

The uncertainty relation

Who will tell me how, all through existence, my whole person has been preserved?
What was it that carried me, inert, full of life and spirit, from one end of nothingness to
the other?¹

I'm looking for a point. Realise there is no point. Only in theory. According to Einstein, 'physical reality must be described in terms of continuous functions in space'. I see existence as a composition of constantly changing states and its complexity overwhelms me.

Scientific processes have always interested me and the desire to unite them with other disciplines like poetry, philosophy, phenomenology, and psychology has always been great. I seek expressions for unity between material and immaterial, between natural and artificial, between mind and body.

Something that has long amazed me is the paradoxical in human nature. Contradictoriness in general. Its necessity and the dialectics between opposites. The natural in relation to the manipulated.

The void seethes with energy. Everything is set against its extreme and it is only through this relationship that we can understand what we call reality. Sometimes I want to step outside of reality as an observer, with a bird's eye view, which is an impossibility because I will never be capable of defining someone of whom I myself am a part. As Bachelard puts it in his critique of Bergson: 'In vain do we try to differentiate between understanding a process and living it'.²

Is the hesitation of the particle also that of humanity? Asks Helena Granström in *Osäkerhetsrelationen* (The uncertainty relation).

It seems that humanity's nature is as difficult to define and predict as that of a quantum particle. When it is exposed to external influences, light or energy in some form, its state changes, its position and speed.

*I turn around, change my position to forget.
To break the trajectory of my thoughts, my state, and the physical position.
Go in, go out, completely, with all my power, preferably simultaneously.
Go up and down, to the right and the left. Turn around and realise it has no meaning.*

We want to measure, be able to predict and define. Our society has been dominated by Western rationalism where everything of value can be measured. But how do you measure a thought? A dream, an inner flow of energy? Is a thought a particle or a wave?

Granström writes in *Alltings mått* (The measure of everything), 'To live is to cause death. The denial of this, and the objectification, distance, that it entails is more than anything else the zero point of what we call evil'.³

¹ Paul Valéry, quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, translated by Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen, 2000).

² Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, p. 53.

³ Helena Granström, *Alltings mått* [The measure of everything] (Stockholm: Ruin, 2008).

Measurement – an attempt to reduce to the least common denominator with a number as the final answer – is not always applicable because measurement itself causes an object to change. Perhaps I am looking for a potential number. A number that neither is nor isn't. A one inside the zero, not yet defined.

Granström likens the scientist to the pornographer in his or her attempts to objectify and measure in a time when human relations have been reduced to digital ones, when economic growth no longer is distinguished by unification but by appropriation.

The dream of the future. We are constantly on the move.

On the move to where?

*The straight line will inevitably be forced to bend
and the circle ended where it began.*

In Lars von Trier's film *Antichrist* the calculated is related to the unpredictable and chaos to structure. I see the woman in this film as the primary connection to nature. She is a part of it but alien to herself. She feels guilt because she could have acted to prevent the death of her child and instead she gave in to her instincts. Interestingly enough, the child's fall out of a window coincides with the mother's orgasm.

In a scene in which the man discovers the photos of his dead son in which the woman has laced up the boy's left shoe on his right foot and vice versa, it becomes apparent that she has deliberately tormented her own son, something which she seems to have denied.

To me, *Antichrist* elucidates the question of whether human beings are by their nature self-destructive or whether it is society's denial of the natural that has given rise to destructiveness.

In *Antichrist*, as in many other of von Trier's films, I see a kind of critique of rational reasoning. *Melancholia* is a film that throws this sharply into focus. The scene where Justine rushes into the study and exchanges pictures of modern works of art with classical Bruegel-paintings is to me a critique of the progressive character of modernism. Everything doesn't just go forward. It goes in all different directions.

In the films of Andrei Tarkovsky it is as if the elements become living beings. He personifies nature, verdure, wind, fire in a way that speaks to an inner reality. As though humanity's inner nature speaks to its outer one. Nature mirrors us and we nature in an almost 'supernatural' way. In the same way, in the film *Mirror* one can see how a man's wife is reflected in his mother, how everything is repeated. The roles exchange places, boundaries are erased until time almost ceases to exist.

Dilapidated industrial settings are mixed with poetry. The doctor in *Mirror* says, 'We don't trust nature, ourselves'. When he leaves her the wind rises. He stops, as though it were trying to tell him something.

An artist I feel strongly for is Hiroshi Sugimoto. In the work *Lightning Fields* (2008) he photographs static electricity. A way to observe light with light. It is as though he has managed to capture the movement of light particles/waves in a visual experience where fractals, branchings, and blurred boundaries form a pattern that makes me think of the structure of life. It reminds me of an experiment where a proton and an anti-proton collide

with one another at high energy and give rise to a couple of nearly free quarks.⁴ To me he manages to unite art with a scientific experiment, something I myself would like to develop.

I also see that Sugimoto is drawn to some kind of emptiness, or nothingness, as in the work where he, using a low shutter speed, photographs cinemas and drive-in cinemas during an entire film. The result is a completely white projection where, during the process, all information has been erased.

Horizons are something by which I have long been fascinated. The limit of what we can see with the eye's limited field of vision and what lies beyond. Linear perception of the three-dimensional. This is one of the reasons why I am inspired by Sugimoto's suggestive photographs of sky and sea at different times and places.

Sugimoto has a way of illuminating almost invisible details. This wealth of detail can also be found in Gaston Bachelard, who has long been one of my primary sources of inspiration. He goes to the bottom of the nature of matter and translates it from a psychological and poetic perspective. His analyses of the four elements in the books about 'the imagination of matter',⁵ as well as his texts on the theory of science, have formed the foundation for many of my works.

He believes that science would never have existed without the ability to imagine, and also that thought has substance. The physical body can also be seen as a complicated form of motion.⁵ The equation energy + mass = acceleration has long interested me.

'Is it not obvious that the wave's vibration *is* at the same time both heat and light?'⁶

Also Lee Lozano's multifaceted works and links to natural science and interest in energy in a mixture of ideas about femininity, sexuality, and violence have a strong appeal to me.

Language and the limitations of the body
Challenges, exhausts
Disturbs
Destroys
The traces of the process go on

To mention some other sources of inspiration: Lee Ufan, Pippi Lotti Rist, Hilma af Klint, Patti Smith, Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails), David Lynch, Sally Mann, Jeanette Winterson, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Igor Stravinsky, Wolfgang Tillmans, Björk, and others.

Many of my latest works have focused on weight, guilt, and human aspirations. In the work *Potential Traces* time has stopped. But the fall is inevitable. Gravity, the force that makes us unite while it simultaneously causes us to degenerate or be crushed in the abyss, has already or has not yet left its mark. Or will the objects for some reason rotate differently during the fall and result in a different impression? Have the past, present, and future become united?

⁴ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam Press, 1988).

⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *The Philosophy of No: A Philosophy of the New Scientific Mind*, translated by G. C. Waterston (New York: Orion Press, [1968]), p. 25.

⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, translated by Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen, 2000).

‘The pull of gravity will be analysed in two phases by relating two objects, the moving body and the earth, and also by distinguishing between the time of the possible and the time of the real.’⁷

In *Potential Traces* there is, on the other hand, a desire to strive upwards. Toward purity and clarity. Up toward empty air. The silence. Liberated from weight, conscience, and guilt. Free of memories.

Usually weight is associated with depth, but according to Bachelard, Nietzsche finds true depth in height. He speaks of the substancelessness of air, as an element of freedom that is associated with depth.

‘But it is with human beings as it is with this tree.

The more they aspire to the heights and the light, the more strongly their roots strive earthward, downward, into darkness, depths – into evil.’⁸

‘*Weight* does not weigh on the world but on our souls, our minds, our hearts – it weighs on man’.⁹

Bachelard speaks of Nietzsche’s ethical imagination. In it Bachelard sees that good and evil have never been so close to one another, or rather, never have good and evil, high and low, so clearly been caused by one another.¹⁰

In the video *White Wall 2010* I focus on embodying a striving for weightlessness and purity. I want to liberate myself from my conscience and human guilt. It is also about trying to fit into an impossible existence and a yearning for dissolution in the whiteness, for annihilation.

In this work I have been inspired by Albert Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus*. In Camus’s interpretation of the classical myth, Sisyphus has been condemned by the gods to roll a boulder up a hill just to see it roll down again, and perpetually to have to start all over again.¹¹ In the same way, the woman in *White Wall* tries to climb the flat white wall, a task which is doomed to failure. She falls again and again, but starts over.

I want to dissolve this state.

Dissolved in water.

Let the thoughts mix. Gradually they lose their value, their specific character, their symbolism. They dry out and grow pale with time.

Once again I find myself thinking about Nothingness and Emptiness. Emptiness is a space between, a field between objects that is affected by the objects in question. Emptiness can never be completely unaffected because it is surrounded by energy with which it interacts.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, edited by Adrian del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, translated by Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 29. The second sentence is quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, translated by Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1988), p. 149.

⁹ Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 158.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 157.

¹¹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, translated by Justin O’Brien (London: Penguin, 2000).

Nothingness on the other hand is rather the lack of empty space. Compressed matter, energy under high pressure collapses in on itself. A black hole. Complete compression of information contributes to complete loss of information.

I toy with the idea that if one could compress all the consciousnesses of the world into a single consciousness and press it together, then it would probably cease to exist.

A place where contradictions cancel each other out. Is that a place? Or perhaps rather a state? A state of being a non-being. Where the deepest meets the highest, where the most compressed meets the most dissolved, where nothing embraces everything and everything nothing.

The thought is ambiguous and fluid.

The effect of it is often definitive.

So many possibilities.

A single outcome.

These problems of physics.

All these states to which subject myself.

All these extremes.

All these creations of states.

Where is the non-state?

References:

Helena Granström (2008), *Alltings mått*. Stockholm: Ruin, 2008.

Helena Granström (2009), *Osäkerhetsrelationen*. Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2009.

Gaston Bachelard (1943), *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, translated by Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1988.

Gaston Bachelard (1940), *Philosophy of No: The New Scientific Mind*. New York: Orion Press, [1968]

Gaston Bachelard (1950) *The Dialectic of Duration*, translated by Mary McAllester Jones. Manchester: Clinamen, 2000.

Albert Camus (1942), *The Myth of Sisyphus*, translated by Justin O'Brien. London: Penguin, 2000.

Stephen Hawking (1988), *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. London: Bantam Press, 1988.

Andrei Tarkovsky, *Mirror*. Mosfilm, 1975.

Andrei Tarkovsky, *Stalker*. Mosfilm, 1979.

Lars von Trier, *Antichrist*. Copenhagen: Zentropa, 2009.

Lars von Trier, *Melancholia*. Copenhagen: Zentropa, 2011.

ⁱ Gaston Bachelard, 'The imagination of matter' series:

The Psychoanalysis of Fire, translated by Alan C.M. Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter, translated by Edith R. Farrell (Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1983, 1999).

Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter, translated by Kenneth Haltman (Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 2002).

Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement, translated by Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1988).