

JEWELLERY AND HYBRIDITY¹: ON HUMAN NATURE AND THE FUTURE OF JEWELLERY

Dear Jewellery,

I am quite aware that contemporary exchanges concerning your “true” nature are a kind of mined territory to be treaded carefully. One is well advised not to forget that your contours are supposed to be sharp and that there is a constant need of drawing lines between you and other genres. One learns for instance never to accept any confusion between you and painting, sculpture, or photography in miniature, or—worse still—designer products or Modeschmuck.² From time to time one is also reminded never to reduce you to the outcome of a mere craft. Aren't you so much more as you glide across our skies on your conceptualist wings powered by instinct, intellect and all those formidable theories? And then there are, of course, the repeated injunctions not to confuse you with mere adornment—despite the fact that such distinctions are still so far removed from common evidence. For, outside a narrow circle of “specialists,” one does continue—with an innocence so typical of the thoughtless—to associate you with the vanity of a wearer expressed within the context of a social event. I have no idea why this is so. I simply take it as a kind of philosophical mystery in need of closer scrutiny.

But it suddenly strikes me that you do lead a rather bashful existence among your cousins in the world of the arts, don't you? Just look at the amount of media coverage painting, sculpture, opera, cinema, theatre receive, whereas *you* are hardly ever seriously discussed, at least in mainstream journals. I guess, this issues from the uncertainties related to your status, which in turn generates what seems to be a widespread need to situate, define and distinguish you from whatever you run the risk of getting mixed up with.

Nonetheless, isn't there a strange contradiction in all such efforts? On the one hand everybody seems to recognise you instinctively: as part of that ancient package we seem to have inherited from our Palaeolithic ancestors and as an element of our collective unconscious structured by those archetypes proposed so many decades ago by Carl Gustav Jung towards a better understanding of human nature. On the other hand—and precisely because of the metaphysical nature of your bond with us—there seems to be a strange aura of vulgarity around you, as if you were an anthropological undergarment to be ashamed of or in any case not worth reflecting on. When we talk about freedom, exploitation, environment, terrorism, migration—all those powerful issues concerning us as global

citizens of the 21st century—we keep forgetting to talk about you, and for that matter our own bodies, with which you have been so fatefully connected since the dawn of our existence.

But, dear Jewellery, maybe things are far easier after all. Maybe you are simply everybody's business and there is no need to grope for deeper reasons. In this vein I can only wish you a powerful return to our bodies and minds.

Yours

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As I pause before signing this letter, I suddenly find myself caught up in a maelstrom of doubts. For who am I to you actually? I am aware that I am neither a maker nor a wearer nor a collector, but maybe just someone who has been struck—and undone—by the possibility that you might hold some of the answers to the mystery that I am to myself. So, instead of concluding this letter, I might as well continue my ramblings along more general lines and switch over to the third person ...

THE SECOND PERSON MODE

At this point it might be worthwhile to take a short look at the *three modes of speech* and their role in modern thought. The first person mode, as we know, is personal and reflexive. It draws attention to the fact that the source of an action mentioned in a discourse is also the source of the discourse itself. Every time I utter an "I", as in *I think, I speak or I am writing this essay*, I am the speaker and the referent at the same time. By contrast, the third person mode is impersonal, objective and typical of scientific discourses, in which things are viewed *in profile*, turned into *objects* and dealt with *in absentia*, the two main consequences being: (1) that we consistently forget that we are not speaking of a thing, but an object; (2) that the discursive presence of the object masks the actual material absence of the thing. The first and the third person modes are thus associated with two distinct and mutually exclusive *perspectives of knowledge*.

The idea that the three modes of speech can function as epistemological perspectives, and that knowledge can be regarded as the cumulative effect of a hybrid cluster of perspectives *without* a lowest common denominator, is certainly not new and has been in circulation since the days of Nietzsche and early quantum physics. In recent years, Hans-Ulrich Hoche has drawn attention to the fact that science continues to operate almost exclusively in the third person mode despite quantum mechanics or early twentieth century trends in theoretical biology, in which the *subjective* spatio-temporal environments of non-human animals began to be explored by people like Jakob von Uexküll.³ However, philosophical reflection cannot do without the first person mode. As Hoche observes, "a methodologically reflected inquiry into consciousness has to be largely a study of *subjectivity* and hence as a rule must be carried out by means of methods suitable, not for the third-person, but for the *first-person* perspective."⁴

Such efforts have a systematic tendency to waver between the first and the third person perspectives, resulting from the subject/object-disposition of modern thinking described at length by Michel Foucault in his archaeological history of Western thought.⁵ The second person mode, in which we would need to address the object of enquiry directly in order to gain knowledge of it, remains largely out of sight in mainstream academic philosophy. There is, however, a marginal tradition in modern thinking that does take the second person mode seriously enough to invest it with diverse

socio-epistemological and ethical functions. In this vein, Martin Buber delivered several decades ago a micro-genealogy of what he termed “dialogical thinking,” starting out with Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi in the late eighteenth century and, decades later, Ludwig Feuerbach, who both pointed out the essential nature of the social nexus between the “I” and the “you,” which Kierkegaard on the other hand tended to elevate to the relation of transcendence between the individual and the divine.⁶ Buber unfolded his own “dialogical thinking” in the context of twentieth-century thinkers like the great Neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen,⁷ or Cohen’s student Franz Rosenzweig,⁸ distinguishing categorically between the connections I/you and I/it and pointing out that the “I” employed in them is invested with two different meanings. The difference between the “I” in opposition to the “you” and the “I” in opposition to the “it” corresponds to the familiar Graeco-Christian distinction between the human and the non-human.⁹ The dialogical principle also figures in later formulations like the “Call of Being” (Martin Heidegger) or the “Call of the Other” (Emmanuel Levinas). The common evidence shared by most of these examples is that the second person mode addresses either a human or a divine Other.

A quite different expression of the “dialogical principle” is Walter Benjamin’s concept of the *aura*, which leads beyond the human to the non-human, but remains within the threshold to the divine. Benjamin explains in his essay on Baudelaire (1939) that the *auratic* experience derives from the intrinsic *expectation* of a gaze that the phenomenon gazed at can respond to by gazing back.¹⁰ He elaborates the idea as follows: “Experiencing the aura of a phenomenon amounts to attributing to it the faculty of opening its eyes.”¹¹ The dialogical principle inscribed into such a formulation is best understood by means of a thought experiment concerning the elementary act constituting what is termed the *homo religiosus*: a human animal, confronted with a piece of rock, paints an eye on it, feels the gaze, falls on his knees and begins to talk with the rock. An act such as this is not only capable of initiating an auratic relation, but also the second person mode inherent to it.

One year after the essay on Baudelaire, amidst the turmoils of the Second World War, Theodor Adorno wrote a letter to Benjamin with the query: “Is the aura the trace of the forgotten humanness in a thing?”¹² Benjamin responded that trees and bushes, which can also be attributed with a gaze, are not man-made. There must be a humanness to the things, which is not created by labour.¹³

But what, if the *homo religiosus* just depicted above decided on a sudden impulse to wipe out the painted eye and stand up on his own feet? That would amount to Nietzsche’s *death of God* and Benjamin’s *birth of modernity* issuing from the elementary act of de-auratisation. As the painted image of the eye is wiped out and the gaze vanishes, the aura is dispersed and the piece of rock transforms into an *object* incapable of gazing back. The dispersal of the aura implies a radical transformation in our relation to things. We find ourselves inhabiting the world as a solitary subject encircled by an infinity of gazeless objects. In such a world, philosophy—in tune with the phenomenological standpoint—can ask the question:

“How is it possible, that things appear?”

However: if the things would regain their gaze and we would enter the second person mode, philosophy would find itself reformulating its question:

“How is it possible, that we appear?”

JEWELLERY SIDELINED

Despite decades of critique, experiment and flights of conceptual imagination, jewellery continues to be admired or disdained as mere decoration, rather than being taken as what it has been for enormous stretches of human history: a technique of enhancement peculiar to human animals, rooted in a daily practice of fabricating one's own image and generating *more being*. Inherent in such a practice is the art of *appearance*, which can easily pass for one of the most fundamental art forms accompanying human existence.

In fact, there seems to be a basic connection between the art of appearance and "culture" as such, if the latter is taken as a collection of techniques and rituals designed to enable collective living. These techniques not only support us in our elementary project of survival as we cross over from non-being to being, but also help us to distinguish our "own" cultural mode from those of "others" and thus delimit our *cultural identity* issuing from the specificities of our "own" practices of excess beyond all survival. The art of appearance can be taken as one of the most ancient unconscious "traditions" at the threshold of all culture.

In tune with this "tradition," human animals employ camouflage in two different senses. On the one hand they use camouflage to conceal themselves from powers that surpass and threaten them, the prime concern being survival. On the other hand they use camouflage in order to be more than what their adversaries are by *appearing* to be more than what they actually are. This second type of camouflaging is in use when we mask ourselves with an image of ourselves in the context of our daily social interactions. To the extent that such images include symbolic elements, the art of appearing involves participation in the biological powers of stronger organisms through contact or substitution. One can drape oneself in the skin of a more powerful animal or arrange constellations of claws and teeth across one's surface. In archaic techniques of appearance, masks, dress and jewellery are applied in order to transform a finite and mortal organism into something beyond itself. The application of symbols indicates an urge not only towards survival, but also towards excess, understood as the drive, the act and the experience of exceeding oneself.

In such a context, jewellery is optimally qualified to produce enhancement. Adornment is the degree zero of enhancement and is often expressive of the power of the powerless. As long as women are oppressed, they are expected to be made pretty through jewellery. As long as elementary needs, like dignity and participation, are sidelined by the dispositives of consumerism, things like necklaces, brooches, rings will spiral down to mere adornment. The moment jewellery finds its place in the contemporary world as an act of resistance and as an expression of autonomy with respect to a norm, it triggers off the ancient project of self-enhancement.

I guess, such political constellations explain, why, despite the diatribes against Modeschmuck, jewellery continues to be seen as mere adornment, while evoking the typical highbrowed rejection from "serious" people in responses like: "I don't care much about jewellery or appearances, because I am preoccupied with more adult concerns." That obviously explains the absence of jewellery in the reflections of philosophers and sociologists and—in a compensatory manner—its exaggerated presence in social anthropology, which is primarily concerned with forms of pre-modern life that are already marginalised before being subjected to the ethnological gaze ...

JEWELLERY AND ME

Take my case for instance. During my long liaison with philosophy, I never encountered jewellery as an object of theoretical enquiry. Nobody wrote about it, nobody discussed it, nobody seemed to be even aware that jewellery is not only something to be made or worn or admired on a body, but also something to be thought about. It figured at most in a metaphorical sense in terms like “Redeschmuck (ornamental),” understood as tropes or figures functioning as techniques of enhancement of speech effects. Prominent philosophers like Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Foucault have reflected at length on art, but they never left the well trodden territories of traditionally acknowledged art forms like music, painting, literature. With respect to jewellery, not much more can be heard than an eloquent theoretical silence. One finds for instance the short essay by Georg Simmel titled “Psychologie des Schmucks,” written around 1908;¹⁴ a small piece by Roland Barthes called “Des joyaux aux bijoux,” published around 1961,¹⁵ and some stray allusions to jewellery in the unpublished writings of Walter Benjamin,¹⁶ who was in any case intrigued by visual practices like photography and cinema that also took a while to get recognised as art. That is all. Simmel and Barthes were both philosophically interested in the everyday aspects of modern life like fashion, popular culture and media, which is why they seemed to feel a brief need to turn their theoretical spotlights on jewellery. And then there are the architects Gottfried Semper¹⁷ in the mid-nineteenth and Adolph Loos¹⁸ in the early twentieth century, who made some fundamental remarks on jewellery and ornamentation. The question is therefore not: “What is jewellery?” but: “Why is jewellery absent in mainstream theoretical discourses?”

My own reflections on jewellery were sparked off by chance personal encounters. I literally stumbled into the world of contemporary jewellery without intending to and was struck by the powerful thinking inscribed into the works I happened to experience. Since then I have been writing on jewellery as a *philosopher*. All my texts are rooted in intense exchanges with makers, which certainly left their imprint on my philosophical enquiries in general. So it did not come as a surprise that at the start of an Australian lecture the issue of my identity surfaced once more. My host turned what was supposed to be an introduction to my person into the question: “Who are you actually? What is a guy like you doing in the world of jewellery?” I found the question justified, since I am in fact neither a maker, nor a wearer, nor a collector, and could only respond by comparing myself to the augurs of old, who would probe into the entrails of living organisms to gather knowledge of the future. Similarly, I dissect the bodies of jewellery objects to read in their structure and composition what it means to be human at this hour of history.

The most striking aspect of my cooperation with makers till now has been the structural *hybridity* that has been never been absent in our technical and intellectual exchanges. When a goldsmith and a writer join hands, their radically different work-worlds are inscribed into whatever they produce. The sheer heterogeneity of the processes, materials, forms, interpretations connected to their normal daily work generates at the end of their exchanges a collage of their incompatible worlds. This was a recurrent experience, which attained a kind of climax, when a group of jewellers and metalsmiths answered a set of theoretical questions set by me in the mode of objects. These were presented at a Munich exhibition, in which the questions as well as my analyses of the object-answers also figured as exhibits, crafted from the materiality of words. The space of the show became like a cloud chamber, in which the trajectories and transitions from the words to the materials used in the exhibits, like copper, porcelain, textiles, could be felt almost physically.¹⁹

A HYBRID WORLD

In the first chapter of his essay on “symmetrical anthropology,” *Nous n’avons jamais été modernes*, Bruno Latour goes through a long list of news items and reads in them the hybridity of the world as it presents itself to contemporary knowledge.²⁰ Such media-based mainstream discourses, probably the strongest factor informing our contemporary sense of reality, have us constantly crossing the boundaries between nature and culture, as we switch from biology to politics, from politics to economics, from economics to medicine etc. in our daily preoccupations with the global threats assailing us in our contemporary world. The analytical technique engineered by Latour and his friends, known as the “Actor-Network-Theory” (ANT), in fact does away with the more or less occult idea of *society or the social* and focusses instead on hybrid constellations of human actors and non-human elements. To understand, sociologically, the communication processes unfolding in a round table discussion, we need to go beyond traditional sociology and take not only the human actors, but also the table itself into account.

This is not entirely new. In the late sixties of the twentieth century Jean Baudrillard designed a sociology of furniture.²¹ In the mid-seventies, Michel Foucault defined the *dispositive* as a collection of heterogeneous objects like laws, documents, architectures, bodies, etc., strung together by a common strategic purpose.²² His famous example was the sexuality dispositive, connecting knowledges, institutions, practices, bodies to generate a fiction called “sex,” which we are urged to talk about incessantly. In the eighties, Donna Haraway unfolded a fictional ontology based on the idea of the *cyborg*, the “Cybernetic Organisms” populating our contemporary world and constantly crossing the boundaries we have got used to drawing between nature/culture, organisms/machines and materialities/immaterialities.²³ According to Haraway, human existence in the contemporary world is better characterised by the ontological mode of the cyborg. More recently, the physicist and gender theorist, Karen Barad, proposed that we determine the “apparatus” in scientific experiments as a hybrid constellation of human agencies and non-human objects.²⁴ In the philosophical movement called *The New Realism* led by people like Maurizio Ferraris and Markus Gabriel, reality is nothing other than the events breaking into the constructivist fictions of a unified and interconnected world and manifesting itself as the heterogeneity and plurality of fields of meaning coexisting and succeeding each other.²⁵ The experience of the hybrid seems to be inseparable from our collective contemporary experience.

JEWELLERY AND HYBRIDITY: A WISHFUL THINKING

I guess, one can take off from such ideas to see jewellery as something that is much more than an object produced by a maker, attached to a body and displayed at a social event. Instead, one can see it as part of a *dispositive* connecting objects, bodies, gazes, events, institutions to generate appearance through surfaces of enhancement and the interactional energies specific to them.

From its earliest manifestations on, jewellery has functioned as an intermediary. The actual *work of art* resulting from the process of making, wearing and displaying it is neither the biological body of the wearer nor an object attached to the body, but the *hybrid* entity of an animal organism draped in metals, minerals, etc., to attain something like a temporary enhancement associated with a particular moment in time. Jewellery has always taken up its position in the intermediary space between Haraway’s opposing spheres, which according to her vision of the cyborg are being challenged and

overcome in the contemporary world. Placed between the body and the world, jewellery is neither something merely biological, nor purely social, nor as distantly objective as the mountains or the stars. It is neither only natural nor only cultural, neither only animal nor only mechanical or artifactual, neither only material nor only immaterial. It is simply an *intermediary*, understood as the medium of hybridity of a materially and symbolically enhanced organism.



Figure 1. David Bielander, *Wellpappe (Cardboard)*, bracelets, 2015, silver, white gold staples

My own ongoing involvement with jewellery has, as mentioned earlier, resulted from more or less coincidental encounters between the heterogeneous worlds of makers and the writer that I am, so that I was constantly faced with the issue of hybridity in questions like: How do words and metals tally? How does the materiality of a text relate to the language of a material? Are there structural homologies between the logic of enchainment of ideas and the material techniques of enchainment in jewellery?²⁶ If words can respond to objects— which is what I am constantly expected to implement as a writer—can also objects respond to words?²⁷ In this sense, my experience of jewellery has had me zigzagging between an “outer” circle of hybridity issuing from the interdisciplinary nature of my collaboration with makers and an “inner” circle centred on the inherent hybridity of jewellery itself. I guess, this experience has been seminal for my approach and my choice of the works feeding my ongoing enquiries within the wider horizon of a philosophical diagnosis of the present.

There are innumerable examples for the inherent hybridity of jewellery in contemporary works. One can find hybridity on the level of the *material*, as in the case of the *Heart* brooches of Peter Bauhuis (Germany), made of silver but perceivable in their surface appearance as weathered pebbles. The same holds for the silver bracelets in David Bielander’s (Switzerland) *Cardboard Series*, in which the silver is visually indistinguishable from cardboard. Another example is the “ice jewellery” of

Kirsten Haydon (New Zealand), in which tiny glass reflector beads are sprinkled on metal surfaces to give them the look of ice and to evoke reminiscences of Antarctic expanses. Such works enact and manifest a hybridity between the haptic and the visual: what can be touched and weighed is not what can be seen in the same object.



Figure 2. Robert Baines, *The Gold Hoard from The Phoenician Colony Settlement at Freshwater Point on the Queensland Coast. Gold Jewellery from the Bronze Age, Phoenician (?)*, approx. 2nd half of 7th century BC., 1997-2008, gold. Photography by Gary Sommerfeld.

Haydon's work also represents a hybridity in *scale*, as she captures the vastness and sublimity of Antarctic ice landscapes within the anthropomorphic proportions of jewellery. The same can be observed in the *Façades* brooches/neck pieces by Beatrice Brovia (Italy) and Nicholas Chang (Hongkong), made of marble extracted from the Carrara massif and cut down to the proportions of jewellery and then sculpted to produce the look of soft cotton fabric and the optical illusion of lightness. The effect is heightened through the mode of presentation, in which the anthropomorphic scale of jewellery is visually confronted with photographic reminiscences of the great Carrara range as its background and source.

One can also observe hybridity on the level of *production technique, form and narrative*, as in the works of Robert Baines (Australia, *Phoenician Gold Hoard*) or Peter Bauhuis (Germany, *Gallium Hoard of Obertraun*), in which ancient metallurgical techniques are applied to produce a kind of pseudo-historical jewellery that is subsequently displayed in the context of invented narratives. This leads to a disconcerting hybridity in the status of the objects, resulting from carefully constructed historical fictions injected into a real and contemporary artistic practice.²⁸



Figure 3. Peter Bauhuis, *Heart brooches*, 2003, silver



Figure 4 . Peter Bauhuis, *The Gallium Hoard of Obertraun*, 2011, Gallium



Figure 5. Beatrice Brovia, Nicholas Chang, *Necklace*, 2011, Carrara marble, PVC, silver



Figure 6 .Kirsten Haydon, *ice movement*, 2011, necklace, enamel, reflector beads, copper, silver, 390x200x30mm. Photography by Jeremy Dillon.



Figure 7. Johanna Zellmer, *Forged*, 2013, copper alloy, plastic tubing, archival satin fine art paper

As a last example, I would like to mention the occurrence of hybridity on the level of *function*. This can be observed in Johanna Zellmer's (Germany/New Zealand) jewellery and passport project *Forged*, in which the metal of a coin symbol is hammered and flattened out, perforated with the passport number of a participant and then attached to the participant's ear with the plastic tubing of a hearing aid. This produces the effect that the passport number punched into the metal is projected onto the neck of the wearer as an image of dotted light reminiscent of neon ads. The actual piece of jewellery resulting from such a process is thus a hybrid object functioning as adornment and political intervention at the same time, as it enacts a return of the "deep" data of an individual wearer, monopolised by the modern state and symbolically condensed to a passport number, back to the surface.²⁹

To sum up, I see in contemporary jewellery a strong potential for the employment of hybridity as a mode of political and cognitive intervention. Unfurling the hybridity coiled up within the folds of jewellery would involve crossing boundaries in a zigzag movement between what seems to be incompatible spheres. I dream of great collaborative projects, in which studios and laboratories work together and jewellers cooperate not only with philosophers, but also with natural scientists, economists, politicians, health scientists, environmentalists, etc. in order to produce objects that are not only to be worn and seen, but also to be read as a contribution to our contemporary understanding of what it means to be human under the abysmal conditions of our globalised order of things.

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1. This text is based on an earlier article published in the Alchimia Blog under the title "Wishful Thinking" (<https://alchimiablog.com/2016/05/23/pravu-mazumdar-wishful-thinking/>). Concerning method, I would like to draw attention to the following points: (1) I will use the term "hybridity" in the sense of a space of differences emerging between two or more things that approach each other without merging: a tensional space of forces, in which the things can cooperate or resist each other; (2) Hybridity is more than a mere idea. It involves an epistemological perspective as well as the corresponding practice of organising discourses; (3) It is in this vein that I hybridise the three modes of speech—the first, the second and the third person modes—, in the course of unfolding the central themes of this text, letting it commence in the second person mode as an open letter to jewellery; go over to the third person mode for articulating the idea that different epistemologies correspond to different modes of speech; and revert to the first person mode whenever a reflection on the person of the author takes place.
2. "Costume jewellery," "fashion jewellery."
3. Hans-Ulrich Hoche, "Anthropological Complementarism. Linguistic", *Logical and Phenomenological Studies in Support of a Third Way Beyond Dualism and Monism* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2008) 25.
4. Ibid.
5. See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
6. Martin Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1973) 301. See also Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1923).
7. Hermann Cohen, *Die Religion der Vernunft aus dem Quellen des Judentums* (Leipzig: Fock Verlag, 1919).
8. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt/M.: Kauffmann Verlag, 1921).
9. Buber, loc. cit., 7.
10. "Dem Blick wohnt aber die Erwartung inne, von dem erwidert zu werden, dem er sich schenkt." Walter Benjamin, *Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire* (1939) in: *Gesammelte Schriften Band I* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1974) 646.
11. "Die Aura einer Erscheinung erfahren, heißt sie mit dem Vermögen belehnen, den Blick aufzuschlagen." Ibid. [Trans. by author]
12. "Ist nicht die Aura allemal die Spur des vergessenen Menschlichen am Ding?" (29th February 1940) in Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, *Briefwechsel 1928-1940*, ed. by Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1994) 418. [Trans. by author]
13. "Baum und Strauch, die belehnt werden, sind nicht vom Menschen gemacht. Es muss also ein Menschliches an den Dingen sein, das nicht durch Arbeit gestiftet wird." (7th May 1940) In Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, ed. by Christian Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1995) 446.
14. Georg Simmel, "Psychologie des Schmucks" in *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901-1908*, vol. II, ed. by Alessandro Cavalli and Volkhard Krech in *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Otthein Rammstedt, vol. 8 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1993) 385-93.
15. "Des bijoux aux bijoux" in Roland Barthes, *Oeuvre complètes*, vol. I, 1942-1965, ed. by Éric Marty (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1993) 911-14.
16. See for example Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann & Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. II. 3 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1977) 958.
17. Gottfried Semper, *Über die formelle Gesetzmässigkeit des Schmuckes und dessen Bedeutung als Kunstsymbol* (Zürich: Meyer & Zeller, 1856).
18. Loos defined aesthetic progress as "the trajectory of culture from the ornament to the loss of ornament." See Adolph Loos, *Trotzdem (1900-1930)*, ed. by A. Opel (Vienna, 1982) 92. (Trans. by author)
19. The show, titled *Answering Pravu* took place in Munich in March, 2015. The seven participating artists – from Stockholm, London and Munich – were Tobias Birgersson, Henrik Brandt, David Clarke, Frederik Ingemansson, Magnus Liljedahl, Karen Pontppidan, Miro Szadic.
20. Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie symétrique* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1991)
21. Jean Baudrillard, (1968), *Das Ding und das Ich (Le système des objets, dt.) Gespräch mit der täglichen Umwelt* (Wien: Europaverlag, 1974).
22. See "Le jeu de Michel Foucault (entretien sur l'Histoire de la sexualité)" in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits, III*, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald in cooperation with Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) no. 206: 298-329.
23. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 149-81.
24. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007).
25. See Markus Gabriel (ed.), *Der Neue Realismus*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014.
26. I have tried to address some aspects of this question in "Wearing the world. Some reflections on jewellery and metaphysics", in Manon van Kouswijk, *Hanging Around* (Hoofddorp: Uitgeverij Boek, 2010).
27. This question essentially motivated the experimental Project *Answering Pravu* mentioned above.
28. I have discussed these works in detail in *Gold und Geist* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2015).
29. See Pravu Mazumdar, "Returning to the Surface" in Johanna Zellmer, *Forged* (Cologne & New York: Darling Publications, 2015) 9-59.