

## In the language trap - terms as triggers

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What does a controversial term like **luxury** have to do with **banality** or **non-art** with the term **sustainability**? Depending on the chosen context / worldview, both pairs sharpen the spheres in which they appear to be opposites and problematize reality. They require their users to position themselves independently and to become aware of how these change their attitudes and have challenging repercussions.

Today, politics and art are often communicated linguistically via contextual key terms, so-called *triggers*. Whereas in earlier times it was about the transformation of **bread** and **wine** into another (christian) dimension, today conceptual triggers extend ongoing communication in a very calculated way: political communication of impositions, claims, exclusivities and inclusions is today part of social-aesthetic staging and vice versa.

Even if information today has only a very narrow time span to become publicly effective: In today's "infocracy" (Byun Chul Han), information in turn collects appropriate data from self-generated sentences. More and more often, single terms operate like *triggers* that refer to traumas suffered or future social injustices (Cf. Svenja Flaspöhler, *Sensibel*, 2021). The conceptual mantra **respect**, for example, operated like such a calculatedly deployed trigger, combining a sensitivity of its author Olaf Scholz (i.e. the next german chancellor) with an empathy toward the impositions of many individuals, thus evoking the fictive whole of a society. "Trigger" operates like abstract and context-sensitive language traps: one hears a certain ((in)correct) term, which is immediately tested for its political explosiveness, its socio-cultural power of distinction, or for its aesthetic "sexiness."

The good Lord created the joke and its sharp wit, man imitated this model and has been reproducing jokes as cheap humor ever since. "**Wit cuts, humor binds**" once wrote the creative Nazi art historian *Wilhelm Pinder* in 1937 in an smart essay on the "Map of Humor". Wit as an original intellectual achievement disturbs and can even disturb; in the form of surprising insights, it even produces wide-awake moments. Those who demonstrate wit in their thinking intuitively divine far-flung connections that are often only made recognizable through original comparisons and juxtapositions of the unfamiliar. The famous physicist Wolfgang Pauli, for example, once formulated: *God created the volume, the devil created the surface*. Such formulas with four unknowns have the advantage that they bring truths to bear where the opposite cannot be proven.

*How does reality show itself when there is wit and other forms of perspicacity?*

Niklas Luhmann would probably have asked today. An art that addresses itself linguistically self-confidently to others and to the others, operates in each case with doubly applied grounds: it imputes to us "feats of art" that occur, as today, no longer as works in space, but as events of their making and in the time of their representation. The actual joke of a representation arises from the imposition of reflection that we demand of ourselves and others - or not. In the end, an imposition operates like a "second-order trigger": *do I want to / do I have to put up with this?* Now the use of terms has also reached its (political) limits of shame ...