

FERRAN ADRIÀ, JÈSSICA JAQUES¹
**FOR AN APPLIED
PHILOSOPHY OF GASTRONOMY**

Applied philosophy considers as a single generative matrix the discursive praxis and its validation in a real object. It resignifies traditional metaphysics by blending it almost inextricably with a real praxis. It combines with and draws from artistic, ethical, educational, psychological, religious, ethnic, political, legal, economic, sociological, activist, linguistic, ecological or scientific practices. Now is the turn of gastronomy: in recent times, this field stopped being a mere practice to become a discursive generator of new ways of thinking. In the wake of Jean Antelme Brillat-Savarin (cf. 1826) and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (cf. 1930), contemporary cuisine is beginning its theoretical journey and, because of its strong bond with reality, this journey falls within the scope of applied philosophy (cf. Allhoff & Monroe 2007; Curtin & Heldke 1992; Jaques 2014; Kaplan 2012; Korsmeyer 1999 & 2001; Onfray 1995; Telfer 1996).

Ferran Adrià was, unknowingly to himself, a philosopher at the stoves. He closed his restaurant, *elBulli* (<<http://www.elbulli.com/home.php?lang=en>>), six months a year to devote himself to creation, despite the economic risks entailed. He wasn't aware of being a philosopher until British artist Richard Hamilton blurted out that his cooking was a language. Not a propositional, but a global language. Since then, knowledge and flavour were a single word in his head, without even knowing of their etymological link (*sapere, sapor -oris*). Adrià began to wonder about the conditions of possibility of gastronomy. He closed *elBulli* in July 2011 (after twenty-five years as a creative entity) to focus during seven years on reflection. In fact, the whole history of *elBulli* can be divided in cycles of seven years. He understood Hegel, Brillat-Savarin's contemporary,

¹ This article is, strictly speaking, the result of a series of interviews between Jèssica Jaques – Professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory at the Philosophy Department of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona – and Ferran Adrià. In a broader sense, it responds to four years of networking within the territory of philosophy applied to gastronomy, with special emphasis on applied aesthetics. This article would not have been possible without the support of the *Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad* to the research project FFI2012-32614: *Aesthetic Experience and Artistic Research: Cognitive Production in Contemporary Art*.

without even knowing who the German philosopher was; understanding was a crucial prelude to being creative once again. He didn't know Kant either, but shared with the philosopher of Königsberg the idea that the fundamental category of aesthetics is disinterestedness, and also a philosophy of talent. Gastronomy has nothing to do with nutrition, but with the pleasure of thought, just as any creative painting or poem. Adrià started *feeding thought*,² by replacing the creative intentions of dishes by theoretical explorations labelled *Food for Thought* (cf. Hamilton & Todolí 2009), *Eating Knowledge, Feeding Minds, Feeding Creativity* or *Creative Inquiry*.³

He closed *elBulli* to open a new *elBulli*, which will be named *elBulli1846* and located on the site of the previous restaurant (Cala Montjoi, Roses, Catalonia). The name refers to 1846, the number of dishes created in *elBulli* over the years of its existence. It is intended to be two things: 1) A showcase of the creative biography of *elBulli* (past, present, future); 2) An incubator of post-institutional creativity, dedicated to culinary creativity *beyond* restaurant and shaped by the austere standards of philosophy. To achieve this goal, Adrià opened in July 2014 (just three years after closing *elBulli*), in Barcelona, *elBulliLab*, a sort of kitchen of ideas, more of a *metalab* than a *medialab*. A *metalab* dedicated to gastronomic metalanguage that will offer a large space dedicated to exhibitions on creative process. The team's sole obsession: to decode the culinary process (creative, reproductive and experiential). Its passion: applied philosophy, understood by Adrià as "the process of understanding things in general – not limited to specific foci – with a commitment to reality". Its vocation: creativity, education, research and innovation – all inseparable terms in this new adventure. Its underlying commitment: democratising knowledge to stimulate creation and innovation. Adrià and *elBulli's* team innovated in gastronomy from a small cove on the Catalan coast; today, they innovate and revolutionise philosophy from Barcelona, by using propaedeutics, metaphysics, taxonomy and methodology to decode gastronomy as part of a remarkable project: *Sapiens*. A multidisciplinary team of fifty persons work on the project. Six of them are trained in philosophy, accompanied by three professors, all related to the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*.⁴ When the innovative philosophical

² This was the title of the postgraduate course that started the collaboration between Ferran Adrià and the Philosophy Department of the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*. It lasted from February to May 2011 in La Pedrera building, Barcelona. See <http://www.feedingthought.es/feedingthought/Presentacion.html>.

³ See for example "Ferran Adrià Feeds the Hungry Mind; The Former *ElBulli* Chef Is Now Serving Up Creative Inquiry", *The New York Times*, January 2, 2015.

⁴ Students: Yaiza Bocos, Júlia de Luis, Pol Lucas, Abigail Monells, Diego Rey and Pilar Talavera; professors: David Casacuberta, Jèssica Jaques and Gerard Vilar. All are members of *eBullició* (literally, *boiling* in Catalan), a multidisciplinary collective of forty people dedicated to the gustatory aesthetics. Moreover, Jèssica Jaques and Gerard Vilar teach gustatory aesthetics – an unprecedented subject in the international academic landscape – in the Bachelor curriculum of Philosophy in the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (<http://www.uab.cat/guiesdocents/2014-15/g100281t2500246a2014->

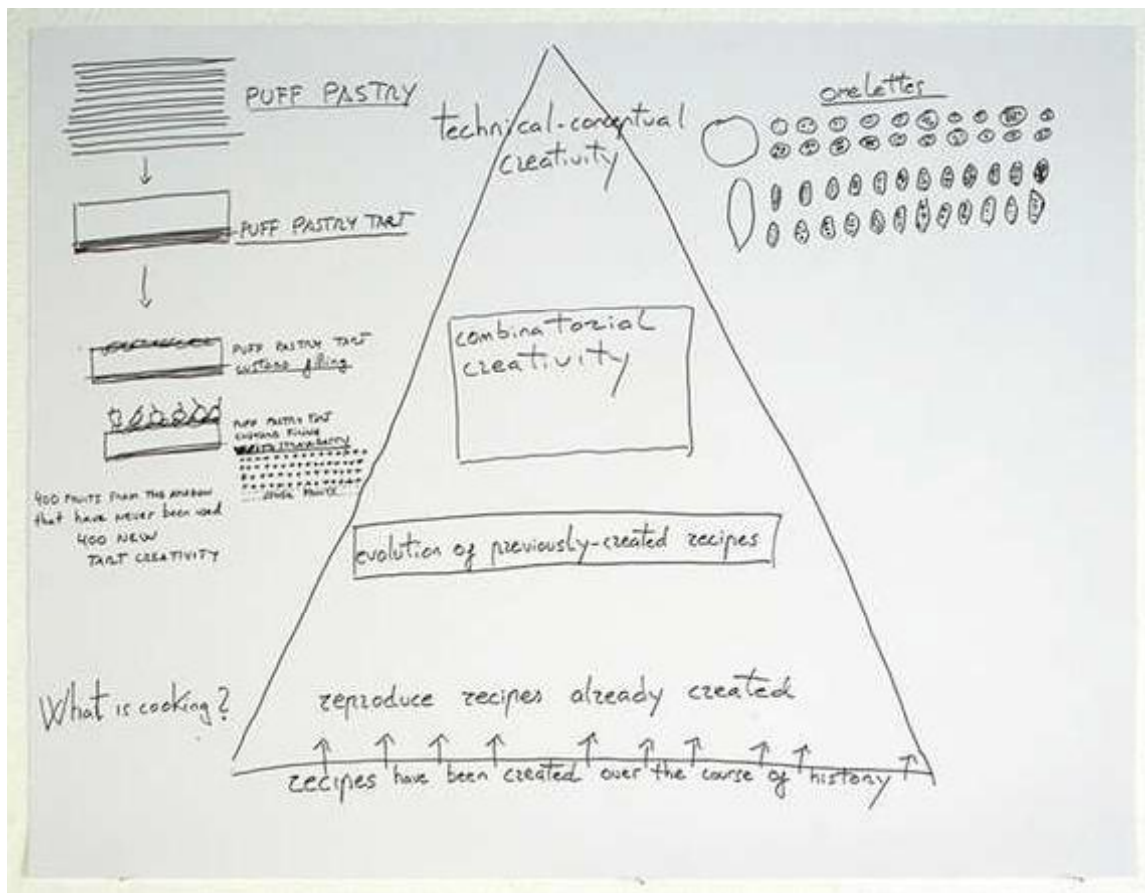
contents that emerged from *elBulliLab* start flourishing in *elBulli1846*, the latter won't be preparing mere dishes, but something similar to what Kant designated as *aesthetic ideas*: ideas that trigger reflection, collect knowledge and disrupt it with imagination; and eventually, provoke dialogues that will generate new knowledge, waiting to be disrupted, once again. Following the tradition of applied aesthetics, *elBulli1846* will cook philosophy. Kant published his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1790 against the backdrop of the French Revolution. The cooking of *elBulli* was revolutionary; but what is being cooked in *elBulliLab* and will be cooked in *elBulli1846* paves the way for gastronomy 2.0.

1. Sapiens, *BulliPedia*, Seurching

What is *elBullilab* creating now? Its creative project is starting to offer three results: *Sapiens*, *BulliPedia* and *Seurching*. These are three projects whose prospective design require a long period of intense work. The three point to the last creative stage of applied philosophy: the dishes of *elBulli1846*. The second gastronomic revolution of Adrià is a philosophical one. Its driving force is the desire to create dishes that are different from the previous stage; they will be philosophical dishes that embody seven years of reflection. They won't be designed by Adrià himself but by the creative team in residence. Adrià is longing to move from the vanguard to the rear-guard of creativity, something like a thesis advisor in the applied philosophy for *elBulli1846* dishes. Meanwhile, new business ventures will allow the *elBulliLab* team to start exercising its applied philosophy.

ElBulli had been cooking ideas long enough to understand that creativity depends on concepts. This can be seen both in the restaurant's fascinating the catalogue raisonné (<http://www.elbulli.com/catalogo/catalogo/index.php?lang=en>) as in one of its most successful icons: the *creative pyramid*, which masterfully introduces to the restaurant's philosophy of creativity and that, in retrospect, can be seen as the first embryonic form of the maps designed in *elBulliLab*. The *creative pyramid* shares a surprising resemblance with Plato's "Allegory of the line" (*Republic VI*) in its four parts: 1) Plato's *eikasia* becomes *repetition* in *elBulli*; 2) *pistis* becomes *variation*; 3) *dianoia* (where the imagination played a role) becomes the *unusual association* of what already exists; and 4) *noesis* is what *elBulli* and *elBulliLab* call *concept*. And for Adrià, the concept is "the gateway to the possibility of new creative results".

15iCAT.pdf) and the Master Research in Art and Design (*Eina. Centre de Disseny i Art*, UAB; <http://eina.cat/en/postgraus/master-oficial-eees-master-universitari-de-recerca-en-art-i-disseny>).



But how to conduct a conceptual inquiry into the gastronomic process, in all of its phases and, more specifically, how to inquire into culinary creativity? The key methodology for conducting this investigation is called *Sapiens*. It took nine months of intense reflection to elaborate – a pregnancy, a kind of platonic birth with Adrià as the Socratic midwife. In fact, it's the first slowly-cooked creative result of *elBulliLab*. Adrià is obsessed with methods, although he knows them to be a temporary tool (like Cartesian provisional morality, but with a pinch of humour and improvisation) to generate creative disruptions. *elBulliLab* developed the 7 *Ws* method, which summarises *Sapiens* and consists of seven philosophical questions adapted to the digital world: 1) *What?* (The ontological question); 2) *How?* 3) *Why?* (gnoseological questions); 4) *Who?* 5) *Whom?* (The *poietic* and experiential questions); 6) *When*, 7) *Where?* (circumstantial questions). According to Adrià, these seven questions have changed the way the team works: they transformed their first conceptual drafts into elaborate taxonomies, maps, definitions and treatments applied to gastronomy; the whole process took the shape of a presentation that translates Aby Warburg's *Atlas* (much admired by Adrià) in the digital world and relaxes the stiffness of Linnaean taxonomy. These seven questions will shape the content of *BulliPedia*, a platform dedicated to gastronomic knowledge, a constant work-in-progress that will adopt various formats (online encyclopedia,

applications, paper books, e-books, exhibitions, workshops, interviews and conferences).

Voltaire wrote the entry for “*goût*” (<http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.6:1331:1.encyclopedie0513.7683367>) of the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D’Alembert in 1757 claiming the non-metaphorical use of taste, i.e. “the tongue and palate” as a faculty of discernment and reflection. *BulliPedia* takes up this tradition and defines itself as a propaedeutic, metaphysical, taxonomic and methodological project. It tries to provide this first encyclopedia with the agility required by social networks, but applies the same rigor as the *Encyclopédie*, with whose enlightened spirit *BulliPedia* has much in common: it strives to retain the knowledge in times of threatening excess.

For this reason, it will be controlled by two procedures. First of all, by experts who will follow the most stringent norms of academic publishing. In this sense, it won’t be a “*Wikipedia* of gastronomy”. Secondly, it will have its own immune system against excess, called *Seurching*. Recalling the days when *elBulli* created its own vocabulary (the exquisite *morphing*), Adrià proposes a *cured anti-search engine* against excess. Its morphology and its logo are the result of the blending of two words: *sea urchin* – a common animal in Cala Montjoi – and *searching* (today, specifically online). Searching the Internet is often overwhelming and superficial because of the excess of results. *Seurching* will offer a *consequential navigation* system, regulated by experts that will act as the editorial board of a trusted specialised magazine. Just like in the old days, when we would buy our trusted specialised magazine but with today’s informative possibilities. The preferred example of *elBulliLab*: white asparagus. An Internet search gives 6.260.000 hits. Browsing them wisely is virtually impossible. *Seurching* will provide an effective, immediate or paused reading, according to the user’s requirements, by ensuring the correct linkage of all the gastronomic knowledge. The logo of *Seurching* has thorns: indeed, aimless searching can be thorny; besides, *paideia* and philosophy require efforts.

Investigating gastronomy in the pure Socratic style is what all this is about. If possible, with interviews. Something similar to what Plato did in his dialogues. Adrià says that dialogical philosophy is the “hard drive” of his current creativity. He has clearly understood that, in philosophy, questions are far more important than answers, and, recognising himself both in Socrates and Rancière, he is quite surprised that contemporary creative practices haven’t examined themselves from this angle. His questions range from: “What is a fruit?” to “How do I create?” or “How do I eat?” with a very contemporary trend towards the creative experiential process of the diner, whom he links to relational aesthetics. The diner is a cook just as much, or even more, than the cook himself. Just like audience in art is the principal actor of the creative process, according to relational aesthetics.

Sapiens is a questioning method of high philosophical rigour that forgives neither silences nor distractions. Every moment of the creative, reproductive, offering,

experiential, distributive and marketing process of gastronomy involves *Sapiens*. For Adrià, this methods affects all creative projects. On two different levels: synchronic and diachronic, with a special emphasis, in his case, on the history of gastronomy. One claim: patience. *Sapiens* is now an internal method of *elBulliLab*, the results of which will be revealed in 2018, seven years after closing *elBulli*, as a tribute to the bicentenary of Brillat-Savarin's *The Physiology of Taste* (1826), the first and almost only philosophical treatise on gastronomy, much admired by Adrià. The chef-philosopher faces an immense challenge: he wishes to respond to Savarin with a work that will most certainly be called *The New Physiology of Taste*, which will decode all the processes involved in gastronomy and realise Savarin's dream of compiling "[...] la connaissance raisonnée de tout ce qui a rapport à l'homme, en tant qu'il se nourrit." (1826: *Méditation III*).

What for? To create again and above all: to help creating again according to a contemporary paradigm shift. The temporality of philosophy and *paideia* is slow, even though our time is fleeting, precarious and full of excesses (crf. Vilar 2015). Adrià and the team of *elBulliLab* undertake the philosophical crusade of patience and reflection. They want a calm *paideia*, which returns to its origins and defends itself against the excess of information. And even from the institution, in this case, the restaurant, which may well be obsolete in its contemporary uses. Question: how were gastronomic creative processes before the introduction of restaurants, what new significance could they convey in contemporary times? *elBulliLab* now claims the originality of a return to origins. As claimed by Cézanne and put into practice by Picasso. That is precisely why the archives of *elBulli*, huge and obsessively organised, are still feeding those of *elBullilab*. Derrida's archive fever (*mal d'archive*) binds both, just as *deconstruction* of food finds its counterpart in the *decoding* of gastronomy.

2. Revolution

If we had to choose only one word for Adrià's current project, it would be this one: revolution. Restaurants emerged after the French Revolution. But now, the issues have become post-institutional and of philosophical nature. How can we recover the knowledge and flavour of the origins? How can we recover traces of an ephemeral, undocumented creative process? How can we be original by going back to the origins? Was the restaurant really a democratising process? Or was it a drift of capitalism and patrimony, just like museums or zoos, which emerged at the same moment as restaurants? What does gastronomy, beyond the restaurant, mean today, in the age of ICTs and social networks? Bizarre dating designations are starting to be used for all of these questions: the era before restaurants is labelled *b.R.* (*before restaurants*); the era with restaurants, *a.R.* (*after restaurants*). And one might add: 2018 *p.R.* (*post restaurants*) for the era *beyond* restaurants.

The French Revolution called for “*égalité, liberté et fraternité*”. This could be *elBulliLab*’s motto as well. In *elBulliLab*, *égalité* means that anyone can be creative (in the purest style of Beuys: “*Jedermann ist ein Künstler*”). Willingness, time, passion, motivation and commitment in sharing are the only necessary ingredients for *elBulliLab*’s team, just like in *elBulli*’s kitchen. The premise is that we are all equal in our inequalities and that we all have talent – and talent can be educated. Moreover, the digital world offers us today almost equal opportunities. *Liberté* for *elBulliLab* means that in order to create, one needs self-awareness of freedom, and to defend it against all odds. *Fraternité* provides radical generosity. One can only be creative by being generous, as was *elBulli* when it disclosed the secrets of the *Chef*. In *elBulli*, Adrià wasn’t the *Chef* of a team; rather, there was a team of *chefs* – without capital C – a system of organisation rarely used in avant-garde kitchens, where a disciplined team of cooks works on the reproductive process under the control of a single, changing leadership. In *elBulliLab*, Adrià comes in and out of projects and entrusts its rotating members with “items” i.e. micro-projects with an immediate resolution. These are no longer items of revolutionary cuisine but items of philosophy that is, governed by conceptual logic that is analytical, dialogic, synthetic and ultimately, revolutionary.

The results prior to the work of *elBulliLab* were shown in the exhibition *Auditing the creative process* (<<http://espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com/ferran-adria>>). The story of the birth of the creative miracle named *elBulli* (a reflection of applied philosophy analogue to the reflection on “the Greek miracle of the birth of philosophy”) was presented to visitors who could slowly examine and understand the map of the creative process and the amp of gastronomic reproductive process, and could also understand that the secret to long-lasting creativity is understanding *a posteriori* – in a Hegelian manner – one’s own process and the application of a strict audit on innovation. Becoming aware that one can be extremely creative without being innovative and that innovation is an area for the construction of the public sphere. Finally, the question is “What am I providing?”, “How can I make a living from it, and how can I share it so that others are able to make a living from it?” Adrià is unaffected by criticism against late capitalism, that sees innovation as the supreme value (in fact, an anti-value, cf. Rauning, Ray & Wuggenig, 2011). White-collar Robespierres tried sharpening the guillotines, especially in the art world.⁵ But gastronomy has changed many lives in some underdeveloped countries and now represents a fraction of their GDP. In Peru, for example, tens of thousands of underprivileged youth are studying cuisine, developing business ventures in otherwise very poor economic environments (cf. *Perú sabe* <<http://www.perusabe.com.pe/el-documental/gaston-acurio>>). Adrià understands

⁵ As could be seen, for example, in some critics of Documenta XII in Kassel, regarding the fact that *elBulli* was appointed to the Pavilion G by the curator of this edition, Roger Buerger. Cf. <http://www.canalplus.es/Creaccion/documenting-documenta-el-bulli-en-kassel/>.

paideia as a project for innovation. If we would read Werner Jaeger (cf. 1937-1944) in contemporary terms, we would certainly agree: *paideia* is a commitment to social return and the construction of the public sphere, through collective projects. In other words: a commitment to generosity. I would like to add: a commitment to professionalization.

It would seem that world of art is giving ground to gastronomy: it has finally accepted that gastronomy is at the heart of processes of particular importance in current debates, not only regarding education but also about artistic research and how to adapt creativity to the post-institutional era (post-museum, post-restaurant). Meanwhile, *elBulliLab* will investigate the artfied dimension of gastronomy, fundamentally through performances of its own creation. According to Adrià, it's time to move from the paradigm of design (which he knows well) to the paradigm of art. *elBulliLab* will become, among other things, an exhibition centre for artistic research.

3. *Paideia*, philosophy and the 'Creativity, research, innovation' triad

In the times of *elBulli*, Adrià didn't think about the issue of *paideia* because he linked it to repetition and he was convinced that "creating is not copying (reproducing or repeating)". But he discovered that repetition has a charm of its own, perhaps because of his fascination with Japan: mantras, repetitions, mimesis, rituals, scenographies... all of these share a common ground with *paideia*. *elBulliLab* repeats documents over and over, with variations and versions of variable authorship. Just like a pianist who wakes up at dawn (Adrià wakes at 5 a.m. to "study", just like Kant) to practice scales, arpeggios, variations, before, eventually, improvising creatively. It is a choral and polyphonic device, not devoid of dissonances, which end up, after discussion, being praised.

Adrià thinks that teaching creativity is teaching research and innovation. From his perspective, *paideic* process evolves through new questions and contributions that improve the existing conditions or understanding of the public sphere. It would seem that this is what any research processes asks for – not only in science and technology, but also in art, design and philosophy.⁶ Always based on the understanding that uncertainty and a certain dose of precariousness and vulnerability in the approach to work are implicitly contained in the very concept of research. One might add: following the tradition of Hellenistic sceptical philosophy, according to which we know where we come from but not exactly where we are going. Furthermore, he questions everything constantly under the motto "we must learn everything from the origins". The *paideic* nature of *elBulliLab* focuses on the relation between creativity, research and innovation. The team is fully aware of setting out from home, packed lightly and not knowing

⁶ See, for instance Niedderer Reilly 2010: 20.

anything about their final destination. In any event, their first intellectual wanderings produced Aristotelian and Kantian distinctions, such as: the distinction between creativity as faculty or capacity (the Aristotelian *dynamis*) and the creative result (*enérgeia*). The first would involve creative talent and imagination, while the second would relate to originality, and its potential drifts towards innovation. The team also obeys to the main rule of validation of the criterion of taste according to Hume i.e. the comparison of creative results, as a procedure to review the established knowledge, especially in the canon of the history of cooking.

Following Kant and according to Ferran Adrià, creativity without research and innovation would be blind, research without innovation would be fruitless, and innovation without the other two, non-existent. What is the <creativity-research-innovation> triad's commitment with *paideia*? *elBulliLab* will take the issue *beyond* the university, perhaps because the university is forgetting revolution and how to lead social processes, and also because it has, at least in humanities, a certain reluctance to engage in business ventures; something that, on contrary, was embedded in *elBulli*'s DNA and that fuels its contemporary drift – especially when taking into account the convivial creative bond that can unite between people in the business world.

4. For an Applied Philosophy of Gastronomy

Adrià and the team of *elBulliLab* are cooking ideas to create once again and help others to create. They understood and assumed up to its last consequences what philosophy is and what working philosophically means. With two goals: 1) promote a philosophy of gastronomy that reconfigures and hence revolutionises the work of Brillat-Savarin for the 21st century; 2) claim the usefulness, efficiency and effectiveness of philosophy in its broadest sense. The fact that a corporate, *paideic*, *poietic* and poetic adventure, such as *elBulliLab*, undertakes these two objectives opens new, unprecedented avenues in the field of applied philosophy. Returning to the origins, once again: the Socratic–Platonic *paideia* and the inherent *paideia* of Greek theatre were also forms of applied philosophy. It's very interesting to read Plato's *Symposium*, this *paideic*, *metatheatrical* and *philosophical text*, in *elBullilab*. 2,400 years later, *elBulliLab* and *elBulli1846* are creating new philosophical *banquets*. And the territory of applied philosophy is expanding with *eros* in their direction.

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