

## **An Attempt at an Absolute Blank Conversation**

No. I

(Proposed as an open or improvised conversation).

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Place: University of Copenhagen (Holger Schulze's office) and at Amager Fælled (nearby park).

Date: Thursday the 8th of February 2024

Time: 3-5pm

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### **Other context:**

On the interest of what an 'absolute blank conversation' could be like, Holger Schulze and I (Lukas Quist Lund) met up to explore and lightly test an (attempted) 'improvised' conversation. Not necessarily 'on' or 'of' the subject of an 'absolute blank conversation', but rather as a curious conversation; one able to build, formulate, and share some experiences relevant for continuing the experiment.

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### **Part I**

(At Holger's office)

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- (Lukas Quist Lund): [

]

(Holger Schulze): [

]

- [it's the exact same thing] it's only the control of software.

[ ] yet another proprietary wall [

] if we should stay here and start with it or if we should start going out but maybe the one could lead to the other.

- [

] what happens to the conversation when you actually leave the chair and the table [  
]

[  
]

- [

] if we try to improvise the conversation for listening it's quite easy to just becomes this meta conversation about what does that even mean [ ]

[  
]

there must be something on which it can be made.

- [ ] it is really the sensation of it that is quite interesting [ ] what if we just don't say a word for like 10 minutes and just really sit in that silence together.

[ ] that could be guiding ritual maybe for other blank conversations starting with not saying anything until someone feels like saying something [

] So, I would not exclude most activities we would do without recording.

- [ ]

[ ] Maybe leaving the conversation without agreeing that we end the conversation could be one rule. That can be physical, but also mental.

- [ ]

[ ] Anything else? [ ] And 5pm would be the latest of time?  
[ ]

- [ ] maybe 4.45pm as the latest? [ ]  
] Just a little space to transit in.

[ ] I'm even happy to take time. [ ]

- [ ] also ask in which degree would you mind or have a comment to me taking notes? [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]  
] I can then write them down, then return to the present. [ ]

I use it also every day, but [

]

- Then maybe another time we could have a non-note conversation.

[

]

- [

] for some reason I connect  
slowness to these moments or pauses that appear blank, [

] what is the blank conversation? What is a slow  
conversation? Well, how do they meet together? What is slow blankness? [ ] the  
last week of February.

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- Okay. Should we do a moment here and now...

One hour and 35 minutes do we have, as maximum time. We don't need to exhaust it as you said. But that is the maximum. Okay? Let's start now.

[Sits in silence...]

[On the recording you can mostly hear the breathing. However the window of the office was open, and many different sounds entered in the room.]

[silence lasted 1 minute and 30 seconds.]

[  
] some tracks bumping bumping over some road things, like pa -dang, pa -dang, pa -dang. That reminds me briefly. [  
]

- Do you think that whatever we hear of sounds, we somehow reference them back to childhood or something like that?

Not necessarily. In this case I did. In other situations there are other references. [  
]

- [  
]

That's the point, that a lot of childhood memories, when people claim, I know from my childhood, that these are also constructions we do, of course. We actively reinforce, and then they become important. [  
]

] And suddenly different things become important. [  
]

- [  
]

(laughs)

] I shouldn't really trust any memory, or even my idea of memories [  
] a lot of fun because it's very generative [  
]

[ ] witness, eye  
-witness, autobiography, fiction, invention, theory, made up, of course there is a line  
between them, but it's blurry. Most of the time it's blurry, even if we have very vivid  
memories of certain things, we transform them all along our lives by telling them to  
others. [  
]

]

- [  
]

] letting go,  
forgetting, missing, [  
] We have this tendency to focus on what we have compared to  
what we do not have [  
]

It is important to forget. [  
]

] frankly I can enjoy  
this now because it's pleasure that you don't have certain things on your mind  
and knowing that other people have a hard time of forgetting certain things makes it  
even more joyful that something simply vanished somewhere [  
] that gives free headspace for urgent  
current things.

- [ ] what you then make  
space for [

] when I'm not stressing about  
remembering or forgetting that becomes this extra space this third space of  
being able to be present and in some degree that I'm not if I'm constantly  
worrying about what do I remember what we're not remember and what is  
important What is not and always Analyzing my way through what should I  
keep from this moment rather than just [ ]

[ ] how accurate sometimes an involuntarily memory is, especially [in my  
case at least, regarding references, pages where a certain term appeared or pieces or  
birth dates of a person of cultural interest or any detail where sometimes where  
sometimes a person of cultural interest or] any detail where sometimes a person of  
say, "Oh, that was, yeah, it's 1776." I didn't know that I remembered that so  
precisely. [But that's also, let's say, a professional brain aspect.] I would say that's  
embodied knowledge. [ ]  
things that are simply so deep in your body that you can apparently have forgotten  
it, but it's still there if it's needed [

] So the intuition is not intuition.  
It's just embodied knowledge.

- [

] (speaking in  
foreign language)

Yeah, [ ] prejudice?

- [

] (gasps) [ ]

[

] It's not an easy

concept, [

] I think a lot of aspects in intuition is also experience.

[

]

- Experience becomes intuition.

[

] or having a conversation [ ]

- [ ] I feel that works against for example the concept or practice of listening [

] I don't want this habitual way of listening

[

] I need new experiences [

] I need that unsureness, this crack, this challenge of my intuition, rather than the intuition itself. I want to use my intuition but then experience how the world disagrees with me, or it makes me surprised, or...



I'm thinking if that is the difference also between actual improvisation, where you challenge yourself and... and let's say also limited degree of simply repeating stuff that you totally love or can do very well. [ ]

regurgitating things that are embodied, that you do very well, all these desires and obsessions you have in your body and simply dragging them out. [ ]

[ ] maybe funny, but it's not of interest for others, very often, because it's just regurgitating things [ ]

]

- [ ] from a limited position: How do you then judge or become aware of the limitedness? [ ]

[ ] I don't know. How do we judge that? [ ]

] And maybe we can't.

Maybe we can't, but I feel if one has a certain degree of critical perspective on oneself, [ ] where one simply repeats stuff that is not of interest to others. [ ]

[ ] okay. I could now throw this into the conversation. But now I know it would lead us more there. Do I want to go there? Or is this more interesting maybe to challenge the situation with doing this? [ ]

[ ] change the conversation [also through that, because there's maybe something else happening, and] that will affect us again.

- [ ] gives me directions for what I know would not work, [ ]

]

Yeah which begs the obvious question; should we go for a walk?

- [ ] I would just ask because we agreed about how to leave conversation [ ] I know she's sick you mind if I just wrote her a check-in?

[ ] please communicate with her. I will put on my jacket and everything. Take your time.

- All right. Thanks. Including that as part of the conversation.

yeah. Indeed.

-

## **Part II**

(Lost due to equipment failure - 30-45 minutes of conversation while walking at Amager Fælled, corresponding to approximately 15 pages (here inserted as blank.)

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### **Short rememberings about what we talked in the lost tape:**

Holger:

[[[I remember that we were talking about how listening leads to remembering as well as to a deeper interlocking of the senses. Isn't our response to sounds or listening situations often based on some rather idiosyncratic personal experience? We also touched upon the sense of next steps or what may come in the future. I mentioned the work of phenomenologist and psychiatrist Eugene T. Gendlin and his concept of "felt sense": a concept to describe how meaning, a next utterance, a next statement, actually emerges from one's momentary bodily experience (especially in this article: Gendlin, E.T. (1992). The Broader Role of Bodily Sense in Thought and Language. In M. Sheets-Johnstone (ed.), Giving the body its due, pp. 192-207. Albany: State University of New York Press). We also noted how common or uncommon the practice of daily walking might be for a person, and we even talked about the surprisingly cold weather that day.]]]

Lukas:

When remembering back, the words easily come to stand in the background of the gravel, the colors of the tree, and the sensation of the cold but light wind. We talked about these things, I think, but in what way? I remember us talking about sensing; sensing as more than the five western hierarchized senses. How we might have internal senses helping us with among others balance, blood pressure, etc. We talked from a rather personal perspective, drawing on our different, and yet perhaps alike, experiences. I try so hard to remember what we talked about, but the more I try, the more it disappears, or becomes an imagination of mine, which I doubt corresponds to what happened. Did we also talk about this when walking? It is fitting how we at the office talked about the ability to forget and then lost the recording. Both things seem to have enhanced my ability to forget...

—

### **Part III**

(Walk back from Amager Fælled)

—

- [ ]

[ ] Can you hold it for a maximum of maybe 19 minutes or something like that?

- [ ] But I've also always loved how they add on, like this disruption or this loss of the conversation or however you want to frame it. [ ] much more a beginning or a layering [ ]

[ ]

- [ ] it was too cold [ ] we had a lot of time to think of that and what that meant and how that changed our perhaps now caring for or reminding of the conversation. And that was really giving.

[ ] though every author fears when there's a text lost, [ ] it helps you to forget all the minuscule details. [ ] the important work you did and think about the real important things. [ ] And often it becomes a better text. [ ] you focus more on the crucial things. [ ] losing something, forgetting something can refocus. [ ] to center on the things that are actually important in the moment. [ ]

[ ] And to forget some things is also here, not always nice, maybe even painful, maybe even professionally damaging in some cases. But it can help you to understand, oh, actually, this is not what I want to do. Maybe I need to say something here. Maybe I need to leave this

activity or make sure that it turns into something else or something. So again, the practice of forgetting, that is definitely a topic.

- [ ] if you have your memories and what kind of ownership is that rather than when you are with it and when you are in the process of things becoming and things disappearing. [ ] what is in existence rather than [ ]

It's leaving the objectification, the reification of the things that can be in your body and that can be embodied.

- [ ] if you want a successful death, you should not leave in heritage. Because that means you haven't spent it during your life. You haven't given it to someone. So when you die, you should have already given all your things away. You should have spent it. [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ]

- [ ] Make myself come at terms with what is of meaning, of value, what to give, [ ]

]

[ ] obviously, I'm 25 to 30 years older than you, [ ] what it means, what time you have realistically left and what you want to do and what you do with that and how you want to go out of your life, how a celebration after your death should be [ ] what could be the last post on the various social media accounts you want to have, [

] it's a realistic perspective on further events. It doesn't claim, yeah, I live for all eternity. It never ends, which is obviously and necessarily complete and utter bullshit. At least right now. [

] how to speak about our capabilities in life. And what is a normal person? What is a normal person's capability? And I have to stop you because I think we're walking more east now. So we have to turn right at some point. And maybe the next right. [ ] the idea of a normal person is actually the least normal person, [

] the first 10 years you're a kid. Then you have 10 to 20 years more where you learn and try to gear up everything what you can in knowledge, in practice and everything you try out in reading, in conversations, in social life, in sexuality and everything. [

]

- [ ] the fitness of  
what, the degeneration of what? [

] Or when in life do you have the best ability to have a  
conversation? Do you have the most caring, loving abilities or the greatest ability to  
listen? [

] but what also just transforms? [

]

[

]

- Maybe there's a note of orientation. I think we didn't really walk right. Like we  
walked further away. I'm not sure anymore. [ ]

[ ]

- [ ]

[ ] But let me look into  
the all-knowing eye, where we are now. [

] I will

check in a second if we're actually doing that.

- [ ]

[ ] The dot representing my tool is moving in the right direction.

- [ ]

[ ]

- Have you recently had a good conversation situation?

[

] And especially these situations when you really get to know each other. That's, of course, a moment when you can reorient yourself. [

] This other person you've never met before, how they live and what they're interested in. And you realize the routines that might have worked for these other persons are not working here. So you need to reorient. [

] this person asks me or asks from me or inspires me to speak about topics I haven't.

- [ ] if the reorientation part is an important criteria for a good conversation. In what way would blankness either offer or not offer reorientation? [

] And in what way does the blankness reflect back on me and challenge me and perhaps disrupt me and force me to reorientate? [

] But I'm not sure with others. [

] I don't know.

I feel the moments of silence are important, which you demanded also a few minutes ago here, which is great. Good, I feel, because then you react to the environment and you let things happen more than running on the tracks of your thoughts and words.

- [ ] how both the blankness, but all the silence is not really real, but more a framing of a situation.

[ ]

- Because when we were silenced, the only thing we did different was not speak out. All the sounds and all the happenings, other than speaking, were still taking place.

[ ]

- [ ] That something is missing, but all the other is still, and perhaps to a large degree, being activated.

[ ] My body, my sense now is maybe our conversation ends when we come to the street. Yeah. I don't know. OK, maybe that's an arc we have here. We could go on. But I feel, you know, in my sense, I feel OK. [ ] how do you think about that?

- [ ] And if nothing else, I'm also just interested in seeing what happens. [ ]

[ ] So I'm curious about that. [ ] it's funny how I'm usually the one on the bike. [ ]

[ ] I feel I'm super slow moving through the world because other people are so fast. [ ]

[ ]

[ ] I was for the longer part of my life a walker. [ ]

[ ] So I noticed that my body and my existence transforms more into the cycling thing, biking thing. But for a longer time, I always preferred walking to taking the bus or the bike [ ] Sounds weird. It's a practice of transport that allows me more freedom to think and freedom to wander around in the world, [ ]

- [ ] but this is what our bodies are designed to do by evolution.

Maybe.

- [ ] Or maybe running is the most ideal exercise, [ ] what our bodies do really, really well.

[ ] So we're coming to the street in a second. Or right here is the street already. We could also end here. [ ] And thank you, [ ] for this great blank conversation.

- Absolutely. Thank you. I'll just stop it. Bye.



—

**After-note (by Lukas):**

I am surprised about this conversation's specific relationship between the distance walked, and the words spoken. It feels, in the way I remember it, that we walked much further, and said much more. Now listening to the recordings, and going through the transcription, it seems as if very few words took quite a lot of steps to speak - and that we in general, and relatively, went for a rather short walk, roughly one hour; a walk, that on my behalf felt as longer, perhaps due to some kind of expanded sensing, responding and thinking.