

Göteborg 4 November 2016

Dear members of the Växjö panel

This year's VR-symposium will thematically revolve around issues of ethics in artistic research. Hence, as far as I have understood, all the items of the programme are expected to relate to the announced topic one way or another. Moreover, I interpret the potential of our final conversation as an opportunity to critically examine some of the claims and proposals as well as doubts and ambiguities that may have come to the fore during the two days.

As for the general dramaturgy of our discussion, I suggest a brief (five minutes) opening statement by each one of you. The following lines are principally meant to be inspirational, but I would like you to share at least one experienced, concrete example of an ethical dilemma.

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When asked to moderate the panel discussion in Växjö, I immediately came to think of Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. I've always found Calvino's lectures deeply concerned with matters of ethics, the way they are insisting on a set of virtues, which he envisioned as not only essential to evaluate but, in fact, as inevitable measures for literary practitioners to meditate and take into account in the new millennium: Lightness, Quickness, Exactitude, Visibility, Multiplicity. Although one might conceive of Calvino's propositions as somewhat out-dated and perhaps irrelevant to our discussion, I'm convinced that the very notion of *exactitude* or *visibility* has an urgent bearing on our subject.

It may be that, compared with other disciplines such as for instance medicine, physics or the humanities, artistic *research* and artistic *practice* are intrinsically interconnected in ways that call for a more complex set of ethical considerations when the two are being performed within the same framework. This could be one of many points of departure for our debate in Växjö: If invited to expand in particular on the *relation* between artistic practice and research with regard to inherent ethical perspectives, categories and challenges – what would you say? Provided you think of them as possible to distinguish, in what ways can *practice specific* ethical aspects inform, support and even reinforce *research specific* ditto and/or vice versa?

If we for a moment reflect on distinct issues with ethical resonance in single artistic fields – e.g. Werktreue (work fidelity) in music, the problem of authenticity in film and photography, relational aesthetics and various participatory practices in fine arts as well as questions of sustainability in design – how do these issues correspond (if at all) with an ethical attention (awareness/sensitivity) when absorbed by and integrated in a researching context? Or to speak with Nietzsche: is there a *transvaluation of values* going on here? If so, what can we learn?

Could *sustainability* with its layers of acute environmental strategies be employed as part of a transdisciplinary practice that might feed into questions of ethics in artistic research? To what extent are references to New Materialism and a *posthumanist methodology* instructive relative to a discourse that aims at identifying ethical dimensions in our field?

Speaking of which: we may also want to look into the frequent appropriation of knowledge formation from *other disciplines* aimed at building theory to validate/support practice in both research education and senior research in the arts. Are there any ethical implications?

These and other inquiries materialize as I write. I only ask of you to let some of them ring. For the rest, I hope *claims* and *proposals* – *doubts* and *ambiguities* will generously guide our conversation through the terrains of ethical response-ability in artistic research.

Questions we may want to explore:

- If at all relevant, how do *practice specific* ethical dimensions inform and feed into ethical considerations and challenges in *research* and/or vice versa? Might there be conflicts of interest or are the issues more or less identical in both fields?
- How would you respond to the idea of trying to formulate a set of ethical operational guidelines or recommendations for AR as they seem to exist in other disciplines? What would the principles be? Of a similar fundamental kind or differentiated referring to separate categories such as *poetics* versus *formal procedures* (methodologies, use of theory, documentation, dissemination)?
- Might it be that a situated ethical *discourse* based on propositions by for instance Foucault, Haraway and Barad is more adequate and productive than a set of rules?
- I mentioned in my letter to you a series of concepts that might have relevance for our conversation: *intra-action – response-ability – ethics of mattering – ethics of worlding* (Barad); *situated knowledge – diffraction* (Haraway); *lightness – visibility – multiplicity* (Calvino); *ambiguity* (as proposed by for instance Barthes or de Beauvoir). How do you resonate with them? How do they inform/misinform our inquiries?
- If you were to give advice to the Committee for Artistic Research at the Swedish Research Council as regards how and on what grounds one could instigate a qualified ethical discourse to support and strengthen the field, what would you propose?

I came across two quotes in a paper by Kathrin Thiele:

Ethos of Diffraction: New paradigms for a (Post)humanist Ethics

[https://www.google.se/#q=Kathrin+Thiele++New+paradigms+for+a+\(Post\)humanist+Ethic](https://www.google.se/#q=Kathrin+Thiele++New+paradigms+for+a+(Post)humanist+Ethic)

How to live a world of difference(s), a world in/as ongoing differentiation, in such ways that the outcome is not ever more separation and antagonism, exclusion and the fear of others, but so that new senses of commonality are envisioned?

What Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* calls the 'ethics of mattering', and what more recently she has further specified as 'an ethics committed to the rupture of indifference', brings the *ethos* of diffraction as attitude of primary differential relationality and entanglement (dis/continuous becoming and cutting together-apart in exact Baradian terms) to the proper ethical question of accountability.

Some connecting references to begin with:

Karen Barad – *On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am*

http://gendersexualityfeminist.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/on-touching-the-inhuman-that-therefore-i-am-v1-1-original.pdf

Donna Haraway – *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* <http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~ewa/Haraway,%20Situated%20Knowledges.pdf>

Italo Calvino – *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*

<http://www.veryinteractive.net/library/six-memos-for-the-next-millennium>

Swedish Research Council's online publication *Good Research Practice* (2011)

Yours sincerely
Ole Lützow-Holm