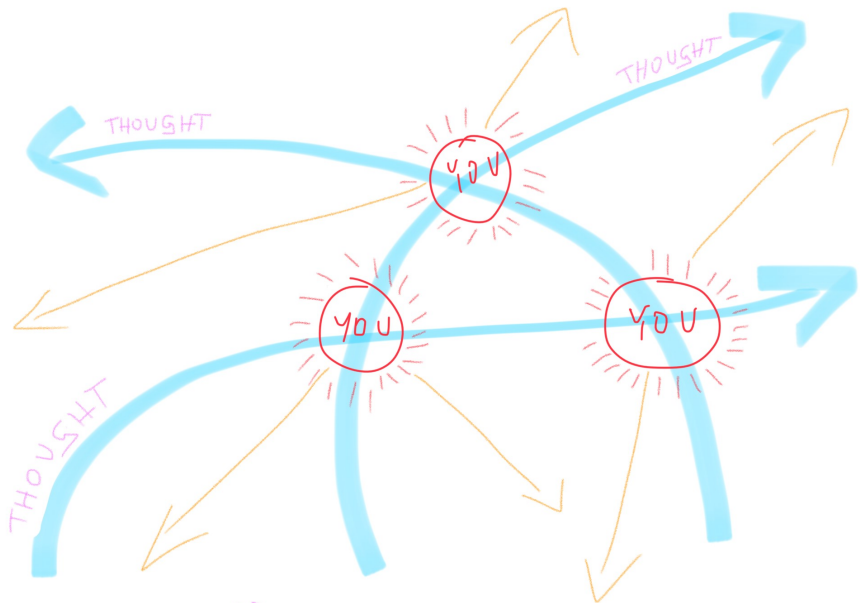


# Writing Intersectionally

Seven encounters with writing as thinking



This publication is made in the context of the q-tutorium „Writing Intersectionally“ at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 2019.

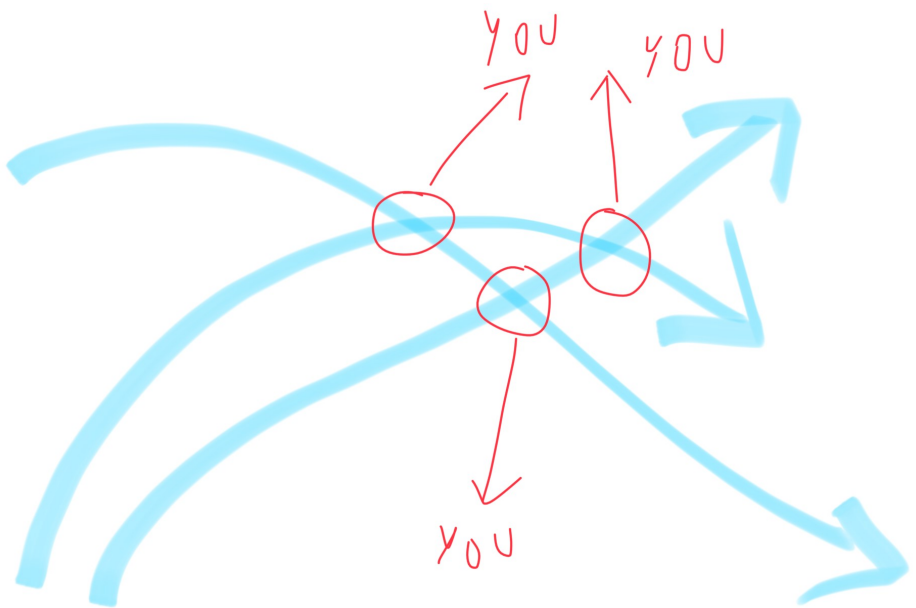
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Flora Löffelmann, 2019



# Introduction

By Lukas Kofoed Reimann

This publication was made in the context of the q-tutorium "Writing Intersectionally" which took place in the winter semester 2018-19 at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. For 4 months we have worked with some of the many ways situated and embodied knowledges can influence and find expression in our own (academic) writing. In short, we have asked our selves how we can write in intersectional ways. How can we bring our own positionality into our writing? Can we translate embodied knowledges into text? Will writing differently help us think differently? How can we make our own writing more accessible, interesting and informative? This publication is the product of these questions.

At the core of this process was not only the conviction that how we write is inseparably linked with how we think, but also the idea that writing can be understood and used as a methodology for research. Practically this means that we have been writing since the first time we met and that all our texts are part of the conclusions we draw out of our research process. In other words, the practice of writing is both our shared methodology as wells as our result. Each participant has used writing to reflect on their own motivation to study and write as well as it has been the tool through which we have created research questions and in the end writing was instrumental to our self-reflection and evaluation. During the semester we have worked with questions ranging from the doing of writing, such as how to overcome the fear of a blank page and how to structure a writing process, over the political potential

in poetry to what intersectional research can look like when we begin to write it down. We have shared our writing with each other as often as the academic time frame could allow, and thus shared the self-reflection we have done through writing with the others, creating a room for different ways of doing and thinking about research than the common classroom discussion.

This publication consists of some of the texts the participants have written in the course of this process. They are a result of what can happen when we simultaneously let go of most of our rigid academic traditions and formats and take our own knowledge and thinking seriously. Each text has arisen out of different questions and interests, but they share the desire to write differently and to take intersectional thinking and situated knowledge seriously in how we write as much as we do in other areas of our research and studies.

In the end of the publication you will find an archive of things that have helped us along the way. You will find a list of tips, tricks and suggestions to help your writing as well as a bibliography of texts which all have inspired us in different ways.

We hope you enjoy reading our texts and that you might get inspired to try out writing differently yourself.

# Stop making sense

By Meike Bartlema

Every time I sit down to start writing, I want to write about the whole world at once. I want to write about my feelings, mental health under capitalism, borders, my pregnant friend (is she two persons yet?). I want to write about anthropocentrism and how to dismantle it, even if I'm still a human being. I want to write about the normalization of extreme-right politics, about interspecies entanglements, life as a molecular process, the memories of plants and where they store them. I want to write about sleep deprivation and being tired beyond words. I want to write about spirits and about love and I want it be like poetry and radical critique.

So I closed my blank notebook yesterday night and went to rest on my couch. I picked up a book by Mia You (I too, dislike it). Mia You writes that “the problem of writing is that it can go anywhere, touch anything, make everything be about something, whereas in life, you wake up, you brush your teeth, you eat breakfast, you do some work, you take care of the kids, you eat dinner, you brush your teeth and then the next day and then the next day.”

Linearity comes quite naturally to you when you're just living your life. It feels like you're going forward. Maybe, in writing too, I will have to find some kind of linearity to stop myself from going everywhere. But I don't like going forward all the time. Sometimes, I just want to stop time from moving, press everything into this tiny frame and then rest for a bit. My

writing does not have to be linear like time. I just want the succeeding parts to make sense to someone at some point, in this particular order.

Although living might seem more linear than writing, at the same time, writing can order your thoughts. You think that what you write down is the expression of your authentic self, it is so *naturally* you! Writing about something that happened can make it seem so clear and graspable. The event becomes coherent like a map. You create a beginning and a middle and an end, and once it's put on paper it will never change again. It becomes more linear than real life. And bigger, more important. You make everything be about something.

For me, for now, the task is to start small. To start from my own body. Notice how my fingers keep on moving on the keynote, how these words miraculously come out before I've had time to properly think them through. The buzzing of my laptop gives a strange sensation to my wrists. From my wrists on, the buzzing moves through the rest of my body. I notice how my breakfast sits heavy on my stomach. On top of that, a spherical and see-through pill of Vitamin D, of which I believe it's getting me through this winter. The pill must have been absorbed by my intestine by now (or not yet, I really have no idea how long these things take). I once read somewhere that Vitamin D is usually "ejected" into the "extracellular fluid space". It sounds extra-terrestrial to me and I like to think of the inside of my body like that.

# Suche nach Sprache

By Berit Carstens

Ich erinnere mich an die frustrierende Grunderfahrung meiner Jugend, dass keine sprachliche Form, die mir zur Verfügung stand, meiner Erfahrungs- und Gedankenwelt gerecht zu werden schien. Im Schreiben kam ich nie nah genug an das Erfahrene und Gedachte heran und nie weit genug weg, um es außerhalb von mir zu fassen zu kriegen.

Ich erinnere mich an die Kraft, die mich erfasst hat, während ich mein erstes Theaterstück inszenierte. Geschützt durch die vermittelte Form des Theaters, die eine tiefe inhaltliche Beschäftigung mit meinen Fragen an die Welt zugelassen hat, durchdrang mich eine mir bis dahin unbekannte Euphorie, Energie und Entspannung. Diese spezielle Methode des Erkenntnisgewinns durch den gemeinsamen Prozess mit anderen, die Fiktionalisierung von Realität, die Dramatisierung des Profanen und die Kontextualisierung des flüchtigen Moments ermöglichten mir ein spezifisches Begreifen meiner inneren und äußeren Welten. Ich erinnere mich an die Geborgenheit dieses Schutzraumes, den Mikrokosmos Gesellschaft, der da laborhaft im Spiel untersucht wurde. Im Rausch einer Idee, eines Stoffes, einer Figur – die ihre Fragen immer auch an mich stellte – entbrannte ich. Vor unseren Augen entfaltete sich in der szenischen Darstellung das Unfassbare in ein Fassbares und wir pflückten es, wie reife Äpfel vom Baum. Ich erinnere mich an die dichte Atmosphäre, die Temperatur, den Geschmack, die wir vorab im Gedankenspiel definierten und die da plötzlich vor uns Gestalt annahmen.

Ich erinnere mich an meine Vorstellung während der Probenarbeit, dass

die Inszenierung bereits fertig wäre: gleich eines unentdeckten Kosmos. Dass die Reise dorthin ungewiss war, aber die Gewissheit, dass er bereits in ganzer Vollkommenheit in der Idee vorhanden war, mir großes Vertrauen schenkte.

Ich erinnere mich, dass es eine Zeit gab, in der ich Theater und Leben nicht unterschieden habe. Alles war Theater.

Dann

Mir wurde

Ich konnte nicht

Ein Opfer von

Jemand hat

*(Schweigen)*

Ich bin

Viereinhalb Jahre später, ein Satz:

Dann wurde ich im Theater Opfer von sexualisierter Gewalt.

Ich erinnere mich an die Mauer, die danach zwischen mir und diesem Schutzraum lag, der keiner mehr war.

Ich erinnere mich an die Sprachlosigkeit. Jede aufrichtige sprachliche Äußerung schien mir als Überschreitung meiner Intimität. Ich schwieg.

Ich erinnere mich, keine Form, keinen Ausdruck, keinen Zugriff mehr auf meine Gedanken zu haben. Kreisend liefen sie ins Leere.

Wenn ich „ich“ sagte wusste ich nicht mehr, wer damit gemeint ist.

Leben und Theater hatten sich voneinander geschieden. Zurück blieb das Leben. Ohne eine Sprache, mit der ich es hätte beschreiben kön-

nen. Ohne ein Ich, das sich sprachlich vermitteln konnte.

Ich erinnere mich daran, dass meine Mentorin im Theater früher einmal sagte: Sei niemals privat, sei immer persönlich. Diese Frage hatte sich mir nie gestellt, sie hatte sich im Probenprozess scheinbar immer von selbst beantwortet. Ich vermute, dass ihr Ratschlag darauf abzielte, zu unterscheiden, was gesellschaftlich relevant sein könnte und was nicht. Sich persönlich vermitteln zu können heißt auch, seine Anliegen als gesellschaftliches Subjekt vermitteln zu können, sich als Vermittlerin seiner selbst zu begreifen und eine Sprache zur Verfügung zu haben, die für die Gesellschaft wahrnehmbar ist und sie herausfordert.

Ich erinnere mich, keine Unterscheidung zwischen privat und persönlich mehr treffen zu können.

Ich ging zurück zu den Wurzeln meines Denkens. Im Studium hatte ich Sprechen und Denken gelernt, da müsste es auch wieder zu finden sein. Ich erinnere mich, dass mein akademisches Schreiben früher immer eine intensive Entdeckungsreise war, die jedoch weit von mir entfernt stattgefunden hat.

Nun sitze ich hier und frage mich, wie schreibe ich nicht privat, aber persönlich? Wie kann ich mich vermitteln, um gehört zu werden? Wie kann ich mich selbst im Schreiben begreifen?

Ich erinnere mich, dass das Private sich in der Theaterarbeit durch die spezifische Methodik – die Recherche, das Gespräch, das laute Lesen, das verkörperte Spiel – zu einer Strukturfrage im gesellschaftlichen Kontext transformiert hat und in der szenischen Darstellung als Persönliches in Erscheinung trat. Eine Bewegung von Nähe zu Distanz und wieder zu einer anderen Form von Nähe. Eine Transformation. Das Private tritt durch die theatrale Vermittlung als Persönliches in Erscheinung.

Sich selbst mit Hilfe von Sprache Distanz zum Erlebten und Gedachten verschaffen, sich sprachlich einordnen und vermitteln, das könnte ein Weg zu einem Leben mit Sprache sein.

Ein Leben in dem ich mich selbst wieder als gesellschaftliches Subjekt begreifen könnte. Eine Sprache, die Unfassbares fassbar machen könn-

te.

Ich habe erfahren, dass Personen, die Marginalisierungs-, Diskriminierungs- oder Gewalterfahrungen ausgesetzt sind oder waren, in der Gefahr sind, den Verlust ihrer Selbstwahrnehmung als gesellschaftliches Subjekt zu erleiden. Das Ich, dass sich scheinbar von sich selbst getrennt hat, kann seine gesellschaftliche Verankerung nicht mehr spüren, ähnlich eines körperlichen Schmerzes, der erst das Bewusstsein für das schmerzende Körperteil schafft. Man kann seinen Blinddarm erst fühlen, wenn er entzündet ist. Ohne Trauma erscheint uns die Verankerung in uns selbst und in der Gesellschaft häufig als selbstverständlich. Durch das Trauma kann das Ich seine Sprache verlieren. Der Verlust dieser Sprache, der Verlust der Artikulation von Bedürfnissen, von Ängsten und Kritik, führt zu Isolation. Deshalb ist die entscheidende Frage wahrscheinlich weniger, was privat oder persönlich bedeutet oder was gesellschaftlich relevant erscheint oder nicht, sondern wie wir eine Form des Zuhörens entwickeln, die gerade da besonders sensibel ist, wo eine Stimme wieder sprechen lernt, wo ein Ich sich wieder als Subjekt begreift, wo das scheinbar Private politisch wird.

Ich werde mich erinnern, wie ich einen Text über meine Suche nach Sprache schrieb.



# Thinking about the giraffe

By anonymous

13.11.2018

Here are some thoughts about the giraffe.

The giraffe is big and yellow with brown spots. Wait. Maybe it is actually brown with yellow spots. I am not sure. However, a distinctive feature of the giraffe is its long, long neck.

A neck connects a head with a body.

A long neck connects a head far away with a body nearby.

Despite the distance, the giraffe's head and body are still connected.

I recently learned that the unusual height of a giraffe require specific physiologies:

apparently the heart is large and strong

and apparently the blood veins are long and has some kind of flaps on them to secure that the blood does not flow too fast from the brain when the giraffe lowers its head to drink

and apparently near the brain the veins split into several and creates a so-called "wonder net" which regulates the blood pressure to the brain

Imagine that. A wonder net. A connecting net of wonder. How great.

14.11.2018

Gender studies have for long been concerned about which life are considered as life. What follows is the question of what are considered nonlife or death. I am interested in exploring that.

Wow. So many headlines. Zoo authorities from Copenhagen Zoo have decided to kill a healthy giraffe named Marius who are genetically unsuitable for future breeding due to overrepresentation in the captive population. Public horriification.

As a self-evident truism, anthropocentrism conveys the idea that human life is the most central on Earth: human life is special, extraordinary, unique, exceptional. Exceptional life.

Life life life life life life life life life human life life life life life lif ife lfie f iel felife  
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What is life? What is alive? And what is death and dead? Was Marius alive? Is Marius dead? What kind of being was Marius? Something other than human? Non-human? Animal? What kind of being am I?

Okay. There really is something going on with those dichotomies of human/non-human, life/death, nature/culture that I need to understand... And why is everything always so complexly gendered, sexualized, racialized....?

20.11.2018

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5.12.2018

So. A giraffe. In a zoo. Is killed. By humans.

A healthy giraffe is killed by humans

because it constitutes surplus according to humans

among the other giraffes that are put in the zoo by humans.

It is a matter of logistics.

It is a matter of space.

There is not space enough for a healthy, human-bred giraffe because the human-created space is too little.

They say it is a matter of science, of knowledge, of saving specific species - but it is also a matter of not-saving, of killing, specific species.

7.12.2018

The life of a giraffe in the zoo is designed by humans

The destiny of a giraffe in the zoo is designed by humans

The death of a giraffe in the zoo is designed by humans

Marius' life is designed to be, to happen, but then also to not happen, to end.

But wait, can we even call that a life to live? Should we call it a nonlife to not live?

And wait, is that even different from the lives of other beings?

And wait, do any of us actually live? Or do we all have nonlives to not live?

Life, death, humans, nonhumans, relationships, connections, attachments, affiliations, dependencies, entanglements, strings, webs, nets. Nets of wonder. How great.

12.12.2018

We have an idea of nature and natural life as something opposite to culture, something wild and untamed. However, we keep trying to control and cultivate nature – the zoo and Marius' life is very much owned, administrated and controlled by humans.

As such Marius represent not nature in the sense of something wild and untamed, but as an owned, administrated, controlled, constructed....design. Is Marius both nature and culture, then? Or neither nature nor culture? Can we understand Marius' life (and death) in this way in terms of a "cyborg life": a life outside the normative constructions of nature and culture, life and death?

12.12.2018

Life life life life life life life life giraffe life life life life life lif life lfie f iel felife  
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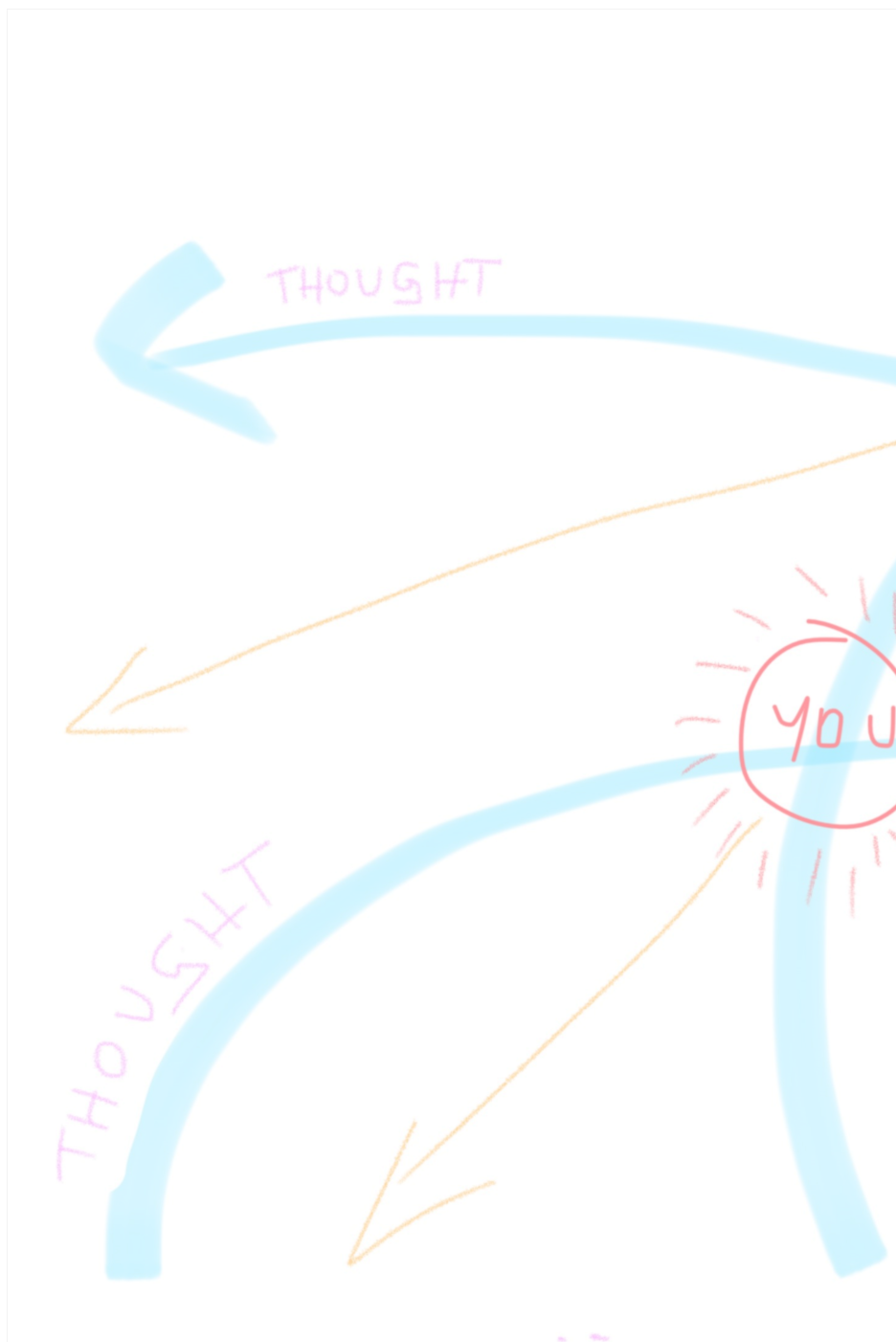
Is the giraffe life in the zoo a designed nonlife, a cyborg life?

Is the giraffe life much different from the lives of other species?

Is the designed giraffe life much different from my designed life?

Are we all designs, cyborgs, giraffes?

How great.



# My gift is my writing

By Rodrigo Zorzanelli

It's been a long time I haven't done this. Yes, to write. There is something about the freedom and the beauty of the writing process itself. I want to experiment and explore while I write and I want this experience to be led by my feelings. Led by what feels right or round and by what makes sense for me.

Talking about writing reminds me of an earlier me, one that I refuse to connect to or to see as myself. An earlier me who wasn't able to blossom, to connect with what is inside. I thought I didn't know how to express myself in many ways but I was mistaken. I did this through writing. I remember sitting in cafés around Avenida Paulista, enjoying the feeling of being lonely in a city of millions of people where everyone is talking and there is no one left to hear what is being said. Barely I knew how I was so connected to what is inside me while I was writing. I remember sipping that hot cup of coffee and throwing all those words on paper. Words, words, words. Barely I knew how true it all was.

When I look back, it's hard to see myself in the person I was that time. At the same time, I am also sure that I was there if I think about what I wrote. Perhaps the part of me I can't recognize is the one I'm still struggling to accept.

These days I was playing a game with myself: I was thinking about friends of mine and I wondered whatever things and interests I connect

with them. For example, if I think about Hannah, I think about dance, about sharing feelings, about processes, about traveling and about laughing. If I think about Lukas, it's bouldering that comes to my mind. As well as gemini, academic intelligence and minimalist style. With Joyce I also connect bouldering but not only. Architecture, learning German... The way she puts her hair on a graphic pony tail, the way she wears her geometry inspired clothes and accessories. But what happens when I think about myself? Can I really point out what interests me and what my friends would connect with me? Somehow it's a hard task, I don't know why.

I do know that our lives are made of stories and encounters, which tell us a lot about ourselves and our world. However, I feel like I'm not conscious enough about me. As if I couldn't look at myself and appreciate what I've built and who I am.

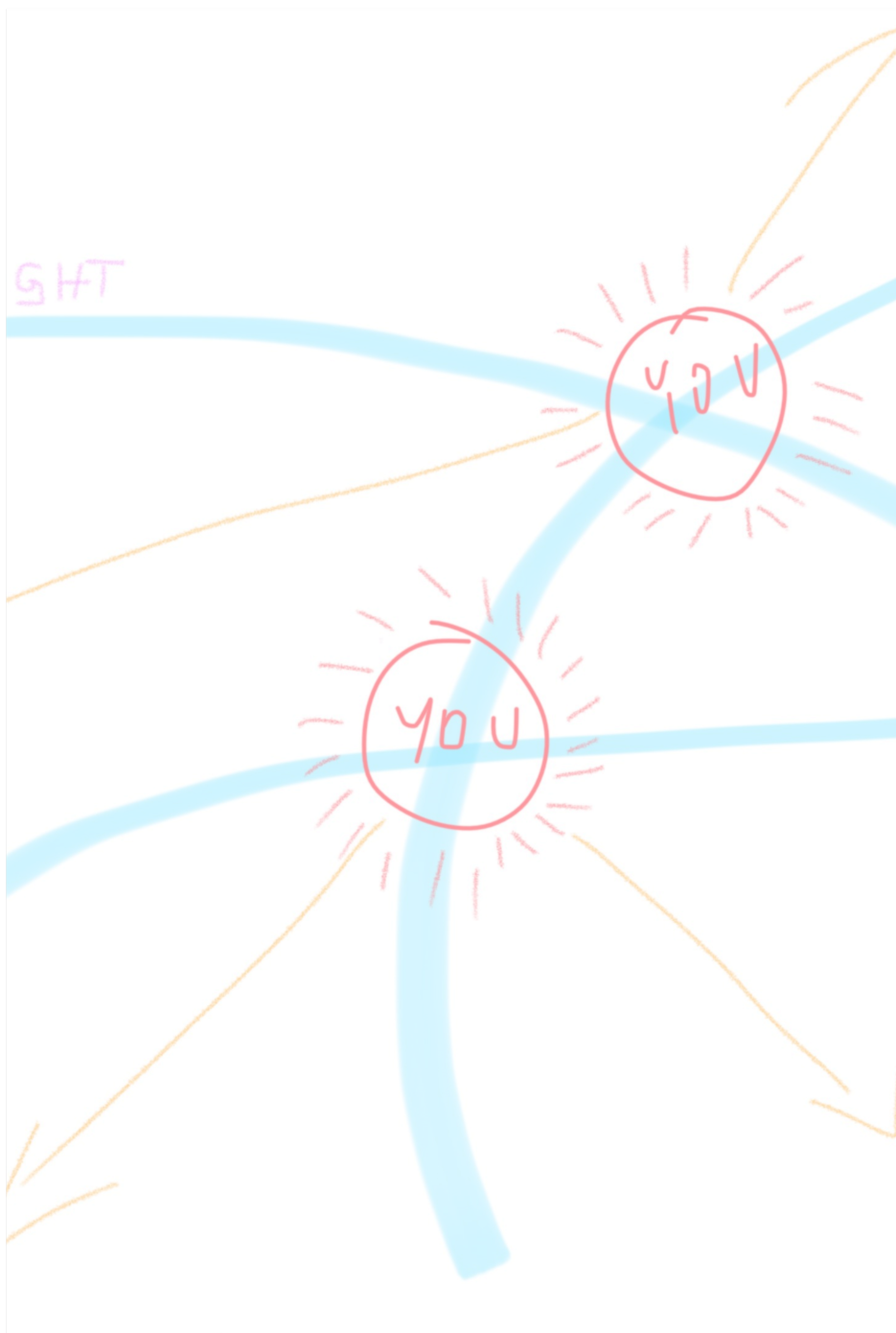
I've been reflecting a lot on my own role in my own life. Emotional roller coaster day all over again. What do I want? What do I need? What is important for me? How to be responsible for my feelings and desires? For myself and for my environment? How to express and practice what feels good inside my heart? So many questions. Although the answers would be beautiful, I feel suffocated. I feel anxious. I let these questions become walls that surround me and interrupt my connections to anything and anyone.

So here I am, taking my time to write and it feels good. But still I try to put all my honesty in this text. Why can't I do this really? Why do I say I want to be honest but I don't really utter it? I still keep this distance, this barrier, this back door from which I can escape in any moment.

Someone told me once that sharing is a way of feeling responsible for what we write. This makes me imagine this writing as being a gift. In a way, I feel quite flattered about it. I can already imagine all the beautiful wrapping papers and laces I would use for packing it, so the experience of receiving this gift starts immediately with touching it, becoming inti-



mate with it. By peeling and unpacking it, the text would slowly become visible. It would be just there, naked and vulnerable. The beauty wouldn't be in anything physical anymore. It would just come by reading and feeling what I wrote there. It's just the words you read and the feeling they carry from my heart to yours. I thought this was a gift to you, but maybe it is a greater gift to me.



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# On Modes of Function

By Flora Löffelmann

Do you ever wonder how everything you have learned during your life is another piece of information that fits with something you already know before – and how the order in which you gather this information might also have a significant influence on how you position this information in relation to each other?

How exactly does all of this align? If I had heard about something at another point in my life, would my thoughts have been completely different? But then: historicity. Every thought that you ever heard/learned/read is in itself also a product of a complex interaction of circumstances, events, and times. Some might attribute these thoughts to the singular genius mind of one person (usually male in the imagination) who just spontaneously comes up with whatever great thought and is forever praised for it. I say: this is highly unlikely. By looking at historicity, I want to debunk the myth of the solitary genius mind. I want to take this rhizomatic, intertwined understanding of texts, theory and material world and trace how it is productive. What additional information can we get if we look not just at the information at hand, the context that it came from, where it originated, but also at our own situation at the moment of encounter with a specific thought? What do we see that we would otherwise miss? How can we deepen our understanding of things by relating them to our present situation? And, in consequence: How can we develop theoretical thoughts that are informed by this and yet aware of the fragmentary nature of such a thought?

You are the subject that is doing the research, the nodal point of your own thought, of your own history. How can you avoid that what you research about is only the object of your observation? Is there a way of showing the intra-activity, as Karen Barad calls it, how what was formerly named "subject" and what was formerly named "object" interact with one another?

The researcher is the place where this interaction takes place. You reform what you read by virtue of your own experience. Neuroscience tells us that the way you cluster knowledge is complex, but that emotions also play a big part in it. So why do humans so easily classify scientific knowledge as utterly different from emotional memory?

Knowledge can hurt us, it can make us feel lesser, but, on the other hand: it can also empower us. By finding out something about a topic that is very personal for you – like discovering that there is feminist science that questions invisibly embedded patriarchal values – you feel uplifted. How could conventional philosophy trick you for such a long time into thinking that there was no alternative? If you read an article that shows recent research of how many people – a significantly bigger amount of them female – have to suffer sexual harassment at their workplace, this also touches you on an emotional level. Do not just take this information as a value-neutral token that can be reused at another point, let it point towards all of the experiences you yourself have made, and at narratives of people you know, and at the faceless crowd of all those you do not know. Scientific knowledge always points beyond itself. And it is through you that it points beyond itself. In the process of pointing, you are transformed, and the knowledge is as well. Even the results of so-called "hard sciences" are not monolithic. They are read, they transform the reader, they prompt further thought. They may raise disapproval or praise, or they might fit into someones narrative as exactly that puzzle piece that was missing all along.

In the author, there are many more mechanisms at work than usually described by what we call "academic research", or the production of results and text. It has never NOT been personal. That mythical time does not exist where whatever people were thinking about was not in-

fluenced by their own history – including their intellectual history. And that is the best thing about human intellect: by virtue of everyone being different, being positioned in a distinct historical and socioeconomic situation, being so intersectionally diverse, there are as many different re-workings of every single thought, as small as it might be, as there are humans.

The ultimate ethical act for Levinas is: Approaching the other without preconceptualizing what or who they are. Likewise: thought. Let it come at you, and don't violently foreclose emotional reactions it might prompt. Be ready to be touched, feel into the reaction. Be ready to be touched. Be ready to be touched by a thought you might have never thought before. Be ready to research, within yourself: How does this thought come to be, what does it link to, and why? How is it embedded in your own layers of memories and knowledge, where are the points leading beyond themselves without knowing where? Vectors, like in math class drawings. I remember learning of vectors for the first time and of the fact that, even though seemingly parallel on paper, they inevitably touch somewhere in space because space is not flat. I imagined all the parallel vectors drawn into our books and how they would meet and cross and where that might be. Or at what time! How fast does thought travel along a vector? How far does it go? Only until it discovers another object? Or is it not a mere object anymore, but a subject in its own right, diffracting the vector, mirroring it, maybe throwing it back at where it came from, maybe somewhere entirely different?

It is a vector that brought me here: I travelled along its lines to figure out how thought works. How thought is interconnected with the outside. It is not mere language: In line with Karen Barad, we have to take into account the materiality of things – how they are transformed by one another in every instant of proximity. Close vectors that run alongside each other will cross, inevitably space is not flat, remember – but how does one determine if they are merely close or overlapping? Who is to measure that, and by what means? Language, again, since I am not talking about mathematical constructions: So you will say "that's close to what I

thought" upon hearing someone else's account of the same situation or same text passage, or you will say "I agree but there is this aspect you did not take into consideration" – and in that instant, you could always add: "You do not take into consideration by virtue of xxx". There is a reason the other person might not point something out that is quite obvious to you, and this reason is the historicity of thought. You might be close, might even come so near as to feel the heat of the other's thought, but might not see quite the same. What does "close" or „overlapping“ mean when there is no indication of the breadth of the vectors anyway? Of the scope of the thought? Does it stay the same continually, or does it grow and merge over time as it picks up other details and fragments and experiences?

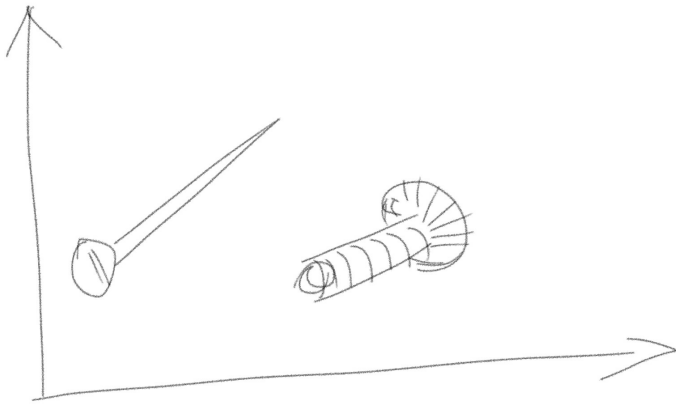
Maybe I should have written: The vector starts with you. It is what is pointing beyond yourself in a thought you are processing. It is what can touch upon other objects and be changed by it. But, then let's take a look at the ways thoughts can influence each other. Let's look at a mode of function – that has, literally, held most of history together: the bolt and the nut.

Wikipedia teaches me new things: the inside of the nut/ respectively the outside of the bolt have a surface that is threaded. Threaded surfaces stick to one another by friction, stretching and compression. I am specifically interested in the friction at this moment: The friction that is created by the miniscule lines, the threads on the outside/inside of the object falling into the right place. You screw it in, you make it fall in the right place –but you also have to turn the bolt in the right direction in order for it to fit. It will only go in if you do this right, there is a rule for that: which direction you have to turn and how parts fit into one another. You have to know the rule. There is not much to be done with violence if you get it wrong and cannot figure out the system (picture an Alien situation). If you use force, you will most likely ruin the threads and it will not hold again. On the other hand: screw the other way and you will take everything apart, intended or not. But, then: If you screw a bolt into a nut, what is the direction anyway? What is it relative to?

Let's apply this movement to thought: This could be the way someone pictures an argument. One piece/thought goes into the other exactly in one way. The threading, what one could call the specific properties of the argument, align with each other in a certain way. Which way? That's the challenge of the theoretician. But if it is done, if the two of them fit together, it will stay like that for a long time: arguments tied so closely together that you forget that they were, in the beginning, just two lines of thought, two mere vectors – and that someone, at some point, saw how they could fit together. The thought becomes self-evident over time, the nut and bolt, individuals at first, dissolve under layers and layers of grease and dirt, hard to tell apart, even harder to actually be taken apart: It would require a lot of WD-40 and a technician's eye for detail. But what if one screws it open anyways? What if the claim that there are individual nuts and bolts already makes them visible, to the eye and thus deconstructable?

Picturing arguments as nuts and bolts, it is clear that there is not much space for the "individual". But, then, how individual are we really if our subjectivity is also something always under construction by virtue of interaction with the Other, the outside? Are we also a nut for something's bolt? How are we, as persons, threaded? And how do specific thoughts go into "us" – and, most importantly, how do they leave us?

Associations. How to weld pieces of thoughts together in a meaningful manner: this goes here and this goes there and I can say this using that, and so forth. Take this piece you found interesting there and make it something new by combining it with what you found elsewhere – or just in yourself. It is an argument, baby, and the only one to carry it out is you. You are the one deciding on its structure, its architect, its envisioner, its host: invite the parts into your garden, to your party, let them mingle and dance and catch them just in the moment of self-alignment, before self-betrayal, before passing out.



Flora Löffelmann, 2019

# Intersektionalität – Ein Gedankengang

By Sofia Casarrubia

Für mich ist Intersektionalität einerseits ein theoretisches Konzept von Worthülsen. Begrifflichkeiten, die auf -ismen enden. Ein zunächst akademisches Konzept, welches mir zum ersten Mal in den ersten Semestern meines Bachelors begegnete. Ich erinnere mich lose an den Titel eines einführenden Textes. Irgendetwas mit „Wir, die Seiltänzerinnen“.

Das Bild einer Seiltänzerin ist mir in Erinnerung geblieben. Ich erinnere mich, wie ich mich als junges Mädchen in einer Kinderzirkusgruppe auf einem Seil versuchte. Es war vielleicht 1,5 Meter über dem Boden und die Vorstellung runter fallen zu können, kostete mir einige Zeit der Überwindung. Irgendwann stand ich mit nackten Füßen auf dem Seil, meine nackten Füße schmerzten am Anfang etwas auf dem harten Drahtseil. Ich war froh, neben mir eine Hand zu halten, die mir dazu verhalf, mein Gleichgewicht zu suchen um nicht zu fallen. Ich erinnere mich an den unsagbaren Schmerz zwischen meinen Beinen, als ich dann doch mal vom Drahtseil abrutschte. Dennoch versuchte ich es weiter, bis der Tag kam, an dem ich von einer Seite auf die andere hinüber balancierte. Intersektionalität bildet für mich eine Gratwanderung ab. Keine leichte Aufgabe, im Gleichgewicht zu bleiben. Um auf dem Seil entlang zu tanzen, braucht es Standfestigkeit, Ausgeglichenheit zwischen Entspannung und Anspannung und viel Übung und Vertrauen in dir selbst. Es braucht Mut und Entschlossenheit, wieder auf zu stehen und weiter zu machen. Da kann eine nahestehende Person im Umfeld das Gelingen des Seiltanzes beeinflussen. Manchmal reicht es zu wissen, ich könnte nach ihrer Hand greifen, mich unterstützen lassen ohne die Hand wirklich zu berühren.

Wenn ich theoretisch über Intersektionalität nachdenke, Texte lese, eine Präsentation für ein Uniseminar vorbereite, dann schöpfe ich aus meinen Lebens- und Praxiserfahrungen und aus meinen Bildungsarbeiten als Trainerin. Ich denke oft an Personen, die mich inspirieren, an ihre Biographien und Geschichten. Meine 80jährige italienisch/sizilianische Freundin Elena mit ihrem faltigen, mit Warzen versehenem Gesicht und ihrer lauten Stimme. Meinen stark sinnigen Großvater, der mit einer leichten Lähmung in seiner rechten Hand geboren wurde und sich gegen den Hitlergruß wehrte. Meine Großmutter, die als junge deutsche Frau im Krieg in Hamburg Steckrübensohlenbrühe trank und Hausfrau wurde. Meine Eltern, die Familiengeschichten verbinden, Kinder zeugten und damit zwei europäische Nationen zusammenführten. Meine Kolleg\*innen, Freund\*innen und Mitbewohnerinnen, mein Partner, die mich im Alltag begleiten, bestärken, herausfordern und inspirieren...

Intersektionalität bedeutet für mich, individuelle Lebenserfahrungen mit historischen, politischen und strukturellen Realitäten in Zusammenhang zu setzen und nach gemeinsamen Schnittmengen zu suchen. Diese „Verbindungsanalysen“ begreife ich als intersektionale Arbeit: Lebenserfahrungen historisch zu kontextualisieren. Erleben in Worte zu bringen und zu reflektieren. Es geht mir um eine systemanalytische Auseinandersetzung. Um den Versuch, Patriarchat, White Supremacy, Kapitalismus, Rassismus, Gender, sexuelle Orientierung, sozio-ökonomische Herkunft, Ableismus, Adulthood, Rasse, Ethnizität und weitere konstruierte Kategorien und Systeme als in einander verschränkte Unterdrückungssysteme zu betrachten. Oft verwirren mich die Komplexitäten und all die Widersprüche. Um diese sozialen Ungleichheiten greifbar zu machen, sie benennen zu können, will ich mich mehr für intersektionale Gerechtigkeit stark machen.

In diesem Zusammenhang bietet Intersektionalität für mich einen anhaltenden Prozess der Anti-diskriminierungs- und Widerstandsarbeit, für eine sozial-politisch gleichberechtigte globale Gesellschaft in Zeiten des Rechtsrucks.

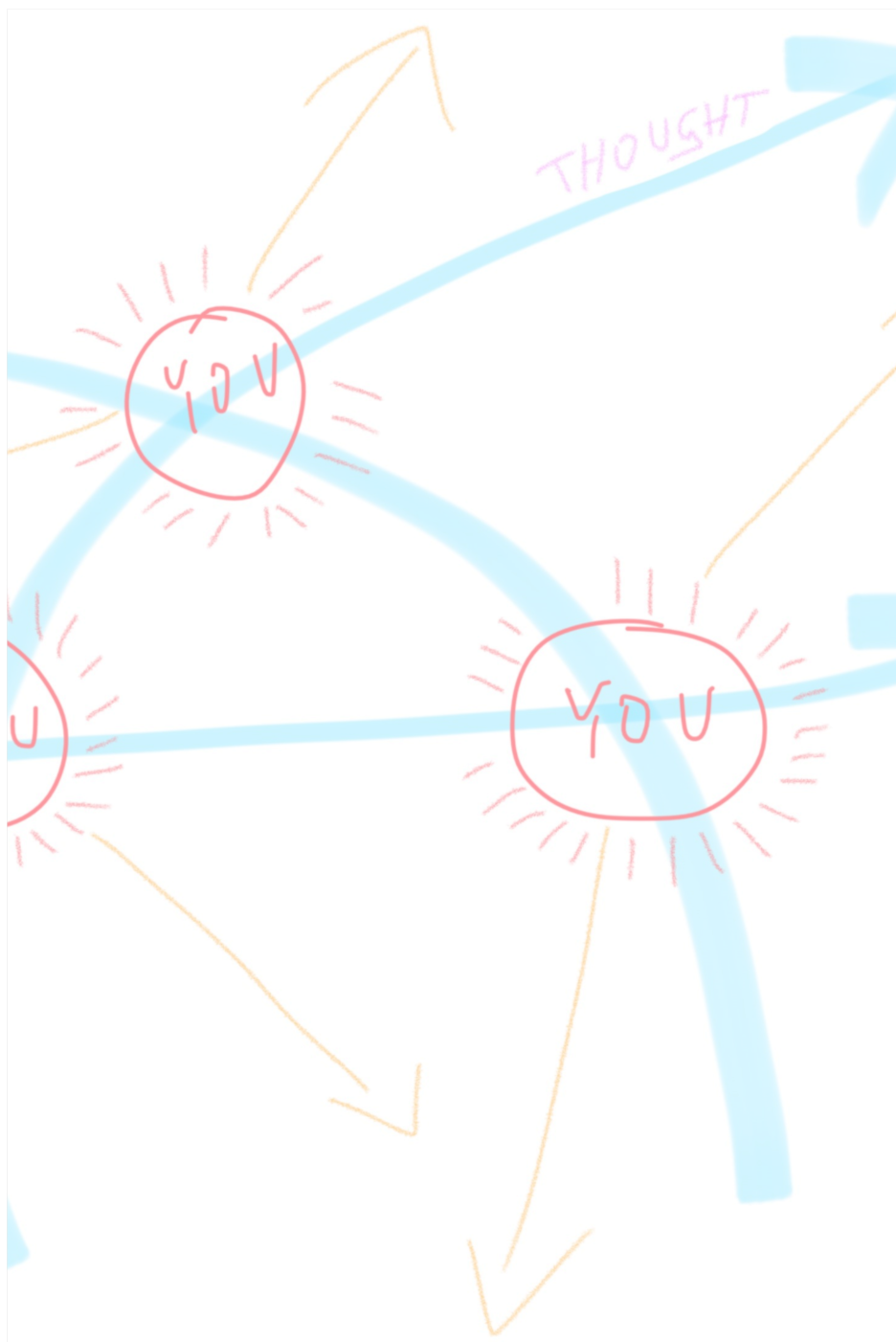
Intersektionalität bedeutet für mich, bewusst Verantwortung zu tragen, sowie die Aufgabe, Antidiskriminierungs- und Gleichstellungspolitik in



Europa und darüber hinaus partizipativ zu gestalten, um strukturelle Ungleichheiten und fest eingefahrene Machtstrukturen zum Schwanken zu bringen.



Foto von h.lutz, fotocommunity, 2019



# This is not the ultimate guide to writing — nevertheless, here are some tips and tricks

This section was written during our second to last session of the semester. The goal was to collect some of our experiences and conclusions in order to share them with others interested in and struggling with the writing process – as we have shared our struggles and achievements with each other the past months. We wrote the following in approximately 45 minutes and surprised ourselves with the amount of text we were able to produce in this short time. In this way the text is both a documentation of some of the methods we have used and a testament to the effect of these.

The following is written and edited by Adiba Afros, anonymous, Berit Carstens, Flora Löffelmann, Lukas Kofoed Reimann, Meike Bartlema, Rodrigo Zorzanelli, Sofia Casarrubia.

## **Keep writing – just do it**

Just do it. Yes. All you need is a pen and a paper. Or your computer or mobile phone if you prefer. Nothing more. Sit down, take ten minutes of your time and start writing. About what though? What is your inspiration for today? It doesn't matter. Just write. You will see how the words will flow and you will always have something to write about. This might sound a bit scary, I know. Staring at a blank page and not knowing where to head with it. But trust me. It works! A little tip here: if you feel blocked, you can also just write about that. Write about how you wish you were inspired. Write about how you were supposed to be writing

but you can't. Just write and keep writing. Ten minutes. The clock will tell you when to stop. If you do that for a couple of days or weeks, it will become a habit. It doesn't even have to be ten minutes if you don't want. Perhaps just five. Perhaps just three sentences and no watch involved. It doesn't matter. What matters is that you keep writing. Anything. Just write. It makes sense if you collect all these writings somewhere. After a month or a given timeframe you decide, go back to that very first day. Start reading everything you've written, and I am sure you will have something there. I can't tell you what it will be, but I also don't have to. You will see that you've written exactly what you had to write. And keep writing!

### **Don't be too self-critical**

Being overly self-critical can take all the fun out of the writing process. Even worse, it can stop you from writing anything at all. At times, I felt so much pressure to write something that was instantly good and interesting and funny, that I completely froze before I even started. I think it's okay to write silly things and pretentious poems and boring monologues about your private life, at least if you're having fun writing it. So please, refrain from being too self-critical. Some of these writings may actually be helpful for developing a thought, or you might be able to use something for later texts. And some writings will be completely useless and make you cringe. Both is totally fine!

### **Fake it 'til you make it**

The text is not your judge: first, there is only you and the paper, you and the page. The page does not know you, more so, it is not even interested in you. It does not know your affiliations, your knowledge, your status, what is in your bank account or how many PhDs you have to your name. To the page, you could be whoever – and that is the most freedom you will ever have: Write as if your first book was just at the printer's, write as if you got paid 10 Euros for every line of poetry you pro-

duce, write as if there was a person hand lettering all your thoughts onto building walls, as if people were queueing a night ahead to listen to your thoughts.

### **Stop romanticizing creativity**

Don't think about writing like it's something you can only do in a black leather notebook with a glass of red wine in a candle-lit bar, after a genius idea just suddenly hit you out of nowhere. Just start writing, whenever, wherever. You might get the most inspiring thoughts during breakfast after a good night of sleep in a super boring week, who knows.

### **separate creativity and critique**

a really great tip for the writing process is to separate the process of being creative from the process of being critical. this tip is inspired by peter elbow 1998 who very helpfully describes how these two processes often conflict with each other. instead elbow suggests to consciously keep them apart:

try to write as freely and uncritically as possible

try to avoid worrying too much

try to be completely open and allow yourself just to produce words - any words!

and then at some point return and look at your text through a critical lens

it's true: it helps!

### **Be ready to be surprised**

You sit in front of an empty paper and you have to start writing. You don't know where to start and what to write about. Your head seems empty like the page in front of you in this very moment.

You think of just leaving the space, leaving the empty paper, going for a coffee or surfing online on social media. You hold on, you turn your internet-connection off and you come back to your empty paper and then you just start writing. From one letter to another. You are bringing one and another word out. You look to yourself while you write your first sentence. You make a point. And a second and a third sentence starts appearing on your page.

You have written a page and while you think, „okay you just wrote a paper for the garbage“. Some days later you hear yourself reading the text twice aloud to your fellow students during class.

While you're not sure if your reading is making any sense to them, you listen carefully to their feedback. They tell you how structured and clear your text has been received.

Relieved and with an inner smile to yourself, you leave the room to get some fresh air outside.

## **Start with yourself**

You might think that you - "yourself" - is no academic authority. (But what or who is an academic authority anyway?) In allowing yourself to be your own focus of research, you value your own experiences and situate yourself, which opens your writing for criticism.

Maybe within writing about your own ideas, questions and experiences, you even realize how you already are an expert for a special topic. Writing about something personal and putting it into a bigger context could also be a relief. Read "When Death Cuts Apart: On Affective Difference, Compassionate Companionship and Lesbian Widowhood." by Nina Lykke and experience the power of personal writing.

## **just follow the rules!**

if you struggle with having yourself as an authority - can't motivate your inner (very intelligent but very uninspired, sensitive, self-critical and maybe also sometimes very lazy) artist - a way to push yourself to get started is to follow a set of rules: any rules. you can make up some yourself or you can ask other people to make them or you can get inspired by peter elbow 1998 "poetry as no big deal" - however, a defined structure or specific rules can lighten the pressure and make the blank open world of creativity feel less intimidating

## **Start with a poem**

If you have the problem of sitting in front of a blank page and do not know how to start (as everyone has at some stage!), just start with a poem. You could simply use two phrases that Peter Elbow proposes in "Poetry as No Big Deal":

1. phrase: „I remember..."
2. phrase: „I wish..."

Start every sentence with the phrase you chose. Do not think too much about it, just write down what comes to your mind. (Of course, you can choose any other kind of repeating phrase.)

Maybe your poem will consist of only three sentences or it will fill up six pages. Both is fine. Now you probably feel a relief of pressure, you have done research within your own thoughts and you have the perfect starting point for writing what you actually want or have to write. Plus: If you now use the revising-method of cutting it up and just cut off the phrase at the beginning and give it a new order, you will probably have already a nice text.

## Writing is Thinking

Are there thoughts stuck in your mind? Is it playing over and over again, the same words and sentences like a broken record player? Write it down.

Write it down and all the associated thoughts with it, create a poem, a sketch, a paragraph, just spill it all out, because once the thoughts materialize into visible words, it you may feel somewhat relieved. Relieved from the burden of those words in the head by transferring them into another object. Or, it may be the starting point of a longer chain of thoughts. The way we think eventually turns into actions that affect ourselves and those around us, and so it is necessary that we process our thoughts with greater care. Writing is perhaps a solution to this. It is not necessary to write for others, but for this particular purpose, to think, it has been worthwhile to have a conversation with myself to understand how and why I think the way I do. My mind unfortunately does not have a very reliable short-term memory space as an auto-saving Word Document; minor but important conjectures tend to slip out, a Word Document can save that in seconds. Understated wonder of the technological era.

During the past few instances of freewriting, I wrote about topics swirling in my mind, and instead of moving on to the next thought, I decided to dig deeper. It turned into an unexpected exercise towards self-realization, about my positionality within each topic. I did not find definitive answers, and neither was that the purpose – I wanted to explore the past: experiences that led to a particular way of thinking about a topic, the present: how I am affected by it and possibly others and, the future: what such a way of thinking entails.

I do not think or write in such a linear manner, far from it. Through writing I have realized that my thinking process is more like a multi-dimensional constellation of interlinking experiences, ideas and perceptions, it is somewhat akin to the complexity of being a human being.



Nothing profound; it just means that it is okay to accept and embrace with how fucking confusing everything is and no wonder we screw up so often. At such instances, the written thoughts may have a valuable role to play. We can go back to our writing to see whether we dismissed any important minor conjectures before we prematurely acted to screw things up, and I can only hope that over time, with greater practice and self-reflection, I will have fewer instances of repeating the same mistakes in life.

### **Use another metaphor**

What is the last object that you found interesting? What is the last process that caught your attention? The last place that made you stop your walking in bewilderment? In writing, we embody the structures we encounter in the world because – let's say it like it is – humans like to adhere to structures they already know. A text, 'they' say, is like a building you build, one stone atop the other, structures, hierarchies, dichotomies, clarity. But what if texts were more like a pond? A deep dark hole in the ground pulling you downwards when merely gazing at it? Is there a monster at the ground? Or the decomposed corpses of forgotten children? What could that thought be, and how would it sound?

### **(Toxic)perfectionism**

We all love us some Britney – but trust me, this is as much toxicity as we want in our lives. So, the next time you find yourself re-reading your term paper for the tenth time at two in the morning with tear-filled eyes, the cat already purring up your leg to ask if everything is alright with their favorite human, do the smart thing: Let our Lord and Savior Ms. Spears's delightfully autotuned voice guide you out of this situation. Because we should never forget: She lived through and sang about it, so we do not have to do this anymore. Go and get your taste of a poison paradise elsewhere!

## Sharing is caring

Sharing is caring and there is nothing else left to say. When you share your text, you care about yourself, about the time you have invested into producing your piece. Not only time. You also care about your feelings inserted in between your words. You care that you have something to share, so you acknowledge this need in you. Sharing is caring because you are also caring for the reader. We all have been in situations when we have read something, and these paragraphs or pages really touched us. Maybe it was one simple sentence, but it was exactly what we needed to read in that moment. You never know who you are going to touch with what you write. You also don't know how you are going to feel whenever you share what you have written. What you know though is that if you don't share, these opportunities won't even exist. So, start sharing and start caring!

## Read it aloud:

In – CUT – ter – CUT – sec – CUT –tion – CUT – al – CUT – ity

Inter section ality

section inter ality

ali ty in ter section

Intersectionality

## Just cut it up/off

“Off with their heads!” shouts the Queen of Hearts very loud without any mercy in her voice. She is desperately angry when she finds out that her garden’s roses were actually white. They were just painted red. All the blood comes up with her rage and her own face turns red. As a punishment, the painters will be decapitated.

This was the first image that came to my mind when thinking about cutting something off. Perhaps cutting something off is often seen as negative. But why though? It might actually be quite helpful. When you write, you will have a lot of material. The more, the merrier. But what can you do with a lot of material? You can just leave it and then it's nothing but material. Or you can treat it, polish it, transform it into one piece, one text that collects many of your thoughts and ideas into one composition. How do you do that? You extract the most valuable parts and the rest, you just cut it off. Don't be afraid of it. Cut it! Differently from the Queen of Hearts, you're not beheading here. You are rather painting the roses red. Just don't let her find out about it.

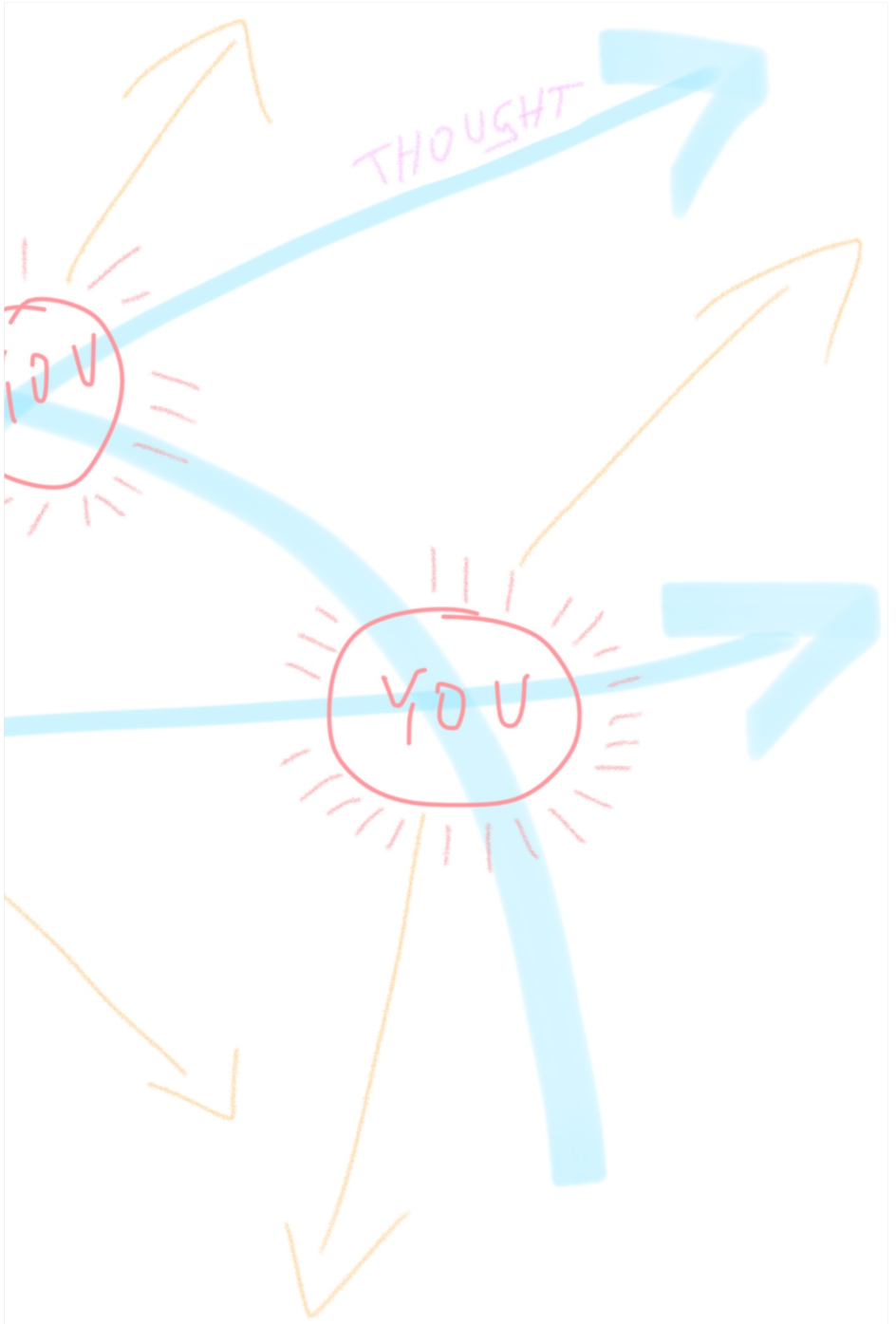
## Meet up with friends and write!

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