

# EMBRACE RACE

Mika Hannula

## **Embrace**

– Analog Experience, the Question of Aesthetics,  
and the Idea of Repeating Forwards with the  
Practice of Painting

Mika Hannula

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Texts: ©Mika Hannula, 2020

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Cover image: Onya McCausland, Saltburn  
(Helsinki), (detail)

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Publisher: Hunang, Dugguvogur 3, 104 Reykjavík

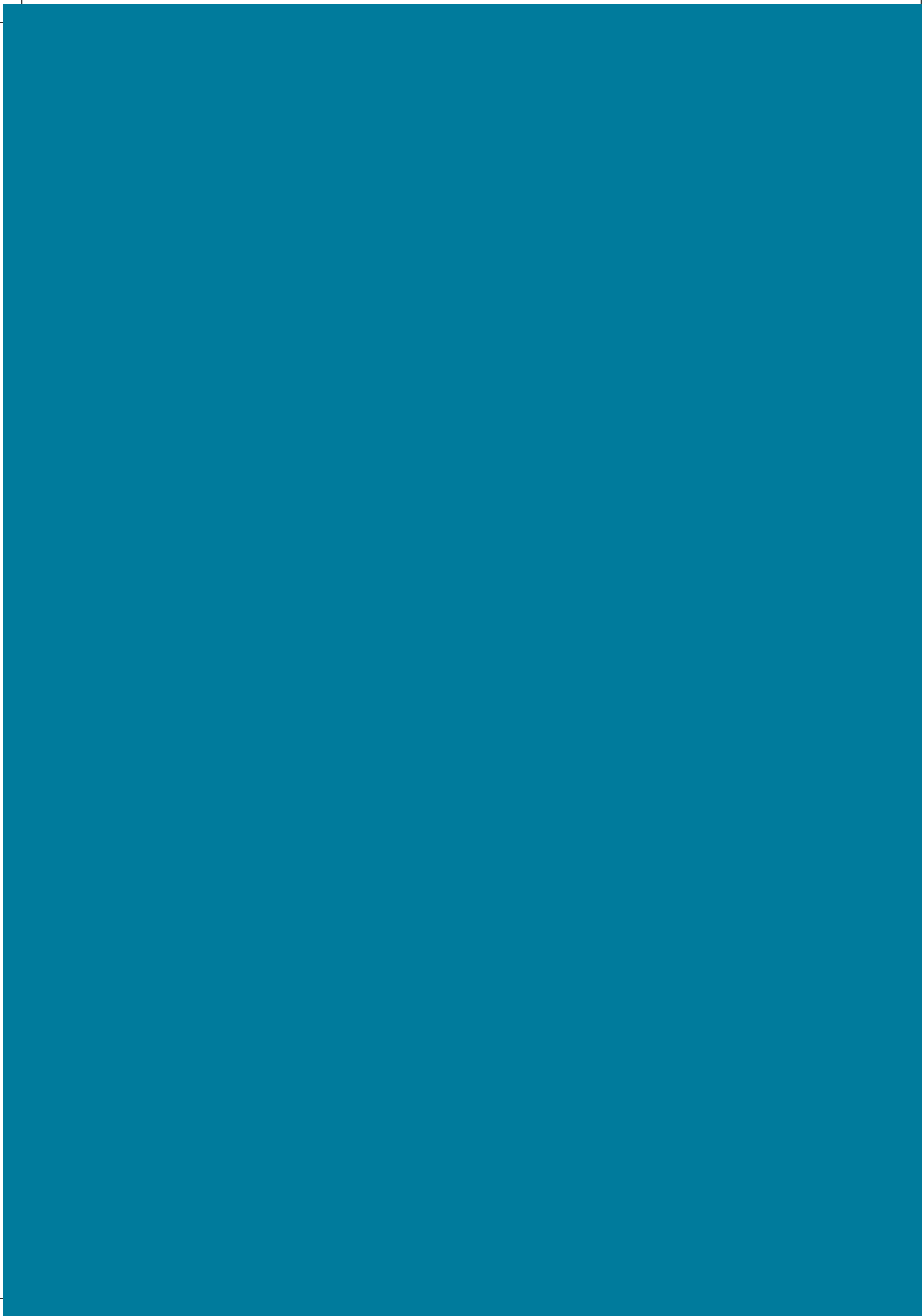
isbn 978-9935-24-706-3

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## PREFACE

Embrace is a project and a process that combines thinking-with and doing-with. The acts that are acted, both individually and collectively, take place with and within the discourse on contemporary painting and with and within organizing and conducting group exhibitions (Akureyri Art Museum, January–April 2021 and Norrtälje Konsthall, February–April 2021), focusing on the same topic and theme of contemporary painting.

What you see and read and hopefully react to and with is not a book as a document, because, logically, this book is actualized as a prelude, before the acts of spatial and visual narratives in exhibition spaces. This is a book as an event, as a road map towards something that we individually and collectively find important, and that we, yes, desire. It is a means to turn towards the big main issue of analog experience, what it means, how it possibly provides an alternative to the fully commodified experiences of late modern societies and how it also potentially becomes an arising, emergent place for alternative ways of articulating and actualizing content to a concept, symbol, act or a rhyme.

What's more, this book is linked to analyses of the content of the aesthetics and the embedded idea that with art and aesthetics, there is a creative chance at facing questions of who we are, and how we are, both alone and together, not forgetting how we are forced, whether we want or not, to deal with the current dramatic disturbing alterations in our societies (such as digitalization, crises of democracy, and climate change, just to name few of the central ones). Altogether, it carries with it the aim of remembering and repeating forward.

At the very core of these inter-connected enterprises and adventures lies a central distinction: it is not about *what* something is or ought be, but rather, the whole process is asking about and putting forward variations of *how* it (work of art and aesthetic experience) is made and shaped. Thus, the task and the aim is not to define or describe what analog is, or what aesthetics is, or what painting as a practice is, but to present, push forward and make possible situated and committed interpretations of each of them and also very much so in connection to one another – in deep-seated and anchored connection to its particular pasts, presents and potential futures.

This is then painting as a practice that is not universal, does not seek to go beyond or past its imperative shadows of a doubt, but will find all the energy, all the strength to get closer, remain close and stay with the inherent and intended issues and dilemmas within each and every painterly act and process. It is, therefore, all about the “thisness” of the acts that are acted, about the uniqueness of analog experience and the aesthetic experience on the move, in these recurrent and inter-linked movements, in its repetition, rhyme and rhythm.

It is important to emphasize how the chosen context for addressing physical and mental experiences is not painting as a separated and isolated medium, but painting as a constantly renewing practice that, with its own logic and means that matter, is taking part in and participating with the changes and challenges of our contemporary societies. A context that never is, but is constantly made here and now with the examples, the moments of hesitating beauty of thinking with, feeling with and engaging with works of art as an opening – as metaphors we live day in and day out, by and with.

This is to underline, with varied alteration of connections and perspectives, how the works addressed and discussed here have a direct and immediate political and social component – not in what we might

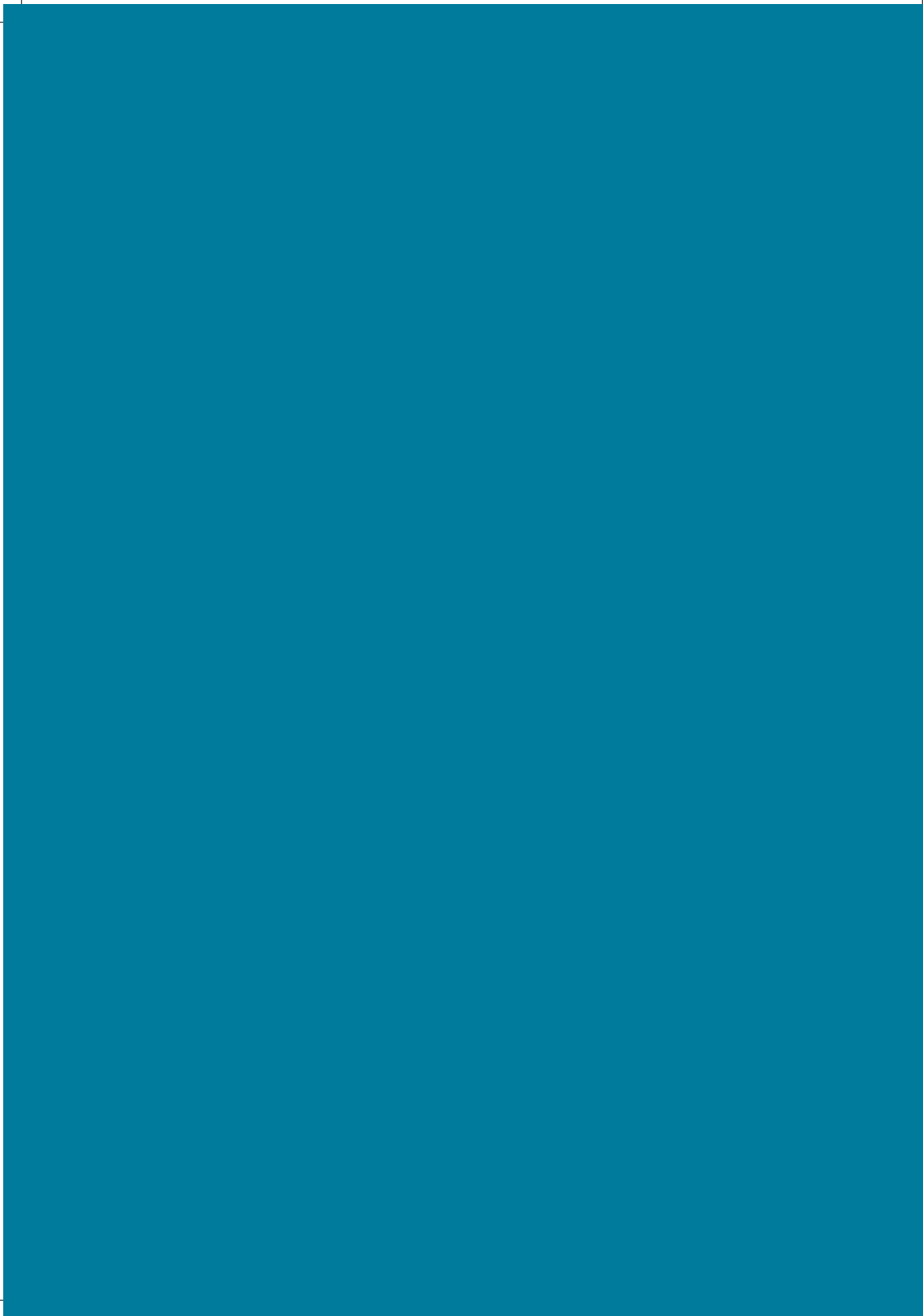
at first hand actually see or recognize, but what topics and themes are confronted and connoted with. The politicized content is always implicit, not in the foreground. Therefore, as a vital distinction, this is not politics as in what's wrong, or who got it right, or who gets what and who does not, but politics as politicizing, asking, again individually and collectively, what's going on, also asking where are we going, and how I/we relate to the issues and what might I/we, in fact, want to try to do with it.

It is, in the strongest sense available, an act of *Embrace*, a continuously growing acts of embrace that invite, they welcome you and us to be with, to see with and feel with.

Deeply felt thanks go to all the artists involved in the exhibitions, in alphabetical order, Birgir Snæbjörn Birgisson, Emil Holmer, Heidi Lampenius, Onya McCausland, Miikka Vaskola and Þórdís Erla Zoëga, to Helen Hedensjö, Norrtälje Konsthall, and Hlynur Hallsson, Akureyri Art Museum, for all the help with the project, to Arnar Matthiasson for the language edit, and for Sigrun Sigvaldadottir for the design.

This embrace is dedicated to all the three Amir-Moazami's that always and forever matter the most: Schirin, Yuri & Aila.

*Berlin, Spring of 2020*  
*Mika Hannula*





## INTRODUCTION

*Embrace* is a project and a process focusing on the internal logic of the painterly acts that are situated, committed and long-term embedded. It is a project that will be articulated both as this book and as a series of linked exhibitions – all parts coming together with the aim of creating and generating sites and situations for paintings to not only be but to become. Thus, the aim is to get away from the idea of distanced neutrality and start moving towards participating – the confusingly messy but pleasurable road from absence to embrace. It is an eat-me-feed-me, help-me-hurt-me constellation that combines, brings together for a both-and type of negotiations and navigations, staying far and clear away from either-or dead-ends and categorical staleness.

*Embrace* is built upon a three-part structure that includes the following elements: 1) analog vs. digital experiences, 2) singular vs. universal, and 3) intensity and intimacy of aesthetic experiences, their immersion and integrity. These intertwined three points are not serving as statements or yet to be proven facts. Their role and function is to give and provide a direction, ascending *Ahnung* as a set of guidelines that are constantly rewritten and remodeled.

In short, what these propositions as presuppositions say is that it all comes down and it all comes back to particularities and having a stake, and taking a stand, from a certain position, with a specific voice. It is about our ability and willingness to take part, to combine the inside and the outside, the familiar with the unknown, to enjoy cleverly constructed and constituted risks while always, instead of falling down the stairs of cynical distance or

delusion, always keeping that door wide, wide open that allows and cherishes us to laugh at ourselves.

## **1) Analog vs. digital experiences**

The project makes the distinction and the juxtaposition between the internal logic of painterly acts and gestures, here short-handed with the title SLOW, and acts done in accordance with the rules and regulations of a spectacle, also known as the means of behavioral modification, mass-production of feelings, short-handed as SMS. This is to address the difference, albeit an existing inter-connection, between the analog and the digital experiences with and within the world, with the interactions of being-in-the-world that is always both given and unknown.

Thus, what we do is a comparison of the internal qualities of analog experience with painting (SLOW) vs. the internal qualities of Social Media Spectacle (SMS). Starting with the previous one (SLOW), the context is a double take, both an aim and a hope. This is a version of a painting practice that digs deeper into its own potentialities, confronting those acts of doing what one does when we do them hopefully in a bit better and meaningful way, in and through acts that are contextual and compassionate, committed and situated.

As a list, as a tool to think with, it looks like this:

### **Analog experience – SLOW**

(an extra o added there, for, well, something ... of a hiccup, a call to remain in light, to stay awake and curious)

- slowness
- tactile
- being-with

- participant
- localized
- vernacular
- singular
- historically embedded
- digging deeper, remembering and repeating forward

### **Social Media Spectacle (SMS)**

- 24/7/365, idealization of being all the time, everywhere and with everyone
- 360 degrees view and vision
- surface contact, horizontal moves
- increasingly fast and travels incredibly light
- illusion of being on the right spot, being special and worthwhile
- provides an effective way for a moment of escape from reality (like the cinematic experience in the 1930's cinema, SMS is that in contemporary societies, but with a total reach, active through the day, and the night)
- a spectator turning into a product
- cheap and trendy
- significantly happy being ahistorical
- extremely low attention span
- hype of the merits of blatant opportunism
- instrumentalization and commodification of the everyday

Thus, it's a choice, a decision and an interpretation, which way to turn and find the focus – if not always solace. It is a choice, but a choice that carries both sides with it. It is not to choose the good and not the bad, whatever that is, or to deny the opposite side in a complexly intertwined site and situation, but to choose and play against the odds, against the dominant mode of 24/7 illusion of presence and omnipotence of digitalized logic. It is not only to hide, but to seek, it is to make these confrontations a finding place, not a hiding place.

It is to prove, cleverly provoke, for example, just asking out loud, just stating it not so very innocently: does the digital, virtual and visual information system, does it also increase the quality of lying, or only the quantity of it? Or do we possess a chance to tell better stories, more intimate and intensified, more breaking in and out of sensations with the analog mode and motions?

It is – this decision to juxtapose analog and digital – an opening for making a dent within the expectations, not about making a virtue of standing outside in the cold.

It is a way to avoid instrumentalization, and a way to turn towards engagement, and yes, embrace. The aim is to get closer and stay closer to surprises, risks, situated painterly gestures and movements – and to avoid static, formalist and stale categories and dead-ends.

And yes, it is to wonder, to stay mobile, agile and open. Not to fall, not to break under pressure, not to rely on detached cynical seasoning, but to take the heat, the heat. Move along, get along – not to opt out but to join in, perhaps even to jump in.

## **2) Singular vs. universal**

The project, both this book and the exhibitions, focuses on one, not many – as in both what and how one tries to do when one does what one is doing.

However, in according to the principles of critical hermeneutics, that particular one, when gaining access and getting closer to its intents, intensities and integrity, it gives us a version of one in a many. This point of coming together, this point of inter-connectedness, this one is then a work of art. It is not a representative of an imaginary whole, or a hole, for that matter, but it is an example, a sparring partner of an articulation and actualization of a one.

Stated in another manner and mood: it is the difference between *what* is done and *how* it is performed and actualized. A sense and sensitivity that looks for conflicts and collisions, that merges from them a bit bruised but always with an interpretation of nearness that touches and demands. Or perhaps it is to be articulated in this fashion: could it be, would it be, or even should it be like a version of a bossa nova song that caresses and arouses – and then fades away leaving us to ache for more, and more.

What I have in mind, what I carry along is a sensual version, a bossa nova version of the once a very popular song called Let's Get Physical, this specific version with a kind of whisper of a singing, and a lingering, tarrying rhythm that almost, but just almost moves forwards. A something called re-enactment, a certain past-present-future linked sensibility and a sensuality of "thisness" that never is *an sich*, but is about to become – a recognition of a resemblance of what was while moving, repeating forwards a new interpretation, a new version.

It is a connection of the dots between the same that remains and that difference that keeps changing and repeating. With a reference to one of the most vital and important writers of the philosophy of history and who made us aware of the idea and aim of re-enactment, R. C. Collingwood, what this is about is how "the sameness is the sameness of an historical process, and the difference is the difference between one thing which in the course of that process has turned into something else, and the other thing into which it has turned" (1970, 62).

In terms of reflective vocabulary, this book of an embrace focuses on the content of a singular, not the universal. In the words introduced and applied by Georges Perec, this is to concentrate on the most basic, the most everyday, the most common dry boring usual aspects of life that so very often goes unnoticed. Perec (2008, 210) called it the strategy of "infra-ordinary. Its aim is to describe and highlight the banal, the obvious and the simple – and to find its particular and peculiar specificity within it.

This is the act of being able to connect the dots between the personal and the common, private memories with shared recollections, and strive towards an achingly meticulous and obsessive observation that looks for the depth in the shallow end and collects the pearls within the most unknown and not appreciated materials. It is actualization and activation of a passive memory – a meta level that is framed by the everyday background noise but localized in and through the most precise and detailed participatory interpretation of this here and this now. In the words used by Perec: “The everyday examined from every angle, next the search by traditional means for my own life-story, then finally this fictive memory” (Ibid. 129).

It is a move and a movement that combines, and brings together, and which is guided and guarded by a sense of empathy to be with and to share with. “A movement that starts with yourself and goes towards others. It’s what I call sympathy, a sort of projection, and at the same time an appeal!” (Ibid. 133).

A colleague of Perec, another novelist with an interest in both content-driven and structural experiments, this constantly evolving give-and-take between form and content, Italo Calvino, expressed this wish and the aim as the art and science of the unique and the singular – instead the common habit of searching for the general and the universal. Calvino, who happily acknowledges that he is following the writings of Roland Barthes, provides yet another example of the possible opening, the creating act of connecting the dots, the delight in and on understanding the uniqueness of every act, every object, every demonstration of a content of a concept. It is an aim that goes into the most mini or even less than what meets the eye, into moves within the events and turns on the everyday and stays closer with them – making and shaking those wished for links between here and then, now and there (See Calvino 1988, 75, and 2013, 72).

It is a dealing with and a potential deliverance that is like a knot, oh yes, like a knot, but please be aware, a knot defined by Calvino when it is what

it is and but, well, a bit of something else, and more: “linear configuration in three dimension” (2013, 61). A somewhat breathtaking moment of a push and pull of an emerging relationship that is constantly on the make, and on the shake – shaping and making its connections and dependencies, its take-offs and landings. It is below and above, it stops and it starts, talks tall and hides low, it turns swiftly from right to left and back again and it is heated and frozen in its anticipation of what is or will be next and its acts of remembering and resurrections of what just went past and by – all actualized and articulated in the acts of giving content to an act, concept or a symbol exactly at its sense and sensibilities of an interpretation.

It is a move and a movement that relies both on an empathetic take as in a sense of a reality – embedded but not determined, localized but not naive. And yes, it leans strongly on the power and agility of the curious mind – to open up and not fall into static and sterile disengagements. This is then nothing else than the power of connecting the dots – the power of imagination that reminds us of what it means to imagine and to be imaginative: a) to be able and willing to shift from one perspective to another, and b) to be willing and able to locate oneself to and with the structures and biographical facts from where one acts and speaks from (Mills 2000, 211).

Or to intensify the act of connecting the dots between what is recognized and what goes on by unnoticed, this is where we again reconnect with Calvino and his musings about the potentialities of imagination and its endless variations of expectation and experiences. It is about what is and why it’s so possible within the reach of impossible, this is to cherish and embrace, truly and duly embrace the interplay and serious hilariousness of how we attend to and seek for a connectedness to the constantly shifting moods and modes between, not two poles of, lets say, like fact and fiction, but many formations and alterations in-between them as in modes of what did not happen, what will not happen, but what could have taken place. “There is still another definition in which I recognize myself fully, and that is the imagination as a repertory of what is potential, what is hypothetical,

of what does not exist and has never existed, and perhaps will never exist but might have existed” (Calvino 1988, 91).

### **3) Inside and outside intertwined – intimacy of aesthetic experiences, locality of analog intensity and integrity (Less is More)**

Now, finally, let's talk about quality, not quantity. Let's focus on singular and unique on and through the everyday – on what is at stake in that emerging and evolving moment, not a monument, of articulation and actualization. Let us focus on what we have, not as a limitation but as richness, on those things that affect us and on those that we can have an effect on. Let's deal with something that we both can grasp and have a sensual reach for. Let us not aim for something that makes us to behave as a tourist or as in a voyeuristic manner. Let us be frank and let us be bold – let us ask for less and make more, much more out of that we all have, and have close by and by – that what is singular, personal and participatory.

Let's take risks, enjoy experiments – let's open the window and jump from the height of, well, about 5 centimetres, just to get it going, just to practice, just to get it started, that motion and emotion of going to somewhere where we have not been before. Not as something unthinkable, or incredible, this is something we yearn for, this is something we burn for. This is something we desire. And it is something that has a purpose, a direction and a sort of aching kind of a plan. This is an aesthetic experience that becomes what it can be and strives for in an analog setting and circumstances.

This is to connect us with that simple and seductive and elegant phrase from a song: “There is a science to walking through windows” (Graceless, The National, 2013, American Mary). A metaphor, nothing more, for sure,



and for real, a practical means for getting closer to the intent and intensity of surprises and celebrations of the unexpected – without hurting ourselves in the wrong and harmful way. And as ever, it is rather little about what a sentence like that actually means, it is all about what you actually do, articulate and make accessible with it.

Or, now that we have managed to address and open this particular door of references, part II, soundtrack of our hopes and desires, this is to recall Marvin Gaye, originally a song from 1972, that by then did not get the recognition it certainly deserves. A song called *Where are we going* that gives us the direction of an open horizon, with the following lines, repeated with an elegant lightness that comes close to an obsession: “Where are we going, day in, day out, what’s the future showing, where are we going ...”. But as obsessions go, this tends to go towards the opening up, towards the move and the making of a moment of repeating forward, not stale and static giving up.

But, in order to concentrate on the rhythm, rhyme and repetitions from one to many and back again, lets take this chance to do the same in a yet a bit different way very very seriously. Let us focus on the pleasure principle. A principle that, of course, has elements of passion play, elements of hedonistic joy, but not only those. In itself, it’s more complex, certainly confused but inter-connected. It is a principle that has a yesterday, a today and a tomorrow. It has patience, it is clever – and it is unbelievable porous and beautiful when it tries and fails, gets up and does it again and again while doing that is able to laugh at itself.

Pleasure. This is the pleasure to be with and within, the pleasure of being a stakeholder, a partner in crime. With yet another nod towards Roland Barthes, it is an actualized version of pleasure as in the great, great adventure of desire (See Sontag 2009, 76).

What if, in our current conditions of conditions of increased importance of the visual and the virtual, what if there is still, despite all bureaucratic turns and ticks against it, despite the overwhelming totality of a commodified and instrumentalized everyday, something in a basic humanist notion of a weltanschauung to gain and to take with us? Not the tasks or in terms of beauty or wisdom, but as a description of the relationship and the connection, that possible connection that might be – perhaps perhaps perhaps – made between the viewer and the work of art, the one that sees and the one that is seen and which get entangled and embedded, combined and connoted in an aesthetic experience? How about it, huh?

This would be an understanding of the chances and challenges of enlarging our potentialities with confrontation, being willing and able to broaden the spectrum for a moment, to turn to and towards books, films and paintings, for example, or songs, designs and architectural structures, that might rise and help us to open up, to gain a fuller, more situated and embedded experience and also gain an awareness and a sort of being-in-the-world that is a bit more and a bit richer than before – however temporal that moment is.

This would be then based on the necessity and need to actualize and to articulate our contacts and connections to the works of art and aesthetic experiences – not in general terms but always time and space bound. In other words: analogically. It would rely on and trust compassionate confrontation and juxtapositions, even enjoy them, while not worrying so much whether the end result is shining in its harmonic or synthesis type of a composition.

It would mean the aim and ability to get closer, stay closer – and take the heat, the benefits and the burden of proximity. There is our body as in plural, our ever-changing bodies in emotions in motion – the body that must be confronted and felt with. And yes, the body, the co-existence in being-in-the-world, without with, not to lower the odds, anticipations and

expectations, anything we do have very little meaning and weight nor importance.

It is a body in interaction that is the very moment of both of a proposition and projection, its presuppositions and transformations entangled and emergent. In the words of Judith Butler: “For the Other to represent being is not for it to be being itself, but to be its sign, its relay, its occasion, its deflection” (2015, 57). It is a sense and sensibility that is tumultuous but dedicated, clever and even irresistible. A site and situation in which it all happens, shifts positions and comes back again, because “Who speaks is not who writes, and who writes is not who is” (See Sontag 2009, 84).

It is a collection of acts that allow and encourage us to let ourselves open up, and to be confronted with versions of the same that are different. It is an act of getting effected and influenced in a way that would be part of the proposition and play of the *now* of the past, the *now* of the present and the *now* of the future – as a promise of not getting stuck but as a proposition to try to move along and make a difference while remembering forwards. Let me repeat it: remembering forwards. It is an available and accessible act of freedom and responsibility that, just to include that another vital and constant movement within a balance act of an *Embrace*, is about the reassuring restoration and the reliance in the continuous and committed aim and intention of repeating forwards.

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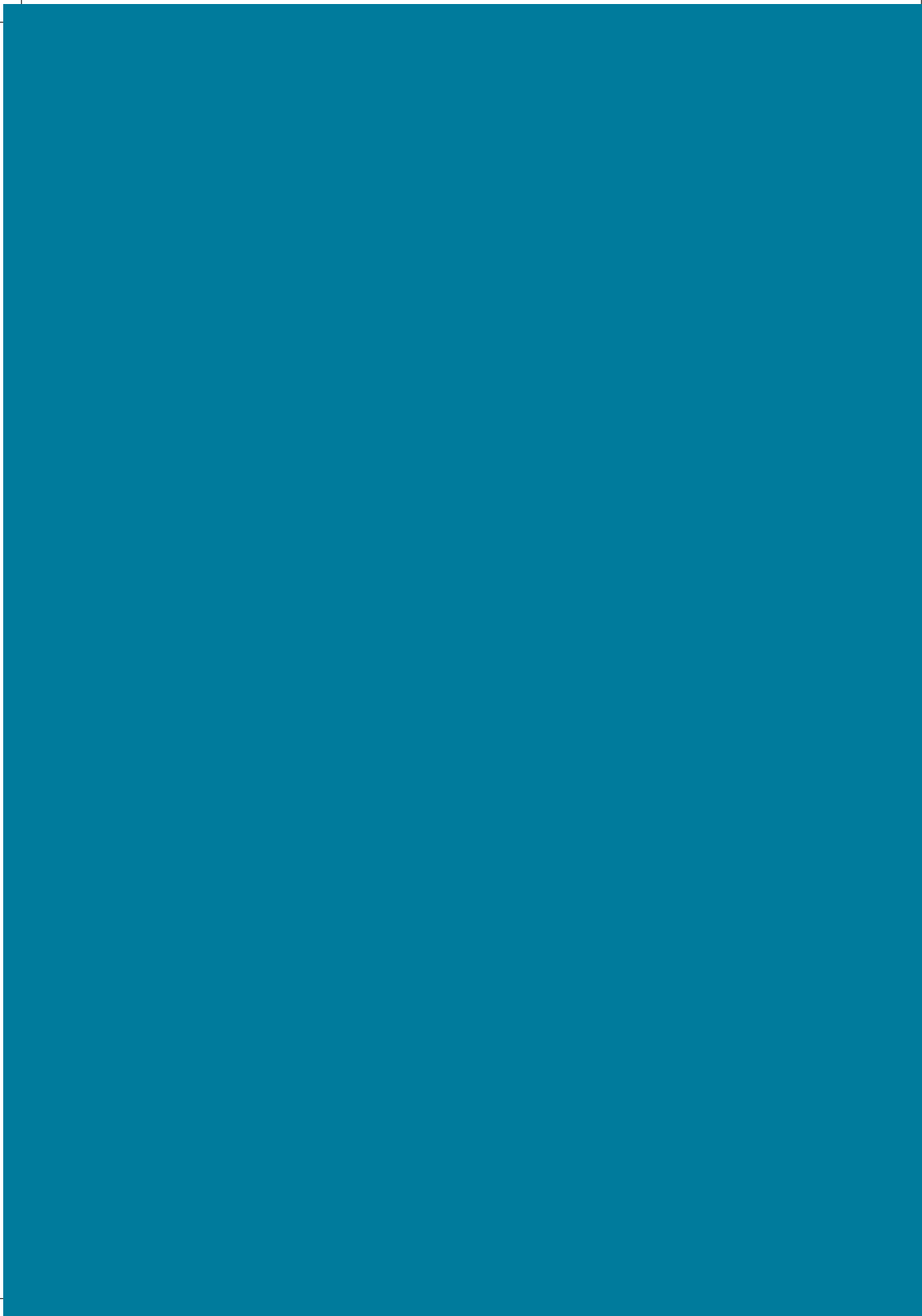
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## ROOTS AND CULTURE

### Past, Present and Potential Future of an Aesthetic Experience

**“What men think about the world is one thing; the terms in which they think about it, another.”**

*Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution 1789–1848,  
Vintage 1996*

Aesthetic experience? How do we relate to it, how do we approach it, what kind of rival and conflicting version does it connote today, and in the past, distant and near – and finally, what kind of value-laden hopes and desires do we place and project on and upon it in the future, both near and distant?

It is a complex, intertwined yet a very much of a solid gold kind of honest dilemma embedded into the everyday experiences of our being-in-the-world. It is to ask, directly and nowhere near in a roundabout way: How do we perceive our chances to participate in our daily actions and environment – as in what, how, where, with whom and why?

Or to put a slightly different spell to it: How do we try to live a life in full, cherishing and appreciating the plurality of its means and methods while sorting out the various ways of connecting the dots between public and private, particular and general, content and form, determinism and freedom, and not to forget, nature and nurture?

\* \* \*

The tide is high, things fall apart and the center is not holding. We are facing, staring at big issues, dark times, but nevertheless promising beginnings.

In contemporary times of troubles and aching awareness of the multiplicity of huge global size issues (climate change, digitalization and its effects on conditions of work, erosion of democratic values and structures, just to name a few central ones), we face a site and situation that is manifested in a double-act. It demonstrates itself with a critical view of the current set of norms and values of rational-technical world view while at the same time searching for another set of guiding lights and criteria as in how to solve the mess we are in and at.

Surprisingly or not, there is a growing tendency to look outside of until now existing legitimate box of tools of solutions and salvage – and to widen up the scope by including the notions of senses and sensuous knowledge into the process. This is to say and state the wish to broaden up the spectrum of experiences, to win distance from locked-up deterministic linearity, and one size fits all approaches. As an immediate consequence of these doubts and questionings, we are witnessing a growing interest and wish to include aesthetics into the body politics.

But what kind of a version of aesthetics experiences are we talking about? And why, well, now?

These questions share a larger scale connection with the trajectory of our modern times, the histories of it in plural, more or less arbitrarily starting with the emergence of modern nation-states at the end part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The timeline does carry with itself a strong push and pull of ambiguity because if anything, those trying and troubled times of post-revolution of 1789 (French one, that is) were full of contradictory moves and moments, rhythms and rhymes. But it was a time that for better or worse



does provide a substantial point of reflection and comparison with our current sites and sorrows.

It was a time when a new and competing vocabulary was both invented and developed. (As Hobsbawm underlines, these were the times when concepts such as industry, capitalism, socialism, liberal and let's add one more, railway, were either invented or gained their modern meanings). This was a time of what later was address as Enlightenment, a shorthand here for secular, rational progress (in its various colors and forms, strongly dependent on their newly built nation-state base), but it was a time for insecurities and all kinds of try-outs. In short, some went for a deliberately deterministic view, and some chose a view based on freedom, while some trusted Reason, some Force – while none of them, no matter what they at the time uttered and openly even stood for, was at all sure what it meant or implied. They were, for sure, whistling in the dark, stumbling without clarity of a direction but trying nonetheless and the cacophony of the noises was extreme.

Fascinating enough, it was a time when the idea of the new role of aesthetic experience was also introduced. One of the central, albeit for sure not the only one, of this line of thought was produced by the German writer Friedrich von Schiller who, besides being a known man of letters was also working as a professor for history, published a text called, in original in the year of 1795, *Über die Aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen*, (In English translation, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man.*)

In this highly speculative and ground-breaking text, Schiller articulates a position that seeks to combine and bring together, not to isolate and distance, the seemingly opposite but by any means interconnected forces – or what he already then called drives. This is the common framing of separation between, let's say, rational and legislative aims and needs, or from another angle between receptive and sensory approaches, or, perhaps in its most over-covering way stated, between rationality and senses.

Schiller's view of a human life was a mixed one, a passionate search for a both-and solution that would bridge intellectual and sensuous elements if not together then at least into a complementary interaction and recognition of each other. He wanted to find reconciliation, a mediating element between the different and often seemingly incompatible parts. This wish he articulated with the notion of play – or in another vernacular, play-drive.

Obviously, what Schiller meant with play was something not directly stemming from cheap amusement or trivial pursuits. Play was introduced as an ongoing committed activity within which artistic expressions and appreciations of beauty were located and actualized. In other words, the domain of aesthetics, instead of it being frivolous and to be warily suspected, serves as an act of balancing between the forces at stake. "To the extent that it deprives feelings and passions of their dynamic power, it will bring them into harmony with the ideas of reason; and to the extent that it deprives the laws of reason their moral compulsion, it will reconcile them with the interest of the senses" (1967, 99).

But what kind of a content of the concept of play did he have in mind? What was its role in the search of the hesitating equilibrium of both-and – private and public, individual and society, reason and senses?

For Schiller, play served as glue, social and mental one, while it allowed the believers in both sides to try out and to experiment without worrying that it would rock the boat too heavily. It gave, in a very central way, a room and a chance for each side to unfold and to expand, to experiment and emerge. At the same time, in and through the acts of play, Schiller achieves to highlight the importance of motion – or, why not, emotions in motion. This is to say that Schiller was instinctively aware of our need with the big issues, with the difficult complex matters, to constantly gain nearness and achieve distance, to accumulate closeness and to allocate and sustain some breathing place.

Thus, Schiller's concept of play is through and through defined as action. It takes place and finds its shape and content within the decisive interaction and intervention in the conditions of our daily conditions. It is a provocative and disturbing act that alters our balance, and changes on purpose our perspective to the matters that matter. It brings close to what is often seen as being far, it changes up to down and heavy to light, taken for granted into elements of surprises, and turns day into a night and back again. What Schiller was getting closer, and closer to and towards, but not articulating it as such, was the act of creativity – a creative treatment of an actuality.

Therefore, it no longer is an exaggeration that Schiller's notion of play, and its contextualization within the realm of aesthetic experience, is at the very core of the issues at hand with the projects of *Embrace*. Instead of being a marginal or marginalized theme, and in itself somewhat contingent one, aesthetic play gains a central role and potential capacity in the search for a fuller understanding and realization of humanity, of a human being as somewhat near complete. It becomes a necessity. A notion that is articulated in the following, and for right reasons known passage by Schiller: "Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays" (Ibid. 107).

\* \* \*

Well, that was then, then being the sites and situations and through the year 1795? What about now, right here? Similarities, dissonances, continuities? And not only, for example, being satisfied by broadening the scope on men to all human beings and also living creatures – referring to the quote by Hobsbawm at the very beginning of this chapter, dated to the year of 1962, but seriously addressing the issues of alterations with social imagination, and its implementations into laws and habits of our everyday practices.

But all in all, this notion of the need to see and recognize realities as a push and pull between both-and, it does sound familiar, doesn't it? With a bit of anticipation, a bit of a creative interpretation and we have, not in itself a novelty of a world in turmoil, but more than that, we have a set-up in which both the questions and the answers of the old regime do not match with the dramatically altered reality, both our view and the facts on it, all the while when a new type of questions have already surfaced, but we are still trying to sort out credible answers to.

Some might say that this is the very definition of a human condition; the sheer necessity and responsibility to strive for new type of conceptualizations and solutions, to participate in providing content of and for concepts that shape and make, define and describe our lives. If so, we should then also take it into our hearts and minds, to repeat, hearts and minds that the human condition is characterized by our responsibility, and yes, our freedom to do something, to act – to move on, and to imagine, and to produce alternative ways of being-with and acting along. Thus, in a classical sense, this is to remind and to remember that in order to be able to build a city, we first have to imagine it.

In contemporary parlance, this is the view of an active participatory stakeholder, and a realization that we cannot pretend to be outside of these huge, constantly accumulating and intensifying issues. We are part of the mess; always part of the problem and the central element of all these intertwined issues is that there is no over-all, no objective, and no universal and detached solution. Each and every solution is time and place, true blue value laden entity and enterprise.

So, what is there to do? In order to act, we recognize that we need some help in both navigations and negotiations with and within all places and participants, especially our commissioned view on the past, the present and the future. And here, again, the notion of the human condition of never being able to solve these things for good, or for sure, but always just

partially, always in a way that demands giving up something what you had before (either mental or material security), and always in a way that something is missing, something is lacking, we face the give and take proposition of these tasks being in the constant inter-play between their limited actuality and their almost unlimited potentiality.

It is what it is, it is the ethics of the unattainable, which by no means should lead us into passivity of giving up, but instead, and nevertheless, motivate us to an increased and intensified will and wish to strive towards and search for the matters that matter.

Once again, and especially in contemporary times, we do not suffer from lack of information or evidence. First Club of Rome report, state of the international research into climate change titled *The Limits to Growth* (subtitled as the Predicament of Mankind) was published in 1972 – or if one prefers production of knowledge, lets say, from another source, the main reference within popular culture is the 1971 released seminal album by Marvin Gaye called *What's Going On*, and in this context, especially the song named *Mercy Mercy Me (Ecology)*.

Something was in the air, so to say, something was changing, at least for a time, but here, and now, it is worth recalling those openings lines, those words from that time that unfortunately have not lost any of its importance or urgency.

*"Whoa, ah, mercy mercy me  
Oh things ain't what they used to be, no no  
Where did all the blue skies go?  
Poison is the wind that blows from the north and south and east  
Whoa mercy, mercy me,  
Oh things ain't what they used to be, no no  
Oil wasted on the oceans and upon our seas, fish full of mercury  
Ah, oh mercy, mercy me*

*Ah things ain't what they used to be, no no  
Radiation under ground and in the sky  
Animals and birds who live nearby are dying"*

Or to move from the top of the top of the pop hit lists of those times, we can re-link us again to the quote at the beginning of the chapter, by the historian Eric Hobsbawm, who published this first in a series of four impressively observing and synergetic books on modern histories in the year of 1962, accelerating the changes from there to now, from the acceptance of us as men to the actual impossibility of its short-sightedness, immediately wishing to re-write that part to include all, and not only as human beings but living beings, all inclusive its their past, present and future manifestations. This is to say that history is told, and retold, constantly altered and based on a different but distinct values, wants, desires and fears which are not neutral, not given, and not objective but made and shaped, maintained and shaken.

Facing the never-ceasing gap between knowing and doing, we suffer from the darker side of the very human condition of not articulating an actuality into its near-full potentiality. This is a potentiality to choose differently, to act differently and to follow upon the new set of norms and demands when moving away from, just one example, from through and through instrumentalization and objectification of the nature into a subtle and difficult road of co-habitation and reciprocal respect.

A compassionate and certainly a confused process and a project that is ongoing, all-compassing in its time-consuming demands, and never ever fulfilled. It is the art, always the art, the art of the almost, not quite nor complete, but the art of the almost.

The art of the almost, embodied and situated within the continuity of a singularity of an aesthetic experience – one by one, one informing the next while recognizing the connections to its own histories, that does not

imply an essence but a performative act. It is the act of being turning into a becoming – a porous and emblematic, a hesitating beauty localized in-between what's already-gone-by and what's not-quite-yet-there.

This is the continuous and situated act that becomes visible and loud in and through metaphors – not just the metaphors that describe but also that define who we are, where we are and how we are. These are metaphors, here's a list for a beginning, which aim at bringing together, making us aware of the complications of both-and but feeling sad or sorry for it but nevertheless articulating and actualizing versions in and through those sites and situations. Metaphors, never as answers but as platforms and as trampolines, such as writing with (actually, title of the last chapter in this book), remembering forwards, get down on it, catch me if you can, connecting the dots, and a double take, lost in translations connected to found in transformation (See also Lakoff and Johnson 2003, for a comprehensive over-view of the theme).

To move from what is, cemented or hallucinated, to what might be and become, dreams and wishing-wells, it is a conscious and comprehensive dismissal of and from any kind of locked-up essentialism and instead of an illusion of security, it decisively faces, get close and closer towards the issues at hand, and at those arising in the horizon. It is a creative treatment of an actuality that can take many forms and expressions, ranging from loving conflict to speed kills and back again.

As ever, important is not what the metaphors that we activate are but how they are used and localized. In these acts, both physical and discursive, we try make sense, seek to connect the dots and combine that very something, which is always, immediately here linking ourselves to the above mentioned metaphor lost in translation into something that might yet be found in the processes of transformation. This is to, just to provide the helping hand with another set of two metaphors, both originally from specific context but both available for a generous and creative re-activation. To bring together

and to let loose again, we do what we do when realizing that it is a both-and act; an act that is a catch and a release, and an act that is a continuous call and response. Something gets started, but it is not that important who did and what, the crucial thing is how to keep on keeping on.

This is a version of art and aesthetic experience that per se does not rely on its possible importance as a factor in tourism, not does it justify its existence through economic and monetary means, and finally, neither does it explain its role through what might be its inherent and intrinsic value. It is not only about more this, more that, it is not only about budget. It is about affecting and having an effect. Or to put in a repetitive mode that we all recognize and that we all fall short of. What is needed, what is required is us as committed participants who listen, and listen carefully, and only after that, only after the listening part begin to do the talking.

Because this is a version that does not turn away, it turns towards. It is not only about talk talk talk, but very much so about listen, listen, and listen, especially its demands and dispositions. It does not hide, it tries to find – it tries to find means and ways of moving away from any type either-or essentialism, moving away from phlegmatic stagnation into the realm of taking part and being part. That is, acknowledging and acting upon the notion that staring at the waves in never enough, we need to act upon the issues and start making those waves ourselves – and for ourselves and our surroundings.

It is the promise and a productive take of opening – opening to the hopefulness of becoming a specific and particular site, or content of a concept or a symbol, that very act of repeating forwards.

As a concrete historically effected consciousness, an example of this repeating forward is a re-activated link to the previously talked about concept of *Spiel* by there and then in times and terms of Friedrich Schiller, the year of 1795. It is now re-connected with another take on the same concept



of *Spiel*, this time by Hans-Georg Gadamer, almost 200 years later, but by no means just re-warming the content but taking tours with and from the previous one and adding something else and different to it. For Gadamer, the concept of play is not only present in the person who experience but also in the work of art itself. It is the extension of the self, combining subject and object and sending them into the orbit of give and take, push and pull. “The work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it” (2006, 103).

Aesthetic experience as a play presupposes commitment. It is what it can be and become if and only if when the player loses oneself in play, engaging with the to-and-fro moment of participation. It is an interaction that renews itself in ongoing repetitive acts, but which is always has both open and not so open, visible and invisible risks and its responsibilities. What we confront and hopefully caress is the promise of the actuality of the experience, and the joy that it expands, sometimes exploding; the pleasures of sensual knowledge it creates and sends forth. It is an act that is found and generated in the moves and moments of tarrying with, and deking and ducking in and out – but always staying with, and not looking away. It is a committed act that entails both a freedom from restrictions and also a freedom to take it somewhere else, interpret and provide a time and place bound opening with it (See Gadamer 1977, 29).

Thus, this to see, to recognize, to cherish and conceptualize aesthetic experience as a central part of our lives, our lives of being-with and perhaps of even being-for. It is the potentiality to shape and make our everyday sites and situations in conditions of conditions that are never perfect and will never lead to a complete fulfillment, but which nevertheless are worth trying out, and worth striving for.

It is the art, the art of almost.

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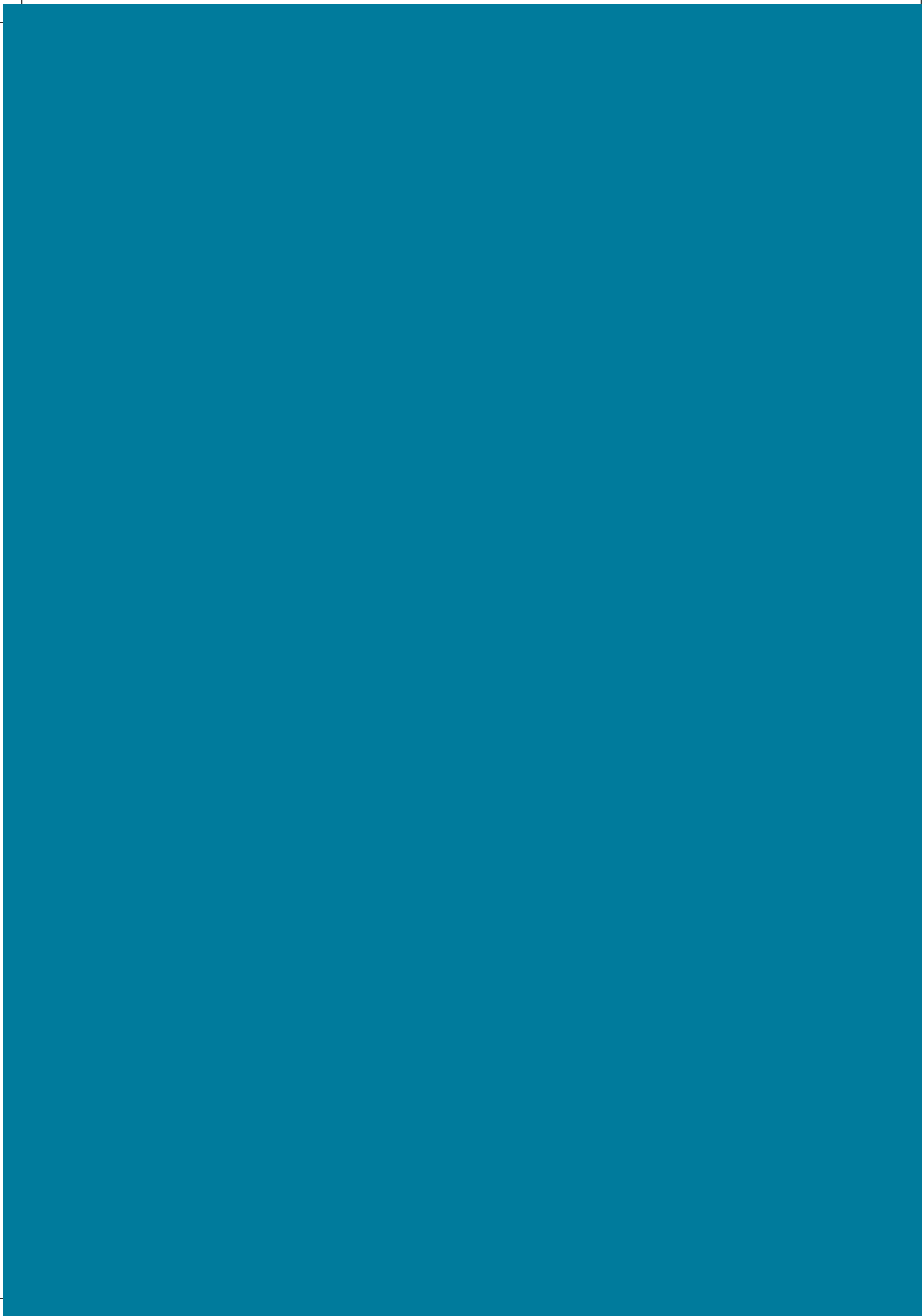
The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every receipt, invoice, and bill should be properly filed and indexed for easy retrieval. This not only helps in tracking expenses but also ensures compliance with tax regulations. The document provides a detailed guide on how to set up a filing system, including the use of folders, labels, and digital tools. It also highlights the benefits of regular audits and reconciliations to identify any discrepancies or errors in the records.

The second part of the document focuses on the importance of staying organized and efficient in the workplace. It offers various tips and strategies to improve productivity and reduce stress. These include creating a daily to-do list, prioritizing tasks, and taking regular breaks. The document also discusses the importance of communication and collaboration with colleagues, as well as the benefits of a clean and clutter-free workspace. It provides a checklist of essential items to have on hand at all times, such as a calendar, a pen, and a stapler.

The third part of the document addresses the issue of time management. It explains how to identify and eliminate time-wasting activities, such as excessive social media use or unnecessary meetings. It provides a step-by-step process for creating a time management plan, including setting goals, identifying key tasks, and allocating time to each. The document also discusses the importance of delegation and the benefits of using time-saving tools and techniques. It provides a list of recommended time management apps and resources.

The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. It offers various strategies to reduce stress and improve overall well-being, such as exercising regularly, practicing mindfulness, and spending time with family and friends. The document also discusses the importance of setting boundaries and saying no to unnecessary commitments. It provides a checklist of self-care activities to incorporate into a daily routine, such as taking a walk, reading a book, and getting enough sleep.

The fifth and final part of the document provides a comprehensive overview of the topics discussed in the previous sections. It summarizes the key takeaways and provides a checklist of action items to help readers implement the strategies discussed. The document concludes with a message of encouragement and a reminder to stay organized and efficient in all aspects of life.



## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF HOPE

**“What we know about anything is determined by the way we encounter it, and therefore we should never assume that our knowledge of anything is more than partial.”**

*Marilynne Robinson, The Givenness of Things,  
Virago 2015*

At the end of his recollections, in his own words thinking through four decades and two careers, Clifford Geertz talks about liberalism, its values and aims. For Geertz, what it comes down to is its deepest and most central commitment: “The moral obligation to hope” (2000, 260).

At the beginning of his last book to be published while he was still alive, appearing just before passing away, Tony Judt puts the finger where it certainly does hurt. He asks: “Why do we experience such difficulty even *imagining* a different sort of society?” (2010, 34). The backdrop is the current and unfortunately on-going malaise of one-size-fits-all, all-encompassing arguments of an economic nature. Judt continues, “Our disability is discursive: we simply do not know how to talk about these things anymore” (Ibid.).

One reaction is to shout for a new type of language, and concepts that would help us with the task. This wishful longing after the newest of the new is well rehearsed by writers such as Rancière (2006) and Badiou

(2007). The aim that we could if we just try hard enough imagine something that is completely new, no longer inter-connected to its past, and its histories.

But what if we do not need to run after them, what if we should not waste time hunting down the new of the new? What if the conceptual tools for re-visiting and re-actualizing social hope are already available, but greatly in need of being activated, reclaimed and re-valued?

The task, in abstract sense, is clear. It is an activation of the content of a concept (symbol, sign, act, etc.) that is situated and committed. It is the participatory act that Gadamer (1999, 55) called the act of *sich vergegenwärtigen* – articulation of a content in its history of effects, in connection to its past, present and future.

In practical ways, the task is to address and re-validate the subject of social hope with the help of two distinguished conceptual tools. These are 1) Sigmund Freud's short but important 1914 text "Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten" (in English, "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through," 1924) and 2) Gianni Vattimo's text "Nihilism and the Post-modern in Philosophy," 1988 (originally in Italian, 1985). The former focuses on the intertwined concepts named in its informative title, and the latter on the concept of *Verwindung*, which translates into the overlapping and conflictual acts of distorting, accepting, resignation and convalescence.

What unites both Freud's and Vattimo's approach is the issue of how we relate to and confront the past. It is a past that is never to be solved, but is something that rather always needs to be dealt with in each site and situation – critically, yet constructively, not by denying, nor by affirmation. The questions that emerge are two-fold: 1) Is it a meaningful conceptual act to combine Freud and Vattimo? And if yes, 2) what are the consequences of bringing these two conceptualizations together in order to re-activate the concept of social hope?

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The content of a concept is not neutral, given, stable, natural or objective. The content of a concept is on the move, and we should keep on moving with it. Not after, or behind, but with it. It is the need and necessity to think with, and to think with in terms of what the texts said there and then – and what it says to us now and here.

The content of a concept is constructed, conflictual, contested, contextual. Thus, it is also confused. But it also should be compassionate. We need to feel with – and feel for. It is not what it is, but how it is made, shaped and maintained in each context, its site and situation (See Hannula 2009, 29).

It perhaps goes without saying that Sigmund Freud's text "Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten" (Remembering, Repeating and Working Through) is one of the prime examples of a text that in itself is just a beginning. It is there, but it has not yet arrived. It needs to be interpreted – it needs to be made actual. It requires both historical contextualization and contemporary reflection.

The text itself is short, and condensed. It is truly a remarkable text. Ricoeur characterized it as strange (2005, 110), and for a good reason. The contextualization of the text begins not only with its original year of publishing, 1914, but with its original sub-title, that was dropped out of later editions. It was called: Further Recommendations for the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II.

Two words, obviously, which make the scene, develop the direction and shape the context. The nature of the text is advisory. It makes suggestions on how to conduct the practice of psychoanalysis. It also makes the point of calling that internal logic of the particular practice a technique.

It is certainly a temptation to read perhaps a bit too much into and from this compact text. However, it is not an exaggeration to underline that this

text passes on a version of a practice that is in a continuous process. These recommendations are not a static list of do this, do that. This technique is not a formula.

Freud is very precise in addressing the demands and difficulties of the wished for act and aim of working-through. Its aim is to overcome resistance – resistance to remembering. For Freud, the act of working through is exactly that: it is acted out. Remembering happens through the compulsion to repeat, both in transference and in resistance (Ibid. 151).

Freud is also very careful in pointing out the dangers of the process. “It cannot always be harmless and unobjectionable” (Ibid. 152). Thus, there are, there will always be clashes and collisions.

For Freud, working through the resistance is the part of the process that we need to stay with. We need to stay put with it. It demands continuity, it requires stamina – from all involved in the process. In one word, it needs time. What’s more, it is a confrontation “which cannot be avoided nor always hastened” (Ibid. 155).

Remembering, repeating and working-through. With time, within time. In and through time. Inside, in a practice that is open, self-reflective and self-critical.

What more is needed? What more can be said, added?

Time, care, and going through and through – emotions and motions. For us, for us, the emotional hooligans.

In articulating a recommendation, recommending a technique, Freud is addressing himself and his colleagues. He is a doctor talking to doctors while the patient is waiting – perhaps listening, perhaps not. But what does it say to us? Not in 1914, but now, and here. Not in a clinical treatment, but



in thinking with and thinking through the conditions of our conditions of being-in-the world?

It would be futile to deny the difficulties, the connections between two very different scopes of practices, and the differences between a micro and macro sphere of discussion. None of these difficulties should stand in one's way when making that particularity of a connection. And this connection is the procedural and the time-based character of Freud's recommendation.

There is no answer, there are no guarantees. There is a task; there is a chance, a motivation to keep on keeping on, digging deeper, not sliding sideways. Not slipping away, but staying at it, staying with it.

Remembering, repeating and working through.

The significant part is the acknowledgment that you are stuck, allowing yourself the sensation that there is no way out. You must face the gravity that pulls. Not the facts, not hard reality, but the ways in which you are in the world. You need to confront the stories that you tell and that are told about you. It is an I, it is a You, and it is an Us that is not isolated. It is an identity that is connected with the various parts and sides of itself, with its surroundings, and the ever on-going construction of relationship between all parts and participants.

There is 24 karat gold of a fixed identity. But regardless of its process-based temperature, the main task is to keep that process going. For that, you need to be aware both of being stuck and then getting a little more unstuck.

There is no magic, no remote control, no overall helping hand. There is a site, and there is a situation. You go through it, you work yourself into it. You are admitting that you have no easy way out. Even if what you did might have functioned before, you still need to try it out and actualize it again. And, again and again, always and constantly being careful and aware

of the dangers of slipping into a negative circulation, instead of being able to repeat forwards.

And for this, for this challenge of always continuing, falling down, stumbling and getting up again, you need a frame. You need a structure, a structure that is there to assist, not stand on your way. It is a structure, as in a time frame. Not for now, not for tomorrow, but for the whole distance – and back again. It is a structure that is aware of its past, present and future, allowing it to keep on moving – not moving away, but moving towards, within its historically effected consciousness (See Gadamer 2004, 299–306).

Because when we work through, we move – not alone, not outside, but together, inside the structures, inside, in their chances and challenges, what they include, and what they consequently try to exclude. We are part of it, and we need to try to be a participant in it.

In the words of Judith Butler, “Even the most given or non-chosen features of our lives are not simply given; they are given *in* history and *in* language, in vectors of power that none of us choose” (2011, 12).

Working through is a double take on an act that is continuously both a physical and a discursive act. It is the act we act, in and through our living body.

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On the face of it, Gianni Vattimo’s text “Nihilism and the Post-modern in Philosophy” is less of an enigma. But this distorts the inherent and embedded nuances; the distinctions of where Freud and where Vattimo are coming from – especially with what material Vattimo’s is coming about, and around. Whereas Freud, along the way, is creatively making and shaping the whole bag (psychoanalysis) he carries and pushes forward, Vattimo

comes with a whole complexity of a bag (modernity) that spells the aim of going beyond metaphysics. And that, as an act of becoming, is not for the broken hearted.

If Freud's question (one of them, of course) is to ask: how do we come to terms with ourselves, especially in connection to the past, then Vattimo's question (again, one of them) is to ask: how do we come to terms with our society, especially its past.

True, Vattimo is not speaking directly about a society. He is talking about the values and the self-image of a society. He is talking about modernity, not more, nor less. He is talking about metaphysics of modernity.

For Vattimo, it is not a question of whether we are or are not modern. There is no choice: we are stuck. We are stuck with our past, with the philosophical foundations of our past. In one word (one of the many possible ones), we are stuck with modernity. Here, this colossus of a concept stands for unity, oneness and truth, to... well, just to begin with.

Vattimo's point, especially when writing the text in mid 1980's, was to argue for a position that claims that there is no way out. We cannot, and therefore, we should not try to leave behind, or go beyond, the metaphysics of modernity. It is not something that we can solve or set aside. "Metaphysics cannot be thought of as just another human error, from which the subject could escape through an act of will or a more rigorous methodological choice" (1988, 174).

Metaphysics, and metaphysics of modernity, so to say, is here to stay. We better get along with it. Move along and with it. But how?

This is where Vattimo opens the bag and drags out a concept. It is not so surprisingly yet another German concept called *Verwindung*. Here again, we

are confronted with yet another concept that is never addressed with one version or as a version, but with various inter-connected characteristics and elements.

The thing is that Vattimo takes this concept from Heidegger. And Heidegger takes it from Nietzsche. But where one takes something from, and what one does with it, is not the same thing. In Vattimo's version, the important thing is to articulate what this concept is not about. It not about over-coming (*Überwindung*). Or reversal, or about over-throwing or solving; solving X, Y or Z, or anything.

It is *Verwindung* that sets the score to its constant presence. It is an act that is both-and. It accepts and it distorts. It is made of resignation and of convalescence. It is a process of facing up to and living with the past but is not a process that helplessly gets caught up with the past or gets captivated by it (Ibid. 172).

*Verwindung* is both-and.

It is to remember, to recollect and re-think the past, the tradition that you come from, that you are part of, and that you have a relationship with. It is to be with, to think with – and then to twist it, take it somewhere else, and to do something with it. Traverse it, distort it, and dissolve it. From within, not from outside.

The past is with us. You can't throw it away, and if you try, trying to hide, deny or not admit it, it just rebounds with an even fiercer force. A catastrophe, an accident waiting to happen that does not lie low; it catapults. Oh yes it does. Says Vattimo, and says Freud, too.

Therefore, we've got to deal with it. Face it; accept it, go deeper and deeper into it. And then, then do something with it. Not against it, but for you. Not there, but here. Not then, but now.

For Vattimo, *Verwindung* is an act of being responsible. It is the responsibility of comprehending where you are coming from in order to be actively available for dealing with and distorting it – or at least trying to. It is an act that must be situated, it must be embedded, and it must be seriously contextualized. It must know what it criticises and why – and what for.

Therefore, for Vattimo this notion of being stuck and always being part of the metaphysics of modernity is not a cause for despair. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a beginning. It spells social hope.

Vattimo applies *Verwindung* on a very personal level. He applies it in connection to his own personal past; a past that he is stuck with, but a past he has serious problems with. In *Credere di credere* (1999) Vattimo faces with his relationship to Catholic Church and its belief. It is a life-long process he has worked through, he has gone through, and is still going through: the acts of distorting, acceptance, resignation and convalescence, in terms of what this belief means to him.

In short, the conflict is open, and the wound is deep. As a left-wing political philosopher, as a homosexual man, the Catholic Church has somewhat different views of what it means to live a good life. In this confrontation, in and through the never-ending processes of *Verwindung*, what Vattimo does is that he takes some, and leaves some. He distorts, but he does not leave behind everything. He takes distance from what he calls the superstition of the institution. He leaves *der Aberglaube*, and makes and takes a secular version. He leaves a lot but takes much, much more with him. He takes two principles. He takes the principle of non-violence and the takes the principle of love.

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What happens when we put Freud and Vattimo together, setting the texts, placing *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through* and *Nihilism and The*

*Post-modern in Philosophy* into an active give and take relation? And what, if anything, has this combination and its effects to do with the re-vitalization of the situated and contextualized concept of social hope?

The benefit that these two rather short texts provide is a well-needed focus; a focus on build on and going further with. To stay, not to run away. To be particular, not generic. To turn towards, not away. To make it a finding place, not a site for hiding. It gives us some of the necessary and essential coordinates of thinking-with and being with.

Obviously enough, one should not force Freud and Vattimo together. There are too many discrepancies between these different yet similar approaches to the role of the past and the question of identity in connection to the past. But what we can do – and we do not need to use any kind of a force to do it – is to allow these two texts to collide, caress and be combined with one another.

With the combination, we get their intertwined notions that are in direct contact with re-thinking and re-activating the concept of social hope. These are the elements of a) historically effected consciousness, b) the notion of time, both its slowness and longevity, and c) the actualized situatedness of content of a concept.

What both Freud and Vattimo push forward is the need to be aware of the conditions of our current conditions. We are not free-floaters. We are stuck with the past, but the question is always *how* we are trying to deal with it – a past that is constantly on the make and on the move. What these two writers also very effectively argue for is the notion of time, its slowness, its sense of feeling the gravity pull. It is not just that things take time, and that we ought to do things more slowly. It is a notion of the internal weight and substance that only comes in and through time. It is a process, which gains credibility not through shouting, not through volume, speed and price, but through the slowness of facing up to, face-to-face, being with. In short, intensity and intimacy.

Neither Freud nor Vattimo uses the vocabulary of a situated self. Both, however, address the need to both speak from and speak with. Both acts and actions are only meaningful when done consciously embedded into the sites and situations that the act is taking place with and from. There is no all-encompassing answer, formula or method. This is what Freud is driving at with the litany of Remembering, Repeating and Working Through. This is what Vattimo wants us to focus on with the constantly recurring openings of the concept of *Verwindung*. It is not what things are, but how they are made and re-shaped into the processes of becoming of a place.

It is the social hope of always and constantly returning to the metaphorical scene of the crime. There is no now without its then, and there is no past that is not coloured with its vision of a future. Social hope is articulated and activated in the acts that take part in the processes of giving content to the concepts that we use and that have an effect on us. It is us staying with these concepts – not their static versions, but their constantly evolving and constantly newly anchored interpretations.

It is a social hope based on the acts of many collisions that create and generate a loving conflict – a hope that makes us to come closer, get closer, and stay closer. Not longing for the big bang, but making sure that we also make the waves, not just stare at them. The waves are made within the locally articulated versions of remembering, repeating, and working through, and doing this in a way that achieves change, achieves the acceptance and distortion, being-with and evolving toward, resisting and caring for.

It is a set of intertwined acts, as in a matrix of a social hope that, to use a completely different vocabulary, is no longer asking how we could be more and more happy, successful and great. Instead, it is asking: How could we be and become a little less lonely.

Now, is that really too much to ask for? For us to stay with it, getting closer, remaining within the dilemma, its shifts of possibilities and impossibili-

ties, openings and dead-ends, and not to slide or sprint away? This is to try again, and to come back, and when returning, returning with another version of the changing same – a live and kicking version of a situated and committed social hope. Is it really too much to ask for?

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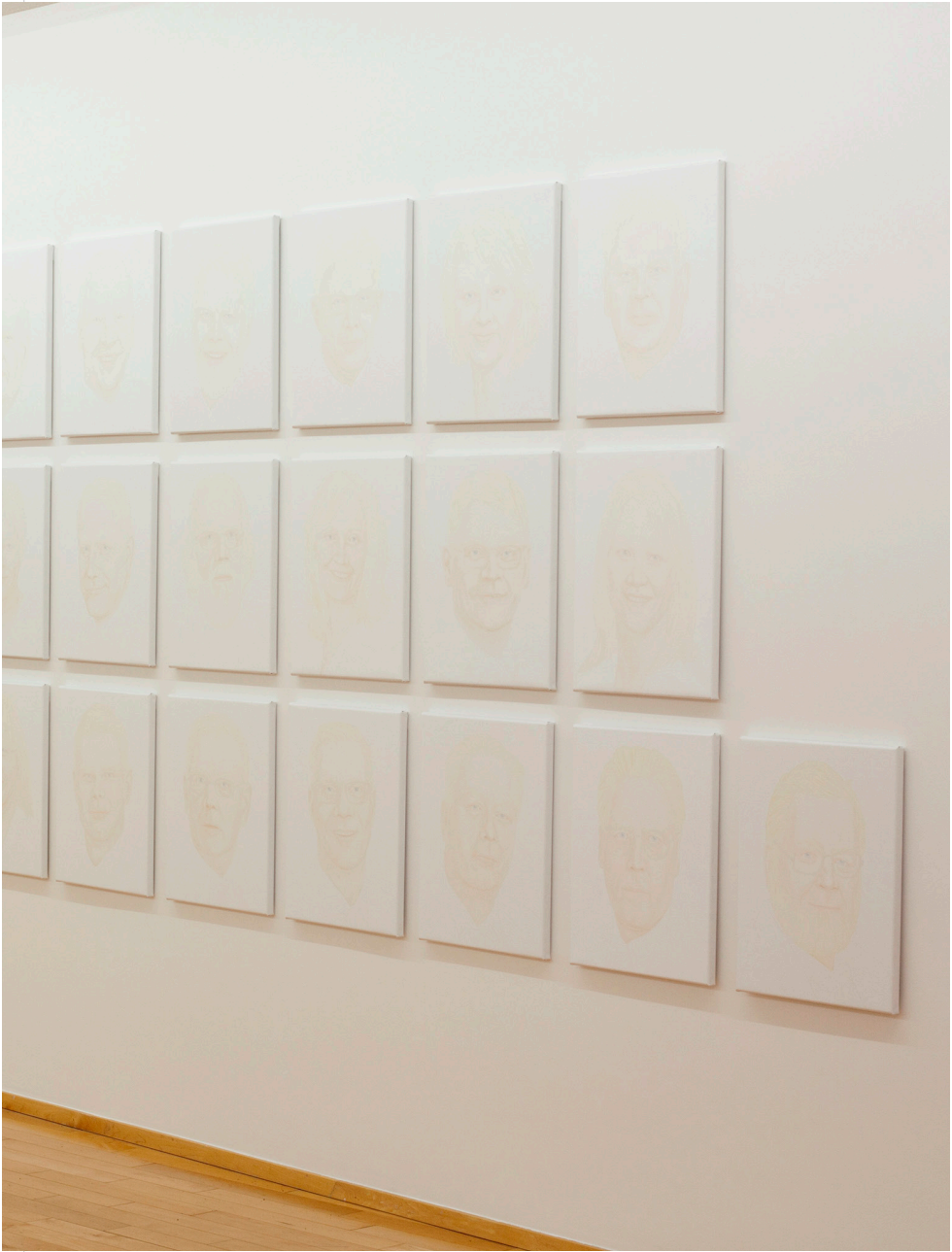


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Hope · Birgir Snæbjörg Birgisson





From the Series *Hope* · Birgir Snæbjörn Birgisson

## A Real Human Being

What you see is not what you get. You see more and you see less – simultaneously. And what you think you recognize is not what it is about. It is, again, much more complex and oh so very simple.

It is about two things, two inter-connected things. It is about hope, and it is about what it means, and is it even possible, and if yes, how so to be and become a real human being.

A hope of a chance for becoming a real human being.

\* \* \*

A wall. We stand in front of it, and we stare at a wall. We keep on keeping on – trying to be with, trying to relate with.

The facts are comforting, they help. They bring structure into an inherent ambiguity. The facts as in numbers that lead us to the latest, but not the last, election in 2013. It was the case of the parliamentary election. In the state of Iceland, there are 63 members of the parliament.

63 is an uneven number. It has to be an uneven number, because when voting about laws and regulations, budgets and budget cuts, there must be a result. A tie is not possible. A tie is not in the books.

But why 64 on the wall? Perhaps for a symmetry, perhaps for paying attention to the fact that the elected body is not stable. It lives. Some change jobs, some change their overall currency of being. Some even leave their bodies. They die.

But perhaps the main reason for the number 64, the empty one is to keep it open, to underline how each and every one of the members of the parliament at that very time are indeed both changeable and contingent. They could be anyone, but they are not.

These 63 faces, these persons behind and beside these faces are one and they are many. They are singular but they are part of a bigger whole.

\* \* \*

These 63 portraits, plus that important extra one, the one that activates our imagination of what could and perhaps should come about, these are portraits of real human beings. They have mothers, they have fathers. They most often have families. They are loved, and sometimes they love back. They have been hurt, and they have caused pain. They have known joy and felt a sudden rush of happiness, even desire.

They are like all of us. Almost.

These 63 are different. They are not special. They are different, because they have a role that is not just a role play, but a role that is painstakingly controlled and continuous.

They represent. Not humanity, not a human being, not a human kind of a situation, not a real hero. They represent the people. They are an aggregate of the nation.

They are one and the same, and they are single and generic. They are more, much more than one should ever expect them to be.

But what exactly do these 63 represent?

Well, everything and nothing. They are the blank check, they provide the perfect surface for the projection of who we are and how we are – and most essentially: who we would like to be, who we would loved to become – and what we are never ever able to achieve.

To repeat. These 63 represent our wishes, our wants, our desires and especially our fears. They are a both a platform and a dumping ground for all our anxieties, disappointments, short-comings and insecurities.

Now, hand on heart, who would want to be that?

We know it is impossible, even inhuman. And we know that the propaganda asks us to believe that nothing is impossible. But it is. And it will be.

\* \* \*

But what do we see? What do we hear? What do we feel?

When facing ourselves, like with a mirror, and a mirror that keeps on nagging us and wanting us to stay for yet a bit longer, these 63 portraits demand. They are, indeed, extremely demanding.

These works demand attention. They also deserve attention. There is no way to solve them, no way to satisfy them, no way to deny them.

They stand in front of us and they tell a story, no, sorry, to be precise, they tell stories. These are stories that we actually do not want to see, hear, or feel with.

These stories are not nice and neat, nor are they bold and beautiful. These are stories that are about us. They are not necessarily scary or ugly but they are – us. In these stories, we never reach what we wish for. We are frail, and we fail. We suck and we are sucked into a whirlwind of everyday events that control us – not the other way around.

What we see, hear and feel for is a real human being. Someone and somebody whose reach always horrible extends his/her grasp.

And that, that truly and duly hurts. It is bound to cause a bruise and a heartache. A commotion and a clash.

\* \* \*

In the movie *Drive*, directed by Nicolas Winding Refn, and starring Ryan Gosling, from the year 2011, we witness a setting that proves to be more and less than meets the eye. Our expectations are both met and deceived. We see, hear and feel a love story that is quite but not exactly. It is almost. The art of almost.

In a central scene of the movie, the main character has decided to alter his course of action. He no longer only stands for himself, or only does things that help himself. He chooses to help someone else, regardless of the consequences.

In this scene, we hear the music. It comes in, and it stays in the background but it also pierces through. We want to stop for it, but the



events of the moving images do not let us to have the luxury of a halt. We move on and the lyrics of the song move on with us.

It is a rather typical retro kind of electro pop song. In itself, nothing much to talk about, but the point here is timing and the connections. The character is about do right, and to do wrong. At the very very very same time. It is an act that inevitable leads to a tragedy. Blood, sweat and tears.

And song, the song sings: "A real human being, and a real hero".

\* \* \*

With these works, with these 64 ones that are there, on the wall, to serve and to shiver, we get the elements of the real crime. We get into the act of wishing well within which our wishes are not so innocent or swell. But we need more, always more. We need something to guide and to balance this endless and never ever fulfilled acts of projections.

We need protection. Not from someone out there. There is no out, and no in. We are the mess. It is our mess. It is our freedom and our responsibility. What to do and what not to do. Or: whom to blame for the boogie that we wished for.

We need protection from ourselves. And it is only ourselves that can provide and maintain that projection for and from ourselves.

Remember: it is our mess, and it is our chance and challenge to confront and deal with it.

Projection and protection.

It is both-and, it is here and now, and it is there and then.

These works, these 63 + 1 portraits. They are projection, and they are protection.

Please please please. Try it out, again and again. Be a human being, a real human being and stay – get closer, stay closer. Let these portraits look back at you and let them have an effect on you.

And yes, while doing it, and while failing and then getting up again, if you need a word, a concept, a helping hand to navigate and negotiate with these dangerous paths and tumultuous seas, we have it. For you, and for us. To care and to caress.

It is called hope.

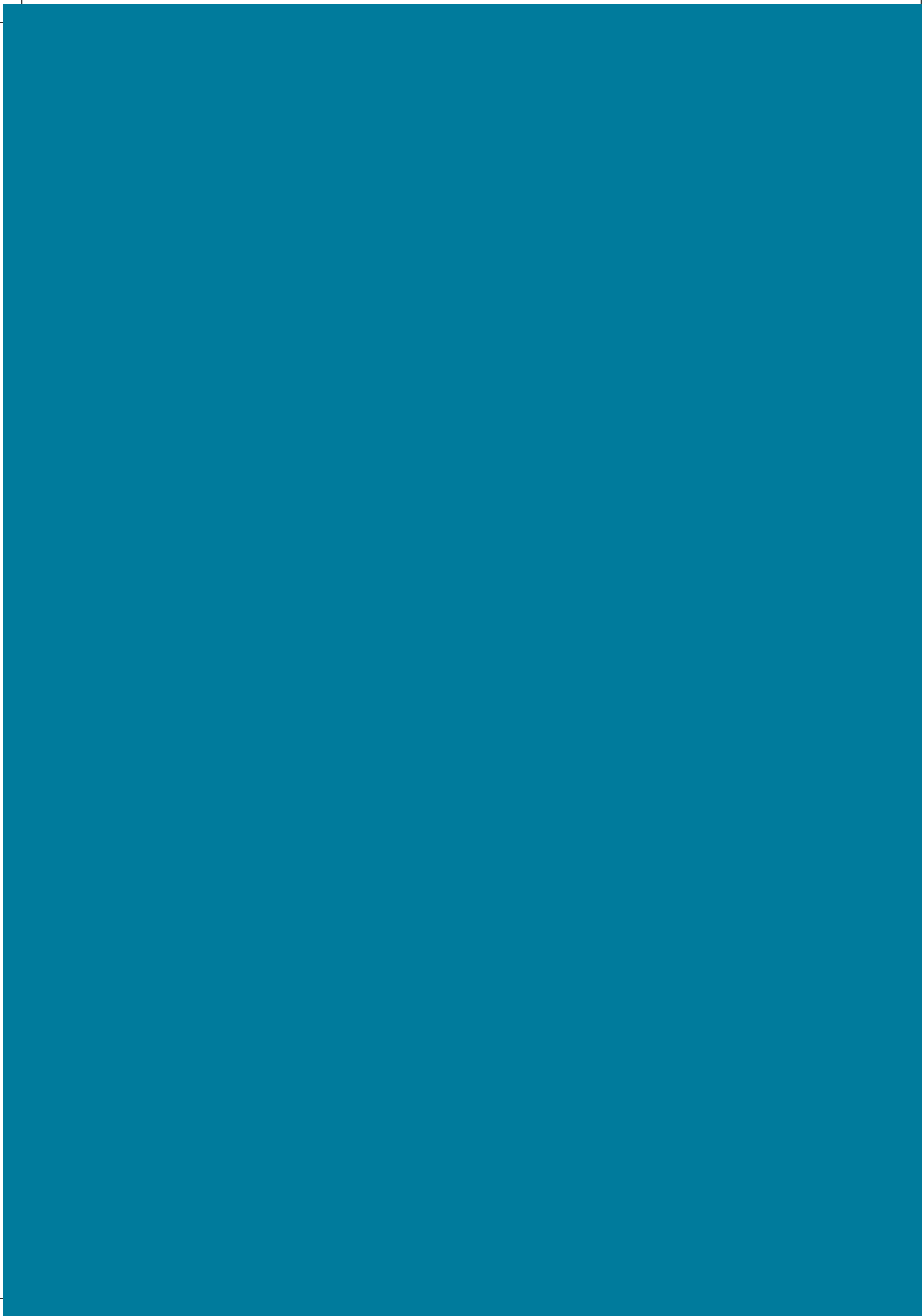
Hope.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. This includes not only sales and purchases but also any other financial activities that may occur. It is essential to ensure that all entries are properly documented and supported by appropriate evidence.

In addition, the document emphasizes the need for regular reconciliation of accounts. This process involves comparing the company's internal records with the bank statements to identify any discrepancies. By doing so, the company can ensure that its financial statements are accurate and reliable.

Another key aspect of financial management is the timely payment of bills and invoices. Failure to do so can result in penalties, interest charges, and damage to the company's credit rating. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a system for tracking and paying all obligations on time.

Finally, the document highlights the importance of budgeting and financial forecasting. By setting a budget and monitoring actual performance against it, the company can identify areas where it is overspending or underspending. This information can be used to make informed decisions about future operations and investments.



# LOVE IN A COLD COLD CLIMATE

Analog experience and its trajectories

**“Our understanding of ourselves is a narrative understanding, that is, we cannot grasp ourselves outside of time, and hence outside of some narrative.”**

*Paul Ricoeur, On Psychoanalysis, Writings and Lectures  
vol. I, Polity Press 2012*

Sign of the times, sign of our times is that we are facing, individually and collectively, major changes and deep insecurities – ranging from to the overall aching issues of climate change and its results to the consequences of digitalization that will affect our everyday life, not least in how we comprehend and structure the content and concept of work, while directly inter-connected to how do we (often simultaneously) sense ourselves as being part of something significant and/or feel as being left behind in our societies.

What is it, then, in these circumstances, the task of the artist and art? What is or could be the role of an artist or contemporary art in these matters, these questions? If and when we are all part of the problem, part of the mess, there is no way we can detach ourselves or pretend that we are not involved. If so, then the point being is not so much as to *what* but it articulates as *how*?

Are we expected to actualize and present answers to complex and continuously altering issues in an instrumentalized and often either-or dichotomy manner? Is this what we ought to do, to dress up for the part of a specialist

(in a wide, widening, widest field of expertise) and to participate in issues we both lack the education and the experience?

Or is there room for works of art and interventions within visual culture that, instead of propaganda and pre-paid solutions, offers us a platform to think with, to think through and to connect the dots within each complex set of fields of problems? What if, rather than joining the blame game of who got it right, and who is wrong, the task of art and culture at large is to open up and engage with the demands and the dilemmas, aiming to shifting the balance and the perspective between the constant move and movement from near to far, from closeness to distance, from feeling confident to feeling insecure?

Thus, this would be a work of art that does not claim to possess or provide solutions, does not fantasize or pretend to be a politician, a management consultant or a neuroscientist, and is not satisfied with just raising the issues, not just making noise, not keen on taking part in the competition for attention or queuing up for yet another polarized shouting match. Instead and rather, it would focus on the acts to keep on keeping on as a work of art, staying true to its own inner logic, giving us means and a motivation to deal with, to face with the multiple problems and dilemmas at hand situationally and slowly.

If yes, the aim is to address a variety of artistic approaches that all share the sense of necessity to deal with the common and shared big questions and recognize the need to articulate these issues in a way that is not only descriptive or illustrative, not only assertive or accusatory, but works of art that very well start with a given issue but then work through it, filtering and editing in and out, producing a work that is no longer captivated to where it came from but has gained a weight and meaning of its own. In other words, the content is embedded, imbued, and it is implicit in its political turns and twists, never on the side of the essentialist or on the foreground.

It is a work of art that in and through visual means and aesthetic sensibilities, also tactile values and sensualities, able us to confront the difficult and demanding issues that we all share and all of them which shape us. This is then a set of works of art that invite us to be with, to gaze at and to feel part of the ongoing discussions of how, where and when. It is an ongoing process, a mighty rough road ahead – and yes, we are working on it, asking with the help hand of these specific, special songs, asking individually and collectively both What's Going On? and Where Are We Going?

\* \* \*

Why analog experience? Why sensual knowledge? And to continue, bringing them together, how do they affect one another?

On one hand, we must do this, because both are neglected and in danger of being forgotten. And on the other hand, because within their content and within their reach, there is a potentiality for coordinated, critical yet constructive acts of producing cultural gestures and significant objects.

The neglect is hardly something surprising in our conditions of conditions that are determined in and through our culture being increasingly dominated by visual and virtual information – both as means and as intent. This is, on purpose, to juxtapose information and knowledge, something that moves effortlessly in horizontal fashion and something that requires stamina and ability to stay with.

With another set of references, this is the difference between an image and a work of art – an image being a commodity that serves the spectacle and the purposes of one-sided instrumentalized branding, while a work of art is by necessity always also something else, something more than just an image of a thing. Where as an image is flat and linear, a work of art is per se porous and three dimensional, addressing and adding up to the 1) stories behind and with it, 2) experiencing it at face-to-face conditions on a

specific site and situation, and 3) opening towards the future versions and variations of the changing same.

As a presupposition of the macro-level issues, it is a modern dilemma that is characterized by 1) transformation of reality into images, and 2) fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents (see Jameson 1998, 20) – and all the while emphasizing, strongly emphasizing that these developments are beneficial, valuable and to be valued, highly, very highly and that, in the end, there is actually no alternative to them.

This directly connects to the dangers that analog experience, and the sensual knowledge that is potentially produced in and through its acts and actions, is facing because both take place and operate characteristically on and with something else, even if not rejecting the visual and the virtual, nor the fantasy of ever being present and available, and able.

What is this something else? Is it the explanation of the chance, the embedded potent alternative that is there, available and accessible, but not yet actualized? Yes. Now, then what is it? (Here, a short note that a whole chapter page 139–156, addresses the question of actuality and potentiality).

First of all, if and when almost everything else in our societies runs after instant satisfaction, the spectacle, being very busy producing or simulating the visual and virtual effects, these means of behavioral modification, when looking for a point of resistance, not outside of their domain but next to them, the logical route is not to join in it, but to turn towards, to focus on alternative direction – not without them but despite them.

This is to turn from many to one, from mass to singular, from speed, volume and price (logic of spectacle) towards the time and space bound experience that is face-to-face, within your body, within its restrictions and flexibilities. This is what analog experience makes possible, this is what it delivers when it is properly sustained and actualized, protected and chal-



lenged, sustained and sparred with, and this is what is not possible without its unique presuppositions.

At the same time, this opening of a metaphorical door or a window, this task of looking into the specifics of analog experience, it underlines the content and the direction of sensual knowledge – something that is not neutral, not detached, not objective, not rational and not possible to copy, to manufacture or to commodify. It is what it is in that hesitating beauty of a moment of simultaneous nearness and distance of articulating a content of a concept, or act, symbol or deed. You can try to repeat it, and you most likely come close, but it is always a new version of the same – of the changing same – not the exact copy, such as, for example, the tooth paste that you buy day in and day out in a store, here and anywhere, and expect it to be the very same, not almost the same.

This brings us to type of an experience it is and it also by necessity must be. As it has already been hinted at in the previous chapter, it is the art (not the work of art) but for the way of being-in-the-world that is defined by that somewhat innocent but very powerful denominator of almost. It is the art of moving towards something, trying to do what one tries to do when doing what you are doing (continuously and situated within an ongoing practice) but never ever finishing, never ever reaching to its last destination.

This is the ethics of the unattainable – that very something that when you move towards it, it alters its shape and positions, making you be part and a participant in a never-ending process that is not chasing its tail but making the best out of the process, not necessarily of progress. This is to form and generate alternatives for the currently dominant makeover culture – for the internalization of an instrumentalization of our bodies, and well, our minds. It is to shape and create room for experiments, room for taking risks and the art of almost, ability to lose and fall down but then again get up – instead of one-dimensional industriousness and glorified and always openly accounted for display of labor – both at work and at leisure time.

What is the alternative?

It is not a dichotomy, it is not a tight multiplication of zeros and ones, it is not a one size fits all answers, but it is something else. Something that gets real with the uniqueness of each and every site and situation, throws itself into the dilemmas that it will not master but which it will face – and while that, learning by doing, allowing and generating room for experiments and elements of surprises, yes, learning how to try to treat others a little bit better and to learn how to trust the kindness of strangers.

\* \* \*

Analog experience is direct contact and connection, it is a moment, not a monument, and it is one experience in a time thing. It strives for proximity, for close, closer the closest contact and co-habitation – and disallows the promises of detachment. It can be delivered and produced with a wide variety of means, including obviously often enough with the means of visual and virtual culture, but it is an experience, connected with and realized in and through your body that cannot be reproduced. It stays analog, and it remains as such, often enough hiding in plain sight next to digital variations. This is to say: it is sensitive, sensual, and sensible, somewhat secretive because something is always lost in translation even if a lot is won in transformation (in the experience with), it is suspicious, and it is surprising.

But what is sensual knowledge? Not yet conceptual, because we will address this in the upcoming chapter number 6, but here in a long-term sense, in its a long historical trajectory?

We are dealing here with the writings of Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762), which as it is a historical fact, were in his times still published in Latin. This is a dual project of books that were published in 1750 and 1758.

It is a project that truly did invent, as the history again tells us, convincingly too, what is seen as the modern usage of the word itself. And the word is aesthetics. What is interesting is that from day one of the history of the word, it was strongly based and built upon our experience with the realities, with the world as it is confronted with and lived at. It is an experience that for Baumgarten there and then demanded a great focus on how we bodily react and act. The reason for this emphasis is found on the premises of the engagement with a work, or, well, with anything, being an active relationship of how we are and perceived how we are in the world (For the background of the genealogy of the concept, see Eagleton 1990).

Baumgarten was talking about sensuous cognition. As its premise, it needed a body, a body in interaction that it was engaged and committed to. It is a relationship in strongest sense, always and continuously involving and engaging both sides of the both sides. It was not a passive relationship, but something of an act that is about to become and happen – in its structural and temporal situatedness that is always both given and emergent. It required a readiness to see and to listen, an ability to feel with and feel for. It presupposes empathy – and interest of linking oneself with the other, the reality that we are part and a participant in and about.

To recall and repeat – and to underline within the chosen frame and direction. At the very beginning of the discourse of aesthetics, there was the body, it was based on the individual experience, and it was about knowledge that is sensual and sensitive, located and alive, confused and scarred but caressed in the body.

Baumgarten was nevertheless not alone, not by far. There was something going on, something in the so-called air that feeds the tree and makes oneself wonder what, where and especially how. Baumgarten was duly and truly a product of his own and time of pre-Enlightenment, its potentialities and dispositions – horizons and imaginations. It was a time when growing knowledge and expanding experience was linked and even bound to and

with the understanding or even hopes what is a body and how that affects us as persons. Or to rephrase: what it means to think, to be autonomous, to be a person, that is.

This act of connecting the dots from then as in historical timeline from there and then to the contemporary times, happens in this context via the writing of Merleau-Ponty. In concrete terms, it is taking place in the 1950's when Merleau-Ponty was linking himself with a set of lectures by a theological philosopher called Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715). This leap and inter-connection of various timeframes and discursive locations, this discourse sets us into the heart of the matter of what it means to be touching and to be touched, to see and to be seen. In other words, we land at a central notion of tacit knowledge that is about tactility – embedded and included in all its preconditions and imperfections (See Merleau-Ponty 2001).

Here, a direct quote of Malebranche is essential. “I can feel only what touches me” (In Butler 42, 2015). As a short condensed sentence that takes us back somewhat three hundred years but a sentence that is as relevant today as it was back then. It is a sentence that could have been articulated right this very moment of engaging with the promises and the problematic of what it means to be in a relationship with a work of art called painting (More of this comes all along, but especially in the chapter 8).

\* \* \*

What we have, in the very big picture, the macro level constellations of histories of ideas, as two constructed alternatives, is a choice, a decisive moment. There, on the one hand, is the certainty and the unity, the universality that a rational-technological view of the world provides us – an alternative that in its current modus is best defined as the combination of how all and everything is both processed and presented in and through the means and ways of the visual and the virtual.

On the other hand, not denying the existence and indeed dominance of this type of a view, there is the alternative of analog experience that focuses on the singular, on the infra-ordinary of each and every site and gesture – and which does not promise the benefits of the scale, or the vision of the spectacle. Instead, analog experience remains with, it stays with, not true to it, but facing it, the demands and desires of compassion and confusion, its clashes and collisions.

But hold on. Out of the above mentioned four C's, why compassion? Because we need to get connected, we have to feel with, and feel for – and engage in a way that gives and takes, requires a risk but also a pay-off. You participate and take part – without a guarantee of the outcome. But nevertheless you do it, and try doing it, doing it better.

What would confusion mean or implicate here? It is the point and the notion of connecting the dots between the beginnings of aesthetics, the idea by Baumgarten described and discussed already above, and the task and the function that the film director John Waters has set for art. A combination that is perhaps, at least on the face of it, strange and even alienating, but which will bring together two sides of the same topic of what confusion can add to the analog experience and its presuppositions.

Instead of a dichotomy of either-or, this set-up again is based on the both-and strategy and worldview. For Baumgarten, already there and then in 1750's, aesthetic cognition mediates and brings into a give-and-take navigation and negotiation generalities of reason and particularities of sense. This clash and collision, definitely (read: inevitably) means confusion, but it is not only confusion that muddles or breaks down the practice and the train of thoughts, but instead, by bringing together, by making them interact, it achieves an ongoing process of a fusion.

As a fusion, a combination of form and content, it is not obscure, it is elegant, it is organic and it is more than just a sum of its parts. We need,

we must have the confusion, in order for the matters that matter to keep on moving, and for them to find and define alternative ways of being-in-the-world. But even if the starting point is confusion, the outcome of the aesthetic experience and gesture, its articulation and actualization of giving content of to a concept, that is only to be achieved in and through repetitions and constantly evolving try-outs, aiming for the time and space bound exactness, its temporary thisness, its urgency and intent, intensity and integrity.

What does all of this have to do with John Waters, the popular culture icon, the maker and shaker known for his ability to shock and confuse the lower and the higher forms of taste? In of all possible places, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal (dated 30.3.2012), answering to himself, thinking out loud what is the purpose, what should art do, Waters comes to this view and vision: “it should confuse us in a beautiful way”.

And this, yes, this is where things come together, and bounce off one another in a surprising way. This statement of Waters, it is opening up and pointing towards the same direction and the same Ahnung, the same intuitive sensibility as Baumgarten over 250 years earlier. It is not offering a solution, not for one or all issues and problems, but it is articulating a version of how to address, how to deal and how to move on and face the sites and situations. Not through control, or power, but in and through clever interventions, smart moves on the dance floor that break the pattern but maintain the groove – something that is both-and, beautiful and confusing, and sure, coming together, for that singular moment, but a moment within an ongoing continuity of similar movement, potentialities, not widening the gap or causing more distraction and distress, but to connect the dots and bring together in order to be sent into orbit again and again.

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Love in a cold cold climate? Why cold? And why suggest it's getting colder, nastier and increasingly more difficult to maintain and renew analog experience and to produce, deepen and pass on sensual knowledge?

Or to phrase the overall issue from another position, another angle, what is wrong, what is the problem if and when our life-worlds are increasingly being determined by the logic of the visual and the virtual information (mainly via its algorithms that aim for prediction and behavioral modification) – turning our intentions and affections to focus on not what something is or could be but how it appears and looks, or seems, and how that can be distributed everywhere and anywhere at the same time – denying the absolute limitations of our bodies, our analog experience and sensual knowledge?

Thus, why resist, why try to opt out, why dismiss when the visual and the virtual are already everywhere, taking space and energy, controlling our life-worlds, becoming de facto the new emperor of our everyday lives, turning ourselves willingly to be colonized, patronized and diminished into a one-dimensional buy, play and throw away objects?

Why, indeed?

Because in our self-denial of responsibility for our not choosing differently, while everything certainly is made to seem fine, and great – until it is not – one-size fits all logic, one dimensionality of only visual and virtual information is simply too little, too separated, too lop-sided on and off what that human being can and is able to achieve in and through analog experience and sensual knowledge. It lacks the combination and the connection between the form and the content, stability and movement. To repeat: the inherently necessity of the push and pull of the form and the content.

The link here, between then and now, along with Baumgarten, is not so surprisingly Immanuel Kant (1995, 77), and his maxim, his wish that we

could act as grown-ups, for sure, and for real, and to start to think for ourselves, critically yet constructively. It is a text dated to the year of 1784, and its message comes in a Latin proverb: *Sapere aude*. A saying that means as an aim and as a task this: please, please, please be brave, and question, open up and think, think – use what you have and what’s at your disposal.

How about it, huh? Think, and act, and try to make the most, the best of your freedom and responsibility to be an active and caring human being. Now, and here. Because other wise, otherwise our life-worlds are taken and accepted as captive, and caged. As a way of being-at, it is through and through controlled and cared for, it is certain and it is protected, in a double feat, it is so very nice and neat, but it is poor, it is boring and it is sad – if we leave these sites and situations of potential interaction and engagement only to visual and virtual culture, and via their predominance, if in a position of monopoly, it turns our everyday lives into a cold cold dispositions with little variations and less and less pleasures.

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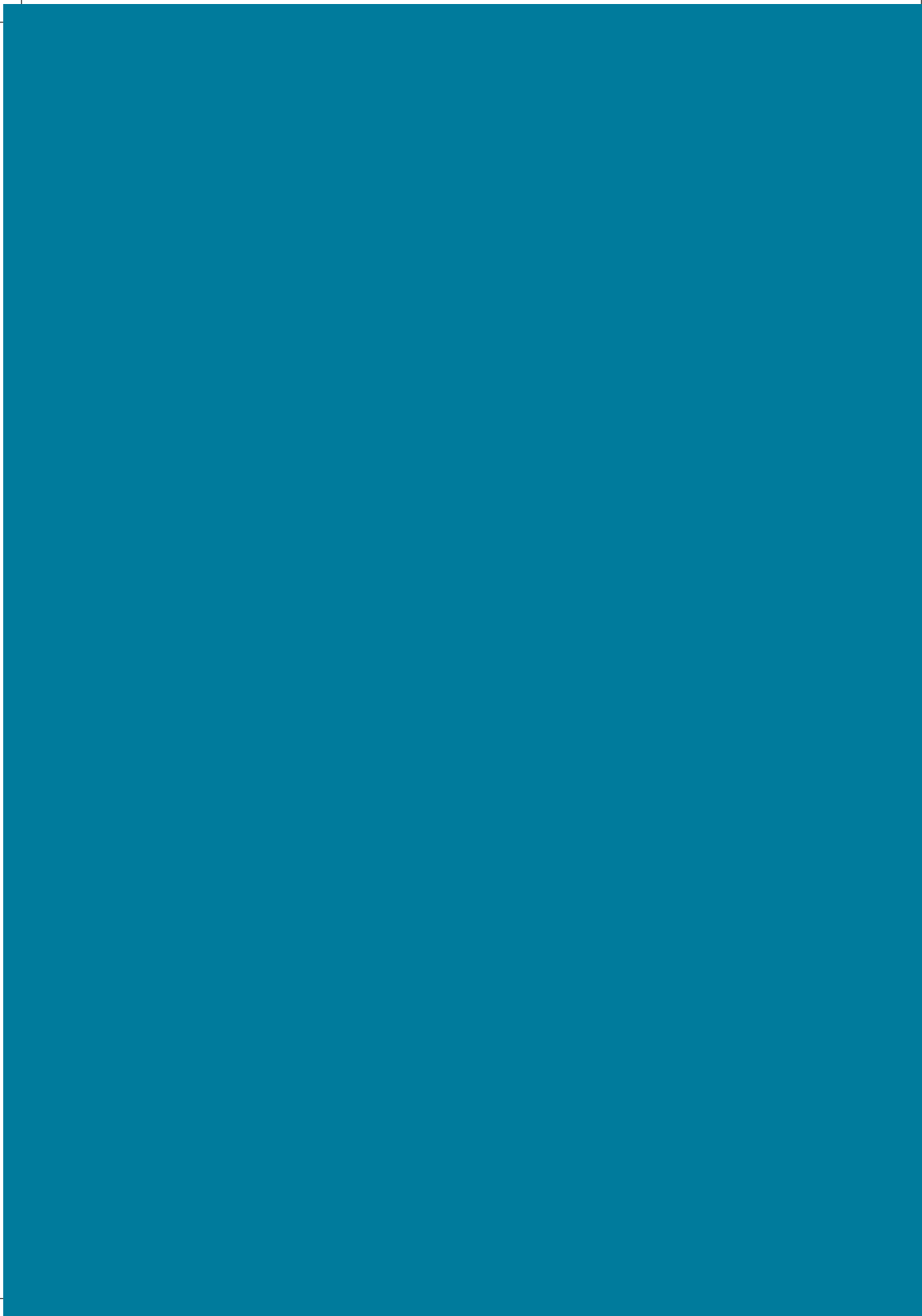
John Waters, interview with *WSJ*, 30.3.2012



The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, income, and any other financial activities. The document provides a detailed list of items that should be tracked, such as dates, amounts, and descriptions of transactions. It also outlines the proper format for recording these entries, ensuring consistency and clarity throughout the ledger.

The second part of the document focuses on the reconciliation process. It explains how to compare the recorded transactions with the actual bank statements and receipts to identify any discrepancies. This step is crucial for detecting errors, such as double entries or omitted transactions, and for ensuring that the books are balanced. The document provides a step-by-step guide to performing a reconciliation, including how to calculate the difference between the recorded and actual amounts and how to investigate and resolve any variances.

The final part of the document discusses the importance of regular audits and reviews. It highlights that periodic checks of the financial records are essential for identifying potential issues, such as fraud or mismanagement, and for ensuring the overall accuracy of the financial statements. The document provides guidelines for conducting an audit, including how to select a qualified auditor and how to prepare the necessary documentation for the review.



# LIFE'S FULL OF SURPRISES

## Practice-Based Quest for Knowledge

**“I hoped for nothing. And yet I lived in expectation.”**

*Lem, Stanislaw, Solaris, Faber & Faber 1970, 214*

Let's start with the most direct and disturbing question: What is it that you do when you do what you do? Not accidentally, not as a one-off whim, but as a situated, committed and long-term act of regenerating and maintaining a momentum and a direction. Let us repeat it: What is it that you do when you do what you do?

The trick of the question does not lie in its seemingly repetitive form and format. It lies in the notion that in a continuous and committed act as a practice, it is not about what you do, but how you do it. It is about how to make and produce a version, an interpretation – an actualization and an articulation.

In principle, it does not matter, not at all what that thing is that you do or strive to pursue. What matters is that it has, and it is aware of its contextualized past, present and a future. And not only that, but that it is consequently and coherently shaping a now of its past, a now of its present and a now of its future.

Confusing? Scary? No need to be, because what all these above announced questions point towards is the bigger question, what is the frame and the

scope that keeps our actions together. It is called practice. Not as an answer, but as a platform, as a beginning of a beginning.

A practice? Now, what is that, and why would it be in any sense interesting? Here, we could go back to the essential horizons of our civilization, say the writings of Aristotle, or we could clarify the main principle of critical hermeneutics, which would come with the writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer, in connection to the first mentioned philosopher, but we do not necessarily need to lean on them. We should keep them with us as a background, solid foundation, but nevertheless, keep the eye on the everyday of the practice – how it carries the weight, and also the promise of a both continuity and chances and challenges of digging deeper.

Because practice is the place, it's where it is at. It is with it, within it – in and through the daily acts of, lets us repeat it once more, of focusing on what you do when you do what you do. Practice brings together changes and repetition, similarities and differences, concordance and dissonance.

Practice – what a wonderful thing to have. Except, it is exactly where it both burns and heals its is where the troubles start and where they constantly and always return to. Because, if and when the content of a practice is not given, not solved and not natural, and its frames, then it must be made and shaped. These acts are then by definition time and space bound, contextualized and contested. It is the awareness of the need and necessity to stay put, and to get closer, and to try to move yet a bit closer.

What we are talking about is the dual system of freedom and responsibility. You, as a person taking part in that given practice, have the freedom to renew and create new versions of the practice, but you also have the responsibility towards its past, present and future. What you do relies on what was done before and how it was done – and how it will be done today and tomorrow and the day's and months and years after that.

Practice is what gives ground, it shapes the direction of an act that without it would lose its sight and its significance. What this means is nothing else but this: the question of quality is not possible to address without the internal goods of a given practice. What this, consequently, means is not that complicated: each practice, whatever it is, has certain elements and ways that make that given practice work better or worse. Thus, quality of an act and an overall practice is then defined in and through the very acts of doing that practice so that it keeps on moving, takes it seriously enough to be able and willing to act critically yet constructively.

This is to say that whatever it is we do in and through the everyday life practices, sometimes what we do comes out a bit more meaningfully, and sometimes it just falls down, fails to fulfil its own expectations and impossibilities.

Sometimes yes, definitely, and sometimes just about so so, and sometimes no no no way. Or: maybe so, maybe no.

For the internal good of a practice, for a means to address and get closer to the idea of a quality of an act, we must have a location, a time and space bound coherence and consequent set of acts. It is a practice that seeks to move towards acts that gain integrity and intensity, not volume or distance. It needs to be slow, it must be done in a long long continuity of a practice that becomes both annoying and something you cannot let be. A never-ending process, that is.

But, in our current conditions of conditions, is it realistic? Possible? Is it in the Christmas card or the melancholy rose that we are given.

It seems unlikely, because, without any interest of demonizing the system or the structure of the current sign of the times, the current state of affairs, YES of what is seen beneficial and worth while, it does seem that the

current phenomena exemplified by the flat-rate all-inclusive world of the web dichomatically denies the chance for a slow and localized dense and determined committed and situated practice.

The world we experience has been promised a 24/7 access, it has been granted a 360 THE LATTER degrees non-stop and never ceasing ability of views and vision, it cherishes, no, it celebrates the ideology that it is not local, it is not embedded, not anchored but free to be and to move everywhere, all the time and with everyone.

True or false, truth or dare? Who cares, because the point is: how do we deal with this in terms of a practice-based quest for knowledge and pleasure?

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Why would painting as a medium of artistic expression be a case of point for the above mentioned procedural and practice-based chances and challenges of embedded and situated, long-term committed production of knowledge? Thus, why an argument for painting? Or to be precise, what kind of a painting are we talking about?

The last part of the set of questions is perhaps best to be answered directly. This is not the medium as the king of the hill, the only game in town – no tall letters, big gestures or terrifying drama. This is a practice like any other practice. If and when you are in it, as a participant, it no longer is so much about what you do but how you do what you want to strive towards. Thus, the distinction between what a practice as a set of parameters is thought to be, and how that particular version of that practice is – day in, day out – produced and maintained, renewed and challenged.

But why painting? Why not horse polo, rock climbing or volleyball? Or collecting stamps, you know, those items we used to use in so called times of snail mail? Anyone? Yes, indeed, why not? Perhaps it is a desire, a

personal wish, if not a need to discuss something that one feels close to and entitled for a participatory and discursive action.

But the answer lies, not in the outer realms of the connection to this particular medium, but inside its acts and actions. It is situated within with what and how a painting can be done and achieved. The list is inevitable and clear: its particular history, its inherent slowness, and its blatant ridiculousness, not to say futility.

Here, one of the main traits of painting is truly its histories, very much emphasis on its plurality. It has definitely a past that is plural. It has a somewhat universal narration of a past, a canon that is not the same from one nation-state to the next but tends to share the same agreed upon heroes. Then again, it certainly has its own local past in all the contexts, not only nation-state framed ones, where it has been done and contributed to. These change from one social imaginary notion to the next – from one paradigm to the next. And no, this weight and awareness of its histories need not to be a negative thing. It must neither be a positive element. In one very simple sense, it is what it is, and you cannot deny it. You must deal with it. Therefore, reality bites and gravity pulls – and the medium of painting is not possible to take seriously or take further without a carefully and concentrated involvement with its past, especially the version of that past that is available and used right here, right now.

As for the inherent quality of its very act, painting is as it must be slow. It is not happening or becoming a place instantly. It takes time – both to do and have a relation with as a viewer. A sinking feeling, that is.

However, perhaps the most efficient way to underline this procedural slowness is to reflect at it via a completely different vocabulary. In this way, painting is analogue, while quite a lot of the other means available in visual creative processes are today very strongly and empathetically something else – they are digital.

We know the distinctions. Digital is fast, it is furious, it is everywhere and all the time. It hardly knows and recognizes borders or hurdles. But one thing it is not. It is not tactile. Thus, the inherent slowness of a medium becomes its positive force. It demands a face-to-face confrontation. Sure, OK we have the ability to pass on pictures of the painting, but then we get closer yet to another main ingredient. It is the difference between knowledge and information. It is the situated junction between localized experience and detached viewing.

Knowledge is slow, slow to attain and gain and to pass on. It is and must be slow. It is time and energy consuming, and it leaves its tracts and traces during the process. Something rubs of, something is taking a turn and a change.

Information is everything knowledge does not want nor can be. Information is possible to be condensed into endless rows of ones and zeroes. It is distributed without the necessity of the face-to-face contact between the participants in the game of viewing and being viewed, seeing and being seen.

We are left with the third ingredient, the one that sounds strangest of them: ridiculousness.

Why would one want to exemplify or celebrate an act that is by itself and due to its own standards of excellence something that is best described as ridiculous?

But if not ridiculous, what then? It is that very act, a long-tem and seriously conducted digging deeper of an activity, of putting paint on a canvas or whatever surface. As a medium that cannot compete with fastness of producing information about the so-called reality, a medium that cannot compete with exactness of the reproduced image of the reality, and a medium that by itself is kind of a dirty and even melancholic thing?



Again, we hit the difference between experience and information; and a difference that cannot be by-passed or removed in the case of a painting. Either you are seeing it face-to-face, or you are not experiencing it. There are not doubles or trebles of that painting, it is that one thing, not more, not less. But it is one.

And, it is ridiculous, because it fights a very uphill battle. As an act, there is no justification for it. As a means of expression, it is burdened with its past and its present low or lowest estimated levels of credibility. No matter which direction or under which imaginary stone you look, painting has all the downsides and hardly any winning arguments – expect its own peculiar characteristics and quiriness.

It has a history to talk with and to deal with. It is slow as in a procedure of doing with and thinking through while doing what one is doing. It by necessity requires critical reflection of both doing and thinking about what one does. It is a means that is fairly cheap to have access to – both in terms of cost of materials, and space it requires. You have no choice: you are doing it alone, but you do not need to be or feel lonely. There is the history, and there is a version of a present.

And it is ridiculously hard. Both when comparing to where it comes from and how it tries to gain some sort of attention in today's climate of no whatsoever attention span to the analogue means of dealing with who are and where do we come from. Painting is a losers paradise, but it is, oh yes it is, it is a paradise for an act that is focused, connection to its version of a past, and it burning and healing, caring and reeling, wish to make a contemporary, a new version of the same happen here and now.

History, slowness and ridiculousness. The inevitable fact of making something that has very little use or function, and nevertheless, an act that gains and gathers to and with it something more, something beyond the pale – a gravity's rainbow of a potential singularity.

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But problems? Are there any problems? Somewhere, somehow and somehow – potentially possible?

Problems within the act of critically yet constructively thinking with and working through the big issue, the question of what do you do when you do what you do in that practice of yours within which you are situated, committed and not a tourist, no. So? Who is that I, or what is it – and what does that version of the I in use, what it includes, excluded, implicated and hides, what does it have to do with the chances and challenges of a practice?

Therefore, this is the part where we ask: who is this I? To what and to whom is that person, the agent connected, and how? What are the links, the emotional belongings or betrayals? To paraphrase this honest dilemma of the I as follows: how much are we, in fact, capable of taking part in the act of telling stories and shaping our daily lives? Or, on the contrary track, how much are we, indeed, determined by forces outside of us, pushing and pulling us into directions that we have little or no influence over?

What follows is a characterization of this honest dilemma in two parts.

- a) The I as the person – as the doer, the agent, and the problem of the romanticization of the I
- b) The chance and challenge of anchoring, situating the self, the I in and through the very acts of doing what one is doing within the practice – long-term commitment, repetition and deepening the knowledge in and through it

However, before moving towards the question of the I, especially the danger of romanticizing the I, not the eye, to make that one distinctive

point between differences of writing and talking, let us lay down some of the principles and presuppositions of the I.

What we have at hand is the constant interplay, the never-ending give and take of the duality of a both-and system of an identity. Whatever we do, we are always both effecting and effected. In other words, we are certainly due to a degree able to tell our stories while at the very same time there are stories told about us. We are not outsiders, but inside-in, we are part of the problem, always stuck in the crossroads of complex set of contradictory wants and wishes, demands and desires.

The question bounces back to this “very degree” as in how much are we able to take part and feel of being a meaningful participant – or not. To state this from another angle, it is to ask: what is it that you do with your loneliness? What is the type and character of the relationship between you and your surroundings, you and the society, you and the structure?

In yet another vernacular, this is to focus on the inter-connection between spaces of experience and the horizon of expectations – both in an individual, let’s say, micro dimension, and also of course simultaneously at the social, macro as in structural level. A connection that, when transformed into the strategies of the actualization of a narrative, come across as the combination of seduction and suspicion, giving it out and holding it back.

Taking an imaginary leap into the very end of this part of the essay, the aim is to be able to combine the individual aspect and the focus on the act of maintaining a reflexive and self-critical practice. This comes together as the question of a whole, of a unity. But what kind of unity is it that we are talking about? First of all, it must be procedural, never about fixing it or finishing it. It comes together as the way we can and are able to make enough of a unity that then generates a sense of a certain connectedness of a life. It is the act of a quest of self-narrative as in connecting the dots

between private and the public, known and not yet there, familiar and uncanny. This, then, is the main claim of this very chapter: this combination is achieved within the practice, the continuous and committed acts of repetition and digging deeper within that open-ended developing practice of what you do when you do what you.

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What is it again, what do you call a brilliant mistake? Yes, I get it, I do remember. We call it the act of romanticizing the I.

Now do we, really? And what do we mean by that?

The histories, the genealogies, the background for the phenomena of overrating and overplaying the role and importance of the I are well known. The phenomenon of a king of a hill attitude is no stranger to us and our practices. We recognize the backdrop, the notions of romantic sense of one's relationship to nature and society – all the completely filled-up heroic and hedonistic wishing wells that are here and there, everywhere within our discourse and contexts. We have the fantasy, we have mystical traits and with have magical hopes. In the end, it comes down to this: what is the I made off?

When addressing this issue through the opening made possible by taking seriously tackling the danger of romanticized I, we have obviously chosen sides. We think, no, we are convinced that the idea of a genie in a bottle is not meaningful, not realistic, not functioning. In shortest and most concrete way, the romanticized idea of a creative mind and a creative individual who, because he/she is so very detached and independent, can achieve the highest forms of both self-invention and overcoming of the self, is a fantasy. As a fantasy, well, why not also as an aim or an ideal, is ungrounded, relentlessly unrealistic and in the end also dangerous in its dream of going beyond and

leaving behind the senses and sensibilities of how we are acting in and through the spatial attachments and situations, the interpreted horizons of being stuck with the past, present and the future.

Why? Well, whether the genie model of the I, the sole creator, the genius of the dance floor or the hermit of the bookshelves, whether it comes to the scene as a romantic figure or an avant-garde rebel, what is common to all these types of a presupposition of the I is this: they are not connected. They are outsiders, and they are that willingly, glorifying so. Or to be precise: they could not achieve what they should achieve if they were part of a community, part of a context, part of continuity. They are exceptional, outstanding and feverishly singular.

Here we have, for example, a variation of the natural mystic that goes back to its presumed roots, back to the nature, back to basics that is not yet tainted by the brutal forces of the society, the industry, mass media etc. Or we have the high-modernistic version of the very same: the outsider rebel yell that is, of course, free from all bourgeois nonsense, freed from the nasty weight of the capitalistic system. In one word, and in both cases, these individuals are free. Free as a bird ... or free as or of ... something.

His/her being free means also of being free of the restrictions and frames of what was before. Not only what was there for that given specific individual, but what has been going on and done within that field within which that individual is now about to make that big splash, the huge difference. There is no link between then, now and next. If there is, it is an obstacle that our free I is amazingly capable of finding ways to deal and overcome with.

Surprisingly enough, this version of the disconnected I stands in complete opposition to the view of critical hermeneutics that is presumed and operated with in this essay. Who is right? Who got it together? Is the audience, the ones actually paying for it the ones who have the ultimate right to get it right?

Not wanting to sound too unlike drama, I would say it is all about the balance – and its constant internal interactions and conflicts. Not in terms of the audience, but bouncing back to the issue of the danger of romanticizing the I. It is this give-and take, push and pull moment where we must have both sides of the both sides. We have an expectation of what is going to happen, and then we have the openness of the actual outcome. There is the juxtaposition and the inter-dependence of the subjective urge within a practice bound frame, collectively decided criteria of excellence.

We got an Ahnung of a direction, and we have the elements of surprises at work. It is embedded and it is detached. Hot and cold, sweet and sour, near and far, dear and despicable. Something that quickens in tempo while it is being delayed, gathering and loosing, winning and losing. Or: careful and careless, delicately dense, condensed and fighting for its release from our very thrownness into the world, and our thingness, that very thisness in and at it. So very stuck and still able to move.

It is to move from a distance and absence towards getting closer, staying near and getting nearer, and embracing the conflicts, the troubles and the heartbeats.

In terms of the I, he/she is constantly in-between. In-between the forces and waves, fakes and fractures of temporal and permanent, particular and universal, personal and social. The danger is duly acute when this act of ongoing, never-solved balance act tips over and freezes – one way or another. Alone and lonely nothing is enough or adequate.

It is about the balance of things that seek for the balance that they will never ever achieve but nevertheless, or, in fact, just because of it, never cease to strive and search for.

This is what Paul Ricoeur (1992, 83) was writing on and about when addressing the most elementary aspects of the I. It is an I that always

has two sides that must be deeply connected and in strong contest with one another. These are then the I as idem and ipse, as sameness and as changes, as concordance and discordance, as substances, fixed entities, and as events, as transitory entities. It is about giving and receiving, sending it out in order that something returns, and then making sure it is sent back out again. It is a circle, not a vicious circle but a circle nevertheless. It is an understanding of the never-stopping process of an I that is both secure and insecure, having a direction and not knowing what will happen next. Thus, a version of an I that through trials and errors might learn to do this: to be able to laugh at oneself.

To make the link with the words of Susan Sontag (2009, 72): “The point is not to teach us something in particular. The point is to make us bold, agile, subtle, intelligent, and detached. And to give pleasure.”

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And then we land back, back at it – the thing in itself, we face and we deal with it. We deal with the open-ended question and proper honest dilemma of a practice.

Let us start with a definition that follows the internal logic of this essay, by an author previously not mentioned. We gain this insight from Alasdair MacIntyre (1985, 187), who argues that a practice is “any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.”

A definition stating that while kicking a ball around is not, football is a practice. Or how shifting the pieces on the board without a plan is not, playing

chess is a practice. A definition that is not only about, or even mainly about the certain skills you need, for example, to play chess with consistency and competitively, nor is it determined by its institutionalized form, let's say the organization of world championships of the chess game. Instead, it is a live and kicking daily practice that keeps a moment and momentum going on while trying hard not to become a monument.

A practice, any kind of a serious, committed and situated act that tries to do what it seeks to do a bit better and in a bit more connected way. It is a localized, non-naïve version of more that is not about volume, but about intensity and integrity, intent and imagination.

This type of a practice is what connects the dots, the dots between the I and the structure. Here we have the platform, the daily meeting point between the individual with all of its complexities and anxieties, and the society, with all of its woes and wonders. It is a point of a struggle, a combined and intertwined act of navigation and negotiation that is never solved, never arrived. It must keep on keeping on.

As a non-naïve practice, it is self-reflexive and self-critical. It provides a direction of a continuous act, but not only allows, it demands and cherishes acts within its frame that are there to take risks, make experiments and open up the processes. It is a continuous act that is linked to its own past, but makes sure not to seek for answers from the past and not to become captivated by the lures of the past. It is truly and duly a process. It admires, maintains and enjoys the internal conflicts and clashes, tries to stay mobile, yet not glorifying or demonizing the inherent and inevitable contests or confusions.

It is not a world of its own, it must be directly and indirectly part of the everyday, part of the ongoing dents and tensions, being influenced and challenged by other practices and fields of knowledge. We are talking about, in



terms introduced by MacIntyre, the internal goods and their opposition of external goods of a practice – and we are talking about not what they are but how they are made and maintained through the daily acts. Something that makes that very act of a practice to be and to do either better or worse what it strives to achieve. These are traces and tracts, emotions in motion that are brought together in order that they are let out and lost again so that they can again and again return – return to the sender in a way where both sides have been altered and effected.

It is important to recall that it is not a sense of practice just as a collection or recollection of skills or techniques. It does not go back to the characteristics of the institutionalized form of a practice. What it does require is the willingness and ability to think differently, to think and act out of the box, out of the expected and out of the ordinary.

In other words, a practice, a situated and committed practice is based on imagination. It is a competence without which we cannot bridge the gaps and connect the dots between here and then, now and there. It is also the requirement to open up – for being affected and creating moments of effects.

In the vocabulary of Isaiah Berlin, while talking about the necessity of a sense of reality, he stresses the combination of both-and in the terms of upper and lower levels, or in another language, micro and macro levels of issues and contexts. For Berlin (1996, 33), the task of imagination is to understand these relations and also to participate in them, “the kind of semi-instinctive integration of the unaccountable infinitesimals of which individual and social life is composed.” It is a continuous give-and-take processes where, just as starters, these types of skills are involved: powers of observation, knowledge of facts, experience, timing, sensitivity and sensibility, and yes, improvisation. All in all an act that is kind of an inspired guesswork.

This is the moment, a very moment of inspired guesswork, to be sure, where we are able to provide a sort of a definition for that missing link, the link of the concept of microhistory. It is the act of being aware of the nuances and the push and pull of the all various levels and elements at the game, within itself, and the outside of it, too. There is that one thing, connected to a many of the same or similar – as the many is inter-dependent on the becoming place of the one. This is to underline the rather evident observation: the singular part and the structure, they demand each other.

Linking ourselves with yet another perspective and point of nearness, of getting closer and seeking to keep up the closeness and proximity, following Marilynne Robinson, we need to be aware of the givenness of our everyday sites and situations. This is a givenness moving in-between what is more inclined to be open and what, on the other hand, is leaning more to be determined, bouncing on and off, creating back and forth movement and moments. “The reality we experience in given in the sense that it is, for our purposes, lawful, allowing hypothesis and prediction, or available at least to being constructed retrospectively in terms of cause and effect. It is *given* in a deeper sense in the fact that it is emergent” (2015, 90).

This both-and constant inter-play, a game of prepositions and their transformations that are arising and evading in and through the acts that re-acted, or in in another vernacular, a game of push and pull between consonance and dissonance, it kind of begs for yet another anecdote, yet another moment of connecting the dots.

It is a definition type of a case of merging of horizons, both its intertwined expectations and experiences, and as a detour, it takes us to a short text that Italo Calvino (2013, 75) wrote, in fact, directly after the death of Roland Barthes. In the dramatic urgency of circumstances, Calvino was following the lead given by Barthes and making a wish, or a point, in fact, of a new science that would not bother about the whole, but would be

there, combining exactitude with sensitivity, givenness and emergent for each and every individual and meaningful act, item and theme. It would be a promise of new science for and of each object, a *mathesis singularis*, no longer just *universalis*.

Instead of general rules, we would be able to search and get closer to those traces and tracts, and yes, well, also reflections and plays of light that rely on details and nuances, some forgotten, some not yet given any attention, sort of making an event out of the everyday, the great escapes and magic of the mundane. A quest that is attentive to the singular and the unique – not as one-off thing, but as a continuity and inter-connectedness to other cases of singularity and uniqueness.

Calvino makes a point of celebrating this particular promise, the promise Barthes sustained in and through his writings. It is an ability to articulate and actualize a certain ‘thisness’ that cannot be taught or learned, but, as Calvino finishes off his text, pointing out in admiration how Barthes “has proved it is possible: or that it is possible to search for it” (Ibid. 76). It is that very something of which we never have more than an *Ahnung* – that something of a yet-not-yet there but which shines a bright peculiar light that we are drawn to and amazed with.

But: how and where – and in what conditions of conditions? And if not now, where and when then?

To make proper use of another quote provided by Ricoeur, this is about linking the timelines of past, present and future together: “We belong to a historical tradition through a relation of distance which oscillates between remoteness and proximity. To interpret is to render near what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually)” (2007, 35). To be sure, it is vital to stress the possible and potential swap of the terms in question – how the concept “interpret” can very well be replaced, for instance, for that

very act, with the concept of narrative and then swapped back again. It is, in the most striking sense, the movement of back and forth, the act of trying to make a site, a concept, and a symbol to become a place.

It is, as an intricate combination of the both-and, of here and there, individual and structure, a site and a situation in which, at which, with which, through which the story is told. What's more, it is not only told in and through it, it becomes it there and then – a place as a version, an interpretation, the articulation and actualization of a narrative within a continuous project that is called life. A life lived and experienced, and yes, told back and forth, as a narrative. Never ready, never steady, but always on the move, on the make, looking, searching for those small or huge, tiny or fat but always tremendous details that turn the lights on and off, on and off.

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, income, and any other financial activities. The document provides a detailed list of items that should be tracked, such as dates, amounts, and descriptions of each transaction. It also outlines the proper format for recording these entries, ensuring that they are clear, concise, and easy to read.

The second part of the document focuses on the process of reconciling the records. It explains how to compare the recorded transactions with the actual bank statements and receipts to identify any discrepancies. This process is crucial for detecting errors, such as double entries or missing transactions, and for ensuring that the records accurately reflect the true financial position. The document provides step-by-step instructions for performing a reconciliation, including how to identify and investigate any differences between the recorded amounts and the actual amounts.

The third part of the document discusses the importance of regular audits and reviews. It explains that periodic audits are necessary to verify the accuracy of the records and to identify any potential areas of concern. This includes reviewing the records for completeness, accuracy, and consistency. The document provides a checklist of items to be reviewed during an audit, such as the accuracy of the entries, the completeness of the records, and the proper use of accounting principles. It also outlines the steps to be taken if any discrepancies are identified, including how to investigate the cause of the error and how to correct it.

The final part of the document provides a summary of the key points discussed and offers some final thoughts on the importance of maintaining accurate financial records. It emphasizes that accurate records are essential for making informed financial decisions and for ensuring the long-term success of the business. The document concludes with a call to action, encouraging the reader to take the time to review and improve their record-keeping practices.



*Salburn (Helsinki) · Onya McCausland*







## A Wall of Voodoo

A wall. A wall made with a colour, one colour – painted with care and finesse so that the monochrome paint is even and engaging, smooth and soothing. It possesses a kind of slowest of slow sensibility, a continuous and calm act of breathing in and breathing out with and within a site and situation of a work of art that demands a reflective reaction.

But what kind, and how? Both in terms of the materials used and in connection with the wall as a surface for projections, it's inter-connected and combined past, present and potential futures?

At first sight, it is a one thing, a straightforward coloured wall. But as is to be suspected, there is more to it. There is another layer, another level and a more complicated story involved and embedded. But what kind of a narrative are we reaching at or searching for?

Perhaps its not a neither-or set-up, not one, not two stories, but perhaps perhaps perhaps, it is a both-and connection and confrontation, a narrative clash and collision, and something that gains respect, reaching up to the cumulative connecting the dots up and to the number three?

\* \* \*

What we have, and what we stare at and with, deep in thoughts and concentration at the Helsinki Contemporary gallery wall, is a work by Onya McCausland. A work of art that is titled *Saltburn; Helsinki*, 2018,

and a title that literally links us to what it is about and where it is coming from. And not to forget – how it is actualized and articulated exactly where it is currently but only temporarily at.

*Saltburn* takes us to a geographical entity that is located in the UK, close to a medium sized city called Middlesbrough. It is a site that in terms of time periods shifts us back to at least two centuries – and towards a future that is dramatically if not uncertain then at least uncomfortable.

Because as an actual site Saltburn is what it is: a dilemma, an achingly open and burning dilemma. It provides material that matters into the long arch of trajectory from industrialized sites to post-industrial situations. It is an example of the economic structures of the past, an iron mine that was kept alive and kicking for years and years until it no longer was possible or profitable to maintain. This particular mine closed down in 1960's. But even when it was closed up, it did continue. Not economically, but ecologically, to have an effect to the very surroundings where it is at. It is a question, a internal logic, and cause and effect of what got out and what is left behind, and how this was achieved – the negative spiral of polluting the ground water and leaving both physical and mental traces that are highly complex and volatile.

Now, how does the closed iron mine, currently an ecological dilemma in the UK connect to a contemporary art gallery in Helsinki, Finland? The link is the artist, and her on-going project of addressing the past and the present (and a big part of the future) of the material leftovers by the mining industry.

So far, Onya McCausland has situated herself into five different sites, five different mines – and coming out and up with OK five different, distinctive new colours. It is a process that 2017 gained an important actualization in the form of her Ph.D. at Slade, London; a prac-

tice-based academic work titled as *Turning Landscape into Colour*. As a title, it almost gives away what it is about: distilling and producing a pigment, a colour, out of a material – in these cases, from the vast industrial waste lands of the mine industry. It is a case in point that definitely gives another turn and twist, and yes, cannot help but to mention it, another colour to the promised process of recycling.

The contents of the material gained for the paint; the ingredients made out of a waste in the case of Saltburn are the following ones: iron oxide ferrihydrite pigment and cellulose emulsion. The result is a colour that comes close to a version of ochre, in the case of Helsinki possessing a deep-seated quality of curious inner-light, making the wall feel as if it is slowly and porously pulsing to its own rhythm and rhyme – in a manner that certainly makes you aware how the gravity of our previous knowledge and grounded *dasein* (the thrownness of our being-in-the-world) pulls, and pushes, helps and hurts, burns and caresses (See Gadamer 2006, 254).

It is kind of painful to say it out loud, but there is, in fact, no way around it. What we see is a kind of magic. We see, and we face a wall of voodoo (not ethnologically but metaphorically) that puts a spell on us, and a spell that you cannot brush aside or leave behind. You carry it with you, yes you do. It is not of a type of voodoo that is scary, nor is it exotic, weird or incomprehensible, but sets of a give-and-take reactions that disturbs our expectation, throws us off the seemingly well maintained balance and forces us to see with, to think with and to feel with.

A wall of colour that is like concrete poetry, constructivist but compassionate, a constellation of altering the expectations and anticipations, the intrigue between distance and nearness, things seen and felt as familiar and uncanny. It is a wall accomplished with a singular colour, and simultaneously it is more than just a colour because this colour comes from a site that is everything but neutral and innocent. Thus, it

causes the commotion of shifts and shocks that might even lead into the territory of something we might anticipate, that we might have an Ahnung of, but which we yet do not grasp or comprehend. A site that is about to emerge, a site that is potentially called the third space.

\* \* \*

Third Space? What? Whaaaaaat?

How about a bit of time travelling? Do you remember the times? It is early 1990's, the Wall, the long dividing wall in the middle of Europe, it had just got pulled down (but not yet sold as a souvenir), an enterprise called Soviet Union is no longer in existence, and an event called cold War is turning to be a thing of the past. Something has changed, and that what was is in the process (in plural) of moving and transforming into something else.

A time of openings, a time of hope, and a time conceptualization of the interaction and eventualization of something that is never ever one, or two, but a combination of both-and comings and goings, settlings and departures. A conceptual articulation that addresses and articulates the need and necessity to avoid and perhaps even get beyond the closed-up dichotomies of (almost) any kind; for example, the often locked up binaries of subject-object, west-east, human-nature, man-woman, and yes private-public.

An idea and also idealization of a non-essentialist way of being-in-the-world, an existence that would not close out, but include and integrate. This gained new terms, or at least eagerly newly painted content to the older ones, which were sometimes stolen, sometimes borrowed, but always returned to the sender labelled such as, not only anti this or that, but as cyborg, diaspora, multicultural, or cosmopolitan, and always ambivalent and grossing over and miming under.

As an aim, it brought towards what was seen as inside and outside, actualizing the interaction between both-and propositions and their material manifestations that did recognize their base but nevertheless urged us to move somewhere else, perhaps somewhere beyond. It was a combination of the roots and routes, a way from and a way to that would not be halting for a long time to come. It is a move from a generic and common space into a particular and localized actualization of a place. A place of in-betweenness, and of porous ambiguity, accompanied with the notions of diversity and hybridity.

Or in the words of one of the main protagonist of the task of thinking with and opening up with the concept of third space, Homi K. Bhabha, stating how it “constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (2004, 55).

And to continue, in order not to place too much weight on one address or presupposition, this was the moment of comprehension of lived experience, in and through it, that no culture, no identity was something on or for itself, but that it was constantly contested and constantly conflictually made and shaped through borrowings, both acknowledged or unreflective, appropriations of all sort, exchanges and inventions, not to forget transformations and interventions. It was an opening of a duality that despite some elements of self-congratulatory effect and mime, was awake and aware of the pressures of both performing and being a difference within a difference.

As a recollection to the need and necessity of how identities and contents of concepts are performed and temporary constituted yet always taking place and articulated in particular historical locations, it is worth to recall how any type of a comprehension of a both-and

combination has to be procedural, evolving and emerging between difference and unity.

It is a combination that, according to Pnina Werbner, needs to hold on to its ability to differentiate between contingency and speaking from a one unique position, while “it must explain how and why cultural hybrids are still able to disturb and ‘shock’ – and thus heighten reflexivity and ‘double consciousness’ – in a postmodern world that celebrates difference through a consumer market that offers a seemingly endless choice of ‘unique’ identities, subcultures and styles” (1997, 21).

\* \* \*

But that was then – and this is, well, now? And within this brutality of the fact of now, we barely have a choice but to engage in the cruelty of comparing the sense and sensibility of the hopes awoken and set free by the changes of the 1990’s with the personal contacts and public double-checks of the facts produced by the realities of the current crises (in plural). It is a comparison that, from one side, starts off with the colossal hopes for a monumental change and finds its counter-partner in a position of even more monumental political and ecological turmoil. In short, it is about recognition of the limits and dangers of the everyday experience being colonized by instrumental logic and total commodification.

As a comparison, it is not perhaps fair, but it is imminent. It is so close to bringing out the hard-felt tears, but it does beg the question, the reaction to and from: what is it that you do with these terrible facts, and its flip side, the desire to deny OK? How about it, hope or fear, bringing together or division, turning towards or isolation?

In another vernacular, it is to ask, it is to wonder, what is the relevance of the opening and potentiality of the third space right here,

right now? It is promise of interactive place of in-betweeness that has the ability, the cleverness and the courage not to be lamented into a commodity or yet another stale and static dead-end essence.

A place, not the actual site, but the works of art under the umbrella title of *Saltburn*, both the wall pieces and the versions of canvas as in painting, that allow us to confront but not collapse, urge us to engage but not to forgot the distance between physical and mental bodies, the ever-present and demanding experiences, the acts of playing the part instead of just dressing up for the part. It is the site and situation, an immediate reaction that cannot provide answers, or a neat cute proper solution, but produces more and more of an itch – to think with and to see with.

Like a wall, for example, this very wall, this ochre coloured wall. To stare with intent and to seek with intensity that grows and is alert. To go on, to act upon, and to keep on going on. And on and on and on.

\* \* \*

The suggestion here is a two-fold intertwined move. First, it is to argue that the third entity, the one that seeks to undermine and move away from dichotomies, is not a generic or general space. Instead, and this is not a silly game of words, it is a localized, particular and situated place – a significant alteration from assumed or attempted universal space towards a singularity of an articulation and actualization of a time and place bound content of any concept.

Secondly, the act of moving away from the binaries of either-or assumptions and categorizations is achieved by the constant push and pull in-between both sides of the same thing – while we stay with, remain in light with both its past and its present manifestations and confusions.

This is the act that within a certain momentum, not a monument, but a node of a sense of presentness, it is a “thisness” (a concept that leads the way, all the way to the works of Duns Scotus 1266–1308) that is made and shaped, renewed and maintained in the on-going connection and distortion between the seemingly opposites. We face a back-and-forth move and movement from the singular to the common, from the local to the general, from a micro to the macro level.

And yet, within this on-going back-and-forth move and movement, there is that extraordinary moment for turning potentiality into actuality, that uniqueness of things which makes it no matter what and how much energy is needed or consumed worth searching and striving for. It is a “thisness” as in what it (an act embedded into a situated practice) can be and become as a particularity and an individual. It is that connection between thinking and action that was so important, so central for Hannah Arendt, constantly and tirelessly connecting the dots between what was, what is and what might come, providing a site and an intimacy for our right for a future tense. It is a “thisness” that has a direction, yes, but which is always imperfect and wanting in its actualizations and articulations (See Kristeva 174–195, 2001).

It is a sense and sensitivity of the simultaneousness of this being-in-the-world that makes the difference, and also both allows and cherishes the ability to sustain and let difference approach and talk with, to walk with a difference which in the meanwhile confronts and gets closer yet to another version of the different same – the constantly changing same. Or in other words, you feel it, the both-and sensation of longing and belonging, longing and belonging and then letting it go again and again.

In the very physical and material case of Saltburn, the particular mine left behind, the toxic dirty water filled wastelands of the industrial age making an ugly face towards the post-industrial eras hopes and



dreams, and in case of the work of Onya McCausland presented at a gallery space, what this set-up opens up and implicates is how there is always a number of moves, a varied number of interpretations and actions from there to here (and back again), but how this process of there to here is nevertheless acutely present. A connection from where it comes from and an actualization of it here and now that does not deny, does not hide the roots and the routes but highlights their necessity of co-habitation and co-existence in their ultimate collaterality.

In a conceptualized framework, this interpretation takes its form and yes, its function in and through the acts of turning, to refer the title of Onya McCausland's doctoral thesis, a landscape of waste into a colour. An act that at the same time seeks nearness as it is producing a distance, looking back while gazing towards what is yet to become. The end result is a material that matters, a pigment that is possible to use and to make use of in the almost similar fashion like any other paints – albeit this one here is hand-made, not industrially manufactured in predetermined DIN-form.

The pigment comes from a specific site, but a site that is very difficult if not impossible for most of us to gain access to – both in physical and mental sense and manner. We all can recall and recognize the abstract notion of an industrial waste and an ecological catastrophe, but we – thankfully – have not the particular taste in our mouths or a colour at hand. Or to be precise, we do not have the connection to there (waste) but we do have the access to this now here (hope for sustainable future), the filtered and edited in and out version of it in the shape of a monochrome wall of a work of art.

A wall of somewhat universal appeal of a long-lasting tradition of monochrome paintings as in works or art but even more so, a long practice of colouring the walls of our inhabited spaces with a one colour. Lovely, oh so lovely, one could say, and add. A common as

muck, a so-called basic of the very basic thing that nobody, let us emphasize, nobody cannot claim that they have no relation to it. It is this openness, this seemingly innocent character of the monochrome wall that connects the dots between this here, and that there – achieving the simultaneousness of particular and abstraction, personal and public – ugliness and beauty. Not in an either-or, nor one after another fashion, but occurring and emerging at the same time, not in a perfect harmony, but in that give-and-take hassle and confrontation, one thing sparring, affecting the other while waiting for the rebound, constantly trying to make sense who were are, where we come from and where we might want to move and go.

It is the astonishing beauty of the simple and effective wall that opens the doors (or, if you wish, the windows), allows for the interaction between the waste and the wall of voodoo, the certain ration of sadness of a left-over past that never comes back, and the promised spirit of a future light and elegant lightness, the spirit of hope that is encountered and engaged in this specific work of art.

The point being, without its inherent if somewhat hesitant beauty, we would not have the urge, the incentive to connect the dots, to stay facing the issues and the complexities, getting closer, and staying closer to their inherent dilemmas. On the other hand, without the direct, almost impatiently direct connection to the cruelty of the wastelands of our industrial past, it would be just another pretty but basically uninterested plain wall.

It is a both-and site and situation, a move and moment from one to something else, a move and moment called the third place. It is an emerging site and situation of not-yet-there, but still, and because of its ultimate unattainability, all the while worth striving to and at.

\* \* \*

To rehearse the experience, and to repeat the argument. Here it is, again and again. It is a monochrome wall that is a single coloured wall but it is also something else, something more, and something different than only meets the eye and is set loose with the first notion of getting connected, simultaneously confronted and comforted.

It is a move and movement from a generic space towards a particular place – interpretation of this here, this now in connection to where it comes from and where it is possibly moving next. But, what's most important here, it is to realize and to recognize this notion of emotion: it is a move and movement that goes back and forth, and a move that is never to get stale or static, but which always and constantly boils over as it also freezes under. It is not one, not two, but something else. It is a materiality of a colour that certainly comes from somewhere but is performed in a different and often unexpected or uncontrolled ways; a materiality that matters and which despite all efforts, refuses to be capsuled and captivated into a binary of this or that but which in and through re-activations of its past-now, present-now, and future-now possess a potentiality and a right for a surprises. It becomes a place, not a space, and it exists in all its plural histories and complexities as a finding place, not as a hiding one.

*Saltburn, Helsinki, 2018*, in all of its apparent but bluffing simplicity, in all of its minimal repetitive gestures that gain intensity, accumulate close to the maximal effect, is a work of art that is there only for a certain duration of time – the usual allocated slot of little less than four weeks in its circulation of gallery time and structure. A work that connects the multiples, the plurality of dots from somewhere else to someplace here, a connection in and through time and which is in itself bound with time. It is work that for a certain period is there and then quite soon, is no longer there.

The wall remains where it is as it is, it is painted over and over, and while the dust settles and is then wiped away, the act that is now gone leaves important and impressive traces of its being. No longer it will be there as a physical manifestation but very much so it will exist there in the personal and collective memory, in the transforming traces that turns that potential generic space into an actualized and particular place of freedom and responsibility to hold on and sustain our right for a future tense.

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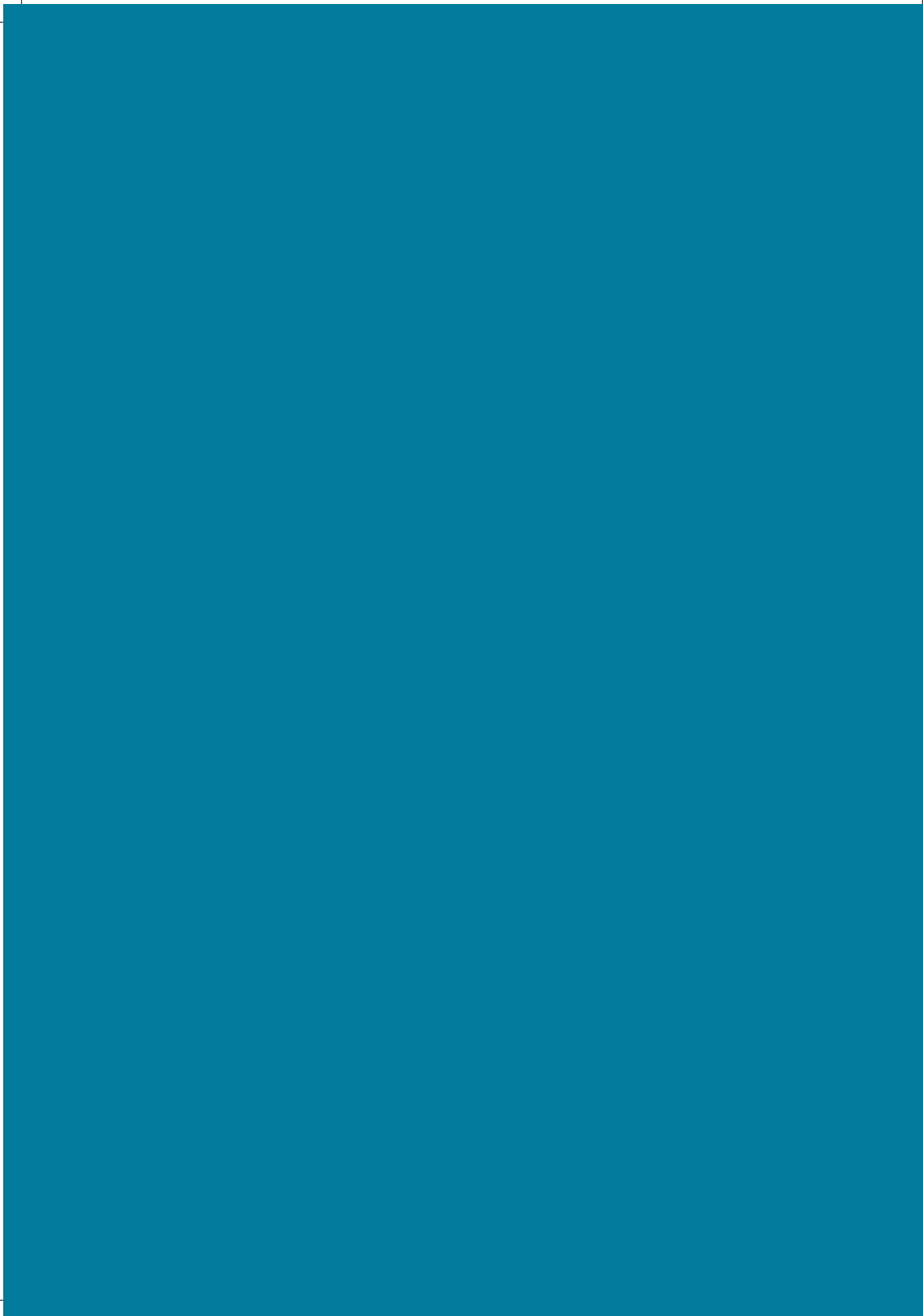
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## SENSUAL KNOWLEDGE

**“I feel as though I’ve already secretly achieved what I wanted and I still don’t know what I achieved. Could that be the somewhat dubious and elusive thing vaguely called “experience?”**

*Clarice Lispector, A Breath of Life, 2012, p. 20*

What is it, in real time and in one-to-one site and situation, that happens when we meet, confront and engage with a work of art called a painting? What is going on in this intimate, sensitive but also sensual give-and-take interaction that requires and expects a certain kind of slowness and careful movements of back and front with and within the work?

Questions upon questions leading to more questions, which in themselves are never innocent: they already strongly and effectively frame the context. We are talking about reflection, being-with and seeing with – not at or about. We are talking about a relationship that must be based on mutual respect and recognition. Thus, we are talking about heavy-duty expectations and demands, anticipations and suspensions.

In short, we are talking both about how the works of art as in paintings are made and done as we are also talking about how they are met, dealt with and seen with. In short, it is about the promises and preconditions of engaging with a painting. Just to offer a sort of a warning, or a summary,

we will address a) the preconditions of such a potentially productive confrontation, b) how such a relationship can be achieved and maintained in a bodily-based interaction, and c) how this interaction then translates to our being-in-the-world as confused and conflictual individuals that produce and attend to sensual knowledge. What we will also address and deal with is the question and definition of experience, and even more, in terms and scope of knowledge and understanding, we will ask when or how enough is enough, and what would that enough actually imply?

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When talking, thinking and feeling with a work of art, we are engaging in an act that – perhaps, possible and why not – might produce something that is labelled here as sensual knowledge. This is a concept that has a background, leaning strongly to and towards the whole trajectory what is known as tacit knowledge. This is then knowledge that is produced and transmitted with other means than just written arguments with and within a specific language, more precisely, a language game, and a vernacular with its own distinguished past, present and future. A knowledge that is grounded on the long-term situated and committed articulation and actualization of a given practice – whatever the name or category of the practice in question.

Thus, we are talking about those notions and comprehensions of a physical acts of repeating what one does when one does what one does: an embedded evolving kind of a knowledge that is based on the internal logic of a continuous act. This is then knowledge that often emerges without words, without even a conscious level of being aware what is taking place. A knowledge that has to come about in its own way, with its own sense and sensibilities that should not be cut down by other kind of logic superimposed upon its acts and actions.



It is tacit because it is not straightforward, but it is lingering, it is about to become. It is partly physical in kind, found and located in the memories and syntaxes of our bodies, our muscles, their repetitions that are carried on and maintained. This does not make it mystery or magical, it is just different from other types of production of knowledge. It is *per se* and *an sich* leaning towards being silent, but it is important to underline that it is never schtumm, never closed-up. Certainly, it is slight in its hesitation and slow in its movements. But it is a form of knowledge that we do recognize, and we do realize that it is there – emerging and existing. The question that comes about is this: how do we approach this knowledge and how can we pass it on and accumulate it in its own terms and conditions?

This calls for a strategy that is so often at use for the very simple reason because it is a credible solution. We look backwards, but do not get stuck, we do not haunt for answers from the background as in history, but we learn and we relate with – and then we interpret and actualize that background story right here, right now. We act the act of bringing together the three inter-connected timelines of past, present and the future.

But what kind of a past are we talking about? This is a question that is through and through pre-condition by the framing of itself: what we find depends on what we are looking for. Therefore, it is important to outline transparently what is it that we are aching and searching for. Now go on, and sing along, our aim is true, sure, and our aim is to find the links from the past that connect the dots between there and then and now and here.

In a bit less abstract vocabulary, this is to articulate the background of a process of being-with a work of art as in painting that is an act that includes both seen and being seen, a process of participation that requires a situated body that engages with and within. Thus, we are talking about how we see, how bodies are involved and in fact, how the body that is made and shaped in interaction stands in the very centre of the whole enterprise. We are not

detached and neutral, we are involved, we must be involved - and we are part of the mess, part of the interaction that might cause distress or ever-caress of a various kind.

We are talking about that elusive but nevertheless central concept of experience, its openings and limitations, framings and cravings.

\* \* \*

Mind the gap, since experience as such is part of the self-reflection of our past as in plural. The question is what kind of qualities are attached to it. The frame of mind is that sure, we all have experiences, but well, how can we translate them to others and how can we if not measure then compare them. You know, the distance and nearness between anticipation, the expectation, and the lived experience of and with it. One burns with desire, the elements of surprises while the other one goes up and down among the nuances of lived experience as something you suffer, endure and well, sometimes even enjoy.

With the concept of experience, there is simply no way out of the historical make it or break it point where a certain philosopher called Wilhelm Dilthey distinguishes, in German, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. It is a difference that gains weight by how each of them are defined and how that is done in connection to the other. The classical notion is to see *Erlebnis* as a lived experience with a connotation to an individual perspective and take while *Erfahrung* has more of collective character. The not so subtle hinted at implication is that while *Erlebnis* is then more about the intensities of the every day, *Erfahrung* is about the normalization and objectification process of the sense of experience (For the comprehensive historical background discussion, see Jay 2005, 11–12).

Keeping this game of distinctions in mind (and the evident inter-dependence that can't be lamented into an either-or scheme), the common-sense

part of experience also goes far to fetch back the importance of this private and personal sphere. Some types of hermeneutics try to achieve an objectified level of this as a sum of experiences, but the more interesting challenge is to have both sides of the dilemma constantly on the move. In other words, enjoying the uncertainty of the experience and how it cannot be guarded, guaranteed or granted. It boils over, and it does it swell. For this, it is adequate to turn to John Dewey who came up with the following definition of the act of having an experience. An act that does not stop but has an element of ongoing process in it – a process that is not about a closure but about open-endedness. A process that is never just intentional. It is both passive and active.

“For “taking in” in any vital experience is something more than placing something on the top of consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction, which may be painful. Whether the necessary undergoing phase is by itself pleasurable or painful is a matter of particular conditions” (Dewey 1934, 42).

What Dewey emphasizes is how an experience I created and recreated in interaction with the world. There is the act of editing in, and editing out of what is seen as meaningful and what is not. “In every integral experience there is form because there is dynamic organization. I call the organization dynamic because it takes time to complete it, because it is a growth. There is inception, development, and fulfillment (Ibid. 56–57).

The lived and uncontrollable experience is an engaged one. It is very very far from believing it to be neutral, natural or objective. It is an understanding of our being-in-the-world where we are never completely to be separated, detached, or out of it, but always entangled, always part of the mess, part of the inherent dilemmas connected to its emerging and existing interpretations and actualities. What’s more, we can easily accept the common sense line that yes, experiences are that we have, and that the content of them is not direct, but is shaped and made with the use of language and our

ability to work in and through a chosen language game. In the discourse of truth, the same part of common sense agrees that whatever a meaning of an act or image is, it must be traced back to the experience of it (Davidson 1990, 126).

The problem with experience is a very typical one. It is the difference between seeing the content of a concept as an answer or as a situated version of a dilemma where everything begins and where everything returns and an act where something has left its mark and its trace. In the jargon of philosophy, we call this a condition when trying to understand what, how and where, it is necessary to take into account the complexity of having an experience, but no, that in itself is not enough. It is necessary but not sufficient. And it is not innocent. To quote Michel Foucault: "Man is an animal of experience, he is involved *ad finitum* within a process that, by defining a field of objects, at the same time changes him, deforms him, transforms him and transfigures him as a subject" (1991, 124).

But well, what do the deniers then have against this? Just about everything, because for the deniers, the process of an experience is not what it promises. It is not open but closed endeavor; it is not a process but a determined dead end. But before dealing with the chosen protagonist of the part of deniers of experience, that is Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben, let us take another detour.

It will be a detour into an anecdote of a strange but special kind. It is an anecdote that connotes with the following very normal small news item in any of our newspapers in any randomly chosen day or year. This particular piece was in a German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* the day of 18.3.2010. And well, it goes to underline how long I managed to carry that ripped up news article with me.

It consists of a single column of 20 lines. A news item that is short and laconic, but very dramatic – and somehow without doubt connected to an

idea of having an experience as in plural. The news item is about a man who was killed while jogging. He was jogging on a beach in South Carolina. The man had headphones on and no, he did not die due to heart-problem or a drive by shooting or a killing whale on the shore. He died because he was hit by a propelled airplane trying to conduct an emergency landing. The four-seat plane had to land because it kept losing oil and it already had lost one of its propellers. The motors were no longer running and the man with the headphones was listening to music when he was struck with the plane. The newspaper informs us that the man was a father of two children. He was from Atlanta and was in South-Carolina for a business trip. None of the people in the plane were injured.

Was he having an experience? What kind of music did he hear? How loud was the music? Did the choice of music affect his ability to experience the soundscape out of his head and the music system? A blurry of conflicting images that stops for a moment when connected with another memory. We recall Alfred Hitchcock's 1959 movie *North by Northwest* with Gary Grant lost out somewhere in the vast corn field and being attacked by a small plane. A vision of Grant barely escaping the attack by plunging to the ground, getting up and having no place to hide, running scared away from the returning plane and its dive that tries to kill.

Are we having an experience while watching the movie? What about when we remember the movie, gluing bits and pieces of it, sometimes confusing parts from other movies, and moving images that have re-enacted the so-called original film? What are we then experiencing?

According to Benjamin, nothing much at all. To understand the distance and difference from there to here, from his times to some other times, it is perhaps informative to recall a fragment and comment by Benjamin. Written in 1931, Benjamin saw the enemy and attacked it with full force. The enemy, not the only one but certainly one he despised, was Mickey Mouse cartoons, that are instruments for preparing for the time after everything,

and he meant with everything our civilization, falls apart. Benjamin stated that “these films disavow experience more radically than ever before. In such a world, it is not worthwhile to have experiences” (Quoted in Jay 2005, 331).

But this dim view of entertainment is not all – there is that something else, there is this is nothing of a yet-to-come, or become. In other words, the collapse and the emptiness are also an opportunity. In Benjamin, despite all negative views on the chance for an experience, there is hope. There is hope you can reclaim that version of an experience that is not dominated by the logic of modernity. A logic that denies the chance for an integrated experience but rather alters it into various ways of false consciousness and manipulation; in one word, the experience turns into a commodity. Or for even more dramatic turn, Benjamin saw the demise of a pure experience as the decline of a culture into barbarism. It was the totality of the politics and the exhaustion of a culture that had direct consequences on his life. As is well known, Benjamin committed suicide while fleeing the German NS forces, trying to leave the occupied France in 1940.

In the genealogy of the negative experience, and the mourning after the alienated and lost experience, but with always embedded with a hint of a something that can be rescued, Adorno developed the notion that began with Benjamin. It was a shared, in fact, experiences of the World War II and for Adorno the consequences of Holocaust that inform the content of their analysis. For Adorno, there is no other choice to regain the lost experience but by diametrically opposing the current false one. The main chance lies in the emptiness, the lack of a subject that is, paraphrasing that modern classic of a novel as a man without qualities – a man who could be anyone and anywhere, without history, without identity. It is only through the consequent logic of negative takes and turns that a chance for an experience is constructed. Perhaps it goes without saying, this is a circularity that allows little means to break that spell. What is most disturbing is that this version of an experience comes very close to being without a historical dimension.

Interestingly enough, Adorno traces back the decay of the real experience into the modern metaphysics that by its dichotomy leave no room for the true interaction between, let's say, subject and object or emotional and rational. It is a story of a damaged life with no unity. Adorno writes: "The identity of experience in the form of a life that is articulated and possesses internal continuity – and that life was the only thing that made the narrator's stance possible – has disintegrated. One need only note how impossible it would be for someone who participated in the war to tell stories about it the way people used to tell stories about their adventures" (Quoted in Jay 2005, 345).

Derrida follows this train of thought and claims that there is no experience left. Experience is monumental, it is confirmed, and it is static. It has the metaphysical presence that is the presence of one, not many. It is a presence of stop, to say full stop, meaning absolutely no go. For Derrida, there is no interaction, no dialogue within the experience. It has reduced the other and the difference into a one-sided token, locating it already completely outside of itself (See Derrida 1989, 53).

The next in line is Giorgio Agamben for whom experience is gone. It is no longer possible. Certainly, within the mass volume produced entertainment of, for example, shopping and cultural industries, there is definitely no lack of the shout and the scream. But these vast collections of ooh's and aah's are not experiences. They are reflections and incorporations of affects. They might be hysterical, overwhelming and solidly boring, but they are one-dimensional and seldom nothing but empty. While following Benjamin, Agamben concludes that excited recollections and ecstatic emotions do not collide with experience. The former remains in the closed area of consumer goods, while the latter as in a classical understanding of an experience still carries with itself the promise of empowerment and change. These emotions, claims Agamben, are second hand bought and sold, surrogate sad shadows of what they could have been (Agamben 1993, 18).

But what exactly is then denied? Along the whole logic of the denial, albeit in various versions, there is always a trace of that experience is actually taking place and it's important but it has lost its importance and chance in the current conditions of our conditions. Thus, it is not experience that is at stake but the reality that frames and sustains it. It is a realization that allows us yet another way of linking the discourse of truth and experience together. A reminder of the analysis of Davidson (1990, 122) who underlined that any quality of an utterance is based on its balance and embeddedness into the acts of a) what that given word might mean, and b) there is the background world arranged within which that word is used and activated. A crucial point that brings us back to the presuppositions of the conditions of our conditions. Not only how they are defined, but what type of a character they are provided with – the scales of their elusiveness, flexibility or determination. A point that begs us to go further and to ask: how are these realities then represented? And the even more cruel follow up: how do the representations affect our comprehension of that given reality?

This collective consciousness of the mass volume of attention and shared publicness of it is gone. We face a fragment specter of information flow that with the contemporary means of technology splits the common sense of an audience into more and more disintegrated segments. What is left of the common without doubt follows the inverse logic that Adorno believed himself to believe in. Instead of education and the aim of taking things higher, the current common sphere functions mighty well on the basis of the lowest common denominator.

The second example of attending to the ways of how to debate and discuss this how to use words and where and when, is the recent argument pushed forward by Tony Judt (2010, 171). According to him, we have lost our ability to talk differently while slowly but surely we have surrendered to the one-sided language use of economical arguments. Judt is demanding a return to the ways of talking about the ends of our actions, not only about means to achieve them. "Our disability is discursive: we simply do not know



how to talk about these things anymore. For the last thirty years, when asking ourselves whether we support a policy, a proposal or an initiative, we have restricted ourselves to issues of profit and loss – economic questions in the narrowest sense. But this is not an instinctive human condition: it is an acquired taste” (Ibid 34).

But, while so very accurately being able to define the loss and the lack, in his writing Judt says peculiarly little about where, how and when we ought to discuss these matters and where is that we ought to return to. Since, as said, that common ground is no longer there. There is no comprehensive medium that would reach us all. There is no platform that would collect coherently and in a consistent manner even most of the people that would be participants in the game of giving content to concepts – not to talk about getting people with opposing world views to actually not only talk but to listen to each others.

What do we do when what we do no longer has a common ground? What is to be done when we have allowed ourselves not to be enjoying the death of the author but have reduced ourselves – rom a citizen to a consumer – to face the site that it is about the death of the listeners that we must worry and witness.

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Surprising or not, but a very classical dilemma emerges and demands our attention. If and when everything is inter-connected, if and when experience, sensual knowledge is tightly linked to its past, present and future interpretations and actualizations, how much of a pre-understanding of the themes and the concept do we need to possess and sustain?

This is to ask, seriously face the question of what or how would be enough (to know, the recognize, and to reflect on) in each and every particular

context? When is enough really enough? And well, enough as in what? Is it enough as in sentiment, measurement or a sensitivity to what and where at?

How do we know, how do we recognize that we have learned enough, that we know enough and that we can in safe and secure conditions of conditions move on, write with, think with and do something with?

Instead of fantasizing about how to measure this enough, due to its relational character, when reflecting and analyzing the core of this potential enough, its premises and its embedded attitudes, we must turn on the theme and topic of staying with, remaining with – being-with.

We can write with and think with only as long as we are not chasing the truth, the only truth, but instead searching for interpretations, actualized and articulated content within a trajectory of an ongoing practice – its past, present and future manifestations.

Along with this notion of, not relativity, but the necessity to provide historically conscious time and discursive space bound versions, we need to recall the comprehension that we cannot be neutral and objective by-standers, we have to be active participants – always part of the problem, part of the mess. There is no view from far away window, no view from a detached position. What we have is only what is possible: the constant process of give and take, push and pull, getting closer and gaining distance and always bounding back again.

The third element of writing with, of thinking with in terms of required premises is addressed in and through the ways we seek to relate to and to treat each other's. This is very strongly linked to understanding that we are tainted, we are filled with prejudices and clashes of background.

The point is to underline the importance of the way we treat, at least the way we aim and try to do it, the other, who ever that other is. This other is with whom we do the thing that is done with – not on or about.

Being with is not possible or permissible unless we treat the other as an end in itself. This is to say that we avoid (by all means and ways possible to us) to instrumentalize the other. We try not to use, abuse or to turn the other into a one-dimensional object or entity. In other words, if and when we treat the other, whatever and whoever that is, as an end in itself, we change the perspective and turn the sensation of linearity around and about. We begin with the other, listening, and listening carefully what and how the other is speaking, acting and generating a time and a discursive space.

We do not avoid, stay clear of the tool of instrumentalizing the other because we are better persons, or because we are more in touch with deep core of humanity, know what it means to be a real human being, or whatever. We do so because it is in our own very interest. Why? Because instrumentalizing the other stops the process, kills the interaction and leaves us cold, so very cold – out there, all alone, all alone

But how do we then, well, treat the other? As a friend, as a fan, as a celebrity?

We treat the other as an equal. Not an equal in terms of exact measurements or harmony, but as an equal in approach and in chances. We treat the other, have you ever heard about this one before, huh, we treat the other the way we would like them to treat us. Not because we think we get a shiny happy medal for it, not because it makes us feel so much better, but because this is the only way to way to keep the processes of give and take, push and pull emerging and generating a reciprocal interaction and a productive clash and collision of expectations and experiences.

If we treat the other as a means, or as an enemy, we fail to connect. If we treat the other as a friend, or as someone we gaze upwards, we actually do the very same thing but with opposite motivation. We turn the other into a one-sided, one-dimensional object, depriving it from its plurality, diversity and complexity.

The other is only what it is and only what it can be if and when it is in interaction, in a true blue demanding and challenging interaction with us – constantly altering the perspective and the position of how is the other and who is to listen and when do we get a chance to say something – you know, god damn, anything.

The other is not your enemy, not your friend. The other is your sparring partner – and if you let your guard down, you get knocked down, you get hurt, oh yes you do, but please, do not go blaming anyone else for that. Get your act together, live a little, give a little, take a little – and, in short, get a life. You try to help, and you try not to stand on the way of the action and interaction, the emotions in motion. You might feel comfortable, with the other, in the action, the inter-change of views and visions, but you better to be ready, always ready for surprises – sometimes funny, sometimes funky, and sometimes awful, but without them, without the surprises, alterations of rhyme, rhythm and the pace of repetitions, its nothing.

Sensitivity, sensuality, sensuous knowledge?

Is that what it is about – this play with, and the move and movement onto and with the other, the question of the question of enough?

Perhaps, in fact, how could it be otherwise? If and when you are acting with, dealing with, thinking with and doing with, the relationship has to be moving or stalling both ways – both partners in crime, in the action, affecting one another. Not in the same way, not in the same force, or measure, but there has to be a porous two-way street of affecting and being affected.

This is what it is when being with and thinking with. Not as a result, but as a starting point – the preciously and acutely, even achingly vulnerable. There are no guarantees, no UN high commissions at play or in place. It is what it is in the interactions – the way we try to treat the other's as we would like them to treat us.

So, there is a great amount of awareness and sensitivity, readiness and willingness to let the other to affect you – while you are affecting the other. This requires a lot, you need to be able to do this without knowing what actually is happening, with what force and how formidable or horrifying results. You get on, and join in – in the processes of being with, and you take the risk, you face the failure, but you do not, you do not dial for denial. You face the site, the situation, and you deal with its promises and demands as well as possible

Something might go wrong, something is always missing, sometimes missing in action, lost in translation, but whatever that it is, you know, and you trust that what might go missing, that is then, not as a same thing, but something similar, something worth while is there and then found in transformation. You move – and get moved. And you change and then you return to where you began but something is different – something has left a trace.

Enough is enough. For sure, and for real. But it is what it is only if and when we are able to accept the required uncertainties, to take up and face the risks of opening up and letting the other affect you, and to be with, move with and let things alter, let things happen. You don't need force feed the accelerator, but you certainly have to be sure that you are not standing on the brakes.

Please please please. Be sensual, be sensitive, but not blindly, not stupidly, but with a sense of both belonging and longing. You do come from somewhere, but you ache to go and move somewhere else. You want to do some-

thing, something that is connected to what you done before but not only repeating what you did before.

You act, and react. It is called reciprocal recognition and mutual respect. Sounds good, doesn't it? Sure, but what does it all have to do with the issue of enough?

Well, you tell me. And I will listen – listen carefully, very very carefully.

\* \* \*

And yes, oh hell yes, you might think. All these detours are indeed a challenge, but please, do not despair, since these issues of a) experience and b) when enough is enough, they contextualize and activate the sphere of the content of sensual knowledge. This is the long winding route towards the heart of the emerging questions of how we as bodies, inter-connected and inter-dependent bodies see and are being seen, adding the next layer of how that inter-play effects us, both as sensual and sensible subjects and objects.

It is a landing that might sound overly dramatic but that is not the purpose here. The aim, as said, its true, and the aim is to highlight how the conditions of conditions of thinking about aesthetics from the very start has been based on the body and on the acts of sensuous cognition. Or to this: susceptibility of embodiment.

But, not to move too furiously and carelessly, what does this sentence mean? What does it imply? It is a question that gives us the hint to leave the past and connect its reference to the present – to that site and situation of here and now.

What it is about is how to meet, how to be with the other – the “other” this time framed as a work art, well, as in a painting. These words, a selection of them, are combined and presented here. Two of them are already joined together in the sub-title: susceptibility and embodiment. What kind of conceptual tools do we have?

Tarrying is one, a verb, referring to the act of staying with a work, going back and forth with it, and getting closer and staying closer with it. Then this, from another language but remarkable well transmitted: *Ahnung*. This is the borrowed concept of an *Ahnung* as in a hesitant waiting between not-yet-there and already-over-and-gone, a subtle comprehension of the direction of the moves and the content. Then we have wavering, another verb, or almost the same: to swerve. Both include a sense of rhyme and rhythm of have a relationship. All that is needed to be added is the continuous repetition of the acts.

Are there other words? These have already been taken up in the previous section. It is a relationship that cannot be linear, it takes detours and gains counter-balances. It is filled with anticipation, expectations and dissonance – as with suspense and suspension, and sure, why not, surprise.

Words upon words, and their wild alterations and magnificent circulations. But what about wisdom? Well, not perhaps wisdom but the context to and which these words come from and where they always return to, in a modern sense as in comparison to the previously in chapter three articulated historical examples of both Baumgarten and Malebranche, is Maurice Merleau-Ponty. With Merleau-Ponty, the focus is set on three inter-linked concepts that all gain vital force in a book that was published after his death in 1964. This publication (2004) brings us these following concepts:

- 1) Intertwined
- 2) Touched and touching
- 3) Seen and See/Seeing

The way to address this complexity of a meeting with a work of art as in a painting, the crucial importance and role is placed on the first of the concepts. If and when both sides of the both sides, whether we articulate as a relationship between subject-object, me-other, or being sensed-sensing, are indeed bound together, the issue is then *how* that is happening, not so much of *why*.

As with Malebranche (recalling his maxim: “I can feel only what touches me”), we can state that we become interested, we become participant and a stakeholder when being acted on – and only through that we have the motivation and impulse to act at all. It is inevitably a both-and contract and a process. Both sides depend and rely on one another, but the relationship is not harmonic, not symmetric, not consensus-driven or stable. It is not an essence, it is an evolving and emerging act, a continuity of them. A give and take of an interaction that cannot be a closed circle, or a pre-determined solution. Something is taking place, something is about to happen, but the point is to let those things come about – in the terms of what was listed above as hesitant and searching. It opens up and reaches out. Never aimlessly, never without a direction, but always with a purpose and stamina of striving towards something, even somehow.

All of which, yes, get connected, remain real and stay alive with and within a body. Thus, we have the focus on the second part of the sub-title: Embodiment. It is a body, a living body that is constantly being formed and informed, it has an effect upon and it is affected by. It tries to make a difference and a difference is made on it. It is private, it is public, it is close, it is far, it is about proximity and it is about breaking up and gaining a necessary distance. In one concept, and in consciousness repetition, it is both-and.

It is a both-and strategy that is realized and maintained in and through a body. It feels and it feels for and with. It is sentient. Not a rock solid formation, but a process that gives out and lets it. It is vulnerable and it is sensi-



tive, but it has its own strategies for survival. It is, by all means, much more persistent and sustainable than it might seem.

What we have, what we recognize, what we witness is a body that needs and aches for other bodies – emotions in motion. That’s where it’s at and that’s where it ought to always return in order to move along and go about.

With Merleau-Ponty, we have the basic ingredients of the elements that make and shape a body – a body in process, and a body that is always both one and many, the ones included in the volume of the many and the many is within that very one. A body that touches and is touched, a body that sees and is seen, senses and is being sensed.

With this exact focus of a discourse, this is as much as we can get from Merleau-Ponty. He did not have the luxury of taking these thoughts further and activating them through the major changes of questions of identity and structures of societies since the 1960’s – not even taking up the move from analog to digital and how that affects our senses and sensibilities of being in the world.

Not so very surprisingly, there are many routes taken upon from where Merleau-Ponty was forced to leave the scene. One of the most influential and also experimental of the readers and interpreters of him is Judith Butler. A writer that starts from the notion of a performative body, a body that is produced in and through its discourses – and a body that is both the source of alternatives and the address of its own limitations.

This is where we link some important elements to the body: passion, desire and touch. For Butler (2015, 37), the formation of a body is taking place through tactility and touch. It is something of a dilemma, because as a body that moves and is moved, it remains partly untranslatable, partly non-conceptual. In short, it is uncontrollable and unknown, never fully but always

partly. For Butler, what is important in the processes with and within a body is how that interlinked and intertwined reality on the make gives us the needed chance to overcome the either-or disposition between the seemingly opposites of subject-object etc.

It is a body as the place where movement is actualized and articulated. It is not stale, not static. It is a relationship that is revisable – both sides need and affect one another. But the point is that these relationships are not reducible to any sides or detached elements, nor are these positions possible to be exchanged. It is a process that has to add up to more, much more than just a sum of its parts. It becomes this more, much more in the interaction, in the moves and counter-moves that make and shape that distinguished, the particular, that singular content of a concept, symbol or an act. It is a process that cannot be repeated, but due to its course of continuous re-articulation, something, even if it is the slightest thing, is altered and becomes something else – something within the directions of the changing same. It is a process of the becoming of a situated and embedded body that cannot be copied or mimicked. It is not the mystery of a one and only, not the “thisness” of an alchemic recipe.

Thus, in and within a body, we have subject and we have an object, and they are by necessity and by inter-dependence intertwined, but they are not united into one. They remain separate but in interaction.

And yes, it is in and through this endless and infinite interaction that sensual knowledge is articulated and actualized. It is in and within a body – your body, my body, our bodies. But it always starts with the one, not the many, even if the connection has to be there. It is about focusing, about getting and gaining weight for the details, for the nuances, and for the particularities.

It is a body that must be defended from the logic of a spectacle. A body that is overruled and instrumentalized, and made into a commodified body,

a compartmentalized buy, pay and instantly throw-away product if it is reduced into the logic of price, volume and speed.

It is a body that is slow, searching and undecided. It is looking for and keeping up the search. A search in with the aim is to get closer to the intensity and integrity of a body – a body that gets closer to these when it digs deeper and gets into the specifics of how and when.

Or to relate to and with another type of cultural environment, we can highlight the difference between the singular one and the spectacular commodity with the distinction that the conductor and musician Daniel Barenboim (2009, 128) has so effectively stated. It is the difference between power and force of and with an act – leading forming a work of art. Force of a being-with is achieved by intensity, not by volume. Yes, yes, and that is singular, not generic.

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What can we face, what can we put into words about and off a production of practice-based knowledge that is tacit, silent and actively avoiding a pinning down with concepts and linguistic measures? In other words, should we just leave it alone – emerging and dwelling, wandering and wondering – or how do we relate to its processes without doing structural violence and without putting a stop to its processes?

If and when it is out of a question to try to say something about a thing that is about to come, what is there to be said and reflected in and with words? The acts before and after? Or perhaps how these on-going and yet to be happening acts are situated and embedded?

Perhaps the detours to and towards the processes of sensual knowledge are to be found in the attachments and involvements, in the passion plays that motivate and inform the very acts. What we are talking about is again noth-

ing fancy nor strange. We are addressing the frame and the surroundings of an act. A conceptual construction that is attentively asking three inter-linked questions:

- 1) With whom do you want to talk?
- 2) Who are able and willing to listen to you, and stated other way around, consequently, whom do you commit to listening to, and to listening carefully?
- 3) How do you deal with your loneliness?

A set of questions that seemingly alter the course of addressing the theme of sensual knowledge, but this is not the case. What we are dealing – because the very act in itself is out of reach – is where is it coming from and how does it relate to itself and its surroundings.

Therefore, the first two of the questions points out to the inevitable dialectics of producing talk (any type of kind of works of art as in performative actions) and how that talk is deeply dependant on ones ability to reciprocally listen to others talking and doing whatever they are doing. This comes close to the cliché of a notion that talk is cheap, but it is also very true – so far that talk is just talk and lack the balancing act of also actively and willingly listening. This duality of talking and listening is not a moralistic proposition. It is extremely practical set-up. It is imposing nothing less and nothing more than the conditions of conditions of any productive and fruitful give and take site and situation that come from somewhere, are activated at a certain site and are about to go somewhere else.

Why? Because any act depends on its relationship and interpretation of past-present-future. It is a work of act that produces talk (it seeks to connect and to communicate something) but because it presupposes a contact, the question directly rises: with whom does this particular work want to talk with and be in a relation with?

Frankly, this is a relationship that cannot be controlled and planned. It is filled with uncertainties and unknown factors, but it is nevertheless a process of being-with and getting in touch with. It is the hope of having someone to respond to when doing that act of performing a talk. And consequently, it includes the promise of being prepared to do the very same thing to the others that are producing their version of the talk and a work of art.

Therefore, without the ability and willingness to listen, there is no prospect for the continuous development of a talk talk talk. A connection and contact that is hardly ever straight-forward, but which does exist and emerge. We are linked, we are embedded, and the question is always how are we this, what are we able to do about it and how can we achieve it so that it actually helps more and hurts less?

We are moving towards, getting attached and letting the other have an effect on us. This movement, this collision it aches and craves for protection, but it also requires – in order to keep on moving – dissonance and distortion. Its moves are circular, kind of chasing joyfully its own tail, they are defined by a combination of rhyme, rhythm and repletion. It is circularity that gives the acts in a continuous direction its form, its loose but necessary unity. It is the other that we know that we need for to be able to gain and maintain a presence – an articulation and actualization of this here and now. With the words of Butler: “For that Other to represent being is not to be being itself, but to be its sign, its relay, its occasion, its deflection” (2015, 57).

This brings us to the third question, the very ultimate one: how do you deal with your loneliness? As a hard-won currency of a question that takes us a bit back, because why would we admit to being lonely? And what kind of a loneliness is it about that we try to address?

Again and again, we focus on the content of a given act – what is happening when doing what you are doing while doing it. And we are interested in the sensual knowledge that is evolving and being produced there and then. It is process that you, or anyone of us, is most often, in fact, doing alone. We face the empty canvas, or the white sheet, or the glow of the computer screen. We are alone, for sure, in that moment, that hesitation and wariness – that moment of decision and embodied susceptibility, just to link us directly to previous section of the essay. We are there – and we are in a great aching need to be connected and feeling not so only alone. We are alone, but not lonely.

We are embedded, we are connected – we have friends that we talk with and friends that we listen to and talk with. And this, this is the source, this is the background, the sense of reality that helps, not hurts, that brings about and makes the production of sensual knowledge both possible and worth while.

Connected, confused, but no, not scared nor sacred. Instead, it is active and activating – it is about touching and being touched. It is an experience that seduces, makes us vulnerable, but allows clever and capricious ways of connection and dis-locations. It is an active excitement, an impelling force, not a passive flat timid compromise.

It is a meeting that opens up, instead of blocking or closing down. It is porous, breathing in and out, being able to be with and to feel with. We do not stare, we do not gain control by knowing and by categories – we are taking part and becoming a part of the work, the processes of sensuous cognition. A knowledge that solves absolutely nothing, but carries and comforts us – allows and supports us to take these acts and processes further and deeper.

Or, to use a little bit of widening of the context, a quote and reminder by Gadamer (1989, 110) on the both-and back and forth movement and

constellation of giving in order to be able to get. “To be in a conversation, however, means to be beyond oneself, to think with the other and to come back to oneself as if to another”.

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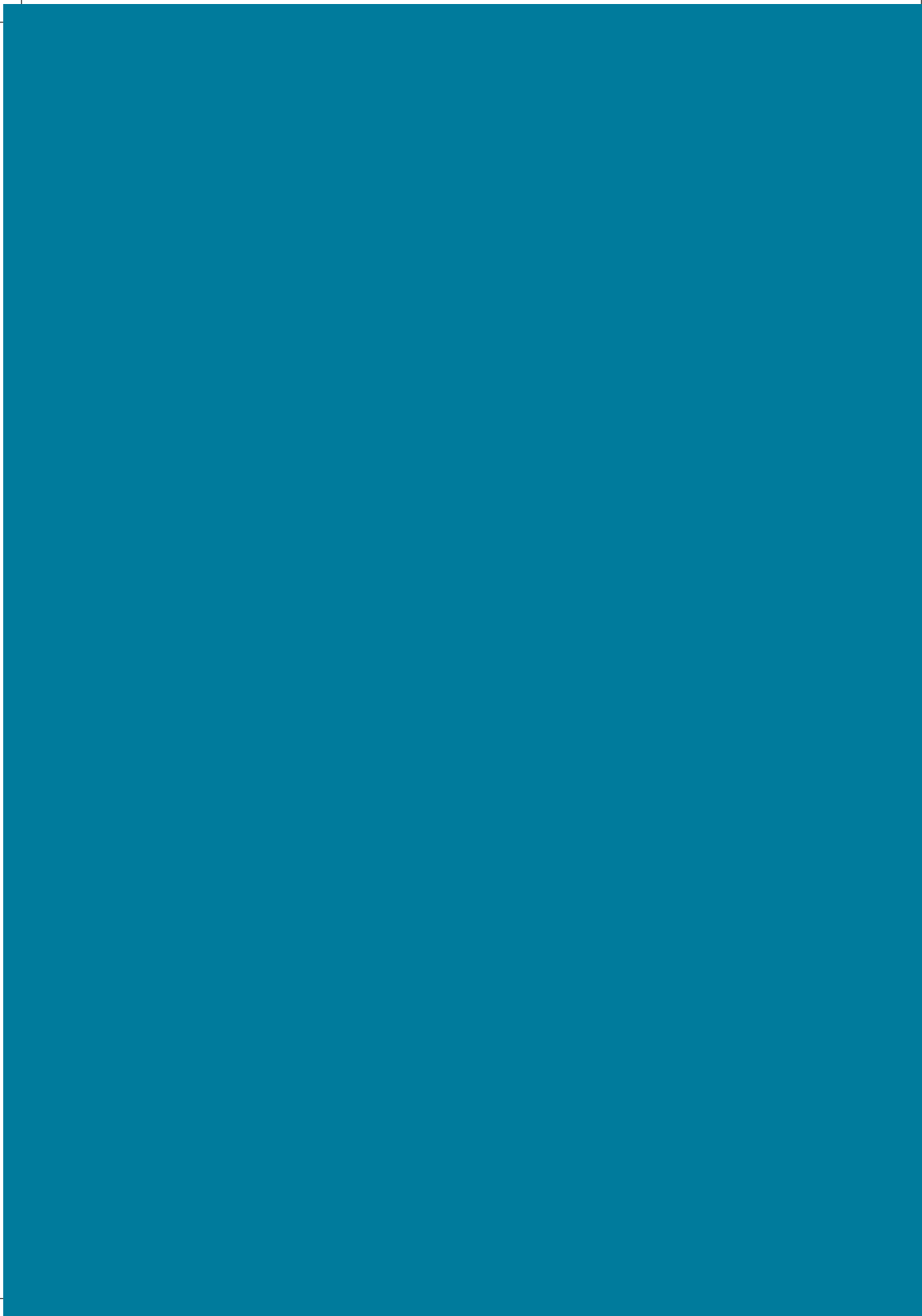


The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, income, and any other financial activities. The text suggests that a consistent and thorough record-keeping system is essential for identifying trends, managing cash flow, and preparing for tax obligations.

Next, the document addresses the challenges of reconciling accounts. It explains that discrepancies often arise due to timing differences, errors in recording, or omissions. To resolve these issues, the author recommends a systematic approach: comparing the company's records with bank statements, identifying the source of the variance, and making necessary adjustments. Regular reconciliation is presented as a key practice to prevent small errors from accumulating and to maintain a clear picture of the company's financial health.

The third section focuses on budgeting and financial forecasting. It highlights that a well-defined budget serves as a roadmap for the company's financial future. By setting realistic goals and allocating resources accordingly, management can better control costs and optimize performance. The text also touches upon the importance of monitoring actual results against the budget to make timely adjustments and stay on track.

Finally, the document concludes with a strong emphasis on transparency and communication. It states that clear financial reporting to stakeholders is crucial for building trust and ensuring the company's long-term success. This involves providing regular updates on financial performance, explaining the underlying reasons for any variances, and being open to feedback. The author encourages a culture of accountability and collaboration, where everyone in the organization is committed to accurate financial reporting and sound financial management.



## ACTUALITY AND POTENTIALITY

**“One has only to compare two self-portraits of Rembrandt – it is not the sameness of my body that constitutes its selfhood but it’s belonging to someone capable of designating himself or herself as the one whose body it is”.**

*Ricoeur, Paul, Oneself as Another,  
Chicago University Press 1992, 129*

What is it, in fact, that we are asking and addressing here? What do we imply with actuality and potentiality, and what about their inherent interdependence? How to approach it, get closer to the distance and difference between something actually happening and that something possessing a potentiality of happening? Or what kind of a difference is there made and shaped in-between actuality of a thing, event or act and its potentiality?

It is a set of questions that heavily lean towards the ancient sources of our reflective thinking. However, before jumping into the deep dark waters of the mighty pool shaped and made by Aristotelian metaphysics, lets frame the question a bit more suitable for our grasp, if not reach. Let us frame it so that we have access to the issue – instead of it constantly slipping and sliding away. Let us phrase the question in terms of telling stories. This time around, it is not stories necessary told as in linguistic narratives, but stories as a way to comprehend, to structure and to follow, to make sense and be sensitive, about the world, our reality – who we are, where we are and how we are.

If framed like this, this starting of a positioning of ourselves as in what do we do when we do what we do, it gives us this following advantage: we can localize ourselves and not only that, we become a participant in creating and generating that very locality, the context within which we act and are acted upon. And with which we tell stories while stories are told about us.

This is then a site and a situation, which is defined and designed, in detail, always in detail, from and by the clash and collision between space of experiences and horizon of expectations. It is a sort of a mouthful of abstract notion, which has the benefit of articulating the site and situation, not as a face-off, but as a constant and never-ending dilemma. We stand and we fall, and then we try to get up again within these parameters between what is an experience (and of course how is that both manifested and represented in each case and its given thisness) and what do we expect and anticipate from these experiences.

Thus, with experience, its being or not being actual or potential, it is a both-and site and situation of something gaining a momentum and that momentum at the same time being what it can become as an imagination. It is real, for sure, and it is imagined. It is not only happening, as in real, because what and how is something happening, is fully dependent upon how it is perceived and from what position its expectations and horizons are shaped and made, opened up or deeply frozen – and everything in-between.

This moment of both-and, this inter-action and not to be diluted, nor solvable dilemma, this can be addressed with the help of a direction of a story, of a movement, of a situated act. It is an act that has its past, present and the future. Thus, it is an act that goes both ways, and in both directions – it is about having access to the past that shapes and makes the expectations of where the act might go and how it might do what it strives to achieve. It means that it is foreseeable and partly predictable. At the same time, what will happen, has to be partly unknown, yet-to-be-taking-place. Otherwise there would be no tension, no attention, no emotional intensity between

now and then – or between what is experienced and how are we imagining that experience.

With the guidance provided by Paul Ricoeur, we can with our best intentions simplify this approach by acknowledging what is happening in the act of reading (and here the idea is that this can be swapped by other acts such as seeing, painting and performing). There is a direction to the act, but what will happen in its due course, is partly still open and undecided. What's more, for the act of reading to continue, for the reader to be and become an active and committed participant, it requires a push and a pull. There is the decisive moment of wanting to go on, and to read further. This is the moment of seduction. And then there is that moment of hold on, what's going on? This is the moment of suspicion.

It is a relationship of give and take, and a push and pull. For sure, for real- and not to forget: forever. What we have is a story that has a direction but that direction is yet to be fulfilled. It is open but anchored, it is same and it is different. It is actual and it is potential. It is both narrative imagination, and yes, it is what can be called as ethical imagination. This is our capacity, our ability for imagination as in our willingness and ability to reach out and touch – and to be touched. Seeing and being seen, reading and being read – letting the world around you have an affect on you while you try to affect it.

Or with another vernacular, situating this type of language to hermeneutics, to Aristotle, to pragmatists, well, to anyone with the commitment to an anchored notion of the constant inter-play between necessity and openness, responsibility and freedom of interpretation, in anything we do and strive for, we are limited in our access and comprehension, and a comprehension how that limit, this non-fullness is a benefit, not a down-side.

Reinforcing this approach to a statement, this is to say that whatever we face and are struck with, accompanied either with interest or indifference,

what we actually can grasp and know about anything is depending how and where we meet and get confronted with it. It is a notion with immediate consequences that means this: our everyday existence, our being-in-the-world is partial, lop-sided and very inaccurate. But it is what it is when it tries to become what it can be. Here and there and then and now.

\* \* \*

Let us get back to the inter-dependence between actuality and potentiality as according to Aristotle. What is the difference between an important and an insignificant story? What is it? Perhaps an example here might serve a purpose, and an example that is currently circling around and around me. An example of a fly, and the question is what would make this particularly angry and active fly that is buzzing around me, distracting me and annoying me, become significant in a story – either as part of it or as its full focus? Or to address this from the opposite angle, what is it, despite the vast and evident promises, with this thermodynamic fly, and the site and situation that would not add up and turn out to be just a bore, threatening to terrorize us with trivialities?

According to Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), it is about the co-existence of the quality of a given actuality and a potentiality of a more general matter of the thing or an act. With Aristotle, opening the door to his kind of train of thought, we are immediately thrown into what is called metaphysics (see, especially, *Metaphysics*, book IX, chapters 6-8). Granted, in Aristotle's argument, what holds within metaphysics has direct relevance and consequence for what is seen as the internal logic of, well, physics and, yes, storytelling.

What we get with Aristotle is not only the fascinating connection and trajectory to way back then, and consequently how the realization of the difference between what and how goes to the essence, to the fundamentals of the matter that are effectively substantial here and now. What we are

referring to is really older than most of what we are able to relate to, you know, it is older than the Catholic Church, just to make a simple and not so innocent comparison. But what's more, it is about whether that very matter, for example the actuality or potentiality of a story, a narrative, is gaining the force of moving here and there or whether it is static and stale.

In his book on *Physics*, following the lead from *Metaphysics* (here, see book III, chapters 1–3), Aristotle describes the four variables of how matter alters its content and its direction. These variables focus on a) its being, and how it is born and how it dies, b) its quality and the changes within it, c) its quantity as in diminishing or growth, and d) its location, its inherent movement or lack thereof. These four aspects are always found within the interaction and interdependence between the state of actuality (as in actualization of a story) and a state of its being potentially a story. The latter is universal, and it is not limited in its scope or trajectory. It is everywhere as a possibility. The former, on the other hand, is achieved when and only when there is that movement from what it was as a potentiality to what it means achieving it as in actualizing that potentiality.

It is an actuality that occurs both in the agent and the result. It was already strongly notified in Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, book IX, chapter 8) that the one who performs the act (of storytelling) is not that very act (the story) and it is not how it is read and received. But the crucial point, and the challenge of making or losing its cutting edge within the chances and challenges of actuality, is the will and ability to do and to perform – to try out and to repeat and to learn the specific craft of that very act and its particularities.

This will, this drive, this need to do, to act, to perform and to communicate (as in the act of telling a story) is socially and structurally framed by what is labeled as either internal goods that enable the act and hindrances that stand in its way or external goods or hindrances. (It is beneficial for the sake of the whole argument to underline that this version here is both informed directly by Aristotle's writings but also strongly guided by the

interpretation of them by Heidegger and Gadamer – and not to forget, these are clearly not the only choices of interpretative paths than can be taken with Aristotle).

With the internal part, these references allow us to focus on the question of what exactly it is in that very act that makes the act work or not work. What is it in the given and chosen version of storytelling that actually is important and what is irrelevant? And to follow: which turns and choices lead to increasing integrity and intensity and which ones do not?

With external goods and hindrances, we are focusing on the conditions of the condition, the daily sites and situation within which that very act is trying to be and become what it can be and striving towards as in searching for ways to fulfill its full potentiality in its actuality. This refers to the social, political, economic and historical settings, the structures that structure the actions and stories, their variations of flexibility or stubbornness, their ability to cherish plurality and a loving kind of a conflict.

Both sides add up to the actuality of a story, its move and movement from what to how, it's becoming to be a place of its own, with a voice of its own. Needless to say, this is the bumpy road taken and followed, faced with the ability, the will, the perspiration and stamina of doing what you do when you do what you do with an attitude of a situated self, in an embedded reflective, critical yet constructive way. It is to search for the ways of looking for the good life while digging deeper into the core of the practice of what signifies and frames the practice within which your act is contextualized and connected.

It is nothing more, nothing less than the constant necessity to give and provide a time and space bound version to the content of the act of actualization and articulation, emphasizing the very difference between what and how – that moment of connection or disconnection.



\* \* \*

Tactility. Touching and being touched, letting that touch guide and inform the next move, the upcoming choice of decisions and acting upon them. And then, well, staying locked in the and to the task, repeating it, and letting that repetition gain substance and to open up – to take us somewhere we have not yet been even if we might have been able to imagine it.

Or is there more to it? Perhaps how its done, or even if it is done at all? This thing called touching, or being touched upon? A dilemma sorted out, perhaps like this: Do we really want it – to be touched? Because if and when it happens, this thing called touching, something else gains ground. It goes beyond the control mechanisms that we master and can sustain. Touching, yes, when it aims for getting closer and closer, it goes deeper and further – as it is also supposed to do.

What if it is a touch that is gentle and pleasant, kind of nice and neat? What happens then – or does anything happen at all? Or: Is it possible to seduce only as a play – without the crossing of a border and it (seduction) becoming a violation?

This is a claim that Susan Sontag (2009) is reading into and reading with the works and words of Roland Barthes. Sontag is praising, she is writing duly and truly an homage to her hero, her savior in the arena of cool and dedicated analysis and literary comments. It is a text shadowed and shaped by the occasion – written in connection to the accident and death of the person in question.

In this text, Sontag leaves no corner used, no stone touched upon how great and careful, concentrated and keen Barthes as a writer was. For her, these writings are a proof, a proof how “absence is really presence, emptiness repletion, impersonality the highest achievement of the personal” (Ibid. 77). Interesting though, for Sontag, Barthes’ work is dedicated to this: to

pleasure, or “the great adventure of desire” (Ibid. 76). Sontag goes so far as to emphasize how Barthes writing is by its character affable, never rude, nor pleading. “This is seduction as play, never violation” (Ibid. 71).

However, albeit all respect to each of the writers, we might need to back-pedal a bit. Is this possible? Sensible? Wished for? How can anyone be touched, how can we be touched unless there is at least a certain sort of crossing the borders of the expected and already-known? Seduction, for sure, absolutely and positively, but is this not impossible if it does not challenge and re-write what is acceptable and even desired?

Nobody wants to be violated, damn right, not for real. That kind of a thing is to be avoided, at all costs, it is highly unpleasant. But touching and being touched – that is something we might be but ought not be afraid of? Or? The act and acts of being effected and having an affect, it is a game, a relationship of give and take, a move and an act based on mutual concordance, a reciprocal recognition, why should it NOT stimulate us, push us a bit, and drag us out of the boredom of the safe and sound?

If you ask me, as a person active as a reader, as a viewer, as a participant, I want to be violated – within the frames of the reasonable disagreement. There must be a certain level and energy of moving up and down the trajectories of engagement and experience. There needs to be transformation, there has to be transgression, not aggression. Not literally, of course, but discursively. I search for it – effects and affects. I want to be moved and taken somewhere – within the wide range from a most subtle caress to the rather aggressive shout.

When I watch, when I read, I stop in order to shift the balance, to slide sideways. I move somewhere else, I will choose and do something new. And if what I see, if what I react to and with, if it does not cause something to happen, I do something else. I will not wait for that moment of click and clack for all that long. I move, and I want to be moved.

It is always about preferences and enchantments, but on an even more deeper level than that, the whole process of being effected and having an affect sets the emphasis on these inter-linked issues: Who is that I, and what can an entity called I want and how? Thus, it is a movement within which that very “I” keeps on searching for itself, for its ways of being what it tries to be, what it desires, fears and admires. It is, yes it is, it is the whole bag, shaken and taken for a rough ride, a long haul of effects and emotions.

It is what it is – calling for the ability and courage to stay close, and get closer: to desire, to be, and to be with – and to become.

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But for now, let us take a leave from Sontag, and let us get back to being touched and being the one who touches. Let us get to the ways, moving away from the actual how to the structural how, to the ways this contact, this ability to touch is achieved. Let us focus on three inter-woven aspects of production of knowledge, three inter-dependent notions of how to make a difference and how to achieve an articulation and actualization of a given act or a content of a concept. Let us focus on rhyme, rhythm and repetition

Why? Because its highly important to break down the spell that seduction, us being touched is somehow magical and fully of mystery. It is – as it should be – a means to communicate, to drive something through and to strive for an effect. Therefore, it is using the means accessible for telling stories, any kind and type of stories. And yes, stories are told, passed and renewed with the means of rhyme, rhythm and repetition. This is how we get connected, this is how we gain access, this is how and why we pay attention and get embedded.

Let us start with the rhyme. Train, waiting for the train in rain, waiting in vain .... This is a not so surprisingly often found part of a lyric used and abused in so called pop songs. It is a solid example of how rhyme is

constructed with words. As an example, it is crude and very direct, and that's why it is a good example.

What would be a rhyme in visual language, in getting closer and gaining access to a painting? Is there a train in the work that we try to watch in vain? Hardly. But how then? We get to the core of visual communication. We get to shapes, we talk about colors, and we address the elements at play as in their composition.

With composition, as a whole of the act, in the picture, in the painting, we connect rhyme and rhythm. And we bring back that lovely, oh so lovely pop song where rain, train, vain and let's add pain, interact and even go beyond to a yet not fathomable terrain. A pop song that has a rhythm, at least of a sort, because it has music, however annoying or cheap it might appear or feel. But it has music, beat, a frame and a function.

What is a rhythm in a painting? What is the beat of a work of art? It is clearly, and as simply stated as possible and on purpose, again within the relationship of its parts to the overall whole. It is in and it is about the composition – how elements within the story relate and reflect to one another.

Rhyme and rhythm, well, not too complicated, potentially to be comprehended even when moved from pop songs to so called serious paintings. But repetition? In that lovely, oh so lovely pop song, it is crystal clear why repetition is so high on cards and charts. It is to be repeated, that pop song. Playing on the radio, yes, and within each song itself. It is rare, very rare that a pop song is so composed and so performed that it does not repeat some parts or most parts of it many times.

Where is repetition in a painting? There is no radio on, no, but there are exhibitions. There are exhibitions that connect the dots from before to now, from here to there and back again. Certainly, there is a longer time frame

between exhibitions than intervals of song in popular radio, but well, the radio is not on all the time, and it does not always just play the same song.

Thus, repetition is continuity. It is continuity as a structure of the events – from outside-in, and yes, from inside-in. It is continuity that is seen in a larger perspective, and in it a necessity of a continuity within each work itself, within each gesture, each move and moment.

But what kind of a repetition? Well, this is as it has to be obvious. Each painter has a certain rhythms of practice, a certain habit of the heart regarding how to approach the task. A practice that after working as a professional for 5–7 years, give or take, it is not relevant, a year or month, more or less, it is evident that every and any artist has a tendency to use certain types of colors, to start the process with a certain type of a gesture, and to keep adding certain other elements. This is then a constant process that both states what is about to become but it also articulated by choosing what is edited in and what is edited out - as in what are the actual paths followed up and realized from so many potential paths that could have been taken.

Repetition is the palette you use, the colors you choose, it is the way you stretch the canvas – it is the everyday acts that proceed the very moment of painting – acts that do have a role and do serve a purpose. Sometimes this purpose is invisible, sometimes highlighted – but it is always there.

What about this, what about the common structural element in music, what about combination of harmony, memory and rhythm? Or: using pictorial material so that you do recognize to what this painterly gesture refers to but you have no solution to what is made of and with this image as a gesture that moves from somewhere and is yet about to land at somewhere else?

What about it? Or, perhaps in correct application: how about it? Are you ready, ready to join, ready to take a share in the processes, ready to participate?

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It is a circular move and moment. Something goes around and returns back but always what comes back has been slightly altered. It is what it is, and what in can be: a process. A process within which each part on its own and each part in a relationship to the other parts is searching for its hesitated but dedicated locality, its moment of time and place anchored truth, its actualization and articulation.

On the level of actuality, it is the combinations between the elements in composition: rhyme, rhythm and repetition. On another level, lets call it a metaphysical level, it is the “eat-me and feed-me” site and situation of ongoing search for a non-existing balance between the notions of body, soul and mind.

BODY

SOUL

MIND

Or is it to be stated in another order? Does the order matter?

It does if we wish to separate them. Then we actually leave one part and we get a neat confrontation between, lets take as an example, mind and body. This would then try to face the dilemma of whether it is the mind or the body that determines our actions? This again would call the followers of the Descartes, and the philosophy of dualism, something like that, if we take soul and mind, then we call towards holistic practices that busy themselves with the dilemma of healing and interconnectedness.

Or we can relate to many, very many variations of soul songs that aspire for the higher beauty of love, brotherhood and caring for birds and the

bees and the deep seas. We can also add almost endless verses from the Bible, but that would not take us that much further – if and when we want to hold these three aspects together, ourselves being busy keeping them in combination, and not only that, but to creating and generating sites and situations in which these relationships can emerge and evolve.

But no, we do not want to get lost. No, we want to have the focus, focus on the whole – and its parts. Acts of touching and being touched, activated and potential.

The composer and musician Philip Glass talks about these things. Not exactly in these words, but within his own discursive vernacular. For Glass, it is about striving towards a certain hard-earned and difficult to attain but still possible level of attention. Because this is it for him when talking about music and how we experience it, this is the structure as in how form and the content become the one and the same.

Let us focus on a quote from him: “Once we let go of the narrative and allow ourselves to enter the flow of music, the buoyancy that we experience is both addictive and attractive and attains a high emotional level” (2015, 221).

How would this translate to means and ways of a painting? Words and concepts that are used can, as ever, cause a positive stir or they can turn to be standstill, a burden. Instead of getting stuck with the notion of narrative that Glass mentions, what I think he is saying is relating to the internal logic of a painting in the following way. It is about representation – or: how to tell the story. It is the move from abstract what to unique how.

In a painting, if the topic of the work, lets pick one in all of its randomness, if it is a lion, the point is not how realistic, or how powerful the lion as a lion is. The lion is a symbol, a figurative starting point that must gain

distance from its representational origins. Thus, it must move – and become something else – a painting, that is.

Therefore, with a painting, that definitely gives us the opportunity to link with it, with the symbol of, for example a lion, but if the is nothing else than a resemblance, it would hardly be a work of art worth while returning to and watching again and again, cumulating the give-and-take relationship with it. There must be more to a painting that the correlation to what its topical starting point is.

This something more, this something else takes us to the core of the chances and challenges of what is possible, actualized and potential, for the inner logic of a certain kind and type of a painting. It cannot merely be a painting of a lion. It can easily start off from an image and most likely an imaginary version of a lion, or a hedgehog or a sailing boat, or, well, a swimming pool, but it must do more, much more. Not as an image, not as a reproduction, but as a painting, with its painterly gestures and magnificent moves.

If and when this is achieved, then we are getting closer and closer to the notion that Glass was addressing. There is a meeting, an actual meeting between the work and the viewer, the object and the person who move beyond the borders and limits of either-or. There is a still kind of a movement, like touching each stone under the water while crossing the river, a slight altering of the parameters that cause this phenomena of an uplifting experience.

Glass calls it buoyance, which is a beautiful name for it. There is the flow, there is that change, that difference at making which makes us feel with, and be with in a way that is elastic, elegant and vivid. It is not elusive, it is not exact, but it is kind of like floating – trying out and reaching for, searching about alternative ways of being-with.



This is, expressed with yet another vernacular, what is meant with the concept of changing same. What this means is that while something is fixed, something else is transitory. Or with the words used by Paul Ricoeur (1992, 141), every move, every articulation, every configuration of a time and space, it is always an inter-play between its concordance and its discordance. Something is arranged into a work of art, what ever the medium is at stake, and that has a certain arrangements of facts and materials. A matter of fact that could possible be made in thousands and thousands of different ways but which at a certain moment, at a certain here and now can only be made in that one exact version – which nevertheless has other versions through the past and must have upcoming new interpretations in the near future.

But back to basics, back to A & P This new lion, this new interpretation, when is it actual, and when only potential?

Whenever and whatever it is, it must be connected, as it has to be able to gain distance. It remains while it breaks loose. It is going over, and freezing under – shooting from the hip while using the emergency doors. A lion that is not only a lion, but more and less, both-and – it is an interpretation of how to be in the world, how to make sense of who we are and how we are.

It is a changing same. Something, yes, something in the process of getting connected and letting that connectedness have an effect on both sides, something is there and then changing while something else is the same. But they are together, not possible to be separated. The content and the form, for sure, searching and then getting lost, chasing its tail for comfort while trying to set it on fire. A relationship that always requires a long-term commitment, a deep-seated mental concentration and a physical stamina. It is about sparring and testing, getting on each others nerves, for real, and yet managing to come out with a new version of the same while we witness the production of a unique content of a concept.

This is a process, and a move where what we do remains the same, but it must always gain a new buoyance, a new edge, will and well, passion of how it is actualized and articulated.

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But what about that exact moment, that there and then when it happens? What is going on?

Glass talks about the necessity to listen to music, this is what it is all about for him, everything about playing is the ability to open up and to listen. His question, to himself is this: when does that listening take place? Is it now, exactly now at the heightened present, or just-before and a-bit-after? His intuition says: “the best case situation is that I’m playing and I’m almost hearing what I’m about to play. And my playing follows that image. In other words, it’s like a shadow that precedes the object, rather than follows it” (2015, 97).

Thus, in one sense, that moment requires a sensibility to be connected to where that that very acts comes from as in its previous actualizations, a sense and a will to actualize a current interpretation of and with it, and a sensibility to do so that this act actually opens up chances for yet other ways of doing the same thing but in a bit different way.

It is not the result of endless repetitions, not about conquering the technique and minimizing the errors or the same thing from the other side, about maximizing the control of the act. It is about doing it there and then – in connection to past and the future versions. It is the constant interplay between expectations and experiences, between spaces of experiences and horizon of expectations. It is the hesitant and quivering, that moment of an *Ahnung*, in English, a presentiment, a foreboding and a premonition. It is the porous existence of a radical openness, something that we cannot

control but which always shakes the trees and slaps us in the face - that very something which is not-yet-quite-happening and which is already-gone-by.

With the words of Glass: "The ideal way of performing, to my way of thinking, would be when the performer allows the activity of playing to be shaped by the activity of listening, and perhaps even by the activity of imagining listening" (Ibid. 97).

In the classical world of pre-modernity, this was articulated with the following notion: to be able to build the city, you first have to imagine it. Thus, it is that three-step model that constantly mixes what comes first, second and third, making it impossible for it to remain in a neat and nice linear logic. There is a lineage, in everything we do, and the more we might deny it or not acknowledge it, the more it actually affects the end results. But this lineage, where we come from, is just the starting point, not a completely determined iron cage. We must move, and do something – make those waves and not just admire them.

Then what we have is not a formula for satisfaction or for stardom. We have the core ingredients of the constant need to do and try again and repeat the acts that achieve that little alteration in the changing same. It is the take off, the make a move moment, and the very road where and when what's potential becomes its full force of a hesitant and temporary actuality.

A notion of a move within which it is possible and even to be encouraged to swap the concept of listening to the one of viewing, or seeing, and of course, reading, and to swap it then back to hearing and listening. And then you do the same with playing to alter it to writing, to designing, to painting etc.

It is not that complicated, no, not as an abstract notion. But it is, as it ever will be, in a great need of the clash and collision of the acts of actualization

and articulation. It requires that burn and heal of a now. It needs the form, and it needs the content – and it strives towards the transgression within the productive and progressively protective frames of body, soul and mind.

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#### LITERATURE

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Penguin 1998

Glass, Philip, *Words Without Music*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015

Ricoeur, Paul, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago University Press 1992

Sontag, Susan, *Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes*, in *Where the Stress Falls*, Penguin 2009

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. This includes not only sales and purchases but also any other financial activities that may occur. It is essential to have a clear and concise system in place to ensure that all data is properly recorded and easily accessible.

Next, the document addresses the need for regular audits. These audits should be conducted on a consistent basis to identify any discrepancies or errors in the accounting records. This process helps to ensure the integrity of the financial data and provides a level of transparency that is crucial for stakeholders.

Another key aspect of financial management is the timely payment of bills and invoices. Delaying these payments can lead to strained relationships with suppliers and creditors, as well as potential penalties or interest charges. Therefore, it is important to establish a clear payment schedule and adhere to it strictly.

The document also emphasizes the importance of budgeting. A well-defined budget allows a business to track its spending against its income, helping to identify areas where costs can be reduced or revenues can be increased. This proactive approach to financial planning is essential for long-term success.

Finally, the document discusses the role of technology in modern accounting. There are now many software solutions available that can automate many of the manual tasks involved in bookkeeping, such as data entry and reconciliation. These tools can significantly reduce the risk of human error and free up time for more strategic financial analysis.



*Untitled, (Oneself as Another) · Mikka Vaskola*

## Keys of Life

What is it that makes a thing stand out? What is it that makes something special? Or: what is a classic of its own kind – a song, a book, a painting or a theme?

According to a novel called *Carol*, argued in a conversation between the protagonists “a classic is something with a basic human situation”. It is a novel that has had many lives, many names. First it came out in 1952 as *The Price of Salt*. The writer of this novel, which rather surprisingly sold almost one million copies in paperback was stated to be someone called Claire Morgan. Later, much later when the book came out under its current title, the name of the writer was given as Patricia Highsmith. In the meanwhile, when not only the names and titles have changed but when the social imaginaries surrounding it have taken many turns and twists, it has turned into a classic – for the right reasons, indeed.

A classical theme, if anything, is identity. This is to ask, to wonder, and to get lost and feel irritated, agitated. This is to open the door that shakes our ground and blows us off the balance. It is to face the wall, writings on the wall: who are we, where do we come from and where might we be going?

Questions, questions, questions – and even with all the waiting and anticipating, hardly any answers.

*Carol*, the book with two names and titles, and many routes and destinations, is about identity. And it is about love. It is not love in the time of cholera, that is another great book, also about identity, love and yes, memory. It is a novel not only caught in the middle of times that are dramatically changing but it is a book that also managed to alter our perceptions of who we are, and where and how is it possible to be who we might want to be and become.

There and then, here and now. Actualized in collisions of the interplay between consonance and dissonance, in clashes of wishes, wants, fears and agonies of what, where and how.

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Identity.

Are we talking about it as in a person, as in an individual – or as in a portrait? Or, in times like these, why not a product?

A picture that always does the double thing, and the double take. It describes and it defines. It takes part but it aches, it leaves us always wanting, always missing something. In a series of paintings, still ongoing and emerging, Miikka Vaskola does not try to stop the process of this doubling, or troubling, but instead, he turns to and towards it. Instead of chasing for the very one and its finality, and sure, the security it denotes, this is about plurality. This is about that one as many, that one that includes the others, in clashes and in collisions, but sometimes in careful embraces, uniting the ones that were, the ones that are and the ones that are yet to become.

But there is a trick. A trick of the light, and the trick of what we are used to, what we are conditioned to see. Because here, by turning around



the expectations, here we have many in one. The portrait series *Oneself as Another* presents more than one side of the subject within the same painting. In these portraits, which have been drawn with ink, charcoal and chalk, light and shadow switch position so that when the viewer looks at the portraits with their naked eye they see a negative image.

But there is another turn, and another take from analog to contemporary means. When viewing the portraits on a phone or tablet with the screen color settings set to negative, however, the image is displayed as a positive one. There is, indeed, at the very face of it all, one reality and image, but this one contains the many, the painting whose multidimensionality only becomes observable by looking below and through the surface: “The painting occupies a space below the surface” (Vaskola 2017).

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### Identity.

One version of it, a true classic of its own, says that identity is the thing that we constantly keep searching for and yes, identity is it itself what comes as a conclusion out of that never completed search. We do look for it but we never get or capture it.

The basic, the main idea, the task is not to arrive, it is not to hunt something down, it is not to own it, nor control it. As a task it recalls a classic refrain of a song, by Curtis Mayfield, singing “keep on keeping on”. It is not an advertisement, nor is it a suggestion for a pastime. It is a way of addressing the issue, the need and the necessity to keep that search up and running, developing and emerging, finding ways of temporary articulation and actualization.

Here, the connection of the dots is made between, not only then and now as in years lived and gone past, but between someone singing in relation and in reflection of and with the everyday experiences both contrasted and combined with political change, social hope and theological ascension.

How about it, huh?

It's all in the bag – itching and twisting with identity. But what do we find there, here? And yes, do we have, in fact, do we possess the courage to go through, and not only that, but to follow with it?

To follow, through and through?

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The album with the above-mentioned song by Curtis Mayfield is called *Roots*. It has seven songs. According the sleeve notes, the longest (*Beautiful Brother of Mine*) is said to last 7.23. The shortest, called *Love to Keep You in Mind*, stops at 3.48. In-between these times, you find various lengths of songs that are called *Get Down*, *Underground*, *We Got to Have Peace*, and *Now You're Gone*.

Can you, concretely speaking, can you follow my drift? This is it what it is about. Always and in never-ending give and take, push and pull of emotions in motions. This is it. Yes it is.

This is a kind of a way to confront the question of identity, the contrapunctual dissonance of who we are and with whom are we what we are, this links us to the dual disposition. It links roots and routes. We all share the same thing – even if it is hardly ever the same. We all come from somewhere – our roots. Then we all take from that background

different routes to go on and do something. Somewhere and somehow. We try and we fail, being frail and freaked out. Out there, out there in the cold, out there in the heat, those missing or matched beats.

Roots and routes. Cool combinations and wild conspiracies – and anything in-between, under and over. Not as answers, but as beginnings. Something that must be constantly and *in situ* be negotiated and navigated. An act that is never about something definite or final. It is always about moving towards something – that very something that changes its spots, its colors, its coordinates the very moment you get closer to it.

It is a process called identity that you keep on keeping on. You keep on searching. Anticipating, reclaiming and commemorating – telling stories. And listening, listening to stories.

This album called *Roots* came out in 1971. It carries with it memories – time and space bound symbols and metaphors that might and then again might not make sense to us. It is a participant in the game of connotations within the social imaginary of where, when and how. And a litany of why yes and why not.

My version, this one that I keep staring at and turning around and about, of this product is on vinyl. It is a black flat item, not heavy, but rather amazingly durable. It still reproduces the sound that is embedded into it. It has scratches and certain weariness attached to it, it's been played during the day, and sometimes through the night, and it certainly has seen a lot. But sure, but it works, it delivers. It does what it is supposed to do: it plays all along.

While listening to it, I check the back of the album, and I read what it says, there and then. "Also on Ampex 8-Track Cartridge & Cassette Stereo Tapes." I do remember a C-cassette, I sometimes still even use

them. But what is or what was Ampex 8-Track Cartridge? Available where, and for how much – for what?

Times and changes. Objects that turn to subjects and back again – and again.

Like this painting, the one we already talked about. The portrait that is both-and, there is that subject that is an object, and then back again as a subject, turning and returning, activating our look, our gaze, and our contact and potentially a connection.

Not convinced? Well, then look again. Turn towards the immediate one, the analog one, and take a look at the eyes, the face, and the whole of a portrait that is certainly looking back at you. There is a hint of a person, chasing the promise of a personality. It is a portrait as a kind of a cold breath on the surface of a frozen ocean, polished and presentable but still very raw. There is a reflection, and a reaction but more than that, there is immersion – emotions in motion drawn to and at it.

Better? If not, then take that tekno device out of your pocket, check the settings and make that plurality become and be what it also is. Not contradicting, not denying the other, but staying within itself while taking the other with and along – including all the possible shades and shapes it connotes. Here, and now, the eyes you see look the opposite way, and their effect is altered. It is not doubled, but troubled. What at first went into the work, it now comes out – ascending elegantly, almost on purpose slowing its emergence from one to the other, for one and the other.

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## Identity.

It never is. It does exist, but it is in a state of a flow – coming and going from there to here and near to far. And back again. Always back again and again. It is the repetitions of actualizations that are like circles, these familiar moves that are always a bit different, a bit something else. Sometimes more, sometimes less but always on the move.

Identity is performed. It is told, retold, shaped and made, maintained and manipulated. It is never one, it is always many, contradicting and clashing many.

If and when we want to keep on keeping on, keeping on searching for who we are, where we are and where we might go to, then we need imagination. We must be able and willing to alter our perspectives and connect the dots in a way that will surprise us – and even confuse us in a beautiful way.

But hold on. What is imagination? Italo Calvino actually has an answer, no doubt about that. Finally we have an answer – to something at least. Are you ready?

“There is still another definition in which I recognize myself fully, and that is the imagination as a repertory of what is potential, what is hypothetical, of what does not exist and has never existed, and perhaps will never exist but might have existed” (Calvino 1988, 91).

But what about if identity is stolen, broken, or if it is denied? Manufactured and manipulated? What if identity closes off, turns against us, forces us to behave in a manner that we feel uncomfortable with?

In another classic of a short novel about assumed identity and performed identities, both possible and fatal ones, the Czech writer

Jiri Weil confronts us with a series of mistaken and confused propositions of identities. This book called *Mendelssohn is on the Roof* came out originally in 1960, published just after his death in 1959. It was first translated into English in 1991.

The setting of the book is German occupation of Prague in the early 1940's. Times are crushingly hard and people are disappearing and vanishing. Forever. The book refers to a multiple of potential identities – lost and found, combined and collected, bruised and battered. The Mendelssohn in question is not the Mendelssohn the German head of occupation army thinks it is. The real reference, as a statue guarding above the city's concert hall, among many other statues of famous musicians and composers, is the romantic composer called Mendelssohn, who, in fact, was not a Jew. The reference that the German officer links the statue with is the theologian and writer Mendelssohn who is worldwide known for his texts on Jewish secular identity in the 18th century, a pioneer of the line of thought known as Jewish enlightenment.

The beginning of the plot is the following set-up. While preparing for a big event in a new location, the Nazi officer spots the statue on top of the building and assumes that it is a portrait of a Jew. Factually it is not, but who is anyone to argue against this claim and the dangerous threat that it carries? Two native workers are sent to the top of the building to take down the Jew, the statue. But the workers have a problem. None of the over 20 statues are named or labeled. They do not know which one is the one, the one to take down and fast. The new opening of the freshly Germanized concert hall is only in some hours time, with important guests arriving from all around the regime and its widening borders.

So, it is a question about identity. What to do? After heated discussions and many consultations, someone comes up with a practical and

empirical idea. The workers are told to measure the length of the noses of the all the statues and well, combining in thought-action expectations to evidence, the one with the longest nose must be the very one, it must be the Jew. In due course, the workers do manage to locate the statue with the longest nose and they promptly set on taking that one down, but fortunately, just before the damage is done, another high German officer races to the top to hurry up the lazy idiots and recognizes the identity of the statue that is about to be removed. The one with the most impressive nose is the statue of Wagner, the one and only Wagner whose music is about to be played that very evening.

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#### Identity.

And then we to turn towards a yet another book. But, well, bear with me, please. In a short book, a novella that is, the Russian born, but someone who on purpose writes in French, Andrei Makine, connects and combines the processes of a micro-level and the macro level of an identity. It is a book about both a personal identity and a collective identity.

The collective identity in this book called *A Life's Music* is something of a riddle. It is a made-up identity, an identity that is generalizing and not very admiring. It is called *Homo sovieticus* – something that was but no longer is. The story of the person, that one person is an identity of a pianist that studied and practiced complicated pieces of piano music but was never ever able to perform them in public. A professional identity that was but never happened, but which nevertheless become the most important and cruelly hurting part of this person's character.

It is a story about an identity that is there but it is not allowed to be there. In the beginning of the book we find the poor fellow old and

wearily, sitting at the piano, kind of like playing the piano but he is not able to touch the keys. He is only able to let his still experienced fingers go and move over the keys – always almost touching them but never making the contact, never making the sound. He cannot touch because that simplest touch would mean too much. It is a missed touch that sealed his destiny. He was sent to the camps, because he was doomed to be part of the intelligentsia, part of the people who were against the real people, the workers. But when it all happened, he, indeed, was not against or for anything or anyone. He was just a child.

Fingers flying over the keys, knowing what they do but never making the contact, only highlighting the connection, the real and imagined contact between then and now, hurt and hope. A touch that is not a touch but then again changes everything. Everything.

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Identity.

Like that painting we discussed at the beginning. A work of art that combines the abstract and the figurative, the move from here to there and the stillness of it all – the constant interplay between analog and digital experiences. A painting that no matter how long, how many times you look at, you gaze and you might even get connected and see something significant below the surface, you never ever solve it. A work of art that does what it supposed to do but does what is so very difficult to achieve and to sustain. It keeps up the hope of an opening, it keeps up the promise of a future tense. It keeps up the elements of surprises.

Why, or how? Because, well, you get caught, but not stuck. You are entering into the interplay between something you recognize but you



cannot pin down, something that is near and far, self-evident and mysterious – something that holds on to us in its back and forth move and movement of longing and belonging.

Yes, and yes. Did someone say Doppelgänger? Did I hear Uncanny? Or, I am not sure, was it like this: the pleasures and demands of the everyday existence?

Hard, impossible, and annoying – for sure, and for real. But if you don't give up, and if you try to make sense, against all odds, of something that keeps slipping away and at the same timing scaring the living daylight out of you, something might happen. Meaning: if you are hurting, if you are ailing, and aching, if you search and seek for means and ways, for stories to be told and to be heard, stories to be read and listened, please stay. Stay with. Get closer, even closer. Stay with identity, with the whole bag of the theme – or just with this one work, or the others that address and embrace it.

There will be no closure, no satisfaction, and no conclusion. But you might feel a little bit less lost, and a little bit less lonely. A little bit. Not much, but a little – bit.

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And yes, one more time, one more take – and we are done.

Identity.

It is identity that that in another cultural product, this time not a book, but again an album deals and treats us with. This album, *Songs in the Key of Life*, came out in 1976. The version that I just put on the record player, flipping hesitantly between sides A and B, then falling softly

as ever to the side B (A side proving the beat and the bounce of Sir Duke, and B side the lyrical exactness of Pastime Paradise), is made in Italy. The object as in vinyl, not the content. The publisher is said to be Motown Record Corporation, its address given as Hollywood, California 90028.

I have no idea why this vinyl is physically pressed in Italy, nor why it is published in Italy, Europe, by another record label, called EMI. The cover gives out this: Grafica Centonze / Como. If my geographical knowledge is to be trusted, Como is a town in Italy. Where, north south, east or west, I do not know. But in Italy it is, and exists.

Come to think of it, I do not remember when or where I bought the album, or to be precise, it is a double album, but I do have it, often in heavy rotation. And now that I read the cover label, I realize that I am missing something. The record cover states that this album has those two vinyl records, with sides A, B, C and D, and then it also promises a bonus record with sides, I would guess, logically, E & F. In the first four sides, there are altogether 18 songs. The sides E & F, titled a *Something Extra*, have four songs. These are called, in order of appearances, Saturn, Ebony Eyes, All Day Sucker, and Easy Goin' Evening (My Mama's Gall).

The thing about this double+ album, and its identity, as a material fact is that I do not have that bonus record. I do have and possess two out of the three. I have tried to find the missing third in different places and at different times, but I cannot relocate it. Perhaps I lost it, left it somewhere, perhaps it accidentally slipped into another long-play cover, perhaps I never had it.

Perhaps perhaps perhaps.

Does it matter, like really really matter? Does it belong, like organically, or is it surplus? I don't know, like you know now, know, for sure, and definitely, but I do, I do keep on keeping on. I do keep looking for it, and I do keep searching for it, and with it.

Identity.

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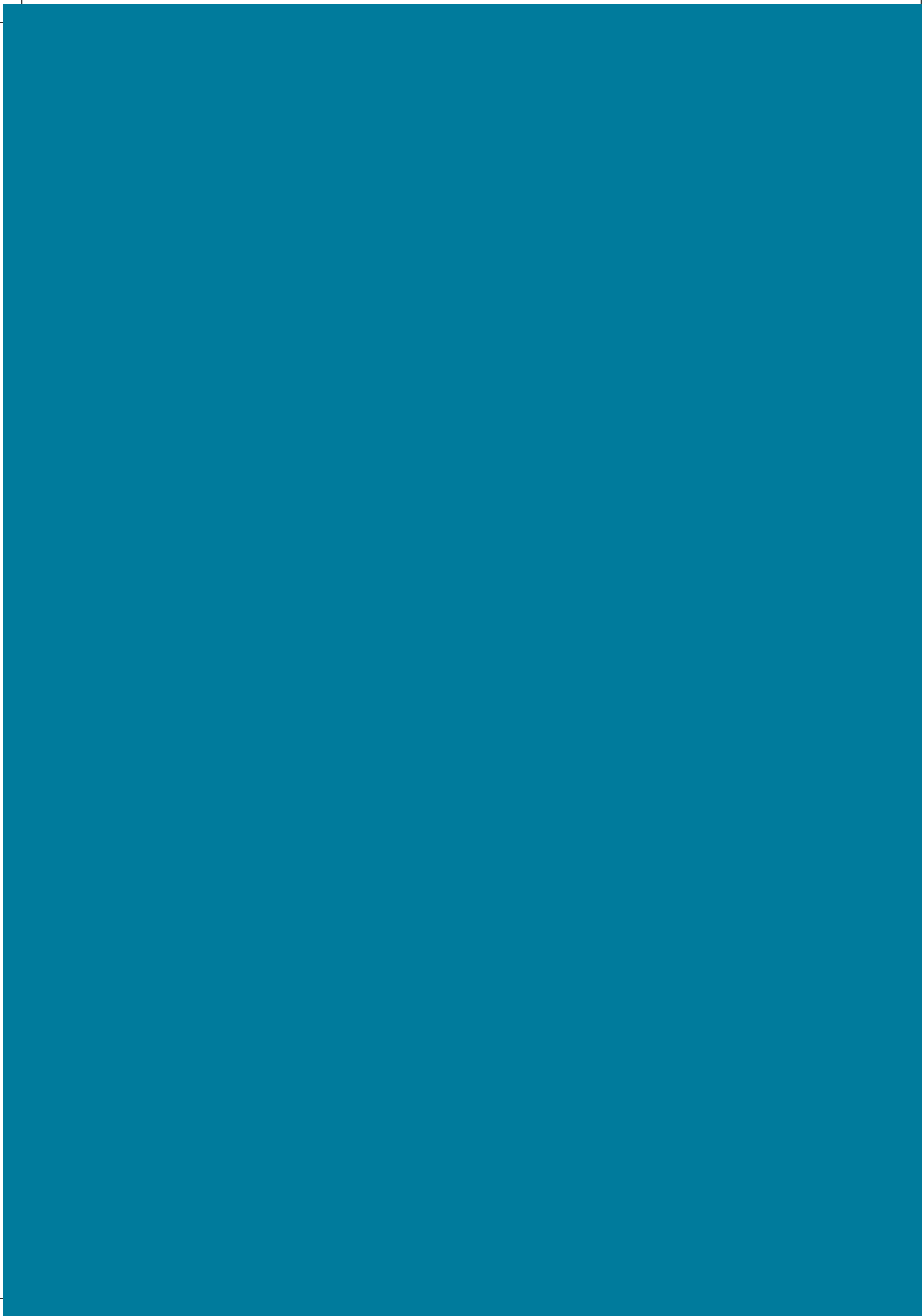
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## GAZE AND DESIRE

**“So if you take, then put back good  
If you steal, be Robin Hood  
If your eyes are wanting all you see  
Then I think I’ll name you after me  
I think I’ll call you Appetite”**

*Prefab Sprout, Appetite, 1985*

The gaze and desire. Seeing, experiencing and encountering, interaction and presence with and along with the work, right? Experiences and anticipations from there to here, from then to now, right? Troubled waters and broken flowers, tenement towers and paper tigers, right, or perhaps wrong? But we do know this much. There is no need to rush, no need to panic. We know it is a site and a situation of a promise and a demand. A honest dilemma of a confrontation with a bridge and a barrier – simultaneously. You are pushed, effected by and upon, and you will push – but please do it with care, and caress, also finesse. It’s like a litany that you search for, knowing intuitively, that you need to move along, join the game, the play, the interaction, and not to worry too much about what comes next.

You make and break, bend and mend, shaking with the difficulties of not being sure, not wanting to be sure, but tending to the choices, the alternatives that all ask you to give in order to get.

The soft arousal of the touch – both physical and discursive – when expectation alter and when you are being effected upon in a way that something moves into you, not only about you, and it is not only you, but you recognize how others sway and reel on and around.

Like that raindrop, the one you felt but did not see. It is a drop so slow but riotously loud in its own echo chamber, the silence that is embedded into its smile. The one that against all odds did something different, the special one that went upwards, climbing and caressing the surprising move and moment from expected to unexpected.

Like, when connecting the dots in-between one sensuality to another, that foreseeable smoothness of electric piano, called Fender Rhodes, so recognizable yet still able to open up and create something that was not there before. It is the sound that carries with it the edges of destiny and desperation but which invite and include you to the constant evolvement of acts affecting another, one after the other generating that distinct wave – a wave you move with and a wave you move in. Until, of course, you're thrown of it, your attention disappears and the thisness of a touch is delayed, but nevertheless again and again returned to and at. Not as it was, not how it ever was, but as a process of breathing in, breathing out. An act of balance that realizes how much, how deeply it relies, it depends on clever concussions and dissonances.

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Gaze and desire.

Can you hear me, can you follow me, can you bear with me. Can you, or can you not?

Repetition, rhyme and rhythm.

And a change from this to that – moving slowly but surely towards the not-yet-there, but which we know is there within our horizons, within our reach of the imaginable. Alternatively, it can be a sudden change, or a very hesitant, deliberately slowed down exchange – like the move from auto tune to out of tune.

And at the very same time is a promise; a promise of a caring touch that could mean so much. The roots and routes from mechanics to magic. That is what it says, that is what I read, that is what I got.

Do I sense it correctly, do I feel the rays of the sun coming down, coming at me, coming at us almost in a same way, the ways of the changing same? Do I detect a story, a narrative, a give and take of an anticipated expectations and collision of experiences?

Something gets going and gives a moment of a motivation – to look more closely, to look better. It spells intensity and integrity. Somehow, we are able and capable, not just of looking, but of seeing. Now and then, quite rarely but nevertheless some day, sometimes.

It runs and it goes, until it stops and starts again. From opposite to alongside and always back again – the unique in the universal and the universal localized, actualized.

Gaze and desire. What do we see when we look? What do we desire when we look for something, something deeper, something meaningful? And yes, remember the rules and respect them: no parking on this dance floor.

Whose desire, what distinctions and destructions?

Difficult, dreadful and potentially dismissive. But I know, and you know – we all do know. This is true, this is true. Trust is a must.

Trust is a must.

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The gaze. It never goes out or comes back equally. It projects, it messes around, and it does not care if it causes distortion and trouble. It goes over,

comes under. It intrudes and irritates, nastily, even. Encountering, emergent encountering founded on mutual respect is the exception. That collision of a kind, that contact there and then when the gaze and its object form an interlinked momentariness. Corporeal, participating and exposed. Protection and projection – or is it the other way around?

Just like: steadying yourself in a speedily spinning motion – or then perhaps not. Fall, you might, but fear you should not.

The variations of the gaze are there, they are. Disturbing and dizzying, so dear with and without, so fretful of getting, staying near. Oh my, oh my. I made a decision, I was able to act. I called it in, yes I did, I called them. I called Distance and Distribution, but well, they did not answer, but I am not sure, not sure at all if they actually heard me.

Call me if you need me.

Seeing, looking and staring. And from thereon, there accumulates, from there develops, from there is an envisioning, happening via thousands of repetitions, learning, not with an attitude, from there comes what is called observation. The act that in itself is always two-directional, interactive. We look at and we are looked at. Or: you are the visible and the see-er.

Simultaneously, and yet not in equilibrium or equally, but in relation to participatory parts and elements, seeking it, modifying it – the whole of it, made out of pieces and particles.

If and when we are all a part of the whole ongoing process, if not per se always active participants in it and at it, why do we talk about the malevolent gaze, the evil eye? How could we get away from overly banal, hostile images? How might we envision the gaze as a participatory act that is neither this nor that, but which is always inevitably and necessarily both/



and – a part of the problem, located in the center of the whole rending and racking trajectory of the circle of interpretation.

The gaze is not innocent, not natural. It is a productive activity. The gaze focuses. It makes and pictures reality. It brings and draws in while it leaves out. It looks back. It demands attention, an invitation to dance, staying on the dance floor, not surreptitiously fleeing from it.

But: in itself it is not bad, not good, not even good in a bad way. It is a productive activity that mistreats only and solely that one and the same, that assumed certainty is never ever there.

Question, I have a question. Day in, day out you see all sorts of things, millions of images and impulses roll and readjust themselves onto the retina, onto the display terminal, projected onto the wall. But what do we see? And what is the difference between mere general, superficial seeing and concentrated looking that goes on in a depth sounder?

It does not go away, not even in the pouring rain, nor even massaging your sweet and sour soul with good-mood hobbies. The power of its lure, of its swing, it persists, but how does it persist, and what traces does it leave behind? – that is our concern, our responsibility.

Did I hear correctly? Did I hear integrity and intensity? Yes, I did, but I heard also something else, something more. And I also heard this: pleasure.

Desire and the gaze. They cannot be disconnected from power, not from subjugation. But do they, do the gaze and desire always and forever have to stay in the grip and the prison of power and subjugation (not forgetting submission)? Would it not be possible to look and to desire in a way that participates in interaction, respects its partner, favors interaction and is protective of it?

The gaze that is something else. Something of a more and less, of this and that, but hardly ever a bore. Simultaneously. It is surprising and familiar, unexpected and stunning – liberating but yet potentially devastating. The desired gaze that moves through the past and into the future, bouncing on and off the expectation and emerging into the existent awareness of the growing tension and attention.

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But hold on, and do not forget: keep on holding on. Who is this singular I, and this plural we? References and repercussions, revelations and round about returns.

What is it that we know, that we can, in fact, you know, know about ourselves, who we are and why so?

Is it a mystery? Are we the secret of the sea, high as a cute kite (metaphorically) and looking like an entity made in the void of light, a collection of cave flowers (the real deal, also known in the name of anthodites)? Or are we the unknown known? Maybe it is the other way around? Known unknown? Perhaps it's the ultimate version, the last resort, the dreary merry-go-around, the very dead-end, human beings, kind and unkind ones, as unknown unknowns?

How about it? Double or nothing, or should we make it triple trouble? Huh? What did I say? And did I mean what I said?

Call me if you need me.

But what do we know? Well, we know and have known all along and all the time that we are cultured but confused, we are both-and. We are always both more and less than we think we are, and more and less than we assume, hope, or fear, oh oh dear.

Or to put it through a contemporary parlance, we have become masters of the universe in assuming what amuses us – to the max, without a doubt, till the death us departs, and and and ... a little bit beyond.

Instrumentalization of every day life experiences, blatant over-whelming consumerism and collective deliberant forgetting, well, of and about everything, combined with the hysterical trust in rational-technological make-belief argument. There you have it, it is all in the baaaag.

Amid these, among this mess, this wonderfully weary mess – what should a poor person, a run of the mill so called human species, kings and queens, princes and princesses of evolution do? Huh? What? Whaaaaaat? Can it really get any more complicated than this?

Well, as Freud, Sigmund Freud that is, to be precise, did show, and he did also tell, many times and all over again, it does, and it does get so complicated in each case and every personality crises – latent or lamented.

All of a sudden, with all our wisdom, our cleverness, trying to stumble and to answer this, it is very demanding.

What is it that you want? And why?

And, hand in heart, eyes, both eyes, focused on the lovely blue sky above, who is this you, this me, this I? And where?

I wonder, and I wonder if you wonder too.

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Desire. A little like the gaze in these days of Technicolor love love love, and well, and also a little bit like hate, and why not, faith. Constructed, contested and contextual, also complicated and confused.

Desire to do, and not to do. Reasons to be cheerful and sure, I rather not, I rather not talk about it. One of the basic functions what is has, what it possesses is its range. We can ask, and we can wonder: what is left without it, why in principle do anything at all if its dot there?

It is what is called a key issue and a necessity. And yet it seems to be struggling in such shaky condition, in disrepute. Why, oh why – have you forsaken us? Desire. Desire desire desire. Passion and play. Desire. Desireeeeeeeeeeeeeee.

Something more, something beautiful and handsome. Real, reciprocal and risky, too.

Desire.

It is what it is. It is a six-letter word. But it is connected, that is to say, inter-linked to others, no matter, no matter the numbers or the systems of accountability.

I repeat. A little like the concept of gaze. It does not end in a draw, not in harmony, it only goes here and there, rebounding, without kowtowing, but getting knocked about. It seeks, but does not find, and enjoys it – the seeking.

Desire's nuances, risks and boundary zones. It is a conscious activity, yes, quite definitely. At the same time, it is an unconscious project and projection, just as clearly, incessantly. All at once, both-and, and not separately, but at the same instance, and yet not equally or in same measures and amounts.

Desire.

It strikes, it misses the mark. It flusters and panics. It subsides and slackens off until it rattles down the steps and bangs its bounce. Once again always more, and no no no, never less.

And oh what a moment it is, too. Smiling and carefree, so remorseless and so precious in its non-existence – an opportunity to get and to be closer, to move and slide a lot closer than the framework of physicality gives in and gives way.

Close, closer.

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Desire, not passion.

Desire that draws in and deceives. It makes us do things that are, nevertheless of the heat waves it causes, perhaps not worth our doing. No no no and once again no. And yet it stops, and moves again. Perhaps not so elegantly, but it changes its shape and shade, senses and sensitivities.

A man's desire, a woman's desire – a sense of power. We all desire. We all want. And as we know, and as we have become alerted to, the primitive sign of wanting is trying to get.

I want, you want, we want. Something somewhere somehow. Hopefully. It is not a matter of what, but how – and how in relation to where we come from, what we are and where we are going. In power relations, responsibly, dutifully. As fellow human beings, as co-spectators and as part-time agitators.

Never innocently, never fully aware of what where and how. What where and how when the wind blows, and sometimes, for sure, it blows so softly,

sometimes cruelly and harshly. Is there space, some room for moving in and out – despite the expectations and the anticipations? Can desire surprise us? Or is it, as so many other things and matters that matter, is it commodified and compartmentalized, modified behavior turning and churning the chance of a self into a domain of monitoring and discipline?

What did we hear, how was it called? The move and moment, the horror, the horror between internalized and externalized desires? Who shakes the tree and who is there to take care of the tree after the dust settles? In and among the contradictions and complications, in and through low or lower self-esteem, highly perceived perfection and all-inclusive body dissatisfaction – where do we go, where is there to move?

A moment when desire moves into us, when its directions becomes tacit and appears in an altered state, when what's overheard gets underlined. We want, we want, we want – something. And that something wants us, but never the same way, never in the same measure. Our bodies, malleable, vulnerable and flawed, and yet so there, here, always, constantly craving, steering us up, and down. It gives us, without us asking for it, something to strive for, something to aspire for, dominant and demanding, if not demeaning.

If and when they ask you what you want, remember to answer but no to the question. Talk about this and that, talk about bees and the birds, gardening and love, if you wish, or insist, but do not get even near the actual issue and its shadows and sunshine. Because a desire that already knows what it wants is no longer a desire. It is a product. It lacks what is necessary, it lacks motion, the move from attached to detached, from enlarged to reverse, from high to the low and always back again.

A desire that is defended, not in hiding, but in the moments of finding, in and through acts taking place in plain strong light. It is defended in and through the act of maintain the acts. We move, and we keep on moving

while realizing how that movement is always imperfect and always wanting, but that this unattainability is its source, its point of connection and connectivity. A version of a particular thisness that leaves and alters what it claims and articulates in order to return to what was said and saying in yet in a different way, in a different light, in a different balance and beauty.

References, we need references. In short of an opening, never a closing, it is a book, a title of it. Or, in fact, it is two titles. It is a human condition, which is a condition as an active human being, a *vita activa*. And a book that is known to carry both of the above mentioned titles. (Arendt 1958) together, all together, it is about acting, seeing, recollecting and acting again. Moving along, and moving away from what drags us down and what keeps us not fulfilling that wish and that desire that we do know but which we feel, and ache for.

Here's a question, to be precise, a series of questions that have no answers. There is only a certain direction, a premonition. I.e. a fragrance, not a smell. It is the *Ahnung* of a direction that we need to believe in, albeit doubting it, too. That it would be possible, reasonable and pleasant. Acts, series of acts that would lead somewhere other than where we started off. Acts, a series of acts that would result in more than just the sum of expectations and assumptions.

Like that light, that light at the attic. Perhaps forgotten, perhaps meant to be there just in case if anyone comes around, or perhaps it is little bit of both, just in case. But it does not matter. The light remains, and keeps on burning, the light that keeps a promise – a potentiality of being able to turn towards, of bringing in – and staying with.

An invitation of engagement and yes, of embrace.

To repeat: Call me if you need me.

\* \* \*

An embrace of the unwanted, and the fretfully difficult. But yet, there it is, as an opening. This is it, part I. Can you hear me?

What was it? Can you remember? Was it like this, or was it like that?

Lack, loss and void. Or if it was: lack, loss, void.

Can't recall. No no no.

Let's try this, lets move our melancholy hips, lets get out of our transcendental trance, and let's not plan any more trips to an all-included holiday in Cambodia.

lacklossvoid

That's it, now I got it.

lacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoid-  
lacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoid

Do you get it?

\* \* \*

And part II, it does, it goes like this.

Words.

Words are women's best friends? Aren't they? Or was it a man's? Dogs? Horses and carriages? Cabbages and cobblestones? Huh?



Fuck me if I would know? Fuck me twice, sideways and backwards if I actually do – you know, now, know.

Words.

Some say them, and some mean them, too, and some do not.

Words.

They do come easy, don't they?

All these things that we say or leave unsaid, all these meanings that we push forward and simultaneously pull back again.

Words.

Broken, mended, blended even splendid.

Words. Playing with fire, the great funeral pyre – behind the trees, the flicker of ever- changing camouflage screens.

Words.

Material of the unconscious, material of the unconscious.

\* \* \*

And part III?

Did we miss it? Or did it get mixed up with something dreadly? Lost in the supermarket? No, its here, it's here.

Lack, loss and void.

Let's try it again.

No big thing, but with small letters, all together, all aboard. Like this,  
call and response.

lacklossvoid

Then let's do it twice.

lacklossvoidlacklossvoid

Then let's do it three times.

lacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoid

Now, let's say it loud. Say it loud, say it loud and proud.

Can you hear it?

Nothing, not enough or perhaps?

Let's try again.

Let's say it loud, and let us say it proudly, with conviction, with connections  
– commemorations of the kindest kind.

lacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoidlacklossvoid

And what do you hear?

...

...

...

... and now, finally, I'm so glad to meet you, my name is Dr. Freud.

\* \* \*

But hold on, and back off. Let me breathe in, and out. Let me move slowly, to be able to take care, to be able to be aware. Now.

Gaze and desire – and experience of this, and with that. Or illusions of sad but true deliberations?

Let's take a counterargument. The way of envisaging reality that, starting as early as the end of the 1960s, has asserted that no, that reality no longer even exists. It has turned into a simulation, into hyperrealism, in which the surface of the sign is the only thing that means anything. And and and and is all that is left.

Jean Baudrillard, almost forty years ago, got it into this argument, proposing that the relationship between image and reality (in this context between the gaze and desire) is impossible. Baudrillard (1983, 11) envisaged the development of the image and representation as a four-part breakdown, albeit not a tragic one in itself. This four-stage process has the following levels that are articulated here, one by one:

- 1) The image corresponds to and depicts reality, both exist and make sense together.
- 2) The image masks, skews and distorts reality. A rift has occurred, which can no longer be repaired.
- 3) The image masks and conceals the fact that reality no longer exists – there is only the surface, only images. 4) The relationship between image and reality, the gaze and desire has ended, it is no longer faulty or distorted, it has evaporated, ceased. There is nothing pure and genuine other than the simulation of reality.

Thus vanish, thus disappear the differences, the sorrows and the charms of connections. In the last phase, there is no more distance, no fine-tuning and no piecework in the relationship between active and passive mode, not the subject not the object, not existence and manifestation. It's all the same, one and the same. And, in Baudrillard's words, the place where we end up here and now is: "The desert of the real itself" (Ibid. 2).

Huh?

How about it?

The desert of the real itself?

\* \* \*

What about the counterargument to this counterargument? For this, and not so surprisingly, we turn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we turn towards phenomenology. Something comes from there and is found there. Intersubjectivity, instead of a readymade space and gaze, is about becoming open to 'commerce' or interplay, and being, being towards the world. With it, along with it, and mixed in with it.

Speeding, accelerating, and as if coming to a halt against a wall – staring, seeing, perceiving, all sorts of lovely junk and sparkles in it. And the lightning strikes – somewhere and somehow.

It is not only about the present moment,, but also bringing together, taking a look at, the future and the past simultaneously. Whereupon, and thus in this case, the relationship with all the levels of time is active. For example, coming from behind the movement of the horizons of perception, when possibly the relationship is no longer a time lag, but something else. If and when remembering is giving the past "the efficacy of renewal or 'repetition', which is the noble form of memory" (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 68).

There we have the body, the fleshly element, the component of age and rage. There we have the object that is looked at. Each of them is, and is so simultaneously and in two-stroke. It is about the act of seeing and the act of being visible. Not outside, not separate, but modulating, being modulated. Appearing, not withdrawing.

Merleau-Ponty calls this both/and state and situation, this constant pressure and potential, a very special paradox. I.e. a kind of space of circumstances, a relationship that is a bit, as it were, unrelated. It comes across as impossible, even if it is very clearly both experienced and perceived, looked at and desired. One aspect of this paradox is that we are always in that in-between space, the visible and the see-er. Instead of equilibrium what is required is participation, throwing ourselves into it, and the ability to attend and to attain momentary fixed points, elastic experiences.

But Merleau-Ponty opens up the nature of the paradox itself using the terms 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. We reach the deepest caves of perception, open quarries, from which a lift perpetually brings and takes away, up and down, up and down. And because the chance to and for misjudgment is evident, quoting directly is needed: "Thus there is a paradox of immanence and transcendence in perception. Immanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives; transcendence, because it always contains something more than what is actually given" (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 16).

What this means is this and that if there is an itch, it is best to scratch it. Or this: whether this or that should pass, don't leave a drop in your glass. Or then, for instance, thus: a contradiction, an unresolved one.

And in this case the somewhat peculiar way of depicting this contradiction is left in the background. We can put the word paradox to one side and in its place take a description of space and time that contain the energies and impetuses that just have to be there. It is then a matter of this: a riddle. Not

some cheap or vulgar joke. Not house-trained tinkering, no. It is a matter of an unattainable ethic, its evaluation, respecting it, but also laughing with it, seeking out that relationship, gravitating towards that relationship.

In practice the simultaneity of immanence and transcendence thus means that in the gaze experience, in the act that motivates the desire to move and to reach, to touch, to bring something about, what is in it is on site and situated as both presence and absence, too. Not either/or, but both/and. And in a way that does not revert to or merge into a round figure, not a dead heat, not harmony. It winds and whines, it creaks and crushes. As we said before, it is simultaneity, but not equality. They are distinct, but in it together. Committed to one another, stubbornly not getting away – aware of their mutual dependence, and yet still attempting to break out with a crash.

Up and down, forward and back – in perspective. In a rhythm in which the gaze and desire do the work and also enjoy their results, the momentary fruits of giving and getting, caring and caring yet some more.

But that immanence and that transcendence, what is it, actually? It cannot be so easy, so self-evident, can it? They are not given, not constants. They are relative, and they are always incomplete in themselves. And that is why, that is why they need, they demand, they simply have to gravitate to the opposite camp, so that they will again, even for a moment, get to be in their own playing position, home.

Something is known, its direction, but you can't have everything, because then the issue would already be decided, and nastily unpleasantly stuck. But we are somewhere, or rather where we are we can't stay, because we need movement, to be moved.

Presence, absence, babbling and silent. And demanding, oh so wonderfully demanding. And rare, to be sure.



Distracted and never sure if it is really desired – but always willing to depend everything, everything on it.

Breathless.

\* \* \*

Gaze and desire. Try it, just try it, who knows, you might even like it.

Something got me started, for sure, for real. Notions of negotiations and navigations which are accentuated, not accidentally, present, beside you, within you, and that which extends elsewhere, into the public. That particular source of thisness, which is something special and it is what it can be and become in one-on-one situation, in a relationship, something particular.

But they all, these all, they are. They are not up in the air, they don't live in a cupboard. They are temporal, and they are spatial. They have their time and they have their place. And when their time is up, it is up.

Where how when, why and what. Tell me, tell me – tell me all your secrets and I promise, of course I do, I promise to at least pretend that I am listening.

If we think of place and space, that double attachment, we get a relationship between the public and the private. Not as a certainty, but as an interactive response, as a basis, as a primer. We have a public level and we have a private level. And they are combined in the gaze, in bodily perception that is fed by desire.

So we take what exists and what is given. The public. That which we get to refer to with the English word space. I.e. space, the essence. And then as an opposite pair we get the English word place, i.e. a place and a



manifestation. Bearing in mind: always together, never separate. Always constructively situated, never externally, duplicitously. Inside the structure, producing variations on the structure, modifying them – sometimes even extending into the structures, affecting them.

Space and place, essence and manifestation, public and interpretation. Coffee, anyone?

Between them the all of it – all that there ever is and ever will be. It goes by the name of an encounter, the gaze seeking out a way and locating itself. An encounter that is already present in the starting point, in a both/and fine adjustment between space and place, essence and manifestation, between times, an embracing of communication.

It is what it is. A proposal of a promise, it is not a fulfillment of a task. A possibility that expects and demands, obliges fulfillment. Not in heaven, not even floor seven of a department store, but in social commerce.

In an actualization of space and place taking it in turns to lead the way and follow up the notions of emotions and motivations of the secret kind, i.e. where the gaze and desire meet the past, present and future, i.e. where the personal and the private fine-tune a version that is an actualization, articulations of that moment – creative activity.

That is, this and that themselves: producing the content of a concept, an act or an issue in that situation in relation to the act's own historically affected consciousness, deepening it, developing it.

Simplifying, but not banalizing. It is a matter of modifying the content of the word and the act; of how a certain act acquires its momentary value-laden content – i.e. how and with which desires, hopes, fears and needs that one and that private are produced and interpreted in the public.

Nothing else. In no way a bigger deal or any more peculiar than that. The encounter in time between space and place, in the gaze and in desire, in which there is actualized an interpretation, a version of the public that is in itself present and absent, coming and going, and yet real, oh oh oh and ah ah so real.

So so real real that it reminds of me of, well, it reminds me of what we used to call dreams. Yes, not no, but yes to it, to them. Let's sing and praise the dreams – that we have, and especially those we do not share. Long gone but still there – somehow, and some way.

Dreams. Yes, we have to remember, we have to respect the importance of dreams. And never to sideline or forget the connections and disruptions in-between the elements of preconscious, consciousness and of course unconsciousness. No no no.

Repeated, recalled and re-activated, not to say re-considered.

But please, please do recall. Take care of them, those and these dreams, stay close, gain distance, respect them, but please please remember: a dream is a not the dream as dreamed but a narrative of it.

\* \* \*

Now what? You want, you crave for an example? Not again, you must be joking. God damn, kilogram, an example – of what and what for? Is that right, or is it wrong? I don't know, how could I – now, you know, know. Doing is doing, and stating is, huh, help me out here, please, well, it is something else. Yes, something else.

Desire. Desiiiiiiiiiiire.

... of a different kind, of a difficult but fine kind.

Now here is an issue, here is a question: what do you want? Like what do you really really want?

When Aretha Franklin passed away in 2018, in his eulogy, Stevie Wonder asked, he pleaded, he made an argument, not against but definitely for something. Wonder, Stevie, was of the fixed sure set mind that what we need, what want, what we desire right there and then is this: make love great again. Let us be careful and very precise. Not to make great love again, but to make love great again.

To be repeated, and hopefully memorized: make love great again.

And Freud, Sigmund Freud? What did he say to this? Something we lost in action, all those funeral flowers getting in the way, or was it so that we could not listen? Or just not paid no attention to?

But what is it that you want, in your deepest of deepest way? Me? Huh, forget it, ask it yourself, you idiot, leave me alone, huh. Ok, no need to get personal, lets go to plural. What could we possible, potentially want?

Desire of the delinquents? Desire of the terrible desolate, doomed for the dead dark dance floor? Or what about this: desire that dedicatingly disturbs the border between you and me? All in a flux, and all aboard. Are you ready, ready to be ready?

Desire. Desiiiiiiiiire.

Or what was it? It's antidote, its defence or its, come again. Yes. Denial. Like riddle, or the sun that never sets but keeps on burning, yearning for a break – for a sleep of the semi-serious, those who would but could not let go, let be, let be.

Denial.

Desolate desperate dysfunctional  
Distorted deleted delayed  
Defunked derailed and detained

9 x D 9 x D 9 x D

Dial for Denial, Dial for Denial

\* \* \*

Volatile, deficient, unfulfilled. It can be that, too. That encounter. Annoying, sad and dull, boring. Why not, huh?

Winner takes it all? Or what did I hear, winner fakes, or breaks it all? And well, can't help but to wonder what is this all in all of this?

Stop playing games, stop pretending. Move along, go along, and if you must, sing along, but do not, do not stop.

Chance-taking, flirtatious and unsuitable, fomenting restlessness, riven with impatience. It can be frustrating, cantankerous, sloppy and feeble, insipid even.

The encounter can be anything and any way, because it does not exist in itself, but has to be made and realized. Made into an event. Always and especially one after another, but always in itself, in relation to its environment.

Hugs and kisses, sure hit misses.

The gaze and desire, in the body, from the body and into the body. It separates and it unites, it is solitary and rich, affirmative and critical in nature,

the yap of the lapdog and setting up beside the assumed enemy, even dozing off there, but always, always with your pants on.

It is more, and, at the same time, less than one plus one – or one followed by another one. This relationship, this presence that actualizes the existent does not revert to an even distribution, it does not contract in advance into the given and the shared. It is present in the touch of perception, in its reflexivity – in the way the see-er and the visible are linked, are associated together.

The movement that is based on continual, simultaneous swapping of who leads and how, and who is keen to follow and how. And yes, be aware, on the way, all along we seek both distance and closeness. The gaze knows and anticipates the touch that brings about the next spiral, rotation and trajectory, a mutual integration, in which both parties are together and separate – each one affecting the other, each one being affected by the other. Movement and a track that contain a potential, a possibility for opening up, for movement somewhere that does not yet exist into something special and different (Merleau-Ponty 2004, 185, see. also Butler 2015, 53).

What we have is what we need and what we have is this. We have the starting point and eternal point of return for extra time is the relationship with and attitude to being in the world, in a way that is ‘both-and – plus freedom and duty. Not bad bad bad, not good good good, but something and somehow from in between, there between – interpreting, going deeper, being influenced.

Encountering as a challenge, as a challenge to being awake – to being in and through time, to making space, and also to pleasure.

Encountering. Call and transmission, social commerce. Anticipation and expectation, an assumption of what and where – not forgetting how.

Encountering face to face. Viewer and work, and the changing same. The power to influence and to be subject to influence. Not in a gloomy way, not cute, but something else – as something else. The gaze, desire and experience.

A present surreptitious danger, a precondition for taking a turn and for influencing – as also for being influenced. Going along with it, throwing yourself into it.

Strength and power, openness and vulnerability.

Intense woundedness, its possibility, its ceaseless being there beside you. Not melancholy, not overkill. It is something else, something other than the state of being of the one doing the expecting. There is a tension there, when you are able and capable of exposing yourself, not submitting.

Encountering. Individual, one-to-one. Not repeatable, not possible to copy. And yet, and yet it happens in a continuum, within a framework of similar encounters – in a promise of a continuation, of the next and the next after that.

Longing, yearning and pain. Unattainable and yet moving towards it.

It is one and one, but not alone. It knows where it comes from and it anticipates where it could go. And in between is everything – the yet to become encounter. The actualization of time and place, becoming an event.

A promise of closeness, of the intimate relation in station to station. What else do we want, what else do we long for? A rubber biscuit? Or two of them?

I promise to take you as you are and to give you a chance to become something even more, and more alive, than you are to begin with – to get you to

achieve the potential that is in you, that which awaits awakening, waking up and breathing in and out. I wait and let the expected values grow – towards the skies, towards forbidden fruits, impossibilities. And those expectations are not in the way. They are not obstacles. They are supporting pillars, aids as in hands that support and help.

I am waiting for you and you are waiting for me. We are waiting – we are being activated. In perception, in the body, in an interaction of gaze and desired.

We are inadequate and yet possessed, wanting and wailing. Too much and too little – but both, as separate entities, are out of the question, neither is accepted even if both are included. Instead, let's take the route to and towards an encounter, being face-to-face, deepening presence, caressing it, and also rejecting it.

\* \* \*

Gaze and desire.

The work and the viewer, they are entangled and emerging. What we need to, what we have to do is to let the potential space become the actualized particular place, let its essence and manifestation become, happen. Head-on and roundabout, going off spiraling and orbiting, going deeper and further.

I look at the painting and it looks back at me. This is where it starts and this is where it returns. This is where it belongs, and is longing for a return – constant shift between nearness and distance. The elements of crime and care are at the site, available. What we have is the gaze and desire – mutual respect, reciprocal recognition and the interaction involved in social commerce.

This is everything, absolutely everything. In the shade, in its shapes and ways, means and ends we are what we are when we do what we do when we do it.

In and with the painting, with the senses of and with it, the sensibilities of holding tight and then letting it go on and on. It is a sensuality of an embrace, not sensational striving for an effect, but sensitive act of caring for – something that moves along, moving into me and that moves with me.

Here, hear, here.

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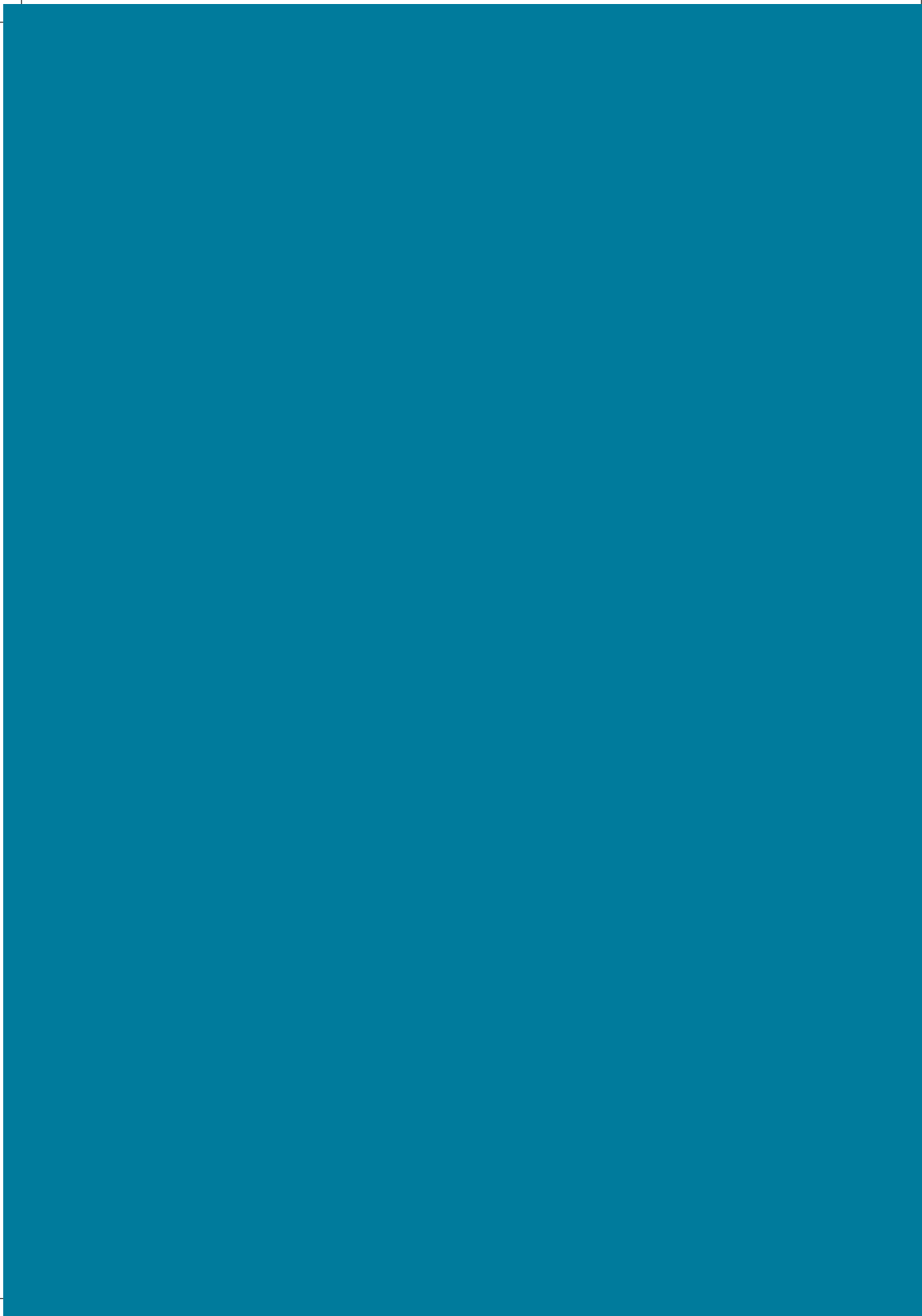
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## EPILOGUE: WRITING WITH

### “And afterword?

- **What to write now? Can you still write anything?**
- **One writes with one’s desire, and I am not through desiring.”**

*The very final page of the book Roland Barthes, by Roland Barthes, University of California Press 1994*

What does it mean to, at first, to be aiming to do and then secondly, actually doing things, such as writing and thinking with, leading to and towards seeing with and being with? What is it with this connection with – to and from? Why with? Why not on, about or, for example, along?

Yes, why indeed? The short compact version is this: it is about relations, reconsiderations and recollections, the presuppositions and also implications of writing with.

But even before that – before the part about *with*? Writing, yes, why writing? Well, it is not writing *an sich*, but it does presuppose this participatory stand of a stakeholder: narrative understanding of our lives and ourselves. Thus, it is stories, stories told by us and stories told about us, stories that we are both participants and by-standers in and at. Stories as in narratives about who we are, where do we come from, where are we at and where might we want to move towards?

Why, or to add a bit alteration and why not aspiration, how come? Because of the temporal character of human experience that makes us, shapes us, and that we cannot escape or do without. We are what we are in time and in space, and what's more, we are this in a relationship to its versions and interpretations of past, present and future. We have experiences, for sure, some few, some way too many, but the only way to deal, to relate to and to figure out what they are and what they mean is with – in and through – stories. We need narratives, and well, narratives need us.

With perhaps the most eloquent articulation of this principle, the quote from Paul Ricoeur: “Our understanding of ourselves is a narrative understanding, that is, we cannot grasp ourselves outside of time, and hence outside of some narrative. There is an equivalence therefore between what I am and the story of my life” (2012, 201).

If you wonder, granted for a good reason, what is a narrative, or, in fact, what does it try to accomplish, Ricoeur gives an explanation. Narratives, as in stories, no matter how told or articulated, linear or circular, fantastic or feeble, they are symbolic forms as in gestures, productive acts of reaching out, and in his words: “symbolic forms are cultural processes that articulate experience” (1984, 57).

So? Now, because you are an inspiringly insisting individual, you might ask also this – as in what does a narrative then, well, do? And Ricoeur answers: “Narrative puts consonance where there was only dissonance. In this way, narrative gives form to what is unformed” (Ibid. 72). But all this, telling and retelling stories, taking part or avoiding taking part in a narrative, that is not innocent, but what it is, to repeat, it is a productive act. Something somehow is pushed and pulled, given and taken, edited in and out – articulated and actualized – with blood, sweat and tears, also with pleasure, joy and for sure, with lies and violence.

\* \* \*

Writing with. Yes. It is an aim and it is an idea – and a metaphor for how we are and sustain ourselves in and through the everyday. It is something to strive for, something to keep on keeping on, searching and producing, putting forward versions that are situated, embedded and committed – connecting the dots between personal and public, private and common, individual and society – hopes and fears, desires and dirty dirty deeds when the lights go on and off, on and off.

Well, how? Or, indeed, even one hesitating step backwards, why?

Basically, we do not have a choice. We are part of the mess, part of the problem of existing together and within co-dependence. There is no meaningful way to distract and distance ourselves, our values and value-laden choices from our daily lives, the structures that we are embedded into and the everyday hassle with double and nothing relationship of restrictions and freedoms they allow and allocate. We are, as some say, thrown into it, and then we either learn how to swim or we sink. Or, to put into a modern parlance, the issue is this: how to live a clean life in a dirty world.

As is well known, and even better documented, we might wish for it, we might gather around and about a great deal of fantasies how we can be objective, neutral and detached but well, it does not only remain a flat fantasy, but a rather bleak and silly one, too. As a story, as a narrative how we are in the world and how we try to make sense of who we are, this kind of version lacks gravity, credibility and stamina. It does not correlate with our experiences.

To underline this very point that has been articulate many a times through this book: we are not innocent, not neutral, not objective and never detached. Or, to turn it around, if we were, we would be highly, oh sorry, need to rephrase that, we would be incredibly irresponsible, amazingly self-

ish and just plain stupid. Now, well, hand at heart, who really wants to be that – a true blue sucker, a tourist in his/her life as lived?

Therefore, since we do not actually have other options, since we have to face the troubles, we have to deal with this dilemma, this honest dilemma that never will go away or diminish, we need to aim to make this dilemma our dilemma – something that we will be (when writing with, thinking with, and ultimately, being-with) in touch all along, and always.

So, what is the dilemma? In short, and in its credo, its about how to get engaged and how to maintain that engagement with the site, the issues and with yourself and your surroundings. It is be part, or at least trying to be part and to become a participant. You are trying to face the issues, and yourself. You are not gazing with awe above, nor looking with distaste down. You are taking part, engaging in the ongoing acts of face-to-face interactions and interventions.

You do need to get connected and possess information about the issues in question, you, of course, have to go along with the mapping of the terrain of this and that issue, figuring out its past articulations, but you cannot remain in that detached and distanced position of writing on, thinking about and being aside. (The open and important question is what does it require, how much do you need to know before you can write with – as in what is enough). You got to get going. You, well, are you ready, are you? You got to get down on it. Nothing more, nothing less but to get down on it.

You write with – get into the groove, into the reciprocal recognition and reactions of getting closer, and gaining distance, getting burned and hopefully sometimes also healed. You start with – getting closer, and trying out ways how to stay close, even how to gain even more closeness – proximity instead of distance, touch and being touched rather than feeling derailed and disillusioned.

You write with – with yourself, the version of both who you are and who you want to be, or who you might fear who you are, and you are not running after this or that solid truth or measurable fact, but you are turning towards – getting closer to all these issues that bother us, not all at the same time, no, but one after another. It is a move and a moment of both empathetic nearness and critical distance.

You will never ever control it, you will never ever finish this, you are constantly moving towards an aim that constantly keeps also moving, changing its shapes and colors but nevertheless, or in fact, because of this, you keep on keeping on. It is not a narcissistic but a collaborative effort, recognition of our deep-seated co-dependency. You do not stop, even if you are on the verge of losing your balance, but you move on, and you maintain the course of navigation and negotiations. You turn towards, and gain access to a conversation, not assimilation, but a meeting, a confrontation of a unique kind.

You write with – connecting the dots and opening the perspectives between you, your surroundings and how, for better and worse, not better or worse, this is it, this is both your freedom and responsibility to articulate and actualize a narrative, a story that moves in and through and is accomplished by writing with, not off, about or on.

\* \* \*

What is the connection between the idea and the aim of writing with and being-with, as in being-in-the-world? One to one or are they distant cousins?

Zygmunt Bauman has articulated a three-way distinction of the relationships that we have with ourselves and with our surroundings. This relating to and with is detailed into options and implications of being-aside, being-

with and being-for. Granted, this is the trio that is embraced with the issues of ethical kind, whereas Bauman recognizes other types of being together, which he lists as mobile, stationary, tempered, manifested, postulated and matrix-like – all which are characterized by and through their various levels of temporality and time and place bound situatedness (Bauman 1995, 43–49).

However, when focusing on these three forms of ethical togetherness, the prepositions fitted to in each of them kindly do tell the direction of the presuppositions and the realm of that particular relationship. For Bauman, the question is about closeness, and what these meetings and proximity then requires and demands, but it is also about how fragmented or episodic these encounters are and could be. Bauman is very careful not to see this trio as a linear progression with different shapes and shades of intimacy and accumulation of togetherness, but as variations of what it means to act and engage in concordance.

Starting with being-aside, this is, quite obviously one might add, a form of togetherness that is not that terrible deep or demanding. Participants within an act or a habit of the heart, they do things along and aside, but they do not affect each other's, even if they do need to take the other into consideration. Being-aside is without the connection of the follow-up, without the need to engage further. Being-aside is visualized in the acts of watching a concert or getting along with your daily work schedule and site. Acts that can be important but at the same time, not very demanding.

For Bauman, despite not wanting to set up priorities, the whole story of togetherness does evolve in-between the distinctions he articulates in comparisons to being-with and being-for. Bauman states that it is not enough to achieve or aim for the act and gesture of being-with. Being-with for Bauman is still too fragmented and too incomplete. He goes even so far as in describing this kind of togetherness a mis-meeting. It tries to go further than being-aside, but it fails.



Being-for in this comparative *Spiel* means that there is a way and a means to go beyond, to bridge the gap and gain connectedness, and not to accept separation. Being-for is whole and continuous. “Being-for is a leap from isolation to unity; yet not towards a *fusion*, that mystics’ dream of shedding the burden of identity, but to an *alloy* whose precious qualities depend fully on the preservation of its ingredients’ alterity and identity” (Ibid. 51).

Thus, it is about, in another vernacular, the story between difference talking to a difference who keeps on getting in touch with another difference – rather than aiming at consensus or a full closure of a unity or fusion. For Bauman being-for aims for a form of togetherness, (not achieves, that is always something else) a deep-seated connection that is not stopping at the gates of coming along and getting along. It is a togetherness that is closer and more demanding than being-with. It brings together, and it is more than just separated entities that are with.

For this, he uses the verb alloy that stems from metallurgy and refers to ingredients coming together but maintaining both their own identity and at the same time becoming part of a new whole. For Bauman, being-for means a never-ending process that constantly resists objectification and it sets trust, it believes that no matter what, no matter how difficult, it is worth striving for - the idea of moving towards, the constellation of forever not yet (Ibid. 7).

\* \* \*

Here, the important and reasonable way of now, not only writing with, but thinking with and reading with Bauman is, I believe, not to emphasize the differences or distance between being-with and being-for, but actually seeing them as part of the same process and direction of a situated and embedded continuous as acts within a constantly evolving trials of semi-success and semi-failure, the confrontations between over-articulation

and under-performance and the daily task of producing interpretations, articulations and actualizations. And for sure, Bauman does articulate this, underlining the inter-connection between with and for, saying how there is “the for in every with”, emphasizing the process-based character of this back-and-forth moment (Ibid. 7).

Thus, and in its core, the difference between being-with and being-for is potential and possible to locate in the phase of where they are at and where they must be at. Being-with is not yet even close to what being-for has searched and dreamed for, but being-with is, simultaneously, the very vexing state of the realities that we might, at least, have some access and connection to it.

In other words, the problem with the aim of being-for is that it is so incredibly demanding and not unfortunately very realistic. It leans very strongly on the behalf of what is in its multiple entity labeled as the Other – without always paying enough attention to let this Other to breathe and to evolve and not to become a token entity. And well, without wanting to drown on the wishing wells projected into the Other, in every day circumstances, and back to basics, you don’t have to stay aside as a wallflower, or be another brick in the wall, but for all participants within our mess that is called daily life, it is very ok not to try to be and become a mother Theresa.

The second main issue with choosing to write an essay titled Writing with, and implicating the notion of being-with, not writing for or being-for, is the direction of the action and the relationship that is about to emerge and to become – to potentially become a located and situated version of itself, its narratives and interpretations. The benefit of being-with is the benefit of the doubt that who we are, both sides of the same process, and the benefit of the doubt that how much can we actually achieve and engage at – and finally, of course with. We do not take anything for granted, we search, we fail, and then we try again – to be with, to turn towards, to listen and to care.

This also means, and it also demands that there is an open-ended interaction between both parts of the relationship; that is, to see and feel how both sides affect one another and how something else, something more than just a sum of its parts emerges from the encounter and meeting. Being-with must go and it has to move both-ways and each side has to open up and feel with.

This is to say, perhaps a bit complicatedly, but it is a needed word of advice: when aiming at togetherness, you have to be able also to protect yourself. You are engaging, and you are, with yet another metaphor, you are taking a risk, you are jumping out of the window but you have to practice it, you cannot jump first from the 15th floor, it is important to try out first from the height of the ground floor. As with anything that matters, you must learn to walk first, then, well, jump, or run, fast as you can or go back to crawling.

When looking for the most effective metaphor, it comes back to this, it is, oh yes it is, about how to write with – and consequently, how to look with, think with, and ultimately, how to live with. Like here, with this short text, how I have been trying to talk with and write with, for example, with Ricoeur and Bauman, not using or abusing them, not instrumentalizing them nor objectifying them, not hiding behind them, not making them heroes, not villains but facing them, confronting them – here and now, here and now.

You write with, ride on, right on – and you take part and you move with it, with and within its rhyme, rhythm and repetition.

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## LITERATURE

Bauman, Zygmunt, *Life in Fragments, Essays in Postmodern Morality*, Blackwell  
1995

Barthes, Roland, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, University of California Press  
1994

Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative*, vol I, Chicago UP 1984

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, transfers, and adjustments. The text explains that consistent record-keeping is essential for identifying trends, managing cash flow, and preparing for tax obligations.

Next, the document addresses the need for regular reconciliation. It states that comparing the company's internal records with bank statements and other external sources is crucial for catching errors early. This process helps to ensure that the books are balanced and that there are no discrepancies between what is recorded and what actually occurred. Reconciliation is also a key step in verifying the accuracy of the financial statements.

The document then discusses the importance of budgeting and forecasting. It notes that a well-defined budget provides a clear picture of the company's financial goals and helps to allocate resources effectively. By comparing actual performance against the budget, management can identify areas where costs are exceeding expectations and take corrective action. Forecasting allows the company to anticipate future financial needs and make informed decisions about investments and financing.

Finally, the document highlights the significance of transparency and communication. It stresses that all stakeholders, including investors, creditors, and employees, should have access to accurate and timely financial information. Clear communication of the company's financial health and performance is essential for building trust and maintaining the confidence of all parties involved. The document concludes by reiterating that sound financial management is the foundation of a successful and sustainable business.

Page 50–51

**Birgir Snæbjörn Birgisson**

*Hope*

Oil on canvas, 2015–2016

(64) x 50 x 40 cm

Installation shot

Page 52

**Birgir Snæbjörn Birgisson**

*From the Series Hope*

Oil on canvas, 2015–2016

50 x 40 cm

Page 94–96

**Onya McCausland**

*Saltburn* (Helsinki)

Saltburn minewater iron oxide in cellulose  
medium on wall, 2018

320 x 550 cm

Page 158

**Miikka Vaskola**

*Untitled, (Oneself as Another)*

Ink, acrylic, coal, charcoal on canvas, 2017

80 x 70 cm

– For the inverted version, please change the  
settings in your phone from positive to negative  
to see the image



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isbn 978-9935-24-706-3