

WORDS

**MOOD
MODE**

**F1
F2
F3**

Mood

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Eating and Loving

1.

All these pots and pans and spoons and cups and bowls and jugs and ladles!

Are they really nothing more than artefacts emerging from the heat of human productivity? Are we merely their creator and are they merely the result of our traditionally established crafts and skills? In a sense however, the opposite is also true and we are no less their creation, as they feed and water us daily. They are inseparable from our daily acts of eating and drinking. How can we ever begin to formulate our gratitude towards them?

2.

No matter what we eat, whether meat, fruits, vegetables: we *have to* kill prior to eating. But meat reminds us of ourselves more than vegetables or fruits and needs to be removed far enough from us, so that we can eat it without inhibition.

The inhibition increases in fact, if we have any relation to whatever we kill, which is probably also the reason why we would usually prefer to eat animals without a name. From the instant something has a name, there is also a relation between us and the bearer of the name. In modern life, it is almost a matter of principle to eat anonymous or anonymised meat or fish, which we perceive or treat as a material, not essentially different from that of the table we are sitting at or the vessels we are eating and drinking out of. Whatever has no name has *less value* than whatever has a name.

3.

We *eat* these anonymous substances as food for our bodies. On the other end of the spectrum a name can allow us to *love* a thing as food for our soul. In other words: we eat and drink whatever has less value than what we love. We can begin to love things like humans, animals, houses, streets, natural objects, when we give them names. And we give them names, when they are important for us. But we do not need to give a proper name to the things we eat.

The opposite of eating is throwing up. The opposite of love is hate. Whatever we hate, we would like to throw up. Whatever we love, we can relate to through our affection or sexuality, or by incorporating them into our bodies through the act of eating. This explains, why we often use the same word when we say: “I love you!” or “I love fresh fruit!”

4.

Whether we eat or love – in both cases, we enter a cycle of exchanges with our environment and unite with the greater reality around and beyond us.

Whether we throw up or hate – we get disconnected from our environment and enter a state of isolation from the greater reality around and beyond ourselves.

All ideologies of moral purity generate distances, hierarchies, devaluation of the Other, revaluation of the Self. In all our practices, which are in any way orgiastic or excessive, we merge, fuse, exchange with our environment.

The individual and non-divisible ego rests on practices of fasting and renouncing, and is enhanced by them. All joy, pleasure and ecstasy result from openness, curiosity and the willingness to surrender and transform ourselves.

Mode

30. May 2013

Munich

Dear Friends,

Before I begin, I want to thank you for the idea to do this exciting experiment! What you are proposing is in my view an essentially philosophical action and a privilege, which rarely comes one's way. First of all: We want to bring words and things into a dialogue. That is a truly interesting idea. Because it implies that there can be a common basis to language and things. However, on second thought, we are not intending to have a dialogue between words and things in general, but between *my words* and the *things you make*, both of which are artefacts. But can artefacts communicate with each other? I guess yes, for artefacts can always assume the function of gestures. For instance a bottle of champagne can be a gesture of thanks or congratulation. My job in the first question will be easy. I simply have to continue using words as I have always done. Your job will be to hew out gestures of response out of the materials you are going to work with. However, from the second question onwards, the adventure also begins for me. I will have to react to your objects, treat them as *questions*, to which I will have to respond with a further question, and so on ...

I originally wanted to let you know something about the thrust of the philosophical work I have been doing till now, as a kind of background and an initial *Kennenlernen*. But I suddenly feel that we would lose something like innocence that way. I think it is better to start straight away with the materials, without the persons getting in the way. Nonetheless, I understand the complex dialogue we are about to begin, as a mode of practicing friendship. The Greeks understood friendship as a kind of philosophical activity and a breeding ground for culture. The Platonic dialogues are nothing other than forms, in which friendship could unfold between human beings united in a common enquiry. I see our question-answer-project in this vein.

A last word on procedure: I think, I will be formulating my questions in the form of "micro-texts": a series of open and rambling texts, which I will try to keep as short as possible. The openness of these texts will be the body of my questions. That way I have the possibility of presenting each question as a fragment of thought, which you can then lead further in any direction you feel driven towards.

Then let's get going!

Pravu

F 1

Question 1

In my view philosophy is not a theory, but a technique or art of producing questions. It is as if the role of philosophy were to let in fresh air and ventilate our thinking. It is as if the space of thought we have been living in till now would suddenly be opened towards an unknown outside, so that we begin to doubt everything we have been thinking till now about the world and ourselves as a part of it. In the special instant, in which a real question surfaces, we are suddenly without a theory about all that is in and around us. We are suddenly confronted with a specific type of emptiness.

What is then a question? Is it possible to produce a material object, which is not an answer, but a question?

Introduction

Basic to any art is an element of reflection, questioning the very existence of the artform as such. That also applies to *corpus*, the four constitutive elements of which are:

- (1) Form
- (2) Possible content
- (3) Material
- (4) Function

In the pragmatic context of everyday life knives, spoons, vessels combine these four elements, keeping them at the same time separate by “protecting” them from each other. Each element exists in its own terms. It can relate to the other elements like the hollow of a spoon to its function of scooping. But it cannot attack or put into question any other of these elements. For instance the form cannot contradict the function, the material must be such, that it is not eroded by the possible content, etc.

Maybe the object in the specific sense of the *corpus* turns into a question when any one of these four elements is threatened in its very existence.

Comments on works

The fact that two of these works have no title, is certainly connected with the character of the first question, which in its high level of abstraction evokes a basic trait of questions in general: emptiness. If an object is to be a “question”, then it has to be emptied of one or more of its elements. Its form becomes opaque, it refuses to yield a meaning, its function is subverted. When an object becomes a question, then it reveals that: no artefact – and in fact no material that can be transformed into artefacts – is ever a mere “thing” or “raw material” divorced from thought, but rather a vehicle for cultural signification. Thus gold or copper, a cup, a saucer are all replete with cultural associations and possess something like an *oblique function* as receptacles of collective memory.

1. Tobias Birgeron (No title)

Tobias has produced a spoon, which cannot scoop and therefore is no longer a spoon, but rather a spoon turned into a question. For one of its four elements, its function of scooping, is subverted by “prolonging” the form into the content. The common factor between the form and content of Tobias’ spoon is the material itself, which is wood. The content is the material itself. The form created from the material of the content. The inner space is more than excluded: it is annihilated permanently.

2. Henrik Brandt (Doodle)

The function of a *corpus* is intrinsically associated with a movement. The spoon makes a scooping movement, the cup is raised to the mouth. The bowl is placed and displaced. All these movements are subordinated to a *telos* (aim). The raising of the cup is subordinated to the act of drinking, etc. The function of a *corpus* is a movement subordinated to a *telos*.

Henrik’s *corpus* becomes a question by snapping the tie between movement and *telos*. The movement towards an aim is reduced to its essence as mere movement, movement *without* a *telos*.

The object is a silicon capsule with three steel rings going around its body, evoking something like the body of a bee or a wasp. The steel rings bring the form of the body, which has no opening whatever, into focus. The inner space is again whisked away, at least to the eye: it has been sealed off by the material. The strange insect-like body has a tail, which is the cable connecting it to a source of electricity, which starts it into motion. The silicon body is supported by three pencils at three different points, so that its motion creates three distinct

tracks, however and in whichever direction it moves. The body is turned into a question by reducing the functional *telos* of movement. The energy moving the body is not the human body using a *corpus*. The energy moving the body is electrical energy, but also the friction between the pencils and the surface on which the motion takes place. The motion itself seems to be erratic, since it is no longer calculable by taking into account a *telos*-like motive like drinking or scooping. The movement of the insect-like body is at most calculable and therefore interpretable by considering all the physical (and not cultural or mental) forces impinging upon it.

3. David Clarke (What goes in must come out)

David has produced a strange object with pewter, the material of archaic tableware. It has neither the form of familiar things like dishes or tumblers, nor that of a music instrument. But one could imagine drinking out of it or blowing air through it. In any case it evokes a metaphor swinging to and fro between *corpus* and music. (We know that one can make sounds with pots, pans, dishes, forks, saucers and that the horn can at the same time be drunk out of and blown for producing sound.) The functional soul of vessels is, that whatever comes in – food, drinks, poison (as with the intrigue ridden snake-holes, which the palaces of old used to be) – must come out: into the mouth and the stomach; or into the gutter, if it is not palatable.

In any case: David's work shows that *corpus* articles, like questions, are transit spaces serving the passage of the elements into human organisms. Aren't all artefacts on the dining table in some sense cultural catalysts for the food-cycle? However, there is an important difference between the function of *corpus* and that of a question, which can be seen as a discursive machine for generating metamorphoses. A question is on the one hand what answers and evidences can flow into, to get all confused and churned up for a while. On the other hand, it is also what *new* answers and *new* evidences can flow out of. Also questions are transit spaces. But their constitution is such, that what comes in *is not* what comes out. This is an essential aspect of questions. In the case of *corpus*, what comes in can come out changed, as in the case of cooking pots or a material, which affects the taste of a drink. But this is not necessary to the definition of *corpus* objects in their entirety.

4. Fredrik Ingemansson (What's In)

Here, all information concerning the content is reduced mainly to weight and sound. As a secondary information, the inner space makes itself *felt*, when the object is moved by the hand

holding it. The content cannot be seen, touched, smelt, tasted, since it is enclosed within that part of the hollow, which has been sealed off and rendered inaccessible. It can rather be heard and felt: as a weight and as something in movement within a space, which is not directly perceptible. As the content is problematized by reducing the information related to it, the function also becomes a focal point of reflection. What is the function of such a piece? Is it meant to hold, contain, scoop, drink something out of? The piece turns into a question through a systematic reduction of content information and an equally systematic withdrawal of any precisely defined function.

5. Magnus Liljedahl (No title)

The object has no title, the form is clear and stable: a cylinder with two narrowed ends, plugged by stoppers of cork. There is no univocal collective association of a possible function. My personal and rather subjective association is that of a capsule (Warhol's "time capsule"); or that of a jar of sugar candy with a mouth and a base, both of which are identical. The perfect symmetry between the two ends serves to confuse all orientation concerning the distinctions top/bottom, mouth/base. The only (non-utilitarian) function manifests itself when the object lies on its side: as its potential for rolling. The material is also clear: metal and cork. The metal used for the cylindrical body lets the image of a thermos flask with its function of keeping things warm flash through the mind as a chance association. We have here a *corpus* object, whose inner space is sealed up as with the three other objects reflected until now. The object turns into a question by using the form and the material to exclude the inner space.

6. Karen Pontoppidan (Corpus I)

A silver *corpus* – with all the weight associated with silver, but unable to receive a touch without its form breaking down – is another example of a *corpus* object turned into a question. In breaking down, the form projects the material into a foreground presenting itself as an amorphous heap. The *corpus* turns into a heap, as the form "gives way" to the material. Karen's question-object involves the destruction of the form and the function through mere touch. The relation between the hand – and in general the human body – and the object is basic for the functioning of any *corpus*. In Karen's work this relation is applied in such a way, that it destroys both form and possible function at the same time. The content, as with Tobias' spoon, is the material itself. The inner space is expelled or, as it were, extinguished by the material.

7. Miro Sazdic (Let's Have a Coffee)

Miro's work has the openness of a question and the structure of an *invitation* or *proposal*, characteristic of all questions, as long they are not rhetoric questions. All questions born out of *curiosity* or *critique* are invitations to change: change of perspective, change of attitude, change of approach, etc. All invitations are therefore thresholds to possible exchanges and ensuing changes, taking place in the mode of discourses, disparate signs like pictures, words, texts, symbols, anagrammes, pictogrammes: colliding, harmonising, cooperating with each other and stamping in their semiotic power into the souls being churned through the black hole of a discourse – all over just a cup of coffee!

It begins with a question or a questioning of what materiality actually is. Can there be immaterial materialities? I would add to this a further question: Can the entire sweeping spectrum of all that we term materiality be essentially related to repetition? Is something always repeated – something of the nature of a visual, tactile, chemical, mathematical property – when we are faced with a material? Does a discourse have a materiality of its own? Does the back and forth, the question and answer, the stimulus and response, so characteristic of discourses have a repetitional materiality of its own? Is the cup of coffee a focal point of the strange, repetitious trajectories of discursive elements like words, statements, exclamations, sudden falterings, the uncomfortable clearing of the throat, getting foam around the mouth, all related to signs leaving their stamps and impressions on the delicate foils of the minds in exchange?

Miro's work is not a question, but an answer to the question "What is a question?". But the answer is packed into the form of rhetoric questions. Her treatment of my *metaquestion* – "What is a question?" – thus provides the answer: A question is the issuing point of a discourse. A cup of coffee is the medium. *Corpus* is in a sense an inevitable pre-requisite of questions. For food and drink are, generally speaking, occasion not only for stuffing things into our bodies, but also for ventilating our minds. All the artefacts gathered on the dining table immediately switch the mind – at least mine – into the mood and mode of discourse.

F 2

Question 2

- 2. (a) Is there a threshold to *corpus* as such? Where does a cup begin, where does it end?**
- 2. (b) Are there thresholds within *corpus*? Where does a cup end and a spoon begin? Is there something like a “*corpusness*” common to plates, knives, vessels, to name only a few of all that goes to constitute *corpus* objects?**

Introduction

Question 1 was not concerned with the four dimensions of a *corpus* object: *form* (hollow/round/large), intended *content* (liquid/dust/solid), *material* (metal/wood/porcelain), *function* (scooping, drinking, piercing). It was instead concerned with creating a *corpus* object as an *instrument* or *medium* for answering a verbally formulated question and elucidating what a *question* as such means: The object turns into a question, when at least one of its dimensions is “suspended”.

Question 2 is not concerned with *objects* functioning as answers in the garb of a question, but rather with the *concept* supporting different types of *corpus* objects and identifying (1) the limits, beyond which it ceases to signify anything like *corpus*, as well as (2) the “fault lines” dividing up the concept according to categories like spoons or bowls or cups with their distinctive features. Such a concept is however radically different from the expression used in the context of what we usually term “concept art”. For a *corpus concept* guiding the production of tableware and connected objects is ontologically rooted in life, philosophically speaking, in human *Dasein*, for it is derived from an essential dimension of *being human* and *living the life of a human*. A *corpus concept* is inseparable from activities as elementary as eating, drinking, exchanging, celebrating.

The first part of question 2 is closely connected to question 1. For at the limit, at which the *corpusness* of an object beings to get confused, the object slowly mutates into a question. However, the internal “fault lines” of the concept, constituting a typology of *corpus* objects, question the specific form/content/material/function of a *corpus* type. Is this object a spoon anymore? Or is it already a vessel?

Comments on works

1. Tobias Birgersson (No title)

The first thing that strikes the eye here is the double layer of wood and metal. The silver covers up the cracks, which would otherwise be visible on the inner surface of the bowl, perhaps through the translucence of the tea yet to be drunk. Is the inner surface of a tea bowl a threshold to its being a receptacle for a fluid content? Yes and no. Yes, in the formal sense that certain modifications in the topography of the inner surface – like letting it bulge out as a convex surface – would jeopardize the function of a receptacle. A certain format also distinguishes it from a spoon or a soup dish. No in a material sense. For adding a material like silver to the wood leaves the function of containing tea intact. However, the silver functions like cosmetics. It makes the natural aging of wood, the slow geological transformation of the population and structure of its cracks invisible. Maybe – or in fact quite probably – there will be a perceptible change in the taste of the tea. The impact, says Roland Barthes, which a striptease has, depends on the clothes just discarded. According to the same figure: The taste of the fluid depends on the material it just left behind to affect our tongues and palate.

2. Henrik Brandt (Octocorpus)

Henrik continues to explore the association between *corpus* and biological organisms. In general, one can in fact draw an elementary connection between the artefacts we create for the kitchen and the table and the animal and plant life that we exploit and kill, in order to transform and consume them in the same spaces of the kitchen and the table. Can a cow be taken as a metaphor for a receptacle for milk or meat, is the skin of an orange a kind of prototype of a vessel containing the juice and flesh of the fruit? Does the body of a bee transport honey from the flowers to our mouths, like a spoon or ladle moves our food from vessel to our mouths? In fact, the title of the object – *Octocorpus* – connects the two morphological elements signifying the two poles of the metaphor, the animal and the artefact, initiating a continued exchange of their semantic energies, which underscores the ontological boundary of our understanding of *corpus* as that, which can contain what plants and animals hold in store for us and our biological survival. Consistent with the title, this hybrid object consists of the shape of a maritime organism made of powder coated steel wire and the lid of a porcelain tea pot. The metaphor not only connects the objects, but also the fluids in concern: the sea water flowing through the body of an octopus and the tea flowing through the drinking human body.

3. David Clarke (Full Fat)

In David's first piece, the emptiness within, traversing the length of the object, evoked associations of the content and function of *corpus* and well as the dynamics of passage. It showed that the function of *corpus* is such, that the content, which comes in, has to come out again, without necessarily undergoing any change. In David's second piece, the emptiness impinges laterally upon the object and attacks its very being as a receptacle. Instead of a jug, we have the fragment of a jug, incapable of functioning as a receptacle and visible in profile as a contour of broken lines. At the threshold of *corpusness*, the form of the jug is fragmented and its function nullified.

4. Fredrik Ingemansson (No title)

Fredrik's answer to question 2 is a chalice of copper like his first piece. However, the inner space is one whole without a segment being sealed off, so that the piece can easily be used to drink out of. On the outer surface of the chalice, finger-prints of the potential holder – and drinker – can be seen, made visible with the help of "glass metal". We have seen, that the threshold of a *corpus* object can be explored on the level of its material (by covering wood with silver); or on the level of its being as an artefact and not an organism (as in the hybridity of an "octocorpus"); or on the level of its form and function (as in the case of David's fragmented jug). In this piece, the threshold being explored is that between the worlds of the *corpus* object and that of its human user. The fingerprints designate some of the points of touch, at which the two worlds get connected, letting the neuronal life of the body flow into the *corpus* and the fluid content of the *corpus* back into the body. In this sense, the fingerprints have the ambivalence typical of all touch: they seem to belong in equal parts to the *corpus* and the human body wielding an arm and a hand to assist the *corpus* in its function of feeding and watering the body.

5. Magnus Liljedahl (No title)

The whole piece looks like a tea set, complete with a candle. The cup-like object has the ambivalence characteristic of all thresholds. It looks like a cup, in fact it has everything that goes to make a cup: the body, the handle, the hollow, the base. But it has something in addition: a concave metal surface that covers the cup and dissolves its function. A normal cup has a rim, which provides a multitude of points, at which the lips may be applied for drinking out of the cup. Here, however, the rim is abolished. What is left is the hole in the middle of

the covering surface. But is it possible to place the mouth on the hole and drink out of the vessel? One has to put in a straw through the hole and suck out the tea – as in the case of the plastic cups of the “coffee-to-go” shops. However, the plastic cups can have their lids removed and reveal the rims, from which the content can be drunk. The concave surface in this piece with the hole in the middle compels us to change our mode of drinking. We need an addition to the corpus object to secure the function of drinking. The corpus object is no longer autonomous with respect to its function. It necessitates the external factor of a straw, if the function is to be retrieved. The threshold of *corpusness* is here the threshold at which the function of drinking switches modes: The rim is whisked off – the lips are raised – they close in upon a straw – the vessel is no longer tipped to pour the drink into the mouth, but rather kept straight – the face is no longer raised, but turned downward – the mouth no longer receives the drink passively as it is poured into it – it narrows down to suck in the drink.

6. Karen Pontoppidan (Corpus II)

Karen’s first piece was a formed heap of silver dust. The material merged with the content and transformed the heap shaped by a corpus-like mould, with all its fragility and transience, into a question. In this piece, there is a strict boundary between the material (silver again) and the content. In fact the piece, a rectangular slab of silver, has a semantically minimal form – if we compare it with things as clear and outright as ladles or pots. It could be a multitude of things: a tiny and exquisite cutting board, a crazy little mirror, a micro-platter for placing tiny fruits or nuts or pieces of salted chocolate for the guests, a piece of sculpture imitating a cigarette case, etc. It is only the piece of soap that gives it a functional meaning. The threshold explored in this object is that between a *corpus* object and its content. It is a threshold, which serves to define the function of the object and determine it in its specific *corpusness*.

7. Miro Sazdic (Habibi)

Suddenly the table and all the tableware with their food and drink have been whisked away. Or are we in a state of limbo, waiting for their return? What remains, is a piece of cotton, which can be spread out anywhere: on a table, on the bed, on the floor, on a meadow for a picnic. The embroidery on the piece consists of a linear and geometrical ornamentation, done with the care and intimacy of a “Habibi” (“My beloved” in Arabic), the border with its red strands enhance the impression. Is there a subtle message in the ornamentation or in the way, in which the piece is folded, waiting to be spread out for eating, talking, exchanging? In Miro’s first piece, corpus revealed itself as an invitation to discourse and as the point of its

take-off. In this piece of embroidered cloth embodying the act of waiting for food, drinks and words to be offered and exchanged, the discourse has already begun: as the subtle message of the embroidered lines and rectangular fields and the folds echoing them. The centre of attention of this piece is again not occupied by the form, function, content or material of a *corpus* object, but the social and discursive context of its use. In the first piece, the cup was an invitation to a discourse. In this piece, the discourse is already there in its embroidery and fold and serves as an invitation to the return of *corpus* and, along with it, to the singular moment of eating, drinking, talking, making merry.

F 3

Question 3

Some of you are jewellers. Is there any essential relation between corpus and ornament?

Introduction

The term “ornament” is used in contexts as different as architecture, jewellery, rhetoric. Traditionally it is seen as a *supplement*, which is not essential, but rather a kind of decorative addition or embellishment without relevance to a “real” function contrary to a roof, a dress, a concept.

The Latin verb *ornare* means “to equip” or “to arm”, implying the addition of something like a tool or a weapon in the face of a danger or a threat of any kind. An ornament usually finds its place as a layer superimposed on an empty wall, the empty surface of an artefact, the plain and inconspicuous style of a sentence, so devoid of figuration that it would otherwise be hardly perceivable or retained in memory. In this sense, the ornament “attacks” and annihilates the emptiness of a surface, which is exactly what an answer does to the emptiness of a question. But the opposite is also true. For ornamentation also means *marking* a surface and making it visible, without which it would remain imperceptible in its originally unornamented emptiness.

In a sense therefore ornamentation can be seen as a means of *masking* the *emptiness* of a surface, notwithstanding its different roles in corpus and jewellery.

Please continue ...

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The project has been performed with the support of

Konstnärnämndens
internationella program
för bild- och formkonstnärer