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Death in Bologna: An Essay on a Manifesto against Artistic Research

Book essay on Silvia Henke, Dieter Mersch, Nicolaj van der Meulen, Thomas Strässle and Jörg Wiesel, Manifesto of Artistic Research: A Defense Against Its Advocates (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2020).

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Manifesto of Artistic Research: A Defense Against Its Advocates is one of the most thought-provoking texts to have appeared on the subject. Commencing with a brutally direct principal theme, the authors declare artistic research to be no more than a politically engendered institutional phenomenon. Yet, the orchestration and the polyphonic writing in this book quickly develops the simple – even simplistic – initial theme into a multifarious and splendidly chaotic texture. To be clear, this book is a must-read for anyone who is in any way engaged in questions related to practice-based research within the arts. In this essay I will use the *Manifesto* as a travelling companion as I explore some of the peaks, valleys and reflecting pools that make up the wild terrain of artistic research.

Like any good manifesto this one begins with a shock declaration:

Since its beginnings in the 1990s, artistic research has been driven by politics. Without the strict academicization of courses of study in art and design as furthered by the Bologna Reform, the entity we call ‘artistic research’ could hardly have come into existence.

This declaration is like the child’s revelation in the Hans Christian Andersen’s tale of the Emperor’s New Clothes. As soon as we hear it, we know that it is true, even if we pretend not to. But how to proceed from here? And does this ‘revelation’ actually reveal the real problem with artistic research? Certainly, there is some irony in the fact that the most rebellious and

‘arty’ kid in the research community should be the ‘offspring’ of a politically and bureaucratically European encounter in Bologna with the aim of standardizing higher education.

And yet, after the first page, where examples of academizations and the ‘striv[ing] after respectability through traditional academic qualification formats like PhD programmes’ are presented, we read the following conclusion:

So long as artistic research continues to direct its focus towards the standards of university research and attempt to imitate them, it enters into a rivalry in which it cannot and should not exist. In this way, artistic research squanders its original potential. (p. 6)

Having thus defined artistic research as driven by politics, and claiming that without strict academization, furthered by the Bologna Reform, ‘the entity we call “artistic research” could hardly have come into existence’, the *Manifesto* concludes that these same processes that have created and conditioned the existence of artistic research are squandering its potential.

This ambivalence permeates the entire book. On the one hand, artistic research is scorned as a subservient field to conventional academia (hence the need to defend it against its advocates), on the other hand it is considered as something beyond and independent of the same processes by which it was created (hence the need for the present manifesto). And to add further complexity to the ambivalence, there is a third perspective, frequently stated in the book, which simply dissolves the existence of any entity called ‘artistic research’. The many internal conflicts, even when it comes to defining the *Manifesto*’s central issue – ‘artistic research’ – make the writing frequently incoherent.

And yet, it might be said that this conflicted and ambivalent presentation of the subject aptly captures the ambivalence of the subject itself. Whether it is politically, bureaucratically and academically initiated or not, many of us feel a strong need to decentre the approach to research on and in art. And whether we call it artistic research, practice-based research, performance studies or practice studies, these fields of research are driven by the fact that we know and have experienced how conventional academic research ignores or disfigures important aspects of art and artistic practice.

The main attack in the first pages of the *Manifesto* is directed against the tendency for artistic research to simply reuse theories and methods that are uncritically adopted from conventional academic practices. To the extent this is a fair description, the critique is both thought-provoking and legitimate. But the question, then, is: Is there any alternative to politically driven and academized artistic research that ‘squanders its original potential’?

Interestingly, later in the text, an alternative will be painted in bright colours, as we read:

If artistic research were able to draw these practices out from art, to develop them further and to productively incorporate them into academic discourse, we would have to reckon with an academic revolution.

And by ‘these practices’ the *Manifesto* means:

that the arts do not proceed according to a strict method (met’hodos) along a pre-determined trajectory, but rather in the form of leaps, digressions, and detours which continually generate new and un-expected counter-expressions, and do not set a goal for their nonlinear ‘experiments’, but instead trigger irritations and thus daring revelations.

At this point in the *Manifesto*, the authors celebrate the potential for artistic research to become a major force in an academic revolution, by ‘productively incorporate[ing]’ what is called ‘these practices’ from the arts. Suddenly academic discourse is proffered as something positive, and the academic potential of artistic research is celebrated as revolutionary.

This rather obscure argument seems to suggest that the ambition of artistic research is to initiate a kind of guerrilla war against conventional academic practices. This reading resonates with the genre of the text, a manifesto with the ambition of creating a revolution in academia, and with the tactics described (e.g. to ‘continually generate new and un-expected counter-expressions, and do not set a goal for their nonlinear “experiments”, but instead trigger irritations and thus daring revelations’). But this reading, which I find invigorating, is neither directly confirmed nor developed in the continuation of the *Manifesto*.

The *Manifesto* certainly challenges readers’ expectations. Developed argumentation is not prioritized, and the matter is further confused by inconsistent use of important terminology. As we have already seen, even the term ‘artistic research’ is in constant flux, and ‘practices out of art’ turn out to be ‘leaps, digressions, and detours’. The word ‘practice’ is used repeatedly, but in the same sentence we may find ‘praxis’, without any explanation as to why the two terms are used interchangeably with the same meaning. Time and again, the *Manifesto* chops up words of Latin or Greek provenance (like ‘met’hodos’ and ‘de-finition’) – adding no extra dimension by replicating this Derridean approach. The writing in this book is caught in words, not always in reasoning, it is seduced by the potential complexity of language, rather than by its power to create insight or convince by rationality. The writing proceeds as if it were loyal to the ‘leaps, digressions and detours’, cited above: it frequently favouring non-linearity, and it surely ‘triggers irritations’, but sometimes also ‘daring revelations’. In this regard, the text practises what it preaches in applying the characteristics of art to artistic research (and thus, also for academic writing, if artistic research fulfils its assumed revolutionary potential). Is this the real, but hidden, message in the *Manifesto*? That artistic research must be presented in writing that incorporates the ‘practices’ (the ‘leaps, digressions and detours’) found in (some) contemporary artworks? And is the *writing* in this book a demonstration and definition of what the authors believe artistic research really should be?

However we might answer these questions, the questions around how we write about art and artistic research cannot be ignored. The use of language cannot be separated from the use of method, theory, terminology and metaphor. Accordingly, the *Manifesto* presents a list of

three major problems with artistic research, all related to the question of how to use language.

The Three Problems with Artistic Research

The first problem is one of personnel. Since, according to the *Manifesto*, the people who engage in art research are frequently recruited from the academic world, they ‘reproduce its working methods’. Thus, ‘[t]hey do this according to a strict yet sometimes vague understanding of what can be called “research”, in terms both of their *language* and their goals and research methodology’ (p. 11).

The second problem is the ‘coarse-grained understanding of theory, discourse and reflection’ with which the ‘defenders of artistic research are working’. The result, they argue, is the adoption of ‘terms from scientific research like “laboratory studies” and “experimental systems”, *language* which misleads from the beginning’. In other words, a problem that either reflects the lack of appropriate theory and method in artistic research, or simply a vain attempt to give the research a false scientific dress. Either way, it demonstrates the researchers’ lack of understanding of what is theory, method and language.

The third problem is the uncritical use of fashionable theories that create a vain and pointless language:

Historical epistemologies, ‘actor-network theory’, ‘object-oriented ontology’, or ‘new materialism’, as well as privileged thinkers like Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Karen Barad, or Donna Haraway are not so much read and criticized as used and exploited as citation sources. Theoretical building blocks are manufactured which do not even attempt to understand aesthetic thought. Instead, empty ciphers are employed, and are hastily filled in with the procedures of artistic research. The orthodox insistence on ‘research questions’ and ‘research results’ also leads to schematic applications which conceive of theory not as a reflexive work of thought which is to be modelled but rather as an activation prosthesis. Through this, the potential of artistic research to question the sphere of validity of conceptual labour is wasted – as is the possibility of dynamic dialogue between conceptual reflection and the practices of aesthetic reflexivity. (p. 12)

To summarize these three problems, we might say, according to the *Manifesto*, that the people recruited to artistic research (due to their university background), unwittingly reproduce the methods and *language* of academia. Yet, since they lack an in-depth comprehension of theory and discourse (i.e. they are not really competent academics after all), they adopt a misleading *language* (as exemplified by the tendency to uncritically employ terms from scientific research), but possibly even more aggravating, make use of superficial and vain references to trendy theoretical texts and privileged thinkers – text and references that are neither comprehended nor correctly implemented in the language of the research. Or perhaps we might

condense the cankerous *Manifesto* critique to this: wrong people, wrong theory and, most of all, wrong language.¹

What is then the *Manifesto*'s solution? Artistic research should take its lead from art. It is the 'artistic practices' themselves that should dictate research. In the following extract we can see how the contradictory character of art should be used as a model for artistic research. The argument appears to be that, rather than mirroring academic practices, the practice of artistic research should draw its energy from the conflict inherent in art.

As examples of such research practices, we could take dichotomies or incompatibilities or tensions that become manifest between things, actions, textures, materials, or images and sound and their respective composition (*com-positio*) in the sensual sphere. Beyond their measurement through quantifying methods, or their conceptual definition, they break forth from the respective contradictions and dissonances, are, as leaps, already thoughts, without needing to articulate themselves as such or requiring a *de-finition*, an exhaustive explanation. This is why we speak so often of 'showing': it signifies that form of displaying or presenting which *does not require certification through language*. (p. 48; emphasis mine).

This paragraph is characteristic of the often-impenetrable style of the prose in the *Manifesto*, although the gradually escalating return of the refrain of the book – that artistic research does not require certification through language – is at least clearly articulated. (This change of attitude to the language comes as a surprise, actually, and does not chime well with the high hopes for the rejuvenation of academic discourse they have just mentioned.) But for the rest of the content in this paragraph, most readers will probably struggle to grasp a/the meaning. The second sentence is particularly difficult. Not least as it is not clear what the pronoun (their) refers to. Whose measurement? Whose conceptual definition? What breaks forth from the respective contradictions and dissonances? Is it the research practices or is it the research practices as dichotomies or incompatibilities or tensions? Either way, this may lead to the conclusion that research practices are (or ought to be) already thoughts, 'without needing to articulate themselves as such or requiring a *de-finition*, an exhaustive explanation.' If so, research practices are inarticulate, not *de-fined* or *ex-plained* (sorry, it is contagious!), and thus, according to the *Manifesto*, not requiring 'certification through language.'

If this is a plausible reading, then artistic research consists of research practices that are energized by conflicts, and do not gain from being articulated, explained or defined. Still, they are 'thoughts'. And since they are best considered as inarticulate, undefined, unexplained thoughts, their mode of presentation is 'showing'. To my knowledge this is the first time in history that 'practice' has been defined as thoughts, which at first appears as paradoxically

¹ Tellingly, the heading of the next section, after the presentation of the three problems is 'Artistic research is not a playground for failed academics. Nor for failed artists.'

logocentric, until we remind ourselves that the connection between thoughts and words has just been severed.

Yet the text does go on to bring in examples, such as Jean Tinguely's 'monstrous but pointless machines' that seem to indicate that there is no distinction between research in art (as an intrinsic part of all great artists' practice and creation) and artistic research. And by this 'clarification', we are again facing an old ghost: the awkward question of what is really new about artistic research, apart from its recent branding and – as the *Manifesto* would have it – detrimental academization.² And all this appears to be demonstrated in the following beautiful sentence, coming just a few lines later in the book and resembling something found in the later works of Gaston Bachelard:

The opportunities and irreducibility of research in the arts are based on this: they culminate neither in the discovery of quantifiable entities nor of general laws, nor do they pretend to solve riddles or reveal hidden causes; they instead live from uncovering dried-up sources and other points of view which nest in the interstices between unruly phenomena. (p. 49)

Now, if artistic research is simply research in the arts, and if the 'practice of research' is thoughts (developed from 'the interstices between unruly phenomena') and irrelevant to language, then all is well. There is no controversy. No one can doubt the relevance and legitimacy of (this type of) artistic research as it has always been essential to developing art and artists. The only thing we must do, then, is turn back the clock to so that research in art is in the state it existed before the Bologna Reform. But even this sanctuary is denied us, for reasons we will soon see.

Towards the end of the book, we find single paragraphs that are rich, relevant and well-written, paragraphs that reward our willingness to wrestle with this multivocal text:

Art has undeniably taken on the character of a 'system'. Labels like 'artistic research', 'practice-based research', and the like reproduce this system in the mode of its immanent professionalization. Meanwhile, it seems unpopular to speak of a historical break according to which art has given up its role as 'governor' (Adorno) of another, 'better' world, to instead function as a 'research machine' which has stripped away everything utopian, now defaming it only as 'romantic'. (p. 59)

It is easy to be seduced by the eloquent declarations of this paragraph. As art continuously loses

² At this point in the *Manifesto*, this distinction between creation and artistic research has evaporated. But this can only lead to another impertinent question: Have not all great artists always done some kind of research?.

its appeal and the entertainment industry wins every war, the survival of art seems to rely on the willingness of public (state) funding, depending on its inclusion in – and its curation by – the academy, financed through educational and government-initiated programmes and systems. The Bologna Reform is then simply a token of the sad order of things, the final proof of how academization has rendered art lifeless. But I think the extract above raises three further fears that we need to address.

The first fear is triggered by the suspicion of a wholly unsound relation between politics, art and research. Should we not fear that we are trapped in a Soviet-like politically controlled cultivation of art, with the only difference that we ignore its existence and our own suppressed status? And, moreover, are we simply relying on that the politicians and bureaucrats themselves to believe that what they support through the academic and cultural institutions is valuable because its being tested and curated by the same academic system that they finance?

The second fear would be to suspect that artistic research simply serves to add an academic and intellectual superstructure in order to legitimate practices of art that have long since lost their aesthetic value. In other words, instead of confronting art in its own terms, we apply aloof explanations, complex and only half-digested philosophical terms and references in order to distract us from dealing with tough questions regarding the ontological status of art, as well as its ability to create shared aesthetic experiences.

The third fear is the most intimidating. Are we simply being tricked, in our vanity, into reproducing an institutionalized art system, attributing importance and value to it, and dedicating our lives to representing something that actually blocks us from embracing a ‘free’ art and a more fulfilling but financially less secure life?

Admittedly, none of these fears are explicitly presented or developed in the *Manifesto*, yet they seem to be resonating in the background or, at least, they may explain the next important paragraph in the *Manifesto*. Here, it is not only ‘artistic research’ that is questioned, but even the terms ‘art’ and ‘artistic’, which are paradoxically turned into existing nonentities:

For the question is whether that which makes up art has not become so non-specific as to have become foreign to the aesthetic. There hardly exists anymore a binding concept of what is considered ‘artistic’ other than, of course, the fact that such a concept no longer exists. ‘Institutions theory’ has apparently totally triumphed over art: art is that which is publicly considered art. (p. 59)

Of course, the first thing we could ask the authors is whether they really think that art has ever been anything but what is publicly considered art. The concept of art appears, at least from the perspective of music, as intrinsically connected to the process of institutionalization, even when it tries to stand in a dialectical opposition to this process. But look at the argumentative movement in this extract! First it declares that art is no longer an aesthetic issue. Then comes the dissolution of the concept ‘artistic’. In fact, neither ‘art’ nor ‘artistic’ are any longer meaningful concepts; what is called ‘institutions theory’ has triumphed. Against all this

dissolution, all this loss of concepts and meaning, only one thing stands, *the aesthetic*. And here we are touching the hard wood of the *Manifesto*. The word ‘aesthetic’ is time and again presented as the salvage of art and research, but also as the sole (or soul) protector against the desecrating processes of the institutionalized systematization and academization of art.³

The Authority Game

Let us look again at the book’s title: *Manifesto of Artistic Research: A Defense Against Its Advocates*. Two things are implied by the title and further confirmed by the text. First, that the authors of the *Manifesto* assume that it is their right and duty to define what constitutes artistic research. Second, that the authors consider that the ‘advocates’ of artistic research have got it wrong and that their attempt to build a defence only makes things worse. However generously one reads the title, it comes across as authoritarian and somehow arrogant. And this impression is enhanced by the fact that the text clearly and repeatedly announces its strong antipathy to the very thing it tries to define and protect against its advocates: artistic research.

The only possible excuse – and this is indeed offered in the *Manifesto* – is that they want to defend art against what the advocates of artistic research are doing. But this line of reasoning becomes problematic when even the category ‘art’ is simply considered as an (academic and institutionalized) system. The only thing that is never doubted is the relevance of the aesthetics, that is, the academic interest the authors of the *Manifesto* obviously share. And then, logically, the *Manifesto*’s authors dream of a *utopian* art, an art that may once have existed before it gave ‘up its role as “governor” (Adorno) of another, “better” world’.

I would like to add two further problems to the three addressed in the *Manifesto* and outlined in this review. My fourth problem would be the tendency to confound insight and knowledge with a style of writing that constructs sentences that are impossibly complex and inscrutable; sentences that have the writer’s own voice or vanity as the only point of reference; sentences that are not anchored in any commonly shared understanding of terms or topics. This is a ‘sin’ that is present in the *Manifesto*, but also one that we must admit is well-distributed in the field of artistic research. Preaching to the mirror will not win any new souls for artistic research or for art.

My fifth problem might be called the ‘authority game’, and it is to this problem that I now turn. It implies that instead of seeking new insight and knowledge in and through art, authority and dominance become the aim of the engagement. Whether or not you agree with the positions

³ This brings us back to an earlier paragraph in the *Manifesto* where we read: ‘It is remarkable how trends in artistic research are taken up only reluctantly by artists, or even how artists consciously reject this label. The reverse is true of academics, who readily assume the label to position themselves at the forefront of the movement and to theorize it. From this results a terminological culture of certification, which invokes and calls on the stereotype of theory rather than arguing autochthonously, *allowing itself to be guided by the genuine power of the aesthetic*’. (p. 12; emphasis mine)

in the *Manifesto*, it would be hard to deny that the authors are using tactics in order to obtain authority and domination (over the advocates of artistic research). To intently seek authority and dominance is to enter a power game that frequently leads to authoritarianism. As such, it involves an attempt to block others from thinking differently or daring to ask critical questions, as well as to impose a view and an order where the ‘authority’ puts itself on the top. The *Manifesto*’s authors seek the right to define artistic research, but this ambition is also an intrinsically part of institutionalized artistic research. (We must remember that many of the advocates of artistic research are themselves excellent players of the political game.) In fact, we cannot judge the positions and perspectives presented in the *Manifesto* without comprehending what they stand against. The *Manifesto* is an attempt to correct what the authors consider to be an illegitimate claim to authority over art and research, based on an ill-advised or incompetent use of theory, method and language. Thus, we can partly explain the authoritarian approach in the *Manifesto* as an attempt to confront the authoritarian pose and sectarianism that are also present in the institutionalized artistic research.⁴

One of the tactics used in the present authority game is the question of who best represents and understands the ‘great artists’ and ‘great art’. In this battle, the researchers inside institutionalized artistic research will often sell themselves as the best spokespersons for ‘great art’, based on their practical competence. On the other hand, and symptomatically, the *Manifesto*’s authors claim that real artists do not connect with artistic research, and, moreover, that ‘failed artists’ should represent neither art nor artistic research: they will only belittle the very same thing by which they seek authority, the art. And yet, the *Manifesto*’s authors’ self-presentation as the true defenders of artists and art may be not only a token of their involvement in the authority game but also of their reliance on the romantic cult of the genius. Again, this illustrates a hierarchically ordered concept of art where the ones nearest the top (or their ‘true’ advocates) gain authority.

‘We who know!’ is a stance that plays well in the authority game. The questions of what we know and how we know it, although far more interesting, do not make efficient tactics for the game. And maybe this is the foundation on which the authority game is built: the fact that dominance through appearance and grandstanding work surprisingly well when social control in academic and artistic matters are at stake. Indeed, grandstanding and performance of authority are deeply embedded in the (social) practices of art: in the professions, in the marketing, and in the educational programmes.

Authoritarianism always replicates a top-down approach, not only in its dealing with people

⁴ Like anywhere else in the academy, there is also in the field of artistic research a tendency to become auto-sufficient, self-centred and accordingly hostile to questioning from the outside. Our systems of publication, academic accreditations and financing, foster tribe loyalty at the cost of communicating across academic fields. And it may be because the *institution* ‘artistic research’ was created before the urge and content, that it has cultivated a protectionism and at times, a pure arrogance, which certainly has seemed to provoke the authors of the *Manifesto*.

but also in its dealing with production of insight, knowledge and value. I argue that it is for these reasons that the awareness of the authority game is important. It not only reveals inhibiting power structures but also shows how research can be reduced to the application of static propositions and stances, reproducing the dominant *doxa*. Playing the positions in the *doxa* well is a useful tactic in the authority game, but will necessarily obscure the ability to develop new insight, competence and knowledge in and through art.

In any research process, there are doubts and inconsistencies: choices made that could (and frequently should) be remade. Playing the authority game fosters arrogance, it conceals what is really at stake, and prevents the contribution of the wider research and art community. Arrogance closes doors and cramps the room.⁵

Whereas the *Manifesto* orders its hierarchical structure of power and authority from a theoretical positioning (in which Adorno is an important reference, both directly and indirectly), the power and authority in the institution of artistic research are and have been frequently politically developed and motivated, often within the institutions of higher education. This is less a criticism than a simple reflection on the need to bring things further. Let us not forget that the academia has always played the authority game and that an important *raison d'être* for artistic research was and still is the need to challenge conventional research practices on art. In that regard, the *Manifesto*'s authors are right to point out the problem of simply adapting (unconsciously) methods, language, theories from the academia, from science and philosophy.

One central question has been resonating throughout this essay: Is there really such an entity as artistic research? This question permeates the book as well, not least through the authors' own inability to maintain any coherent concept of artistic research throughout the book. But, in their criticism of the institution of artistic research, they also point out the lack of any internal coherence – of any well-founded or generally accepted theoretical or methodological approach.

This can be explained, of course, by the fact that artistic research was institutionalized before it became a research field in its own right. But again, this 'wrong ordering' of things cannot be used as an argument against the relevance or potential of artistic research. What it can question is the idea that artistic research is an entity in its own right.

Most likely there will never be a single entity that answers fully to the term 'artistic research'. But what we can do is to develop new insights into how practice, performance, creativity and performativity can be studied. Fundamentally, we need to resist our urge to begin from the top of the hierarchical structure, and prioritize the matter at hand and to which we may have a privileged access – matter that can and will challenge conventional academic research. But more importantly, we need to challenge the infantile urge to find father-figures or global theories that can explain art. This search will only replace one authoritarian structure

⁵ Despite the *Manifesto*'s aloof and arrogant tone and its quest for winning authority, on close reading all clarity disappears. The text as such has no authority, it performs authoritarianism.

with another.

We might instead think of artistic research as a conglomeration of different perspectives, different ways of seeking knowledge, insight and competence that can help – or be found in – the practice and creation of art and performance, as well as a means to challenge or complement existing research. Might we think of artistic research as placed in a continuum, as something to which we can *contribute*? Tellingly, ‘contribution’ is a word completely absent in the *Manifesto*. By playing the authority game and by manifesting an arrogant rebuke of the ‘advocates of the artistic research’, all communication, interaction and contribution are effectively silenced. Moreover, as a manifesto, the book offers no solution for artistic research – but rather calls for its dissolution or replacement by *aesthetic* research. In fact, more than anything, this becomes a manifesto *against* artistic research.

Does this make the *Manifesto* irrelevant? No! Its critique of the institution of artistic research is worth reflection. The presentation of the ‘three problems’ deserve attention. But, most of all, the authors are to be praised for addressing the obviously troubling political origin and academization of artistic research. It is a pity that this revelation results in a top-down approach that quashes the very thing that should be lifted up and freed from the institutionalized quagmire in which the *Manifesto*’s authors obviously see artistic research trapped. But most of all, the advantage of the book is that it provides a canvas on which we can project our own views of artistic research. And maybe was that the chief intention all along, to provoke in a productive way?

And, regarding the *writing* in the *Manifesto* as such, the strange thing is that it is *because* of its many inconsistencies, contradictions, its aggressive and arrogant approach, that this book is so effective in provoking new thoughts in the reader, that it will ‘trigger irritations and thus daring revelations’. Yet, the ‘journey’ is always interesting, and when the reader is able to focus on the single sections or paragraphs in the text, beautiful passages come through and make this a very worthwhile encounter. But we have to come back to the fundamental problem of this book, which I would now like to illustrate by telling a variant of Andersen’s fairy-tale.

... Then a little boy called Theodor W. shouted: ‘The emperor is naked’. Suddenly, all illusion was lost. The relatives of the boy stormed in and covered the emperor’s body in a heavy blanket called ‘aesthetics’. The emperor was now completely concealed, from toe to top, but he struggled to breath. The relatives said that this was the best way for the emperor to be protected, in all future, from any new scandal or swindle. Yet, some of the bystanders, and there were many tailors among them, feared for the life of the emperor. They wanted to give the emperor a more suited wardrobe. And if the tailors were given the chance, they would also use the nice fabric in the blanket ‘aesthetics’. But the relatives said no. They would rather let the emperor die than allow any tailor create a new scandal. ... But here, dear reader, must we depart from the tale. Only the future can tell the end.

