MASS CULTURE AND INDIVIDUALITY IN HERMANN BROCH’S LATE WORKS

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Abstract

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This thesis explores Hermann Broch’s thought regarding the relationship between the individual and the mass, in an age of mass-culture. Broch, an Austrian-Jewish intellectual, who emigrated to America in 1938, discussed ideas upon this theme in theoretical essays, including a theory of mass hysteria (Massenwahntheorie) as well as his fictional The Death of Virgil (Der Tod des Vergil). In the study, the analysis of his theoretical work shows that Broch’s views regarding the masses differ from those of other theorists contemporary to him (Le Bon, Freud and Canetti), in that they are closely linked to his theory of value. It also establishes that his ideas about individuality reach back to the earliest philosophers, and that he perceived this dimension of human existence to be changing, through the development of ‘ego-consciousness’. Building upon this, the textual analysis of the Virgil demonstrates that Broch finds similarities between his own era and the age of Augustus, but also indicates that the concept of individuality portrayed in the work goes beyond that discussed in his theoretical writing and points towards a new role for art in the post-industrial age. Consideration is given to Broch’s interest in Natural Philosophy (and developments thereof into the natural sciences), his contemplation of ideas about the Logos and myth, and analysis of the narrative technique. This aspect of the thesis presents a new reading of the Virgil. The study also gives some insight into the Modernist dimension of his thought. The thesis concludes with consideration as to how Broch’s ideas about individuality might relate to his concept of mass society.
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Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References and quotations</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Introduction to thesis 1

Part One. Some theoretical considerations of mass culture and individuality: Broch as a theorist of the masses

2. Introduction to Part One 12
3. Philosophical influences upon Broch’s thought: Nietzsche, Simmel, Weber and Scheler, and Broch’s theory of disintegration of value

4. Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti

5. Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality

6. Discussion of the role of ‘negative universalism’ in Broch’s thought.

Part Two. Analysis of the relationship between individual and mass in the Virgil novel, leading to understanding of Broch’s concept of individuality

7. Introduction to Part Two

8. From the theoretical and philosophical basis to the depiction of the masses and the individual in Broch’s Virgil novel.

9. Broch and Natural Classical Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work

10. Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work

11. Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding
Broch’s concept of individuality

a. The state of being in the ‘Water’ chapter.

b. Transformation in the ‘Fire’ chapter.

c. The role of Lysanias in Virgil’s transformation.

d. The state of being in the ‘Earth’ chapter.


b. Further remarks upon how Virgil is changed in the ‘Ether’ chapter.

13. Some concluding remarks about Broch’s idea of individuality, following the reading of the Virgil novel, and evaluation of his overall achievement in this work

14. Some observations upon how Broch’s concept of individuality might relate to his ideas regarding mass culture

Bibliography
References and quotations

In this study, references to Broch’s novel *The Death of Virgil* refer to the following edition, unless otherwise stated:


References to this work are made in-text, through the abbreviation ‘DV’, followed by the appropriate page number, in parentheses. eg. (DV 26).

References to the corresponding German text, *Der Tod des Vergil*, and Broch’s other works in German, which appear within the ‘Kommentierte Werkausgabe’, edited by Paul Michael Lützeler and published by Suhrkamp, are indicated through the abbreviations listed below. (See Bibliography for full bibliographic details.) The abbreviation for the appropriate work, followed by the page number in parentheses, appears in the footnote for each quotation. eg. KW13/3 62. Unless stated otherwise, translations are my own.

In general, quotations from the *Virgil* work are from the English translation only, though the German text is also provided in footnotes at points where it may clarify meaning. Page reference to the corresponding German text is given in all instances.

Unless stated otherwise, all references to Virgil/Vergil refer to Broch’s protagonist, rather than the historical poet. It should be noted that in Broch’s original German drafts, the spelling ‘Vergil’ is employed, whereas Untermeyer’s translation uses the traditional English spelling, ‘Virgil.’ I have adhered to the conventions of both Broch and his translator, using ‘Virgil’ in my discussion of the text in general, and in quotations from the English translation, but employing ‘Vergil’ in quotations from the German text.

Details of works cited by other authors are given in the footnotes and are not listed in the Bibliography.

List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used to signify Broch’s works:

KW 1 Die Schlafwandler.
KW 2 Die Unbekannte Große.
KW 3 Die Verzauberung.
KW 4 Der Tod des Vergil.
KW 5 Die Schuldlosen.
KW 6 Novellen. Prosa Fragmenten.
KW 7 Dramen.
KW 8 Gedichte.
KW 9/1 Schriften zur Literatur: 1 Kritik.
KW 9/2 Schriften zur Literatur: 2 Theorie.
KW 10/1 Philosophische Schriften 1: Kritik.
KW 10/2 Philosophische Schriften 2: Theorie.
KW 11 Politische Schriften.
KW 13/1 Briefe 1.
KW 13/2 Briefe 2.
KW 13/3 Briefe 3.
1. Introduction to thesis

Despite being nominated for the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature, the work of Hermann Broch (1886-1951) remains little known beyond the confines of German Studies. His thought is worthy of our attention, however, for he engaged closely with ideas regarding the individual in an age of mass culture.¹ He was not only concerned with the rapidly expanding mass culture that had begun to emerge in late nineteenth century Europe, but also with the broader picture, the overall human condition in modernity. This theme is just as relevant in twenty-first century society as it was in the mid-twentieth century. As our lifestyles seem to be accelerating into an increasingly fragmented, crisis-ridden and often authoritarian world, the question of how (or whether) a positive mass society might be achieved in the West continues.

Broch, an Austrian-Jewish intellectual, had first-hand experience of the Nazi regime before he emigrated to America in 1938. He entered into discussion with a wide range of thinkers both in Europe and the United States, and during his time in exile, became politically active and continued to write and comment upon the impact of National Socialism.² His literary output ranges from philosophical and theoretical essays, to fiction, drama, and poetry, and includes theories of mass psychology and human rights. He also studied mathematics and followed developments in modern physics. Although his fiction, and a small collection of essays have been published in translation, and interest in his work is beginning to grow world-wide, much of the secondary literature remains in German. The first justification for conducting this research project, therefore, is to contribute to critique of his thought, in English. The task is to illuminate Broch’s ideas regarding the

¹ I employ the term ‘mass culture’ to refer to the culture that prevails within a mass society. My definition of the term is not restricted to culture in late modernity.

During his time in exile, Broch worked with intellectuals including Thomas Mann, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Herbert Agar and Alvin Johnson, on a project titled The City of Man: A Declaration on World Democracy, which aimed to oppose Hitler’s concept of global terror with

individual and the mass, through analysis of his late works, with particular reference to his *Massenwahntheorie* (a mass psychology, the title of which may be translated as ‘Theory of Mass Hysteria’), and his *magnum opus*, the novel *Der Tod des Vergil* (published simultaneously in English translation as *The Death of Virgil*), which was begun in 1930s Vienna and completed in exile in America.

Broch was a keen cultural critic, interested especially in the role played by art in the post-industrial era. A survey of his theoretical works and correspondence reveals sustained interest in culture in general, through which the relationship between art and the various realms of philosophy, religion, myth, history and politics is explored. As a literary author and cultural critic, he is generally regarded as belonging to the Modernist movement, which revolutionised artistic form in the Western world from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, by breaking with tradition through experiment and innovation. Broch, who belonged to the second generation of Viennese Modernists (those, who, born and raised in Vienna, for ‘complex reasons found themselves developing and flourishing elsewhere’), critiqued culture and politics in an elegant, almost tentative literary style. His essays express his concern not only with understanding the role of culture in his own era, but with comprehending its nature more generally: they encompass his engagement with the relationship between the individual and the external world, which he perceived to have reached the point of crisis.

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2 KW12.
4 I use the term ‘post-industrial era/ age’ to refer to the period of late modernity from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.
5 See KW9/1; KW9/2; KW10/1; KW10/2; KW11; KW12.
8 See KW10/1 147-167, ‘Zur Geschichte der Philosophie’.
The idea of cultural decline is discussed throughout Broch’s writing, from his early notes, which remained unpublished during his lifetime, to the Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his Time essay, an apocalyptic portrayal of the art and values of his own era, written during his later years. His particular concern was that, in the twentieth century, art had lost its meaning and become a matter of aesthetics. He spoke of ‘evil in the value system of art’, and wondered whether art was up to the task of representing the extreme nature of the current period, which was ‘filled with horror, bloodlust and injustice’: ‘What should we do?’ he asked. The theme of philosophical and cultural change underpins his fictional writing. The Sleepwalkers (Die Schlafwandler), for example, portrays changes in values from the late nineteenth century until the end of the First World War. The Spell (Die Verzauberung) relates the changes brought about by the arrival of a charismatic figure in a mountain village, and The Guiltless (Die Schuldlosen), his last fictional work, depicts a situation in which an entire society is founded upon outdated aesthetics. The Massenwahntheorie sets out his ideas about mass society and culture. It was his last major work, and he was still working upon it when he died.

A body of criticism of Broch’s works has grown steadily since his death, although initially his thought was held in high esteem by only a few fellow philosophers, including Hannah Arendt and Erich Kahler. Hitherto, various aspects of his literary work have been researched, from his contribution to human rights theory, conflict resolution and mass communication, to symbol theory and philosophy of values. The editor of


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See also R. Kluger (2003) ‘Kitsch and Art: Broch’s Essay “Das Böse im Wertsystem der Kunst”’ in P.M. Lützeler (ed., with M. Konzett; W. Riemer; C. Sammons) Hermann Broch, his collected works, Paul Michael Lützeler, has written widely on Broch’s contribution to literature. His biography of Broch is a rich source of information derived from otherwise unpublished correspondence. Similarly, the articles in his edited volumes on Broch’s engagement with the Modernists and the arts demonstrate that Broch took a close interest in developments in these fields.14

Beyond the work of Arendt and Kahler, however, relatively little research has been conducted into Broch’s ideas about the individual. The work of Robert Halsall, who discusses Broch’s thought in English, should be noted here.15 He asserts that the problem of autonomy is central to understanding Broch’s literary and philosophical work.16 There has also been some discussion about mystical and Gnostic elements of Broch’s work, which provides some insight into his ideas regarding spirituality, and is therefore pertinent to this project. For example, in his discussion of mystical ideas used in The Sleepwalkers, Karol Sauerland points out that Broch showed interest in mysticism as early as 1913.17 In a similar vein, Robert Weigel’s discussion of Broch’s theory of mass psychology contemplates the idea that the relationship between the individual and the mass might be of a spiritual nature.18

The work of Anja Grabowsky-Hotamanidis is of interest here, for she presents a detailed analysis of the mystical ideas underpinning Broch’s work.19 As a starting point, she draws attention to the rediscovery of mysticism in twentieth century art, literature, philosophy and theology. She

Ibid. p. 29. Halsall compares Broch’s thought with that of Kierkegaard.


finds similarity between Broch’s ideas and the thought of medieval mystics, especially Meister Eckhart. She proposes that Broch depicts a secular form of mysticism (termed ‘leere Transzendenz’, which might be translated as ‘empty transcendence’) that arose in the early twentieth century in response to a widespread sense of loss.

For many years, Broch’s theory of mass hysteria was largely disregarded by sociologists. It has begun to gain recognition, however, and some insightful commentaries have been made upon Broch as a theorist of the masses. In the opinion of sociologist Christian Borch, the *Massenwahntheorie* is ‘one of the ‘most comprehensive contributions to the history of crowd semantics’. Cultural theorist Wolfgang Müller-Funk, who compares Broch’s ideas with those of Sigmund Freud and Elias Canetti, finds his thinking to be ‘problematic but in many ways contemporary’. For Stefan Jonsson, the work is a study of ‘social destruction and death’. Of interest here, is the role played by the idea of death in Broch’s concept of mass society, and how it might affect the individual.

There has been little critical consensus of opinion, however, regarding understanding Broch’s intentions in writing his novels, particularly *The Death*
In this text, the fictional Virgil, urged by impending death, appraises his life as a privileged individual living in the mass society of the Roman state and tries to look beyond death into the future. Broch’s Virgil comes to the conclusion that his life has failed, particularly with regard to addressing the problems of the poor. The interest here lies in determining the extent to which the text is an account of modern mass society, and to what extent it is an attempt to overcome this form of society. What is the role played by literature, or, more specifically, by Broch speaking through the individual figure of the fictional Virgil? How does such fictional writing relate to Broch’s theoretical works and his own biography? What is the role played by art in an age of mass culture? What is the relationship between the individual and the mass? What was Broch’s contribution as a Modernist? Of interest here is his claim that everything contained in the *Massenwahntheorie* is also to be found in the *Virgil* novel.

As Lützeler observes, criticism of *The Death of Virgil* has tended to focus upon particular aspects of the novel, rather than appraisal of the work as a whole. Nevertheless, the discussion of the characters and the structure of the work set out in the *Materialien* is constructive. Regarding the relationship between the individual and the mass, Weigel’s commentary is useful and of interest, as is Patrick Eiden-Offe’s discussion of the idea of democracy in the work. Müller-Fünk has analysed Broch’s theory of the masses with some reference to the *Virgil* novel. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis devotes several short

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chapters to analysis of the depiction of mystical ideas in Broch’s fiction, including the Virgil work, but does not provide a complete commentary upon the novel. Vasily Rudich has also discussed the mystical nature of the Virgil: in his view, it is a work of Catholicism.\(^{17}\)

There has been some discussion about the question of art in the Virgil novel. For Jürgen Heizmann,\(^{30}\) it ‘is an extensive lyrical and philosophical meditation on the duties and limitations of writing’. For Theodore Ziolkowski,\(^{31}\) the work ‘is not about Virgil at all, but is a profound meditation on the meaning and value of art in the face of human existence and death’.

However, interpretation of the Virgil novel has paid relatively little attention to Broch’s interest in Natural Philosophy (and developments thereof into the natural sciences), and the connection between this area and his contemplation of ideas about myth and the Logos. Reference to the idea of Logos appears throughout Broch’s oeuvre. For example, his essay ‘Die sogennanten philosophischen Grundfragen einer empirischen Wissenschaft’ discusses the subject of intuition and the Logos.\(^{32}\) In this respect, I believe, he enters into a tradition of study of the idea of ‘Logos’, which reaches back to the earliest philosophers but continues today. The ‘Logos’ is difficult to define, and the breadth of ideas to which it has been associated range from the Christian idea of the divine Word or wisdom of God, to law, reason or the inward debate of the soul, to a continuous statement and bringing to account.\(^{33}\) Perhaps the most comprehensive definition appears in Lorenzo Perilli’s discussion of the depth of meaning within the word ‘Logos’: he suggests that it is the balance between order and disorder, the production of order in a disordered world.\(^{34}\) A similar idea arises in Broch’s essay on the

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For reference to the Logos in Broch’s correspondence, see for example, KW13/1 317-321, here, 318, letter from Broch to Egon Vietta, dated 19 November 1934; KW13/1 407-408, letter from Broch to Egon Vietta, dated 20 April 1936; KW13/3 44-45, here, 44, letter from Broch to Daisy Brody, dated 27 December 1947.


35 Art of translation: here, he points to the Logos as being the underlying principle to human language. Arendt’s early observation that the Virgil should be read as a poem should be noted here, for it draws attention to the importance of language (and therefore the Logos) in Broch’s thought.

36 Evans Lansing-Smith’s exploration of the poetics of Modernism should also be acknowledged, for he includes Broch’s engagement with myth in the Virgil work in his discussion. Ruth Bendels’ extensive research into Broch’s interest in the natural sciences should be recognised, though she does not discuss the Virgil work. Ernestine Schlant discusses his interest in developments in physics, and asserts that his knowledge of ‘modern physics’ and mathematical research was precise and up-to-date until he left university. Most recently, Carsten Könneker has discussed Broch’s reception of physics, particularly quantum mechanics, in The Unknown Quantity.

Broch’s engagement with ideas arising from Natural Philosophy as well as the mythical, mystical realm in this way is significant, for it indicates that he embraces the concept of ‘totality of existence’. This is a theme that arises throughout his theoretical writing, and which he relates to the realm of art. He asserts that the mission of art, especially literature, is the attainment...
41
42 Of totality as part of humanity’s striving towards cognition: it is an expression of religious impatience. In contemplating the idea of ‘totality’, it is interesting to note that the Virgil novel has provided the inspiration for several musical works.
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I believe that the employment of ideas rooted in Natural Philosophy, poetry and myth in the Virgil work builds upon the ideas set out in Broch’s theoretical writing and directs the reader towards his understanding of the relationship between the individual and the mass, which is linked to art. Here, Neo-Kantian influences upon his thought come to the fore, which enable us to gain new insight into the underlying purpose of the novel. The Virgil is indeed a profound meditation on the meaning and value of art in the face of human existence and death, but it is about Virgil, and also the reader. I wish to show that Broch’s engagement with ideas regarding mass society gave rise to his unusual view of the realm of art.

Taking this into account, the thesis aims to provide a new and comprehensive reading of the Virgil work, which illuminates Broch’s understanding of the relationship between the mass and the individual, and the role played by art in post-industrial society. It demonstrates that his views about art and individuality are closely linked to his engagement with the idea of the masses, and that he points towards a new understanding of the role of
The study also provides some insight into Broch’s contribution as a social scientist, arguing that he has a positive view of mass society and commenting upon how his ideas about the masses might be organised in the modern Western world. The guiding principle of the individual and the mass is used throughout the study, and Broch’s thought is also viewed in the light of the History of Ideas.

In order to achieve an all-round view of Broch’s thought, the study examines both his theoretical and fictional work. The thesis is divided into two parts, with a general introduction. Part One discusses Broch’s theoretical engagement with ideas concerning mass-culture, the individual and art. Part Two presents a textual analysis of the fictional Virgil work, and some concluding remarks regarding Broch’s concept of individuality and how this might relate to mass society in the post-industrial world. An outline of the chapters is set out below.

The Introduction to Part One explains the context into which Broch was born, and the background that generated ‘theories of the masses’. This chapter sets out the theorists of the masses with whom Broch engaged and justifies the selection of Gustave Le Bon, Sigmund Freud and Elias Canetti for comparison with Broch. Chapter Three continues to set the scene, by discussing the group of philosophers, which influenced Broch: the NeoKantians. This group included Friedrich Nietzsche, who might be regarded as a catalyst for Neo-Kantian thought, Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Max Scheler.

Chapter Four considers Broch as a theorist of the masses. Here it is shown that his ideas regarding value underpin his interpretation of mass formation. He focuses upon the individual as a means of gauging the state of the collective, and detects awareness of a mystical or spiritual dimension, that
is difficult to measure. Chapter Five aims to clarify Broch’s concept of the individual. It sets out Broch’s engagement with ideas concerning the emergence of the individual and individuality, from that of myth, to expression of individuality through fashion and value, and the construction of a model of the self, or ‘ego’. Chapter Six considers a new human condition observed by Broch, which he describes as ‘looking back in loneliness’.

The second part of the thesis is devoted to textual analysis of the Virgil novel, with the intention of uncovering aspects of Broch’s thought regarding the individual and the mass, which are not apparent in his theoretical work. Chapter Seven explains the structure and origin of the novel, and sets out relevant secondary literature. Chapter Eight then examines the ways in which the individual and the mass are represented in the text, linking the portrayal to Broch’s theoretical work.

Chapter Nine raises the question of why Broch chose the names of the four classical elements as chapter titles for the Virgil novel. This has proved to be a most exciting area of research, for it provides a key to understanding Broch’s ideas regarding the relationship between individual, the mass, and art in the Virgil work. Chapter Ten examines the overall narrative technique, which has given further insight into the work. Here, it is established that Broch employs a sophisticated form of interior monologue, which, in addition to the main thoughts of the protagonist, conveys his doubts, and more peripheral ideas. Having established the unusual nature of the narrative technique, the thesis analyses the transformation of the protagonist in the course of the narrative, as he passes through the elements.

Discussion of Virgil’s transformation in the ‘Ether ‘chapter occupies an extended chapter, for it is here that the greatest changes take place. In this final section of the novel, Virgil, physically dead, continues into the Afterlife. Chapter Thirteen discusses what has been uncovered about Broch’s concept of the self and the mass, and consequently the role of art, through the analysis of the Virgil novel. It also evaluates the overall achievement of the work and Broch’s contribution as a Modernist. What is important here is that the text offers more than mere description of the activity of the ‘ego’, as may be found
in Broch’s theoretical work. Chapter Fourteen considers how Broch’s concept of the individual and art might relate to his ideas about mass society. By taking into account ideas that have arisen from Broch’s fictional writing as well as his theoretical work, the reader might be able to appreciate his unusual and potentially transformative contribution to Western postindustrial society.

2. Introduction to Part One

Hermann Broch’s sustained interest in the relationship between the individual and the masses could be said to be a direct product of his era, for his lifetime coincided with the emergence of the masses as a phenomenon. Born in 1886, into the family of an ambitious Jewish textile merchant, who had migrated to Vienna in the 1860s in search of wealth, Broch grew up in a privileged household. Upon entering the family business, he gained direct experience of engaging with the world of commerce and dealing with the factory workforce, at the very time when the idea of the existence of ‘the masses’ was coming to the fore.\(^{18}\) As a later student of mathematics, philosophy and literature, he was well placed to comprehend and contribute to intellectual debate regarding the concept of the masses. He felt compelled to abandon commerce in order to write, and became an individual ‘posited against his time, rather than in his time’.\(^{19}\) In order to place Broch as a theorist

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\(^{18}\) As manager of the family enterprise, Broch voluntarily made social improvements for the benefit of his employees. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) *Hermann Broch: A Biography*, p. 48. According to Lützeler, shortly after the First World War, Broch had members of his workforce elected on to the Workers’ Advisory Board and the Industrial Council. He worked to have mains electricity, previously available only in the factory, installed in the houses of Teesdorf, the location of the family factory. He provided a free lunch daily for needy children, and established a library of 4,000 books for the villagers. He also built a gymnasium for the workers’ gymnastic and athletics club, an open-air swimming pool, and initiated the founding of a local cultural society. He did not, however, enjoy a good relationship with his employees, keeping them at a distance.

\(^{19}\) F.W. Nietzsche (1979) *The Use and Abuse of History*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Section 6, p. 41.

of the masses, it is necessary to consider the sociological climate, which gave rise to mass culture, and fostered his intellectual development.

The concept of ‘the masses’ as a social strata emerged in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, during a period of unprecedented economic growth and population expansion. Between 1800 and 1914, Europe’s population increased from 180,000,000 to 460,000,000, alongside rapid industrialisation. In Vienna, the place of Broch’s upbringing, the number of businesses doubled between 1850 and 1890, whilst the population grew from 400,000 to 800,000, rising to over 1,700,000 in the decade 1890-1900.

The sharp increase in the European population represented a change in social composition. The presence of the huge number of people in the workforce, ‘the masses’, was perceived by many intellectuals to be a threat to the status quo and therefore a matter of concern, so that general interest in the masses arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Intellectuals were divided in their attitude to the masses. Some viewed them as a source of labour, whilst others regarded them with disdain, or feared a potential uprising, for there was widespread fear of overpopulation. Dismay at the emergence of the masses was documented by literary authors. Flaubert, for example, declared in a letter of 1871, that ‘the mob, the mass, the herd will always be despicable’, whilst Nietzsche’s Zarathustra claimed that ‘far too many are born’, and denounced ‘the state that overwhelms the individual’. For H.G. Wells, the ‘extravagant swarm of new births’ constituted ‘essential disaster of the nineteenth century’.

In the early twentieth century, the nature of living in mass society became a topic, which was addressed by a number of Modernist authors. Indeed, Broch was one of the few thinkers to address the phenomena of the individual and the masses through both theoretical and literary writing. Others writing in German included Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Robert Musil (1880-1942), Elias Canetti (1905-1994) and Heimito von Doderer (1896-1966). Austria, particularly Vienna and Prague, generated considerable interest in

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20 From 1800 to 1914, Europe’s population increased from 180 million to 460 million.
writing about the individual and mass culture. Musil, author of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*), lived in Klagenfurt; von Doderer, who wrote *Die Dämonen* (*The Demons*) and Broch grew up in


Vienna, whereas Kafka and Canetti lived in Prague.21 These authors portrayed the impact of mass-society upon the feelings and conduct of the individual. In particular, Kafka, author of *Der Prozeß* (*The Trial*) and *Das Schloß* (*The Castle*), depicted the experience of alienation in modernity, and drew attention to the question of identity in a rapidly changing world.22 Amongst those writing in English, were Virginia Woolf (*Mrs. Dalloway*), T.S. Eliot (*The Waste Land*), and James Joyce (*Ulysses*).23 Despite this surge of literary interest, art appeared to remain beyond the reach of the masses: the Modernist movement decried the idea that the masses might become culturally literate, and ensured that understanding of the arts was preserved for a select few.24

Interest in the advent of ‘mass culture’ amongst intellectuals gave rise to production of ‘theories of the masses’, which attempted to explain the formation of a mass, and the appeal of collective ideologies, through a scientific approach. Study of the masses through scientific investigation was

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24 J. Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, pp. 16-18. As Halsall points out, there was ‘an increasing emphasis upon individualism amongst intellectuals and artists. The autonomy of the intellectual or artist was seen in terms of an aesthetic distancing from the masses’. R. Halsall (2000) *The Problem of Autonomy in the Work of Hermann Broch*, pp. 44-45. 

pioneered in Europe by the French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon, whose book *Psychologie des Foules* ('The Crowd') was published in 1895. Le Bon’s work was hugely influential. Translated into German in 1912, it underwent twenty-six printings in French and sixteen in English before 1925, was translated into thirteen languages, and was admired by Sigmund Freud, Ortega y Gasset and Adolf Hitler. By the turn of the twentieth century, the study of masses, or crowds, was becoming a discipline in itself and was taken up by early sociologists, who adopted a new scientific approach to philosophy. Included in this group of thinkers were the Neo-Kantian thinkers Max Weber (1864-1920) and Georg Simmel (1858-1918). German-speaking intellectual culture was becoming rich in thinkers keen to theorise about the masses, although the discourse was not exclusive to Germany and Austria.

The onset of the First World War became a turning point regarding attitudes to the masses. The shocking effect of the unprecedented, industrialised warfare and the recognition of the emerging mass culture generated further interest in the masses, and during the early decades of the twentieth century, several important texts were written on the subject. The following works, for example, are indicative of the fascination with trying to understand mass formation and the emergence of collective ideologies. Wilfred Trotter’s *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916); William McDougall’s *The Group Mind* (1920); Sigmund Freud’s *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* (1921); Ortega y Gasset’s *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930). In response to the emergence of increasingly authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in Europe, a considerable number of other thinkers devoted their energies to the masses during the first half of the twentieth

century. Research was continued by authors such as Adorno and Horkheimer, who commented on the culture industry and anti-Semitism in
The Dialectic of Enlightenment (1943), and Canetti, whose work *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*) was published in 1960.\(^{28}\)

Approach to study of the masses has varied. As Müller-Funk\(^ {29}\) observes, some theorists, such as Le Bon, Trotter, McDougall and Freud refer to recent mass events in their explanation of the formation of masses. (Le Bon’s analysis is based upon the emergence of political masses in the pre-war period 1871-1914, whereas Trotter, McDougall and Freud refer to the importance of the masses before, during and after the First World War).\(^ {30}\)

Canetti, however, sets out his explanation of the formation of a mass, and why human beings might behave in different, perhaps inhuman ways, when they are part of that collective, in a-historical fashion. He avoids giving the impression that specific Austrian events, such as the burning of the Palace of Justice in Vienna, or Hitler’s announcement of the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, might have influenced his theory of the masses.\(^ {19}\) Nevertheless, there was an attempt amongst authors such as Musil, Freud and the young Canetti to understand what happened after the decline of the *ancien régime* and the rise of the modern masses as an unavoidable factor in politics, culture and society.\(^ {31}\)

Broch, a keen student, spent his formative years as a philosopher in the developmental stage of this cultural climate. It was not the only influence upon his thought, however. He read widely, and amassed a private library of more than 3000 volumes, which, in addition to the works of the classical


\(^{30}\) Ibid. 19 Ibid, p. 92. Protest amongst socialist workers, which broke out in front of the Palace of Justice in Vienna on 15 July 1927, was suppressed by force, and the building was set on fire. Hitler’s announcement that Austria was to be annexed into Nazi-Germany, was made from Heldenplatz, Vienna, on 15 March 1938.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

philosophers and the Church Fathers, included many volumes on contemporary philosophy.\textsuperscript{21} He studied Nietzsche and engaged with the ideas of many Neo-Kantian thinkers, such as Max Weber, Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936). His interest in the masses as a phenomenon may be considered a natural development in his thought. His writing on the subject dates from the end of the First World War, when he wrote an open letter to Franz Blei, in which he reflects upon the conduct of the crowd outside the parliament building in Vienna, during the call for the establishment of a German-Austrian republic on 12\textsuperscript{th} November 1918.\textsuperscript{32} It is clear from Broch’s correspondence and Lützeler’s editorial notes to the Massenwahntheorie (‘Theory of Mass Hysteria’) that he was familiar with the ideas of a wide range of thinkers concerned with masstheory.\textsuperscript{33} In addition to Canetti, these included Le Bon, Ortega y Gasset, Freud, C.G. Jung, Alfred Adler and Paul Reiwald. Canetti, with whom he corresponded, was similar to Broch, in that he adopted both theoretical and fictional approaches. Canetti’s fictional work Die Blendung (Auto da Fé), which deals with the difficulties experienced by an educated individual in relating to the masses, was published in 1935, many years before Masse und Macht.\textsuperscript{34}

In order to draw some conclusions from our analysis of Broch’s thought, it has been necessary to select a small number of theorists for use in comparison. For the purposes of this study, I believe that the thought of Freud and Canetti is particularly relevant, and the work of other theorists, such as Le Bon, who influenced Freud, and belongs to the first generation of theorists of

\textsuperscript{21} KW13/1 30-34. Open letter from Broch to Franz Blei, dated December 1918, and titled ‘Die Straße’ (‘The Street’).
\textsuperscript{32} KW13/1 30-34. Open letter from Broch to Franz Blei, dated December 1918, and titled ‘Die Straße’ (‘The Street’).
\textsuperscript{33} Reference is made to the following thinkers, for example: Alfred Adler KW13/1 51; José Ortega y Gasset KW13/3 235; KW13/2 Sigmund Freud KW13/2 67, 83, 85, 119, 132, 146, 151 f., 163, 339, 412, 447; C.G. Jung KW13/1 86, 225 f., 279, 280, 319, 372, 376, 399, 402, 414, 490, KW13/2 56, 412, KW13/3 84; Paul Reiwald KW13/3 93-96, 100-103; Elias Canetti KW13/1 344, 346, 354, 409, 410, 438, KW13/2 98, 233, 234, 266.
the masses, warrants occasional reference. The selection has been made on the basis that Broch himself acknowledged the theoretical nature of Le Bon’s and Freud’s thought, and was keen to maintain contact with Canetti regarding research into the masses. Both Freud and Canetti stem from a similar German-speaking background to Broch. Canetti’s ahistorical approach towards theorising about the masses is appropriate for comparison with Broch’s work, for although he expresses his horror at the unfolding of the National Socialist regime in his correspondence, his approach to study of the masses remains largely without reference to specific events. In his Massenwahntheorie, for example, historical references are only to be found in the proposal for the founding of the ‘Research Institute for Mass Hysteria’. The aim of all three thinkers seems to be to set out a general theory, which explains why a mass might form, and how individuals, who participate in the mass, might be brought to behave in ways that they would otherwise find repugnant.

Whilst comparison of Broch’s theory of mass hysteria with the thought of Le Bon and Freud reveals some similarities, and comparison with Canetti’s work largely finds difference, this study asserts that Broch’s ideas extend beyond those of the other thinkers. As Broch remarks to his publisher, he

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36 See KW 13/2 339; KW10/2 173-194 ‘Werttheoretische Bemerkungen zur Psychoanalyse’ (’Theoretical Remarks upon Value, towards Psychoanalysis’). Although Broch suggested to Canetti that they should keep each other informed about their findings, the latter refused. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, p. 201.


38 W. Müller-Funk (2003) ‘Fear in Culture’, p. 93. See KW12 11. References to political issues contemporary to Broch are to be found in the final section of the Massenwahntheorie, titled ‘Zeitgenössische Entwicklungen und die Bekehrung zur Humanität – Demokratie versus Totalitätstaat’ (’Contemporary Developments and Conversion to Humanity’). KW12 510-564.

29 Ibid, pp. 92-93.

39 Müller-Funk observes that Broch’s concept of mass hysteria is an original theory, which goes far beyond Freud’s theory. See W. Müller-Funk (2003) ‘Fear in Culture’, p. 94. This thesis aims to illuminate Broch’s ideas about the mass and the individual through analysis of both his theoretical and his fictional writing.
does ‘not go about things in a psycho-analytical way’, but adopts a much broader approach:

With regard to mass-hysteria literature, however, you are right; apart from Freud and Le Bon there is hardly anything theoretical. From the psychoanalytical side a book has appeared from Reich and one from Alexander; I still do not know them and I also do not go about things in a psychoanalytical way (or at least, by no means exclusively), but rather from a much broader starting position. And there, there is no field of knowledge, which does not, in one way or the other, reach into the area of investigation. In short it is an unconquerable matter. I slave away accordingly also quite dreadfully, and each day is too short for me, not to mention the months and the years.\textsuperscript{31}

Thus Broch himself indicates that he approaches study of mass phenomena in an unprecedented, individual way, there being few theoretical works at his disposal for reference. My analysis of his theory aims to show how it differs from that of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti, and points towards his ideas regarding the individual and individuality. As a preliminary step, it is helpful to consider some philosophical influences upon Broch’s thought, by examining his engagement with the work of Nietzsche, Simmel, Weber and Max Scheler, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
Letter from Broch to Daniel Brody (his publisher at the time), dated 17 July 1943. Broch writes:


3. Philosophical Influences upon Broch’s thought: Nietzsche, Simmel, Weber and Scheler

This section examines some influences upon Broch’s thought, which will enable us to place his ideas in the philosophical context of his time. In particular, I wish to look at the influence of his near-contemporaries Nietzsche (1844-1900), Simmel (1858-1918), Weber (1864-1920) and Scheler (1874-1928) upon his theory of value, and ideas about the individual and the mass. As a preliminary step, it is helpful to look briefly at some of the main themes, which preoccupied thinkers during Broch’s formative years as a philosopher.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the philosophical climate was one of change, a sea of emerging ideas. By the 1840s, the thought of Hegel and other German Idealists had become unfashionable, and philosophers tried to address how the new ideas and modes of living, which accompanied the rapid demographic and cultural changes occurring in the newly industrialised German speaking countries, might be conceived in philosophical terms. In the second half of the nineteenth century, western philosophers were challenged by theories, which upturned the prevailing Christian world-view. Amongst the matters arising for debate was the ‘materialist controversy’ of the 1850s, which considered whether all things, including consciousness, might be the product of material interactions. (‘Materialism’ maintains that the only thing that exists is matter, or energy, and that all things are material: all phenomena are therefore the result of material interactions.) In a similar vein, Darwin’s concept of evolution (1859) offered an explanation of the development of the biological world that was based upon physical criteria, whilst Nietzsche’s proclamation of the ‘death of God’ confirmed growing disbelief in the validity of nineteenth century
Christian teaching. A new branch of philosophy, ‘Neo-Kantianism’, evolved in the 1860s, in response to the new developments, particularly the ‘materialist controversy’ of the previous decade. The Neo-Kantian philosophers ‘sought to revise Kant’s thought in the light of new ideas in the natural and social sciences’.

According to Kant’s idea of ‘transcendental idealism’, the mind can only know ideas: anything existing beyond that which appears to the mind is a ‘thing-in itself’ (‘Ding an sich’), which cannot be directly known. This philosophy is based upon the idea that the mind consists of some form of spirit. The ‘Materialist’ thinkers, however, refuted the Idealist position that all entities are composed of mind, or spirit. They believed that matter is the only substance, and that reality is identical with the actually occurring states of energy and matter.

Members of the ‘back to Kant’ movement opposed the Materialist thinkers, and were interested in how knowledge provided by the natural sciences might relate to that derived from the humanities. They pursued the idea that all knowledge is based in some form of (unspecified) values, which transcend the contingency of the historical and empirical worlds, and make some form of judgement possible. Interested in pursuing epistemology, in preference to ontology, they approached philosophy with a new emphasis on scientific validity and logic. Their work should not, however, be confused with Positivism, which also developed during the course of the nineteenth century. According to Positivist belief, truth lies only in scientific knowledge, which implies that only a scientific approach to a problem can be meaningful, an

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43 A. Bowie (2003) An Introduction to German Philosophy, from Kant to Habermas, p.182.

A third branch of Neo-Kantianism was represented by Leonard Nelson (1882-1927), a German mathematician and philosopher, and friend of mathematician David Hilbert.
attitude which contrasts sharply with the more rounded approach of the Neo-Kantians.

Neo-Kantianism divided into two main branches, known as the Marburg and the Baden schools. The Marburg Neo-Kantians, led by Hermann Cohen, with Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer, were concerned with epistemology and logic. The Baden, or South West school, which included Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Ernst Troeltsch, focused more upon ideas of value and culture. Simmel, Weber and Scheler, whose ideas are discussed in this chapter, belong to the Neo-Kantian school of thought. Nietzsche, whose thought is also included, may be regarded as a forerunner to Neo-Kantianism.

Broch’s theoretical essays and correspondence show that he was very familiar with Neo-Kantian thought, reference being made to a number of Neo-Kantian thinkers, including Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert, Wilhelm Dilthey, Rudolf Eucken, as well as Georg Simmel, Paul Natorp, Edmund Husserl, Hans Vaihinger, Hermann Cohen, and Ernst Cassirer of the Marburg school, and Ernst Troeltsch of the Baden, or Southwest school. He also followed the journal *Kant-Studien* closely. Although it is well documented that he was a student of Kant, only a few critics writing in English have acknowledged the overall Neo-Kantian nature of his philosophy. Lützeler notes that around 1916, ‘Broch opened his mind to Neo-Kantianism, and his thinking became increasingly influenced by Kant’s ethics’. This perspective is endorsed by Harrington, in his study of Broch as a

45 Broch refers to the following thinkers: Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915); Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936); Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911); Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926); Georg Simmel (1858-1918); Paul Natorp (1854-1924); Edmund Husserl (1859-1938); Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933); Hermann Cohen (1848-1918); Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945).


student of Max Weber. In my view, Broch’s engagement with Neo-Kantian thought, especially the concept of value, was important to the formation of his ideas regarding individuality in an age of mass culture.

Nietzsche

One of the earliest philosophical influences upon Broch’s thought was Nietzsche, whose work he began to study in 1908. The catalogue of his library in Vienna shows that he possessed Nietzsche’s works, and a volume of letters. Many references to Nietzsche are to be found in Broch’s own correspondence, and clear reference is made in his 1933 essay, ‘Evil in the value system of art’. Nietzsche might be regarded as having acted as a catalyst to the Neo-Kantian movement, in that he considered the notion of value as a philosophical idea. It is this area of Nietzsche’s thought that is of interest to our study of Broch.

The influence of Nietzsche upon Broch has been acknowledged by a small number of critics, including Arendt, who asserts that Broch’s theory of value is indebted to Nietzsche, and Large, who finds similarity and subtle differences in the terminology used by the two thinkers. Nietzsche, Large observes, was preoccupied with the question of contemporary decadence and

49 P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: a Biography, pp. 33-35. According to Lützeler, Broch studied the work of Schopenhauer and Weininger in the same period. He also studied the work of Kant in detail at an early stage in his philosophical development.
50 K. Amann and H.K. Grote, Die Wiener Bibliothek Hermann Brochs: Kommentiertes Verzeichnis des rekonstruierten Bestandes, p.184-186. For examples of references to Nietzsche in Broch’s correspondence, see KW13/1 27, 40, 348 and KW13/3 214, 270, 271, 272, 536. 14
51 See H. Arendt (1955) Men in Dark Times, p. 121. Also D. Large, ‘Zerfall der Werte: Broch, Nietzsche, Nihilism’, pp. 72-73. In the course of his discussion, Large analyses The Sleepwalkers trilogy. He observes that the influence of Nietzsche upon Broch was not generally recognised by critics for many years.
Nihilism, and the fate of European culture in the wake of the radically *absconditus deus*.\(^{52}\) He believed that the origin of the crisis of values lay in ‘the manifestations of European decadence’, and found Nihilism to be a normal condition, in which the highest values were invalid.\(^{17}\) Large argues that Broch’s theory of ‘Disintegration of Values’ was influenced by Nietzsche.\(^{53}\) He asserts, however, that Broch draws somewhat different conclusions to Nietzsche. He points out that, whereas for Nietzsche, future values will be shaped by the self-styling law-giving ‘Übermensch’, Broch seems to want a resurrection of values from the ashes of the old order.\(^{54}\) This is of interest, for, in my view, Broch’s value-theory, whilst it may originally have been inspired by his reading of Nietzsche, extends far beyond the issue of contemporary decadence.\(^{20}\) As will be shown in the course of the thesis, his value-theory is connected to our historical concept of time, and points towards the possibility of spiritual renewal.

Ideas about value may be found throughout Broch’s oeuvre, from his earliest writing, onwards. In the piece titled, ‘Kultur’, which was written at the time when he first read Nietzsche, but remained unpublished during his lifetime, he outlines ‘the decomposition of Western culture’, and sets out ideas that appear in his publications of 1916-20.\(^{55}\) The ideas are developed into a theory of ‘disintegration of value’, which asserts that shared values have been in decline since the Middle Ages, when the Christian church stood at the peak of the overall value system.

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\(^{52}\) Ibid, p. 74.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid, p. 79.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid, p. 82.  
\(^{55}\) A.Harrington, ‘Hermann Broch as a Reader of Max Weber’, p. 5. Early jottings about the disintegration of Western culture appear in Broch’s 1908-9 piece, ‘Kultur’ and also in his 1916-20 essays. See KW10/1 11-31 and KW10/2 11-155 respectively.
Broch’s theory is set out in his 1931 essay, ‘Logik einer zerfallenden Welt’, (which may be translated as ‘Logic of a Disintegrating World’), and also in the essayistic Excursus within the third section of The Sleepwalkers novel.\(^{56}\) Within the latter, the philosophical insertions interrupt the narrative, introducing a sense of disintegration to the text itself. Here Broch asserts:

> Our common destiny is the sum of our single lives, and each of these single lives is developing quite normally, in accordance, as it were, with its private logicality. We feel the totality to be insane, but for each single life we can easily discover logical guiding motives. Are we, then, insane because we have not gone mad?\(^{57}\)

The insertions proceed to illustrate the decline of religious values in favour of the rise of a ‘ruthless logic’, which is ‘directed on the object and object alone’, and characterised by its ‘lack of consideration for consequences’.\(^{58}\) For Broch,\(^{59}\) this ‘brutal and aggressive logic’, from which ‘one cannot escape’, has produced multiple value systems, each demanding ‘the utmost rigour’ in achieving their goal. The modern world, he maintains, is characterised by the multiplicity of different value systems running in parallel. Each individual subscribes to one or more value systems, which may compete with one another and cause conflict, both internally and in social interaction. In the last section of this Excursus, the reader is directed to the ‘final indivisible unit in the disintegration of values’, the human individual, whose ‘private theology struggles to comprehend any values beyond its immediate and most personal environment’.\(^{26}\)

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\(^{56}\) KW10/2 156-171.


\(^{58}\) Ibid. p. 446 KW1 496.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

In their analysis of the modern condition, both Nietzsche and Broch seem to begin with the idea of the loss of a spiritual absolute, or ‘the death of God’. Broch differs in his outlook, however, and some illumination of his ideas may be found in Large’s comparison of his use of vocabulary with that of Nietzsche. Large suggests that the title of Broch’s early essay, ‘Ornament: Der Fall Loos’, shows some similarity with the title of Nietzsche’s commentary on decadence, ‘Der Fall Wagner’, and with his discussion of ornament in his writings. Similarly, one of the chapter titles in Broch’s ‘Hofmannsthal’ essay, ‘Die fröhliche Apokalypse Wiens um 1880’, resembles the title of Nietzsche’s work, ‘Die fröhliche Wissenschaft’. Large suggests that although Broch uses Nietzschean terminology, the overall tone of his philosophy differs to that of Nietzsche. For example, whereas Nietzsche uses the word, ‘Zersetzung’, which may be translated as ‘subversion’ or ‘decomposition’, Broch employs ‘Zerfall’, which means ‘disintegration’. Thus, whilst Broch suggests that values are breaking up, for Nietzsche, they have fallen into decay. Whereas Nietzsche observes the state of Nihilism, which he regards as ‘a normal condition’ that may be denied, or recognised and accepted by the individual in various ways, Broch points to the increasing separation of values, which affects all aspects of human life, and leads eventually to the isolation of the individual.

For Broch, the disintegration of values has resulted in each value system developing its own system of rules. This development, he asserts, extends to the realm of art: he speaks of ‘evil in the value system of art’. In

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62 The title of Broch’s essay may be translated as ‘Ornamentation: The Loos Case’ (KW10/1 32-33) and that of Nietzsche as ‘The Wagner Case’.
common with other writers and artists within the modernist movement, he contemplated the question of aesthetics, that is, what could be represented and what ought to be represented through art. Whilst the artist must undoubtedly operate within the realm of aesthetics, Broch’s concern was that the art of his era subscribed merely to the prevailing values of the time and had become a matter of aestheticism. In ‘Evil in the Value-Sytem of Art’, he notes that throughout history, art had given visible expression to the lifestyles of different epochs. He questions whether the art of his own era is up to the task of making manifest the extreme nature of the period. His observations are echoed in Hofmannsthal and his Time, the essayistic critique of his own era. Here, he asserts that the art world in Vienna had stagnated; it had become a value-vacuum. Broch’s rejection of aestheticism is apparent from his earliest writings to the Hofmannsthal essay. In his view, the problem of art is that we only consider ‘good art’ (or ‘ethical art’) to be genuine art. We ignore other representations and consider only that which pleases us to be beautiful: only that which is considered to be aesthetically pleasing is tolerated. Consequently, there are aspects of reality which remain unrepresented and therefore unseen. This is an important aspect of Broch’s thought. In the long-term, he maintains, this attitude towards art results in the production of kitsch, the reproduction of ideas that have already been generated. Kitsch, he asserts, is the evil in art, the confusion of the ethical with the aesthetic.

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Simmel

We turn now to the thought of sociologist Georg Simmel, whose work Broch studied quite intensively, although little direct reference may be found in his writing. Lützeler\cite{39} maintains that Broch held Simmel in greater esteem than any other sociologist or ‘historian of mentality’ (‘Mentalitätshistoriker’). In the opinion of David Frisby,\cite{69} Simmel is arguably ‘the first sociologist of modernity’, for ‘more than any of his contemporary sociologists he came closest to expressing and analysing the modes of experiencing the “new” and “modern” life-world’. A wide range of topics linked to modern urban life, including money, fashion and religion, are discussed in Simmel’s Lebensphilosophie.\cite{70} Despite the lack of references to Simmel in Broch’s work, his ideas should be considered at this stage, for, as will be shown in the course of the thesis, there appears to be some confluence of thought between the two thinkers.

Simmel starts out from ‘a regulative world principle that everything interacts with everything else, that between every point in the world and every other force permanently moving relationships exist’.\cite{71} In his view, it is the relationships between phenomena that are of interest: the social interaction occurring at an everyday level provides the research material for understanding of the ‘puzzling life of society’.\cite{72} He perceives the everyday world to be ‘the source of the development of higher cultural manifestations, including religion’.\cite{73} His analysis of society observes an increase in ‘the need for religion ... now that the two great intellectual currents, the scientific and the social, have lost much of their intoxicating power’.\cite{74} He asserts that deep

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \cite{69} D. Frisby (1985) \textit{Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin}. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 39.
  \item \cite{70} ‘Lebensphilosophie’ may be translated as ‘Philosophy for Living’.
  \item \cite{71} D. Frisby (1985) \textit{Fragments of Modernity} p.54. Frisby cites, Simmel, G. (1890) \textit{Über soziale Differenzierung}. Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, p. 13.
  \item \cite{73} D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds.) (1997) \textit{Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings}. London; New Delhi: Sage, p. 22.
  \item \cite{74} D. Frisby (1994) \textit{Georg Simmel. Critical Assessments} (3 vols.) London; New York: Routledge, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
insight into the structure of society may be attained through the sensory impressions of the observer.\textsuperscript{75} In his view:

Each sense, according to its distinctive features, brings typical contributions to the construction of a societal existence: the nuances of its impressions correspond to the unique aspects of the social relationship.\textsuperscript{76}

Simmel does not stop at the gathering of sensory impressions, however. He places great emphasis upon the ‘inner life’ of human beings, the psychology of modernity.\textsuperscript{48} Insight into this inner life may be attained through the analysis of fragments of modern existence:

From each point on the surface of existence – however closely attached to the surface alone – one may drop a sounding into the depth of the psyche so that all the most banal externalities of life finally are connected with the ultimate decisions concerning the meaning and style of life.\textsuperscript{77}

As Frisby\textsuperscript{78} observes, Simmel views fragmentary aspects of existence as being ‘connected with the essential’. Interpretation cannot take place, however, without taking into account the significance of symbols to human existence: symbols provide a key to understanding human interaction. In particular, Simmel\textsuperscript{51} attaches importance to the role of money as a symbol of ‘the relativistic character of existence’, and here, his thought approaches the ideas about value discussed earlier.

For Simmel, value is a matter of exchange between two parties. As he asserts in his essay, ‘On the Psychology of Money’,\textsuperscript{52} ‘all granting of value is a psychological fact’. The value of something is therefore not fixed, but determined by what it means to an individual, who desires that thing. In his view, society is not an external, objective phenomenon, but a means by which

\textsuperscript{75} G. Simmel, ‘Soziologie der Sinne’, p. 1027.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. Translation Frisby. See D. Frisby (1985) \textit{Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin}, p. 56. 48
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p. 56. Frisby find Simmel’s emphasis upon psychology to be of interest, given sociology’s attempts at the end of the nineteenth century to demarcate itself as an independent discipline not merely from history, from philosophy, but also from psychology.
\textsuperscript{78} D. Frisby (1985) \textit{Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin}, p. 58. 51 Ibid. 52
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. 52
individual human beings might relate to one another: it contains a wide range of competing value systems based on psychological values. As Frisby 79 describes, money, for Simmel, is ‘a universal equivalent to all values’ and has the capacity to bring the most diverse things into relationship with one another’.

A particular concern, for Simmel, is the nature of psychological hierarchies that may be generated by living in the metropolis. His ideas upon this theme are set out in his ‘Metropolis and Mental Life’ and ‘Fashion’ essays.80 Here, he discerns the ‘spirit of the age’ and asserts that the pace of life, or interaction between parties appears to be much more rapid within the metropolis. His ideas here invite comparison with Broch’s assertion that ‘historical unity depends upon an effective or fictive centre of value’:

The style of an epoch would not be discernible, unless a unifying principle of selection were assumed at its centre, or a ‘spirit of the age’, which serves as a standard for judging the value-posing and style-creating forces in operation. Or to fall back on a hackneyed expression, culture is a value-formation.81

Simmel’s ideas regarding individuality and mass culture are also pertinent to our discussion of Broch’s ideas upon the same theme. It should be noted that some of Simmel’s writing upon this topic was published posthumously, so it is difficult to discern the extent of his direct influence upon Broch.56 Nevertheless, Simmel draws attention to the type of values held by an urban-dwelling individual in the post-industrial age, and how those values, which may be in flux, are constantly compared to those held by others. Overall, it is the idea of observing the psychological effects of city dwelling upon human existence that Broch shares with Simmel.57

Weber

The thought of Simmel’s friend Max Weber may also be considered to have exerted considerable influence upon Broch.58 Weber, a founder of modern social science, discussed epistemology and ethics, and believed, not

79 Ibid, p. 18.
unlike Nietzsche, that the modern Western world was in a state of disenchantment (‘Entzauberung’). He asserted that, in the post-industrial era, humanity struggles to deal with the effects of capitalism and technological progress, being unsure how to experience the world, and to contemplate ‘what comes next?’

Broch’s library in Vienna included Weber’s 1921 collected political works, and he both owned and made notes on an anthology of Neo-Kantian texts, which contained Weber’s essay, ‘Kritische Studien auf dem Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik’. Only a few direct references to Weber occur in Broch’s writing and correspondence, however. One such example may be found in his 1942 autobiography. Here, in discussing the rise of the National Socialists, he laments the lack of responsibility and political indifference shown by those working in the spiritual and intellectual fields, and

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57 This is an idea with which Broch engages, in his 1934 essay ‘Zeit und Zeitgeist.’ See H. Broch, ‘The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age’ in H. Broch (2003) Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch, pp. 41-64. KW9/2 177-218.
remarks that few Germans have the political passion of Max Weber.\footnote{See H. Broch (ed. Lützeler, P.M.) (1999) Psychische Selbstbiographie. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 98. Broch writes:

Hätte Deutschland mehr Männer von der politischen Leidenschaft eines Max Weber gehabt, hätte der deutsche Intellektuelle sich nicht jahrzehntlang vom politischen Geschehen ausgeschaltet, es wäre um die deutsche Demokratie besser bestellt gewesen.}

At a later stage in the same piece, he condemns ‘the Völkerbund’, or rather Western diplomacy, in the 1920s and 1930s, for its unholy fluctuation between ‘Gesinnungsethik’ (‘ethics of attitude’) and ‘Verantwortungsethik’ (‘ethics of responsibility’).\footnote{See H. Broch (1999) Psychische Selbstbiographie, p. 100 and note 28 on p. 186. Broch writes:

Der Völkerbund oder richtiger die Diplomatie der Westmächte in ihrem unheilvollen Schwanken zwischen „Gesinnungsethik“ und „Verantwortungsethik“ hat diese Gelegenheit versäumt ...}

According to Lützeler,\footnote{Ibid. Lützeler explains Weber’s use of ‘Gesinnungsethik’ and ‘Verantwortungsethik’ in Note 28 on p. 186. As I have been unable to find a direct translation in English for ‘Gesinnungsethik’, I will use the German word in the course of this discussion.} the terms ‘Gesinnungsethik’ and ‘Verantwortungsethik’ were introduced by Weber in his essay, ‘Politik als Beruf’ (‘Politics as a Vocation’). Some similarity in viewpoint may also be found between Broch’s choice of the title \textit{Die Verzauberung (The Spell)} for his novel about the impact of a stranger upon the inhabitants of a mountain village, and Weber’s use of the term ‘Entzauberung’ for describing the disenchanted state of the world.\footnote{The title \textit{Die Verzauberung} has also been translated as \textit{The Bewitchment}.} It seems that through his choice of vocabulary, Broch both alludes to Weber’s work, and indicates admiration for his ideas regarding ethics.

Weber’s work on ethics also enters into Broch’s thought regarding value. In a letter to Hans Sahl, dated February 1945, he refers to the idea of ‘Gesinnungsethik’, in which he asserts that the role of the intellectual is one of seeking truth, including freedom and justice.\footnote{See also note 21 on p. 183, and KW13/2 437-445.} Here, he makes clear his understanding of the importance for the intellectual of being able to stand outside of any particular value sphere: the true intellectual is the ‘heretic itself’, ‘the revolutionary itself’.\footnote{Ibid.} Some similarity may be seen here with Weber’s idea of value, which describes aspects of modern life, such as religion, economics, politics, aesthetics, and intellectualism, as ‘value spheres’. Each value
sphere strives for absolutism, competing with other value spheres, and causing conflict in the society. For Weber, ‘the transition from pre-modern to modern society is a differentiation of value spheres’. As Harrington observes, some similarity may be found here with Broch’s thought. He writes:

Throughout the Excursus and elsewhere, the reader is repeatedly reminded of what Broch describes, in strikingly Weberian terms, as a process of ‘disintegration’ of value-spheres, of a ‘splitting-up of the whole value-system into partial systems’, and of ‘single value-systems’ that ‘have separated from another, now run parallel to each other’, and ‘can no longer combine in the service of supreme value’, of a world, in which modern man now finds himself ‘helplessly caught in the mechanism of autonomous value systems, and can do nothing but submit himself to the particular value that has become his profession.

We have already seen that, in Broch’s view, the Middle Ages was a period in which Christian values stood at the peak of the prevailing value-system. In his discussion of the ‘Disintegration of Values’, he describes this era as an ‘ideal centre of values’. He writes:

Ist also der Intellektuelle, welcher die Wahrheit innerhalb eines dogmatischen Rahmens akzeptiert, seiner Berufung untreu geworden? gibt es nicht den katholischen, den Marxschen Intellektuellen etc? natürlich gibt es ihn: nur wird er zum katholischen oder marxistischen Theologen; er bleibt intellektuell, er bleibt “wahrheitsverantwortlich”, doch in einem eingeschränkten Wahrheitskreis. Der reine Intellektuelle ist hingegen innerhalb eines jeden Wahrheitskreises skeptisch; er ist sozusagen der “Ketzer an sich”, der “Revolutionär an sich” also selbst innerhalb der Revolution. Er bezieht stets die geistig gefährlichste Position.


The Middle Ages possessed the ideal centre of values, [...] a supreme value to which all other values were subordinate: the belief in the Christian God. Cosmogony was as dependent on that central value [...] as man himself; man with all his activities formed a part of that whole world-order, which was merely the reflected image of an ecclesiastical harmony [...] It was a world reposing on faith, a final, not causal world [...] the faith was the point of plausibility in which every line of enquiry ended. 73

Broch’s description of the Middle Ages as an ‘ideal value-centre’ corresponds to a ‘typical ideal’ in Weber’s philosophy.74 This is the high point, from which values begin to disintegrate. In Broch’s view, the move towards Protestantism represents the first step in the dissolution of the central values of the Catholic Church.75 He maintains, however, that it also has the effect of binding the individual to duty based on the Scriptures, ‘the sole extant of God’s spirit on earth’,76 rather than experience. He writes:

The most characteristically Protestant idea is the categorical imperative of duty. It is in complete opposition to Catholicism; the extraneous values of life are neither subsumed in a creed nor included in a theological canon, but are merely strictly and somewhat bleakly supervised on the authority of Scripture. 77

Broch’s association of Protestantism with the Kantian idea of ‘categorical imperative of duty’ suggests that, although the Protestant believer is freed from the restrictions of the Catholic Church, he or she is restricted to adherence to duty. The individual is bound to a set of values, which entail ‘fidelity to the Scripture’, for the Scriptures are the ‘sole extant of God’s spirit on earth’.78 His criticism of Kant’s idea of the categorical imperative as a framework for making judgement may show further influence from Weber, who expounds the relationship between the idea of work and religion, a concept going back to Luther.79 For Luther, it was the duty of the individual to

73 H. Broch (1996) The Sleepwalkers, p. 446. KW1 496-497. Broch writes:
Das Mittelalter besaß das ideale Wertzentrum, auf das es ankommt, besaß einen obersten Wert, dem alle anderen Werte untertan waren: den Glauben an den christlichen Gott. Sowohl die Kosmogonie war von diesem Zentralwert abhängig (ja noch mehr, sie konnte aus ihm scholastisch deduziert werden) als auch der Mensch selber, der Mensch mitsamt seinem ganzen Tun, bildete einen Teil jener Weltordnung, die bloß Spiegelbild einer ekklesiastischen Hierarchie war. [...] Es war ein im Glauben ruhendes, ein finales, kein kausales Weltganges [...] Der Glaube war der Plausibilitätspunkt, bei dem jede Fragekette endigte.


75 KW1 581. Broch writes, ‘Protestantismus wird zur Wurzel der Wertzersplitterung’.
carry out worldly work, which would also benefit society. As Rothe observes, for Broch, the individual tries to bring disparate conditions into a unified value system, which is a psychological model.88

Max Scheler

The thought of Max Scheler is worthy of consideration at this stage, for, according to Harrington,81 his ideas about 'love, ethics and the “material theory of values”' were of some importance to Broch. Broch owned several volumes of Scheler’s work and refers to him in his early correspondence, but makes relatively little direct reference in his essayistic writing.89 Harrington maintains that he distanced himself from Scheler’s notions, in favour of Weber.90 In my view, there are similarities between Scheler’s thought and Broch’s concept of individuality, an understanding of which will be developed in the course of the thesis.

Scheler’s ideas about love, ethics and value are set out in his 1913 phenomenological study, Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die material Wertethik (Formalism in Ethics and the Material Ethics of Values).84 Here, he discusses the nature of the human being, the ‘Being of Man’, and maintains

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that love lies at the centre of human existence. He links all human feelings to five ranks of value-experience, which range from feelings associated with the body, with need, with life and the person, to feelings connected with the divine. He asserts, however, that this fivefold order of values, which is embedded in the human order of love, is quite different from a rationally contrived order. In his view, a person, who engages freely in activity that leads towards feelings of higher value, may be acting in a pre-rationally intuitive way. He believes that each person is drawn towards knowing the world and realising the values that they derive through their experience of the world. The ethical imperative is personal, experienced as what ‘I’ ought to do, as opposed to what anyone should do. Thus, for Scheler, values are not only personal, but also a matter of virtue. His belief that values are ‘feelable’ phenomena, which are given a priori, infers that values are part of the realm of a material a priori.

To summarise and conclude this chapter, some confluence of thought may be seen between Broch and each of the Neo-Kantian thinkers discussed. There is some similarity between his commentary upon the disintegration of values, Nietzsche’s theory of decadence and Weber’s concept of competing values spheres. In common with Simmel, Broch considers society to consist of a wide range of competing value systems based on psychological values. His thought also differs to some extent from that of the thinkers under discussion. He illuminates the problem created by adherence to aesthetic values, and, rather than directing the reader to Nihilism, or to Weber’s disenchantment of the world, his value-theory points towards some form of renewal. In this respect, his thought seems to be closer to Scheler’s view that feelings of value may be a matter of virtue. The next step is to consider how Broch’s value-theory relates to his ideas regarding the individual and the mass, which is discussed in the following chapter.

91 M. Scheler, Formalism in Ethics and the Material Ethics of Values p. xiv. Scheler refers to the ‘Being of Man’ in relation to ‘biological social, ethical, metaphysical and religious dimensions’.
4. Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti

Having contemplated some philosophical influences upon Broch’s thought, our attention now turns towards his work as a theorist of the masses, and how his value-theory might relate to his ideas regarding mass formation. Through comparison of his thought with that of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti I aim to illuminate his ideas regarding why a mass might form, and why an individual might participate in the mass, and become capable of conduct that he or she might otherwise find despicable.

Hitherto, although Broch’s theory of mass hysteria has attracted the attention of a few critics writing in German, there has been relatively little discussion of this aspect of his thought in English. Of interest in German is the work of Robert Weigel, who examines the spiritual nature of the Massenwahntheorie and Wolfgang Müller-Funk, who discusses the role of anxiety in the theories of Broch and Canetti. The following works in English are of note and have proved useful to this study. Müller-Funk’s 1983 essay, ‘Fear in Culture’, a short study, which compares Broch’s theory of the masses with that of Freud and Canetti, within the overall theme of Austrian culture and the mass society; Serge Moscovici’s historical treatise of mass hysteria, which provides a comprehensive overview of mass psychology as an area of study, with some reference to Broch; and Christian Borch’s recent discussion of the politics of crowds.

The analysis provides a foundation for understanding his ideas regarding the relationship between the individual and mass society, whilst

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taking into account the already discussed Neo-Kantian influences upon Broch’s thought.

How the chosen theorists approach analysis of the masses

Broch’s posthumously published *Massenwahntheorie* comprises three main sections, each of which is developed from what he describes as ‘a new idea’. The first section deals with the notion of the ‘twilight condition’, and the second relates this state to the masses. The final section bears the title, ‘The Fight against Mass Hysteria’, with a subtitle, ‘A Psychology of Politics’. In the annotated edition, these sections are preceded by three drafts, which provide overviews of the content, written in 1939, 1941 and 1943.

In my view, the crux of Broch’s theory of the masses may be found in the very opening paragraph of his *Massenwahntheorie*. Here, he conveys both his awareness of ‘the air of madness clinging to the world events of the times’, and the importance that he attaches to his sensitivity. He asserts:

Everybody knows about the air of madness clinging to the world events of the times. Everyone knows that they are affected, endangered by the craziness, either in an active sense or as a victim, yet nobody knows quite whence it comes, or quite what it is. Everybody knows about the superior force of enveloping danger. Still, to overcome it, nobody knows where to locate it, nobody knows from which direction it comes, nobody is really able to look it in the face, nobody is able to really oppose the danger. The danger to mankind through mass orientated mental confusion is an open secret, and through this an open problem.

Thus, Broch indicates, from the outset, that the individual’s awareness of a sense of madness, and the difficulty of locating the source of that sensation in mass society, are crucial to his theory. The title of his study,

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5 The ‘twilight condition’ is discussed later in this chapter.

6 See P.M. Lützeler (1987) *Hermann Broch: A Biography*, p. 200. The titles of the three overviews are as follows:

‘Vorschlag zur Gründung eines Forschungsinstitutes für politische Psychologie und zum Studium von Massenwahnerscheinungen’ (1939) (‘Proposal for the Foundation of a Research Institute for Political Psychology and Study of the Manifestation of Mass Hysteria’). ‘Entwurf für eine Theorie massenwahnartiger Erscheinungen’ (1941) (‘Plan for a Theory of the Phenomena of Mass Hysteria’).


8 KW12 11. Broch writes:
Jedermann weiß, unter dem das Weltgeschehen dieser Zeit vor sich geht, jedermann weiß, daß er selber, sei es als aktives, sei es als Opfer, an solchem Wahnsinn mitbeteiligt ist, jedermann weiß also um die Übermacht der ihn umgebenden Gefährdung, doch niemand weiß dieselbe zu lokalisieren, niemand weiß, aus welcher Richtung sie kommt, ihn zu übermannen, niemand vermag ihr wirklich ins Angesicht zu schauen, niemand vermag der Gefährdung wirklich entgegenzutreten. Die Gefährdung des Menschen durch massenmäßig orientierte Geistesverwirrung ist ein offenes Geheimnis und eben hiedurch auch ein offenes Problem.

Massenwahntheorie, alludes to these ideas, by suggesting that mass formation is concerned with hysteria, a form of neurosis with indirect expression of emotional feelings, and disturbance of moral and intellectual faculties. It also conveys that it is possible to devise a theory of the experience. Broch’s approach may be likened to that of Simmel, for whom the idea that the individual may feel carried by the ‘mood’ of the mass, as if by an external force, is one of the most revealing, purely sociological phenomena. In common with Simmel, he attempts to analyse and depict forces, which may be perceived by the sensitive individual, for the purpose of sociology. He takes on the task of analysing that which is difficult to capture, ‘a subject which is real and non-real at once and which is extremely vague and fluid’. From this elusive force, which constitutes a mystical dimension of human experience, he tries to establish a science of mass psychology.

Particular attention is paid in the Massenwahntheorie to the problem of defining and diagnosing the phenomena of madness in a mass. Broch recognises that ‘the mere desire to fight against mass hysteria’ is insufficient to ‘bring form out of the formless’ and asserts that even though the study of the masses is not easy, mass psychology should be central to our perception of the world. In his view, the key to understanding mass psychology may be attained through observation of the individual. He writes:

The diagnosis of neurotic and psychotic attitudes is in no way easy or unequivocal in the individual, not to mention then in a human mass, which would be a completely fluctuating, vague object, because it would be on its part only the single individuals - when however is the unity of a mass constituted through a number of individuals? Which criteria are available a priori? Which relationship exists between the individual

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9 See G. Simmel (1950) ‘Fundamental problems of Sociology’, p. 35. See also KW12 67-68, where Broch asserts that ‘all post-war planning remains senseless as long as we do not succeed in mastering in a rational way the ‘irrational’ elements of human history’.

In his 1947 review of Swiss-German psychologist Paul Reiwald’s *Vom Geist der Massen* in the *American Journal of International Law*, Broch writes:

on problems concerning the mass and the principle of leadership exclusively from 'the' biological, 'the' psychological, 'the' sociological of 'the' practical point of view: only when all the various scientific branches have been brought into a close interconnection and under a methodology common to all, may one hope to attain satisfying and adequate over-all results. Therefore, the first concern is to establish a sound foundation for the new science of mass psychology, and there can be no doubt that to this end Reiwald's book offers a first and very substantial contribution. KW13/3 101-102.

Weigel draws attention to Broch’s view that the intellectual is always aware of the human state of 'twilight consciousness' and feels driven to awaken fellow individuals. See R.G. Weigel, *Zur geistigen Einheit von Hermann Brochs Werk: Massenpsychologie, Politologie, Romane*, p. 113.

and the mass? When are the phenomena of mania, as far as they can be grasped, assigned to the individual and when to the mass? All these prerequisites, necessary, by definition, fail almost entirely, and besides, one still asks about the aims of practical research on such fluctuating grounds, so the sceptical answer is not far away: the mere desire for struggle against the phenomena of mass hysteria is not enough to bring form out of the formless, and without this well defined form, and without this well defined area of work, there is also no programme of work.12

By raising questions such as, 'which criteria are available *a priori*?' and 'which relationship exists between the individual and a mass?' Broch not only draws attention to the difficulty of the task which he has set himself, but also indicates the Neo-Kantian nature of his approach.

In his view, the individual represents the smallest observable unit of the mass, and changes therein may indicate potential participation in the mass. The individual is the 'concrete centre' ('Konkretheitszentrum'), whose reflex makes it possible for the mass to be understood psychologically.13 The respective conditions of the individual and the mass are described in relation to a perceived normal, balanced state, using terms (which may be perceived as being problematic) such as 'healthy' or 'ill'. Broch asserts that there should be an emotionally healthy relationship between the individual and the mass:

The observation material for mass-psychical appearances therefore remains predominantly the individual. He or she is the concrete centre and the masspsychical can only be grasped concretely only in his or her reflex. This is particularly valid also for the here so urgent decision between healthy and sick mass constitution; a non-existent mass-soul possesses no image of normality whatsoever, from there some sort of deciding criteria could be drawn, and the problem would always be insoluble, would not grant the normal image of the individual a second, concrete illumination. For such an image of normality of spiritual health exists both for the individual in itself and in its relationship to the collective, admittedly not

12 KW12 11-12. Broch writes:

Sharply defined and definable, but sufficiently familiar, and we must proceed from this sufficiently concrete image of normality: it is the foundation of our model.

For Broch, therefore, observation of change within the individual enables information about the constitution of the mass to be gathered: the emotional or psychological state of the individual provides an indication of the condition of the collective.

In this respect, his thought is similar to that of Le Bon. The latter refers to ‘anarchic mass behaviour’, a state in which participants behave in similar fashion even though they belong to a ‘psychological’ mass that is not necessarily physically congregated in one place. For both Broch and Le Bon, a mass, or crowd may consist of many isolated individuals, who seek a sense of security by having something in common with other individuals. The mass

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96 KW12 13. Broch writes:

Das Beobachtungsmaterial für massenpsychische Erscheinungen hat demnach vornehmlich der Einzelmensche zu bleiben: er ist das Konkretheitszentrum, und nur in seinem Reflex ist das Massen Psy chische konkret zu erfassen. Im besonderen gilt dies auch für die hier so notwendige Entscheidung zwischen gesunder und kranker Massenkonstitution; eine nicht-existenten Massenseele besitzt auch keinerlei Normalitätsbild, von dem aus her irgend ein Entscheidungskriterium gewonnen werden könnte, und unlösbar für immer wäre das Problem, würde ihm das Normalitätsbild des Einzelindividuums nicht eine zweite, eine konkrete Beleuchtung gewähren. Für das Einzelindividuum sowohl an sich als auch in seinem Verhalten zum Kollektiv, existiert ein solches Normalitätsbild seelischer Gesundheit, zwar kein scharf definiertes und definierbares, wohl aber ein hinreichend bekanntes, und von diesem hinreichend konkreten Normalitätsbild muß ausgegangen werden; es ist das Fundament unseres Modells.


98 Ibid, pp. 15-16.
bears a psychological dimension, in that the individual identifies with others, who may not be physically present. However, Le Bon observes the behaviour of the whole mass, whereas Broch focuses upon the individual and tackles the question of why an individual might participate in mass behaviour. Broch’s approach in this respect is closer to that of Freud, whose work he admired, and whose influence may be found in his use of psychological terms such as ‘neurosis’, ‘psychosis’ and ‘hysteria’. However, whereas Freud approaches the study of the individual solely through psychoanalysis, (his method of interpreting and addressing perceived unconscious conflicts in the mind of a subject), Broch’s theory extends further, incorporating a variety of approaches, and even observing the dawning of a new *condition humaine*.

In contrast to Freud and Broch, Canetti asserts that it is impossible to study the masses by looking at the psychological responses of the individual. In his view, it is the collective that must be observed, to which he refers as a ‘crowd’. He likens a crowd to an inert substance that collects around certain centres, described as ‘crowd crystals’, and perceives a crowd to be animallike, in its desire to grow and engulf everything in its vicinity, and enjoy the process of destruction. He refers to crowds as being ‘open’ or ‘closed’, a natural crowd being an open crowd, there being no limits to its growth. The closed crowd, in contrast, has a boundary and renounces growth, creating a space for itself that it will fill. For Canetti, it is in the crowd’s capacity for growth that power lies: power is central to the crowd’s existence at all times. This view differs from that of Broch, for whom, as will be shown, the power of a crowd is important at certain times. Canetti’s approach to study of the mass is through physical observation of the collective, rather than the interpretative observation of the individual employed by Freud and Broch. He adopts a biological and anthropological approach, which contrasts with the psychological observations

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During his years at university, Broch was in touch with the members of Freud’s Psychoanalytic Association of Vienna. He also underwent psychoanalysis himself, consulting analyst Hedwig Schaxel for eight years until 1935, and later, in America, Paul Federn. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) *Hermann Broch: A Biography*, p. 67. According to Lützeler, Broch corresponded with Hedwig Schaxel-Hoffer during his exile in America, and met his later analyst Paul Federn at her house in Vienna.

100 See Lützeler’s editorial notes to Broch’s *Massenwahntheorie*, KW12 582.
of the other thinkers. He believes the power of the crowd to be linked to its potential for violence.

**Some observations regarding how and why a mass might form**

The chosen theorists vary in their ideas regarding why human masses might form. For Le Bon, mass formation represents ‘a fusion of individuals into a common spirit and feeling, which blurs personality differences and lowers intellectual capacities’. In his view, ‘an accidental gathering of a thousand individuals in a public place does not constitute a mass, or a crowd, from the psychological point of view’. What he finds important is a shared psychological outlook, which might be spread by means of ‘suggestion’ and subsequent ‘contagion’ of ideas. He recognises that the mass has the effect of diminishing differences in education, social class and culture. Its members acquire ‘a sort of collective mind, that makes them feel, think and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think and act if they were in a state of isolation’. ‘From the moment they form part of a crowd, both the learned man and the ignoramus are equally incapable of observation’. By joining a mass, ‘the individual acquires a sentiment of invincible power, which allows him to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would have been perforce to keep under restraint’, attributes participation in the mass to the effects of unconscious phenomena, asserting that ‘the conscious life of the mind is of small importance in comparison with its unconscious life’. He does not expand upon how the unconscious might operate, but his thought acts as a foundation for the idea of the collective unconscious, which emerges in Carl Jung’s concept of the existence of archetypes.

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22ff.
22. Ibid, p. 20. 26
The first section of Freud’s *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse (Mass Psychology and other Writings)* comprises an appraisal of Le Bon’s work.
Freud, who was influenced by Le Bon, does not differentiate between ‘masses’ and other social groups. He notes Le Bon’s observation that the individual changes upon becoming a member of a mass, and seeks the conditions that give rise to the ‘group mind’, or ‘herd instinct’, that Le Bon had not investigated. Of particular interest to this study, Freud’s theory of mass psychology, in common with that of Broch and Canetti, is based on the idea of fear, or anxiety (‘Angst’). As Müller-Funk observes, anxiety occupies a central position in Freud’s thought, being the point at which several factors coincide. Freud describes anxiety as ‘a junction, at which the most varied and most difficult questions come together’.

In Freud’s view, anxiety lies in the ‘Ich’, or concept of ‘I’, and it is susceptible to the effect of three dangers: threats from the outer world; threat from the inner life; and the demands of the paternal higher self (Über-ich), in the form of conscience. He believes anxiety to be a human experience, a permanent disposition, which he differentiates from the fear undergone by animals. Fear is a response to the expectation of danger, and a preparation for it, whereas anxiety is a ‘universal coin’ (‘allegemeine Münze’) against which ‘all emotional disturbances’ (‘alle Affektregungen’) may be ‘exchanged’ (‘eingetauscht’). Anxiety is a fear of something that remains in the unconscious.

Anxiety, in Freud’s view, lies at the seat of participation in the mass. However, he asserts individuals are moved to participation in the mass by channelling of the ‘libido’. The ‘libido’ includes not only sexual love, but also self-love, parental and infant love, friendship and love of humanity, and love of concrete objects and abstract ideas. For Freud, these sexual drives constitute part of the essence of the mass mind, and the collective consciousness of a mass is a product of the libido of its members. The individual ‘finds himself in conditions that allow him to shed the repressions of his unconscious drive impulses’. The conduct of the individual in the

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106 W. Müller-Funk, ‘Der Angst (vor) der Masse in Broch und Canetti’, p. 181.
107 S. Freud (1987) *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, p. 308. He writes:
collective expresses that unconscious. Freud later developed his theory with the consideration of opposition between the libido and the destructive or death drive (‘Todestrieb’) within the individual. This leads to the idea that the function of civilisation is to suppress the destructive drive.

For Broch, the potential for participation in mass activity is also linked to the human capacity for, and knowledge of, fear. In his view, the great thing affecting modern humanity, which is manifested in both the individual and the collective, is the existential fear of death. His thought here shows the

Einen Knotenpunkt, an dem die verschiedensten und wichtigsten Fragen zusammenlaufen: ein Rätsel, dessen Lösung eine Fülle von Licht über unser ganzes Seelenleben ergießen müßte.

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‘from the moment man opens his eyes to consciousness, until the moment he closes them to eternity’. He writes:

Because death in its unimaginable remoteness from life is nonetheless so near to life that it continuously fills the human soul with its physical presence and its metaphysical existence — because of death, the only absolute of reality and nature, another absolute must be thrown up against it by the human will, which can create the absolute of the soul and the absolute of civilisation; and this remarkable ability of the soul, perhaps the most amazing phenomenon of human existence, finds its expression in that ever-renewing act, which could simply be called the ‘act of being human’, and in this humanity, human existence is elevated to the act of value setting and value-creating.

This idea is connected to Broch’s theory of the ‘disintegration of values’, and the individual’s attempts to deal with their feelings. He asserts that death counters value. He maintains that, in the Western world, human beings strive constantly to overcome their fear of death: death represents the ultimate ‘non-value’, which may appear to be overcome, by indulging in ‘value’, which can be found in some form of culture. He writes:

Everything that we know as ‘value’ and which deserves that name aims at the nullification and overcoming of death. Death is the opposite of value, it is un-value a priori, seen in its opposition to the value of life, even when it can only be overcome by itself, when it is death that overcomes death, when death is transformed into a life-value, by linking the two infinities in a circle, in the ultimate sense of a redemption through death.

In his analysis of the individual, Broch asserts that there are two streams running through the human being: the rational and the irrational. He understands the rational as being something positive, whereas the irrational, the unknown, the future, represents that which should be feared. He regards the individual as being constantly under rational command:

The normal, healthy person is continually under the control of his rationality, and admittedly under that of a socially-bound rationality, for it becomes, as far as it does not serve the purpose of pure perception, almost without exception used for purposefully directed interaction with the next person. The bases of this socially directed rationality lie in a defining of normality, in a normative system for human relationships. They lie in culture and its value axiomatic, which may, with every higher law, act as a measure of human normality, the more it is grounded in the Absolute, or supposed Absolute.
In Broch’s view, ‘culture’ facilitates the rational regulation of the irrational needs of the human being, by channelling them through two possible responses:

Culture is the rational regulation and control of irrational needs. The scale of these needs extends from the metaphysical to that of impulsiveness, which are realised in the next person and finally in the collective. In principle, there are two paths are open for this.44

The first method of controlling irrational needs is achieved through ‘expansion of the irrational’ (‘Irrationalbereicherung’), in which the individual or group produces an ‘irrationality grant’ to satisfy their needs, and brings about some form of cultural and community transformation. Activities which produce a sense of love, religion, or of an aesthetic nature are included in this category.45 The second lies in ‘impoverishment of the rational’

42 Ibid. 43 KW12 13-14.
Broch writes:

Der normalgesunde Mensch steht weitgehend unter der Kontrolle seiner Ratio, und zwar unter der einer sozialgebundenen Ratio, denn sie wird, soweit sie nicht den Zwecken einer reinen Erkenntnis dient, nahezu ausnahmslos zum zweckgerichteten Verkehr mit dem Nebenmenschen verwendet. Die Stützpunkte dieser sozialgerichteten Ratio liegen in einem normalitätsbestimmenden, in einem normativen System für menschliche Verhaltungsweisen, sie liegen in der ‘Kultur’ und ihrer Wertaxiomatik, die mit je höherem Recht sich als Maßstab menschlicher Normalität gerieren darf, je mehr sie sich im Absoluten oder vermeintlich Absoluten begründet. KW12 13-14. 44

KW12 14.


45 KW12 14, 25.

(‘Rationalverarmung’), which renders the individual or group incapable, rational behaviour being overtaken by resort to instinct, though this is often accompanied by fear of personal madness.46 When many resort to instinct, however, the participation of the individual appears to be endorsed.47

‘Impoverishment of the irrational’ may be so great that a state of panic may erupt, fuelled by the underlying fear of the impenetrable nature of death.48 Both processes may also be undergone by a whole culture, with the effect that its influence increases or reduces accordingly. If a substantial number of individuals undergo impoverishment of the rational, it is considered by Broch to be an instance of mass hysteria or psychosis (‘Massenwahn’).49

Thus, for Broch, mass hysteria tends to break out amongst individuals, whose rationality is reduced: their psychological state renders them particularly
vulnerable when a mass forms. Cultural activities, which generate the ‘expansion of the irrational’, are therefore particularly important to counteract tendencies towards ‘impoverishment of the rational’. The social interaction arising from participation in cultural activity may also promote the formation of communities, rather than masses. He maintains that a ‘mass is not a proper community’.\(^{50}\) This is an important aspect of his theory of mass psychology, for, as Borch observes, there is no sense of community, or warmth, in Broch’s concept of a mass.\(^{51}\) The mass is composed of a number of individuals, who share certain values, but do not necessarily relate to one another. Those affected seek ‘ecstasy’, or escape from their condition, through participation in mass behaviour. They also long for symbols, a topic that will be dealt with later in this section.

A community, for Broch, ‘has a common metaphysical feeling of truth’.\(^{52}\) He asserts that whereas ‘a community is determined by its common

\[^{46}\] KW12 14. 47
\[^{47}\] KW12 13-16. 48
\[^{48}\] KW12 21. 49
\[^{49}\] KW12 14.
\[^{50}\] KW13/1 30-31. Open letter from Broch to Franz Blei, dated December 1918.
\[^{52}\] KW13/1 31-32. Open letter from Broch to Franz Blei, dated December 1918, and titled ‘Die Straße’ Broch writes:

Das Wesentliche der Gemeinschaft ist das gemeinsame metaphysische Wahrheitsgefühl und Verankerung der letzten Einsicht in einem Glauben. [...] Aber system’, ‘a mass is based solely upon irrational values’.\(^{53}\) Borch\(^{54}\) finds this aspect of his theory puzzling, on account of the ‘complete ignorance of the category of society’, there being no distinction between ‘community and society in the Massenwahntheorie’. He also questions ‘the clear-cut separation between crowd and community’.\(^{55}\) However, Broch’s differentiation of a community from a mass on the grounds of the former having a common metaphysical feeling of truth’ is significant. It seems to suggest that a community is underpinned by a value system of a very deep and lasting nature, whereas members of a mass, which is ‘based solely upon irrational values’, may actually have less in common that is lasting.\(^{56}\)
In contrast to Broch’s theory that irrational needs may be controlled through participation in mass behaviour, Canetti’s study presents a range of situations, in which human fear of physical contact is observed. He describes a variety of circumstances, in which masses have gathered, such as the ‘baiting crowd’, and the ‘feast crowd’, and classifies them into groups, according to their perceived ‘emotional content’. In each case, the subject is in the position of prey to other stronger beings, in a relationship of power and violence, emphasis being placed on physical existence. For Canetti, the fear of touching another person, or being touched, may somehow be overcome by participation in the mass. The mass offers the means by which that which is outside, and therefore threatening, may be incorporated into the massmember: participation in the mass reduces difference amongst the participants, thereby ending fear. The mass is the only situation where each member is free from the fear of contact with others. In Canetti’s view, power relationships, such as those displayed in ‘baiting’ and ‘flight’ crowds, are representative of human behaviour that has been influenced by that of animals. Other power relationships, however, such as the ‘feast’ crowd, are deemed to be specifically human. Overall, however, for Canetti, the members of a mass experience a deep-seated fear of physical touch, the cause of which, along with the desire to overcome it, remains unexplained.

Surprisingly, Canetti’s thought may be quite close to that of Broch here. Both theorists are concerned with the presence of fear within the mass: Canetti observes fear from outside of the mass, whereas Broch’s approach analyses it from within. Both thinkers are attuned to the idea that humans not only experience fear through animal instinct, but are also subject to...
deepseated knowledge of fear, anxiety. As Müller-Funk observes, their theories combine two classic discourses characteristic of Modernism: that produced by the experience of human anxiety following the ‘death of God’, as described by Nietzsche, and that arising from the physical formation of masses at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.114

**Broch’s idea of ‘twilight consciousness’, the ‘sleepwalking state’**

The reduced state of rationality, described above, is closely linked to another important aspect of Broch’s theory of mass psychology, that is, the ‘twilight condition’ (‘Dämmerzustand’) or ‘sleepwalking state’. The ‘twilight condition’ is one of dimmed awareness, in which the individual lacks free will, even though decisions appear to be made consciously. Broch describes it as:

> the nebulous twilight that embraces the human, which hardly ever leaves him, and in which his will has not been a will for a long time, but only a being driven into the current of dreams.115

He asserts that those in the ‘sleepwalking state’ are aware of their dreamlike existence, but are neither able to prove the depth of their immersion, nor discern dream landscape from reality.60 The human faculties of those affected are reduced to an ‘animalistic, often vegetative, darkly shadowed dream-state’.61

Some similarity may be found here with the thought of Le Bon, who observes a special state that is induced by the mass:

> The individual immerged for some time in a crowd in action soon finds himself – either in consequence of the magnetic influence given out by the crowd, or by some other cause of which we are ignorant – in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotised individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotiser.62

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115 KW12 110. Broch writes:

> Denn diese Mittellage ist die der ‘Traumhaftigkeit’, ist die des dämmerhaften Halbdunkels, das den Menschen umfähnt, das ihn fast niemals entläßt und in dem sein Wollen schon längst kein Wollen mehr ist, nur noch ein Dahingetriebenwerden in dem Traumesstrom. Doch weil der Traumesstrom eine echte Realität ist, eine Realität, die ein jeder – soferne es ihm gegönnt ist, sich der eigenen Traumhaftigkeit zu entringen – allezeit und allerorts (und schließlich eben auch an sich selber) zu beobachten in der Lage ist, kurzum, weil im dämmerhaft-traumhaften Dahinleben tatsächlich eine beinahe willenlose Lebensenschicht sich zeigt, ist der Geschichtstheorie der Zugang zu echter, d.h. tunlichst fiktionsloser, realitätsbezogener Wissenschaftlichkeit freigemacht.

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The special state identified by Le Bon renders the subject ‘without conscious personality, will and discernment being lost’.63 ‘All feelings and thoughts are bent in the direction determined by the hypnotiser’, whilst ‘the individualities in the crowd, who might possess a personality sufficiently strong to resist suggestion (by a leader), are too few in number to struggle against the current.64

However, Broch maintains that the state of reduced consciousness is not limited to instances of mass hysteria, but is fairly widespread: it tends to emerge strongly in an urban mass, though it may also affect an individual.65

Thus, his concept of the twilight state extends beyond that observed by Le Bon, in that its manifestation is not limited to the ‘crowd in action’.66 The ‘twilight state’ of mind may be likened to Simmel’s observation that imitation of other people, ‘one of the lower intellectual functions’, is brought about through the ‘increase in nervous life’ in the urban metropolis. For Simmel,68 the mass is an exceptional state that ‘arouses the darkest and most primitive instincts of the individual, which are ordinarily under control’.

60 KW12 111. 61
KW12 112.


64 Ibid. 65 KW12 156.


The idea of the twilight condition as such does not feature in Canetti’s theory of the masses, though there are references to individuals being in a dream state, which seem to acknowledge the significance of such a condition to our understanding of the human condition. He writes:
A madman, helpless, outcast and despised, who drags out some twilight existence in some asylum, may, through the insights he procures us, prove more important than Hitler or Napoleon, illuminating for mankind its curse and masters.69

In setting out his ideas concerning the ‘Dämmerzustand’, Broch finds it to be a ‘spiritual condition’, of which mass formation is a product.70 He acknowledges that philosophers of the late nineteenth century, such as Schopenhauer, Hartmann and Bergson prepared the way for its study.71 This is of interest, for overall, little reference is made to other thinkers in the Massenwahntheorie. He also recognises that philosophers and psychologists of his own era, especially Freud, had taken the next step in investigating the phenomena, by researching concepts such as the unconscious (‘Unbewußten’), and the subconscious (‘Unterbewußten’) respectively. He maintains, however, that neither the ‘unconscious’ nor the ‘subconscious’ constitutes an appropriate description of the ‘twilight condition’. Although the ‘twilight condition’ partly belongs to the realm of the ‘unconscious’, operating in the form of animal instinct and irrational drives, it is also related to rational capabilities (‘Vermögen’) and its specific limitations, or boundaries (‘Begrenzungen’).72 Broch therefore differentiates his ideas from those of Freud and recognises ‘twilight consciousness’ as being a significant aspect of human existence, which had remained undetected hitherto.73 He attaches importance not only to his own recognition of the ‘Dämmerzustand’, but also to the discovery of the various states of consciousness, through scientific investigation, as being benchmarks of progress in knowledge about the human being: he even calls for a theology of the condition.74

70 KW12 70-71. 71 KW12 70-71. 72 KW12 71.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.

The ‘sleepwalking state’, which may be regarded as a state of reduced state of consciousness, is depicted elsewhere in Broch’s literary work. It is central to the trilogy, _The Sleepwalkers_, in which the characters seem to respond to their situations with little conscious thought, as though being carried along by the current of their respective time. In
The role of the leader

The ideas of the respective thinkers regarding the relationship between a leader and a mass should also be considered. As suggested above, Le Bon believes the leader to be of great importance, and speaks of the ‘lasting effect of great leaders’.

He acknowledges that ‘in the case of human crowds, the chief is often nothing more than a ringleader or agitator, but as such he plays a considerable part’. In Le Bon’s view, a leader is able to guide those who are in a hypnotised state. ‘The leader has most often started as one of the led. He has himself been hypnotised by the idea, whose apostle he has since become’. For Le Bon, the leader therefore plays a significant role in establishing the identity of the mass.

The arousing of faith — whether religious, political, or social, whether faith in a work, in a person, or an idea — has always been the function of the great leaders of crowds. [...] In every social sphere, from the highest to the lowest, as soon as a man ceases to be isolated he speedily falls under the influence of a leader.

In common with Le Bon, Freud considers the leader of a mass to be important, particularly regarding religious belief. His theory is concerned with the relationship between the leader and the mass in terms of the libido. He observes the action of the leader, and its subsequent effect, in the mass, but does not seem to take into account the various contexts, which bring about the formation of that mass. In his view, the presence of a leader is essential for the mass to form.

In Canetti’s theory of the masses, however, the role of leader seems to be unimportant. Throughout his survey of a wide range of different types of human gatherings, he consistently disregards any need for a leader to emerge in the formation of a mass. He believes the mass to be a neutral phenomenon, which comes close to ‘a state of absolute equality’.

It is of fundamental importance, and one might even define a crowd as a state of absolute equality. A head is a head, an arm is an arm, and differences between my view, it also forms the foundation for the interaction of the characters in his late work, The Guiltless. Here, all of the chosen figures are thoroughly ‘apolitical’, and any political ideas they might have are ‘vague and nebulous’. The condition is linked to his theory of disintegration of values, and, as will be shown, contributes to the depiction of mass society in the Virgil novel.
For Canetti, should a leader emerge, it is only as an effect of the overall mass. For example, the conductor of an orchestra might be perceived as the leader of the mass gathered within the auditorium, in that for the duration of the performance, the conductor rules that world. For Canetti does cite examples of dictators (‘Machthaber’) holding power over their respective masses, as a slave-master holds power over slaves. However, as MüllerFunk points out, the role of the ‘Machthaber’ in Canetti’s theory is not that of a leader. Canetti’s study is based on a biological basis, in which there is no real difference between human and animal: the dictator rises to a dominant position in response to the perceived threat from outside. The dictator can only assert themselves through violence, and bring about compliance through force.

Broch differs here from each of the other theorists, by asserting that a leader may be required by a mass at certain times. Whilst this may appear to be a position of compromise, his view is linked to his theory of value. He asserts that a leader may be sought by a mass which has formed by human beings who have experienced the loss of their established values. Such groups tend to seek out substitute communities, and the irrational values that accompany the feeling of being connected with a mass. They may also seek a leader, who will take on all the rational functioning of their group, and guide them out of their predicament, by becoming an ‘exponent of its value system’ and ‘bearer of the system’s dynamic’. At an individual level, a leader, who is able to provide security (‘Sicherheit’) and super-satisfaction
('Superbefriedigung') is sought by those who find themselves in a state of panic.84

Two different types of leader are distinguished in the Massenwahntheorie, the first being the 'religious bringer of salvation' or 'founder of religion' ('der religiöse Heilsbringer' or 'Religionsgründer'), and

the second being 'an earthly victor' ('der irdische Sieger'). The two leaders operate by means of religious ecstasy, and the victor's delusions of grandeur, respectively.116 For Broch, the leader is the exponent of a valuesystem and the carrier of the dynamic of that system. The leader appears to be the symbol of the system, their rational traits and deeds being of secondary importance.86

The differing phases of the life of the mass

Broch also differs from the other theorists in that he observes stages of development within the existence of a mass. Le Bon observes different types of mass, such as the 'electoral crowd', and 'parliamentary assembly', but does not describe development within these gatherings. Freud does not acknowledge that cultures and historical epochs may differ with regard to the masses. He restricts his description of different types of mass to organisations such as the army and the church, systems, in which hierarchy is easily observed, but there is no development of these masses, in the sense depicted by Broch.

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82 KW12 79. 83 KW12 81. 84 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
86 For Broch, the 'demonic demagogue' capitalises upon the fact that the individual tends to search outside of him or herself for the source of anxiety, and to hold external persons responsible. See C. Borch (2008) 'Modern Mass Aberration: Hermann Broch and the Problem of Irrationality', p. 75. KW12 301.
Although Canetti describes many different types of mass, he does not record the development of a mass as such.  He observes four main attributes: a desire for growth, density and direction, and the facility to create equality. He asserts that the most important occurrence within a crowd is the discharge, without which the crowd does not exist. At the moment of discharge, he maintains, all those who belong to the crowd feel that they are equal, and therefore perceive themselves to share in the power. Linked to this, is his observation of the destructiveness of crowds, prior to discharge, and the significance of fire as a factor, which ensures the continuation of a crowd. He asserts that a crowd, or mass, will behave destructively in the presence of fire, but as soon as the fire has died out, the mass behaviour ends. For Canetti, the individual within a crowd feels that he is transcending the limits of his own person, feeling that all boundaries are removed, so that a sense of freedom is achieved.

Broch’s view that a mass undergoes evolution is linked to his theory of value, and contributes to his idea that mass formation is important at certain times. He maintains that a mass may pass through four distinct stages of development, which may be recognised as psychic cycles in history. The first stage is that in which one central value system prevails, forming the basis for culture and understanding reality. Such systems tend to ‘assume a closed form’, however, and are therefore ‘bound to rely more and more on deductive values’, so that they ‘depart increasingly from reality’. The values held within the first stage therefore tend to change over time, though the change is not necessarily apparent, with the result that the system’s theology becomes ‘hypertrophied’, though it is still generally believed to correspond to reality. The third stage is reached when pretence of there being any correspondence between the hypertrophied values and reality is no longer possible, and the system becomes destabilised. The final stage witnesses the collapse of the centripetal system, and the emergence of a struggle for power of various subsystems, which have hitherto been held in check by the central system.

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118 Ibid, pp. 16-17.
this point, the panicked individual, or mass, attempts to restore harmony, by reinstating a central value system.96

Broch illustrates his theory with the example of the development in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the belief in the existence of witches, and the subsequent emergence of hysteria.97 He regards the discovery of witches as being indicative of the hypertrophy of the closed theological value system of the western world at the time. The witch became a figure of fear, for it stood outside the prevailing value system. He observes that, in Europe, the fear of witches overlapped with the Reformation and the Renaissance,

90 Ibid, p. 20.
91 Müller-Funk likens Broch’s thought to that of Spengler, and suggests that in at least two versions of his theory, he constructs a philosophy of history that resembles Spengler’s cycles. See W. Müller-Funk (2003) ‘Fear in Culture’, p. 100.

92 KW12 54.
93 KW12 81-82.
94 KW12 54.
95 KW12 82-83.
96 KW12 55.
97 KW12 43-66, here, 54-55. (‘Plan for a Theory of the Phenomena of Mass Hysteria’. 1941). and challenged the value system in a development that reached its high point with the scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century.119 He asserts that, once shaken, a central value system must be confronted and reconsidered. Resolution of the central system, however, sets all its subsystems free, and for Broch, the consequence of the developments in Europe was the setting in of a psychotic state, that of ‘Zerrissenheitswahn’, or ‘disintegration hysteria’, which might be seen to correlate to the emergence of mass movements in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century.120

Individuals affected by ‘Zerrissenheitswahn’ feel insecure to the point of hysteria, for they have allegiance to several value systems, including those of the state, their profession, and religious community.121 They form a mass, which might be guided towards ‘expansion of the irrational’ through the founder

120 KW12 55.
121 Ibid.
of a religion, for example, or subjected to ‘impoverishment of the irrational’, through the work of a demagogue, or dictator. Broch believes that the mass may be guided through diffuse autogenic powers, which come to light when a mass forms, especially when the sense of panic is high. At this stage, the mass is particularly susceptible to the guiding power of the leader.122

Broch not only observes the evolution of a mass, but also considers how it might be managed. Here, existential anxiety underpins his idea for establishing a mass society. He asserts that all institutions seek to enslave, and proposes the idea of political conversion of a mass to a state of ‘Total Democracy’,123 based upon extensive human rights.124 His concept of Total Democracy adopts a position of anti-enslavement and especially refutes capital punishment. Total Democracy differs from previous interpretations of democracy in that it requires application of regulative principles to prevent outbreak of mass hysteria and tendency towards totalitarianism, and to enable ‘the individual to be extricated from the mass’.125 In accordance with Broch’s theory that ‘expansion of the irrational’ fosters some form of cultural and community transformation, there is a religious dimension to Total Democracy, in that it demands a form of religious conversion.126

Conversion to Total Democracy would be achieved by subjecting the mass society to a four-stage process that gradually transforms an open value system into one of a closed and less rational nature.106 The concept is founded upon the idea of respect for the human individual and finds no grounds for legitimising the death penalty. In practical terms, it would be achieved through

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122 KW12 57.
123 KW12 93-96.
124 KW12 476-477. See also 466-468 and 536ff.
125 KW12 86.
legislation for human rights, based upon Broch’s idea of the ‘earthly absolute’, which condemns human enslavement above all.127 As Arendt128 observes:

Broch’s ultimate faith was in the earthly absolute. He was consoled by the insight that something absolute on earth can be found and demonstrated, and that even the political realm, that is, the inherently anarchic conglomeration of human beings in the conditions of life on earth - contains a limiting absolute.

Thus Broch not only analyses the individual psyche for indications of the problems of mass society, but also proposes that it might be addressed through the same means. It is of interest that he includes the idea of ‘virtue’ in the final section of the Massenwahntheorie.109 He asserts that within an ethical organisation, virtue can be ‘worshipped’ and that this can operate as a regulative principle, and take effect in relations between people. Whilst there is no direct reference to Scheler, some similarity in outlook between the two thinkers may be noted here.129

Broch’s theory of mass psychology and the role of symbols

Not to be overlooked in our analysis of Broch’s theory of mass psychology is the role of symbols. Whilst symbols do not play a significant role in the mass-theories of Le Bon, Canetti or Freud, I believe that they form an important part of Broch’s thought, in that they link his ideas concerning the individual, the mass and his theory of value.130

Broch finds the use of symbols to be an essential aspect of human life, and discusses the topic in several of his theoretical works, including the

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127 KW12 472-3. For Broch, the concentration camp constitutes the final stage in a tendency towards enslavement, which has grown since the Enlightenment period. In such camps, he maintains, the ‘I’-consciousness is removed from the human being, who becomes a corpse, a thing. See KW12 485.
109 See, for example, KW12 368-71. Broch writes:

Ein ethischer Verein kann zur Not Tugenden “verehren”, indes innerhalb eines lebendigen Gemeinwesens können sie bloß “geübt” werden, und zwar derart, daß sie als regulative Prinzipien eingesetzt werden und als solche in der Beziehung zwischen Mensch und Mensch wirken. KW12 367.
129 As we saw in Chapter 3, Scheler believes that each person is drawn towards knowing the world through experience of the world. In his view, a person who engages freely in activity that generates feelings of higher value, values may become a matter of virtue.
130 Symbolism plays a significant role in Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, but does not feature in his mass psychology.
Massenwahntheorie.\textsuperscript{131} His interest in symbols is closely connected to his idea that the self, or ‘Ich’, is constantly striving to overcome the fear of physical death. In the Massenwahntheorie, he recognises that the individual is unable to integrate everything into the ‘Ich’, and asserts that this aspect of human existence gives rise to the use of symbols as a means of dealing with fear and culture. He maintains that alongside the process of ego expansion or reduction, discussed earlier, a basic system of symbols develops from aspects of the world that are not incorporated into the ‘Ich’ (‘Ich-fremden Weltbestandteile’). In his view, anything which is not assimilated into the ‘Ich’ may become a symbol of physical anxiety, of deathly loneliness, of death itself. Anything can become a symbol, and language particularly is composed of symbols that reflect, or have reflected, human consciousness. He writes:

All aspects of the world, which have not been incorporated into the ‘Ich, or cannot be incorporated into the ‘Ich’, take effect as ‘anxiety reminders’, as symbols of metaphysical anxiety, as symbols of the loneliness of death, as symbols of death itself. They are foreign to the ‘Ich’, and everything ‘foreign’ becomes in such a way an anxiety-symbol, that is they become the object of the deepest metaphysical aversion, the symbolic object for hatred of death.\textsuperscript{132}

Thus a symbol may represent the anxiety by which it has been generated.

Each symbol is ordered, according to its relative value within a symbol-system. The aim of the system is for the individual to overcome metaphysical angst, and achieve the state of ‘ecstasy’, in which they feel that symbolically, they are a reflection of the divine. The individual, who has expanded the ‘Ich’ to incorporate the whole world, appears to have overcome death. However, there are stages of ecstasy, which are ordered according to the intensity of feeling.\textsuperscript{114}

Whatever is before you in transactions of value, is a nearing, an early symbolic attempt at the final overcoming of death in the religious realm, and within this is also contained a specific colouring of experience. The intensity of feeling is experienced with the ecstasy of religious insight, as a final release from anxiety running through each person. In addition, the smallest experience of value, and that intensity may be recognised as that of ecstasy, even that which is weakened and often depraved, may be recognised as half-ecstasy, as quarter-ecstasy, as pseudoecstasy. But then, on top of that, the symbol of full ecstasy enters into all of humanity’s value-attitudes and lends its specific colour, all the way down to that of intoxication.\textsuperscript{115}


\textsuperscript{132} KW12 17-18.

Alle Weltbestandteile, welche vom Ich nicht einverleibt sind oder nicht einverleibt werden können, wirken als Angstmahnungen, als Symbole der metaphysischen
Thus it may be seen that for Broch, human existence is immersed in symbolism, to the extent that ‘life, speech, communication, cognition, whatever it is that defines man is carried out in symbols and symbolizations’.\footnote{Ibid.} In his view, ‘all cognition is carried out in the setting up of models consisting of (cognitive) symbols, combinations of symbols, aggregates of symbols, systems of symbols’.\footnote{KW12 231.} New combinations of symbols are never completely detached from previous models, however, for in any such system, original symbols (‘Ur-Symbole’) lie within ‘higher

Angst, als Symbole der Todeseinsamkeit, als Symbole des Todes schlechthin. Sie sind Ich-fremd, und alles ‘Fremde’ wird solcherart zum Angst-Symbol, m.a.W wird zum Gegenstand der tiefsten metaphysischen Abneigung, zum symbolischen Objekt für Todes-Haß. \footnote{KW12 18.}


symbols’.\footnote{KW12 18.} He believes that symbols lie beyond conscious rational thought, in a realm, of which the individual may be aware, but is generally unable to access; on the brink of reality and our dream world, which might be understood as the mystical realm.\footnote{KW12 18.} Symbols therefore lie close to the ‘twilight consciousness’, an idea that is indicated in the \textit{Massenwahntheorie}:

Symbol holds [...] an odd middle ground between concrete visibility and abstract visibility, between the earthly and the unearthly because it originates by earthly visible-tactile concrete means (language, the pictorial, etc) and nevertheless in no way ‘overlaps’ with that which is symbolised (the named, the represented), but instead simply ‘means’ (‘meint’), ‘meaning’ the system of cognition and the system of overcoming and while bringing them within itself to ‘expression’.

The idea, expressed above, that symbols might permit access to the
‘odd middle ground […] between the earthly and unearthly’, explains why the leader, who ‘appears to be a symbol of the system’, which has given rise to the mass, is able to control the mass. The leader, as symbolic bearer of all the values of the system that they represent, appears to have access to the realm, which members of the system’s mass find impenetrable, and consequently, the leader is able to make a deep impression upon the mass. Over time, Broch observes, symbols tend to lose their original meaning. As this occurs, affected symbols are transferred to new contexts.


Reality is for Hofmannsthal the symbolic come to life. Yet the symbol emerges from the convergence of life and dream, and at the level of the symbol all poetic knowledge of world reality is kindled; and the problem of reality is constantly rekindled and is the constant enticement to poetry. If man did not possess the dream induced by reality, he would confront the phenomena of reality ‘speechless like an animal: but because he does possess it and, with it, the symbolic range of language, language itself becomes a second reality. In language, external reality is timelessly stored (indeed, preserved in ‘form’). yet linguistic reality is once again incorporated into dream, this time by the language-induced, poeticising dream, is once again symbolised, again to be stored (in ‘content’) at the next level, so that a word truly derived from language – ‘and he who says ‘evening’ says much’ – achieves a poetic value beyond time.

See KW9/1 210-211. 120 KW12 221.


121 KW12 81.

their meaning having been changed, or conventionalised. In accordance with his theory of disintegration of values, as the historical process moves towards the abstract, some symbols are left behind:

Even symbols that stem from identifiable contexts of experience can become setpieces in abstract aesthetic and cognitive models whose expressive value is irreducible to the expressive value of individual symbols, what Broch calls ‘Realitätsvokabeln:’ the ‘vocabulary’ of available experience. 123

As values change, and familiar correspondence between value and symbol can no longer be found, the ‘Ich’, or self, experiences a sense of
insecurity, and may enter a state of panic. The yearning for symbols leads the panicked individual to the idea of escape, fleeing to a previous less fearful era, a golden age, or ‘the good old days’. In the escape to the past, refuge is sought in symbols associated with security and tradition, such as the Christian church and the cross, and family emblems. However, this retreat, Broch observes, is peripheral, because it only gives a superficial impression of satisfaction, and leaves the panicked individual to seek further satisfaction: the underlying anxiety is not alleviated by the traditional symbols. The individual within the mass feels threatened by panic, and seeks ‘Super-satisfaction’ (‘Superbefriedigung’), which counters the sense of fear, but actually conveys only the sensation of ecstasy rather than true ecstasy.

We should note here that the process of ‘looking back’ is indicative, for Broch, of a new condition humaine.

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122 See KW10/2, ‘Über syntaktische und kognitive Einheiten’. Also KW10/2, ‘Gedanken zum Problem der Erkenntnis in der Musik’. KW9/2, ‘Das Böse im Wertsystem der Kunst’. It should be noted that Broch’s symbol theory changed over time. His essays from the 1930s show the function of the symbol to be that of representing totality. It is the task of the artist, particularly the poet, to represent totality through artistic means.

During the 1940s, Broch’s work acknowledges the impossibility of achieving knowledge of totality, whilst communicating that totality simultaneously. He focuses on epistemology, aiming to understand the relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘non-I’. The symbol no longer functions as a means of representing totality, but as part of the cognitive process of entering the ‘non-I’.


124 KW12 21.
Broch writes:

Wo Panik ist, gibt es auch Fluchtgedanken. Und neben der sehr deutlichen Flucht vor der Ratio beschäftigt sich die seelische Labilität des panikisierten Menschen mit noch vielen anderen Fluchtdzielen, nicht zuletzt mit dem der Regression, d.h. mit dem der Rückkehr in einen früheren, noch niht angstbesetzten Zustand, kurzum in “die gute alte Zeit”.

125 KW12 22.

Der panikisierte Mensch braucht eine triebmäßige “Super-Befriedigung,” eine “Zusatz-Befriedigung”, m.a.W. eine zusätzliche Angst-Übertäubung, und mit dieser Tatsache muß jedes psychologische Begreifen historischer Abläufe ein für allemal

Summary and conclusion of chapter

To summarise this section, it has been shown that Broch approaches his theory of the masses by focusing upon psyche of the individual as an indicator of the psychological state of the mass. The psychological approach
of his theory shares some similarities with the thought of Le Bon and Freud, but largely contrasts with that of Canetti, whose theory of the masses takes the form of an anthropological study, describing a variety of situations in which masses have gathered. Whereas Freud and Broch focus upon the psychological symptoms, which tend to affect the individual who participates in mass behaviour, Canetti observes the physical formation of the mass. Broch’s study may be regarded as being Neo-Kantian, in that he adopts a phenomenological approach, and introduces the idea of value to his theory of mass psychology. He aims, as Borch observes, to prevent totalitarian mass aberrations.127

The concept of fear plays a significant role in the formation of a mass, for Freud, Canetti and Broch. For Canetti, members of a mass seek to overcome their fear of physical touch, finding power in mass participation. Freud asserts that a mass forms in response to the need for its members ‘to shed the repressions of unconscious drive impulses’.128 Broch, however, asserts that the individual participates in culture as a means of overcoming irrational needs, and the fear of death. The individual strives to achieve a balance between the two possible responses of expansion and impoverishment of the irrational. Excessive participation in mass activity is an indication that an individual is unable to achieve a balance between the two drives. Whilst both Broch and Freud are concerned with the psyche of the individual, Broch’s view differs from that of Freud. Whereas the latter believes that participation in culture is inspired by the drive towards death, Broch maintains that humanity participates in culture in order to overcome the fear of death. Thus, even though he admired and was influenced by

rechnen, besonders dann, wenn er von einer Politik ausgeübt wird, welche den Ausbruch einer Massenpanik zu verhüten wünscht'.


Freud, he developed a theory of mass psychology which goes beyond that of Freud.
A distinctive feature of Broch’s theory is the ‘twilight condition’, or reduced state of consciousness, which he observes amongst mass participants, especially in the metropolis. This aspect of his theory seems to develop Le Bon’s observation of the existence of ‘a special state’ in the mass. In Broch’s view, individuals affected by ‘rationality impoverishment’ succumb to twilight consciousness, a state in which they are susceptible to the suggestions of a leader. A leader is therefore only required at certain stages in mass formation. He also differs from the other theorists discussed, in his belief that mass society passes through four-phase cycles of development: that symbols play a significant part in the relationship between the individual and the mass; and his development of his theory of Total Democracy and the Earthly Absolute counteract enslavement. Each of these aspects of Broch’s theory of mass psychology is closely connected to his theory of value disintegration and fragmentation of society in modernity. They also contribute to the emergence of the new human condition observed by Broch, which has been termed ‘negative universalism’. We will discuss the latter after giving further consideration to Broch’s theoretical engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality.

5. Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality

Having established the importance that Broch attaches to analysis of the individual in his theory of mass psychology, I now wish to consider his ideas about the individual and individuality, (as discussed in his essayistic writing), in greater depth. This aspect of Broch’s thought as such has not attracted much attention from other critics, especially in English, though it does arise indirectly in criticism of a general nature. The idea of the individual enters into Grabowsky-Hotamanidis’ studies of the mystical nature of Broch’s

134 A number of critics have documented Broch’s interest in Christianity as being the source of the prevailing value system in medieval times. See, for example H. Arendt (1955) Men in Dark Times, pp. 111-151, here p. 111ff. See also Steinberg’s ‘Translator’s Introduction’ to Broch’s Hofmannsthals essay, in H. Broch (1984) Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his Time: The European Imagination 1860-1920, pp. 1-29, here, p. 13.
thought, and his association of the individual with the idea of value has been identified by Kahler and Müller-Funk.\textsuperscript{135} Halsall’s research into the idea of autonomy in Broch’s work, mentioned earlier, is also relevant here. The question of what constitutes an individual has concerned philosophers since the time of the ancients and remains under debate today. In the current English speaking domain, the extensive work carried out by Charles Taylor and Anthony Giddens on the making of identity, and that of Richard Sorabji, on the idea of self, are an indication of the importance that is attached to the individual nature of a human being in the modern world.\textsuperscript{136} These thinkers have adopted a range of approaches to the question of the individual. Taylor, for example, attaches importance to the various types of personae that have been held in the course of Western history, whereas Sorabji examines the idea of self from antiquity to the modern age and considers what sort of self might exist in the universe.\textsuperscript{137} For Giddens,\textsuperscript{138} the self, in modernity, has become a ‘reflexive project’, sustained through a reversible narrative of self-identity.

The question of individuality is a particular concern within German philosophy. Amongst those writing in German, the ideas of present-day philosophers Volker Gerhardt, who speaks of a ‘principle of individuality’; Christoph Riedel, who discusses the relationship between the subject and individual in the history of philosophy; and Broch’s contemporary Heinz Heimsoeth are of especial interest.\textsuperscript{139} Due to the breadth of the field, this


section deals only with developments that are pertinent to Broch’s ideas concerning the individual, individuality, and mass culture.

Some consideration should be given to the terminology in use here: what is meant by the ‘individual’, and how does it differ from ‘individuality’? As a general starting point, the term ‘individuality’ might be defined as the means by which one human being may be differentiated from others. It indicates that certain distinctive qualities show how that person differs from others, to the extent of being unique. However, individuality is not simply concerned with the single physical person. As will be shown, ideas about individuality are linked to the nature of human being, bound up with religious beliefs about human mortality, the body and the spirit, as well as relationships to others and the world.

**Concept of individuality in Ancient Times**

As indicated above, the question of how the individual and individuality might be defined is a rather complex topic, but in order to illuminate Broch’s ideas upon this theme, I wish to consider his theoretical work within the broad historical development of thought in this area. His thought regarding the individual engages with ideas ranging from the Homeric world, as may be seen in ‘The Style of the Mythical Age’, to the post-industrial age, which is discussed in the *Massenwahntheorie*.140 With this in mind, my exploration of his ideas begins by considering the emergence of self-awareness in ancient philosophy.

It is impossible to know when the initial move towards the birth of the subject, or self, was made, that is, when human beings became able to view themselves as though from outside.141 We can only interpret, rather than fully comprehend the ideas of the ancients, for many traces of early thought are only available in fragmented form. It is known that there was some discussion amongst the ancients about the existence of the human soul, but there does

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not seem to have been a coherent concept of the individual soul. According to Sorabji, although many of the ancient thinkers showed interest in the individual person and gave accounts of some form of ‘self’, the variety of ideas was too great for there to be a consensus of opinion upon this matter. He maintains that, in ancient philosophy, the self was seldom identical with the soul and that the form of self varied from one thinker to another. Nevertheless, a general awakening of subjective consciousness may be found in Greek mythology, especially the Homeric epics. (In order to retain the focus upon Broch, I will limit my discussion of ancient ideas here largely to the thought of Plato and Aristotle).

An overall awareness of the idea of self may also be seen in Latin, which used inflected verb forms to indicate the person to whom reference was being made. The language indicates that the idea of a person as subject was emerging, but was not yet separate. The idea that each human being is not entirely separate from an object may be seen in the thought of Plato. He believed that the relationship between two people might be developed through discussion, and his dialogues suggest that something of the object may move towards the onlooker, bringing the two into a relationship. For example, in Phaedrus, which discusses how love between two people may range from sexual love (eros) to that of mutual intellectual love at the highest level, Plato

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142 See H. Lorenz, ‘Ancient Theories of Soul’, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (ed. Zalta, E.N.) (Summer 2009 Edition), [Online]. According to Lorenz, by the end of the fifth century B.C., the time of Socrates’ death, the soul was generally considered to be the subject of emotional states; responsible for planning and practical thinking; and the bearer of virtues such as courage and justice. Thereon, a broad conception of the soul developed, according to which the soul was not only responsible for mental or psychological functions like thought, perception and desire, and the bearer of moral qualities, but also accounted for all the vital functions that any living organism performs.

143 R. Sorabji, Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death, p. 32.

144 Ibid, p. 34. Sorabji writes:

Sometimes it (the self) is connected with only one aspect of soul, such as its reason, or will, or a part of soul to be distinguished from the shade, or ghost. [...] Sometimes the self is the body, or includes the body along with the whole person.

145 C. Riedel, Subjekt und Individuum, p. 12.
indicates that a sense of truth might be established through the interaction and critical assessment of thinking and responding partners.\textsuperscript{146}

These general indications of an emerging sense of self-consciousness form a basis for considering Broch’s thought. He engaged with the work of a number of the ancient thinkers, and interest in myth is sustained throughout his oeuvre.\textsuperscript{147} In his view, humanity’s primal experience of the sense of having knowledge of the soul is preserved in myth. Myth, he maintains, has the capacity to portray the interconnectedness of the world’s content: it is a means of representing the world’s structure and therefore ‘its very essence’.\textsuperscript{148} Traces of the idea that something of the object may move towards the onlooker may be found in his concept of the relationship between the leader and members of the mass.\textsuperscript{16} As we have seen, for Broch, individual members of the mass may identify with particular qualities displayed by the leader, who is then able to guide their behaviour.\textsuperscript{149} The responsibility for taking appropriate action is then placed upon the leader. It should be noted that the idea of moral choice, or freedom of the individual, did not enter into the discussion of Plato and Aristotle. Both thinkers were of the opinion that each person should simply make decisions appropriate to their circumstances.

It is also of interest that some of the ancient thinkers attempted to categorise that which lay beyond the human being, and tried to determine the smallest possible unit of being, or matter. An early example of this stream of

\textsuperscript{146} Plato (trans., intro. Rowe, C.) (2005) \textit{Phaedrus}. London: Penguin. See also Plato (trans. and intro. Lee, D.) (1977) \textit{Timaeus}. Harmondsworth: Penguin. The idea that some form of radiation moves between subject and object gradually dwindled, and had largely disappeared by medieval times, although its vestiges may still be detected, for example, in the work of Honoré de Balzac and Michel Tournier.


\textsuperscript{149} KW12 81.
thought may be found in the work of the Greek philosopher Democritus (460-370 BC), who referred to the existence of tiny, barely perceptible ‘elements’, which he regarded as ‘the origin of the whole’, a concept that was later translated by Cicero as ‘individual’. A development of great importance was Aristotle’s ‘principle of individuation’, which sought to determine any kind of thing, either singly or in multiple examples. Aristotle (384-322 BC) believed the individual to be something real in itself, which could be differentiated from similar things by number. (In his view, similar things share a unity of nature, or species, termed ‘specific unity’, which Aristotle believed to be derived from Form.) He defined the individual (and the numerical ‘one’) as that ‘which is expressed from no sub layer, because it itself is derived from a definite form, and the definitive material’, a concrete single being that is constituted through a certain form and the final material. (This definition was later to generate much discussion with regard to the substance from which the individual being was derived, that is, whether it was composed from form or matter.)

Aristotle’s principle of individuation is pertinent to our discussion of Broch’s thought. We have already seen that, for Broch, the individual is representative of the state of the mass, whilst simultaneously being in possession of particular qualities. How the individual might be differentiated, however, is as yet unclear. According to the Aristotelian point of view, the individual within the mass might be understood to be ‘a concrete single being that is constituted through a certain form and the final material’. That is to say, even though a number of human beings may share a common nature, or ‘specific unity’, the individual may be uniquely differentiated in some way by

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153 Ibid.
means of his or her composition.\textsuperscript{154} Quite how Broch’s concept of the individual might be distinguished, we have yet to uncover.

**Concept of individuality and the Advent of Christianity**

In considering Broch’s ideas regarding individuality, it is important to note his engagement with the work of Christian thinkers, for ideas about the individual began to change, as Christianity became established, and marked a departure from the thought of the ancients. Whereas Plato and Aristotle were of the belief that each person must make the right decision for their circumstances, Christian teaching introduced the question of moral choice and the idea that human beings might commit evil deeds. The doctrine of St. Augustine (354-430) was especially influential, in developing the idea of original sin. According to Christian belief each person aimed to live their earthly life in a Christ-like way, and viewed their soul as being imperfect in comparison to the divine. Their being, or soul, was therefore lacking in some way that they must rectify as far as possible during the course of their lifetime. The relationship between the human being and God was now of a temporal nature, for perfect existence was believed to be achieved through the resurrection of the soul after death.\textsuperscript{155} The individual was burdened with the need to make choices that were appropriate to ensure their place in the Afterlife, and the soul was the realm in which individuality could be played out.

This idea of individuality, which was reinforced and spread by the Church Fathers in a battle against the views of the ancients, is an area of thought with which Broch engaged.\textsuperscript{156} In October 1934, he described himself as being ‘engrossed in the writings of the Church Fathers’.\textsuperscript{157} His library contained works by a number of these thinkers, including St. Augustine,\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, p.

\textsuperscript{157} KW13/1 297. Letter from Broch to Daisy Brody, dated 16 October 1934.  

Dionysius Areopagite, Hieronymous, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom and Boethius.\textsuperscript{158} As Grabowsky-Hotamanidis observes, he showed particular interest in the thought of the Platonist and early Christian thinker Origen (184/5-253/4).\textsuperscript{159} The latter, one of the first Christian writers to be raised in Christendom, established the comparison of texts on a Christian basis. Origen’s early work, \textit{Peri Archon}, which bears traces of Gnostic and Neo-Platonic thought, such as the pre-existence of souls, is discussed in Broch’s essay, ‘Pamphlet gegen die Hochschätzung des Menschen’.\textsuperscript{29}

Evidence of Broch’s critical interest in the development in Christianity is to be found throughout his oeuvre. His 1932 essay, ‘Zur Geschichte der Philosophie’, discusses the development of religious ideas within a philosophical framework, which leads ultimately towards the ‘solitude of the I’.\textsuperscript{160} In other writings from the same period, he discusses philosophy and theology in conjunction with literature. For example, in ‘Das Unmittelbare in Philosophie und Dichtung’ he recognises the presence of a value and culture creating force, which can destroy existing rational values, with positive consequences.\textsuperscript{161} A connection may also be seen here between the temporal nature of the relationship between the individual and the divine that was introduced by Christianity, and Broch’s idea that modern humanity feels driven to accumulate value before physical death. A parallel can be noted in his own biography: Lützeler observes that \textit{The Sleepwalkers} trilogy contains references to Catholicism, which are linked to Broch’s personal experience. Broch also refers in a novelistic sketch to his ‘failed experiment with Catholicism’, as though the religion had restricted his individual freedom. He writes in English:

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid, p. 12; p. 53; p. 111; p. 118; p. 121 and p. 25 respectively.


\textsuperscript{160} KW10/1 147-166. The title may be translated as ‘Towards a History of Philosophy’.

\textsuperscript{161} KW10/1 167-190, here, 189. The title may be translated as ‘The Immediate in Philosophy and Literature’.
The failure of his Catholic experiment: he couldn’t become the poet, he wished to be in his boyhood, and now he can’t become the catholic believer; instead of being a poet he is preparing himself for entering in the family business, and instead of changing religion he remains a Protestant like his ancestors.\footnote{KW13/3 174. The original was in Broch’s own English. He converted from Judaism to Catholicism in 1909. In the opinion of Lützeler, the move was motivated by ‘the young Broch’s inclination towards Catholicism, rather than social pressure and the desire for assimilation’. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, pp. 18-19 and p. 28.}

Broch also engaged with ideas discussed by the late Scholastics, the group of thirteenth and fourteenth century religious philosophers that includes Thomas Aquinas, Petrus Hispanus, William of Ockham and Duns Scotus.\footnote{In addition to Aquinas’s works, Broch owned Frohschammer’s 1889 critical appraisal of Aquinas’ thought, and several other works by Frohschammer. See K. Amann and H. Grote, Die Wiener Bibliothek Hermann Brochs: Kommentiertes Verzeichnis des rekonstruierten Bestandes, p. 255 and p. 80 respectively. KW10/1 147-166. See also A. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis, Zur Bedeutung der mystischer Denktradition im Werk von Hermann Broch, p. 156.} An important aspect of debate amongst these thinkers was the work of Aristotle, which was becoming more widely known in the Western world.\footnote{KW13/3 174. The original was in Broch’s own English. He converted from Judaism to Catholicism in 1909. In the opinion of Lützeler, the move was motivated by ‘the young Broch’s inclination towards Catholicism, rather than social pressure and the desire for assimilation’. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, pp. 18-19 and p. 28.} The principle of individuation remained a problem for discussion. Growing exchange of thought also brought the Scholastic tradition into confrontation with Arabic-Jewish philosophy. Some Islamic philosophers, such as Avicenna (980-1037), and Averroës (1126-1198) became concerned with trying to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with that of Islam. Avicenna, for example, raised the question of what it is that constitutes an individual in their individuality.\footnote{In addition to Aquinas’s works, Broch owned Frohschammer’s 1889 critical appraisal of Aquinas’ thought, and several other works by Frohschammer. See K. Amann and H. Grote, Die Wiener Bibliothek Hermann Brochs: Kommentiertes Verzeichnis des rekonstruierten Bestandes, p. 255 and p. 80 respectively. KW10/1 147-166. See also A. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis, Zur Bedeutung der mystischer Denktradition im Werk von Hermann Broch, p. 156.}

Oeing-Hanhoff observes that the ideas raised by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, in addressing this problem, may be understood to correspond to the transcendental dimension in the concept of the individual.\footnote{In addition to Aquinas’s works, Broch owned Frohschammer’s 1889 critical appraisal of Aquinas’ thought, and several other works by Frohschammer. See K. Amann and H. Grote, Die Wiener Bibliothek Hermann Brochs: Kommentiertes Verzeichnis des rekonstruierten Bestandes, p. 255 and p. 80 respectively. KW10/1 147-166. See also A. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis, Zur Bedeutung der mystischer Denktradition im Werk von Hermann Broch, p. 156.}

These difficulties are recognised in Broch’s essay, ‘Zeit und Zeitgeist’ (‘The Spirit in an Unusual Age’).\footnote{In addition to Aquinas’s works, Broch owned Frohschammer’s 1889 critical appraisal of Aquinas’ thought, and several other works by Frohschammer. See K. Amann and H. Grote, Die Wiener Bibliothek Hermann Brochs: Kommentiertes Verzeichnis des rekonstruierten Bestandes, p. 255 and p. 80 respectively. KW10/1 147-166. See also A. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis, Zur Bedeutung der mystischer Denktradition im Werk von Hermann Broch, p. 156.} Here, he observes that it was the ‘logical crisis within Scholasticism that inevitably led to new forms and new extra-


Scholastic modes of verification.38 His ideas are in agreement with those of present-day philosopher Gerhardt, who asserts that the metaphysics of the late Scholastics dissolved in the consequential continuation of their genuine theological impulse. He writes:

In this process of self resolution of theology, the drives to occupation with the sensory perceptible nature were strengthened. Theology had made its god so great and so inconceivable, that, from its own logic of knowledge (Erkenntnis), you could only speak of it by looking at nature. A *deus absconditus* links the theological interest back to the objective world.39

In the 1946 essay, ‘Über syntaktische und cognitive Einheiten’, Broch40 remarks that the Scholastics acutely observed ‘the great secret of individuation’ as being a form of ‘participation in divine thought’, an idea that was ‘a scientifically legitimate and valid theory, because the existence of God was an experiential fact’. Here, he suggests that something of the divine may be experienced by the individual, an idea that is in accordance with his view that humanity’s primal experience of having knowledge of the soul is preserved in myth, and that the latter constitutes ‘a kind of pre-science of primitive man’.41 From the need for epistemology, he maintains, emerges a substitute, the idea of intuition, which he describes as a necessary stopgap or auxiliary concept, which might be likened to the role of Ether, in physics.42 For Broch, therefore, the human individual has a need to express their experience of the existence of a higher level of being in some form. The hierarchical world view of medieval times is translated, in his work, into the theory of value: each individual is striving to reach the ultimate value, the divine.

Broch’s interest in the thought of the medieval mystics, including...
Eckhart, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Nicholas of Cusa, whose works he

40 KW10/2 146-299, here, 260. The title ‘Über syntaktische und cognitive Einheiten’ might be translated as ‘Upon syntactical and cognitive unity’.
41 H. Broch, ‘The Style of the Mythical Age’, in H. Broch (2003) Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch, pp. 97-114, here, p.102. See KW9/2 217. 42 KW10/2 260. Broch writes: Aus dem gleichen erkenntnistheoretischen Bedürfnis heraus, aber unter Wegfall der göttlichen Erkenntnisgrundlage, ist als Ersatz, als richtiger Ersatz für die scharfexakte Partizipationstheorie, das wolkige Gebilde der auf das “Leben” gerichteten “Intuition” geschaffen worden, ein ebenso notwendiger Hilfs- und Verlegenheitsbegriff, wie es der Äther in der Physik gewesen ist..... possessed, is pertinent here.43 In his view, philosophy is theology. He maintains that the medieval mystics rebelled against theological dogma by moving towards a breakthrough into immediate or direct experience of the divine (‘Das Unmittelbare’).44 Thinkers within this tradition were concerned with the relationship between the individual and God, and regarded the former as being a reflection of the latter.45 They believed that the individual could reach towards the divine and even achieve unio mystica46 and were creative in developing language that could express individual experience of the spiritual realm, without describing the domain itself. They put forth a negative theology, for, through apophasis, they set out what God is not. A consequence of the discussion about mystical experience was that increasing emphasis was placed upon the unique nature of the individual human being. This in turn aided the development of the concept of the independent individual, or subject. The growing self-definition of the subject drew attention towards individual creativity, and interest in creative activity

To my knowledge, Broch does not refer directly to Cusanus in his theoretical writing. Nevertheless, as Bendels points out, interest in Cusanus was revived by Neo-Kantian thinkers. See R. Bendels, *Erzählen zwischen Hilbert und Einstein: Naturwissenschaft und Literatur in Hermann Brochs “Eine methodologische Novelle” und Robert Musils “Drei Frauen*, pp. 203-206.

For detailed discussion of Broch’s engagement with mystical thought, see A. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis, *Bedeutung der mystischer Denktradition im Werk von Hermann Broch*. Grabowsky-Hotamanidis asserts that although Broch was influenced by Neo-Kantianism, the mystical tradition is both central to his thought, and contributes to his theory of value. See ibid, p.152.


Moreover, the human creative response had progressed from the telling of myth towards the cultivation of personal creativity.

A further change that may be attributed to mystical thinkers during the early modern period is that awareness of the ‘dignity of the ‘I’ (‘dignitas individui’) began to emerge. This awareness of personal dignity marked a development in the idea of individuality, in that the individual was becoming aware of how the self might appear to others. It appears, for example, in the work of Cusa, who emphasised the idea that each may ‘be pleased about their uniqueness’. In his view, ‘each person both agrees and differs from the other’, so that ‘the general is realised in contraction in the individual’.

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163 In the opinion of Oeing-Hanhoff, the Franciscan monk and scholar Roger Bacon 1214/1220-1293 was the first to raise the idea of ‘dignity of the ‘I’. I have been unable to find evidence that Broch read, or possessed Roger Bacon’s work, but feel that reference to emergence of the ‘dignity of the ‘I’ is useful as an illustration in the development of individuality. See L. Oeing-Hanhoff, ‘Individuum, Individualität: Hoch- und Spätscholastik’, p. 308.
recognised the emergence of awareness that each person bears traces of the state of group consciousness. As we have seen, this is an idea that is employed by Broch in his theory of mass psychology.51

**Concept of individuality in Modernity**

With the Renaissance, the philosophical world view turned its focus towards the individual, and perception of individuality began to change.52 As Broch’s contemporary Simmel165 asserts, ‘the era of the Italian Renaissance created what we call individuality’. This accomplishment ‘took place in such a way that the will to power, to distinction and to becoming honoured and famous was diffused among men to a degree never known previously’.166 He writes:

> The individual wanted to be conspicuous; he wanted to present himself more propitiously and more remarkably than was possible by means of the established forms. This is the behavioural reality of the individualism of distinction, which is associated with the ambition of Renaissance man, with his ruthless self-aggrandizement, with his value emphasis on being unique.55

Broch comments upon how these changes to the individual became apparent in the realm of art. In his view, it was in the fifteenth century that the idea of personal values began to enter the individual’s self-view, and that this becomes apparent in works of art of the period. In his 1933 essay, ‘Denkerisch und dichterisch Erkenntnis’,56 he observes that works of art by Dürer and Leonardo depict a move towards autonomy of the individual, though the borders between individual space and personal autonomy were not yet established.57 These observations are significant, for they indicate that he considered the idea of individuality to be a phenomenon that was continuing to develop.

As current-day social scientist Marianne Gronemeyer observes, from medieval times onwards, ideas about individuality began to shift away from the spiritual dimension of existence, towards the physical.58 There was a

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KW9/2 43-49, here, p. 44. The title may be translated as 'Intellectual and Poetical Knowledge'. Broch writes:

Es ist ein ähnlicher Prozeß wie jener, der sich in der Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts vollzogen hatte, als nach mannigfachen Vorversuchen die "hierarchische" *Perspektive* endgültig durch die "natürliche" Dürers und Leonardos abgelöst wurde. Freilich war es damals kein *Vorrang der Naturwissenschaft*: es war die Zeit, in der sich die einzelnen Wertgebiete erst aus dem mittelalterlichen Gesamtorganon abspalteten, um zur eignen Autonomie zu gelangen, es lagen die Grenzen zwischen den einzelnen Gebieten und einzelnen Autonomien noch keineswegs fest ...

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Broch notes that these artists, influenced by developments in science, adopted a much more realistic and natural style of painting than that used previously.


turn away from the prevailing Christian belief in the life of the soul, towards philosophical reflection, which was to some extent catalysed by the influence of Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, and Diderot. Rather than partaking in a process that cultivated the soul, the scope for developing individuality was now much more dependent upon the individual’s interaction in their social circle.59 Fashion and social activities became the means of expressing individuality. For Broch, the effect of the new individualism was that each means of expression in human life became a separate form of individuality.60 The soul was now placed in opposition to individuality, rather than being the realm for its cultivation.

By the eighteenth century, *freedom* had become ‘the universal demand which the individual used to cover his manifold grievances and selfassertions against society’.61 This was a pivotal point for individuality: ‘when man is freed from everything that is not wholly himself, what remains as the actual substance of his being is man in general’.62 A new emphasis was placed upon
individuals differentiating themselves from one another, in order to try and define their individuality. The drive was not only towards freedom, but also towards equality: ‘what mattered now was no longer that one was a free individual as such, but that one was a particular and irreplaceable individual’.53

The question of the human ego also came under discussion, and some thinkers, such as Leibniz (1646-1716), Kant (1724-1804), and Fichte (1762-1814) became concerned with exploring the self-reflection of the subject. Kant and Fichte believed ‘the ego to be the bearer of the knowable world and made its absolute autonomy the moral value’.64 Kant, in particular,

60 KW10/1 191- 239, here, 196-7, ‘Theologie, Positivismus und Dichtung’ (c.1934). Broch writes:

63 Ibid, p. 222.

revolutionised ideas about individuality, by putting forth the idea of the ‘thing in itself’ (‘Ding an sich selbst’).65 According to Kant, human beings can only know something in relation to something else: one thing cannot be viewed in isolation. Consequently, we cannot know the world ‘in itself’: the world is constituted through our consciousness of its existence. For Kant:

To know a thing completely, we must know every possible [predicate], and must determine it thereby, either affirmatively or negatively. The complete determination is thus a concept, which in its totality, can never be exhibited in concreto. It is based upon an idea, which has its seat solely in the faculty of reason - the faculty, which prescribes to the understanding of the rule of its complete employment.66

As Borsche asserts, Kant shows the unfathomable nature of individuality, in that we can only have the idea of a certain thing in relation to other things.67 In order to know a thing completely, we must know the sum-total of all possibility of that thing. Never do we have perception, only in ‘this single case’ do we
have the idea of an individual (nur ‘in diesem einzigen Falle’ die Vorstellung von einem Individuum’). This idea of the embodiment of all reality is the ‘single actual ideal, of which human reason is capable’. We can only

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66 I. Kant, (1966) Kritik der reinen Vernunft p. 610-611. Kant writes:

Um ein Ding vollständig zu erkennen, muß man alles Mögliche erkennen, und es dadurch, es sei bejahend oder verneinend bestimmen. Die durchgängige Bestimmung ist folglich ein Begriff, den wir niemals in concreto seiner Totalität nach darstellen können, und gründet sich also auf einer Idee, welche lediglich in der Vernunft ihren Sitz hat, die dem Verstande die Regel seines vollständigen Gebrauchs vorschreibt.

See also I. Kant (1929) Critique of Pure Reason p. 489.

Sorabji observes that for Kant:

first-person experience does not postulate a continuing substance, but this only shows that the idea of a continuing inner substance is a necessary condition of that person’s thought, not that it is a reality. The conditions of thought are all that Kant attempts to specify.

R. Sorabji, Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death, pp.109110.


Diese “Vorstellung des Inbegriffs aller Realität” ist zudem das “einzige eigentlich Ideal, dessen die menschliche Vernunft fähig ist.” Es kommt hier dieselbe Einsicht der Zeit in die Unergründlichkeit der Individualität, obgleich in umgekehrter Weise, zum Ausdruck, indem Kant das Fazit zieht, daß wir uns die Idee eines durchgängig bestimmten Dinges nur in bezug auf eine omnitudo realitatis bilden können, die gerade nichts Individuelles, sondern dessen Gegenteil, das im höchsten Grade Allgemeine und nur eben darin etwas Einziges bezeichnet. Nirgends haben wir Erkenntnis, nur “in diesem einzigen Falle” die Vorstellung “von einem Individuum.”

Ibid.

perceive the existence of something in relation to other things within this ideal framework of ideas.

In Kant’s view, it is conceptual activity within this framework of ideas that enables us to make judgement. He maintains that neither thinking nor perception in isolation can lead to judgement: he finds perception without thinking to be blind, and similarly, thinking without perception to be an empty activity. However, for true judgement to be made in practical moral matters, as required by the Kantian concept of the categorical imperative, there must be consensus between individuals; perception does not matter here. The
application of the categorical imperative therefore demands action that is contrary to what individuals would otherwise do. Thus, whilst Kant explains how we might reason about a situation, he attaches little importance to the idea of individuality.168

This is recognised by Broch, who studied Kant intensively.169 In one of his earliest pieces, ‘Notizen zu einer systematischen Ästhetik’ (1912), he affirms that ‘the proof that all recognisable things lie in the spirit secures the unity of subject and object, of the ‘I’ and the world’.170 For Broch, the idea of truth has become a value amongst other values, which claim equal validity. He maintains that truth-producing acts are degraded to a sort of action, which differs from other value-creating acts only in that it brings the ‘truth’, rather than other values, into being. In his view, the act of thinking, which is a value-setting activity, constitutes a special case of action, for only acts aimed at value exist in the autonomy of the ego.171 Value-setting is accompanied by a dilemma, for each person is responsible for the ethical nature of their own creative output.172 Each must resolve the dichotomy between the ethical values of action and the aesthetic value of what has been achieved,173 thereby bridging value spheres. Nevertheless, the act of setting values in this way is an indication that the individual is free to do so.

Similarity may be drawn here with Max Scheler’s theory of material ethics, in which the ‘categorical Imperative’ is an individual concern, a matter

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169 Broch occupied himself with the study of Kant from 1907, and especially intensively between 1912 and 1922. See KW9/1 27 n.21.

170 KW9/2 11-35, here, 13. The title may be translated as ‘Notes towards a systematic Aesthetic’. He writes:

der Beweis, daß alles Erkennbare im Geiste liegt, sichert die Einheit von Subjekt und Objekt, von Ich und Welt.

171 KW9/2 127. ‘Das Böse im Wertsystem der Kunst’.

172 KW10/2 25, 78 note30. ‘Zur Erkenntnis dieser Zeit’.


of value, of virtue. As we have seen, Scheler calls for a rehabilitation of virtues, especially those of humility and dignity, which, he maintains, preserve the radical uniqueness of each and every person.\textsuperscript{174} In his view, the call to act for the sake of the good contributes to the process of individuation.\textsuperscript{77} The call becomes ever more personal as the value deepens. In acting ethically, each person is brought to realize their unique place and contribution, and consequently becomes more conscious of their obligation and duties to the world and to others. ‘A material value ethic, in contrast to a formal ethic, reveals both the radically unique manner by which each person is called to act and the radically unique value of each and every person.’\textsuperscript{175}

Broch’s thought may also have been influenced here by Eduard von Hartmann, whose work he possessed. A critic of Kant, Hartmann asserts that the subject perceives nothing other than modifications of its own soulcondition.\textsuperscript{79}

Broch’s ideas about the activity of the ego are developed in the 1936 essay, ‘Werttheoretische Bemerkungen zur Psychoanalyse’.\textsuperscript{176} Here, he divides the ‘Ich’, (which I have translated as ‘ego’ for the purpose of this discussion), into three components: the ‘outer-ego’ (‘Ich-Schale’), which consists of the physical and psychological aspects of the ego; the pure ‘egonucleus’ (‘Ich-Kern’), and the ‘non-ego’ (‘Non-Ich’).\textsuperscript{177} In this model, the


\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{176} KW10/2 173-194. The title may be translated as ‘Theoretical Remarks upon Value, towards Psychoanalysis’.

\textsuperscript{177} KW10/2 187 f. This model of the ego is discussed by Broch’s friends and correspondents Hannah Arendt and Erich Kahler. See H. Arendt (1955) \textit{Men in Dark Times}, pp.111-151. Also E. Kahler, \textit{Die Philosophie von Hermann Broch}, pp. 61-62.
egonucleus exists only in relation to the empirical-ego and the non-ego, and can therefore only be understood in relation to the outer world. Broch asserts that this part of the ego is self-contained and autonomous, and through the act of thinking, it produces the non-ego. For this to take place, however, some form of ‘pre-established harmony is a logical necessity’,\(^{178}\) for the act of thinking necessitates the presence of an object, a model of the world, in the mind of the thinker.\(^{179}\) To put this more simply, the role of the ego-nucleus is to enable the individual to relate to the outer world through the process of thinking. The ego already contains an impression of the outer world. The thought activity of the ego-nucleus reveals those parts of the outer world, which are within that impression, but do not belong to the ego: this is the non-ego.

For Broch, the activity of thinking seems to contribute to the structure of the ego, in a way that is reminiscent of Plato’s idea that there is some form of interaction between subject and object. The change, which he observes in the ego, suggests that in the act of thinking, the individual must decide in some way as to what is important. It is interesting to note that in a letter to Gustave Bergmann, he refers to the existence of ‘a ‘self’ (‘Selbst’), if not already the ‘Ich’, which suggests that he believes in some form of development of the ego. From this, the ego-nucleus, that part of the ego which cannot be known in itself, might be understood to be the ‘self’ or ‘I’, the ‘I’ being a higher form of the ‘self’. (Here I have refined my translation of ‘Ich’ to accommodate development of the ego.) Through its participation in the process of thinking, the ‘self’ or ‘I’ enables the non-ego to be changed, as different parts of the outer world are gradually uncovered.\(^{84}\)

Broch relates his concept of the ego to the idea of time. We have already seen that, in his view, the individual fears his or her own death, and consequently feels compelled to transform everything into value. In the ‘Werttheoretische Bemerkungen’, however, he asserts that the ego is


‘completely incapable of imagining its own death’.\(^{85}\) He believes the ‘I- nucleus’ to be timeless, but the consequence of its inability to envisage either its own beginning or its own end is that it becomes alienated from the world.\(^{86}\) (Similarity may be found here with the Aristotelian idea that the individual is derived from a definite form and the definitive material.) For Broch, ‘the external world presents itself to the “ego-nucleus” as being not only as utterly alien, but also as utterly threatening. It is not only recognised by the ego as “world’ but as “non-ego’.\(^{87}\) This idea is linked to his theory of knowledge, in which he asserts that both time and death may be abolished by the discovery of an ‘epistemological subject’, which represents the whole person. This ‘epistemological subject’ may be described as ‘the human personality in extreme abstraction’, and it enables the ego to belong to the world (from which it has been alienated), by means other than expansion or deprivation, ecstasy or panic.\(^{88}\)

\(^{84}\) KW10/2 173-194, here, 179. Broch writes:

Obwohl das Denken dem Ich unlösbar angehört, unterscheidet es sich vom IchSubjekt, gehört also einem Non-Ich zugleich an.

In a letter to Gustav Bergmann, dated 5 November 1945, Broch comments upon the existence of a self. Here he asserts that relationships such as those contained within Gustav Bergmann’s theory of positivistic metaphysics and Husserl’s thought regarding relations in the object field (ideas that he finds to be in agreement), cannot be fulfilled without the hypothesis of the existence of a ‘self’, if not an ‘Ich’. Broch writes:

Denn strukturell scheint mir Ihre positivistischeTheorie der ‘aboutness’ und der N^ + S^ + S^ .... Reihen mit den Husserlschen Überlegungen übereinzustimmen: auch hier wird ein Indizienbeweis für Relationen im Objektfeld, d.h. für deren notwendige Existenz vorgenommen. – Relationen, die ohne Hypothesierung eines ‘Selbst’ (wenn schon nicht des Ich) nicht sinnerfüllt gemacht werden können. KW13/3 34.

\(^{85}\) KW10/2 186.

\(^{86}\) H. Arendt (1955) \textit{Men in Dark Times}, p. 132. \(^{87}\) Ibid. \(^{88}\)


For Broch, therefore, the human subject, who has developed ‘I’ consciousness, has a sense of ‘I’, or self, which contains the idea of all that lies beyond it, the non-ego. When the owner of the self participates in activities that give rise to expansion or reduction of the ego, a sense of value is derived. In addition, his model of the human ego indicates that the ego also has the
ability both to experience the world, and to relate to it in some way, from within. Of interest here, is that, in his correspondence, Broch comments upon changes in human awareness, which give rise to increasing consciousness of humanity as human beings.\textsuperscript{89} He asserts that the realms of the religious, the mythical, and of ‘truth in itself’ are concerned with the structure of consciousness, and that we can only penetrate the world with perception derived from the ‘I’. In his view, ethics are the principle of historical understanding, for ‘only ethical man has historical reality […] only the man, who desires the good […] lives in history’.\textsuperscript{90} He writes:

The morally absolute man is also the absolutely historical man. Christ's birth was the point in time around which absolutes revolved and it was the time’s moral task to consolidate its true importance.\textsuperscript{91}

This overall development may largely be found in Broch’s discussion of his theory of value.\textsuperscript{92} For example, in his ‘Pamphlet gegen die

\textsuperscript{89} KW13/2 437-445, here, 440. Letter from Broch to Hans Sahl, dated 28.2.1945. My italics. Broch’s ideas might be likened here to the thought of Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950), who developed a theory of the existence of differing levels of reality, ranging from the inorganic to the intellectual level. Broch was in possession of several volumes of Hartmann’s works. See K. Amann and H. Grote, \textit{Die Wiener Bibliothek Hermann Brochs: Kommentiertes Verzeichnis des rekonstruierten Bestandes}, p. 100.


Halsall argues that the search for autonomy in Broch’s work is connected to the theological quest for God through a state of pure inwardness, which is portrayed in the fourth part of \textit{Der Tod des Vergil}. He maintains that, in Kierkegaard’s terms, the acceptance of the religious and thus the ethical is existentially necessary because the individual comes to a state of affairs in which he/ she can no longer maintain the mode of existence which he/ she has adopted hitherto. In his view, grasping the self’s autonomy, for both Kierkegaard and Broch, is bound up with moving from an aesthetic to an ethical and ultimately to a religious state of existence. R. Halsall (2000) \textit{The Problem of Autonomy in the Works of Hermann Broch}, p. 21 and 33 respectively.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. Broch writes:

..., daß der ethisch absolute geschichtlicher Mensch, nämlich der Religionstifter, auch der absolute geschichtliche Mensch ist; er hebt in seiner Wirklichkeit die Zeit auf und macht sie zu seiner Epoche — Christi Geburt wurde zum absolutierenden Fixpunkt der Zeit und die ethische Aufgabe der Zeit wurde es, seine Wertwirklichkeit auszubauen.

In this essay, Broch asserts that Kant’s idea of ‘good will’ comes from autonomous grounds. Hochschätzung des Menschen’, he asserts that every world-view harbours its own value system, each of which must address the age-old question ‘what is that?’\textsuperscript{93} The question, he maintains, necessitates the response ‘What should I do?’ which transforms will into value.\textsuperscript{94} Each human being must therefore
respond subjectively to their circumstances, through a combination of ego expansion and reduction, as discussed in the previous section.

Broch’s ideas here are very similar to those of Gerhardt, who asserts that it is the task of the modern human being to define his or her own individuality.\(^{95}\) He believes that the idea of individuality is itself part of an ongoing and changing process, the origins of which lie in the earliest philosophy in Western thought.\(^{96}\) He maintains that humanity has gradually become autonomous, being apparently no longer in need of God, a development that led to the idea of ‘self-definition’.\(^{97}\)

Gerhardt observes that the asker of the question ‘What should I do?’ is already in the midst of ethical reflection.\(^{98}\) In common with Broch, he finds consciousness that is ‘expressly to do with the ‘I’’ to be essential in the development of individuality: the activity of the ‘I’ enables a conscious and fulfilling self-relationship to be conducted.\(^{99}\) Each person must find their own departure point, from which to develop the self. This may be achieved through an original act of thinking: you have to think for yourself, in order to

\(^{92}\) Broch’s idea that the individual bears some internal sense of time is not included in this essay.

\(^{93}\) KW10/1 34-45 (c.1932). The title may be translated as ‘Pamphlet towards the High Esteem of Humanity’.\(^{94}\) KW10/1 37-38.


\(^{96}\) Ibid, pp. 126.

\(^{97}\) Ibid. Some similarity may also be found between Broch’s thought and that of Heimsoeth, in that both thinkers attach importance to the influence of medieval Christian mystics upon the idea of the soul. Heimsoeth, however, seems to believe that developments in metaphysics since the Middle Ages stand in opposition to the ideas of the ancient Greeks, whereas Broch engages with thought from antiquity onwards. See H. Heimsoeth (1994) \textit{The Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics and the End of the Middle Ages}.\(^{98}\) Ibid, p. 29.
Gerhardt refers to the ‘Ich’ as being the first person singular, in grammatical terms. Riedel also finds ‘I’-thoughts to be necessary for philosophical reflection. See C. Riedel, *Subjekt und Individuum*, pp. 146-155.

Understand what thinking is. In turn, the act of thinking may give rise to something that is not only spontaneous and individual, but also an absolute departure point in the self. Through the attainment of self-consciousness, human beings become able to reflect upon prior thinking: they are conscious of thoughts that have arisen in the past, but are also able to distance themselves from previous ideas. For Gerhardt, it is in this distancing, in which possible perspectives of others upon us come into play, that the individuality of the thinking being may shape itself. He acknowledges, however, that the roles by which we shape our identity are not fixed, and can only establish difference from others, for each individual essentially remains ungraspable. Thus, by attaining an advanced stage of subjectivity, the individual may reach the stage of ethical reflection.

The thought of Paul Ricoeur is relevant here, for he also asserts that human life has an ethical aim, that of self-esteem. In his view, each person is the subject of their own actions and is therefore responsible for everything they do. Subjectivity, he maintains, is anchored within the physical body, in the material world, and language is the means of subjective articulation. Through language, each human being may create a narrative, which establishes a structure for understanding his or her life. Narrative enables personal identity to be expressed. It overcomes the difficulty of embodied subjectivity, by actively structuring perception: ‘the self can be at one and the same time a person of whom we speak and a subject, who designates himself (or herself) as a first person while addressing a second person’. It also permits the

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182 Ibid, pp. 238-239.
183 Ibid, p. 447.
185 Ibid, pp. 34-35.
subject to be viewed through varying temporal perspectives, (we remind ourselves here that Broch also relates his concept of the individual to time), so that a coherent sense of self may be achieved.\textsuperscript{185} The creation of a narrative self enables self-esteem to be attained, not through accomplishment, but through the capacity to judge, to esteem.\textsuperscript{186} “From the suffering Other there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing, but precisely from weakness itself”.\textsuperscript{187} For Ricoeur, the ‘esteem of the other as oneself and the esteem of oneself as another’ are ‘fundamentally equivalent’.\textsuperscript{188} In his view, individual identity may be defined through relationships with others. (We should remind ourselves here of the idea found in Plato, that there is some form of interaction between subject and object). Some similarity may be found here with Broch’s idea that will is transformed into value through the ethical response to the question, ‘What should I do?’

In concluding this part of our discussion, we should note that in his theoretical work Broch makes a close connection between ideas concerned with individuality and the realm of art. As suggested earlier, his essays upon myth, and his comments upon medieval portraiture, indicate that he regards a work of art as being a natural image, brought forth from the spirit of the artist. This idea is supported in the ‘Hofmannsthal’ essay, in which he asserts that:

\begin{quote}
Every expression of the human spirit, in other words every work of art (no matter how ornamental) wants to ‘say’ something, wants to express a ‘reality’ [...] consequently every work of art is in a final sense a ‘rationalisation of something irrational,’ and the fact that art always succeeds in raising irrational realities into the rational is the fact of its human miracle.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

Here, Broch seems to suggest that a work of art (even if it is rooted predominantly in aesthetic values), is representative of the artist’s individuality, whilst he also recognises the ‘unfathomability’ of the latter. Further insight into


\textsuperscript{186} P. Ricoeur (1992) \textit{Oneself as Another}, p. 181.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid, p. 194.

his ideas about the individual and individuality may be gained by looking closely at the most challenging example of his own artistic output, the Virgil work. An important aspect of this analysis is the examination of the narrative technique, which may illuminate further similarities between Broch’s thought and that of Ricoeur.

6. Discussion of the role of ‘negative universalism’ in Broch’s thought

As a final step in our analysis of Broch’s theoretical engagement with ideas about the individual and the mass, I wish to consider the role of ‘negative universalism’ in his thought. This phenomenon, mentioned by Manfred Durzak, has been discussed by Endre Kiss, but otherwise it has attracted little attention from critics. To my knowledge, there has been no appraisal of the topic in English. This chapter aims to refine our understanding of the phenomenon, and relate it to the ideas of other thinkers, although I accept that this aspect of my research is incomplete. Nevertheless, I believe that the new human condition observed by Broch is connected to the idea of loss of life experience, and that it contributes to his concept of individuality.

Reference to a new human condition, a state in which isolated individuals experience the sense of loneliness, is to be found in Broch’s correspondence. In a commentary upon the final ‘Hugenau’ section of his fictional work The Sleepwalkers, he explains that the book consists of a series of stories, which adopt the theme of ‘humanity looking back into loneliness’. The ‘looking back’ is brought about by the disintegration of values, and the series of episodes in the novel demonstrate the new productive powers that emerge from the loneliness. It becomes apparent to the affected individuals that there is a marked difference between personal values and the values

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190 KW13/1 144-145. Letter from Broch to Daisy Brody, dated 23 July 1931.
191 Ibid, 5  Ibid, 144. Broch writes:
generally held in that era. There is a differential between the change that has taken place at personal level and that which has occurred more widely. Broch writes:

The book consists of a series of stories, which all adapt the same theme, namely the 'looking back of humanity into loneliness' – a looking back that is brought about by the disintegration of values – and the production of new productive powers, which emerge from the loneliness, if they are actually manifested.5 The new human condition is not only depicted through the interaction of the characters of The Sleepwalkers, but is also conveyed more directly through the philosophical, essayistic commentaries on the 'disintegration of values' inserted into the third section of the novel. This part of the trilogy, set in World War 1, may be understood to correspond to the stage of development in an industrial society, when there is a tendency towards 'hypertrophy mania'.6 Through the philosophical Excursus, Broch brings the whole meaning of reality into question. For example, the first 'Disintegration of Values' section opens by asking, 'Is this distorted life of ours still real? Is this cancerous reality still alive?'7 Here, as Kiss8 observes, Broch's ideas bear some similarity to Weber's concept of 'disenchantment of the world'. Perhaps even more important, however, is that the narrator expresses awareness of the state of reality: the narrator is conscious that life has become 'distorted'.9 In this way, Broch conveys to the reader the idea that reality was once different to that which is now perceived, and that remnants of the previous reality remain in the narrator's consciousness.

Broch's correspondence indicates that he was aware of the effect of 'looking back in loneliness' in his work. The technique is therefore part of the structure of the novel. Indeed, shortly after explaining his methodology, he confided to his publisher Daniel Brody that the 'disintegration of values' sections in The Sleepwalkers represent the foundation for something completely new:
der neuen produktiven Kräfte, die aus der Einsamkeit entspringen, wenn sie tatsächlich manifest geworden sind.

6 See KW12 292.
7 H. Broch (1996) *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 373. KW1 418. Broch writes: ‘Hat dieses verzerrte Leben noch Wirklichkeit? Hat diese hypertrophierte Wirklichkeit noch Leben?’ Some similarity may also be seen between the ‘distorted reality’ and the ‘hypertrophied’ state that emerges in Broch’s theory of the development of a mass. See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti.
9 Broch’s narrative technique is discussed in detail in Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the *Virgil* work. This is said incidentally and without arrogance, for I am very well versed in the material, the ‘Disintegration’ represents the outline/plan of a completely new epistemology of philosophy of history. Hopefully the reader does not notice.10

This is significant, for it indicates Broch’s awareness that he was conveying something new through his writing.

The term ‘negative universalism’ is worthy of consideration, for it may be interpreted in various ways. For example, it might refer to a state, which presents only a potential alternative to a state of universalism, in that it simply does not affect anyone. It could also refer to a universal feeling of negativity, or, thirdly, to a condition, which negates a previous state of universalism. As Broch indicates in his correspondence that some people are affected by a ‘new human condition’, the first suggestion may be eliminated. The second explanation of the term may be also discarded, as some characters in *The Sleepwalkers* do not experience a feeling of negativity.11 The third interpretation of the term therefore seems to be most fitting at this stage. As Kiss asserts, the condition is ‘universal’ in that certain values still prevail, but it is ‘negative’ because it is clear to those affected, that those values are no longer valid, because something is absent.12 However, this state might equally be termed ‘negative individualism’ and is therefore in need of further clarification.

10 KW13/1 150. Letter from Broch to Daniel Brody, dated 4 August 1931. He writes (originally in brackets)::

Nebenbei und ohne Überheblichkeit gesagt denn ich bin [in] der materie recht gut beschlagen, repräsentiert der ‘Zerfall’ den Grundriß einer völlig neuen Erkenntnistheorie der Geschichtsphilosophie, hoffentlich merkt’s der Leser nicht. Thus we may see that it was
Broch’s intention to influence the reader psychologically, but unobtrusively, through his writing.


Characters such as Elisabeth and Herr von Pasenow do not seem to share the sense of looking back that is experienced by Esch and Joachim von Pasenow, for example.


Kiss likens the condition to existentialism, the Absurd, Nihilism, and the Post-Modern. However, in my view, it is not quite the same as any of these states, for none of them entails ‘looking back into loneliness’. The Absurd, for example, ‘recognises the world’s indecipherable nature’, but offers nothing further than ‘bewilderment’, as may be seen in Camus’ The Outsider and Beckett’s Waiting for Godot. Similarly, in Nihilism, as we have seen, all prevailing, traditional systems are destroyed, or found to be lacking, without any suggestion of alternative value, whereas Broch’s new human condition has the capacity to generate new, productive powers. The eclectic approach of the Post-Modern, in which all values seem to be permitted to coexist simultaneously, on account of its backward-looking nature, also remains distinct from ‘negative universalism’.

For Kiss, Broch’s new human condition ‘points to a natural and understandable existential dimension’. He maintains, however, that it cannot

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To define the world as absurd is to recognise its fundamentally indecipherable nature, and this recognition is frequently associated with feelings of loss, purposelessness and bewilderment. To such feelings, the Theatre of the Absurd gives ample expression, often leaving the observer baffled in the face of disjointed, meaningless or repetitious dialogues, incomprehensible behaviour, and plots which deny all notion of logical or ‘realistic’ development.

be termed existentialist, for it consists of a lively and existential negativity of values.\textsuperscript{16} The phenomenon is very similar to Existentialism, in that it acknowledges the unique aspects of human existence. In particular, the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), which recognises that the individual is the source of all value, is close to Broch’s new human condition. However, it should be borne in mind that Broch’s writing here precedes that of Sartre. For Broch, it is the \textit{act of looking back} in response to a sense of loss that gives rise to perception of a general decline in the worth of the world and generates new productive powers. Individual awareness of the act of looking back is important, for this process enables personal appraisal to take place, before action is taken. We remind ourselves here of his comments upon changes in human awareness, which give rise to increasing consciousness of humanity as \textit{human beings}.\textsuperscript{195} We should also note Kiss’\textsuperscript{196} observation that the condition does not explain the emergence of totalitarianism. The latter is rather a political and social realisation of ‘looking back in loneliness’.

Some similarity may be drawn here between Broch’s thought and that of Reinhart Koselleck, who, in his discussion of the semantics of historical time, raises the idea that human perception of the passage of time is changing.\textsuperscript{197} He asserts that in the centuries between 1500 and 1800, ‘a temporalisation of history occurred, so that we now possess the perspective of the onetime future of past generations, or […] from a former future’.\textsuperscript{198} Thus, for Koselleck, we have become conscious of our position within the course of time, and feel a sense of critical-historical distance from the past. For Broch, it seems that the process of looking back to the past causes \textit{certain individuals} to be particularly

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{195} KW13/2 437-445, here, 440. Letter from Broch to Hans Sahl, dated 28 February 1945. My italics. See also Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality.


\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.

\end{flushleft}
affected by the sense of loss of life experience. They take positive action, in
order to overcome their fear of death.

The emergence of Broch’s new human condition may be considered in
the sense of Hegelian dialectics, according to which a thesis is negated by an
antithesis, before the conflict between the two is reconciled by a synthesis. For
Hegel, it is the ‘task of philosophy to reconcile the various opposing aspects of
human life, in order to overcome the estrangement of modern humanity from
the environment’. He envisages modern society as being the mediator
between a bureaucratic state and the freedom of the individual: the state and
the individual interact in dialectical fashion, to produce a synthesis, which leads
towards the unity of all opposites. He asserts that ‘the dialectical process is set
in motion by the ‘World Spirit’ (’Weltgeist’), which advances in a direction that
will ultimately allow people to achieve self-awareness’. This process might
be detected in the condition observed by Broch: the alienating effect of the
disintegration of values challenges the existing order, and the subsequent
synthesis causes individuals affected by ‘the new loneliness’ to feel driven to
take positive action (make a dialectical response) against their situation. Here,
the third explanation of ‘Negative Universalism’, in which the condition negates
a previous state of universalism, seems to be most fitting. According to this
definition, those affected by the condition feel driven to establish their own
values, which may differ from the universal values.

Kiss asserts that a specific negativity of attitude emerges from the
condition that might be likened to Adorno’s ‘negative dialectic’. His
interpretation suggests that the outcome of the negativity would not
necessarily be positive and pre-determined. This is of interest, for it indicates
that Broch believes human existence to be incomplete in some way. In

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199 Ibid. Hahn observes that, for Hegel, work enables the individual to attain a higher degree
of self-awareness, which in turn leads to higher patterns of integration with inter-dependence
of individuals and social groups. For Hegel, individuals must be integrated into larger entities,
a process that is enhanced by use of language, which leads to new patterns of social
integration, by developing self-awareness and by binding individuals to the community of their
Grundlinie der Philosophie des Rechts, Werke 7, §257.

Dialectics was first published in 1966, fifteen years after Broch’s death.
comparison to Hegel’s idea that existence is moving towards the unity of all opposites, Kiss seems to suggest that negative universalism may lead humanity towards an unknown state of being.\footnote{201}

In my view, an important aspect of Broch’s new human condition (which is not discussed by Kiss) is its association with the sleepwalking state. Lützeler\footnote{202} describes the new existential state as ‘Verdummtheit’, which might be translated as ‘being made stupid’. His description suggests that as a result of their new human condition, people behave as though they are anaesthetised in some way, and are unable to think clearly, or fully control their actions. They are ‘sleepwalkers’.

In a similar vein, Dominick LaCapra\footnote{26} suggests that ‘negative universalism’ may be linked to ‘Anomie’, the sociological term used to describe a condition emerging from a lack of norms. The term ‘Anomie’ was used by French sociologist Émile Durkheim in setting out social causes of suicide, in his 1897 book \textit{Le Suicide}.\footnote{27} His research demonstrates the extent to which social orders permeate the thinking, attitude and conduct of the individual. Durkheim cites reduction of standards or values and the sensation of alienation and purposelessness as being social causes of suicide. He considers the occurrence of significant economic changes and discrepancy between the ideal values of a society and what might be achieved in everyday life to contribute to the state of anomie. It is not only the rigid nature of some societies that tends to produce anomic individuals, but also the existence of multiple value systems which provide a bewildering experience for the individual, and give rise to the state of Anomie.

Anomie, together with the Absurd, has become associated with existentialism. In neither condition is there a defined mode of conduct, only the sense of having lost clear values. For example, in Camus’ \textit{The Outsider}, Meursault’s crime seems not to be that he has killed another man, but that he does not demonstrate grief at his mother’s funeral.\footnote{28} Similarly, the characters...
in Broch’s *The Sleepwalkers*, particularly Esch, sense that defined values no
longer prevail, but are unable to locate when precisely those values declined:
they have only their emotional response to their situation. Both examples
 correspond to Broch’s idea of ‘new loneliness’, for

House, pp. 42-53, here, p. 50. LaCapra writes:
What is perhaps most astounding is that Broch never discussed Durkheim, for
Broch’s social thought may in many respects be closest to that of founder of French
sociology. Broch’s notion of a ‘value vacuum’ as the ‘Grenzsituation’ of the modern
age recalls Durkheim’s analysis of anomie. More broadly, Broch, like Durkheim, both
envisaged and enacted the tense relation between a desire for socio-cultural
integration, or at the limit, totalisation, and the ‘anomic’ forces that contested it. He
too made critical use of the concepts of normality and pathology as they applied to
collectivities and not simply to individuals. And he combined a critique of the role of
excessive anomie in modern life with a defence of an open, self-critical, and
democratic social system in which limited anomie was necessary and not entirely
negative.


Philosophie’, p. 10. Kiss cites an example of ‘negative universalism’ in *The Sleepwalkers*. In
although certain values may still prevail, they no longer have validity for those
affected by the new condition. For Durkheim, the foundation for the shared
values sought by the anomic individual lies within traditional religions, a view
not dissimilar to Broch’s theory that culture is rooted in religion. For Broch,
affected individuals search for means of expressing their spiritual experiences.
They search for truth, but find that it cannot be known. In this respect I disagree
with Kiss30 view that the ‘new loneliness is neither a religious phenomenon,
nor a political condition, and it cannot be addressed through either of these
spheres – it is meta-political and meta-religious’. I believe that the condition is
a manifestation of the search for spiritual meaning in Modernity.

Whilst Broch does not seem to have associated directly with members
of the Frankfurt School, similarity may also be found between the sleepwalking
state and Adorno’s31 idea of the ‘authoritarian personality’. (We should note
that negative universalism carries the idea that those who ‘look back in
loneliness’ may be prepared to accept a totalitarian regime.)32 Adorno asserts
that large numbers of people in the twentieth century no longer are (or never
were), individuals in the sense of nineteenth century philosophy.33 Rather, he
maintains, they are subjected to ‘ticket thinking’, to standardised, opaque and overpowering social processes, which leave little freedom for true individuation.\(^{34}\) In his view, society is becoming increasingly polarised, each opposing camp becoming increasingly rigid.\(^{203}\) Some similarity may be found here between Adorno’s observations and Broch’s theory of disintegration of values, in which each individual has a personal system of values, and may belong to a group that has some shared values.

The subject of the ‘authoritarian syndrome’ observed by Adorno adjusts socially by taking pleasure in obedience and subordination. This adjustment seems to be based on Freudian theory. As we have seen, Freud maintains that human beings are constantly trying to create a balance between the aggressive and libidinal drives. When these drives are suppressed, as might occur in a totalitarian regime, the individual is unable to balance the opposing

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\(^{203}\) Ibid, p. 759. Adorno refers to Horkheimer’s theory that ‘external social repression is concomitant with the internal repression of impulses’. Adorno writes:

In order to achieve “internalisation” of social control which never gives as much to the individual as it takes, the latter’s attitude towards authority and its psychological agency, the superego, assumes an irrational aspect. The subject of the “authoritarian syndrome” described by Adorno adjusts socially by taking pleasure in obedience and subordination. This brings into play the sadomasochistic impulse structure both as a condition and as a result of social adjustment.
drives and aggression of the individual is redirected. For Adorno, this syndrome may be likened to a sadomasochistic resolution of the Oedipus complex. He writes:

in the psychodynamics of the “authoritarian character,” part of the preceding aggressiveness is absorbed and turned into masochism, while another part is left over as sadism, which seeks an outlet in those with whom the subject does not identify himself: ultimately the out-group.204

An individual representative of the 'authoritarian syndrome’ tends to vent his feelings against members of the ‘out-group’. In the imagination of the authoritarian ‘out-group’ individual, the out-group assumes the qualities against which subjects protested in their fathers: practicality, coldness, dominant personality, and sexual rivalry. Adorno observes ambivalence in this character type, demonstrated by unflinching belief in authority and preparedness to attack those deemed to be weak or the victims of society. Stereotypy becomes a means of social identification and a means by which the libidinous energy can be channelled by the excessive demands of the superego.

Some similarity may be seen here between Adorno’s theory and that of Broch, in that the individual experiences two psychologically opposing drives. 205 Adorno’s description of stereotypy as means of a state of social identification may also be likened to Broch’s idea that a mass consists of a group with shared psychological values. As we have seen, for Broch, in the absence of firm values, the fearful individual is in a ‘sleepwalking state’, and is prepared to indulge in value in order to escape the impending fear of death. Affected individuals are already in a state of pre-panic and therefore prepared to follow a leader who appears to have the potential to lead away from panic. However, those in a state of pre-panic may be exploited by those in authority: Broch notes the tendency towards regarding a person as a physical ‘thing’. 206

204 Ibid. Adorno acknowledges here the work of Erich Fromm on the “sadomasochistic” character.
205 See KW12 13-16. See also Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas concerning mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti.
206 KW12 475. Broch speaks of ‘der Mensch als Sache’, which may be translated as ‘the human being as a thing’.
Marcuse observes, Modernity has witnessed the increasing reification ('Verdinglichung') of humanity in the Western world.\textsuperscript{207}

According to Adorno's theory, such sleepwalking would cause a group that identifies with strength, and displays an authoritarian personality, to reject ‘everything that is ‘down’.\textsuperscript{40} He asserts that this attitude is extended even to those situations where social conditions are acknowledged as being the reason for the demise of a group: the authoritarian type understands the circumstances to be a deserved form of punishment for that group. This type insists on maintaining distance from ‘close physical contacts’, and identifies with the in-group structure, as a means of imposing authoritarian discipline upon itself. For Adorno, it is in this way that the fascist personality evolves in industrial society.

Much may be found in common between Adorno’s concept of the authoritarian personality and the sleepwalking state observed by Broch. The negativity experienced, by those who are unable to identify with any particular group, fosters the emergence of Broch’s new human condition. The negativity may render those individuals susceptible to participation in mass behaviour, for they are in a sleepwalking state. For some, however, the awareness of ‘looking back in loneliness’ is sufficiently strong to enable a rise above twilight consciousness. For Broch, there seems to be a factor that lies beyond societal influences, which causes certain individuals to take action in response to the experience of negativity. Of importance here is the idea of difference, the feeling that drives a person to take action in order to achieve a sense of freedom. Broch’s new ‘human condition’ demonstrates that out of the realisation that values are declining, something positive emerges, ‘a lively and existential negativity of values’.\textsuperscript{208} The positive forces are generated by the individual’s recognition of the negativity, in which they are immersed.

\textsuperscript{40} T.W. Adorno et al. The Authoritarian Personality, p. 762.  
This response might be illustrated in the twenty-first century by the considerable number of people of all denominations, including agnostic and atheist, who are drawn towards religious activity even though they feel that they are unable to identify with religious worship.209 Many express the opinion that certain values, such as caring for the environment, are being eroded, whilst feeling at the same time that the possibility of making a difference as an individual seems unlikely. Nevertheless, there is an observable trend towards voluntary ethical action, which might be likened to the developments emerging from ‘I’-consciousness discussed earlier: affected individuals feel that it is necessary to take action. New human initiatives such as the ‘Green’ movement could be said to have emerged from the negativity of isolation, whilst technological advances assist in bringing isolated individuals together. What remains unclear is whether the outcome of the positive response would contribute to the resolution of opposites and thereon to the discovery of a pre-existing whole, or whether it would show that existence is incomplete. Broch nevertheless draws attention to an observable phenomenon, which does not quite match previously established human conditions. Derived from recognition of loss of life experience, it may be termed ‘negative universalism’ in that it negates a previous state of universalism, and also points towards a particular form of individualism in that it only affects those who are able to rise above twilight consciousness. In my view, Broch points to a new spiritual experience in Modernity, of which more may be uncovered through the textual analysis of the Virgil novel.

To summarise Part One of the thesis, we have seen that, as a cultural critic, Broch engaged with the work of thinkers throughout the ages, and that his ideas regarding the individual and the mass were wide ranging. Influenced by Neo-Kantian thought, he was interested in ideas concerning value. He regarded the mass as being not necessarily a physical phenomenon; its main characteristic, in his view, is that it connects individual human beings who share particular values or a psychological state. He observed that since the

209 See, for example, Newsweek/ Beliefnet poll, conducted 2-4 August 2005. See also Pew Research: Religion and Public Life Project, (9 October 2012) ‘Nones’ on the Rise.
onset of Modernity there has been an increasing tendency towards aestheticism within Western culture, as a means of representing the world in general and the individual in particular.

His work indicates that he believed ideas about individuality to have changed over time and to be continuing to do so. This development is accompanied, in Broch’s view, by growing concern with physicality at the expense of consideration of spiritual existence. He asserts that as Christianity, the value-system that prevailed in the Western world until the medieval period, disintegrates, human beings increasingly fear death, the ultimate non-value. They participate in cultural activities to overcome their existential fear. Cultural participation, he asserts, can contribute to both expansion and reduction of the ego, but extensive ego-reduction tends to render individuals as being susceptible to participation in mass activity of a totalitarian nature, in regimes in which aestheticism prevails. He was deeply anti-totalitarian and anti-slavery in outlook.

Broch sets out a structure of the ego in his theoretical essays, suggesting that the individual ego may develop in response to experience, and progress towards an increasingly ethical outlook. He observes the incidence of a ‘twilight state’, in which individuals experience a reduced level of consciousness, which renders them particularly susceptible to the influence of a leader. He also points towards the emergence of a new condition humane, ‘negative universalism’, which affects those who can withstand ‘twilight consciousness’. Those subject to this condition undergo a sense of loss of life experience (‘negative universalism’), described by Broch as ‘looking back in loneliness’.

As our attention shifts from consideration of Broch’s theoretical writing upon individuality and the masses towards interpretative analysis of these ideas in his fictional work *The Death of Virgil*, key themes that should be borne in mind are his observations upon aestheticism and value; existential fear, twilight consciousness and the emergence of a new condition humane; and changing individuality.
7. Introduction to Part Two of the Thesis

Having analysed Broch’s position as a theorist of the masses, our attention now turns towards his fictional work, *The Death of Virgil (Der Tod des Vergil)*, which explores the spiritual journey undertaken by the dying protagonist and points towards the author’s interest in the extrasensory world. The intention is to supplement the understanding of Broch’s thought reached in Part One of this study, through textual analysis of the *Virgil*, with reference to our discussion of the *Massenwahntheorie*, and to other works within his oeuvre. Of interest here is that, in comparison to theoretical writing, a fictional text offers greater scope for the expression of ideas. That the *Massenwahntheorie* and *The Death of Virgil* belong to quite different genres limits the extent to which interpretation of one may be applied to the other. Nevertheless, as Broch asserted that all that is contained within his mass psychology is also to be found in the *Virgil*, reading of the fictional work though the lens of his theoretical writing still constitutes a valid and useful exercise.210 By examining the structure and narrative technique of the *Virgil*, as well as its content, this part of the thesis aims to illuminate Broch’s ideas regarding the individual and art in an age of mass culture, and to provide a new reading of the *Virgil*. The first step in this process is to introduce the *Virgil* work.

*The Death of Virgil*, regarded by many critics as Broch’s most challenging novel, was begun in 1930s Vienna and completed in 1945, in America. The work was produced in a series of four drafts, of which *The Death of Virgil* is the last, and most extended version. For the first draft, *Die Heimkehr des Vergil*, part of which he broadcast on radio in Vienna, Broch drew on an eighteenth or nineteenth century edition of the *Aeneid* for information about the life of Virgil.211 He introduced the legend of Virgil’s intention to destroy the *Aeneid* in the second version, written in 1937.3 A further draft, titled *Erzählung*...
vom Tode, which incorporated further elements from the fourth *Eclogue* of the historical Virgil, was produced in the same year. The final version was the result of a further six years of writing. The translation into English was carried out by Jean Starr Untermeyer, who worked closely with Broch from late 1940, until the work was published.

The *Virgil* gained a mixed reception upon publication, with little initial success in Central Europe. Circumstances were unfavourable for the distribution of the work in Europe: post-war trade restrictions prevented it from becoming available in Germany and Austria until 1949, when it could be exported from Switzerland. Consequently, the work received correspondingly few European reviews. Its publication in England went almost unnoticed, the review in the *Observer* making clear that the book was not to British taste. In America, however, it prompted a much stronger response, being appraised by, amongst others, Aldous Huxley, Hannah Arendt, Günther Anders and Waldo Frank. Huxley found fault with the work’s long sentences and repetition of adjectives, whereas Anders accused it of being a ‘book for no-one’. He admitted, however, that ‘as a monument to the crossroads of our times, as a monument to futility, this work of genius remains immensely impressive’. Shortly before Broch died, Thomas Mann, whose opinion of the *Virgil* had varied whilst it was in draft form, described it as ‘one of the most extraordinary and profound experiments ever to have been taken with the flexible medium of the novel’. In a similar vein, for

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7 Ibid, p. 223. 8 Ibid, p. 220. Lützeler reports that Anders reviewed *The Death of Virgil* in the *AustroAmerican Tribune* in September 1945, and accused it of ‘theme-lessness, fear of omission, imitation of Joyce, late Romanticism, the influence of Wagner, and proximity to Heidegger’.

9

Ibid, p. 222. Lützeler cites an unpublished letter from Mann to Alvin Johnson, dated 18 April 1951, and held in the Broch Archive, Yale University Library.

George Steiner it represented ‘the only fiction to move any distance inward from Joyce’.

Broch was not alone amongst Modernist authors in his choice of a classical figure for the focus of his work. Examples of works by Broch’s contemporaries that employ classical figures include Joyce’s novel, *Ulysses*, and Jean Giono’s *Naissance de l’Odyssée*, both of which allude to the figure of Odysseus. In his selection of Virgil as protagonist, Broch was also influenced by the 1930 celebration of the bi-millennium of Virgil’s birth, a time that witnessed a resurgence of interest in the historical poet: a number of Virgilian biographies and novels were published during the 1920s and 1930s. The most influential biography of Virgil was Theodore Haecker’s 1933 *Virgil, Vater des Abendlandes*. This work added to the idea that the cultural crisis of the twentieth century might be compared to the age of Augustus, a notion to which philosophers of history had subscribed since the publication of Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*.

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Cox cites, for example, André Bellessort’s 1920 *Virgile, son œuvre et son temps*, a celebration of a ‘Fascist’ Virgil, whom Bellessort wanted to portray as the head of a new cultural tradition in France. Also, Robert Brasillach’s 1931 *Présence de Virgile* strives to portray a modern-day Fascist Virgil. (Brasillach, pupil of Bellessort, was executed for Nazi collaboration.)


See also F. Cox, ‘Envoi: The Death of Virgil’, p. 328. Cox points out that T. S. Eliot also stressed the importance of a Christian Vergil to Western civilisation, though his Vergil has a noble idea of empire, glorying in civilisation despite the cost, thereby differing radically from Haecker’s and Broch’s vision. See T.S. Eliot, ‘What is a Classic?’ and ‘Vergil and the Christian
However, the surge of interest in the historical Virgil should not only be attributed to admiration of the poet, but also to the instability of the times. The huge economic and political turmoil of the early twentieth century, particularly between the two world wars, was accompanied by the rise of mass movements and cultures in the Western world. Broch’s own observations about the similarities between the instability of his own era and that of the historical Virgil are pertinent to our analysis of mass culture in the novel. In an early commentary upon the Virgil text, he writes:

Following a decades-long bloody strife, which displays many analogies to the happenings of our time, Augustus pacified again the Western sphere of civilisation and brought it to a new prosperity. Augustus’ goals – the reconstitution of Roman glory, of the Roman spirit, of Roman paternal piety – seem on the whole to have been realised. Yet the after-effects of the profound disruptions could not be eradicated from the souls of men through such a total conservatism. Spiritually something new had to emerge, and it became Christianity.\(^\text{16}\)

Broch’s perception that something spiritually new was to emerge from the profound disruptions is particularly poignant regarding interpretation of the Virgil work. The similarities, which he finds between his own era and that of Augustus, may be attributed in part to his own experience of the Nazi totalitarian regime: he witnessed not only the propaganda that assisted its rise to power, but also its brutality. Broch was one of 70,000 people arrested by the National Socialists in Austria in March 1938 and was incarcerated for a period in Bad Aussee.\(^\text{17}\) His imprisonment affected him profoundly: he described it later as ‘a personal confrontation with the experience and reality of death’.\(^\text{18}\) He was therefore well equipped to depict the emotions of the dying protagonist Virgil. In captivity, he worked on the early draft of the Virgil work, A Story of Death, writing it ‘as a kind of private diary’.\(^\text{19}\)

The setting of the Virgil, which portrays the poet’s final eighteen hours as he returns from Athens on the ship of his emperor friend Augustus Caesar, brings together the themes of mass culture, the individual and art.

Augustus: Rekonstitution des römischen Glanzes, des römischen Geistes, des römischen Väterglaubens schienen sich allesamt verwirklicht zu haben. (KW4 457) 'Erzählung vom Tode' (Der Tod des Vergil) [I]


17 Broch was arrested on 13 March 1938, the morning after German troops marched into Austria, and detained until 31 March 1938. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, pp.154-158.


19 Ibid. See also KW4 464.

The fictional Virgil, urged by impending death, appraises his life as a privileged individual living in the mass society of the Roman state, and tries to look beyond his earthly death into the future. Written largely in lyrical style and comprising long, snake-like sentences within an inner monologue of almost five hundred pages, the text opens as the fleet enters Brundisium, and leads the reader into Virgil's consciousness, accompanying him into death and beyond. Set within chapter headings named after the classical elements, Water, Fire, Earth and Air/Ether, and including excerpts from the work of the historical poet himself, the text harks back to the time of the ancients, but, as will be shown, it also deals with modern concerns: the structure of the work bridges historical time and the modern age.216

The names of the elements provide a structure for the text of the Virgil, each section dealing with a certain period in the hours around Virgil's death. 'Water - The Arrival' ('Wasser: Die Ankunft') depicts the arrival of the dying Virgil in Brundisium, on the eve of his friend Augustus Caesar's birthday. 'Fire – The Descent' ('Feuer: Der Abstieg') is concerned with Virgil's experiences during that night in Brundisium. 'Earth – The Expectation' ('Erde: Die Erwartung') relates Virgil's final conversations, with a physician, his friends and, as a climax of the text, Augustus himself. The final chapter, 'Air – The Homecoming' ('Äther: Die Heimkehr') conveys the events taking place beyond Virgil's death.

216 Of interest with regard to parallels between the time of the historical Virgil and that portrayed in Broch's Virgil, are the works of Jürgen Heizmann and Otto Tost. See J. Heizmann (1997) Antike und Moderne in Hermann Brochs Roman "Der Tod des Vergil": Über Dichtung und Wissenschaft, Utopie und Ideologie. Tübingen: Narr.

The plot of the *Virgil* is very simple, but highly unorthodox, focusing on the plight of the protagonist, as he faces death. There is interaction with only a few others: his close friends and a doctor. The text therefore presents an extended, explorative study of the mind of a single human being, a focus that corresponds to Broch's analysis of the individual as a means of determining the underlying factors in mass psychology. The selection of the renowned figure of Virgil, whose knowledge was derived from extensive education, including study of law, medicine, philosophy, rhetoric and astronomy, lends huge scope to the imaginative power of the depicted mind. It should be noted that Broch has been accused of lacking knowledge of the historical Virgil. For example, Ziolkowski comments upon his ignorance of Latin, as well as the works and biography of the historical poet. However, Broch’s lack of knowledge of the historical Virgil is not problematic for the purposes of this study. It is clear from his correspondence and essayistic writing that he was well-read, an informed thinker. In my view, Broch’s protagonist presents a figure, through which ideas about the mass, the individual and art may be explored.

The portrayal of Virgil’s relationship with mass society, and the changes that he undergoes in the hours around his death, are of especial interest to this study. As an artist, the protagonist occupies a lonely, elevated position in the Augustan mass society, his role as poet being dependent upon the existence of lower ranks within the mass regime, but complicated by his friendship with his patron, the emperor Augustus. Virgil’s meeting with Augustus, in the third chapter, and their discussion of the role of art, and the artist’s right to destroy their own work, bring the confrontation between the individual and the mass state to a climax. The idea of friendship is important here, not only on account of the historical relationship between Virgil and Augustus, but also because the theme has been a point of discussion amongst philosophers since ancient times, and was taken up by several Modernist writers, including E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf. The depiction of the poet’s onward journey beyond earthly existence into the Afterlife, in the
The Virgil work is difficult to categorise, however, regarding genre. For Hannah Arendt,\textsuperscript{217} it is ‘one of the truly great works of German literature, unique in its kind’. As will be shown in the textual analysis, it is not an historical novel, but a work of fiction. The protagonist belongs to the modern age, indeed, to Broch’s own era, in that he has an enhanced sense of self, a quality that alienates him from the very mass culture, upon which his identity depends.\textsuperscript{218} In the opinion of Broch, the work is not exactly a novel. He finds its subtitle, ‘A Novel’, to be inadequate, and refers to the work as ‘simply something that emerged from the necessity of his constellation of problems’.\textsuperscript{219} At one point, he describes the Virgil as a ‘lyrical commentary’, a term that associates but differentiates the work from both poetry and the novel, and suggests that it belongs to a new genre.\textsuperscript{220} Of interest here is Broch’s somewhat grandiose

\textsuperscript{219} KW13/2 452. Letter from Broch to Aldous Huxley, dated 10 May 1945. Broch writes:

[Ich] empfinde aber das Buch sicherlich nicht als ‘Roman’, sondern einfach als etwas, das in Notwendigkeit aus seiner Problemkostellation entstanden ist und diese, eben infolge solcher Notwendigkeit, hoffentlich halbwegs adäquat ist.
\textsuperscript{220} KW4 474.
Ibid. 28
See KW13/3 233-234. Letter from Broch to Herbert Zand, dated 23 July 1948. Also
claim that the language of the work aimed to achieve no less than a whole new
reality, and that it ‘had an important role to play ‘in converting people back to
humanity’.

In the course of this analysis, I wish to argue that the Virgil is an
experimental, fictional, poetic work, the reading of which gives rise to a new
experience. It therefore belongs to a very particular genre, as will be shown.
By paying attention to Broch’s use of language and his engagement with ideas
derived from developments in the natural sciences, under the guiding principle
of the individual and the mass, the analysis uncovers further aspects of his
concept of individuality.

8. From the theoretical and philosophical basis to the depiction of the
masses and the individual in the Virgil novel

This chapter considers the representation of the individual and the
masses in the Virgil work, through textual analysis, with reference to our earlier
discussion of Broch’s Massenwahntheorie. Examination of the text in this way
aims to highlight the relationship between the individual and the mass, and the
role played by art and aesthetics in the value-system of the depicted mass
culture.

The depiction of the masses and the individual in the ‘Water’ chapter

An indication that the Virgil text is set within some form of authoritarian
mass society is provided in the first sentence, which informs the reader that
‘the imperial squadron is steering towards the harbour of Brundisium’. (DV
11) The idea is reinforced, a few lines further on, through the suggestion
that the fleet itself contains some form of power: it is ‘imposing, [...] of ornate
structure, [...] sumptuous, festive and grand’. (DV 11) An expectation of
obedience to the Augustan regime is intimated through the description of
‘vessels that follow one another, keels in line’, flanked by war-ships, with the

KW13/3 89. Letter from Broch to Karl Burger, dated 2 April 1946. When trying to make the
Vergil work known in Germany, Broch wrote to Karl Burger (former director of Vienna branch
Biography, p. 219.

KW4 11. 2 Ibid.
**gilded ship of Caesar remaining in centre of the fleet. (DV 11)**

It seems that the authoritarian character of the regime is not only represented by the warships, but is also carried within the aesthetic appearance of the fleet.\(^4\)

The two significant individuals in the text are introduced in swift succession. Reference to the emperor is made indirectly within the description of the imposing nature of his ship, which, ‘under purple sails, festive and grand, bears the tent of the Caesar’. (DV 11)\(^5\) As an individual, Caesar is associated from the outset with the power of the imperial regime.

Virgil, however, is referred to only as ‘the poet of the *Aeneid*’, who is on the ship ‘immediately following’ that of Caesar.\(^6\) Whilst apparently failing to name Virgil as an individual, the text simultaneously places the poet as a representative of individuals within the regime, whilst playing upon the reader’s knowledge of the canon of Virgilian works. Virgil is therefore juxtaposed as an individual with the capacity for great creativity, against his emperor friend, arch representative of the powerful mass-regime.

Direct reference is also made to the masses in the opening chapter. The fleet is greeted at the quayside by crowds, gathered in honour of the emperor’s birthday, in ‘a sparkling gigantic space packed with human bodies’. (DV 21)\(^7\) They are excited, anticipating the events to follow, waiting in particular for the arrival of the emperor, the moment in which ‘the brooding mass-beast would release its howl of joy’. (DV 22)\(^8\) The celebration is not taking place outside of the control of the authorities, however. A ‘double line of soldiers bearing torches, man after man in gleaming helmets’, is ‘obviously there to keep an unobstructed thoroughfare from the landing place into the city’. (DV 21)\(^9\) The controlling presence of the mass regime is further reinforced by a welcoming parade of troops, who perform a military salute, the ‘hearty unimpassioned performance’ of which, ‘as stipulated by the army manual’, is

\(^{222}\) Ibid. 4 My italics. Broch may allude here to the use of surface aesthetics and symbols as means of propaganda, by totalitarian movements such as the National Socialists. The ideas conveyed may be compared to those of Simmel, who observed the human tendency to rank all aspects of culture into forms of value. In his view, adornment constitutes ‘the means by which social power or dignity is transformed into visible, personal excellence’. See Simmel’s comments upon fashion and adornment, in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (1997) *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, pp. 187-211, here, p. 210. For discussion of aesthetics in National Socialist propaganda, see for example, I. Guenther (2004) *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*. Oxford; New York: Berg. 5
'regimentally right in its military ruggedness', and has the effect of being 'curiously mild and soothing'. (DV 17)\textsuperscript{10}

That the crowds allow themselves to be calmed by the parade indicates that they may be contained within the ‘sleepwalking, or twilight state’, which, as we have seen, underpins Broch’s \textit{Massenwahntheorie}, and is linked to his theory of values.\textsuperscript{11} The crowds are under the influence of what Broch describes as ‘the nebulous twilight that embraces the human, which hardly ever leaves him, and in which his will has not been a will for a long time, but only a being driven into the current of dreams’.\textsuperscript{12} This dreamlike

\textsuperscript{6} Virgil is introduced by name on the second page of the text, within the interior monologue. This is discussed in Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the \textit{Virgil} work.
\textsuperscript{7} KW4 21. 8
\textsuperscript{8} KW4 22. 9
\textsuperscript{9} KW4 21. 10
\textsuperscript{10} KW4 17.
\textsuperscript{11} See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud, and Canetti.
\textsuperscript{12} KW12 110.

state of consciousness is an ‘animalistic and almost vegetative stupefaction’,\textsuperscript{223} which ‘lies between the rational will and irrational urges of humanity’, and ‘emerges in particular intensity in the metropolis’.\textsuperscript{224} Through the urban environment, the consciousness of members of the mass has been dulled to that of lower forms of life.

As Broch\textsuperscript{225} observes in his \textit{Massenwahntheorie}, the formation of a mass may be attributed to some form of ‘irrationality impoverishment’, or suffering already undergone by its members, which has led to action against the perceived threat to the life of the individual members of the mass. When human beings experience the loss of their established values, they tend to seek substitute communities, and the irrational values that accompany the feeling of being connected with a mass.\textsuperscript{226} They may also seek a leader, who

\textsuperscript{223} KW12 112. Broch writes, ‘Es handelt sich um jenes animalische und fast vegetative Dahindämmern’.
\textsuperscript{224} KW12 156.
\textsuperscript{225} KW12 14.
\textsuperscript{226} KW12 79.
\textsuperscript{17} KW12 81.
will take on all rational functioning of their group.\(^{17}\) This is the position of the crowds at the quayside awaiting the return of the Augustan imperial fleet from Greece. They are the masses, who have suffered the bloodshed of warfare in the name of the Roman Empire. Already thrown into a state of panic, they are willing to be led, in order to escape the bewildering loss of values facing them. It is not difficult to find similarities between the depiction of crowds in the *Virgil* text, and images of the mass rallies of the National Socialist era.

A further parallel may be drawn with the historical Augustus, who took advantage of the suffering of the Roman people by glorifying his achievements in warfare in the form of art. For example, at an early stage in Augustus’ career, the Senate despatched the *Res Gestae*, an account of his deeds and covenants for the Roman people, to all the Roman provinces, because Augustus wanted to show how important his actions had been for Rome and that he deserved recognition for them from the Romans.\(^{227}\) A vast mausoleum was also built in Rome, as a political monument to family rule. The mausoleum was later redesigned to include a sundial, which was oriented so that on Augustus’ birthday, September 23\(^{rd}\), the day of the autumnal equinox, the shadow fell on the entrance to the altar, pointing to the man to whom the altar had been dedicated, thereby linking the emperor with divine power.\(^{228}\) Symbolic gestures such as these have the effect of instilling confidence amongst the masses. As Broch asserts, identification of the mass with power perceived to be held by a leader may be achieved through the use of symbols, with the effect of endowing the panic-affected mass with a sense of self-trust. He comments:

> Self-confidence must be given again to the panicked masses, admittedly through identification with the powers of the leader, which, moreover, demand blind trust. The appropriate symbolic thinking of the mass is steered through quite simple and succinct symbols, and trust, like self-trust, culminates finally in the illusion of an allpowerful, almost mystical symbol strength: in the ‘self-mythification’ of the masses. The fascists have genially recognised and mobilised all these psychical masselements throughout, that is, they have used them towards a culture of ‘political conviction’.\(^{229}\)

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\(^{228}\) Ibid, pp. 121-122.

\(^{229}\) KW12 308-309. Broch writes:

> Den panikisierten Massen muß wieder Selbstvertrauen gegeben werden, und zwar durch Identifikation mit den Führerkräften, die hiezu blindes Vertrauen fordern; dem
In the case of the Virgil text, the crowd await the appearance of the emperor himself, as symbolic representation of their desires. They anticipate the culmination of their sense of satisfaction, their appetite having been whetted by the aesthetic appearance of the imperial fleet, and the military parade. As leader, Augustus represents the physical embodiment of the promise of ‘super-satisfaction’ sought by the mass, being the ‘exponent of the value system’, as well as the bearer of the system’s dynamic.\textsuperscript{230} Comparison might be also drawn here, with the powerful use of symbols and uniforms within fascist regimes such as National Socialism.\textsuperscript{231}

The masses are not only congregated at the harbour, but are also much closer to Virgil, on the ship itself. From the ‘brutal, subhuman’ oarsmen’, to the ‘flashy’ but ‘harried’ waiters, and ‘the forever smiling head steward’ with ‘politely tip-opened hand’, the crew represents the lower reaches of the hierarchy in the Augustan mass-system. (DV 14-16)\textsuperscript{232} Each individual member of the crew is striving to satisfy the need of the passengers in order to maintain his position in the hierarchy. However, it should be noted that not only the oarsmen, but also those of superior rank in the hierarchy, the passengers, are likened to animals. ‘Wolfish, foxish, cattish, parrotfish, horsish, sharkish, they are always dedicated to a horrible, somehow self-imprisoned lust, insatiably desirous of having’. (DV 15)\textsuperscript{24} This creaturely ‘desire for having’ may be compared to Broch’s idea of the need of the individual to expand the ego through possession, discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{233} The strong wish for possession constitutes an animalistic drive, pointing to an imbalance in their constitution, which, in turn, may contribute to the sleepwalking state. The state of the

symbolhaften Denken der Masse gemäß wird der Vorgang durch ganz einfache und lapidare Symbole gelenkt, und Vertrauen wie Selbstvertrauen gipfeln schließlich in einer Vorstellung von allergrößter, beinahe mystischer Symbolstärke; in der Selbstmythisierung der Masse. Die Fascismen haben all diese psychischen Massenelemente durchaus genial erkannt und mobilisiert, d.h. zur Bildung der ‘politischen Überzeugung’ verwendet.

\textsuperscript{230} KW12 81.
\textsuperscript{232} KW4 14-16. 24
\textsuperscript{233} KW12 17. ‘Ich habe die Welt’.  
passengers therefore also corresponds to the ‘animalistic, often vegetative, darkly shadowed dream-state’ of the ‘sleepwalking’ condition described in the *Massenwahntheorie*. As Weigel observes, the greed of the masses may be a consequence of corrupt activities on Augustus’ part, in which case, the leader’s need for ego expansion appears to be reflected in those being led.

Having established the twilight nature of the mass consciousness, the narrative conveys the observation that the mass exists, so that power might be allocated to certain individuals:

These were the masses for whom Caesar had lived, for whom the empire had been established, for whom Gaul was conquered, for whom the Parthians were besieged and Germany brought into battle, these were the masses for whom the great peace of Augustus had been made, who to maintain this peace had to be brought again to civic discipline and order, to belief in the gods and to a humanly-divine morality. And these were the masses without whom no policy could be carried out and on whose support Augustus must rely if he wished to maintain himself, and naturally Augustus had no other wish. (DV 22)

Here it can be seen that the masses underpin the existence of the whole empire. The text acknowledges that the masses constitute the means by which the leader may attain and retain power. The leader is therefore dependent upon the compliance of the masses. What is of interest, however, is that this insight has been made amidst a mass immersed in the sleepwalking state. It raises the question of who is speaking in the text, a matter which is dealt with in our analysis of the narrative technique in the Virgil work.

As poet to the empire, the protagonist Virgil occupies a high ranking position in the Augustan mass society. The narrative makes clear, however, that he differentiates himself from the lower ranks, feeling that he has ‘nothing in common’ with those, who neither ‘understand nor pay attention to him’. (DV 16) His attitude towards the masses may be likened to that held by late

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234 KW12 112. Broch writes:

> Der gemeiniglich als traumhaft bezeichnete Zustand des menschlichen Seins ist in Wahrheit der eines animalischen und oftmals geradezu vegetativen, dunkelverschatteten Dahindämmerns.


236 See Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work.

237 KW4 16.
nineteenth and early twentieth century intellectuals, who feared overpopulation, in the early stages of theorising about the masses. However, he also seems to be aware of his dependence upon the existence of lower ranks, almost to the extent of admiring them. The sections of the masses who lie beneath him, propelling the ship, are described as: ‘below, magnificent, savage and sub-human, but not less-befogged, the tamed rowing mass work together, stroke after stroke’. (DV 16)

Thus, Virgil both despises and has concern for the masses simultaneously, aware that they have the potential to overthrow the status quo. This individual concern for the masses is a modern concept, which would not have been shared by the ancients. At the time of Augustan rule, the masses, or plebs constituted a significant sector of society, but they were not necessarily awarded Roman citizenship. Citizens were segregated from others, who were considered to be expendable. Thus, even though Broch finds similarities between his own era and that of the historical Virgil, he seems to acknowledge differences in attitudes towards the masses.

In order that direct contact with the masses might be avoided, Virgil’s four porters take a shortcut through the backstreets of the city. It seems that the mass culture cannot be avoided, however. Even though the ‘human howling’ becomes ‘only a distant murmur’, he is led through the ‘confusion of stalls, storage houses and dockyards’, which provide for daily mass existence. (DV 35) Carried aloft through an alley gorge, to Misery Street, where ‘daily life in its most wretched round of misery consummates itself’, he is confronted by the sheer deprivation of the poorest members of the mass society and ridiculed by the women for his status and his art. (DV 40) He is brought to

239 KW4 16.
241 KW4 35.
242 KW4 40. The slum scene with shrieking women was added in the third reworking of
realise, perhaps for the first time, that mass society can ‘transform human existence to that of mere mass animals’, and as an artist, he may have failed to represent the masses. Thus Virgil begins to be awoken from his ‘sleepwalking state’, whilst his anxiety about his situation suggests that there should be positive aspects to mass culture, which can be derived from the realm of art. Thus Broch infers that art affects consciousness and can raise human existence beyond the animal level. Unlike Freud, he comments upon how mass society might be organised.

**The depiction of the masses and the individual in the ‘Fire’ chapter**

Having established the setting of the novel within a mass society, and depicted the orchestration of a mass that is already in a state of twilight consciousness, the text proceeds into the second chapter, ‘Fire’, with a rather different approach. Virgil now rests in Caesar’s palace. The mass regime is presented rather less noticeably than in the previous chapter, though it remains, nevertheless, a background for Virgil, who feels imprisoned by the ‘breath-lack of the narrow walled and shut-in room’. (DV 95) Here, Virgil descends into his own psyche in a deep reverie, his thoughts being conveyed by means of an interior monologue. The text focuses entirely upon the mind of the individual, in accordance with Broch’s approach to the study of mass psychology. A feverish descent into hell is depicted, in which Virgil descends into the many layers of his own being. He follows a path which might be compared with that of Orpheus and Aeneas, the experience however being

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243 KW4 90.

244 See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud, and Canetti.

245 KW4 90.

246 The interior monologue is discussed in detail in Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work.

247 KW12 13. Broch writes:


KW13/3 64. Letter from Broch to Hermann Weigand, dated 12 February 1946.
entirely inward, and drawn from the psyche of the protagonist. Although Virgil’s nightmarish exploration of his own mind has been likened to the descent into hell in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, it should be noted that Broch was swift to deny any connection to any literary godfather, above all Dante. As a result of plunging deep into his own mind, Virgil’s fear of death comes strongly to the fore, even though it is an event that he ‘does not want to miss’. Broch writes:

> this alarming sense of being lost with no way out, this sharply-felt foreboding of an ever-threatening, ever-present engulfing calamity, its essence indiscernible, its source undiscoverable, especially as one was ignorant of whether the threat lurked within or without. (DV 87)\(^{248}\)

Virgil’s experiences are based on the author’s focus upon his own mind, through meditation. Broch maintained that the process of concentrating on the experience of death, through writing, was an entirely private act, which required no prior learning, but which served as a means of clarification and preparation for his own death.\(^{249}\)

In the course of his descent, Virgil encounters three terrifying figures, which emerge from the depths of his imagination, yet seem to belong to the Augustan regime. Belonging both to the realm of the individual, and to that of the mass, the figures show that the brutal nature of mass society continues to take effect in the depths of the individual psyche, even when that individual is distanced from society.\(^{250}\)

The state of mind brought about by Virgil’s fear of death corresponds to the symptoms accompanying Broch’s new human condition, ‘negative universalism’. He experiences contraction of the ego and subsequent panic, feeling isolated, and out of step with the age in which he lives. He wants to withdraw into himself: now, ‘nothing is more pressing than to remain by oneself’. (DV 75)\(^{251}\) As he descends into his psyche and confronts his own death, the masses remain present, though the festivities have receded into the

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\(^{248}\) KW 82.
\(^{249}\) KW 13/3 65. Letter from Broch to Hermann Weigand, dated 12 February 1946.
\(^{250}\) This episode is discussed more fully later. See Chapter 11b: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality. Transformation in the ‘Fire’ chapter.
\(^{251}\) KW 71. 46
KW 82.
background, ‘the drone of the festival receding into a hum, and the even tread of the withdrawing troops becoming audible as a sort of ground-bass’. (DV 87) Here, the ‘irrational expansion’ of the individual is juxtaposed against the ‘rational impoverishment’ of the mass which is continuing in the background. As the poet surrenders himself to the deep exploration of his inner being, and his own death, the masses celebrating the arrival of Augustus flee into the intoxication of the festival, and desire for a leader:

Did not the human event, however and wherever it happened, unhesitatingly disclose itself as a consequence of creaturely fear, from the twilight prison of which one could neither break out nor escape, as it was the anguish of the creature lost in a maze? [...] inviolable and unteachable, clinging to their individual and collective ardour, they screamed out of themselves and to themselves that somewhere in the thicket there must exist an excellent one, a mighty one, an extraordinary voice, the voice of a leader to whom they need only attach themselves so that in his reflected glory, in the reflection of the jubilation, the intoxication, the power of the imperial divinity they might with a gasping, wild, bullish, thundering assault still be able to clear an earthly path for themselves out of the entanglement of their existence. (DV 91-92)

Thus, as seen in our earlier discussion of the Massenwahntheorie, both the individual and the mass in the Virgil appear to be searching for a means by which their own death might be symbolically overcome. There is, however, little sense of community amongst the masses gathered to welcome Augustus. Although each individual member of the mass awaits the leader, it seems that the gathering has less to do with expression of warm birthday greetings than with ‘clearing an earthly path for themselves out of the entanglement of their existence’. The identification with a leader seems to promise the possibility of some lasting form of individual survival, which goes beyond expansion or reduction of the ego. It is the voice of the leader that is sought, and it is somehow connected to the divine. Upon close examination, it can be seen that an indication of this insight is given at an early stage in the text, through the posing of the question, ‘Did not Augustus see that this was no birthday greeting, that it had quite other implications?’ (DV 22)

50 KW4 22.
The depiction of the masses and the individual in the ‘Earth’ chapter

The return from Virgil’s reverie leads the reader into the ‘Earth’ chapter, which continues against the background of mass culture, in the emperor’s palace. In this section, however, the interaction between the mass culture and the individual becomes much more direct. A confrontation between the poet and the emperor is depicted, in which Virgil, representative of art (and individuality), discusses his right to destroy his own work, with Augustus, representative of the mass-regime. As the text proceeds, manifestations of the mass society come increasingly to the fore.

Before his meeting with Augustus, Virgil is prepared physically for his death, a process that reflects the authoritarian nature of the mass-regime. The exchange with the doctor accentuates the difference in outlook between Virgil and those around him, whilst comparing Broch’s era with that of the historical Virgil, and questioning the role of myth in the modern age. The physician’s name, ‘Charondas’, alludes to Charon, the mythological ferryman, who takes the dead across the river into Hades. Whereas in the ancient epics, the transfer to the Underworld was believed to open up a new dimension of existence, Charondas’ aid to Virgil is superficial, amounting to no more than cosmetic (aesthetic) preparation for physical death, and leaving spiritual concerns unmentioned. Charondas alludes strangely to the realms of both myth and logos, yet he remains in the physical world. His physical control of his patient comes close to overall dominance of Virgil’s being, so that Virgil is ‘reduced to a child, an animal’, in a fashion not dissimilar to the guard’s treatment of the masses, already described. (DV 279) Portrayed as a high ranking member of the mass system, ‘a classic example of a vain and narrow-minded scientist [...], who works for Caesar on account of the high income’, the doctor operates in the style of a modern dictator, a leader who works upon Virgil’s ‘ego-

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255 The discussion between Virgil and Augustus is discussed in Chapter 11d: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality. The state of being in the ‘Earth’ chapter.

256 KW4 262.
contraction’ (‘Rationalverlust’), thereby gaining some power over the individual.\textsuperscript{257}

It becomes clear that Virgil’s values, regarding medical practice and understanding of death, differ from those of his physician, for he finds Charondas’ practices unfamiliar: this is an example of disintegrating values and ‘looking back in loneliness’. Broch draws attention here to changes in attitudes in science and medicine, between his own era, and that of the historical Virgil, the latter having studied medicine.\textsuperscript{54} Charondas’ concern with the physical body, with little regard for the soul, or spiritual life, may be considered to be representative of modern secular mass culture, in which humanity is perceived to live only an earthly existence, there no longer being belief in the Afterlife. As Ariès\textsuperscript{258} observes, our focus has turned so much towards life experience, that the idea of death has been ‘furtively pushed out of the world of familiar things’. Such changes in attitude regarding death were observed by Broch himself. For example, in discussing the procedures practised by American undertakers, he comments: ‘the USA is no place to die. To be rouged and laid out in a funeral parlour is an eerie idea; they don’t admit of death here’.\textsuperscript{259} Comparison may be drawn here with the ideas set out more recently by Gronemeyer, who describes the gradual development of preoccupation with physical existence in Western culture, as a means of overcoming our existential fear.\textsuperscript{260} Gronemeyer cites the onset of the plague as being the point in history at which humanity began to fear death in the Western world. She observes thereon an increasing desire to evade existential anxiety, and a subsequent change in consciousness, which refutes the existence of the human soul beyond physical death.

The biography of the historical Virgil, which was available to Broch (known as the ‘Donatus Auctus’) describes the poet as having trained in medicine.

\textsuperscript{258} P. Ariès (1976) \textit{Western Attitudes towards Death, from the Middle Ages to the Present.} London: Marion Boyars, p. 105.

\textsuperscript{259} KW13/3 299. Lützeler observes that Broch was not spared this ritual when he died. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) \textit{Hermann Broch: A Biography}, pp. 267-268.

\textsuperscript{260} M. Gronemeyer, \textit{Das Leben als letzte Gelegenheit. Sicherheitsbedürfnisse und Zeitknappheit.}
Broch’s reference to Asclepiades may be understood as an allusion to the beginning of the drive away from the ancient, holistic approach to medicine. According to Tost, the Romans did not develop their own medical theory, but built upon the knowledge of the Greek tradition.\textsuperscript{261} It is possible, therefore, that some practices were continued in the absence of the knowledge held by the ancient Greeks. The suggestion that the Roman physician focuses solely upon physical concerns therefore points towards the totalitarian nature of Roman society, whilst drawing attention to the cyclical nature of history, which features in his *Massenwahntheorie*.

A further aspect of Roman mass society raised in the ‘Earth’ chapter is the issue of slavery. Virgil is attended by a slave, whilst he rests at the emperor’s palace, an arrangement which would probably have occurred in the time of the historical Virgil, when most households kept slaves.\textsuperscript{262} However, the text conveys the idea that slavery should be considered essential, because the ‘welfare of the state’ depends upon it. (DV 368)\textsuperscript{263} Broch thus draws attention to parallels between the Roman state of the *Virgil* work, and the modern forms of economic enslavement, which he criticises in his *Massenwahntheorie*.\textsuperscript{61}

Broch seems to act upon the position of the slave through the protagonist. When dictating his will, Virgil expresses the desire not only that his slaves should be freed upon his death, but that provision should also be made for them. Such an action would have been unlikely to occur in the time of the historical Virgil, when slaves were only released when they could purchase their freedom. Thus Broch draws attention to the existence of remnants of Roman practice in modern industrial society, and also illuminates how the underlying ideas may have changed. Virgil’s intention that conditions for slaves should be improved corresponds to the overall thrust of Broch’s

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{263 KW4 346. Broch refers here to ‘der Wohlstand des Reiches’.}
\footnote{61 KW12 543.}
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mass psychology, which not only defends the dignity and freedom of humanity, but proposes that mass society has the potential for positive and enriched human living.\textsuperscript{264}

We have already seen, that Broch differentiates between two quite different types of leader in his \textit{Massenwahntheorie}.\textsuperscript{265} The first is described as the religious bringer of salvation, or founder of religion (‘der religiöse Heilsbringer’ or ‘Religionsgründer’), whilst the second is described as an earthly victor (‘der irdische Sieger’). The two leaders operate by means of religious ecstasy, and the victor’s delusions of grandeur, respectively.\textsuperscript{266} They are brought into confrontation with one another in the ‘Earth chapter’, when Virgil discusses the role of art with Augustus. As a leader, Augustus can easily be identified as an ‘earthly victor’. He firmly believes that he must ‘erect cities because they are the supporting points of the Roman order’, and maintains that ‘the merchant is the Roman soldier of peace’, who must be tolerated if banking is to be tolerated, it being part of state’s welfare’. (DV 362)\textsuperscript{65} Ruthless in the pursuit of his own values, he subscribes to the position that Broch describes as ‘business is business’,\textsuperscript{267} that is, he is a producer of kitsch.

However, it may not be immediately apparent to the reader that Virgil fills the opposing role, that of the ‘religious bringer of salvation’ or ‘founder of religion’. In his correspondence, however, Broch\textsuperscript{67} describes Virgil as a ‘preprophet’ (‘Vor-Prophet’), a preparer of the way for prophets to come. This was the position of the historical Virgil, who, despite his pagan origins, became known as the ‘forerunner of Christ’ on account of his depiction in the \textit{Fourth Eclogue} of hope for salvation in a boy leader, whilst Aeneas became

\textsuperscript{265} KW12 81. See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud, and Canetti.
\textsuperscript{266} KW12 81. KW4 340.
‘the prototype of a Christian hero’. Virgil is juxtaposed against the other characters for, as Broch asserts, ‘even if Augustus and his other friends had access to all the knowledge of their time, ideas about being a prophet or preprophet would never have occurred to them’. The conversation between the two types of leader creates a climax in the text, which, as will be shown, is significant regarding its effect upon the reader.

Virgil’s discussion with Augustus over his right (or freedom) to destroy his own artwork draws further attention to the similarities and differences between the world of the historical Virgil, and Broch’s era. Here it becomes clear that Virgil supports the autonomy of the work of art which ‘reposes to a certain extent in itself’ (‘etwas in sich Ruhendes ist’). (DV 312) Augustus, however, maintains that the Aeneid no longer belongs to Virgil:

> It is no longer your work. It is the work of all of us. Indeed in one sense we have all laboured at it and finally it is the creation of the Roman people and their greatness. (DV 313)

Broch indicates here that the Augustan authoritarian state ignores human individuality, to the extent that it takes possession of it. Virgil’s values differ from those of the emperor. As far as Augustus is concerned, the only ‘real freedom is that which is found in the Roman order’. (DV 365) He perceives his task as that of guiding the ‘blind, gigantic masses’, who are ‘without judgement’. In his view, the masses

> follow anyone who is clever enough to wrap himself in the glittering and seductive mantle of freedom, trickily disposing its folds so as to conceal how it is patched and pieced together with scraps of meaningless and outworn form’. (DV 365)

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67 KW13/2 455. Letter from Broch to Aldous Huxley, dated 10 May 1945.
69 KW13/2 455.
70 See Chapter 10: The Narrative Technique in the 'Virgil' text, and Chapter 11: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality.
71 KW4 293. 72 KW4 293–294. 73 KW4 343. 74 Ibid.
Thus, the emperor acknowledges his understanding that the masses have difficulty in making independent judgement, and also confirms his preparedness to exploit their vulnerable position. It is made clear that the authoritarian state disregards human individuality and dignity to the extent of carrying out mass murder, as a means of asserting its power. Augustus informs Virgil:

Like Crassus, I should have to let thousands of them be slain on the cross, as much as a warning to the people as to divert them, and in order to make them, who are always ready for cruelty and fear, realise with fear and trembling, how impotent the individual is in comparison to the all-commanding state. (DV 368)268

However, unless the individual can break out of the ‘twilight consciousness’, there can be no perception of the state in which the mass is held, and consequently no individuality.

**The depiction of the masses and the individual in the ‘Ether’ chapter**

In the final section of the text, ‘Ether’, Virgil journeys beyond physical death into the cosmos, in a dreamlike sequence of events. The chapter differs from the previous three in that it is set outside of the earthly realm, and beyond the reach of human totalitarian control.269 It portrays an individual, spiritual experience, in which Virgil appraises his own earthly achievements, reflecting upon what has gone before, whilst acting as witness to changes that are occurring within his own being: his soul is fully explored, from its animal aspects to the metaphysical dimension. The chapter is therefore devoted entirely to individuality, and offers the reader not only the opportunity to act as witness, but also to participate in the purification process undergone by Virgil.

Although the final chapter focuses upon the individual after death, it also relates to the idea of value and the cyclical nature of history in the Massenwahntheorie. As we have seen, Broch perceives history to pass through four-phase cycles of changing values, the last stage of which causes the panicked individual, or mass, to attempt to restore harmony, by reinstating

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268 KW4 346.

269 Due to its unusual nature, the ‘Ether’ chapter is discussed in detail in an extended chapter later in this study. See Chapter 12a: Analysis of Virgil’s transformation in the Ether chapter, and 12b: Further Remarks on the Ether Chapter.
a central value system. The ‘Ether’ chapter might be compared to the fourth stage of the cycle: here the task is bestowed upon the individual to reflect upon the previous developments and to decide which values should be retained or restored. It is sufficient to say, at this stage, that the *Virgil* text would be incomplete without the fourth chapter, because it focuses upon an individual after he has dwelt within the mass. In Broch’s words, it is an attempt to reach ‘the greatest possible proximity to knowledge of death’. 271

To summarise this section, it has been shown that the *Virgil* work is set within an authoritarian mass culture, which draws parallels between postwar western culture, and that of the historical Virgil. The masses depicted respond to the mass-culture in ways corresponding to Broch’s theory of mass hysteria, existing within a ‘twilight consciousness’, which can be orchestrated by the controlling authorities. However, one individual, the dying protagonist Virgil, is able to glimpse outside of the ‘sleepwalking state’ in which the masses are held, and confront the emperor accordingly. The chapters alternate in their focus upon the masses and the individual, though the mass-culture never fully disappears. Even in the final chapter, which focuses upon the individual after death, it could be said that the effects of the mass culture are still present in the appraisal of Virgil’s life.

The next two chapters consider the setting of the text within the classical elements, analysing the narrative technique and its effect upon the reader, with the intention of deepening our understanding of the relationship between the mass and the individual in the *Virgil* work.

9. Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the *Virgil* Novel

At this stage in our analysis of the *Virgil*, a most striking aspect of the work should be considered: that is Broch’s selection of the four elements, Water,

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270 See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud, and Canetti. KW12 55.

271 KW13/2 320. Broch describes the work as ‘die größtmögliche Annäherung an die Todeserkenntnis’. 
Fire, Earth and Ether, as chapter headings. Whilst providing historical flavour, the choice of chapter titles is, in my opinion, somewhat unusual for a text drafted in the mid-twentieth century, when the use of the classical elements as scientific points of reference seemed to be long past. Some similarity may be drawn with Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which was originally published in serial form under titles derived from Homer’s *Odyssey* (Telemachus, Nestor, Proteus, for example), though the headings were deleted when it was published in book form.¹ Joyce’s use of *The Odyssey* was known within literary circles, and was presumably known by Broch. Broch’s use of the four elements has attracted little comment from critics, however. Apart from Heizmann, who make some reference to the elements and Lansing-Smith, who discusses the *Virgil* in the light of medieval alchemy, critics have acknowledged the chapter headings, but not pursued the question of why they might have been chosen.² The work of Schlant and Bendels, mentioned earlier, is also relevant. As will be shown in the course of this chapter, the very choice of the elements leads the reader to contemplate both ancient and modern in the same text, whilst conveying Broch’s ideas about the masses and the individual.

As stated in the Introduction to Part Two, the names of the elements provide a structure for *Virgil* text, for each section deals with a certain period

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My analysis of Broch’s use of the classical elements is in agreement with Lansing Smith’s observation that *The Death of Virgil* follows the alchemical rhythm of ricorso (a creative return to origins) and revelation. My approach to the work differs, however, in that I trace Broch’s use of the elements to the thought of the Natural Philosophers, and relate the depicted events to modern physics. I also consider how the reader might be affected by the depiction of ‘ricorso and revelation’ in the text.


in the hours around Virgil’s death. The selection of the names of the classical elements as chapter titles points towards Broch’s interest in cosmology: he described himself as a Platonist and, at one stage, considered using the
elements as the title of the novel itself. He incorporated references to the elements in his theoretical essays and short stories, a planned collection of which was named ‘Tierkreis-Erzählungen’ ('Tales of the Zodiac'). The elements are also to be found in his poetry, depicting nature during different seasons and times of day. They feature most clearly in an acrostic poem, titled 'Erde und Wasser', which includes a reference to Virgil. In this verse the elements are clearly named and described in terms of physical and emotional characteristics. The first few lines suggest that the mixing of elements has the effect of driving the earthborn further on his way ('sie treiben den Erdgeborenen immer weiter des Wegs'), with the effect of bringing about change. This is of interest regarding interpretation of the Virgil work, as will be shown.

The chapter headings direct the reader towards the discipline of Classical Natural Philosophy, the study of nature and the physical universe that was the forerunner of natural sciences such as physics. Natural Philosophy can be traced to the earliest Greek philosophers, particularly Empedocles (c. 490-430 BC), and Aristotle, who considered the natural

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4 See KW6 127-221, “Tierkreis-Erzählungen”. For example of representation of the elements in short stories, see: ‘Mit schwacher Brise segeln’ ('Sailing in a Gentle Breeze'); ‘Vorüberziehende Wolke’ ('Passing Cloud'); and ‘Der Meeresspiegel’ ('The Level of the Sea'). ‘Mit schwacher Brise segeln’ ('Sailing in a Gentle Breeze') was the original title of the novella ‘Ein Abend Angst’ ('An Evening of Fear').

5 KW8 133. The poem ‘Erde und Wasser’ is dedicated to dedicated to Eric von Kahler and Lili Loewy. Broch writes:

Erde und Wasser, bewegende Luft und verwandelndes Feuer,
Leidend und trauernd die ersten, die andern heiter und zornig,
Ringend im Zwist miteinander, sie treiben den Erdgeborenen
Immer weiter des Wegs; und furchtbar spaltend und dornig
Ist ihre gewaltige Peitsch – sie bricht ihn, wenn nicht ein neuer,
Lindernder Führer ihm wird, ein Plotius, schrotig und korrig
Charongleich über finstere Flut ihn lenkt mit dem Steuer

In die Gefilde der seligen Wesen, wo dem Verlorenen
Hoffnung zuteil wird wie einstens Vergil, dem selig Erkorenen.
world and its processes. They attempted to understand the underlying laws of nature, by studying nature itself. Their understanding of the world was that everything has always existed, and that nature is in a constant state of transformation. Change was therefore considered to be a reality. These ‘Natural Philosophers’ took the first steps towards scientific reasoning, and, given Broch’s unusual approach to studying the mass and the individual, an understanding of the development of their ideas may help to illuminate his thought.

Classical Natural Philosophy

In European Culture, the doctrine of the four elements began in the thought of Empedocles. In contrast to previous thinkers, who perceived the source of everything to be one substance, such as air, or water, Empedocles believed that all matter can be reduced to the four elements (or ‘roots’), earth, fire, wind and water. By ‘root’, or element, Empedocles refers to that which cannot be further reduced: all things can be created from combinations of the four elements, so that ‘fourness’ lies at the root of all being. Empedocles’ teaching on the elements combined scientific method with mythological illustration, because he maintained that the elements refer to the gods. Zeus is the fire; Hera is the air; Hades is the earth, whilst water is adopted by the

272 The Natural Philosophers also include Thales, (from Miletus, 585 BC), who thought that the source of all things was water; Anaximander (Miletus, 585 BC), who perceived the world to be one of many worlds that evolves and dissolves in what he termed the ‘boundless’; Anaximenes (Miletus, 570-526 BC), who thought that all things comes from air, or vapour. Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes all believed in the existence of a single substance as the source of all things. The ‘Eleatics’ (Elea, 500 BC) were interested in the problem of how one substance might change into another. For Parmenides (Elea, ca. 510 BC), the senses may provide an incorrect picture of the world, which does not correspond to the reason of the perceiver. Heraclitus (from Ephesus, c. 540-480 BC), regarded fire as being the material source of all natural substances, a physical manifestation of Logos.

273 J. Soetebeer (2007) ‘Vom Anschauen der Welt bei Empedokles’, Die Drei, 1, pp. 44-53, here, pp. 46-47. According to Soetebeer, the term for ‘roots’ used by Empedocles ‘rhizómata’, was later translated into the Latin ‘elementum’. Soetebeer also points out that the Greek ‘stoicheion’ (translated into German as ‘Stoff’ /’Ursstoff’), may be translated into ‘letters’ (‘Buchstabe’).

274 This principle contrasts with the thought of previous thinkers, who assumed the presence of just one element as the primordial substance. For Heraclitus, fire was the original element (‘Urelement’) of the world; for Thales. it was water and for Anaximenes, it was air.
local Sicilian god Nestis. This establishes a starting point for philosophy, which acknowledges the existence of unseen forces.\footnote{J. Soetebeer, ‘Vom Anschauen der Welt bei Empedokles’, p. 46. Soetebeer cites W. Capelle (1968) \textit{Die Vorsokratiker}. Stuttgart: Kröner, pp. 181-249.}

Empedocles believed that the elements work together in cool-moist-watery and warm-moist-airy combinations, but the four roots remain unchanged. They adopt particular forms of appearance, such as rain, mist, vapour or cloud, the form being defined by the predominant influence of either Earth or Fire. The ‘roots’ are considered to be equivalent, although fire has the additional capacity of being able to harden mixtures, and is therefore viewed as a fundamental principle of living things. The mixing of the elements is understood by Empedocles to be the effective unity of opposing principles: affinity and enmity.\footnote{Ibid, p. 47. Soetebeer cites Fragment 18 in W. Capelle, \textit{Die Vorsokratiker}, p. 195ff.} Affinity, or love, has the power to attract and unify, whereas enmity, or strife, repels and separates. These powers can combine, similar to the mixing of colours on an artist’s palette, enabling all things to appear to us as a result of the mixing of the elements.\footnote{Ibid, p. 48. Soetebeer cites Fragment 13 in W. Capelle, \textit{Die Vorsokratiker}, p. 193ff.}

Empedocles’ thought was taken up by Aristotle, who developed a framework within which issues such as motion, causation, place and time could be explored. In the modern world, this has evolved into the science of physics. Using both reason and senses, he founded a system of classification for the sciences, based on what an object can do. Living things were divided into plants and creatures, the latter being subdivided into animals and human. Non-living things were regarded as having potential for change. For Aristotle, humanity stood in the first tier of classification, because of his ability to reason. Beyond humanity, lay the ‘first mover’, or ‘God’, who remained at rest, but was formal cause of movement of the heavenly bodies and therefore all movement in nature.

Natural Philosophy later branched into disciplines such as astronomy, cosmology, the infinite, matter, and mechanics. It was taken up by sixteenth century thinkers such as Copernicus (1473-1543), Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo (1564-1642), who worked from observation of nature, and introduced
the ‘empirical method’ of science. Francis Bacon (1521-1626) expounded the
discipline as a means of challenging tradition concerning scientific
methodology, proposing possible conceptions of society, and questions of
ethics in the transition from the Renaissance to the early modern era.\textsuperscript{278}

Natural Philosophers approach problems through the process termed by
Bacon\textsuperscript{279} as ‘induction’, a fully empirical scientific method, by which ‘one by
slow and faithful toil gathers information from things and brings it into
understanding’. By this method, knowledge acquired from observation is held
to be true until further knowledge shows otherwise. Natural Philosophy
continued to develop, emerging in the seventeenth century in the thought of
pantheist Spinoza (1632-1677), who believed all things to be an expression of
God and nature. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Natural
Philosophy of the ancient Greeks was to inspire the thought of the German
Idealists Kant, Fichte, Schelling (1775-1854) and Hegel (1770-1831), although
the discipline was losing favour generally because of its close association with
alchemy. As Hegel, who looked to the thought of
Empedocles and Aristotle, commented regrettfully in his \textit{Philosophy of Nature}
\textit{(Naturphilosophie)},\textsuperscript{14} ‘no educated person, and certainly no physicist or
chemist is now permitted, under any circumstances, to mention the four
elements anywhere’.

\textbf{Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy}

Broch showed interest in this area of thought over a considerable period. In
his early days at university, in 1904-5, he attended classes in Classical Natural
Philosophy, as a non-matriculating student.\textsuperscript{280} At a later stage, in 1920, he

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid. See B. Farrington (1964) \textit{The Philosophy of Francis Bacon}. Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, p.89.  
\textsuperscript{280} KW 10/2
195.

According to Lützeler, Broch attended classes (as a non-matriculating student), on ‘Practical
Philosophy’, and ‘Aristotle, Calculus’ and ‘Principles of the Philosophy of Natural Science’,
from autumn 1904 until summer 1906 at the University of Vienna. He attended Austrian
physicist Ludwig Boltzmann’s lecture, ‘Prinzipien der Naturphilosophie’ (‘Principles of Natural
considered Natural Philosophy to be pertinent to his discussion of the philosophy of history, as shown in his ‘Theorie der Geschichtsschreibung und der Geschichtsphilosophie’. This study, of which only part is published, addresses the relationship between science, philosophy and perception-theory. It conveys Broch’s awareness of a division that had emerged between the methodology of the natural sciences and that of Natural Philosophy. The full work, a manuscript of 303 pages, with many handwritten alterations, demonstrates his sustained interest in the field of Natural Philosophy.

Thus, at a time when many thinkers, such as the Logical Positivists, placed increasing faith in scientific methods that investigated cause and effect, Broch looked to Natural Philosophy as a means of exploring phenomena. Some similarity may be seen here with Broch’s approach to his study of the masses. Whereas most other theorists analysed the behaviour of crowds, Broch focused on the individual, in order to gather information about the mass. In this respect, he may be understood to have adopted the approach of Natural

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281 KW10/2 94-155. The title may be translated as ‘Theory of Writing History and Philosophy of History’) 1920. Reference is made to Bacon in this work: see KW10/2 97. See KW10/2 106-110, for reference to ‘Naturphilosophie’.

282 See R. Bendels, Erzählen zwischen Hilbert und Einstein: Naturwissenschaft und Literatur in Hermann Brochs “Eine methodologische Novelle” und Robert Musils “Drei Frauen”, pp.6770. According to Ruth Bendels, the published essay focuses on aspects of the whole work not concerned with the Natural Sciences: the longest chapter, ‘Das mathematische Interesse’, and ‘Das physikalische und das biologische Interesse’, which Bendels describes as dealing only with physics, are not included in the published work.

283 Logical Positivism is a philosophical approach, which accepts only testable statements as having meaning. Broch studied at the University of Vienna, when Logical Positivism was flourishing. He studied philosophy under Moritz Schlick, nominal leader of the Vienna Circle and the Logical Positivist movement, and Rudolf Carnap. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, pp. 62-65. Lützeler refers here to the ‘Neo-Positivist’ movement.
Philosophy: he observed phenomena in order to induce philosophical conclusions.
Broch’s interest in Natural Philosophy is not simply a return to ancient thought, however, but shows influence of the Neo-Kantian movement. In addition to his engagement with Neo-Kantian ideas regarding value, his philosophical work, including the 1920 essay mentioned above, indicates that he was very well acquainted with the work of Windelband, Eucken, Rickert, and Dilthey of the Baden or South-Western School of Neo-Kantianism.\footnote{See KW10/2 94-155 ‘Theorie der Geschichtsschreibung und der Geschichtsphilosophie’ (1920), in which Broch refers to Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936), and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), as well as Georg Simmel (1858-1918) and Paul Natorp (1854-1924). See KW10/2 109-110 for reference to Simmel, Windelband, Rickert, Dilthey and Natorp. In this essay, reference is also made to Emil Lask, and H. Lotze. (According to Otfried Höffe, Dilthey did not, strictly speaking, belong to the Neo-Kantians, though his thought was strongly influenced by Kant. See Höffe, O. (trans. Farrier, M.) (1994) Immanuel Kant. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, p. 242.) See also KW10/2 11-77, ‘Zur Erkenntnis dieser Zeit’ 1917-1919. Broch refers to several Neo-Kantian thinkers, including Eucken, in this essay. References to other Neo-Kantian thinkers also arise elsewhere in Broch’s theoretical writing. They include Hermann Cohen, and Ernst Cassirer of the Marburg school, and Ernst Troeltsch of the Baden, or Southwest school. Reference is also made to Friedrich Lange, Hans Vaihinger, Edmund Husserl, Max Weber, Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger. See KW10/1 and KW10/2.} Both Dilthey and Rickert, with whom Broch’s thought can be especially associated, demonstrated interest in Natural Philosophy.\footnote{Höffe comments upon the engagement of Neo-Kantian thinkers with the natural sciences. See O. Höffe, Immanuel Kant, pp. 240-242. \footnote{KW10/2 195. Broch write: Als ich 1904 die Wiener Universität bezog, um Mathematik und Philosophie zu studieren, erfuhr ich – wie so viele andere - bestürzt und enttäuscht, daß ich nicht} 

However, it should be noted that whereas fellow Neo-Kantians interpreted the work of Kant in an anti-metaphysical manner, Broch did not reject metaphysics.\footnote{KW10/2 195. Broch write: Als ich 1904 die Wiener Universität bezog, um Mathematik und Philosophie zu studieren, erfuhr ich – wie so viele andere - bestürzt und enttäuscht, daß ich nicht} He experienced deep metaphysical disappointment, when he first attended university and found that he was not permitted to ask questions of a metaphysical nature. He writes:

When I enrolled at the University of Vienna in 1904 to study mathematics and philosophy, I learned with shock and disappointment that, like so many others, I was not entitled to ask all – or even any- of the metaphysical questions I had come with. I learnt there was no hope of any kind of answer. It was the first flowering of ‘scientific positivism’.\footnote{Ibid, p. 243.} 

As we have seen, Broch, although influenced by Nietzsche, did not adopt a nihilistic approach to philosophy. He considered ethics to be an essential part of philosophy, and opposed the flourishing Viennese Logical
berechtigt sei, irgendeine all der metaphysischen Fragen zu stellen, mit denen beladen ich gekommen war; ich erfühle, daß es keine Hoffnung auf irgendeine Beantwortung gab.

Positivism that he witnessed at university in the 1920s. As Lützeler records in his biography of Broch, the Neo-Positivists had abandoned the search for answers to what Broch considered to be fundamental questions in philosophy. Broch rejected this branch of philosophical study, claiming that 'if one judges by the ethical content then positivist “scientific” philosophy is philosophy no longer'.

Broch, therefore, demonstrated interest in the methods of Natural Philosophy, and Neo-Kantianism, though he retained metaphysics. This is important in developing our understanding of his ideas about the individual in the post-industrial age. By setting out the Virgil text within the elements, Broch establishes a scientific framework in the mind of the reader, within which Neo-Kantian ideas upon areas such as psychology, philosophy and epistemology might be explored. His conviction that literature has the scope for embracing ideas excluded from scientific study is set out in the 'Methodological Prospectus' for The Sleepwalkers trilogy. He writes:

This novel is based on the understanding that literature should deal with those human problems, which on the one hand are excluded from scientific study because they are completely unsuited for rational analysis, and only lead apparent existence deeper into a dying philosophical 'feuilletonism'; and on the other hand are not yet reached by the grasp of science, in its slower, more precise progress. The vested rights of literature – between the 'no longer' and the 'not yet' of science – have become more limited but also surely more certain, and embrace the whole sphere of irrational experience and actually, in the border territory, in which the irrational appears as fact, become expressive and portrayable.

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284 P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, p. 65. I understand Lützeler’s use of the term 'Neo-Positivism' to refer to the Logical Positivism movement. Viennese Logical Positivism had been influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell. The movement was led at the University of Vienna, by Moritz Schlick, who appointed Rudolf Carnap to his staff in 1926. Carnap, who found metaphysics to be meaningless, found that he differed from Wittgenstein, but was impressed by Russell’s idea that logic should have a similar relationship to modern philosophy as mathematics has to physics.

285 Ibid.

25 KW10/1 167-190, 'Das Unmittelbare in Philosophie und Dichtung' c.1932. Broch writes, 'Am Bestande der Ethik gemessen, ist die positivistische, 'wissenschaftliche' Philosophie keine Philosophie mehr'.

286 KW1 719-721, here, p. 719. Broch writes:

Dieser Roman hat zur Voraussetzung, daß die Literatur mit jenen menschlichen Problemen sich zu befassen hat, die einst von der Wissenschaft ausgeschieden werden, weil sie einer rationalen Behandlung überhaupt nicht zugänglich sind, und nur mehr in einem absterbenden philosophischen Feuilletonismus ein Scheinleben
Thus for Broch, literature has the capacity for dealing with those areas of life that remain beyond the grasp of science. It explores the realm lying between that which science recognises as known and that which is not yet known. The use of the elements as chapter titles develops the method begun in *The Sleepwalkers*, establishing a structure that points the reader more directly towards Natural Philosophy.

**The special case of Ether**

Upon considering Broch’s interest in Natural Philosophy, study of the ‘Ether’, during his own era, should not be overlooked. ‘Ether’ seems to have taken a slightly different historical path to the other elements: regarded by Aristotle as the ‘quinta essential’, the stuff of which the heavens are made’, its association with scientific (and philosophical) study has been retained until the present day. As Broch discussed Einstein’s ‘Special Theory of Relativity’, which resulted from nineteenth century ‘Ether theories’, and applied his knowledge of development in physics to his ideas about literature, the development of the study of this element should be considered at this stage.27

The first *theory* of ‘Ether’ (or ‘Aither’) appeared in Aristotle’s writing on the elements, though Ether had been depicted in Homer’s poetry, described as the ‘brilliant, upper realm of air, akin to men’s souls’.28 Similar ideas occur...
Quantum Mechanics had greater influence upon his thought than Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. See, for example, Lützeler, ibid. E. Schlant, ‘Hermann Broch and Modern Physics’, pp. 69-75.

Of importance to my argument, is that the framing of the Virgil work within the classical elements draws attention to human awareness and knowledge of the world. 28 N. Cantor and M.J.S. Hodge, Conceptions of Ether: Studies in the History of Ether, 17401900, p. 3.

in the thought of Greek thinkers Anaximenes and Heraclitus, whose cosmologies appear to be founded upon the idea of ‘aer’, or ‘aether’: for Anaximenes, ‘aer’ was the source from which all else arose. 29 The idea of the existence of primitive matter (‘Urstoff’), or world ether (‘Weltäther’), which has the capacity to unite all natural phenomena, continued from Aristotle’s doctrine, to emerge in the thought of many Western thinkers, including Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. For Hegel, ‘ether lies at the basis of all experience’. 30

Ether became a generally recognisable object of research in the nineteenth century, when theories were developed and tested to explain the changing concepts of Ether held by scientists, including the suggestion that it does not exist, because it cannot be observed. 31 ‘Various ethereal media’, including ‘electric, magnetic, caloric, luminiferous and gravitational, were subjected to specialist investigation’. 32 Arising from these experiments, the theory, that light consists of waves, which seem to require a medium in space, probably contributed to acceptance of a single ‘Weltaether’. 33 Faraday was of the conviction that aether, should it exist, might have uses.

28 Ibid. 30


31 M. Norton Wise, ‘German Concepts of Force, Energy and the Electromagnetic Ether 1845-1880’, p. 269. Norton Wise acknowledges that the notion of the existence of a single pervasive ether that unites all natural phenomena was not new in the middle of the nineteenth century. He observes that Descartes, Leibniz and Kant had long before provided respectability for the idea of primitive matter (‘Urstoff’ or ‘Weltäther’) as a possible ground for systematic natural philosophy. He asserts, however, that precise description of empirically distinguishable phenomena, such as electricity, magnetism and heat, had generated more specific referents than simply ‘ether’.

Many ethereal media – electric, magnetic, caloric, luminiferous and gravitational – populated different regions of specialised investigation. Not until the late 1840s did the general philosophical and the specialised claims find a common foundation
Acceptable across the broad spectrum of physical scientists. And only then did ‘ether’ turn into a generally recognisable object of research. As Cantor and Hodge observe in the Introduction to *Conceptions of Ether*, the ether theories of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) provided cases exemplary enough to suggest an introductory characterisation of ether theories in general. N. Cantor and M.J.S. Hodge, *Conceptions of Ether: Studies in the History of Ether*, 1740-1900, p. 1.

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32 Ibid.  
33 Ibid.  
34 Ibid.


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Other than the simple ‘conveyance of radiations’ The wave theory of light also gave rise to the notion of ‘Luminiferous Ether’, which was considered to be ‘an elastic solid that filled space and whose transverse undulations constituted light waves’.35 The idea of the optical ether also being the seat of electrical and magnetic effects, was demonstrated by James Clerk Maxwell, whilst William Thomson asserted that atoms of ordinary matter were nothing but patterns of vortex motion in a ubiquitous, space-filling motion’.36

The idea that ether might not exist, posed by Maxwell, proposed that the existence of ether would exert a drag on the earth as it moved through space, causing light to travel at different speeds in different directions. However, the ‘Michelson-Morley’ experiments, conducted in 1881 and 1887, demonstrated that light travelled at the same speed in all directions, suggesting that there is no ‘ether-wind’ to impel or impede its progress. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, further interpretation of the ideas of Maxwell and Thomson underpinned the notion of the existence of a truly ‘Universal Ether’ (‘Sound Ether’), regarded as a ‘fundamental’ and ‘primordial medium’, ‘assumed to be the ultimate seat of all phenomena’.37 The experiments gave rise to Einstein’s 1905 paper, ‘On the Electro-dynamic Properties of Moving Bodies’, which suggested that the space previously presumed to be occupied by ether is not a simple, invariant container of matter, light, magnetism and gravity, but is itself subject to transformation as a result of them’.38

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**Broch and the Theory of Relativity**

As indicated above, the ideas generated by nineteenth century ‘Ether theories’ were of interest to Broch.39 He corresponded with Einstein40 from

Research carried out by George Fitzgerald, Oliver Lodge, Joseph Larmor and others. See D.M. Siegel, Ibid, p. 239.

For detailed analysis of Broch’s engagement with developments in modern physics, see note 31. 1937 until 1945 and made reference to the ‘Theory of Relativity’ in his essays and letters. His volume of Cassirer’s 1921 work, Zur Einstein’schen Relativitätstheorie (On Einstein’s Theory of Relativity), is annotated and corrected throughout. Whilst perhaps influenced by Cassirer, Broch seems to have been developing his own ideas regarding the theory of relativity and philosophical thought, connecting the developments in physics to the thought of earlier natural philosophers Galileo, Kepler and Aristotle. He writes:

Through radical de-nominalisation of the Ether, the theory of relativity has resolved the physical conception of the world from the static into the dynamic, with a certain finality. The extraordinary meaning of this fact for the logical basis of scientific concepts was emphasised most sharply by Cohen in the critical postscript to Lange’s ‘History of Materialism and Critique of its Present Significance.’ Here, those tendencies inaugurated by Galileo and Kepler are fulfilled, everywhere the sensory-empirical strives to resolve into the logical-lawful, and under strict keeping of this empirical line of vision the astonished, Aristotelian first question of all recognition/understanding, the ontological ‘What is that?’ unfolds inductively to the unity of the cosmos in the unity of the Logos. All natural science is ontologically the definition of substance/essence, and in the resolving of substance modern science accepts the idealistic position of epistemology; it is the ontology of Idealism.


In 1933, Broch expressed in his correspondence that he found Cassirer’s work concerning symbols to be inadequate. See KW13/1 262. Letter to Daisy Brody dated 18 November 1933. Broch writes: ‘Aber ich hatte große Lust einiges Erkenntnistheoretisches und Ähnliches über das Symbol zu sagen, schon weil Cassirers drei dicke Bücher so unzulänglich sind’. (Broch refers here to Ernst Cassirer’s three volume Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, 1923-1929)

Draft Fragment, undated. Dated as 1918 by P.M. Lützeler and described as a plan for ‘Zur Erkenntnis dieser Zeit’, Draft C [1918] YUL, YCGL MSS 1, Box 57, Folder 1356)


For Broch, the recent discoveries in the field of physics applied not only to the field of empirical science, but also to literature. The theme of relativity occurs in his fictional work. For example, in his early novel, The Unknown Quantity the mathematician protagonist Hieck struggles to account for phenomena that he is unable to measure. The theory of relativity appears in the ‘Epistemological Excursus’ of The Sleepwalkers, as part of the discussion of the disintegration of values. Indirect reference to relativity is made by the doctor narrator of The Spell, who informs the reader that he ‘abandoned the scientific world for the sake of a different kind of knowledge, which was to be even stronger than all oblivion’. As will be shown, the theme also appears in the Virgil novel.
Discussion of the significance of the theory of relativity to literature is to be found in the 1936 essay, ‘James Joyce and the Present Age’. Here, Broch explains the need for both the observer and the act of seeing to be drawn into the field of observation, so that theoretical unity of physical object and the physical act of seeing may be established. This is an issue with which Broch engaged for a considerable period, as he explained to Hermann Weyl, towards the end of his life:

For about thirty years, I have been wrestling with the question of the observer on the field of observation, a question which first occurred to me in connection with the theory of relativity, and from which I have learned that positivistic means offer no satisfactory solution.

Substanz und in der Auflösung der Substanz fügt sich die moderne Naturwissenschaft in den idealistischen Stand der Erkenntnistheorie; sie ist die Ontologie des Idealismus.

The connection between Broch’s writing and relativity was acknowledged by Einstein himself. In an undated letter to Broch, Einstein conveyed his fascination with the Virgil work and its capacity to express that to which he had dedicated himself in the field of science. He writes:

I am fascinated by your Virgil and constantly defend myself against it. The book shows me clearly, what I fled from, when I devoted myself entirely to science; I was already aware, although not so clearly* that what you said about intuition in your letter,
is spoken to me from the soul. The logical form exhausts namely the nature/essence/Being of perception as little as metre (exhausts) the Being of poetry or the theory of rhythm and chords/harmony (exhausts) the Being of music. The essential thing remains mysterious and will always remain so, can only be felt, but not grasped.

* Flight from the ‘I’ and from ‘we’ into the ‘it’.

Here, Einstein recognises that Broch’s approach to writing evokes something which evaded his own work in the scientific field. His fascination with the \textit{Virgil} suggests that he perceives a connection between Broch’s thought and the concept of relativity. By combining science and literature, Broch’s approach to writing might be understood as belonging to the tradition of Natural Philosophy.

To summarise this section, it can be seen that Broch’s use of the classical elements as chapter titles establishes an imaginary framework in the mind of the reader, which extends from the earliest scientific and philosophical thought into the twentieth century, through the discipline of ‘Natural Philosophy’. In the course of this study, Natural Philosophy is shown to be a structural device in the \textit{Virgil} novel, within which the problem of modern aesthetics is unfolded. The division of the text into four elements is the first indication of this structure, but, as will become apparent in the following textual analysis, the elements also permeate the text itself, playing a key role in conveying Broch’s ideas about the individual and its relationship to the mass.

\textbf{Textual Analysis of the \textit{Virgil} novel: Chapter 1. ‘Water’}

Upon close analysis, it can be seen that the opening paragraph of the \textit{Virgil} novel, indeed the opening sentence of the German text, contains awareness...
of all four elements. The air appears in the form of ‘a soft, hardly noticeable cross wind’ (‘einem leisen, kaum merklichen Gegenwind’), which affects the water to create the ‘waves of the Adriatic sea’ (‘Wellen des adriatischen Meeres’). Earth is represented by ‘gentle hills of the Calabrian coast’ (‘die Flachhügel der kalabrische Küste’), whilst fire combines with air to form ‘the wood-smoke of the fires’ (‘das Holzfeuer der Herdstätten’). Additional reference is made to water through ‘the harbour’ (‘der Hafen’), ‘the sea’ (‘der See’), ‘the channel’ (die Fluten’), and ‘the water’ (‘das Wasser’). (DV 11) 287

The elements are described as they appear to the senses of a third person narrator. It is reported, through knowledge gained through visual perception, that ‘here the water had become mirror-smooth; mother of pearl spread over the open shell of heaven’. (DV 11) 53 Fire is detected through the sense of smell (‘man roch das Holzfeuer der Herdstätten’). The scent is particular, being that of wood-smoke, and it comes from hearths, which evokes the idea of human homes. A more general impression of human life is conveyed through sound, which is ‘blown over from the shore: ‘whenever a sound of life, a hammering or a summons, was blown over from the shore’ (‘so oft die Töne des Lebens, ein Hämmer oder ein Ruf von dort hergeweht und herangetragen wurden’). (DV 11) 288

As indicated above, water is present in abundance in these opening lines. ‘Steel-blue’, it moves lightly in waves, becoming ‘mirror smooth’ along the coast. The coast itself bears the marks of the activity of the water, being described as ‘white-sprayed’ (‘weißbespülte’), an indication that the water affects its environment. Each of these references is concerned with the elements, and their interaction, through either enmity or affinity, as in Empedocles’ description of the four roots. The water responds to the movement of the air, by creating waves and becoming mirror-like. It is shaped by the earth, as a result of the human action of forming breakwaters that

287 KW4 11. 53 Ibid. Broch writes:
    das Wasser war beinahe spiegelglatt geworden; perlmuttern war darüber die Muschel des Himmels geöffnet.

288 Ibid.
protect the villages and settlements. It has reacted with the air, warmth and cold, and the earth, in order to form white spray along the coast.

This scene depicts the protagonist Virgil’s sensory awareness of his environment, of his individual Being. The presence of human activity along the coast is associated with the water as a life-giving element, but, by the inclusion of ‘the deathly loneliness of the sea’ (‘die todesahnende Einsamkeit der See’), Broch also conveys awareness that water can be life-threatening. (DV 11)\(^{289}\)

The idea that the very water which sustains life carries death within it is the first of a succession of opposing concepts, to which indirect reference is made through the elements. Further examples include the breath, or air, that flows not only from the dying Virgil, but also from the spiritual realm into the earthly world. (DV 19)\(^{290}\) The suggestion that Virgil is deeply connected to the earth, yet somehow rising above it through his consciousness is conveyed through reference to the stones, humus and vegetation in the lands that ‘he had traversed, […] how buried all this and yet how immediate, objects, countries, cities, how they all lay behind him, about him, within him, how entirely they were his own’. (DV 31)\(^{291}\) Reference to Virgil being ‘borne floatingly aloft over festival fires’ alludes to the idea that fire may be both destructive and celebratory: Virgil is on the brink of leaving his earthly existence, but about to enter the Afterlife. (DV 50)\(^{58}\) He is therefore in a state of change: he is ‘becoming’, rather than ‘being’.

The elements in the opening scene constitute the environment, whilst Virgil, surrounded by water and heading towards land, travels by ship, somewhat protected from the elements. He is ‘in between’, and the plot depicts his homecoming, not only to Brundisium, but also to his spiritual origin.\(^{292}\) His consciousness is further conveyed through awareness of the constant

\(^{289}\mathbf{Ibid.}\)

\(^{290}\mathbf{KW4}\ 19.

\(^{291}\mathbf{KW4}\ 31.

\(^{58}\mathbf{KW4}\ 50.

interaction between the elements and humanity, as indicated in the phrase, ‘changed with the peaceful stir of friendly human activity’ (‘sich ins friedvoll Freudige menschlicher Tätigkeit wandelte’). (DV 11)\textsuperscript{60} Here, Broch acknowledges the churning effect that humans, being simultaneously dependent on, and threatened by, the four roots, have upon their environment. The conveyed consciousness has knowledge of humanity’s animal origins and, simultaneously, an awareness of the effect of humanity upon its environment. The image of the mussel shell in the opening paragraph is especially rich in allusion to the mixing of the elements, as understood by Classical Natural Philosophy.\textsuperscript{293} It also requires the complete engagement of the reader. In the text the heavens are likened to a mussel, a product of the sea, its inner mother-of-pearl reflecting its origin, the water. It is known by the reader that the shell is protective, brittle. It has been hardened or fired by the action of the water, working in conjunction with minerals derived from the water’s action on the rocks of the earth. The beauty of the mother-of-pearl draws the onlooker to gain a glimpse of the Logos. Inside the shell lies a delicate organism, which grows in response to the effects of the elements. The shell is open, so that the world within can be viewed from outside: it is no longer entirely closed as an organism. The metaphor of the mussel directs the reader towards looking at the earth, or Virgil himself, as such an organism, an individual entity that is slightly opened to the cosmos: ‘here the water had become mirror-smooth; mother of pearl spread over the open shell of heaven’. (DV 11)\textsuperscript{62} The example of the mussel shell provides an indication of how the reader might engage with, and be affected by, the text from the outset: the reader’s response is addressed more fully in the next chapter.

Overall, the presence of all four elements contributes to Broch’s depiction of and concern with Being. The effect is reinforced in the German text by the inclusion of the noun ‘Sein’ (‘Being’), in the phrase, ‘sanft überglänzt von der Nähe menschlichen Seins und Hausens’.\textsuperscript{63} The use of the noun conveys the

\textsuperscript{293} The German text refers directly to ‘die Muschel’: ‘perlmuttern war darüber die Muschel des Himmels geöffnet’. The English translation refers only to ‘mother of pearl’. \textsuperscript{62} Ibid. Broch writes:

\[\text{das Wasser war beinahe spiegelglatt geworden; perlmuttern war darüber die Muschel des Himmelsgeöffnet.}\]
sense that ‘to be’ is a state beyond that of merely existing. (It is interesting to note that ‘Sein’ occurs frequently in the text, in various forms, each pointing to awareness of existence). In the example cited above, it alludes, in my view, to human consciousness, the knowledge of existence, which is partially attained through sensory experience. This awareness is deepened in the text, by the use of the word ‘Häuser’ (DV 12), which conveys not only the sense of living, but also of dwelling, or knowledge of living in a particular place and time. Similarly, reference to ‘the deathly loneliness of the sea’ (DV 12) indicates consciousness beyond that of mere sensory awareness. Thus, the opening paragraph of the Virgil hints at the existential nature of Broch’s thought. The ideas introduced here are developed in the narrative technique, which is discussed in the following chapter.


65 KW4 12. 66 KW4
12. My italics.

10. Analysis of the narrative technique in the Virgil novel: the ‘interior monologue’ and mystical use of language

This chapter examines the narrative technique employed in the Virgil work, with the intention of deepening our understanding of its structure and the effect
that it might have upon the reader. Bearing in mind that the work, in the words of Broch, is an ‘interior monologue’, the question of the voice in the text, or rather, who is speaking through the narrative, is of importance here. By analysing different aspects of the narrative voice, I wish to uncover the nature of the relationship between the protagonist, the text and the reader. This is an important step towards understanding the relationship between the individual, the mass, and art in the work, and therefore towards understanding Broch’s intentions in writing it.

My discussion builds upon the work of several narrative theorists, including that of Franz Stanzel,\textsuperscript{294} who examines ‘narrative situations’, or ‘points of view’ and Gerard Genette, who analyses the components that make up the telling of the story. In addition, Dorrit Cohn’s research into the depiction of consciousness in fictional texts is of especial interest to my discussion, for her analyses include aspects of the narrative technique in \textit{The Sleepwalkers} and in the \textit{Virgil} text.\textsuperscript{295} My argument extends beyond that of Cohn, however, in that it also considers the effect of the text upon the reader. In this respect, the work of Wolfgang Iser upon the process of reading has proved to be invaluable.\textsuperscript{296} My analysis also takes into account the mystical nature of language in the \textit{Virgil} work.

The opening scene of the \textit{Virgil} novel, discussed in the preceding chapter with regard to the presence of the elements in the text, has a realistic third person narrative tone, which describes a landscape. Upon further examination, however, it may also be seen that although it is set in the approach to Brundisium harbour, very few details are given about the location: the text seems to deal with a fictional place. The account is therefore not quite


as straightforward as it might first appear. Close analysis shows that within the description of the landscape, there are also occasional insertions expressing emotion, such as 'friendly human activity', and 'sunny yet deathly loneliness of the sea'. The inclusion of these emotions can be understood to indicate the presence of a view distanced from that of the authorial narrator: a psychological state is reflected in the environment. In Stanzel's terminology, these insertions 'contaminate' the authorial narrative, providing the first indication of the presence of the fictional character, Virgil. Thus Broch not only presents information from his own point of view, but also from that of his protagonist Virgil. The text, whilst largely appearing to present third-person narrative written from a single viewpoint, is written in 'erlebte Rede', or 'free indirect style', which, permits events to be related from the dual perspectives of the narrator and a fictional character. This raises the question of who is speaking to the reader through the narrative voice.

The sense of duality conveyed through the 'free indirect style' is reinforced by other aspects of the text. There is a temporal duality: the arrival takes place as evening approaches, which can be understood not only to be the end of the day, but also the final hours in the life of the protagonist, whose brow bears 'death's signet'. (DV 12) This duality places subject and the setting in parallel, in a temporal relationship of microcosm and macrocosm, within an overall unity. The artist Virgil might also be seen as a microcosm of the Roman empire, a relationship that is emphasised, in the following excerpt, by the contrast between the lengthy description of the surface appearance of the Augustan fleet and the succinct reference to Virgil, 'poet of the Aeneid':

Of the seven high-built vessels that followed one another, keels in line, only the first and last, both slender rams-proved pentaremes, belonged to the war-fleet; the remaining five, heavier and more imposing, deccareme and duodecicaremes, were of an ornate structure in keeping with the Augustan imperial rank, and the middle one, the most sumptuous, its bronze-mounted bow gilded, gilded the ring-bearing lion's head under the railing, the rigging wound with colours, bore under purple sails, festive and grand, the tent of the Caesar. Yet on the ship that immediately followed was the poet of the Aeneid and death's signet was graved upon his brow. (DV 11)
The twofold nature of the Virgil text is further reflected in the overall use of language. For example, the title of the novel alludes to the poetry and time of the historical Virgil, but also conveys that this time is past, referring to ‘The Death of Virgil’, thereby directing the reader simultaneously to two eras. This approach continues into the work. As Tost observes, there are similarities of style between the opening paragraphs of the Virgil text, and the introductory section of the historical Aeneid. For example, the prose of the Virgil, although syntactically more complex than the historical work, employs many participles and subordinating clauses, as might be found in the style of the classical poets. The incidence of participles is also high in comparison with Broch’s other novels, and with works by other contemporary authors. The Virgil text seems to present peculiar, slightly affected prose, which conveys the poetry of the ancients, whilst emphasising the narrator’s dependence upon Latin. It is not, however, an historical novel: as will be shown, although it deals with an historical figure; the narrative style and the content belong to twentieth century modernism.

Of interest here is that the sense of duality conveyed by the Virgil corresponds to a theme, which has been observed in the historical Aeneid. During the second half of the twentieth century, discussion arose with regard to the possibility that the narrative of the historical Aeneid might be of dual nature. This idea, developed in the work of Adam Parry, Wendell Clausen and Michael Putnam (known collectively in this context as the ‘Harvard School’), emerges from a ‘pessimistic reading’ of the Aeneid. The ‘pessimistic critics’ perceive that human nature is unable to achieve its ideals and that the

301 Ibid. Tost, whilst acknowledging that his sample is not a fundamental analysis, compares the Virgil novel with similar sections of Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus and Elisabeth Langgässer’s Das unauslöschliche Siegel. More than 100 participles are to be found in the introductory 7½ pages of Broch’s work, in comparison with 48 in Mann’s Doktor Faustus, and 34 in Langgässer’s Das unauslöschliche Siegel. In Broch’s novel Die Schlafwandler, there are only 19 participles at the beginning of the first section and 23 in the introductory part of the second section. In his novel Die Verzauberung, the number of participles (46) equates with that in the above-mentioned example of Thomas Mann.
protagonist Aeneas fails in his tasks. For these thinkers, the *Aeneid* speaks in two voices, those of personal loss as well as public achievement.\(^{10}\) This approach contrasts with the traditional ‘optimistic’ view (set out, for example, in T.S. Eliot’s ‘What is a Classic?’),\(^{11}\) which regards the *Aeneid* as a celebration of the achievements of the Augustan age, and Aeneas as the ideal hero of ancient Rome’.\(^{12}\) For the ‘optimistic critics’, the poem is ‘a monument to the values of order and civilization’.\(^{13}\)

There are further complications to Broch’s narrative method, however. The brief reference to ‘Virgil, poet of the *Aeneid*’ mentioned above is an indication of the shift in narrative style that is to follow. In the same way as certain words expressing emotion contaminate the text, and announce the presence of Virgil, the brief reference to his name and circumstances provide an introduction to the protagonist, and prepare the reader for what is to follow. In the subsequent paragraph, as Virgil experiences a Platonic awakening, ‘becoming conscious of himself’, the text plunges into a prolonged ‘interior monologue’, in which his innermost thoughts are conveyed.\(^ {14}\) The significance of the interior monologue to the *Virgil* novel should not be underestimated: Broch describes the work as being ‘from start to finish an interior monologue’.\(^ {15}\) He asserts that:

> although it is written in the third person, it is the inner monologue of a poet, above all, a ‘coming to terms’ with his own life, with the moral correctness or incorrectness of this life, with the justification and non-justification of the poetic work, to which this life was dedicated.\(^ {16}\)

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\(^{14}\) Ibid. \(^{15}\) The paragraph continues for more than four pages of text. See DV 12-16.

\(^{16}\) KW4 11-16.
‘Translator’s Note’, written by Broch for his translator Jean Starr Untermeyer. DV 485-488, here, 486.

KW4 473

Obwohl in der dritten Person dargestellt, ist es ein innerer Monolog des Dichters. Es ist daher vor allem eine Auseinandersetzung mit seinem eigenen Leben, mit der

It is appropriate to consider how the interior monologue technique might be defined, and the role that it plays in a narrative. According to Stanzel, the interior monologue is achieved by entering more fully into free indirect style, to the extent that the view of the fictional character largely replaces the author-narrator. Genette prefers the term ‘immediate speech’ to ‘interior monologue’: in ‘immediate speech’, the narrator is obliterated, being substituted by the character, as may be found in Schnitzler’s Leutnant Gustl, which depicts the angst of a young army officer from an inner perspective.

For Cohn, the style is better described as a ‘narrated monologue’, which renders a character’s thought in his own idiom whilst maintaining the third-person reference and the basic tense of narration.

Analysis of the paragraph, in which Virgil becomes conscious of himself (see below), shows the seamless combination of Virgil’s view with that of the author-narrator, as described by Stanzel. The protagonist’s inner thoughts are italicised, though it is difficult to discern who is speaking between these thoughts. This is of interest, because it shows that the voice of the interior monologue retains a certain ambiguity, making it difficult for the reader to determine who is speaking. As Cohn asserts, narrative language appears as a kind of mask, from behind which sounds the voice of the figural mind. The monologue might therefore also be described as an example of ‘immediate speech’:

although bound to the cot which had been set up for him amidships, he became conscious of himself or rather of his body and the life of his body, which for many years past he had scarcely been able to call his own, as an after-tasting, aftertouching memory of the relief which had flowed through him suddenly when the calmer region of the coast had been reached; and this floating, quieted-quieting fatigue might have become an almost perfect boon had not the plaguing cough, unaffected by the strong healing sea air, begun again, accompanied by the usual evening fever and the usual evening anxiety. So he lay there, he the poet of the Aeneid, he Publius Vergilius Maro, he lay there with ebbing consciousness, almost ashamed of his helplessness, at odds with such a fate, and he stared into the pearly

moralischen Richtigkeit oder Unrichtigkeit dieses Lebens, mit der Berechtigung und Nicht-Berechtigung der dichterischen Arbeit, der dieses Leben geweiht war.

roundness of the heavenly bowl: why then had he yielded to the importunity of Augustus? Why then had he forsaken Athens? Fled now the hope that the hallowed and serene sky of Homer would favour the completion of the Aeneid, fled now every single hope for the boundless new life which was to have begun, the hope for a life free alike of art and poetry, a life dedicated to meditation and study in the city of poetry, fled the hope ever to be allowed to enter the Ionian land, oh fled the hope for the miracle of knowledge and the healing
through knowledge. Why had he renounced it? Willingly? No! It had been like a command of the irrefutable life-forces, those irrefutable forces of fate which never vanished completely, which though they might dive at times into the subterranean, the invisible, the inaudible, were nonetheless omnipresent as the inscrutable threat of powers which man could never avoid, to which he must always submit; it was fate. He had allowed himself to be driven by fate and now fate drove on to the end. Had this not always been the form of his life, had he never lived otherwise? Had the pearly bowl, had the halcyon sea, had the song of the mountains and that which sang painfully in his own breast, had
the flute-tone of the
god ever
meant
anything
else to him
than a
circumstanc
e which, like
a receptacle
of the
spheres,
was soon to
draw him
into himself,
to bear him
into
immensity?
(DV 12-
13)303

Broch’s narrative technique can perhaps be defined more closely, in an attempt to discern what it conveys, and who is speaking. The excerpt above illustrates how Virgil begins to doubt his life’s achievements, and question the course that his life has taken, as his self-awareness increases. The use of the subjunctive form ‘might’ introduces a sense of doubt and indicates the presence of the fictional character. As Virgil’s presence begins to come to the fore, the sentences increase in length, blending the view of the narrator with Virgil’s statements almost seamlessly, in ‘a style that befits a poet’.304 In Broch’s view this ‘form permits access to the purely psychological realm, and penetrates that of the metaphysical’.305 He refers to this aspect of his technique as a ‘lyrical method’,25 asserting that ‘only the lyrical is able to combine the unity of antinomian differences’ in the structure of the human mind,26 and ‘grasp the deepest realities of the soul’.306

Given the poetic nature of the Virgil text, Dujardin’s307 description of an interior monologue is also relevant:

The interior monologue is, in the order of poetry, the unspoken discourse without an audience, by which a character expresses his most intimate thought, that closest to the

303 KW4 12.
304 F.K. Stanzel, A Theory of Narrative, p. 193. Stanzel asserts that the language of the narrator and the characters is differentiated in a figural narrative situation: the figural element increases at the expense of the authorial element.
305 KW4 462. 25 Ibid. 26
unconscious, prior to all logical organisation, that is to say, in its nascent state, by means of direct sentences reduced to syntactic minimum.

The interior monologue therefore can be understood to convey intimate thought, close to the unconscious, in its most nascent state, as in Genette’s ‘immediate speech’. The merging of ideas can be seen in the emerging poetic style in the Virgil excerpt above; scenic description is followed by self-interrogation, whilst narrated exclamations and cumulative interrogations are reported in the third-person: ‘He stared into the pearly roundness of the heavenly bowl: why then had he yielded to the importunity of Augustus? Why then had he forsaken Athens?’ (DV12)

The inclusion of these methods is described by Cohn as the ‘transformation of figural thought-language into the narrative language of third-person fiction’. In this transformation, third person pronouns replace person pronouns, and the past tense replaces the present, resulting in a narration of Virgil’s monologue. The use of third person narration is significant: as Broch asserts, the process of death could not be expressed in the first person. The technique appears to put forth what Virgil thinks to himself rather than what is reported about him, and permits blurring of the fictional realities lying inside and outside of his mind. For Cohn, who uses the term ‘narrated monologue’, the method portrays consciousness, and can be defined as ‘the technique for rendering a character’s thought in his own idiom, while maintaining the third-person reference and the basic tense of narration’.


KW4 12.

D. Cohn (1978) Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction, p. 100.


For Cohn:

These analogies between third- and first-person narration should not obscure the obvious and crucial differences between them: even when a narrator becomes a ‘different person’ from the self he describes in his story, his two selves still remain yoked by the first-person pronoun. Their relationship imitates the temporal continuity of real beings, an existential relationship that differs substantially from the purely functional relationship that binds a narrator to his protagonist in third person fiction. Cohn comments in a footnote that the difference was most clearly worked out by Käte Hamburger. In particular, Hamburger draws a distinction between third person narration as a mimesis of reality and first-person narrative as a ‘feigned reality statement’. See K. Hamburger (1973) The Logic of Literature. London, Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, pp. 311-318.
D. Cohn (1978) *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, p. 100.

Cohn differentiates between ‘narrated monologue’ and figural narration, asserting that narrated monologue is not ‘vision avec’, the vision of reality which is not the narrator’s own, but rather ‘pensée avec’, in which the coincidence of perspectives is compounded by a consonance of voices, so that the language of the text resonates momentarily with the language of the figural mind. In this technique, the thought-thread of a character is most tightly woven into the texture of third-person narration. It may be employed in an authorial narrative: to reflect external events in the protagonist; and to convey ‘narrated perception’. As seen above, and as will be shown in the course of this discussion, the narrative technique in the *Virgil* novel seems to match this definition. Broch’s narrative method might therefore be understood as a means of conveying the consciousness of the protagonist, incorporating awareness of both inner and outer perspectives, the narrative being focalised through *Virgil*. As Cohn observes:

> the effect of the narrated monologue is precisely to reduce to the greatest possible degree the hiatus between the narrator and the figure existing in all third-person narration [...]. In narrated monologues, as in figural narration generally, the continued employment of third-person references indicates, no matter how unobtrusively, the continued presence of a narrator. And it is his identification – but not his identity – with the character’s mentality that is supremely enhanced by this technique.

The narrated monologue related in the third person enables the reader to identify closely with the subject, through the consciousness of the protagonist. As Broch observes in his 1936 essay upon the work of James Joyce, not only are ‘the observer, and the act of seeing, drawn into the field of observation so that theoretical unity of physical object and the physical act of seeing may be established’, but the narrated monologue ensures that events are portrayed ‘through a temperament’. The work develops out of the

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308 Ibid, p. 111. For Cohn, narrated monologue, in contrast to quoted monologue, suppresses all marks of quotation that distinguish it from the narration. This is best achieved where the narrative adheres most consistently to a figural perspective, shaping the entire fictional world as an uninterrupted ‘vision avec’.

309 Ibid. 35


process of observation, the observer always being right in the midst of it, presenting himself and his labour. The unity is not achieved by description of objects and events, but by representation of consciousness, as indicated above.

It is important to note that Broch’s use of the interior monologue differs from that employed by James Joyce (though there are also many similarities in style). Like Broch, Joyce also attempts to capture a sense of ‘immediacy’, though to different effect from that achieved in the *Virgil* text. For example, the ‘Anna Livia Plurabelle’ chapter of *Finnegans Wake*, which depicts the conversation of women as they wash their linen in public, leads to the gradual slackening of their speech and movements, until they merge into the landscape, no longer conscious. In Broch’s words, their ‘conversation is itself washing, for they are washing the dirty linen of the whole town’. Joyce differs from Broch, in that he employs the style of ‘Naturalism’, in his endeavour to capture and reflect the whole environment. Through the talk of the women, which becomes ‘incomprehensible both to the listener and to themselves’, he depicts a whole society that seems no longer to be conscious:

Night! Night! My ho head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shaun? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons and daughters of? Night now! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night, night! Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!

In the *Virgil* work, however, the focus is upon the consciousness of the individual, rather than the society. Broch’s ‘new narrative method’ goes beyond trying to reflect the whole environment through language, attempting instead to convey the simultaneous presence of narrator and protagonist.

Joyce’s use of interior monologue is widely acknowledged, and some difference between the styles of the two authors may also be discerned in *Ulysses*. In the latter, the narrative focus shifts from chapter to chapter.

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310 Ibid.  
312 This episode of *Finnegans Wake* is discussed by Broch. See H. Broch (2003) *Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch*, pp. 65-95, here, p. 82. KW9/1 63-94, here, 79.  
conveying the monologue of one character then another. The effect is supported by extensive use of metaphor. As critic David Lodge points out, ‘each episode [in Ulysses] has its own set of leitmotifs – its special art, colour, organ, symbol and “technic”’. 314

Two main aspects of the narrative in Ulysses distinguish Joyce’s work from that of Broch: the depiction of the interior monologue of several characters, and the combination of third-person and first-person discourse.

(We remind ourselves that the word ‘I’ or ‘one’ appears only rarely in The Death of Virgil, and that Broch portrays the interior monologue of Virgil only.)

In the opinion of Lodge, Joyce’s representation of consciousness offered a quite new combination of third-person and first-person discourse.315 He finds the third-person narrative to be impersonal and objective, without trace of an authorial persona. For example, the episode depicting Paddy Dignam’s funeral opens in third-person narrative combined with direct speech (without quotation marks), depicting events in fairly conventional style. The narrative evolves, however, so that it slips into free indirect discourse focalised through the viewpoint of Leopold Bloom, incorporating some of his comments in the first-person:

Mr Bloom entered and sat in the vacant place. He pulled the door to after him and slammed it tight till it shut tight. He passed an arm through the armstrap and looked seriously from the open carriage window at the lowered blinds of the avenue. One dragged aside: an old woman peeping. Nose whiteflattened against the pane. Thanking her stars she was passed over. Extraordinary the interest they take in a corpse. Glad to see us go we give them such trouble coming. Job seems to suit them. Huggermugger in corners. Slop about in slipperslappers for fear he’d wake. Then getting it ready. Laying it out. Molly and Mrs Fleming making the bed. Pull it more to your side. Our windingsheet. Never know who will touch you dead. Wash and shampoo. I believe they clip the nails and hair. Keep a bit in an envelope. Grow all the same after. Unclean job.316

Here, difference may be discerned when compared with the narrative of the Virgil work, which remains in the third-person apart from statements made in direct speech.

As Lodge observes, Joyce discriminates stylistically between the consciousnesses of his main characters by varying the proximity of the discourse to the metaphoric and metonymic poles. Stephen's consciousness, Lodge asserts, is essentially metaphoric, for he is constantly transforming what he perceives into other images and concepts drawn from his reading, on the basis of some perceived similarity or ironic contrast. Bloom's stream of consciousness, however, is 'essentially metonymic'. The reader is 'always much more aware of what Bloom is doing, and where he is situated in time and space, because there is a more direct connection between what he is thinking and what he is doing'. Lodge maintains that 'Molly's stream of consciousness is even more "metonymic" than her husband’s', for the few metaphorical connections that she makes are derived from 'colloquial or proverbial clichés'.

By incorporating the interior monologue of each of the main characters, Joyce builds up a series of perspectives upon the society of Dublin on a given day: 16th June 1904. The resulting narrative of *Ulysses* ‘attempts to tell the story of a whole nation or generation through representative figures’. It is in this way that Joyce’s deployment of interior monologue differs from that of Broch, which adheres to portraying one consciousness.

For Broch, the whole narrative process is a ‘lyrical commentary’, which moves from one lyrical image to another, leaving some things unsaid. He believes ‘the wonder of the lyric’ to be that ‘it allows the illogical to hover unsaid between the words and the lines, and to be inserted into the logical and comprehensible’. The capacity of this style of narrated monologue, or interior monologue, for rendering consciousness is particularly suited to his focus upon the individual soul as the seat of potential participation in mass behaviour: the use of the interior monologue enables access to the innermost thought of an individual within a mass culture. The narrative method can therefore be considered to be a key to understanding

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Es gehört zum Wunder der Lyrik, daß sie das Alogische zwischen den Worten und Zeilen ungesagt schweben lassen und damit ins Logische und Verständliche einspannen kann.

Broch’s concept of individuality, and is therefore of particular significance to this study.

For the purposes of this discussion, Broch’s own term ‘interior monologue’ will be used, whilst acknowledging Cohn’s justification of her terminology, and taking into account the observations of Stanzel, Genette and Dujardin. 318 In the subsequent section, the narrative technique in the Virgil is analysed further in order to establish the effect produced by the interior monologue.

**Variations of the inner monologue: multiple voices and shifting focus**  It would be misleading, however, to describe the Virgil work as a continuous interior monologue, because the narrative technique changes during the course of the novel. Further analysis of the text reveals a changing focus upon Virgil, which shifts between reporting his impressions, and conveying his thought directly. For example, having informed the reader of Virgil’s inner doubt, described above, and that he is ‘ready to take on the last loneliness’, the third person narrative voice is resumed to convey the protagonist’s sensory awareness, by reporting his impressions of the voyage.

In the following excerpt the verbs indicating the narrative voice are italicised:

*he heard* the slithering foam of the wake, and the silver pour that sprayed out each time the oars were lifted, their heavy creak in the oar-locks and the clapping cut of the water when they dipped in again, *he felt* the soft, even thrust of the ship […], *he saw* the white-surfed coastline slip by. (DV 13-14) 319

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319 My italics. KW4 13-14.
These sensory messages redirect the focus slightly, viewing the protagonist from outside and therefore distancing the narration.

Virgil’s consciousness of phenomena that cannot be detected through sensory awareness is then indicated, still in third person narration, the narrator retaining distance through use of the word ‘thought’: ‘He thought of the chained dumb slave-bodies in the damp-draughty, noisome, roaring hull of the ship’. (DV 14)\(^320\)

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\text{He thought of the chained dumb slave-bodies in the damp-draughty, noisome, roaring hull of the ship. (DV 14)\(^{321}\)}
\]

Clauses used to distance the narration slightly, as described above, are termed ‘tags’, and the passages concerned are narrated in ‘tagged indirect speech/discourse’\(^322\) or ‘narratised speech/discourse’.\(^323\) A ‘tag’ may accompany both direct and indirect discourse, and may be defined as:

a clause (‘he said’, ‘she thought’, ‘she asked’, ‘he replied’) accompanying a character’s discourse (speech or verbalised thought) and specifying the act of the speaker or thinker, identifying him or her, and (sometimes) indicating various aspects of the act, the character, the setting in which they appear, etc.\(^324\)

In the Virgil text, the shift into ‘tagged indirect discourse’ or ‘narratised speech discourse’ provides the reader with a slightly distanced perspective upon the protagonist, whilst continuing to depict his point of view: the tagged discourse enhances the sense of duality already established. The reader is made privy to Virgil’s perception of his position in comparison with the slaves. He empathises with the slaves’ enforced immobility and endurance of the journey, but is also aware of his retained right to freedom of expression and movement. His empathy might be understood as the emergence of his


\(^{324}\) G. Prince, Dictionary of Narratology, pp. 95-96.
conscience. The tags point to the action in the text and make the reader aware that someone is doing the thinking, hearing and feeling. The descriptions ‘chained dumb slave-bodies’ and ‘damp-draughty, noisome, roaring hull’ can be understood as words that contaminate the text, which have the effect of further indicating Virgil’s presence and preparing the reader for full immersion in the interior monologue.\textsuperscript{325} The text therefore creates an awareness of consciousness. This raising of awareness of consciousness corresponds to Käte Hamburger’s\textsuperscript{326} ideas regarding the nature of literary language, and ‘the logic of literature’. She asserts that the interior monologue and free indirect speech are devices belonging to the process of fictionalisation, part of the creative power of language that produces literature. The logic of literature is not merely ‘poetic’ language, but the creative power of language that can create literature.

Immediately following the reported glimpse of the protagonist’s thought described above, the narrative embarks upon a substantial passage of free indirect speech, in which Virgil’s thought is conveyed directly. In long, complex sentences, the interior monologue informs the reader of Virgil’s opinion of his fellow passengers, Caesar’s courtiers, whom he finds to be ‘gluttons’, ‘insatiably desirous of having, […] desirous of the bustling idleness of possession. (DV 14-15)\textsuperscript{327} The style then alters slightly, as the narrating and the figural voices are brought together, appearing to express Virgil’s view whilst slipping into what emerges in the course of the text to be Broch’s own distinctive lyrical style. The technique is particularly effective because the perceiving mind belongs to a poet renowned for his ability to transform his perception of his reality into language.\textsuperscript{328} The narration includes, however, more than one voice. In the following example, the authorial voice is italicised.

\textit{Everywhere there was someone putting something into his mouth, everywhere smouldering avarice and lust, rootless but ready to devour, all devouring, their fumes wavered over the deck, carried along on the beat of the oars, inescapable, unavoidable; the whole ship was lapped in a wave of greed. Oh, what would that}

\textsuperscript{325} F.K. Stanzel, \textit{A Theory of Narrative}, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{326} K. Hamburger (1973) \textit{The Logic of Literature}, p. 343.
\textsuperscript{327} KW4 14-15.
\textsuperscript{328} D. Cohn (1978) \textit{Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction}, p. 126.
accomplish? Nothing avails the poet, he can right no wrongs; he is heeded only if he extols the world, never if he portrays it as it is. Only falsehood wins renown, not understanding! And could one assume that the Aeneid would be vouchsafed another or better influence? But people would praise the Aeneid because as yet everything he had written had been praised. (DV 15)

The expression of philosophical insight is enunciated here in the English present tense (‘Nothing avails the poet, [...] understanding’), as in the original German text. In the translation of some similar passages elsewhere in the novel, however, Broch consented to the substitution of the simple past tense, in order that the text might flow more easily. (DV 488) The shifts of tense in the original German implicate an ambiguity of voice, which is lost when adhering to the simple past tense in English translation. The statements represent the voice of Broch himself (or the voice of the ‘implied author’ that stands in for Broch), in the form of authorial intrusion. Cohn asserts that although these statements appear to be the narrator’s ex cathedra statements in gnomic present tense, they must be interpreted as quotations from Virgil’s monologue, because they continue (and are continued by) the statements of the narrated thought-sequence. The result is that narrator and character become inextricably fused in the language of philosophic commentary.

In this study, however, the introduction of the third voice, in the form of authorial intrusion, cannot be overlooked. The narration is focalised at this stage through three narrators, which present Virgil’s consciousness in an apparently intermediate state of being. The text is predominantly mimetic, the narrated consciousness resulting from a triad of voices, and might therefore be described as being multivalent. Broch’s narrative technique opens up the

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330 ‘Translator’s Note’ to The Death of Virgil. DV 485-488.
331 D. Cohn (1978) Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction, p. 126.
332 Ibid.
consciousness not only of Virgil, but of Broch himself, and therefore provides access to his concept of individuality.334

**The interior monologue and the opening up of inner space: ‘the inner journey back to loneliness’**335

Having melded the narrator and protagonist in the mind of the reader, at an early stage, by means of the interior monologue, the text proceeds to portray Virgil's entry into Brundisium. The approach is narrow, river-like, flanked by fortifications through which Virgil must pass. His position bordering life and death is reflected in 'twilight', whilst the elements convey a sense of heaviness as the open sea is left behind, and earth is approached.

(DV 16)72 Virgil passes through the canal, past a 'hearty unimpassioned salute', which he nevertheless finds to be 'curiously mild, curiously soothing', becoming aware of the darkness, which is filtering upward, so that the mirror of heaven becomes indistinguishable from the sea below. (DV 17)73 From the darkness emerges light, which 'no longer comes from above, but hangs in itself', and sound, which vibrates continuously. As the journey proceeds, Virgil becomes aware of emerging life, from the sparse grass of the slopes under the fortifications, to shrubbery, and the first olive trees between the stone-fenced quadrangles of the peasants. (DV 18)74

The initial effect of the journey, described though information derived from the senses, is to raise Virgil's awareness of his physicality.

Oh grass, oh leaf, bark-smoothness, bark-roughness, vitality of burgeoning, in this branching out and embodiment ye are the earth's darkness made manifest! oh hand tingling, touching, fondling, embracing, oh finger and finger-tip, rough and gentle and soft, living flesh, the outermost surface of the soul's darkness opened up in the lifted hands! (DV 18)75

His raised physical awareness gives rise to the desire to 'hold fast to the unity of human existence, [...] for insufficient was the desire of hands, insufficient the desire of eyes'. Sensory awareness suddenly seems inadequate, so that

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335 DV 13. KW4 13. 72

KW4 16.
‘sufficient alone was the desire of heart and mind communing together’. (DV 19)\textsuperscript{76}

A further channel then opens, which seems to lead beyond earthly existence, beyond prior experience, into a new interior space, within Virgil’s consciousness, which can be understood as a refuge from the hostile environment outside.

Still there was an approach and there was his thought, breathing and waiting, listening into the twofold abysses where Poseidon and Vulcan reigned, both realms united by the heavenly arch of Jove. (DV 19)\textsuperscript{77}

Opening and flowing now the light, the breath too was flowing, as flowing as the current into which the keels plunged, floodbath of the innermost and the outermost, flood-bath of the soul, the breath flowing from this life into the beyond, from the beyond back into this life, the unveiled portal of knowledge, never knowledge itself, but still a presentiment of knowledge, a presentiment of the entrance, a presentiment of the path, a dim presentiment of the twilight journey. (DV 19)\textsuperscript{78}

Once accessed, the inner space gradually opens up and deepens, becoming central to Virgil’s reality. In this space, Virgil encounters a lyre-playing slave boy and is led to the masses, assembled to celebrate Caesar’s birthday, before continuing deep into his own reverie. The passage along the channel can be understood as a physical action which reflects the mental activity of the protagonist, as he penetrates his own mind, a task that is also demanded of the reader. The text later presents a similar experience when Virgil passes through Misery Street and again in the ‘Fire’ chapter, when three figures emerge from ‘the narrow space between the palace and the outer wall’. (DV 106)\textsuperscript{79} The process is diegetic in effect, both echoing and continuing the reduction in focus at the start of the text.\textsuperscript{80} Made available to the reader through the interior monologue, and Broch’s use of mystical language, the inner space might best be described as the realm of Virgil’s spirituality. (The effect of access to this realm upon Virgil is discussed separately.)\textsuperscript{81} Before analysing the interior monologue in the final two chapters of the novel, it is appropriate
to discuss the role played by the use of mystical language, and the response of the reader to the text.

**Mystical Use of Language in the *Virgil* text**

The expansion and deepening of the inner space, described above, may be attributed to the incorporation of mystical language into the text. Language derived from the tradition of Logos Mysticism emerges towards the end of the first chapter and is developed fully in the course of the second. It is as though the reader, once admitted to the interior realm of Virgil’s mind, is exposed to the contents of that domain. Space is created through the high incidence of nouns, many of them from the mystical tradition. The prefix ‘un’ occurs frequently in the original German text of the *Virgil*: it was used widely in the mystical tradition, in attempt to give expression, by means of negation, to concepts for which hitherto there had been no language. Some examples of the use of the ‘un’ prefix in the German version of the *Virgil* are given below, followed by the respective English translations:

- *aus dem unausdrückbarst Außergewöhnlichen*: out of the inexpressible and extraordinary (DV 85)
- *nicht als das Ununterscheidbare des Herdanfangs*: not as the indiscriminateness of the herd-beginning (DV 88)

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79 KW4 107.
81 See Chapter 11: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality. Also Chapter 12: Approaching individuality; an analysis of the ‘Ether’ chapter.
82 For details of Broch’s engagement with the work of the medieval mystics, see Chapter 5. In addition to the thought of Meister Eckhart, Mechtild von Magdeburg, and Nicholas of Cusa, Broch also seems to have been familiar with the work of mystical thinker Jakob Böhme (1575-1624). See H. Broch (1984) *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his Time: The European Imagination 1860-1920*, p. 119. KW9/1 302.
ist dennoch in der Undurchdringlichkeit des Stimmenwaldes an die Stelle gebannt: was thrust back into the chaotic maze of separate voices (DV 89)

In the Virgil, old forms of language are also juxtaposed with neologisms, the combination of which challenges the reader to grasp the vast number of presented concepts. Frequent use of oxymorons has a similar effect. The mystical use of language, in conjunction with high frequency of nouns, challenges the reader to create a new reality in the imagination, thereby demanding greater reader engagement than perhaps could be achieved through a more mimetic approach of describing Virgil’s experiences. The overall effect is one of contrast, of mutually-reflecting, opposing realms.

The narrative progresses gradually between opposing poles of existence, which seem to stand above and below, or this side and that side,


Further examples are as follows:
unverständlich und undurchdringlich in ihrer brüllenden Stummheit (KW4 84). incomprehensible and impenetrable in their roaring muteness (DV 89).

unauflösbar-unzerteilbar undurchdringlichen Drohung (KW4 84). insoluble, indivisible, impenetrable threat (DV 89)

unrettbar ist der Verirrte im Dickheit eingekerkert […] dorthin ins unausdehnbar Unendliche (KW4 84). the lost one was past saving, imprisoned in the maze […] there into the inextensible eternity (DV 89).

Ibid. and which might be interpreted as lying within the realms of physical existence, and in the spiritual dimension of being respectively. The narrative appears to move towards one pole, before drifting back again. Between the poles, lies the realm of consciousness, the existence of which does not diminish the polarity of the spheres, but drifts between them, making references to both. The spiritual-intellectual course of the narrative brings both spheres into a thick
web of references, ‘a thicket of opacity’ (DV 132), by floating between the two. For example:

Yet the breach into the ultimate reality would not be made from the sphere of the stars, nor from the spheres in the interstellar spaces, [...] but rather from the sphere of humanity; the impetus to break through the boundaries would proceed from man. (DV 106-107)

The poles are reflected in one another, reality being repeatedly reflected in image, and image in reality, making orientation difficult for the reader. The sense of hovering between the two poles of existence conveys a feeling of suspension above reality, in an ‘in-between zone’. The effect is emphasised by the use of verbs that depict floating and flowing, such as ‘schweben’ (‘to drift, float’), ‘fließen’ (‘to flow’), which feature in the language of the medieval mystics, especially the Beguine Mechthild of Magdeburg, whose work Broch owned. Such verbs convey the idea that time has been exceeded, and an ‘eternal now’ has been reached, and attempt to portray the eternal presence of the divine.

The use of opposing poles and reflection of the realms of being may also point towards the work of other thinkers within the tradition of Logos Mysticism, such as Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa and Jakob Böhme, to whom Broch refers in his theoretical essays. Eckhart, for example, observed

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336 KW4 126. Broch refers to ‘dieses Dickicht der Undurchsichtlichkeit’.
337 KW4 101. Broch writes:

Und nicht aus der Sternsphäre, und nicht aus der Zwischensphäre unter den Sternen wird der Durchbruch zur Ur-Wirklichkeit erfolgen […] wohl aber in der Sphäre des Menschen, und vom Menschen aus wird der Anstoß zur Durchbrechung der Grenzen erfolgen.


339 According to Lube, verbs of duration comprise approximately one third of all the verbs in Der Tod des Vergil. See B. Lube, Sprache und Metaphorik in Hermann Brochs Roman “Der Tod des Vergil”, p. 37.


341 See, for example, reference to Eckhart and Angelius Silesius in KW10/2, 81-93; reference to Böhme in H. Broch (1984) Hugo von Hofmannsthals and his Time: The European Imagination 1860-1920, p. 119. KW9/1 302. See also Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality.
that the existence of a reflected image is dependent upon an original image, and applied this view to the relationship between humanity and the divine. In common with Nicholas of Cusa, he believed the divine to be the coincidence of opposites. For Cusa, God is both Maximum and Minimum, since to be the Maximum is to be everything that can be; in the fullest sense God as Maximum must also be as small as he can be, and hence Minimum. Jakob Böhme, for whom 'no thing could be revealed to itself without opposition', may also be included here. Each of these philosophers was concerned with the idea of 'internal relations', that is, that all things are connected. In this respect, the thought of Martin Luther (1483-1546) is also relevant, because he was of the belief that humanity could access the divine without resort to an intermediary.

The interconnectedness of being is also incorporated into mystical use of language through subtle progression and expansion of vocabulary. As Lube demonstrates, a concept is gradually developed in the text, through the introduction of a word, which then reappears in modified composite form at different stages of the novel. In the course of such development, many references are made to the idea of language itself, and the voice, in particular. The continued reference to language and voice ensures that the ideas offered are connected to human experience, whilst the range of ideas is deepened through association with other concepts. For example, the concepts of 'shadow' and speech are gradually associated with other concepts, each of which is also developed, until the concept of a 'speech shadow' ('Sprachschatten') is reached. The suggestion of the existence of a 'speech shadow' might be considered to be Platonic in nature, alluding to the idea that

344 Nicholas of Cusa, Of Learned Ignorance, p. 12.
346 B. Lube, Sprache und Metaphorik in Hermann Brochs Roman “Der Tod des Vergil”, pp. 66. For example, Lautschatten (KW4 47); Schattenfieber (KW4 102); Sprachgestrüpp (KW4 146); Kristallsprache (KW4 195); Sprachschatten (KW4 435).
there is an original source of speech, in the realm of ideas, and a corresponding shadow of that source, in the earthly world. This Platonic awareness adds to the dual nature of consciousness already described. This gradual development of the language in the way of a fugue enables the text to progress from one pole to the other, until the lyrical style is overblown, or ‘hypertrophied’. The individualised, polyphonic use of language, set within the interior monologue, seems to expand the inner space to the very periphery of consciousness, stimulating the reader’s awareness of the extent of language in the process, thereby having an individualising effect upon the reader. In Broch’s words, the technique ‘attempts to discover the deep unifying logic from those regions of the soul that lie far below the purely psychic sphere’. His method corresponds to Hamburger’s observation that ‘the logic of literature is not concerned with merely ‘poetic’ language, but with creative language, that which produces the forms of literature’. Hamburger is of the belief that the general nature of narrative function and the idea of the ‘I’ put forth through lyrical language belong to the logic of literature, whereas analysis of how a narrative technique might have been achieved and the content of lyrical statements are matters of aesthetic interpretation. She observes that collaboration between the logic and aesthetic of literature is most striking when aesthetic investigation examines questions of technique and structure rather than the poetic or philosophic content of a text. Thus, through its very structure, the Virgil narrative provokes a deep response from the reader.

The narrative technique not only facilitates the depiction of Virgil’s thought and Broch’s philosophical insight, but also shifts in time and space. At certain points, the lyrical form builds towards the insertion of Virgilian texts, which both add historical colour, and seem to enable the narrative to reach a

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348 KW4 463.
349 KW4 470. Comment made by Broch upon comparing his technique with that of Joyce. He writes:
Ich selber habe eine andere Technik angewandt, indem ich versucht habe, die tieferere einigende Logik aus jenen Regionen der Seele aufzudecken, die weit unter der rein psychischen Sphäre liegen.
101 Ibid.
climax, creating a celebration of all that has gone before, and a point of departure for further expansion of experience. As the new dimension is penetrated, the sense of passage of time seems to dwindle, so that the space seems to take the place of time, creating a sense of feeling of simultaneity, or oneness with the environment. Through the peculiar use of syntax and mystical language within the interior monologue, ideas that occur in narrated space, and events that occur in narrated time can appear to occur simultaneously, capturing ‘fleeting moments of consciousness’. As Untermeyer\(^{351}\) observes:

Broch’s syntax, which he considers purely functional, and which may be summed into the principle: ‘one thought – one moment – one sentence’, permits him to gather within a fleeting moment of consciousness all the thought-groups of the inner monologue, whose emotional and philosophical contents are often of a highly disparate nature. (DV 486)

This concurrence of ideas might be considered to reflect human consciousness, in that it permits the juxtaposition of new thought alongside that which has also occurred previously. Further similarity may be drawn here between Broch’s thought and that of Ricoeur, who maintains that human beings experience time in two opposing ways, as a linear succession of events and as phenomenological time, which is experienced in the past, present and future.\(^{352}\) In his view, the two may only be brought together through narrative, which enables human experience of time to be represented. Ricoeur’s analyses of fictional works by authors contemporary to Broch focus upon the diverse variations of time produced by three temporal dimensions within each text: the time of narrating, that is the point at which the story is told, within the framework of the plot; the narrated time, which may be explained as the temporality created by the text; and the fictive experience of time produced through ‘the conjunction/disjunction of the time it takes to narrate and narrated time’.\(^{353}\) The interplay of different experiences of time, he maintains, is an essential component of reflective philosophy, or self-understanding. This

\(^{351}\) ‘Translator’s Note’ to The Death of Virgil.


\(^{353}\) Ricoeur analyses works by Virginia Woolf (Mrs. Dalloway), Thomas Mann (The Magic Mountain), and Marcel Proust (Remembrance of Things Past). See P. Ricoeur (1990) Time and Narrative Vol. 2, p. 77.
experience is offered by the Virgil text, which has a peculiar relationship to the concept of time, in that it is set in the time of the ancients, but deals with modern concerns and makes demands upon the reader in the process of reading.\textsuperscript{354}

The mystical use of language in the Virgil complements the ‘narrated monologue’, with the consequence that the text conveys consciousness in two different ways. The reader is presented with a challenging experience, that of accessing a new reality with the intellect and imagination. It is this aspect of Broch’s mystical use of language that is significant, and its reception is dependent upon the response of the reader, which is discussed in the following section.

**The Demands made upon the Reader: Reader Response Theory**

We have seen that the interior monologue has the capacity to convey several strands of thought simultaneously. As Virgil penetrates into his own mind, the interior monologue begins to make demands upon the reader. In order to engage with the text, the reader must be prepared to exercise the imagination and respond accordingly. As Iser\textsuperscript{355} asserts, the text brings about an ‘aesthetic response’ in the imaginative and perceptive faculties of the reader, in order to make them adjust and perhaps even differentiate their focus. Interaction takes place between the text and reader, which is affected not only by the potential disposition of the reader, but also by the social and historical norms of their environment.\textsuperscript{356} The reader, who has already been prompted to search for meaning by the presentation of the text within the framework of the elements, must be prepared to enter the interior monologue and allow the narrative to take effect and bring about a unique response. It is in the process of reading a text that its potential begins to unfold.\textsuperscript{357}

\textsuperscript{354} For further discussion of the depiction of time in the Virgil text, see J. Pearson, ‘Time, Space and no Future? Time and Spirituality in Hermann Broch’s “Der Tod des Vergil” and Marianne Gronemeyer’s “Das Leben als letzte Gelegenheit”, pp. 27-42. This topic is dealt with more fully in Chapter 13: Some concluding remarks about Broch’s concept of individuality and evaluation of his overall achievement in the Virgil work.


\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid, p. 19.
In addition to providing a framework within which to set the narrative, the elements may be viewed as an early step in presenting the reader with something unusual. The title has a similar function, playing upon historical fact: the reader knows that Virgil is already dead, yet the title implies that the text deals with his death. This brings historical knowledge into the present. Viewed in conjunction with the lyrical nature of the language, and the use of elements, the title may also allude to Hölderlin’s tragedy *The Death of Empedocles*, directing the reader towards the poet’s concern with cosmology and finding meaning in an uncertain world, and the thought of the German Idealists.\(^{358}\) It also alludes to the idea that Roman influence upon the Western world is in decline. The complex use of ‘Latinised’, mystical language challenges the reader similarly. A similar effect is achieved through the use of the classical elements as chapter titles. Presented with the titles, the reader may pause to think why Broch should have selected the elements at a time when their use as scientific points of reference is long past. This brings the reader to consider why the text was written during the 1930s and 1940s, dealing with the crisis of art in a time of mass rule. Through the inner monologue, the reader is then confronted at length with a moment by moment experience of the *death* of Virgil, which in turn raises the question of what it is to live, and to die, and the role played by art within human existence. The existing knowledge and disposition of the reader, against which the reading experience is set, is affected in the process. The use of negativity and silence in the ‘Fire’ chapter prompt the reader to fill the gaps, from their own experience.

Through the interior monologue, the reader is confronted by the multiple viewpoints of Virgil’s consciousness. This challenges the reader to consider

\(^{358}\) F. Hölderlin (2008) *The Death of Empedocles: A Mourning Play* Albany NY: Suny. It should be noted here that the title may also allude to Thomas Herbert Warren’s *The Death of Virgil: a Dramatic Narrative*, published in 1907, though I have been unable to find any indication that Broch was aware of this work. See T.H. Warren (1907) *The Death of Virgil: a Dramatic Narrative*. R.H. Blackwell: Oxford. In a note to the text, Warren asserts that it is not a play, but a story told in dramatic form; it follows general fact and fiction, but does not profess to be strictly historic.
Virgil’s consciousness and individuality in depth, thereby making great demands on the reader’s own resources. The reader participates in Virgil’s consciousness, whilst the novel organises his thoughts. A new reality, corresponding to Virgil’s reality, must be created within the imagination. This requires concentrated application of abstract thought, prompted by the interior monologue and mystical use of language. The reader, identifying closely with the protagonist, drifts between the reality depicted by the text and the furthest reaches of their own inner space, so that a deeply personal experience is achieved. In this respect, the mystical nature of the narrative can have an individualising effect upon the reader.

Engagement in this way may help to lay a foundation for selforientation of the reader in the final, most challenging chapter: as little guidance is provided by the text, the reader is forced to draw on their own reserves of experience and adjust accordingly. As Iser asserts, as the reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text and relates the different views and patterns to one another they set the work in motion, and so set themselves in motion too. In the process of reading, the text initiates a response from the reader, which may prompt further reflection and subsequent action:

the text serves to bring about a standpoint from which the reader will be able to view things that would never have come into focus as long as his own habitual dispositions were determining his orientation.

It is therefore the process of reading of the Virgil text that brings forth its potential. Broch’s ‘new narrative method’ may be likened to the Platonic dialogues, which challenge Socrates, but do not offer finite solutions to the problems proposed: his narrative demands the response of the reader. An important aspect of the interactive process provoked by the text is that the protagonist, whilst remaining central to the narrative, is not fixed in character, but is transformed during the course of the novel. Virgil’s ‘narrative self’ is not as Daniel Dennett describes, ‘a narrative centre of gravity, [...] a theorist’s

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360 Ibid, p. 35.
361 The development of Virgil is discussed in Chapters 11-12.
fiction’, which ‘becomes more determinate [...] in response to the way in which the world impinges upon it [us].’ Virgil remains active in the mind of the reader, through their response to the interior monologue, with the result that it is not only Virgil who is brought under scrutiny, but also the reader, whose attention is focused upon the protagonist.

The narrative technique in the ‘Earth’ chapter

The interior monologue is further developed in the third chapter, ‘Earth’, which deals predominantly with Virgil’s encounter with Augustus. The opening paragraph, following on from his ‘sleep without dream’ at the end of the mystical experience of the ‘Fire’ chapter, is concerned with Virgil’s awakening. The narrative slips into free indirect speech through the use of the subjunctive, ‘knowing that he should have rushed to the seashore at dawn to destroy the Aeneid’. (DV 233) However, quite who is speaking remains ambiguous, because the narrative is mostly conducted in the third person indicative mode, which reports upon events, while conveying the protagonist’s thought: the narrator could be Virgil, or Broch’s authorial persona. The ambiguity of voice is reinforced by Virgil being only half-awake. The style of the monologue then begins to change, through the introduction of direct speech, which, in this instance, is tagged.

And he fled back to sleep again to find the angel who had vanished, perhaps even hoping that the strange glance which he felt still resting on him might be his. He was certain it was not; all too surely he sensed the strangeness that stood next to him, and actually to frighten it away, even though still with a last spark of hope for the angel’s presence, he asked out of sleep: “Are you Lysanias?” (DV 233)

This question sets the tone for the chapter, which includes much direct speech, conveying Virgil’s conversations with his friends Plotius and Lucius and the physician Charondas. Additional voices are also quoted; those of a slave, and Virgil’s beloved Plotia. Each time that a tag such as ‘she replied’, is

363 KW4 219.
364 Ibid.
used, the reader is reminded of the presence of a narrator. In the Earth chapter Virgil refers to himself as ‘I’, in the course of direct speech. The interior monologue is therefore complicated by the introduction of additional voices.

The reader continues to learn of Virgil’s inner thought processes, whilst also being aware of his discourse with others. The reader is therefore in a privileged position of knowing what other characters do not know, even though the precise nature of the narrator is not known. In the course of the chapter, it becomes apparent that some characters are unaware of the presence of others: characters such as the slave, Lysanias and Plotia exist only for Virgil and the reader. The narration is therefore affected by the presence of several characters, even though some remain invisible. The reader, in common with Virgil, is influenced by the utterances and actions of these characters.

The combination of interior monologue and direct speech incorporating several voices reaches a climax in Virgil’s exchange with Augustus. Much of the discussion is reported in direct speech without naming the speaker, thereby requiring the reader to participate in the dialogue, by keeping close track of who is speaking. In the course of the dialogue Broch’s authorial persona emerges, appearing, as Cohn asserts, to be part of Virgil’s monologic discourse, but nevertheless being recognisable, especially in the German text, through the use of the present tense. These authorial intrusions remain untagged, standing as blocks of information for the reader: in the course of the chapter, Broch’s authorial persona comes to the fore. In the example below, the authorial intrusion is italicised:


‘Und das willst du deinen Erkenntnisgrund nennen? Es ist der Erkenntnisgrund eines Haruspex! Was verbirgst du Vergil?’

‘Wir sind der Zeit verhaftet, wir alle sind es, und sogar die Erkenntnis ist verhaftet’

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365 D. Cohn (1978) Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction, p. 126. See for example, DV 352, KW4 331; DV 353-4, KW4 332. 117 KW4 330.
What was the mystery which lay in time? *emptily the empty stream flowed towards death, and if its goal were removed, then stream and time disappeared. Why would time be annulled if death were?* Things fitted together dreamily and it was a dreamvoice which spoke: 'The serpent-ring of time .... the heavenly viscera.'

'And you call this the basis of your perception? It is that of a haruspex ...What are you hiding, Virgil?'

'We are captives of time, all of us; and this is even true of perception.' (DV 351-2)

In this example, the use of the present tense can be seen quite clearly in the German text, though this gives way to use of the simple past and the conditional in the English translation. Influence of authorial intrusion can be seen in Virgil’s response to Augustus: his words indicate that he has taken heed of the intervening narrator. Thus it seems that the authorial narrative voice affects the protagonist as well as the reader. The reader’s response may therefore seem to reflect that of Virgil, an effect which not only reinforces the reader’s identification with the protagonist through the interior monologue, but also deepens the dual nature of the experience. As Broch observes, ‘the conversations gain an abstract quality through their inclusion in the interior monologue, in a measure reminiscent of Plato, and certainly far removed from naturalistic representation’. (DV 486)

**The narrative technique in the ‘Ether’ chapter**

Analysis of the narrative technique in the final chapter, ‘Ether’, soon shows that it differs from the style of preceding chapters. At this stage, Virgil has undergone physical death, and the narrative can be understood to be an account of events beyond earthly existence. The chapter opens with selfquestioning, which, as discussed earlier, is one indication of the presence of an interior monologue. Who exactly is speaking, however, remains ambiguous. The questions are followed by statements which could be interpreted either as authorial intrusion, in the present tense, or interior monologue, in the subjunctive mood, in an appeal to Virgil’s fellow poet

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Plotius. (‘Oh Plotius, oh that it might endure, oh that it might endure murmuringly’)\textsuperscript{367} The continuation of the sentence in the indicative mood suggests the presence of Broch’s authorial persona, as well as Virgil, in relating the narrative. The ambiguity of authorial persona, or inner monologue, then gives way to a continuation of Broch’s now-established ‘lyrical style’, a long sentence of many clauses executed in the simple past tense:

Was there still something murmuring? Was it still the kind murmuring of Plotius, protecting and kind and strong? Oh Plotius, oh that it might endure, oh that it might endure murmuringly, quiet and quieting, welling up from the unfathomable depths within and without, now that the labour was over, now that the labour sufficed, now that nothing need follow, oh that it may go on forever! And verily it went on, murmuring and murmuring, rolling in softly in endlessness, murmuring wave after murmur-wave each of them tiny yet all of them radiating in a boundless cycle; it was simply there, no sort of hearkening, no effort whatsoever was needed to hold on to it, indeed this murmurousness was not to be held onto, for it strove onward, mingled with the trickling of the fountain, with the trickling of the waters, merged with them in the vast and colourless might of a rest-bearing stream, itself the thing carried, itself rest, itself a moving stream, softly lapping the keel and the sides of the boat with slithering foam. (DV 439)\textsuperscript{120}

The latter ‘snake-like’ sentence not only conveys a sense of reassurance in the presence of murmuring sound, and a return to the mystical, lyrical style, but also moves the narrative forward slightly. Whilst referring to the merging of sound-waves, which in turn combines with trickling water to form a moving stream, the text conveys a sense of being borne forwards, of progression. The following statement that the ‘destination was unknown’, and that ‘one was shoved off’, however, indicates the continuation of an interior monologue:

the destination was unknown, unknown the harbour of departure; one was shoved off from no pier, coming out of infinity, pressing on to infinity, the journey went on of itself, nevertheless strict and true to its course, guided by a sure hand, (DV 439)\textsuperscript{121}

In this statement, the use of the pronoun ‘one’ in the course of free indirect speech is significant. It differs from the predominantly third-person application of the interior monologue hitherto, and introduces a sense of selfcommentary.\textsuperscript{122} It is followed by a brief shift from the indicative into the subjunctive mood, in the original German text, thereby reintroducing a sense of doubt, and the possibility of the presence of another speaker.

\textsuperscript{367} KW4 413. Broch writes: ‘Oh Plotius, oh, daß es andauere, oh, daß es murmelnd andauere’.
Ins Unendliche strebend ging die Fahrt vor sich, dennoch streng und scharf in ihrer Richtung, geleitet von sicherer Hand, und wäre es gestattet gewesen, sich umzuwenden, man hätte den Steuermann am Heck erblicken müssen, ...  

The question of who is speaking therefore remains ambiguous. However, the continuation of the narrative in the long sentences characteristic of Broch's 'lyrical style', executed in third person simple past tense, ('the substratum in which the narrative must proceed'), predominantly without self questioning or challenge, indicates that Virgil's presence in the text is greatly diminished. The text continues in this style at length, interrupted only on occasion by the subjunctive mood, and some self-

120 KW4 413
121 Ibid. 122 See DV 406. KW4 383. 123 KW4 413.
questioning.368 Authorial intrusion in the form of philosophical discourse is greatly reduced, remaining marked in the German text by change from past to present tense. In the following example, the present tense is italicised:

Über sich selbst hinausgewachsen war nun diese Innensicht, und sie hatte auch den Entschwindenden dort, den Freund ergriffen - oh unverlierbar derjenige, der von innen gesehen wird in seiner nacktsten Einheit. Oh Verwandlung des Endes zum Anfang, Rückverwandlung des Sinnbilds zum Urbild, oh Freundschaft! Und obwohl nur weniges je so vertraut gewesen war wie das Antlitz dessen, den man in Freundschaft hatte Octavian nennen dürfen, ... 126

This insight had now grown beyond itself and had comprehended the one vanishing there, the friend – oh unlosable is he who is seen from within in his nakedest wholeness. Oh transformation of the end into the beginning, transformation of the symbol back into the arch-image, oh friendship! And although few faces had been so familiar as his whom in friendship he had been permitted to call Octavian, ...
(DV 443)

The chapter proceeds in this style, almost without interruption, there being only three paragraphs in its first forty pages, and four paragraphs in the final three. The text appears no longer to be a personal account based on

368 See, for example, use of subjunctive, KW441, KW4 415; use of self-questioning, DV 443, KW4 417; DV 445, KW4 419; DV 452, KW4 426; DV 456, KW4 430; DV 458, KW4 431: DV 469, KW4 442. 126 KW4 417. My italics.
memory and narrated by Virgil. It is presented as though by an observer, looking on from outside, rather than from within. Virgil is still present in the text, as subject, but the narrative is now largely related by Broch rather than his protagonist, a succession that is fully accepted by the reader. The narration becomes a commentary upon the proceedings, relating Virgil’s experiences in a more ‘diegetic’ fashion than previously. The change in style is reinforced by the content of the text, which deals with the transformation of Virgil after physical death, as he discards his name and physicality, undergoes a process of creation in reverse and finds that time has ceased.369

The shift in narrative style is most marked in the final three pages of the text, following the report that Virgil is ‘permitted to turn around, [...] and is turned around’. Here, the narrative bears no indication that it is an interior monologue. It is composed in third-person past tense, indicative mood, without indication of self doubt, or ‘contamination’ of the text that might indicate the onset of inner monologue. At this stage, there is little indication of Virgil’s presence, other than as the protagonist, whose experience Broch describes by means of his authorial persona: Virgil has given way to Broch. He writes: ‘Thus he saw it, seeing thus the boy and the mother, and they were so familiar that he was almost able to name them without being able to recall their names’. (DV 480)370

Thus he saw it, seeing thus the boy and the mother, and they were so familiar that he was almost able to name them without being able to recall their names. (DV 480)

The distinct changes in the narrative technique of the fourth chapter suggest that it may have a different function, in the structure of the novel, to the preceding three sections. Whereas the first three chapters portray the final hours and anguish of Virgil’s life, the final chapter is concerned with events beyond his physical death: Broch offers a new experience, the narration of that which occurs beyond death.

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369 The transformation of Virgil in the ‘Ether’ is discussed in detail in a later chapter. See Section 12a: Approaching Individuality: An analysis of the ‘Ether’ chapter.

370 KW4 452. Broch writes:

So sah er es, so sah er den Knaben, so sah er die Mutter, und sie waren ihm so überaus vertraut, daß er sie fast zu benennen vermochte, freilich ihre ihre Namen zu finden.
The final chapter, Ether, provides an opportunity to reflect. The text leads beyond known points of reference: as indicated early in the chapter, it is ‘a leave-taking from the diversity of familiar things’. (DV 440)

The destination was unknown, unknown the harbour of departure; one was shoved off from no pier, coming out of infinity, pressing on to infinity, the journey went on of itself, nevertheless strict and true to its course, guided by a sure hand and had it been permitted to turn round, one must have glimpsed the steersman at the helm, the helper in the unchartered, the pilot who was acquainted with the exit to the harbour. (DV 440)

The structure of the narrative therefore differs from that of the previous chapters, but nevertheless continues to make demands upon the reader. As discussed earlier, the reader has already suspended disbelief by accepting the melding of free indirect speech, third person narration with shifting focus, and authorial intrusion as being the voice of Virgil. The transition into the less complex third person narrative discourse of the final chapter may be accepted by the reader, who feels very much part of the course of events. The absence of interior monologue may not be questioned, for the reader adopts the role of an onlooker, who views from a distance, whilst continuing to understand that the events are conveyed through Virgil’s innermost thoughts. The latter may be assumed by the reader to be contained with the account. The reader, therefore, takes on Virgil’s consciousness, whilst occupying the role of third person observer to that consciousness and becoming an active participant in the narrative through the use of the imagination. The difficulty here is the content of the chapter, for the ‘Ether’ depicts events taking place after Virgil’s physical death. It represents the final stage in the metamorphosis of the protagonist, comprehension of which is an important factor in developing understanding of Broch’s concept of individuality and its relationship to art. The following sections are therefore dedicated to analysis of Virgil’s transformation.

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371 KW4 414.
372 Ibid.
11. Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality

The previous chapter has shown how the complex narrative technique of the Virgil work portrays the consciousness of the protagonist and engages the reader. Our attention now turns towards the ways in which Virgil changes in the course of the narrative. In this, and the subsequent section, I wish to show that his consciousness is gradually transformed, as he passes through the elements, and that the metamorphosis is significant concerning our understanding of Broch’s concept of individuality. The previous discussion regarding how the interior monologue might engage the reader in Virgil’s consciousness, and the importance of reader response, should be borne in mind in the course of this analysis. To my knowledge, no other critic has approached the work in this way.

a. The state of being in the ‘Water’ chapter

Following the initial reference to his death in the title of the novel, and shortly before the beginning of the ‘inner monologue’, Virgil is introduced to the reader as ‘the poet of the Aeneid’. (DV 12) This concise description shapes the reader’s impression of the protagonist from the outset, possibly building upon their prior knowledge of the historical Virgil, whilst ensuring that he is associated with his life’s achievement, his literary masterpiece. This identity is confirmed at an early stage in the inner monologue, when Virgil refers to himself in the third person, as ‘poet of the Aeneid, he Publius Vergilius Maro’. (DV 12) The association of the protagonist with his earthly achievements is consolidated in the first pages of the text by his concern with his physical being: Virgil ascribes great importance to his name, and describes himself as ‘a peasant from birth, who loved the peace of earthly life’. (DV 12-13) Reference to the physical presence of the Aeneid, and the protagonist’s attachment to it, indicates that he regards his artwork as a representation and reflection of his

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373 KW4 11.
374 KW4
12. 3 KW4
13.
physical existence: ‘He assured himself that the chest with the manuscript of
the Aeneid stood undisturbed near him’. (DV 16) His identification with the
physical realm corresponds to the mode of expression of individuality, which
emerged from the Renaissance onwards.

The focus upon physical existence is further supported through
description of the goods carried by the ship, the cargo including arms, grain,
oil, wine, spice, silk and people, both master and slave. The goods indicate the
interests of the mass society under Augustine rule, ‘the whole ship being
lapped in a wave of greed’. (DV 14-15) It is interesting to note that whilst the
chapter titles suggest a cosmological framework for the novel, the protagonist
is concerned with his material, earthly existence: slight discord is conveyed
between Virgil’s state of mind and the situation in which he is found by the
reader.

In the face of death, however, Virgil’s consciousness seems to be
beginning to change: it is shifting away from purely physical existence. The
onset of his transformation is conveyed through the inner monologue. The
reader is informed that he is ‘a prey to seasickness,’ being ‘held taut, […] not
having dared to move the whole day long’. (DV 12) Virgil finds that, ‘although
bound to the cot which had been set up for him amidships, he becomes
conscious of himself, or rather of his body and the life of his body’. (DV 12) The
tension appears to lie between his mind and his body. Although he defines
himself as the poet of the Aeneid, he begins to question the course that his life
has taken, and concludes that he has submitted to ‘those irrefutable forces of
fate which never vanished completely’. (DV 12) He feels that, ‘in conformity
with a higher destiny’ he has neither been ‘allowed to be free from nor free to
stay at home’. ‘This destiny’, the reader is informed, ‘had pushed him out from

375 KW4 16.
376 See Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the
individual and individuality.
378 KW4 11-12.
379 KW4 12.
the community into the nakedest, direct most savage loneliness of the human crowd’. (DV 13)  

The protagonist’s experience constitutes a form of Platonic awakening, the beginning of inward reflection, which can occur when the subject feels completely alone. It corresponds to the sense of loneliness, to which Broch attaches importance in his *Massenwahntheorie*, and may be understood to be an example of Negative Universalism. As we have seen, for Broch, such isolation lies at the root of philosophical reflection.\(^{11}\) Virgil gains an ability to reflect upon his whole being, seeing his life from a new and different perspective as death encroaches. As he gazes into the skies, he finds that he is unable to relate to the heavenly bodies, but nevertheless, senses a faint connection to them, that he cannot quite place. He is vaguely aware that knowledge of the stars lies somewhere deep within his consciousness, hidden but present, like ‘those irrefutable forces of fate which never vanished completely’, thereby acknowledging the effect of hidden forces, over which he has no control. (DV 12)\(^{12}\) The discovery of traces of previous ages, laid down within his consciousness, is reminiscent, once again, of Parry’s ‘Two-voice theory in the *Aeneid*’.\(^{13}\)

As master poet, Virgil’s task has been that of conveying the glory of the Augustan empire, of reflecting the ideal in art. Now, however, he begins to doubt the artistic worth of his life’s work the *Aeneid*, suspecting that he has not done justice to the masses in his poetry, and therefore he has produced sham art, which has glorified the Augustan regime. He realises that ‘the poet is heeded only if he extols the world […] only falsehood wins renown, not understanding’. (DV 15)\(^{14}\) Despite his misgivings, he continues to identify with his role as poet: ‘it was of no moment, he Publius Vergilius Maro had nothing in common with them’. (DV 16)\(^{15}\)


\(^{380}\) KW4 13. Broch writes:

Es hatte ihn hinausgetrieben, hinaus aus der Gemeinschaft, hinein in die nackte, böseste, wildeste Einsamkeit des Menschenengewühles.
‘No philosophy is possible without the Platonic-divine primal experience of the individual Self in isolation’. KW9/2 184.

It is interesting to note that Broch underwent a similar ‘Platonic experience’, at the age of nine. He recalls that all that really existed for him was his own thinking ego. He was suddenly uplifted to be an imaginary ‘world creator,’ a Platonic philosopher whose task was to recreate the world in his own thoughts. See P.M. Lützeler (1987) Hermann Broch: A Biography, pp. 10-11. 12

KW4 12.


KW4 15. 15

Virgil’s insight is significant. He suspects that his art has subscribed to aesthetics, rather than ethics. He feels that he has contributed to what Broch refers to as ‘evil in the value-system of art’. A philosophical experience, his realisation marks the beginning of a process, in which he undergoes change. The idea only occurs to Broch’s twentieth-century Virgil, however, in the face of death. For Broch, the occurrence of philosophical experience lies in the ‘primacy of the Logos’.381 The onset of change in Virgil’s consciousness not only places his identification with his role as poet of the Aeneid under threat, but also raises his interest in the Logos. His dispersing consciousness affects his breathing and is reflected in the elements. When he breathes in the music of the spheres, ‘his chest hurts him and he coughs’.382 When he coughs, it becomes suddenly warm and the city becomes visible:

a strange, dusky, knotted and confused network that lifted itself darkly from the shiny, oil-dark surface of the water toward the unmoved evening brightness of the heavens.383 (DV 21)

This causes him to sense the threat posed by the masses, and understand how easily they could overthrow the Augustan regime.

Virgil’s feeling returns when he is faced with the crowds waiting to celebrate Caesar’s birthday, in which he senses a ‘tide of evil’. (DV 22)384 He

381 KW13/1 407. Letter from Broch to Egon Vietta, dated 20 April 1936. Broch writes:

Wenn es für mich ein philosophisches ‘Erlebnis’ gibt, und ich glaube behaupten zu dürfen, daß ich gehabt habe und eigentlich fortwährend unter seinem Einfluß stehe, [...], so liegt dieses philosophische Erlebnis im Primat des Logos, ....


383 KW4 21. Broch writes:

ein sonderbar finsternes, verkreuztes und verworrenes Wurzelwerk, das duster aus der glänzenden öilig-dunklen Wasserfläche emporwuchs zu des Himmels unbewegter Abendhelle.

384 KW4 22. 20 Ibid.
begins to doubt his achievements: ‘to glorify, not describe, that had been the mistake’. (DV 22)

A hundred thousand mouths yelled the evil out of themselves, yelled it to one another without hearing it, without knowing it was evil, nevertheless willing to stifle it and outshout it in the infernal bellowing. [...] Was he the only one to realise it? (DV 22)

The self questioning is followed by simple references to the elements, which indicate through the narrative that Virgil has intuitive awareness of being connected to the cosmos:

stone weighted the earth, leaden weighted the waters, the demonic crater of evil, ripped open by Vulcan himself, a howling crater on the border of Poseidon’s realm. (DV 22)

The protagonist does not comment on the occurrence of this thought. As the inner monologue proceeds, it indicates that he is becoming aware of the presence of evil: ‘something new arose in him, namely the awareness of the people’s profound capacity for evil’. (DV 23) He knows that it is the artist’s role to address the ‘seething, befuddled, unrecognised evil’, which lies ‘beyond the reach of every governmental enterprise, beyond reach of every earthly force [...] beyond reach perhaps of the gods themselves’. (DV 23) It is through song, ‘that small voice of the soul, [...] which while it makes known the evil, announces also the awakening of salvation’. (DV 23)

It was not hate which he felt for the masses, neither disdain, nor repulsion, he wished as little as ever before to separate himself from the people, or even to lift himself above them, but something new arose in him, something of which, despite all his concern with the people, he had never wanted to take cognizance, and irrespective of where he had been, whether in Naples, Rome, or even Athens, ample opportunity had been given, something that here in Brundisium had unexpectedly obtruded itself, namely the awareness of the peoples’ profound capacity for evil in all its ramifications, their possibilities for human degradation in becoming a mob, and their reversion therewith to the anti-human, brought to pass by the hollowing out of existence, by turning existence to a mere thirst for superficialities, its deep roots lost and cut away, so that nothing remained but the dangerous isolated life of self, a sad, sheer exteriority, pregnant with evil, pregnant with death, pregnant with a mysterious, infernal ending. Was this what fate had wished him to learn, so that he was forced back into the heterogeneous, into the cauldron of bitterly boiling worldly life? (DV 23-24)

Virgil’s response to his insight is to try to cling on to his physical existence. He ‘clamps his hand tightly to the handles of the leather manuscript chest lest it be wrenched from him’. (DV 24) He holds fast to every smallest

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385 Ibid.
particle of time, trying to ‘embody all of them in memory, as if they could be
preserved in memory through all deaths for all time’. (DV 24)\textsuperscript{28} He clings to
consciousness ‘with the strength of a man who feels the most significant thing
of his life approaching and is full of anxiety lest he misses it’.
(DV 25)\textsuperscript{29} His sensory awareness of physical existence continues to be
raised as he is carried through the city on a litter. ‘Complete knowledge is
conveyed to him through his nose, breathed in with the narcotic fumes in which
the audible and visible are embedded’. The foul smell of the deserted market-
place, where produce is ‘indistinguishable through their common decay’,
reaches his nose. However, he also senses ‘unending peace’ from ‘the orbit
of productivity’, the ‘bucolic peace ‘from which he had emerged as a peasant’s
son’. (DV 36)\textsuperscript{386} His yearning for continued participation in the physical world
is refuelled by the emergence of these opposing ideas.

One could smell the huge masses of comestibles that were stored here, stored for
barter within the empire but destined, either here or there after much buying and
selling, to be slagged through these human bodies and their serpentine intestines,
one could smell the dry sweetness of the grain, stacks of which reared up in front of
the darkened silos waiting to be shovelled within. (DV 35)\textsuperscript{387}

He becomes aware of a yearning within himself, which has ‘changed in the
course of his earthly wanderings, and turned to knowledge’. (DV 37)\textsuperscript{388} Held
aloft, but forced to look at the ‘utmost depravity and decay,’ he finds ‘life’s
entrance and exit woven in closest kinship’. (DV 41)\textsuperscript{389} As he penetrates more
deeply into his own mind, he finds that ‘it is himself that he finds everywhere’.
(DV 36)\textsuperscript{390} Thus his identification with his role as poet of the \textit{Aeneid} is

\begin{itemize}
  \item 22 Ibid. 23
  \item KW4 23, 24
  \item KW4 22.
  \item 25 Ibid. 26
  \item KW4 23, 27
  \item KW4 24.
  \item 28 KW4 25, 29
  \item KW4 24.
  \item 386 KW4 35.
  \item 387 Ibid.
  \item 388 KW4 36.
  \item 389 KW4 41.
  \item 390 KW4 36.
\end{itemize}
beginning to crumble, as his view of the world begins to change. As he becomes aware of the sound of the music of the spheres, and heaven and earth appear to merge, a youth, later known as ‘Lysanias’, appears to him. A curious sense of time is conveyed by the text, for the idea of celestial harmony reaches back to the thought of the ancients, whereas the youth (as will be shown), seems to point to the future. Thus, as Virgil’s reliance upon sensory information dwindles, his sense of time alters too.

b. Transformation in the ‘Fire’ chapter

Virgil’s fear that his artwork has subscribed to the Roman administration leads to a journey into his own mind. Facing the end of his earthly time, he descends into himself, experiencing what Broch describes as ‘looking back into loneliness’.391 His body, which has been his self image, no longer seems to belong to him: it has become the ship bearing him. He feels divided, into physical and psychological existence, ‘deprived of the unity of human life, [...] no longer believing himself to be capable of self-mastery’. (DV 77)36 He searches his psyche, seeking values that were once important to him, which now seem to have lost their validity outside of his reality. Eventually the descent reaches the edge of being, the depths of loneliness, beyond sound and light, where self delusion is no longer possible. (DV 219)392 As has been shown in our discussion of the inner monologue, he has discovered a space deep within himself, which may be understood as the realm of his spirituality.

As Virgil enters the mythical, mystical realm, the air reduces and three figures appear, emerging gradually from the darkness. They depict three sins: gluttony, debauchery and drunkenness, and they argue over money, being foul-mouthed and abusive. The brief halting of their disputes by the referral to the name of Augustus indicates his position at the peak of their value system. (DV 112)38 Described as ‘a three-bodied form of the most unknown God’ (DV

391 KW13/1 144. Broch refers to the ‘Rückverweisung des Menschen in die Einsamkeit’.
36 KW4 73.
38 KW4 106.
the trio can be understood as representing the depravity brought about by the Augustan regime. Their presence could be regarded as a modern representation of the parade of souls of future heroes witnessed by Aeneas, during his descent into the underworld, in the historical *Aeneid*.\(^{40}\) Their two-sided nature, that never permits full agreement, is also reminiscent of mythological ‘Janus’ figures, which suggests that Virgil has arrived at the brink of a hitherto unknown realm. In Roman mythology, the god Janus symbolised the process of transition from one condition to another, for he was able to see simultaneously into both past and future, and from one universe to another. Worshipped at times of change and new beginnings, Janus represented the centre point between barbarity and civilisation, and became known as the god of the door or threshold.\(^{394}\) The appearance of these figures to Virgil at the point when he has gained insight into the nature of his artwork, perceiving it to be of sham quality, is significant. It indicates that he is moving away from his materialistic approach to existence, and has reached the threshold of the spiritual realm.

Here, the parallel drawn by Broch between his own era and that of the historical Virgil comes to the fore. Collectively, the figures appearing to Virgil convey the bestial nature of which humanity is capable, without quite becoming an animal. The lack of air indicates their participation in the enclosed system of a totalitarian regime. This is consolidated by the brief silencing of the trio at the sound of Caesar’s name. They are aware of the nature of the system, and convey to Virgil that Augustus’ regime is not only built upon filth, but produces filth too. ‘Filth is what they’ll dole out [...] filth is what your Caesar is’. (DV 113)\(^{395}\)

That there are three figures is significant. When one speaks, he is supported by the other two, there being no direct opposition. This strengthens

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\(^{40}\) See Virgil, *The Aeneid*, pp. 136-139.

\(^{394}\) The two faces of Janus originally represented the sun and the moon. Similar gods, combining heads of gods such as Hermes and Athena, in Janus-like form are found in Greek mythology. See, for example, L.A. MacKay (1956) ‘Janus’, *University of California Publications in Classical Philology*, 15(4), pp. 157-182.

the relationship, so that they can enclose and perpetuate an evil force. Broch conveys here that evil exists as a force in the world, which can become enthroned within a totalitarian regime. For the reader, past and present are placed in parallel once again. Broch had witnessed the totalitarian regime of the Third Reich, in which the decrease in recorded crime rates generated an apparent sense of security, whilst masking the atrocities of the concentration camps. A similar phenomenon may be seen in historical Roman literature, in which debauchery is recorded, but not given elevated status. Comparison may also be drawn with the historical Virgil, who writes in the <em>Aeneid</em>, ‘The time will come for war. [...] That will be the time for pillaging, and for hate to vie with hate’. 

Virgil, terrified, realises gradually that he has already participated in this evil by subscribing to the Augustan regime. The figures are connected to his earliest experiences of fear within the family. Described by Schlantas being possibly of Kabiric origin, they may be associated with gods of sea farers and with fire. The figures emerge from the imagination, and may be interpreted as Platonic Forms, or Ideas, which lie behind the earthly empirical reality: the perfect archetypes of all that exists in the physical world. They can only be grasped by the intellect, and are available to Virgil through the process of anamnesis. Broch’s thought may be illuminated here through comparison with Schelling’s study <em>The Deities of Samothrace</em>. In this work, Schelling describes the subject of his study as the Kabiri, a group of ancient gods, who are associated with initiatory activity at Samothrace and Lemnos. He believed that the Kabiri possess magical powers, which could bring higher gods to realisation. In his view, the first three Samothracian gods correspond to Demeter, Persephone and Dionysos, whilst the fourth, known as ‘Kasmilos’, or ‘Kadmilos’, is a messenger, who mediates between the aforementioned gods and higher gods. The fourth is understood by Schelling to be also a god.

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397 ,921 offenders had been sentenced by German courts in 1932. There was a decrease of 100,000 in 1933, and by 1937 (the only year in which an amnesty for minor offenders did not distort the statistical picture), the number stood at 904, 093. Grunberger cites (1949) <em>Statistisches Handbuch für Deutschland 1928-1944</em>. Munich: Franz Ehrenwirth, p. 633.
'Hermes', who stands above the other three, rather than being subordinated by them. In the Virgil, the fourth deity may be understood

47 E. Schlant (1970) 'Hermann Broch’s Theory of Symbols exemplified in a scene from “The Death of Vergil”', Neophilologus, 54, pp. 53-66, here, p. 58. According to Schlant, the limping leader is Hephaistos, identified by Broch later in the novel. She infers that if the limping man is Hephaistos, the accompanying female must be the Aphrodite of lust, goddess of prostitution.
to be represented by Lysanias, whose mediating role is examined later in this section.

As Broch observes, the images appearing to Virgil have the effect of transforming physical pain into philosophical perception, as though holding a mirror to creation. The encounter fully confirms his fear that he has subscribed to the realm of aesthetics. This is significant to his metamorphosis, for he is turning towards the sphere of ethics. His realisation that aesthetic beauty serves only itself and cannot subscribe to ethics is conveyed in lyrical style, rather than prose. Broch writes:

Thus beauty revealed itself to man as the law that lacked perception, Beauty in its abandonment proclaiming itself as a law unto itself. [...] the game that could be repeated endlessly. (DV 123)

Virgil realises that ‘the lowering, tempting desire for destruction is there within and about him, embracing him, expressing horror and bringing it to pass, the language of the pre-creation, the language of the void’. (DV 130) He

398 KW4 469. Self-commentary upon Der Tod des Vergil. 50 KW4 117. Broch writes: so enthüllt sich dem Menschen die Schönheit als Gesetz ohne Erkenntnis, die Verworfeneit einer Schönheit, die sich selbst zum Gesetz hat. [...] endlos wiederholbar.
399 KW4 124. 52 KW4 125.
perceives that the force of evil may lie hidden within his own being, with the capacity to reduce him to an animal state:

Oh, nothing was so near to evil as the god tumbling down into a false-humanity or the man catapulted toward a false divinity, both lured toward evil, to ward calamity, toward the uncreated state of the animal, both playing with destruction, with a demonic self-destruction from which they were perchance separated only by a hand’s breadth ... \(\text{DV 131}\)\textsuperscript{52}

Thus, in his altered state of consciousness, Virgil has gained access to the Platonic realm, and become aware of a change in perception of art, between ancient times and the modern era. For Plato, the task of the artist was to produce good art, based on ethical principles. In his view, the craftsman who made good shoes could provide a glimpse of the beautiful. The role of the artist was not elevated, as it is today. A work of art was considered to belong to the state or the patron, whilst artists were regarded by the aristocracy as social inferiors who had to work for others.\textsuperscript{400} In contrast, modern art, rather than serve purely an ethical cause, primarily seeks to serve the beautiful. For Broch, as we have seen, art that is aimed at producing the ‘beautiful’, rather than the ‘good’, becomes a matter of ‘Kitsch’, which he defines as ‘the confusion of ethical and aesthetic categories’.\textsuperscript{54}

The descent into his own soul as death approaches brings Virgil to believe that his art has failed to address the masses and belongs to the realm of Kitsch. He comes to the understanding that the role of art is to provide insight into the divine:

this, the disclosure of the divine through the self-perceptive knowledge of the individual soul, this was the task of art, its human duty, its perceptive duty and therefore its reason for being, the proof of which was art’s nearness to death, and its duty, since only in this nearness might art become real, only thus unfolding into a symbol of the human soul; verily this he knew. \(\text{DV 140}\)\textsuperscript{55}

It is interesting to note the use of the word ‘verily’ (‘wahrlich’) at this point of Virgil’s gaining insight. By confirming Virgil’s knowledge of the task of art ‘as being ‘the disclosure of the divine through the self-perceptive knowledge of the individual soul,’ ‘verily’ might be understood as a reference to initiation into a deep seated truth of which he has now been made aware. He has glimpsed

\textsuperscript{400} Art in the Roman era was used to record historical events, great use being made of the commemorative aspect of public art. See M. Müller (1972) ‘Künstlerische und materielle
into part of his psyche, which he would not usually see. The quotation is an example of ‘authorial intrusion’ followed by free indirect speech, which has the effect of merging the voice of Broch with that of the consciousness of the protagonist. The description of the ‘task of art’ is conveyed in the German present tense, whereas ‘verily this he knew’ adopts the simple past tense. This can be seen in the German text below, in which statements conveying ‘authorial intrusion’ are italicised:

\begin{quote}
dies, die Aufdeckung des Göttlichen durch das selbsterkenndende Wissen, um die eigene Seele, das ist die menschliche Aufgabe der Kunst, ihre Menschheitsaufgabe, ihre Erkenntnisaufgabe und eben-darum ihre Daseinsberechtigung, erwiesen an der ihr auferlegten dunklen Todesnähe, weil sie bloß in solcher Nähe zur echten Kunst zu werden vermag, weil sie bloß darum die zum Sinnbild entfaltete Menschenseele ist; wahrlich dies wußte er.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

As a result of his insight, Virgil resolves to destroy his life’s work, the \textit{Aeneid}. He is beginning to observe an opposing point of view, in the knowledge that

\begin{quote}
it is already contained within his own soul. That which has been lying passive within his being is becoming apparent, and his perception is changing: now he can hear the ‘spheric singing of the world’. (DV 205)\footnote{KW4 205.}
\end{quote}

\textbf{c. The role of Lysanias in Virgil’s transformation}

We now direct our attention to the youth Lysanias,\footnote{KW4 205.} who emerges from the elements as Virgil’s consciousness begins to change. The protagonist is affected by his relationship with the boy, who, as will be shown, plays a significant role in his transformation. The youth is a curious figure, for his presence is apparent only to Virgil, and the reader. Research into Lysanias has been dealt with mostly in criticism in German. Curt von

\begin{quote}
\footnote{KW9/2 119-157.}
\footnote{KW4 133.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item The name ‘Lysanias’ may allude to a tetrarch of Abilene, introduced by the evangelist Luke; and also to a third century B.C. Greek grammarian and lexicographer from Cyrene, whose work included \textit{On Iambic Poets}. See H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.) (2002-2010) \textit{Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World}. Vol. 8, Leiden: Brill, p. 32.
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}
Faber du Faur’s examination of the historical origins of the figure, and Walter Hinderer’s discussion of the portrayal of the youth are of particular interest to this study. Critics have paid little attention, however, to the relationship between the boy and the poet, especially the way in which Lysanias contributes to Virgil’s transformation. Analysis of this aspect of the novel, in my view, will assist in our understanding of Broch’s concept of individuality.

As indicated earlier, Virgil becomes aware of Lysanias’ presence shortly after his philosophical awakening, when he becomes conscious of the flowing of the elements beyond earthly existence: ‘How mild was the air’, Broch writes, ‘the bath of inner and outer, bath of the soul, flowing from the eternal into the earthly, knowledge of the coming into this side and that side!’ As the protagonist concentrates upon his breathing and listening, the flow of the elements gives rise to another being, a lyre-playing slave. The youth seems able to pass between earthly and unearthly worlds. He leads Virgil to the music of the spheres, where ‘the nameless song of a nameless boy’, may be heard: this is ‘the music of the spheres singing itself’. (DV 20)

Here, Broch introduces ideas that were of interest to natural philosophers. The concept of celestial harmony goes back to the Pythagoreans, who, strongly influenced by ancient Egyptians, discovered the mathematical relationship between the length of a string and its pitch. This gave rise to the idea that the same proportions might be applicable to motions of an ordered and unchanging universe, in which planets were believed to

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Wie weich war die Luft, Bad des Innen und Außen, Bad der Seele, fließend aus dem Ewigen ins Irdische, Wissen vom Kommenden im Diesseitigen und im Jenseitigen.

It is interesting to note that the elements are used to similar effect in Heimito von Doderer’s, novel, Die Dämonen (The Demons). For example, in the latter, the character Leonhard finds that he has become conscious of the air and water and decides that he has been born to use his sense of smell. See H. von Doderer (trans. Winston, R. and Winston, C.) (1989) The Demons (3 vols). London: Quartet.


move in concentric circles around the central, spherical earth. The four elements were drawn into the cosmic scheme, which is of particular interest concerning the division of the Virgil novel into four roots. The theme was taken up by great thinkers: Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Milton and Kepler all engaged with the idea of the music of the spheres.407

Through depiction of celestial harmony, Broch directs the reader towards a mode of thought that had largely been forgotten by the midtwentieth century. Virgil only becomes aware of the tones as death encroaches, and he begins to notice that which would normally lie outside his consciousness: his sensory awareness is raised. This represents the opening of the way into the afterlife, or underworld, which is only open to him because he is dying. In modern consciousness, dying replaces the initiation previously induced by a priest.408 Depiction of celestial harmony also occurs elsewhere in Broch’s work. For example, in his early novel, The Unknown Quantity, which depicts the changing consciousness of the mathematician Hieck, the protagonist hears, ‘[the earth’s] vibrant note, the note that swells to fill the whole universe, to an intuition of the whole universe’.409 For Virgil, the association of the youth with the music of the spheres points towards a realm of existence, which hitherto has remained hidden.

When he first appears at Virgil’s side, the ‘rather childish-looking, dark-curved boy’ is associated with aspects of life close to the poet’s physical self. He takes care of Virgil’s possessions, the cloak and manuscript chest, thereby echoing his identification with earthly matters such as his name, and his peasant origins, in the early pages of the novel. The boy’s actions do not go unnoticed, but take effect in the protagonist. Once Virgil’s attention has been

Nacht für Nacht zur Erde zurückkehren, ihren Glockenklang vernehmen, den Klang, der anschwillt zur Ganzheit, zum Ahnen der Ganzheit und doch nichts zurückläßt als eine kleine Erkenntnis: dies war alles, was man verlangen durfte.
drawn to Lysanias, he begins to rank his concerns, starting with those of a physical nature. The cloak is deemed ‘less important than the manuscript-chest, [...] yet ‘a small part of the vigilance [...] might be devoted to the cloak’.

(DV 25) Here, Virgil’s identity appears to be shifting. The manuscript chest, containing the product of his artistic output, is given greater priority than the cloak, which is used to cover his physical being. Virgil now places greater value upon what he has produced, than what he possesses, in order to protect against circumstances.

Lysanias’ sudden appearance, however, soon causes Virgil to probe deeply into his memory. His vague recognition of the boy is disrupting his thought, bringing him to question their relationship more closely: ‘whose features did he actually bear? ... those of a long bygone or more recent past?’ (DV 26) The youth provides some form of reflection of Virgil, reminding him of his own youth, whilst remaining in the present, and therefore disrupting his sense of measurable time. Virgil briefly contemplates the boy as a sexual being, becoming aware that this aspect of earthly life, in which he has participated, is now over. He is brought to realise that his sense of time is diminishing: ‘When was it ... unreckoned ages past, or just a few months back?’ (DV 26) He finds the arrival of Lysanias to be an unexpected inconvenience: ‘the nuisance was right; it had not been foreseen’. (DV 57)

There is an affinity between the two, however. The boy complements Virgil, as if he were a friend. Conversation with Lysanius brings Virgil to consider his origins, and time appears to be cast aside, as he is led into his own past, which becomes a process of anamnesis, or ‘recalling to mind’. The boy’s voice is associated with sound, with memories of home and mother. Virgil is led back

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410 KW4 25.
411 KW4 26.
68 Ibid.
412 KW4 56. 70 KW4 57. Broch writes:
to the speech of Mantua, his mother-tongue, to the origins of existence; the music of the spheres and the elements:

‘You should not send me away .....’ the hoarse-soft young voice had a familiar sound, its peculiar peasant undertone almost like that of the homeland. The voice was like a reminder of a scarcely-memorable bond, something compatible in an undiscoverably remote motherly once, a knowledge of which shone also in the boy’s eyes. (DV 58).70

He is brought to contemplate his ‘song-- the song of the spheres singing itself, reaching out over every human realm’. (DV 59)413

The youth leads the protagonist through a range of experiences, which uncover the totalitarian nature of the Augustan empire. Virgil is brought to witness those aspects of reality that remain unrepresented by his poetry, such as the poverty of Misery Street, and the greed and debauchery brought about by the Augustan Empire. He encounters strange beings, which would no longer be recognised by belief systems contemporary to the historical Virgil, and which show similarities to beings described in ancient mystery religions.414

Lysanias has the effect of illuminating the part of Virgil’s consciousness of which he has been unaware, and bringing that which was lying dormant to the fore, whilst lifting the past into the present. This is significant not only for Virgil, but also for the reader. That the other characters in the text remain unable to see Lysanias, suggests that the youth operates in harness with the interior monologue, enabling the reader to be in the privileged position of knowing the full contents of Virgil’s consciousness. The boy has knowledge of Virgil’s inner monologue, and can respond to him, in the form of ‘echoes’ or ‘reflection’.415

As their exchange continues, however, it becomes apparent that the youth’s role is not merely to reflect, but to direct. He informs Virgil that his path is poetry, and that his goal lies beyond poetry. He therefore directs the poet to the future.

413 KW4 59. Broch writes, ‘Gesang -, Sphärenluft, die sich selber singt, über alles Menschliche hinausreichend’.
415 Lube comments on this, asserting that Virgil sees only his own reflection in Lysanias: he is alone. See B. Lube, Sprache und Metaphorik in Hermann Brochs Roman “Der Tod des Vergil”, p. 81. 74 The Orphic religious practices of the ancient Greeks were associated with the myth of Orpheus. There are similarities between Orphism and Pythagoreanism. See, for example, J.A. Philip (1966) Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, pp. 137-138.
Lysanias may be understood as being an Orphic figure, for he plays a lyre, an instrument of ancient, possibly Egyptian origin, which is traditionally representative of wisdom. The lyre is associated with the Orphic practices of the ancient Greeks, which promised enhancement of the Afterlife through initiation into the Orphic mysteries.\textsuperscript{74} (It was used from ancient times onward to accompany poetry; the Greeks defined a lyric as a song to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre.)\textsuperscript{416} It also alludes to the idea of heaven or paradise, through its association with song and dance.\textsuperscript{417} We remind ourselves here of the lyrical quality of Broch’s writing in the \textit{Virgil} work, a dimension that echoes the poetry of the historical Virgil.\textsuperscript{418} Lysanias therefore provides a connection to unearthly worlds, and may be associated with knowledge of ancient mystery religions, and the possibility of life continuing after earthly death.\textsuperscript{419} The text indicates that his song has the power to transform those who hear it, offering a passage to prophetic knowledge. (DV 20)\textsuperscript{420} When Virgil hears the song, everything fades until ‘only the voice remains, becoming clearer and more dominant as if it wished to direct the ship’, and the source of the voice is forgotten. (DV 20)\textsuperscript{80} The youth can therefore be associated with the voice, and language, but he also seems to possess a magical quality, which enchants Virgil.

Broch also alludes to Orphism in his poetry. For example, in the 1945 poem, \textit{Vom Schöpferischen}, he speaks of ‘Orphisch zu schmerzlicher Rückkehr (‘Orphically, to painful return’):

\begin{quote}
Aber die Gestaltung der Erdischkeit ist jenen aufgetragen
die im Dunkel gewesen sind und dennoch sich losgerissen haben
Orphisch zu schmerzlicher Ruckkehr.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Here, Broch indicates that earthly existence requires knowledge of the mythical realm, though this knowledge may not be immediately apparent. He

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{416} Cuddon, J.A. \textit{Dictionary of Literary Terms}, p. 481.
\textsuperscript{418} See Chapter 10 re lyrical dimension of Broch’s prose.
\textsuperscript{419} H. Bowden (2010) \textit{Mystery Cults in the Ancient World}. London: Thames and Hudson, p.139.
\textsuperscript{420} KW4 20. 80
\end{footnotes}
draws on a realm of experience that was already known to the ancients and would have been known to Virgil. Comparison may be drawn here to Goethe’s poem *Urworte, Orphisch* (*Primal Word: Orphic*), which sets out the course of human life, as it evolves from destiny and chance, to stages of love and suffering, duty and hope. Whilst both poems convey a sense that there is something lasting about human existence, Broch’s verse suggests that some form of future development might emerge from the pain of the return.

Broch’s ideas here may also be linked to the avant-garde ‘Orphism’ movement of 1912-13, which was inspired by artists Robert and Sonia Delaunay. The Delaunays attempted to achieve the equivalent of lyrical abstraction, or musical simultaneity, in their painting, through the combination of bright colours. A similar idea was explored by members of the Futurist movement, who believed all activities to be deeply connected to

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81 KW 62. See editorial notes in KW 208. Variations of this poem appear in Broch’s work. According to Lützeler, the title ‘Vergil in des Orpheus Nachfolge’ was not chosen by Broch. Similar ideas arise less directly elsewhere in Broch’s poetry. See, for example, KW 13, ‘Mathematisches Mysterium’ (1913); KW 15, ‘Vier Sonette über das metaphysische Problem der Wirklichkeitserkenntnis’ (1915); KW 45, ‘Jeder wander ..’ (1939).


83 The work of the Delaunayeys was termed ‘Orphic’ by the French art critic Apollinaire, who perceived their work as ‘pure art’, created by the artist himself. In *Les Peintres cubistes* he described Orphic Cubism as:

The art of painting new compositions with elements not taken from reality as it is seen, but entirely created by the artist and invested by him with a powerful reality. Works by Orphic artists must offer simultaneously aesthetic pleasure, a clearly perceptible construction and a meaning, the subject, which is sublime. This is pure art. The light in works by Picasso contains this art, which Robert Delaunay is inventing in his way, and towards which Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp are also striving.


the world of forms. Through Lysanias, Broch brings Virgil’s past, and aspects of his consciousness that have been hidden, into the present. Thus as an Orphic figure, the lyre-playing youth draws the past into the present, and has the effect of guiding Virgil towards the future.
It is of interest that the youth remains nameless until quite late in the text, when he is named as ‘Lysanias’.\(^{421}\) (DV 180) According to Faber du Faur,\(^ {422}\) Broch’s friend at Yale, he is ‘Telesphorus, the leader to the dead’.\(^ {423}\) It is therefore fitting that the boy-god appears as a figure of salvation from the watery elements, for Telesphorus was of Kabiri origin. As indicated earlier, the Kabiri were known as gods of seafarers, the deities from Samothrace.

Broch’s explanation of how he stumbled across the figure is pertinent to this study. In his correspondence, he recounts how he encountered the youth whilst in a trance, achieved by means of an ‘advanced Yoga Technique’.\(^ {424}\) It was upon relating his visionary experience to von Faber du Faur that the figure was identified as being Telesphorus.\(^ {425}\) Lysanias might therefore be understood to be part of Broch’s consciousness, of which he would be unaware, whilst in a normal, wakeful state. Thus, his presence stems not only from Broch’s dream-consciousness, but also from his ability to reflect upon occurrences experienced within that consciousness.

Lysanias is not only Telesphorus, however. According to von Faber du Faur, the youth is also Cucullatus, an ancient god of non-Greek origin, who only appeared in the century before Christ, and of whom the historical Virgil probably knew little.\(^ {426}\) Adopted as a god in the service of Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing, Cucullatus is short, of coarse peasant appearance, and completely veiled by a cloak. He wears a ‘cuculla’, a hooded robe of Celtic origin, reaching to his knees, with the hood drawn over his head, and is often depicted as a tiny hooded figure seated upon Asclepius’ knee.\(^ {427}\) Thus as both bringer of health and leader to the dead, Lysanias presents a

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\(^{421}\) KW4 172.


\(^{423}\) Ibid, pp. 150-151. Faber du Faur refers to Lysanias as ‘Telesphorus, der Totenführer, der Endbringer’.

\(^{424}\) KW13/2 342; letter from Broch to an unnamed addressee, dated 16 August 1943.


\(^{427}\) Ibid. 91 Piero della Francesca, (1450s) The Baptism of Christ. National Gallery, London.
contradictory character, who echoes the opposition already established within the protagonist’s consciousness. This is significant, for although Broch depicts figures evoked from the underworld, he does not seem to regard their presence as being altogether sinister. As Lysanias has emerged from the elements, he might be understood to be not only of the mythical realm, but also of Virgil’s inner reality: he represents a higher, or more ideal, self for Virgil. Comparison could also be drawn between Lysanias and a figure in Piero della Francesca’s painting, The Baptism of Christ. In the painting, a youth wearing a white loincloth is depicted alongside Christ. The figure can be interpreted as a higher being, perhaps of Zoroastrian origin, a visual image of Christ’s destiny.

Analysis of the narrative technique shows that Lysanias’ affirmation that he wishes to stay with Virgil is placed between insertions of authorial intrusion, Broch speaking both as narrator and quoting Virgil, and Lysanias’s direct speech. The voices are seamlessly combined, as part of a continuous narrative which reinforces the sense of permanence and cohesion. Lysanias might therefore be seen as a youthful dimension of Virgil, of which the protagonist is still unaware, but to which attention is drawn through authorial intrusion in the narration. In the following example, authorial intrusion is italicised.

‘Too bad .....what do you want then?’
‘To stay here with you.’
The picture of the festival hall into which the boy was to have been smuggled in order to appear before Augustus faded out: ‘You wish to stay with me ...’
‘Forever.’
Everlasting night, domain in which the mother rules, the child fast asleep in immutability, lulled by darkness, from dark to dark, oh sweet permanence of the ‘forever.’
‘Who is it that you are seeking?’
‘You.’
The boy was mistaken. What we seek is submerged and we should not seek it as it mocks us by its very undiscoverability. (DV 59)

Virgil’s view is combined with authorial intrusion in the final line, ‘The boy was mistaken. What we seek is submerged ....’ As neither statement includes a ‘tag-clause’, the text presents ‘immediate speech’ from two sources in
succession, which may merge in the mind of the reader. Whilst the text seems to warn the reader against searching for that which is hidden, it illuminates that which is not visible to Virgil. By making the contents of Virgil’s consciousness known through the inner monologue, Broch enables the reader to glimpse changes that are occurring within the protagonist, which would otherwise remain hidden. The reader is able to witness the development of which Virgil seems to be unaware: the boy is gradually penetrating his consciousness.

Lysanias hovers around Virgil, acting as an indicator of his potential. In accordance with his Orphic connections, the child leader moves gradually forward throughout the text: he enables Virgil to gain a glimpse into the future, to see what lies ahead for him. The encounter with Lysanias gradually brings forth that which would otherwise have remained internal to Virgil. As Virgil is limited physically, emphasis is placed upon his intellectual activity, which becomes externally visible to the reader. There is a distant, hardly memorable, mutual understanding between the two, evoked by the boy’s voice. Lysanias’ voice resonates with Virgil, conveying aspects of his past as a peasant boy: the youth speaks his language. They share a path and Lysanias diminishes the rift between the present, past and future. He informs Virgil: ‘I was your path, I am your path. [...] I am the overtone of yourself, that was yours from the very beginning, vibrating beyond every death into eternity’. (DV 179)\textsuperscript{429} The boy is not identical to the protagonist, however.

Lysanias’ words to Virgil, ‘noch nicht und doch schon’, which can be translated as ‘not yet and yet already’,\textsuperscript{430} are worthy of consideration here. The phrase recurs in the course of the novel as a leitmotif: it reinforces the effect of the elements, by conveying the idea that Virgil is both ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. For Virgil, the phrase ‘comes like a corroboration from the boy’s lips’ (DV 61)\textsuperscript{431} for his life is in an ‘in between’ state, and Lysanias appears be

\textsuperscript{429} KW4 171. Broch writes:
Ich war dein Weg, ich bin dein Weg. [...] Ich bin das Mitklingen, das zu dir gehört, von Anfang an und über jeden Tod heraus, für ewiglich.

\textsuperscript{430} In the Untermeyer translation, ‘noch nicht und doch schon’ is translated as ‘not quite here but yet at hand’.

\textsuperscript{431} KW4 60. Broch writes:
guiding him towards change. A similar concept arises in the work of Broch’s friend and contemporary Ernst Bloch, who refers to the idea of ‘Vor-Schein’, which might be translated as meaning ‘pre-illumination’, or ‘glimpse of the future’.\textsuperscript{96} In \textit{Das Prinzip Hoffnung}, Bloch comments upon the yearning for a leader that was prevalent in biblical times.\textsuperscript{97} He asserts that the origins of such yearning sink back into Egyptian, Jewish and Greek traditions. His thought echoes the idea put forth in the historical Virgil’s \textit{Fourth Eclogue}, of the coming of a child leader, who, in Bloch’s words, ‘would end the age of iron and bring back the golden age’.\textsuperscript{98} Of further relevance is Bloch’s concern with the emergence of the new in the individual, of capturing the moment of simultaneous absence and presence, which he terms the ‘darkness of the lived moment’. This concept presents a paradox, for whilst we are able to comprehend the notion of time past, or time to come, we find the notion of the present difficult, or even impossible to grasp. We can understand the concept of the present, but find that our attempts to judge the present through our consciousness always fail, because the moments that we try to appraise are always gone, past. Bloch writes:

\begin{quote}
The darkness of the lived moment ....coincides in its total depth with the essential, but not here-existing mode of existence of the goal-content itself .... and which ... is in fact the goal-content, that does not yet exist here, has not yet been brought out, of existing itself.\textsuperscript{99}
\end{quote}

Some similarity may be drawn here with Broch’s model of the ego. As discussed earlier, the ego-nucleus finds the external world, or non-ego, to be

\begin{flushright}
Noch nicht und doch schon, kam es wie Bestätigung von des Knaben Lippen.
\end{flushright}


I have been unable to find the phrase ‘noch nicht und doch schon’ in Bloch’s \textit{Geist der Utopie}. However, a similar phrase is used by Margarete Susman, in her commentary on this work in \textit{Frankfurter Zeitung} 12 January 1919. I thank Prof. Peter Thompson of University of Sheffield for his assistance here.

According to Lützeler, Broch had become acquainted with Bloch when the Blochs moved to Vienna for six months from autumn 1934- summer 1935. They only met occasionally, however, when Broch visited Vienna. Broch admired Bloch’s \textit{Erbschaft dieser Zeit} (\textit{Heritage of our Times}), and recommended that it should be published in English, but their friendship did not flourish until later when they were both living in America. Lützeler, P.M. (1987) \textit{Hermann
threatening. Through the process of thinking, however, the ego-nucleus has the capacity to uncover the outside world, and change the non-ego.

Lysanias’ words, ‘not yet and yet already’ draw attention to the intangible nature of Virgil’s being, and inability to perceive his own being in the present, in the same way as it is impossible to grasp the ‘Ding an sich’. Nevertheless, his self-awareness is raised through the presence of the boy.

Thus, it may be seen that through the figure of Lysanias, Broch alludes to myth and ancient mystery religions, the origins of which lie in Greek and Egyptian culture: he seems to find a positive dimension to the underworld. The youth diverts the protagonist’s attention away from his physical existence and raises his awareness to the idea of celestial harmony and the presence of the elements. Thereon, Virgil is led to consider his own role in the world, and the contribution that he might make through his voice, or language. Lysanias therefore helps Virgil to detach himself slightly from his close association of the self with his earthly body, and to discover a second reality within his own mind. Consequently, he begins to view death not as an end, but as a means of completing his life, and to associate the voice and language with the attainment of higher levels of being. Lysanias may therefore be considered to direct him towards virtue.

Comparison may be drawn here with Broch’s concept of the self, set out in the Massenwahntheorie, in which he asserts that there must be a balance between what we ‘have’ and what we ‘are’. He observes that the ‘I’ (Ich) is central to consciousness, and that it is bound to the physical body. In the awakening of the ‘I’ and its rudimentary consciousness, the body and the ‘I’ are equal (‘gleichgesetzt’), as in a young child. The individual quickly learns what is associated with him, and this is reflected in the verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’. See KW12 487. Broch writes:

Das Ich ist das zentrale Bewußtseinsphänomen, und es ist, nicht zuletzt in seinem invarianten Kern, ein Phänomen des Gedächtnisses; das Ich ist an das Körper gebunden, und in den Stadien des Ich-Erwachens und seine noch rudimentären IchBewußtseins, also beim etwa dreijährigen Kind, kaum mehr jedoch beim Primitiven, werden Körper und Ich kurzerhand gleichgesetzt, doch sehr bald lernt der
Mensch das Ich als den Bezugspunkt seines gesamtes Lebens und Erlebens kenne und weiß – nichts weiß er so genau wie dies – was ihm zugehörig, was ihm-nah und was Ich-fremd ist; die Sprache mit ihren Ur-Hilfsverben “Sein” und “Haben” ist hiefür – wie sollte sie auch nicht – der getreueste Spiegel.

Further comparison may be drawn here with Heimito von Doderer’s novel *Die Dämonen* (*The Demons*), in which new realities are created by the demons possessing the characters. Awareness of a new reality is raised through referral to the elements. The second realities occur in various aspects of human life, and have the effect of imprisoning those affected, such as the character Quapp, who aspires to become an accomplished violinist, forcing herself to practise endlessly. Release comes suddenly for some, whereas others have to undergo a series of changes, before discovering their true sense of self.

**d. The state of being in the ‘Earth’ chapter**

The third chapter, ‘Earth’, which depicts the conversation between Virgil and his patron friend Augustus, marks a development in the very short plot of the *Virgil* work, and brings the changes experienced by the protagonist to a peak. As a result of his insight into the spiritual world in the ‘Fire’, and his encounter with Lysanias, Virgil’s awareness is rising beyond the physical, ‘crossing the sill of awareness’ into another realm, causing him to feel increasingly detached from his surroundings. (DV 233) Strange beings are encountered, which appear only to Virgil’s consciousness. His companions, who remain in the physical, earthly world, are unaware of their presence. At this stage, Virgil’s physical freedom is minimal, and he struggles to assert his will, though he strives to make clear his beliefs before he dies, to those who will remain on earth. He is subjected to the attentions of his well-intentioned friends, Plotius and Lucius, who try to obscure the fact that he is dying. The physician is also predominantly concerned with the physical aspects of Virgil’s remaining life, leaving spiritual concerns unmentioned. His companions are therefore preoccupied with the aesthetic dimension of the situation, and provide a sharp contrast to the changes occurring within the protagonist.

In the dialogue between Virgil and the emperor, the reader learns that Augustus regards the *Aeneid* as a state masterpiece, and is angered by his friend’s desire to destroy it. As the discussion proceeds, it reveals a deep conflict between the radically opposed philosophical views of the two men. The emperor holds a practical, political stance, which contrasts sharply with the

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432 KW4 219.
433 O. Tost, *Die Antike als Motiv und Thema in Hermann Brochs Roman “Der Tod des Vergil”*, p. 99. Tost notes that the Romans did not develop their own medical theory, but built instead upon the knowledge of the Greek tradition.
ethical views of the spiritual realm glimpsed and conveyed by Virgil.\textsuperscript{434} For Augustus, art is a matter of aesthetics: it is a means of reflecting reality, and understanding life. He is of the belief that there is ‘one simple reality’ (DV 358),\textsuperscript{104} and is only able to envisage individual freedom within the Roman totalitarian state. This implies that he is only concerned with the earthly realm. As Broch observes in a commentary, the friends represent two different types of men.\textsuperscript{105} For Augustus, ‘The only real freedom is that which is found in the Roman order, in the well-being for everybody, in short – the state. No other freedom exists’. (DV 365)\textsuperscript{106} Virgil, however, considers art to serve ethics, rather than aesthetics, as part of a continuing process. He criticises the Roman approach to art, for in his view, it has no originality: ‘In art we are everywhere imitating the Greek forms’. (DV 335)\textsuperscript{107} Thus it becomes clear that he has become aware that values are changing, and that the Augustan regime does not pursue true art, but kitsch. He urges Augustus to foster true freedom in his empire, as opposed to providing the apparent freedom of a totalitarian regime. Concerned with the consequences of individual actions in the long term, he urges Augustus to rule his empire on ethical principle. He regards the adoption of the ethical approach as a significant move for his friend: ‘In the conduct of the state you are forging a new path. You are fulfilling the task of your time, not I’. (DV 335)\textsuperscript{108} For Virgil, this may only be achieved through the recognition that there is a mystical nature to human existence, the ‘celestial in the terrestrial’.

\begin{quote}
to recognise the celestial in the terrestrial and by virtue of that recognition to bring it to earthly shape as a formed work or a formed word, or even as a formed deed, this is the essence of the true symbol. (DV 355)\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

This would represent a living work of art. Virgil informs his friend that

\textsuperscript{434} KW4 469. Broch writes:

\begin{quote}
offenbart sich der tiefere Konflikt zwischen zwei radikal entgegengesetzten philosophischen Haltungen, deren Gegenüberstellung auch hier nur die übliche Lösung zeitigen kann: im praktischen Leben obsiegt die politische Lebenshaltung (die in diesem Falle zur Rettung des Manuskriptes der „Äneis“ führt), während im geistigen Bereiche die rein ethisch philosophische Auffassung unwiderlegbar bleibt.
\end{quote}
'perception is the concern of humanity'. (DV 332) and ‘all reality is but the
growth of perception’. (DV 359) He gives voice to the idea of progression
towards ethics, which is set out in Broch’s theoretical work, discussed

KW4 336. 104
KW4 469. In a self-commentary on the Vergil work, Broch writes:

106
KW4 343. Broch defines this way of thinking in his 1934 essay ‘Theologie, Positivismus
und Dichtung’ as ‘Abkehr von der Spekulation und zum Objekt’, which may be translated as
‘Turning away from speculation and towards the object’. KW10/1 191- 239, here, 196.

EARLIER Virgil is of the opinion that ‘genuine art bursts through boundaries’
(DV 255), and that the task of art, especially poetry, is to enable the
perception of the irrational, of death. ‘Nowhere, however’, Broch writes, ‘is this
perceptive duty of art so compelling, so binding, and so sharply prescribed, as
in the realm of poetry; for poetry connotes speech and speech connotes
perception’. (DV 341) 109

Thus Virgil directs Augustus to look beyond the earthly realm, in search
of a force that cannot be seen. His encounter with the emperor represents his
last struggle with the physical world, before his death. He hopes that Augustus
will create a state that not only provides order, but also scope for individuality,
through piety. Whilst Augustus views piety as a means of serving the state,
Virgil differs. (DV 375) His piety is not that of ostentatious piousness, but
the piety of the human soul.

Virgil gives voice here to Broch’s cosmological beliefs, which reflect the
Neo-Kantian influences upon his thought. The protagonist has attained the

435 See Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the
individual and individuality. 113 KW4 239.
436 KW4 320. Broch writes:

Nirgends allerdings ist die Erkenntnispflicht so zwingend und bündig und scharf
vorgeschrieben wie im Bereich der Dichtung, denn Dichtung ist die Sprache, und Sprache ist
Erkenntnis. 115 KW4 353.
understanding that the concept of freedom is absolute, and that freedom creates, rather than reflects reality: if individuals do not act ethically, then there cannot be freedom in reality. As we have seen in our earlier discussion regarding the development of individuality, the individual must be in a state of freedom, in order to make an ethical decision. Freedom cannot be imposed upon human beings, however: each person must attain a state of freedom of their own accord. In my view, this is why Virgil urges Augustus to rule in a way that permits freedom, rather than conduct a society that gives the impression of freedom.

The protagonist’s transition from identification with his physical being to the more spiritual state of ethical freedom provides some insight into his sudden decision to give the *Aeneid* to Augustus. His gesture has been a point of discussion for several critics. It is interpreted by Wienold as being an act of self-purification, whereas for Heizmann, it is a gesture of Christian love. It should be noted that for Broch, the protagonist is not a prophet of Christianity, (as the historical Virgil has come to be regarded), but a figure of transition. In my view, Virgil’s abrupt change of mind is indicative of his position within his relationship with Augustus: it demonstrates that he has attained the freedom to make an ethical judgement. As he seems to have been unable to convince the emperor of his views, he must weigh his desire to destroy the *Aeneid* against the value of their friendship. Although he appears to have very little freedom, being physically immobile and at the mercy of Augustus, he knows that he is about to die, and is free to make a judgement. The physical freedom with which he once identified has now given way to the individual freedom of the human soul. He also realises that he is unable to control the use to which his artwork is put in the future. Although he suspects that he has failed, both in the quality of his artwork and his failure to destroy it, he knows that by giving the *Aeneid* to Augustus, he is acting out of friendship, putting the emperor’s wishes before his own desire to be remembered. Believing that true art leads in some mysterious way to the divine, he hopes that Augustus will use the *Aeneid* responsibly.

The idea of friendship is important here, especially as it arises amidst discussion of Greek and Roman values. As indicated in the Introduction to this
section of the thesis, the theme of friendship, or love, which was taken up by some Modernist authors, has been a matter for philosophical discussion since the time of the ancients: it features especially in the work of Plato and Aristotle. For Aristotle, in particular, ‘philia’, or friendship,


118 Friendship, or love, is a matter for discussion in Plato’s dialogues, the Lysis, the Symposium and the Phaedrus. provides a key to achieving the good life, and enables human beings to integrate with society in a meaningful way: it forms the basis of society. He devotes two chapters of the Nicomachean Ethics to the subject of ‘philia’, which he regards ‘as being a kind of virtue’.437 Aristotle divides friendship into three categories: utility, pleasure and goodness. He maintains that friendships based upon utility, such as business relationships, are impermanent and likely to dissolve, once the ground for their existence has ended. Friendship based upon pleasure, such as erotic relationships, and those formed amongst the young, are also inclined to change over time. The perfect friendship, in his view, is based upon goodness:

It is those who desire the good of their friends for their friends’ sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he truly is and not for any incidental quality [...] Each party receives from the other benefits that are in all respects the same or similar.120

Here, it may be seen that in a perfect friendship, each seeks something from the other person. It is not a reflection of their own being, or self, which is sought, but that which complements the self. Aristotle asserts that this type of

friendship is lasting, for it is based upon the mutual desire for the good: each seeks to transfer to himself the traits he admires in the other. There seems to be a special dimension that transcends this type of friendship, which has been described as 'a single soul dwelling in two bodies'.

In my view, the relationship between Virgil and Augustus, described by Broch as being ‘of deep homosexual understanding/agreement’, corresponds to Aristotle’s idea of perfect friendship. It has progressed from the basis of pleasure, which was established in their boyhood. Each party now seeks in the other that which they do not have. Through the process of supplementing one another, they reduce the opposition between themselves.

That is not to say that each finds the other’s conduct completely comprehensible. Augustus appears to be jealous of Virgil’s artistic achievements, whereas Virgil admires the ease with which the emperor rules. The tensions within their relationship demonstrate that a range of qualities may be found within each virtue, and illuminates the parallel between Broch’s protagonist and the historical Virgil, suggested earlier. As several critics have observed recently, in contrast to earlier interpretations of his relationship with the emperor, the historical Virgil did not subscribe to the propaganda of the Augustan empire, but wrote independently. Broch’s protagonist behaves similarly: he remains independent and acts out of friendship. His gift of the *Aeneid* takes the interests of the emperor into account, and contributes to his own individuality, by looking to the future. The deed is indicative of his

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transformation from preoccupation with physical being to recognition that he is intellectually free to make his own judgement.
12a. Approaching individuality: an analysis of the ‘Ether’ chapter

Before we enter the final stage in our analysis of Virgil’s transformation, it is helpful to explain my approach to the ‘Ether’ (‘Äther’) chapter. I have considered four main overlapping areas of interest and reported the findings in my general discussion of the chapter. The first such area covers the structure of the chapter, including its formal content and how Virgil is changed in the course of its text. The second area deals with how the ‘Ether’ chapter relates to the rest of the work: it is concerned with a sense of ‘looking back’ upon the previous chapters in a form of reflection. The third area of interest considers how the content of the chapter might relate to the History of Ideas. This dimension is important, because Broch read widely and incorporated a wide range of ideas into his work, which may contribute to the effect of the text upon the reader. Lastly, the reader’s response to the text, which has already been discussed more generally, is taken into account. By analysing the text within these areas of interest, whilst adhering to the guiding principle of the individual and the mass, and attention to Broch’s interest in ‘totality’, we can deepen our understanding of his concept of individuality considerably.

It is important to remind ourselves of Broch’s philosophical position. As we have seen, he had a thorough knowledge of Kant, and was influenced by Neo-Kantian thought. Our discussion of the new human condition that he observed also suggests that he was influenced by Hegelian philosophy. He himself maintained that the historical-philosophical Excursus in The Sleepwalkers, in which he sets out his theory of the disintegration of values,
would be unthinkable without Hegel.\textsuperscript{443} This is important for our understanding of the events in the final chapter.

Broch’s interest in Kantian, Hegelian, and Neo-Kantian thought marks him as a Platonist at heart, for each of these branches of philosophy is a development of Plato’s ‘Ideas’,\textsuperscript{444} and, as mentioned earlier, he described himself as a Platonist. Of importance here, as Reale\textsuperscript{445} asserts, is that Plato distinguishes two levels of reality: the ‘sense’, or physical level, and the ‘metaphysical’ or intelligible level. (The latter is incorporeal, grasped only by the intelligence, and relates to the Platonic Ideas.) The Ideas were developed by Kant into three forms of reason, which have regulative function, and then critiqued and partly further developed to become Hegel’s concept of dialectic. The Neo-Kantians and Marburg School gave new life to the Ideas, understanding them as laws, and structural methods of thought. In contrast, the Positivists, whose thought Broch opposed, weakened the theory of Ideas.\textsuperscript{446}

Hegel’s influence can be observed in the structure of the \textit{Virgil} work. The final chapter has already been shown to differ from the preceding three, regarding the narrative technique. It can now be seen, that it not only differs in style, but also in content. Whereas the first three chapters portray the hours leading up to Virgil’s physical death, the fourth depicts the events taking place in the ‘Afterlife’, looking back upon Virgil’s earthly life. The structure of the novel might therefore be compared to the Hegelian idea of ‘thesis, antithesis, synthesis’, in that the final chapter introduces an antithesis to the previous three, with the expectation that a synthesis might be introduced. The idea of incorporating the Hegelian process into the novel was suggested by Broch himself. He explains in his correspondence, that, in the

\textsuperscript{443} KW13/1 407. Letter from Broch to Egon Vietta, dated 20 April 1936.
\textsuperscript{444} See G. Reale (1996) \textit{Toward a New Interpretation of Plato}. Washington DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, pp. 110-115. See also Chapter 9: Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy. The Use of the Elements in the \textit{Virgil} work.
\textsuperscript{446} See KW10/1 170 (‘Das Unmittelbare in Philosophie und Dichtung’), in which Broch remarks that ‘if one judges by the ethical content, then positivist ‘scientific philosophy is philosophy no longer’. He writes: ‘Am Bestande der Ethik gemessen, ist die positivistische, ‘wissenschaftliche’ Philosophie keine Philosophie mehr’. 
Virgil, he wanted to symbolise how an obsolete reality must be painfully resolved, before that reality can find its way into the new, by means of Hegelian synthesis.\footnote{KW13/3 145. Letter from Broch to Waldo Frank, dated 20 June 1947.} He writes:

That is how it always was. What we call progress was always an advance towards a new reality (perhaps even always under the leadership of artists) and then, the old, the antiquated reality had always to be resolved, rather, in Hegelian synthesis with the new, to simplicity and naturalness. I wanted to symbolise this process in the \textit{Virgil}. \footnote{Ibid. Broch writes:}

As will be shown, the resolving of old reality is very much part of the protagonist’s transformation, a process, which requires reflection upon previous events and the History of Ideas, and the engagement of the reader.

An indication of the Hegelian process operating in the novel is provided by the title, ‘Ether’, in that it differs from the preceding chapter headings. Whereas the elements used for the previous chapter titles refer to distinct, visible concepts, the term ‘ether’ refers to several aspects of knowledge, all of which are invisible to the human eye, including the elemental root; sound; a medical substance or gas; a space-filling substance occupying the universe;\footnote{As discussed in Chapter 9: Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy. The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work. Broch was concerned with natural philosophy and the theory of relativity.} and part of the human body. Ether is associated with light, air and movement. In Greek mythology, it is the pure essence inhabited and breathed by the gods. The Natural Philosophers believed ether to be that which is given off when air and water are combined, whilst earth is the substance that remains. In Aristotle’s thought, ether moves in a perfect, circular motion, remaining unchanged, whilst for Hegel, it lies at the basis of all experience, with the potential to give itself form.\footnote{H.S. Harris (1983) \textit{Hegel’s Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801-1806)}. London: Oxford Univ. Press, p. 420.} Interpreted in accordance with Broch’s symbol theory, in which ancient experiences are represented through a succession of
symbols, the element ether can be understood to represent any, or all of these forms.\footnote{See discussion of symbol theory in KW10/2 246-299, „Über syntaktische und kognitive Einheiten”. See also KW9/1 111-300. „Hofmannsthal und seine Zeit”.}

The title ‘Ether’ may therefore be seen to allude simultaneously to ancient concepts of the universe and to modern physics, which were of interest to Broch, and have also appeared as themes in the course of the novel hitherto.\footnote{See Chapter 9: Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy. The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work.} It evokes the idea of ‘totality’, which, for Broch, is connected to the realm of the Logos,\footnote{See KW13/1 407; letter from Broch to Egon Vietta, dated 20 April 1936.} and is incomplete without the experience of death. It brings together philosophical and scientific concepts of the universe and presents the reader with a challenge. The ambiguity of the title, in conjunction with the changed narrative technique, suggests that the final chapter may introduce the reader to something new, as Virgil continues beyond physical death into the Afterlife.\footnote{Some critics perceive Virgil to die only at the very end of the novel. For example, Hermann Weigand asserts that he does not regain consciousness in the ‘Ether’ chapter. Weigand writes, ‘As life recedes, -not abruptly, but by degrees, he does not regain consciousness’. See H.J. Weigand (1947) ‘Broch’s “Death of Vergil” Program Notes’, \textit{Publications of the Modern Language Association of America}, 62(2), pp. 525-554, here, p. 547. My following analysis in this chapter makes clear why I beg to differ.} The experience may be difficult to navigate, but, as will be shown, the changes undergone by Virgil in this chapter are perhaps the greatest indicators of Broch’s concept of individuality.

\textbf{A Change in Perception}

The new experience offered by the ‘Ether’ begins immediately. The awareness of sound conveyed in the opening line, ‘Was there still something murmuring?’ indicates that some form of consciousness has continued beyond Virgil’s physical death. (DV 439)\footnote{KW4 413. 16} This may be a slightly disconcerting concept for the modern reader, who believes consciousness to continue only whilst a human being is physically alive. At the same time, however, the murmuring provides a form of reassurance for the reader,
‘rolling softly in endlessness, murmur-wave after murmur-wave’. It is ‘simply there’, an invitation to share the comfort to which Virgil resorts, as the text embarks on the final stage of a terrifying journey, in which the ‘destination is unknown’. (DV 439)\textsuperscript{16}

Virgil’s consciousness of sound might be understood as an innate awareness of a form of the Logos, portrayed in the text as though received through the senses. He is unsure of the origin of the sound, but associates it with that which is familiar from the physical world, wondering whether it is his friend Plotius who can be heard. He seems unaware that it may emanate from his own being, but finds further reassurance in the discovery that those familiar to him are present: Plotius acts as oarsman, whilst his companions Horace and Propertius wave farewell. Virgil’s sensitivity to sound has developed during the course of the text. At the start of the ‘Water’ chapter, he is aware of ‘sounds of life being blown over from the shore’ (DV 11);\textsuperscript{455} in the ‘Fire’ section, he actively ‘lies listening’. (DV 233)\textsuperscript{18} In the ‘Ether’, however, his ability to detect ‘silent murmuring’ indicates that he is no longer dependent upon the physical sense of hearing. His awareness of sound has gradually changed, progressing from hearing the sounds of physical activity, to sensing forces, the source of which remains hidden.

Virgil’s acute sensitivity to the ‘murmuring’ suggests that he has detected the unseen forces, which were believed by Empedocles to correspond to the elements and to be constantly at work in nature.\textsuperscript{456} Bearing in mind Broch’s interest in relativity, the references to waves and radiation, ‘radiating in a boundless cycle’ (DV 439-40),\textsuperscript{20} may also allude to theories of ether held in eighteenth and nineteenth century physics, such as the

\textsuperscript{455} KW4 11, 18
KW4 219.
\textsuperscript{456} See Chapter 9: Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work. 20
KW4 413-414. Daniel Siegel explains that the ‘Luminiferous Ether,’ a concept which accompanied the wave theory of light in the mid nineteenth century, was believed to be ‘an elastic solid that filled space and whose transverse undulations constituted light waves’. The ideas of Maxwell and Thomson, interpreted and elaborated in the closing decades of the nineteenth century by George Fitzgerald, Oliver Lodge, Joseph Larmor and others, gave rise to the notion of the existence of truly universal ether. See D.M. Siegel, ‘Thomson, Maxwell and the Universal Ether in Victorian Physics’, in N. Cantor and M.J.S. Hodge (eds.) Conceptions of Ether: Studies in the History of Ether, 1740-1900, pp. 239-268, here, p. 239.
‘Luminiferous Ether’ and the ‘Universal’ or ‘Sound Ether’. Overall, Virgil seems to have become aware of the presence of ether itself. Whilst the intangible nature of the element presents the reader with difficulties in orientation, Virgil may be understood to have entered a new form of being, in which ‘no sort of hearkening, no effort whatsoever’, is required to hold on to the murmuring. The text conveys that ‘this murmurousness’ (‘dieses murmelnde Geschehen’) is part of a continual progression, ‘striving onward [...] mingled with the trickling of the waters, [...] itself the thing carried’.

‘Dieses murmelnde Geschehen’ might also be translated as ‘this murmuring event, or happening’, in which a sense of significance is conveyed by the use of ‘Geschehen’, which means ‘happening’, or ‘event’. At the same time, reference to the ‘slithering foam softly lapping the keel and sides of the boat’ seems to allude to the proximity of the ether, indicating awareness of the presence of watery airiness hovering above the water. (DV 439)

Virgil’s enhanced level of perception seems to enable him to make a smooth transition beyond death, ‘an easy leave-taking from human life, and human living that still persisted there, a farewell in a changed scene essentially unchangeable’. (DV 440) Here, the idea is confirmed, that although he appears to be leaving his earthly life, he is continuing to exist, perhaps in another form, within ‘a changed scene essentially unchangeable’.

The reference to ‘human life and human living’ (DV 11) (‘menschlichen Sein und Hausen’), invites comparison with similar usage at the beginning of the novel, and reflection upon Virgil’s growing awareness of human existence as being just one part of the whole cosmological framework. The use of ‘Sein’, in the original German text, conveys a sense of being that extends beyond ‘life’, and suggests a continuation of existence. Virgil appears to be looking back at his earthly life, with the enhanced perception of one who can perceive the forces beyond the elements.

Even though Virgil’s consciousness is still closely connected to his physical existence, his soul may be understood to be beginning to leave his physical body. This is indicated by ‘the fading of the tomb into the gray fog’, as he prepares to take leave from the ‘diversity of familiar things’. (DV 440) The concept of the body being a tomb for the soul is a Pythagorean belief, which
directs the reader again towards ancient ideas concerning death and the afterlife. Building upon this, Virgil is aware of a continual drive forward, which seems to allude to the Orphic myth, in which the party must proceed

Broch writes:

Die Üfer blieben zurück und das war wie ein leichtes Abschiednehmen von dem menschlichen Sein und Hausen, das dort vonstatten ging, Abschied im verwandelt Umwandelbaren, Abschied von der Mannigfaltigkeit alles Vertrauten, von den vertrauten Bildern und Gesichtern dort, nicht zuletzt von der im Nebelgrau entschwindenden Gruft ...

See also Chapter 9: Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work.

and not look back. As he penetrates into the ether, ancient thought is being brought to the fore.

The changes undergone by Virgil continue to be reflected in his environment. As he sets off from the shores, his surroundings change, so that events are no longer measurable through the familiar, earthly means of time and space. Broch writes:

The immense ocean had to widen out to a second immensity, an immensity so boundless that there is no line of demarcation between the liquid and the sheerly airy, giving the impression that the ships are swimming in pure light .... (DV 440-1)

This expansion of the elements suggests not only the diminishing of the boundary between the water and the ether, but also the extension of Virgil’s being into the ether and the spiritual world. (DV 440-1) In this realm, earthly qualities such as speed and power are no longer significant, for ‘all of them [the vessels] curiously keep the same speed. The feeling of individual existence is reduced and everything seems to merge in a procession that is ‘herdlike, [...] enveloped in a mild zooming like an invisible cloud’. (DV 441) Overall, a sense of hovering is conveyed, as though the protagonist is close

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457 Ibid. This description appears to be an allusion to Plato’s idea of the ‘second voyage’, that is, the passage from sensible to super-sensible being, which requires the introduction of a non-physical and metaphysical cause in order to explain the sensible. See G. Reale, Toward a New Interpretation of Plato, p. 104.

458 Ibid.

459 Ibid.

28
to, but slightly removed from reality: he seems to have entered the ether itself. The vessels are propelled, ‘as though pressed by imperceptible storms coming out of the airless void, for it is windstill, complete calm reigns and the mild zooming hums in a nowhere’. (DV 441)\(^{28}\) Once again, the description corresponds simultaneously to the lack of ‘ether-wind’ demonstrated in the testing of ether theories, and to the hidden forces interacting between elements, described by Empedocles.\(^ {460}\) The allusion to both ancient and modern ideas seems to distance the reader from temporal points of reference. Overall, orientation is difficult, for both protagonist and reader, as the subject seems to merge with his surroundings.\(^ {461}\) Broch’s use of apophatic language enhances this effect and indicates that he depicts a negative, rather than a positive, theology.

The strangeness of the continuation of Virgil’s consciousness beyond death, and subsequent transformation into a new state of being is reflected in ‘the invisibility, the inaudibility, the impalpability of a long-left and undiscoverable immensity left behind while yet remaining, [...] changed to a transformed permanence’. (DV 442)\(^ {462}\) Here, the environment discloses a significant change in the protagonist. He is now able to view his companions as visions within the imagination, seeing their essential qualities, rather than their earthly features. Rather than depending on information derived from the senses, as at the beginning of the novel, he now has an enhanced sense of perception, which gives access to insight attained previously only through dreams. Broch writes:

\(^{460}\) See Chapter 9: Broch and Classical Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work.

Reference to theory of relativity is made in Broch’s correspondence and essays. See also KW1 622-3. The ‘Michelson-Morley’ experiments conducted in 1881 and 1887 demonstrated that light travelled at the same speed in all directions, suggesting that there is no ‘ether-wind’ to impel or impede its progress. The experiments gave rise to Einstein’s 1905 paper, ‘On the Electro-dynamic Properties of Moving Bodies’, which suggested that the space previously presumed to be occupied by ether is not a’ simple, invariant container of matter, light, magnetism and gravity, but is itself subject to transformation as a result of them’. See S. Connor, The Matter of Air, p. 149.

\(^{461}\) See Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative technique in the Virgil work.

\(^{462}\) KW4 416. 32

KW4 417.
For the transformation which had taken place was the transformation of outside to inside, the merging of the outer with the inner face, always striven for, never attained, but now fully achieved through this final exchange: suddenly, as suddenly as his dropping into infinity, this man who hitherto been called Augustus, was seen from within, seen in that completely inner way usually reserved for the dreamer, the dream-lost, when he forgets his earthiness and – gaining perception through the dream – recognises himself in the image of himself, seeing the ultimate, inseparable, crystalline, essential source of his qualities revealed as mere form, as a glassy play of lines, aye as an empty cipher in its final dream-existence. (DV 443)

The change in Virgil’s perception indicates that his consciousness has changed. He has entered a new way of being, in the spiritual realm, where innate awareness has overtaken the facility for conscious thought, which was dominant in his mind during his earthly existence. Whilst those he knew in his previous existence ‘share the voyage on ethereal boats’, it seems that they are also being laid down in a deep-seated memory, ‘vanishing into eternity without disappearing’. (DV 443) In this new state of being, earthly matters such as names no longer seem to be important. He perceives ‘power to be slipping away’ from Augustus, along ‘with his name’. The emperor, however, ‘is still himself’, gaining ‘a new identity, a new aspect, in a new stillness on a loftier plane’. (DV 442-3) Thus Virgil is moving beyond the physical level of being, towards a new level of reality.

His perspective is also beginning to change in the ether. He is gradually realising that the new realm lies outside of the values of the Augustan regime, and here, Augustus no longer has command over him. Consequently, he becomes able to comprehend the quality that has been most essential to their relationship, friendship:

this insight had now grown beyond itself, and had comprehended the one vanishing there, the friend – oh unlosable is he who is seen from within in his nakedest wholeness. Oh, transformation of the end into the beginning, transformation of the symbol back into the arch-image, oh friendship! (DV 443)

Virgil’s self-reflection illuminates his sudden decision to give the Aeneid to the emperor as being an act of virtue. The ideas put forth seem to correspond to Scheler’s view that values are a matter of virtue, part of the realm of a material

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463 The use of the word ‘Seienden’, in the German text, conveys that the realm described lies beyond the ‘world of becoming’, or beyond earthly existence. Broch writes: das Augustusschiff aus dem Seienden genommen wurde und zur Vergessenheit entsank -, einsank in die zurückbleibende Unendlichkeit’. KW4 416.
a priori. This may explain Broch’s assertion that the gesture is ‘based on a deep homosexual agreement’ as being a suggestion that there is an underlying cosmic meaning to the expression of love.\(^{37}\)

The newly dead Virgil is now in an ‘in-between’ state, between the mutually reflected earth and the heavens. A distanced awareness that his position has changed is conveyed by a shift towards retrospective narration, from an external position.\(^{38}\) He has reached a state for which he had ‘always striven, [but] never attained’, (DV 443)\(^{39}\) which corresponds to a realisation of the leitmotif, ‘not yet and yet already’,\(^{40}\) which appeared throughout the previous chapters. This almost utopian state might be compared with the ideas of Broch’s contemporary and acquaintance Ernst Bloch, who believed that humans have the capacity to attain a glimpse of the future (‘VorSchein’).\(^{464}\)

He was concerned with the optimistic drive forward into new philosophical territories, as well as looking back into the past. He did not envisage the evolution of humanity in a closed teleological sense, but believed in the openness of the world, a concept he expressed through the term ‘Process’. He refers to the openness available to people born into a world that already exists, which limits what is possible, as ‘the objectively real possible’.\(^{465}\) This possibility is rooted in previous development, and also bears the potential for

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\(^{34}\) KW4 417.  
KW4 416.  
KW4 417.  

\(^{37}\) KW13/3 27. Letter from Broch to Robert Neumann, dated 22 October 1945. Broch writes:  
… hingegen mußte inhaltlich-psychologisch gezeigt werden, wie dieser Kampf auf dem Boden eines tiefen homosexuellen Einverständnisses vor sich geht.  

It should be noted that Broch did not view his protagonist as a prophet of Christianity, but as a figure of transition, a pre-prophet (‘ein Vor-Prophet’). See KW13/2 455. Letter from Broch to Aldous Huxley, dated 10 May 1945.  

\(^{38}\) See Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work.  

\(^{39}\) KW4 417.  

\(^{40}\) For example, see DV 61. KW4 59-60. Also DV 198. KW4 188. The phrase ‘noch nicht und doch schon’ is translated by Untermeyer as ‘not quite here, but yet at hand’.  

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\(^{464}\) See Chapter 11: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality.  

future development: it is described by Bloch as ‘a future-laden definiteness in
the real itself’.466

A parallel may also be drawn with Broch’s reflection upon what takes
place in the collapse of a general value system, which he describes as ‘the
hiatus between no more and not yet, the intermediary stage, in which the
confusion of decline joins with the confusion of quest, and forms the starting
point of new spiritual union’.467

The change in Virgil’s being may be explained as an expansion beyond
the limits of the physical body, into a form without the same sort of boundaries.
Virgil’s ‘etheric body’ retains essential qualities from his previous existence,
but reaches beyond the material into the ether, to the ‘crystalline archetype’.
(DV 444)45 Through the discovery of the ‘etheric’ dimension of his being, he
has become able to experience the souls of others directly, without resort to
the senses. The facility to do so stems from his own being, arising ‘from the
deepest recesses of the self’. (DV 444)46 He may be understood to have
attained a state of intuition, able to perceive the essence of the being of others,
seeing them as pure form. ‘The merging of the outer with the inner face’ causes
the familiarity of existence to diminish, so that everything appears to Virgil in a
new light. (DV 443)47

as they were falling into oblivion, their faces had become an unspeakable and
unspeakably clear expression of their essential qualities, they were freed of all ties,
deeply genuine in the boundless, nameless self, no longer in need of an earthly
mediator and an earthly name caller, because all of them, seen from within, were
absorbed into the glance of friendship, absorbed with that glance into an experience
of a knowledge, self to self, which arose from the deepest recesses of the self, from
the depths of a self that stemmed from a sphere beyond the senses, which no longer
saw the material person and the material metaphor, but only the crystalline archetype,
the crystalline entity formed by the essential qualities. [...] all these friendly forms
passed into a new interstate of memory, a new interstate of comprehensibility, full of
light casting shadows within muted sounds. (DV 444)48

Virgil’s perceptual transition from dependence upon outer appearance,
to inner perception might be illustrated mathematically by a Möbius strip, the
surface of which is twisted once before being closed into a loop.49 In the course

466 Ibid. Bloch refers to ‘eine zukunfttragende Bestimmtheit’.  
5. 45  
468 KW4 418.  
469 Ibid.
of travelling along the strip, the inner edge becomes that on the outside. A similar effect is achieved by imagining the journey along one edge of a 'lemniscate', or figure of eight, as illustrated in the diagrams below. For Virgil, it is the aspects of his being, which had remained hidden during his earthly existence, that are now coming to the fore.

Figure 1 Lemniscate

Figure 2 Möbius Strip

47 KW4 417. Broch writes:

Denn die Verwandlung, die da vor sich gegangen war, sie war die Verwandlung des Außen ins Innen, sie war die Einswerdung von Außengesicht und Innengesicht.

48 KW4 418. Broch writes:

Es war an ihnen das menschliche Antlitz zum unsäglichen, zum unsäglich klaren Ausdruck ihrer Grundwesenheit geworden, enthoben jeglicher Beziehung, tief wahrhaft im grenzenlosen, namenlosen Selbst, sie bedurften nicht mehr des irdischen Mittlers und des irdischen Namensaufrufs, weil sie allesamt von innen gesehen, von innen sichtbar wurden, von innen her erkannt, eingegangen in den Freundesblick, eingegangen mit dem Freundesblick in das Geschehen einer Selbsterkenntnis, die aus dem tiefsten Ich-Innen, aus der Ich-Tiefe jenseits des Sinnenhaften stammt und nicht mehr die sinnliche Person, nicht mehr das sinnliche Gleichnis sieht, sondern nur mehr das kristallische Urbild, die kristallische Einheit ihrer Wesenseigenschaften, [...] daß all die Freundesgestalten in einen neuen Zwischenzustand der Erfaßbarkeit, voll lichtstrahlender Schatten im stummen Ertönen ihrer Stille.


In order to keep pace with Virgil’s progress, the reader must be prepared to exercise their imagination. Broch is drawing on a realm of experience that was known to the ancients through mystery religions, and would have been available to the historical Virgil. Broch himself maintained that he could achieve a higher level of consciousness, by employing a form of self-hypnosis (‘einer ausgebildeten Yogatechnik’). An ancient example of how perception might be changed through meditation is to be found in Plato’s

468 KW13/2 342. Letter from Broch to an unknown addressee, dated 16 August 1943.
‘Seventh Letter’. Here, Plato explains that ‘the most important things and things of the greatest value’ are best reserved to oral dialectic. Communication of such matters results from ‘a long series of discussions between teacher and learner, until a spark which lights up the truth is born in the soul of the learner’.469 Plato describes the process as follows:

The knowledge of these things is not at all communicable like other knowledges, but acquaintance with it must come after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself, and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining.470

Plato was of the conviction that the logos can only operate through speech and that writing has meaning only for those already in possession of knowledge: the written word is a means of prompting recall. A composition, he maintains, ‘is incapable of either defending or helping itself’.471 Consequently, ‘the philosopher does not put “the things of greatest value” on paper, but instead writes them directly on to the soul of the student who is capable of receiving them’.55 He refers in Phaedrus, for example, to ‘another kind of speaking [...] the living animate speech of the man who knows, of which the written word would rightly be called a phantom’.472

With the passage of time, however, it has become clear that we have become dependent upon writing. As early as the time of Aristotle, the view that everything should be recorded may be found.57 Nevertheless, whilst Broch communicates through a text, rather than by oral means, there are similarities between his method and that described by Plato. The engaged reader of the Virgil must become the learner, participating in the indirect tradition advocated by Plato, acquiring knowledge through patient application to the subject.

For Broch, the written word must substitute speech: he attempts to provoke an awareness of the logos within the psyche of the reader through conscious application of his narrative technique. For the reader, it is as though Virgil has returned to the world of ancient Egypt, where the gods and humanity

469 G. Reale, Toward a New Interpretation of Plato, p. 64.
were believed not to have fully separated from one another, and has become able to approach matters from what was hitherto the opposing point of view. Of interest here, is that Virgil encountered the cities of Egypt, Assyria, Palestine and India in the course of his descent in the ‘Fire’ chapter. Whilst he perceived these centres of ancient religion to be ‘the cities of the dethroned gods’, he also gained the insight that ‘everything, great and small together, revealed itself in an almost overpowering sameness of significance’. His trance-like dream in the ‘Fire’ seems to have been a premonition of his experience in the ‘Ether’. Similarly, allusions in the ‘Ether’ chapter to Pythagoras and Orphism, build upon concepts such as ‘celestial harmony’ and subsequent, indirect reference to Cicero’s thought, introduced in the early stages of the text, whilst pointing towards ideas that originate from ancient Egyptian culture.

As Virgil’s experience seems increasingly to be derived from ancient Greek and Egyptian ideas, it is appropriate to recall the contrast between Broch’s thought and that of Freud, concerning mass hysteria. Whereas Freud defines the incidence of mass hysteria as a form of redirected libido, Broch regards formation of a mass as an indication of something much greater. He maintains that the mass forms only under certain conditions and that particular individuals retain a slightly enhanced sense of self, which enables them to remain distanced from the mass, whilst comprehending the appeal of participating in the mass: this is the position of Virgil.

Virgil’s expansion into his ‘etheric body’, or the ‘etheric nature’ of his being, seems to correspond to an idea that occurs in Aristotle’s thought. In his analysis of the nature of soul, Aristotle describes a principle which combines, or unifies the different aspects of the soul into one whole. This

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474 KW4 159. 60 Ibid. 61
475 See Chapter 11: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality: Water and Fire chapters.
476 See also Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas concerning mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti.
principle constitutes the life-force of living beings, being a prerequisite for the principle of sensation. It is defined in the words of Aristotle, as follows:

...in each of the bodily parts there are present all the parts of soul, and the souls so present are homogeneous with one another and with the whole; this means that the several parts of the soul are indissoluble from one another, although the whole soul is divisible. It seems also that the principle found in plants is also a kind of soul; for this is the only principle which is common to both animals and plants; and this exists in isolation from the principle of sensation, though there is nothing which has the latter without the former.65

For Aristotle, this 'etheric body' enables the material components of an individual to function together purposefully, and seems to permeate the entire being. It may also be connected to the human ability to reflect upon ideas concerning the soul, mind and the divine world, by enabling access to the 'nous', which Aristotle seems to regard as a different type of soul:

Concerning 'nous' and the power of contemplation, nothing is clear as yet, but this seems to be a different type of soul, and this alone cannot be separated, as the eternal [is] from the perishable.66

Thus, through his 'etheric body', Virgil seems to be approaching a permanent aspect of his being, which has enabled the use of his intellect.

Meister Eckhart’s thought may be used to illuminate Broch’s ideas, as an example of similar thought occurring in medieval times.67 By making

64 Broch’s concern with the thought of the ancient Greek philosophers seems to have been sustained throughout the writing of both The Death of Virgil and work on his theory of mass psychology. In a letter to Eugen Claassen, dated 24 May 1948, he praises Kurt Reidemeister’s work, *Das exakte Denken der Griechen. Beiträge zur Deutung von Euklid, Plato, Aristoteles* which he has given to Hermann Weyl. See KW13/3 220-221. Also of interest is Broch’s reference to Max Bense’s 1946 book, *Konturen einer Geistesgeschichte der Mathematik*. See KW13/3 212-213. Letter from Broch to Eugen Claassen, dated 31 January 1948.
67 Eckhart asserted that it was his intention to adopt a ‘God’s eye’ view and to speak as though this were his audience’s sole reality. (Sermon 11). See O. Davies (1994) *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*. London: Penguin, p. xxxiv. Davies observes that the examples statements from an ideal position, Eckhart developed a meditative technique, in which the subject is brought to feel ‘as if they already united with God’, though they are simultaneously aware of the impossibility of that position.
Eckhart’s method has the effect of blurring the boundaries of subject and object, so that the subject might see matters from an opposing point of view, and adopt a position which is a synthesis of their starting point and that which stood in opposition. Such meditation may lead to ‘breakthrough into the divine’, that is, a breakthrough in knowledge of the soul’s transcendent essence.\textsuperscript{68}

Virgil’s extension into his ‘etheric body’ through self-reflection may also correspond to what Jörg Evertowsky\textsuperscript{69} describes as ‘the discovery of the consciousness soul’, a state that enables the individual to view matters from within. For Evertowsky, the ‘consciousness soul’ differs from humanity’s ‘reasoning soul’, which always regards matters as external objects, because it has the capacity to put itself in the place of an object, and incorporate it into itself. It recognises everything from within, its centre being the ‘Ich’, or ‘self’.\textsuperscript{70} He asserts that the discovery of the ‘consciousness soul’ constitutes a new stage of development in humanity, which reaches beyond western Christian spirituality towards a new, generally demanded form of spirituality. This is of interest regarding Broch’s ideas about the development of the self towards ethics and his suggestion that his era could give rise to ‘a new metaphysics’, an ‘organon of religion and a new religiosity’.\textsuperscript{71} The Virgil might be seen to contribute to this development, for the reader participates in an experience in parallel to that of the protagonist. The text evokes a process of conscious reflection, in which the subject is made aware of both their presence and their transformation. The reader is required to look back upon history, in the

are not intended to be taken literally but are an attempt to hold before the listeners the transcendental possibilities of their own nature, and belong to what Eckhart referred to as his ‘emphatic speech’.

\textsuperscript{68} See for example, Sermon 22 in O. Davies, \textit{Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings}, pp. 202209. Eckhart writes:

Then I am what I have once been, and I neither increase nor decrease, but am an immovable cause which moves all things.

\textsuperscript{69} J. Evertowsky (2007) \textit{Die Entdeckung der Bewusstseinsseele: Wegmarken des Geistes}. Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben. We have already seen that Virgil has achieved a state in which he is able to see his earthly companions from within.


same way as Virgil looks back upon his earthly life from the ether. Just as
Virgil’s environment is transformed as he passes into the ether, reflecting his inner state, the change of consciousness experienced by the reader may, I believe, be an indication of what is happening in the collective. The reader may be undergoing a transition from the modern, isolated consciousness, in which human existence is seen as nothing more than a finite lifespan, to a new cosmic consciousness, in which he or she is led towards an increasingly ethical outlook.

The ideas of pedagogue Ernst-Michael Kranich477 about the ‘process of becoming’ are also relevant here. He employs an educational method based upon Goethean science, in which natural phenomena are observed through the effect that they have upon the inner activity of the individual. The changes experienced by the individual are central to the process of ‘becoming’.

Absorption into the Cosmos

Having begun to expand into his etheric body, Virgil is further transformed, in a fashion similar to his experience in the ‘Fire’ chapter.73 As new space opens up before him, his recollections are projected to form new areas of memory within that which exists already, so that his existence becomes temporarily doubled:

The space of non-recollection absorbed further stretches of recollection, [...] and both spaces united to form a second memory-space within the first one, a space in which the transparency and inclusiveness of memory were so intensified, so deeply embedded, were so much a doubling of existence to a new integration, [...] joined to a new unity – memory within memory [...] the living world taken into the world of the spheres.... (DV 444-5)478 Also:

For as if aware of all duality to which all unity is subject and to which he too must submit, he cast off the unity of his being and became, at least for a certain time, doubled. (DV 445)75

Here, the phrase, ‘the living world taken into the world of the spheres’, suggests that Virgil has entered the ‘Universal’ or ‘Sound’ Ether, to which allusion was made through the ‘murmuring’ at the start of this chapter. As we saw earlier, in our discussion of the study of the element ether, in the decade

478 KW4 418-419. 75 KW4 419.
leading up to Einstein’s 1905 paper, the ‘Universal Ether’ was regarded as a ‘fundamental and primordial medium, assumed to be the ultimate seat of all phenomena’. This concept of ether, developed when Broch was a young man, may correspond to, and offer a further scientific explanation of, the phenomena described by Cicero as ‘the music of the spheres’. The text presents a commentary upon humanity’s scientific discoveries, suggesting that it is human response, rather than the observable phenomena that may change over time. Virgil’s initial feeling of inability to relate to the heavens, conveyed in the early stages of the text, corresponds to Cicero’s belief that men have become deaf to the music of the spheres. In the course of his transformation, however, his awareness of the music of the spheres has gradually developed, until he is now reawakened to the sound, as ‘memory within memory’.

The term ‘Universal Ether’ therefore seems to offer a modern explanation of an idea conceived in ancient times. The Virgil combines concepts of ether from the beginning of scientific thought with those contemporary to Broch, to create a sense of simultaneity. The effect is reinforced through the apparent reoccurrence of experience undergone in the earlier parts of the text. For example, in the ‘Water’ chapter, Virgil became aware of the music of the spheres, and perceived Lysanias to have emerged from that realm. In the ‘Ether’ chapter, it is conveyed that he has entered that part of the cosmos. His experience echoes that which has gone before.

The process of ‘partaking in the wholeness of doubly reflected being’ (DV 445) results in the impression that Virgil is being absorbed into the whole, that is, into those parts of the universe which have hitherto remained inaccessible. This gives rise to the feeling that he can participate in the

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481 See Chapter 11: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality: Section a. Water.

482 KW4 419.
invisible, without outside assistance, so that he is approaching the experience of totality. As Virgil is transformed, his previous existence and companions remain in his consciousness, distant, but nevertheless present, so that his earthly life is reduced to the essence of his experience:

though fallen back into namelessness and non-existence, (they) were nevertheless not without name and being; all of this was left behind while yet remaining [...] changed to a transformed permanence. (DV 442)

He seems to have reached the border of a realm beyond human physicality, where all occurrences are laid down outside of time, ‘the closure of the dual boundlessness in which the future crosses the past and the past to the future’:

Behold, it was not liquid which was being drunk, it was not thirst which was being quenched, no this was participation, it was partaking in the wholeness of doubly reflected being, it was absorption into the endless flow of the waters, it was penetration of the invisible from within, but at the same time however, it was recognition, thought freed, on the terminus of the perceptive cycle that encloses the nothing, it was the juncture, the closure of the dual boundlessness in which the future crosses the past and the past to the future, so that –oh duplication within duplication, reflection within reflection, invisibility within invisibility ..... (DV 445-6)

The experience of passing beyond all borders here might be attributed to the peculiar nature of Ether, which, as already seen, offers no resistance to bodies travelling within it. Virgil’s being is permeating into the ether, becoming part of the element itself. Frequent reference is made to the nature of ether, as described by physicists contemporary to Broch. Here, ‘time is exempted of duration’, and the ‘voyage goes on and on over the empty stillness in a peaceful, almost imperceptible gliding devoid of all speed’. The ‘light is lonelier, purer and chaster than before, turned to a strange and miraculous dusk of infinite duration’. (DV 447)

483 KW4 416. Broch writes:

Und, obwohl zurückgefallen ins Unbenennbare, weder seines Namens noch seines Wesens verlustig ging -, es blieb zurück und blieb trotzdem gegenwärtig, zurückbleibend, [...] verändert durch sie zu verwandeltem Bleiben.

484 KW4 419-420.

485 ‘Michelson-Morley’ experiments conducted in 1881 and 1887. See Chapter 9: Broch and Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work. See also S. Connor, The Matter of Air, p. 149.

486 See Chapter 9: Broch and Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work. KW4 421.
process of transformation, ‘perceptibility being wrought by silent radiation, the
source of which lies in the outstretched, way-showing hand of the boy’. (DV
448)\textsuperscript{487} There is sense of detachment from the body and a shift towards
intellectual activity, similar to that described by Eckhart.\textsuperscript{488}

Virgil seems to be penetrating into himself, becoming aware that he can
relate directly to the cosmos. His name is no longer needed: here ‘no mediator
nor implements are needed, not that of the goblet to surround the liquidity, nor
that of the hand to extend the goblet’. (DV 446)\textsuperscript{489} At the same time, he
perceives that the course of his existence has been a product of his own
relationship to the cosmos, rather than a path led by Lysanias.

Voyage or no voyage, it constituted an interstate of knowledge, it was still that and the
steersman back there stayed quietly at his post, his presence not less felt now than
before, all security came from him and not from the far too fugitive, far too transient
boyish figure, no the steersman determined the course of the voyage, he alone, even
if in reality it depended on the course of a star. (DV 447)\textsuperscript{88}

As Virgil is being loosened from earthly attachments, and forces within his
soul come to the fore, a sense of equilibrium is conveyed between his own
sense of being and that which lies outside. The words ‘as if it were final
fulfilment of a long-forgotten, […] premonition of floating in freedom’, suggest
that by undergoing death, he is realising the destiny, of which he has always
had vague understanding. Broch writes:

Still bound, it is true, to the middle of the boat while being loosened from it, and so
very detached, that it seemed as if the last fetters were being struck off, as if this were
the final fulfilment of a long-forgotten, no longer rememberable premonition, a
premonition of floating in freedom; ever stronger became the wish to take part in
bringing this floating premonition to reality, to float within it, to float in a state of

\textsuperscript{487} KW4 422.
\textsuperscript{488} See O. Davies, \textit{Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings}, p. xxix-xxx. Davies explains that, for
Eckhart, the ‘detached person’ lives in the world, but is not of it (cf John 12:16). The ‘birth of
God’ has taken place within them, and their ‘knowing essence’ is now engaged with God and
not with the world.
\textsuperscript{489} KW4 420. Broch may be alluding here to the thought of Luther as set out in his 1520 work,
‘An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation’ (To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation).
See H.J. Hahn (1995) \textit{German Thought and Culture from the Holy Roman Empire to the
Present Day}, pp. 48-49. 88
KW4 421. 89 KW4 424.
Broch writes:

\begin{enumerate}
\item zwar noch immer an die Mitte des Nachens gebunden, aber diesem schon so sehr
entbunden und entlöst, daß es wie Abstreifen letzter Fesseln schien, wie endliche
Erfüllung einer längst vergessenen, längst nicht mehr erinnerbaren Ahnung, wie
hauchende Erinnerungsrückkehr eines freien Schwebens, das er ahnte; immer
starker wurde da der Wunsch daran teilzuhaben, die schwebende Ahnung zu
verwirklichen, selber in sie hineinzuschweben, in das Unerinnerte, das zugleich das
geahnt Künftige ist, hinzuschweben zu dem Lichtschein des Ringes ...
unrecollection which was at the same time that of a surmised future, to float onward to the radiance of the ring. (DV 450)

Here, his experience also evokes the idea that there is a structure to history, an ‘eidos’, which will eventually result in the end of time taking place in time: the ‘eschaton’. This aspect of Broch’s thought might be compared with the work of his friend and correspondent Eric Voegelin, who explored the idea of an ‘eidos’ in history, in the Christian thought of Joachim de Fiore (1135-1202). For Joachim, whose thought Voegelin describes as ‘breaking with Augustinian tradition when he applied the symbol of the Trinity to the course of history’, there are several formal stages in history, advancing in levels of spirituality towards an end, when the most perfect way of life will be attained. Each age corresponds to stages of self-revelation of the divine trinity in the history of humanity, which pass through advances in spirituality and freedom. Similarity may also be found in Hegel’s idea of the ‘end of history’, a doctrine which was influenced by Joachim. Whilst Joachim de Fiore is used here only as an example to illustrate my interpretation of Virgil’s transformation, his ideas seem relevant to Broch’s thought. Virgil’s progression through successive stages corresponds to Broch’s assertion that

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491 For Joachim, the ages are those of the layman, the priest and the monk. See ibid, pp.110-
492 Voegelin describes Joachim’s Trinitarian eschatology as follows: the age of the Father was the first period of the world; the age of the Son began with the appearance of Christ, which will be followed by the third age of the Spirit. The three ages correspond to increases in spiritual fulfilment, in the age of the layman, the active contemplative life of the priest and the perfect spiritual life of the monk.
494 Hitherto, I have been unable to find direct reference to Joachim de Fiore in Broch’s essays and correspondence. Of interest, however, is the division of Broch’s earlier novel, *The Sleepwalkers (Die Schlafwandler)*, into three sections, each of which is devoted to a period of history and the consciousness and values arising thereof. The protagonist of the first section is named Joachim von Pasenow; in the second section the protagonist August Esch encounters Martin Geyring; in the third, the protagonist is a realist, named Huguenau. Viewed from the point of changing consciousness, these names may perhaps be understood to correspond to Augustine, Martin Luther, and a descendent of the Huguenots, the sixteenth to seventeenth century French Protestant Reform church. Brief reference to Joachim de Fiore is made in connection with *The Sleepwalkers* by Heinz Osterle. See H.D. Osterle (1971) ‘Revolution and Apocalypse’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 86(5), pp. 946-958.
'progress is the painful resolution of an age-old reality, before it can find its way into the new reality'.495

The sense of simultaneity achieved, as Virgil merges with the cosmos whilst retaining a sense of self, is a mystical experience. It constitutes a form of ecstasy, which corresponds to that described by Broch in the Massenwahntheorie.496 It is similar to the experience described by Eckhart, in which the divine is distinct in itself, yet simultaneously part of the whole universe.497 It corresponds to Nicholas of Cusa’s ‘coincidence of opposites’, in which perfect harmony, or paradise, is achieved by the combination of opposing ideas.498 Thus, by merging with the cosmos, Virgil is subjected to the process which has already been conveyed through the narrative technique: he is approaching the position of the ‘ideal observer’, because he now finds that all the stars are ‘simultaneously visible to the eye’. (DV 453)99

The experiences combine to depict a sensation of expansion, as Virgil’s entire being seems to open up into the outer world, extending into the Ether:

The voyage had become immeasurably slower and in equal quietude the roundness above and that below, reflected in the lustre of the stars, had expanded on every side to meet this becalmed gliding, the quiet glance of the spheres reflecting itself in itself, the gray eye of the water and the darker gray of the heavenly eye widening and merging to a day-impregnated night, to a dawn dusk in which there was no duration or occurrence, no name, no chance, no memory, no fate. (DV 450)499

This stage of his transformation may be understood as an example of the ‘expansion of the irrational aspects of being’, to which Broch refers in his Massenwahntheorie.500 Virgil’s ecstatic experience can be compared to

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495 KW13/3 145. Letter from Broch to Waldo Frank, dated 20 June 1947.
496 See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti.
497 See Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work.
498 Ibid.99 KW4 427. See Chapter 9: Broch and Natural Philosophy: The Use of the Elements in the Virgil work,’ and also Chapter 10: ‘Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work.
499 KW4 424. Broch writes:

Unendlich war die Fahrt velangsamt, und in nämlicher Ruhe war das Rund des Oben und Unten, spiegelnd im Glanz der Gestirne, um den gleitenden Stillstand herum gebreitet, der stille Sphärenblick, der in sich selbst sich spiegelt, das graue Auge des Gewässers und das dunklere Grau des Himmelsauges darüber, sie beide ineinandergeweitet, sie beide geweitet zur Helligkeitsnacht, geweitet zu dem Zwielicht, in dem es keine Dauer und kein Geschehen mehr gibt, keinen Namen, keinen Zufall, keine Erinnerung, kein Schicksal.
500 See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti.
Broch’s description of the sensation of ‘Irrationalbereicherung’, expressed as ‘I am the world, because it has entered into me’,\textsuperscript{501} in that he is simultaneously entering the ether and being permeated by it.

The idea of the continued existence of a distinct self also occurs in Broch’s poetry, such as the 1915 verse, ‘Stufen der Ekstase’.\textsuperscript{103} In this poem, he conveys that we search for a self, or ‘I’, which, whilst remaining hidden, has the power to blur boundaries in our perception: it is only in the self, that ‘unity may unfold to the All’.\textsuperscript{104}

By extending into his ‘etheric body’, permeating and being permeated by the ether, Virgil may have reached that part of his psychical being that Aristotle terms the ‘nous’. This may be understood as an imperishable aspect of the soul that can exist separately from the body, with the capacity to remain distinct from that which is changing and perishable. (Aristotle asserts that although the combination of body and soul is perishable, the ‘nous’ is probably more divine and impassive.)\textsuperscript{105} Virgil’s participation in ‘noesis’ may be explained as a form of intellectual activity, which differs from the processes of perception and memory, because it can take place in pure ‘theoria’, and does not involve actualisation of any part, or aspect of the body.\textsuperscript{106} Participation in ‘noesis’ enables the whole person to be perfected, in a process termed ‘dianoia’.\textsuperscript{107} Thus Virgil’s transformed being now appears to be participating in a form of cosmic intellect, accessed through the ether.

The experience of participation in the ‘nous’ also brings to mind Hegel’s idea of the existence of a ‘World Soul’, the ‘anima mundi’, or universal soul of nature, which is divided into the individual souls of

\textsuperscript{501} KW12 25. Broch writes, ‘Ich bin die Welt, weil sie in mich eingegangen ist’.

\textsuperscript{103} KW8 15-17. The quoted verse is the final part of ‘Vier Sonette über das metaphysische Problem der Wirklichkeitserkenntnis’. Broch writes: `Und wissen suchen wir ein Ich, das stets verborgen, Allein die Macht hat Grenzen zu verwischen, Dunklen Genuß erhebt zum Schöpferischen Reiner Ekstase nie erreichter Morgen: In ihm darf Einheit sich zum All entfalten

\textsuperscript{105} Virgil’s participation in ‘noesis’ may be explained as a form of intellectual activity, which differs from the processes of perception and memory, because it can take place in pure ‘theoria’, and does not involve actualisation of any part, or aspect of the body.\textsuperscript{106} Participation in

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Und seine Zweiheit Gottes Welt gestalten – Im
Suchen nah und ewig doch entrückt – Die Kraft
des Ursprungs winkt mit milden Händen. Es weht
ein Frühlingsband und will uns senden
Vergessenen Traum aus Kinderland zurück.

Aristotle (Vol. 6). Frome: Prometheus Trust, p. 44.

P.S. Macdonald, History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit
from Homer to Hume, p. 65. 107

organisms.502 Described by Hegel as ‘an immediate unconscious totality’, and
the ‘sleep of spirit’, the Natural Soul is all-pervasive
(‘Allesdurchdringendes’), and is not simply that which exists in a particular
individual.503 In relation to individual souls, the World Soul acts as the basis of
singularising of spirit:

It is the substance, that is to say the absolute basis of all the particularising and
singularising of Spirit, so that spirit has within it all the material of its determination,
and it remains the pervading identical ideality of this determination.504

Virgil’s continued existence also appears to correspond to the ideas of
Islamic thinker Averroës, who, in his discussion of Aristotle’s doctrine,
maintained that ‘acquired intellect may transcend the death of the
individual’.111 As mentioned earlier, Averroës considered the human soul to be
divided into two parts, one individual, one divine, though he believed the
individual soul not to be eternal: ‘at most one is granted a glimpse of eternity,
of eternal truths while alive’.505 He believed that, following death, individual
imagination becomes part of the great intellect, or single mind. Therefore,
although the intellect continues beyond death, individuality disappears,
because each soul becomes part of one eternal soul. In Virgil’s case, however,
individuality seems to be being retained.

Reidel, § 391.
503 Ibid § 440, § 389 and § 406
respectively.
504 Ibid §
389. 111

505 Ibid. See Chapter 5: Some observations about Broch’s engagement with ideas about the
individual and individuality.
In similar vein, Aquinas, towards the end of his life, asserted that each human being is in possession of an intellect, which could survive death.\textsuperscript{506} For Aquinas, the human soul is defined as the ‘first principle of life’, being immaterial and only tied to a body by an act of God. According to Macdonald,\textsuperscript{114} in Aquinas’ doctrine, the soul is rewarded or punished beyond death for its earthly achievements, as it continues ‘enmattered’ in a resurrected body. Aquinas’ thought therefore ‘formulates a strong argument for the immortality of the soul, but in so doing, reaches a post-mortem separation of the body, which can only be addressed by the Christian doctrine of resurrection’.\textsuperscript{115} Kenneth Schmitz describes Aquinas’ concept of the soul as follows:

the human soul, by virtue of its intellectual nature, is both a substance in its own right, and yet the spiritual life of the body. Without the body, it subsists only as a radically incomplete human being, since it is by nature meant to inform, structure and vivify its human body. In the end, St.Thomas’ proof delivers to us something not unlike a Greek shade.\textsuperscript{116}

There are similarities between Aquinas’ doctrine and Virgil’s experience, in that at this stage, Virgil is continuing to exist in some form without a body. What differs, however, is that Virgil seems to be retaining a sense of self, and in Aquinas’ doctrine, there is no notion of reincarnation: resurrection occurs on the day of judgement, and a body is restored to the soul on that day.

The work of Wolf-Ulrich Klünker upon Aquinas’s thought is of interest here.\textsuperscript{117} For Klünker, (who demonstrates that Aquinas’ thought brings together the knowledge teaching of Plato with that of Aristotle), all humans undergo the

\textsuperscript{506} Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274. See Chapter 5. Aquinas is mentioned in Broch’s ‘Evil in the Value system of Art’ essay. See H. Broch (2003) \textit{Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch}, pp. 3-39, here, p. 30. KW9/2 119-157, here, 146. Broch refers to Aquinas in his explanation of the preservation of the past by the practice of clinging to preformed, rigid ideas as being the reversion of the pre-existing and preformed into the chaotic state of ‘apeiron’ (the unknowable), even though those ideas may be preserved for a time in petrified form.

The man who thus perverts his value-goal has lost his goodwill; his ‘volitio’ has become reversed to ‘nolitio,’ even that ‘nolitio perfecta’ which Aquinas saw constituting evil itself; he becomes a collector of lifeless objects and for him the past and its forms are not just symbols of the infinite goals, but come suddenly to be the goal itself. And so the believer in dogma and in scripture [...] – the visible church is no longer the all-encompassing symbol of God that it professes to be, but is mad to be God itself: in reducing the infinite quality of God to the finite quality of the visible, faith becomes mere moralising as it is dragged down from the sphere of the ethical
same process after death. The outcome of the process, that is, whether or not immortality of the soul might be attained, is not dependent upon earthly moral conduct, but through after-death spiritual perception. Spiritual self-knowledge of man may be possible, if the soul is able to experience itself as thinking: the human spirit comes to self-knowledge, through its activity, thought. The soul can therefore only achieve spiritual

and into the aesthetic, and the infinite imperative of faith is degraded into an aesthetic one.

See Chapter 5, note 34.


W-U. Klünker (1990) *Selbst-Erkenntnis der Seele: zur Anthropologie des Thomas von Aquin*. Stuttgart: Edition Hardenberg im Verlag Freies Geistesleben. Aquinas wrote an extended commentary on Aristotle’s ‘De Anima’. Self-knowledge, when it observes its own activity.\(^\text{507}\) Klünker observes that Aquinas ascribes to the soul a way of cognition that does not come from sense-perception, but which has been acquired in earthly existence.\(^\text{508}\) The person also retains the fruits of earthly cognition as the ‘disposition of the being of knowledge’ (‘Habitus des Wissens’).\(^\text{509}\) An individual, who has engaged with the spiritual world during earthly life, may therefore achieve an enhanced passage through the After-life. Whilst Virgil’s experience does not quite correspond to Macdonald’s interpretation of Aquinas’ doctrine, it is similar to that of Klünker. Broch, therefore, seems to be introducing a concept of individuality that does not quite correspond to established ideas derived from existing belief systems.

Although Virgil’s sense of self is retained, it is changing, being pervaded and becoming less distinct through expansion as a great force is encountered:

\(^{\text{507}}\) Ibid, p. 71. Klünker refers to Aquinas, ‘Summe der Theologie’, I, 87, 1. The part of the soul that recognises itself is termed ‘mens’, by Aquinas, as opposed to ‘intellectus’.


\(^{\text{509}}\) Ibid.
The force may be understood as the opening up of the cosmic Ether, as Virgil merges with the ‘etheric body’ of the cosmos: he encounters the ‘etheric’ force, which, in Aristotle’s thought, moves the heavenly bodies in endless circles.\(^{510}\) Here, Broch draws attention once again to the changing role of science, reinforcing the effect of the chapter title, ‘Ether’, the ‘murmuring’, and the ‘music of the spheres’, which allude simultaneously to ancient concepts of the universe and to modern physics. The force encountered by Virgil might therefore be the same phenomena described by Faraday,\(^ {123}\) who as we have seen, considered the conduction of ‘magnetic force’ to be a possible function of the ether.

For Virgil, the force is linked to sound, ‘the silent radiation’, the source of which appears to be Lysanias. (DV 448)\(^ {124}\) His experience of ‘memory in the interstate of the senses, yet devoid of sensuality, this afterglow of former doubling and halving’, may be understood as participation in the aforementioned realm of the ‘nous’. (DV 448)\(^ {125}\) Virgil experiences the mingling of inside and outside, as he merges into Lysanias, ‘entering a higher plane in the knowledgeless knowing of the second immensity’, ‘flooding into him as a soundless music, streaming back as an insight of the boy, as a simultaneous knowledgeless knowing of nearness and farness, which fills the beholder with light’. (DV 449)\(^ {126}\) It is significant that, after the merging, Lysanias’s voice ‘speaks no longer’, which infers that the power of his voice has somehow been transferred to Virgil, through the Ether’s capacity for transmitting sound. (DV 448)\(^ {127}\)

As everything appears to blend into one and comes almost to a standstill, the only point of orientation is the sun, though it is difficult to discern whether it is the sun, or its reflection that can be seen. Broch writes ‘Sun in

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reflected movement, or that of its own, in earthly imprisonment or in spheric freedom'. (DV 449)\textsuperscript{128} The vessel in which Virgil is carried is drawn towards the sun, which appears to be the source of Virgil’s drive to fulfilment:

\begin{quote}
\textit{as if the voyage were heading for the sun, as if this were its aim, the steersman, seemingly, in response to the boy’s longing gesture, followed the path of the redglowing image ...} (DV 449)\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

The discovery of the sun as the destination of the journey directs the reader once again towards ancient mystery religions, in which the Sun God was the highest being, such as ancient Egyptian belief systems and Mithraism. In such religions, the Sun God was considered to be both creator and leader for humanity, believed to lead people in life after death.\textsuperscript{130} The god Mithras was perceived to be higher than the visible sun, a creator and order of the universe, and therefore a manifestation of the creative Logos or Word.\textsuperscript{131}

The effect of the sun upon Virgil might be likened to experiences witnessed within mystery religions.\textsuperscript{132} As the first Natural Philosophers observed, the sun is the great source of heat, which assists change in the combination of the elements. As he is drawn towards the sun, Virgil experiences the huge expansion of the boat, ‘plainly seen by the growing distance of the boy at the bow, plainly felt by the steersman’s falling back at the rear’. (DV 449)\textsuperscript{133} That which is outside of his being is absorbed, so that ‘speed changed into growth’. (DV 449)\textsuperscript{134} He is no longer able to determine whether he is making ‘real or sham movements’, and begins to undergo enormous growth: (DV 449-50)\textsuperscript{135}

\begin{quote}
\textit{and the point of the boat in its gradual turning remained constant to the path of the sun [...] speed changed into growth, into such an irresistible, all embracing growth that, were it to persist, must finally bring the voyage and even the night itself to a complete standstill.} (DV 449-50)\textsuperscript{136}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{124} KW4 422.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid. 126 KW4 422-423. 127 KW4 422.

\textsuperscript{128} KW4 423. In the German text, the sun is described as being in ‘etheric freedom’ (‘in ätherischer Freiheit’).

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
Sensing that he is ‘bound to the middle of the boat while yet being loosened from it’, Virgil feels that ‘the last fetters are being struck off, as if this were the final fulfilment of a long-forgotten, no longer rememberable premonition of floating in freedom’. (DV 450) He realises that he has reached a threshold, in which ‘past and future criss-cross in a single effulgence, shot through with the whole complex meaning of the past’. (DV 451) He knows that he is about to move into a higher level of consciousness. He wants to ‘float on to him [...] flooded in radiance, who might still be a peasant boy, but also might be an angel moving ethereally on wings of Septemberish coolness’. (DV 450) As Lysanias hands over the task of guiding the journey, Virgil senses that he is undergoing transformation:

133 KW4 423.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 KW4 424.

Verily, this revelation of farewell, this consciousness of farewell, was also embedded in the floating in-turned smile of the boy. (DV 451)

Although still directed forward by Lysanias, Virgil is aware that forces are mounting and taking effect within his own being: he has become conscious that his soul is ‘poised in the tension between certainty and yearning’. (DV 452) He is being directed beyond the elements, to an ‘invading flood of knowledge, greater and milder than any streaming of air and water’. (DV 452) It is interesting to note that the German text refers to ‘Äther- und Wasserströmen’ (streaming of *ether* and water), which implies that Virgil is heading beyond the ether. The reported awareness of ‘a new stillness on a loftier plane’, and ‘knowledge ready to be organised into a new knowledge’, suggests that his soul is now prepared to enter a new state of being, an experience which might best be interpreted, in our discussion so far, as
entering Aristotle’s concept of ‘nous’, and the cosmic intellect, whilst somehow retaining his individuality. (DV 452-3)\textsuperscript{143} As mentioned briefly earlier, the ‘nous’ is described by Aristotle\textsuperscript{144} as a ‘different type of soul, which cannot be separated, as the eternal [is] from the perishable’.

**The final transformation?**

As the sun is approached, Virgil witnesses a ‘final transformation’, in which ‘the seraphic apparition finally frees itself’, and Lysanias is transformed into Virgil’s beloved Plotia, still ‘pointing to the east’. (DV 455)\textsuperscript{145} This seems to be the final separation of his soul from his body, for ‘there is no further need for a vessel’. (DV 456)\textsuperscript{146} His soul is now fully in the spiritual world, reaching the crystal dimension of the ether, ‘the pristine crystal of infinity’, and even penetrating beyond the elements, ‘hovering over the waters’. (DV 456)\textsuperscript{147} He finds that he is able to sense feminine aspects of his own being, seeing Plotia ‘as it were from within, and beholding from the core of her individual essence’, no longer ‘a body, but rather a transparent intrinsic substance’. It is not only the occurrence, but Virgil’s consciousness of his experience that is significant. He seems able to perceive the divine in Plotia, viewing her smile as ‘that which gives meaning to everything human’, a ‘yearning, gesture sent up to the utter clarity of the remotest spheres, […] a yearning, upward gesture, which is already fulfilment’. (DV 459)\textsuperscript{511} As a result of his experiences, he seems able to perceive a connection between human existence and the cosmos, and is beginning to fulfil his seemingly impossible ambition to relate to the heavens set out in the early stages of the text.

Virgil seems to have discovered the teleological dimension of his own being, which connects him to the cosmos. He may be understood to have accessed part of his soul, which, according to ancient belief systems, reaches into the Ether. In ancient Egyptian tradition, the part of the soul, which participated in the Ether and enabled a being to achieve form, was known as the ‘Ka’. ‘The latter was believed to consist of a light-like substance which received its light from the Sun-God. Invisible, it derived its power from the spirit world and remained with the individual throughout earthly life.’ Association of the soul with the Ether has emerged several times in the course of history. Aristotle speaks of a vegetative soul, which acts as an etheric force upon a living being, whilst Hegel believes ether to lie at the basis of all experience. Aristotle also refers to the ‘pneuma’, which mediates between a being in the spiritual world and its corresponding form in earthly existence, as being related to the ether of the heavens. A similar idea arises in the nineteenth century, in the work of Fichte, who refers to ‘the unifying principle of form, which cannot be found in the material elements’. For Virgil, the transformation continues, becoming a creation in reverse, as he penetrates his own soul. He uncovers further aspects of his being, which are successively reflected and transformed. With Plotia, he enters a garden in which everything grows abundantly. The realm of primal growth seems to have been reached, in which ‘appeasement

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In den Stoffelementen daher kann das wahrhafte Beharrende, jenes *einende* Formprinzip des Leibes nicht gefunden warden, welches sich während unseres ganzen Lebens wirksam erweist ... [...] Daher ist es nur als ‘Kraft’ zu denken: als Kraft aber ohne Zweifel an einem realen Substrate befestigt ist.

514 Lansing-Smith links the apocalyptic events of the Ether chapter to the biblical imagery of the books of Genesis and Revelation. E. Lansing-Smith, *Ricostru and Revelation: An Archetypal Poetics of Modernism*, pp. 147-154. Broch writes:

..., hing die Dunkelheit seines inneren Wurzelbodens, die Dunkelheit des Wurzelabgrundes, der das Pflanzliche heraufgeschickte hatte und es bis zur äußersten Faser durchränkte, der Widerschein des letzten Antilites, in dem sich Sternenantlitz, Menschenantlitz, Tierantlitz, Pflanzenantlitz nochmals spiegeln, nochmals und nun vom Irdischen her, gebunden zur letzten Einheit ihres irdischen Lebens, Widerschein des tiefsten Erdenantlitzes und seiner muttersverschatteten Ruhe.
and refreshment are sent from its immeasurable boundless depth’. (DV 461)\textsuperscript{153}

Broch writes:

there hovered the darkness of its inmost rooty-soil, the darkness of the rooty-abyss that had pushed up this plant-life and saturated it to its last fibre, a hint of the last countenance in which star-face, human face, plant-face were again reflected hither from the earth, bound up with the unity of their earthly lives as the reflections of that most profound face, the face of the earth in its shadowed maternal calm. (DV 460)\textsuperscript{154}

It may be tempting for the reader to interpret Virgil’s entry into the garden as arrival in Paradise, the final destination.\textsuperscript{515} Although he rests there briefly, it soon becomes apparent that his transformation is ongoing, and his perception is still being raised. The ‘hovering of the darkness of the inmost rooty soil’ has reached his consciousness. He is aware of the ‘upper air’: he is approaching ‘the place of the gods’, that part of the ether which is light.\textsuperscript{516} In this place heaven and earth are reflected in one another: there is both sun and shadow, but ‘darkness and light melt into each other, so that nothing is to be found which would not be at the same time both star and shadow. The souls of Virgil and Plotia ‘walk hand in hand, their communion, liberated from language’. (DV 462)\textsuperscript{157} They reflect one another in a sexless, innocent, vegetative way, which enables Virgil to gain an ‘insight of wholeness, his own wholeness as much as that of the happenings near him [...] as much an alliance with himself as with heaven, star, shadow, animal and plant, a twofold alliance with Plotia in the perception and self-perception of a doubled insight’:

and as soul, animal and plant reflected in one another, reflected as substance en elemental substance, as the whole reflected in the whole, and he too was reflected in the elemental darkness of Plotia, he recognised mother and child in her, he saw himself as having taken refuge in the mother-smile [...] he perceived the slave in Lysanias and the slave was himself [...] he saw therein the universal fusion beyond fate, saw the beaming fusion of elemental substances, layer by layer, limb by limb, he perceived the living oneness of the elemental substance which was his own soul. (DV 463)\textsuperscript{517}

In the garden, Virgil gains insight into his being, realising that his whole being is derived from the elements. He witnesses ‘the universal fusion beyond

\textsuperscript{515} Weigand likens the garden to biblical Paradise. See H.J. Weigand, ‘Broch’s “Death of Vergil” Program Notes’, p. 549.


KW4 435.

KW4 436. 159

KW4 436.
fate’, and perceives the living oneness of the elemental substance which was his own soul. (DV 463) With full consciousness, he has entered the part of his being that lies beyond language. He can see the reciprocal relationships between beings, based on affinity. He recognises himself as an integral part of this existence, perceiving between mother and child the capacity for warmth within the human soul, which is connected to human language.

Virgil’s experience can again be understood as a form of ecstasy. For Broch, the rediscovery of pre-existence constitutes the highest ecstasy humanity can attain. In the Hofmannsth al essay, he asserts that ecstasy may be attained by complete identification of the individual with the object, through the rediscovery of pre-existence:

It is the stage at which man is endowed with the complete identification of the ego with the non-ego (which confronts him as the world), the stage at which he has irrevocably and for all time received the divine gift of harmony of thing and concept and world – in short, the foundation of all world intuition, all knowledge and all language. The rediscovery of complete world identification, the rediscovery of pre-existence, hence reveals itself – and this is a thoroughly Indian idea - as the highest ecstasy man can attain.518

Here, Broch finds confluence of his own thought with that of Hofmannsthal, though he later asserts that the latter ‘appeals to moments of poetic ecstasy’, ‘his evidence being nothing that comes from reading’,161 which suggests that his own ideas are substantiated by engagement with historical texts.

Admittedly, Broch’s familiarity with historical sources referring to the state of ecstasy as a rediscovery of world identification, (Heraclitus, Leibniz and Jakob Böhme, and texts recording Indian philosophy), is only inferred in the Hofmannsth al essay, though reference to these and similar historical sources is made elsewhere in his theoretical writing, and correspondence.162 For example, the rediscovery of pre-existence described above seems to correspond to the ‘pre-established harmony’ that exists between the ego and the world, conveyed through the Sanskrit expression, ‘tat twam asi’ (‘that art thou’) to which Broch refers in his 1908-9 essay ‘Kultur’.163 Similarly, his concept of enrichment and impoverishment of the ego assumes that each

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individual has a sense of balance within the ‘self’.\footnote{164}

As a result of his ecstatic mystical experience, Virgil perceives that Plotia is part of his being, having ‘come as the reflection of his soul and in order to be reflected in it’. (DV 464)\footnote{165} His experiences of attraction and reflection appear to be part of a process of growth in the spiritual realm.

Overcome by his knowledge, and ‘overcast by mirror after mirror’, he falls asleep, to find that his perception continues. In his dream, the chain of his being is revealed, showing the ‘fusion and reflexive insinuation of Plotia into himself’, passing through vegetative and plant-like stages, interspersed by sleep:

He felt the unquenchable persistence of the fusion and reflexive insinuation of Plotia into himself, into the constituent parts which made up this self, insinuation into the sensible and insensible, wholeness gliding into wholeness, earth-dark and soft, stone-cool and hard, insinuation into the wholeness of his life, into the rocky bones of his skeleton and into his earthbound roots and marrow, into what was vegetable and plant-like in him, into what was the animality of his flesh and skin, he felt Plotia becoming part of himself, of his innermost seeing soul, and he felt her glance resting in him, seeing, as had his glance in her, from within. (DV 464)\footnote{166}

Thus the realisation is reached, that all past occurrences, through which Virgil has passed, are carried within his consciousness. In his dream, not only has Plotia’s femininity been absorbed into his soul, but he has been aware of the process as it is occurring. The experience leads to the recognition that his consciousness has evolved, through alternate periods of waking and sleeping. He perceives that:

his sleep was the ancestral chain, [...] the line of substances through which he had passed and the seed of those he carried in himself had united in his sleep, contracted to his sleeping self, absorbed into him nameless along with Plotia to whom a name no longer clung to become ‘a spaceless reflection of all that had been built into the

\footnote{Ibid. Discussion of ‘ecstasy’ is also to be found in the \textit{Massenwahntheorie}. See, for example, KW12 18, 22.}
\footnote{See H. Broch (1984) \textit{Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his Time: The European Imagination 1860-1920}, p. 119 and p.194, note 3. In explaining ‘that art thou,’ ‘...' Steinberg states that ‘that’ refers to the transcendent Godhead (Brahman) and ‘thou’ refers to the individual soul. KW9/1 303. See also KW10/1 11-31, here, 18.}
\footnote{KW12 14-19 & 46. See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti. Also Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality. KW4 437.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
recesses of sleep so that it might unfold again as a reflection in space, there where sleep would turn into waking. (DV 464)\textsuperscript{519}

We should remind ourselves that, at this stage, the narrative technique reports observations about Virgil through the third person perfect tense, rather than speaking through the interior monologue. The reader is informed of the changes undergone by Virgil from a more distant point of view than in previous chapters. The text conveys a reflection upon events, from a position outside the protagonist's consciousness.

Upon waking, Virgil finds that Plotia ‘has vanished without loss, left behind in the second place of memory’. That ‘the mute song of the spheres continues to resound’, suggests that his new knowledge regarding his transformation is being carried into the cosmos. (DV 464)\textsuperscript{168} Enhanced by his dream experience, Virgil’s journey continues, passing again through animal and plant forms, ‘hearing the dumb language of the beast, hearing in himself the mute melody of the spheric song, carried by an echo of profoundest earthly darkness’, and realising that ‘this animal totality in its invisible transparency was the goal of his conscious knowledge’. (DV 465-6)\textsuperscript{169} Rather than reducing Virgil to animalistic qualities, the creaturely stages emphasise the human capacity for consciousness and speech, and direct the reader again to Aristotle’s idea of the ‘nous’. Virgil’s experience might be seen as a review of his earthly life, a reflection upon nature, as part of his conscious growth in the spiritual world. Broch writes:

He heard the dumb language of the beast, heard with them, heard in their speech, heard in himself the mute melody of the spheric song continuing of sound, carried by an echo of profoundest earthly darkness, in unison with the un-incarnated, uncreated elements, slumbering uneasily at the dark source of all animalhood and vibrating through all its dumb speech. (DV 465)\textsuperscript{520} Also:

and he the man, having remained human notwithstanding his concourse with the uncreated, [...] he was included in this benumbing occurrence, [...] yet his human eye had forfeited none of its discrimination. (DV 469)\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{519} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} KW4 438.
\textsuperscript{169} KW4 438-439.
\textsuperscript{520} KW4 438. 171
KW4 442.
The stages through which Virgil passes are reminiscent of the partanimal, part-human mythical creatures, which accompany a soul on the journey into the afterlife, according to the beliefs of ancient Egyptians. Participation of creatures in the human soul is also described by Eckhart, who proclaims that when all creatures pronounce his name, God comes into being. The discovery of animalistic qualities within the human soul may also be found in Broch’s poetry. For example, the 1940 poem ‘Der nächtliche Urwald’ (‘The nightly primordial forest’) speaks of awareness of the animal and its cry, within the poet. His use of animal imagery introduces philosophical thought, conveying ideas that reach back into ancient thought, and portraying humans as composite beings which have evolved over a succession of journeys through the cosmos.

The idea, that human beings may be ‘cultivated’ can be found in the thought of Cicero, who asserts that humanity and culture, are one and the same thing, continually undergoing cultivation. Cicero’s conviction that man may realise his potential as a human being, through the process of cultivation, became a model centuries later for German-speaking humanists, such as Erasmus and Copernicus, who, in turn, challenged the dominance of the Christian church. This aspect of Virgil’s transformation builds upon the sense of formal structure (‘eidos’) of history conveyed in the text, and also allusions to Luther’s ideas, mentioned earlier. The indirect reference to Cicero also points back in time, both towards medieval times when the idea of the ‘Music of the Spheres’ was made available through Cicero’s thought, and to the start of the novel, when awareness of celestial harmony was raised.

522 L.W. Beck, Early German Philosophy: Kant and his Predecessors, p. 52. Beck cites Eckhart, Sermon 12.
526 See Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative Technique in the Virgil work.
During his metamorphosis, Virgil is taken deep into his own soul, being reflected in reflection, and passing through alternate stages of dark and light. The struggle is always upward, ‘direction being indicated by the light above’, even though he finds himself in ‘an ether thicket hanging in itself’. (DV 472) Reflection continues until he finds that ‘the mirror of sky and the mirror of sea merge to a single essence, earth changing to light’. (DV 477) Eventually, he reaches the part of the ether that is light, aware of the ‘eternal light hidden behind the fog, playing in the waters, establishing wholeness, sustaining it’. (DV 477) The very core of his being has been reached: the ‘ego-nucleus’. Now he ‘consists merely of his eye, the eye on his brow’, floating between mutual reflections of heaven and earth, described as ‘two mirrors, floating in the space between the liquid light-fog above and the liquid swells below’. (DV 477) At this point, the very essence of Virgil’s soul may be understood to be re-conceived, as a new being, in which heaven and earth become fused. Broch writes:

And it seemed to him as if a very large hand like a cloud were carrying him through this mild occurrence, through the mildness of this twofold dusk, motherly in its gentleness, fatherly in its calm, embracing him and carrying him on, further and further and forevermore. And then, as if to fuse together the gentle unity above and that below, as if to wash away the last separating wall between the liquefaction above and below, the rain began to fall. (DV 477)

Thus the essence of Virgil’s ‘etheric body’ bears the fruit of his earthly achievements, and gives rise to a new self. Broch’s ideas draw upon those of the ancients, who believed the son of god to be the fruit of earthly existence. A parallel may be drawn with Aristotle’s idea that ether is contained in the ‘pneuma’, the force that mediates between a spiritual being and its earthly

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527 KW4 445. 180

KW4 450. 181 Ibid.

528 Ibid. 183 Ibid.

Broch writes:

Und es dünkte ihm, daß eine sehr große Hand es sei, die ihn wolkenhaft durch diese zwiefach milde Dämmerung, durch dieses zwiefach milde Sein trug, mütterlich in ihrer Weichheit, väterlich in ihrer Ruhe, ihn umschließend und weitertragend, weiter und weiter, ewiglich. Un nun, gleichsam um die milde Einheit des Oben und Unten noch inniger zur Einheit zu verschmelzen, um die letzte Scheidung zwischen der obern und untern Feuchte aufzuheben, begann Regen zu fallen.
form, which in turn is to be found in semen, suggesting that the individual is connected to the heavens through the process of physical reproduction.

Aristotle states:

Now it is true that the faculty of all kinds of soul seems to have a connection with a matter different from and more divine than the so-called elements. ... All have in their semen that which causes it to be productive. I mean what is called 'thermon'. This is not the fire or any such force, but it is the ‘pneuma’ included in the semen and the foam-like, and the natural principle in the pneuma [is] like the element in the stars. 529

The idea of the divine being the fertile ground, or father, which continually generates all the fruits of earthly existence, also occurs in the thought of Eckhart, who, referring to the Gospel of John, speaks of ‘the birth of the Son in eternity’. Eckhart writes:

The Father gives birth to his Son without ceasing and I say more. He gives birth not only to me, his Son, but he gives birth to me as himself and himself as me and to me as his being and nature.

My fleshly father is not actually my father except in one little portion of his nature, and I am separated from him: he may be dead and I am alive. Therefore the heavenly Father is truly my Father, for I am his son and have everything that I have from him, and I am the same son and not a different one. Because the Father performs one work, therefore his work is me, his only begotten Son without any difference. 530

As far as Virgil is concerned, his capacity for thought has survived physical death. By the same process, in the course of successive earthly experiences, the self has survived, and gradually changed. 531 Thus the transformation of the soul contributes to its individuality. In turn, this leads to Cicero’s idea that humans are undergoing cultivation.

The continuation, in some way, of Virgil’s ‘being’ beyond earthly existence, is of particular interest regarding Broch’s concept of individuality. We have already seen that in the Ether, all of his earthly achievements are gathered in a form of appraisal. The result of the evaluation, the fruit of his earthly life, may be understood to be Virgil’s individuality, which has continued into the Ether. As mentioned earlier, regarding the continuation of some form


of consciousness beyond death, this idea does not seem to have been embraced by Broch’s critics. For example, in his discussion of the Virgil novel, Weigand asserts that ‘individuality is left behind, with Virgil’s name’. Of significance here is that he associates Broch’s Virgil with the work of Dante. ‘I would stress that Dante, rather than the ‘Eclogues’, ‘Georgics’ and the ‘Aeneid’ was responsible for the formation of Broch’s creative Virgil complex’, he asserts.

This is a connection denied by Broch, who maintains firmly that his view of Virgil is ‘un-Dante-esque’. In Dante’s Inferno, individuality does not continue, because the dead souls are empty beings. As soon as Dante enters Paradise, everything, including his individuality, stops, to be maintained at that point: having reached the benign realm of the Christian saints, he is unable to go back. Weigand’s critique is not entirely erroneous, however. In his reply to Weigand, Broch congratulates him on his ability to see the Virgil novel as a work in two sections, there being ‘unity within the first 513 pages’, whilst the final three pages constitute ‘a second part’. He indicates therefore, that the closing pages present the reader with something new, to which he has not drawn attention. This is of interest concerning Virgil’s individuality: it seems that a further experience may lie beyond the Afterlife.

188 Ibid. p. 530.
189 Following Weigand’s assertion that the Virgil work is based upon Dante’s Divine Comedy, Broch describes, in a letter to his son, how the inspiration for his poem, ‘Dante’s Shadow’ (KW8 67), arose from a dream, in which he saw ‘Dante going for a walk along Gonzagasse,’
191 See Broch’s letter to Hermann J. Weigand, dated 16 August 1947, KW13/3 155-156. Broch writes:


The process of purification undergone by Broch’s Virgil also differs from that depicted in the historical *Aeneid*. When Aeneas enters the Underworld, the landscape is visually striking, the river of Tartarus for example being described as, ‘a vast quagmire of boiling whirlpools belching sand and slime’. In the case of Broch’s Virgil, the landscape comprises ethereal images representing spiritual building blocks, which combine to form a creation of purity.

Three pages before the end of the text, Virgil is ‘turned around’. (DV 479) This suggests that the text of the ‘Ether’ chapter up to this point offers a foretaste of existence beyond earthly life. From the indications arising in our discussion so far, and Broch’s refutation of association of the novel with the work of Dante, the second part of the chapter may be understood as being a continuation of Virgil’s existence. As will be shown in the last stage of this analysis, the final pages of the *Vergil* text indicate that the fruit of Virgil’s earthly existence is generated into a new form.

As Virgil reaches the ‘etheric core’ of his being, it is conveyed that he remains conscious throughout, aware as the ‘sky cupola is drawn back, to become like a single star, a single eye in which his own is reflected, at the same time above and below’. Held within ‘unending refractions and

193 At this stage, it is interesting to note the three quotations inserted by Broch at the beginning of the *Vergil* work. The first, ‘...fato profugus...’ (Virgil, *Aeneid*, I, 2) suggests that the historical Virgil is driven by fate as much as by his creation Aeneas. Loss of authority is a leitmotiv employed throughout the *Aeneid*, exacerbating Virgil’s insecurity and sense of exile. (See F. Cox, ‘Envoi: The Death of Virgil’, p. 329. ‘Fatum’ is connected with the verb ‘fari,’ meaning to speak: see K.W. Gransden (1990) *Virgil: “The Aeneid”*, p. 97. The second quotation, ‘Da jungere dextram ...’ (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 6, l 697-702) suggests that Virgil has become aware of the intransitory nature of things: Book 6 reflects upon the destinies of the human soul. Aeneas returns to the upper world to begin his task of founding Rome. See K.W. Gransden, *Virgil: “The Aeneid”*, p. 75. The third quotation, ‘Lo duca ed io quell cammino ascoso [...] E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle’ is from Dante’s *Inferno*. (Dante, *Divina Commedia: Inferno*, XXXIV, l.133-139). It states, ‘My guide and I along that hidden route / set forth, to see the world of light once more; and for repose or respite caring not, we climbed, he first, I second, as of yore, until the lovely things the heaven bears / I could not perceive through a round aperture / whence we came forth once more to see the stars’. Translation Barbara Reynolds. See B. Reynolds (2006) *Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 233.
The inclusion of this quotation by Broch suggests his belief in other worlds, and/or the transmigration of souls. Overall, the three quotations hint at Virgil’s departure from the earthly world, where events are perceived to be affected by Fate; his passage into the world of the supernatural, and his deliberate decision to continue into a further realm. The quotations provide a further example of the passage of Virgil (and the reader) through three successive stages. 194

reflections’, he seems to have reached ‘heaven, simultaneously within and without’. At this point, it is reported that he searches for himself, asking ‘where was his own face in this universe? Had the crystal receptacle of the spheres already received him?’ (DV 478) 532 Somehow, he is aware that the centre of his being has been reached. He realises that he has consciousness in the spiritual world: his consciousness is ongoing. It is this realisation that enables Virgil to make the next step, a quantum leap into ‘a still more embracing unity’. (DV 478) 533 He has understood that his very being is derived from forces of nature: his awareness, his looking and waiting have developed out of the Ether. ‘It is at the same time that of the crystal itself, its consciousness of growth, a consciousness intent on developing to a purer equilibrium’. (DV 478) 534 His yearning for self-knowledge is so intense, that, ‘in a last flaring up of the universe’, his soul receives a new dimension in the form of divine light. Broch writes:

So much the crystalline will, so much a fore-echo of the still unsung song of the spheres, so much a fore-echo of the ether, that in a last flaring up of the universe, in a last flaring up of the creation, the light again crashed into the darkness as the darkness opened to receive the light. (DV 478) 198

Virgil’s soul is transmuted into what might best be described as a new self or ‘I’, formed from the essence of his earthly existence, conjoined with an aspect of World Spirit derived from the Ether. In the process of transformation, he gains a glimpse into the ‘universal abyss’, perceiving that something is there, for he is there. He knows that he has found ‘the birthplace of all essential

532 Ibid.
533 Ibid.
534 Ibid. 198 Ibid.
Broch writes:

So sehr Kristallwille, so sehr Vor-Echo für den künftigen, noch nicht erklungenenen Sphärensang, so sehr Vor-Echo des Äthers, daß in einem letzten Aufflammen des Alls, in einem letzten Aufflammen der Schöpfung nochmals das Licht in die Finsternis einstürzte, zugleich aber auch nochmals sich der Finsternis öffnete.
qualities, the birth-giving nothingness’, which has opened to the ‘glance of the glanceless one’, that is to his soul, possessor of ‘seeing blindness’. He has progressed to a higher level of being, (and consciousness), a transformation that corresponds to the ideas set out in Broch’s theoretical work, and also with those of the Neoplatonic thinker Plotinus, whose thought is discussed later in this section.535

In the transformation of Virgil’s self, comparison may also be drawn between the ‘crashing of the light into the darkness, as the darkness opens to receive the light’, and the idea of ‘Keter’, which occurs in Kabbalistic thought. The ‘Keter’ is the zig-zag flash of lightning, which is believed to activate a circuit within the ten ‘Sephiroth’ or stages of divine selfmanifestation. The point at which this occurs constitutes a state of Oneness, out of which is born a drive towards the idea of creation, the second Sephirah, the ‘Hokhmah’ or ‘Wisdom’. Of particular interest is that the ‘Keter’ is also known as ‘ru’ah’, which can be translated as ‘ether’, or ‘spirit’.536 The idea of sudden light also occurs in Böhme’s thought, in the form of a ‘flash’ (‘Schrack’), or force, that ignites life, and illuminates the invisible world. In a similar vein, Hegel538 refers to the ‘Absolute Generator’, which is triggered when the ego has reached the point of contraction.

I refer here to the Kabbalah in order to illustrate Virgil’s transformation. Although I have been unable to find direct acknowledgement by Broch of knowledge of the Kabbalah, we should remember that he was familiar with the thought of Böhme, and Giordano Bruno,203 whose thought is associated with this tradition. He admired Goethe, who showed great interest in alchemy, and

535 Broch refers to Plotinus (204/5-270) in his essayistic writing. He likens conservative preservation of past values to what Plotinus described as ‘forgetting the divine origin of things’. See H. Broch (2003) Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch, p. 29. KW9/2 146.
read the Kabbalah as a young man.\textsuperscript{539} He also read the work of Spinoza and Leibniz, who were influenced by Kabbalah, and in common with Francis Bacon, showed interest in alchemy. Taking into account Broch’s interest in Eckhart, his correspondence with Voegelin, who considered Hegel to be part of the Hermetic tradition, and the depiction of Virgil’s experience, Broch may be considered to be an Hermetic thinker.\textsuperscript{205}

**Further Transformation: ‘the yearning of the lodger who longs to be son’**

Virgil’s realisation permits him to turn around and view creation from his new position in the heavens, finding a state of universal harmony, in which all creatures are ‘striving towards the human face’. He is able to perceive the significance of human existence, the capacity to convey its consciousness, revealed in the smile shared between infant boy and his mother.\textsuperscript{206} Consequently, he comprehends the relationship between humanity and the Logos, through which all things are shaped, ‘the mild yet terrible glory of the human fate, begot from the word, and already in the begetting, coming to be the word’s substance’. (DV 480)\textsuperscript{207} His new insight into humanity’s relationship with the Logos is an acknowledgement that he himself has changed, through participation in a process described as ‘the yearning of the lodger who longs to become the son’.\textsuperscript{208}

In loving perception the word received the yearning of the heart and that of the mind for their great communion, the word becoming the confirmation by force of innate necessity, assuming the yearning of the lodger who longed to become the son, his task fulfilled. (DV 480)\textsuperscript{209}

The ‘lodger’ (or guest) who longs to become the son’ may be a biblical reference, though hitherto I have been unable to locate it directly.\textsuperscript{210} The idea may, however, be compared with Eckhart’s idea that the divine may reside


Comparison may be drawn here with Ernst Bloch’s work, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, in which Bloch speaks of the merging of the Egyptian Horus-myth, with the image of a saviour, around the time of the birth of Christ. The title of ‘Saviour’ was bestowed upon the emperor Augustus. See E. Bloch (1970) *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Vol. 3, p. 1483.

In the German text, ‘Gast’ is used, which is translated as ‘lodger,’ though ‘guest’ would perhaps be a more accurate translation. The German word for a lodger is ‘Untermieter/in’. The last of the four sons of Ezrah, of the tribe of Judah (See 1 Chronicles 4 v.17) is called ‘Jalon’, meaning ‘Lodger’, or ‘Jehovah lodges’. See *Easton Bible Dictionary* [Online]. The name also means ‘Israelite’. See Strong’s Bible Concordance. Strong’s Concordance [Online]. The name is also associated with ‘tarrying’, ‘murmuring’ and ‘abiding’. See *Hitchcock’s Bible Names Dictionary*. [Online].

within the individual. With reference to the Gospel of John, Eckhart writes ‘God is Love and Love is God; doubtless he is well lodged as heir to God, and he in whom God dwells has a good lodger’. In this sermon, Eckhart asserts that the individual soul ‘may be moved directly by the Holy Spirit’, for ‘God gives the soul a gift which moves her to interior things’. This moving of the soul is part of a divine process: ‘in eternity each soul is part of the eternal present, where the divine Father is begetting his one-begotten Son’.

A similar theme of sudden and unexplained yearning is explored in Broch’s ‘Zodiac’ series of short stories. For example, in the tale titled ‘The Prodigal Son’, the protagonist Andreas realises that his visit, seeking lodgings, to a house occupied by a mother, her daughter and their servant, is significant, but does not know why. He feels drawn to the house, ‘as demanded by his predetermined program’, to discover that the three women miss the arbitrating presence of the deceased father, who was a judge. Clarification of Andreas’ drive to seek lodgings there is offered by Hildegard’s observation that her mother ‘is always looking for a lodger, but in reality is looking for a son-in-law’. Andreas’ presence moves Hildegard to consider the enormity of her self-set task of ‘preserving peace in the household’, whilst enabling him to gain insight into the need to accept the vulnerability of human existence, and to participate in something beyond earthly existence by taking some form of risk. His consciousness is reflected in the elements. At his moment of insight he is described as being ‘in the breath of life’, a state which may be compared to Virgil’s expansion into his ‘etheric’ body. Broch writes:
A. had again clasped the iron balustrade; naked and breathing under his clothes, he leaned out into the rain, which was now falling thicker and faster; the treetops across the way whished softly. Out there earth was breathing; earth was breathing behind the house, the breaths of living things rose up and merged over the roof of the house, in which human beings were sheltered. Here in the breath of life, they hovered with their manifold bones, joints and veins, lifted high above the earth. To be born of a mother, to be born into shelter, to leave the shelter of the house and find one’s way back to it: the body’s fear of ceasing to be a child, of congealing in unlife, no longer sheltered, but only sheltering, the fear of all women in their naked bodies under their clothes.540

The story ‘Der Meerespiegel’ also relates the sense of longing experienced by a stranger, as he approaches a house by the sea.541 Drawn to the security of the household, he is tempted to stay. The domestic discord that he uncovers, however, leads him to realise that his yearning is for the infinite, represented by the sea, and beyond.

Within Virgil’s soul, the ‘lodger’ is that which has given rise to his raised consciousness, to his concern with language, and ethics. It comprises those forces which have affected the course of his life, giving rise eventually to the birth of a new self and new level of being. Virgil is undergoing a mystical transformation of ‘one into all’,542 witnessing a revelation of the divine spark,

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540 Ibid, pp. 76-77. KW5 82. He writes:

541 KW6 196-205. The title may be translated as ‘Sea Level’. The story is not published in English. See also E.W. Herd (1966) Hermann Broch: Short Stories, pp. 42-43.

542 The process corresponds to Eckhart’s ‘breakthrough into the divine,’ mentioned earlier. See P.S. Macdonald, History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit from Homer to Hume, p. 67. Also See Aristotle, ‘Metaphysics,’ Book Lambda.
which Aristotle believed to be eternal, as the ‘nous’ becomes aware of itself. His experience corresponds to Eckhart’s ‘breakthrough into the divine’, the discovery of the ‘spark in the ground of the soul’,\textsuperscript{543} and also to the Kabbalistic ‘Ein Sof’, the point at which distinction between subject and object ends. The transformation may also be understood as being none other than his own response to the Logos: an acknowledgement of that which has driven him onward.

Virgil’s self-awareness is reflected in the elements, so that ‘everything may be seen and heard in simultaneous depth’. Broch writes:

\begin{quote}
Drawn hither by the summons of the word, the brooks and streams begin to trickle, the surf with a soft booming struck the shore, the seas swelled steel-blue and light, ruffled by the nethermost fires of the south, and everything could be seen and heard in simultaneous depth. (DV 480)\textsuperscript{220}
\end{quote}

The use of the elements here is not dissimilar to that employed in the opening lines of the novel. The reader is directed back to Virgil’s earthly existence, as well as remaining in his current consciousness, being able to see, in common with the protagonist, the ‘immensity of the here and now’. A state of simultaneity is conveyed, in which it is possible to participate not only in past and future, but also in the ‘stream of creation, in which the eternal rests, the first image, the vision of visions’. (DV 480-81)\textsuperscript{221} Virgil realises that humanity’s concern with the Logos is closely connected to human imagination and expression.

Virgil is so transformed, that his innate awareness of the Logos has developed from the former ability to detect an ‘endless murmuring’, to recognising the sound as the ‘pure word’, which is ‘significant beyond every comprehension’. (DV 481)\textsuperscript{222} He realises that it emanates from his own soul. His transformation is not yet complete, however. Having penetrated the Ether, he finds the roar of the word so overpowering that he is ‘caught up, enveloped and penetrated by it’. (DV 481)\textsuperscript{223} His newly reconfigured soul may

\textsuperscript{543} References to the ‘Fünklein im Seelengrunde’ (‘divine spark of the ground of the soul’) are to be found in Broch’s fiction: KW1 532; 559; 587; 600; 715. KW3 3; 34. KW5 328; Broch’s essays: KW10/1 175. KW9/1 61; 113. KW10/1 173. KW12 172; Broch’s correspondence: KW13/1 307. See L.W. Beck, \textit{Early German Philosophy: Kant and his Predecessors}, pp. 52-53. G. Scholem, \textit{Kabbalah}, p. 130.
be understood to be undergoing birth into physical, earthly existence, brought
about by the breaking forth of the Logos from the Ether, and ‘the mingling of
light with the darkness’.

Nothing could withstand it, the universe disappearing before the word, dissolved and
acquitted in the word, whilst still being contained and preserved in it, destroyed and
created forever, because nothing had been lost, nothing could be lost, because end
was joined to beginning, being born and giving birth over and over again. (DV 481)²²⁴

Thus Virgil re-enters the world somewhat changed, to begin time afresh.
Despite his discovery of intuitive powers, the Logos remains in the elements,
beyond the grasp of his new self:

²²⁰ KW4 452. Broch writes:
Solcherart von des Wortes Anrufung herbeigezogen, begannen die Bäche und Flüsse
zu rieseln, mild brausend schlug die Brandung an den Strand, fluteten die Meere,
stahlblau und leicht, bewegt von den untersten Feuern des Südens, und alles war in
Gleichzeitigkeitsiede auf einmal gesehen.

²²¹ KW4 453.
²²² Ibid. ²²³ KW4 453-454. ²²⁴
²²⁵

although [...] the more he penetrated into the flooding sound and was penetrated by
it, the more unattainable, the greater, the graver and more elusive became the word,
a floating sea, a floating fir, sea-heavy, sea-light, notwithstanding, it was still the word:
he could not hold fast to it and he might not hold fast to it; incomprehensible and
unutterable for him: it was the word beyond speech. (DV 481)²²⁵

Broch surely alludes here to the first lines of the Gospel of John, ‘In the
beginning was the Word, and the Word was God’.²²⁶ Having reached into the
divine intellect, by participating in the ‘nous’, Virgil now witnesses the merging
of the elements, beyond which lies the absolute idea, or Logos. The self that
seems to have been reduced to nothing gives rise to a whole new reality, a
new aesthetic. The inference is that, for Broch, the human spirit is enduring. It
can achieve unity with the Logos, so that it might be transformed. This enduring
dimension of the soul may be understood to be the Ousia,²²⁷ which, according
to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks, is the substance that persists throughout
change, and constitutes the final stage in Aristotle’s principle of individuation.
The process of transformation is ongoing, ‘being born and giving birth over and
over again’, (DV 481)²²⁸ an idea that corresponds to Eckhart’s assertion that
God must give birth to himself in us fully and at all times, this being simply his
nature.²²⁹ As Davies²³⁰ observes,
'for Eckhart, breakthrough to God is a breakthrough in knowledge. Lower

Broch refers to the opening sentence of the Gospel of John in his 1934 essay, ‘Zeit and Zeitgeist’ (‘The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age’). He conflates the first sentence of John with Genesis 1, 2. He writes: 'In the beginning was the Word … and the Spirit of God moved upon the surface of the waters'. ('Am Anfang war das Wort … und der Geist Gottes schwebte über den Gewässern.') See H. Broch (2003) Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch, p. 50. KW9/2 186. 'Zeit und Zeitgeist' (1934).

In the same essay, Broch states: 'The word is nothing without the spirit, which can live nowhere else but in the word: whoever kills the spirit, kills the word, and whoever desecrates the word, desecrates the spirit; the two are bound inseparably'. See H. Broch (2003) Geist and Zeitgeist: Six Essays by Hermann Broch, p. 42. KW9/2 178. The German text states: Nichts ist das Wort ohne den Geist, und kein anderes Lebensfeld als das Wort ist für den Geist vorhanden. Wer den Geist tötet, tötet das Wort, und wer das Wort schändet, schändet den Geist: untrennbar sind sie einander verbunden.


forms of knowledge serve to obscure God from the soul, and the soul from its own transcendent essence'. However, when we use language relating to God, 'it gets in the way by making an object of him, clothing him in concepts and images which are inappropriate to his uncreated nature'.

Our understanding of the text may be further deepened by examining these final statements of the novel from the point of view of Derrida’s negative theology, as set out in his essay, ‘How to Avoid Speaking: Denials’. Here, Derrida argues that if it is necessary to speak of God at all, positive attributes or predicates must not be used; one must speak apophatically, as in the work of Eckhart. He points to the enigma of Heidegger’s Being and

544 Ibid, p. xxxv.
Time, asserting that the author ‘said, wrote and allowed to be written exactly what he said he wanted to avoid, namely a theology that is opened, dominated, and invaded by the word being’.546

In a fashion similar to that observed by Derrida, Broch employs a form of ‘sous rature’ (a technique employing a word or expression, which the author recognises as being inadequate, yet necessary), which renders the final words of the novel as being paradoxical. He does not describe Virgil’s experience of the divine, but depicts his inability to grasp ‘the word’. On the one hand Virgil seems to reach the Logos, yet on the other the divine remains out of reach, unattainable. The apophatic nature of Broch’s use of language suggests that Virgil has reached not God, but God under erasure. The elusive nature of ‘the word’ in his portrayal strengthens, rather than diminishes, the idea that the Logos is present.

Acknowledgement of the Logos, the divine spark, the moment of great lucidity in an individual, forms the foundation for Broch’s new reality, based on ethics. He writes:

The absolute is irrevocably embedded in the self, and though man may be ever so lonely and forsaken and naked, though he may sink ever so deeply into indifference, indifference to himself and to his fellow man, thus incurring guilt, there remains – as long as he is capable of saying “I” – a spark of the absolute within him, ready to be fanned into a flame, so that even on Robinson Crusoe’s island he may be reunited with his self and his neighbour’s self. And thus, through the kindling and rekindling of the flame, purification occurs. A work of art – not every work of art, but every work of art that approaches totality, though it need not be a Faust – has the power to fan the flame.547

By witnessing the revelation of the ‘divine spark’ within his soul, Virgil gains a momentary glimpse of the Logos and reaches the point of self-discovery, of self consciousness.


b. Further remarks upon how Virgil is changed in the ‘Ether’ chapter, and how the reader might be affected by the text

In the course of this study, a range of philosophical ideas have been used to illuminate Virgil’s transformation. At this stage, it is appropriate to comment a little further by comparing his transformation with some other concepts of soul, particularly from the ancient world, and to consider how the reader may be affected by the experience.

As indicated above, the transformation of Virgil’s self may be related to the thought of the Neoplatonic thinker Plotinus. The latter believed that in the heavens souls have tenuous bodies called vehicles, which, being purer than earthly bodies because they do not conceal thoughts, enable souls to
understand each other. He maintained that we are in possession of multiple selves, having three or more powers of soul within us. Whenever we act, we are one of the selves, acting in a ‘fluctuating spotlight of consciousness’.\textsuperscript{548} There may be an indefinite number of higher parts of the self and we should always follow the next highest guardian spirit, as far as rational reasoning is concerned, but if one can see oneself as intellect, then one sees oneself not as human but as other.\textsuperscript{549} That is to say, we gain brief recognition that part of human existence is engaged outside of time.\textsuperscript{550} Virgil, after death, is transformed into a new and higher self, a being of which he gained a glimpse shortly before leaving earthly life. As in Plotinus’ philosophy, his previous earthly achievements remain in his consciousness, contributing to his individuality, as forces, or powers acting within his soul, whilst also having access to the world-soul.

There are also similarities between the ideas put forth by Broch and an ancient stream of thought known in German as the ‘Logoslehre’,\textsuperscript{551} which closely associated the Logos with human consciousness. The ‘Logoslehre’ extended from the time of Heraclitus through the thought of the Stoics and Judaism into the ideas of the early Christian thinker and the Platonist Origen, whose work was familiar to Broch.\textsuperscript{552} As the tradition developed, the Logos gradually became linked not only with consciousness, but also with the human facility to speak and use language. For example, in the time of the Stoics, human language was differentiated from the sounds made by animals, as being an expression of the Logos. Of particular relevance to Broch’s Virgil is

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\textsuperscript{549} Plotinus Id.5.3 [49] 4 (8-13) Plotinus’ thought may be compared here with Thomas Aquinas’ idea that the ‘human soul can achieve perfection through successive generation of humans as a species’. See P.S. Macdonald, \textit{History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit from Homer to Hume}, p. 188.


\textsuperscript{551} W. Kelber (1958) \textit{Die Logoslehre von Heraclit bis Origenes}. Stuttgart: Verlag Urachhaus. The term ‘Logoslehre’ might be translated as ‘Logos teaching,’ or ‘Logos philosophy,’ but as I have been unable to find an equivalent account in English translation, I have adhered to the German name.

\textsuperscript{552} Heraclitus (c.535-475 B.C). Origen (183/4-253/4 A.D.), one of the first Christian writers to be raised in Christendom, established the comparison of texts on a Christian basis. See KWX/1 34-44, here, 45, note 1 (‘Pamphlet gegen die Hochschätzung des Menschen’ ca. 1932). See Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality.
the idea put forth by Greek-Jewish thinker Philo, that the process of articulating thoughts, which stem from the Logos, places the speaker in a role of responsibility regarding the meaning of the language used. The speaker is a translator of the Logos, and their utterances, although they adopt new form, must convey the original meaning, rather than adhere to literal translation. The process therefore makes demands upon the conscience of the speaker. A parallel may be seen here, in Virgil’s fear that his poetry has not been dedicated fully to the cause of true art, and has subscribed instead to sham art, by glorifying the Roman Empire. In the course of his transformation, Virgil is concerned with language, becoming increasingly aware of its significance, until he is faced with the Logos, which underlies all human language.

Comparison may be drawn between Virgil’s experience at the very end of the novel and the thought of Heraclitus, who was the first of the PreSocratics to link consciousness of thought with the Logos. Heraclitus perceived the Logos in humanity as being eternal, the seed of further human development, and the source of all thought. Believed to be an initiate of the Ephesian mysteries, he drew only upon what he could derive from his own being, and concluded that all knowledge lies within the individual, and can only be uncovered, rather than learned. Virgil’s experience is similar. When he encounters the Logos, he finds that although the ‘universe is disappearing before the word’, it is ‘contained and preserved in it, destroyed and recreated forever’: he finds that the means of reaching the Logos lies within his own being. It becomes apparent that, in the course of the text, he has gradually penetrated his soul, until he has reached the Logos. At this

553 W. Kelber, *Die Logoslehre von Heraclit bis Origenes*, p. 186.
554 For example, when Virgil encounters the trio in the ‘Fire’ chapter, the reader is informed that ‘this was a language that was no longer a bridge between people’. DV 115; KW4 109. Later in the same section, he realises that ‘all language stems from the most unknown god’. DV 132; KW4 126. At the end of the ‘Fire’ chapter, when he learns that ‘his time has come’, he hears the ‘language within language, in all its earthly simplicity’. DV 230; KW4 218.
555 Heraclitus writes ‘this Logos, which is eternal’. ‘Dieser Logos, der ewig ist.’ See W. Kelber, *Die Logoslehre von Heraclit bis Origenes*, p. 21. Kelber summarises Heraclitus philosophy, asserting that Heraclitus’s overriding idea was that, in mankind, the Logos is the core of further development of human existence. Kelber writes, ‘Der Logos im Menschen als
stage, he realises that not only is the Logos perpetual, but that it has always been present. Broch writes:

because nothing had been lost, because end was joined to beginning, being born and giving birth again and again: the word hovered over the universe, over the nothing, floating beyond the expressible as well as the inexpressible. (DV 481)\textsuperscript{244}

Origen’s contribution to the ‘Logoslehre’, which builds upon Heraclitus’ philosophy, is pertinent to Virgil’s transformation at this point. In particular, his concept of the ‘Hegemonikon’, an idea which had occurred previously in the thought of the Stoics and Clemens of Alexandria, is of interest. A Greek term, ‘Hegemonikon’ can be translated as the ‘principle of leading’ (‘Führungsprinzip’) and, for Origen, it indicates a power, by which the stirrings of the soul are experienced. It points towards, but is not identical with, that which would now be referred to as the ‘I’, or ‘self’, and resides in the human heart, housing the human being’s highest powers of perception.\textsuperscript{245} It constitutes the most inaccessible part of a human being, believed to contain that part of his or her being, which no longer belongs to the earthly world, though its awareness of connection to the Logos has faded.\textsuperscript{246} Origen attempts to illuminate the process, by which the ‘Hegemonikon’, or ‘I’, gradually finds its way towards self-consciousness.\textsuperscript{247}

Similarity may be found between Origen’s idea of the Hegemonikon, as


\textsuperscript{243} Ibid, p. 23. Heraclitus states that the source of his knowledge was ‘himself’. ‘Ich durchforstte mich selbst’.
See also pp. 16-18, here, p. 18. Kelber writes, ‘In einem besteht die Weisheit, das erkennbare Vernunftprinzip zu erfassen, das Alles mit Allem durchwaltet’.

\textsuperscript{244} KW4 454.

\textsuperscript{245} W. Kelber, \textit{Die Logoslehre von Heraclit bis Origenes} p. 242.

According to Kelber, Origen develops the Stoic belief that the Hegemonikon resides in the human heart.
being ‘stirrings of the soul’, and Virgil’s discovery of different aspects of his being, in the final chapter. For example, that part of his being which relates to the sun and stars, and that which remains after passing through the Ether, might be considered to constitute his ‘Hegemonikon’.

The ‘Hegemonikon’ not only refers to an inaccessible part of the body. For Origen, it is also concerned with humanity’s ability to participate in the ‘World Spirit’ or ‘Nous’, which might be described as the breakthrough of a ‘higher self’ into the ‘self’. Origen speaks of three ways in which the ‘Hegemonikon’ can bring the Logos and the spiritual world into contact. The first is through involuntary picture perception as might appear in a dream. The second is by the power of thought leading to super-sensory perception, and the third is unmediated super-sensible perception and transfer to the spiritual world.

In the case of Broch’s Virgil, the appearance of Lysanias may be interpreted as an example of involuntary picture perception, which leads the protagonist towards the spiritual world and the Logos, whilst illuminating his ethical failure with regard to the masses. (It should be remembered that Broch himself encountered the figure of Lysanias, whilst in a trance.) The trio of figures appearing in the ‘Fire’ section serve the same purpose. The power of thought brought about by their appearance, dedicated to how he might redeem himself by destroying his work, may have assisted Virgil in finding the Logos. His attempts to act ethically, in writing his will, and in trying to persuade Augustus to rule the empire on a humane basis, may result from the effect of the spiritual world upon him, and assist him on his journey towards the divine. Of course, the reader cannot know how successful Virgil is in his endeavours, before physical death. It is clear, however, that he makes amends, and tries to

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556 Ibid, p. 244. ‘Hegemonikon’ is used synonymously by Origen with the term ‘Dianoëtikon’. In Neoplatonic times, ‘Dianoëtikon’ was used to refer to the ability of man to participate in the ‘World Spirit’, or ‘Nous’.
558 KW13/3 538. Letter from Broch to Karl August Horst, dated 11 April 1951.
convey the need for the ethical cause to others. In the final chapter, Virgil is seen to transfer to the spiritual world, participating in what appears to be unmediated super-sensible perception, leading to the breakthrough and subsequent birth of a new self. He may therefore be understood to participate in the already mentioned eternal cosmic mind, the ‘World Spirit’, or ‘Nous’,\(^{559}\) and in this respect, the text might be described as having initiatory qualities.

As suggested in our discussion of the narrative technique, the reader is not left untouched by the text, for in the ‘Ether’ chapter, he or she is faced with the possibility of human existence beyond death. Whilst similarities may be found between aspects of Virgil’s transformation and a range of philosophical ideas, there is no direct correspondence: Broch presents a unique death experience, a new concept of individuality, in which the self seems to retain consciousness beyond physical death.\(^{560}\) It is unlikely that comprehension can be drawn from experience alone: apart from the printed text, which provides the reading stimulus, there is nothing in the physical world that might assist the reader in dealing with the experience prepared by Broch. The reader must resort to use of the imagination in order to overcome the ‘aporia’ that is presented. Reading of the Virgil may be likened to the Hegelian process of working through two opposing concepts, to arrive at a synthesis of previous and new experience, which constitutes an advance into a new reality. Engagement with the events depicted in the ‘Ether’ section may therefore lead beyond measurable time and space, into a new experience that belongs in the realm of the imagination. The reader may be drawn into the text to the extent that he or she contributes to the very process that they are undergoing.

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\(^{559}\) Aristotle, ‘On the Soul’ (DA 413b24) cited in P.S. Macdonald, *History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit from Homer to Hume*, p. 66. Aristotle seems to regard the ‘Nous’ as an inseparable type of soul, an idea which emerged in Hegel’s thought as the World Spirit. See discussion earlier in this chapter.

\(^{560}\) As far as I am aware, Broch does not state that humans undergo repeated incarnations. In the Virgil novel, however, as Virgil achieves a state of simultaneity, the narrative conveys an awareness of not having received permission to turn around, or to look back:

> All of them simultaneously visible to the eye, although no permission had been given to turn around, or to look back, all of the stars beheld and known, inexpressible known, star-face after star-face, name after name, in spite of having long since passed with their names into the region of oblivion. (DV 453) (KW4 427)

It might be inferred from the text that Virgil is reaching back to the very beginning of time, and is aware that he will receive the instruction to turn around, because it has happened previously.
reader might therefore be said to be led into the ‘Nous’, being required to draw upon personal reserves to complete the process of reading. By demanding reflection upon ideas concerning the soul, mind and the divine world, the experience of reading is not only individualised, but also *individualising*, in that it contributes to the reader’s own individuality.

Of further relevance to Virgil’s transformation, is the idea that the ‘Hegemonikon’ is closely concerned with the ‘freedom of will’. For Origen, freedom of judgement (‘Freiheit des Urteils’) equates to autonomy (‘Selbstvollmacht’), or freedom of will (‘Freiheit des Willens’). He believes that because human beings have the ability to admire their participation in the law of nature, the power of their thinking and freedom of judgment, they are equipped to recognise the Logos and make decisions accordingly. He asserts that all beings have free will, and have laid down the reasons for their current fate, in past eons. It follows, for Origen, that through free will, human beings may be raised to full consciousness as if they were divine beings, so that the Logos may be born therein. A human being’s consciousness is therefore awakened by his or her recognition of the Logos. The focus upon consciousness, and purification of the self in the *Virgil*, suggests that Broch should not only be placed amongst thinkers who pursued the idea of knowing the Logos by purifying the self (such as Eckhart, Angelius Silesius, and Johannes Tauler), in the stream of thought known as ‘Logos Mysticism’, but, as suggested earlier, he also may be seen as belonging within the Hermetic tradition.

As we have seen, the account of Virgil’s transformation, set within the framework of Natural Philosophy, evokes ideas reaching back into the most ancient beliefs. Through the narrative technique, these ideas are lifted into the present, into an ‘eternal now’. As Broch describes in a selfcommentary,

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562 Ibid, p. 252.
563 Ibid. 256
Ibid, p. 265.
257 Broch’s thought is similar here to Simmel’s idea of the ‘eternal present’. See D. Frisby (1985) *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin*, pp. 38ff.
Virgil is led again from reality back into the world of imagination, into eternity.\textsuperscript{564}
He is led to a knowledge that arises from the ‘deepest recesses of the self, from the depths of a self that stemmed from beyond the sphere of the senses’.
(DV 444)\textsuperscript{565}

It would be difficult to dispute that Virgil’s transformation in the final chapter of the novel presents an unusual experience for the reader. Broch made a bold literary move by embracing the events beyond the earthly life of an individual, tackling a topic barely discussed in literature hitherto, but one which, inevitably, concerns all of humanity. As already indicated, the setting of this section of the text in the Ether is significant, for this element lies outside of earthly and sensory experience, and adopts transitory form: the Ether lends itself to the human imagination. The strangeness of the setting demands that the reader makes a considerable contribution to the act of reading, through engagement of the imagination, thereby participating in the transformation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Broch recognised that what is regarded as the ‘progress’ of humanity is always an advance towards a new reality, and it was his intention to portray this process in the Virgil novel.\textsuperscript{566} The potential involvement of the reader in the metamorphosis may be seen as the possible realisation of Broch’s aim of trying to awaken a new reality and sense of morality in the reader.\textsuperscript{567} In his correspondence he refers to a ‘genuine

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[564]{KW4 469. See discussion of unity of subject and object in Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality.}
\footnotetext[565]{KW4 418.}
\footnotetext[566]{KW13/3 144-146 Letter from Broch to Waldo Frank, dated 20 June 1947. Broch aimed ‘to combine the artist’s task of presenting a second reality with the moral and political task of introducing a new reality’, whilst recognising that, ‘the new man will not live on the level of a Picasso or a Kafka, (at least while his lungs need to breath air, and his stomach need food to eat), but his level of living will lie at a higher level, so that a natural vision comes to him’.
\footnotetext[567]{KW13/3 537. Letter from Broch to Karl Horst, 11 April 1951.}
\end{footnotes}
phenomenon of being’, which becomes apparent and produces further meaning, when he attempts to capture that which lies beyond rational treatment.

Thus Broch conveys his awareness of the transformational qualities of art. He may be understood to have fulfilled his Neo-Kantian aim\textsuperscript{262} of achieving, ‘a new transcendental consciousness, a very necessary purification of the Kantian view’.\textsuperscript{263}

Within Broch’s new reality lies the idea that the individual has the power to make his or her own judgement, rather than depend upon application of the Kantian categorical imperative. (The reader may be brought to realise that there are moral consequences to the discovery of each new reality). However, an individual, who is able to access the ‘Nous’, may be considered to be free from restrictions by outside forces. One, who has freedom of will, is free to exercise judgement, and may develop ‘Fingerspitzengefühl’, the intuitive capacity to act judiciously, which enables life to be lived as a living work of art. As Virgil discovers:

Not his eyes, only his fingertips were reading, they read without letters or words a wordless speech, they read the unspeakable poem behind the poem of words, and what they read consisted no longer of lines, but of an endless immense space stretching out on all sides to infinity, a space in which the sentences did not follow one another in order, but covered each other in infinite crossings and were no longer sentences, but were rather a dome of the inexpressible, the dome of life, the creation’s dome of the world, planned for in time unknown: he was deciphering the inexpressible, deciphering the undepictable landscapes and inexplicable occurrences, the uncreated world of fate in which the created world was embedded as if by accident. (DV 189-90)\textsuperscript{264}

As a novel, the \textit{Virgil} text thus belongs to a very particular genre. It subjects the reader to an experience in which orientation is difficult to find. It has affinities with texts such as \textit{The Tibetan Book of the Dead}\textsuperscript{265} and ancient Egyptian funerary texts, in that it explores the nature of the Afterlife, but it approaches the topic through modern narrative technique and ideas developed through Western philosophy. It presents a new literary

\textsuperscript{262}See also discussion in Chapter 13: Some concluding remarks about Broch’s idea of individuality and evaluation of his overall achievement in the \textit{Virgil} work.
Broch’s philosophical position as a Neo-Kantian thinker has already been discussed. See Chapter 3: Philosophical Influences upon Broch’s thought: Nietzsche, Simmel, Weber and Scheler. 263

See KW13/3 33. Letter from Broch to Gustav Bergman, dated 5 November 1945, in which Broch, discussing solipsism, asserts: ‘es geht um eine Neueintroduktion des transzendentalen Bewußtseins . eine sehr Notwendige Purifizierung der Kantschen Sicht’. Also KW13/3 39. Letter from Broch to Carl Seelig, 2 December 1945, in which he asserts that friendship emerges from an act of sympathy. He writes:

Freundschaft entsteht ja durch jenen unenklärlichen Sympathie-Akt, kraft welchem man plötzlich erkennt, was dem anderen im Innersten notwendig ist, und aus eben dieser Notwendigkeit besteht der Charakter, möge er gut oder schlecht sein.

264 KW4 181.


experience, for individual contemplation, in which the elements are combined in a process of purging to give a glimpse into the future. It assists the engaged reader to attain perception of death, through, in Broch’s words, ‘Zerknirschung und Selbstauslöschung’ (‘remorse and self annihilation’).266

As the text oscillates between Broch’s era and that of the historical Virgil, the reader takes the role of an ‘ideal observer’,267 being forced to contemplate aesthetic values from both periods, and decide where their own opinion lies. By engaging with the text, the reader is invited to undergo spiritual illumination, through which new possibilities within the self may be revealed, and recognition of the part which the self is called to play in the divine scheme.268

It is the process of engagement and reflection that elevates the individual. According to Broch’s concept of individuality, it is that part of the soul termed the ‘self’, which actively leads the individual through experiences which prepare and reinforce the soul for the next stage of its existence, so that nothing is undergone in vain.269 The determination of the ‘self’ corresponds to the ‘self-will’, or ‘individuality’ of the individual, understanding of which may be gained through the act of conscious reflection upon the spiritual dimension of that individual. For Broch, ‘self-will’, or ‘individuality’ seems to be closely connected to the Logos, access to which is made through the ‘etheric body’, by means of the ‘pneuma’ and the voice. Thus it


At the side of the truly religious man, as also at that of the creator, there is always death, exhorting him to fill his life with ultimately attainable significance, in order that it may not have been lived in vain. If there exists a justification of literature, or a supra-temporality of artistic creation, it is to be found in a totality of cognition such as this. For the totality of world comprehension as striven for by the work of art, in Goethe’s sense at least, concentrates all knowledge, of humanity’s endless evolution into one simultaneous act of cognition: eternity must be comprised in a single existence, in the totality of a single work of art, and the nearer the work of art comes to the frontiers of totality, the greater its possibility of survival.

In this highest sense, the artist creates not only for the diversion and instruction of his public, but purely and simply for the cultivation of his own existence. This is culture as Goethe understood it, in the form in which he opposed it to philosophy and the sciences; the hard, severe task of cognition which he never abandoned throughout his entire life, and which impelled him to voracious absorption of all the phenomena of life in order that, in the true sense of the word, he might transform them.

appears that a glimpse of the Logos might be revealed through pursuit of the Logos.

This process can be observed in the Virgil work. In the course of the text, Virgil is brought to understand the relationship between his self-will and his voice. Through engagement with the language, the reader is led through what amounts to a death experience, and brought to contemplate not only Virgil’s existence beyond earthly life, but also his or her own. The reader is directed towards the creation of a new reality based on ethics, which as indicated at the end of the text, will emerge through language. The new reality constitutes a new era: in Hegelian terms, it is the age of the spirit. Whilst the new era might be interpreted by some as representing a post-Christian age, in my view it is a continuation and product of Christianity. The task of Virgil’s new earthly existence, and that of the engaged reader, must be to continue to pursue and interpret the Logos, using the uniquely human powers of intellect and imagination.
13. Some concluding remarks about Broch’s idea of individuality, and his overall achievement in the *Virgil* novel

I now wish to consider ideas pertaining to Broch’s concept of individuality, which have arisen in our textual analysis of the *Virgil*, in conjunction with what was learned earlier from his theoretical writing, and to draw further comparison with the work of Gerhardt and Ricoeur. This refinement of our understanding of Broch’s thought will contribute to our appraisal of his overall achievement in the *Virgil* work, and also to consideration of how his view of individuality might relate in practice to his ideas regarding mass culture.

We saw earlier that Broch’s theoretical writing engages with a wide range of ideas linked to the theme of the individual and individuality. It was shown that, in common with Gerhardt and Ricoeur, he finds the idea of the ‘ego’ or self to be important, and the presence of ‘I’-consciousness to be necessary for the development of individuality.\(^{568}\) He conceives that there are three aspects to the ego. Through interaction with the outside world, the egonucleus, or pure ‘I’ responds to stimuli received from the physical and psychological aspects of the ego and moves towards an increasingly ethical outlook.\(^{569}\)

As the textual analysis has shown, the activity of the ego is manifested in Virgil’s changing attitude towards himself as an artist. His transformation is closely linked to his perception of time, for his suspicion that he has not acted ethically arises only when he realises that he is close to death, and therefore the end of time. His realisation brings about a change in consciousness, which in turn, enables other aspects of his psyche, such as his sensitivity towards the presence of the elements, and the presence of Lysanias, to come into play. This may be understood as the response of the pure ‘I’ to stimuli received from

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\(^{568}\) Reference to the hypothesis of the existence of a ‘self’ is also to be found in Broch’s correspondence and the *Sleepwalkers* trilogy. See for example, KW13/3 34; KW13/2 440; KW13/2 358. See also H. Broch (1996) *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 560. KW1 619.

\(^{569}\) See Chapter 5: Some observations upon Broch’s engagement with ideas about the individual and individuality. The changes in Virgil’s consciousness also correspond to the idea of ego expansion and reduction set out in the *Massenwahntheorie*. 
both physical and psychological aspects of his ego. Virgil reaches back into memory, into myth, to bring aspects of his being, which have been present, but occluded, to the fore. His reflection upon the poetry of Homer, coupled with reference to the work of his contemporary Ovid, draws attention to the task of the artist, especially the poet, not only in ancient times, but also in late modernity. He ‘looks back in loneliness’, and through the process of anamnesis he undergoes experiences, which lead to further transformation of the self. Having responded to the presence of Lysanias, he is led deep into the realm of spirituality, to the very ‘edge of being’ (DV 219), and continues beyond into the sphere of Platonic forms, which hitherto has constituted the ‘non-I’. His experiences there are then drawn into the ‘pure I’ and affect his consciousness. Consequently, he is aware of the presence of the elements and Lysanias during his discussion with Augustus, and realises that his judgement may have some cosmological influence. Thus, through contemplation of and engagement with the ‘non-I’, the ‘ego-nucleus’ may gradually be transformed.

The complex narrative voice, with its varying perspectives, enables the protagonist to reflect upon previous thought, whilst allowing the opinions of other characters to come into play. Broch thus reveals the self, or ego, observing and commenting upon itself. This may be seen in Virgil’s initial philosophical experience, when he suspects that he has subscribed to aesthetics, rather than ethics. Of importance here is that he responds to his own feelings about the situation: he resolves to destroy the physical evidence of his artistic activity, the *Aeneid*. As his transformation continues, it becomes apparent that the metamorphosis is being drawn from the powers of his own being, and directing him away from the physical realm. He is responding to a whole series of voices within himself: the voice of how he perceives Augustus to think about him; the comments of the mass upon their poet; the voice of the historical Virgil; the voice of Broch; the voice of Broch pretending to be Virgil. Thus it may be seen that, for Broch, the ego does not operate mechanically, but responds to a range of influences through the use of the *imagination*. This

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is in agreement with Gerhardt’s view that individuality may be shaped by consideration of the perspectives of others upon one’s being.\textsuperscript{571}

It seems that, for Broch, the human voice is a means by which each person may distinguish his or her existence, and therefore their individuality. In the Virgil work, he draws attention to the voice as being the means of expressing (and commenting upon), one’s ethical outlook through art, as opposed to the means of mere communication. The text indicates that the voice gives expression to part of the ego which is lasting in some way. It reaches back to the beginning of time, but also extends into the future. As Virgil is informed by Lysanias (who reaches back to the protagonist’s earliest memories, but also leads him into the future), ‘his path is that of poetry, [but] his goal is beyond poetry’. (DV 60)\textsuperscript{572}

The idea of the voice being a means of expressing individuality returns us to the work of Ricoeur, who attaches importance to the construction of narrative identity. In his view, human beings are able to create their own narrative identities, through which they may learn about themselves: the narrative self enables ‘fault lines’ in the human being to be reconciled. Such an identity is not fixed, but can only be changed to the extent that embodied existence will permit. Time and memory are important factors in the formation of identity, here. As we have seen, the process of looking back into memory causes Virgil to adjust his course of action.

Ricoeur’s theory also contains a moral dimension, for the narrative self is judged according to its ethical responsiveness to others. He asserts that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The person, understood as a character in a story, is not an entity that is distinct from his or her “experiences.” Quite the opposite, the person shares the condition of dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted. The narrative constructs the identity of the character.}\textsuperscript{573}
\end{quote}

Thus, for Ricoeur, human beings can only attain self-knowledge through their relation to the world and interaction with others in the world.

This seems also to be the case for Broch. The textual analysis has shown the importance that he attaches to relationships with others, especially

\textsuperscript{571} V. Gerhardt (1999) \textit{Selbstbestimmung: Das Prinzip der Individualität}, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{572} KW4 59.
through friendship. Virgil is brought to the realisation that he must engage with the masses, whilst the closeness of his friendship with Augustus is given particular attention. As discussed earlier, Broch’s model of friendship seems to be based upon that set out in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: the role of a friend is to provide that which the befriended person does not have. Interaction with friends chosen upon this basis provides a form of opposition that enables the self to be developed and cultivated. Opposition, in various forms, appears to foster individuality, for Broch. Virgil’s decision to give his artwork to Augustus may be seen as a gesture that is ‘ethically responsive’: he is aware of what is best overall for his friend, as well as his own personal desires. His relationship with Augustus may be regarded as a model, reciprocal, friendship, in which both parties regard the other with the same consideration as they give to themselves. They challenge one another, but the deep foundation to their relationship transcends gender, and provides the potential for the greatest achievement in both men, so that they might attain the state of ‘one soul in two bodies’.

Human awareness of death plays an important role in Broch’s concept of individuality. He believes that in late modernity our existential fear leads us to participate in culture, our sense of self being expanded (as may be seen in Virgil’s activity as an artist) or reduced accordingly. Gerhardt, similarly, asserts that awareness of the inevitability of death plays a role in our decision making, enabling us to order our own lives, and to define our individuality. He associates our awareness of death with its effect upon *life*, that is, with lifespan. In his view, as soon as you have had to make a decision about the future, you have already contributed to the limits of your being (Dasein). As self-aware human beings, we make demands upon ourselves in our

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574 See Chapter 11d: The state of being in the ‘Earth’ chapter.

> Die Erfahrung der Endlichkeit machen sie schnell genug von selbst: Sobald sie eine Entscheidung über ihre Zukunft fallen müssen, haben sie die Grenzen ihres Daseins schon mitgedacht.
attempts to overcome those limits and assert our individuality.\textsuperscript{578} The consequence of our actions is that we continually reproduce the tension between finite and infinite.\textsuperscript{579} In this way, the individual determines his or her own future.

Thus both Gerhardt and Broch recognise that awareness of death affects our judgements as self-conscious individuals, but it is here that difference may be discerned, and an exciting possibility is raised. Gerhardt’s concept of the ‘potentialisation of individuality’ seems to be linked to the possibilities that may be attained within a physical lifespan, whereas Broch indicates, in the \textit{Virgil} novel, that individuality includes a form of existence, which extends into the future, beyond earthly life. It is interesting to note here that Gerhardt’s view of individuality is based upon the reasoning power of the individual: he refers to ‘rational egoism’\textsuperscript{580} For Broch, however, it seems to be rooted in the imagination, a creative dimension that is linked to the essence of being, and ultimately to the cosmos.

The textual analysis suggests that for Broch, the self becomes aware of its own existence through the discovery of new realities. Virgil becomes aware of his ‘innate self’ at an early stage in his philosophical awakening. (DV 37)\textsuperscript{581} He then passes through a succession of experiences that result in the transformation of the self, and the discovery of a higher level of being. Whilst it may be seen that activity within the ego brings about change, there is something conveyed within the text, which suggests that this process is not merely mechanical. In my view, this is linked to the use of the classical elements in the text: Broch points towards phenomena that can be observed, but are not yet fully understood. This ‘phenomena of being’\textsuperscript{582} might be

\textsuperscript{578} Ibid, p. 450.
\textsuperscript{579} Ibid, p. 451.
\textsuperscript{580} Ibid, pp. 438-441. According to Gerhardt, the ‘rational egoist’ knows that he/she can only maintain him/herself under certain conditions,
\textsuperscript{581} KW4 36. Broch writes, ‘... niemals etwas anderes als selbst-erinnertes Eigen-Ich ist, erinnertes Eigen-Einst’.
\textsuperscript{582} KW13/3 537. Letter from Broch to Karl Horst, 11 April 1951.
understood to be the new human condition, Negative Universalism. Those affected by this new condition humaine are driven onwards towards new levels of morality, and ethics, by the response of the self to their new reality. This is an experience that Broch underwent himself, being ‘driven from the theory of knowledge and fiction to the mass psychology and from there to political theory’, a development which I believe was driven by his witnessing of the Nazi regime and later exile. He writes:

It is to do with a genuine phenomenon of being, admittedly not in the sense of Existentialism, much rather, at least moving towards – in the sense of Husserl. And when I take the trouble to capture that which is beyond rational treatment in a novel, it has still further meaning: each discovery of new reality must out of necessity also include moral consequences, for there is nothing isolated in this world; I succeed in awakening a presentiment of a new reality in the reader, so I also help them to gain a presentiment of a new morality, and that that is the most urgent global task today, I need not prove further. For the sake of this task, I have been driven from the theory of knowledge to the mass psychology and from there to political theory.

The whole experience may be likened to the idea of ‘worldmaking’, that is, that each person has the capacity to bring things about. Similarity may be found once again with Gerhardt’s view that each person defines their own individuality, but Broch also conveys the sense that something prerational and positive arises, as in Scheler’s concept of ‘Material Ethics’.

For Broch, therefore, individuality seems to be the product of the creative force within a human being, derived from awareness of the egonucleus, the ‘I’, which enables life to be lived in a progressively moral and ethical way. He points towards the existence of the human self, which may

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583 Ibid. Broch writes:

Es geht um echte Seins-Phänomene, zwar nicht im Sinn des Existentialismus, wohl aber – wenigstens annäherungsweise – im Sinn Husserls. Und wenn ich das, was sich der rationale Behandlung entzieht, in einer Art Roman zu fangen mich bemühe, so hat das noch einen weiteren Sinn: jede neue Realitätsaufdeckung muß notwendigerweise auch moralische Konsequenzen in sich schließen, denn es gibt nichts Isoliertes in dieser Welt; gelingt es mir also, im Leser eine neue Realitätsahnung zu erwecken, so helfe ich ihm auch, eine neue Moralitätsahnung zu gewinnen, und daß das die heute wohl dringlichste Weltaufgabe ist brauche ich nicht weiter zu beweisen. Um dieser Aufgabe willen bin ich von der Erkenntnistheorie zur Massenpsychologie und von ihr zur theoretischen Politik getrieben worden.


develop to the ‘I’. As it cannot be contained within the individual, but requires some form of expression, the development of the ‘I’ is closely connected to the human capacity for producing works of art. It is important to remember here that, for Broch, a work of art is not produced primarily for aesthetic effect, (‘for the realm of the aesthetic has simply become immoral’), but for the purpose of the artist working as an ethical craftsman. An artwork produced in this way should be regarded as ‘an instrument of itself’ rather than ‘some form of moral sermonising’. He writes:

a work of art functions – as is eminently shown by Faust – not as an instrument of religion, much less of moral sermonising, but as an instrument of itself, so to speak. For the totality of being that an art work is (by virtue of representing it), necessarily encompasses infinity and nothingness, and these two are the foundation of all conceptual knowledge, the foundation (denied to animals) of the most human of all human faculties: namely, the faculty of being able to say ‘I.’ Consequently both are fundamental to man, though they are beyond the scope of his knowledge, in part because though one can always think and even count toward infinity and nothingness, one can never reach them, regardless of how many steps of thought or enumeration one takes, because the ultimate foundations of existence (otherwise they would not be ultimate) lie in a second, logical sphere removed from it and accordingly cannot be grasped by the methods of the first sphere. Herein lies the absolute, unattainable in its remoteness, yet suddenly present in a work of art, immediately grasped, the miracle of the human as such, the beautiful, the first step towards the purification of the human soul.

For Broch, the development of ‘I’-consciousness is essential to the development of the individual as a creative being, and therefore for individuality. As he indicates in one of the infrequent references to the ego in the Virgil work, there is a close relationship between the ‘I’ and a work of art.

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586 KW13/3 35. Letter from Broch to Gustav Bergmann, dated 5 November 1945.
587 KW5 327-328.

hierbei funktioniert das Kunstwerk – und gerade der “Faust” zeigt dies – nicht als Instrument der Religiosität oder gar der moralischen Predigt, sondern sozusagen als Instrument seiner selbst. Denn in der Seins-Totalität, die das Kunstwerk ist (indem es sie darstellt), ist wesenhaft sowohl das Unendliche wie das Nichts miteingeschlossen; beides ist Voraussetzung des begrifflichen Erkennens, ist die (dem Tier verwehrte) Voraussetzung für die menschenhafteste aller menschlichen Fähigkeiten, nämlich Ich sagen zu können, und beides ist daher dem Menschen unverbrüchlich absolut, dennoch seinem Wissen entrückt, um so entrückter, als sich zwar sowohl zum Unendlichen wie zum Nichts stets hin-denken und sogar hinzählen läßt, aber keine noch so große Menge von Denk- oder Zählchritten je dorthin gelangt, weil letzte Voraussetzungen des Da-Seins (sonst wären sie keine letzten) in einer diesem entrückten zweiten logischen Sphäre wohnen, also mit den Mitteln der ersten nicht habhaft zu machen sind: das ist das Absolute, in seiner Entrücktheit unerreichbar und doch urplötzlich im Kunstwerk vorhanden, unmittelbar habhaft das Wunder der Menschhaftigkeit an sich, das Schöne, der erste Ansatz zur Läuterung der Menschenseele. 23 KW4 133. Broch writes:
Art summoned the soul to continuous self-mastery, compelling the soul to reveal level after level of her reality as, descending step by step, penetrating deeper and deeper through the inner thickets of her being, she gradually approached the unattainable darkness which she had always surmised and been conscious of, the darkness from which the ego emerged and to which it returned.

So that the soul, realizing the great equilibrium between the ego and the universe, might recover herself in the universe, perceiving in this self-recognition that the deepening of the ego was an increase of substance in the universe, in the world, especially in humanity. (DV 139) 23

Art (in all forms) therefore plays an ethical role in human existence. Overall, it may be understood that, for Broch, individuality is shaped by earthly activity, especially that of an artistic nature, but that the human soul is in some way a permanent part of the universe: it is part of totality.

**Overall achievement of the novel**

What, then, does Broch achieve overall, in *The Death of Virgil*? As stated earlier, much has been written about aspects of the work, but relatively little has been said about its overall achievement. Firstly, Broch’s focus upon the figure of Virgil, renowned poet and elevated citizen, enables the relationship between the individual and mass culture (and therefore the role of art) to be examined from the perspective of one mind. Building upon this, the unusual choice of the four elements as chapter titles establishes a framework, within which the effect of mass culture upon the individual may be explored.24 The elements enable a peculiar relationship between the Virgil and the concept of time to be created, for the structure of the work bridges historical time and the post-industrial age. They point towards the origins of Classical Natural Philosophy and a time when poetry, science and philosophy were not separate disciplines, but belonged only to the realm of the thinker. They also provide a striking contrast with Broch’s narrative method, a third-person interior monologue, which depicts modern consciousness: it assumes the ‘presence of a self, an ‘I’,25 and reveals the contradictory nature of the protagonist’s thought. This framework not only portrays the dialectical interaction between the individual and the mass, but also establishes a basis from which that relationship might be developed.

Similarity may be found here with the thought of Ricoeur, for whom narrative
damit die Seele, gewahr des großen Gleichgewichts zwischen dem Ich und dem All, sich im All wiederfinde, damit sie das, was dem Ich durch die Selbsterkenntnis zugewachsen ist, wiedererkenne als Seins-Zuwachs im All, in der Welt, ja im Menschentum überhaupt.

From this it may be understood that expression of individualism is not necessarily indicative of individuality.

The only comparable use of the elements as titles that I have found appears in T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. See T.S. Eliot (1944) *Four Quartets*. London: Faber.

is the only means of bringing together and representing the two opposing ways in which human beings experience time.589

The sophisticated narrative method of the *Virgil* work conveys the protagonist’s explorative self-awareness, as he appraises his life’s achievements during his final hours, and provides a glimpse of what Ricoeur terms ‘the fault lines’ in his own being. The varied perspectives upon Virgil’s thought offered by the narrative establish belief in his sense of self, within the mind of the reader. As Broch observes, the work constitutes a ‘lyrical commentary’ upon the self, in which the ‘I’ of the narrator only appears at high points in the narrative’.27 This establishes a foundation for the transformation of Virgil’s consciousness in the course of the text, so that his individuality may gradually develop and become apparent, in a literary representation of the concept of individuality outlined in the previous section.

The emergence of Virgil’s doubt about the ethical validity of his artistic output, in conjunction with his feeling that he is unable to relate to the heavens, form the starting points for his metamorphosis, whilst the mystical language contributes to the sense of movement and transformation.

The portrayal of the protagonist’s ethical dilemma enables the theme of friendship to be explored. This aspect of the work is significant for our understanding of Broch’s ideas regarding the individual and of mass society. The text shows that Virgil’s relationships with his close friends are of paramount importance during his final hours and, ultimately, they outweigh his professional duties. However, it is his relationship with Augustus, his patron-friend that carries the greatest significance, for here Broch draws attention to the tension between politics and friendship. He directs the reader to the

27 KW4 470.
question of what lies at the basis of friendship and what it might offer to each party. Through the peculiar time-frame, he raises the ideas of the ancients, especially Aristotle, into modern consciousness.

The combination of the choice of Virgil as protagonist, the framework of the elements, and the unusual narrative technique is of particular interest regarding the effect of the text upon the reader. Through the process of reading, which takes up measured time, the reader is led into a time framework provoked by engagement with the text. The reader is then able to create a new world, with its own timescale, within the imagination. This is significant with regard to Broch’s observation that everything contained within the Massenwahntheorie is to be found in the Virgil work. Through the provocation of the reader’s imagination, the fictional, lyrical Virgil presents an expanded version of the ideas set out in theoretical form in the mass psychology. Broch pushes the boundaries of the novel to its very limits, offering the possibility of engaging the reader through a new form of narrative technique and inspiring new ideas by stimulating their imagination, whilst placing art (and therefore the individual) under the closest scrutiny, within the context of mass culture. The work may be described as a ‘lyrical novel’.

By conveying a period of eighteen hours over four hundred and fifty or so pages, the Virgil text brings Ricoeur’s concept of ‘narrated time’ into correspondence with that of ‘lived time’ and ‘cosmic time’. The narrative drifts from the present into both the past and the future, before drawing all time into what may be described as ‘a continuous present’ and moving outside of time and space. In accordance with Ricoeur’s views, this expanded experience of time places the reader in the position of being able to reflect upon the past, at the hand of the protagonist. It enables the construction of

KW13/2 454. Letter from Broch to Aldous Huxley, dated 10 April 1945. We should remind ourselves here that the Virgil preceded the Massenwahntheorie.

The poetic quality of the Virgil text was achieved partly through Broch’s personal exercise of imagination as preparation for writing, by entering a form of trance. See KW13/2 342. Letter from Broch to an unnamed addressee, dated 16 August 1943.


See, for example, DV 300. Broch writes:
For past and future came together in the ring, to an unending present, to a constantly self-renewing knowledge of destiny, to a constantly self-renewing rebirth.

See also KW4 281. Broch writes:
Den Vergangenheit und Zukunft fließen im Ringe zum nichtendenwollenden Jetzt zusammen, zum stets-sich erneuernden Schicksalswissen und zur stets-sich erneuernden Wiedergeburt.

See David Frisby’s discussion of Simmel’s thought regarding modernity as an ‘eternal present’. For Simmel:
The essence of modernity is psychologism, the experiencing and interpretation of the world in terms of the reactions of our inner life and indeed as an inner world, the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid element of the soul, from which all that is substantive is filtered and whose forms are merely forms of motion.

D. Frisby (1985) Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin, pp. 38-108, here, p. 38. For Broch, the work is ‘none other than a single glimpse of life, admittedly that of one, who is dying’. See KW4 458.

a narrative identity, in parallel to that of the protagonist, by which the reader might learn about his or her self. Participation in this process through engagement with the Virgil text enables the reader both to reach back in memory and to project into the future. Consequently, the reader’s awareness of their position in historical time, and therefore of their subjectivity is raised: great emphasis is placed upon the selection of values. The effect is accentuated through Broch’s choice of the historical figure of Virgil as a protagonist. The reader is aware that the developments in Virgil’s soul are taking place in the present, but there is also a curious connection to the past, for some aspects of the story are based upon the biography of the historical Virgil, and there are numerous allusions to philosophical and mystical thought, as well as art and culture from throughout the history of the Western world. Broch’s Virgil is an almost archetypal figure, with whom the reader must interact.

As a whole, the text presents a form of opposition, which the reader must overcome. The impact of the peculiar time frame brought about by reference to the elements, developments in physics and myth, the narrative voice and mystical use of language work together to create an individualising

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experience, which takes place in parallel to that of the protagonist. In the ‘Ether’ chapter especially, the reader must produce concepts so that the events may be visualised and understood in their connectedness, for Virgil’s metamorphosis goes beyond earthly experience. This chapter entails a final weeding out of the contents of Virgil’s soul, a ‘taking into account’ of his engagement with ethics and aesthetics over the course of his life. The reader is subjected to a similarly demanding process. As the reading of the text progresses, the reader gradually becomes aware of all the voices within the narrative, and realises that consideration of both ethics and aesthetics is necessary, if human existence is to be balanced. This may be understood as the Logos coming to the fore. To understand that the Logos is reached at the end of the work, the reader must participate in the developmental process of the text, and thereby undergo, in the words of an older tradition, an initiation, or more precisely, an initiation through reading. It is in this respect, that the Virgil work differs from Broch’s theoretical essays about individuality, in which he describes the process of initiation: the Virgil is predominantly mimetic, rather than diegetic. Through the process of reading the fourth chapter, the reader becomes equipped to understand and re-read the earlier sections. Such engagement reveals that the experiences depicted in the ‘Ether’ have already been undergone in the previous three chapters; the Logos structure encountered in Chapter 4 is already operative in these sections. In my view, the initiatory qualities of the Virgil narrative also distinguish it from the work of Joyce, mentioned earlier.

It should noted here, that Enrico Terrinoni, in his recently published volume Occult Joyce: the Hidden in Ulysses, offers an in-depth reading of Ulysses from an occult standpoint. He asserts that ‘the occult is imbricated in the dichotomy of belief and scepticism which underwrites the text and characterises the reader/ text relationship’. In his view, readers of the work are ‘interpreters of the occult that is hidden in the text, for ‘by following the traces and signs left on the textual surface, they eventually dig out what lies

592 A tint of moral consciousness also seems to be conveyed through the Virgil text.
dormant beneath’. I am of the opinion, however, that the *Virgil* and *Ulysses* texts may have different effects upon the reader. Whereas Joyce’s narrative

A similar idea is to be found in the thought of Jakob Böhme and Hegel, both of whom have been shown to be of interest to Broch. For Böhme, the conflict of opposing principles, which he saw in all things, was part of a necessary process of opposition that had its source in the divine itself. He writes;

Nothing can be revealed to itself without opposition. For if there is nothing that opposes it then it always goes out of itself and never returns to itself again. If it does not return into itself, as into that from into which it originated, then it knows nothing of its origin.


In a four-part symphony, the potential of the final movement is introduced in themes in the earlier movements. The movements contrast and build the themes to the final movement. See Chapter 10: Analysis of the Narrative technique in the *Virgil* work. There is insufficient space to discuss Joyce’s narrative technique here. As a continuation of this project, I wish to compare Broch’s thought with that of Kafka, Musil, Canetti, through textual analysis.


undoubtedly incorporates many references to the occult, it is the focus of Broch’s text upon the individual (in conjunction with allusion to esoteric knowledge through reference to art) that has an individualising effect and particularly invests the work with initiatory qualities.

Given that the conscious metamorphosis of Virgil’s soul continues until it reaches the ‘Ousia’, and that the narrative enables the reader to be led through a parallel process of transformation, Broch’s position regarding individuality may be likened to that of Hegel. That is to say, through engagement with the text, the reader is brought to recognise, in their
subjectivity, that they have within them a living spirit. For Hegel, "the Aether is the energy that is absolutely conserved, the continuum at the basis of all experience".

Our discovery of the peculiar initiatory dimension of the Virgil returns us to the question of its genre, and the reason for its creation. We have already seen that the work was begun under the threat of Nazism. For Broch, it became a ‘form of imagining one’s own death’, a ‘private preparation for death’. For the reader, this ‘lyrical novel’ (or commentary) provides an aid for their preparation for future existence. The process of reading (and writing) the text constitutes a form of engagement with the Logos, which strengthens the ego and refines individuality. By enabling the very origins of the self to be explored, it offers a means of maintaining resilience to mass hysteria. Above all, it directs the reader towards virtue, thereby introducing an ethical dimension to the realm of art: this, I believe, is Broch’s contribution as a Modernist. As we have seen, his position is derived from his engagement with the idea of the masses, and observation of the disintegration of values. The Virgil presents an experience, which corresponds to an idea proposed in the Massenwahntheorie: it prepares the reader for a transition into a new epoch. Viewed in conjunction with the text’s mystical use of language and allusion to the thought of the medieval mystics, this transformative quality of the Virgil suggests that Broch belongs to the tradition.

594 KW13/3 64-65. Letter from Broch to Hermann J. Weigand, dated 12.2.1946. He writes:

Die Todesbedrohung durch das Nazitum nahm zunehmend konkretere Formen an; darüber konnte ma sich nicht mehr hinwegtäuschen. […] Doch jedenfalls war es ein Zustand, der mich zwingender und zwingender zur Todesvorbereitung, zu sozusagen privater Todesvorbereitung nötigte. Zu einer solchen entwickelte sich die Arbeit am "Vergil," und ebenhiedurch hat das Buch, wie Sie ganz richtig bemerken, seinen durch die historische Gestalt und das Werk des Vergil gesteckten Rahmen vollkommen gesprengt. Es war nicht mehr das Sterben des Vergil, es wurde die Imagination des eigenen Sterbens.

595 For Broch, as a Jewish writer living under the threat of persecution, and later in exile, engagement with the Virgil text provided a means of survival. This dimension of the work calls to mind the legendary figure of Ahasverus, ‘the wandering Jew’. Broch refers to Ahasverus in his 1915 cycle of poems, ‘Vier Sonette: Über das metaphysische Problem der Wirklichkeitserkenntnis’, which may be translated as ‘Four Sonnets on the Metaphysical Problem of Epistemology’. See KW8 15-17.
of Logos Mysticism. He builds upon the work of a succession of thinkers in the ‘Logoslehre’ tradition, and points towards a new and transformed consciousness.

Broch’s novel *The Spell (Die Verzauberung)* is worthy of note here. This work, which depicts the effect of the arrival of a stranger upon the inhabitants of a mountain village, illustrates how human beings respond to different types of leader. I suggest that the work might be considered to be a ‘coda’ for the *Virgil*, in that it provides a further experience in which the individual is confronted with the appeal of the collective. It raises the possibility that the reader, having undergone the initiatory experience offered by the *Virgil*, may be able to differentiate between good and evil, and resist the appeal of the false leader.

See discussion of conversion to ‘Total Democracy’ in Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas regarding mass hysteria and the individual with the thought of Le Bon, Freud and Canetti. We remind ourselves here that Broch aimed to achieve no less than a whole new reality, through the language of the novel, and that it ‘had an important role to play in converting people back to humanity’. See KW13/3 233-234, letter from Broch to Herbert Zand, dated 23 July 1948, and KW13/3 89, letter from Broch to Karl Burger, dated 2 April 1946.

14. **Some observations upon how Broch’s concept of individuality might relate to his ideas concerning mass culture**

The final step in this study is to give tentative consideration to how Broch’s concept of individuality might relate to his ideas concerning mass culture, and the relevance of his thought to today’s world. We remind ourselves here that although his work is not widely known, it is still read and appreciated by a body of critics. The field is specialised, however, due to the difficulty of reading his work: a wide readership is therefore excluded. Given the
individualising effect of reading the Virgil text and its facility to direct the reader
towards ethics, what is important here is the message that it conveys.

We have seen that, for Broch, the post-industrial Western world
consists of a multitude of complex value systems, to which each individual
human being might subscribe. He asserts that this modern society exudes
a culture of existential fear, which places humanity under increasing
psychological pressure, and induces a tendency towards loneliness. Such
anxiety may lead the individual to participate in mass activity that they would
not choose, should the fear of death be reduced, or absent.

Of interest here is Broch’s observation of ‘looking back in loneliness’,
the condition that causes affected individuals to realise that they no longer
subscribe to prevailing values, and to search for personal values to bring
meaning to the world. Brought about by fear of death, the condition is
characterised by individual search for meaning in the world. For Broch,
individuality seems to be gradually changing, and in my view, the new condition
that he observes may be part of this development.

The textual analysis has shown that the Virgil offers a literary depiction
of these psychological consequences of the disintegration of values. Within
the novel’s detailed portrayal of the acute anxiety and isolation of the individual,
the inter-related themes of art and friendship enable us to attain some insight
into Broch’s ideas regarding modern mass society. Whilst the theme of art in
the Virgil has been discussed by several critics, it has not, to my knowledge,
been connected hitherto to interpretation of the Massenwahntheorie. The
protagonist’s anxiety about the ethical nature of his art is closely connected to
his relationship with his friend and patron Augustus, who seems to be more
concerned with politics and aesthetics than ethics. (Here, Broch draws
attention to the importance of appearance in the growing consumer culture in
the Western world.) The theme of friendship is also developed through the
protagonist’s relationships with others, for the only characters to engage with

596 See analysis of Broch’s theory of disintegration of values in Chapter 3: Philosophical
influences upon Broch’s thought: Nietzsche, Simmel, Weber and Scheler.
Virgil, apart from his physician, are his friends: even the angelic figure Lysanias describes himself as Virgil’s ‘oldest friend’. (DV 417)

Virgil’s friendship with the patron of his artwork, the emperor Augustus, is established from the outset, and the problematic nature of their relationship is a continuing strand of thought within the protagonist’s consciousness. It begins with the seed of doubt concerning the authenticity of his poetry, when Virgil becomes aware that he may have merely served the realm of aesthetics as a means of pleasing his friend. Their relationship is complicated by Augustus’ political power, the practical nature of which contrasts sharply with Virgil’s role as state artist, who is primarily concerned with the realm of ideas. This is acknowledged by Virgil at an early stage, when, whilst reflecting upon his friend, he suspects that Augustus is only concerned with the realm of appearance, and describes their relationship as an ‘hypocrisy of friendship’. (DV 56)

Their friendship since boyhood, however, is what Virgil and Augustus have in common, and it is important to both men. Even when their discussion about the role of art becomes heated, their lifelong relationship remains in Virgil’s consciousness and, ultimately, he gives his treasured artwork to Augustus. As stated earlier, this should not be seen as a deed of Christian goodwill, but as an act of friendship: when Virgil realises that he is unable to control the future of the Aeneid, he decides to entrust it to his friend, in the hope that Augustus will use it wisely in shaping the Roman Empire. Despite their differences, Augustus appears to be part of Virgil’s vision of the future. This may be seen immediately following Virgil’s affirmation that Augustus should take the Aeneid to Rome, when they dispute boyishly over the description of the horses that they chose in their youth. At this point, Augustus seems to merge with Lysanias, Virgil’s oldest friend, in the form of a figure of salvation. He appears to Virgil ‘like a herald of yore’, being ‘Caesar, the holy one’. (DV 393) The origin of the picture lies not in memory, but emerges

597 KW4
394. 3 KW4
55.
598 KW4 371.
instead ‘from the strangeness of that which was ever at hand, livid and mute [...] yet full of terror, thunderous as a brewing storm’. (DV 394)\textsuperscript{599} The image might be understood as a projection into the future, in accordance with Broch’s concept of individuality. Virgil recognises that Augustus possesses the political power, which he lacks. He envisages the evolving individuality of his friend, and his vision may be regarded as a consolidation of the status of their friendship. In Broch’s words, they are ‘of deep homosexual agreement’, even though they do not ‘comprehend one another spiritually’. \textsuperscript{600} They have a mutual understanding, which reaches deep into their very being and transcends gender in some way.

The question here is how might the relationship between Virgil and Augustus (and therefore the role of friendship in society) be interpreted for the twenty-first century? How might the idea of a single spirit in two bodies (within one of which it appears as being insufficient), relate to Western society in late modernity?

Broch’s portrayal of friendship could be interpreted as a proposal that society might be organised in a way similar to that discussed by Aristotle, though the ancient’s ideas were based upon the relatively small cities of his time. Aristotle considers all types of friendship to be part of the greater community, and finds the latter (or association), to be essential to any friendship’. \textsuperscript{601} The idea of friendship seems to underpin Broch’s thought regarding the possibility of achieving the ‘good life’ through the development of community in modern mass society. As mentioned earlier, for Broch, a mass does not necessarily have a sense of community. \textsuperscript{602} He indicates in his 1918 open letter to Franz Blei, which expresses his horror at the barbarity of the masses, that community, or friendship, is not only desirable, but necessary in

\textsuperscript{599} KW4 371-2.

\textsuperscript{600} KW13/3 27 Letter from Broch to Robert Neumann, dated 22 October 1945. Broch refers to ‘ein tiefes homosexuelles Einverständnís’. See discussion of the friendship between Virgil and Augustus in Chapter 11: Analysis of Virgil’s metamorphosis as a means of understanding Broch’s concept of individuality.


\textsuperscript{602} See for example, KW12 78; KW13/1 30-31. See Chapter 4: Comparison of Broch’s ideas concerning mass hysteria and the individual, with the thought of le Bon, Freud and Canetti.
human society. Here, he asserts that, ‘a true community is one that has a common metaphysical feeling of truth’. 

Broch indicates at the beginning of the Virgil work that his idea of community is associated with peace. Here, ‘friendly human activity’ is associated with ‘villages and settlements along the white-sprayed coast’ and the reminiscing protagonist feels that he was once ‘pushed out from simple, secure life in a village community’. (DV 11, 13) Later, as Virgil’s consciousness expands, he calls for ‘a community that is supported by men of awareness, and supported by the individual human soul’. (DV 367) This ‘community will be vulnerable in the individual and the right of the individual will be protected by the community’. (DV 367) Thus the community, for Broch, as for Aristotle, constitutes the arena in which individuals may interact for mutual benefit. For Aristotle, such a community cannot be established under tyranny. In his view, ‘We cannot maintain that there is much room for friendship and justice between rulers and ruled under a tyranny. They are most adequately realised in democracies, the citizens of a democracy being equal and having many things in common’. This seems to be the case for Broch, too. As indicated earlier, he decries any political regime other than democracy, but calls for a new interpretation of the concept: ‘total democracy’.

It should be noted that, in the Massenwahntheorie, Broch appears to be somewhat inconsistent in his terminology for ideas such as ‘community’ (Gemeinschaft) and ‘society’ (Gesellschaft). I attribute this to the speed with which he was trying to convey his ideas in his latter years, though it may of course have been quite deliberate. Borch also suggests that Broch’s distinction between crowd (mass) and community may have been influenced by Le Bon. See C. Borch (2006) ‘Crowds and Total Democracy: Hermann Broch's Political Theory’, p. 112.

KW13/1 30-31. Open letter from Broch to Franz Blei, dated December, 1918. Here, Broch defines a community by its common system of
rational values, in the form of norms, and irrational values, such as feelings of friendship, customs, and tradition. He defines a mass, however, largely through its irrational values.

The problem facing Broch’s vision of a mass society based upon the principle of friendship and helpfulness is the plurality of value systems, which have emerged from the process of disintegration of values. As each system is totalitarian in its demands, aiming ultimately for autonomy, society is faced with the political difficulty of finding common ground for negotiation. In the opinion of Borch, Broch’s concept of mass society is ‘largely Utopian’, for it fails to demonstrate how modern secular society might be based on a new centripetal value, apart from that of ‘decency’ (‘Anständigkeit’). (Decency is proposed in the Massenwahntheorie as being a ‘preliminary stage of the future ethical centripetal value.’) Whilst such reservations are understandable, Broch points, I believe, to an overhaul of societal relationships in the West, for his vision ‘seeks not only to install democracy for everyone, but to make democracy a new common value’.

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Here, I believe, Broch reinterprets the ideas of the ancients. Whereas Aristotle does not explain how the ideal community might be maintained (beyond advocating practice of virtuous existence), Broch addresses the problem through the notion of human rights. In so doing, he redefines the idea of democracy. A sophisticated system of human rights might have the capacity to implement the principle of friendship in law, which would then oblige human beings to be helpful to one another. By basing legislation upon the ideal of helpfulness, rather than tradition, it might be possible to resolve conflicting values arising amongst the realms of politics, religion and law. Such legislation would take up Aristotle’s idea that in resolving a dispute it is necessary to consider what is good for the other person, or friend, rather than what is pleasurable for oneself. For Aristotle, you will have a happy life, if you act as a good person. From this it may be deduced that pursuit of pleasure in itself does not generate happiness. Aristotle’s ideas may be seen to be developed in Broch’s discussion of the ‘pursuit of happiness’ in his *Massenwahntheorie*. Here, he asserts that whilst happiness is expansion by means of value, it remains difficult to define.

The founding of a society based upon friendship would demand that the ethical validity of its value systems must be brought into question. The feasibility of any given value system might therefore be examined in the light of Kant’s Categorical Imperative. Kant was of the opinion that all human beings should be treated as free and equal members of a shared moral community. According to the Categorical Imperative, a value system may only be deemed to be feasible, if it enables all of its subscribers to live by its values: it must be universal. A value system based upon profit, for example, would be invalid, for it would be impossible for everyone to live by profit alone. Monetary gain could be only valid if it were a by-product of other ethical activity. Admittedly, given the multiplicity of existing value systems in the Western world, it would be difficult to achieve universal compliance with a new value systems.

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605 KW12 486-496.
607 Ibid.
system. However, Broch’s ideas for the introduction of human rights seem to suggest that application of the Categorical Imperative might be achieved through legislation. The principle of friendship, or helpfulness, would constitute the value system, by which all people could lead a fair existence, supported by human rights legislation. Such legislation would seek to satisfy the interests of all parties in a dispute, and would therefore set out the ideals of virtue in law. This interpretation of Broch’s ‘earthly absolute’ is based upon syndicalism, rather than an authoritarian foundation. As we have seen, enslavement has no place in any institution in Broch’s society. He asserts that ‘a human being may never be treated as a commodity’, and Kant’s assertion that man is never a means (Mittel) but an end (Selbstzweck) is, by his own admission, clearly audible here.\textsuperscript{608} Democracy, he says, ‘is anti-enslavement, provided that what constitutes enslavement has been defined’.\textsuperscript{24} However, any attempt to implement his ideas regarding human rights through legislation would raise questions about who should administrate the system, and how authoritarian tendencies might be avoided in practice.

Whilst some might regard the proposal of a shift in the prevailing value system toward ‘friendship’ as being ‘largely Utopian’, it does suggest a means by which steps towards a fairer society might be taken. Of importance here is that the social spheres of culture, law and economics work in harmony, rather than in conflict, and do not overrule each other’s values. The view that has become apparent in the course our analysis, that selfawareness of relationships with others, is necessary, if personal ethical development is to take place, is significant here. As current-day sociologist Zygmunt Bauman observes, ethics must be combined with politics, in the attempt to address global injustice.\textsuperscript{25} A form of cosmopolitan legislation is required, by which ‘laws aim (without purely being instruments of discipline and order) to force individuals and organisations to behave in a particular manner’.\textsuperscript{26}

Some similarity may be found here between Broch’s thought and that of Ricoeur, who also considers how a fairer society might be achieved. In

\textsuperscript{608} KW12 476. Broch writes: Der Mensch darf niemals als Sache behandelt werden. \textsuperscript{24} KW12 563. Broch writes:
Oneself as Another, he proposes the idea of a ‘just institution’, and discusses its role in establishing a society in which individuals may live well together. (The term ‘institution’ refers here to structures of living together in the form of a people, nation or region, a ‘structure irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these in a remarkable sense’.) Ricoeur is concerned with ‘the extension of interpersonal relationships to institutions’, rather than the ‘judicial system, which confers coherence and the right of restraint upon the law’. In his view, the just institution provides the structure for reciprocal acts of friendship and helpfulness to take place. Here, he makes practical proposals that are founded upon ideas similar to those of Broch. For Ricoeur, each individual must have the capacity to respond to the call of the Other, before being commanded by duty. He speaks of ‘benevolent spontaneity,’ by which self-esteem arises from the exchange of benevolent feelings, which one could direct towards oneself, but only through the benevolence of others. (Similarity may be found here with Aristotle’s concept of ideal friendship, and Broch’s depiction thereof in the relationship between Virgil and Augustus.) In Ricoeur’s view, ‘equality [...] is to life in institutions, what solicitude is to inter-personal relations’. Thus, in order for a just institution to be established, its members must feel that they, and their contribution to that society, are valued.

Greater insight into Broch’s ideas regarding the relationship between individuality and mass culture may be derived, I believe, from our analysis of the ‘Ether’ chapter. Here, as we have seen, attention is drawn to the interconnectedness of the whole cosmos through the repeated reflection of phenomena. Broch directs the reader towards the reciprocal effect of beings upon one another. How might these findings relate to mass culture and

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26 Ibid.
27 P. Ricoeur (1992) *Oneself as Another*, p. 172
28 Ibid, p. 194.
29 Ibid, p. 197.
609 Ibid, p. 190.
contribute to a positive mass society in today’s world? Whilst the afterlife of the soul might initially seem to have little connection to the rest of the world, Broch’s portrayal points to the contrary. He suggests that all human activity contributes to the cosmos in some way, and that the Logos, which remains largely hidden, may occasionally be glimpsed through the realm of art. He indicates that the effect of all earthly activity, especially relationships with others, is borne in the Ether. Virgil’s transformation suggests that it is in the Ether that the human soul discovers its incompleteness, of which it was barely aware in earthly existence.

Of importance here, is the idea that an individual may be complemented through a relationship with another being: one has the capacity to release the potential of the other. In the Ether, the effect of the earthly interaction becomes apparent, in the form of cosmic reflection. The element illuminates forces at work upon human beings. The emergence of ‘looking back in loneliness’ might be interpreted as being a consequence of those forces. In turn, the sense of isolation experienced in late modernity may be further reflected in the Ether, and give rise to activity in receptive human beings. All experience, it seems, is laid down within the cosmos. This effect corresponds, I believe to the ‘genuine phenomena of being’ observed by Broch.611

By drawing attention to the importance of friendship, within the peculiar framework of the classical elements and modern consciousness, Broch points, I believe, towards further reinterpretation of Aristotle’s thought. His portrayal of the relationship between the artist and the politician might be interpreted for today’s world as being a diluted form of Aristotle’s model of friendship, which enables the individual to attain greater self-awareness through engagement with the community in a form of citizenship. Broch seems to have had positive experiences of democracy in America. I propose that the recent trend towards voluntary ethical action and participation in activities of a spiritual nature without particular identification with religious worship may be viewed as an

611 KW13/3 537. Letter from Broch to Karl Horst, 11 April 1951.
example of Broch’s ‘new phenomenon of being’, in that it represents a search for new values and therefore a change in consciousness. 612

Broch could not have foreseen the technological progress that has occurred since the mid-twentieth century, but technology now offers new means by which individuals might relate to one another: the take-up of communication through cyber-space suggests that there is a need for human beings to relate to others. (Admittedly, it also offers seemingly endless means of distraction from the difficulties of relating to others.) We have seen that Broch attaches importance to awareness of the spiritual dimension of human experience, and acknowledges the role of language in society as being a means of conveying awareness of the spiritual realm. The emphasis that he places upon the importance of the human voice, the setting of ethical values, and friendship, conveys the idea that mass society must foster ethical use of language, which is open to all. As Arendt observes, for Broch, the mission is that of the ethical imperative, and the task, which cannot be evaded, is that of the human claim for help.34 What comes forth from the ‘Ether’ chapter is the need to exercise aesthetic judgement in appraising a given value. Here, the moral dimension of Broch’s ideas regarding egoexpansion and reduction comes to the fore. The individual, directed towards virtue, must consider the ethical and aesthetic value of any act, in the knowledge that all deeds are laid down in the cosmos. Meanwhile, it is the role of art to provoke creation of new values. The exciting possibility is that the resulting activity of human consciousness is further reflected in the Ether.

Broch shows that rather than providing a reflection of the past or the present, art has an ethical purpose, because it looks to the future. Ethical art provokes the intellect and imagination of the engaged interpreter. In the face of the complex, increasingly interrelated problems of post-industrial society, Broch’s concept of human rights may appear inadequate and overly simplistic. Nevertheless, his focus upon the human self, and ‘I’consciousness is

significant. By demonstrating that the self is not only viewed from within, but also from without, he challenges the reader to reconsider current values, and to engage in political discourse. He lifts the ideas of the ancients into the present, and conveys that ethics and aesthetics must be balanced, in order that his positive vision of mass society might be made into reality. For Broch, virtue is the key.

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