

Pictures and Souls.

On knowing Oneself by Outward Criteria (PI II iv)

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“The human body is the best picture of the human soul.” The famous quotation from the second part of the Philosophical Investigations (if such a “second part” does exist is a different and well-discussed question) presents a philosophical problem not to be confused with emphatic existentialist thinking about the self. The self Wittgenstein is talking about is characterized by contingent ascriptions rather than inner processes constituting our language use. If someone is in possession of a soul, this “soul” is not an abstract entity to be respected under all possible circumstances, it is the outcome of common attitudes governing individual linguistic approaches to other individuals and vice versa. The deepest feelings can be silenced by not reacting to them; “deep” is a word expecting certain reactions of compassion and consolation, where there are no common “attitudes” to expressions affirming their existence as undoubtedly, they will gradually peter out. This petering-out is known to be the consequence of a specific, non-mentalistic understanding of how linguistic meaning comes into being. Wittgenstein’s paragraphs in PI II iv refute the intuitive emphasis of the personal in contrast to the impersonal side of things. The soul as a philosophical entity becomes, in Wittgenstein’s hands, also a realm of contra-intuitive emphasis on the public quality of feelings sorting our self-images into kinds of an ontological relativity we tend to forget, imagining us as agents of self-constituting actions not connected to other people’s changeable, sometimes capricious perceptions. If we are bound to other people’s perceptions insofar as they constitute what cannot be constructed by ourselves, their different “attitudes” gain a quality far away from Platonic (and Aristotelian) *doxa*, exhibiting arbitrariness and lack of information in important fields of discourse. Wittgenstein in PI II iv: “My attitude to him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul.” The notion of “attitude” itself undergoes a change and it is likely that this change is connected with a serious perception of alter being the owner of something fragile, which is yet, as a contextual disposition, open to discussion. Possessing a soul is fugitive. It depends on strong attitudes not altering too often, not changing in too short a time. What is problematic in having the *opinion* that someone has a soul? Opinuating follows the logic of the marketplace, where reasons (with the implication of their exchangeability) can only serve as reminders of actions for a certain time. The action of treating somebody as someone possessing a soul therefore needs something stable to make up for the fleeting quality of our opinions. Having a soul is not open to discussion. The discussion (viz. when someone is treated badly) has to be closed before it begins on a level as contingent as fundamental. The important ingredient of this fundamental view of the other being the owner of a soul consists, as I shall point out, in the notion of the “picture”. Pictures are not only universal tools of making images communicable, they are what we see when looking at another person, wondering how the opponent might feel in a situation of disappointment or happiness. “The expression on her face says more than words.” The expression “saying” something is referring to a mode of comparison. Something is visible as something, if it can be perceived in a form fulfilling two conditions: Firstly, this form is reliable and expres-

sive at the same time – if the expression were wildly different when appearing at different times on a human face, it could not guide any behaviour claiming constancy and adequacy. Constancy and adequacy are virtues that need to be attached to something. Secondly, the single perceptions need to be framed, a possible realm of perceptions needs to be limited to secure the applicability of the most different perceptions in one language naming them. Pictures are meeting both requirements: They are reliable and expressive, because their similarity-based attraction guides perceptions with reference to content – that is the conventional attitude of *mimesis eikastike*, *Ebenbildlichkeit*, *imitatio* – and with reference to form, viz. to *mimesis phantastike*, adding not only, as Plato suggested, a capacity of imagination, but the possibility of adapting our perceptions to different circumstances. That the picture-like quality tells us about the other having a soul is not accidental. Pictures are the essence of what we can believe to be non-deceptive, because the picture already concedes a certain amount of deception as its constitutional element. Not because pictures show what painters did imagine for themselves in times of exaltation, but because they are a picture of something else. The deception is not Platonic – the lying poet cast out from the state – but entailed by spatial relations: two properties cannot individualize at the same point and time.

1. Pictures and Actions

The first words of PI II iv set the problem of the soul as a problem of belief and disbelief: “I believe that he is suffering.’ – Do I also believe that he isn’t an automaton? It would go against the grain to use the word in both connexions. (Or is it like this: I believe that he is suffering, but am certain that he is not an automaton? Nonsense!)”

Not being of the *opinion* that someone has a soul means to rely on the picture someone gives while acting in worldly circumstances and, secondly, to believe that the picture he is a part of is worth to be constituted. The automaton cannot be touched by our conviction that something is the case. Believing is as we know (from *On Certainty*) the other side of doubting. Our knowledge that someone is not an automaton is as obvious as convincing: We do not treat the other as such. The word “someone” would not be possible, we would feel inclined to speak of a different, non-human kind of object, questions of similarity of objects and human beings (and anthropomorphisms) would dominate the discussion. Having a soul is not simply to be equated with consciousness as Descartes did (Dilman 1974, 162). Distinctions – being treated as someone equipped with a soul – seem to be the result of being looked at in a certain way. The soul we “have” (it is not a possession) is action-based, conversation-based, based on guided perceptions. These perceptions combine to build a net of convictions, which then, after a process of normative play of testing them, leads to attitudes conceding a soul. And the word “conceding” is probably too strong: an attitude does not concede, it treats someone in a certain way after having conceded. And the aspect of time needs to be clarified: The action of conceding a soul and the action

confirming it coincide. To do one after the other (conceding, then confirming) would open a space of metaphysical shallowness: this empty space has no place in real communication. The aspect of action is intertwined with the aspect of time. Descriptions need to address one thing after another: that is the contiguity of things in written word. Again the fact that two properties cannot individualize in the same point plays a decisive role in talking about the human soul being a question of attitude, not of opinion. Actions taking place in a certain spatial environment exercise a right to take place there. If only one action can occupy one place in one moment, an *attitude* extrapolates a right to assert the emphasis of this action later on in other contexts – in words. Believing that someone has a soul would open this question to fundamental doubt – not as fundamental as things belonging to our given frame of reference (like time passing), but fundamental in a sense of putting the whole notion of soul into question. Seemingly, it is not possible to believe an attitude. This sentence is not strange, but explaining the difference of an opinion (one imagines a quarrel on something, people looking for the most convincing argument, trying to defend their point of view) in contrast to having an attitude. An attitude is something not put into question so openly – and not put into question by the one's holding it without deep changes (in society, entailing changes in the use of language etc.). Furthermore an attitude (being shared by many, an important point in the question of the soul) has the implication of entailing a stable behaviour towards *alter*, saving him from sudden change of mood, weak-mindedness, disease-like uncertainty.

The hidden equivalent to the word "attitude" is "reliance". Reliance covers a certain time in which actions are taking place – it does not mean that there are no exceptions from the rule, because this infallibility were an idol not to met by worldly speakers – but it makes, being action-based itself, these actions predictable. The soul is, so to speak, built up by condensing strong expectations. And these expectations are mutual. Actions confirm what could become an expectation by actions implying it. What is the role of the picture in this scenario? The human body being a picture of the human soul performs the actions on which the idea that someone has a soul is based. It has a twofold role of embodying its soul and behaving in a way confirming this soul via confirming the souls of others. *Ego* switches to *alter* to switch to *ego* to confirm a need in form of action-based judgements. An attitude is a constant judgement.

May the "human being" be favoured in contrast to the "person" (the latter implying a dualistic account of consciousness) (Teichman 1974), human beings also need concepts confirming their identity. The picture as a concept helping to find information about the other without having them talk is less technical than the open dualism, but lives on the difference between body and soul – the connection (someone being able to read in another one's face) is done by those perceiving the human being as someone having a soul. To say that having a soul is action-based means to invent and re-invent this soul by acts of caring, talking and taking someone seriously. That you can "take" him in one way or another shows the power of individual appraisal; the "attitude" is a combination of many (prospective) appraisals over a longer time.

Interesting is the sentence in PI II iv: "I believe that he is not an automaton", just like that, so far makes no sense." The expression "just like that" implies that in a certain context the words would make sense – this context

comes into being through actions, not statements. The content of "I believe that he is not an automaton" is uttered rightly in a language of looking and agreeing with what you see. When uttered in *such* a language the sentence is not ridiculous, but part of a body language which is, of course, the language of the soul. Only "just like that" the sentence is questionable, because nothing is made the just-like-that-way in a language used by many. The attitude toward a human being having a soul therefore is part of a practice of translation: Sentences making no sense alone are embedded in actions constituting and confirming them; what a single sentence cannot express without being misleading, can be said by nonverbal behaviour (entailing and confirming the linguistic *façon de parler* conceding a soul). Opinions deny the implication of *durée* attitudes have; they are the just-like-that-equivalent to just-like-that-thoughts. Attitudes being connected with reliance deny the just-like-that quality of sentences standing alone without linguistic counterparts: this quality (or its impression) is borrowed from the character of a spoken language being not just-like-that at all – this impression stems from many rules defining language use elsewhere, contingent, but serious. When the body is the picture of the human soul (not the only one, because it can be the "best") its picture-like quality is based on actions (perceiving as an initial action) securing the reliability of the picture. It is framed by the one's looking at it in order to discern humanity, to discern the soul – and the worth of one's own actions implying it.

2. Pictures and Reactions

The information that someone is not an automaton can serve as an information only in very special circumstances: "... and to whom would it be an information? To a *human being* who meets him in ordinary circumstances? What information *could* it give him? (At the very most that this man always behaves like a human being, and not occasionally like a machine.)" Firstly, the second question is rhetoric. The expression *human being* is written in italics; it seems to be not quite plausible that two of a kind should face such deep necessity of clarification in ordinary discourse. Only in circumstances where doubting is possible and reasonable, someone can feel uncertain about the ontological status of one, who, after all, belongs to the same kind. The information contained in the sentence "He isn't an automaton" can only be one of securing correct language use in the future – stressing again the aspect of reliance being the hidden equivalent of having an "attitude". When pictures are showing the condition of the soul they can only do so because the readers of the picture of the soul are human beings perceiving the one showing the soul-like signs as another human being. The actions implying a soul start very early: as early as comparing oneself to someone else (having a soul too). Being able to compare two things does not mean that the alternative is plausible. The non-human entity, the automaton, the mechanical monster, which threatens because of a similarity, not a difference, is rather a collective projection than a fact arousing difficulty. If it were totally clear that it were a kind of its own, the comparison would make no sense. Nevertheless emphasizing that someone is not an automaton serves a function: to remind the one perceiving this fact of a similarity-based capacity of reliance. The information of the sentence "He is not an automaton" is, so to speak, not information about content, but information about a formal prerequisite met by two speakers. This seems to be the reason why the actions implying a soul (accepting, confirming, admitting someone as similar) are also reactions in

a relation to the one showing his soul in bodily expression and the one's reading it: Expression behaviour and reaction behaviour are intimately connected. This connection is what is confirmed by reading the soul; being constituted by good actions the reaction behaviour shows that these acts of acknowledgement are not only a benign expression of humanity chosen by friendly speakers, but a necessity not open to discussion and choice. This can be illustrated by an example: If someone is ill and cannot mirror the behaviour of another in their face (or can only mirror it by inadequate openness exposing what others can conceal) the relation between expression (action) and reaction is distorted. It is equivalent to constant doubt, doubting the presence of the opponent to be a serious one, doubting their words. I am telling a fact and somebody answers thoughtfully: "Probably". This answer puts into question everything which has been said before, it is an example of not having understood the difference between fact and telling a fact and opening a discussion. To *tell* someone something is not speculating with the other. This difference is one of denying someone a reaction that would have confirmed their behaviour. The human body can only be the best picture of the human soul, because we read this picture as a picture of a painter we trust. The picture of the soul is not open to the fancy of *mimesis phantastike*, *Einbildungskraft* – it is the good side of *imitatio*, with a touch of sobriety knowing the limits of imagination where speakers try to meet the expectations of others. Seeing the soul is reacting appropriately. This is also part of the dissolution of the problem of other minds – *Fremdpsychisches* – in PI II iv (ter Hark 1995).

What happens when the inadequate reactions silence the initial action? The speaker will wear a mask, acting as if he *had* received reasonable reactions confirming themselves. This mask can be seen as a form of politeness – the attempt to cover a face in which no one reads properly. Trusting in speaker S, then, means trusting in their capacity of reading. Pictures not being read are no pictures anymore – there is a bit of *esse est percipi* in the human body being a picture of the human soul.

3. Pictures and the Soul

Pictures and spoken words can serve the same function. This is Wittgenstein's point in the example of religion: "Religion teaches that the soul can exist when the body has disintegrated. Now do I understand the teaching? – Of course I understand it – I can imagine plenty of things in connexion with it. And haven't pictures of these things been painted? And why should such a picture be only an imperfect rendering of the spoken doctrine? Why should it not do the *same* service as the words? And it is the service which is the point."

As an "image of him" is not an image of him because it resembles him, or because of a similarity (PI II iii). The image of the soul existing after the death of man is not an image of the soul because we know how such a soul looks like and we confirm a similarity, but because we are living in a culture where certain images of the soul are used. They form a standard we are used to. The standard itself needs not to be accepted explicitly. "And it is the service which is the point" means: The role of the picture of a soul living after one's death can be equated with the role of words saying so. The picture is, of course with more freedom of an artist's genius, as convincing as a spoken or written word. The reason lies in the distributing channels being the same and in looking at tales and pictures of the

immortality of the soul as a piece of information. Modern times often need to explain what they are used to; the *Gepflogenheit* is not always self-evident.

The picture of the soul doing a *service* ties in with a religious understanding: Now it is grammar, and the aim of grammar is "nothing but that of a language" (PI 497), doing a service and constituting what is meant by the term. A service in a church is a ritualistic approach to what people perceive as being the truth. This connotation of the word is still present when talking about the service of a picture of the soul. The idea of perfection ("And why should such a picture be only an imperfect rendering") lies at the core of the idea of a good creator only wanting the good. In times describing language grammatically, made up by language use, the picture of something is a constitutional element of a (scientific) explanation (taken as a description, PI 109) only insofar as it postpones the factor of similarity. Similarity is an important aspect of pictures only at first glance – would it be the constituting element in using the human body as the best picture of the human soul one would have to stick to a conception of *imitatio* not letting in the grammatical point.

PI II iv continues: "If the picture of thought in the head can force itself upon us, than why not much more that of thought in the soul?" That "an 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria" (PI 580) is fundamental to Wittgenstein's later philosophy emphasizing the public side of things and the arguments explaining them. The private language argument is only one example. Philosophy after its grammatical turn denies the implicit privacy of essentialist thinking; everyone seemed to be alone with the *Wesen* of things (god, reason, friendship, liberty) to consider it thoroughly. This museum of things held in the eyes of an individual was a pale reflection of the real world. And "reality" is not an essentialist entity by itself, but an equivalent to the soul being made of strong expectations condensing. As what we call the soul is constituted by these expectations, reality described with reference to grammar is not stable (its ways of description being valid only temporarily), but stable enough. What else could one expect? The "thought in the soul" Wittgenstein is talking of in PI II iv can force upon us because our grammatical ways of conveying knowledge and a non-essentialist certainty (viz. certainty not being based on essentialist descriptions (of the self)) encourage it. Where the soul can be constituted by contingent, but binding ways of describing it, it is not an authority needing other authorities to explain its expressions, but available to action-based, conversation-based, language-based behaviour shared by many. When we use the human body as the best picture of the human soul it is "not a figure that we choose, not a simile, yet it is a figurative expression." The final sentence of PI II iv describes the picture of the soul – it is as inevitable as pointing to one's heart when understanding something "in my heart". "Of course one means it" But one means it because others do so too and did so in former contexts. Reliance being the hidden equivalent to having the attitude that someone has a soul is also one of constant gestures, having transformed an individual experience of some to criteria of many. The criteria we understand are part of a modern way of explanation: "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is (Theology as grammar.)" (PI 373) The notion of the soul transforms its religious coinage to something more open to public discourse: PI II iv reminds us of a representation existing because there are ways of reading it. Action, reaction and seeing the soul in the body being the best picture of it form a secular set of instruments meeting

the necessities of the modern view of language as the language of human beings. The *darkness of this time* cannot be highlighted by single expressions of *joie de vivre*. It is the grammatical foundation of our language use which corrects inconsistencies of the holy and the profane. It is the foundation we have and the foundation we need. Having a foundation is an old idea, which stems from a time where language was considered to be a sign of the life of god. Now the founding is made by *ego* and *alter* and their mutual perceptions entailing conventions (Lewis). The criteria exist in their fleeting, worldly way. Believing is something else. The soul being made of expectations condensing (readable as a picture) is not only an expression of the self – it is where the self begins.

Literature

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