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From Homer's *Odyssey* zu Joyce's *Ulysses*: Theory and Practice of an Ethical Narratology – Abstract

Homer's *Odyssey* is, with its alternation of authorial and I-narration, a highly intriguing narrative, but, with its constant inquiry into the nature and function of narration, it also proves to be a narrative poetics of great importance and special significance in the light of the current debate on the ethics of story-telling. Tenets to be drawn from the *Odyssey* are, among others:

1. Narrative gives structure and meaning to life and experience.
2. Narrative involves a conflict between good and evil.
3. In narrative the ethical is contained in the aesthetic.
4. Narrative always involves a tension between truth and lying.

The lecture then proceeds to a discussion of modern theoretical approaches to the problem of the ethics of narration. Particular emphasis is given to the concept of narrative self-constitution, as formulated in Paul Ricœur's work *Soi-même comme un autre* (1990). Subsequent to the discussion of extant positions in theory and criticism, the lecture elaborates a concept of an ethical narratology, in which the notion that narrative techniques have moral implications forms the central argument. This argument follows the idea put forward in the *Odyssey* that the ethical cannot be separated from the aesthetic. The theory is, in the lecture's last part, applied to text passages from James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Jane Austen's *Emma*.

Questions liable to be discussed controversially are, among others,

1. Is it correct to appropriate the term "ethics", which belongs to the sphere of philosophy, to narratology?
2. Are all narratives ethical? Is the ethical a constituent quality of fiction as a genre?
3. As to the ethical nature of story-telling, is there a difference between literary and non-literary narration?
4. Is it adequate for an ethical narratology to consider the category of the other – Ricœur's *l'autre* – as a constituent element of narrative?
5. Should an ethical narratology be an ethics of reading? What is the reader's role in an ethics of narration?