

Half concentrated, I picked up a carrot cake on my way out in the morning. Only later did I wonder what drove me to choose it, but of the assortment presented in the cafe it seemed like the best option. Its unusual thickness was hardly discernible; an even brownish mass coated in cream with soft cut edges that sealed the whole thing like fresh snowfall obscuring the now unrecognizable object underneath. Subsumed into a consumable form, the cake seemed to have disguised its components, urging an investigation of its consistency and not-quite-defined angularity.

Everything seemed noteworthy, but still I wasn't quite there yet. I no longer knew where my concentration was, whether in the near or distant future or past. What occupied me seemed like an overlap of impulses rather than a singular thought. Was this that thinking-in-the-now where I can't grasp anything conclusively as a memory or set it as a plan? There was something nostalgic but also new about it, hard to pinpoint. These speculations that have taken over my thoughts were so hard to locate that even their scale became indistinct. They were simply things. I can't even say whether I could call them that. They had no edges, no terms that would have made them definite. Maybe it was just an experience of conception, yet it felt so tangible. I couldn't remember what it was.

Anyway, it was in this moment that my consciousness was partially awoken to confusion – the realization of this ambiguous state and my need for control. Surprised, I found myself in as much discomfort as potential euphoria when I noticed that one of the two walnut halves sinking into the icing had a fairly straight cut, too straight for the way the piece was sliced. Apparently I had just taken a bite as I slowly discovered that the sharp edge of the walnut half ran pretty much exactly along the indentation left by my teeth; I wondered if I was already eating part of the walnut. A different strength

in bite would have made me aware of the situation earlier. A few seconds passed as I wondered if this walnut might be different from my understanding of what makes them tick. Not that I want to deny these walnuts their authenticity, just that there appeared the possibility that my steadfast belief in what things are can falter. Like the idea of a walnut that is not particularly crunchy or noticeable, but conformed instead in its consistency to the bed of icing on which it sits. As if the icing and the nut had become one, and their difference was only a visual decoration and an orientation for how and where the cake could be sliced, a demarcation of where one piece ends and the other begins – the walnuts as a two-dimensional core, about 2 cm to the respective edge; as a signifier for the not yet formed but imminent singularity – ‘a piece of cake.’ And now I was beginning to notice myself wavering back and forth between my notions of what determines icing and cream. Doesn’t icing usually seal a piece with a matt sheen and a thin layer of firmness that breaks up when it is „opened“, and gives up – or is taken away from – its shine as an outright commodity? Cream doesn’t have this status, it wouldn’t even need cake or flavor to remain cream. It is pure consistency. It almost seems as if not only the walnut has adapted to the glaze, but also the cream has given up its status as a glaze to become something together with the walnut. What would one call this? Mimesis seems more like adaptation in favor of forming and retaining one’s own identity, like an orchid learning to resemble a wasp to ensure survival, but here individual qualities merged to partially dissolve. So just assimilation? Opportunism? Consistency camouflage? The walnut and the cream seemed similar in their material composition, yet completely different in their appearance, in how they presented themselves in the constellation of the cake, the tray or the whole assortment in the cafe. United as one in a final layer, but not like a rigid blanket of icing that would clearly mark the spatial end of the cake upwards, they maintained an open and porous mass without

emphasizing a strict boundary, instead preserving a soft cohesion with the glazes covering all other pieces, perhaps even with the not yet spread cream in the bowl, with the not yet placed pieces of walnuts. Rather than asserting their character through material rigor, they found identity through signs and relations. Carefully and politely, they signaled from a distance that, by biting into them, one would be breaking through a boundary, stepping too close. While icing already beckons to be cracked open – as a satisfaction of an inner aggression, a violent response to a straightforward harshness – the cream is ideational and thus moralizing; one is already ashamed of the thought of destroying its form.

After those seconds, I ventured a test that transformed all speculation into awareness. A bit more „reality“. I hesitated, for I didn't know if I wanted to go there, but my thoughts were spinning in a vortex I hated to be caught in. Again I made contact with the walnut kernel, bit into it attentively and carefully, and all ideas vanished into thin air. It was a walnut kernel and not an aspect of a homogenous mass. Quite in line with my previous conception and against everything I had secretly hoped for in the last few seconds. It was undeniably harder than the cream. Perhaps I prefer to use just „cream“ now, to emphasize through its softness the different consistency to the walnut kernel.

So its sharp edge existed before me. And although I now know that I had not created it, but that my bite only took up this geometry and continued it into the underlying cake mass, the question of which consciousness reacted in such a set way remains. Can I call it my consciousness, when I wasn't even aware that I had not bitten off the nut with it? Do my teeth or my jaw have a consciousness that bypasses a large part of my brain power, operating without identifications? A subconscious consciousness? Or is this just an intuition for order and

straightness – for alignment and clean edges – after demarcations and defined units? How much power and intellectual distance from what is going on should one grant to an assumed bodily motor system that is acting here? And how different are intuition and consciousness really? Was it my teeth that, despite their skinless absence of haptic sensors, were able to find their way into the situation and place themselves in it, or was it the lips that had sensed this in advance, without passing on the information of different degrees of hardness? Following an inner satisfaction something like a partially executed plan emerges. How consciously do things come into being that can then be read as such? Like borders drawn on a map or a model, my bite seems to have been conceived so straight that it could have been applied to anything other than the even mass of cake delineated by shape-forming parameters and ornaments, were it not for the fact that its bluntness is bound to the size and shape of my dentition. It is these boundaries on which one settles in the same unconscious consciousness and stakes out horizons of the familiar until the first obstacle. So what would have happened if my bite had not kept to the perimeter that the walnut set? Had the bite landed on the walnut and not stopped at its resistance, the edge produced would be more ambiguous still, full of traceable hindrances of its creation. I guess in this form of demarcation, the recognizable, closed off identity of individual things (such as the walnut, the piece of cake, etc.) would possibly become imprecise and diffuse – and thus also how they are perceived, the understanding of their properties and conditions, and the possibility of rupturing their unity.



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