

Notes on Stones

*remembering sites and objects*

*Judit Flóra Schuller*



My observation starts by the bank of the Danube on the second day of my residency. My thoughts are wandering around, none of them takes any concrete form, besides the side-note that the same river flows in my city. During this 'active nothingness', some kind of recognition directs my attention towards a middle-sized stone. Or maybe it was the stone who 'issued a call'<sup>1</sup>. It is a perfect ergonomic fit to my left hand: it smoothly fills my palm with both of its sides, every small bulge on its surface finds a dent in my left palm and vice versa. I took it with me and place it on my desk. It accompanies me during the upcoming weeks.

'Heisenberg is looking at the atomic nucleus. The question is, whether the nucleus would be looking at him if he was not doing so.'<sup>2</sup>

According to object-oriented ontology, objects can act as agents themselves, as Harman says, objects perceive as so far as they relate<sup>3</sup>. What do we sense in an object when we accept, perceive its call? What makes an object different to the other entities? Can we sense the layers of history in a material thing? If an object can evoke remembrance, can it remember itself? Human perception is selective - that is also the basis of how our memory works-, we can not perceive everything, we filter what surrounds us. Some objects can become active agents, they issue a call to us, but we can only receive and accept it if we are looking at them.


On the last warm autumn day, we went on a hike to the pre-Alps with other resident artists. We are tourists, we fight our way up to one of the mountain tops, we enjoy the view of the surrounding mountains and the Traunsee. A couple of days later I am about to post a picture of the landscape to Instagram, when the second option as a location offered to me by the app is 'Ebensee concentration camp'. A memorial site has just become active to me. Am I the physicist or the nucleus in this relation?

---

1. Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p.4

2. Nádas, P. (1991). *On Heavenly and Earthly Love*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó. p. 68

3. Harman, G. (2018). *Object-oriented Ontology, A New Theory of Everything*. UK: Penguin Random House.



**Ebensee, Austria**  
Ebensee, Austria

**Ebensee concentration camp**  
Ebensee, Austria

**Marktgemeinde Ebensee am Traunsee**  
Hauptstraße 34, Ebensee, Austria

**Bahnhof Ebensee Landungsplatz**  
Salinenplatz 6, Ebensee, Austria

**Ebenseer Rathaus**  
Ebensee, Austria

**Pfarrkirche Ebensee**  
Kirchen gasse, Ebensee, Austria





Not just objects, but sites can be active entities. By the term active, I mean some kind of indescribable essence that can be triggered by a mere feeling or sensation of a historical layer. A site where we can sense that the traces of history are still present, or used to be present. Before the involuntary recognition that I was really close to the site of a former concentration camp, I had been suggested to visit the Mauthausen memorial. And this accidentally, involuntarily evoked remembrance put an end to my hesitation. During the last week of my residency, I visited the Mauthausen camp and memorial.

I left a small stone at the Hungarian memorial, a piece I had been keeping in my pocket for several days, found by the Danube during another walk.

