Aspects of Visual Epistemology:
On the "Logic" of the Iconic

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Propositionality and Visuality

During a discussion in 1968 between Claude Lévy-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, François Jakob and Philippe L'Héritier, all of the participants – despite profound differences – agreed on one point: language, or more generally communication, is the universal basis of mankind and its culture.[1] It is conspicuous though that the multifacetedness of the iconic is never mentioned, let alone in contrast to the regime of language that cultural techniques for visualizing have their own role. In fact, one of the classic *topos* of philosophical thought according to the *linguistic turn* manifests itself here: thinking occurs in the medium of language, and where language, or more specifically, the symbolic or propositional is missing there is a lack of actual thought as well. It goes even further: intentionality, according to Edmund Husserl the most common form of *cogito*, which primarily indicates the directionality of the consciousness towards something,[2] coincides with the predication, the proposition of something "as" something. Ludwig Wittgenstein, following in the thought of the logician Gottlob Frege, who was as crucial to him as to Husserl, wrote: "The thought is the significant proposition",[3] so that "thinking something" first and foremost meant "meaning something" and corresponding to that, "referring to something", "expressing something" or "giving someone the understanding that…". Accordingly, "intentionality" – an expression that still completely follows the norms of traditional philosophy of consciousness – and "referenciality" – which reconstitutes the act of relatedness as a speech act – belong together.[4] What is common to all of these is the possibility to distinguish between true and false, which Aristotle – and later the

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[1] "Leben und Sprechen: Ein Gespräch zwischen Francois Jakob, Roman Jakobson, Claude Levy-Strauss und Philippe L'Héritier", in Roman Jakobson, *Semiotik: Ausgewählte Texte 1919–1982*, ed. by Elmar Holenstein, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992, pp. 398–424.

[2] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (1913), transl. by J. N. Findlay, London: Routledge, 2001, see esp. Investigations I and VI.

[3] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, transl. by C. K. Odgen, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922, par. 4, cf. also 4.002 and 4.01.

[4] John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

whole of the analytic philosophy of language – identified to be a property of propositions and hence to be constitutive of knowledge.[5] Then, a complete circle of relationships is revealed – together with their discursive connections – since thinking from now on means speaking, while knowledge manifests itself in propositions, which refer to the world and whose references are realized in true/ false distinctions. Otherwise, like transposed modes of speech, metaphors, or words uttered on the stage, they prove to be erratic, senseless and non-epistemic.

Consequently, the assertion is nothing less than that every system of signs used by humans, as Jakobson specified, encompasses the "existence of language", for language is the "central phenomena in semiotics", even if not the only one, but the "central and fundamental one".[6] In this way Jakobson underlined the imperial claim of linguistics – and, as it seems, with that only repeats an opinion of how this – at least in certain readings – also applies to Wittgenstein's philosophy and the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas' discourse philosophy, the post-analytical approach of Donald Davidson or Niklas Luhmann's system theory, to name just a few of the decisive contemporary positions. In fact, these do ignore that at least for Charles Sanders Peirce logical diagrammatics, which operates *in* and *with* the visual, form a powerful argumentation instrument.[7] Also, in the same way Wittgenstein not only frequently referred to images in every phase of his writings and even developed parts of a picture theory of his own, but also thought *in* images and *with* images.[8] Furthermore, if one looks beyond Wittgenstein's main writings to his diaries or notebooks, or Friedrich Waismann's records of conversations, *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations*, to the *Big Typescript*, or his considerations from the 1930s and 40s*, it is noticeable how much the iconic in the form of drawings, sketches, schematic diagrams or graphs, created, very often, by Wittgenstein himself, constantly serve as a reference point, not only as a

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[5]   See e.g. *Zur Philosophie der idealen Sprache*, ed. by Johannes Sinnreich, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972; *Wahrheitstheorien*, ed. by Gunnar Skirbekk, Frankfurt/M.: Surkamp, 1977.

[6]   "Leben und Sprechen" (cf. note 1 above), p. 418.

[7]   See esp. Sybille Krämer, "Operative Bildlichkeit: Von der 'Grammatologie' zu einer 'Diagrammatologie'? Reflexionen über erkennendes 'Sehen'", in Martina Heßler – Dieter Mersch (eds.), *Logik des Bildlichen: Zur Kritik der ikonischen Vernunft*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009, pp. 94–122; Helmut Pape, *Die Unsichtbarkeit der Welt: Eine visuelle Kritik neuzeitlicher Ontologie*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1997, pp. 404 ff.; Steffen Bogen, "Logische und ästhetische Experimente: Diagramme bei Peirce und Duchamp", in Angelika Lammert et al. (eds.), *Räume der Zeichnung*, Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2007, pp. 38–56, esp. pp. 45 ff.

[8]   See esp. Dieter Mersch, "Wittgensteins Bilddenken", *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 2006/6, pp. 925–942.

point of comparison for his analysis of language, but also as media in their own right and in order to carve out their genuine epistemic merits. Thus Wittgenstein used different types of pictures and diagrams both as tools for cognition as well as aids in a debate, to sometimes *graphically* and at other times *discursively* visualize the diverse problems he wrestled with and to find solutions through them. However, the use of pictures proves to be equivocal as is obvious by just glimpsing at the early *Tractatus* and the later *Philosophical Investigations*. The *first* refers mainly to models and diagrams, while the *latter* includes illustrations, genre paintings, portraits, as well as explanations of spatial layers and the topology of colour[9] both to clarify the relationship between language and picture as well as to study questions of perception and visual thought. It is thus due to a specific conception of philosophical thought – and a specific philosophy of cognition – that the iconic is not assigned its own place in thinking. That is, unless it deals directly with iconic "propositions", visual evidence or "allegations" which function homologously to verbal propositions or allow a transfer to a propositional expression. Where this *fails* to apply or where translations or isomorphisms seem impossible, it only concerns something *pre-linguistic*, a preliminary phase of cognition so to speak, which has not yet reached its potential and at best applies to the heuristic or aesthetic, but in no way applies to the presentation of scientifically determined opinions.

Two Projective "Pre-judgements"

Why is this? Two reasons can be stated: *First*, the marking of intentionality and subsequently of the reference in thought, which has repeated and varied the schema of representationality for centuries; *second* the projective *praejudicum*

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[9] See for example P. Kunzmann, *Dimensionen von Analogie: Wittgensteins Neuentdeckung eines klassischen Prinzips*, Düsseldorf: Parerga, 1998, pp. 134 ff.; Paolo Gabrielli, *Sinn und Bild bei Wittgenstein und Benjamin*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2004, pp. 156 ff.; Kristóf Nyíri, "Wittgensteins Philosophie der Bilder", in Nyíri, *Vernetztes Wissen: Philosophie im Zeitalter des Internets*, Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2004, pp. 107–129. – Oliver R. Scholz, *Bild, Darstellung, Zeichen: Philosophische Theorien bildlicher Darstellung*, 2nd, completely rev. ed., Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 2004, pp. 163 ff., refers primarily to the question of understanding pictures with reference to Wittgenstein's later philosophy; for Kuno Lorenz, "La valeur métaphorique du mot 'image' chez Wittgenstein", in J. Sebestik – A. Soulez (eds.), *Wittgenstein et la philosophie aujourd'hui*, Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1992, pp. 299–308, the notion of the image can only be understood metaphorically, whereby the difference between Wittgenstein's early and later philosophy pertains to the "représentations iconiques" in the *Tractatus* and "représentations symboliques" in the *Investigations*.

which, in philosophy, dominates the medium of language and with that the notion. Since, when, as in the first case, the referential serves as criterion, the picture cannot win against language. Every allegation of a visual thought then includes the ability of the picture to appropriately represent or emulate reality – or its parts, whether these are understood as an *idea*, presentation, *designo*, *semiosis* or "concept", embodiment and symbolization. The true–false distinction does not necessarily apply here yet, however the figurations that purport to depict these *as* real, do. They do not aim at causality or logical correctness, as in the field of the discursively conveyed *episteme*, but rather "similarity", as the central category of iconic mimesis. Which is why the similarity discourse dominates philosophical considerations of the iconic:[10] To understand something as something means not stating in the image that the proposition "p" applies, but rather that it "looks like" "p". The validity of the proposition includes its establishment in the sense of causality or logical correctness; reasons can be "true" or "false", so that the proposition "that 'p' " belongs to a truth discourse at the same time, whereas similarities can only be deduced from similarities: there is no argument for similarities, only methods of comparison (e.g., "looks like"), which are again rooted in perceptions, as long as images are not mathematized – as in digital – and the comparison is made with calculations based on algorithms, whether they be of the algebraic (functions) or geometric sort (congruencies). Obviously, similarity is a circular term, its claims cannot be true or false, unless they deal with syntactically describable isomorphisms, because they do not include any "as" that could be expressed propositionally. Instead, its claims contain "similar to" or "like" which, as Wittgenstein expressed, do not invoke a reason in the sense of "that is why", but rather only a "showing" in the sense of an appeal for evidence.

Is this not the reason why Plato, despite all of the ambiguity of his picture theory, excludes the iconic from the court of the alone discussable *episteme* and allocates it to the supremacy of *simulatio,* of fallacy?[11] Nevertheless, one has to point out here that with that, iconicity – and subsequently the visual – is reduced to the function of representation alone, whether it be understood mimetically or as *designo,* "ideas" or embodiments and the like. What sets the realism apart in the image is this representation. Accordingly the epitome of this representation would be illustrativeness realized with absolute perfectionism, reproducing real-

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[10]   For a critical stance on this see also Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols,* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1968, ch. I, sect. 6; Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979, sect. 3.5.

[11]   Plato, *Sophistes* 235d-236b; Plato, *The Republic* 595a ff. With regard to the various uses of "picture" by Plato see Gernot Böhme, *Theorie des Bildes*, München: Fink, 1999, pp. 14 ff., see also esp. the analysis he offers in a critical spirit, *ibid*., pp. 22 f.

ity *exactly* the way it is, which not only transfers the logical principle of identity to the iconic, but also engraves the iconic's *telos* in the central perspective and its technological ideal in photography. We are thus clearly dealing with a reductionism, a specific notion of pictures that never existed in art – one could say: with an epistemic dogmatism, which drives the capacity of images to its most extreme misjudgement. Moreover, it is certainly no coincidence that it was above all the science of enlightenment with its demand for stringent rationalism, which in this sense either remained blind to all things iconic, or limited its function to an objective diagram, which solely served their equally naïve and foolish belief in truth. As long as one holds onto this paradigm of illustrativeness or reference, one cannot escape the case in which visual or iconic thought is rejected. In comparison, art did indeed teach otherwise – especially the different aesthetics of the avant-garde.

There is still yet another reason for the transgression of visual thought though. It lies in philosophical discourse itself, since in philosophy, language always means both: language is the medium of analysis, as well as the medium for reflections about the conditions of the possibility of the analysis itself. In this notion of the connection between thought and language, language always ends up with a double role: language is both discourse and apriori all at once. Thinking has to be imagined along the linguistic yardstick, indeed because of the one argumentation that those who try to think about thinking, already speak and take recourse to language, in order to in turn, so to speak, inject one's own linguisticality into the process of reflection. This figure, which of course once more describes a circle, even comes with the honour of a "transcendental argument", therefore: Every talk of non-discursive thought as well as in particular about images or visuality already makes use of language and therefore already refers to language's presupposed transcendentality. Here, philosophy speaks so to say about its own mediality, which it in this way fixes absolutely. All the same, the argument can also be turned around, since the same reflection loop, which basically does nothing more than perform a *petitio principii*, denies the linguisticality of language every suitable purpose. In his later considerations about the philosophy of language, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Martin Heidegger summed this up well in that he saw every speaking of language intertwined in an inevitable self-referentiality, because in thinking about language, language already has to be activated. Since in bringing "language as language to language", "our proposed way to language is woven into a speaking that would like to liberate nothing else than language, liberate it in order to present it, giving utterance to it as something represented – which straightway testifies to the fact that language itself has

woven us into its speaking."[12] With that, this claim of intertwinement, its implicit totalization, proves to be repressive with regard to the question of iconic or visual thought: it becomes a projection surface of a philosophical discourse that remains concerned with itself. In this sense the rejection of iconic knowledge by referring to the transcendental antecedence of language is a *self-fulfilling prophecy.*

Differentiation and Negativity

However, in his considerations on Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's concept of negativity Heidegger comes to a different result – though without naming the iconic.[13] Once again, he starts with the question of reasoning and its logic, not however in order to investigate it from the "as"-determination, the form of propositionality and the possibility of the true/false distinction, but rather from the structure of the differentiation itself. Accordingly, thinking means being able to differentiate, whereby negativity is given a key role, because it – corresponding to the Spinozian *omnis determinatio est negatio* – should be seen as the basis of all differences. If one also considers that reasoning, according to the traditional determination of German idealism and beyond, does not first and foremost mean a "relation" in the sense of *intentio*, but rather a positing of differences – Johann Gottlieb Fichte derived these using speculative etymology from the first "judgment" or separation of "I" and "not I".[14] Negativity is thus raised to the origin of human rationality and is in this way according to Hegel – and with Hegel, according to Heidegger – located in thought itself for all of occidental philosophy. We are thus dealing with a notion of thought which has not already activated language, but is rather located *before* the language of negation as a fundamental characteristic. A notion of thought, as Heidegger also added, that reaches far back in tradition to Plato and Aristotle,[15] and suggests that it is this determina-

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[12]   Martin Heidegger, "The Way to Language", in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, rev. and exp. edition, ed. by David Farrell Krell, New York: Harper, 2008, pp. 397–426, these passages on pp. 398 f., see also *passim.*

[13]   Martin Heidegger, *Hegel*, Gesamtausgabe vol. 68, 2nd ed., Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 2009, Part I, "Die Negativität", pp. 3 ff.

[14]   Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Gesamtausgabe der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1962 ff., II, 4, pp. 182–184: "Urtheilen, ursprünglich theilen ... Es liegt ein ursprüngl. Theilen ihm zum Grunde ..." – "Bei den negativen ... ziehe ich eine Grenzlinie ... Dort schließe ich aus." – "Bei jedem Setzen ist auch ein *Ausschließen* u. das positive Urtheil kann auch betrachtet werden als ein negatives."

[15]   Heidegger, *Hegel*, *loc. cit.*, p. 9.

tion of thought which demarcates itself from the iconic and with it the visual. This exclusion, however, according to the further supposition, rests on a *specific notion of negativity*, which, incidentally, is already connected to the fundamental determination of thought that it performs[16] – since the negativity, as Heidegger continues, describes the "energy" of thought, i.e., that which first triggers thought into becoming and the reflexivity of the concept.[17] Thus, for Hegel, thinking means "negation" but this negativity, as Heidegger adds, is not conceptualized from the perspective of "nothingness" (*Nichts*), but rather as a *negation* of "being" (*Seienden*), as "not being" (*Nicht-Sein*),[18] i.e., as *actio*, which has always already marked being (*Sein*) and granted "being" (*Seienden*) priority. In short, negation affects "something" which it claims is nothing or whose proposition it denies – the true/false distinction is accordingly derived from this. However, we cannot forget that with Hegel we are confronted with a triple negation: first with an abstract one, which underlines the *indifference of being and nothingness,* then between *one and the other* – or otherness altogether – and *finally* between something and something other, the difference between various states of being (*Seiendheiten*).[19] All three of these generate different forms of difference, at first between (them), that *something "is" and not nothing*, as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz already expressed it, second, the distinction between *determinants and indeterminants* and third the *determining difference between two entities*. In all three, the function of the negation is decisive for the constitution of differences, or as one could also say, as a generator of differences and with that for the determination *of something as something* – consequently it is also decisive for what one could call the "propositional" or, with Heidegger, the "apophantic" and "hermeneutic *as*".[20]

In order to demarcate "something" from "another" or a determinant from another determinant, the difference – that is the thought – requires the negation, in the sense that the "other" is *not this one*, that "something" and "something other" are *not the same* as well as that something at all *appears before the background of another* or this appears *as* this in comparison to other circumstances. In doing so, "something" and "other" act towards one another in the *mode of absolute negation* whereas "something" and "something other" act in the *mode of a determining negation*. Nevertheless, if one then asks which type of nega-

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[16]   *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[17]   *Ibid.*, pp. 14 and 27.
[18]   *Ibid.*, pp. 12 ff.
[19]   See esp. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, transl. by A.V. Miller, New York: Humanity Books, 1965, part I, ch. 1, C; part II, ch. 2, B, C.
[20]   See Martin Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth*, transl. by Thomas Sheehan, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

tions these are, the answer should be: a negation born from and arising from the *principium contradictionis*; all of the determinations of traditional logic including the *tertium datur* are prerequisites in order to first generate the "as" of the determinant via a chain of different negations. In other words: The structure of the difference is of the *either-or* type, a strict or exclusionary opposition, and accordingly: the figure of negativity, thus found in play, is the *contradictory* – or *exclusive negative*. In fact it does indeed prove to be formative for all of traditional logic and metaphysics as well as for characterizing the rationality of thinking. Thinking understands something *as* this, in that it contradictorily demarcates this from others that it *is not* or *is not at all*. Subsequently – and this is Heidegger's point – with Hegel, and with the latter for the whole of the philosophy of the West, thinking means being able to differentiate in the sense of a contradictory or exclusionary negativity. More precisely: Differentiating means judgments in the sense of determining something "as" something, which includes the *not this* and *not as*, and even, the *difference between being and not being* in the sense of presence and absence or trueness and falsehood.[21]

In short, the "as" is rooted in "being different" or "being able to be differentiated", which in turn, is based on the *principium contradictionis* and its specific negativity. In doing so – beside the differentiating of being and nothing, and the exclusion of the not being, and therefore the emphasis of existence itself – differentiating proves to be a decisive way of negation in the sense of determining "something" in the course of eliminating the indeterminate. Consequently, "as" includes this: "*something*" – *and nothing other*, therefore a determinant – and nothing indeterminate. The contradiction to the other is thus a condition of the proposition "as something", since both propositions – *as* "A" und *as* other (B, C, etc.) – cannot be simultaneously true. That also means: if "as A" is true, all other determinations are false, because the same exclusion also applies in relationship to *truth* and *falsehood*, so that the determination itself is already based on a demarcation, exclusion or opposition. The constitution of the object is dependent on "A", and "not B", "not C" etc: *Tertium non datur*. However, this does not apply to the visual, at least not in the same way, because seeing directly opens up a whole series of alternatives and all of them are visible at the same time. The space of perception is not "segmented", it is not broken down into a disjointed order, an already existing classification, as would be a prerequisite here. Therefore, one of the reasons for the exclusion of the visual and in particular of iconicity from the field of thought and structure of the symbolic seems to lie in the fact that pictures leave no space for strict differentiations and with that contradictive negatives: Pictures are, as Nelson Goodman

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[21]   Heidegger, *Hegel*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 22 f. and 45.

somewhat misinterpretably expressed it, "dense".[22] However, as Gottfried Boehm also stated, there are contrasts in images[23] – but contrasts have two sides and both are simultaneously visible in their duplicity, because both sides of the opposition always appear. In other words: in the picture we have at best a contrarian *negative,* not a contradictory, whereas the iconic follows a logic of *both/ and*; but we will come back to this. As long as – and this would be the *first consequence* – thinking is fixed on a determination and differentiation in the sense of a *logic of exclusive distinction*, of an *either/or*, or exclusionary oppositions, visual thinking does not seem to exist *strictu senso*. Rather, the iconic at best seems to belong to the forecourt of propositional thinking. And "forecourt" means at this point: the iconic would take on an "opening up" role, but not a constitutive one.

Plurality of Showing

As an interim result we can thus note: "iconic" or "visual thinking" is not thinking as long as a specific notion of thinking, which already includes the *logos* and with it the principle of traditional logic and especially the contradictory negative, is taken as a basis. If this is not the case, then we are including non-traditional logic and non-oppositional differentiations, that is contrasts, paradoxes and the like, then we not only manage to extend the circle of the cognitive, but also a concept that absolutely ensures the visual its own place in thinking. Such a different concept of thinking can be developed with Wittgenstein and beyond Wittgenstein from the duplicity – or dialectic – of *saying and showing*. This duplicity, or to be exact: their "chiasm" applies primarily to the medial that is tightly interwoven with the structure of thinking. Every thought gains its presence within the chiasm. The philosophy of language in relation to a philosophy of cognition should be credited in that it links the attentiveness of thinking in the closer sense to its *mediality*, in a way however that it grants language the sole priority. If we extend the circle of the medial and include the iconic but also the work of gestures, movements, sounds and the like, that is traditional forms of art, the means of cognition also change and with that the connection between thinking and mediality. In doing so – heuristically – the iconic or visual can be ascribed the format of "showing" and the conceptual or

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[22]   Goodman, *op. cit.*, pp. 135 ff. The possibility of misunderstanding stems from the fact that the mathematical concept of density is applicable to certain discrete orders too, such as e.g. the set of rational numbers.

[23]   See esp. Gottfried Boehm, "Die Wiederkehr der Bilder", in Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994, pp. 11–38.

propositional the format of "saying": Both refer to the different registers of *aesthetic* and *discursive* media.[24]

However, it should be clear that *first*, this differentiation is too schematic, because saying and sign are entwined with one another; nevertheless, it depends on whether we are – as with the iconic – dealing primarily with a "demonstrative saying" (*zeigenden Sagen*) or – as in linguistics – with a "telling demonstration" (*sagenden Zeigen*). *Second*, the primary modus of the showing extends far beyond the iconic: bodies show too,[25] as do facial expressions, gestures, performative acts or silence, just as, as mentioned, verbal expressions such as metaphors, irony or indirect speech; just as Heidegger understood language on the whole from the perspective of "saying" as well as the "showing".[26] To put it differently: showing refers to a practice which cannot alone be reserved for the iconic, just as the reverse applies, that pictures do not unfold alone in the act of showing, because, with all iconic methods, other dimensions also play a role – here we are reminded of the symbolism of art, the specific readability of pictures and in particular graphs and diagrams, which express explicit abstract structures or logical relations. If at this point we emphasize the primary modus of showing, then it is to root the location of the picture first and foremost in the aesthetic, which obeys principles other than the discursive or referential; in particular it has to do with considerations beyond the traditional philosophical ones on the image, which continually move along the subjects of representation, of similarity, of differences between imagination and concepts of truth and appearance and with that – literally – sight unseen privilege the paradigm of the utterance, the propositional determination, those that shift into the foreground, in which the genuine merit of the picture is. *Showing is something other than saying*.[27] It provides us with a different grammar, capacity and performance than saying. That along with the fact that the notion of "showing" cannot be separated from the visual in which it is shown is why accessing (a notion) through showing offers another *access to the iconic* than the question of representationality or similarity, and that is, according to my thesis, *in transit through its aesthetic*. As long as we therefore consider showing as a genuine picture practice, we have already entered the level of aesthetics – and a philosophy of the picture, thus forming our *second thesis*, which is also applicable precisely here, because the mediality of

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[24]   See Dieter Mersch, "Wort, Bild, Ton, Zahl: Modalitäten medialen Darstellens", in Mersch (ed.), *Die Medien der Künste*: München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003, pp. 9–49.

[25]   Dieter Mersch, "Körper zeigen", in: Erika Fischer-Lichte – Christian Horn – Matthias Warstat (eds.), *Verkörperung* (*Theatralität*, vol. 2), Tübingen: A. Francke, 2001, pp. 75–91.

[26]   Heidegger, "The Way to Language", *loc. cit.*, pp. 400 f.

[27]   Let me here refer to the various formulations by Wittgenstein: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, esp. 3.262, 4.022, 4.12–4.1212, 4.126, 5.62, 6.12, 6.36 and 6.522.

the iconic, its forms of representation, first unfold in the aesthetic and have to be viewed from the perspective of the aesthetic. In other words, thought which shows (illustrative thinking) is aesthetic thinking and if one asks about the particularities of the picture, about the specificity of the visual, one is already referring to the *structure and logic of showing.*

In doing so, showing reveals itself as an equally interesting and unwieldy notion, and it is worth examining the expression in its uniqueness with a view to the iconic. Since, initially, the expression "showing" – linguistically speaking – can be used transitively as well as intransitively. This was also already indicated by Wittgenstein.[28] That is within the philosophical context of *deixis* the transitive "showing" is almost exclusively singled out – showing then means: to point, indicate or refer to something – equally common though are practices of demonstrating or exhibiting, even including presenting oneself, i.e., *showing itself.* At the same time, the relational structure – as a further point – proves to be, whether transitive or intransitive, immediately ambiguous. Thus *on the one hand*, there is showing in the sense of *monstrare*, just as there is the monster, the monstrous and the holy monstrance: in the stricter sense, by showing they point to themselves; they are, so to speak, what they are and nothing beyond that, unless that is, we equip them e.g., in the instant of a religious ceremony, with a symbolic structure. *On the other hand,* the *deixis* – which was directly connected with the saying in Greek – functions as a *three-figure* relation in the stricter sense, exactly like the corresponding pointer: it indicates something other, directs the view to a specific place, just as it equally refers back to the shower, no showing can show without showing itself at the same time. This can also be formulated as: *The showing testifies for its own showing.* Ultimately, in German – as well as in other languages – the expression "showing" carries a number of connotations: *Ich kann etwas zeigen*, that is I can show something, or, *ich kann auf etwas zeigen*, i.e., point out something. Moreover, I can also indicate something, i.e., *etwas anzeigen.* But I can also demonstrate or perform something – as in *a* show; finally, I can present or exhibit myself, e.g., *cora publico* in a talk, and so forth. It can thus be assumed that showing participates at the same time in all of these possible meanings.

Showing therefore opens up an equally rich and complex modality of possibilities – and in its entirety we are in fact dealing with a philosophically rather neglected cultural technology; and the fundamental insight here is that according to Wittgenstein both, saying *and* showing, are deeply interwoven and cannot be separated from each other. Moreover: if we compare the richness of expression

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[28]   This applies in particular to the expression "to show itself" (*sich zeigen*): *ibid.*, 6.36 and 6.522.

which belongs to it with that of language, we see that it comes a close second. Then, the *thesis* here is that (not only) the iconic participates in all of these facets of meaning; instead in any expression, discourse or interaction, even in logical propositions we are immediately confronted with the entanglement of both. Showing is not something apart that simply happens; rather we are dealing with a *plurality of showing games*, which could clearly be set in analogy to the complexity and plurality of Wittgenstein's "language games" – and just like these the analysis of showing allows us to travel back and forth across a broad and extensive field of thought.[29]

This also means: the variety and capacity of showing – as well as that of visual presentation in the mode of showing and showing itself – are difficult to sound out on the whole; moreover in the iconic a connection between them and other modes of presentation would have to be made, for example, when I aspire to point out a specific path system as with a map, but do it at the same time with iconic and symbolic elements that not only open up a diverse aesthetic game – traditional map art is of this type when within its frame it simultaneously co-implements complete views of the city – but also allows anagogical readings: medieval maps were like this; they were oriented on the history of salvation so to speak. But there is still more: For every showing, whether it be ostentatious, deictic or intransitive, a duplicity belongs beyond the duplicity of saying and showing, that is still allowed in the practice of showing itself, which simultaneously opens up an *oblique* dimension with every act, since *showing and showing itself do indeed point towards one another*. Since with every gesture that indicates something or every demonstration that attempts to present something I exhibit *myself* at the same time *in my corporeality*. Then transitivity and intransitivity not only form different practices of showing, but are also always "chiastically" interlaced with one another.

At the same time, the chiasm elucidates that the aesthetic dimension is always inescapable: in that I *show or point to something*, I cannot avoid *showing myself in showing*, i.e., to "perform" the way I show alongside and to characterize its uniqueness. This applies to ever bodily act: the movement that I perform to underline my comment and to lend it its own emphasis, are peculiar to me – just as no painter or photographer escapes the distinctiveness of their own style, because their own flesh is embossed in the painting or in the photograph just as their gaze is. Jacques Lacan emphasized this in particular: making a picture, means first and foremost "giving" someone something to gaze at. The artist does

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[29]   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, Preface, p. vii.

not just show something, *rather he bestows upon me his gaze*.[30] In short: the transitivity and intransitivity of showing join together – like appearance, *ekphanes* and *ekstasis* – directly in the aesthetic.[31]

As a limitation it should be added here, that this aesthetic structure is at the same time subject to a series of *idiosyncratic properties*. They deny their reflexive status. Not only is showing unable to simultaneously show what it shows, the showing itself occurs in showing so to speak incidentally and beyond any control. It does not allow itself to be dominated or controlled; it happens. This also applies to the Lacanian bestowing of the gaze. That is, I show myself when I demonstrate something or introduce myself or present a specific view and even when I say something or remain silent, *but I am not able to explicate this presentation through showing*, I can only surrender to it. *Thus, showing itself withdraws in the showing*. It remains implicit in the reflexive mode and is always endowed with a characteristic vagueness or indeterminacy. The ambiguity, the constitutional "fuzziness" of pictures as Gottfried Böhm expressed it, depends on it.[32]

The Contrary Negative and a "Logic" of Non-Oppositional Differences

Up until now, we have only found an alternative mode to "saying" and "proposition", in order to apply them to images; in the following though we have to focus on its capacity in view of an extended concept of thinking. I would suggest that: if there is visual thought that is different from discursive thought then the difference between the two can be exemplified based on a "logic of the iconic", *which follows a logic other than propositional logic*, namely a *logic of showing*. Although always already ensnared in "saying", "showing" turns out to be as complex as the "saying"; nevertheless, it is endowed with other potentials for expression and forms of reflection and therefore also with another structure. If we try in the stricter sense to understand this structure, it can be said – in relation to Heidegger's considerations about Hegelian negativity – that showing

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[30]   See Jacques Lacan, "The Line and Light", in Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, transl. by Alan Sheridan, New York: W. W. Norton, 1998, pp. 91–104, cf. esp. pp. 100 f.

[31]   For a theoretical foundation see: Dieter Mersch, *Was sich zeigt: Materialität, Präsenz, Ereignis*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002.

[32]   Gottfried Boehm, "Indeterminacy: On the Logic of the Image", in: Bernd Huppauf – Christoph Wulf (eds.), *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination:The Image between the Visible and the Invisible*, New York: Taylor & Francis: 2009, pp. 219–229.

opens up a *non-dichotomous, non-oppositional logic*. It can be called a "non-non-classical logic" beyond the distinction between classical and non-classical logic, which still argues in the realm of propositions; and the thesis represented here is that this non-non-classical logic is rooted in *the non-expressibility of the contradictory negative*. We can already garner this from the simplest and most basic form of negativity, the difference between being (*Sein*) and nothing (*Nichts*). How would a non-being or a non-fact be depicted visually? Are there "negative facts" or – in the sense of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* – negative elementary propositions?[33] At least their possibility for perception would have to be refuted, since the aesthetic always deals with the *appearance*; however, there is perhaps an indirect trace of the non-appearing once again stated in the appearance, in a sense the paradox indication of an absence through a presence, an *absentia in praesentia*.[34]

With regard to showing, this means: either I show something – or I omit every action, which also means that I am not even able to mark the omission. Similarly, something either *shows itself* – or *nothing*, whereby the nothing should not be conceived from being, rather the being from nothing in the sense of an event or an occurrence. Consequently, showing allows just as little room to manoeuvre as seeing does: I point to this, single out something or pass over another intentionally, leave it out, but each time there is a showing, one that even points to (shows) the omission. And again, similarly, there is either seeing or total blindness, since even the conscious suppression is owing to a seeing that *does not want to see*: the perception permits no transition, no link, no differentiation between perception and non-perception. I have to, so to say, have already seen that I *over*looked something. Obviously, I cannot show nothingness –; that is there are denials and failures to grasp something, deceptions and maskings, but as just as a negative factuality does not exist, a negative performance also fails to exists. The decision between showing and not-acting so to speak "goes all out". That is why I can at best aspire to hide or conceal something by my showing something else; I can mask something, build an illusion or a pseudo-showing, or even demonstrate an illusion as illusion, but what is common to all of these, is that they are still *modes of showing*, that they still have to be *evincibly* performed and in doing *so show themselves*, as masks above all bear witness to, which as masks always discover/uncover. As Wittgenstein noted in a sporadic remark found in his *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*:

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[33] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.21–4.22, 4.5, 5, 5.5.

[34] With regard to the game of *praesentia* and *absentia* see Dieter Mersch, *Posthermeneutik*, Berlin: Akedemie Verlag, 2010, esp. pp. 97 ff., as well as Mersch, "Absentia in Praesentia: Negative Medialität", in Christian Kiening (ed.), *Mediale Gegenwärtigkeit*, Zürich: Chronos, 2007, pp. 81–94.

"Erst in einem komplizierten Ausdrucksspiel gibt es Heuchelei und ihr Gegen-teil."[35] In a similar sense it can be said that a refusal or restraint in the showing evokes a complex pattern of actions, which it first indicates as such. Thus, for example, the eradication of a picture such as Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1951) first gains its sense within a space of showing; the erasure is literally grafted onto the showing, in the obliteration the remains of the obliteration are shown, which as such remain irredeemably shape the picture.

Negation in the picture participates therefore always already in the *duplicity of a positivity and negativity* – whereas in language it belongs to grammar and its rules. "Only within a system of symbols do we possess the concept of nega-tion", as Wittgenstein states in the *Big Typescript*,[36] which defines it just as it executes it; on the other hand iconic negations form additions or secondary applications ex post, which as such are not easily understood: "Daß z.B. ein gezeichneter Plan eines Weges ein Bild des Weges ist, verstehen wir ohne wei-teres, wo sich der gezeichnete Strich nach links biegt, biegt sich auch der Weg nach links etc. etc. Daß aber das Zeichen 'nicht' den Plan ausschließt, sehen wir nicht."[37] Iconic negativities concern, in other words, something already painted or represented that first has to undergo a subtraction and is at the same time not deductible itself. Jörg Immendorf's *Hört auf zu malen* (1965), whose title is painted with rough, pastose letters across the picture, creates a visible example of this. The script, which by the way is also part of the painting, (i.e., its vis-uality is) does not negate the picture, but rather the act of painting, albeit so that the painting as a painting is negated as much as it is confirmed; the writing though remains part of the picture and through that certifies the painting once more. Even iconoclasm as the most rigorous form of destruction or negation of the iconic, which does not even leave behind the remains of a cavity or ashes, inversely confirms the power of the iconic all the more clearly in its passion against the iconic and in this way creates perhaps the most radical form of its recognition. In doing so, the work of destruction undermines the illusion of an

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[35] "Feigning and its opposite exist only when there is a complicated *play of expressions*." (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I, ed. by G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, transl. by C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, § 946.)

[36] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Big Typescript: TS 213*, German–English Scholars' Edition, ed. and transl. by C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, p. 90e.

[37] "That e.g. a sketched plan of a route is a picture of the route, we understand immediately, where the line bends to the left, the route bends to the left too etc. etc. However, we do not see that the sign 'not' excludes the plan." (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen*, Wie-ner Ausgabe, vol. 3, ed. by M. Nedo, Wien: Springer, 2003, p. 54.)

obliteration which unwillingly still emphasizes the affirmative power of the iconic. In the same sense, *not wanting to see* in the end means submitting oneself to seeing through the act of a deception and to, all the more urgently, render homage to it. That is why when faced with the question of the negative Heidegger at the same time poses the problem of "Nothingness" (*Nichts*) in traditional metaphysics, because this always already concerns a Non-*Being* (*Nichtsein*). That is, it always concerns the negation of a primordial Being – whereas the "nothingness" in consideration of *showing* and the "logic" of the visual takes on a different status, precisely because we are not already operating in alternatives, but rather always already in "affirmatives" – or better yet: beyond affirmation and negation – in delaying what we could refer to as the *non-negativity or non-negatability of existence.*

The "said" does indeed have its equivalent in the non-negativity of the space of perception itself. Since the negation cannot be a mode of perception either, insofar as it is always proceeded by a "something" – a *that*, an existence; the concept of negativity would be totally amiss, just as it would be amiss to say "something" at point k at time t already means the negation of all other facts at this point at this time, because the reference to "all" does not make any sense here: the "everything else" would not even be explicable. This too has always been pointed out, both in Aristotle's theory of perception as well as by Maurice Merleau-Ponty:[38] That is, I can be mistaken about *what* I see, but not *that* I see (or that what I see appears *so* to me and not differently). Wittgenstein describes the same difference based on the example of a ball, which can be doubtful *as* a ball, but not that *it can appear to me as such*: "Der Mechanismus der Hypothese würde nicht funktionieren, wenn der Schein auch noch zweifelhaft wäre. … Wenn es hier Zweifel gäbe, was könnte den Zweifel heben?"[39] This remark from 1930, which seems to later lead to the elucidations in *On Certainty*, directly coincides with the question of the negativity of showing and negation in pictures. Since just as "non-being" cannot be an object of perception, it can also not be the subject of visual representation, because this always makes "something" visible and only shows itself through a visibility; otherwise it means bearing the paradox, to simultaneously see and not see something. That does not mean that the "not" is not somehow found in the picture – one could

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[38]   Aristotle, *De Anima*, transl. by R. D. Hicks, New York: Prometheus Books, 1991. In particular Aristotle understands perception as "pathos". Further Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomology of Perception*, part 2: "The World as Perceived", transl. by Colin Smith, London: Routledge, 2006, §§ 3 and 4.

[39]   "The mechanism of the hypothesis would not function, if the appearance were to be still doubtful. … If here there was doubt, what could eliminate it?" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen*, p. 19.)

think of a number of ways to define negations, for example to paint over, strike-through or cross-out; Otto Neurath tried something comparable in his pictorial grammar as did Peirce with his "logical graphs". Nevertheless, in no way do these forms of negation prove to be unambiguous, since striking-through or crossing-out can, e.g., also mean agreeing when responding in a questionnaire, particularly in the picture, despite all of the negations applied after the fact, the negated, crossed-out or painted over always shows through and reveals itself or can be made visible by technical means. An example here would be Richard Hamilton's *My Marylin* (1964), which following in the footsteps of photographers selects an image from a series of pictures of Marylin Monroe by means of cross-ing out the others.

Quite early on, Wittgenstein discussed this difficulty in the visual by com-paring the not (*nicht*) in discursive and iconic schemes. Thus in *Bemerkungen,* a publication compiled from remarks formulated in 1929, he writes that "[m]an …[kann] nicht das contradictorische Negative sondern nur das conträre zeichnen (d.h. positiv darstellen)".[40] Time and time again Wittgenstein returned to this striking difference. Thus a passage in *Philosophical Investigations* states: "a painting or relief or film … can … at any rate not set up what is not the case."[41] And an earlier comment also from 1929, as well as notes from the *Philosophical Remarks* and *Big Typescript* state more precisely: "Ich kann ein Bild davon zeichnen, wie Zwei einander küssen; aber doch nicht davon, wie Zwei einander nicht küssen (d.h. nicht ein Bild, das bloß dies darstellt.)"[42] The reflections stem from a comparison of the proposition and the picture, whose relationship, as is commonly known, played an important role in *Tractatus* and which, with regard to the question of negation, met up with particular problems in both media. Con-sequently, the transition from fact to picture to propositions, as is postulated in *Tractatus*, is untenable.[43] Similar problems also arise however for the "elemen-tary proposition", [44] which only expresses "what the case is". As Wittgenstein

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[40]   "[O]ne cannot draw the contradictory negative, but rather only the contrary (i.e. representing it in a positive manner)", Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen*, p. 56.

[41]   Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 520, cf. also *The Big Typescript* (cf. note 36 above), p. 81e. See also D. Mersch, "Bild und Blick: Zur Medialität des Visuellen", in Christian Filk – Michael Lommel – Mike Sandbothe (eds.), *Media Synaesthetics*, Köln: Halem, 2004, pp. 95–122.

[42]   "I can draw a picture of two people kissing one another, but not two people not kissing (i.e., not a picture that shows only that)", Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen*, p. 56. Similarly in *The Big Typescript*, p. 89e: "I can draw a picture of two people fencing with each other; but not of two people not fencing with each other …"

[43]   See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 2.1 ff., 3 ff.

[44]   *Ibid.*, 6.

further determines, contradictory negations, in particular their notation, require a discrete drawing apparatus which first needs to be constructed – a premise, which in turn loses all validity outside of discursive schemes, especially in the visual.

This insight can also be made fruitful with regard to the difference between *contradictory negations and contrasts* and as a potential to differentiate against the backdrop of a proposition of thought: Although entangled with each other, it leads to two different concepts or ideal types of thought as they can be developed from the *dichotomy of oppositional distinctions* on the one hand and the *non-oppositional* or *contrary differences* on the other hand. Since it is in fact not about alleging that pictures, to the extent that they show, would be incapable of negations and thus exclude every form of "negativity", but rather that we are confronted with *another form of the negative*. Different too from the opposition between "contradictory" and "contrary" propositions in logic and their division into "logical squares". If there is visual or pictorial thought, then there have also to be *non-discursive or non-dichotomous or non-oppositional ways of differentiating, whereby the "logic" of showing can be identified as an example of such differentiation*. It operates, and this is the *third result* of our considerations up to here, preferably by means of contrasts, whose specific merit in the visual would admittedly have to be examined more closely. However, both, contradictions and contrasts, always already cooperate in thought. Since we have to use media in order to "mediate" meaning, both, the visual and the verbal as well as "showing" and "saying" or aesthetics and discourses and both forms of the negative are necessarily intertwined.

Contrast and Distinction: On the Question of the Visual Representability of the Logical

So far, as a temporary *initial* result of our considerations we have: pictures show; showing does not allow any contradiction, in particular any absolute negativity in the sense of a division between being and nothingness. Moreover, beyond the *contradictory negative* there are other forms of negation, in particular those which work with contrasts and those that are based on the principle of *contrariness*. Moreover, there are of course contrary expressions or implications in logic and language as well; however, contrasts, as specific features of the medial and iconic representation in particular, act in a topological manner and incorporate the space on which they operate, while discrete orders primarily are based in time. Time and again it turns out that pictures in difference to language generate spatial orders, that diagrams arrange relations in space, that the surplus

of the iconic is bound precisely to its spatiality.[45] Spatial – or non-discursive – contrasts in turn form the basis of that which Gottfried Boehm called "iconic difference";[46] we will still take a closer look at this. Hence, images generate different types of differences and therefore act differently than propositional or discursive schemas, in particular they are not limited to "as"-determinations that can be judged as "true" or "false", but rather first construct their subjects by means of forming contrasts. It is not their referentiality that is decisive – nor the judgment about supposed similarities – rather it is their compositionality, which first puts together what it is showing from spatial oppositions. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe already pointed to this in his colour theory: "We observed that all nature manifests itself by means of colours… We now assert, extraordinary as it may in some degree appear, that the eye sees no form, inasmuch as light, shade, and colour together constitute that which to our vision distinguishes object from object, and the parts of an object from each other."[47]

Moreover: We have determined that showing is in a sense based on affirmations, as it posits its gestures in the visual, which is always connected with the allegation of "existences". That is why every dash, every line drawn, every dab of colour, every released element or every piece of canvas that shines through is relevant. In a picture there are no gaps, no empty spaces or free places that do *not* belong to the picture, rather everything's place is equipotent and visible. Even the contingent, the random mistake, or some unexpected occurrence is immediately drawn in and integrated into the picture – which is the problematic aspect of imaging in the natural sciences. If, in other words, showing – as a

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[45]   On the correlation to space and picture see Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Laokoon: oder die Grenzen der Poesie und Malerei" in *Werke und Briefe* in 12 volumes, vol. 5/2, Frankfurt/M: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989, esp. pp. 92ff. and 115ff. Foundations of diagrammatology as well as phenomenological picture-theories use similar topoi. See also Lammert et al. (eds.), *Räume der Zeichnung*, pp. 10 f. as well as Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, "Gezeichnete Geschichte: Im Koordinatenraum der Faktographie", in Lammert et al. (eds.), pp. 25–37; cf. my reflections in Dieter Mersch, "Visuelle Argumente: Zur Rolle der Bilder in den Naturwissenschaften", in Sabine Maasen, Torsten Mayerhauser, Cornelia Renggli (eds.), *Bilder als Diskurse – Bilddiskurse*, Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2006, pp. 95–116.

[46]   See Gottfried Boehm, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen: Die Macht des Zeigens*, Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2007. See also Bernhard Waldenfels, "Spiegel, Spur und Blick: Zur Genese des Bildes", in Gottfried Boehm (ed.), *Colloquium Rauricum*, vol. 7: *Homo pictor*, München– Leipzig: Saur, 2001, pp. 14–31. Moreover, see also Axel Müller, *Die ikonische Differenz: Das Kunstwerk als Augenblick*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997, which gives yet another sense to difference.

[47]   Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Goethe's Theory of Colours*, transl. by Charles Lock Eastlake, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970 p. lii.

medial form – does not tolerate any not-showing, when it – just like pictures – is unable to create any exclusive differences and thus also no exceptions, nothing unmarked or areas demarcated from the observation, then there is no falsehood or, as the unjustly forgotten Albrecht Fabri said, no "Rätsel" in the picture, because "nichts ... verborgen ist, vielmehr alles offen da liegt."[48] Consequently, the means of iconic expression is not based on yes/no decisions, but rather on black/white or colour contrasts, upon which intersecting lines, hachures or figure/background vexations, which always make both sides of the difference visible without playing them off of one another or preferring one over the other. Accordingly, the particular uniqueness of such contrastings is that we are not perceiving only *either* the one *or* the other – in contrast to the "change of aspect", which contains a transitional figure and the sudden change of perception from A to B or B to A without the detour via a nuance[49] –, but rather immediate *simultaneities*. These simultaneities, which have to be reconstructed as contradictions or paradoxes within the repertoire of contradictory logics, belong to contrasts, whereas in the mode of showing they fall under the simultaneous recognition of oppositions – just like complementary colours side-by-side or the interweaving of masculine and feminine features in a single figure. Instead of oppositional logics, we are dealing with spatial patterns, which in turn make boundaries, situations or positions visible to one another. This also means that a space or area can be divided by a line or a series of figures and colours, but that which divides, as Walter Benjamin noted, both sets the divided apart from its base as well as at the same time marking the base, thus allowing both – the *line itself* as well as the *base* – to identify.[50]

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that this "division" in no way weights the divided: contrasts always allege the parity of all of their parts, they *de-hierarchize* the difference. Drawing a boundary line thus does not generate a disjunction, as also George Spencer-Brown stated, but rather a conjunction: the disparity of the either/or turns into the simultaneousness of both-as-well-as that

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48   No "mystery", since "nothing … is hidden, rather everything is laid out in the open" (Albrecht Fabri, "Wie man eine Ausstellung eröffnet", in Wulf Herzogenrath – Gabriele Lueg, eds., *Die 60er Jahre – Kölns Weg zur Kunstmetropole: Vom Happening zum Kunstmarkt*, Köln: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1986, p. 28.

49   Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Part II, sect. XI.

50   "The graphic line is defined by its contrast with area. … the background is conjoined with the line. The graphic line marks out the area and so defines it by attaching itself to it as its background. Conversely, the graphic line can exist only against this background, so that a drawing that completely covered its background would cease to be a drawing." (Walter Benjamin, "Paintings or Signs and Marks", in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. I, 1913–1926, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 84.

includes a mutual participation, not already the chasm between appreciating and depreciating. This can be clarified particularly with the example of colour play. According to the four colour theorem, four colours are able to divide an area so that no two areas with the same colour come in contact with one another and thwarts its discernibility – then the space can be completely broken down into pieces by forming contrasts, nevertheless, all of the colours as well as the *structure of their division* is visible. We are therefore given a topological difference schema, which satisfies mathematical conditions, but whose spatial configurations, measured against the doctrine of traditional logic, fail to prove themselves as unambiguous or free of contradiction. The productivity of such methods is known from diagrammatics and cartography as well as from the false colour technique; in fact, at this point the iconic functions no less analytically than discourse, *however, in a different way*. Moreover, as far as that is concerned the "logic" of colours forms an interesting special case, because every colour, in correlation to the space which absorbs it, simultaneously excludes any other colour. Both Husserl and Alexius Meinong already noted this – and Wittgenstein's discussions about the same circumstances were recorded primarily in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations*.[51] Thus a surface might be covered in "red" or "green"; however, topologically they cannot be found at the same place. In other words, a space either seems "red" or "green" which is why colours can be used to "make differences" as various colouring methods demonstrate in order to mark different temperatures, degrees of activity, differences in heights etc. Accordingly, we are not dealing here in the strictest sense with an oppositional logic based on principles of identity and contradictions (as in classical logic), because colour differentiations do not function hierarchically and no conclusion that can be characterized as "right" or "wrong" can be derived from them. "False" is always logically dependent on "true", which does not apply to colours. At the same time colours do occupy *presentative* functions, taking on synoptic functions and providing overviews, however, they represent non-discrete values, at best degrees.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that colours as markers of differences cannot form complex structures – in particular when there is only one alternative, 0/1 or yes/no decisions can also be modelled by means of complementary colours. First however this applies only to limited, i.e. finite, spaces, whereas binary algorithms or Turing machines calculate with potentially infinite quantities. *Second*, colours take on here only *syntactic* properties beyond their particular aesthetic qualities, which can lead to confusion, when colour schemes

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[51] See Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis: Gespräche, aufgezeichnet von Friedrich Waismann, Schriften, vol. 3, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1967, pp. 63 ff.

(e.g., legends) are associated with symbolic structures or experience-based in-tuitions.[52] *Third* and most important, the key question remains that of the negativity, because "yes"/"no" or 0/1 or "on"/"off" decisions – or for that matter presence/absence or being/nothingness – already include their negations, "red" and "green" in contrast, do not (that is unless they are defined as such conventionally, which then already implies the discursive commentary). In the binary code 0 is always defined as non-1 and 1 as non-0, whereas "green" and "red" does not allow for any similar construction. From there it follows that with the aid of contrasts in limited surroundings, veritable "logics" can develop, like Venn diagrams in particular show, which visualize the notion of sets as well as the relations between the sets and which in turn supply the model for Peirce's "existential graphs".[53] Nonetheless, compared to traditional "logics of contra-diction" profound differences remain. Thus complex logical derivations can be noted with solely visual means through the equivalence of logical operators such as "and" or "or" along with set-theoretic operators like "intersection" and "union", whereby the negation is constructed via complementary sets. However, what is introduced set-theoretically via the contradictory negative is depicted contrastively in the Venn diagrams. This applies without exception to the ele-mentary parts of propositional logic as well and in disregard of any aesthetic. Once again though, the "complement" or negation denotes the pivotal point, represented for example by hachures or something similar in diagrams and are not weighted in comparison to the original set. Moreover, as iconic elements, they remain without any distinction. Venn diagrams are thus only relevant as syntactic graphs; however, they lose their significance when the frame is shifted, the range of validity varied, or when non-syntactic characteristics such as mat-eriality etc. have to be incorporated. They thus only possess *formal properties*, even when they include colours or take recourse to the aesthetic dimension. Thus as Wittgenstein dogmatically postulated in proposition 2.0251 of *Trac-tatus*: "Space, time and colour (colouredness) are forms of objects."[54] They are because they belong to the *logical structure of the world* and, consequently, are only considered in their logicity. That which lends colour and materials their aesthetic power and first allows objects to vividly stand out is itself elusive.[55]

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[52]   This is also the reason why false colour representations are often applied along conven-tional associations: the more yellow and whiter, the hotter, the more bluer, the colder.

[53]   See esp. Steffen Bogen, "Logische und ästhetische Experimente" (cf. note 7 above), pp. 40f.

[54]   Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 2.0251.

[55]   See Dieter Mersch, "Diagramme, Graphen, Modelle" (forthcoming); Mersch, "Materiali-tät der Bildlichkeit" (forthcoming); Mersch, Schrift/Bild – Zeichnung/Graph – Linie/ Markierung: Bildepisteme und Strukturen des ikonischen ‚Als' " (forthcoming).

Topological Difference: On "Iconic Episteme"

What is therefore decisive as the second result of our considerations is that the contrary negative under formal restrictions and within a given frame is clearly suited for exclusion, not however for generating positive/negative classifications. The mutual exclusion is of a topological sort, not a logical: A excludes B at the same place, however, "not B" does not *result* from A, just as "not A" does not result from B – colour differences or foreground-puzzles are a perfect example of this. Accordingly, no propositions can be made with them in the sense of "as A" and "as not B" or "not as B": Spatial relationships remain neutral in comparison to conceptual decisions. That is why contrasts fail there, where we are dealing with predications: That is, in a picture there is an "as" – every "iconic as" that we have yet to speak of[56] – not however, as already mentioned, a "not as" or an "as not" as is applicable to discursive propositions: "not red" is not replaceable with "green", rather "green" represents "green". Visual representations thus generally function here tautologically: "What you see is what you see",[57] which is why according to Frank Stella, despite some provocative comments by Jiri Dokupil or Albert Oehlen and other painters from the *Junge Wilden*: "Wenn kein Rot mehr da ist, wird eben mit Grün weitergemalt."[58] This also means that contrasts divide an area or space; in doing so they operate symmetrically and in an egalitarian manner. Differentiations between figures, and the background in particular, do not tolerate a visual distinction even if pictorial history seems to suggest just that – for example, Kasimir Malewitsch's *Black Square on White Background* (1915), whose title sets the sequence for that which "as a picture" is left open, i.e., whether it is a black square on a white background or a white frame on a black background: The "metastable" game of the paradox functions specifically in that both sides are equally weighted.

This differentiates the forming of contrasts from the positing of differences: The Spinozian *omnis determinatio est negatio* generates the determination through a negation. By comparing something determinate to something indeterminate, the chiasm of alterity is isolated. Producing a proposition thus means

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[56]   See also my concept of framing in Dieter Mersch, "Blick und Entzug: Zur Logik ikonischer Strukturen", in Gottfried Boehm – Gabriele Brandstetter – A. von Müller (eds.), *Bild – Figur – Zahl*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007, pp. 55–69.

[57]   See title of exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA): *Frank Stella and the Anderson Collection at SFMOMA,* 2004.

[58]   "When there is no more red paint left, green is used."

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discriminating against the indeterminate: "Something" is carved out of a horizon (itself indeterminate) and acts here like a background. This also applies to George Spencer-Brown's "difference marker", which otherwise exhibits similarities to a graphical inscription: Thus to "draw a distinction"[59] only identifies an alternative between "something" and "something other" so that the distinction emphasizes one side of the difference, whereas the other remains free as "unmarked space". Also the ground which is marked by any drawn line remains untouched or "in-different" in Spencer-Brown; the materiality of the space plays no peculiar role. *In that "inside" and "outside" or "system" and "surroundings" are separated from one another, such positings of difference function differently than the contrasts used in visual logic and therefore generate other patterns.* At the same time, unlike binary orders, they allow other operations in the room – since it is not by chance that the "logic of disjunction" can be written in a formula using the Scheffer stroke which symbolizes the "neither-nor", while visual structures always have to appeal to positively posited simultaneities and the "both-and". That is – once again in the limited and well-defined context of Venn diagrams – there is a visual representation of the neither-nor, e.g., by marking the complement of two disjunct circles, however, *firstly*, there is still no decision about what exactly is marked – there is again an indifference between the figure and the background. *Secondly*, even more importantly it cannot be demonstrated in this way that the Scheffer stroke is sufficient for representing traditional logic's "and", "or" and "consequential relationships": Rather the visual result tends to irritate.

This does not imply, however, that there are no visual arguments: Geometric proofs with compasses and rulers are based on graphic deductions; sometimes the erratic evidence of a line is sufficient; the same applies for proofs using Venn diagrams even when they lack the desired precision of formal derivations because they inherently assume the spatialization of mathematical properties. Important areas of mathematics as a result remain closed to a suitable visualization despite the dramatic "return of the picture";[60] nevertheless, there where space supplies the decisive parameter, both in geometry as well as in graph theory and topology, the surplus of spatiality is able to generate derivations, which otherwise could not be met. And it is exactly there that the additional value of "diagrammatics" is to be found: Its epistemic potential lies in the representation of relational structures, distributions and orientations, whose inscrip-

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[59] George Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form – Gesetze der Form*, Leipzig: Bohmeier, 1997.

[60] On the return of pictures in mathematics see: Heinz Otto Peitgen, "Mit den Fraktalen kehren die Bilder in die Mathematik zurück", in Florian Rötzer (ed.), *Vom Chaos zur Endophysik*, München: Boer, 1994, pp. 98–114.

tion on a surface allows inherent manipulations – shifts, correlations, demarcations, combinations etc., so that cognition can occur in the graphic mode itself. It is based on that which we have already discussed a number of times as "iconic difference": The frequently misunderstood expression, introduced by Gottfried Boehm in order to characterize the specific mediality of iconicity, is directly related to the question of the "iconic as" in comparison to the "propositional" or "discursive". If "iconic difference" refers in the most general sense to the formation of contrasts by means of lines, colour, surfaces, contours, shading but also – in the iconic medium – between text and pictures, painted and photographed, things and primer and so on, the framing itself creates the most basic form of contrast, its *"Ur-Kontrast"*, to the extent that it separates that which is the "picture" from its other, thus emphasizing it and consequently guiding the gaze and the attention in such a way that "something" can in the first place appear and be seen "as a picture".

The framing, whether it is a given border, the distance between two pictures, its slight withdrawal from the wall, or the uniqueness of how it is hung etc., consequently belongs to the picture, forms its literal *Be-Dingung* (conditions), its own *mediality*. As a limit, the frame is also part of its iconicity, which first constitutes the pictorialness of the picture, i.e., allows it to *occur*. At the same time it actively allows the possibility of other contrasts to *occur*. Accordingly, we can talk of a principle of iconic différance, just as we can talk of an analogy to Jacques Derrida's *"Ur-Schrift"*[61] with *"Ur-Kontrast"*: The process of an ongoing contrasting that cannot itself be marked by a particular contrast, which however produces all of the contrast formations and outlines them. All aesthetic expressions are based on it, just as the diagrammatic formatting of a surface, its division into a grid pattern, the separation of fields, their scaling through a metric and the respective relational structures etc. etc. Each of these particular differences, relations or structural patterns spread themselves across the surface, making themselves visible, or can do nothing other than show themselves in their respective presence, but also in their precision or faultiness. They *are* so to speak, without reserves, since the picture reveals itself without reservation, surrenders itself fully.

At the same time, in the sense of spatial-qualitative differentiations the diverse forms of contrast govern the development of a visibility: *Pictures are constructions;* what they make visible is, as Paul Klee rightfully noted, based on visualization, not on the "de-piction" of a "reality" perceived somewhere else. Beyond any Platonian approach to representation the image first and foremost

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[61] On the concept of Derrida's *différance* and *"Ur-Schrift"* see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, esp. chapters 2 and 4.

shows its own reality which includes the image as well as its material basis and the framing differences between the picture and the non-picture (the background wall, the outside etc.). The visual epistemology derives from that: The "iconic difference" conditions the picture "as" a picture and through that first allows us to "see double", i.e. to see something *as* a picture and see something *in* the picture, the image – which proves to be fundamental to seeing pictures.[62] More-over, it also simultaneously erects that visual "world" in which we believe we recognize "something as something" – that which Husserl called the "*Bildob-jekt*" or "picture-object" and which phenomenological picture theory has chosen as the starting point for its "thaumaturgic" picture theory.[63] Therefore it is not the arrangements condensed into figures that seem relevant such as a "face", a "naked body" or an "anecdote" (Maurice Denis),[64] which strives to delude us into thinking something imaginary is real, but rather what occurs *before*, before a reference that is always the product of interpretation even comes into play. What we refer to as visual thought or "iconic episteme" – *a thinking in and with pictures* – is instead *owed to the iconic difference as a pictorial principle of différance*: those permanent generations of visual differentiations, in which "something" can be seen or with which something can be substantiated – as long as they operate like an index and refer to "existences".[65] They first become problematic when we look into their reality and "short-circuit" them to speak, with notions from the world – when we try, that is, to have blind faith in the supposed "realism" of the picture.[66]

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[62]   With regard to seeing double see Mersch, "Bild und Blick" (cf. note 42 above).

[63]   See esp. Lambert Wiesing, *Artifizielle Präsenz*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2005.

[64]   Quoted after Werner Haftmann, *Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 4th ed., München: 1965, p. 50.

[65]   See the discussion about the "indexicality" of photography in Philippe Dubois, *Der photographische Akt*, Amsterdam: Philo Fine Arts, 1998; see also Dieter Mersch, "Das Bild als Argument", in: Christoph Wulf – Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Ikonologien des Performa-tiven*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005, pp. 322–344; also Mersch, "Naturwissen-schaftliches Wissen und bildliche Logik", in Martina Heßler (ed.), *Konstruierte Sicht-barkeit: Wissenschafts- und Technikbilder seit der frühen Neuzeit*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006, pp. 405–420.

[66]   The author is indebted to Rett Rossi for having prepared the basic version of the present translation from the German original.