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**BRUEGEL – SEDLMAYR – IMDAHL:
THE BLIND SPOT OF INTERPRETATION**

Der Äußerste Grenzmoment der Verblendung ist dialektisch vermittelt mit einem Moment der Offenheit auf Offenbarung? wie immer diese als solche unausgesagt bleibt – wofern sie nicht, über der offenen (!) Hand der Gestürzten, als Erlösung durch eine Staude von Schwertlilien symbolisiert ist: Verkehrte Welt – so könnte man unter den Perspektiven des Manierismus sagen – selbst in Verkehrung.

Max Imdahl

Paying tribute to the memory of both Dmitry and Vladimir Sarabianov, we consciously fall under the spell of our memories connected with them. There was a moment when a chance remark made by Dmitry Vladimirovich – that the greatest text created by Sedlmayr is “The Blind”, not “Loss of the Centre” – supported us in our engagement with Sedlmayr’s legacy, although at that time we did not have enough courage to focus specifically on “The Blind”. However, after Dmitry Vladimirovich died, we felt it was somehow necessary to go back to this article and translate it. These notes are the result of our work on commentaries to “The Blind”, which included an investigation into the sophisticated relationship between Sedlmayr and Max Imdahl, an equally outstanding although somewhat lesser known author.

Before we give a full account of our probably somewhat incoherent observations on how any interpretation inevitably generates another competing

one that is not exactly an interpretation, we will outline the profiles of two characters in the strange story that is traditionally called art history.

First we would like to remind the reader of Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984), who was one of the most prominent members of the Vienna School of Art History and the author of “Loss of the Centre”, one of the most important texts in the Humanities field in the 20th century, which proved to be a true bone of contention. At first Sedlmayr was fascinated with architecture, which he studied at Vienna’s Technische Hochschule between 1918 and 1920. Later he left for the University of Vienna, where he studied art history under Max Dvořák. After Dvořák’s death Sedlmayr wrote a dissertation on the history of architecture under Julius von Schlosser. Starting from 1934 Sedlmayr taught at Vienna’s Technische Hochschule and also at the University of Vienna, where he first acted as Schlosser’s assistant, then from 1936 held a chair in Art History as Schlosser’s successor.

Even in Sedlmayr’s early texts-manifestos such as “Das gestaltete Sehen” (1925), “Die Quintessenz der Lehren Riegls” (1929) and the crowning text “Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft” (1931), one can see the key characteristic of Sedlmayr’s work, notably the gathering of methodological impressions from phenomenology, existential characterology and Gestalt psychology from the point of view of catholic anti-modernism. His rather radical ‘non-Euclidian’ view of architecture was expressed in pre-war publications dedicated to the Austrian baroque (1930) and Francesco Borromini (1934).

Structural analysis, traditionally associated with the names of Sedlmayr and his *Kunstwissenschaftlichen Forschungen*, which he edited together with Otto Pächt, bore fruit in the analytical approach towards both architectural forms (*Das erste mittelalterliche Architektursystem*, 1933) and painting (*Bruegel’s Macchia*, 1934).

After the War “Loss of the Centre” (1948) was published, in which art history is perceived as a history of ‘critical forms’, or critical moments in spiritual history that are understood as symptoms of godlessness, polytheism and idolatry, of the victory of the ‘technical age’ etc. And we are confronted by the story of the sufferings and sacrifices of humanity.

Sedlmayr argues that one can find these martyrs, or witnesses, among artists, because the most sincere of them carry out a prophetic and eschatological ministry. This book or case history became the subject of fierce discussions, which became even fiercer with Sedlmayr’s follow-up ‘diagnostic’ and ‘therapeutic’ works, such as “*Revolution der modernen Kunst*” (1955), “*Die Tod des Lichtes*” (1964) and also the collection of methodological articles “*Kunst und Wahrheit*” (1958). Its name is an allusion to Goethe.

“*Die Entstehung der Kathedrale*” (1950) – a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ of Gestalt-structural approach with elements of visionary sacramentalism and focused on church architecture, is a text intended and also partly written as a diagnosis of modernity, but this time considering the period from gothic ‘faraway’ to modernist ‘here and now’.

Continuing the tradition of phenomenological analysis of the architectural environment started by August Schmarsow and Hans Jantzen, Sedlmayr singles out 'baldachin' (also 'shelter', 'tabernacle' or 'aedicule') as a universal spatiotemporal monad, which he sees as a psychosomatic, if not 'primordial', invariant of the temple. Not only does the baldachin organize and channel some plastically and optically structured theophanic experience, but it also proves to be the condition of visually and emotionally dramatized kinaesthetic practice: the liturgical Meeting and Eucharistic Presence. However, because the Presence is given in the form of visual demonstration, this foreshadows all visual and optical illusions of 'modern art'.

A special aspect of Sedlmayr's work is his exemplary piece of analysis and interpretation of works of art (made for his art history seminar at the Munich university) that follows the four-part exegesis that originates from Philo of Alexandria and shows similarity to the iconological schemes of Erwin Panofsky, Rudolf Wittkower or Erik Forssman. Take such examples as his analysis of Karlskirche in Wien (1956), *The Parable of the Blind leading the Blind* by Pieter Bruegel (1957) and especially of *De Schilder const* (*The Art of Painting*) by Johannes Vermeer (1958). It was this last text that provoked an exaggerated reaction from Kurt Badt, who accused Sedlmayr of 'mystifying didacticism' from the standpoint of Gadamer's hermeneutics¹. Sedlmayr responded by claiming that Badt's arguments were nothing but 'banal' because he did not seem to have been able to overcome "the natural attitude" (*natürlichen Einstellung*).

The problem outlined in Sedlmayr's text on Bruegel is as follows: how could one both contemplate and feel blindness not only thematically but also emotionally and cognitively? An instrumental reduction, i.e. empathising with the represented characters, seems to be possible only in the form of hypothetically [virtually] blinding oneself, in other words, in the form of either restraining oneself from vision or doubting one's ability to see.

This is the basis of the whole plot of an interpretation as an experiment, as a radical experience of self-challenging, starting from the artificial interruption of visual experience or its impeding through Tachistoscopia, which cancels the continuity of vision and brings the spectator back to the point of the initial meeting with a thing – to the 'macchia'.

Going through the semantic levels or rather meaningful aspects in a three-dimensional exegesis of the work of art, starting with the physiognomic level and followed by the formal and noetic, the latter including the object, allegorical, eschatological and tropological sense, Sedlmayr's text finishes by turning the spectator to the unseen transcendence of 'the final things': death, most probably followed by Resurrection.

As for Max Imdahl (1925-1988), he was one of the most noticeable figures in post-war art studies, and not exclusively in Germany. What was special

¹ See: Badt, Karl. *Modell und Maler von Jan Vermeer. Probleme der Interpretation. Eine Streitschrift gegen Hans Sedlmayr*. Köln, 1960.

about his scholarly work is the integration of an artistic education and an academic career as art historian: he worked at the University of Münster and was a professor at Ruhr Universität Bochum. The range of his interests is impressive: from Carolingian book illustration to modern art, including the 17th century French theory of art. Imdahl has been especially praised for turning modern art into an academic subject, at least in German universities. Apart from that he implemented undoubtedly progressive methods of artistic education. However, his main achievement that placed him forever in the Pantheon of the world's art studies was his book about Giotto¹. This work is a brave experiment in putting together phenomenological hermeneutics, poststructuralist neoformalism and iconological postulates revised in the Neo-Thomist key. To the already known opposition introduced by Panofsky between 'iconography' and 'iconology' comes a third part – its result and, at the same time, basic unit – 'iconic' – Ikonik, slightly reminding us of Droysen's Historik. For Imdahl this is a theory and practice of considering the work of art both as a result of the painter's 'work of the eye' and as a way of discovering the 'presentness' of the spectator, which is crucial for the understanding of a work of art, whereas for the spectator his/her optical activity is a form of self-discovering and self-realisation. Apart from this, iconic is a special type of visual eventfulness where the dramatisation and choreography of imaginary acts, forms and motifs are intended to work in concert². As a consequence, iconic as a hermeneutic procedure is rather a performative than informative process, in which an essential feature is the linguistic 'staged performance' of a specific work of art, which takes into consideration all its references – textual, related to events and to subjects. The result is supposed to be the grasping of a 'simultaneous and intense visually compelling totality of the image'³ in its profound and immediate contingency⁴.

...After this presentation of the two characters of our little hermeneutic play, as we believe there is no need to introduce Bruegel, let us proceed to the 'libretto', whose leitmotif can be formulated as following: is Imdahl's theory a real alternative to the previous tradition of interpretation, which is usually signified by the concepts of iconography vs. iconology. Imdahl believed he had developed this tradition to its climax and thus, let us put it this way, abolishes it by introducing his own iconic.

¹ Giotto. Arenafresken: Ikonographie, Ikonologie, Ikonik. München: W. Fink, 1980.

² Ibid., pp. 17-28 (part II, 'Contingency – Composition – Providence').

³ Ibid., p. 108.

⁴ 'Necessity' as a stable visual composition of the representation is juxtaposed to the 'chance' (contingency) of a viewer's glance, which alone actually makes the representation (and the whole world) visible and thus meaningful. ((Ibid., p. 17, referring to Max Dvořák). This act of contingency already includes the power of the optical to grasp and conquer the haptic, if we use Riegl's oppositions here. But this is still grasping and categorization (restraining within public domain, and therefore the possibility to transfer the knowledge, its ability to communicate).

He finishes his book about the iconic by demonstratively criticizing Sedlmayr and parting company with him. It is not a coincidence that Sedlmayr was chosen for clarifying Imdahl's relationship with the old tradition; rather, for Imdahl he is a perfect example of demonstrative, or rhetoric, hermeneutics with elements of didactics, which is truer about *De Schilder konst*; however, he chooses to focus on the *Blind ... purposefully*.

Yet this 'parting company' is preceded by mentioning Erwin Panofsky and his three-part interpretation scheme in quite a positive way¹. Imdahl sees only one problem with it: exploring meaningful levels in the picture, Panofsky, although pointing at a possibility of 'condensing' meanings so as to receive 'a meaningful whole', does not realise this possibility. Staying at the level of the summing up of these meaningful levels, he does not try doing anything beyond what they are – regardless of their presence in a visual structure – in other words, in an optical and consequently historical event, in a specific representative and performative situation, which could be named only 'iconical'.

In Imdahl's view, one can achieve this adequate way of perceiving a work of art only through iconics. Because it takes into consideration 'the iconic evidence of a representation as a meaningful whole', it makes one experience 'iconographically and iconologically perceived pre-data'.

This appears to be kind of transcending, of overcoming the limitations of pre-established possibilities, i.e. a true 'transcending increase in the meaning'². However, Imdahl argues, it retains the overcoming meaning inside itself, unchanged and, at the same time, up to date.

Imdahl claims that neither iconography nor iconology takes into account such an overcoming of the meaning of the original work of art. It should be pointed out that he undoubtedly uses a popular 'iconology lite' version, because the original complex version does consider 'the inner meaning' at the third level of interpretation. Probably Imdahl is not satisfied with Panofsky's slightly Neo-Kantian orientation towards immanent transcendence, actually towards a transcendently, or direct and unambiguous way out into zones of existential symptoms, into the reality of 'reell' experience, using Husserl's terminology.

Symptomatically, Imdahl's discontent increases when it comes to Sedlmayr, whose texts 'dig into' deeper layers of the interpreter's personality even more radically than Panofsky's. Imdahl's questions to him are far more serious; his attitude might be unforgiving because they seem too similar to each other; for this reason Imdahl can't help noticing even minor differences.

What do they have in common? Apart from the focus on a particular work of art with its 'visual gestalt and particular order or meanings' (Sedlmayr's

¹ Giotto. *Arenafresken: Ikonographie, Ikonologie, Ikonik*, pp. 99–101.

² *Ibid.* The iconic uses iconography and iconology as raw material, with an aim to "overcome" its meaning. Generally speaking, iconic relates to *icon* in the same way logic relates to *Logos* and ethics to *ethos* (S.92). Above all, iconic is an "iconic way of seeing" (*Ibid.*), i.e. a praxis of seeing and not the system of knowledge.

words quoted by Imdahl), it is attention to the ‘special qualities’ that originate from ‘the condensed’ – the famous *Verdichtungen*. In this case interpretation is the next stage of creation in the form of ‘poetry’ (*Gedichte*), which is always ‘truth’, if the ‘flesh’ of art, the unshakable ‘now’ of a live creative act is taken into account¹.

Yet the differences between these two ‘poets of the meaning’ are more important. Imdahl emphasises their different understanding of what ‘meanings belonging to a work of art’ are, and how ‘they enter the work of art by themselves’². We argue that here is the origin of Imdahl’s unawareness and mis-understanding – his neither seeing nor accepting the things Sedlmayr writes about. The latter is not prone to deal with isolated meanings, ‘contingently’ popping into a work of art – and then popping out in order to meet the spectator’s eye.

While examining Imdahl’s interpretation of Sedlmayr, one notices the following accusations:

1. Sedlmayr is found guilty of building his interpretation according to ‘layers’ supposedly characteristic of the representation itself; as if the latter has a multi-layer and, what is even worse, both hierarchic and systematic structure of meaning. Imdahl believes that the idea of layers is based on Sedlmayr’s false conception of one original pre-perceivable layer that, however, has a certain ‘mood’. This ‘mood’ penetrates all the other layers, which altogether form a system of analogic qualities represented at each level in different ways. Consequently, the major problem, from Imdahl’s point of view, is that the meaningful whole, a kind of final meaning, comes as a result of the mutual neutralisation of the variety of meanings, its merging into the all-penetrating pre-conceived meaning.
2. Imdahl claims that his approach is different. In his view, the representation, being built in the process of ‘seeing sight’ – *sehendes Sehen*³, of contemplation, is ‘coincidental’ by nature, which means its visual and meaningful aspects, especially opposite to each other and competing, coincide in the moment of vision thanks to the active eye of

¹ Giotto. *Arenafresken: Ikonographie, Ikonologie, Ikonik*, p. 99.

² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³ ‘Seeing sight’ – *sehendes Sehen* is related, or rather juxtaposed to ‘cognitive sight’ – *erkennendes Sehen* (*Ibid.*, p. 26ff). The last one is aimed at recognition of the well known meaning of the familiar objects of the external world, whereas the first one is a figural creative act, a real representational praxis aimed at and fulfilling the creation of meaning. However both ways of seeing are linked in integration of ‘perspective projection’ and ‘stage choreography’, both immanent for representation (*Ibid.*, p. 20). On the one hand, actual sight really and literally makes a drama while moving the narrative, f.e. of Biblical story (thus making the script to play), on the other hand, the iconic turns the iconography of a scene into the emotional experience of a real event, concerning both soul and spirit – so that they both are examples of the higher range of spiritual and intellectual activity respectively. (p. 91ff.).

the spectator, who is aimed at 'evidence', i.e. the visibility and vividness of his experience in a state of 'audacious equivalence'¹.

3. Nevertheless, all the accusations against Sedlmayr, who allegedly ignores the multiplicity of contradictory meanings, seem groundless. Moreover, Imdahl appears to consciously or unconsciously misrepresent the situation, which becomes obvious if one reads the final part of Sedlmayr's text in which he writes precisely about 'the multiplicity of meanings' (Dante's term). In this context the 'iconic' alternative to Sedlmayr's structuralism seems a mere extension of the latter's principles and procedures.
4. It appears Imdahl misunderstands or ignores the core of Sedlmayr's idea, because Sedlmayr on purpose begins by mentioning the experiment with the tachyscope² that immediately demonstrates 'visible character' and inevitably draws attention to the 'endothymic' level – that of noesis rather than the representation³. In Sedlmayr's work we see the interpretation of the meaning-building work of noesis and clarification of the implications of the interpreting acts as such, which can be only cohesive because the nature of noesis is historical. The acts of 'understanding', with the help of language efforts, draws noesis out of its pre-rational condition. This is why this type of interpretation not only informs the spectator, but also transforms him / her by means of such a strong remedy as devisualisation of visual images. Without saying this directly, Sedlmayr offers his text as an experiment aimed at a representation of the author's position: putting the spectator and his /

¹ Ibid., pp. 108-109. The last phrase (audacious equivalence - 'kühne Äquivalenz') occurs six (!) times in the two partially full pages of Imdahl's book, thus appearing like an incantation, especially because these are the last pages of the book...

² Indeed Sedlmayr connects the tachyscope (an early version of the projector with revolving cylinder, slides and the source of light inside) and stroboscope (designed to make flashing lights to illuminate the picture).

³ In his efforts at interpretation Sedlmayr refers to Philipp Lersch: according to Lersch, the endothymic level endorses 1) 'the tectonic of psyche'; 2) analogies to the structure of the brain (the deep brain as a connection element and the integrity of the brain as a part of the human body – key to the organic level of all brain performances, including representation); 3) the equivalency and isomorphism of all structures, including the semantic and exegetical (levels of meaning such as arrangement, formation and construction). The endothymic level implies on its lower level a static pair 'sense of life' – 'sense of himself', and on the higher level – a system of emotions such as endothymic affections (their own *pathoses*). The latter are related to the 'personal superstructure' with its functions of thought and volition as well as its longing for control and responsibility. But below this endothymic base level (*Grund*), there is a true subconscious level, in other words, according to Lersch, memory, or traces of events and remains of the previous life. This dynamic model of psyche as interaction of static and dynamic levels implies the uncertainty and blindness (!) of the endothymic level, which however has an "id-image" character and remains outside the personal 'ego-image' channels (P. Lersch, *Zum Personverständnis in der Psychologie* // Idem. *Der Mensch als Schnittpunkt*, München, C.H. Beck, 1969, pp. 104-124).

her vision in the situation of non-seeing, of blindness – for the sake of Unseen.

5. For this reason we argue that Imdahl's criticism is a kind of self-defence against such attacks on both the spectator and their vision, and also the representation and probably its creator. However, Sedlmayr emphasises that there is no need to defend Bruegel, because the latter himself tended to critically shift these traditional positions: creator – picture – spectator. So Imdahl's reaction is primarily resistance to Sedlmayr's experiment, a move to look deeper inside, immediacy as the sole reliable condition. But it results in cognitive rather than optical blindness, rigid knowledge rather than vagueness, uncertainty and the permanent transitiveness of the foundations of one's consciousness.
6. In fact Imdahl uses the same device but he makes it more vivid and thus seemingly more convincing. Where Sedlmayr considers a *macchia*, Imdahl sees a diagonal, a vector determining and directing the sight (the diagram works as an instruction). This diagonal should 'express' polar opposites, or more exactly it provides their simultaneous presence in the representation, whereas for Sedlmayr everything seems to move successively. The structural analysis would not accept 'as well as...' This is evident in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus, where the gesture of Christ means omnipresence and omnipotence, represented by this diagonal¹.
7. Imdahl acts like Sedlmayr, both directly and indirectly, when he takes a separate visual motif and runs it through various themes. Yet Sedlmayr talks about an unformed motif, or rather a state of form (a patch), whereas Imdahl speaks of pure abstraction (a line). Where Sedlmayr indicates shifting, falling and scattering, Imdahl sees permanent wholeness achieved through the simplicity and singleness of the motif (line), and through its reduction. Nothing can happen to the line, because it completes and stops both visuality and hermeneutics, whereas the patch contains within itself without concealing, giving not just a possibility but a necessity, the inevitability of executing and constituting the meaning. The patch is not something initial, but it is awakening, eye-opening and dark-rejecting; in the tachistoscopic experiment the patch is a result of the meeting between dark and

¹ Ibid., p. 105. Strictly speaking, when the ability to 'express' something (even the gesture of Jesus, overcoming the time at *Exactly-Now*) is attributed to the diagonal line, Imdahl's arguments fail to describe the real situation directly and precisely: the diagonal as an instrument of expression leads us back to the same level of allegory and metaphor, i.e. to the level of iconography. Leaving out all semantic 'metabolism' and achieving the 'anabolism' of the meaning is only possible through the intermediary stage of optical 'catabolism', a paradox of negation instead of uplifting the visual in the representation. This is exactly what Sedlmayr is doing, or to be more accurate, what his text is doing together with its readers. And one of them is – or was Max Imdahl (see below).

light, between a flash and the return to darkness. Nevertheless, thematically 'blindness' works in the same way as 'all-presence'. It is the same 'visible character' (Imdahl does not mention it when he characterises Sedlmayr); although it has different contents, its influence is all-embracing.

8. What is the reason for this strange situation? Indeed, such inability to see and recognise the obvious resembles blindness. Yet let us suppose that this is not conscious distortion. To explore this phenomenon, let us go back to two factors in Sedlmayr's work: 1) He writes about understanding rather than the meaning; he analyses the process of interpretation, the structure of the hermeneutic act which cannot be coherent in a simplistic way due to the nature of human consciousness; he considers the stages of understanding, not the layers of the meaning, and only at the end asks if these things were implied by Bruegel himself. 2) Such understanding demands the whole spectator, who must empathise with the characters of Bruegel's 'play', both performatively and transformatively; one's efforts to understand stem from one's blindness as the inability to accept what he/she sees because it is more than undesirable: it is disgusting. The spectator turns away, preferring not to see the fact that, being blind, he is not able to recognise himself in the blind.
9. Sedlmayr's major hypothesis is as follows: this situation of non-identifying oneself with the characters was modelled by Bruegel himself, who purposefully destroys, literally 'decomposes' the situation of wholeness, singleness, coherence and cohesion of not the representation but vision as the ability to recognize things and situations. Vision is connected with reminiscing, with one's efforts to identify with an already familiar content. And such exposure of the shortcomings of vision with the help of the representation is achieved through repeated use of *macchia* which literally patches, splits the objective order of the representation, penetrates the colour, turns even the space into a kind of millstone that revolves, grinds and plunges into the abyss everything and everybody, even including an uninvolved and uninterested passer-by. This is why Sedlmayr's tachistoscope works as a strobo-scope!¹

¹ Let us recall here once again that in the effect of *macchia* itself, which blinds or reveals blindness, emerges in connection with the primary experience of perception, with the continuous flow of stimulus-qualities, a sensory field, which is then subject to synthesis into the discrete elements of the conscious experience. *Macchia* is touching our consciousness with partially structured data. This is not the very *fundus*, including *fundus oculi*, but periphery, side vision, the flow of sensory texture with inevitable blind spots, since the retina does not catch everything in its field. And at the same time this means destruction of the whole mechanism of metaphor, as well as of the perspective with a single vanishing point, its defocusing, displacement of the virtual 'vanishing point' by a real optical spot, meaning escaping the two dimensional planimetry of picture (See Imdahl. Op. cit., pp. 126-127. Anm. 82-83).

10. Macchia is repeated visible, artificial and consequently instrumental introspection, visual autopsy, optical anatomy (imitating the figurative). The problem is to what extent Bruegel used it consciously? The pre-war article implies it was unconscious, and for this reason can be seen as a symptom relating to a diagnosis. In the 1958 text the interpreter follows and imitates the artist's ways, which means macchia is considered as a means of exegesis rather than diagnostics. Importantly, Imdahl finds himself in a kind of gap between ideology and methodology. The problem is whether this situation was provoked by Sedlmayr, or was it an inevitable shortcoming of his method? Is it possible that Imdahl somehow performs a decomposition of gestalt-structuralism?
11. Or is it the inevitable logic in the substitution of the objectivity of the text about the object (representation) for the objectivity of the object itself? In Imdahl's work the collision between perspective and planimetry is symptomatic. Is this not the same 'drama' we see in Imdahl's reading of Sedlmayr? Here we also find exegesis (with Paul substituted for Icarus on purpose), and this is justified as an experience of metalepsis (not metaphor!) as long as we acknowledge that the text on a work of art generates its own object, its own creation which substitutes for the original not only inevitably but also justifiably, given that the text is also a work of art in its own right. So Imdahl displaces Sedlmayr's text by his own. The question is: what kind of thing do we have at the end of this 'decomposition chain'? Could this be the only way to build real 'polysemy'? Are we not all involved in this process?
12. It seems Imdahl prefers not to see all this magic exegesis transforming into mystical eschatology, which focuses not on the picture and what is in it, but on both the spectator in front of it and what is in him¹. He does not see certain things in Sedlmayr's work in order to give his reader an opportunity to recognise his own hermeneutic innovations and the discovery of the 'iconic', because otherwise it would be difficult to discern them through the curtains of 'iconographies' and 'iconologies' invented by others. Imdahl appears to use such device as 'visual aposiopesis', which prevents the reader from seeing something familiar in Imdahl, his similarity to Panofsky, Sedlmayr and many others. One can appreciate his courage when, anticipating all possible comparison with his predecessors, he takes the initiative and compares himself with them, without giving his reader time to be a spectator, observer, witness or judge...

¹ Imdahl's identification of 'gestalt vision' with 'subject matter' of the visual motif, as well as his allegation that Panofsky would disregard the non-objective emotional dimension of the representation, both sound almost like a provocation. Let us repeat once again that the blinding light spot, the flash, breaks through the surface level of visualization of objects and reveals the deep layers of meaning, connected not with the endo-thymic base, but with something more profound and at the same time Sublime.

13. Another form of such methodological camouflage seems to be Imdahl's transition from easel to mural painting, whose characteristics are, so to speak, transferred to the qualities and results of their analyses. However, he does not appear to notice that there is not a mere difference but a conflict between the two types of representation: easel painting in its objective definiteness (it is initially a thing) implies, provokes and stimulates 'de-thinging', whereas mural painting always implies an architectonic environment, and trying to affect it with the help of phenomenological epoché-decomposition has more serious implications than provoking the spectator and reduction of vision. This leads to the destruction of praxeological and existential space, rather than illusive, optical and visual. Moreover, in the case of Giotto's Capella del Arena, which Imdahl chooses for the application of his conceptual programme, this space is also a place of the Presence of the Sacrifice – the Gift and Gratitude.
14. However well intentioned, this cognitive reductionism casts doubt also on constructiveness, on the world and on physicality. This is more challenging and even more dangerous. For this reason it is tempting to look for a point of balancing, a period of truce, to go back to the representation and credit it rather than one's 'synthetic intuition' with immediate, simultaneous and, consequently, unshakable reality and almightiness. However, we ought to remember that, according to Panofsky, it is the 'synthetic intuition' that is responsible for reaching the ultimate level of 'intrinsic meaning'.
15. Let us try and see the situation at another angle: Imdahl is approaching Sedlmayr as a reader. He cannot see in Sedlmayr's text something that is not there because it is a consciously modelled text offering itself for experimentation. Experimental is the original situation of tachistoscopic examination of the picture, and tachistoscopic is the final, textual, picture of what was read. In accordance with its nature, the text, first, replaces the visual and the objective, which is not there as something real because we talk only about its representation; and second, it is linear, not simultaneous. Moreover, as a text constructed especially for experimenting with the reader who considers himself a spectator, it provokes this reader to elude the experiment. He has the right to turn down this proposal, especially if he feels he is forced to accept it not as a paradigm of interpretation aimed at pictorial art, but as a gestalt of universal reflection, because this puts in danger his spectator's and reader's existence as such. The reader may choose to reject the experiment; however, paradoxically, this way he will choose blindness, a descent into darkness, into the death shade. That said, Imdahl might have objected that being an object of experimentation feels awkward and is not necessary, especially if one can offer some obligatory, from his point of view, paradigms.
16. Thus we can say that Imdahl, reading Sedlmayr literally, uses his right to protect his Ego (he uses this word when describing Sedlmayr's

method, although Sedlmayr himself does not). It is a kind of uncontrolled counter-transference, by which the ‘patient’ Imdahl reacts to his ‘therapist’ Sedlmayr... Imdahl builds a wall between himself and Sedlmayr; however, he immediately covers it with various graphs and agraphs, if not breaks.

17. Yet such psychoanalytic and bibliological metaphors also comprise a more superficial layer of interpretation of the interpretation of interpretation... Such endothymic ‘archaeology’ might also conceal a basis, a ‘continent’, the layer of the completely unconscious where an excavation might turn into an involuntary, reflector autopsy, inevitably leading to hiding, concealing, burying oneself either in protective layers of Ego, or in crypts of Id.
18. The endothymic character of this process, controversial and unhealthy because it is unconscious and reflectory, relates also to the fact that its basis might be much simpler than we imagine, even primitive in the sense ‘original’ and ‘archaic’. Imdahl approaches Sedlmayr’s text as an outer object, alien or alienated from him. He sees it as fragmentary, in a decomposing manner, because any text is inevitably tachistoscopia and discrete, particularly a rival text. The only problem is that he is not completely satisfied with this original and archaic effect. He wants to use Z’s textuality as raw material for his own ‘contingent’ construction. He builds or imitates an elusive, in fact, scenic, situation, in which, supposedly, such a level is achieved that there is nothing more to recognize and remember; one can only start from the beginning and build a relationship with the other through its consistent rejection.
19. Thus Imdahl’s experience is an attempt to tackle somebody else’s interpretation as an object of one’s own experience. Patching is inevitable – a read text cannot stay ‘spotless’ because it is an object of manipulation: at first this might come in the form of envy (also an act of vision!), then – of a careful privatization (also a fact of awareness!) Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the condition of spontaneous, involuntary and apparently (but only apparently) unbiased perception is one’s blindness, one’s insensitivity towards the perceived text. It is also tachistoscopia, although organized at one’s own discretion; it resembles blinking – as when you get a speck in your eye (hopefully, not a log). However, once again, this might be an involuntary and uncontrolled effect, like twitching.
20. Yet once there is no vision, once non-seeing is the basis of unawareness as the condition of freedom, independence from another opinion, then one could still depend on hearing. However, without hearing there is only the text, which in its primary silence is hard for the unseeing to read. Having escaped from the fire of visual hermeneutics developed by others, we get trapped in our own unconscious textual rhetoric. The text allows us not to see the author, to ignore him or just forget, but it does not make you free, because ‘its name is legion’.

Instead of the patch it offers diagrams, calligrams, vectors, structures and all kinds of geometric figures imitating writing, and consequently – the essence of activity. The ‘diagrammatology’ of the iconic dictates its own rules and blinds the reader with its illusive shining, suggesting that he can do everything according to his will and forget about his blindness given to him for the sake of seeing Unseen.

Yet because this blindness is selective, it does not involve the whole field of visual hermeneutics; the blind spot is functional; macchia is not glaucoma, breaking the representation into meaningful layers is neither, so to say, retinal detachment, nor the tearing of exegetic nets. This is rather their repair and airing by the artificial fire of the interpretation conflict.

Falsification as a reaction to the textual hypothesis-experiment, followed by visual revolt in the form of self-blinding, is in the very nature of the optical exegesis. It is not possible to divide the visual from the textual and the text is not only changing its object (we look at the text about the representation, not the representation itself. We have to start all over again: whereas at the beginning there is an uncertain and pure material-stimulus, in the case of the text I must construct the whole situation (allegory), stop to recognize it, stop to understand it (eschatology) in order to reveal the hidden as present and given for my conversion (tropology). But to achieve this – one must at first – die.

Resurrection is another light, and seeing face to face.