

12.

What is a global citizen? A view from cognitive semiotics

Abstract

In order to think 'globally', despite the differences we so enjoy and value, we have to accept using global notions, of society, subjectivity, language, and semiosis, evidently developed in science-based frameworks when possible. In this chapter, we will firstly give a general and global ecological account of what a human society is, in terms of what it extracts from and expels back in to nature. The stratified model obtained will serve as a general and global frame for a characterization of the human life-world and its experiential strata and domains. Human principles of authority, power, and truth depend on a perspective of this eco-ontological kind, and we will secondly consider how signs and meaning unfold according to such a global, indeed universal, characterization: meaning falls into a stable typology, incl. performative, epistemic, and affective modes, and both sign types and types of language use anchor these modes as semantic formats in the discourses shared by human beings. Discourse structures, incl. the narrative, the argumentative, and the descriptive formats, ground the possible forms of knowledge available to a global citizen: history, philosophy, science — complementary to our forms of art and religion, whose structural origin must be sought in the psyche. However, instead of opposing psyche and world, i.e. life-world, we will finally try to show how a psycho-semiotic study must also directly relate to an eco-semiotic study, because the mind is itself shaped by the semiotic world that evolved with it during its 50.000 years of modernity.¹ Ethics, aesthetics, and critical thinking must now converge, in view of the contemporary threats, to defend the possibility of a global, planetary habitat and humanity.

Keywords: Socio-sphere; Global Ecology; Mental Architecture; Sign Types; The Symbolic; The Imaginary; The Organic; Catastrophe Dynamics.

1. The global ecology of the socio-sphere.

A human society has borders, outside of which there is ... nothing (nature) or other societies. In the beginning of the social career of our species, there was often nothing human outside of a society; being inside or outside was existential for an individual, a question of social life or solitary death. Now, borders always (ideally) coincide,

¹ See the last chapter of Brandt 2004, "50.000 Years of Modernity", a first draft of the analysis presented here.

bilaterally, but the question remains existential, since the question concerns the alternative of peace or war, welfare or misery, hope or hopelessness in the perspective of forced migration. Human cultures cover the planet, and yet only the flows of commodities, money, and weapons are global. The Enlightenment-based idea of the *Weltbürger* (Kant), the citizen of the world, has really been promoted by philosophers, poets, and other intellectuals since Antiquity, and it is a natural defense of equality, humanism, and human rights. Nevertheless, bordered societies are not likely to merge and abolish their differences in the name of egalitarian humanism. There is certainly a global sphere of human social life, a *socio-sphere*, but it is 'articulated' into defined national territories, each one offering life conditions of its own, based on its traditions, myths, languages, and habits. Still, the existence of an exhaustive, all-embracing socio-sphere is relevant, not only to the abstract ideal of humanism, but to the understanding of *what a society* really is, namely the set of conditions that are necessarily shared by all such social entities capable of assuring the life of a population nested in some part of the material and organic geography of the planet Earth — the substratum called Nature. In what follows, I use the pronoun 'we' to design any collective human agent and member of the socio-sphere.

In order to exist, we must extract 'stuff' from Nature, and after consuming it, we must expel, excrete, its waste. If this waste could always regenerate and become a resource, the process would be stably circular. However, regeneration is fragile. We pump up clean water and expel dirty water for the ground to clean again; we use wood and plant trees, etc. Regeneration takes time and sometimes, nay often, fails; the circle becomes a spiral, Nature is changed, and so are we. We could call this phenomenon an ecological dialectics, and we need to understand that it is a dangerous game.

We may distinguish certain categorical levels in the extraction-excretion process. There is an *organic*, basic ecological level of taking and throwing: water, flora, fauna — to cover the needs of everyday life and assure a fertile environment. If everything else breaks down, this level of subsistence must be assured (and often it is not). The organic level already organizes life in several, maybe at least four, ways: there is a group that produces, raises food, and a different group that reproduces, raises children. There is a group that defends the community and its territory against external threats, and a group that maintains values and beliefs.

If a community thrives, there is further a level of extraction-excretion that allows it to build and develop for protection and further exploration, for technical production and codified distribution of goods, services, and knowledge. It furthermore makes possible a peaceful exchange of distributed items with other communities, and thus establishes a horizontal (local) geography of borders and 'others' for communication. This second level of the stratified socio-sphere, superimposed on the organic level, is the *political* level of social life. It creates a *polis*, a variation in the density of demography stabilized in form of cities, hence of citizens, parts of the population that live without strong contact with the organic base level and instead depend on urban-based opportunities for remunerated 'work' (a notion that expands to also cover institutional and commercial activities). The political level of social life in the latest three millennia, i.e. since the axial age, has been regulated by monetary and judicial systems, whatever be their modes of production and transportation.² It furthermore developed writing, hence literature, mathematics, technology, medicine, and philosophy. Extraction includes wood, stone, metals, and natural sources of energy, from grease, coal, and oil to uranium. Excretion of waste increases drastically on this level and currently reaches globally life-threatening levels, as the modern, global network of exchanges and communication increases the intensity of the planetary ecological 'peristalsis'.

The third and last level of the socio-sphere may be the most important, in the perspective of social change, and certainly the least studied.³ We extract 'precious' metals, 'precious' stones, and 'precious' materials of all kinds, with great effort, that are however of no material use to the community — other than to adorn and monumentalize the socially transcendent instances we call power, sovereignty, authority. The use of these globally appreciated substances is *symbolic*. Divinities and rulers are adorned, their temples and palaces must shine; princes and priests signify their particular status as military and religious superhumans by visual and ceremonial pomp and circumstance. The globality of this symbolic principle is striking. Historically, temples became monetary banks when the adornment of divine images led to the idea that the metals could contain the protective force of the gods, thus not only signify but inherently and magically contain it, so that possessing coined quantities of these metals

² In China, India, Iran, Greece, Palestine. Jaspers 1949. Eisenstadt 1986. Graeber 2011.

³ My source for this line of thought is the works of the French philosopher Georges Bataille and especially his 'general economy'. Bataille 1949.

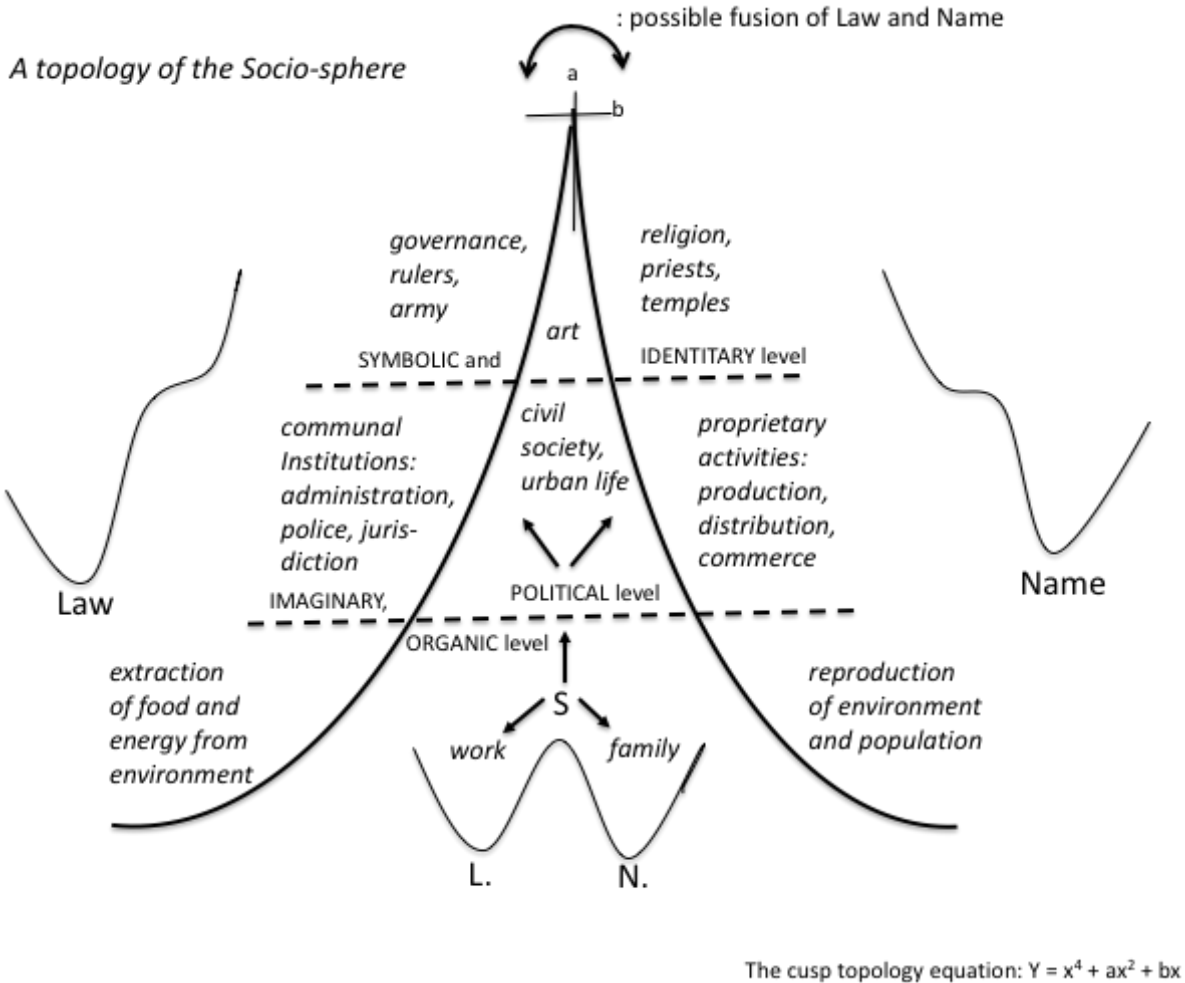
had to be existentially valuable: priests became bankers, and money was born. The close connection of military force and religious devotion often creates more or less stable fusions of the sacred and the profane powers, as world history shows.

Nevertheless, the semiotic distinction between the sort of *executive* performative power that lies behind human Laws in general and the *ritual* performative power grounding human Named identity in general is important. There can be a Law, if there is a normative text to respect or disrespect, and an enforcement of punishment, namely armed physical violence. The use of violence, prototypically killing, makes it possible to maintain a judicial condition shared by people understanding themselves as subjects to a Law imposed for all, hence to a condition of elementary equality. The Law in fact or in principle makes the population subjected to it similar and equal; it creates an atmosphere of neutral and anonymous commonality. Violence in this sense grounds legality at the political level of social life. Violence itself remains ungrounded, an elementary privilege of the ruler. By contrast, the priest embodies a different principle of authority and power. The divinity that the priests embody is involved in the attribution of a name and an identity of the child — identity meaning the status of being seen, recognized, blessed, and attended to by the divinity. Subjects to Law are anonymous, whereas the same subjects individually or collectively require a blessed Identity, which is what religions prototypically give. The Identity (capitalized) of a subject or a group provides a distinctive difference from everybody or everything else. Justice is anonymous, but Identity is distinctive by imposition of a Name.⁴ Both principles are fundamental and constitutive to human sovereignty. This duality defines the power of (violent) princes and (sanctifying) priests. Hence, subjects are both anonymous judicial citizens and named, identitary singularities. This duality trickles down through the political level — legally established institutions will treat you as a citizen lambda and markets as a (named) brand — and it lands at the organic level in the opposition of the more or less egalitarian and solidary communities of work and the anti-egalitarian kinship groups, families, incl. tribes, castes, genealogies, and their private hereditary conditions transmitted through the generations. Even the sexual life of the population is directly determined in these two ways, by possibly conflicting laws

⁴ Personal names are of course essential here, but the so-called brand names (often acronyms) of supra-individual institutions and enterprises follow the same principle of sacralized identity.

and religious rules. The opposition of Law and Name, or Legality and Identity, established at the symbolic level, form a stable, dynamic conflict between the two attractors, which determines the political as well as the organic levels and thus characterizes the entire structure from top to bottom. This dynamic opposition therefore allows us to develop a model of the described semio-sphere in terms of a topology from catastrophe theory, the cusp, that may represent the vertical strata crossing the horizontal strata and thereby forming a sort of ecologically based social geography.⁵ Only the (vertical) levels are not topologically defined, since they articulate a continuity, ecologically specified. Subjects (S) are determined at every stratum of the topology, either by direct experience or through communication.

Fig. 1. A topology of the socio-sphere.



⁵ Thom 1972. Brandt 1992 and 2004.

In this mathematical and topological diagram, L. and N. are (x, y) attractors that meet in the conflict zone of the control variables (a, b) of the potential $(y = x^4 + ax^2 + bx)$, and the subjects, individual or collective, are the systems undergoing the attraction. The advantage of such a dynamic model is to show both the opposition and the interaction, and even the possibility of continuity and fusion. The three horizontal b strata are separated (dotted lines) within the vertical a continuity by the external ecological processes mentioned, without which there would be no social structure at all. The modern distinction between State (institutions) and Market (exchange), on the political level, illustrates the content of the conflict zone on this level.

However, neither legislation nor religion can function by violence and rituality alone, even when the semiotics of money permeates the entire structure. All power forms, transforms, and manifestations on the contrary presuppose a spoken and somehow written *language* shared by the population, by which to penetrate the entire structure.⁶ But the global socio-sphere divides into local linguistic and language-based cultural areas, and language itself tends to develop dialects and even new idioms wherever a change in communication intensity appears, typically for territorial reasons, but also due to political or symbolic reasons (regime changes, civil wars, revolutions, etc.), so a global society in the literal sense is impossible. Even when large populated areas are in constant commercial and technological connection, it has to exist in the form of separate societies that incessantly invent and negotiate borders, and lately become 'nations' dominated by unifying ideologies.⁷ These 'national' parts of the socio-sphere historically maintain distinct systems of law, education, administration (especially taxation), and health, and their economical conditions vary drastically. Only at the top level, where 'sovereign' fusions of profane and religious power are frequent, and economical transactions become 'transcendent', i.e. untouchable (e.g. financial), we see a globalization (French: *mondialisation*) taking place and creating tensions between global supra-political power and the infra-political isolation of the existential conditions at the bottom, the organic abandonment of populations in areas of minor economical interest.

⁶ Some countries have many languages, Cameroun counts for example 242, and two administrative languages, French and English.

⁷ The most common current list of *sovereign states* counts 206 such states. The list is disputed, and the inventory, mainly set up for reasons of international law, has generated a huge critical literature. It is estimated that around 7.000 languages are currently spoken in the world; however, 90% of them are spoken by populations smaller than 100.000 persons.

There is nothing entirely new in this actual situation, except for the ecological fact that the organic life conditions now are at stake and put at serious risk in large areas by the current irresponsible behavior of the supra-political powers, the 'capital' (financial, military, religious) in a wide sense. Can separated societies change the global situation? Can the socio-sphere become a global trans-society populated by truly global citizens? I will discuss this question after the following section.

2. Signs and meaning types in the social world.

In order to reflect on possible outcomes, it may be useful to consider some semiotic and subjective aspects of the sphere under discussion. We are 'subjective' subjects, and our means of communication are based on meaning production and signifying practices, that is, *semiosis*.

There are three prominent types of meaning in the social world, and they are each characteristically predominant in one of the eco-social levels. Firstly, performative meaning dominates at the symbolic level. The immediate exercise of power is done through the use of certain marked utterances, gestures and signs. Here, performatives are obligatory: imperatives on the one hand (e.g. military commands) and ritual declaratives on the other (as used in prayer, baptism, marriage, burial formulae...). The meaning of performative signs is to let a content be an *instruction* or an *identification*: to say what a person must do or what a person must be, both immediately enforced in the very moment of the utterance. This is the meaning type that defines *symbolic* signs. Symbols are performed by an entitled instance and address a receiver who knows the 'arbitrary' and conventional code translating their signifier into the modal meaning of their signified (*Turn left! Sign here! — I hereby declare you man and wife! The meeting is adjourned! Allah is great!*). Symbolic signs, utterances or gestures are always performative and, in that sense, create new states of social reality if pertinently performed. This is in fact what power universally does and is supposed to do. The meaning production on the *symbolic* level of the entire socio-sphere, as of its societies, is predominantly *performative*.

Secondly, the political level in particular involves institutional, educational, commercial, technological, and cultural *imagination and planning*, activities that mentally involve open explorative, interrogative, dialogical, inventive attitudes and

epistemically oriented meaning production. Language and other sign use concern the understanding and further planning and development of shared enterprises that depend on all sorts of material and immaterial conditions and circumstances. The thinking is therefore mainly oriented toward what is true, possible, probable, and how to conceptualize states of affairs in order to change them, affect them or adapt to them. We have to unfold an ethics of collaboration, responsibility, and open-mindedness that can allow us to act stably within the public sphere, professionally, and politically. The modern idea and principles of democracy express such an ethics, however often in conflict with the superimposed impulses coming from the symbolic level. Imagination and planning predominantly use the *diagrammatic* semantic conceptualizations that characterize the *intellective* mode of enunciation in language and semiosis in general.⁸ We develop informative and evaluative routines in communication that serve our general need to act on this institutional level of social life. So, meaning production on the political level is mostly *in-formative*, rather than performative, we might say.

Thirdly, the organic level has a particular meaning profile that favors the representation and fixation of memories and perceptions; mental images, expressed by *iconic* signs such as pictures or even entire theatrical shows, are the elementary phenomena that support meaning production in this area, i.e. the *affective* unfolding of subjective dispositions and attitudes to ongoing life. Iconic meaning is essentially affective. We stabilize our feelings through images and mobilize our feelings whenever looking at images. Our affective memory uses images as markers that allow us to retrieve feelings, and often through these images to retrieve concepts and words.

The organic level develops a communitary realm of entertainment, fiction, dance, theatre, cinema, sports events etc., underlying the political public sphere. Technologies of communication through the centuries have made this massively fictional, game-oriented or otherwise iconic form of shared and spectacular activities a core part of social life — especially since the emergence of the genre of *News* (papers, broadcast, then channels, etc.), which typically centers around basic organic, existential values:

⁸ A semiotic comment: Diagrams such as maps, flowcharts, curves, graphic models, geometrical configurations of all kinds, are the mental and social tools for developing these intellective ideas that transcend experience and prefigure theories. Despite frequent assumptions, diagrams are not icons, since they are not signs by similarity (to some perception, possible or real) but instead mentally or socially directly express the elements of thought — however, they often contain alphanumerical symbols and icons as integrated labels.

death, dangers, catastrophes, threatened life conditions in general, and thrilling sports, where groups confront and 'kill' each other — connecting to the symbolic level.

This organic, iconic meaning production thus momentarily merges with the symbolic in *religion*, in *sports* and in *art*, bypassing the political level as if it did not exist, or as if it were transparent. These three genres of semiosis are meaningful to subjects when they connect the intimate and existential with the transcendent realm of destiny, 'spirituality', the feeling of 'continuity with the universe', as Bataille's phenomenology described it.⁹ This feeling may be at the origin of modern Heideggerian and fascist exaltation as well as of revolutionary and contemporary versions of 'spiritually' exalted populisms. Historically, it is likely to be found whenever the political level of a society breaks down or enters into a crisis threatening its trivial functionality.

3. Subjectivity.

The three sign classes that distinguish respectively the three levels of social structure, namely the *symbols*, the *diagrams*¹⁰, and the *icons*, also resonate in the register of the architecture of the human mind. Signs and minds have been and are constantly shaped by the same deep process of semiotic evolution.

The architecture of the human mind¹¹ is a stratified, or layered, and integrative conceptual disposition in the individual, spanning the interval separating the somatic instance of sensory perception and the somatic instance of affective bodily reaction. Between these two somatic instances, a neuro-cognitive structuration of concepts allows the mind to dispose of a complex conscious awareness, which the will-driven function called *attention* can navigate, more or less freely.

The *first* layer contains the *qualia*, some of which are roughly labeled in language by adjective terms (such as colors and other named 'sensations'). Sound qualities, tactile qualities, smells, tastes, sometimes unlabeled and often surprising but recorded in long-term memory. The *second* layer contains substantive entities, 'things' identifiable in

⁹ Bataille 1954.

¹⁰ Diagrams are active in all interpretations of natural signs, also called indices (in the semeiotics of C.S. Peirce). For an occurrence to make sense as indication of a currently ongoing and present event, state or thing, the mind has to diagram the relation between the two instances (in Europe called the signifier and the signified). The Peircean term 'index' is misleading, because for him and his followers, it is intended to include deixis.

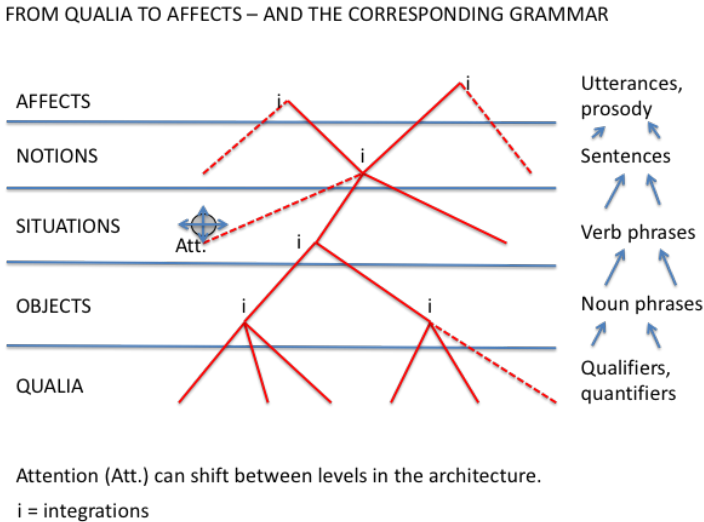
¹¹ On mental architecture, see Brandt 2006.

space and time; qualia can appear as their properties. These 'things', objects, are often labeled by categorizing nouns. On a *third* layer, the mind distinguishes scenarios, episodes that can be chained as narrative processes, isolated as events or acts, or fixated as states, all containing a generative nucleus that language sometimes labels by its verbs. Scenarios of course typically integrate the underlying concepts from the preceding layers, adjectives to nouns, noun phrases to verbs and verb phrases.

A *fourth* layer allows the mind to establish analogies *between* scenarios and thereby to form normative notions of all kinds; experiences of the third layer are typically memorized as framed by such normative and comparative notions, also called values and parameters (such as importance, perfection, precision, care, truth...), which language labels in multiple ways, including marking it by evaluative adverbs linking sentences.

Finally, a *fifth* layer integrates the normative concepts from former integrations and creates the affective states we label as emotions (short term feelings), moods (longer term), and passions (very long term). It is obvious that these states both present a semantic content — anger contains a narrative of offense, etc. — and a somatic signal that for a certain time affects the body involved. Language registers some affective occurrences in utterance morphemes like exclamations, and in the utterance profiles of intonation and in accompanying co-speech gestures.

Fig. 2. Mental architecture



This mental architecture seems perfectly comparable to the conceptual stratifications in other animal species, both concerning the types of content and the processing; however, since human semiotic evolution is specific and unique, it shares basic articulations with the socio-sphere. This is what I will try to indicate below.

The processing of neural and conceptual information that constantly updates the content of the architecture is both *afferent* and *efferent*. The afferent integrations (upwards) often allow re-conceptualizations (downwards), by which contents are 'edited', corrected, reexamined, revised. This variation, involving the work of attention, explains the differences in meaning modes.¹²

The styles of attention accounts for the main differences in meaning production, i.e. the 'productions' of the inter-somatic mind we have considered. *Symbolic* sense-making, often wrongly considered the most complex intellectual function, is in fact the simplest and the fastest: this type of afference goes directly from perception to scenario, or situation, further to the normative and the affective integration, and then forwards to somatic motor reaction, with minimal efference. In this mode, the subject understands intersubjective situations as calling for bodily response: linguistic perception demands a bodily-motor response (e.g. obeying to an order), and bodily-motor perception demands a bodily-linguistic response (e.g. giving an order) that again calls for a bodily-motor response. Performative acts mainly use this upper register of the architecture, which makes them faster than other types of thinking but also less reflective. Authoritarian styles of meaning-processing are therefore fast working but less 'intellectual'.

By contrast, the unfolding of epistemic imagination, such as our attitude when studying a problem, finding possible explanation to a difficulty, trying to understand another person's story, feeling, and thinking, requires more ample use of efferent processing. We then hold the underlying content as such while examining former integrations, questioning the gestalts and assumptions already made, and letting the 'light beam' of attention illuminate as much as possible of the network of memorized concepts considered — while delaying the post-cognitive somatic reaction. To 'think' in this inquisitive and almost philosophical sense requires hesitation, a certain amount of bodily passivity, and patience. The effect of writing is already an example of lowering the

¹² On attention in a cognitive semiotic perspective, see Todd Oakley 2009.

velocity of thinking, compared to thinking in conversation, and it often yields richer conceptual results than simply 'thinking inwards'. Epistemic imagination, with or without language (for example in architecture, music or mathematics), does not need to mentally 'see' as we do when looking at external things; it 'sees' relations that are invisible but exist in the imagined shape of lines, bindings (cf. the German term: *Verbindungen*), arrows, triangles, circles, etc., displaying a sort of rubber geometry serving the representation of 'abstract' states of affairs, but a geometry without rules to learn, since the mind does such diagrams all by itself.

Images — external or spatiotemporally displayed mental recollections, dreams, and fantasies — are completely dominant in the individual consciousness as a continuous existential background for whatever else the mind is doing in every moment. Therefore, *iconic* signs enter directly in contact with the mind's own affective tonality, which they can easily modify. In the mental architecture, icons are processed as if they were the subject's own perceptions, except for the superimposed understanding that they were intended by other subjects to be interpreted in a certain way. The idea of the supposed 'sender' of an expressed image is integrated into the object that the image constitutes for the 'receiver', so the processing includes an efferent or reverse process inserting the iconic object in the frame of being given by someone for someone else to receive, or 'read', with its *intended qualia*. Therefore, images are likely to be perceived even more vividly than the corresponding perceptions would be; their formal qualities invite a 'close reading' precisely because they are conceived as being intended by someone 'out there', whereas what we see just by opening our eyes on our surroundings does not offer this particularity. This may also be the reason why we experience our dreams as some sort of messages from an 'unconscious': since they are images, they must be meant by some other subject (within ourselves: the Unconscious, or, formerly, outside, the Gods). Likewise, the sharing of fantasies makes them even more vivid, which is probably why we like to share pictures and tell self-experienced anecdotes and stories to others — telling makes it easier for us to grasp the details, as if the content was given to us by a narrator different from the speaker (hence the impersonal, 'Olympian' narrator in fiction). The talking cure offered by psychoanalysts exploits the same intentional phenomenon.

The individual, existential psyche thus comprises a fast-processing symbolic mode for inter-personal and performative power relations; a slow-processing epistemic and diagramming mode for reflection, discussion, critical interaction with others; and an even slower processing iconic mode for intimate, aesthetic, and affective exchange, especially with 'significant others', friends and family. Psyche and society are connected through all modes and levels, since their constitutive layered structures are *isomorphic*, as we have seen, and mediated by signs of corresponding types. This is why social events automatically affect us as if they were almost biographical events in our life. Our *affective* states immediately and automatically react to critical changes in the 'surrounding' world, and we have to feel committed and to be participant when the social *imaginary* around us undergoes transformations; when sovereign powers slide, for example, between despotic fury, or financial chaos, and soft and quiet constitutionalism, we get depressed or relieved as if the events were addressing us personally and bodily. Society penetrates us, locally and globally.

4. Global citizens.

Society penetrates subjectivity, and yet resistance and critical opposition are possible, as well as conformism and anonymous sycophancy. 'Going global' intellectually, following the Enlightenment idea of world citizenship, can be a way to resist but also to conform. Any physical person is biographically rooted only in a small set of countries but is also naturally prepared for going wherever life sends her, since the socio-sphere only varies historically, not structurally; everyone can adapt. A local citizen is also potentially a global citizen. But there are different forms of 'being global', as the reader may have guessed from the preceding analysis.

The so-called *jet set* is a symbolic caste of people who 'fly' over legislations, rules of behavior, and concerns for populations, in order to personally enjoy and share the unlimited opportunities offered to the wealthy and powerful 'elite' of princes, priests, bankers, mafiosi, moneymongers etc. who are about as international as today's giga-companies with no necessary base in any country. This symbolic caste currently represents one of the most serious dangers to the material and immaterial ecology of our planet, because its opportunistic decisional force transcends the highest instances of

the political level and thereby the highest peaks of legal authority. Can it be 'ruled in'? The question is crucial and unfortunately quite open.

The political 'elite' is a different caste, composed of leaders, presidents, secretaries, ministers, statesmen and -women, who travel between societies and establish networks of coordinating functions that serve... either the interests of the mega-companies and the symbolic caste or those of their respective populations, which they somehow represent; these political agents are under constant pressure from both sides and typically act inconsistently and corruptly for that reason. They are 'global' but hardly capable of moving beyond the poles of this vertical dynamics (which opposes the organic and the symbolic); the discourse of this caste is often morally painful to hear, since it emerges from a source that cannot be explicitly presented.

Thirdly, the organic globalists include of course the ecological militants, who understand that the fate of the planet is in the hands of humanity beyond and above all national limitations. They do not form a caste, but instead an open community without borders connecting 'grass roots' that wish to invest themselves in a struggle for planetary conservation. Planting trees for this purpose is a truly organic initiative, and it may be perceived and intended as being both symbolically and politically meaningful; however, only a real, transversal connection of social agents operating on all levels, from the organic through the political to the symbolic, is likely to be in a position making such global initiatives possible. Hence, the hypothetical transversal agent is our fourth sort of global citizens — at least in principle — definitely not a caste in the sense of the first listed types, but a *globally critical citizen*.

My suggestion as to the human activities that might embody the fourth position would be to compare it to the borderless community of writers, musicians, painters, and artists in general. *Art* in fact travels and is experienced as embodying trans-cultural forms of humanity. Recuperation of artistic activities by the castes is often occurring, but it remains inessential to what art means to populations worldwide: an active and enactive togetherness, a potentially unlimited community of minds, the humanity of humanity, so to speak. In the unboundedness of art, we may get a glimpse of a core symbolic principle that could escape the grip of the Law and the Name, and which may

contain the nucleus of a *critical* spirit: a nucleus of *symbolic freedom* (autonomy and courage) to go where one can and to avoid the wrong, in the name of Kantian truth.¹³

The question of identity deserves a last comment. The classical distinction of qualitative and numerical identity has a non-trivial interpretation in the perspective sketched out here. On the *numerical* side, I am just me, and just this *one*, who stays *me* in time and space as long as I live; this is the necessary prerequisite for juridical responsibility (I cannot escape by claiming to be someone else). On the *qualitative* side, I may be a member of certain cultural communities (I am proudly one of these... etc.) and may claim recognition in that respect; this is what ethnic or otherwise specified collective entities do, in the name of culture, religion, gender, race, or history. However, the ultimate qualitative identity is bound to be that of a person's citizenship in the world; the problem being that in this case, there is no one left outside to sign the recognition of *this* qualitative identity! The global citizen has to live without being anything else than human; artists, as well as the migrants of the world, know what it is to not be recognized¹⁴ and appreciated for what you are by what you do. We can all learn from that existential feeling. There is no stable position to 'take and defend' here; we can sketch it out theoretically, philosophically, but the embodied version is everyone's challenge.

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¹³ By Kantian truth, I mean what we individually think is true for everybody, where 'true' means as reliable as possible. — In Figure 1, an internal zone of the symbolic level is marked: "art". This is to indicate that there is individual, *personal sovereignty*, namely the sort of personal integrity and autonomy it takes to be *ethically* (cf. to be just someone by Law) and *aesthetically* (cf. to be this person and no one else, by the numerical identity labeled as having a Name) committed to humanity through the globality of art, by in some way loving it, thinking through it, maybe doing it yourself.

¹⁴ When artists are eventually recognized, they must move on, do something more radical and risky.

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