

LEAD SULPHIDE

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Look at a stone and imagine it having sensations.
—One says to oneself: How could one so much as
get the idea of ascribing a sensation to a thing?

Ludwig Wittgenstein



The river's lack of memory forms a gentle riverbed.
Africa and Europe will merge, the Mediterranean
Sea will vanish. It is an utterly brutal region and
what we see today is of yesterday.

Is it the water that forms, or does the form
come from its movement?



Where does the tunnel emerge on the other side?
What was transported through it? Did it go in
or did it come out?



How does a bird unclamp its claws from a branch before take-off? How do ants find their trail? What alternatives are there to the toothbrush? What can make discontented people stop pointing their fingers at others? Since when do fingernails exist? Is paper the protective layer or is what is enwrapped the core of the paper? What is it that slips attention when the music plays?



A shift renders the old anew.
That is no conventionality but perseverance.



Does geography imply understanding
that the Earth is not evenly shaped?



Up until now I could not even draw a rudimentary world map without becoming greatly disturbed. Sure, I kept this deficit a secret and kept silent when my geographic knowledge reached its own frontiers. The Baltic, the Andes, Oceania. But I know where the polar caps are. People chatter about geography, peacocks that they can retain something as gigantic as the entire planet in their small heads. In doing so, they overlook the fact that earth science is a model too.

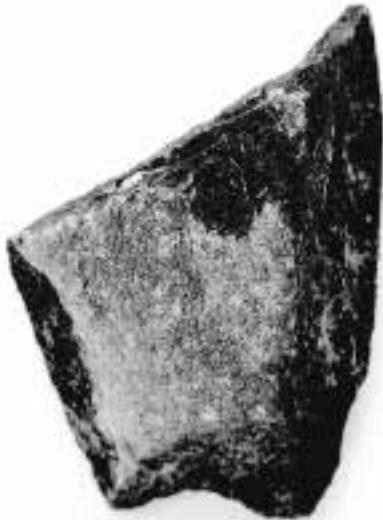


Is it possible to talk to one another from a distance without using a phone? On this side of the planet they say that on the other side they can do it.



How high would the building be if all towers were stacked on top of one another? All I have learned mingles with the memory of my father tossing a pancake. What effect does my knowledge about endocrine disrupters have on my personality? Does it serve my peace of mind to know how polluted the drinking water in Central Europe really is? My knowledge does not belong to me.





Even when I consider the causes for the
ephemerality of industrially-produced goods,
nothing is known, nothing is done.
Where to store the facts on nanoparticles in my
head? Is the mere thought of toxic substances
by itself already a health hazard?

Certainly even a half-formed red blood cell asks itself, while running through the body, where the journey will go. Why should one divide one's powers? Why do we protect our extremities?



The loose wool inside my head is much thicker than expected. I am in uncharted waters, but I can do this: think. Where does an elevator lift us? To the roof terrace.



If I could gain an overview of my present situation, the flat expanse would make me dizzy. Microscopic topography where a worm's-eye view makes a mountain out of a molehill. Save your ass in the flat countryside. The sense of stability is deceptive, even though insurance advertises it.





Children notice it at once: my sense of not being in the right place. They also notice when I am mentally elsewhere. They intuit my misplacedness.

Places where I do not belong: playgrounds, sandboxes, beaches, hotel restaurants, waiting rooms, cruise ships, shopping malls, highways, funfairs, ski huts, hairdressers, shoe shops, swimming pools. This list is incomplete and what does it indicate? My impatience with people who are entirely sure of themselves. Disquiet with the demonstrative pleasures of feeding, breeding and leisure.



Everyone here is alike; I am also here, which makes me alike. Every time I am in a place I would rather not be, I am astonished that I am still prepared to meet someone I'd prefer to meet elsewhere.



Structure is created by following a tight thread,
the bricklayer says.



I had started to count the branches of the large conifers, whose names I did not know. I also did not know the moss or any of the other plants. I could only say tree and grass, but not *Pinus silvestris*, nor boxwood nor heather. I knew mushrooms only from fairy tales; a puffball did not tell me anything.





I knew the landscape fleetingly
and I did not want to describe it.



Raining, it was one or two degrees too warm for snow. Doing everything alone is impossible; a little confidence in others is needed after all.



Even the new postman seems familiar to me today.



There's a lot going on, and men and women talk and dance and promise each other many things about a tomorrow that's never to come. Mutual interest is based on things that remain unfinished.

I could get excited about people I did not respect.





But some things were out of the question.

I feel queasy at the thought of how many marriage proposals are made daily at the Piazza San Marco in Venice.





I had power, you had time. Everything on Earth was there for you; the world was your audience, born to listen to you. You make a trip to us and want to be on time. You travel alone.



You live without the burden of decision-making, like a fresh cake, which has not yet been cut for consumption. Its scent still floats in the air, but not until tomorrow. You sit and wait, while watching as the level of expectation rises and lifts you onto a balcony of solitude. You become old and live out from the lookout. Even while avoiding you, I pay too much attention to you.

I hit the safety net more than once.
You did not want to live with me anymore,
not even once a week.





I will be ashamed of not having been ashamed
of you.

Wrong decisions grow along with us.



The one who sheds their skin must get rid of it.
Who should be taking care of this in my place?





I shudder to think of all the hair that is sprouting out of the heads of everyone on Earth at this very moment.



If the opposite of being ashamed is laughing out loud, I know what I still want to practise.

That's how it is with my friends: they love me out of habit and the hope that something will become of me some day.





Actually wanted to laugh uproariously,
just to leave it at a shy harrumph.



This was a consent like for-all-I-care. Still, I am looking forward to tomorrow, just like – in hindsight – one was eager for the first kiss, which was then forgotten after all.

Even today I fancy that I am missed at my old
workplace and I picture my office chair, still vacant
until today.





Second place is my favourite position, in the family of my childhood or at work; second place with an excellent view, a safe place with all the privileges minus the full attention.

I wanted my old father to assure me that I was not a brat as a child. He tried to comfort me and meant well.





Siblings speak their mother tongue with one another. Passers-by speak their own dialects, no matter where they walk about.

Once again, not being in a hurry,
I was dead on time.



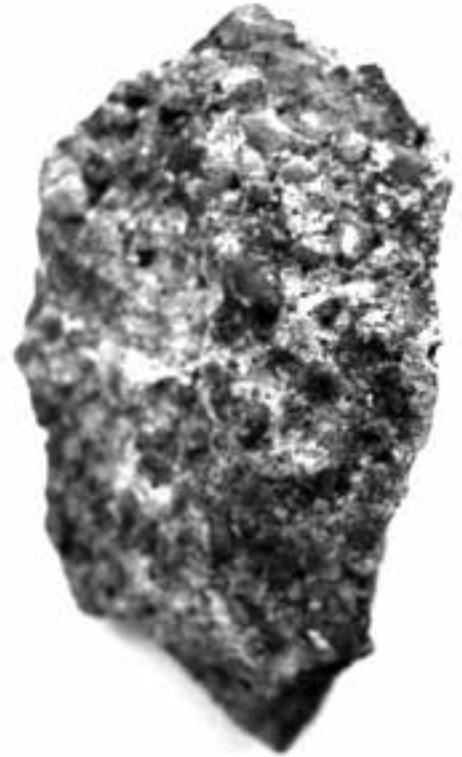
Can someone do the inspection of the apartment for me? I started dreaming of empty flats, as if I had a new life ahead, sparsely furnished. Clean kitchen, uninhabited rooms – as if I could visit my future in advance once more: ‘I will take this flat’.





The moment the key broke in the lock,
my spirits lifted.

Still unshaven, but with cigarettes and coffee.
How surreptitious and pleasant some clichés are.
I wonder if my house breathes, too.





And whenever I want to be especially adventurous,
when I am alone, in the morning, right after coffee,
I warm up two hotdogs with spicy mustard.

I was a happy man. So I called nobody.
I kept the shadows out there for the people
who wanted to visit me unannounced.

COLOPHON

This country is made of mountains. Some pieces of the mountains have rolled downhill and sit in public squares of villages and cities or at the lake promenades as erratic blocks. They are called foundling or gibber. Very small rubblestones turn into pebbles and they are rarely found in the tidy cities. The stones pictured here have been collected on the streets of the city, where even little pebbles are considered obstacles.

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