

Daseinic Narrative Perspective in Thomas Mann's Magnum Opus

Introduction of a New Term

Jelige: opus

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Abstract

Thomas Mann's masterpiece, *Joseph and His Brothers* is one of the most complex literary works of all times, one of its particularly interesting aspects being the narrative perspective that has constituted the focal point of several studies in the Mann-literature. My paper also builds on the discussion of the narrator of the tetralogy starting out from Heidegger's concept of Dasein. I argue that the narrator of the novel manifests as a Dasein not only in the sense that he is conscious about his role in the story and conducts a constant imaginary conversation with his implied readers, but also in the sense that he is aware of his existence being finite and acts accordingly. Through this examination I present the necessity and the *raison d'être* of introducing a new term: the *Daseinic narrative perspective*, whose specific traits I identify through a close-reading of the selfdeclarative utterances of the narrator. This paper is part of a larger study and it focuses primarily on the figure of the narrator in the *Prelude*.

Keywords: Mann; narrator; Dasein; Daseinic narrative perspective.

Introduction

This study introduces a new narratological term, the *Daseinic narrative perspective*. The main literary work through which this perspective will be presented is Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* tetralogy, and within the limits of this paper, I focus primarily on the Prelude.

It is frequent to see literary works that deal with philosophy and psychology. Authors oftentimes play with different aspects of the text (the conversations of the characters, the theme of the texts, the use of symbols, the narrative voice etc.) when introducing the topic of the human mind, the thought processes and other sense related subjects. While some new techniques were introduced, the *old*, conventional ones seemed to be popular as well. It is a recurring feature that a narrator uses the elements of oral storytelling, talks directly to the reader, and annexes comments to his story.

In the case of *Joseph and His Brothers*, written by Thomas Mann, the narrator has the previously listed traits. His nature and style are both so specific that they call for an appropriate label. In Mann's tetralogy the reader faces the question of consciousness on multiple levels, from the characters to the narrator, all the way to the author himself. Thomas Mann presented his narrator as follows: "I was delighted, and that immediately a preliminary probing and productive searching began in my mind as to what it would be like to renew and reproduce this charming story in fresh narrative and with modern means — with all modern means, the spiritual and the technical ones" (1942, 5). Mann thus states that his goal during the writing process of the novel was to recreate an ancient story with modern tools.

Finding something new and groundbreaking was always the main aspiration of each literary movement. This aspiration led to a breaking point, where there was no border to expand anymore. The lack of space to thematically expand, or to create a story with a plot that had never existed before urged authors to find other ways to be creative and unconventional.

It is well known that Thomas Mann was the contemporary of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, who were the pioneers of new psychological perspectives in the 19th and 20th centuries. They paved the way to other psychologists of the era. Freud had an undeniable effect on Mann, they often shared their thoughts with each other, and the author was heavily inspired by psychological and philosophical questions. His works demonstrate his deep desire to research and understand

human nature. In the case of *Joseph and His Brothers* there are many topics related to the depths of an individual's mind.

Heidegger was also Mann's contemporary. There are studies that examine certain characters of the *Joseph novels* from the Daseins's point of view, but there is no research pointing out any type of relation between Heidegger's theory about the Dasein and the narrative perspective of the *Joseph sequel*. I created the term *Daseinic narrative perspective* with the intention to fill this void in the Mann literature. I believe that this term appropriately comprises the attributes of the recurring narrative perspective employed by Mann in such works as *Joseph and His Brothers* and *The Magic Mountain*.

The term Dasein was coined by Heidegger. The basic traits of a Dasein are that it is conscious about its existence and finiteness, about its role in life and in the World, it is preoccupied with ontological questions, and it is capable of measuring the level of its *Being* in different contexts. The term *Daseinic narrative perspective* shall be applied to a narrator who is most importantly aware of his role as a story-teller and who is capable to recognize that his existence lasts until the story is being told. The presence of temporal awareness is crucial considering that one can only become a Dasein if he primarily acknowledges the inevitability of death. A further trait of this type of narrator is that he has to endeavor to stay as objective as possible. In order to apply the term to a narrative perspective the literary work has to contain obvious textual references to these characteristics.

Direct relation between the narrator and the reader can be traced back to preliterate times when stories were being told and the narration was often cut off by narratorial remarks towards the listeners. There are numerous advantages to this oral, story-telling like technique. First of all, it is reader friendly. The narratorial voice is genial, the readers feel like the story is being told directly to them, since their presence is acknowledged by the narrator. This acknowledgement is a mark of narratorial awareness (the narrator knows that story-telling requires an 'audience' for the process to be entirely complete). Second of all, this style allows the narrator to incorporate objective remarks and comments, and other non-literary data (for example: in *Joseph and His Brothers* the narrator often incorporate *contemporary* geographical data). Thirdly, the reader can rely on the validity of the narrator's words, since it has to be as objective as possible. The trace of subjectivity comes from the inevitable involvement of the narrator in the story. Given the fact that the narrator is not a character of the plot there is distance between him and his characters. This distance has to be present so that the Heideggerian objectification can happen. The narrator (as a Dasein) handles

his characters as separate entities, but his attitude towards them might seem a bit perplexing, even paradoxical. The narrator acknowledges that without the characters there would not be anything to narrate, but the narratorial approval is not necessary for the events to happen.

The main disadvantage of this narrative style is that the readers are constantly reminded of the fact that they are in the process of a reading activity. The often-recurring remarks occasionally break the flow of the story, making it almost impossible for the reader to feel as if they were part of the events. At the same time, this defragmentation induces a conscious and aware reading state, which might be the narrator's attempt to create a *companion in Dasainness*. Knowing that it has no influence upon the character's state of mind, it plays with the reader's mind in a discreet and witty manner. Another possible downside to this narrative perspective is that it cannot offer any exact critical opinions about the characters or events. Objectivity demands the presumption of innocence, so the narrator cannot make judgmental remarks, not even in cases when it would be perfectly understandable (for example: Mut trying to seduce Joseph with black magic).

1. Theoretical Background

To discuss the theoretical background, it is necessary to exactly identify what the major topics of this paper are. My central preoccupation is to study the most important tool through which one can make an old story new: the narration. The field of literature to which this research belongs is narratology, since its main goal is to identify the features of Mann's narrator and thus coin a new narratological term. The philosophical background that it bases on, and from which the term comes, is Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

1.1. Narratological research in the Mann-literature

In the Mann-literature there can be found a large number of studies whose focal point is the narrative perspective of the *Joseph cycle*. Given that my central preoccupation is also the narrator of the cycle, in this subchapter I sum up the findings of these earlier studies, starting out from those that tackle wider subjects and moving towards those with a narrower focus.

Daniel Paul Gurska describes Joseph's story as a "narrative expansion of Genesis explored for its cultural, mythological, and psychological meanings" (2017, 21). He also points out the relationship between the Book of Genesis and the novel's narrated time. He presents how the Biblical story starts and directs the reader's attention towards the last part of the tetralogy, *Joseph the Provider*. Gurska highlights an interesting similarity between the language and description in the Book of Genesis and an excerpt from *Joseph the Provider*:

When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. (Holy Bible, Book of Genesis, Chapter 1.)

Unlimited power, unlimited possibility of taking into one's head, producing out of it, and bringing into being by a mere 'Let there be'—such gifts had, of course, their dangers. (Thomas Mann, 1042)

This intertextual reference shows that the narrator of the novel was not only conscious about his finite time, place and role, but also of the aim of his existence (to recreate a story). The Mann quote also shows the ironic style of the narrative voice, which can be followed through the whole novel.

Matthew Francis Naughton uses a structuralist view in discussing the identity of Mann's narrator. He states that one should never dissociate the narrator from the author because their co-existence defines the literary work (Naughton 2020,17).

A further aspect of the narrative perspective employed in Mann's novel that several researches have analysed is the concept of the 'we narrative'. M. Amerian and L. Jofi discuss Jahn Manfred's two types of focalization from which there are two types that can be considered appropriate to describe the narrator of *Joseph and His Brothers*. These two are the following:

1. "Fixed focalization, which is the presentation of narrative facts and events from the constant point of view of a single focalizer."
2. "Collective focalization that is 'focalization through either plural narrators (we narrative) or a group of characters (collective reflectors)' (M. Amerian and L.Jofi 2015, 5).

In the tetralogy's case both of these focalization types can be associated with the narratorial behavior. The *fixed focalization* can be considered accurate if we only focus on the actual narrator. However, this requires a *tunnel vision*, since there are episodes which are narrated by the characters of the story (for example: when Joseph tells stories to Mont-kav on his death bed, but there can be found numerous other embedded stories as well). This leads to the conclusion, that even though the *spirit of narration* is consecutively present in Mann's narration, the narrator occasionally lets the characters tell their own stories within the plot. The second type, the *collective focalization* requires a *we* narration, which is textually present in the novel. However, Mann's *we* is misleading, since the narrator is not talking about other narrators, nor is he part of a group of characters that present the events. What *we* refers to is actually the narrator and his audience who *listen* to the story. The recurrence of *we* suggests that the narrator of the story supposes that his implied reader is intellectually well developed, can perfectly understand the meaning and cause of events (there are occasional exclamations by which the narrator rebukes the reader to understand everything the way it is supposed to be understood). The relevance of the narratorial voice's change is discussed by the two authors of the study as follows: "All in all, in the narrative situation the aim is to mix some other components in order to achieve a number of new interpretations" (M. Ameriana and J.

Lofi 2015, 5), that is, the core of every narrative: the desire to create a text that allows a variety of interpretations/ readings.

Francis Naughton also examines the idea of the *we narrative* and states:

In the Joseph tetralogy, Thomas Mann has made use of an interposed "wir" whose purpose is to re-create the story for us whilst at the same time adding his own colouring of wit and opinion. But even here, and despite fundamental differences of tone and outlook, both types of narrative structure are united by their omniscience. And although the "wir"-narrator may appear to be quite a personality, no attempt is made to present him as a distinct person with attributes of his own. (2020, 19)

Another notion which is oftentimes discussed is the narrator's relationship to the plot, a multilayered aspect due primarily to the complexity of the story-line. Logically every aspect of a literary text influences the plot, from the characters to the narrator. The narrator might decide the outcome of events, which depends on the narrator's nature and intentions. For instance, in the case of an omniscient narrator it is frequent to see that the narrator decides the fate of a character (see, for example: Dickens's *Oliver Twist* or Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey*). In this sense Gerard C. Farley's study should be mentioned, which identifies Mann's narrator as "a personal being, who, in the end, will not allow Joseph to fail" (2013, 3). What is problematic with this statement is the *in the end* sequence. In the case of Joseph, there is no such thing as an exact end. There are deaths that could mark the end of a phase (Mont-kav/ Rachel), Joseph symbolically dies on multiple occasions, but the novel ends with Jakob's death. The narrator does not contribute to any of these events, he does not save the protagonist at all, quite the contrary. He allows his characters to fail and to either learn from the failures or fall into the *trap* again. The contradiction becomes even more striking with Farley claiming that Mann is capable to objectify his hero even though he admires Joseph. Mann, or rather the narrator that he created, is detached from Joseph, and is capable to brush aside any sentimental attachments (Farley 2013, 3). One can either objectify another being, or be emotionally involved, and decide about its fate. This ambiguous statement by Farley lacks any specific point of view, that would conclude a logical explanation and it creates an oxymoronic situation. Even though the narrator occasionally adds ironic comments about the situation of the protagonist or other characters, there is no textual element that would refer to

sentimental attachment. The reader cannot decide whether the narrator likes or dislikes a character, since he does not pass any judgement, he only makes statements and conveys factual information. At the same time, however, Farley's argument – unwillingly though – points towards the narrator's Daseinic nature: the capability of the entity to completely objectify something, even with emotional involvement. In the case of a Dasein the matter of objectification is *himself*. This means that the emotional involvement is unquestionable, since this objectification is self-referential, but it can analyze itself as any other entity. About this conscious behavior Charlotte Nolte states the following: "From the beginning, the narrator establishes himself as our contemporary and a learned guide on our journey in the past" (1996, 128).

Nolte has a thought-provoking, holistic view about how contemporary consciousness works. In her paper, she states that the modern consciousness is focused on the ego, and due to this egoconsciousness we often deny our unconsciousness. In the case of *Joseph and His Brothers*, we can see that the characters' definition of their personalities is completely different from one another. Nolte brings the example of Abraham, and how Joseph refers to Abraham as his great-grandfather, even though there were many generations between them (1996, 77). The relevance of this idea from the perspective of this paper consists in the fact that it can be applied to the narrator as well.

While Nolte's approach is Freudian, and focuses more on the characters, the consciousness has an important role in the narrator's case, too. As the example presents, everyone in the novel has a unique way of creating their identity and defining their role. However, the narrator is not homodiegetic. While the characters usually define themselves in relation to others, the narrator cannot do that. His incapability comes from the fact that he is conscious about the space between the narrated time and the time of narration, and thus he must contextualize himself on another level of reality. Since the narrator cannot (or would not) identify himself through others, there is a lack of personal relationship or emotional attachment between him and his characters. This incapability shows well that the narrator is conscious about the fact that any possible interference between him and his characters would change his identity, or the level of control that he has over his existence. Being too deeply invested in his characters would mean that he becomes part of the events, thus he would inevitably lose his ability to objectify.

Gérard Genette discusses the idea of distance, which he attributes to contemporary literature. He argues that this distance is closely related to how certain components of a novel are presented.

Genette compares mimesis and showing, and states that showing is just a modern term for mimesis (“critical of the old idea mimesis and especially of its modern equivalent, ‘showing’ (1983,44)). Showing is a trait of the narrative discourse itself (not just a means of characterization), but not the narrated text. However, Genette digs deeper into the problem, than simply making oppositions between writing styles. He states the following: “once again, the only acceptable equivalence for diegesis/mimesis is narrative/dialogue (narrative mode/dramatic mode), which absolutely cannot be translated as telling/showing, for showing can hardly be applied legitimately to a quotation of words” (1983, 46).

In the case of Mann’s novel, the narratorial voice combines diegesis and mimesis. While he presents a supposedly true string of events with an objective tone, there are elements whose presence breaks this intended legitimacy, accuracy. The first element that breaks the illusion of accuracy is the narrator’s confession. He admits that he is not Joseph’s or his family’s contemporary. The narrator (or the author, in this case it could be both) had the original *Josephstory* (the Biblical story) to build on and complemented the plot with new details. These details are there to make the reader understand the motivation behind certain events, to give depth to the story and the characters, as well as to justify the existence of the narrator.

How the string of events is built up, and what narratorial influences can be seen in the tetralogy shall be examined, too. First of all, the novel has a circular narrative from multiple point of view. Edmund Ordon considers the *Prelude* of the tetralogy the core of the novel. He mentions Dorothy Thompson’s idea that the *Prelude* can be read as the starting point of the novel, as well as the finishing point of the novel (1943, 3). This means that the *Prelude* would have the same effect if it was placed at the end of the novel. However, this type of circularity also means that the *Prelude* could also function without context. This idea can be confirmed by the fact that the *Prelude* is more of a philosophical discussion than part of the plot. Secondly, the setting creates circularity as well. Ordon describes the temporal aspects of the novel as follows:

Time, in this work and perhaps more here than in any other of Mann's works, plays a significant role in the narrative and an even more important part in the discursive portions of the work which are not, as many critics suppose, adjuncts to the narrative but necessary and integral musings or elucidations which fuse all the elements into one unalterable whole.

In the “Prelude” Mann uses three sensuous time images: the abyss, the coulisses, and the rolling sphere. But time is not only three-dimensional, it is also eternally present and one cannot always distinguish between past and present. (1943, 4)

The multi-dimensional nature is present from the first sentence of the novel. Ordon refers to the introductory sentence *Once upon a time* as a generalizing determination of time. This utterance creates the illusion of a timeless story, with a timeless message. In the case of the *Joseph novels* a similar opening is the first sentence: “Deep is the well of the past” (2005, 3). Further, he also points out that there is another kind of *eternal present* in the novel, which appears through Joseph and Jacob. This can be attributed to the inner perception of time (or *duré*) of the protagonist and his father (1943, 5).

In her study, Joan Dassin states the same as Ordon (related to the opening expressions): “The dialectical complement of tradition is prophecy, as the phrase ‘Once upon a time’ signifies both past and future” (1971, 2). She highlights how history repeats itself, and that Joseph had to serve Potiphar the same way as Jacob served Laban, but at the end, they were both able to turn their luck around (1971, 4). This introductory sentence also sets the atmosphere. With the *Once upon a time* formula the narratorial voice becomes a storyteller, who uses the elements of oral story-telling in written form, and thus he creates a more intimate relationship with the readers.

Kenneth Hughes states that the thematical and structural circularity in the first chapter of the tetralogy has the role of presenting the *mythical collective* (1970, 2). There we can witness the *birth of the ego* which creates the base for contrast in the later development of Joseph. We can see the circularity of Joseph’s fate until *The Young Joseph*, where he breaks the circle. However, Hughes also states that in *The Young Joseph* a unilinear development begins (1970, 2). This idea is debatable since the only *linearity* that begins in *The Young Joseph* is the linear time (unlike *The Stories of Jacob*, which operates with retrospective time), but this linearity only affects the plot and to how the strings of events follow each other in a cause-and-effect relation. Hughes further argues that there is a structural difference between the first part of the tetralogy and the rest. This has to do with two things: the first one is that Jakob is the character that lays down the base of the circularity in the novel. The second that the first part of the novel consists of multiple short stories

from the past, while the other three parts present Joseph's story in linear order from the *present* to the *future* (1970, 2).

Starting out from Hughes's statements and developing this line of thought further, I consider that the narrator is conscious of both narrated time and time of narration. He keeps reminding his readers that the story he is narrating has been narrated before and that everyone is familiar with it. Thus, he proves that his existence is also finite and ends with the end of the storytelling process. He is also aware of the fact that his very existence creates a whole new timeline within the story, that is his present, the time of narration.

What is intriguing about Hughes's idea of the cyclic nature of the novel is that he applies it to certain units of the novel, but when he talks about the story of Joseph holistically (including Abraham, Isaak and Jacob) he describes it as a sphere. He states that:

The motif which Mann uses to represent this circular condition of life is the sphere. At some time in the unrecoverable past, a sphere began to rotate, and as it rotated, it had movement, surely, but it was always the same. Abraham was there, and then Isaak and Jaakob, but as the sphere rotated, Abraham appeared again, and again Isaak and Jaakob, and so on eternally—until Joseph. When Joseph is able to free himself from his game of narcissistic and presumptuous imitations (in the fourth novel), the circularity of human being, the unending recurrence of variations on an archetype, is finally arrested and a new motion founded. This time it is a real development: a unilinear movement predicated on the awareness of self and the personal identity of the individual. (1970, 6)

Fritz Kaufmann presents a more pragmatic and space related view of how the motif of cycle appears in the novel:

In the recurrence of Joseph's descending into the pit, repetition has been intensified and become reproduction; Jaakob, too, had to spend a whole lifetime (so to speak) in the "land from which there is no return" in Laban's "realm of the dead." "The experience consisted

less in something past being repeated than in something past becoming present.” The repetition is internally conditioned and internally sanctioned; men act in a way ‘corresponding’ to their predestined role in life. (1944, 13)

Once again the argument is that one’s life will inevitably be influenced by the fates of the ancestors, and those acts that lead to the existence of the individual will have an impact and a mark on their lives. Kaufmann presents this idea through further examples, and indicates the importance of Abraham, Joseph’s ostensible great-grandfather. The study shows that Abraham is more like an entity that does not take its place in space and time, but rather wanders around, creating a scheme of God’s homeless man. Kaufmann describes this process as *typifying* (1944, 12). This typifying is a recurring element in literature, especially in the case of mythical and biblical literary figures (for example: the story of Oedipus). If one is typified it means that there is a certain life pattern that he has to follow. A Dasein is capable to step out of these patterns and see his life holistically. By that he becomes capable to create new patterns, without Godly (or in our case narratorial) intervention.

Mann’s omniscient narrator has unlimited power over his characters, but he chooses not to interfere with their actions. He has the power to build his own identity, as well as building the identity of the characters. While the narrator stays objective throughout the novel, it is undeniable that he is (to some extent) the creator of each and every character. Even though the narrator’s role is to present the events to the reader, he is the one who uses words to create. The way the narrator presents the events, the plot and the characters is filtered information. While one as a story teller can remain objective, one can never distance himself from giving filtered information. Each and every individual has their own identity built (consciously or unconsciously), which contains certain filters that are defined by social, racial, political, intellectual and many other factors. This filtering cannot be avoided by a narrator, even if he is as conscious as a Dasein. Without filtering, information would not be processed at all. The manner in which the narrator builds his story, and presents his characters has (on the level of language and narratorial perception) a fully objective style, but it contains bits and pieces of the narrator’s personality. Paul Ricoeur also presents a similar concept: “Recognizing oneself **in**, is recognizing oneself **by**” (1992,121). This means that when one recognizes itself in the elements of the surroundings, then one will necessarily recognize itself by them as well. This interference between the development of the individual’s identity and

the exterior elements is another aspect which shows circularity in the narration, more specifically in the narratorial identity. The narrator recognizes himself within the narration, by his role. He creates a story that is supposed to be told, he defines his role **in** relation to the story, and creates his narratorial identity **by** his role.

Based on all the above I can state that the narrative voice and the concept of the conscious narrator have been central preoccupations of the Mann-literature. However, each attempt to define the narratorial style that appears in the novel seems to be lacking something. While the narration might be seen as an aspect that can be inspected subjectively (because of the atmosphere, showing and telling, the techniques that are used, etc.), it is important for the readers to have an objective view of how the narrator appears and wants to appear. In the case of the *Joseph novels*, we can certainly talk about a narrator that is conscious about building his identity. This level of self-awareness gives us a reason to inspect the thought processes, the considerate use of language and even underlaying motivations of being and staying in such an aware and objective state as a narrator. In this sense, Heidegger's term and concept of the Dasein can be perfectly applied to the narrator and his behavior. A narrative voice, that is so conscious about his role and place, cannot be simply presented as highly-intrusive or omniscient. For certain, both terms could and should be applied to the narrator of the novel-series, but they are not enough. For that reason I introduce the term *Daseinic narrative perspective*, which does not only refer to the omniscience or intrusiveness of the narrator, but also to his level of consciousness and his temporality. The way he composes the narratorial identity and how he is capable of staying objective, even though he knows that the world that is presented to the readers is his own construct are all proofs of awareness. On the other hand, as stated earlier and pointed out by several studies, the narrator consciously builds a *wenarrative*. This *we-narrative* becomes especially important when the narrator is examined from a Daseinic point of view: since the narrator decides to create a *we-world* instead of his own world, he affirms his intention to stay objective.

1.2 Heideggerian background

1.2.1 The meaning of being, and how it should be understood in Heideggerian context

The question of our existence, of *being* has always preoccupied philosophers, scientists, artists and lay people alike in all the ages of humanities existence, in our Western culture from Aristotle

onwards. In the Middle Ages religion seemed to offer the answer through the involvement of the transcendental. However, after a while, due to new discoveries in the different fields of science from physics to psychology, this solution was not satisfying any longer, since it made it seem as if humankind had no other goal on Earth, than to please greater powers. Heidegger's problem with this religious reasoning might appear to be a linguistic one, since he declares that "Being cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones" (1962, 23). He reveals how the definition of a certain term might vary owing to conceptual perspectives, and how in the case of *being* the meaning behind the word itself is wide enough so one should only inspect it on its own, not by involving any other genus.

While explaining *being*, Heidegger uses the terms *ontology* and *onticality* to explain in what ways the question of *being* should be approached. He does not offer a detailed differentiation between these terms, but broadly speaking *ontology* deals with *being*, existence, while *onticality* deals with the entities and facts that are related to existence (1962, 31- fn: 3). Thus, it is revealed how the genus of existence and being (in general) is divided within these two categories. It is hard to decide where these two should be separated from each other, since *ontology* attempts to deal with the question of existence as a whole, while *ontical* inquiry endeavors to investigate the entities (as in the *existents*) by using pieces of information about them. Within this line of thought, Heidegger introduces the term Dasein which he describes as an entity that has certain knowledge about his being. "Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being," claims Heidegger (1962, 32), which reveals that one can only 'become' Dasein if he acknowledges his own existence. Heidegger does not use the terms humans/ people (who as far as we know are the only conscious creatures on Earth), but entities, which suggests that he does not connect Being to a physical form (a body) but rather to the soul, to the spirit, thus elevating the question of existence to a metaphysical level.

1.2.2 The concept of Dasein

Defining the concept of *being* in general terms is challenging, thus it should be individualized to a certain Dasein. This means that it is easier to understand what *being* refers to if we analyze it through the perspective of an individual who is conscious about his aim of existence (like the narrator in the tetralogy, who knows exactly that he exists only in order to tell the story).

“The essence of Dasein lies in its existence” Heidegger states (1962, 67). The Dasein has some important characteristics which we have to examine before proposing that a certain individual/entity can be considered a Dasein or not. Its essence lies in *to be*, meaning that its essence is its being. Other important expressions that have to be differentiated are the terms *existentia* (presence-at-hand: referring to the practical relationship between the human and his surroundings) and *existence* (*So-sein* which refers to being-as-it).

Dasein is an entity which handles the question of his existence as an issue that he has to work out. Heidegger differentiates two types of Dasein (which are equally important, one cannot exist without the other): *authentic* and *inauthentic*. The Dasein’s *authenticity* lies in his capability to recognize his development and mental state. One can only be an authentic Dasein if he is fully aware of his existence. He might lose himself, or find himself - but either way, he is on terms with himself of where he is in his *being*. *Inauthenticity* comes from the fact that one cannot always think about the concept of his own existence. The Dasein sometimes “loses track” since life is not just happening inside (in his mind), but outside as well, so when the flow-of-thoughts of the Dasein is interrupted by everyday human things (such as dealing with emotions or handling life), it becomes inauthentic. Therefore, *Jemeinigkeit* (mineness) is important, because the Dasein might deal with everyday life problems, but it is still somewhat self-aware about what it possesses in terms of *being*.

Averageness is “the everyday undifferentiated character of Dasein” (Heidegger 1962, 69). While determining himself as an entity (not only as a human being), the Dasein, firstly, has to become self-aware of his *being*, and situate himself in this *being*, which requires understanding. This is the Dasein’s *existential constitution* (Heidegger 1962, 69). The Dasein shall not be examined as a differentiated character, but as an average, since this undifferentiated character is considered his *proximal* (closest to the first moment of self-realization). The Dasein has to become self-conscious in his own, natural habitat, since he can only question his existence if he exists in his usual way (he can only question matters if he has some knowledge about those matters).

1.2.3 The role of temporal and spatial awareness

Averageness should be maintained for the Dasein to have an uninfluenced realization that the phenomenon of being in the world is the basic state of Dasein. There are three main parts of defining the spiritual and physical *emplacement* of the Dasein. Firstly, we have to define what *inthe-world* means by analysing the meaning of terms such as *World*, and what *worldhood* is composed of. Secondly, we have to examine the entity that is being in the world, not as its part, but as its constructive element (not being the endurer of events but a proactive figure). At this point, we do not define the entity as a *what*, but as a *who*, since his *what* refers to his physical appearance. The Dasein's *what* is only the *host* of his *who*, and his *who* is defined by its level of understanding of where he should be located (not physical place, but rather a space) in the world. Thirdly, we have to understand the whole concept of being-in something, and what *in* stands for. It is always possible to change the perspective of in-something, since there will always be a bigger space of which the given object or in our case, the entity can be part of, until we reach the *universal* level of being in something (being in a room, which is in a house, which is in a city...which is in the universe). We can always incorporate the *Being-in-the-world* while defining one's place or space.

Heidegger asks the following question in relation to the concepts of world and Dasein: "Is 'world' perhaps a characteristic of Dasein's Being?" (1962, 92). With this question he proposes a paradox: if the world is a characteristic of a Dasein, then there has to be 'worlds' to each Dasein. However, if something is so personal that it can be described as a property, it would also inevitably become subjective. The paradox lies in the very being of the Dasein. One of his main characteristics is his capability of objectifying himself, but how could he do so if one of his traits is that he has his personal (subjective) world. This problem can be solved with division. The concept of world can be seen in two individual ways. First, there is the world that is part of the collective consciousness, also described as the public, or *we-world*; while the second one is one's own, personal world (Heidegger 1962, 93). As previously mentioned, *being in the world* is the basic state of the Dasein. However, this state turns into an *absurd inherency* as it mentally grows and evolves (instead of being passively part of the world he gains the ability to change the world).

A further feature of the Dasein is how he perceives temporality. While his spatial recognition is somewhat spiral-like, his relation to time is more like the refracted light in a prism. He sees the

events of the past and present as a linear structure, but his relation to the future is described as a state of *anticipation*. The fact that the Dasein can be in *authentic* and *inauthentic* states, but his main trait is his self-awareness, his authentic side is conscious of his inauthentic side. In terms of temporal perception this means that the future might be under constant formation depending on how dominant the authentic part is, it is a question of authenticity winning over inauthenticity. Heidegger describes this process as follows:

This indicates that Dasein, existing authentically, lets itself come towards itself as its ownmost potentiality-for-Being – that the future itself must first win itself, not from a Present, but from the inauthentic future. If we are to provide a formally undifferentiated term for the future, we may use the one with which we have designated the first structural item of care – the ‘ahead-of-itself’. Factically, Dasein is constantly ahead of itself but inconstantly anticipatory with regard to its existentiell possibility. (1962, 386)

Spatial and temporal awareness is important since in a narrative these two aspects define whether a story/plot could be generalized or not. Also, a narrator could also play around with specificities, so that they become the tool of connotations. In the case of *Joseph and His Brothers* the narrator uses historical data as tools of connotations. He presents the story of a simple man in a theocratic monarchy, but the story is embedded into the era when the bases of the monotheist movement were laid down.

2. Daseinic Narrative Perspective

The *Daseinic narrative perspective* requires a narrator that is conscious about the act of narrating, his/her role within the narrative and temporality. This type of narrator has to make textual remarks on his narration, which means that all texts that include the *Daseinic narrative perspective* will be metatextual.¹

¹ However, not all metatexts contain this specific type of narrative perspective. Example for a metatext that does not contain this perspective is E.A. Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher* – the motif of writing appears, for example, through Roderick’s letter but the narrator is not Daseinic.

As previously presented, a Dasein has to be self-conscious on multiple levels. This applies to a Daseinic narrator as well. In order to be a Dasein, a narrator has to be aware that his point of view will influence the reader's perspective. Omniscience is not a required trait, what is more important is how aware the narrator is of his mental state and knowledge about characters and surroundings. For example: the narrator in the *Joseph tetralogy* is omniscient, he knows everything about everyone. However, Holden Caulfield in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* can also be considered a Dasein (under development). That is because he is aware of his lack of knowledge related to the world of adults, he constantly questions his and other people's morality. While the narrator in Mann's novel is a fully developed Dasein, Holden is a perfect example of how authentic and inauthentic states within a Dasein alternate. The comparison between the two also shows that whether the narration is first or third person does not matter from the perspective of a narrator being or not a Dasein.

Another indispensable trait of the Dasein is how consciously he deals with space and time. Both of these aspects have a definitive role from the perspective of the story and the context. If they are used cleverly by a narrator, they can serve as justifying circumstances for certain traits, like general desire of getting away in Romanticism (temporal) or incorrect, seemingly unsophisticated language used in rural spaces (spatial). The acknowledgement of temporality and awareness related to narratorial finiteness within the story is also required to be present. This means that the narrator has to either fix the narrated time (for example: George Gaylord Simpson's novel, *The Dechronization of Sam Magruder*, where the eponymous character specifies when he got lost, where he traveled in time and how much time he spent there), or the time of narration (for example: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* – in the frame Marlow, the narrator specifies the duration of storytelling).

2.1 Daseinic temporal awareness in the *Joseph tetralogy's Prelude*

Since the *Prelude* can be seen both as the end or the beginning of the story (Edmund Ordon 1943, 3), it can function two ways. It might be seen as the introduction through which the reader is informed to be attentive when reading the novel, since it is not simply just a re-told story but a deeply philosophical work. It could also be seen as an afterword, which helps the reader settle the information and have a deeper insight on what certain passages symbolize. The *Prelude* already presents a narrator with the mindset of a Dasein.

Deep is the well of the **past**. Should we not call it bottomless? Indeed we should, if in—fact, perhaps only if—the past subjected to our remarks and inquires is solely that of humanity, of this enigmatic life-form that comprises our own naturally lusty and preternaturally wretched existence and whose mystery is quite understandably the alpha and omega of all our remarks and inquiries lending urgency and fire to all our speech, insistence to all our questions. (2005, 3)

The novel starts with a philosophical question related to existence which reveals that the narrator does not only reflect on the events of the plot but also on eternal questions of humanity. As Heidegger states, time has a very complex structure within a Dasein's mind, and this structure is partially presented in the quoted sentence. Partially, because it only cogitates on the concept of past, more specifically, on its depth. The most important part of the utterance is the symbol of the *well*, since in this context it contains all three timelines. Wells are straight tubes without any bifurcations. The bottom of the well represents the *start of time*, whilst the top of the well represent the **present**. The surroundings, the world around the well represent the uncountable possibilities of the **future**. Throughout the whole *Prelude* there are multiple utterances that reflect similar ideas. Heidegger defines the past as a line of events that cannot be changed. Mann's narrator presents a similar idea with reference to the past:

it offers us only illusionary stations and goals, behind which, once we reach them, we discover new stretches of the past opening up – much like a stroller at the shore whose wonderings find no end, because behind each backdrop of loamy dunes that he strives to reach lie new expanses to lure him onward to another cape. (2005, 3)

This excerpt proves that even though the narrator's perception and thoughts about time differ in certain aspects from the Heideggerian ones, the main idea behind them is the same. The narrator describes the past as something expandable, but this expansion is not to be understood as expandable in width but expandable as *durée*. The events of the past are already over, but there are certainly passages that have not been discovered yet. By stretching out certain points of this linear past one can see that when time is inspected thoroughly, it is all made up of small pieces of vermiculation attached to each other. The amount of *stretch* or *expansion* that these fragments go

through depends on the focus of the viewer. It seems as if the narrator combined Einstein's relativity theory with Heidegger's concept of time. The following passage promotes the same idea of the relativity of time:

For although we have adopted intact the mathematical sidereal time of that place and period (...) and shall we likewise bequeath it to our most distant posterity, earthly time's meaning, gravity and fullness have not always and everywhere been one and the same; despite all the objectivity of Chaldean measurement, the size of time is uneven. (Mann 2005, 8)

The narrator acts self-conscious at the level of the time of narration. He acknowledges that all present events are consequences of the past and that abstractions and beliefs might have changed during time, but they still influence one another: "It was that past, shaped by deep myths, theological processes leading to its spectral and supernatural spiritualization, that became the present" (2005, 14). The given extract shows that the narrator of the story is aware of the discussed abstractions and their role.

A Daseinic narrator would also make textual remarks on his consciousness within space as well. There is such a remark further on in the *Prelude*: "At the point in time when our story begins—a point chosen rather arbitrarily, but we must start somewhere and leave the rest behind" (2005, 14). A further proof of Daseinic behaviour within this fragment is that the narrator is capable to define himself in relation to his protagonist but still remains objective: "Where do the first foundations of human civilization lie? How old is it? We ask this in relation to the distant Joseph, whose stage of development—apart from little dreamy imprecisions that bring a friendly smile to our lips—already no longer differed in its essentials from our own" (2005, 16). The beginning of the given excerpt proves again that the narrator is occupied with the concept of time and human's development through different times. While the first few questions are more holistic, the second part of the quote focuses more on the present (of the time of narration). The storyteller states that there is just a little difference between the development of the protagonist and *our own* (wenarration). There is one crucial aspect that has to be pointed out here: when composing a story, the narrator has to have a clear image of his hero's/heroine's development, otherwise there would be no path to be followed within the plot. This notion is relevant because, when the narrator compares his development with Joseph's, he is not talking about the beginning state of the protagonist's evolvement but the outcome. The narrator also draws our attention to the fact that

the bases of their development are identical. This passage is one of the main reasons why the *Prelude* could be read both as the beginning and as the end of the novel: it either functions as a foreshadowing or as an explanation. Since structurally it is placed before the actual plot, it indicates that even though Joseph goes through significant changes and becomes much more self- and space-aware, he still will not succeed to become an actual Dasein with all its traits.

When discussing temporality, Heidegger states the following about the Dasein's preoccupation with time:

The concern of circumspective common sense is grounded in temporality – indeed in the mode of a making-present which retains and awaits. Such concern, as concernfully reckoning up, planning, or taking precautions, always say (whether audibly or not) that something is to happen ‘*then*’, that something else is to be attended to ‘*beforehand*’, that what has failed or eluded us ‘*on that former occasion*’ is something that we must ‘*now*’ make up for. (1962, 458)

This quotation shows us that not only is the Dasein occupied with the concept of finiteness but also with the idea that past events (which might not even have happened in his lifetime) might have an influence on his present life.² Heidegger states that certain precautions might be taken due to events of the ‘*beforehand*’, which is an unknown point of the past and has an impact on the Dasein’s ‘*now*’ and ‘*then*’ (future). We should also examine the word ‘*then*’ linguistically. While Heidegger uses the concept of ‘*then*’ as a reference to future, it is most commonly used to present past events (for example: a common word combination: ‘back then’). However, we tend to tell a string of events that strictly follow each-other in present simple, which also often includes the word ‘*then*’ (for example: She goes to the garden, then picks some flowers and goes back inside). This type of narration is generally used in oral storytelling, which (as previously presented) characterizes the novel’s narration, too. Practically the same idea is presented in the *Prelude*:

human memory reaches back to incredibly ancient catastrophes, traditions of which, fed by later and smaller event of similar sort, found a home among various peoples, giving rise to

² This is also similar to the Jungian concept of ‘collective consciousness’, which states that a part of our unconscious is inherited from our ancestors, it is genetically coded into our psyche and it is not based on our experiences and emotions.

that same series of backdrops that lure and excite the wanderer through time. [...]—and here lies the beginning of the illusion of piercing through the vista of time, of the foreshortenings and confusions that govern tradition. [...] Our concern is not time that can be enumerated, but rather its abrogation in the mystery of the transposition of tradition and prophecy, lending the word ‘sometime’—or, better, the word ‘once’—its double meaning of past and future and thus its importance as potential present. (2005, 19-20-21)

The narrator’s goes even further with the previously presented idea and does not only state that bad events are coded into human consciousness but also points out that even though humans are aware of the passing of time, they cannot see through it perfectly. They cannot comprehend the ‘whole’ time but the main ideas, concepts and inherited pieces of information are all included in different traditions. We can also see that the narrator presents the ambiguity of ‘once’ just like the concept of ‘then’ was presented previously. They both act as multifaceted time adverbials. We can find the essence of the novel’s plot and of the philosophy presented throughout the novel summed up in the following excerpt:

There can be no doubt that as time goes by the spirit finds itself increasingly troubled by its role as the world’s destroyer and gravedigger. Colored by the duration of its stay, the spirit’s viewpoint changes to such an extent that, though it perceives itself as having been sent to remove death from the world, it learns to regard itself as just the opposite, as the deadly principle, as that which brings death upon the world. That is indeed a question of viewpoint and perception—one can judge the matter now one way, now another. Except that one should know the appropriate mode of thought to which one is inherently dutybound, otherwise precisely the phenomenon we straightforwardly called corruption will take root, and one will estrange oneself from one’s natural tasks. A certain weakness in the spirit’s character becomes evident here, inasmuch as it has difficulty bearing up under its reputation as the deadly principle intent on destroying all forms—a reputation, moreover, that is largely brought upon itself, given its own nature and its own judgmental impulses, including those directed against itself—and makes it a point of honor to be rid of that reputation. Not that it deliberately sets out to betray its own mission; but against its best intentions and under the coercion of both that impulse and an inner agitation that might be termed an illicit infatuation with the soul and its enterprise and its passionate ways,

words get twisted around in its mouth until they come out sounding like flattery of the soul and its enterprise and, with a kind of tendentious wit directed against the spirit's pure goals, speak out in favor of life and forms. Whether, to be sure, such traitorous or near-traitorous behavior is of any use to the spirit; whether in any case, it cannot avoid, even by these means, serving the purpose for which it is sent (that is, to render the material world null and void by freeing the soul from it); and whether it does not know all this perfectly well itself and only acts in this way out of an ultimate certainty that it can allow itself to do so—such questions must remain open. (Mann 2005, 31-32)

Apart from the fact that the given excerpt is the core of the novel from every point of view, it also mimics the thought processes of a Dasein. Since the narrator is a Dasein he has to distance himself from the ones that are not. This distancing is clearly visible throughout the passage right from the beginning. He does not use the word *we* or *us* meaning that he, at that present moment was not included in any of the listed processes. In the beginning he presents the *turning* of the spirit and where one could go wrong on its path to become a *free spirit* (in our case a Dasein). There are many parts within the quotation that refer to subjective factors (for example: being too preoccupied with one's reputation and judgemental impulses are presented as 'weaknesses of the spirit's character'). Peculiarly, the most important fragment (from this analysis's point of view) is within parentheses; the purpose of the soul is "to render the material world null and void by freeing the soul from it." A spirit/entity can only be truly free if it is capable of recognizing its limits. By recognizing his limits he is capable to separate, distance himself from those and identify himself separately as an individual entity.

Another essential trait of the Dasein (still within temporality) is its capability of acknowledging his finiteness. As soon as he recognizes that his life has an endpoint the process of thinking (and with that getting into the 'authentic' Dasein state) inevitably starts:

Surely because the element of the past, by which we are customarily carried farther, ever farther, is a different past from the one into which we now begin our trembling descent: life's past, the world that was, the dead world to which—deeper, ever deeper—our life will one day belong and to which its beginnings are already consigned to considerable depths. Granted, to die means to lose time and be hurled out of it, but in return to gain eternity and a timeless present, and thus, for the first time, real life. (Mann 2005, 38)

While this passage seems to present a religious view of existence, we cannot overlook the way it explains time. Time is something that one has no control over under any circumstances. What one has control over is how time is viewed and used. The expression *hurled out of time* represents the incapability of humans to change time. One cannot lose time while being alive since our lives revolve around the passing of time. What is intriguing in the case of a Dasein is that he perceives time holistically. Even though the endpoint of its personal time might be far he still positions it within clear sight due to the simple fact that he acknowledges it. That is what we can see in the case of the narrator in all the previously presented excerpts. He has a wider temporal field of vision going back to prehistoric times and he even manages to position the plot within those: “So down then, and no wavering! Is there no stopping in the plunge to the bottomlessness of the well? Of course there is. Not much deeper than three thousand years down—and what is that compared to fathomless depths?” (2005, 40).

But his field of vision also includes foresight since the *Prelude* contains references to death, to the end, and also to the development of the main character which is only shown to the reader at the end of the novel.

2.2 Daseinic self-awareness within the *Prelude*

Self-awareness is a key characteristic of the Dasein. The novel *Joseph and His Brothers* is filled with self-conscious narratorial utterances which constantly remind the reader of the temporal and spatial barriers that exist between the time of narration and narrated time. Such remarks can instantly make any literary text metatextual which is a fundamental quality of the *Daseinic narrative perspective* and narratorial behaviour.

These self-aware phrases are frequently expressed with the use of *we* and *our* pronouns which create the feeling of involvement in the reader as if he/she was part of the story. This involvement reflects the narrator’s appreciation towards the reader. He knows that his whole existence would be pointless without readers. The novel already starts with involving the reader into the story and even flashing them the possibility of influencing its outcome: “Should we not call it bottomless?

Indeed we should” (2005, 3). However, we should not be deceived by his offer since the narrator makes the decision without waiting for our answer. That is how rhetorical questions work and since the narrator is aware of his role as a storyteller, he also knows how different figures of speech are meant to be used.

We can also see other uses of *we* when the reference frame of the pronoun changes: “For although we have adopted intact the mathematical sidereal of time of that place and period” (2005, 8). Here *we* does not refer to the reader and the narrator, rather to humans throughout the centuries. We (as readers and the narrator) are also compared to Joseph and for a moment we are again deceived by the idea of closure:

At this point the young Joseph grew dizzy, just as we do when leaning over the edge of the well; and despite those little imprecisions that ill become us but that his handsome and beautiful head allowed itself, we feel him close to us, our contemporary in relation to that underworldly gorge of the past, into which he too, now so distant, has already peered. He was a human being like us [...] And so in our scrutiny either we shall hold to conditional pseudo-beginnings that we confuse with real beginnings. (Mann 2005, 11)

First of all, time is used as a tool of creating closure since the narrator presents Joseph as ‘our contemporary’. This image is immediately broken by the second half of the sentence which states that Joseph has already peered down into the gorge of the past which means that he cannot be our contemporary. Another deception to which a reader can fall is the narrator’s portrayal of how we perceive the beginnings. He knows perfectly well when the plot begins (three thousand years ago) so in this case the use of *we* can be attributed to his unwillingness to show any type of superiority to the reader, which is another proof of his situational awareness.

The narrator also makes ironical remarks with reference to his own story and one can only apply self-irony if he is capable of viewing himself objectively: “At the point in time when our story begins—a point chosen rather arbitrarily, but we must start somewhere and leave the rest behind, otherwise we, too, would have had to begin ‘in the days of Set’ ” (2005, 15). The ironical segment of this quotation is the very last part *in the days of Set* since it refers to the times of Gods which was very distant temporarily from the events that he later on presents (a further proof that he is as a matter of fact aware of that supposed *beginning*).

Apart from the persistent use of pronouns in first person we can also find a few utterances that describe the method of writing like the very beginning: “Should we not **call** it bottomless?” (2005, 3); but there are many more passages that contain a reference to the act of speaking, storytelling or writing:

“We **mentioned** the example...” (2005, 11)

“We **ask** this in relation to...” (2005,16)

“Clearly, then, **writing** is to be regarded as no more recent, and quite possibly much older still. We **speak** of it because...” (2005, 17)

“By the way of suggesting the murky origins of **the art of writing**, it might be better to employ a variation of that Egyptian phrase and say that it comes ‘from the days of Thoth’
“(2005,18)

“And in the days of **fixed symbolic language** are all beyond our counting—where, then, would one **search** for the **beginnings of the spoken word**?” (2005, 18)

“But when all this is regarded calmly, to **speak** of a ‘Fall’ into sin...” (2005, 32)

“Everything **speaks** in favor of this view...” (2005, 33)

“To **speak** in this connection, then, of sin...” (2005, 33)

“As for ourselves, **in setting out to tell of all these things** and so [...]—we wish candidly **to express** our natural and unbounded appreciation...” (2005, 38)

“And this **storyteller**’s star—is it not the moon, the Lord of the Way, the wanderer, who, in his stations, frees himself from each to move on? Whoever **tells** a story wanders through many stations in his adventures...” (2005, 38)

“Is not past the **storyteller**’s element, the air he breathes, a tense to which he takes like a fish to water?” (2005,39)

“When as adventurous **storytellers** we plunge into the past, we taste death and the knowledge of it...” (2005, 39)

All these fragments of the *Prelude* are the utterances of the self-conscious narrator. He identifies his positions, role within the plot. What is really intriguing within these quotations is the frequent use of *speak* and other words, collocations that refer to the story being told. This impression of

‘telling a story’ contributes to the illusion of companionship. At the very end of the *Prelude*, there is an excerpt which enhances the directness of the narration: “If you squeezed your eyes tight during the descent, open them now! We have arrived. Look—a night of sharp-edged moonlit shadows above a peaceful hilly landscape! Feel the gentle freshness of the spring night blazoned with summer’s stars!” (Mann 2005, 40). It essentially makes the reader feel as if they were sitting side by side with the narrator. This illusion shows very well how apprehensive the narrator is during the act of storytelling: he is capable of distancing himself from the past completely and he also manages to act as if he were the reader’s contemporary. A further element that helps in creating this illusion is that he specifies the narrated time but not the time of narration by which he generalizes the time of storytelling and makes it applicable to any upcoming era.

The same specification method is applied to the spaces within the *Prelude*. The narrator describes thoroughly where the narrated events took place:

For example, for his part the young Joseph, son of Jacob and his beloved Rachel, who had departed into the West far too soon, Joseph in his day [...] Joseph, then, residing in the district of Canaan in the land the Egyptians called Upper Retenu, living in his father’s family camp near Hebron, in the shade of terebinths and evergreen holly oaks. (2005, 4) He arrived in Haran, the moon city of the north, the City of the Way, in the land of Naharina, where he remained for several years and gathered souls, bringing them into a close relationship with his own family. (2005, 5)

The given excerpts are from the very beginning of the *Prelude* but since the narrator deals with introducing the story, he lists many other places even before the actual plot starts. This helps the reader imagine, visualize the setting, the characters’ appearances, the historical era and other details. By using such specificity within the plot but none related to the narratorial space, the narrator creates a gap, a hierarchy between him and his story. The lack of specifying elements prove that the narrator knows that his persona is not part of the events so it is secondary. He steps back and lets the events flow through his mind for him to utter them. His consciousness functions as a filter for the reader.

All the character traits that can make someone a Dasein as defined by Heidegger can be applied to the narrator of *Joseph and His Brothers*. The style of his narration is the combination of all

different types of conscious utterances. He is aware of his spatio-temporal position just as much as of his characters' positions.

Conclusions

Mann's literary works usually operate with an underlying philosophical or psychological layer. The tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers* is very complex from both philosophical and psychological perspectives. Nonetheless, its *Prelude* is an extraordinary text since it can function as a prologue, as an epilogue but as a summary, too. It introduces the reader into the philosophical depths of the novel and it contains all the fundamental topics and themes to be presented – directly or indirectly – in the novel: the question of identity, how the environment can be influential, what the use of questioning ourselves is and how acknowledging death (or the finiteness of existence) influences and improves one's identity. These are all topics that are also addressed within the *Prelude* where they function as hints to the fact that the narrator knows himself and his place within the plot very well. Usually, the focus is on the protagonist and his development as a character and the personality of the narrator gets pushed aside. For certain, there are cases when there is not much to examine when talking about the narrative voice of a text. In the case of the *Joseph novels* the narrator deserves to be studied thoroughly since he is a fully developed Dasein, self-conscious and also acknowledging his position and role in time, space, and in the process of re-telling an ancient story. As stated before, the aim of this research is to introduce a new term into the field of narratology. It is important to talk about this type of narratorial behaviour and personality pattern because all these traits influence the mode of story-telling. The reader gets to know whatever the narrator allows him to know. The same applies to the style: we only get to know the story and events the way the narrator perceives them and renders them into language. As readers we would like to know all the details and circumstances that lead to an event: this precise and thorough presentation can be given by a story-teller that is aware of **all** the factors that might influence the outcome of an event. In the case of literature 'all' includes the perception of the narrator as well. A Daseinic narrator needs the reader to acknowledge his presence. Thus he addresses the reader directly, he may make metatextual comments, remarks about time and place (or, in our case, about the temporal and spatial distance between the characters and himself), and maybe most importantly, he is aware of his *Being* being defined by the story he is narrating, that is, of his *mortality*.

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