Simplex Society

How to Humanize

Koen Stroeken

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Prologue

After the world globalized and informatized, all dystopias seem to come true in the twenty-first century. Financial implosion. Extreme inequality. Pandemic. State surveillance. AI autonomy. Parliamentary impasse. Ecosystem collapse. War again. And the remarkable thing is: none seem to shake the system at its core. 'Seem' I say, because the system is one thing, our idea of it another. We act on the latter. That is the point I am making in this book. Human consciousness has split for us to continue business as usual. The worldwide surge of self-care and the battle for holistic health are among many indications that something needs to be done at the global level. In companies but also schools and universities we were taught that progress can be made without the work of social and cultural translation. Go innovate in the lab, at the office, on the market, in the street, and the rest of the human species will get attuned. For too long have we assumed that society restores itself, and so we inhabit today the global village, a home that turns out an empty shell. Hard. Void. We have come to a point that it has become second nature to say 'society is *this*, humans are *that*'.

To capture the post-truth era, numerous seminal books have been published in the last decade by sociologists, political and communication scientists, economists, historians, psychologists, human geographers and philosophers. The discipline of anthropology has been productive too, but to speak of a recognizable voice in the debate, the jury is still out, so to say. This is surprising because no period in human history has been more in need of a holistic understanding of society than ours, as globalization,

digital information and cultural difference meet. The upshot of that historical encounter looks very much like the anthropologist's specter, an atomistic worldview glossing over cultural perspectives, reducing multilayered communication to bits of information and reproducing the way of life that has been ruthlessly disseminated across the globe despite its unsustainability for the planet.[1] What the current era of the Anthropocene implies is entropy, a disintegration of living systems, because of one species that stopped being a species and launched a lifeway disconnected from life.

The Signal

The atom of concern that made it all possible in my view is called a simplex, a one-layered meaning or thing. No context. No frame. An illusion indeed. Yet ubiquitous.

A fixed idea travels fast. It reaches any place without taking local frames into account. Consider the simplex 'North is better than South'. We annotate it as 'N > S'. To this tune, the Global North condones the worsening of life conditions in the Global South. To a hopeful 'N > S', refugees cross the Mediterranean. To a racist 'N > S', the newcomers are typecast. To an enraged 'N > S', the poor suburbs burn. A reboot at some point requires reframing, which itself presupposes being in touch with the roots of a thought. How to experience the 'tensor' that holds these meanings and events together? Some societies have traditions and rituals that facilitate the experience.

Street art can reframe. 'Racism is a virus', the facemask says on a mural, cautioning about speech. A joke too plays with frames. 'After ten years of solitary confinement in a Russian prison, Putin is released and orders a drink in the bar. Is Moscow ours? Yes says the waiter. And Kyiv? Yes. Even Berlin? Yes, that'll be 5 euros.' The frameshift replacing 'them' by 'ours' prompts a smile because of how intuitively it locks into the mind and reshuffles the deck, the network of social relations. Anthropologists describe frames and how they are culturally related. Structuralism is the method focusing on those contrasts between frames. There was a time, called postmodernity, when scholars could fool themselves that frames had no interrelations and stood each for a perspective in its own right. The present era demands we retrieve the roots of ideas. And so, structuralism deserves a second chance, in a form matured after postmodernity.[2]

Simplex society refers to a system of one-directional signals, blocking off the contradicting input in parallel that could humanize it. Simplexes

carry in their slipstream social phenomena such as polarization, populism, dehumanization, racism, conspiracy hypes, memetic escalation, a-historicism, dogmatic positivism, emo-cracy and identity politics, but also technologies of automation, massification, human resources formatism, algorithmic preprocessing, surveillance and remote-controlled warfare. What simplex phenomena have in common, I will illustrate, is a dissociation of feeling from meaning whereafter emotions can be manipulated or ideas lead their own lives without mediation and verification. The impact on life by wasteful consuming, condoning a racist remark or spreading false rumors is ignored if the feeling of these events is limited to the inner sphere, the likeminded. Not or minimally feeling their meaning unties the sphere from its source of production, from Earth and the species.

Untie society from life, and what do you get? The gap grows between what we say and what we do, between awareness and action, between our thoughts and what eventually happens. This book pleads to take the paradoxes of the era seriously. Democrats in the US tackle poverty but many poor vote Republican.[3] Massive climate protests in Belgium headline the news for weeks on end but a month later the green party loses the elections.[4] We decry the monopolies of Google, Facebook and Amazon but when given the opportunity we'd love to work there.

In sum, we are dealing with split consciousness. I utter the last word with caution, given the vast amount of neuropsychological and philosophical debate it has fostered over the past millennium.[5] The above cases seethe with contradiction, at least according to a meaning-oriented definition of consciousness. In the working definition I propose, of consciousness as *the feeling of meaning*, the discrepancy lies between the meanings we communicate (society) and what we feel (humanity).[6] Once millennials leave their cocoon, they make this pivotal discovery. Things are not what they were told.[7] How to humanize society again? Feel the meaning, in its various layers and dimensions. Before we get there, let's have a look at the past and the present.

The tale repeated by popular movies in this pristine century attests to the discrepancy. Only after society collapses does humanity return.[8] Rephrased, it is the oldest tale. Beware of the monster you create, or you will succumb to it. Remember corona, how it bizarrely raised hopes among many of us for a tabula rasa. The monster made is the (social) system. What else was the main message of dystopia in the twentieth century by among others Orwell, Marcuse, Ellul and Heidegger? Habermas warned

about the colonization of the lifeworld (our reference frames) by the system (economy and politics). The works of Weber, Tönnies and Durkheim in the nineteenth century went through the motions too by theorizing the clash between society and community, the latter's traditions subjected to the former's modernity. The tension was prefigured by (urban) rationalism and (rural) romanticism before and after Enlightenment. As we go back in time, the accounts of imminent danger further probe into humanity as a collective with a wisdom of its own. Exactly four hundred years ago, Vico wrote in 'The New Science' about a providence transmitted through myths and cultural creations that retain ancient wisdom about social equilibria.[9] Our early ancestors may not have been consciously preoccupied with equilibrium. Paying respect to the forests goes a long way.

The Anthropocene compels the human species to face the breach. A series of lifeways systematically exploited the sources of production. A mechanism we will coin simplication characterizes the lifeways. In its shadow furtively sprawls the medicine. Writer and reader pursue the ancient skill of the healer to detect the tensors bundling the many tensions that otherwise are left unfelt. The diagnosis of Part I (Simplex Frames) comes with a remedy in Part II (Tensors of The Undertow). We have reason for optimism. In a knowledge society, whose currency is language instead of capital, altered vocabulary can end discrimination and injustice. Today it can be an act of actual change to launch a new method of thought with a vocabulary to match.

POST-KNOWLEDGE: FRAGMENTED AND FRAMELESS

'It is a matter of perspective.' With those words, a conflict can be prevented. Whether in a geopolitical clash, a scientific controversy or a domestic quarrel, this phrase acknowledging frames of experience reassures the parties of the speaker's openness and ignites a process of mediation. What is the story of this book at the macro-level? The chances for mediation are dwindling in the social network that humans populate today, as this network is toiling to keep the flood of information flowing. The interruption in communication flows can be mitigated by organizing the dialogue between perspectives. A knowledge economy did so via schooling, the social sciences, NGOs, media. A post-knowledge society 'knows better' than to mediate. It does not bother anymore. The consensus is claimed. Its reference to perspectives is publicly staged through spin on corporate social responsibility, through greenwashing and emotive hashtags.[10]

Cultures are treated as impregnable 'identities', as a social category next to race, class and gender, intersecting instead of interacting. The theory of intersectionality conforms to that. 'Seeing things from the perspective of' an African-American or a woman advances policy but at the same time essentializes the category, one frame for each, whereas cultures unlike the other categories permanently change.[11] By paying lip service to the categories, our government and company policies flaunt the stamp of inclusion. In the background, information is processed for a predefined purpose: never before so much profit, likes, big data.

Whenever the construct threatens to crash, for example because of the spin being exposed or the financial system failing, a post-knowledge system will carve out a niche for the confronting perspective to avoid interruption of the flow of information. The spheres of international high finance, leftist versus rightist media platforms, gendered and age-based channels, racial or sexual identity movements, vegan lifestyle chains, university labs, hybrid intellectual networks, and so forth, grow apart. The cause of 'humanity' fragments into specialized NGOs such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, all campaigning to ensure constant media presence, albeit in stalemate with lobbyists. The bubbles deny the wider network the adjustment and growth that come with confrontation and two-directional exchange. Spheres with the potential of solving problems of the entire society have cut their ties with the whole. As the banking system repeats its mistakes by lack of insight in its own framing of the world, citizens bear the brunt of the next financial crisis.[12] Innovations in nutrition are amazing, yet create niches to not interfere with the free market. Sexual, religious and other identities prosper in the margins; tolerance for them in the public eye varies, in turn causing compulsion to refashion or curate the self. Cocoons disconnect from harsh society, interpreting events very differently. Firmed up, the spheres dehumanize each other.[13]

The structural impediment would be remediable, were it not internalized as well: 'to each bubble its truth'. This cynical relativism based on isolated spheres and their frames differs substantially from the acceptance of cultural diversity and multiple perspectives. Post-truth or post-fact means that feelings trump evidence and 'alternative facts' are acceptable.[14] More fundamentally, facts do not matter because consensus among perspectives selecting the facts would be impossible. What remains is the collision of bubbles, leading to power struggle between identities, or disconnection. The network is populated by streams of (alternative) facts,

polarized, meanings uprooted from multilayered extensive feeling, because they can be predictably experienced. In the metaverse, uniquely affective content produced by exchanging actors has made way for experiences occurring to avatars. The dissociation is fun and the metaverse's game never ends.

Instead of providing a palette of actions in a sphere, the frames splinter an office, a school, a classroom, a team or a household into factions and blame the deviating individual, which is to psychologize a cultural fact, namely the conflict of frames. One striking difference with how things used to be is this denial of experiential frames recombining cultural elements. Bluntly put, a child who cannot stand a way of life demanding to stay for hours in a room without fresh air, cuddling or interspecies communication is potentially a case of ADHD. Psychology booms as anthropology shrinks. An indication of the social network psychologizing human experience is the role of emotions in public speech. The compression of time under digital globalization stresses communication. As a consequence, the nine universal neurobiological categories (from happiness over surprise and disgust to sadness) dominate conversations and overshadow what has been self-evident for millennia: the diversity and natural growth of affects, each a unique sensation that no sensory description, metaphor, let alone word can fully evoke.[15] Instead of learning about the specific affect they experience with someone, victims of the stress identify the emotional category and lash out. Or they go for self-care in a stimulus-poor atmosphere, where they can recover their self.[16]

Many terms have been launched over the last two centuries to denote the great change or succession of changes that restructured the social network.[17] Whether the cause of time-space compression has to be differentiated in terms of globalization or capitalism or industrialization, neoliberalism, (post)modernization, post-Fordism, informatization, massive (de)territorialization or Empire, is quite moot in this book.[18] I start from the ruins, the entropy and diminished possibilities at the micro-level, the simplex emotions, ideas, technologies, and afterward—almost in passing—verify which well-studied process at the macro-level parsimoniously explains their upcoming salience. In other words, whenever I use the terms 'globalization' and 'informatization', it is somewhat ashamedly by lack of clinging concept about the process. What I do tangibly have is a mechanism.

The above amalgam of phenomena, the book attempts to explain by starting from a common mechanism gone awry: simplication. To

simplicate is to *simpli*fy through a com*plicated* translation. The 'if' in 'simplification' is dropped. The mechanism, which can be cognitive, affective or material, renders an activity simpler by replacing it with an automated sequence. Richly felt meanings simplicate into an idea for instance. When simplications sediment into simplexes, into one-layered entities such as fixed ideas and identities, they undermine intuition, an utterly human capacity. They disconnect from care for the species.[19] Society loses contact with the dark matter of past decisions, traditions, the vast unknown and something I will term collective reason. A political effect is populism. Part of human intuition was the sense of not-knowing that kept both 'the masses' and 'the elites' cautious in elections, yet still oriented on truth.

The mechanism occasions a vicious circle that might explain the process referred to by 'post-knowledge society'. Simplication drives informatization by reducing intuition and sensory perception to bytes of information amenable to speedy dissemination. Simplication also drives globalization by standardizing economic production and consumption across borders. At the same time, has the reaction against the challenge of complexity due to both globalization and informatization not been to discipline communication into an unhampered flow of fixed ideas and emotions? That is simplication gone into overdrive. The reader may recognize the dystopian tenor of Orwell's novel *1984* on a state training its citizens into doublethink, newspeak and the self-discipline to dislocate their sense of reality. In my book, the actor, multinational, state or other, does not matter. There is no bad guy out there. The cause of trouble is double: structural and mental. And yet, thanks to the fusion of globalization and informatization into social media, the possibilities for interconnection and cultural understanding have never been bigger.

Training Intuition: Tensors Versus Ideologies

If I had to pin down the year of birth for post-truth, it coincidentally would have to be 1984 indeed. A couple of years after Jean Baudrillard published his treatise *Simulacra and Simulation* on the postmodernity of late capitalism, the saturation of symbolic constructs struck me, being an avid music lover that saw his favorite New Wave and postpunk bands lose their raw energy and shift to commercial music. They simulated styles and originality—1984 was *the year that music died*.[20] The Cure, Echo and the Bunnymen, New Order, Eyeless in Gaza, PIL, The Cult were some of the punk and alternative bands scoring hits in the mid-1980s with polished

versions of their signature style. To my adolescent ears, the bands' transition to blasé irony, not unlike Warhol's earlier gambit toward commercialization in the art scene, hardly concealed their inability to capture the erstwhile energy. They imitated how they used to do it. Against Baudrillard's treatise, one could argue that hybridity, mimicry and parody of frames are of all times and did not terminate cultural creativity but simply rekindled it. The sequence of events since the 1980s until the past decade indicates that something else happened, as announced by Reagan–Thatcher neoliberalism and Wall Street yuppiedom. Once spheres merge and globalize, the irony eludes the new members, and positions get firmed up. While the network flourished, the belief in a whole called humanity disintegrated. That too is symptomatic of a consciousness split between meaning and feeling.

Less than ever do thoughts materialize into action. A forager finding a bush of berries in a depleted forest will take action after framing the event as saving her group. In a comparable situation are the top 1% wealthy of the globe able to eradicate poverty. They need not take action. Like in the movie with that name, they take the red pill to enter 'the matrix' and learn an unpleasant truth. The matrix is a 'womb', not only etymologically. It seals off a perspective, from the outside world. Postmodern scholars go beyond the frameless view of the positivist, who reduces nature to (one-dimensional) vectors, units with only one degree of freedom. Although supplementing a degree of freedom (the perspective underlying the vectors), the scholars stay in the (two-dimensional) matrix, up in their ivory tower where they watch the other paradigms. A tensor is three-dimensional, tapping into intuition, suffused with urgency. A tensor (from the Latin *tendere*, 'to stretch') stretches the simplex back to life.

The media-savvy generations are destined to drag us out of post-truth. They know about tensors. When members of generation Z condemn a certain speech for its political incorrectness and possibly 'cancel' the speaker, they appear vectorial to the matrixial mind scolding in disbelief: 'I was ironic!' Well, they did recognize the frame, but went a step further by seeing how the irony hurt. Another indication of their tensorial attitude, however minute at first sight, is 'goblin mode', the word of the year for 2022 according to Oxford University Press.[21] This mode or frame of communication and experience, not coincidentally emerging in post-lockdown nostalgia over pajamas-clad online meetings, temporarily permits the user to stop curating the self and disregard esthetical norms. The goblin mode operates at the three dimensions of the tensor. While acknowledging the

sphere (e.g., an office) and the expected frame (e.g., dress code), the mode considers the impact the frame has on life and on wellbeing (e.g., isolation, depression) and in this way innovates to humanize the system.

A wide range of complex communications on social media can be explained from this humanizing dynamic, de-simplicating and re-simplicating. Energies in the social network have to be 'queered' when they are 'toxic' and meddling with people's carefully crafted selves.[22] Energies of digitized communication, public appearance in the street, choice of dress and tattooed skin, render a society viable. To sense and manage these energies, 'the vibes', an important tool is language, not so much semantically but as performance. A lot happens between the lines, more than ever. How did Professa Jay, a Tanzanian hip hop artist, go about writing a song on country-wide corruption and see it become a hit? He implicated himself in the last refrain, see "Chapter Twelve: Street Cred". He thus crafted a tensor. He did not go for the vector, 'The star speaks'. After the first refrain denouncing corruption with a moral matrix, when the artist judged the rest of the country from that comfortable position in the middle, the third refrain pulled him out of the comfort zone to encounter the fault he reproached others for.[23] Did his tensorial turn weaken the message for the audience? On the contrary, the shifting point of view safeguards the frame. After the first refrain he felt his position to be moralistic, too comfortable to move the audience anymore. His feeling of their meaning was possible because he stepped out of his cocoon to open up and tune into the world.

The undertow is growing worldwide. Among us ever more are looking with dismay at the narcissistic frame of war the West has so long seemed to reward. An increasing number dare to ask: where is the feeling? What began with communism, anarchism, hippy communities and deep ecology morphed into activism exposing the artificial semantic distinctions in political, economic, religious, educational and other spheres. Activists nurture their close tie with life and the sources of production.[24] They reject the reductions and naturalism of the global economy and its side-projects such as transhumanism for augmented cognition (meaning over feeling).[25] They do something else than exclaiming, as Heidegger did a decade after he huddled with the Nazis, that the new technologies (today artificial intelligence) should be mere means and not rule us. Put your smartphone in the wooden box at the door like the Amish do? Segregation rarely works. The undertow is equipped with tensorial apparatus, so as not to fragment life.

Do climate protests support a particular ideology? No, look at the signs the protesters brandish. The texts bear on the planet, the whole. The protests in Iran by generation Z for sexual freedom are not ideological either. They do not seek to promote a Western lifestyle or a particular type of sexuality, as their orthodox rulers contend. The protesters want to retrieve their access to a source of production, in its raw, untamed state. The days of ideology are over, that is, of splitting life into subsystems to serve a political purpose. True, energy is needed to change things: like an atom split for nuclear energy, liberalism and Marxism once unleashed the revolutionary energy tearing individual interests apart from group interests, pitting the economic subsystem against the political and religious. A key observation which Part II sets off with is that the political strategies of prodemocracy movements no longer work because today the stakes of social change concern the whole. Modern ideology took sides; postmodernity fragmented into impregnable identities. The planet will not be helped by dividing the world in sides or identities and by subsequently organizing a revolution of one against the other, oppressed against oppressor. Ideologies separate economic, political, educational, religious, sexual and other spheres to pick elements from them and force them in a simplex frame of experience—a dirty energy to revolutionize the existing order.[26] To bundle the tensions into tensors, the undertow retrieves the sources of production that were artificially separated: desire, respect, belonging, peace, planet, water, sound, scent, energy, the species and more, which together derive from life.

What can be an important source for a planetary plan? Part II proposes something termed 'the collective reason' of the species. Not purified reason. Not one or the other cultural reason. Sure, anthropologists have been wary of 'The West' (the dream held by states with European ancestry that made social, cultural and technological progress and domination their trademark) and heeded 'the' Global South from which civil rights activists have since a century awakened large sections of the Global North to distance themselves from the West, and join the Rest. To put the West to rest. However, the attempt is to keep it real; that the woke wake up to everyday life.[27] Not to exclude or to tell a person's ideas from the place or the color of skin. Collective reason humanizes by letting frames co-exist. Yes, the Global South has technology and government comparable to any other, but equally so, within the things and decisions a tension persists between values promoted and marginalized by a Western frame like

efficiency and consensus.[28] Bundling the many tensions in tensors, I deem an anthropological endeavor.

The revolution will not happen in the standard manner. Millennials and generation Z are not stuck on ideology. They are politically incoherent in one survey, issue-oriented in another, leftists aging into right wingers in yet a third.[29] Currently, the populists, the anti-ideologists par excellence, benefit politically. And so do their counterparts, the technocrats. Italy recently exhibited the oscillation between the emotionally decrepit and emotionally overdrawn, as pragmatist premier Draghi was succeeded by 'post-fascist' Giorgia Meloni, championing political emotion in the form of patriotism. Her reactionary solution to split consciousness will fail as much as the technocrat's, because a superdiverse, globalized information society demands an epistemology proper to the post-knowledge era.

I use an old word for this highly needed method in the field of knowledge: intuition, the missing link between spirituality and knowledge. Intuition, to understand instinctively without conscious reasoning, is the capacity to assess a situation without limiting one's thought or experience, hence without giving up a degree of freedom.[30] Its feeling of meaning reaches deeper and further as it takes into account frames in spheres (situational analysis in the first five chapters) then cultural systems (ethnography in the next five chapters) and eventually the sensory-spiritual level of life-sensing and the sources of production (existential accounts in the last five chapters). This book uses the notions of post-knowledge and post-truth interchangeably, although has preference for the former because it accentuates the specific situation of post-truth emerging in an information society, in a knowledge economy foregrounding communication technology. Post-truth has the one-sidedly negative connotation of sacrificing meaning for feeling. Post-knowledge announces an epoch innovating what used to be knowledge. 'After Knowledge' comes intuition, I will argue. Untrained, intuition is gut-feeling, which only worsens the rule by emotion. Developed, intuition stimulates our feeling of meaning, which grasps the various semantic layers of a situation, linking past and present to the future, intuiting the path to take in a range of possibilities.[31] As in the Enlightenment when individual reason was strengthened in response to weakening community and tradition, the very thing responsible for threatening the social order will have to be embraced so as to be perfected.

Adepts of conspiracy theories and alternative facts will not be convinced by 'the actual facts'.[32] Fighting irrationality with rationality, subjectivity with objectivity, will rigidify their position because sustains the simplex

frame, a claim of superiority that the fight implies. To get to the root of any problem, communicators must first say how they frame (and simplicate away). What facilitates frame-analysis is trained intuition. Letting go of objectivity as a cognitive capacity can be a blessing too.[33] Long live post-knowledge. So we better get equipped for it.

A Method

The theory pairs two of anthropology's towering figures. Max Gluckman introduced the simplex relations of industrial society, which revolve around carrying out well-defined tasks. He contrasted them with the multiplex relations of preindustrial communities where parallel roles require ongoing negotiation. Claude Lévi-Strauss reworded anthropology as 'entropology', no less tentatively, on how anthropologists by their mere presence spoil the culture they come into contact with.[34] Neither of the two concepts made a lasting impression at the time, but their combination will turn out timely, if ingested with some of the eeriness I could personally add as a Gen X member. The synthesis provides a method of thought more than anything else. The extended case method of Gluckman is a *social analysis* recognizing in micro-social situations the processes transforming macro-society. In the situation appear the social relations and power structure of a sphere. The structuralism of Lévi-Strauss exemplifies a *cultural analysis* deriving from cultural systems the way humans think.[35] For example, a comparison of kinship terminologies across the planet clarifies the framing of relationships by one culture's terminology. The third dimension, of life-sensing, enters the equation when we compare the frames' viability.

The reader should be informed about the philosophical penchant of this essay, which has everything to do with its unusual objective of providing an ethnography of the world. After all, how to experience the world? One way is to study a world and yet another, each a lifeworld and whole of its own, and extend these cases to note parallels and discrepancies.[36] My approach is to weld together from the start the many cases as parts into a whole. Recognition comes from the multiplication of micro-situations that converge. Ethnography provides thick description of a discernible group or situation. An ethnography of the world sacrifices specificity for wider grasp. It is 'comparative' ethnography for tracing conversations and cultural expressions that make sense precisely because they concern not only a local sphere but the world as such. Having stayed in the trenches of

life, whether in a poor neighborhood, a rural outpost, a neglected community, an artistic underground scene or another unstudied part of society commits the ethnographer to an experiential angle. Only on the basis of comparison, in my case mostly from the perspectives of a particular African lifeworld and a European one, can I state that a society 'is' so or so. Something is 'in relation to'. For that purpose I will consider the cultural systems of among others Amerindian hunters, drone operators, lab assistants, healers, preachers, football fans, African farmers and urban artists. Ethnography and structuralist analysis together constitute the unique scientific contribution of anthropology. Combined they perform 'de-simplication'.

Ethnography is the study of ethnos, literally (in old Greek) a 'swarm', any group of variable cohesion. Historical fact and statistical generalization are popular in non-fiction books extrapolating statements about *Homo sapiens*. But both sources of data ignore how culture determines meaning. Facts and figures rely on concepts whose objectivity depends on valid framing.[37] About 'kingship', for instance: adopting as a universal category the colonial definition, the story is written, without blinking, of political evolution worldwide.[38] If imagination is a faculty epitomizing *Homo sapiens*, we should accept differences in meaning unimaginable to the outsider. In other words, the scientist speaking for humanity should become an insider of spheres, an ethnographer.

Sociolinguistic analyses of communication have been at the forefront of globalization and superdiversity studies, yet like historical studies they preclude the ontological kind of difference that anthropologists accept as a lens for cultural description.[39] Moreover, most of the data we deal with are not in-depth conversations or interactions but (collective) practices. Think of the kneeling on a football pitch in honor of Black Lives Matter (BLM), the unconscious inclination to specific stereotypes, the cultural implications of upcoming technologies and systems, and disappearing traditions that the ethnographer participated in. These are not discourses to analyze. Sociolinguistics have designed tools to study such pragmatics yet as an extension of discourse analysis.[40] In this book the non-discursive is the primary material. The secondary position of sociolinguistic literature is one of the essay's limitations the reader will have to live with.

Another caveat is how to interpret communication in a world of make-believe (which post-knowledge implies). Dystopic essays have been published of late about the 'new dark age' we have entered, as artificial intelligence and digital programs take over parts of our lives without any

of us able to figure out what the algorithms are exactly doing and the robots are actually 'thinking'.[41] My contribution should reassure in the sense that all ways of thinking can be studied. No matter how overwhelmingly complex the mass of simplex signals of an information network may seem, an ethnographic study can discern regularity and context in those signals. What anthropology needs is a vantage point, an alternative frame of reference one has acquired during fieldwork, to observe one's familiar world afresh. A chemist buys a microscope to peer at the world under it. Anthropologists are their own instrument of observation, (re)designing it as they observe, immersed in the field.[42]

A book proposing a diagnosis of the current human condition and this from a mainly Africanist perspective invites skepticism. Who can I speak for? Whence my authority as author? In whose interest do I write? If I am ready to welcome a critical readership, it is with trepidation. One thing reassures me a little. Being white, male and obviously foolish enough to write about society at large, whatever credit the reader still grants me at the end, I may have earned.

NOTES

1. Tim Ingold for one critically compared the West's 'building' attitude to the environment with the 'dwelling' perspective permitting multilayered sensory exchange with the environment. Ingold, T., 2021. *The perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill.* Routledge.

2. How jokes work is a major argument pro structuralism, which detects the semantic structures in intuitions, artistic creations, myths and the like. A joke expresses a forbidden thought in a socially acceptable way, according to Freud, S. (1960). *The Joke and its relation to the unconscious.* [1905]. London: Penguin. The jester is intuitively in touch with the frames at play, in a fraction dealing the curvature of social relations a blow to reshape. This structure of the social field I will name a tensor. A joke isn't funny anymore without this spontaneity. Similarly, a painting or song reiterating a frame become simplex for losing the ability to shake the observer. Dead jokes and dead art are cut off from the root and origin they spontaneously brought home. (Paired with this book I made an attempt at a novel entitled *The scent* about a vigilante cult trusting only in smell, which pushes the reasoning about intuition to its limits.)

3. Another way of putting this, based on policy content rather than on voter's perception (see "Chapter Nine: The Oracle and the Real") is that economic issues divide Republicans while social issues divide Democrats. Maks-Solomon, C., & Rigby, E. 2020. Are Democrats Really the Party of the Poor? Partisanship, Class, and Representation in the U.S. Senate. *Political Research Quarterly*, *73*(4), 848–865.

4. Politicians' capacity of appropriating street protest is not a matter of ideology but skill of navigating the media landscape. Wouters, R., Staes, L. and Van Aelst, P., 2022. Word on the street: politicians, mediatized street protest, and responsiveness on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, pp.1–30.

5. Instead of listing some of the uncountable references, allow me the shortcut of announcing my definition of consciousness. 'The feeling of meaning' is a working definition based on the limited tools at hand. An anthropologist writes about meaning but the method at hand is ethnography, whose only currency is experience, indeed feeling in the broad (perceptual, non-emotional) sense. For a modest attempt of mine to get my head around the predicament of consciousness, which led to the working definition here, I should mention this admittedly obscure publication, parts of which return in "Chapter Fifteen: Phantoms of the Future": Stroeken, K., 2011. Why consciousness has no plural. In *Worldviews, science and us: Interdisciplinary perspectives on worlds, cultures and society* (pp. 5–30).

6. Meaning constraints anthropology, M.D. Frederiksen (2018) notes in his essay with the deftly equivocal title *An anthropology of nothing in particular* (John Hunt Publishing) which 'explores what goes missing when one looks for meaning' (p. 1). In my book, the advantage or maybe narrow escape, of feeling coming first in the definition, is that the meaning humans feel can include meaninglessness or 'nothing' or 'everything'. Note that consciousness defined as the feeling (and not meaning) of meaning places the phenomenon and not brain or neurology at the center. In Husserl's and Brentano's approach to consciousness as intentionality, consciousness is always of something, of a content, which thus can be contradictory ('why did you, feeling so green, not vote green?'). The preferred term in anthropology for consciousness is the phenomenological 'subjectivity'. For an accessible up-to-date philosophical paper linking affect to subjectivity: Schreel, L., 2022. Passibility: The Pathic Dimension of Subjectivity. In *Phenomenology, Neuroscience and Clinical Practice. Transdisciplinary Experiences*. Springer.

7. Manuals for 'the new generation' use the phrase, among others: Swartenbroux, Katrin. 2023. *OK dan niet: Over mijlpalen, maakbaarheid en de millennial mindfuck*. Murrow. The 'millennial mindf**k' is also a running gag in a radio program by Thijs Launspach. Launspach, T. 2019. *Werken met Millennials*. Spectrum.

8. I refer to heroic scenes of solidarity and care in (post-)apocalyptic drama, examples ranging from the *Battlestar Galactica* TV series of 2004 created by political scientists Moore and Eick to the HBO series *The Last of Us* of 2023 written by Mazin and Druckmann.

9. Vico's humanism restored a premodern form of reasoning. Danesi, M., 1993. *Vico, metaphor, and the origin of language*. Indiana University Press. What keeps the mind sharp is displaying universals in particulars (e.g., syllogism); what keeps the mind subtle (and supple) is putting together universals from particulars (e.g., induction). (Prop. 499 in: Vico, G., 1999. *New science*. Penguin UK). The frames the coming chapters will reconstruct put particulars together, to massage the mind.

10. On staging awareness of ethical expectations, facilitating spin on corporate social responsibility and greenwashing: Laufer, William S. 'Social accountability and corporate greenwashing.' *Journal of business ethics* 43.3 (2003): 253–261. And more recently on the scandal Dieselgate: Siano, A., Vollero, A., Conte, F., & Amabile, S. (2017). 'More than words': Expanding the taxonomy of greenwashing after the Volkswagen scandal. *Journal of Business Research 71*: 27–37. For a review: Gatti, L., Seele, P., & Rademacher, L. (2019). Grey zone in–greenwash out. A review of greenwashing research and implications for the voluntary-mandatory transition of CSR. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, *4*(1), 1–15.

11. My critical observation about this useful tool of social policy, intersectionality, is limited to the theory's lack of room for cultural analysis. The dynamic of cultural exchange requires we go beyond the essentialism of 'seeing things from the perspective of' an African-American, a woman, a homeless person and so on. We must transcend this matrixial approach to culture. The even more problematic 'vectorial' approach drops the perspective altogether and simply equates the culture with a group (and interests). An example is the conservative critique adopting the most static definition of culture like that of: Coaston J. 2019. The intersectionality wars. *Vox*. May 28. Intersectionality courageously bundles inequalities which however renders it vulnerable to both conservative and progressive (Marxist) critique. For a more-layered appraisal see "Chapter Two: Frameshift".

12. Tett, G., 2011. Silos and silences: the role of fragmentation in the recent financial crisis. *Forecasting, Warning and Responding to Transnational Risks*, pp. 208–216.

13. What happens if globalization increases imagery while decreasing contact? Aggression between cocoons is the flip side of 'contact defuses conflict'. See 'sailing together is the best remedy for racism', p. 355 in: Bregman, R. *Humankind: a hopeful history*. Bloomsbury.

14. McIntyre, L. 2018. *Post-truth*. MIT Press.

15. The anthropological study of emotion traditionally starts from affect encountered in the field, as opposed to Ekman's 'basic emotions' in psychology. Ekman, P., 1992. An argument for basic emotions. *Cognition & emotion*, 6(3–4), pp. 169–200. Lutz, C. and White, G.M., 1986. The anthropology of emotions. *Annual review of anthropology*, *15*(1), pp. 405–436.

16. For anthropologists since the mid-1980s, the postcolonial turn meant approaching the body as a self, permeable and more than individual, instead of a psychobiological entity. Wolputte, S.V., 2004. Hang on to your self: Of bodies, embodiment, and selves. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, *33*, pp.251–269.

17. Some of the works that conceived of globalization in terms of the compression of space and time, affecting speed and inequality of social relating include: Tsing, A., 2000. The global situation. *Cultural anthropology*, *15*(3), pp.327–360. Virilio, P. 1977. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*. New York: Semiotext(e). Harvey, D., 2007. *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, USA. Hannerz, U., 1996. *Transnational connections* (Vol. 290). London: Routledge.

18. Ending a long list (of those processes discussed by many authors) with Hardt and Negri's concept of a de-centered, modulating, globally sovereign biopower is my invitation to start from scratch. Let's not assume for once that the world got more complex (Foucault's idea of discipline evolving into Deleuze's concept of diffuse, rhizomatic control). The continuous struggle to simplify has been a cognitive endeavor (re)shaping the species, resulting into the observed trends of (neoliberal) mental optimization and fragmented consciousness about opaque corporate power. Hardt, M. and A. Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Harvard University Press. Foucault, M., 1975. *Discipline and punish*. A. Sheridan, Tr., Paris: Gallimard.

19. I have Emelien Devos to thank for letting go of my reservations about the term 'species' when writing about humanity. It can be done through a speciated post-humanism, see also Haraway, D.J., 2013. *When species meet* (Vol. 3). U of Minnesota Press.

20. I am not the first, going by the music list on Spotify entitled '*81–83 it is the end*'. Moreover, I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the book and blogs by 'k-punk': Fisher, Mark. 2022. *Capitalist realism: Is there no alternative?* John Hunt. The infinite reproduction of capital in an unbounded present deprives the punk artist of a different tomorrow. 'No future' for real?

21. Resonating too with the larger aim of my essay, this 'unsure theorist' has an original application of the mode: Merrett King, C., 2022. Unsure Theory: Ambivalence as Methodology. In *Arts* Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 78. MDPI.

22. How to cope with the accelerated stream of judgments, the proverbial 'others that are hell' (Sartre's *L'enfer c'est les autres*)? Contemporary anthropologies craft new vocabulary reflecting the worldwide mediatized field. What used to be called reappropriation is today *queering*: Hendriks, T., 2021. *Rainforest Capitalism: Power and Masculinity in a Congolese Timber Concession*. Duke University Press. What used to be called witchcraft is today *toxicity*: Rahier, N., 2021. Overheated stomachs: notes on urban life and toxicity in Nakuru, Kenya. *Africa*, *91*(3), pp. 453–472.

23. I apply here the definition of moralism from p.996 in Luhmann, N. 1993. The code of the moral, *Cardozo Law Review* 14: 995–1009. Later on I introduce Gluckman's theory about simplex versus multiplex relations. The binary of good/bad dominating the matrix is a simplex frame, so one could argue that only the tensor guarantees the multiplex position, like that of conflict mediation, of seeing the layer that connects opposite frames and thus acting as member of the human species rather than of a certain group only.

24. The undertow manages to evoke 'the land we live *from*', thus not take for granted the land we live *on*: Latour, B. and Weibel, P. eds., 2020. *Critical zones: The science and politics of landing on earth*. MIT Press.

25. Have a look at the careful reconstruction of technology's disembodiment by this philosophical member of the undertow: Fuchs, T., 2021. *In defence of the human being: foundational questions of an embodied anthropology*. Oxford University Press.

26. Wilhelm Reich's Freudo-Marxism and 'sexpol' historicizes those capitalist subsystems. Their integration of gay rights may be an excuse to impose a certain sociality. Bernini, L. 2016. *Queer apocalypses: Elements of antisocial theory*. Springer.

27. Theory from the Rest, rather than from the South, overcomes the dualism and engages with the species. The Rest has been conceptualized by Michel de Certeau in the tactics (versus strategies), shortcuts (versus grids) and navigations (versus plans) of everyday life. De Certeau, Michel. 1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. U of Minnesota Press. It can serve as a critical

lens on: Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L., 2015. *Theory from the South: Or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa.* Routledge.

28. All humans participate either in the same materiality or in different mentalities? Juxtaposing the two frames to opt for one, I will assess negatively as a 'matrixial' position. The one frame is what Lévy-Bruhl went for in the 1920s with his concept of 'primitive mentality'. It epitomized anthropological racism. Clapperton Mavhunga analyzes the dehumanizing move as both thingifying and deintellectualizing (and notes how Senghor exceptionally emulated it in his anti-intellectualist take on African cultures). It should be said that Victorian anthropologists earlier on did not even consider 'mentality' and simply categorized African technology as 'primitive', indicating a lower stage of material and 'hence' mental evolution (in the one mentality of the species). What is the worse epithet for a mind: unscientific or inferiorly scientific? Mavhunga redirects. His empirical research in Zimbabwe highlights the transience, the making and the workspace in scientific axioms and technical production, and thus redefines the materiality of science and technology. I redirect anthropologically, questioning the 'Western' standards implied by the concepts of science and technology. Materiality varies depending on mentality (affect). Mavhunga, C.C., 2018. *The mobile workshop: The tsetse fly and African knowledge production.* MIT Press, pp. 17–18.

29. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/05/09/are-millennial-leftists-aging-into-right-wingers/. The view may also depend on the media outlet. The right-wing *Vox* chimes: https://www.vox.com/2014/7/14/5891765/millennials-incoherent-politics-libertarians. According to the left, youth radicalize because capitalism failed them. https://jacobin.com/2020/06/generational-politics-millennials-zoomers-socialism. The conclusion may be that there is no (more) such a thing as a generation, culturally at least.

30. Intuition has many aspects, each magnified according to scientific discipline. One aspect is the intellectual perception of abstract reality, supplementing the sensory perception of concrete reality (Chudnoff, E., 2013. *Intuition.* Oxford University Press). Another aspect is the unconscious accumulation of sensory experiences (Hogarth, Robin M. 2001. Educating intuition. University of Chicago Press).

31. Polanyi wrote of tacit or implicit knowledge, which encompasses wisdom, insight, experience and intuition in the narrow sense of instinctive knowing. Our purpose in Part II is limited to distinguishing (individually) intuited knowledge from (individually) reasoned knowledge and associating collective reason with the first. Polanyi, Michael. 1958. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post Critical Philosophy.* Chicago: University of Chicago. Polanyi

argued that without implicit knowledge beyond sense-data, such as the causality of a logic, positivism leads to nihilism.

32. Extreme speech such as hate speech and online vitriol, but also populist memes and conspiracy theories have to be contextualized in terms of speech cultures and the institutions of a platform. Pohjonen, M. and Udupa, S., 2017. Extreme speech online: An anthropological critique of hate speech debates. *International Journal of Communication* 11.

33. Daston, L. and Galison, P., 2021. *Objectivity*. Princeton University Press.

34. Lévi-Strauss, C., 1992. *Tristes tropiques* (1955). Trans. John and Doreen Weightman. London: Penguin Books

35. Stroeken, K. (2020). Stigmatized Bodies Near Lake Victoria: A Cultural Analysis of Institutions. *Foundations of Science*, 1–11.

36. As Laterza argues, socio-technological macro-futures are human and therefore must be brought to life through micro-ethnography. Laterza, V., 2021. Could Cambridge Analytica Have Delivered Donald Trump's 2016 Presidential Victory? An Anthropologist's Look at Big Data and Political Campaigning. *Public Anthropologist*, *3*(1), pp.119–147.

37. I am referring to the use of statistics (e.g., the assumption in an experiment or survey that American students are representative of the global population). Methodological innovation seeks to increase accuracy by applying Bayes' theorem, specifying predictions for subcategories of a population based on prior knowledge (in a way a rationally based framing of data), see: Duchateau, L. and Janssen, P., 2008. *The frailty model*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

38. Harari, Y. N. (2014). *Sapiens: A brief history of humankind*. Random House.

39. Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press. Arnaut, K., Blommaert, J., Rampton, B., & Spotti, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Language and superdiversity*. Routledge.

40. For an introduction by Jan Blommaert: https://www.academia.edu/7561106/Pragmatics_and_discourse

41. Bridle, J., 2018. *New dark age: Technology and the end of the future*. Verso Books.

42. I paraphrase my colleague Hugo DeBlock prompting our students: 'The field is the method', an advice he attributes to his doctoral supervisor Mary Patterson.

Introduction: After Knowledge

To ensure more comfort, more security, more spare time and so on, technology progresses by simplicating, that is, by simplifying an action after a complicated translation. The electrical buttons of a machine provide limited selections through extra wiring that replace mechanic sliders and handles, which used to allow endless options. Science teaches how to simplicate, reducing apparent chaos to atomistic principles. Engineers translate events into tangible, predictable and manageable processes. Descartes's algebra exemplified the technique of replacing a real-life event by a simplified version after complicated approximation. A rolling stone does not follow the perfect curve because terrain is never perfectly even. A slice of life is sacrificed in the simplication, but the approximation works to build bridges and roads.

In another mathematical metaphor, asymptotes replace infinite curves for applications, but they are not real. They conceal infinity, an inconvenient reality. We do the same when singling out facts in discussions, constructing and altering identities, investing time in projects for future gain, or voting for a policy. So much background that holds detail and nuance disappears in the act. Singularity vanishes. At some point, the simplication may be forgotten and users live by simplexes. Languages, frameworks and algorithms are simplication machines that humans built to manage ever larger groups. They keep action predictable. At a price. This book discusses the price.

Sources of Culture

Yesterday I wanted to listen to a post-punk song from 1978 about Camus's novel *The Stranger*. I went on the app Spotify but there was no way of finding the song that The Cure unfortunately named 'Killing an Arab'. A beautiful bit of cultural heritage, the iconic band's first single, might disappear because of the meaning of its title, irrespective of the song's frame of experience. Many listeners from Arabian countries will know The Cure's and Camus's frame not to be xenophobic. They might not identify either with Arab ethnicity. But that does not matter in a social network backing down to skip the experiential frame on the assumption that *everyone is probably so frame-unaware that they will take the meaning at face value.* And thus the song is irretrievable, despite the well-known experiential frame. An apparently silent revolution took place that ended trust in human intuition. The price of globalization.

No frame can be judged without the sphere. The song banned for its song title, irrespective of its intention (experiential frame), is grist to the mill of the defenders of freedom of expression. The anti-woke brigade decries 'woke' activism for ending that freedom. Yet, does the wide dissemination of anti-woke opinions not point to the contrary? We must picture the blatant cynicism of those orators calling out their being canceled as they announce their sold-out shows in places like Madison Square Garden.[1] Missing in the story of political correctness as an imprisoning frame is what a situational (social) analysis reveals: the sphere. The sphere the white commentators communicate in is powerful enough to maintain the status quo of the social system, so it is easy for them to focus on speech and its (absence of) freedom while disregarding the network wherein the idea spreads. Consider pillars of the social network such as housing, schooling, employment, access to public services: do whites have reason to complain about discrimination? Blacks have. When little progress has been made in the way of eradicating racism and structural discrimination, how fair is it for the commentators to lament the success of a frame such as anti-racism or BLM activism?

A frame in itself does not guarantee an outcome. Success depends on the sphere, and more broadly on the social network wherein spheres operate. How to stop those abusing their freedom of expression hurting vulnerable groups? A cancel frame, or 'cancel culture', exists in a certain sphere. Does it reach further? In contemporary society, the reach of an ethical stance is limited because of both the segregated sphere and the

simplex frame. The fragmentation of spheres socially severs the encompassing and interstitial ties of humanity while simplex framing culturally denies the ties through automated decisions, like the app rendering The Cure's song irretraceable. Fragmentation hampers material influences across the network. Automation obstructs discussions on what is viable or not. A combined social and cultural analysis permits to identify the key weapons of discrimination such as insulting words, and get to their actual underlying tension (and their attraction for some) to actively discourage them via newspaper columns, blogs, school books, sensitivity readers and corporate diversity cells.

The intervention will seem partisan though unless its frame of discussions and its sphere of influences are grounded in life, a third dimension. Culture is never purely a product of arbitrary historical convergence. The species' care for the sources of production lie at the origin. Once upon a time—to narrate the origin of instituting a food taboo—pork was forbidden in the Middle East for health reasons. Or to accommodate the transition to a nomadic lifestyle.[2] Alcohol prohibition prevented quarrels in densely populated areas and was adopted by Islam. Women veiling themselves served some purpose too in the new context of nomadic groups seasonally uniting, like limiting jealousy. Democracy and human rights stopped conflict in globalized settings. And wokeness effectively warns about condoning racism. Letting a Black girl star as princess Ariel gives self-confidence to children of color.[3] Hiring a Black actress to play a Norwegian king from the eleventh century may even plant gender- and colorblindness in a wide audience, who initially perceived anachronism in the film.

Cultural elements do not come out of the blue but have at some point been invented, which was their original frame. Religious extremists stoning a girl for not wearing the veil, are in denial of that. 'The veil has no origin but God.' 'Heresy' they say refusing to consider the frame behind a practice. The frame is what a certain Jesus named the 'spirit' of the law to verify whether an application still was in that spirit. The frame motivating a practice may have shifted from a community's wellbeing to an obsession with purity and orthodoxy, or to hegemony of a certain group. Commentators rejecting the cultural system of Islam because of this shifted frame of application, similarly forget to consider the frame underlying a belief or practice. They too assume that an individual cannot shift frame. In the same vein, they ban certain people or ideas on the basis of surface traits irrespective of experiential frame. They want immigrants out,

to isolate them from autochthones or to reprogram them. They believe in surface traits instead of discussing the different frames, possibly grounded in the same source of production such as peace.

To mainstream the study of tensors, which bundle the prevalent tensions and humanizes them by assessing their impact on the species, I propose an advance in three steps: start with culture, embed it in society, insert life. Here comes the first.

Culture as Nomos and Logos

Institutions are established practices, rules and agreements. They determine ownership and management of the sources of production, in particular the distribution of human and natural energy. Energy is a unit for the spread of production sources, like meaning is for culture and event is for the social network. Policy intervenes in the distribution of energy. So do institutions. They can redistribute or steer behavior away from utility. Therefore, contemporary economists have integrated the role of institutions in the neoclassical model of supply and demand driving production, pricing and consumption.[4] The economists—one has won a Nobel prize for it—accept that institutions with their particular histories are part of the (eco)nomos.

In the same go, however, the economists opened a Pandora's box because of the cultural dynamic of nomos and logos, which since Berger and Luckman on the dialectics of socialization and later Bourdieu on the habitus stipulates that no institution is purely a habit or custom, a nomos.[5] It is easy to see that any institution presumes a logic, broadly defined as principles to perform appropriate actions in different situations.[6] The cultural system is a set of institutions wherein one logic interrelates with another, which implies again an encompassing logos that people sense in their judgments (of what is right or wrong). Socioeconomic and ecological interventions must be aware whether replacing one of the set's institutions violates that logic and thus will increase inertia for the nomos to adjust its logic. For instance, the socioeconomic measure of the economist Piketty to redistribute inheritances that are unproductively kept in a family is not possible without a cultural intervention spurring a change of mentality about possessions.[7] What this cultural intervention by the economist requires is a meta-institutional act: to discern the logos in the nomos. The current tendency in the social sciences is to reduce culture to the arbitrary set, the nomos, which corresponds to an identity. Piketty joins that

tendency by concluding from the polarization in politics that progressive thinkers have nothing to gain from the identity debates out of which rightists make hay.[8] My proposal is to take up the debate on identity and relate it back to culture.

Admittedly, it is not obvious how a cultural logic, a frame of experience, emerges from a historically evolved, arbitrary set of practices. Fans of the series *Better Call Saul* will know what I mean when referring to Bob Odenkirk's impersonation of the crooked yet charming lawyer Saul Goodman. The singular combination of traits, loser and worldly-wise in one is a nomos that none of the qualities I propose here could fully capture, yet whose logos the viewer recognizes anyway when applied by Odenkirk in scenes that for that reason—just like situations in a culture—are comprehensible. As I am writing about the actor's performance, I can do little else than identify a limited number of qualities, like pixels, and put them together, hoping the reader will understand what I mean by the image. Now, the constructed image 'Saul Goodman' becomes a pixel in itself as we go on discussing events in the series. This process of an image drawn from a set of pixels and turning into a new pixel I term simplication. Nomos transforms into logos. That is when a thing, an affect or a thought gets a grip on complex reality. Indeed, it exists to us thanks to being framed. The simplication into a frame becomes a simplex, though, when its origins are forgotten. The previous section gave examples of the cultural logics behind institutions and how these might be rooted in sources of production.

A simplex is a frame, but a special one: it obscures the existence of other frames. In the words of Plotinus in the fifth tractate of the Enneads, simplex is 'that before which there is nothing'.[9] Could such a thing exist? Everything has an origin, and is related to something else. Plotinus reminds us of the temptation to forget that. The danger is also called reification, as in supposing a dictatorial regime to be a given (thing, *res*) which thus obscures the origin of its power. Or as in the equation of culture with identity: you should respect an established practice (an institution) irrespective of the damage it causes, because this culture is someone's identity. No, cultural practices have origins in situations, and as situations change, the practices can be adapted. An institution such as inheritance that previously protected a production source such as income can be diagnosed as jeopardizing that source.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS:
MATRIXIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Why could employees of the company Amazon not mobilize enough members to set up a union? A social analysis of interviews and participatory observation explains the problem from relations of internal competition in the company. Employees have interiorized values of individualism, which are indicative of unacknowledged social pressure. They obey the employer. Cultural analysis for its part evinces the history instantiated in this one situation, where the American dream as well as the clash of company pride and aversion against socialism converge. To explain the absence of an Amazon union, the methods are intertwined, connecting micro- to macro-levels of society as well as the social to the cultural, structure to agency and the humanities to the social sciences. Otherwise an explanation remains incomplete.

Launched by Gluckman as the extended case method, situational (or social) analysis is a time-honored approach for ethnographers to describe the various interests interlocking in a situation.[10] Situational analysis extends ethnographic observations at the micro-level, such as a working situation, to make general statements about the meso- or macro-level of, respectively, a sphere or society. Cultural analysis, whose origins are structuralist, basically takes the opposite direction by learning, through fieldwork, initiation and other types of cultural and linguistic training, about the local system of beliefs, traditions and idioms to understand any situation in those terms. Culture is short for cultural system.

The combination of both methods is useful for example in sensitization campaigns to avoid undue association of a group with a stigmatizing practice, for example in the case of albinism-related killings in west Tanzania.[11] If we adopt Goffman's take on stigma as 'discreditable' social status, the combination means that cultural analysis discerns who is discreditable in principle, following cultural logics (of labeling), and situational analysis reveals the actual social devaluation, the extent (of labeling) in practice.[12] The social risk of having albinism in an arid rural area could have been mitigated by a protective cultural title, like that of 'chief' did for twins to accept their excess fertility.

A class in school organizes cultural analysis by teaching about the history of ideas, various schools of thought and their dialectics of thesis and antithesis. The taught subject fulfills the role of a sphere. The dialectic of frames raises the validity of the pupil's understanding of the subject. The

vertical text box in the scheme below refers to what humans do with meanings of events: feeling them, to a determinable extent. Consciousness is defined as the feeling of meaning (versus the feeling of *what happens*, Damasio's neurobiological definition in "Chapter One: Simpl(if)ication"). We feel meaning when we manage to connect the various meanings of an event as terms into a frame and find out how frames relate to each other in a cultural system. Meanings are felt broadly (horizontally across the network) and deeply (vertically toward the meaning system)—the more levels and dimensions the higher their validity. A third dimension will be discussed in the next section when our account reaches down to the sources of production.

Before a frame applies to an event, the actor has defined the sphere to communicate or, more generally, exchange in. A sphere can be almost permanent (a social structure) or transient (a group at an event). In Fig. 1, the dashed ellipse of sphere A encompasses two frames of one cultural system. Examples include the economic sphere where opposite attitudes to trade and the market are possible; the political sphere with diverging approaches to a voting procedure; or intergenerational misunderstandings within a group. Sphere B organizes the encounter of frames from different cultures, like a digital notice board attracting internet surfers of various backgrounds with similar interests. Sphere C describes a moment of context collapse, as in online statements without frame and cultural background.[13] In 'superdiverse' globalized communication, spheres pop up to soon disappear. Others are rigidified.

In gray normal font, meanings linked up in frames, themselves belonging to cultural systems, provide us with the palette of possibilities for making sense. Cultural analysis reconstructs the palette, the semantic field that precedes the actors' definition of a situation. In black italics, spheres of
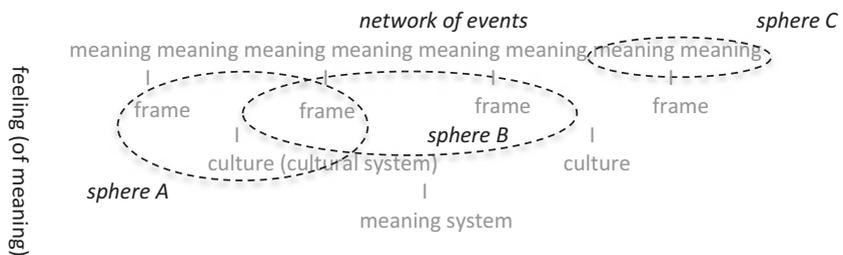
Fig. 1   Feeling meaning (2D)

exchange make up the now, the meaning felt and the choices made at a given moment. Social analysis reconstructs the moment. Whereas the extended case method contextualizes the meaning of, for instance, a wedding (horizontally) in relation to other events, the structuralist method derives the meaning of a marital arrangement (vertically) from the comparison of all marriage and kinship systems of the human species. A 'meaning system' encompassing all cultures suggests that a language is possible for such comparison. The social system is the (social) network of (communicative) events.[14] The meaning system is a hypothetical reality at the macro-level of culture. The first anthropologists who consistently thought from the psychic unity of humanity were structuralists such as Lévi-Strauss studying the unity as a symbolic order of signifiers, human 'culture' in the singular, of which cultures in the plural are quite distinct, historically unique combinations.[15] What else than such a 'meaning system', situated on the outskirts of Fig. 1, could even a radically relativistic anthropology assume to be part of when writing and informing future generations about phenomena the world over? The tensorial anthropology introduced in the next sections elicits this third 'human' dimension.

Social analysis and cultural analysis. Sphere and frame. Each has its constraints. But without the pair, my analysis would lack the volatile dimension of choice. The duality of cultural system and social structure, treating Marx's superstructure and base as two halves of a whole, does not sit well with new materialists and post-humanists like Barad who have inspired anthropologists in the past decade.[16] I contend that, oblivious to the growth of simplex society, these schools of thought could not do justice to the suspense between possibilities from the past and the selection in the present. The suspense has fed much research versed in the critical school that is retrieving relevance, as will be specified in footnotes for the interested reader (e.g., Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, Kapferer, Taussig, Virno, Marazzi). Without the palette of possibilities from past and present how could we have a basis to formulate social critique and invent alternatives?[17] The contrast between simplex and tensor cannot do without.

One generation after anthropology's experiment in decolonizing knowledge coined 'cultural critique' by Marcus and Fischer in 1986, we must again explore the light that cultural comparisons from various corners of the globe shed on current social change.[18] Euro-American premises of the good life have been anthropologically challenged at three occasions at least: in 1966 by Sahlins's depiction of hunter-gatherers as the

'original affluent society', in 1980 by Taussig's ethnographic analysis of commodity fetishism, and in 2011 by Graeber's anthropological history of debt.[19] During this third period, a second decolonizing experiment took place: to radically adopt the ontologies of other lifeworlds.[20] From a post-colonial perspective, the radical pluralism suffers from a political deficit. The more radically the otherness of a lifeworld is presented, the less the community can be protected against exoticization and concomitant abuse.[21] Of course, political pragmatics should not be an argument in determining how things are. This remark in fact also confronts postcolo-nial studies denouncing unjust situations on the unspoken assumption of universal human rights (a Western ontology to which postcolonial intel-lectuals subject local spheres). But what lacks in both positions, ontology and postcolonial critique, and might solve the issue as proposed in the next section is to make the assumptions explicit and falsifiable. We can do that by opening a variable in parallel to local spheres. I call this parallel dimension the relation to the species. *Anthropos*, quite simply the object of our discipline, weirdly forgotten.

HUMANITY: LIFE-SENSING

After-knowledge is easy. But can one learn from mistakes if they are the product of a frame rather than of misinformation? As a coordinator of long-term academic exchange in eastern Africa, having defended with lim-ited success the marginalized soft sciences for their peacekeeping impact, I noted in desolation the outbreak of the war in the most northern tip of that region, in Tigray. How could the chimeras of nationalism and ethnic-ity hold sway in 2020? Twelve years of fruitful cooperation at Ethiopian universities in function of economic and technological progress threat-ened to be wiped away, in virtually one day. Some of those ready to pull the trigger over ethnic difference included engineers and doctors, econo-mists and policymakers with PhDs. Had their 'tribal' sentiments returned? Or had their cultural intuitions about conflict management been stamped out in favor of factual knowledge? Development cooperation in the south has always focused on expertise, the nuts and bolts of machines, the improvement of crops and medical treatment, accountancy and adminis-tration, the analysis of objective indicators of poverty—stuff scientists know how to control. In contrast, the humanities cultivate interpretative skills, including self-criticism. Could this capacity of deconstruction be

helpful among Ethiopian and Eritrean elites to snap out of the frame of experience that opposes the constructs of an 'us' and a 'they'? Could more 'humanities' have prevented the war?

The answer came a year later from Europe as its neighbor Ukraine was invaded by Putin's forces. Belligerent speech implicated all sciences and ideological backgrounds, despite Europe's humanities tradition celebrating self-criticism. The postcolonial turn appears mere veneer. The cause of suffering is a way of thinking, which commentators of repute are instrumental in perpetuating. Whether one says 'Ukraine threatened Russians' or 'Russia invaded Ukraine', both statements make abstraction of a country's internal diversity. The discourse on 'Russia' seeking this and 'Europe' or 'the US' having to do that, and 'China' being thus, each time equates a people with a regime, with self-fulfilling effect say a year later. Russian sons and daughters were led to believe in the equation. They killed and died on the battlefield for that illusion. The regime has fed the belief in an unchanging Russian identity representing a linear history. Western powers were eager to send weapons to the battlefield and fight a war by proxy, which as time goes by inadvertently legitimizes Putin's posse for Russians seeing their country return on the geopolitical map. Economies north and south of the equator, sanctioning and sabotaging each other, are ailing from the instability. Since there was no objective reason for war, what else caused the escalation save a way of thinking?

The parties could have thought in another way. A Russian man condoning the invasion in Ukraine imagines Russia to stand for a fixed set of beliefs, and Europe or the West for an opposite set, and Ukraine to be moving from the first to the second. The man conflates sphere and frame. He supposes the spheres 'Russia' and 'Europe' to possess one frame each, and only one, moreover opposing each other. Scholars and journalists on both sides of the fence replicate the conflation of sphere and frame. The rigid picture feeds conflict. Anti-American sentiments across the Global South morph into support for Ukraine's invasion. Conservative forces feel sympathy for the putative fight against 'Western decadence'. Progressive voices in the Global North think the hard-won 'universal' values of 'democracy and human rights' are at stake. All these positions assume culture to be the explanation and fixed. The escalation could be avoided had everyone from the onset disentangled sphere and frame, and granted cultures their internal diversity.

A stronger antidote than diversity is to consider the impact of the sphere on the larger network and thus on lives beyond the sphere. An 80-year-old Russian grandmother mourning her grandson denounces the war in Ukraine as an idiocy with the words "unacceptable in the twenty-first century!"[22] She knows her community is still suffering the consequences of communism and the Second World War which victory in Ukraine might have alleviated. Nevertheless, her words daringly compare the Russian sphere and its dominant frame of experience to what is viable for humanity in the twenty-first century. She could have contented herself with a matrixial view, which is to juxtapose the two frames in a way showing that both have their logic and thus the local one is fine: 'Europeans have decolonized their imperialism of old' but 'Russians have reasons to fear NAVO and thus crave for territorial reconquest'. Your personal upbringing and identity will determine which frame to choose. Such matrixes are what the humanities and social sciences have become experts in after the cultural turn and postcolonial turn in the 1970s that made a clean break with the imperialist past of academia (and of anthropology in the preceding decade).

The matrix contradicts my assumption that the majority of Russian citizens did not agree with Putin's act of war. Admittedly, I ignored the cultural frame of 'democracy' in that region: contrary to Western democracy with its electoral system striving as much as possible to truthfully equate regime and people, the Russian leader represents the people at once and thus knows their will without needing to ask for their opinion. In response to my ignorance, a Russian interlocutor at a conference in Dar es Salaam a week after the invasion magnified the cultural difference into an irreconcilable opposition.[23] If I may paraphrase between quotation marks: 'A Westerner will never understand the respect of Russians for traditional values and their conviction that the tsar embodies these, no matter what other governments declare.' That is reflexivity: how my faulty speech affects the discourse of the interlocutor. But the elderly lady's gut feeling made her say something else. She went beyond the matrix of frames by assessing their impact on human lives. This third dimension bringing in 'life' upgrades the matrix to a tensor, raising the validity of her position. Applied to anthropology, the formula unpacked is that humans think right (reduce society's entropy) by having frames (cultural analysis) related to the flow of energy (life-sensing) that produces spheres (social analysis).

A tensor adds a degree of freedom, which lends ability to shift frames. Crucial is not the shifting as such, but the openness of mind and senses to the response from the environment as one shifts. A situational analysis, for instance a national survey on school performance, contextualized through cultural analysis which compares countries, periods and educational targets, leads to a policy intervention, for example a pedagogy oriented on self-study. The cogency of the measure will depend on how well the analyses observed the life response. The experiences of teacher and pupil in the classroom and of pupils and parents at home allow the researcher to distinguish the new pedagogy from the old paradigm, and translate the relation between the two frames in experiential terms. Without this life-sensing from the field, the measure will likely not stick.

Eco-transition is wholeheartedly supported by scientists doing the studies in the field and designing the technologies, as well as by entrepreneurs producing and selling the new materials, a generally underestimated willingness also among the bigger companies preparing for transition: these actors keep their finger on the pulse of the field and the market for their survival.[24] Inertia predominates in the unwieldy middle of the knowledge economy, namely the professional services networks, insurance companies, industry audit and consulting firms, financial advisory, risk management and tax services corporations, lobby groups and political organizations. They do not gain from a completed transition, so their life-sensing wavers around a premeditated social analysis and format.

The outcome of observing a life response is unpredictable. Joining a protest march in the street and hearing the diverse motivations should facilitate frameshift, but repeating slogans might as well indoctrinate. In the matrix there is no way back. One swallows the pill, either blue or red. All room for monitoring one's frame in terms of changed situations (life-sensing) is gone. One acknowledges the two frames, yet the contrast is invariably made from the perspective of the pill swallowed, like the cultural frame someone grew up in. The matrix does not dig up the relation between the frames, their semantic field of similarities and distinctions. The scholar will not know how to shift from the first to the second frame and back.

Antivaxxers have swallowed the pill convincing them of the delusion of the vaccinated masses. They themselves are the few with 'pure blood'. So their unfalsifiable claim goes. The antivaxxers' matrix advocates the antithesis, but precludes the question of viability of either thesis. Decrying 'collective psychosis' (a frame in the medical sphere), their matrix does not

grant the masses a wisdom on which democracy is based. The majority of the species would not have the collective reason to make choices for the better, conforming to government policy to save more lives in the short term and prevent pan-panic. Readiness to discuss one's frame is essential, as widely popular online platforms Reddit and Quora show, to expose errors, simplex framing and reductionism. Some antivaxxers have claimed that they represent the undertow against an overbearing state. They believe to be the ones reading the signs of the times and accessing collective reason, an intuition protecting the species, like Vico's ancient wisdom. They cannot be blamed for framing, because humans need to. But they should tell their frame. Their intuition should explicate the frame to compare it with other frames. The comparison should incorporate life-sensing. Empirical science attempts that. Before thinking to have identified 'the monster!' scientists should ask whether they have made the monster. A three-dimensional anthropology studying the making of frames is an advance in validity and in humanizing science.

A simplex, we will see, contains the highly condensed negative energy of unacknowledged layers. If a far-right party wants to forbid immigration because of its threat to the community, to its peace and traditional institutions, why not scientifically check the claim? A moralist rejection of the debate is simplex, with the consequence in a democracy of making the rejected seem cool, a martyr. That is how a fascist can come to look like the underdog, and might attract others disgusted with the muzzling of voices. My frame is that of an intersectionally privileged scholar, a middle-class white male heterosexual, who may gain credibility through an underdog position by having lived a simple life in rural Africa. In my perspective, a democracy rewards speech from the fringes of society. My gay colleague from a poor background, who has been the underdog his whole life, will much more positively frame the acquisition of a power position, the political revolution toward outright dominance of the norms and respect he was deprived of, as well as the legal exclusion of citizens threatening to reduce him again to underdog status. He will cherish signs of the revolution, such as new speech and support of activist authors, which my frame (mis)interprets as new authority deterring votes. Seeing the different frames of experience at work in each other's statements, how they are related and rooted in existential experience, removes the aggravation and misunderstanding ensuing from our belonging to different spheres. It humanizes the social system, including science.

Anthropological Validity: Toward
a Speciated History

For a million years, our ancestors lived off the hunt of animals, when they were not picking berries. For all this time, one may gasp, 'we' engaged in the act of slaughter without stunning. Since about twenty years, we prohibit such deed as unethical. 'Primitive man' did not care how long the shot or trapped animal suffered until the mercy stroke. We as educated citizens are making up for that lack of awareness. Animal rights, like human rights, are an insight of Western intellectuals thinking freely, liberated of cultural institutions. Religious sacrifices will be adapted accordingly, or they will be considered backward. It would not be fair to apply ethics retroactively and call our former selves immoral, but the general claim is clear enough: humanity makes progress.

What compels me to qualify the claim is ethnographic fieldwork in a community different from my own, south of Lake Victoria in Africa. It has led me to believe that progress can only be made on the condition that we remember what was given up and retain what was good about it. Ethics expands knowledge. Instead of replacing one truth by another, which is simplex (one-layered), a valid knowledge adds a layer. An important layer is the perspective or experiential frame of those involved, not only of the researcher. In the judgment above, the perspectives of hunter and animal are missing. Why should the chemical impulse at a certain moment in a pain center of the brain decide about the ethical status of an activity? Yes, we hear the cry of the trapped animal and see the spastic movement of the limbs. It hurts our European senses. And neuroscience confirms the impulse to be pain. But what about the ensuing stillness of the body? Might it reveal the state the animal ends up in, of spending the last moments in the forest where it belongs? Animists attribute to the animal a state of resignation. They worship the animal's spirit for the rich nutrition providing the family, which is another story than prey succumbing to the prowess of an animal higher up the food chain. Yet, even if this is not so, and the animal's panic and pain last until the last minute, why should a life not be judged in its entirety; that the creature feels good by finding its destiny and giving life to others? Why would 'feeling' to an animal be the individual body's sensation that Westerners place in the center of experience? Do we want to be scientists projecting on other creatures our state of consciousness—a culturally and historically specific one at that, which moreover does not question the projection?

The disproportional attention to the impulse, the visible, the moment instead of a lifetime, is telling of a simplex society, focusing on the pixels instead of the figure the pixels form. Concepts of fate have lost their meaning in a society of citizens weaving one gratifying event to another without experiencing the contentment of reaching one's destiny. Positivism conceives of reality as a sum of moments or atoms without perspective or frame linking the elements. Reality simply *is.* The vectors of capitalism, industrialization and modernity, respectively money, Fordism, rationalism and empiricism, have proven their efficiency; they are also what brought the world to its knees. My purpose is not to defend slaughter without stunning, but to give a representation of another lifeworld so as to increase the validity of my position. A sign of that validity is that I am reminded now of the intimate relation with animals that animists have, which the neurobiological study of pain ignores. The ethical insight raises the validity of analysis.

The following contemporary neologisms are simplications gone awry at the macro-level. They could fuel 'entropology', the study of disintegration or dissipation, in this case a decay of the cultural exchange that connects humans to a common sphere, to a collective good.[25] McDonaldization refers, in the Weberian tradition of rationalization, to a standardized, homogenizing form of globalization.[26] Disneyfication transforms an environment to simplify it, for commercial and safety purposes. Googlization is to expand a certain technology of access to all markets, applications and contexts without arousing scrutiny.[27] Amazonization (after Walmartization) is an expansion disrupting retail by crossing distribution platforms with a one-stop shop.[28] In all these cases a blueprint (a simplified sequence of actions) is imposed that after testing should work for the largest number of operations (a complicated substitution). Globalization thrives on mechanisms inventing single frames to work in all spheres. The frame is simplex in that information networks transmit unidirectional impulses to make predictable decisions for large groups. The format does not care about sustainability, the relation between part (the activity) and whole (the equilibrium of the wider system).

In the meantime, what are the formats doing to our minds? A simplex draws you into its grip on reality until you cannot get out. Everything you encounter in the image is set in that light. In the piece of art you peer at, say a carnival painted by Breughel, all constituents, dressed figures on the plaza, obscure scenes on a street corner are interpreted through the frame that initially pulled you in. It is a both mentally and emotionally rewarding

process. A simplex can be compared to such dazzling light. But it goes further. Picture a black hole, an intense gravity that no matter can escape. Think of your colleague labeled in a certain way. All that person does and says, also his refutations, will seem to confirm the framing. Good intuition and communication with the person could have countered it. But something came in between. The compressed time of globalization and the information society has taken over to let a certain atmosphere invisibly envelop the person. The framer enters a dream to never wake up, like looking at the painting and absorbing the scene without ever returning to see the frame again. Simplexes collide. Country against country. Left versus right. Black and white.

"Why believe in progress?" could have been a subtitle for this book. Ten pieces of good advice, scientifically based, by Harvard's Arthur Brooks[29] on being happy each amount to no more than the habits that humans had a few hundred thousand years ago, and that the regular job in contemporary society reserves only for the lucky few with enough spare time: invest in family and friends, become member of a club, be physically and mentally active, think about philosophical or religious matters, do sports, be polite, be also generous, watch your health, go into nature, know your colleagues. Paleolithic societies stimulated all these activities through their initiation networks, egalitarian ethics and way of life. Foragers adapt their paths in function of the environment's direct responses. They live in bands small enough to have a say in decisions. They have the pleasure of following their instincts. In short, they lead a life contributing to a sense of trust, impact and connection. The three affects are interrelated. Much of the human's limbic distrust vanishes when cooperating with or talking to someone and feeling how the mutual connection has impact on the surroundings. In contemporary society, the daily chores as well as science and technology, from factories to informatics, develop skills and organize energies in the opposite direction, to eventually have members watch parallel screens in the metaverse. And revealingly, no member even attempts to call that a life.

An essential moment in this book is to agree now on what the old sensations of the species and their ongoing relevance mean for the study of society. What is the significance of the 'intraspecific' for students of *anthropos*, the human? The physiologist Jared Diamond wrote bestsellers to explain cultural differences from biological and ecological factors. His message is that a modern society at odds with those evolutionary factors will fail.[30] Opponents correctly remark that his materialist take on culture

underestimates the plasticity of human nature.[31] But would they dare contend that humans are malleable to the point of effectively (re)producing any type of society, such as today's when we as Primates live in networks larger than ant colonies?

The plausible position beyond or between the (modern) materialist and (postmodern) idealist tradition seems the wide spectrum of remaining possibilities, which do not ignore the species' neurobiological evolution, however without treating these possibilities as fixed structures that moreover directly determine culture. What these possible anthropologies have in common, quite minimally put, is to differentiate ways of life in the species' history, which materially organize the sources of the planet, and to accept that these lifeways stimulate different palettes of affect.[32] The palette seems to have gravitated toward (dis)trust in the neolithic, futility in industrialization, and disconnection in post-Fordism. The question is whether the evolution of a species' lifeways and its affective dimension are covered by the approaches to history advocated by Fernand Braudel, namely event-based chronicles and long-term structures (longue durée).[33] The first highlights the influences from events and describes the social network of such influences, which fits well in new materialism and Latour's actor-network theory. Other anthropologies adopt the second approach to study structures of thought, culture and logics reproduced in groups and across periods. Yet, when does any long term begin? Neither of the two (respectively social and cultural) approaches captures the accumulative history, also neurobiologically inscribed, of lifeways interrelated because originating from a common and constant source, the species. This origin-based history (versus event- and period-based) tells an 'intraspecific', a 'speciated' story. I am not focusing on natural selection but on how the species learns, after members make decisions for or sometimes against the best neural-wired options. The decisions are often rewarded (naturally selected) by arbitrary circumstances while the sources tapped from share the same origin, Earth.[34]

Earth for humans can be specified through the 'commons', not the few global resources that are left (high seas, the deep-sea bed, the atmosphere, Antarctica, Outer Space and recently cyberspace) but the original commons before institutional change distinguished public and private ownership (cf. 'the tragedy of the commons' associated with the Anthropocene): natural materials held in common such as air, water, habitable land, forests, fisheries, plants as well as intersubjective resources of wellbeing such as desire, care, peace and knowledge.[35] The commons evolved (e.g., health

commons from the forest, digital commons from cyberspace) but their origins are the same, ultimately 'life'. The central idea remains that of common resources with origins closely tied to the survival of the species that therefore ground a critical view. What happens to these sources of production, how they are thought and differentiate people, is also the story of the human species. That is how intimately connected the three dimensions of the cultural, social and existential are, and why I include all three, via the study of frame, sphere and production source.

Tensorial Anthropology: Society/Culture/Life

An engineer of mixed Angolese and Portuguese descent with an old Dutch name and working for an oil company drives me around Luanda, where he was born and lives. The car is a 4WD, his wife's. He enjoys narrating the history of his city in French, while driving by the relevant places. I avoid to ask about the details of his job. Climate change might overshadow the conversation. Another topic is the poverty visible on the streets. A man in rags standing at the crossroads attracts attention with his painted face and mouth full of shredded paper. The strips pop out as if in a still, to solicit the drivers' conscience. At the parking lot where we step out of the car I hesitate to give to the homeless kids begging. A handful of coins would be a cheap way to get rid of the faint guilt. A little further, I am affected by the sight of young people waiting idly on benches in the park at the Cathedral. The great wall-painting across the street throwing a saint into a whirlpool of commodities seems to sum up my unease. 'We are all part of it.' The separation of local spheres is no more than a convenient illusion, preventing the money made from oil or science to be redistributed to those born in deplorable circumstances. My host notices my discomfort. Then he says he teaches capoeira to homeless kids so that they can become trainers themselves. They are taught about the African cosmology of the fighting dance that slaves imported to Brazil and now has returned home.

Each of these scenes from a day in Luanda carries a polysemic message. In his gesture to teach, the engineer performs a double transformation, at the level of sphere and frame. By caring for the kids living in the streets he goes against the tendency of fragmenting the sphere of the economy into informal circuits. He acknowledges the kids' global membership. The capoeira also adds a new frame of experience, one of sportsmanship, to the survivalism dominating the kids' lifeworld. 'Generous' is a correct if perhaps meager label for the tensor, the universally recognizable yet specific

combination of traits presented by this highly educated, wealthy, modest and culture-sensitive guy making a difference for some of his much less fortunate compatriots. The wall-painting pins down another tensor, as does the paper-strip beggar. 'Poverty' is also an all too simple label to evoke their sets of frames emerging in that public sphere, and the source of production that they guard.

Explanations should be multidimensional. "You believe 'x' because it is in your frame (or culture)" is one-dimensional, a vector. That we call cultural essentialism. 'You believe "x" because of your frame (perspective) in this sphere as opposed to another frame' is two-dimensional, a matrix. That we call cultural relativism. The reference to the sphere implies that several frames are possible, attesting to a relational concept of culture. "You believe 'x' because of how your frame in this sphere relates to life" is three-dimensional, a tensor. The explanation has something spiritual, bringing in the collective reality of the human species. The chapters will account for the third dimension in the form of intersecting diagonals, expressing a dynamic of shifting frames (in a sphere). The following Fig. 2 schematizes the three dimensions of anthropological knowledge. They put together a compass for de-simplification and tensor design.
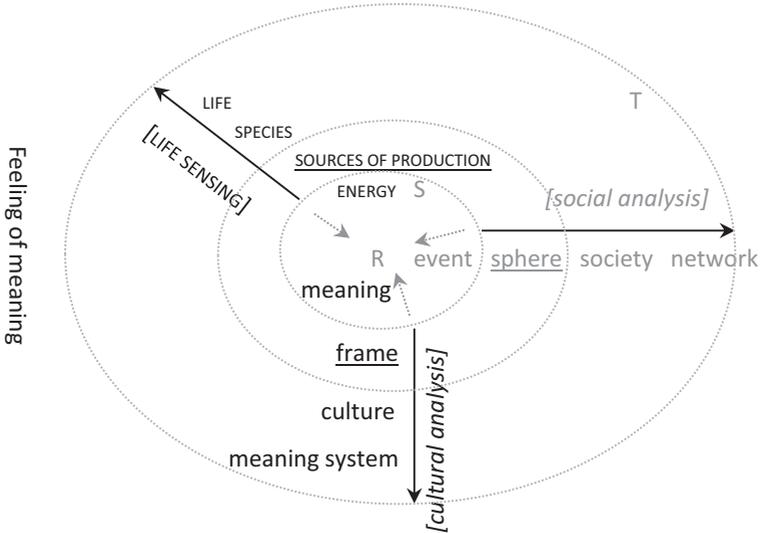
Fig. 2   Anthropological validity

The inner circle of the figure represents a simplex ('S' in Fig. 2). Its meaning, event and energy are disconnected from, respectively, the experiential frame (and its encompassing culture and meaning system), the sphere (and the social network of events it belongs to) and its origins in any natural or other sources of production (from the species and life). The second circle envelops frame, sphere and source of production. I underline these terms because awareness of their (meso-) level is a way out of the simplex. The one-layered meaning then extends into the multi-layered (a multiplex). A tensor ('T' in Fig. 2) extends all the way and in the three dimensions. At its widest and deepest, the felt meaning reaches the macro-level of social network, meaning system and life.

To be in the know is the ideal envisaged by the scheme. De-simplicate, and you can diagnose problem and formulate remedy. Yet, is something true necessarily right? Being made aware of what is omitted in a decision, such as cultural possibilities, enables us to take a more informed decision.

But what if the right decision comes from vision, from an unconscious intuition, which is not driven by cognitive logic and empirical data? The dashed arrows pointing toward R at the core of the scheme picture this alternative to de-simplication. Because the omniscient machine, as in the maximally wired, optimal computer, might still not intuit what is right, humans organize moments of 'the real'. Those are events that carry a strong 'out of the blue' factor, reality appearing in its raw state denuded of its symbolic and imaginary features.[36] For instance, humans organize a democratic vote, even if statistics about individual qualities and personal output could tell them who the best leader is, or the GOAT in some sport or academia. They organize competitions, wherein the condition of the day, even luck plays a role, as if the Greek gods were involved. To end a dilemma, they consult an oracle, which looks like nothing more than a chance event. To feel love, they invest all their energy and spend a lifetime with someone they met by coincidence, as if destiny decided who was right for them. In each case, discussed in the last five chapters, the sense of being stuck in a simplex disappears by doing the opposite of accumulating knowledge. By removing all information they let what remains decide. The real can be nothing, pure chance, or it can be everything, a collective reason that no individual may fathom, a destiny. In the second case, the core transforms into a black hole. Our scheme turns sideways ninety degrees to show what happens behind it: a curved arrow connects the center to the most outward circle, locating the outcome of the real event beyond the widest-reaching tensor.

Brief Overview of Chapters

In the natural sciences, the simplex has a positive connotation, for it solves a complex problem by reducing it to manageable data and thus overcomes noise, the clutter of phenomena. "Chapter One: Simpl(if)ication" describes cases of contemporary technology and communication dominated by a single-part structure or message sending one signal at the time. "Chapter Two: Frameshift" recounts how Bateson's anthropology and Descola's study of animist cosmology *shift perspective*. They combat simplexes by stretching them back into shape along the first dimension drawn in the figure above. We learn to derive tensors from simplexes.

"Chapter Three: Losing the Feel for the Craft" studies witchcraft in a contemporary African setting to illustrate practices that dehumanize. What do albinism magic, drones, double tap, international boycotts and other current simplications have in common? What do they reveal about the direction of the global system? "Chapter Four: The Human Experiment" starts from the notorious Milgram experiment to find the historical and sociocultural origins of dehumanization described in "Chapter Three: Losing the Feel for the Craft". Delving into the unsteady edifice of simplexes on primitiveness and progress brings us, right at the bottom, to a default frame called 'normality' with neolithic origins and discriminating. We explore the morbid energy condensed and transmitted across generations. "Chapter Five: Simplex Communication Society" sketches the impasse of the Anthropocene in terms of the macro context of global information networks. Is a massive shift of lifeway conceivable today, like that of foragers taking the decision to farm?

The five chapters form a first part. They diagnose society as in a state of entropy and dehumanizing. The second part of the book, spanning ten chapters, discusses the remedies developed today, welding cases together into a comparative ethnography (rather than having ethnographic vignettes illustrate a thesis). Part I deconstructed simplexes to derive tensors that are interrelated and form the rationale behind the selection and comparison of case studies in Part II.

Frameshift does not suffice in itself to implement social change. How can new prodemocracy movements break the deadlock? A second way out of the simplex, and effective in combination with frameshift, is to *move sphere*. This operation concentrates on the second dimension in the figure above, following social analysis. "Chapter Six: Collective Reason" shows

how an ecological policy overcomes impasse when it leaves party politics behind to engage with the judicial sphere, where sanctions are imposed on a failing government. Enlightenment and Marxism had clear opponents in their battle for the French Revolution's values of freedom and equality, respectively. The third value of inclusion, a necessity since globalization, turns out to be the missing link to uphold the other two values. In Luhmann's smirk, how to include without excluding? Concisely put, a collective reason situated in the future might do the trick.

"Chapter Seven: The Oracle and the Real" and "Chapter Eight: Healer or King" extend our analysis from frame and sphere to cultural systems and the human species. Ethnographic reflections about lifeways come to the fore. As the art of shifting frames and letting in 'the real', divination defuses the simplex. So does intuition trained in the initiatory networks of central and eastern Africa. Both practices kept the chief's rule medicinal and prevented power from corrupting into autocracy, which I come to theorize as a simplex system after split tensor.

With this theory in hand, "Chapter Nine: A Model Leader" turns to the US and Europe. The dwindling mediation between progressives and conservatives testifies to sedimented simplification. Politics has become ritual. Democrats distend their experiential frame toward the globe, so the best leader would be the one mirroring all; Republicans have their sphere contracted, so they elect a model they want to become. The so-called culture wars, science wars, the rise of post-fact, conspiracy and antivax theories, and the anti-conformist distrust of elites point to a divergence between 'Stick to the facts, no belief' and 'Only belief, distrust facts', caused by generations of simplification that left intuition untrained.

"Chapter Ten: Entropology" prepares for the final, considerably shorter chapters by laying down the pieces of the puzzle in an entropology of human connectedness, impact and trust. The theory substantiates a longue durée explanation of post-knowledge. More exactly, a 'speciated history' differentiates between social, cultural and existential validity. Human experience has over a period of 10.000 years been deprived of its connection with sources of production, spheres and frames consecutively. The ways to escape from the simplex through de-simplification are centrifugal. They restore the dependence of meaning, event and energy on respectively culture, network and life. Participants become aware. An alternative technique with the same purpose of pulling the simplex into a dynamic is centripetal. Participants reconnect their inner feelings to meanings out there in the world after the simplex *contracts to the real* (R in the scheme). Divination exemplifies the technique. An instance of contingency, or

(animate) chance, removes all the clutter of symbolics and past speculations so that everyone (and everything) is in tune and the social situation can be rebooted. The reconnection of meaning and feeling strengthens trust and sense of impact.

Democratic elections are unpredictable moments with major impact that announce a collective choice, only reachable via the real. They intensify, through the public duel, the simplex energy of antagonism. The winner for all to see emerges out of that highly contracted, cathartic event, and the feeling is shared about witnessing a collective reason that no sum of educated individual guesses could replace. A similar contraction and witnessing happen in international football competitions, exciting audiences for organizing a moment of the real, away from simplex society ("Chapter Eleven: Soccer as Mirror"). Hip hop performances are a second case where opponents dissing each other attract a crowd for harnessing the energy between attendants ("Chapter Twelve: Street Cred"). The slur appropriated by the artist representing a discriminated group illustrates the principle of using the energy of the simplex instead of evading it: immunity through contagion. Also the redemption of Pentecostalist converts rests on seizing the very evil that their new religion combats ("Chapter Thirteen: Godwork"). Inhabitants of Lubumbashi and Morogoro train their intuition and prepare their children for tensorial lives.

"Chapter Fourteen: Intuition, Destiny, Love" exemplifies the oldest remedy against simplex society. The magic of love, how could dating apps capture it? They are a cure exacerbating the disease, namely the simplex of (inanimate) chance, as opposed to intuition approaching love as a destiny. "Chapter Fifteen: Phantoms of the Future" discusses the Y2K craze, the moral bifurcation in the 9/11 aftermath, and the collective imaginary about aliens, to discuss the 'ultero-ceptive' senses as a universal way to humanize a system. Can we leave spirituality out of the picture if validity of claims about the world is our aim? Carl Sagan's famous dictum that 'science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality' evokes an awareness of the formidable whole. The centrifugal arrows in Fig. 2 strive for such feeling of meaning covering the entire scheme. The alternative centripetal arrows aim at the same through the passage of the unknown at the center. The puzzling 'pre-ception' in the epilogue is a last attempt at letting the human speak.

Notes

1. https://www.bigissue.com/culture/louis-cks-sold-out-show-at-madison-square-garden-proves-theres-no-such-thing-as-cancel-culture/. I thank Stef Craps for sending a cartoon and related reference in response to this reflection on a shared social media thread regarding a 'hotline for woke incidents' heralded by sociologist Mark Elchardus. A courageous court ruling should be noted: https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/white-fragility-lawsuit-exposes-emptiness-anti-woke-movement-2023-02-13/

2. Harris, M., 1998. *Good to eat: Riddles of food and culture*. Waveland Press.

3. Jackson, A., 2020. The Women of Wakanda. In S. Roberts (ed.) *Recasting the Disney Princess in an Era of New Media and Social Movements*. Rowman & Littlefield.

4. Becker, G.S., 1993. Nobel lecture: The economic way of looking at behavior. *Journal of political economy*, 101 (3), pp. 385–409. I thank Nathalie Holvoet for introducing economics to me from the institutional angle.

5. The habitus is both a structured and a structuring structure (or logic), interacting with the social field to generate practices. Bourdieu, P., 1990. *The logic of practice*. Stanford university press.

6. This goes against Vincent Descombes's definition of institutions, in his classic anti-structuralist phenomenology. Descombes, V., 2014. *The institutions of meaning*. Harvard University Press.

7. Piketty, T. 2022 A Brief History of Inequality. Belknap Press.

8. https://www.ips-journal.eu/interviews/inheritance-for-all-4207/

9. http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.5.fifth.html

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11. Stroeken, K., 2022. Stigmatized Bodies Near Lake Victoria: A Cultural Analysis of Institutions. *Foundations of Science*, 27(2), pp. 741–751.

12. Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

13. Context collapse is controversial depending on the importance granted to actors, intended context and intersubjectivity. Szabla, M. and Blommaert, J., 2020. Does context really collapse in social media interaction? *Applied Linguistics Review*, 11(2), pp. 251–279.

14. Here I conform to sociological usage in cybernetics and Luhmann's systems theory. Luhmann, N., Baecker, D. and Gilgen, P., 2013. *Introduction to systems theory*. Cambridge: Polity.

15. For the contemporary version of the human psychic unity thesis: Rubenstein, S.L., 2012. On the importance of visions among the Amazonian Shuar. *Current Anthropology*, 53(1), pp. 39–79.

16. Reference is made to 'new materialism' in gender studies which has no reason to take issue with the sociological pair of culture and social structure (e.g., patriarchal norms and power relations respectively) but has understandably wanted to move beyond the bland premise. Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press. Yet, how far should we go in non-differentiation, since each analytical concept is a construct merging elements. Culture itself blends the history of a group and the experiences of its members.

17. Barad's agential realism drops the suspense by treating all being as nondual becoming. Social critique would then be symptomatic of human hubris. It strikes that the approach's omission of continuity in time, of a cultural 'pregiven', deprives it of a basis for critique. The now becomes, that's it? New materialism comes across as an intellectual product of simplex society acknowledging as real only the energies and not (transformative) processes. See also: Rekret, P. (2016). A critique of new materialism: Ethics and ontology. *Subjectivity* 9(3): 225–245.

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19. Sahlins, M. 1968. Notes on the Original Affluent Society. In *Man the Hunter*. R.B. Lee and I. DeVore (eds), New York: Aldine Publishing, pp. 85–89. Taussig, M. T. 1980. *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America*. University of North Carolina Press. Graeber, David. 2011. *Debt: The first five thousand years*. New York: Melville House.

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23. https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20220303_98095671

24. The observation came to me through representative stakeholders Valerie Trouet, Ignaas Devisch and Els Grobben. Tan, J., Tan, F.J. and Ramakrishna, S., 2022. Transitioning to a circular economy: A systematic review of its drivers and barriers. *Sustainability*, *14*(3), p. 1757.

25. I am not talking of social cohesion, which according to Georg Simmel's famed axiom benefits from intergroup hostility (Simmel, G., 2009. *Sociology: Inquiries into the construction of social forms*. Brill). An army cements the social fabric of its personnel, while dehumanizing the members' view on (the rest of) the world. See further Chapter "Chapter Ten: Entropology".

26. Ritzer, G., 1998. *The McDonaldization thesis: Explorations and extensions*. Sage.
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29. https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2022/04/happiness-research-how-to-be-happy-advice/629559/
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Simplex Frames

Chapter One: Simpl(if)ication

Reality is complex. We simplify reality by relating impressions in a certain frame of experience. If not, our brain will not let us see anything.[1] The frame is the condition—the 'if'—for there being a reality (see Fig. 1). That condition we cannot keep in mind as we perceive the world. So we *simplicate* reality, which is to drop the 'if' in our simplification. The condition for simplifying things, namely to be applying one frame at the expense of other frames, disappears from view. We temporarily forget to be simplifying. Simplification.

It is perfectly normal to omit the perspective taken since we cannot go around minding our daily business while constantly having to consider the condition of our reality. The gamer will get into the game on the condition of focusing on what happens on the screen and ignoring what lies outside of it. That is 'reality' at that moment, a meaningful event. The trouble starts when we fail to retrieve the frame or perspective thanks to which the event made sense.

Framing is to simplicate, that is, to simplify without going into the details of the complicated translation and selection. We do it all the time. Communication would be impossible without it.[2] That I frame cannot be held against me. A politician cannot be blamed for defending an ideology. The sphere of politics simplicates reality so that the policy proposals can be discussed in terms of pros and contras, with their ideological roots. The simplex emerges though when a politician pretends to just convey the 'facts'. The reductive framing by an ideology permitted the political view on reality in the first place.

Fig. 1 Framing

reality

FRAME: game

The simplex is a special case of simplication. It manifests itself as a unit of (one-way) information escaping (two-way) communication. Simplication conveniently speeds up the flow of information. The simplex however drops the frame to avoid discussions that might lead to retractions. The finger is pointed at a particular group as the cause of a social problem, without this seeming an attempt, desperate and probably wrong, at simplifying things in the face of complexity. In the speech resorted to about members of a discriminated group (e.g., a label), in the procedure applied to them (e.g., a selective renting policy) or in the technology invented as prevention (e.g., profiled surveillance), direct action is made possible without burdensome mediation.

'Europe has colonized Africa': the student makes the statement on a condition, namely that the statement is open to discussion. The listeners are free to nuance and point to omissions. Many Europeans have not been involved in colonization and much of Africa has never been colonized. Nothing is wrong with simplifying an event if you and I know to be engaging in a simpl(if)ication. But a reminder about the frame to the student ('Are you talking of an innate European characteristic?') or to the gamer ('Food is ready!') should suffice to get back to reality. To another 'reality' that is. Otherwise, the gamer treats life as a continuation of the game. Something similar the student would do when dropping the condition in the aforementioned statement and concluding 'The European is a colonizer'. Simplications are necessary but they run the risk of ossifying into simplexes. An indication of their ossifying is emotional fixity. Even if the student knows 'The European' to be many things, the negative connotation is difficult to get rid of. A sense of guilt lingers on. The connotation will be there in the student's chain of actions. True, the immediate, visceral quality of guilt is helpful in the academic sphere. It keeps the writer self-critical by facing the caveat ('Are my assumptions not too Western?') and then letting go of the connotation ('I will formulate more inclusively').

'The concept is everything' says a glossy periodical named *Scandinavian Living*. How could editors go on filling the magazine every month and get readers to waste precious time and money on believing the images and stories? Flipping through the pages, one sees a white couch in a white living room with a view on a lake, wooden furniture, wellness items, shiny kitchen utensils, a recipe of a cake and an elegantly designed chair, none of which could prove that they come from Sweden, Denmark, Iceland or Norway. But admittedly, they have 'Scandinavia' written all over, if one allows oneself to get into the image the authors want to sell. The image works because we enjoy to be carried away by it.

Is the image a simplex? No, like any conceptualization, the Scandinavian image simplicates reality to stir the imagination and some positive emotions. Baudrillard's term of simulation might be applicable. But not the simplex. The reaction aimed at is not predictable, as in one signal, beep, blip, byte. Nor is it affect-laden so that the editor inventing it would balk at me for retrieving the hidden frame. Someone reads the magazine, grins at the pictures, revels in the intelligent framing, congratulates the editor and subscribes. I mentioned gaming and repeat it about movies. Watching a film, like reveling in a concept, requires alienation from surroundings and from production (camera, mic, ketchup for blood). The alienation is intentional and self-imposed, not a simplex that has poisoned the viewer.[3] The crucial difference is the role of frames and their shifts. Viewers shift to film mode. Even switching between the frame 'story' and the frame 'camera' during the movie can be enjoyable (although my co-audience has a hard time believing it). The viewer has no structural reasons to stick to one or the other frame because the activity partakes of the sphere of leisure. An entirely different affect emanates from spreading a simplex signal. The boost of energy to react comes at the price of lost agency. The experience disconnects from the environment.

Unidimensional Language and Scapegoating

As an adjective, simplex means unidimensional. The dictionary defines the noun, in the field of linguistics, as 'a simple or uncompounded word'. In the digital field, a communication system is simplex if it only allows transmission of signals in one direction at a time.[4] The one-way signal of the simplex refers to a single-layered idea, seemingly unrelated to anything else. A simplex reduces layers of meaning to one, given that the complexity of reality can be expressed as a relation between layers of meaning, each a

plexus (a plaited formation, derived from the Latin *plectere*, to plait). Simplication reduces the complexity of reality through a complicated intervention integrating and thus concealing layers of reality that were initially part of the users' agency and decision-making.

Recognizing one dimension only, a simplex such as a fixed identity recasts reality as a lateral field of actants colliding like atoms. The original simplication of the identity divided reality into opposites such as good or bad, in or out, belonging or not, 'animists' versus 'us'. In the simplex more is at play than neurologically rewarding binarity.[5] By mentioning just one of a binarity's poles, the (dis)empowering intervention vanishes from view and so we have no qualms about the negative energy felt about the labeled group or object of indignation. We grant the emotion (e.g., about Europeans being colonizers at heart) extra weight. The gut feeling is imagined to have a wisdom of its own. Stereotypes are built this way, tacitly messaging about themselves. By designating a (e.g., neighboring) population in some way, say as 'greedy', one assumes the opposite quality to be good and claims that for oneself ('we are generous'). Being widely held and fixed, stereotypes are easy to use in globalized settings. Yet, being recognizable as oversimplified images, their energizing potential and persuasiveness are lower than fresh simplexes that just completed simplication. EU public opinion will more readily react against antisemitism than against anti-Islamic sentiments injected with associations of crime and terrorism. Throughout the chapters we will draw schemes (tensors) to deconstruct simplexes, showing how they conflate meanings (the columns in the schemes). The following is a limit case when there is very little semantic stuff to go by.

'Those people!' can be a simplex. Semantically, the phrase is almost void. The indexical 'those' says little. However, its intrinsic meaning, dubbed 'locution' in linguistics, is paired with illocution: the phrase effects the intended action.[6] 'Those people' installs at its very enunciation among listeners a division between us and them. Any outsider overhearing the utterance by chance will have a foreboding about a group he or she did not know of before. A variant is the phrase 'That guy? Well, you will discover by yourself.' The absence of explicit prescription for a reaction contributes to the prescriptive power of the simplex. In linguistic terms, the speech act has perlocutionary force. It convinces, persuades or intensifies the disposition to certain behavior, *in casu* suspicion.[7] A simplex extraordinarily combines locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces, to apply Austin's three aspects of speech acts. Its hence forceful speech raises

the chance of overlooking the blatant framing taking place of that person or category. It is a simplex for conveniently skipping the burdensome search for a common sphere to communicate the different frames.

Simplication deals with complexity by reducing it. When does the reduction take simplex form? In group dynamics the scapegoat, blamed out of expediency, is a simplex for incarnating a binary division that conceals the multidimensional relations between the scapegoat and other group members. Scapegoating, of marginal groups or outliers instead of the symbolic animal, has far from disappeared in contemporary society despite education and democracy. On the internet, influencers succeed in making simplexes acceptable. Terms such as 'foreigner', 'boomer' or 'millennial' no longer mean many things at once. The fixed connotation affords immediate response, such as exclusion from one's sphere. For the over-informed morally burdened actor, labeling makes life easier in complex times.

Globalization is an instance of complexification. Globalization has exacerbated the tendency to simplicate. That might explain populism in voting behavior. How could racist labels return on the political stage after they vanished since the civil rights movement? Together with economic globalization came the information society connecting all communities, urban and rural, into a social network. The technology that drives the information society transmits a particular value: we want information. Context hampers the flow. Information that can travel without context ensures speed of communication. If 'sharing' is presumed in communication, the social network values information, 'informing' as in influencing, by influencers. Europe's social network expanded faster this century than some communities could handle. Nobody had the chance of culturally innovating their community in adaptation to the transforming wider network. Labeling newcomers is a way to exempt oneself from building up meaningful rapport in a globalized context.

Indicative of the role of complexity-reduction is the origin of the racial category in US history. Drawing the color line gained salience after, and not before, the legislative act of abolishing slavery.[8] Freed men and women that formerly lived out of sight on plantations now complicated the social structure of ranks and classes, generating uncertainty about social relations. Racism grew in the wake of public settings becoming more heterogeneous. Those in power worried about their hegemonic control. Ensued the simplex 'black'. After a while, nobody wondered anymore about the

arbitrary choice of complexion for human categorization. A simplex intends no connection with reality.

Reductionism aims at predictable reaction. An utterance as much as a technological intervention, such as a computer program or robotized weapon, can be simplex for limiting the user's options, or for completely replacing agency. The effect of stereotypes, slurs, certain slogans and symbolic acts vary. But no simplex is harmless. Its violence minimally consists in violating perception. A social construct such as 'black' and 'white' narrows down the dimensions of human difference and omits other human traits. The purpose may be to speed up or manipulate communication. Also objects, mass events and procedures can be simplex for transmitting an idea that is unidimensional, causing ready reactions. A wall may be built to communicate who belongs and who does not. The materialized or performed idea aims to be contagious, inciting mimicry, for providing what listeners want to hear and will be triggered by.

Simplexes die hard in densely intertwined networks. The stereotype that would dissipate in face-to-face communication, tends to be sustained in situations of mass communication, when many messages compete to arrive. A simplex effectively discriminating will transform the social construct into social reality. As a case in point, policy-makers have no choice but to employ the racial category to undo discrimination. Civil rights movements in the US stress that 'the Corona pandemic affects more blacks', which attests to the category's disadvantaged conditions of life.[9] The framing itself of victims as black seems unavoidable. The challenge is to take control over *how* humans are framed, which brings us to spheres of exchange and eventually to the source of production. Meaning is use, to reiterate the self-criticism of Wittgenstein about his earlier period as a logical atomist.[10] What he called language games, we name frames, applied in a sphere of exchange.

To make it in this world, your idea must go viral. Bestselling ideas differ in letter, they are alike in spirit: to reduce the complexity of reality for a wide audience and get away with it. The reason why going viral means reduction of complexity has to do with accessibility of the seller's idea. Access improves through freely flowing information, exemplified by the market of buyers and sellers. The moment that population density and social complexity increase in a community to the point of multiplex relationships hindering the flow of communication, something happens to the conditions of communication. To facilitate the flow, people cocoon, which is to partition the spheres of communication and exchange. Or they ignore

the frames. Burgeoning are media that restrict form and content of conversation. They speed up the spread of a certain affect known as hype. Simplexes include contagious expressions ('OK boomer') and shocking images for a good cause such as the blood-stained baby seal in a snow landscape and the starving thin toddler in the savanna. Like the virus in a cell, a simplex exists in situations. Statements, actions or technical procedures reproduce it. Should individuals be reproached for its reproduction? The simplex seeks to be used and to be rewarding to spread. Its reduction of complexity aims at predictable reaction. The reaction going viral is the main criterion of success.

Loss of Agency and Mediation

A button on/off for an effect of 'warm ambience' in the living room replaces my combining of several controls of light and temperature. I appreciate the comfort and ease of use, but must admit to be consuming more electricity than I would otherwise. A bit of my agency has disappeared.

Music lovers from generation X may recognize the issue of agency in the analogy with the polished sound of Korg synthesizers in the 1980s. The keyboard's buttons for predetermined effects (e.g., trumpet, violin) precluded the wide range of distortion and noise achieved by the sliders on Moog (and to less extent Roland Juno) synthesizers. It meant ease of use for the composer, but as indicated by the rediscovery of that spectrum by bands like Boards of Canada, for a while something went missing that could have become irretrievable. The sophisticated wiring of the new generation of synthesizers producing the recognizable 80s sound impoverished choice, reducing the palette to single purpose buttons.

Simplexes have their widest and most immediate impact when materialized in the form of technologies that sidestep human agency. To know how the simplex functions, the noun should be linked to the verb it derives from. The best candidate is the verb 'to simplicate'. The verb is a fascinating construct that has stayed under the radar of the social sciences. It has a more precise use than its lookalikes 'reification' and 'alienation'. The website Wiktionary explains the verb from a blend of 'simple' and 'complicate'. The history of engineering shines through in the definition: 'To make a system more complex so that the use of the system is easier or simpler.'[11] The engineer takes up the challenge of automation which is to simplify for the user the control of a system. An engine has its wiring

upgraded and extra equipment inserted in an all-out effort to anticipate decisions in complex situations.

In the cultural-analytical terms of the introduction, a nomos is chaotic like reality, while a logos is replicable, patterning like the brain does. A thing or speech is simplicated if nomos is turned into logos so that the effect of the former can be repeated. Simplication in speech and technology is a feat of translation and reduction the inventors get away with. One might call it 'magic' for the wondrous capacity, like synthesizing a multi-layered, barely conscious desire into a tangible bundle of medicinal plants and symbolic organic material. The difference with the examples in this chapter is that the medicinal bundle will always remain to be seen as a simplication called magic. At which point does the achieved automation go awry to establish a unidimensional, immediate and disconnected response that negates humanity? An incredible amount of literature has been published since over a century about humanity's so-called robotic future, the cybernetic organisms (cyborgs) infiltrating our lives, and eventually the cyborgs we are becoming through artificial intelligence.[12] The recurring theme is that of an original sin with the advent of modern technology.[13] Surely, there is no need of technological awareness in the case of expediting meat-cutting with a chopper made from hitting flakes off a pebble. I am exploring the idea of a basic human activity whose ambiguous potential has been disregarded in our species' history with every change of production mode. For our discussion, we can think smaller first, starting with an aircraft or any 'craft' that has undergone successive upgrading.

The disadvantage of simplication is to lose 'the feel' for the craft. We (can) no longer trust our intuitions. The engineer's simplication limits operations to effective steps without the necessity of feeling (the craft). Meaning without feeling. An example of how the verb is used in engineering illuminates: 'Our audience is getting younger and less educated, so despite the additional fabrication costs, we must simplicate the new model of this machine to improve ease of use.'[14] A model consumer is pictured in function of sales. Were one free to decide about technological design, the company reasons, the primary value would be ease of use. The company reasons for and instead of the consumer.

Pushing the button on the machine causes a predictable reaction without seeming to prescribe anything to the pusher. Simplications prevail in many domains of life because they conform to the global systemic need of rapidly processing information in accelerated communication. They

become simplexes when conveniently maintaining the illusion of complete freedom. Personal computers brought a technology to the public that until the mid-1980s was reserved for those mastering the computer language BASIC, which already introduced familiar language to improve accessibility for the layperson. The MS-DOS operating system was much more stable than the newcomer Windows but the latter's ease of use made all the difference.[15] Every window of functionalities is selected by the designer to limit the palette of options to guarantee a chain of activities by the user, who enjoys the freedom of opening windows and unleash creativity within them. The Microsoft software defines what is easy to use.

On the Internet, I let Google decide what to notice. Google helps me to find something by narrowing down the options, and thus making choices for me. My search as a consumer is limited to a list topped by advertising companies. The flickering banners for publicity do not even come across as harassment, because I was searching and I was helped. A good Samaritan waited for me with a colorfully lettered map at a sign post in the middle of the digital ghetto. Google has grown into a multibillion dollar business through clickbait. Ten thousands of ICT experts labor behind the scenes to perform complex calculations that consistently apply a simplication: 'this is what you need.' It appears on our screen as a message sending one signal. The calculations for marketing serve to identify potential customers based on detailed knowledge about their spheres (interests) intersecting.

How could memes, which are ideas or behaviors inviting imitation and spreading rapidly across the social network, come to define what is popular on the Internet? Memes only work if they are devoid of contextual information that might prevent them from being adopted by many. The meme carries minimal context. Once the meme spreads, the details that could qualify the statement disappear and the meme gets reinterpreted leading a life of its own.[16] 'Challenge', 'Fail', 'Prank' categorize memes. The simplex quality of memes consists in the operation reducing life to a certain aspect motivating action. The operation should not be underestimated. Finding a popular meme to think through a multilayered situation is an art, a complicated translation of numerous contexts. Visual jokes placing renowned TV personalities in absurd situations are memes. But racist slurs too have been picked for memetic quality.

Communication is to build up a common frame of experience. Users of social media may never reach commonality.[17] Neither does a common frame necessarily mean consensus.[18] The built-up in a sphere of exchange

is what matters. Precisely this intention lacks in the simplex. Communication means mediation with the probability of transforming each other's original position. The two closely related processes are intra- and intermediation.

Interlocutors usually have slightly different frames to start a process of intermediation. Two opinions go on colliding until each speaker is willing to intermediate between the other's frame and her or his own. In a dialogue between partners, the sentences 'You are crushing me' and 'I was just joking' point to two frames. As the respective partners subsequently respond to the other with 'Am I?' and 'Are you?' the two-way exchange toward a common frame is accompanied by inner (or intra-) mediation, an exchange occurring within each actor. The exchange realizes a feeling and feels out a reality, its meaning. Conveying a meaning always contains some feeling or intention, and every feeling conveyed refers to some meaning. Thus communication implies a two-way exchange between meaning and feeling. The minimally two dimensions form a frame for interlocutors to unravel. The listener in turn engages in inner mediation (intra-mediation) to consciously frame the situation.[19] No language could perfectly capture what each person senses, but metaphors go a long way toward expressing the multilayered meaning of the interaction at that moment. A silence after quarrel may be likened negatively to a curling snake ready to strike, or positively to the night announcing a new dawn.

My definition of mediation emphatically does not limit itself to the specialization of anthropology, which would be to analyze culture 'ceteris paribus', as if the subjects that socialize culture have no consciousness or body. The introduction outlined that the 'cultural' dimension of meanings in frames relates not only to events in a network but also to the accumulative and neurobiologically embodied experiences of the human species. The 'feeling of what happens' is how neuroscientist Antonio Damasio describes consciousness.[20] Only, the anthropological contribution is to replace the reality of 'what happens' by the order of 'meaning'. Frames determine meaning. Therefore, Fig. 2 replaces 'reality' by 'meaning'. Summed up, consciousness is the feeling of meaning. If the dynamic attuning feeling and meaning falters, and the two go their own way, then consciousness will be split. We mean this (in communication), we feel that (in consciousness). Society and humanity look like they have parted.

Memes simplicate reality. Consider images associating crime with cultural background. These deflect attention away from the causes of

Fig. 2 Intra-mediation

generational poverty. Drug addiction no longer seems a response to despair; petty theft no longer survival. Deprived of the underlying layer that ties meanings to a social situation and existential threat, drug use and theft are taken at face value, single-layered negative, calling for eradication. The condensed energy incites a reaction, direct and emotional, possibly violent. Unmediated, the emotion is immediate. Thus words can kill. At some occasions in the past decade, simplexes about race, gender, inferiority, crime and immigrants have provided the soundbites for mass shootings in a street, school, mall. An antidote to the violence would be if the actor went through an inner mediation: testing the reality underlying the feeling (of hatred); assessing the meaning attributed to the reality. Also intermediation will help. We then discuss with interlocutors the relation between meaning and feeling: does another's crime or escapism still trigger me emotionally after I do the social analysis and the life sensing?

The simplex primes consciousness for reactions in a particular direction, in defiance of the usual volatility of affect. By hiding its frame, the simplex does not let the listener mediate between feelings and their meaning (the reality they refer to). In simplication the frame and mediation temporarily disappear in the background (see same hue in Fig. 2 for frame and for relation between feeling and meaning). The frame collapses into a simplex when meaning and feeling are permanently equated. The meaning is no longer felt but turned into a reaction such as an emotion that can be manipulated. Figure 1 on the perception of reality thus improves with Fig. 2.

Someone's framing can be simplex, sealing off the equated feeling and meaning. Or it can be multiplex allowing the invisible layer that mediates between the realities of society and humanity through meaning and feeling them respectively. Part I deals mainly with the first process, Part II with the second. In the first, the frame collapses in ready associations such as stereotypes leading to false accusations. Witch-hunts were predicated on such simplexes. Western democracy can pride itself in curbing the surge

of witch-hunts at the brink of modernity by creating a space for open and critical debate, about not only someone else's frames but also one's own, which Francis Bacon termed 'idols'.[21] But Western democracy created its own simplex frames as well as globules breeding populism, as we will elicit in Part II.[22]

Which are the features of simplexes we discussed until now? They envisage ease of use in complex situations. They are unidimensional, conflate layers of meaning and thus conceal their origin. They skip mediation and the attuning between meaning and feeling, and thus take away some of the user's agency. They pretend to be frameless.

Conflation in Automation

Social media have adapted their rhythm and scope to facilitate simplex energy. Facebook convinces me that a quick 'like' on screen strengthens friendship. Unfriending would simply undo the operation. The application maintains the chimera of frameless communication.[23] Tweets reduce opinions to the format of short reactions stirring predictable affects. Barely any time should be wasted on working through the information before tagging and responding.

In science, research needs to be pitched. A short quickly readable paper on a niche of the field is much more likely to be written and cited nowadays than a book rethinking the field. Discourse about the underlying paradigm or frame, for instance of psychiatry, is strangely reserved for popular books of non-fiction.

Psychiatric treatment has no room for the individual's biography.[24] Psychotropic medications of pharmaceutical firms narrow down the wide variety of personalities to a universal model of what humans are supposed to be like and how they should feel. The binary informational logic of 0 and I is easy to apply in technology, to market and disseminate across large networks.

Such very different practices of simplication as stereotyping, standardized technology and formalist procedure all streamline communication in our information society. Postindustrial organizations put much effort into delegating key tasks of personal monitoring to digital programs. The ease of use of these standardized evaluations is to lower personal responsibility and remorse in the decisions. Behind every simplex lies a complex, in the psychological sense. "Chapter Three: Losing the Feel for the Craft" will discuss what drones do to our sense of humanity. "Chapter Four: The

Human Experiment" on demonization will identify victims of simplex framing as the very category of persons the simplicator (apartheid regimes, plantation owners, factories) has to thank because structurally depends on.

Formalist procedures in digital society simplicate intuitions and negotiations. Workers claim to be 'OK' with a situation. The simple pair of letters results from their subconscious assessment of past events. Can a system operationalize and formalize what workers sense? The digital system monitors their situation according to factors 'earmarked' through an elaborate survey of policy objectives as well as the workers' list of articulated needs. In a professional setting of education for instance, a monitoring system furnishes objective results with the caveat that these are to be interpreted. Since the condition is to skip the original frame (the team should not question the survey's selection of parameters), the results enjoy more validity than they should. They influence the way members assess functioning. The team-member's performance that is holistically grasped by individuals and negotiated collectively (e.g., 'the job has to be adapted to his age') is refracted into a new objectified reality (e.g., 'he cannot handle the job'). In one way or the other, hearing the evaluation will change the members' original assessment. The format takes over. Formalism manifests itself as formatism, whose disempowerment goes further than instrumentalism.[25] The services economy consists of such technical procedures that reduce the complexity of a reality in order to make the use of this reality simpler.

Why would anything be wrong with technology facilitating mass access through ease of use? The democratization of ICT could not have been without the genius of a Gates or Jobs to simplicate. Designers make choices, predict and also shape expectations of consumers. They have the talent to detect often unspoken desires. Respecting these will yield more profit, the market says. Constructivist sociologists stress this interaction, the dialectic through which technology is being developed. The bicycle of the nineteenth century with wheels of different size rides faster, but safety comes first. The value-laden choice is culturally supported and integrated in the technology.[26] 'Slow down' says the sign to those driving too fast in a residential area. If the sign fails to convince them, a speed bump will be constructed in the road to technologically integrate the cultural norm in traffic. So the story goes, about the democratic design of technology. Our values are at work in the things we buy and drive. Together we are free to decide how technology can make us free.

And yet on second thought, about the speed bump for instance, a more fundamental influence should be acknowledged. Why did car factories notice the sales of their four-wheel drive vehicles booming? Those cars absorb the shocks of the speed bump when driving too fast. The theory of constructivism may attract, but something more fundamental determines the dialectic of design. Those 4WD cars, ridiculously fit for other terrain than European tarmac roads and therefore a very rare sight until recently, are expensive. The tolerance for 4WD tempting to violate the cultural norm of driving conduct conveys an implicit norm. The market and car lobbyists count on us associating wealthy drivers with legitimate reasons. A frameless communication takes place. It sounds like 'Did those car-owners not pay the higher price for more freedom?' The unspoken premise points to a frame to detect.

A democratic system in principle does not legally privilege the wealthy. Capitalist economy spoils them already with buying power on the consumer market; 'class justice' and ditto legislation will not be accepted. Yet, we have been living for a while now in a knowledge society with a services economy whose welfare technologies apply science. Gated communities, security guards, lawyer firms, lobby groups, private hospitals and exclusive schools redistribute the fruits of scientific research subsidized by the people. The 4WD vehicle lending freedom to break the rules on unchecked terrain illustrates how these technologies have embarked on a course that simplicates social inequality.

What does the formula 'technology is freedom' conceal? It is a frame conflating two statements (meanings) which can be read along the columns in Fig. 3: 'People free themselves, by paying for technology.' The figure shows that recombined the two statements form another frame, thus reminding us of alternative views applicable in the economic sphere. Underneath I have a go at these recombined statements. The first frame says: 'The people pay' (downward diagonal in the scheme). The second frame states: '[Only] the free enjoy technology' (upward diagonal in the scheme).

Compared with the first frame, the second sounds unfair. Such asymmetry is unsustainable in any society. Simplex is the idea that technology

Fig. 3   The simplex and tensor of technology

simplex:	technology	=	more freedom
tensor:	the people		technology
	the free		pay
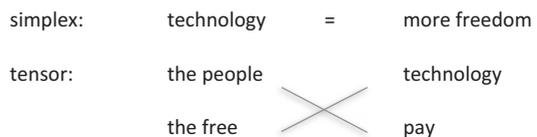
liberates (which omits 'the people' and 'pay') or that those with better technology paid for it correctly (which omits 'the people' and 'the free' lucky few). "Chapter Two: Frameshift" will detail the procedure to relate meanings conflated in a simplex.

Simplexes maintain the status quo because they do not compare the frames in a sphere. They cover up previous choices and alternatives, which increases inertia, slows down societal interventions and firms up the technological bubble. Consumer research fills in the user's expectations in function of available applications instead of the other way around, to invent functionalities that increase freedom. An ad-free internet exists, yet for those who can afford it, which reinforces the gap. At the macroscale, the carbon trade incrementally improves annual emissions, but the trade also prevents a radical reorganization of society through technology.[27]

Whether as automation in technology or as stereotyping in social interaction, the complexity-reduction of simplexes pursues ease of use. They reduce agency, not just complexity. The new engineering steers expectations toward a specific end, which differs from older technology such as bicycles, films or games entertaining the consumers in whatever way they see fit. Automatized procedures do not merely simplify, like a training cockpit or go-car being a surrogate for flying or driving. They replace former activities. They alter the situation. At what point do the simplications of the new engineering become simplexes? Their deleted 'if' warns about the omission of conditionality, that the technology simplifies an activity by afterward barring the options. The thin line is crossed when automation sacrifices the user's freedom.

THE MULTIPLEX: GOING BACK ON A DECISION

Two sociologists left their mark on post-war discussions in Germany, one a technocratic theorist, the other neo-Marxist. Luhmann described modernity neutrally as functional differentiation whereby certain spheres become subsystems such as economy, law and politics with their own logic of practice. The machines roll on, while the psychic system has its own truth. Habermas posited critically that the system the economic and political spheres together form in modernity threatens to 'colonize' the lifeworld, the community's frames of reference. Both theories inform my thesis. Neither, though, accounts for the role of the imaginary or experiential, namely how the set of frames, including make-believe, can give different shape to the sphere. The dynamic of spheres and frames can be evinced through ethnography. We can start with a simple distinction.

The South African anthropologist Max Gluckman introduced the pair simplex and multiplex in the 1950s to distinguish relationships. In a simplex relationship only one link exists between two persons. A mailman or a judge are supposed to fulfill one specific task for you. They do this for you, no strings attached. By deriving simplex from simplication, I underline the temporary make-believe: we act as if the mailman or doctor has no other role in life than this task. We simplify in disregard of the simplification. We catch ourselves lapsing into this momentary alienation when unable to recognize our mailman or doctor out of their context, like in the shopping mall.

Multiplex relationships permit several links in the same communication comprising those of co-worker, kin, peer, co-member, neighbor and possibly more. In an African rural community, a judge maintains multiplex relationships, Gluckman inferred from his research in Botswana.[28] The multiplex definitely does not make the task simpler. The judge faces the complexity of having to interpret customary law in such a way that the quarreling parties cooperate again after the verdict. The judge greets them the next morning as clan-member or co-villager. Multiplex relations require persons to negotiate rules. The negotiators rely on intuition. Aware of their direct impact on the community, the influence also extending with age, individuals negotiate cautiously in palaver. They must be aware of the palette of experiential frames that are most adequate. Thus the judge may prefer a verdict that will preserve the accused's roles as father and husband. Multiplex society trusts in people's sense of the total picture and their role therein. As for life, we are in it together. Truth and efficiency come second. Multiplex philosophy in a nutshell.

Modern institutions have not been conceived that way. To avoid risks, actions should be predictable. Following our role in certain domains, we enact simplex duties. In a large network with much anonymity the actor would otherwise not know what to expect. Applying Luhmann's theory of subsystems,[29] modernity made a massive effort in differentiating spheres to channel our multilayered desires through money-making in economics, voting in politics, diplomas in education and affective ties in family. At the macro-level, the system engages in sophisticated anticipations so as to devise rules for simplifying actions in various situations. The information society has further developed this atomistic system. Simplications sediment into simplex sequences of action.

Every sphere of activity thrives on a prior simplification.[30] To obey the law we must forget that the law has origins. We should not constantly try

to renegotiate the set of invented, adaptable rules. The law 'simplicates' people's expectations and conflicts, which is to simplify them through a complicated substitution: a set of rules which lawyers, prosecutors and judges interpret. The simplication becomes a simplex once the actors cannot stop reifying the substitution. They get alienated from its production. From this simplex, though, a new sphere will be budding, on top of that buried (simplicated) one. New normative frames preoccupy the members in that sphere, so they have a hard time getting back to the previous situation, before courts were set up. Think of the trouble that mediators have today in settling a conflict without one of the parties seeking to fight it out in the sphere of the law, namely in a court where lawyers bend the interpretation of rules to the maximum for their client rather than assist in mediating between clients.[31] Mediators preceded judges. To be able to go back to the simplication and 'de-simplicate', one should combat the simplex. I write 'should' to remind us that simplexes proliferate precisely because affectively they are so well adapted to the social structure of this age.[32]

Conflicts, which communities used to mediate, cannot get out of the judicial sphere. The sophisticated simplification permits to continue the aggression through legal means. In a knowledge economy, each subdomain sanctions deviant actors to become more calculable. The post-Fordist dimension of that economy nevertheless prompts creativity, so that technologies, expertise and policy measures progress. The progress comes down to specialization into a frame of experience. The sphere should not have parallel frames, sets of norms. All energy and creativity are invested in optimizing the made choices, not in exploring alternative ones that turn back time and undo previous decisions ('progress'). Hence the difficulty of redefining our way of life and sense of purpose in the knowledge economy, which in the absence of mediation verges on post-knowledge.

Simplex organization means dividing complex procedures into manageable tasks. The question whether more collective wellbeing would be obtained from more intuitive, multiplex interactions is obsolete, for those interactions are supposedly the null situation to progress from. By and large, humans look for consent to settle personal conflicts, more or less pay their dues, often do the extra mile in duties, and prefer not to know the details of what they emotionally cannot take. In contrast, simplex society stimulates formalism and legalism rewarding individuals that try to get the maximum out of the system, hire a lawyer to settle a conflict, evade taxes where rules are unclear, stick to the prescribed tasks in their job and

remain mercilessly informed on sensational new threats. Knowledge is denuded of its ethical, existential dimension. I call that post-knowledge. Such society expects imminent danger, specifically from individuals. Humans are treated as the system's underlings. For them the upshot is constant stress. One and the same story is reproduced incessantly. What does the engineers' complex wiring to make the user's actions simple tell about ourselves? What are we to learn from the accumulation of rules in anticipation of violations and abuses? Underlying the simplicating arrangement, and inculcating us, is the belief that humans cannot be trusted. That is the message a simplex society conveys. The signal of distrust rebounds on the system through members suddenly feeling naïve if not exploiting the rules of the system.

That the multiplex, which spontaneously motivates members, might be a less costly way to attain social order, has been suggested in many ways the world over. One I cite here is the failure of Tanzania's villagization program in the late 1970s.[33] Sukuma farmers had a polycentric society. Each extended family and homestead (*kaya*) stood for a singularity with a certain character and renown spread across the valleys, confirmed via daily greetings and renegotiated in healer compounds, in public festivities and on markets. The *kaya* traditionally was a fairly self-reliant center integrating all practices, political, economic, educational, religious and medicinal, yielding for adults a sense of cultural autonomy. Their polycentric society spatially translated the multiplex relations. If we switch from a horizontal perspective to a vertical one, a bird's-eye view, then the imbricated, compressed layers look like relatively detached centers. The autonomy and ability for each center to define the situation contrasted starkly with the mental dependence on the nation by the country's civil servants, churchgoers and intellectuals. In accordance with that national elite's dependency, the ruling party had imposed a monocentric type of village with functional zones for economy (cotton silo), health (dispensary), education (school), religion (church) and politics (the ruling party's office). How did the villagization program fare?

In the built environment, the simplex represents the zone serving one objective. Its spatial opposite is polycentric, a singular whole organically grown to fulfill many needs, at walkable distance and respecting the human pace. Critical voices defending organic growth have rediscovered the multiplex, a collective wisdom that individual reason (or the sum of educated minds) cannot beat.[34] Neighborhoods work best. In Tanzania, the failure of a simplex plan for society was clear enough. In three years, farmers

re-migrated to their original habitats after the monocentric model—a spatial simplex—structurally caused social conflict, and land erosion. Witchcraft accusations soared, especially among neighbors within the community, in addition to suspicions within the family.[35] A later chapter will clarify how the logic of the simplex sustains bewitchment, and thus basically how African ethnography can help to comprehend the failure of planned simplication.

As opposed to hunter bands, agrarian communities and industrial society, simplex society is structured in such a way that individual actions remain almost inconsequential. To be on the safe side, the technologies take into account the worst version of their users. How does this regulation impact our self-image? It does not strengthen confidence. Moreover, a conflict lingers between what we want and what we are. Humans are bodily wired to deeply enjoy unpredictable events, which I name 'the real', yet the society they are building seeks to make life as predictable as possible. The excitement of meeting unforeseen challenges is found outside social reality, in kicks, short-term thrills and in gaming, the most popular entertainment. The intensity whereby an in se natural event, the corona pandemic, reminded us of life's contingency illustrates the inculcated ideal of a predictable world.

What is the antidote? Frames in the plural imply that the subject has a choice. History does not bury us under a pile of past events and decisions. Culture does not entangle us in a web of meanings, as the trope goes. Consider the following.

'Here I know no kin', a sign in Swahili reads. It hung on the wall behind my Tanzanian friend standing at the counter of his newly opened shop, a one square meter wooden shed in a small roadside town. The sign refers to the dread of having to sell on credit without being able to enforce installments, which is inevitable when treating customers as kin. The sign establishes a split between economy and family. This process is known to sociologists as the functional differentiation that characterizes modernity.[36] Historians have referred to the rise of medieval cities to discuss its origins.[37] What interests me as anthropologist is the make-believe. An unspoken culture of pretense is implied. My Tanzanian friend referred to 'modern times', a historical breach, to legitimate the sign. The breach was not a fact but a performance, something he achieved through the sign.[38] The simplex sign was an act of illocution. My friend knew very well that his business would not be possible without the support he got earlier from his parents, who themselves are indebted to other family members. The

attractively located little plot of the shop would not have been allocated to him without the extended family's long-time engagement with the community. His shop made profit thanks to his wife taking care of the time-consuming household chores at home.

The make-believe is that family and economy are separate subsystems of society. The family itself is a convenient category to forget that blood ties are an arbitrary criterion to determine belonging, that blood ties always connect someone to more than one family, that land owned by a family is based on the mere convention of the first-comer's rights, and that land existing in separation from Earth is an artificial idea too. Quite a culture of culturing, concealing the arbitrariness of convention, is needed to set up spatial divisions in a society. Of course, at an institutional level, once the conventions are established, the divisions become real in part. At the level of the local sphere. The human species in parallel is far away but does not disappear.

The most renowned example of functional differentiation must be that of Church and State. Modern rationalism and Enlightenment are predicated on the political system freeing itself from theocratic interference. Religious affiliation is a private matter. Voters are free to sanction parliamentary members for being religious or atheistic or whatever. Celebrate in church or festival, make policy in government. The subsystems of politics and religion each went their way after their medieval theocratic phase fooling citizens into thinking that God supported the monarch.

The next make-believe, though, consists in equating decision-making with the State, and in identifying holistic experiences with the Church. We know very well that the Church makes references to, but is unable to integrate the plethora of mystical connections humans experience (the institute of the Vatican rather counteracts everyday religiosity). We also know that the State makes references to, but is unable to integrate the concrete projects of households (party ideologies rather counteract families' decision-making). Stronger still, the decisions we make in life and the sensed dependence on uncontrollable factors together form an existential condition underlying our everyday communications. The partition between politics and religion, whereupon modernity prides itself, veils this condition. There is as much rationality in religious attitudes as irrationality pervading political ideologies. At an existential level, politics and religion belong to the same semantic layer; they co-produce reality. At an institutional level, they differ. To limit the analysis to the latter layer is the simplex. It makes abstraction of life and humanity.

The institutional layer differentiates spheres of exchange, here of politics and of religion. The existential layer (where the participants' frames meet) connects the two spheres to one source of production. The simplex approach to society then is to imagine like Luhmann and the West that separated spheres of exchange split up the source of production. The world of politics would apply one logic corresponding to one part of reality. The world of economy would produce another part of reality. The subsystems of family, religion and education would further split up the production source, producing their chunks of reality.

Of course, an important advance in community-building under modernity was to institutionalize distinct spheres of exchange. Ideally, the politicians deal in votes, the employers in money, the relatives in affection, the priests in belief and the teachers in knowledge. In practice, however, money may buy votes as well as belief and knowledge. The make-believe of simplex society is that the distinction between spheres of exchange would be natural; that the spheres stem from ever so many sources of production. In reality, their separation by state and civil society requires enormous and constant effort, and imagination.[39] When life and the sources of production were in the hands of an autocrat, the citizenry struggled to institutionalize distinct spheres and maintain their independence. They had every reason to, so that people obtain knowledge, irrespective of their earnings; that enfranchisement does not rely on ethnic affiliation or capital; that consenting adults can live out their affective or sexual preferences without being religiously sanctioned. But the spheres are not natural categories. Today proponents of slow democracy overhaul the social contract for future generations by delving into why systems of governance should end at the national scale, and what administrative level could better manage which sphere of life (also known as the principle of subsidiarity) and whether the modern differentiation does not jeopardize the production sources.[40]

Sphere and Frame: A Dynamic

The combination of Luhmann's functional differentiation (spheres as subsystems) and Habermas's colonization of the lifeworld (transgression) inspired Walzer to warn against practices that dare a 'transgression of the spheres'.[41] The principle is too coarse to me. Spheres entertain a relation with frames.[42] Multinational companies interfering with national governments or escaping taxation are clearly problematic, but in the case of a court ruling against a state to save the planet, the interference is positive.

A sphere interfering with another sphere does not necessarily transgress its boundaries and colonize. The reason is double. Firstly, spheres do not have fixed boundaries. Secondly, certain (e.g., ecological) frames can renew other (e.g., economic) spheres. The underlying cause for these two traits I have argued before: the subsystems are quite imaginary. The spheres painstakingly separated into subsystems artificially cut up the sources of production, by framing them in a certain way. The subsystems are themselves already disintegrated units, in need of rearrangements case by case. In brief, we should not consider a sphere without its frames, or we will lapse into technocratic (or legalistic) delusions about society.

Conversely, the consideration of a frame without its sphere leads to dogma or ideology and always proves unsustainable. The ecological frame fits within a welfare sphere. It is unfair to omit the sphere and the industrialization preceding it that set climate change in motion. As West-Europeans it is easy to prioritize the ecological agenda because green technologies suit the current evolution of the countries' economy. India and China cannot be expected to embrace that frame wholeheartedly until having attained a welfare economy. It pains me to admit that an anticipated future may also be in the minds of Tigray and Ethiopian forces warring: they feel provoked by the past and cannot live in the present until a certain sphere with new or restored borders is achieved. Only then will they allow the frame of peace. It is a small yet no less painful step to reconsider the war in Ukraine. For Europe, the Second World War is over and the fall of the iron curtain was a logical epilogue, but for many in Russia the sense of equilibrium does not prevail. That the cards have been dealt and now a peaceful status quo should reign is a perspective to the advantage of Europe and the US. Their wealth was attained through conquest, colonization and slavery, an imperialist heritage they today despise, without consequences, and they will never accept as practice in countries that do not enjoy that welfare yet. The solution is of course not to let the countries do that. 'North' will have to pay 'South' until the desire to emigrate is more or less balanced out.

A frame fits in a certain sphere. The frame of democracy and peace is a luxury reserved for those who enjoy the present as a sphere in equilibrium. To do justice to a lived environment, an ethnographer will therefore describe frames and spheres, and relate them. As the introduction clarified, the description and relating happen in a meaning system shared across cultures. Does radical difference by definition exclude the encompassing layer where oppositions are drawn, where one agrees to disagree, or

mysteries are left to linger? At first contact with German missionaries in 1885, the Sukuma chief said to his people: 'But they are just humans like you and me.'[43] Nothing in the anthropological record indicates the absence of an encompassing level of meaning making. The ancient Indo-Germanic term *manas* refers to such knowing, a sensory, prelinguistic source of all meaning produced.[44] The meaning system inheres within the event of the Russian grandmother mourning her grandson and denouncing the war in Ukraine. Humanity inheres. Even though her society may not be in equilibrium and her grandson wanted to suspend the present for a better future, one of the layers in her plea is the encompassing level of humanity, which the simplexes of 'traditionalist' versus 'democratic' blur. Humans, unlike machines, can spontaneously shift frames. They can also extend, shrink or switch the sphere of relevance.

Notes

1. The statement can hardly do justice to the variety of ways in which the vast phenomenological literature supports it, but given this book's aspiration of being an essay rather than study I limit myself to the anthropological work inspired on Merleau-Ponty by Ingold, T. (2000). *The perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill.* Psychology Press. As for the school of Dewey and Peirce: Turner, V. (1986). Dewey, Dilthey, and drama: An essay in the anthropology of experience. *The anthropology of experience*, 8.

2. See Goffman's 'frame analysis' cited in the introduction.

3. See also Bellin, J.D., 2005. *Framing monsters: Fantasy film and social alienation.* SIU Press.

4. I checked <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/simplex>

5. Binary oppositions in language gratify, perhaps because they exploit neurological dispositions, cf. Feldman, J. (2008). *From molecule to metaphor: A neural theory of language.* MIT press, p.97. For an example of the obscure process, the maternal image of women may seem empirically based, since the mother is the first role of women we as children encountered, yet the image only becomes neurologically wired after a cognitive procedure which opposes mother to father in association with female versus male. A simplex image taps into unconsciously directed attitudes.

6. Austin's term of illocution inspired anthropological theories of magic such as: Taussig, M. (1977). The genesis of capitalism amongst a South American peasantry: devil's labor and the baptism of money. *Comparative studies in society and history 19*(2): 130–155. Tambiah, S. J. (2017). Form

and meaning of magical acts: A point of view. *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *7*(3), 451–473. Bloch, M. (1974).

7. The seminal application of Austin's speech acts was by Searle, J. R. (1985). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge University Press.

8. Takaki, R. T. (1987). *From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*. Oxford University Press, New York.

9. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-black-plague>, read on 12.07.2020.

10. Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical investigations*. John Wiley & Sons.

11. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/simplicate>

12. Gray, C.H., Figueroa-Sarriera, H.J. and Mentor, S., 1995. *The cyborg handbook*. Routledge. Haraway, D., 2013. *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.

13. Heidegger, M., 1977. *The question concerning technology*. New York. Thomson, I., 2000. From the question concerning technology to the quest for a democratic technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Feenberg. *Inquiry*, *43*(2), pp.203–215.

14. I quote the example from a short entry mysteriously devoid of author or citation (on 19.09.2023) in <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/simplicate>

15. Feenberg, A., 2012. *Questioning technology*. Routledge. Bijker, W.E., 1997. *Of bicycles, bakelites, and bulbs: Toward a theory of sociotechnical change*. MIT press.

16. For the social life of memes, see: Milner, R. M. (2013). FCJ-156 Hacking the Social: Internet Memes, Identity Antagonism, and the Logic of Lulz. *The Fibreculture Journal*, 22 (Issue 2013: Trolls and The Negative Space of the Internet). The state of irony the author refers to I would reinterpret as indicative of the futility sensed by the participants battling it out in niches, see my chapter on entropology. For a classic anthropologist's take on appropriation, whether of ideas or things: Appadurai, A. (Ed.). (1988). *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

17. Whereas Bateson (in Steps, *infra*) opted for 'frame of communication', to denote for instance the 'play' of dolphins mock fighting, I zoom into the subjective state of each actor during the communication. The different focus does not concern the nature of the process.

18. "Chapter Six: Collective Reason" repeats this insight to pit Luhmann's skepticism about communication (because of its double contingency) against Habermas's belief in an ideal situation (depending on speech act).

19. The mediation unfolds in a world where the now and possibilities co-exist, cf. the prologue's scheme. The suspense, or what I will describe as inclusive disjunctivity, diverges from the ontology of intra-action proposed by Barad

for instance, because it admits the element of construction by the actor, a 'cut' as conceived in the e-prime manual of Spencer-Brown, G. (1969). *Laws of form*. George Allen and Unwin.

20. Applying his 'somatic marker hypothesis', cf. Damasio, A. R. (1999). *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

21. Corneanu, S. and Vermeir, K., 2012. Idols of the Imagination: Francis Bacon on the Imagination and the Medicine of the Mind. *Perspectives on Science*, *20*(2), pp.183–206. Stroeken, K., 2008. Believed belief: science/religion versus Sukuma magic. *Social Analysis*, 52(1), pp.144–165.

22. To anticipate with the Democrat's predicament, the conviction among Democrats that voters will denounce partisan politicians, causes Democratic newspapers to avoid looking partisan, hence to write critically about Democrats, which scares away the pivotal floating voter, because only emboldens Republican channels that consider partisanship a sign of authenticity. A frame such as the Democrats' that is sound in their sphere may have an adverse effect once it reaches the network, like in elections or public media. Mudde, C. and Kaltwasser, C.R., 2017. *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.

23. Framelessness appears in the expectancy violation after unfriending, cf. Bevan, J. L., Ang, P. C., & Fearns, J. B. (2014). Being unfriended on Facebook: An application of expectancy violation theory. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *33*, 171–178.

24. Bentall, R. P. (2009). *Doctoring the mind: Why psychiatric treatments fail.* Penguin.

25. Sociologists have pointed out the instrumentalization in bureaucracies as personnel members are alienated from their organization by concentrating solely on the correct execution of the steps instrumental in achieving a goal. Mediation discussing the effectiveness of the instruments is avoided to the detriment of the goal, which should be the personnel's primary frame. Simplication, the process studied here, however differs from instrumentalization and alienation in that the exclusion of mediation and the obscuring of frames inhere rather than follow from the technological intervention. Gouldner, A. (1952). Red tape as a social problem. *Reader in bureaucracy*, 410–418. Merton, R. K. (1973). *The sociology of science: Theoretical and empirical investigations.* University of Chicago press.

26. Bijker, W. E. (1997). *Of bicycles, bakelites, and bulbs: Toward a theory of sociotechnical change*. MIT Press.

27. http://www.carbontradewatch.org/publications/carbon-trading-how-it-works-and-why-it-fails.html.

28. Gluckman, M. (1967). The judicial process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia, 2nd Ed. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

29. Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social systems*. Stanford University Press.

30. The self features centrally in Peter Sloterdijk's trilogy 'Spheres'. His metaphor of foam to characterize modern societies conforms to the German sociological definition since Toennies which opposes unstable clusters of selves to units of cohesive community. Gluckman's distinction simplex/multiplex denotes modern instability as a superficial trait. His view conforms better to the anthropologist's experience of multiplexity in non-modern organizations versus rigidified identity in postmodern settings. Sloterdijk, P., 2011. *Bubbles: Spheres Volume I: Microspherology.*

31. Nader, L., 2002. *The life of the law: anthropological projects.* University of California Press.

32. 'Why do we keep doing things that are actually harmful to us such as creating simplexes?' an anonymous reviewer asked, whom I have to thank also for referring me to: Lauren Berlant (2011) *Cruel optimism*. Duke University Press.

33. Stroeken, K., 2010. *Moral power: the magic of witchcraft* (Vol. 9). Berghahn Books.

34. I am thinking of the use-based 20-minutes neighborhoods in the cityscape of: Gehl, J. (2013). *Cities for people*. Island press.

35. Stroeken, K. (2001). Defying the gaze: Exodelics for the bewitched in Sukumaland and beyond. *Dialectical Anthropology* 26(3–4): 285–309.

36. See Luhmann's theory of modernity, cited previously. Any totalizing narrative of modernity is bound to run afoul of postcolonial criticism, but this classic has shown the remaining advantage of a historical periodization: Gilroy, P. (1993). *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness.* Harvard University Press.

37. On the danger of another understanding of modernity, an a-cultural one: Taylor, C. (1999). Two theories of modernity. *Public Culture*, *11*, 153–174.

38. Schein, L. (1999). Performing modernity. *Cultural Anthropology*, *14*(3), 361–395.

39. A point made among others by Sherry Ortner in reference to the Gramscian notion of political agency developed by Raymond Williams in his 'structures of feeling'. Ortner, S.B., 2006. *Anthropology and social theory: Culture, power, and the acting subject*. Duke University Press.

40. Despite consensus on the importance of scales of government, the question of the place of the nation-state in it remains moot. Djaïz, D. (2019). *Slow démocratie: comment maîtriser la mondialisation et reprendre notre destin en main*. Allary éditions. Clark, S., & Teachout, W. (2012). *Slow democracy: Rediscovering community, bringing decision making back home*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

41. Walzer, M., 2008. *Spheres of justice: A defense of pluralism and equality.* Basic books.
42. A recent application (paired with Boltanski and Thévenot's economies of worth) points to the co-presence of spheres to detect and assess the collaborations between tech companies and public health institutions in the datafication of health: Sharon, T., 2021. From hostile worlds to multiple spheres: towards a normative pragmatics of justice for the Googlization of health. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, 24 (3), pp.315–327. Boltanski, L. and Thévenot, L., 2006. *On justification: Economies of worth* (Vol. 27). Princeton University Press.
43. The translated quote comes from the video *Alien Allies (Part 1)* shot in 1999 when I interviewed Sukuma chief Kaphipa.
44. Various indian traditions further differentiate the meaning. Soni, J., 2020. The Concept of Manas in Jaina Philosophy. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, *48*(2), pp.315–328. Intriguingly, the proto-Bantu stem for 'to know' is *mana*.

Chapter Two: Frameshift

How will the present be judged by historians in the future? We should ask ourselves as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson walks the deserted streets of besieged Kiev together with Ukraine's President Zelensky in the company of armed guards.[1] To a solitary passerby Johnson praises Zelensky's courage of withstanding the attacking armies. Glancing sideways at the camera, he addresses the civilian in a tone of voice reminiscent of his hero Winston Churchill. But do the standards of the mid-twentieth century apply? Twenty years after this war, will 'the good side' again be the country responding to attack by throwing the largest bomb causing the most casualties, by ruining another economy most effectively? Surely, future praise will be bestowed on the one leading us out of the logic of war.

What ethnographers perceive are practices, expressions, emotions, statements and conversations. How to reconstruct the frames of experience underlying these? The question has inspired the psychological domains of system therapy, non-violent communication and cognitive (neuro-linguistic) learning. Of particular import was the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson, applied by therapeutic groups in the vibrant Palo Alto of the late 1960s. This chapter introduces his work.

Before we try Bateson's remedy for the problem at hand, we should contextualize the problem. However improbable it may seem as each 'modern' subsystem screeches and closes in on us, we are all part of a transition to a new lifeway. In this social change, language and the framing through language are pivotal.

POST-KNOWLEDGE: SIMPLEX FRAMES
IN THE LANGUAGE ECONOMY

It is time to revise the Marxist story of capital determining the course of society, Christian Marazzi writes. The post-Fordist economy trades in knowledge and more fundamentally in language.[2] Units of meaning, which evoke culture, determine the twists and turns of public attention. Units of meaning are even more volatile than capital or labor. Companies basically buy and sell concepts. That makes a knowledge economy potentially a post-knowledge one. The work force has been liberated from the stupefying shift between sirens, only to spend the better part of waking life thinking and conversing about the catchy idea and the right image, the bigger plan and therein a potential project. Because of these building blocks of work nowadays, and the mind never stops, wages cannot compensate for actual labor, and owners' profits soar.

The financial system for its part fluctuates at the mercy of syllables uttered by Wall Street pundits. Inflation. Bank-rupt-cy. Crisis. Democratic elections can be won or lost depending on financed streams of communication.[3] A tabloid sneer in the UK costs the king of jibes the next election. Cabinets cower at public health officials pronouncing an epidemic, journalists naming a scandal, the media hyping an outrage. Prognoses written and diffused about future events have become crucial, even if those prognoses themselves cause the events.[4] What is being said counts. A lot.

But what counts need not matter. The expectation was that the economy's substitution of language for the assembly-line would boost participatory democracy. Interest groups do establish digital alliances across the global network to discuss issues of welfare, technological design and so on. Sociologists at the turn of the millennium therefore reveled in the possibility of a 'radical democracy'.[5] What went wrong in the meanwhile? Here is the rub about units of meaning. Meanings (e.g., global warming) cannot be units—unless their relations with other meanings (e.g., exploitation) have been severed, that is: unless the frame of experience (e.g., urgency) these meanings together derive from has disappeared and so too people's basis for connection and affinity. This basis (joint membership of a sphere or deeper still a shared source of production) would have permitted firm decisions on changing a way of life. It is unique in history that a temporary mobilization of people taking the right stance and subsequently subsiding into noise draws more attention than the implementation of reform. Neoliberalism, an anti-ideological belief in the free market, is after

2008 no longer a mentality or political movement but a default outcome owing to weakened points of reference in communication. The growing complexity of communication in globalization with more social interactions, hence a higher dynamic density, should mean a denser network of multilayered meanings and social interrelations to match. In practice, immovable ideas and rusty categories return in fleeting decisions and unkept promises. Social interactions are simplex: single-stranded and instrumental in view of a short-term effect.[6]

Why the UK's destiny as the EU's outlier suddenly materialized in a Brexit has been amply analyzed. About the background there can be little doubt: the post-Fordist communicative order that politicians were unprepared for. The EU's tortuous administration to get previously hostile states collaborating as a joint economy was an easy target for simplex communication, in tabloids and by Boris Johnson. After Prime Minister David Cameron introduced the EU referendum in 2016, he went to the European council to negotiate the UK's future position in the union. His frame for the referendum was a search for legitimacy, given the democratic deficit of his conservative party. Another layer of meaning was his pushing the limits for a hard bargain, on the assumption that the UK would remain in the EU anyway. Those layers, the goal of European peace and strategies of domestic politics, were lost on the public, so no concession Cameron returned with convinced. The message of 'lost autonomy' was the spell the island was under.

Simplexes (or simplices) characterize the information society in general and the post-truth era in particular. The era has little tolerance for 'limits of communication', for the difference of singularity, the unique frame of semantic layers eluding categorization and depending on personal experience. Ask any therapist, or yourself, what would be the number one cause of problems in a relationship, in a family or in the workplace, the answer will be faulty communication. A massive industry of study-based interventions has sprouted from the perceived necessity to 'improve communication'.[7] But what does that mean? Are humans less than ever able to communicate? Or have they finally begun to listen, discovering that they previously imagined to understand each other? I would answer 'no' twice. The expectation has changed: communication should be clear-cut and avoid the morass of perspectives. The expectation is of one-signal messages from sender to receiver. Discussion of subjective experiences because of the unique meaning of the message they frame is seen as failure. 'Communication breakdown!' raises alarm, resulting in reproach, anger or

denial, illustrative of communication panic. The merit then of communication therapies is indirect. These rituals inciting to pour one's gut out let participants discover for themselves that their messages and those of others always contain more than one signal. Participants in group therapy face the frames in communication. They rediscover culture, for frames are the stuff studied by researchers of culture.

Denied their frame, meanings become units to manipulate. That is when communication flattens into rhetoric. For example, xenophobic parties in Europe rejecting the niqab veil claim to protect the western value of gender equality. That voters could fall for the facile appropriation of a progressive value by an ultraconservative camp indicates disregard for the experiential frame. In the same flow of communication, wherein politicians juggle with terms like immigrants and religious traditions, progressive parties discourage wearing the Islamic veil, to protect the rights of girls at an impressible age. The strategies on both sides of the political spectrum to recuperate constituencies presume citizens to vote for bits of language, for opinions. Their trading in units of meaning makes abstraction of experiential frames. The network's inflation of meanings without frame undermines the significance of opinions, like in biology an overcrowded cell culture succumbing to its own success. A process that globalizes the network without proportionally increasing the connectedness (via frames) between its nodes (opinions) reduces the impact of each node. This simple 'law' of globalization unfavorably coincided with the next process, which raised the tension between information and diversity.

After the agricultural and industrial revolution, most members of the human species today partake of the information society. By information a type of communication is meant that privileges knowledge, mass connectivity and flow. Castells famously locates us in 'the network society'.[8] The particular character of information is reflected in the importance of the internet, social media and the services economy. The information society links once distant communities in a social network. That network is necessarily very diverse. The pair of diversity and information installs a tension at the heart of society, because much of the information traveling between diverse groups will be incommensurable. An untransparent financing system can to some look like a free market with much liquidity. What is female initiation for the one, the other calls genital mutilation. The information network requires one translation to be correct. Politicians, scientists, school systems and journalists debating to take account of recalcitrant diversity are complicit in agreeing on that one formalist reduction.

The complicity shows among others in how international organizations take the relation between welfare and happiness for granted and as universal. With the welfare state came the simplex of 'happiness', an individual's wellbeing, creating the image of a pyramid with Nordic countries at the peak and African countries at the bottom. That self-image with the tenor of a self-fulfilling prophecy is the simplification we are educated in, concealing a complicated series of assumptions. By 'series' I emphasize the lost interrelations. A simplex glosses over rampant stress and depression in the putatively happiest populations to state that welfare and also the presumably more fundamental happiness measured by international consortia points the direction for development interventions to follow.[9] Another simplex concentrates on the coefficients and evolutions measured by the surveys, passing over the disparities that betray the global economy's incapacity to cater evenly for all.[10] Happiness is moreover presented as the universal preoccupation, a simplex whose individualist frame downplays alternative frames. Why would values such as honor, oblivion (nirvana) and collective wellbeing not be valid?[11]

Scientifically grounded governments assume that happiness might not be thought of in the same way by everybody but is at least the same to every *body*. Restraining the extent of difference and domesticating it as mere 'diversity' is a way to resolve the tension within a globalized network. Speaker, listener or media channel can censor and scrape the dirty, rough angles of the meanings that frame an information. *Imagining* to understand each other works too: forget about the experiential frame altogether. In either case, the price for unhampered flows of communication is meanings disconnected from feelings.

Now we may begin to grasp the historical significance of the disconnection of meaning from feeling. A language getting away with that has formidable powers. Post-Fordist economy has paved the way for such language and for the post-truth communication that goes with it.[12] Making things happen without any link to a verifiable observation represents the apex of make-believe. Such act is more powerful than fact, because facts in themselves cannot steer action. The unit of this language is the simplex message bringing about an effect.[13] To tackle simplexes we must concentrate on frames instead of facts. While facts propel discussions that merely continue the flow of communication, frames reflect on the flow to stop and redirect it. If we take the example of the endless flow of reports on global warming, the crucial question is not asked, whether

reading the statistics can lead to resolute acts. Two simplicating words such as 'the economy' suffice for someone to sever the report's link between fact and act.

It is the task of journalists to 'produce facts' against the lies spread by internet trolls. But why should 'the masses' not interpret the so-called counter-facts as produced out of antagonism? Why would the confrontation with data refuting accusations not irritate and frustrate the masses rather than change their mind? A stronger antidote to fake news than knowledge, bits of data fueling the conflict, is intuition strong enough to shift perspective. One intuits that the claimed acts do not fit the accused. For instance, the Chinese social network Weibo had as trending topics news items reporting about Ukraine soldiers shooting their own civilians and Europe discriminating Russian students.[14] Experiences of European democracy and critical media help to intuit which news items are (im) plausible. Any positive intuition the Weibo users may have about Europe can be undermined by trolls inundating information inlets with reports systematically reproducing a certain frame. The news items on Weibo are adopted from the Chinese State media, whose framing is strategic. At the same time, this generally known intention of framing weakens the validity of anything the Chinese party states. Costly exercises of power and unrelenting indoctrination keep the party in charge, but with unknown salience.

A good story carries in itself power to frame. A friend just sent me a link to a documentary 'revealing' that Putin started his war against Ukraine for a greater cause, namely to end the hegemony of the petrodollar. The simplex idea is that nobody had the guts before to challenge America's rule and that is why he demands rubles for gas, and America raised economic sanctions. For some the clip, of unknown provenance, makes sense. The idea selects and integrates a few emotionally charged elements such as expensive oil and gas, and America's claim to world power. A knowledge society obsessed with accumulating facts has to learn about the lure of fiction. A related link asks why Russia's attack is called an invasion while America's wars in the Middle East, the Gulf and Vietnam were so-called acts of liberation. 'Verify the facts!' we hear from both sides. When facts contradict facts, which ones should have the last word? Frame against frame. Sphere against sphere. Culture against culture. The following sections train to perceive the dynamic between frames, how they simplicate the same event into opposite facts.

Miscommunication

A famous example of Bateson's anthropological analysis is how the train conversation between two well-intending passengers, a reserved British and a talkative American, goes awry, culminating in mutual suspicions of arrogance. The reason neither of them is aware of: they hold opposite frames to interpret the other person's behavior, due to opposite upbringings on whether it is speech (UK) or silence (US) that signals paternal authority. 'When father comes home' in the UK, the family at the kitchen table will listen to what he has to say. In the US, the tradition is to have the kids talk. Coincidentally, exactly the type of communicative frame that both passengers consider unfit in a casual first encounter and want to avoid, they now sense to be overly employed by the other passenger ('father knows best' and 'let the kid talk'). As the American passenger struggles to enliven the conversation (in the polite US mode), the British passenger refrains from speech all the more annoyed (in the polite UK mode). Two frames, each determining what is good and what is bad, collide. They lead to escalation because what is right for the one has been taught as wrong to the other, and vice versa.

Drawing the chains of action and reaction as a sequence of vectors in a dialogue will not do to capture the gist of the passengers' conflict, which I would categorize as a mutual simplification: 'You treat me like a child (inferior)', or (which comes down to the same): 'You feel superior.' The negative energy solidifies the simplification into a simplex. Instead of vectors of influence, we need to draw a matrix of frames. The speakers' collision inheres the opposition of logics, rather than being caused by anything specific the interlocutors in the situation say.

Realizing the relation between frames should be a liberating insight for both passengers. Their conflict should dissolve. The necessary condition is their ability to differentiate and recombine four meanings. The matrix below, of two rows and two columns, schematizes the UK perspective in the vertical dashed lines versus the US perspective in the full diagonals crossing (see Fig. 1).[15] The simplex perspective in terms of superior/

Fig. 1 Simplex and tensor of UK–US miscommunication
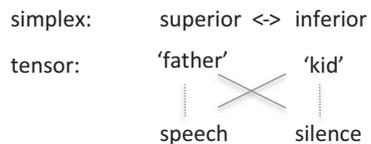
inferior should be replaced by a relation between two frames. The oppositional relation expresses the intrinsic ongoing tension.

Bateson disentangled a cultural misunderstanding in the educational sphere. Each interlocutor suffered from a simplex concealing the frames at play. Neither had any clue about the affinity (even if it is an oppositional relation) with the other's frame, because neither acknowledged there to be frames at all. The one who sees the semantic field, and tension at the heart of it, experiences a tensor. For that person, the matrix consisting of qualities (father, kid, speech, silence, instead of quantities: 0, 1) is what affects the wellbeing of the participants. The term 'tensor' better than 'matrix' evokes the person's three-dimensional experience.

The steps of the procedure to discern the frame behind a simplex are schematized in the next section. The reader can do the same anthropological exercise to understand the tension between liberal and non-liberal voters whereby the opposite view comes across as an attack despite the motive of both being a preoccupation with sustainable society. Attention to the sequence of actions and reactions in the past, a 'historicist' obsession of news and social media, will not contribute to insight in the frames.

Reconstructing the Simplication

We begin by disentangling the two terms explicitly related in the simplex and place these in a diagonal. The two remaining empty spaces we fill in with their opposite or contrasting terms, which have not been mentioned but seem implicit. The procedure is applicable to any simplex.

For instance, in the simplex communication 'You are paranoid', I place 'you' and 'paranoid' in a diagonal (see Fig. 2). The two empty spaces that would be implicit in the message are not obvious finds, but a good start is to invert the meaning of the originals. The question 'What would be the opposite of the said?' broadens the semantic field of the message, ideally without adding new information. Inversion of terms seems an adequate step in our search to carve out the actual frame of reference hidden by the simplex, because a property of concealment or denial is to state the

Fig. 2 Derivation of tensor from simplex

Simplex:	normal	<->	abnormal
'you'			I
trust			'paranoid'

opposite of what one feels or thinks.[16] My proposal would be that 'you' contrasts with 'I', and 'paranoid' with 'trust', as shown below. 'Indifferent' and 'confident' might be other candidates for the antonym of paranoid.

The frame covering both dimensions of the message 'You are paranoid' can now be read vertically, starting with the first column: 'You trust. I am paranoid.' Translated evocatively: 'I reproach you because you have the trust I am afraid to be lacking.' The addressed can hear between the lines the accuser divulging an inner worry. Why indeed would the drive behind the accusation originate from the addressed? The energy of the statement tells more about the accuser. Another version of the frame reads: 'I am afraid (that) you are indifferent.' In this case the drive could be self-esteem and the need of affirmation.

After allowing such translation of a statement and the extension with its opposite, the statement suddenly obtains affective significance, with explanatory value for the communicators, while the aggressive energy of the simplex recedes. The point of de-simplication is not to launch another simplex, which would be to arrogate that this person means the opposite of what he or she is saying, and like Sigmund Freud that we have discovered the actual meaning with the inverted term. The goal of de-simplication is to reconstruct the frames in a tensor, to get an overview of the field of meanings and their combinations. The combinations of the four terms into sentences are equally relevant, including the initial accusation of paranoia. What they point to together is a sphere of exchange where frames of reference meet. The analyst wants to capture the mood, the mysterious interstitial sphere originating between speakers. Therein frame analysis differs from discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis in particular, which following Foucault identify the institutionalized patterns of knowledge and power relations in language use.[17] For the frame analyst, power is not a given but one particular frame next to possible others in a conversation, and a very coarse one at that. Much ethnographic analysis is invested in figuring out the culturally specific details of frames in communication.

'Power' often turns out a simplex explanation of communication. In rural communities where women kneel to greet male and female elders, like the Sukuma villages that have hosted me, it is hard for a European observer to not primarily see gradations of strength and weakness at work in interactions. Or to consider another case, I was surprised to note the readiness of anyone in the village during the morning greeting to communicate about a possible affliction, also its mental component. Was this not an unnecessary show of trouble? The frame of experience I had to

learn about was illustrated among others in their Bantu language of KiSukuma, wherein to 'have' an illness is literally 'to be with' it (*-li na*). Alternatively, the patient is hurting (*nalisaata*). Serious illness in this community is not a quality defining the person at any moment. It is mostly an opportunity to undergo medicinal initiation, on the ancestor's invitation. We note the difference between cultural frames.

The European tradition of defining mental illness has Christian roots. These roots should be further qualified, as sociologists know from the classic studies of Durkheim on suicide and Weber on capitalism. In the Catholic tradition, humans are weak, but will be absolved of the sinful behavior emanating from weakness, after confession. Someone having a mental illness has been dealt a bad hand by God. In the Lutheran tradition, a weakness cannot be absolved. The individual carries the responsibility of deeds. That does not apply to inborn disease (although in the Calvinist branch quite significantly a handicap can be a sign of God's missing grace, precluding salvation). The old religious roots of a cultural system persevere in socialization. A society with Lutheran tradition will be more sensitive to the risk of stigma, given the assumed individual responsibility. In a mixed marriage, friction is possible between frames in that the Lutheran concerned over aberration because of self-image is unable to see the Catholic opportunity for absolution, and vice versa.

Frame rather than truth is what therapists reconstruct with their clients engaged in self-reflection. That is what the wise seek in order to snap out of a cycle of accusations.[18] In one such case of a vicious circle, the younger generation blames the older about deeds in the past: 'Our generation would not colonize, which yours did!' Are the younger so sure of not committing the mistake of exploitation in another domain, with no less mixed intentions and damage? Frame-analysis raises reflexivity in order to curb enthusiasm about identifying 'the' cause, an 'evil' person or 'witch'. As a Sukuma bartender retorted after I asked him about human remains for witchcraft found in a cave close to his village: "Aren't we all witches?" His words instantly altered the mood because opened up an experiential frame on everybody's search for magic, for a lucky break in life. Nobody in the bar talked anymore about indications of a wicked individual participating in a secret sabbath.

Already in his first fieldwork of the 1930s in Melanesia, Bateson intuited the importance of intersubjective frames, locally described as enveloping 'clouds'. Iatmul communities speak of a disheartening cloud (*ngglambi*) surrounding the house of a bewitched person.[19] A trained eye would be able to discern the cloud.[20] Carrying the mood of the witch, the cloud also

determines the mood of the bewitched. The cloud acknowledges the frame of accusation and conflict through which both sides communicate. The Iatmul depiction of conflict refrains from lapsing into the simplex of one signal, one message, the binary illusion of good and evil, of who is right or wrong. An important task for anthropologists working in communities other than their own is to accept the multiplicity of contexts.

In the earlier example of a person accusing the other of paranoia, the simplex covered up affect. Besides fear, the frame contained feelings of distrust or lack of attention. In Bateson's example, the various inversions of terms in 'You treat me like a kid' (namely 'I treat you like a kid', 'I treat you like a father' and 'You treat me like a father') could have brought the quarrelers in the train to extend their definition of the situation, reconsider the other's intention, and enter a sphere to exchange educational frames.

The person addressed as paranoid may not have chosen to be involved in the communication, but cannot avoid to be part of the frame of reference. Such is the wisdom of the *ngglambi* cloud, and I might add as an Africanist, of practices of divination and ritual treatment that harness the frames of reference shared by interlocutors, as we will discover in Part II. The frame of what interlocutors experience broadens the focus, away from the myopic issue of individual responsibility and causality. From the point of view of the insulted individual, this may seem unfair. For the collective, however, care to continue communication is the condition for survival of the community. In a multiplex society, the frame in the sphere of divination relates to peace, a source of production.

Frame, sphere, source: two and three dimensions create a universe of possibilities, unlike the single-layered message. The frame breaks with the illusory dichotomy transmitted by the simplex stirring direct reaction. One might disparage my procedure for offering only one or two more dimensions (each moreover relying on binary terms). I argue that the mere addition of one frame, however embryonic, opens up a range of affects in the meeting of interlocutors.

A similar exercise can be done for technologies excluding human mediation. The clickbait on every screen communicating 'This is needed' is diagonally distributed to become a frame of experience in a sphere including the possibilities 'Something else is needed' and 'This is not needed'. Seeing the frame amidst other possibilities might not stop you from buying the adverted item, but at least makes you think for a minute and contextualize the message (place it in a sphere) before you react to it. Autopilot

Fig. 3 Simplex and
tensor of science

simplex: technology (science) = reliable (saves)

tensor: technology   contingency
                (science)   (kills)

                humans   reliable
                (nature)   (saves)
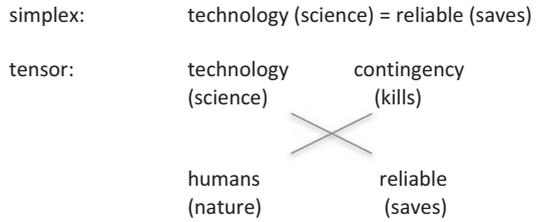
and military drone, as detailed in "Chapter Three: Losing the Feel for the Craft", materialize the message 'technology is reliable'. The frame has as implicit layer 'humans are a contingency'. They engender a tensor with the equally valid frames 'humans are reliable' and 'technology is a contingency' (see Fig. 3). This variation on frames in a certain sphere of technology has inspired classics of science-fiction and their semantic field.

Positivists adhere to the simplex 'Science saves.' The unspoken layer of the frame makes the concomitant claim that 'Nature kills', as in anxiety about wilderness, the wild state before humanity and 'civilization'. The sphere of exchange adds the inversions 'Science kills' and 'Nature saves' which can be heard among anti-conformists. The frames keep the scientific obsession with fact versus fiction at bay by considering the inversions. The sphere raises the possibility that science kills, for instance at the collective scale if medication prevents nature from increasing group immunity. Further possible evidence for 'science kills' is that only the wealthier countries have the top scientists, and the rich have all medications at their disposal. The natural threats to our health are nationalized. Big Pharma capitalizes on the threats. Ecologists do suggest that (a return to) nature will save humanity. All these are the layers, or meanings of frames, conflated in the initial simplex 'Science saves'. The phrase retains a conflated, dense energy raising suspicion and defensive reaction. The social analysis linking specific events in a network called Big Pharma implies a cultural analysis of the unsaid possibilities. A simplex is a condensed energy, event and meaning that carries the seeds of its de-simplication.

Animism: Frame Retrieval and the Species

One word, disdainfully reducing complexity, can suffice to establish a division in the world. What does it mean when someone says: 'They are animists'? We have to be cautious about reading intentions in words. Use,

which is a matter of frame, comes first. Some say 'animist' as a euphemism for 'primitive'. Others mean by animism a universal religion teaching respect for all animate beings. Still, the connotation surfaces of 'nature people' lacking culture like 'the civilized'. But was that the first thought that came to mind, this section asks, during the archetypical scene of a Spanish settler's first contact at the shores of the mighty river Amazon in the age of 'discovery'?

A term such as 'primitive', etymologically signifying 'first of its kind' and referring to preliterate cultures, may be well-intended. It went into disuse in academia after negative connotations. Colonizers projected lower and higher stages of social evolution on populations. 'Primitives!' can be heard nowadays to marginalize people. It has sedimented as a simplex. A term such as animism, however, which has been employed by some to stereotype societies as backward, still has a future on the condition that attention shifts to the meanings it frames. For academia to abandon this term as well would be to back down on de-simplication in the face of a simplex. Instead of lexical retreat, this chapter proposes conceptual activism. We look for what local spheres, distinct 'cultures', are telling about each other, which is to accept the existence of a human species all eventually belong to.

A simplex appears unrelated to anything else because it conceals the terms related to. Once we retrieve the relations, our intuition is restored and we can consciously steer the dynamic. An exemplary retrieval, although not propagated as such at its publication, we encounter in the work of a student of Lévi-Strauss. Philippe Descola studied animism among Achuar Amerindians.[21] He was well aware that contemporary scholars avoided the concept due to the colonial association with primitiveness, and the binarity of nature versus culture. To describe someone as 'animist' sounded like an insult. Yet, does this mean the belief system which the word refers to has stopped existing? Would substituting another term for animism, in a bid for decolonial purity, make a difference in our way of thinking about the belief system? It is rather our way of thinking that requires critical examination. In other words, a structuralist analysis is in order about the binarity nature/culture.

The animism Descola described gains clarity for the reader as he manages to evince his own frame and its specific relation to animism. His frame of experience belongs to a cultural system, Western cosmology. Denoting his frame as naturalism, Descola concludes on a relation of inversion. The scientist is a naturalist, for whom there exist as many minds as there are individuals. What unites the many minds is the bodily organism taught

about in biology classes. In contrast, the animist assumes one mind to pervade the many bodies. At a time when Spanish Jesuits in the seventeenth century contemplated the moral status of primitive minds, Amerindians tested the putrefaction of white bodies by dipping the corpses in the river.[22] Many minds and one body for the naturalist; many bodies and one mind for the animist. Can the two frames of experience meet? For the structuralist they can, and intrinsically do.

Descola's structuralist analysis overcomes the simplex by detecting the tensor that explains the tension between the two cosmologies. Through the opposition with naturalism, 'animism' gets rid of simplexity. The tool to de-simplicate (from simplex to frame) I named a tensor, from the Latin verb for stretching. The tensor sums up the simplification, namely the way it stretches semantic space. It exposes the tension between frames, more exactly how their meanings relate in a certain sphere, as schematized in Fig. 4. As opposed to public discourse treating animism as a concept complete in itself, independent from the naturalism of scientists, the tensor reveals the salient dimensions, in this case mind/body and many/one.

The structuralist derives two remaining combinations beside animism and naturalism, which Descola names analogism (many bodies/many minds) and totemism (one body/one mind). He by the way finds analogism in China and the Renaissance; totemism in Aboriginal Australia. Structuralist divisions are holistic for their dual logic analytically covering all possibilities (here: states the world can be in, beginning with the duality of animists/non-animists). True, a specific phenomenon described in context will always be richer in meaning than such analytical retrieval, but no matter how richly the social analysis describes the context, the intrinsic relation between animism and naturalism will remain unseen. Structuralism, a cultural analysis, permits the ethnographer to interpret phenomena holistically through layers that relate seemingly independent phenomena. It approximates the holism of an actor sensing cultural affinity with meanings from a different cultural system.

Fig. 4 Simplex and tensor of animism

simplex: nature   <->   culture

tensor: one   many

               body(s)   mind(s)
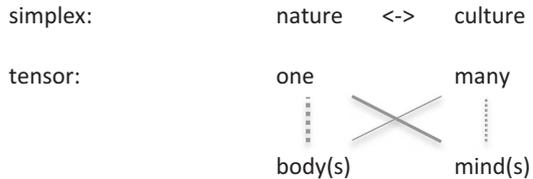
Figure 4 schematizes the operation to retrieve two dimensions in a field of frames. The intersecting lines capture in a relative way what in absolute terms is labeled animism. The thick line 'one—mind' of the intersection refers to the experiential frame of Achuar animism. The thin line 'many—bodies' evinces the unspoken side of that cosmology. Another combination of the terms is the West's naturalism expressed in the thick dashed line connecting 'one' and 'body'. The thin dashed line between many and minds points to a second aspect of naturalism (which may feature less in public discourse).

To sum up, de-simplication uncovers layers of meaning wherein the frames collapsed to survive as a simplex. There may be more than two, but extracting an additional semantic layer from the one explicitly expressed in the message is considerable progress in the way of de-simplicating. We found a common sphere of exchange and shed light on the frames of reference covered up by the simplex. Going beyond a social analysis identifying the injustice suffered by Achuar Amerindians, the cultural analysis brought home their animist perspective as equivalent to anyone else's.

Instead of this semantic analysis, why not simply forbid use of the simplex word? Giving up 'animism' would be to emulate the mistake of the white settler. As the figure below suggests, the settler may have been engaged in an act of covering up, quite strategic like the invention of the racialized category of 'blacks'. My point, and in this I challenge a postmodern consensus, is that the two cosmologies (two frames from different cultural systems) do not lead distinct, incommensurable lives. As far as an ethnographer can tell, the Achuar have their 'local reality' with its own flow of information. It is culturally different, but why should it derive from a separate source of production? In Fig. 5, X represents the animist
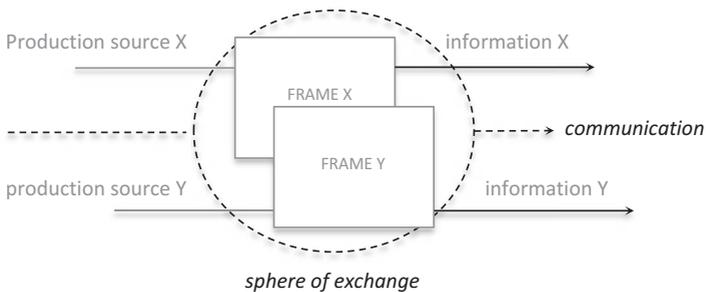
Fig. 5 The illusion of separate sources producing reality

source and Y the naturalist source, besides incalculably more sources of production in the world. I object that humans do perceive common humanity and contemplate the one source of production. Members of the species have varied experiences but all depend on the same principle, life. Therefore, different concepts of life end up in the same table and partake of the one meaning system.

The white observer of the corpse hanging in the Amazon river was ambiguously horrified by the affinity he sensed with the animist test, which was morally equal to his interest (inversely as a naturalist) in the workings of the 'savage mind'.[23] He had inadvertently entered a common sphere by embracing the other perspective. He could only recover his poise through a reassuring simplex about 'primitive tribes' in the Amazon exhibiting the cruelty that 'civilized' minds are incapable of. The extent to which he could fool himself is unknown, but cynically his civilized gasp sounded amidst the invasion of his compatriots decimating Amerindians.

Why did the Spanish settler not take the chance of interviewing the Amerindian about the strange test performed with a corpse? The observer's discomfort about the animist test indicates that he momentarily treated naturalism and animism as equivalent cosmologies. He shifted frames for the species (while having no empirical reasons to reject the animist possibility of all beings participating in the same mind). What then arrested him at the brink of entering a common sphere of exchange and possibly sharing a frame of experience? The answer is his cultural system that framed the Amerindian. The fixed frame facilitates the processing of radical difference. There in Brazil the simplex prefigured simplications at the start of the greater process of globalization. In contrast, a speciated history invites open attitude and experiment to figure each other out, and possibly raises awareness of uncertainty, the impossibility to know anyone for sure. Instead, the settlers went for the other's outright exclusion, based on the frame of certainty that their imperial sphere depended on. "Chapter Four: The Human Experiment" pins down the nightmare the exclusion turned into.

Frameshift, Identity and Emotion

'Are you assuming my gender?' Miles asks on an internet forum. He was greeted as 'mister'. She/he/they/x confront us with the simplex that divides everyone into man and woman. A string of hate speech ensues in response. Miles wants to make people aware about the gender category. In

our words, the category is a simplification momentarily concealing its simplification. We called this a simplication. It might turn simplex. The responders reprove Miles's assumption that their use of gendered terms intentionally attributes identity. Miles too has been simplifying their messages in denial of the simplification. How? By omitting to mention the most probable hypothesis that their use of 'mister' was out of accepted habit, by default and in the absence of counterindications. Miles made a point by questioning the habit. By lack of frameshift, one simplex was met with another.

The emotion, the mutual irritation, is significant. By introducing the gender issue, Miles seeks to distend the frame of the other participants in the sphere. Had they been merely invited to shift frame, they would probably not have been irritated. Now the other members have to either learn from Miles (distend their frame) or reject the latter's membership of the sphere. The hate speech is an indication of the second. Outcasts proliferate as spheres contract.

Generation Z reports about the affective energy unleashed by the war of words on the social media. Besides ease of use and reductionism, simplication through categories of gender or identity serves an affective cause. Miles's emotional recognition and moral disapproval contaminate.[24] Was the polarizing group dynamics it stirred intended? Simplexes are feelings on the loose, energies uprooted from a dynamic of (inter-)mediation. Frameshift can defuse the tension.

In an optimistic interpretation, the serial reproaches on social media illustrate the growing sensitivity of the internet generation to simplication and to the related disregard for singularity and difference, *in casu* of sexual and cultural identities.[25] As diversity in identity is delivered in simplex packages to bombard others with, radical difference less than ever has the chance of protruding. Users of social media learn to detect, and cope with, persuasion. Most have personally experienced the risks of avatar anonymity, trolls, catfishing, fake news and hoaxes. Disenfranchised groups prove to be aware of the manipulation of events and reports by the ruling establishment in view of the status quo. Wokeness becomes a simplex, abused by defenders of free speech to avoid mediation with those they disagree with.[26] The collateral damage of the success of a concept in mobilizing internet users is that the concept soon undergoes 'memefication'. The underlying link with social reform vanishes—is simplicated away—as anti-racism is trivialized in humorous memes (which have become the social media's most common application of meme, a copied cultural element).

Not coincidentally, what works best apparently is a kind of speech that pretends to be frameless.

Offline contexts too unleash emotional energy encapsulated in a simplex, with social consequences. Overhearing the conversation between parent and teenager about school performance, a third party interjects that the teenager should not accept 'the insult' because 'a parent should only motivate'. The teenager's demotivated reaction lends extra weight to the interfering statement. The parent's cultural background amplifies misgivings among witnesses, about an unfit attitude regarding school. The communicative exchange may escalate into an informative moment about the parent, after which school authorities intervene. Exchange of each other's unspoken frames—richer communication—could have stopped the aggravation and displayed the humanity of difference.

The Rapprochement of 'Russia'

Now that we learned about frameshifts and their capacity to bring home the human, we may begin to dream of a better world. Following up on the Zelensky–Johnson scene in this chapter's opening paragraph, could we not derive from a recurring simplex the tensor leading us out of the frame of war?

Does Putin have a conscience? *So-vest* is the Russian word for the English 'conscience'. Both words are translations of the Greek *syneidesis*, literally 'with-knowledge'. Conscience is an inner knowing that accompanies the *scire* of science, which etymologically 'cuts' the outer world into facts. Do we have reason to believe that such a thing exists, an inner knowledge about what is right? Tyrants that kill for the greater cause of the nation may think to be doing right. Since their concept of the good differs very much from their 'victims', what is the point of speaking of conscience other than as a belief system, a culturally specific and personally determined set of ideas? Is Putin invading Ukraine to restore the Soviet empire not doing his duty? Are the mafiosi liquidating a shopkeeper unable to pay his dues not culturally right, and their omerta afterward a conscience at work? The question stems from postcolonial debate on the cultural relativity of moral precepts, which has long seemed an achievement of the decolonizing West: to each culture its truth. It means that specific cultures have the last word. Do they?

Of course not. Otherwise why would Putin forbid the words 'war' and 'invasion' in reports on Ukraine? He cannot rid himself of humanity and

its ethical effect on frames. Conscience is meant to be situated at the enveloping human level. Humans, including dictators and narcissists, can shift frames and internalize the various cultural systems of the planet because everyone's local spheres exist in parallel to humanity. The matter is to give it space, as did the Russian grandmother. Conscience has no significance without the psychic unity of humanity, a meaning system accessible by all. Populist leaders of world powers denying the existence of humanity resuscitate a localized order in its death throes.

Globalization means that because of the free movement of ideas, people, goods and money, a sphere exists which we are all members of. Socially (the network) and culturally (the meaning system) humans are living again the reality of one species. Until we take up the challenge of a globalized knowledge society, demanding cultural translation, the globe verges on post-knowledge, a simplex society dividing. The disunity starts with reducing the scope of unity to a limited sphere like the nation or the circle of likeminded. The partial conscience of a dictator thrives on that delimitation.

When the United Nations celebrated the International day of conscience in 2022, several groups in parks around Lisbon organized 'a silence for peace'.[27] Any method to radiate inner peace, whether through meditation, yoga, mindfulness, prayer or other contemplative act was welcome. 'Not against some or in favor of others, but for the good of all.' Standing together in a circle. In silence. For an hour. What is it good for? How could a circle of silence change anything? The intention contrasts sharply with the discourse of journalists and politicians, on Europe's naivety, on the need of more weapons and larger armies, and on defending truth in an alleged information war. Counter-facts against facts was the dominant narrative from the start. The escalation of framing within that sphere was inevitable: rockets against tanks, and then tanks 'to discourage Putin'. The circles of peace in Lisbon appealed to consciousness beyond frames and cultures or any specific, supposedly common values. Making room for silence is spiritual by planting a seed and generating unforeseen possibilities, hence breaking out of the cycle of counteracting.

Some participants may have believed in a material, energetic flow arising from the circle and actually changing the situation in Ukraine.[28] The least we can say is that the circle refers those hearing about it, or witnessing it, to the frames people can be stuck in. Nobody is condemned to a particular view. By embracing all views and seeing them converge in human consciousness, we take destiny in our hands. Not a particular someone's destiny but destiny as such, the whole known as life, seemed to

be embraced in that spiritual feeling of meaning. On the 'International day of conscience' the circles planted peace for all without polarizing with those wanting war.

The frame of war is contagious. Putin would be losing the information war because of the cunning of the director of national intelligence Avril Haines.[29] From those words we might as well conclude that despite decades of educational and parliamentary investment in peacekeeping and pacifist solutions the US and Europe have fallen into the old trap. They are playing Putin's game. The current war is justified by pretending it to be a game with rules, resulting in a winner and a loser, whereby the humiliated party would never opt for the nuclear military option. Because that is not in the script? As governments enter into the sphere of war, the frame of the game gets stretched, as it did before from an annexation of the Crim to the invasion of a country. Recently we hear about 'tactical' nuclear weapons, low-yield nukes. They will not take us out of the frame of war.

Once the invader has been defeated through military means, who will be victorious: Ukraine or Europe or the democratic West? No, the frame of war. Reminding us of there being a frame though, and thus allowing to question it, will contribute to peace. Which frameshift is needed?[30]

As Russian soldiers upon meeting local resistance might suddenly come to their senses and stop the bloodshed ten days after the invasion, Kirill the head of the Russian-Orthodox Church was quick to hold a sermon justifying the war: humanity has to be saved from sin. Kirill saw a yet grander cause than restoring the Russian empire, which meant preventing Ukraine from becoming a NATO member and official ally of the West. A clash was going on between a god-fearing civilization and a godless one. Ukraine was about to enter the club of countries organizing 'Gay Prides'. Russia's neighbor wanted to be part of 'the West'. Human rights, including the right to be gay, are considered a cultural imposition by the West, whose norms and values defy God and the truth.

The self-criticism that Euro-American scholars are brought up in since Enlightenment is an attitude, but crucially the frame of experience can be encountered in other cultures as well. The belief in universal rights and diversity is an outcome of that frame. Support of traditions in function of the group's cohesion might be an outcome too at some point. What ruins the dialectic between applications of a frame and thus goes against the enlightened attitude is the idea that universal rights and diversity are the West's cultural heritage. That rigidifies a frame. Reduction of a frame to one outcome is a culturalist error, feeding the illusion of cultures in

conflict. The illusion has unfortunately appealed on both sides of the fence. Ukraine's belief in democracy would be a choice pro the West, according to the Russian regime, which would be a choice against Russia. 'Wanting to be part of the West' is unfortunately an expression about Ukraine used also by Western commentators such as Friedman in the New York Times.[31] It is a simplex equating a culture (a set of outcomes) with a people (persons who can shift frames). Putin's delusional tale about Ukraine's denazification to start a war killing civilians rests on the simplex treating countries as actors. He is helped by Europe's sanctions against Russia no less equating a regime with a country. The simplex fuels antagonism with self-fulfilling effect. Sanctions ruining a country's economy in order to squeeze the population into unrest that will supposedly topple the regime are not only immoral, because of the suffering inflicted on innocent people. The measures are naïve, because they assume the regime to care about the population or respond to its needs. The regime would adopt the democratic logic of giving in to the wish of the majority suffering. The sanctions are counterproductive. They play into the hands of the regime by delivering exactly what Putin sought. He has recovered legitimacy by being externally attacked in union with the people, who are objectively on the side again of the leadership. The simplex glossing over the distinction between country and regime fed the mistake. Because of the equation, Russians in search of identity will reject liberal ideas that had already germinated. Discussion in the aula, salon, bar or in a cabin out in the woods at the Finno-Russian border, would have vacillated between on the one hand human rights for sustainable globalization and on the other hand non-liberal ideology 'wised up' after communism's failed experiment in breaching old traditions. A Russian and European sitting around the fire can share frames despite their 'cultures'. It is in this dynamic, and not in ideology or debate, that peace can take root. Post-knowledge ruins frameshift.

The tensor in Fig. 6 tentatively dissects the simplex 'democracy opposes authoritarianism'. The columns state in support of the Western frame that

Fig. 6 Simplex and tensor of liberal/non-liberal democracy	simplex:	democracy <-> authoritarianism
	tensor:	individual collective
		rights sustainable
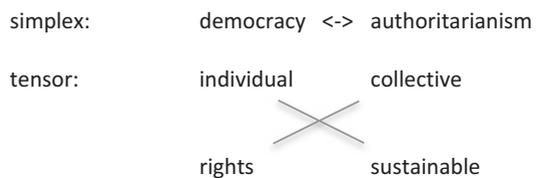
granting (human) rights to individuals sustains a peaceful collective. Recombining the meanings diagonally results in the opposite view that individuals will lead a happy, sustainable life if they support the collective by respecting its rights, namely tradition and authority. Note how interlocked the two frames, liberal versus non-liberal, are by stimulating opposite goals: the more the first insists on individual rights, the stronger the second senses the threat to the collective. Could insight in this tensor, a mutually reinforcing dynamic between frames, not pause the escalation?

Russia's future rapprochement with the West, however unthinkable today, will revitalize a cultural exploration which just after the fall of the iron curtain was stopped in its tracks as Europe hesitated to unite in one way or another with the big Russian bear. Identity politics since the 1990s widened the gap between the liberal and non-liberal concepts of democracy in west and east respectively. How could Russia and Europe enrich themselves again with the other's difference? By not discussing ideologies but by recognizing the frames underlying them. The non-liberal community of Russians seeking truth in a Biblical original equilibrium would be shocked to realize the plausibility of the political experiment done in the West since Enlightenment, which is a dialectic organizing the free exchange of inspiration about the frames of subjective experience. The experiment is spiritual unlike what Kirill stands for, prohibiting the self-critical process. Governments of nations that are too big to be naturally cohesive like China and Russia fear the process and therefore filter the Internet. They keep up the illusion of culturalism. Frames should not meet. The nation equals a culture and the regime represents it—one frame for all.

NOTES

1. https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-61057005
2. Marazzi, C. (2008). *Capital and language: From the new economy to the war economy*. Semiotext, p.41.
3. The nuance is that money buys votes if campaign donors choose their candidates strategically, in function of the candidate's fundraising ability, see: Brown, A. R. (2013). Does money buy votes? The case of self-financed gubernatorial candidates, 1998–2008. *Political Behavior*, *35*(1), 21–41.
4. Um, N. Biopower, Mediascapes, and the Politics of Fear in the Age of COVID-19. *City & Society*.
5. Feenberg, A. (2012). *Questioning technology*. Routledge.
6. The distinction simplex or uniplex versus multiplex popped up in an early version of network analysis for neighborhood policy interventions. Bridge,

G., 2002. *The neighbourhood and social networks* (Vol. 4, pp. 1–32). Bristol/Glasgow: ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research.

7. <https://www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/survey-91-percent-of-1000-employees-say-their-boss.html>, read on June 21, 2020.

8. Here I select aspects that concern the global cultural process affecting the local lifeworld. A dialogue with Castells's work to comprehend 'the network society' on its own would bring us too far. I should mention his optimism about the trend of mass self-communication via blogs (due to the rise of virtuality as a novel accepted dimension of communication). Whereas I look into the semantic and experiential constraints on the messages communicated, he emphasizes their interactive character in opposition to classic news media, see his new preface in: Castells, M. (2011). *The rise of the network society* (Vol. 12). John Wiley & sons. For a fruitful localization of Castells's theory in the urban context: Susser, I. (2002). Manuel Castells: Conceptualizing the city in the information age. In: Castells, M., & Susser, I. (eds.) *The Castells reader on cities and social theory.* Blackwell.

9. Helliwell, John F., Richard Layard, Jeffrey Sachs, and Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, eds. (2020). *World Happiness Report 2020.* New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The report shows the Nordic skew toward freedom (which seems implied in the survey's concept of happiness) and toward trust in the system (which after assessment of Corona policies may impact next year's results).

10. On top of practical challenges for African interviewers to actually reach rural populations away from the main roads (e.g., about half of the Tanzanian population) and address respondents in the local language (a notorious problem noted among others on Afrobarometer.org), the trouble with global surveys is that expressions of discontent can mean different things. The following database ranked Tanzanians as the unhappiest people in the world (Zimbabwe was in second place). Veenhoven, Ruut (2005). *World Database of Happiness, Distributional Findings in Nations.* Erasmus University Rotterdam. <www.worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>. The complaint discourse of farmers, traditionally underplaying their hand so as not to challenge fate, reduces the validity of the survey results, which are better adapted to the worries of jobseekers in Tanzanian towns. Expressing the impasse is also a way of retaining the freedom to divulge the community's collective state of wellbeing. Moreover, in the period before 2005 a 'new generation' of young Tanzanian professionals was expressing their discontent with the present to anticipate a better future. Stroeken, K. (2008). Tanzania's 'new generation': The power and tragedy of a concept. In: Susan Reynolds-Whyte & Sjaak van der Geest (eds.), *African generations: Connections, contrasts, conflicts.* Münster: LIT, p. 303.

11. A scientific type of control, reminding of the simplication we will discuss, is to treat cultural differences as mere variants (particulars) of natural (universal) categories. Besides varying in cultural importance, happiness does not mean the same thing everywhere. For instance, it has no place in the nine basic moods (*rasa*) of the seminal Sanskrit text Rasadhyaya. Shweder, R. & J. Haidt. (2000). The Cultural Psychology of Emotions: Ancient and New. In: M. Lewis & J.M. Haviland-Jones (eds.), *Handbook of Emotions* (2nd ed.), New York: Guilford Press, p. 406.

12. On 'information silos' and retreat, see McIntyre 2018. His book applies the (Western) objectivity-focused dualist terms of rational/irrational, empirical/non-empirical, which does not aim at the root of the problem, as in my view frame analysis (via comparative ethnography) does.

13. Reference will be made in "Chapter Six: Collective Reason" to Jurgen Habermas's depiction of this aspect of communication as 'strategic rationality' versus communicative rationality and Rawls's ideal situation of speech.

14. The journalist Leen Vervaeke did the research. https://www.volkskrant. nl/kijkverder/v/2022/de-oorlog-volgens-weibo~v492759/?referrer=ht tps%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

15. I reinterpret the procedure based on the table 'Bateson's solution to a problem of national character' which combines dominance/submission and exhibitionism/spectatorship in: Barnard, A. (2000). *History and theory in anthropology.* Cambridge University Press, p. 151.

16. For the both psychological and political aspects of denial, which would require the more than two-dimensional de-simplification that I cannot offer here: Cohen, S. (2013). *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering.* John Wiley & Sons.

17. Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction.* Cambridge University Press.

18. I thank Klaas Ruysschaert for the reference on mirroring techniques and the underlying philosophy of Rosenberg's non-violent communication; that the thing bugging anyone about someone else might be indicative of an obstruction one fails to cope with, oneself. The irritation is an opportunity for insight and ending conflict. Society's standard division of culprit and victim, caused or exacerbated by simplification, prevents it. Katie, B., & Mitchell, S. (2008). *Loving What Is: How Four Questions Can Change Your Life.* Random House.

19. Bateson, G. (1958). *Naven: A survey of the problems suggested by a composite picture of the culture of a New Guinea tribe drawn from three points of view.* Stanford University Press, p. 54.

20. "Chapter Fifteen: Phantoms of the Future" ventures to discuss this perception in spacetime (rather than in space alone) as 'pre-ception', an ultero-

ceptive sense. An anthropological point of entry is the healer's active training techniques during initiation, describable as synaesthetics: Stroeken, K. (2008). Sensory shifts and 'synaesthetics' in Sukuma healing. *Ethnos*, *73*(4), 466–484.

21. Descola, P. (2013). *Beyond nature and culture*. University of Chicago Press.

22. De Castro, E. V. (1998). Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 469–488.

23. Taussig, M. (2017). *Mimesis and alterity: A particular history of the senses*. Routledge.

24. Goldenberg, A. and Gross, J.J., 2020. Digital emotion contagion. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 24(4), pp.316–328.

25. On how subreddits (online communities on the social media website Reddit) afford new diversities within politicized sexualities: Foeken, E., & Roberts, S. (2019). Reifying difference: Examining the negotiation of internal diversity on a (post-) lesbian subreddit. *Sexualities*, *22*(7–8), 1268–1287. Evoking the ambivalence of Subreddit in relation to crime and privacy is this piece by: Buozis, M. (2019). Doxing or deliberative democracy? Evidence and digital affordances in the Serial subReddit. *Convergence*, *25*(3), 357–373. On novel, putatively more affective experiences of sexuality digitally enabled, which my essay timorously leaves aside, see: Waldron, E. L. (2017). This FEELS SO REAL! Sense and sexuality in ASMR videos. *First Monday*.

26. For an insightful satire on 'illiberal liberals': McGrath, Tatiana. (2019). *Woke: A guide to social justice*. Constable. The idea of a guide training the reader's speech for a sustainable global future is not far-fetched. For example, young people do not support (anymore) language that is offensive to a religion or minority group: Broadbent, E., Gougoulis, J., Lui, N., Pota, V. and Simons, J., 2017. Generation Z: Global citizenship survey. *What the World's Young People Think and Feel*, *4*, pp. 26–44.

27. https://www.un.org/en/observances/conscience-day

28. See Sadhguru "100% energy". Subramaniam, A., 2010. *Sadhguru, More Than a Life*. Penguin Books India.

29. https://www.businessinsider.com/cia-director-says-putin-is-losing-information-war-over-ukraine-2022-3?r=US&IR=T

30. https://theintercept.com/2022/04/14/russia-ukraine-noam-chomsky-jeremy-scahill/. According to Chomsky, letting go of the Donbas region will be an exit solution for Putin after he suffered more losses than expected. The opposite view is that tolerating another annexation will keep Putin in power and yearning for more conquest. Neither view attempts the frameshift away from war, from the state of violence and emergency, to approach it as a criminal operation planned ahead through years of indoctrination

and corruption by a KGB agent safely hidden in his bunker. Heads of state, EU and international delegates address the Russian foreign minister to negotiate, which further prolongs the charade, instead of asking him live on TV whether his boss has gone mad and he with it. We are fooling ourselves in picturing the Ukraine crisis as the next great battle of a series in a college boy's history books. If the crisis teaches anything it is the downfall of the nation-state, today the cause and sustainer of war. It is telling how obsolete my reflections carrying the surprise of the first months have become by now.

31. Is Putin's invasion of Ukraine an attack on liberal democracy? Friedman's opinion pieces claim so, overestimating ideology and overlooking that Westerners might be defending the underdog in name of the species, so that 'what goes around comes around' (the Democrat's principle that requires no interventionist God) still holds. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/05/opinion/ukraine-war-putin.html https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/opinion/ukraine-russia-putin.html Naturally, numerous voices can be heard on the issue. https://unherd.com/2023/02/is-the-west-escalating-the-ukraine-war/

Chapter Three: Losing the Feel for the Craft

'What's that sound? The humming above. Nothing can describe the powerlessness, the hatred we feel', Nour insists, 'at the constant presence of that thing hovering above our heads. A state peering at us.' Nour is a longtime friend living in Lebanon between the hills near the Israeli border.[1] 'You run outside, shout at it. Go away! It stays or moves a little, an irritating inch, and then goes on humming.'

'Things' can 'tell' us about the direction our society is heading in. The first chapter touched on how 4WD vehicles in European towns simplicate inequality. How does contemporary technology, in this chapter epitomized by the drone, simplicate violence?

Babied

Apple. Audi. Tesla. Mars. A short name for components or ingredients scattered overseas and transported for assembly at high environmental cost. The brand name for a singular thing conceals the complex sequences of just-in-time delivery and untaxed transport routes of the free-trade global economy from which the product's components have been cherry-picked by multinationals. The simplication of production happens at planetary scale, under the banner of shareholder satisfaction. Indirectly, you and me through our government, bank, social security, pension fund and the social contract signed at birth, are shareholders terrified by the slightest disturbance of the system. As shareholders, we do not want to change

the unsustainable yet rewarding arrangement of the welfare state. Not even if the security we hope to obtain from it yields more insecurity. As shareholders of the state, we made a huge loss on the stock exchange after the Covid-19 virus caused a lockdown in China blocking containers in the harbors. 'It takes 2300 pieces to make a Mercedes and one not to.'[2] Corporations prefer the complexity of calculating routes for separate components in function of a resulting fixed price. A simple choice averting fear of the unknown, they assume, is what the customer wants as opposed to the alternative of components produced in ever nearer locations, and prices varying in function of real environmental costs.[3] The customer is a modern citizen, after Gluckman's model, prepared for simplex tasks in a complex network. The complexity of interconnections is not planned. The network's uncontrollable globalism seems inevitable. 'Individual initiatives are proverbial drops in the ocean.' Accordingly, many among us go on consuming unsustainably.

Companies and governments coping with dense networks of polyvocal communication replete with uncertainty want customers to act predictably and as a mass. The post-Fordist company selects truths, conceptualizes and models to simulate a grasp of the complexity surrounding, and make the simulation real in its consequences. In the era of the simplex, therefore, big data reigns. To think of humans as behaving in patterns should serve the prevention of accidents and calamities, and the increase of productivity and consumption. The lust for big data befits the latest postindustrial phase known as surveillance capitalism.[4] What is the unit of big data? An atom of information. A mythical atom, pretending to represent.[5] The 'given', data, would miraculously carry along the context it represents in a massive collection.[6] Big data approach units of information as simplex, reducing reality to a single strand, instrumental in monitoring and steering populations. For technical procedures in genetics and pharmaceutics the number of data frequently yields spectacular results. However, in spite of the enormous investments to manage the zettabytes, big data furnish no accurate predictions of real life events, whether a sports victory or a flu outbreak.[7] Belief in the simplex reflects the wish that life and our future be technical. The results are sobering. Critical minds of the knowledge economy have grown in number, distrusting.

A murmur of polite concern has been heard from the onset about the dark matter of decisions materialized in sophisticated activities and machines; about the market welcoming speedy information-processing unhampered by two-way communication and fickle human intuition;

about production being boosted at the cost of the artisan's customized piece[8]; about supply trailing the greatest demand, which corresponds to the common denominator (e.g., customers disliking effort and wanting instant gratification cheaply, white bread and sweet soda). A novel type of technology dehumanizes, depriving the human of control and the 'burden' of trust:

> My first exposure to the word simplicate was in the 1950's when a NASA engineer told my father that the test pilots were being overwhelmed with situational indicators, and increasingly complex required response sequences. This was leading to dangerously increasing error rates and reduced safety margins, so they had to 'simplicate' the control panels, to re-balance complex equipment failure rates against human error rates, by adding more complex interlock and sequencing circuits, and to reduce the time and motion demands on the pilots. Some pilots objected that they were being 'babied', and losing their 'feel for the craft'.[9]

To be babied sums up the objective of technology marketed for the broadest possible audience so as to make the largest possible profit. The price paid is the feel for the craft. Historically accumulated wisdom vanishes in various domains of life. The privileged witness quoted above recounts a personal impression about the origins of the process. It began with a dilemma. As progress was made in various fields of science, much more information became available on engine performance and weather conditions. Was it not society's duty to integrate the progress into the technology and make flying safer? To use all data available in the operation system, designers have to simplicate. They have to make its circuits more complex so that the use of data will be comparatively simpler. Pilots knew how to read the instruments and controls on the dashboard. They delicately pulled slides and handles across ranges about which they had built up personal experience. They acquired an intuitive feel for a particular aircraft. In simplication, engineers decide for the pilots so that warnings appear and buttons light up to direct the pilot's response in pre-given situations. The overall goal is to reduce contingency. Through the technology, the message is continuously transmitted of our human intuition being a liability. No empirical assessment substantiates this message. Nobody demands that either. The suspicion of human liability in itself prompts the network of designers into action.

Due to automation, the job of flying a plane resembles a computer game, one airline pilot remarks on an online forum. Another pilot compares airline flying to bus driving except that the bus driver at least must stay awake and hold the wheel.[10] Instead of trusting in human intuition, the technology opts to process by itself the greatest amount of information for which no human intervention is required. Mostly we will be happy about that, but in case of system failure or unforeseen challenges the machine 'cannot compute'. It then needs the life-saving capacity of a human. The risk we run of simplication is to have pilots without the skill.

Drones

To expand its market, technological design simplicates. Profit depends on persuading unreached audiences, playing into fears or desires rendering them vulnerable to suggestion. Where no context is necessary the market booms. The biggest booming industry worldwide specializes in the pushing of buttons. Gaming is all about guiding the user through a scenario, giving the impression of limitless options. Gaming in itself is not simplex if it stays within the sphere of leisure. But what about the latest warfare which takes after gaming? The mainly violent plots of the game industry inadvertently train cohorts of teenagers on a daily basis into virtualizing real life. As long as the shift of frames is clear, the training should be welcomed. The shift got blurred a decade ago when the Pentagon committed $19 million to funding a Human Social and Cultural Behavior modeling program, geared toward forecasting human behavior by means of computational data and a software called 'Reactive Information Propagation Planning for Lifelike Exercises' (RIPPLE) developed for the US Army's National Training Center.[11] The center trains ICT soldiers to handle the newest technologies for surveillance and remote attack.

The drone has government personnel pushing controls from remote places to sidestep face-to-face decision-making in situ. The drone does not communicate. It registers and informs HQ about what you are doing. Or it informs you there standing below on what to do. The machine cannot be questioned. Maybe it carries weapons? The drone derives its name from the sound the four little propellers make. Its vague white presence in the sky can be heard hovering overhead. Rapidly covering distance and height, its mobility is almost unlimited, and so too its capacity of targeting missiles. Notice the many features of the drone we can enumerate without having to mention the person behind the console. It's as if that person's

presence is secondary. Drones could do their job without human mediation. Do we not want drones to decide the war in Ukraine?

Remote-controlled apparatuses have existed for decades in assemblages of varying complexity, from toy cars to little helicopters. Drones sell so well of late not because of any remarkable technological advance. Their popularity has risen with the cultural shift known as securitization. Features that previously galvanized the rare amateur have suddenly attracted the interest of professionals from the military and police, with the support of policy-makers. Some amateurs too might be (un)pleasantly surprised today to be able to own a drone with camera that can spy and pry into the neighbors' backyard (despite adapted regulations by the Federal Aviation Administration).[12] For the military, though, an important feature is remoteness. Drones, like robots, do not put the soldier's life at risk. Moreover, they keep the human affect of exchanged glances at bay. The person looking through the camera of the drone cannot be seen. The machine can be an excuse for violence. Hiding the glance facilitates the killing.

Why would an excuse be necessary, one may wonder. Is patriotism not enough justification to kill an enemy 'in time of war'? The army has to take into consideration a range of liabilities to not jeopardize expensive operations. As the globe interconnects, the reasons for empathy increase. Soldiers outgrowing provincialism and making friends on the cosmopolitan internet or backpacking with the Lonely Planet in their hand discover the artificial nature of national borders. Will army generals put the weighing of life-or-death decisions in the hands of cosmopolitans, who on both sides meet and converse in English? Military technology ensures that as little as possible ethical context interferes between detecting a target and eliminating it. Drones are the answer for actions whose execution should not depend on unpredictable communication between striker and target. The technology avoids the affective communication whereby a human striker leaves the expected sphere of exchange, *in casu* warfare, and links up with the existential issue of life and death. The striker and the target originate from distinct spheres, yet just like the explorer in the Amazon forest briefly crossing paths with the animist hunter, they share life, the source of production. That is the other side of the globalist monster we let grow. Because of the ambiguity of globalization and hyper-connectivity, humans more than ever have reason to care about each other. The harm can persist after disconnecting feeling from meaning. The drone prepares the transition.

Contemporary technologies simplicate in that they accomplish a reduction of complexity for ease of use. They impose a simplex, the unidimensional 'ally vs. enemy' which a world citizen must reject. Technology makes the decision for humans so they close off their feelings from the communicative flow. Despite (or because of) the scientific and technological advance of the information society, the ethics of warfare have evolved in a perplexing direction. Combat these days is nocturnal, sometimes urban and mostly erratic in response to the insurgents' attacks, but the newest technologies of allied warfare dehumanize the interventions, thus reinforce the insecurity they are meant to combat. As technologies 'virtualize' human targets, civilian casualties increase. Drones make decisions about life and death less real, but they kill 50 civilians per insurgent.[13] Going by the rate of human collateral damage, 'the war on terror' re-designated by the US administration as 'overseas contingent operations' was indeed contingent, as in subject to pure chance.

Drones have become part of warfare in its latest phase called securitization. The 'war on terror' implemented disproportionate measures to prevent another 9/11 from happening. Civilians became matters of security and monitoring.[14] The advertised goal was to pre-empt unrest in the home region of the attackers. The battlefield separating demarcated sides has been replaced by a dispersed and mixed civilian-military terrain. Through army operations in the Middle East the evolution of warfare has come full circle. The face-to-face combat of the First World War was succeeded in the Second World War by battlefields of largely faceless mobile artillery. The Gulf War introduced stealth and had near-zero allied casualties. The war in Iraq returned to proximity-killing, but with a twist. The face-to-face combat was mediated by images that dehumanize the victim.[15] Night-vision goggles overlaying perception with green-lit squares, digits and directive codes nowadays do much of the detecting at close range for soldiers wearing the goggles during their invasions of civilian houses suspected of holding terrorists. The same objective of avoiding face-to-face contact is attained by armored vehicles making roadside kills. Together with drones steered remotely from behind a pc, the newest war technologies form the sensory equipment to simplicate the weighing of life or death. The simplex 'civilians want efficiency so drones do the killing' covers up an alternative perspective recombining the four meanings: 'drones efficiently kill civilians.' The tensor in Fig. 1 pictures the relation between the two frames in the sphere of warfare.

Fig. 1 Simplex and
tensor of drone warfare

simplex:	drone	=	efficient warfare
tensor:	civilians		efficiency
	drone		killing

The screen of the pc to operate the drone displays boxes. Tick off 'double tap' and the drone will strike twice on the same spot. In between those two rapidly succeeding moments the drone's operator cannot reacquire sight of the area. The fired bomb attracts rescuers including adults that were targeted but missed by the strike. The second bomb kills them in the cloud of dust. Of course, nothing guarantees that rescuers and mourners will be attracted by the first bomb. Moreover, the second strike is automatic instead of an observation-based decision, so in letter the double tap does not violate the army ethic of avoiding civilian casualties. Several US drone strikes killing civilians in this way have been reported among others in Yemen between 2012 and 2014.[16] How could this lethal automation have been initiated under the administration of Barack Obama, whose foreign policy treaded lightly in Democrat fashion?

The double tap originally was an accepted shooting technique for guns. Its purpose was to improve accuracy because the gun barrel fully extends only in the second shot. That condition of use, an 'if', lacks in the drone's double strike. The second bomb will not hit the target 'more' accurately. The double tap exemplifies the simplex for skipping the communication of context and replacing the original purpose of the technique. In letter, the double tap refers to an accepted technique. In spirit, which requires insight in a technology's frame, it lubricates civilian killing. To decontextualize the flow of information is to accelerate the flow and facilitate an expectedly difficult implementation. Also in bureaucratic decisions forbidding the 'dual use' (military and civilian use) of necessities for a population under siege, we capture the spirit of the simplex (see "Chapter Five: Simplex Communication Society").

In the sphere of combat, the contexts of enemy battalions resemble each other. After battle, peace talks are possible. However, the evolution in warfare we noted above points to a widening gap between meaning and feeling, to cultural essentialism and to obstructed feelings of affinity across cultures. Simplexes speed up entropy in society. With uprooted meanings turned into disconnected essences, the cultural basis is lacking for frame-shift and a common sphere of exchange, concretely: peace talks ending

war. The context of a drone strike is not similar to that of a terrorist attack. Both are acts of violence with civilian casualties in the same conflict, but the actors' frames differ fundamentally qua sphere. The insurgent challenges Western hegemony incarnated by the twin towers. The counter-insurgent forestalls the threat of destabilizing the status quo. The objective of the so-called Af-Pac wars in the Swat valley is not a duel with winners and losers. Army generals did not hope for Taliban warriors to give proof of respect for democracy and women's rights to subsequently see the bearded men in kaftan vacate their shelters brandishing a white flag. Nobody counted on the Taliban's alterity vanishing, or had a scenario ready for the war ending. To know why, we must consider a Western view on society's sources of production. The West managed to divide up life.

Geopolitical talk by the US military reduces Muslim communities to foreign 'human terrain systems'. The simplex has attracted some unscrupulous anthropologists hired by the US government's intelligence agencies to dish up cultural 'information' applicable by the army.[17] The 'human terrain system' simplicates cultural perspectives into inimical essences. They make sure that the essentialist definition of culture does not rebound on the Western forces, who are credited as being cultureless, or immune to perspectival bias. The publication of soldier reports from the wars confirm the attitude of coalition forces toward the local population. The geographical locations of 'significant actions' in war are roadsides.[18] References to culture, which dramatically increased in soldier reports since 2007, are invariably of the essentialist kind: 'It is in their culture to ….' The picture emerging about Western armies is that of an invader alienated from the population and mystified by foreign human terrain. Dehumanizing the victim fits within the simplification achieved by technologies of precision bombing and satellite images objectifying communities into targets.

If the battle between nations is a thing of the past, a constant state of war named securitization has entered our economy, technology, geopolitical thought and entertainment.[19] The high number of casualties during and after the invasion in Iraq in 2003, estimated at a total of over 600,000, were 'clean' killings going by the bloodless TV footage and satellite images.[20] More than a hundred thousand civilian casualties fell in the subsequent wars of the allied forces in the region including Afghanistan. The killings were the outcome of a decision process by American and European democracies. Between the decisions and the killings runs an unbroken line. Besides drones, night-vision goggles, armored vehicles and digital

maps of clean destruction, there have been simplexes in media discourse categorizing populations. Eliminating the complexity of life has become a war technology.

The introduction sketched the background for these observations on contemporary warfare. Disconnection between meaning and feeling causes violent meanings to spread like bundles of energy, unhampered by the mediation of feelings. Education, the hard and soft sciences, is supposed to prevent the unintended effects and their escalation. Citizens should know, or better 'intuit', the alarming trends. But have they been educated for that? The central principle the sciences train us in is simplication, a translation esthetically appealing but treacherous. An example is the Cartesian simplication replacing geometric shapes of Euclidean space by algebraic equations. The translation works marvelously as long as one remembers that this deductive reasoning from innate ideas is a rationalist chimera, at best an approximation of reality, because in the empirical world no such perfectly linear shapes can be found.

School is a simplication machine so its epistemology perfected at university cannot counter the simplexes. Confrontation with the empirical, historical situation can, through social analysis. So too can zooming out to the cultural analysis of frames and their shifts. New Age books and therapeutic weekends sometimes help to snap out of our simplex frames, but for a durable effect this spiritual-critical sensitivity has to be integrated in knowledge. The pressure on schooling, on teachers, has been enormous. Besides being warned about the dissociations that technology and media communication stimulate, students have to be convinced of the good outcome of democracy, that each person's limited political impact on the direct environment is for the best, and that knowledge disseminated by arrogant, quarreling scholars is more trustworthy than one's personal experience or the words of a supreme being and religion.

The risk of science reinforcing the simplication machine, by inadvertently stimulating a frame and search of certainty, becomes sharper as we zoom out to events in another region of the world. I discuss a case from eastern Africa where incomplete secondary school education poisons a protective cultural frame without sufficiently planting an alternative. The main motive, though, of ethnographic comparison from other regions of the world is to get insight into the meaning system of humanity. Regional partitions tell a lie, reinforcing simplex society. Humans have shared origins that a speciated history reveals.

Witchcraft as Science

She's medicine. For now, let's say magic. A child with white hair and red eyes is slighted with the slur *zeruzeru* in areas south of Lake Victoria. Everyone recognizes the condition called albinism. Some—an increasing number it is said—also see in such person a highly sought ingredient of magic. Mwanga, light, is among clients a secret Swahili name for the medicine.

In the mid-1990s a series of witch-killings across this region, where farmers speak KiSukuma, had alerted the Tanzanian government. Once these events were supplemented in the 2000s with murders for the medicinal trade of body parts, the government stepped up interventions, forbidding professional healers to perform divinations and rituals.[21] In that region I did my first long-term ethnographic fieldwork from 1995 until 1997.

Strangely enough, the name says it all. Mwanga, light, conveys an inexorable causality. The skin of the victim is light colored, like the diamond the digger seeks in the pit deep under the ground; like the fish lighting up in the dark water of the lake. Diamond-diggers and fishermen, both reputed for the short-term gains they live by, supposedly buy Mwanga. The word alone makes the heart tremble. One must picture as background scene *Ichakaya*, 'where the home dies', the nickname for an unmapped fishery village at the lakeshore with many small bars, *boda boda* taxi motorbikers shouting for customers and out-of-school youth strolling aimlessly, playing distorted radios at maximum volume.[22]

The causality the name Mwanga asserts is something new, for the claimed effect of the magic diverts from what is traditionally expected. No oracle to verify ancestral approval would be needed for Mwanga. The magical recipe has a truth that points to a frame of certainty. The invention of Mwanga is like a nightmare come true. People living with albinism are killed. The murder is a human sacrifice, experienced as an investment with guaranteed outcome: luck. Gone are the frames of experience that users go through in initiation to deserve magic, an initiation and use of medicine that ancestors moreover had to sanction. What has happened in this part of Africa, after the violence of colonization and the neoliberal effects of economic globalization?[23]

'He did not do it', I remember my friend Masanja saying. Unlike most Tanzanian farmers I worked with, he was fluent in Swahili, with a touch of Sukuma mother tongue. During the divinations and medicinal rituals

attended since 1995 until that morning in 2018, he often was the onlooker whispering to me. It had become second nature for him to translate events to me, even when he knew I could follow what was happening. He just wanted to make sure his version somehow entered the papers I would write. Had he spoken English and been brought up in the right milieu he would have been a first-rate academic. A born anthropologist he was, moreover with a joyful disposition, a disarming smile that lights up the immediate vicinity, and with looks invariably appreciated by the ladies. By now Masanja is a tranquil middle-aged elder.

'I don't … believe him', I replied hesitantly. We are talking about our friend, the healer Kalemi.[24] He was incarcerated for three years in the over-crowded prison of Butimba near Mwanza. After his release, Kalemi started a new healing business three hundred kilometers south from the com-pound where we met him first. Masanja had been able to retrace him and discuss what happened to him. Kalemi denied the allegations we had heard, that he had been involved in the murderous trade. His spirit guide did not let him.

But what about the economic pressures and the concomitant change of traditional beliefs, I wondered. Surely, soon after the death of the famous diviner in a neighboring village, who catered for diamond-diggers, her crowd of clients would move his way? They counted on seriously powerful medicine. Kalemi had mainly been treating young people with sexual dys-functions caused by witchcraft, like the one he had cured himself of. Long ago he narrated to us colorfully how he had dreamt the remedy after roaming the bush for weeks. Admittedly, I then saw before me mainly a young man who ran from home and wound up in the bush after leaving secondary school early without job prospects. Masanja and I had been impressed by his welcome when we visited him the first time, as he descended from his traditional hospital at the foot of one of the many rocky hills around Lake Victoria. His friendly face smiling above a flutter-ing black cloak, he addressed an imaginary crowd behind him: 'Did I not just tell you my dream last night that a white man would stop by?'

Younger than us, Kalemi was definitely a flamboyant and charismatic figure. Pretty soon he was famed for his mediumistic oracles that provided detailed diagnoses and remedies, adapted to the new witchcrafts imported from neighboring countries Kenya, Burundi, DR Congo and Zambia in globalizing Africa, which traditional therapies could not grapple with. Why would he not have gone for the next level? The valley had known several years of drought. Terribly dry actually it was all around, compared

to the mid-1990s. Like anybody else's in the region, his first job remained farming. So, yes, I feared he eventually fell for the trade. For Masanja, the point was: 'Kalemi just did not sell that thing, because his ancestor prohibited him.' He knew how strong the bond was, how seriously healers take their dreams about the spirit.

My angle was crime. A gang does the killing. Healers have sadly succumbed to the call of money despite their ethical standards. And, in honesty, was the supposition of business being opposite to their ethics not a product of my upbringing anyway, which the healers gladly enacted before the eyes of the organizing NGO-personnel during government-funded meetings on 'the integration of traditional medicine'? Crime made for a convenient academic explanation because the alternative chilled my (and the NGO's) blood. What if a murderous business is legitimate in a cultural system that considers a community's internal warfare (witchcraft) as the natural state of society? More generally, what do ethics look like in this rural community that does not differentiate the subsystems of politics, economy, religion, education and medicine, their equation excluding the possibility of any 'subsystem' (say medicine) being safeguarded against the norms of another (say business)? There protrudes the idea that frightens. Just imagine that the ancestor speaking through the oracle advises to make money for the family and kill. What if (a large percentage of) Sukuma healers were culturally justified in this way to sacrifice a person living with albinism? And surely, the most mercantile among them master the divinatory tools well enough to manipulate the outcome of oracles. All in all, let's thank the modern state for intervening in this part of Africa?

Interpretation of the cultural system in its own terms can shed another light. It integrates the frame of experience before determining the meaning of a practice, statement or event. Local medicine obeys principles that Mwanga magic brutally transformed. Our basis to speak of 'its own terms' and 'changed principles' is the ethnographic study of frames. The above analysis can go on oscillating between comprehension and shock until we turn back to the ethnography and the frames wherein people experience. A case in point is the principle of uncertainty, following a medicine's dependence on 'blessing', *lubango* in KiSukuma. Mwanga was an invention that seemed to need no blessing. What does this tell us about the frame to experience Mwanga? For one thing, it was an exceptional kind of magic, not at all representative of the Sukuma medicine I had been initiated in. Initiation, which is where a cultural analysis commences, taught to not overrate the witch's craft.[25]

Uncertainty and the Real

The concept of blessing recurs in many cultures and belief systems. Some mean by it an invisible force, others a concrete ancestral spirit, and there are those opting for the abstract 'luck'. An anthropological concept that covers the existential uncertainty caused by any of the three is 'the real'. The real originates outside experience, outside the symbolic order such as language, or the imaginary of our inner life.[26] The biological event of pain, the spark of love or the epiphany in an aesthetic experience overwhelm us as moments of the real. Like the flip of a coin in response to a dilemma, the real imposes itself out of the blue. Whereas symbols fashion an event into reality, the real itself does not obey any law. Its origins are unknown, in analogy with the etymological meaning of the kindred term 'contingency' derived from the Latin *contingere*, 'to arrive'. It arrived. From where, nobody knows.

Whenever a Sukuma farmer, man or woman, looked me in the eye to talk about their recently deceased child or close relative, I saw deep sadness, but I also felt that in this culture, where illness, famine and the death of relatives are regular occurrences in life, the events would not destroy them. Sukuma farmers have a frame to deal with these events because the basic standpoint they have been brought up in is to live with uncertainty. More than using the medicine, one cannot do. To accept the real as a factor in life is a feat of multiplex society.

In simplex society reigns the pretense of certainty. Europeans may boast to their American friends that at least they have a proper system of social security and do not have to accumulate jobs, or panic in case of debilitating illness. The fact of the matter is that both regions of the North separated by the Atlantic ocean are equally unable to live with uncertainty.[27] Both the American dream and its kindred antipode, the European social security system, situate progress in more certainty, in freeing oneself of the fear of natural, economic or other disaster. Initiatives in the domains of schooling, politics, economy, science and religion share the same drive, which fundamentally differs from that in animist, Buddhist or medicinal frames of experience teaching to live with contingency. ("Chapter Eight: Healer or King" will argue that the drive has less to do with Western cultural history than with universal traits of power and political centralization.)

Mwanga is a contemporary invention that changed the principle of medicine. The frame of medicine now evokes something unreal, like

'magic' in the plain sense indeed. 'Magic works. It is African science', a highly educated Pentecostalist told us during our discussions at the peak of the witch-hunts in the late 1990s. I expected Masanja to rejoice as son of a renowned healer. He did not. He laughed. Before him stood a Tanzanian refusing initiation into medicine and unaware of the whims of the ancestor. The preacher forgot that medicine has unpredictable outcomes depending on ancestral blessing. Not only the preacher forgot the difference with medical science. Over the years, under colonial and Western influences of globalization, certain practices of local medicine underwent radical simplication. Mwanga is a case in point. The process is also visible in the witchcraft beliefs of Pentecostalist churches, we will see.[28]

Mwanga magic is a simplex. It one-dimensionally compares medicines in terms of their strength, which is said to be relative to the torture inflicted on the living ingredient. The medicine omits the layer of ancestor, in short the real, a 'sacrifice' which Sukuma medicines require. In principle, to cool (*kupoja*) things down, one must accept the heat (*nsebu*) of sacrifice. This heat of uncertain danger is located in the forest and represented by the ancestral spirit. Participation being the only legitimate way of observing an initiation, Masanja and I had as researchers accumulated cult memberships to observe in different settings the act of ritual power that was sacrifice. We experienced sacrifice in many variants. To enter the society of village elderhood (Bunamhala), I went through a physical ordeal in the bush and had to make a life-long promise. To become Chwezi spirit mediums, we participated in the symbolic transgression of a sexual taboo at the foot of the ancestral termite mount. To perform purification for the Mabasana association, the parents of twins collected personal items representing their home. We saw them put these in a gourd, to be buried at the bottom of a river. In each sacrifice, the presence of the ancestor was verified through an oracle. In Mwanga magic, however, people living with albinism were murdered, without ancestral consent. The ancestor apparently did not need to consent, because the outcome of the act was natural, much like the natural laws Kalemi had learned about in the first years of secondary school before he dropped out. Had he finished school, I am thinking, he would have known about the big 'if', the condition for scientists to be aware of their simpl(if)ication. Science is a controlled act to translate complexity by thinking away layers of meaning.

The torturing of a white body to obtain a white thing sounds like an act of sacrifice. 'Human sacrifice' comes to mind. Yet, culturally, it is the opposite, for sacrifice implies uncertainty of outcome, the unsure arrival of

something blatantly real. The ancestral recipient may choose to reciprocate, or not. In the latter case the patient dies. Sacrifice is not a gift rendering the receiving ancestor indebted to a counter-gift. The possibility of ancestral absence or wrath, which is the actual sacrificial moment within every cooling practice, is missing in the logic of Mwanga magic. Gifts render the recipient beholden. Sacrifice follows another logic. I recognize in the modern African invention of Mwanga the simplication of technology we encountered in drones doing remote-controlled killing. The sacrificial condition missing in the new magic resembles war-technology's preclusion of contingency and face-to-face decisions about life and death. The old magic did not preclude these, and therefore was no simplex. What prevents simplifications from sedimenting into simplexes is to not take an action or a statement at face value. The following cultural comparison of two societies makes frame-aware as well as sphere- and source-conscious before determining meaning.

STATEMENT, FRAME, SPHERE AND SOURCE

Society A: '*Beloved ones bless you, some wish you evil. You feel the power? You feel the curse? Destiny or witches or spirits or god(s) or a higher species, unknown forces play a role in life. Magic exists: "for sure!" Or maybe not.*'

Society B: '*Experiments tell us what is real. The laws of nature. Our knowledge of them can be exact to the point that we predict the future. Invisible forces can be deduced. The regularity of their effects gives them away. Otherwise, the forces and laws do not exist. Without science, humans would fool themselves. There is no magic. For sure.*'

The quotation marks of the first 'for sure' by society A make all the difference. The marks envelop the statement about magic (M in Fig. 2) to frame it with uncertainty (symbolized below by the preceding '?'). Yes, in

frame [statement]		event	sphere		source of production
?[M]	=	hope	medicine	->	peace
![M̶]	=	exclusion	science	->	peace
![M]	=	success	business	->	no peace

Fig. 2 Social, cultural and existential dimensions of magic

this society almost everybody has been trained into medicine or knows something about it. Soft magic.

Does the statement without quotation marks in Society B have no frame? Of course not, every statement has. Scientific claims are formulated in rationally purified terms or via empirically based percentages of probability, in such a way that the claim or probability can be accompanied by a frame of certainty (symbolized by the preceding '!'). The frame reflects one's intention. A scientist strives for absolute truth.

According to the scientist's pure reason, believers in magic are wrong (strikethrough M, ~~M~~). Yet, what happens when that same frame of certainty envelops the statement that magic exists? Then the statement is unmediated and appears frameless, like a simplex. That is the scheme's third case which represents Mwanga. Hard magic. Horrific. Like murder by the drone and double tab.

We cannot understand the effect of a statement unless we consider its frame. Applying the frame of uncertainty to the belief in magic results in hope among the users in the domain of medicine. Applying the frame of certainty to the disbelief in magic leads to exclusion in the domain of science, and marginalizes the believers in magic. The exclusion of magic out of caution in the second statement does not exhibit the tolerance of the first statement's *live and let live* (no harm no foul). Why have we learned to reject it outright? Answer: the scientific frame transmitted in society B does not consider the frames when judging the statements. Science inclines to statements that are frameless; that is the whole point of delimiting a specialization.

The macroscale of the sphere and the sources of production, a third and fourth element next to statement and frame, co-determine what an event means (see last two columns in Fig. 2). Any statement or behavior affects a section of the social network, the spatially and temporally wider effects of an event. The certainty frame permits to standardize behavior in a sphere. It has the advantage of making people reliable. By advantage I mean the effect on a source of production such as peace. Many similar activities of trading and processing can occur in parallel and join each other at some stage without requiring communication and negotiation every time. It is courageous—a courage a modernized society can pride itself on—to seek and formulate statements that everyone can apply in a sphere of exchange irrespective of context. It is a pressure that the knowledge society imposes on itself: to combat contingency, the real. Note that

society A and society B are equally capable of keeping society together and violence at bay. Their frames and spheres differ, but the outcome is similar in protecting peace.

After the comparison between societies A and B, what to think of the third possibility? The horror is ![M]: people blindly believing in magic. They lost the feel for the witch's craft. This premodern society imagined by moderns never existed, until today. Mwanga realizes it in Africa. And so does post-knowledge society, I argue. Both instantiate simplex society.

Of course, some extenuating circumstances should be mentioned. The complex economic situation around buzzling Lake Victoria calls for inventive solutions by the underprivileged to get a piece of the pie. The use of magic is a welcome simplification, simplifying access to capital through a ritual obeying the harsh logic of capital. The simplification spawned a simplex because of the sphere it ended up in, which undermined frameshift and people's wise sense of contingency. The sphere, which together with statement and frame determines the meaning of an event, is the market in a medicinal network incorporating illicit businesses from Tanzania and neighboring Burundi and Zambia. The market is a sphere tending toward massification and institutionalization of items because of rumor and media attention. All six aspects of the simplex are involved (see "Chapter Five: Simplex Communication Society"). In the famous words of Evans-Pritchard, cited by Gluckman and later the Comaroffs, 'new situations demand new magic'.[29] Everybody needs hard magic in the new economic sphere of late capitalism.

The convergence of the same process in areas far apart, the US, Europe and rural Africa, sets one thinking. Are we observing in humanity at large a growing addiction to the simplex? The information society and its social network specialize in informing to influence. They idealize the reliability of machines. Living with uncertainty—with contingency or imperceptible factors—is a capacity that humans are no longer initiated and trained in. Does this entail the entropy of feeling meaning? We have no indication of the contemporary psyche being more frightened and less empathic, blocking out sentiments of confidence and compassion, for instance. In the early phase of the Covid epidemic, civilians volunteered and helped each other out, more than expected. The question is comparable to the perennial issue debated by psychologists whether cruel games make children more violent.[30] The jury is out, do not hold your breath, because they

might be asking the wrong question. The network of events and communications that constitute society has roughened without the psyche needing to follow suit.[31] The very fact of society becoming crueler, in security measures, medical ethics and games of leisure, permits the psyche to retain its sensitivities. The price is 'just' a mind's disconnection from reality. Or in my analytical terms: our spheres are unmoored from the sources of production. The cruelty against the duped is not less when the simplexes of the mind such as negative framing have been eradicated while the simplexes of the world, the bubbles that spheres have become, tolerate the injustice elsewhere.

Among Sukuma farmers, medicine is an art taught to all members since the first initiation. In contrast, the magic that kills people living with albinism does not require initiation because draws on a natural law. The law, unknown to Sukuma tradition, partakes of an 'African science'. The user need not know the details of the recipe. Just swallow it, like pushing a button. The moral cost is high but the outcome guaranteed. Mwanga south of the equator reproduces the simplication the whole world is experiencing. The omission of sacrifice in magic epitomizes communication without mediation. The illusion of unmediated communication threatens to destroy society from within.

What do the human disasters of the past century have in common? At the root of impasse and violence lay not the statements, the irrational premises which better knowledge resolves, but the frame, the perspective of certainty. That endangers life when applied to the wrong premise. Would the holocaust have been possible if membership of the nation had not been seen as objective?[32] The genocide in the highly Christianized Rwanda of the early 1990s is not imaginable without the killers' frame of certainty, in this case about the other ethnicity, Hutu or Tutsi. The cultural systems of Christianity and Rwandan kingship merged into a frame, a rigidifying force. The frame was unique in Africa for pretty much schooling away the population's belief in magic and traditional healing.[33] At exceptional moments of crisis when a witch is identified to be killed, the frame of pure reason emerges. A simplex society is a special case, constantly in such state of self-inflicted crisis. A tensor can remedy, as proposed in the de-simplication of "Chapter Two: Frameshift".

Figure 2 compared statements seen within their frame from a culture, observed as an event in a sphere within humanity, affecting people's energy

via a source of production. The various semantic layers should be taken into account to interpret the event. To make up our minds and judge the good of a practice, I underlined the source of production, which evokes humanity as a sphere parallel to local culture. Consider a recent case illustrating why sound policy involves all dimensions. A minister's refusal to comply with the requests of asylum seekers on hunger strike to regularize their status as residents shocked the media. Newspaper pictures showed the emaciated bodies of blindfolded refugees lying bare-chested on the cobblestones of a Brussels market square. Some of them could die.[34] If we connect the political frame of the minister's statement to the sphere of social engineering, which would be his job, then we understand his fear of lenience as a precedent attracting more asylum seekers and human trafficking. The statement 'asylum seekers are in need' summoned us to regularize, also in combination with the frame 'EU has the means', but not when broadening the sphere to the nation and considering the impact on the social network and hardening politics: 'increased illegal immigration will gravely unsettle EU voters.'

The feeling of meaning transforms by comprising the third dimension, that of life. What is the relevant sphere to protect life? The opponents of regularization, like the minister, assume that to be the nation-state. It once was, but globalization has extended the relevant sphere to the globe. Hence the argument changes. Asylum seekers, whether those reaching an EU country or those who did not and live elsewhere, belong as much as anybody else to all corners of the planet. The most ethical position is the one integrating all dimensions, in this case being true to the actual situation of a globalized world. Therefore, the future will be to regularize the seeking. It will bring humanity back to its origins, when land was part of the commons. Perhaps humans can intuit this speciated history and therefore feel that to be most ethical. At this stage, the electoral system whereupon a minister depends is national, so not adapted. In Stiglitz's words, economic globalization never got to be political.[35] To make humanity the relevant sphere for life again is the task ahead. The next chapter shows the civilizational work undertaken to achieve the contrary, imagining each local sphere, 'culture', to have a separate source of production, without the species in parallel connecting the sources.

Notes

1. Names are anonymized. The conversation took place but exceptionally not in my presence. It was recounted to me by the speaker afterward. I did not take this liberty for the other vignettes.
2. The quote comes from Ewald Engelen in < https://www.demorgen.be/meningen/het-coronavirus-luidt-het-einde-van-de-globalisering-in~bb89a3a7/> See also: Engelen, E., Froud, J., Johal, S., Salento, A., & Williams, K. (2017). The grounded city: from competitivity to the foundational economy. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, *10*(3), 407–423.
3. Thieme, M., & Engelen, E. (2016). *De kanarie in de kolenmijn.* Prometheus. Peersman, G., & Schoors, K. (2012). *De perfecte storm. Hoe de economische crisis de wereld overviel en vooral: hoe we eruit geraken.* Borgerhoff & Lamberigts, Ghent.
4. Zuboff, S. 2019. *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power.* Profile books.
5. See the earlier reference to Wittgenstein's critique of his and Bertrand Russell's logical positivism.
6. The care for frameshift dovetails with the posthumanist critique on the 'world-making' of big data pretending to represent reality (framelessly). Mauthner, N.S., 2019. Toward a posthumanist ethics of qualitative research in a big data era. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *63*(6), pp.669–698.
7. For a critique: Snijders, C. et al. (2012). 'Big Data': Big gaps of knowledge in the field of Internet. *International Journal of Internet Science* 7: 1–5.
8. Feenberg (1999) describes this critical position supported by Heidegger as substantivism.
9. Boldklub-PJs 19:59, 25 February 2011, on <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Talk:simplicate>
10. <https://www.airlinepilotforums.com/money-talk/20210-pilots-becoming-bus-drivers.html>
11. González, R. (2012). World in a Bottle: Prognosticating Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. *War, Technology, Anthropology* (Ed. K. Stroeken), 45–61. Berghahn Books.
12. <https://techguided.com/20-reasons-why-you-should-buy-a-drone/>
13. Sluka, J. 2012. Drones in the Tribal Zone: Virtual War and Losing Hearts and Minds in the Af-Pak War. *War, Technology, Anthropology.* For an update in the region: Gusterson, H., 2019. Drone warfare in Waziristan and the new military humanism. *Current Anthropology*, *60*(S19), pp.S77–S86.
14. On how the (simplex) tendency penetrated the Global South, see among others the contribution on Uganda by Finnström: Whitehead, N.L. and Finnström, S. eds., 2013. *Virtual war and magical death: technologies and imaginaries for terror and killing.* Duke University Press.

15. Robben, A. C. (2012). The dead of night: Chaos and spectacide of nocturnal combat in the Iraq war. *War Technology Anthropology*, 34–44.

16. <https://mwatana.org/en/waiting-for-justice/>

17. Price, D. H. (2011). *Weaponizing anthropology: Social science in service of the militarized state*. ak Press.

18. Over 300,000 soldier reports were uploaded on www.Wikileaks.org. For a volume I edited the site was checked for the twenty incidents rated as most significant by WikiLeaks visitors. 'War Diary: Afghanistan War Logs', consulted on July 25, 2010 at http://wikileaks.ch/ and 'War Diary: Iraq War Logs', on October 22, 2010 at http://wikileaks.ch/.

19. On the global war, see our later reference to Hardt and Negri (2004).

20. The adapted number has been reported by Burnham, G. et al. 2006. Mortality after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-Sectional Cluster Sample Survey. *Lancet* 368: 1421–1428.

21. Stroeken, K. (2010). *Moral power: the magic of witchcraft* (Vol. 9). Berghahn Books.

22. Stroeken, K., 2013. War at large: miner magic and the carrion system. In *Virtual war and magical death: technologies and imaginaries for terror and killing* (pp. 234–250). Duke University Press.

23. Weiss, B., 1998. Electric vampires: Haya rumours of the commodified body. *Bodies and persons: comparative perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*, pp.172–194. Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L., 1999. Occult economies and the violence of abstraction: notes from the South African postcolony. *American ethnologist*, *26*(2), pp.279–303.

24. Like Masanja, Kalemi is not the person's real name.

25. At least as important in the next phase is the opportunity to share one's impressions with a senior anthropologist who has spent his youth in the region and thus speaks the language much better. Per Brandström is the one I have to thank for ongoing joint reflection. Of particular interest is his monograph describing the vigilante perspective on Sukuma witchcraft and peace. Brandström, P., 2021. *Mhola–The Utopia of Peace: An Ethnographic Exploration of the Sungusungu Movement in Tanzania*. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

26. An insightful introduction to Lacan's triad is by Grosz, E. (2002). *Jacques Lacan: A feminist introduction*. Routledge.

27. This quite plainly inverts the seminal notion that 'pre-moderns' cannot live with contingency while 'moderns' can, see: Beck, U., A. Giddens and S. Lash. 1994. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

28. "Chapter Thirteen: Godwork" is dedicated to the critique while acknowledging the adaptiveness of that charismatic movement to the global process.

29. Evans-Pritchard, Edward E. 1937 *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.513.

30. According to a policy statement in 2015 by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), playing violent video games leads to more aggressive behaviors and detracts from empathy. Studies proving the contrary are less published.   <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/evidence-based-living/201807/do-violent-video-games-make-kids-more-violent>

31. I am indebted to Dirk Maetens for reminding me often that according to Luhmann (in *Ecological Communication*) this is a systemic feature: exchange between social system and psychic system is difficult, an 'inter-penetration' at best.

32. That is the constructivist response to primordialism. Bayar, M., 2009. Reconsidering primordialism: an alternative approach to the study of ethnicity. *Ethnic and racial studies*, *32*(9), pp.1639–1657.

33. Intense Christianization, begun by zealous colonial missionaries, marked Rwanda to the extent that the population scored only 0.1% on 'traditional indigenous belief' in the early 1990s (Stroeken 2012: 27, 190). However, the Rwandan tradition of centralization, independently from Christianity, has to be factored in to understand the extent. Longman, T., 2017. *Memory and justice in post-genocide Rwanda*. Cambridge University Press.

34. On minister Mahdi and the hunger strike that headlined for a month: https://www.revuepolitique.be/sans-papiers-pas-sans-voix/

35. Stiglitz, J.E., 2017. *Globalization and its discontents revisited: Anti-globalization in the era of Trump*. WW Norton.

Chapter Four: The Human Experiment

'His answer is wrong.' The test subject of the experiment hesitates after hearing the words of the instructor, for the implication is that he should pull the next lever. Behind the glass screen he sees the respondent, tied to a chair and barely recovered from the previous electric shock that had him screaming in agony. The agreement was that each incorrect answer to the quiz would be sanctioned with an electric shock of higher voltage. The subject stares at the next lever, the last one remaining with the highest discharge. 'Lethal shock', the sign above it warns in red capitals. After a little hesitation, the subject pulls the lever. Follows a sharp screech by the respondent behind the screen. Convulsions and silence. The respondent died right then, as far as the subject knew. Only afterward did the subject get to hear that this was an experiment and the electric discharges were staged. The instructor and the respondent in the chair were actors.

The scene is from the notorious Milgram experiment in 1961 in the then burgeoning field of social psychology which showed common people, you and I, to be capable of extreme acts of obedience in the presence of authority: 'I did as I was ordered to.'[1] The laboratory could have been a concentration camp. Realizing that many forms of authority were competing in the experiment, including religious commandments for the believer, a later analysis emphasized that participants identified with the goals of science. The adapted tenet stated that individuals conform to the group and quickly pick up its institutions. A recent re-analysis further revealed the importance of context. Participants trusted that the scientists

knew what they were doing and so they deferred their responsibility.[2] The role of context further nuances the thesis on individuals conforming. Yet, were the participants dealing with one context juxtaposed to the next, neither of which would be more 'ethical' or less 'dehumanizing'? The re-analyses place perspectives in a matrix. They keep the (tensorial) question of humanity latent.

In the Milgram experiment, the subjects make abstraction of the wider reality they partake of. They differentiate spheres and equate the scientific sphere they are in with a frame of experience they were not yet acquainted with. All humans partake of the production source 'knowledge', but in the lab the production transforms into science. The lab (as far as the subjects know) has no competing frame that in the name of humanity could prevent the killing. You and I may learn from this experiment that an 'immoral' act arises from a 'dehumanizing' context, but those terms between quotation marks are not objective, so that is not how the experimenters, or the social sciences at large, put it. They abide by the neutral terms of objective representation to contend that morality is contextually determined. A subtle nuance of the claim perhaps but momentous in its consequences because thus they do not privilege one experience of context as more real or true. Basically, the scientist should be so objective as to accept that the guards of Auschwitz had their own morality.

Postmodern thought continued on this track with a position on objectivity so advanced it became cultural relativism. What the theory about simplexes warns about is precisely this reasoning. Staying within a frame as if no competing frames exist is the deal that scientists make to play the game of their particular discipline. Ceteris paribus, 'other things being equal', reality is so and so, as if these other things do not keep on influencing the things studied as well as each other. The scientific method has to bar events in order to specialize and establish specific patterns (e.g., chemical versus social effects). The film of events is reconstructed as a succession of snapshots because the flow itself cannot be captured in all its parallel and interacting layers. But should we therefore deny the existence of the flow?

The answer lies in the participants' reaction after the experiment. They seek an explanation for their actions. What they did was not right, they sense in retrospect. They are aware that the lab or the camp made abstraction of the wider reality. Yes, they were in a scientific laboratory, a separate sphere of exchange with its own frame and rules of conduct, and their conduct was meaningful in that subsystem, but after the experiment they worried about how their feelings had dissociated from their conduct. The

dissociation sustained the meaning expected in that sphere. To follow orders is a simplex, a frame concealing alternatives. Its reduction of complexity permits immediate action, the pulling of the lever. The simplex persuades that there is no frame to step out of. Moreover, I argue next, the sphere of the lab was severed from life, the source of production. Hence the subject could kill. I thus question the validity of the experiment, which true to life should be tensorial.

The subjects dehumanized themselves because the sphere they participated in got untied from 'humanity', a parallel sphere, the species. By untied I mean that the subjects did not believe to directly tap into and affect the sources of production. The military has its own hierarchy, law and military police to keep order. The soldiers know that outside the barracks other norms apply. They are aware of the plurality of spheres. That very plurality implies a level of reality where all spheres exist. Like the Spanish settler hesitating at the Amazon river and Putin choosing his lies, humans are aware of there being a world of the species parallel to that specific context. This 'human' sphere implies frames and a 'conscience' ruling out extreme cultural relativism. A species has its rights, as in the universality envisaged by 'human rights'. What humanity's frames are has to be intuited and can be conflictual. Humans, educated and non-educated, equally access this source. Spheres vary in their obstruction to access. How?

The figures above systematically combined four meanings in a matrix. A recombination of the meanings resulted every time in an alternative frame, among others shifting from British to American education, from animism to naturalism, from suspicion of paranoia to the mechanism of projection, and back.[3] For each set of frames I could have drawn the sphere (which we will pay more attention to later on): the train compartment, a riverbed, an office. Irrespective of what happens in the sphere, it can be said that the frames are in tension. This tense relation expressed by the crossed diagonals is the third dimension constituting a tensor. They 'stretch' social space in different directions. The tensor, the relation between frames, does not belong to the sphere like the frames do. The tensor presupposes a parallel system of meaning the speakers can shift to. This sphere comparing frames is the one of humanity that the subjects of the Milgram experiment should have entered and alternated with from the lab, their local sphere, so as not to pull the lever. That, I believe, is what they say when regretting to have virtually killed the respondent. Had they mastered the tensor, they would not have been so readily stuck in the matrix, a certain relation between frames in the lab. That makes the study of tensors societally relevant. In the tensor we exit the matrix.

Think of the company manager's simplex answer to ecologists denouncing 'business as usual'. 'There is no other way' sustains the status quo. The CEO and politician proclaiming the hegemony of a matrix are contradicted by the tensor, namely by one person enacting the alternative frame. A man living high up in a pine tree to protect the Red Woods in California may eventually only save this tree in his lifetime, but his living proof that there is another way will contradict the simplex as long as he is remembered or the energy of his deed has been transmitted to adepts and things.[4] Off-grid communities embody exceptions to the rule. The rule and its exceptions are two matrices forming a tensor (like living up in the tree) which itself keeps the sphere of humanity in sight and prevents the cutting apart of that sphere. Similarly, the attempt to comprehend another culture offers an antidote to cultural imperialism by acknowledging diversity at one level and affinity at another level.

Even in its most subjective, postmodern or poetic rendering, a cultural analysis uses a language democratically accessible for future generations. Hence it presumes a sphere common to humanity, populated by tensors. To call to mind the figures in the introduction, a description of frames in tension 'feels meaning'. It does so in the vertical direction where (horizontally formed) meanings in frames and cultures of humanity interrelate. The tension is released by vertically and horizontally opening up. The tensor extends to the human species but emerges in local spheres, therefore speaks of moralities in the plural as well as relating them to life in the singular (and its various species) to discuss viability.

SUPERIORITY OF THE WEIRD

Take 2. Maybe the experimenters were wrong for another reason than their arrogated objectivity. Why do we prefer to believe that they discovered a universal truth about the blind obedience and cruelty of humans? Does the alternative disconcert too much, that the experimental results characterize an epoch and place? That would mean the results reveal a problematic evolution in society: just as science and education progress, humans become more manipulable. What if the lab we deem appropriate to comprehend ourselves echoes the falling apart of a particular lifeworld? After that, a set of simplexes replaced the multiplex. Subjects disconnected affectively. That would mean Western society is in a state of entropy, and this book is an entropology.

The abstraction of humanity and the ruin of empathy in the setup of the lab could not have come up in just any cultural system. The subjects were a uniform bunch, not at all representing various cultures, so the valuable insight that humans behave similarly in authority contexts was not tested. Rather than revealing something about human nature, the Milgram experiment made a discovery about the subjects' society in the Global North. For one thing, it demonstrated the extent to which the WEIRD—white educated industrialized rich democratic—test subjects of psychology (mostly first year university students) have been brought up to simplicate populations and let these simplications fester into simplexes.[5] As former colonial empire or superpower, their societies carry within themselves the separation of humanity. They imagine a culture with a superior mode of production. The marginalization of other modes of production as tapping from inferior sources requires an emotionally costly leap of faith (Remember humanity's paleolithic bliss). What better place to reproduce the act of reductionism than the laboratory? The experiment pretends to disinter human nature in its bare, unpolished state, while it did not check whether a research population of another culture may have been not that easily manipulated.

Secondly, the experiment looks for our calculable inner program, as if contingent elements of behavior are not part of the human. Should the results not consider the subjects that did not push the button, or the times they didn't, had they been given the chance? To reply that the experiment reveals how far 'the' human can go is to maintain the simplex trope of a human nature to be civilized by culture. Let me repeat the Milgram experiment five times, what makes me human is the diversity in responses. The one time I went too far I will remember most. Does that one act alone reflect my inner nature? The extreme act will strike me as extraordinary, a momentary lapse of self, a glitch of neurons. Experiments try to isolate patterns from spheres ruled by chance as if only patterns would be real. The lab, which is a local sphere, would reveal the universal, say, humanity. Experiments magically presume laws to be out there, of nature on which we as humans have to impose our culture; to 'master our instincts'.

The experiment's setup of a one-dimensional rapport between error and sanction does not seem arbitrary either. It sustained a state of self-inflicted violence that the test persons were already imbued with in their society and drew energy from to exclude ('kill') those categorized as other or inferior. The command gratified the need to ignore human affinity with the test subject. The experiment was salient for reflecting a local structure

of governance in the Global North, which installed a frame of superiority versus inferiority on which competing citizens model themselves. To feel superior, another human category has to be invented that can be labeled and excluded. Consider the subject impressed by the scientists in their white coats. The hierarchy fits within a logic of progress that detaches the sphere of the lab from 'knowledge', which is a production source the subjects normally are familiar with and should have some say over. The next two sections investigate the detachment, concluding that Milgram inadvertently illustrated the demonization the belief in superiority requires. To think that the experiment revealed the nature of humans is the simplex we should get rid of.[6] Human nature is not evil. The separation of humanity into production sources is. How did that simplex come about?

Demonization: A Genealogy of Simplexes

No better way to introduce the society of simplexes than ethnic stereotypes. If successful, stereotypes make listeners conform to a belief that presents subjective motive as rational. The genocide of Jews in World War II would not have been possible without stereotyping. Antisemitism had a long history. It goes back to ancient Greece.[7] But the passage of time whereby certain beliefs turn into prejudices after generations of socialization does not in itself account for the emotion that leads to mass murder. The demonizing of a group or 'race' is not a reflex solely born from bad upbringing. Excluding a category of people from society points to an interest. Emotions get attached to it. The next paragraphs decode the cultural constructions by Western 'civilization', how it constrained exchange with other societies and became more ferocious from it through a lie.

The aim of the simplex is to manipulate. That is more than what stereotypes generally do, for these we attribute to lack of self-criticism. Stronger than the effect of indoctrination is the simplex's gratification of the listener's improper need to live a lie. The simplex evokes a fundamental emotional issue which it resolves in the same go. The Jewish diaspora's norms possibly deviating from local norms did not set the group apart from another immigrated group. But their history as a 'chosen people' according to the Christians' Old Testament did. And so did the new businesses, intellectual creativity or art they brought to a town. They performed ancient ceremonies that still exist and Christ himself underwent. The particular blessing that Jewish difference meant for a community,

often underlined by spatial concentration of residence and cultural production, could also be perceived as a threat. Especially in a period of widespread crisis did it remind of the host community's lack, and of the nemesis to the latter's claim of civilizational (and religious) superiority. The simplex carries unspoken ambivalence because it severs the strong connection with the feeling that gave rise to it. Rumors spread in the community about the threat presented by a certain minority because of its deviance: Jews would lack the community's morality. This one-layered idea of norm versus deviance conflates four meanings which recombined tell us that the larger community felt threatened because lacked something that the minority possessed and was jealously regarded for.

The tensor in Fig. 1 first translates the simplex (the binarity of norm versus deviance) into terms used in public discourse: 'the community is threatened' (first column) and 'the minority is lacking something' (second column). The diagonals across the rows subsequently reveal what is at stake in the prevalent discourse by recombining the meanings. The diagonals are read from left above to right below and then from right above to left below: 'the community is lacking, a minority is threatened' in $tensor_1$. Over time the terms evolve: 'the community is indebted, the source of life (labor) suffers' in $tensor_2$.

The tensor schematizes the relation between two frames of experience on how communities deal with difference. The public frame conflicts with


Fig. 1   The civilizational simplex of demonization (in two steps)

unspoken feelings of shared humanity, reminiscent of the Spanish settler hesitating about the Amerindian's inquiries. At the heart of European modernity and its civilizational project resides this conflict. In other words, a simplex was built on the first binarity and thus concealed the initial tension, which only comes into view by relating the two tensors. Simplex$_1$ in Fig. 1 transforms into simplex$_2$, a positive distinction formulated from the point of view of the educated: 'We can civilize the primitive.' Tensor$_2$ unscrambles the affective dimension juxtaposing in the first column the community suffering and in the second column those indebted for it. The diagonals reverse the relations between meanings to show the actual tension. The community is indebted to a category of people that suffer. They are the source of life, (religious) status, land or (human) resource. How to live with this indebtedness? The modern European projected indebtedness onto the source by imparting 'civilization'. The cost of the lie showed in the intense emotion of the projectors. Pogroms. Holocaust. Racism. Social analysis can elicit personal interests and structural inequalities, while cultural analysis contextualizes the beliefs, but neither explains the energy of the inspiration. The analysis needs life-sensing, an existential approach, which says: discriminated are those whose existence one depends on.

My point is that the victim of demonization is not arbitrarily chosen. Key to this insight is the intense emotion involved in the simplex persuading into action, the amazing endeavor of modern civilization to venture overseas, leave no stone unturned to assimilate difference and the unknown, and educate, all with that same urgency. Where does the simplex draw its energy from? From unrest, discomfort (*Unbehagen* in German), guilt. About its lie: the victim—the 'simplicated'—of exclusion is the very one on whose existence the 'simplicator' depends. Compare the typical identity of the suspect, 'enemy' or 'witch', in various societies, modern and premodern: the one we have to thank, for our life or superior status, comes to mind first as the cause of evil, especially in case of misfortune, self-doubt or powerlessness.[8] To not carry the burden of responsibility for these myself, I will identify some (m)other. The archetypal witch in Europe was female, and more exactly an elderly woman mastering the traditional knowledge of medicine that modernity made a clean break with but descended from.[9] The simplex 'S/he is a witch' during the witch craze preceding modernity illustrates the affective dimension in everyday speech about deviants and later about the primitive/uncivilized. The mother that bred life can take life back. The victim and object of simplication, focus of suspicion, weighs on the group as long as the members do not confront

their feelings regarding the indebtedness. The mobilized members pretend to speak for the whole community when excluding the suspect of deviance. In the chapter on perpetual war, we heard the South silenced by the North. Why? Because of its ambiguous position as provider of the resources for the North's privileges. Anti-woke voices drown out what they are really doing: recasting the subject into a source of production.

Apartheid victimized blacks through a segregation from which South African landowners profited. As autochthones and factory workers, blacks were the source of white wealth. A simplex such as 'race' or 'civilization' excluded them from what they produced. Also colonial regimes developed sophisticated bureaucratic languages administering simplexes.[10] Native Americans and Australian aboriginals living in reserves remind us of the emotional reasons the powerful classes had for segregating the local populations in America and Australia. The culture of Western immigrants was to intervene in the commons. They had a strong tradition of autochthony, which is ownership over land, hence ending free access of humans to that source of production. The white newcomers sensed their indebtedness to the land's first peoples. It is a structural indebtedness, persisting and irremediable. How to deal with that? Local populations for their part counted on exchange, for instance in the form of a blood pact. That the settler might learn from the animist was a possibility too. Instead, what prevailed in practice was the binarity of self and other. A cultural inversion invaded the territory of the autochthone. Whatever the choice later by the (ex-) colonizer, to have cultures interacting or segregated, or to speak of no cultures at all and only of society at large, the first simplex this later choice envelops is that of norm(al) versus deviance. 'Another race', 'another culture' and 'another society' are subsequent simplifications that have not come to terms with the first simplex they built on. Before delving into this simplex, we should untangle the many forming the edifice.

The simplex draws its energy from the tensor it has compressed. The Dalit on the lowest stratum of castes in India are 'outcasts', 'untouchables', because of the system's indebtedness to them. Ever since the religious prohibition on beef, they performed menial tasks of animal slaughter and leatherworking that the system considered polluting, 'disgusting', but could not do without.[11] If we conflate each sphere (a caste) with a frame (duty and status), the discriminatory institution will seem mere tradition, its psychological costs obscured.[12] Castes divide up life's sources of production into modes of production, simplifying relationships by countering and replacing the multiplex reality of overlapping roles. Whatever the

origin may be of the institution, such as formalizing an existing division of tasks, in recent history it has artificially separated the social network into a number of spheres and glued a certain frame to each. The practice sediments a simplification, and may therefore be said to normalize an unsustainable structure.

The tensor schematizing the entanglement of one simplex with another brings out the community's ambivalent dependence on a minority, the source of riches. Immigrant labor, African, North-American, Dalit, aboriginal and Amerindian autochthones, are constructed into lesser copies of the invader or exploiter, moreover indebted to the latter's education and development (tensor$_2$). A key narrative depicts whites sojourning in pristine territory to occupy the land, at high toll because of the explorers succumbing to local viruses and heat; teaching the 'primitive' inhabitants and bringing the potential of land and people to fruition.[13] It is a small step from the distinction between civilized and primitive to that between the developed and the un(der)developed. Each refers to a linear evolution and a relation of superiority/inferiority whereby the first must help. 'Cooperation' the relation was called afterward.

Why not just give money to the poor? Why were social cash transfers not the foremost pragmatic response coming to mind in cooperation?[14] Given the exploiter's idea of ownership, the unacknowledged indebtedness to the autochthone population is sensed as structural. It cannot be remedied through exchange such as a cash transfer, which implies membership of the same (economic) sphere. A frame has to be imposed that redefines the relation with the autochthones. Basically, the choice was made between two extreme options, which correspond to progressive and conservative views. The autochthones have to be either newcomers to the exploiter's frame of experience, which requires educating them into the frame, or eternal outsiders that could never belong to the exploiter's sphere. The first (progressive) option surreptitiously places the autochthone in an inferior position, of having to break with a dark past of superstition, before internalizing the modern frame of Enlightenment and human rights through proper education. The newly 'evolved' are now forever indebted. The second option, exclusion, safeguards the elitist sphere. A unifying concept of humanity would have been an effective obstacle to exploitation after first contact. Well, alas. Enter 'race'. Enter the colonizer's categorization of societies. It meant a bewitchment comparable to the Maori concept of *hau*, a curse haunting a community member unable to return a favor. Denied membership into the new community,

the haunted may escape the curse but are treated as innocent and inferior (Lévi-Strauss's encompassing 'meaning system' combatted that). An alternative to this segregation is to 'develop' the giver, who thanks to the interiorized frame can eventually participate in the sphere. True, the progressive scholars considered the givers as members of their community. Yet, were they interested in the givers' frames to transform European culture? The simplex of normal/deviant was taken for granted. On top of it grew the belief in the superiority of Western civilization. Cultural relativism prevented the exchange.

The simplication that other societies are underdeveloped, rather than that their cultures have logics to learn from, is possible thanks to the simplex that each sphere, initially named 'tribe', coincides with a separate source of production. This source has been called a culture. By this is not meant a cultural system, as in a set of reference frames, ideas and practices that members of a society could adhere to in different degrees and combinations. No, each 'culture' supposedly stands for a source of production, with its own standard of life. The potential for legitimation is clear. Without common human standards, the colonized, later named the Global South, can be exploited. Child labor, corporal punishment and weekend work are treated as locally common cultural features, which refer back to the 'primitive' source of production. The 'civilized' have their own source based on democratic rights. Other cultures should be approached with pluralism and with charity in the form of humanitarian aid, as Fassin demonstrates for Médicins Sans Frontières.[15] The diagonals in Fig. 2 rewrite the dominant discourse of the columns, which says that Western society is pluralist, while 'other cultures' are distinct sources of production with their own rights and frames of experience. The diagonals in $tensor_3$ expose the separation inflicted on production sources: 'the community has rights, the production sources get pluralism (segregation) and charity'. The equation of each sphere with a source and a frame sums up the essentialist take on cultures. Scholars that dislike the culture concept should ask themselves if they are not applying the flawed $simplex_3$, which covers up the exploitative relation. The figure suggests that replacing the simplex 'race' by 'culture', and later culture by 'society', does not alter the problematic simplification which $tensor_3$ unravels.

A category of humans is entitled to wealth and separated from those that are the source of wealth. Otherness is bestowed on the latter via apartheid, 'race', poverty. A simplex holds destructive energy by hiding this major tension. The best tactic to contain it is by building on another simplex. Like a matryoshka doll, the distinction between 'us' and 'them' is inserted within a similar looking distinction between normal and deviant.

simplex$_2$:   developed   <->   underdeveloped

                        ↓   'North'   ↓   'South'

    simplex$_3$:   culture/race/society <-> other cultures/races/societies

tensor$_2$:   community   life source ———→ production sources

                                        ╳

                    suffers   indebted

                        ↓   ↓

    tensor$_3$:   pluralism/ segregation   rights

Fig. 2   Simplex, matrix and tensor of cultural essentialism (in three steps)

With the separation of people in a reserve or through a slur, or by 'educat-ing' them, the violence spirals on. As generations pass, the dominant group's history of trouble, tribulation and trauma about crisis and crime is grafted on the deviant (who 'occupies' the simplicators' phantasy, see cathexis in psychology). The initial injustice inflicted on the victim has doubled.

    Now comes the ploy. The injustice disappears from view if the inflictor hides the relation with the separated. The inflictor manages to forget the simplification by presenting cultures as so separate that their sources of pro-duction differ too, despite their joint participation in the planetary econ-omy. Their source of riches would be inferior, stagnant or just different. Academics have been complicit in spreading the idea that developed econ-omies long ago took the right course, the one with a future. That is how I explain the blatant absence of academically organized cultural exchange (versus consumerism) between (Global) North and (Global) South. The absence exists on both sides, for opposite reasons. Openness to oriental philosophy, Yoga and Buddhism, framed mostly as a marginal activity 'after hours', does not qualify as learning. And from the South, mainly intellectuals trained in the academic idiom participate in the dialogue. Critical scholars of similar education from universities across the planet are brought together, but no genuine attempt is made at deriving

experiential frames from African communities to bring these logics of often little-educated friends and kin into dialogue. Yet, this very dynamic takes place spontaneously worldwide between individuals on market squares, in art venues, schoolyards, classrooms, street corners, restaurants, bars, malls, social media and other platforms. The biggest favor anthropology can do the world is not to antagonize the people with more ethics but to show the intuitions the collective has developed. Part II is the search for that, 'collective reason'. What wisdom do the people hold?

Notes

1. Blass, T. (Ed.). (1999). *Obedience to authority: Current perspectives on the Milgram paradigm*. Psychology Press.
2. Hollander, M.M. and Turowetz, J. (2017), Normalizing trust: Participants' immediately post-hoc explanations of behaviour in Milgram's 'obedience' experiments. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 56: 655–674.
3. A frame can also be installed through a tone of voice, like the non-assertive ascending pitch signalling a question in speech that asserts.
4. See the awarded short film *Connected off the Grid*: https://documentaryshortfilmfestival.com/2021/07/21/short-film-connected-off-the-grid-20min-usa-documentary/
5. Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). Most people are not WEIRD. *Nature 466*: 29–29.
6. A recent example of an experiment assuming universality where, in fact, culture (this simplex era) plays a role: Terrizzi, B. F., Woodward, A. M., & Beier, J. S. (2020). Young children and adults associate social power with indifference to others' needs. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *198*, 104867.
7. It should be clear from the following paragraph that I do not buy into the 'deicide argument' to explain Christian antisemitism. Why would the murder of Jesus by Jews motivate pogroms? That sounds like a handy legitimation. Nor would I for that reason launch the alternative concept of Judeophobia for the pre-Christian era (which supposes archives on Greco-Roman sentiments about Jews to be privileged because of the deicide argument). The temporal distance seems too big to make such subtle distinction. See Schäfer, Peter. *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
8. See Stroeken (2012).
9. Ginzburg, C. (2004). *Ecstasies: Deciphering the witches' sabbath*. University of Chicago Press.
10. Kadima-Tshimanga, B. (1982). La société sous le vocabulaire: Blancs, Noirs et Evolués dans l'ancien Congo belge (1955–1959). *Mots. Les langages du politique*, *5*(1), 25–49.

11. Kapoor, S., 2018. Cast(e) in disgust: Is an empathic reading of caste possible? *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, *2*(2), pp. 256–273.

12. Jadhav, S., Mosse, D. and Dostaler, N., 2016. Minds of caste–Discrimination and its affects. *Anthropology Today*, *32*(1), pp. 1–2.

13. Comaroff, J.L., 1989. Images of empire, contests of conscience: models of colonial domination in South Africa. *American ethnologist*, *16*(4), pp. 661–685.

14. Leisering, L. (2018). *The global rise of social cash transfers: How states and international organizations constructed a new instrument for combating poverty*. Oxford University Press. Political context determines the success because the bureaucracy of development cooperation goes counter making the gift a genuine cash transfer: Hickey, S., & Bukenya, B. (2021). The politics of promoting social cash transfers in Uganda: The potential and pitfalls of 'thinking and working politically'. *Development Policy Review*, 39, 01–20.

15. Here fit Agambian critiques of neoliberalism. Neither collective nor human but humanitarian is the reasoning that Fassin critiques: Fassin, D., 2011. *Humanitarian reason: a moral history of the present*. University of California Press.

Chapter Five: Simplex Communication Society

On a holiday we laud the beauty of the Austrian valleys, the clean environment and the charming old-fashioned solidarity in Carinthian villages. Haider's antimigration party won one election after the other in the 2000s in a region with barely any immigrants. Ridiculous. And all the more telling. Are those rightist fears of 'others' and of the tiniest change in the valley a scandal? The dream of 'no borders', freedom of movement, excites as a cosmopolitan frame in the urban sphere. How about the dream of a traditional community? What if the Carinthian hills and valleys managed to precariously save a communal sphere? A frame cannot be judged without considering its sphere. It is a wisdom that EU officials should have applied to the Brexit as well, so as to anticipate the perspective that motivated (almost) a majority, all the more after they were disparaged for their provincialism.

Ethical principles are easily diffused. NGOs and international organizations export democratic parliamentary elections to Northern Africa. Next, they are surprised at the aloofness or disappointment of the unemployed, uneducated and elderly in that region. Does the frame work in that sphere? That is the first question to ask. Name a frame (e.g., an ideology such as social democracy, liberalism, anarchy) and an appropriate sphere for it can be found. The converse is true as well. An action has its place or else is misplaced (e.g., fascist speech can suit certain bedrooms). Pointing the finger will only appear self-righteous and end the exchange. An NGO's first focus should be on cultural translation across layers of society.

The differentiation of frame and sphere allows for a multilayered approach to beliefs and norms in ethics and politics. Sphere A calls for frames X or Y, while sphere B is better off with frame Z. National borders are an obstacle to ecological policy, for climate pertains to the planetary sphere. No point in recycling in country C when we are polluting in country D. Without a global government regulating, the multinationals export unhealthy, environment-unfriendly industry. Mayors refuse electricity pylons in their town? The subsidiarity principle determines which frame is right for what sphere. National authority performs tasks the local level is unable to, because of NIMB or technically. Migration pressures and illegal labor traffic have to be tackled in the interregional sphere. Other sectors thrive best with policy at the more local level. Also, in the spheres of knowledge, leisure, travel and housing, the frame is ideally not a currency like money. The current situation takes for granted that an economic frame, that of money and transaction, applies to all spheres, to the international market of commodities, as much as to the regional sphere of education (money buys the best universities) and the local sphere of housing (young adults can since the 1990s no longer count on having a house like their parents'). There is no cultural reason, or reasoned logic, for that. The discussion of frames and spheres has yet to be done. What prevents the discussion is the idea that 'every situation is unique'; that there would be no logic underlying the network of events, let alone that this logic could be rooted in life, as in a tensor. This phenomenological primacy of singularity maintains the status quo. It surrenders the decision on policy to power games, to the advantage of the already most prosperous and their frame. There cultural relativism and neoliberalism converge. Child labor and exploitation are possible in factories in the South because there would be no encompassing sphere and frame or ethic. Each culture would have its own source producing meaning and norms. The conflation of layers, into essentialized cultures, results in a normalization of structural inequality.

A European university's vice-chancellor was recently criticized in an open letter by his personnel of professors and researchers for twittering in support of the chairman of the country's far-right party.[1] The politician had confronted a news anchor live on TV for his double standards: how could he reconcile his clamor over local football fans forgetting their facemasks during championship celebrations with his prior silence about the same noncompliance among pro-Palestine demonstrators in the capital?

The VC was inveigled by the cogency of the politician's reaction. The perception by some of his personnel is that he normalized far-right ideology.

Let us peek in the toolbox and take out 'statement', 'frame' and 'sphere'. What the academic supposed he could neglect was the frame of the politician's reaction, which was an extreme-rightist ideology. The politician's statement played into the affinity between Palestine and leftist causes without needing to mention it. A statement which literally has the same meaning, warning about double standards, can have a totally different feeling with the frame added. The VC sought neutrality by considering the statement alone. Thus he inadvertently justified the extreme-rightist frame which trailed it invisibly but was plain for all to see. Cultural analysis stresses the dependence of a statement on a logic (a higher-order meaning) such as the frame.

The VC's critics and colleagues signing the letter seem unable, in their turn, to distinguish frame from sphere, for whatever the extremist politician says should according to them be rejected. He should not be given a forum, for anything he and his fellows do can be expected to build up to events reenacting the fascist 1930s. A social analysis could have clarified to them that this position amounts to excluding from society the sphere, the circle to which he and his fellows belong. The critics had better focused on the frame, to show how it is fascist, because that frame may live among the wider population, and this irrespective of the sphere's public presence on TV or other channels—possibly even proportionately to its exclusion from public channels. Letting people talk is not normalizing their discourse. Not questioning their frame is normalizing. 'Surely, refraining from face-masks in an ordered demonstration is a personal choice that hardly compares to an unruly crowd of drunks dragging along parents and children against their will into a medically risky celebration?' Such question would have exposed the party chairman's framing. Banning him from media is another intervention altogether, which will understandably aggravate the quarter of the population voting for that party, many of them doing so precisely to express their discontent about the critics' wish to censor.[2] The VC's disregard of the frame in a statement is matched by his critics mixing up frame and sphere in their combat.

Humanity requires we include everyone while respecting their differences and without becoming a radical relativist. How to do that? My answer is to respect the different ways, or frames, in which people experience the world, but not necessarily the opinions, statements or actions

that come from these frames of experience. I carry in me the frames of both competition and serenity, and should be allowed to reject the excesses resulting from both, such as the economic rat-race and moral indifference. Similarly, it should be possible to denounce the practice of female genital mutilation as traumatizing without rejecting the cultural motive of purity, namely the frame of experience that gave way to the practice, which itself exists in a range of variants, some far from traumatizing.[3] I carry in me the frame of purity too, which my culture stimulates less or articulates not in a body ideal but in rationality, a purity of thought. After long enough contact with members of a tattooing and piercing sphere I can get into their body ideal, but may still judge some of the actual practices negatively. I may do my best to understand the experiential frame of Jewish settlers in Gaza, but will reject the colonizing practice. Adding the concept of frames to that of spheres helps me to recognize certain progressive frames in conservative spheres, which tend to marginalize those frames. It also helps me to judge the meanings (expressions, opinions, practices, etc.) that derive from those frames. In this way we can approach each other as equal members of humanity without bracketing off what we hold dear. The alternative I fear is a neglect of frames, leaving awareness shallow, with policymakers waiting forever for consensus before implementing an opinion. As a result, activism may degrade into a job, a hobby or attitude, instead of an intense activity building up until the goal is achieved.

Gut Feeling Versus the Globe's Distended Frame

Post-truth politics solicit emotions more than evidence.[4] The disconnection between meaning and feeling also shows in the first being stagnant and the second erratic: affective polarization waxes during elections.[5] The polarization and 'gut feeling' of voters that put populists in power was not what intellectuals hoped for with increasing democracy.[6] From Hochschild's five years of ethnography in the bayou area of Louisiana I infer something else. Supporters of the Tea Party, older, largely white and male, feel like 'strangers in their own land'.[7] Should their contribution to the conservative win not reassure us about the workings of democracy? Yes, populist discourse is impulsive and reactive, highlighting neglect and making impossible promises of individual retribution, but it is also a mass of voters still feeling committed to the future of society and voting, which beats indifference. What should worry is if their choice were solely motivated by group belonging and not interest or policy. Herein intellectuals have a role

to play. Instead of fighting the irrational rule of the gut (against Enlightenment), they should respond to people's search for intuitive capacity, for skills to assess society's functioning as a whole. Does the amazing abstraction we agreed upon since Enlightenment, of a democratic political system serving the collective good, actually work to adjust the system whenever it begins to dehumanize? Did we as intellectuals cultivate the language to discuss the viability of our production mode, or did we disparage the question as 'functionalist' and rather opt for the clash of Marxist and liberalist frameworks? Failing to develop the language of life-sensing deprives a democratic system of its purpose to make majority decisions for the collective good and not for a particular group. Intra-mediation and intermediation attune feelings (a vote) to meanings (the changing environment). Disconnected, the ghost of fascism can resurge.

The contemporary 'inflation' of feelings shows in more than one way. Psychiatrists and philosophers alike decry the cultural phenomenon of psychologizing, which is reflected in the public's emotional oversensitivity.[8] The officially happiest countries, boasting the highest standards of living, harbor the greatest number of depressed inhabitants. Clients get centered on their ego and expect their therapists to treat common human conditions of fear and despair as mental illnesses. The modern image of the subject since the Cartesian dualism of body and psyche would be to blame. But this should not blind us to the changed reality of a globalizing information society burdening the user. More of what happens in the world concerns everyone. We feel 'more'.

Globalization is bidirectional.[9] On the one hand, Euro-American imperialism meant the centrifugal extension of the center's influence to all corners of the world. On the other hand, after Independence of the former colonies, to remain internationally relevant, the formerly imperialist center had to decolonize its attitude and centripetally integrate the cultural perspectives from all corners of the world. For some conservatives, especially the poorer ones buying into the meritocratic American dream, the affirmative action estranges, whether it is nationally for women, immigrants and racial minorities, or internationally for developing countries. Do we really think it is decolonization that estranges? Hochschild's respondents repeatedly mentioned the queue jumping by the intellectually connected. One may disagree ethically, which is a matter of ideology, but at least these feelings, of indignation, are meaningfully tied to actual events. The polarization between populist voters and prodemocratic movements came after globalization.[10] The 'conservative' reflex is to narrow one's sphere down

to the immediate interest group. The next paragraph illustrates the 'progressive' reflex. A (mostly intellectual) frame of experience distends to eventually span the world population. It carries a risk of its own. In the first case we feel less about the rest. In the second case, we feel more, yet less profoundly.

The documentary 'Framing Britney Spears' recently set off outrage in the wider public about how the press and the music industry in the 1990s had made a business model out of humiliating the teenage star as the prototypal 'dumb blond'.[11] Interviewers objectifying her sexually, like the Dutch TV-host asking her bluntly at the age of seventeen about her breast implants, did not see the harm of it. After '#MeToo' we think differently. According to popular consensus this is thanks to a historical evolution heightening our sensitivity to women's fate and intrusive sexuality. Yet, those who lived in the 1990s will remember that feminism existed and bloomed. It just seemed easier then to shift from that political concern to the frame of 'showbusiness', and differentiate the spheres, each with their own norms, hence frame of experience. Stars, jealously admired, were fair game because of their exuberant pay to stand the heat. What has changed human beings in the meantime? How come today we feel guilty of Britney's humiliation, or at least of condoning it? And do we act upon the guilt?

The answer is that the distinct perspectives of feminism and showbusiness have coalesced into one frame, a frame distended because meant to serve the entire globe. Uniting opposite views creates an inner conflict, indeed guilt, which can be avoided by invoking the frame of a separate sphere (showbiz) but this nowadays comes across as eluding moral judgment. I should qualify this statement politically: it seems so mainly in progressive eyes, whose focus is the globe, a knowledge society that globalizes. Progressives take up the gauntlet of inventing a frame for humanity, after lifting the partitions between spheres that safeguard the conservative's bubble. (My remarks against self-righteous niching serve that progressive cause). Conservatives specialize in the local sphere, which teems with feelings, unrestrained by an encompassing field of meanings. For progressive outrage to translate into policy, the globe should be experienced as if it were a (local) sphere in its own right. To be felt, meanings have to be embedded somehow in a particular situation. Characteristic of a meaning disconnected from feeling is that the indignation passes. Our guilt feeling about Britney is fleeting. The next peak of mediatized emotion is underway.

Beyond Ontology and Intersectionality:
The 'Incel' Vector

'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. So there is no such thing as an ugly person.' These words sound all so true. They are also suggestive of a taboo, on the social relevance of looks and thus on raising the issue of 'lookism'. The comparison can be made with race, which has to be acknowledged first as a socially relevant category before one can combat the racism. One could taboo speech about race for it being a socially determined construct of physical traits. But will that not prolong the discrimination by the simplex 'race' framing people with those arbitrary traits? In lookism too, people deemed unattractive have a disadvantage in employment, promotion, romance and self-image. To not recognize this reality in a society, in name of a desired situation of non-lookism (like non-racism), condones the discrimination; is an injustice.[12] The reason for ignoring or even tabooing lookism is the sheer arbitrariness of the traits anyone is born with and how an epoch values these, but this reason lies at the very root of the predicament of the discriminated: their powerlessness in the matter. In that light, it is a sign of emancipation when 'unattractives' form a group to break the silence and express their frustration.

A striking example seem to be the 'incels', involuntary celibates. These young men feel genetically unable to sexually attract women. Several of their online platforms however spread a misogynistic ideology as well as jealousy against 'alpha males'. Five incidents of mass shooting by platform members between 2014 and 2021 in North America resulted in a death toll of about 50.[13] The killing sprees are the top of an iceberg, a trend that is formally studied to detect potential killers and also informally discouraged by online platforms poking fun at incels.[14] Both counterinitiatives obviously do not regard involuntary celibacy as an intersectional category of disadvantage. On second thoughts, why should that be obvious?

One of the unmistakable advances by the ontological turn in anthropology is to be able to state that *people live a different reality* rather than have different perspectives on the same reality.[15] The second part of the phrase is presupposed by anyone tabooing the issue of lookism. Feeling unattractive, and disadvantaged because of that, would merely be a 'perspective', a wrong or at least subjective one at that, on a reality that the tabooist claims to know better (compare enjoying to read Amerindian cosmology while being in the know about the physics of the cosmos). It seems fairer to accept as true to reality what the self-proclaimed 'unattractive' person has

experienced, like ontologists do. So far ontology works: hardening the concept of perspective, to ontological extent.[16] Where the ontological turn falters is the differentiation among those 'being' unattractive. Only a minority of them have 'emancipated' themselves to the point of identifying themselves as such. And of those, yet again a very small percentage consider themselves incels, or did so during their life and maybe moved away from that. In other words, ontology cannot entirely deliver what the concept of culture can with the support of frames, namely to research along two tracks: people live a different reality *and* have different (cultural) perspectives on that reality. (Consider the ethical plus: ontology might legitimate incels' acts of violence consistent with their lived reality). The second part of the new formula points to the dynamic of frames within spheres.[17] The fact that not everyone suffering lookist discrimination has an incel-like experience is also a critique on intersectionality theories and policies. Their phenomenological deficit reducing individual experiences to group identities is a well-known flaw[18] (so is their underestimation of the structural class-features of discrimination).[19]

My book's contribution is to discern, firstly, the *vector of power* that drives the unconscious discrimination of in this case an 'unattractive' person, as well as the latter's resort to violent reaction, and the denial of (and taboo on) that discrimination. Secondly, I transcend the vector to reach the *matrix of comparison* that contrasts views on attractiveness (like ontology and intersectionality theorists do): the disadvantage is real but not intentional. It is the product of cultural framing.

Incels act like they do the comparison. Do they not master the matrix? Are they not ready to emancipate, perhaps even show the world a new path good for them too? No. They engage in 'pilling'. They swallow the black pill (besides red and blue pill in the matrix) positing that there is no way out of their genetic reality of being sexually inferior. They have interiorized the status quo view. Their inner hopes of arousing a woman's desire will never come true so what remains is suicide and taking the lives of attractive women and men in the fall. That makes their framing simplex instead of matrixial: one-layered and vectorial after all.

An underlying layer could have unveiled the social structure the aesthetics come from. They could have demonstrated how stuck-up beauty ideals stress out communities. That, thirdly, the *tensor of transformation* does. It retrieves a dynamic, showing the way to cope with beauty ideals and adapt sexual competition, to alter the current survival of the fittest, in view of a viable society. Incels could have been stopped in their tracks after

they and the rest of society together face the sociohistorical and bioecological sources of the negative energies that steer them.

Figure 1 pictures the three steps in a tensorial feeling of meaning. To meaning-making humans, there can be no reality unless they frame it, which is to select. That mechanism I named simplication. The simplex presents a frame as if it were a vector, unrelated to any other frame. Its symbol is a single or double arrow articulating impact or opposition. A scientific paradigm simplicates, opening up new avenues of research but also narrowing down focus, erasing the memory of previous motives for decisions and flooding the discipline with specialized literature at the cost of general overview (see the domain of ecology).[20] Sooner or later, according to the Kuhnian history of ideas, a paradigm becomes a simplex frame warranting a scientific revolution to replace it. To be valid, an anthropology of a lifeworld should stand the test of time (and the test of place). Therefore, anthropologists should refrain from vectorial knowledge about that lifeworld, as in chronicling what happened in the community. Instead, the reader should be able to trace cultural translations through a more-dimensional approach. The matrix juxtaposes frames. In the figure, a double colon (each point standing for a term in a relation) and sometimes a cross represent a fixed or hierarchical relation (one frame is superior). The matrix evokes a minimal multiplex of two dimensions, for an attempt is made at capturing the meaning of one frame in terms of another.

Crossing diagonals and vertical lines describe a dynamic between (shiftable) frames. These portray a tensor, conceived here as a bundle of tensions whose three dimensions can vary and thus transform social space. Vectorial meanings drive surveillance, to detect and frame someone as 'incel'. Matrixial language is 'in the know' by comparing the incel lifeworld to one's own. Tensorial meaning dynamizes the situation of the incels and their observers, so life can get better.

1D vector	2D matrix	3D tensor
(<)->	:: X	IXI
(simplex) frame	juxtapose frames (multiplex)	dynamic of shifting frames (multiplex)

Fig. 1 From vector to tensor: a three-dimensional experience

Obstructions to Communication
in the Knowledge Economy

A knowledge society, processing meanings, verges on post-knowledge. Why? Meaning does not occur as a given, it is felt. To feel anything, a selection of impressions is inevitable: a frame. An advance for (post)knowledge society is to train awareness of the frames. Do not say: 'Stop framing me', but ask 'what is your frame?' At that moment an intuition can blossom whereby speakers (intra)mediate their framing.

The numbers in the scheme (Fig. 2) situate where, in three directions, a simplex obstructs the feeling of meaning. All six concern aspects of communication. Speech and things become simplex in at least three key aspects: (1) unidimensional, (2) unmediated, (3) disconnected. From these a range of secondary effects have been mentioned. I limit myself here to three: (4) frame(shift)less, (5) fragmented, (6) viral. To sum up the six aspects: simplexes have a unidimensional meaning (reductionist), occur as an unmediated event at the expense of agency and are disconnected from life (anti-intuitive). As a consequence, they prevent the shifting of frames, cause spheres to fragment into bubbles, and (nevertheless) spread uncontrollably across the social network to affect the entire human species. The next paragraphs theorize these aspects a little more to substantiate the general idea.

Unidimensional. In the first aspect of communication affected by the simplex, the vertical dimension of meaning system, cultures and frames conflates and collapses into a fixed meaning. The two colliding arrows in the scheme on the right express the reduction of multidimensional
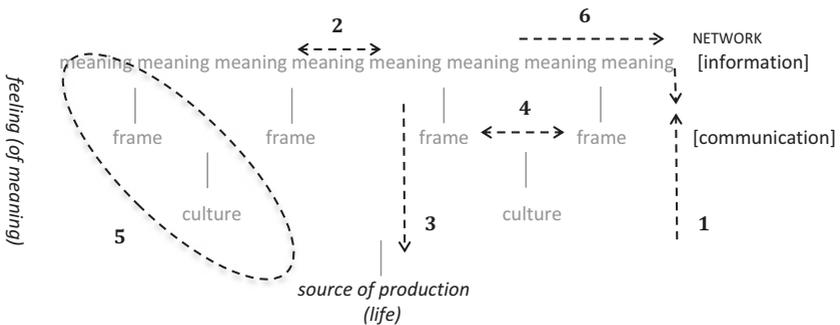

Fig. 2   Six obstructions to communication (2D)

experiential complexity to a lateral field of vectors, influences (in it I recognized ANT's network of actants). The most effective simplexes were found in modern technology, especially within the complex digital field, because their designs contain a message of complexity-reduction that remains implicit. The designs envisage (decontextualizing) information rather than (contextualizing) communication. Simplex things are 'informers', influencing a sphere, while evading discussion about the framing itself. They preclude dynamic. Populist parties win elections by compressing multilayered reality into—*bang!*—a unidimensional idea. They give a false sense of clarity in the typical paradoxes of the day where economy and ecology collide, and policy requires wide support (e.g., nitrogen farming).[21]

Unmediated. In the second aspect, the horizontal dimension of network and sphere contract to an event. Interlocutors affirm their identity without being engaged in situations to mediate their meanings (opinions) for consensus or in relation to personal experiences. The actor does not see how the event is related to other events in a sphere, or how a choice is made in the now between possibilities (in my view not unlike Barad's posthumanist materiality). The simplex adopts ease of use at the cost of the users' agency and decision-making. It is instrumental in imposing a format. A system's neutral definition of the formatism and instrumentism hides that a simplex exerts control over the listener's and user's feelings. Covertly integrating semantic layers permits automation of reaction. These are events of 'immediation'. In the case of a search engine the reaction is a satisfactory if illusory feeling of control.

Disconnected. In the third aspect, the dimension to care about life and production sources has contracted into an energy unleashed. Intuition has weakened into gut feeling. The disconnection between feeling and meaning has uprooted people's affect and entailed escalation of emotions. As meaning and feeling disconnect, we lose our instincts, such as the capacity to distinguish nuances in communication. Social media prosper from the growing intolerance to multilayered meaning in communication. The likes and reactions mushroom when vloggers quarrel. The unilinear sequence of simplexes without attention to underlying frames is easy to follow by a broad audience taking sides in the comments and pitching in. The friction mounts and goes on a little longer than usual if one side represents the 'oversensitive politically correct' position (with good/bad as their unidimensional reference) and the other side the 'unsensitive politically incorrect' position (with weak/strong as their unidimensional reference).

The next aspects follow from the first three. They zoom out from micro- to meso- and macro-level, that is, from meaning, event and energy to respectively frame, sphere and production source, and eventually to cultures, network and species. I select three aspects, two at the meso-level of frame and sphere, one at the macro-level of the network.

Frameless. In the fourth aspect, a simplex (frame) denies its application of a frame. Hence, frame-shift is impossible (see '4' at the heart of the scheme). We have encountered ample instances in technology when simplication engineers away the palette of frames, for easy use. The same happens in communication that does not acknowledge the plurality of frames: as a consequence, I project my own perspective on others as universal. If rivalry is my frame, I will interpret the other's actions in those terms (for instance, interpret a show of empathy as schadenfreude). Frameless associations happen also in academic settings, for instance when we assume someone who is nostalgic about lost cultural heritage to be reactionary, since extreme rightists tend to be nostalgic too.[22] To *know* the meaning of a statement we must take the experiential frame into account (and thus we do ethnography). A society simplex and verging on post-knowledge is a social network that does not reward frame-awareness; prefers fixed labels leveled at opponents. Equally alienating, besides the unfree label, is the bubble, granting freedom within strict limits. That brings us to the fifth aspect obstructing communication.

Fragmented. In the fifth aspect, not frames but spheres become invisible. Once again, society and humanity part. A typical example of sphere-denial is scholars staying within their circles of the likeminded, thinking to change society with their writings, while really they are just preaching to the converted. They contribute to the further fragmentation of the social network. The simplex reaches a structural scale, becoming 'a simplex of the world'. The internet surfer gets categorized under a particular sphere of consumption and remains in that bubble through gate-kept adverts. Unlike a subliminal message, the googled search is vested with the attractive energy of complexity-reduction. The googled list takes away the actor's freedom while allowing for control that was previously impossible.

Spheres of exchange are delimited spatially (e.g., a location), socially (e.g., a speech community or political domain) and/or historically (e.g., an epoch) with varying degree of porosity or overlap. Together they form the social network. Every sphere coincides with a set of frames. A variant of sphere-denial is to employ frames out of context as if they were applicable in any sphere. For instance, 'undisciplined…' sounds like an

innocent reproach among peers but among school teachers in search of explanations it leaves a pupil's reputation tainted. 'Autistic' is a diagnosis in the medical setting, but an effectively harmful remark when employed about an unpopular colleague at work. 'Silent genocide' about an unacknowledged category of deaths is suggestive enough in any context, though should apply to specific events in a place at a point in time.

Viral. The sixth aspect of communication, about its viral spread, highlights a surprising origin of simplexes, namely the network wherein the speech or technology winds up. Whereas formalist procedure and perlocutionary speech directly simplicate, certain communications do so indirectly via the environment they act upon. The researcher's attention shifts away from an event of interaction to the network, although in the knowledge that situations take place simultaneously at various scales, from micro (an event such as speech) over meso (sphere or group) to macro (network). The following example illustrates the interplay between an event of speech and the sphere.

'Recession' says a politician on TV and the stocks plummet. A society frightened about the future can be the breeding ground for such complexity-reduction. The disconnection from reality it causes was seen most tragically in the crash of 1929, and regularly since, whenever pessimism on the financial markets followed a long period of optimism.[23] To give an ordinary, less dramatic example, Tesla shares dropped by 8 percent in one day after the autopilot of its model X caused a fatal accident in California.[24] Investors react impulsively because that is how they believe the market responds. Should they wait for the outcome of the investigation to determine the cause of the accident? Should they check whether the news of this accident reaches the east coast and the rest of the globe? No, profit is made from anticipating fast, which means that time and space are contracted to a simple decision about a supposed link. The reflex wins. The link between one accident and the firm's presumed future is a simplex. Investors react not to a simplification but to an idea reducing the complexity of reality, without paying attention to the conditions of the presumed outcome—the 'if'. A globalized network of information rewards those reacting in a reflex, at least those that afterwards happen to be right. Because of the absence of both mediation and reflection in selling the stocks, I denote this reflex as simplex and potentially viral.

The process takes place at various scales of society, which each has an affective value: connection, impact and trust. The first refers to the meaning felt by the individual, the second to the influence reached via the

group, the third to what the larger environment inspires. The word 'recession' fell in a situation of uncertainty on the stock market. Firstly, at the micro-level of mediation in communication, the brokers disconnected their feelings from reality. They closed themselves off from preoccupations as family member or friend. Secondly, seen from outside, their sector known as Wall Street (the meso-level of the sphere) appears to operate in a state of irony, for during the above communication the members of the sphere acted not upon fact. Nobody had a grip on the outcome either. On televised forums, the expert defending a diet, health trend or epidemiological hypothesis opposes last week's expert on the subject. The goal is to score attention. Popular artists display the futility of life at the meso-level through images of 'bling bling' which they ridicule themselves.[25] The struggle for persuasion on social media indicates that we love our influence (perlocution) now as much as we did our capital before. Thirdly, the reductionism by broker and pundit is consequential nonetheless because partakes of the global network. Nobody knows which monster grows in the background of our simplications, so there is reason for distrust. "Chapter Ten: Entropology" shall schematize the various scales of simplication.

Simplex Aspects Applied: Boycott and Science

The six aspects permeate the horror of Mwanga magic in Tanzania. The client bought a single-stranded, instrumental item that went viral and that in its use and meaning deprived the user of agency, frameshift and awareness. The use of Mwanga reproduced an economic sphere no less contingent than before, and with certainty, with no respect for life and peace as production source, hence having violent impact. Without the experiential frame of contingency that accompanied medicine, people felt more than ever in need of fortune and success. The logos of their magic echoed their nomos.

Consider a case of 'magic' in the sphere of geopolitics. "Lessons not, and never, learned", an urban geographer warns about the US's Caesar Act of 2020 which sanctions businesses cooperating with the Syrian regime.[26] She joins a report on the catastrophic consequences of the economic sanctions the UN Security Council imposed on Iraq from 1990 to 2003. The civilian population, meant to be protected against the regime, bore the brunt of forbidding import of food, water, clothing, sanitation and agricultural equipment. The interpretation of possibly 'dual use' of

these goods, by civilians and military, led to a humanitarian disaster. A bizarre reasoning underpins the sanctions, the geographer suggests. In my terms, they are the product of simplex logic in international politics. Let me clarify.

The more devastating the consequences are for the population, the more willing the regime would be to step down, or be forced to by the population, necessarily through revolution since the sanctions target an undemocratic regime. The apparent assumption is that either the regime would care about the population or the population would have the weapons and readiness to overthrow it. The sanctions are however imposed precisely because neither statement holds true. I can only explain this mistaken reasoning from the simplex that identifies a country with its regime, as in Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions are imposed on 'Iraq' or 'Syria' or 'Russia' which cloaks the issue whether inhabitants back their leaders and whether those who do (for whatever reason, out of conviction or lack of information) should be punished for it. Unintentionally, the sanctions exonerate the regime, which will moreover recover legitimacy in the country thanks to the population's hardship now projected on an external enemy. The population and the regime are condemned to stick together in a self-fulfilling prophecy with socially disastrous effect. After the facts, will the troubled souls of Daesh combatants and their near ones ever rest? And the souls of Russian and Ukraine soldiers and victims?

The crux seems to me the unspoken cultural associations by the policy, homogenizing Syrian (Iraqi, Russian) identity. Social interventions have to cope with their cultural blind spot. Conversely, the critical analysis above of cultural premises in global governance should take into account the social fact of distributed economic means. The members of the regime and their social class have secured enough funding to not personally suffer from the sanctions, which in the final analysis renders the international measure of a country's boycott no less than ludicrous. Thus the cultural analysis is complemented with a social analysis.

The lesson to be learned concerns the formalist procedure ignoring its cultural logic. 'Dual use' is a simplex for the administrator to hide behind, exempting from critical reflection. It allows for formally correct interventions that eventually destroy livelihoods. Formally, the international boycott sends a clear message to a country, but frame-wise, it helps the regime's seed of violence to come to fruition. Simplexes sustain the cycle of frames colliding without mediation and translation. Vectorial action and reaction keep dictators in place. More of the same means more violence,

because no attempt is made to break the mold, enter the matrix of each other's premises and possibly launch a tensor that raises the speciated issue of viability.

The tag 'Syria' killing thousands of innocents loses its harmful persuasive force once politicians do not associate a culture anymore with one frame but acknowledge the internal diversity of frames, among others opposing regime and population within a country. The dictatorial regime and the Western imposer of sanctions belong to different local spheres but they play the same game named geopolitics. Activist groups both inside and outside Syria find connection too. In the opposition and alliance of frames across spheres is at stake a production source named justice.

In conclusion, applied to the boycott for regime change, disintegration occurred in the following six aspects that otherwise flourish in communication. Firstly, 'regime equals country' is a single-strand reduction, away from the multidimensional complexity of experienced reality that a cultural analysis affords. Secondly, the boycott is not effective in the absence of intra- and intermediations among the population, which a social analysis requires. Thirdly, prohibition on dual use happens at the cost of civilian lives. It is a meaning without feeling, disconnecting people from the reality of production and life. Fourthly, without frame-shift the organizers of the boycott sustain the frame of violence. Fifthly, administrators and diplomats of the geopolitical sphere remain in their bubble dominated by the formula 'no dual use'. Sixthly, the boycott can be presented through a simplex message disseminated virally wherein the dictatorial regime pictures the people as victim of the international community. The corresponding six types of entropy return in "Chapter Ten: Entropology".

A second and final application contextualizes the post-knowledge condition wherein conspiracy theories flourish despite increased dissemination of scientific knowledge. Once scientific results partake of information flows, the above six aspects of simplex communication tend to surface. I rearrange the set in terms of their relevance. The first two aspects I treat here are part of all scientific simplication, yet consciously organized and within agreed limits that outsiders rarely observe: reductionism and disconnection. The third is proper to science within a globalized social network: uncontrollable dissemination. The next three aspects are risks to deal with: im-mediation, sphere-denial, obstructed frameshift.

Firstly, scientific analysis does entail one-dimensional reductions, beginning with the separation of researched object and researching subject. How else could scientific results be generalized and applied? Secondly, the

researcher's objectivity does require disconnection of feeling from meaning (against subjectivity), and meaning from reality (against cultural relativism). In the positivist tradition, subjectivity and cultural relativism as well as ethics undermine the validity of a study. Thirdly, results have the tendency to go viral, depending on the sensational value of the claims. The media love to stage scientists that shock with advice defying accepted behavior. In all three cases however sedimentation into simplex can be prevented on the condition of conscious use and discussion of the simplication. Scientific debate is all about that.

The next three simplicating aspects are restrained by scientific principles, but can erode into simplex communication. First of all, the intermediation between peers, to critically discuss results, softens in niches of colleagues networking in conferences, collaborating in publications and advertising their field for funding. Secondly, scholars take their circle of likeminded for granted, or the societal relevance of research can be so limited that they have no qualms about the artificiality of their sphere. The public's agency is very indirect through the peers the state pays for, who professionally intervene in the procedure. Thirdly, disciplines normally do not deny their limitations, as they frame object and method of study. In scientific communication, though, the limitations due to a particular scientific frame wind up in the background as information is disseminated on spectacularly convincing results. This delicate balance of science's power in important issues determining human behavior can explain the intensity of 'science wars', in particular the conflict between the optimist realism of positivist sciences and the critical pluralism of postmodern humanities and social constructivism.[27]

Science has a hard time coping with the current increase of simplex tendencies regarding knowledge. The global network is so complex that interest groups can reframe and sometimes manipulate information. Stronger still, science has moved to the forefront of society's discontent. Even if the scientists' interpretation of data, their debate of results and their possible retraction occur in public without censorship, for outsiders the process appears all the more obscure, taking place in the cenacles of 'the elite'. Conspiracy theories invariably hold elites accountable for whichever disaster, from pandemic to recession. The suspicion that these would be steered stems from the larger problematic: the parting of society and humanity. The elite is situated on the first pole. And so is science. Their framings scare. Trained and rooted intuition countervails the scare.

Notes

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13. See the article by Lewys Brace on: https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/a-short-introduction-to-the-involuntary-celibate-sub-culture/.
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15. I thank Steven Van Wolputte for reminding me of the succinct first part, in italics, of the 'schoolbook definition' of ontology in anthropology.
16. Compare with a panpsychist ruling out matter (the dualism with mind or perspective) as an illusion, see infra Chalmers 1997.

17. Something similar I argued about sensorial anthropologies having to navigate between, and steer clear of, the sensotyping of a society on the one hand and the cultural essentialism overshadowing perspectival dynamics on the other hand. See supra, Stroeken (2008).

18. The phenomenological critique was briefly noted in the introduction. To elaborate with a metaphor, if society is a cake, then intersectionality is aware of the public appearance of the cake to determine social success, 'the identities'. So intersectionality takes into account the icing to distinguish sections of actors (almost literally 'white' coating of one section, 'black' of another, 'pink' of a third, other sections combining two or more coatings in a putative 'mess', etc.). Marxism cuts across the sections to expose the structure under the icing. Differences appear in thickness of layer, in solidity and texture. My proposal with frames is to include the ingredients mixed into the cake; to taste slices of the cake and note the presence, absence and proportion of sugar, salt, milk, butter and flour in the mixture of a section and structure, and derive a more thick description than going by icing and structure alone. Sections as well as structures are separable but may contain only a few or all ingredients, which the ethnographer can 'taste', as in 'recognize'. The analogy is with experiential frames that vary between individuals or according to event, even though their actual expression is never exactly the same.

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20. For a still relevant application of Kuhn's theory: Graham, M.H. and Dayton, P.K., 2002. On the evolution of ecological ideas: paradigms and scientific progress. *Ecology*, *83*(6), pp.1481–1489.

21. A recent example is BBB, a brand new party winning the parliamentary elections in Holland by simplicating into State interventionism the government's plans to cut farmers' nitrogen emissions by half. The chair, Caroline van der Plas, is a former journalist. https://apnews.com/article/netherlands-election-rutte-farmers-873ef2bba709de9d259137d29d199ea7

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24. <https://www.ft.com/content/01d7b2b8-3696-11e8-8b98-2f31af407cc8>, read on 21.03.2020

25. As the irony indicates, the sense of futility and distrust are stances of critical awareness, oppositional however powerless. One-dimensional communication and socio-structural fragmentation in (post)industrial society do not necessarily lead to the one-dimensional, non-critical thought predicted by Marcuse, H. (2013). *One-dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. Routledge.

26. <https://twitter.com/katharinagrneis?lang=en;   https://merip.org/2020/06/the-enduring-lessons-of-the-iraq-sanctions/>, read on 17.06.2020.

27. For example, the Sokal affair in 1996. For a survey demonstrating the relevance of the science wars in anthropology: Horowitz, Mark, et al. (2019). Anthropology's science wars: Insights from a new survey. *Current Anthropology* 60 (5).

Tensors of the Undertow

Chapter Six: Collective Reason

For each decade, this century has spawned a prodemocracy movement. Alter-globalization in 1999. Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring in 2011. Yellow Vests in 2019. Black Lives Matter in 2020. The calls for social reform have been interspersed with marches against global warming. Whether the goal has been to end structural inequality and racism, to curb the sway of multinationals, or to save the planet, none of these causes seem less justified than a previous series that engaged broad sections of the population: the French Revolution in 1789, abolishment of slavery in 1865, enfranchisement of the working class in the late nineteenth century and of women after the Second World War, and decolonization in the 1960s. Both series of causes were driven by a sense of urgency sweeping society, but only the older series led to change in the form of rights and a transformed political system. Are such milestones of democracy still possible at present? What renders a sense of urgency ineffective?

A New Prodemocracy Wave

The reason for recent prodemocracy causes failing to push through is not censorship or fear of reprisal, neither ignorance, nor even lack of political support. The French president hosted a 'grand national debate' in 2019 in response to the Yellow Vest protests.[1] Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, anything from newspaper specials and social media threads to art

exhibitions and class discussions have warned members of the wider public about the neoliberal order emerging.[2] Politicians do not deny toeing the party line and openly discuss strategies to survive the next election.[3] They admit that the drastic international measures against Covid-19 expose the vulnerability of the system (i.e., the disadvantages of a global economy) as pandemics did throughout history,[4] and many of them have warned about the State's eagerness to intervene in personal lives without winding measures down later.[5]

Nobody will deny that national governments and the financial sector lost much credit after the banking crisis in 2008. The absurdity of economic globalization is no secret anymore. Most of us have heard of container ships crisscrossing the oceans to export unhealthy diets to areas where local food was nutritious. We know about the dangerously uneven distribution of profit, as international corporations possess a staggering $36 trillion stashed in tax havens to lobby for their unsustainable interests.[6] International organizations and governments, it is true, shily eye the corporations and capital investors, but are incessantly scrutinized by both social scientists and mainstream media in their resolution to diminish income disparities, to rein in the offshore capital and to moderate polluting production.[7] Factory workers, school children, intellectuals and CEOs alike can be quoted to support social and ecological reforms. Antiracist discourse is entrenched in American political history, and the great majority of voters in European countries denounce racism.[8] Never before has such a large section of the world population acquired information resulting from open debate, increased education and continuous access to media. Since about two decades we are said to be living in a knowledge economy, which implies that all sorts of media communicate about the state of the world. Awareness abounds. Some call it wokeness. Mobilization by activists has surged in the digital era.

The assumption of the social sciences is that communicating about social problems raises awareness about them, which in turn leads to positive action changing the course of society. A democracy guarantees the process at each step. And yet, governments progressively dilute promises and policy targets. In four million years the Earth's atmosphere never had as much carbon dioxide, all owing to industrialization.[9] Policymakers emphasize what has already been achieved and postpone eco-transition projecting an equilibrium in 2050 in disregard of increasing inertia.[10] Activists sue their governments hoping that at least the courts will make a difference and impose fines to lift the obstacles to action (see infra). Still

in the best scenario, protests on social media and in the streets are impacting legislation minimally, relatively less than one would expect from the increased information and awareness of problems in the last twenty years. Petty annoyances fill our conversations while we pass over the big injustices by regimes great and small. Thousands of lives are lost in wars based on flimsy legitimation stories, before in Iraq and Syria, now in Ukraine. We watch powerlessly, and after a while impassively. No revolution, silent or other, will take place. Words are plenty but weigh little. What has become of us? Do we have reason to panic about the world, about ourselves?

If millennials have the reputation of being oversensitive and are labeled as 'snowflakes' for shouting out their indignation about their endangered future, it is because they truly sense the challenge of getting one's message across in the late phase of knowledge society. This book is not primarily about them, but for them. They and generation Z that grew up with the internet are the protagonists experimenting with the weakening bond between individual conviction and societal change.[11] What causes the disconnection between the two? I have pointed to a structural impasse and a mental obstacle, the latter diluting our sense of urgency, the former the impact of whatever remains of that sense. To break the deadlock, we must re-sphere and reframe respectively. And something more: re-source.

Re-sphere: The Law Against Ecocide

When a French citizen in 1789 exclaimed on the market square 'down with kingship and the regime!' those words more directly caused (re) action than they would today. The freedom of expression in a democratic society has as structural consequence the lesser impact of expressions. Calling law enforcers racists has minimal consequences. Treated as opinions next to many others, their low capacity of shocking the public and thus of spurring a reaction from the State reduces the chance of the established order being toppled. The inflation of words, due to people speaking out faster because of the limited consequences, is a side effect that democratic voters are willing to accept. Also individually we are aware of the weakening purchase of opinions, having entered a post-Fordist economy wherein language replaces capital.[12] It is unlikely that a critical statement will receive unanimous support, given the amalgam of viewpoints in a communicative field populated by actors as diverse as the mainstream press, social media and policymakers. The structural tendency of

disconnecting the feeling from the meaning of a statement has a mental effect in diluting the salience of one's position. Also from what is taught in school and university, many of us mean less one-sidedly what we say, because we have smartened up. That's just the way it is, with more freedom and more education, in a democratic society.

Sooner or later, with the diluted salience of opinions, a cogent argument means little anymore, and membership in a sphere comes first. Spheres overlap and divide families at the dinner table. Siblings with similar life standards can be ideologically opposed. The struggle for distinction may explain the absurd significance of the 50-percent mark around which democratic elections divide nations like the US. No objective reason will suddenly push opponents in one's direction.

Additionally, with the diluted salience of opinions, normalization of formerly unacceptable speech and behavior threatens.[13] Smartphone use sums up the tendency. Citizens of a post-knowledge society are users content 'to know'. The distraction by new messages is constant, while the emotional detachment from those messages is possible thanks to 'the cloud' retaining the information.[14] We can perfectly agree with an analysis without having to do anything about it. The answer is sent out there, where it will remain. Do not disturb me in my bubble: the meaning is *this* and I feel *that*. Normalization of injustice, racism, poverty, corruption, degradation is possible because of the structural disconnection of feeling from meaning. Post-knowledge society fragments the spheres, tolerating that they determine their rules and frames. Eco-transition languishes if a government can determine the tempo of implementing policy.

The fragmentation can be countered, I argue, by moving an issue from one sphere to a closely interrelated sphere. This requires insight in logics linking spheres across the network. As a case in point, sensitization campaigns by ecologists supported by scientific studies did lead to legislation on curtailing carbon dioxide emissions after an engaged minority of civilians appealed to the Supreme Court. That shift of sphere is how they managed to compel their government into implementing the (admittedly already toned down) international treaty.[15] The process had grinded to a halt at the level of executive power, and so activists turned to the judicial in support of the legislative. The network has spheres with frames to which Montesquieu's theory of the three powers in democracy refers and which makes the court a 'logical' place to pressure a government. The cultural logic also informed the recent appeal of ecologists at the International

Criminal Court to designate 'ecocide' as a fifth international crime for which states and corporations can be convicted.[16]

The logic circumvents the structural impediment to change by involving all scales and cutting right across the social system. A subversive act is done in name of the species and the commons by tackling the alienating division of society into political, economic, legal, educational and other subsystems.[17] To cut across the spheres is to reappropriate the sources of life which the state and later on multinationals took over from communities, such as food, water, forest, land, sky, energy, fertility, desire, knowledge and justice.[18] By taking a government to court, justice is not a separate sphere anymore but has become a source of production again.

Anthropology's contribution is to point out these (onto)logics and how their distinct arrangements of things and thoughts may conflict. Despite their sensitivity to ontology, explanations derived from Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (ANT) do not account for these arrangements imbricating, because ANT 'laterally' (flatly) situates ineffective protest in a network of associations between various actants, human and nonhuman.[19] Many parts contingently form wholes at various points in history. The parts include the lobbyists' manipulations, the pending elections at that time, the controversy about a climate report, and the shift of media attention toward a pandemic because of nonhuman actants and their viral invasion. The powerful and their lobbyists eventually win the struggle over resources. ANT's seminal paradigm for the social sciences, however, excludes the other direction of (bidirectional) influence, which admits the vertical dimension of meaning: the connections from whole to part, as in the 'logics' that make certain outcomes more likely. What else are journalists and researchers investigating and sometimes jailed for? Dictatorial states do not fear facts. They fear to be unmasked as 'a regime' affecting people's sources of production.

The recourse to courts follows from realizing the relation between court and government. The relation does not depend on coincidental events, to which ANT lends primacy. A logic trickles through at all levels of the layered arrangement from macro to micro to explain and solve the gap existing between awareness and action in politics. The macro refers to the triad of network, species and meaning system structuring human consciousness, namely to the possibility for members of our species to understand each other across time and space by tapping into that shared order of signification. How to retrieve the dark matter of forgotten simplifications underlying the edifice of established values and institutions? The elegance

of structuralism and its cognitive approach is that possibilities that were opted out of in the past remain available. Human thought is not overborne under the weight of evolution and the passage of time. It is a sign of the times for a socio-scientific paradigm like ANT to dominate that underestimates the capacity of the humanities at discerning cultural logics. The underestimation has a delusional aspect. Without awareness of such higher-order logics, how could a social scientist be writing a social critique and designing an intervention without it feeling like pure guesswork?

Reframe: The Matrix of Enlightenment

Experiments since the 1980s with information processing models have shown that sensitizing campaigns (e.g., for health promotion, equal rights and cultural diversity) impact an audience's attitude and behavior much less than knowledge.[20] Information and debate at best shake but do not convert. The mind has a strong emotional component. In the exceptional case that the mind does succumb to the campaigner, the next challenge is (social) structure. Once the mystery occurs of an attitude changing due to knowledge, and of behavior adapting to it, the task of the influencer shifts to the macro-level of the social network, as argued in the previous section: will the various behaviors adapt in a similar direction, or rather interact with and react against each other? To force the entire system into a new track, the necessity of change, 'the push', does not suffice. There has to be a strong desire, 'the pull'. A clear intuition about the future can give that impetus, overcoming the petty antagonisms and lingering doubts paralyzing the collective. A vision. A strong intuition rooted in a collective experience.

In the old prodemocracy movements, protest continued and intensified until the system changed. The poverty the workers experienced was directly linked to the unfair system of production, with little discussion about who were the social classes oppressed and oppressing, the ingroup and outgroup. Their protest stemmed from a shared frame of experience in a sphere crucial for their survival. They were 'pushed'. The current challenge for activists is tough. Factory owners in the nineteenth century were more clear-cut enemies than today when energy company executives plead for eco-transition and repudiate their own company's greenwashing, and empathize with street kids. Striving for peace and climate stability at planetary scale has thickened the picture. The planet has no outgroup. What I argue in the next paragraphs is that the global scale intended by future

interventions demands a linkage of frame and sphere into the social network, via the sources of production. The goal is to learn from earlier revolutions to create pull.

The old prodemocracy movements left scars that altered the political landscape, one of them being the divide progressive/conservative. Ecologists and social democrats cannot permit further antagonism. Reinforcing the cohesion of the ecologically minded into a tight-knit group is counterproductive. It lowers the chance of meeting the planetary goal. To reach the network with non-divisive energy and activate to change attitude and behavior, the vision must have a logic with verticality, a linkage trickling through at all levels, from ecosystem disasters and international agreements, over national and regional organizations to collective norms and personal desires. The caveat holds for any contemporary activism applying a frame to reinforce the sphere of the likeminded: it will be counterproductive because at the expense of overarching humanity. A matrix proposes a paradigm shift, plumping for one perspective over another. A tensor keeps frames shiftable in view of viability.

The prodemocracy movements of the past were simultaneously paradigm shifts. They made audiences aware with a story intuiting the future and befitting the sphere they lived in. A (speciated) history of the French Revolution will begin by describing how the Church disciplined the masses. Catholics recast the neolithic simplex of normal/deviant into good and evil. Duty versus 'sin' were the terms wherein priests conveyed the simplex frame in Sunday Mass. That is how they laid claim to devotees. The feat of Enlightenment has been to reframe by unlocking the simplex of sin. The priest's framing in terms of sin implies as well as prohibits two things: individual choice and the rationality to question the commandment. The matrix of Enlightenment adds that concealed dimension: individuals are able to reason whereas duty derives from tradition, which is collective and thus may impose irrational commandments. Kant, Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire wrote the philosophical version. The freer the individuals are left to think, the more rational their decision.

The diagonals in Fig. 1 de-simplicate by inserting in the opposition 'collective versus individual' the extra semantic layer 'rational/irrational' replacing good/evil. The diagonals invert the simplex's association. Let's face it: there is something dubious about the Enlightened assumption that nothing good or rational can be expected from the people (the collective). The experience of the witch craze, of a mass victimizing a marginal individual (perhaps a genius) and scapegoating may have been the specter they

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simplex:        duty              <->      sin

matrix:         collective                 individual

                (good)                     (evil)
                rational                   irrational    ->    intuition
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Fig. 1 Matrix of Enlightenment vs. simplex of sin

and their rationalist predecessors had been writing against, like the holocaust in recent Europe. However, the Church's idea of duty equated the collective with a congregation obeying the Scriptures. In a strange alliance, for both Vatican and Enlightenment nothing good could come from pagan traditions. As far as the second was concerned, the first was still progress somehow, religion presumably reaching a higher stage of evolution than magic and preceding science. The project of Enlightenment persists in Rorty's concept of communal truth and in Habermas's communicative rationality counting on an 'ideal speech community', that is, individual rationalities interacting (see "Chapter Eight: Healer or King"). 'Individual reason intuits the collective' is how the figure can be read, if the bland term 'irrationality' (counterpart of rationality) becomes a verb like guessing or intuiting. Contemporary philosophy maintains that humans have no other source than themselves and the group they form and discuss in. Could there not be such a thing as a collective reason, as in a destiny, a truth whose seed was planted to ripen and one day delight the recipient? The next chapters demonstrate how anthropological knowledge from non-Western societies may change our minds.

The Enlightened could have produced a tensor, yet their outright association of the collective with irrationality was matrixial. Their partiality and suspicion served the revolution. Thanks to the matrix of Enlightenment, people realized that their place was not as servants in the hierarchy depicted by aristocracy and Church. They were to be free citizens in a republic: *liberté*.

MARX'S MATRIX

When almost a century after the French Revolution, this republic grew into a nation plagued with inequality, the workers devised a new matrix for the revolution. They found out thanks to Marxism that their sphere was a social class crosscutting nations: *égalité*.

Simplexes alienate us from experiential frames. Karl Marx's attempt in the mid nineteenth century to generate class consciousness for a revolution was an exercise in de-alienation, and more specifically de-simplication. His approach was to delimit the sphere that the workers belong to, and to retrieve their frame. The Communist Manifesto, like the lectures he gave to laborers across western Europe, was Marx's and Engels's attempt to stimulate class consciousness in the proletariat.[21] The crises of capitalism were not sufficient in themselves to do so. Antagonism with the bourgeoisie had to be recognized as such to initiate class struggle. Otherwise the laborers could go on investing in the religious sphere where they and the bourgeoisie went to church together. Or they might identify with the community around an aristocrat's estate, with the football club the employer sponsored, with the nation they fought for in war, or with the factory as a collective in competition with other factories. In uniting all the workers of the world, as eternalized in the anthem of the Internationale, communists defined their sphere as international and not factional like other socialist movements at the time.[22] Paradoxically, despite the mantra of historical materialism, that not ideas (superstructure) but economic structures (the base) determine change, it was Marx's idea that had to instigate the communist revolution (such as the one in Russia in 1917).[23] Any 'false' consciousness of the working class needed to be tackled to change the life of that class, and yet any reform of the base of society through the superstructure was supposed to be a miracle.[24]

The miracle happened anyway. How? The situation was unlike that of today's fragmented and individualized society. The workers realized that they formed a class of its own and had been alienated from it. Their definition of the sphere was made possible by kindling the frame of experience the workers shared.

In *Capital*, Marx specified the principles of capitalist economy and the position therein of the working class.[25] For the workers it was not self-evident to form a separate class. Their factory, church and football club, financed by the notables, as well as the sheds nearby they lived in were their neighborhood. As Taussig wrote about plantation workers in Columbia, employees were taught to obey employers in analogy with children obeying their father.[26] This analogy of employee and employer forming a dyad was their simplex, an idea that limits awareness and thus disempowers.[27] Marx had retraced the origin of the analogy. How to reframe the situation as exploitative? He demystified the simplex of employees working for their employer's pay by showing that factory

workers had actually become means of production whose produced commodities were owned by employers. The comparison with slavery informed debates at the time. Stronger still, 'The slave is sold once and for all; the proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly.'[28] How could the source of production become a means, and its produce be owned?[29] Capitalism came with a commodity logic. The simplex frame combined four meanings: sources as means, commodities owned. By sources we should think of the workers. Applied to concerns today, the source is the planet and its natural resources. The capitalist trick is to treat the workers, or the planet, as means. The use of resources as mere means is a simplex, a frame covering up its origin, because a source nobody owns, as exemplified by the commons. Similarly, companies in the digital age grow into multinationals not because of inventiveness but because they mine something they do not own: the number of people interconnected through the internet, and their privacy.

Taussig recognized Marx's matrix of commodity fetishism in the Columbian plantation workers doing the unnatural deed of selling their soul to the devil to participate in capitalism, namely to own things one did not produce oneself, like capitalists claim.[30] Insight in commodity fetishism enriched the second layer of means/owners with an opposition between (the class of) production, on the side of the employees, and (the class of) capital, on the side of the employers. The diagonals in the matrix below specify the Marxist claim. Employers produce commodities in an exploitative market economy. The employees are the sources of capital, so they should own or change the system of production. The simplex 'Employees obey the employer' simplicate this relation, rearranging the meanings to twist them. If the analysis in "Chapter Four: The Human Experiment" is correct, a violent energy could be harnessed from the twisted meaning. The workers' systematic misinterpretation of their production (which a cultural analysis could unravel) prolonged the exploitation (observed through Marx's social analysis). Capitalist owners looked down upon the workers. Surely, not out of a natural sense of superiority? They felt the condensed energy of concealed meaning, as schematized here.

Yet again, let's face the matrix. Figure 2 reads: 'sources of capital produce commodities.' Are workers the sources really, and the only ones we should take into account? The Enlightened all too blandly dismissed the premodern or mystical idea of collective reason. They failed to decenter the individual mind. Marxists for their part had little room for the sources of production, an ancient ecological take on life. They could not decenter

simplex:	employees	<->	employer
matrix:	sources		commodity
	(means)		(owners)
	production		capital
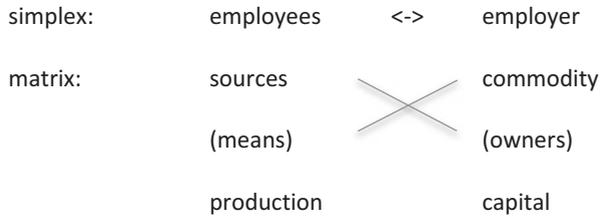
Fig. 2   Matrix of Marxism vs. simplex of exploitation

the production of commodities. However, are individual rationality (being smart) and commodity production (making money) not two obstacles to ripened insight? Against the classic assumption of incompatibility between equality and freedom, the following section argues that the third value is exactly what keeps the other two together in a triad, like the third leg of a tripod. Democracy's unstable balancing act between liberalist and socialist views testifies to it. The various case studies of the subsequent chapters make intercultural comparisons to ethnographically reconstruct this tensor.

The Tensor of Inclusion

The social and ecological issues that we must be aware of today concern the globe, a special kind of sphere everyone talks about but nobody is familiar enough with because of knowledge lacking about its principles and frames of experience. Even the Arab Spring, the more regional of the recent prodemocracy movements, gained impetus from a global frame of reference regarding good governance, and fell flat once the revolution turned inwards and away from the globe.[31] We have only begun to develop shared frames of experience for this widest sphere, so how could we even have a vision of the future, one to believe in? The cultural diversity of the global sphere antagonizes some and inspires others to call for inclusion. Have we come to terms yet with this third value of the revolutionary motto that marked the beginnings of modern democracy: *fraternité*, 'brotherhood', an archaic term to mean inclusion?[32]

Brotherhood or sisterhood imply a feeling of belonging together. Does this feeling come naturally? A matrix has one perspective to frame all other viewpoints. How to ensure their inclusion? According to Luhmann, the value of inclusion is an illusion because including a meaning is always excluding its opposite.[33] Banning a song title in order to be inclusive for Arab listeners means exclusion of certain music lovers, who in turn exclude if their playing the song is heard by the first group. A society that does not

accept equal rights for all human categories opts out of the inclusive globe. The new prodemocracy movements are after the inclusion of all. They defy Luhmann's axiom. For that they will have to seriously reframe. My proposal is to move away from individual reason (integrating meanings and norms) to sources of production because these do not exclude anyone. A meaning cuts and opposes. An energy permeates. Across many cultures, collective reason is treated as a kind of energy named destiny (e.g., *Imana* in Rwanda). Destiny is inclusive, Part II argues toward the end, because it stands for a point of convergence of the species where nobody is yet and which no individual can claim.

Both Enlightenment and Marxism kindled the revolution through a matrix, which means that one relation between terms is seen as correct. For Marx, capitalism was bound to succumb to its own contradictions. There could be no sustainable way of life wherein the sources of production (first column) are paired with capital and commodity (second column). Yet, nobody will want to ban from society capital and commodity. As for Enlightenment, the primacy of individual rationality (first column) suggests the masses to have an irrational inclination (second column). Yet, democracy attributes truth to the majority. In both cases we see that the matrixes stirring the revolution are left behind once they did their job. The next step is to find a tensor, which places us in the position of a Bateson when he realized the specific relation between the British and the American frame of education, or a Descola putting animism and naturalism in a rapport of communication.

The value of inclusion is attained, Fig. 3 shows, if the options excluded in the values of freedom and equality are safeguarded. The matrix of Enlightenment becomes a tensor if we allow the possibility of collective reason besides individual rationality (without relapsing in blind belief or religious orthodoxy). We can think of the complementarity (instead of
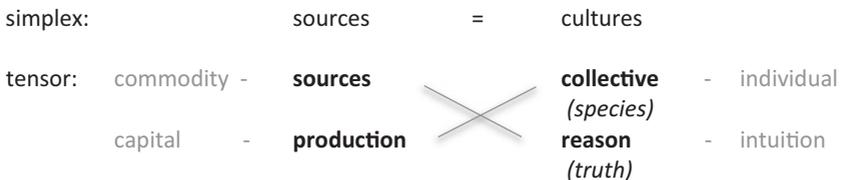
Fig. 3 Tensor of inclusion vs. simplex of essentialism; missing link between equality and freedom

antagonism) between rationalism and romanticism. Marx's matrix gets tensorial if we admit a capital of commodities that respects the sources of production (without returning to capitalism). Eco-friendly consumption and production envisage exactly that.

How to integrate the two matrixes in one tensor? Mere supplementing of the columns does not work. The dynamic should be based on empirical evidence.[34] What we need is to identify the simplex that prevents inclusion. The roads to freedom and equality were blocked because the masses were alienated by simplex frames ('Know your duty, sinner!' and 'Employees obey the pay!') which however conflated the layers of meaning that could also unblock the roads. "Chapter Four: The Human Experiment" concluded on the simplex formula of contemporary society: 'Different cultures (with their modes of production) are separate sources of production.' I argued it to be the arch-simplex condoning exclusion and exploitation of the Global South by the Global North. Its essentialist pluralism justifies a relativistic, 'post-knowledge' attitude about injustice in the world. Figure 3 disentangles the simplex into two parts and recasts them as 'sources of production' and 'collective reason'. Their diagonal relations yield a remarkable insight: 'the sources of reason are collectively produced.'

Global exclusion persists as long as the individual is seen as the source of reason. The human species is the basis for inclusion of the most diverse identities, a collective inclusion.[35] What else than the speciated connection do we mean by 'humans are not machines'? Humans are organisms sensing the viability of a practice. The best possible computer processing all data cannot. The species is at work in the hunch about peace and justice. Collective reason is one of the sources humans have, next to earth, water, cognition and so on.[36] The tensor connects collective reason to sources of production and thus counters the arch-simplex separating cultures as sources of production. The species has a common fate.

The communist matrix for equality reminds that the workers are the source of capital. The liberalist matrix for freedom emphasizes individual reason. A tensor does not privilege one relation between terms. The tensor of inclusion reshuffles the terms to approach collective reason as a source of production. Anthropological studies of community life share that approach. Figure 2 in the introduction described such *centrifugal* directions of feeling meaning, which Part II intends to cover through ethnographic interpretations and cultural comparison.

Of equal importance is the alternative, *centripetal* direction of feeling meaning. Its moment of the real creates a space for insight while keeping

both rationality and personal interest at bay. A universal example of such moment is divination. Reading the entrails of a bird has 'vectorial' reputation because a diviner can manipulate the client. The practice also stimulates life-sensing though. It makes room for an intuition of destiny helping the patient to overcome the reflex of guilt and fear of paying with a life for having breached a profound social law. From democratic elections and medicinal chiefs to football, music and love, tensors remedy simplexes in the coming chapters. What is the point of rooting for a team in a football match, or for an actor in a movie? Wishing well will make no difference to the end result. Oracles too have to be read in the subjunctive tense, describing a dream instead of a representation.[37] Yet, like winning a football game or an election, they are real. In kingship, despite earlier contestation of succession, the incumbent now wears the crown and sits on the throne. Rather than symbolizing power, the tensor establishes power.[38] In an origin-oriented history, the winner links past to future. The participants peek into destiny (see "Chapter Fourteen: Intuition, Destiny, Love").

The tensor leaps out in a humanities context. The notion suits my purpose of distilling richly textured human phenomena into patterns without denying the reduction. In mathematics a tensor is an array of components exerting an effect more general than a vector (one-dimensional) or a matrix (two-dimensional). Tensors have proven their value in physics to see gravitation not as a 'force' of objects but as the curvature of indivisible (four-dimensional) spacetime.[39] Applied to the example above of class consciousness, exploitation continues not because of material necessity or social forces but owing to a simplification, a historical event, energy and meaning, sedimented over time and thus reparable.

Re-source to Reform

To return to our opening question, democratic government beats rule based on the vector of force, but remains a matrix by organizing a vote to decide who decides. The winning frame is played off against the losing frame. Democracy's dynamic is predicated on continuous confrontation with empirical information. It works as long as the 'facts' are framed and reframed to design interventions, sometimes labeled leftist or rightist or claimed as such by political parties. In post-truth society, where the empirical dynamic plays no role and (r)evolution is impossible, the difference between progressive and conservative policies has become a dichotomy ("Chapter Nine: A Model Leader"). Democratic elections and debate

then degrade into mere ritual, making little difference, legitimizing the statics of state policy and more broadly 'control society'.[40] How far-fetched is the feeling of alienation among people, that their thoughts and their children's are manipulated by communication technologies, themselves reflective of untransparent interests of an elite or more broadly 'psycho-politics'?[41] In the digital era the rise of artificial intelligence and surveillance further weaken the impact of electoral, deliberative systems. [42] At the same time however we see the undertow grow. Do we observe in the rhizomes of critique and disobedience a revolt (e.g., implied in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*)? Not exactly. Antagonism, the exclusive disjunctivity of two opposites, is the tenor of the matrix. Real revolt is nondual, the inclusive disjunctivity of the tensor. The Bhutan way.[43]

The cultural analyses of "Chapter Seven: The Oracle and the Real" and "Chapter Eight: Healer or King" expound the dynamics in east African communities that humanize and regenerate society. In Western democracy, empirical data admit a non-machinic moment at the heart of decision-making. Counterintuitively, so do the ancestral knowledges of initiation and divination, we will see. Stronger still, their capacity to subvert and humanize the chief's political system appears more effective in comparison to the ritual of contemporary Euro-American politics ("Chapter Nine: A Model Leader"). Re-sourcing, I argue next, which is going back to the sources of production, can make up for the systemic lack of empirically driven 'pull' to reform.

Living the same circumstances activates a 'push' to reform. The prodemocracy movements of old met the challenge because their spheres were fairly homogenous each time: factory workers, women, Blacks, unlike the motley social categories that Yellow Vests or Arab Spring had to unite during the Great Recession.[44] Yellow Vests span a wide political spectrum in their warning about globalization, remarkably comprising the conservative defenders of local traditions and community life as well as the progressive defenders of social equity.[45] Outsiders are antagonized by either of both, unless they recognize that the Yellow Vests are preoccupied with the logic of a well-functioning system, and not with their ideological identity.[46] This is another crucial moment when matrix becomes tensor in view of the value of inclusion. The pull can make up for the lack of push. A better term than 'well-functioning system' is life. We 'feel the meaning' of the Yellow Vests if they manage to link their opinion with logics rooted in life and concerning the world. That more likely seizes the inner person and fuels a sense of urgency about global interventions.

To allow for pull, the social system has to be re-sourced, that is: modern subsystems have to release the production sources they hold hostage. The spheres of life that the State took over from communities to manage in democratic fashion, such as food, water, forest, land, sky, energy, fertility and desire, are actually sources of production. They have been torn apart. Those parts, via States, national and international systems of exchange, wound up in the hands of multinational companies. An agrobusiness consortium determines the production and distribution of seeds, the chemical treatments of fields and crops, and the range of produce, which are interlinked and organized to standard procedure.[47] Through the simplex of profit, the multinationals make policy without democratic control, and this across more spheres than do the governments people vote for.

The specific situation of reform in the twenty-first century is that opposition between classes (or any other spheres) no longer works because of the political, economic and ecological challenges being global. Policy now should benefit humanity. To not endanger the earth's atmosphere, oceans, energy and peace, the national governments and their school systems could mainstream eco-philosophy like the deep ecology of Arne Naess, seeing humans as part of nature, contrary to the dualism of the 'domestication complex' which is the default ecology of the global economy.[48] The origin of our indignation cannot be a local sphere anymore, but must be located in the sources of production. The sources can return to humanity. All members of the species are entitled to life. Every source of production derives from life and exists as a viable entity. Water, land and energy, but also desire, love and respect are available to us in perfect balance. Political, economic, ecological and other dimensions cut them apart to manage a part of the source, but those dimensions cannot exist on their own (despite their existence as scientific specializations). The economic 'system' is not a viable entity like hills, water, trees and birds. The ecosystem is unreal without integrating social, biological, economic and other dimensions.

Reframe.[49] Re-sphere. Resource. The real is the tool of the undertow to be explored next.

Notes

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28. Principle 7 in: Engels, F. 1847. *The principles of communism.* https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/11/prin-com.htm

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32. Ilyin, M., 2017. Prototype citizenship: evolving concepts of inclusion and order. In *Shaping Citizenship* (pp. 23–38). Routledge. Gonthier, C.D., 2000. Liberty, equality, fraternity: the forgotten leg of the trilogy, or fraternity: the unspoken third pillar of democracy. *McGill LJ*, *45*, p.567.

33. See Luhmann (1995). I have to thank Dirk Maetens for systematically reminding me of this conundrum without inspiring cynicism or nihilism.

34. Until now the matrixes and tensors for de-simplication turned observations of a nomos (a set of events) into a logos (a logic). Here I derive a logos from a logos, before observation. A structuralist could accept this on grounds of 'the world reflecting the mind' in Lévi-Strauss's dictum. The meaning system determines human cognition. Thought is the recombination of terms as in the figure. The following argument however attempts to empirically substantiate, that is, to find nomos in the logos.

35. The Vedic insight 'Atman (individual soul) is Brahman (ultimate reality)' concludes Schrödinger, E., 1992. *What is life?* Cambridge University Press. To my feeling, the premise is intently skipped, namely that the self is

the sum of beings and thus covers reality. I speciate beings so as to delimit human consciousness.

36. Collective reason is a point of orientation, possibly imaginary, to escape the simplex, unlike collective intelligence which is a reality of self-organization, with simplications also atrophying into simplexes, or what the following authors name toxic 'attractors' such as conspiracy theories on the web: Beigi, S. and Heylighen, F., 2021. Collective Consciousness Supported by the Web: healthy or toxic? In *Computational Collective Intelligence: 13th International Conference, ICCCI 2021, Rhodes, Greece, September 29– October 1, 2021, Proceedings 13* (pp. 81–93). Springer International Publishing.

37. Whyte, S.R., 1997. *Questioning Misfortune: the pragmatics of uncertainty in eastern Uganda* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press.

38. A bundle of tensions, shaping social space and whose relations are encountered universally, is how I understand the resemblances scholars see between institutions across cultures, in this case the so-called sacredness of the crown. Hocart, A.M., 1927. *Kingship*. Oxford University Press.

39. The curvature is described by a tensor, which in our approach relates frames in an invariant way. The reader will excuse our transdisciplinary application of a classic model: 'In creating his general theory of relativity, Albert Einstein argued that the laws of physics must be the same no matter what coordinate system is used. This led him to express those laws in terms of tensor equations. […] To express the relativistic law of gravitation, he had as building blocks the metrical tensor and the curvature tensor formed from it. Once he decided to confine himself to these building blocks, their very paucity led him to an essentially unique tensor equation for the law of gravitation, in which gravitation emerged not as a force but as a manifestation of the curvature of space-time.' https://www.britannica.com/science/tensor-analysis

40. Lazzarato, Maurizio. 2014. *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e). Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Bloomsbury.

41. Han, Byung-Chul. 2017. *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. London: Verso.

42. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/02/21/concerns-about-democracy-in-the-digital-age/

43. For another nondual approach to cultural practices within a politically divided society: Van Daele, W., 2018. Food as the holographic condensation of life in Sri Lankan rituals. *Ethnos*, *83*(4), pp.645–664.

44. Discourse as basis to discern a movement is questioned, especially in its explanatory force, on which frames (agency of framing) and spheres (economic and political structure) seem to score better. Bergem, I.M., 2022.

Leaving the discursive definition of populist social movements: The case of the Yellow Vest Movement. *Political Studies*. Aslanidis, P., 2016. Populist social movements of the great recession. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, *21*(3), pp.301–321. Koca, M., 2023. Networked social movements and radicalisation: yellow vests' cross-ideological horizon for under-represented groups. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, pp.1–15.

45. Schneider, J., & Susser, I. (Eds.). (2020). *Wounded cities: destruction and reconstruction in a globalized world*. Routledge.

46. Precarity speaks, and lack of trust in the political (system): Grossman, E., 2019. France's Yellow vests–symptom of a chronic disease. *Political Insight*, *10*(1), pp.30–34. Jetten, J., Mols, F. and Selvanathan, H.P., 2020. How economic inequality fuels the rise and persistence of the Yellow Vest movement. *International Review of Social Psychology*, *33*(1). Shultziner, D. and Kornblit, I.S., 2020, June. French yellow vests (Gilets Jaunes): similarities and differences with occupy movements. In *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 535–542).

47. Wilkinson, J., 2009. The globalization of agribusiness and developing world food systems. *Monthly Review*, *61*(4), pp.38–49.

48. Naess, A., 1990. *Ecology, community and lifestyle: outline of an ecosophy*. Cambridge university press.

49. A final theoretical remark: 'tensor' fits in this list because defined as a 'dynamic of frames' its reframing is not just a matter of meaning (cultural system). The dynamic is also an event (social network) and an energy (life). So are vector and matrix for influencing and antagonizing respectively, but they impede reframing.

Chapter Seven: The Oracle and the Real

'No, the gourd is full', the soothsayer said as he peered into the entrails. It was a hot afternoon in rural Tanzania and we were sitting under the proverbial tree at the center of an extended family's compound. Despite fickle shadows cast by leaves on the dissected rooster, I saw the bird's gallbladder looking healthy indeed. *Kisabo*, gourd, is the name for that organ during the oracle. The client had made the oracle his by spitting in its beak. The oracle conveys ability to digest food through the condition of the gallbladder. Commensality, the consequence of digestive ability, positively indicates prospects of togetherness. The client was the seventy-year old head of the compound, sitting ten yards away.

'And the blessing stands erect', the son of the client added holding the oracle's duodenum between thumb and index. Yes, our beloved elder could still walk, as was plain to see. On top of physical strength symbolized by the erect bit of intestine, blessing (*lubango*) means invisible backing. The subject had reason to trust in his ancestral guide. The bird's stomach reassured the audience. It was fat and full confirming that the man's household is doing fine with a large cattle pen and enough maize in store to feed the many mouths. The stomach called 'home' (*kaya*) measures the impact of this person in society, and in the worst case his social death. Do kin, community and ancestors give their support?

The oracle assesses a person's life by verifying wellbeing at the micro-, meso- and macro-scale. The way the three are specified through food, gizzard and blessing resembles the scales of trust from the introduction: an

individual's connectedness, impact on the group and trust in the network. The matter of the organs can fool us, reminding of a biology class dissection. As is clear from the attributed names *kaya*, *kisabo* and *lubango*, their materiality is affective. The oracle is a social event with a cultural meaning and affective energy. If the belief in bewitchment is a simplex, the oracle de-simplicates, applying both the centrifugal and centripetal approach. As for the first, participants feel a meaning that extends in all directions of the network, like the tensor in Figure 2 in Introduction. Home, gourd and blessing are events, meanings and energies in one, opening up an expanse of possibilities. The oracle does not command. In direct action the tensor would collapse. I will never forget the upset young man pulled off his bike by the diviner's assistant after he thought the oracle's identification of a family member as witch meant she should be killed. Sit in the shade to cool down, schoolboy. Something to that effect the assistant said.

About 3000 miles to the west of this area, my thesis supervisor René Devisch had found among Yaka diviners a tripartite structure as well, to synchronize the fields of body, society and cosmic forces.[1] Any disturbance between the fields was diagnosed and ritually treated, an effective instead of symbolic intervention that led him to revisit the symbolic anthropology of Victor Turner.[2] Sukuma and Yaka share a Bantu language, yet also among Cushitic speaking Daasanech in Ethiopia a number of life-sensing practices such as verbal blessing and body modification address the social causation of illness.[3] In this vein, I propose the tensor.

'But notice the feet', the diviner resumed the séance. One of the bird's two appendices looked irregular, swollen. '*Mitego*', I might have gasped like a good pupil, referring to a trap laid by a witch, but nobody would have paid attention to the interjection. One should be careful with words, especially when reading signs and where uncertainty prevails. I could restrain myself from uttering the words 'a witch?' next. Later the diviner scraped skin from the bird's knees to detect an internal bleeding indicating that a woman kneeling to greet the client was involved in his illness. The intestines, the skin underneath feathers and head, all tell a part of the story, which because of contradicting signs always remains partly untold as well.

'What bothers me', the diviner muttered inspecting two internal bleedings near a sinew on the bird's breast, 'are the two ripe ones close to the cattle tracks.' My friend Masanja whispered to me: 'Those two are waiting for our client to travel'. That much I understood after a month of training into haruspication. The oracle forewarned of a magical ambush on the way to the hospital. I had a car to help this elderly man who had lodged me for

so long, but to die at the hands of enemies outside the home (*wacha malali*) might turn him later into an ancestor with a grudge. That mistake could haunt the family for generations. A few days later he died at home. According to me, the consequence of long illness.

Such oracles among Sukuma-speaking farmers, wherein adults participate on an equal footing, have been the subject of my ethnographic research in the mid-1990s. The academic purpose being to clarify the context to the reader, I never cared to elaborate on the participants' avoidance of clear-cut terms. My writing 'witch' as if the word is a literal translation set the reader on a path of recognition. Yet in practice what I heard were metaphors opening up a range of possible interpretations. Gourd, stomach, blessing and feet are aspects of a condition. The condition itself nobody would be categorical about. Social status, bodily strength, wealth and ancestral support: the oracle portrays the visceral multiplicity of a singularity. Bewitchment though, articulated in guilt, is the patient's dominant feeling. The fear of losing the ancestor's protection because of having breached the law of solidarity sucks all emotions in. Yes, the signs of the oracle covered a wide expanse, whose meaning the participants felt, but this centrifugalism does not suffice for a breakthrough. A seed has to be planted within the subject for a change to grow at its own pace. In the divinatory throw and the mediumistic dream, a centripetal moment of contingency unfolds. What happens when the ancestor speaks?

Quick Pull

Some encounters in the field one will never forget because they unveil the affinity two persons unwittingly have despite distinct cultural backgrounds. At those moments, one experiences as it were the human species. One day a healer, whom my collaborator and I visited regularly, showed us a trick named 'quick pull' which he had obtained as a curiosity from a colleague of his. By stealthily manipulating at the base of a stick the two ends of a thread, a small gourd decorated with resonant bells moved up and down the thread. Some diviners, he said, would use this trick to impress their clients by hiding their manipulation, for instance by asking questions to the gourd and unnoticed steering of the threads in reply. Now it struck us: supposing that clients could fall for this trick and that in spite of its uncommonness they would consider it to be divination, why would they—as my collaborator and I were at first—be so readily impressed by it to the benefit of the diviner's reputation? It occurred to us that the only plausible reason

was the gourd appearing to move and stop 'by itself'. It invoked agency beyond human control. And that, paradoxically, humanized the oracle's symbolic system.

The invisible agency alludes to something present in the event that cannot be reduced to the participants, their manipulations, questions and interpretations. Indication of its presence is also found in the local criterion assessing a consultation: if, without foreknowledge, the diviner is right about falsifiable assertions like gender, symptoms of the patient and exact purpose of the visit, then an extra-symbolic source of knowledge can be assumed to be at work in the oracle and the proposed diagnosis should be taken seriously. Not surprisingly, the trickery exploits what the customer is known to look for and what makes divination appealing and distinct from other forms of interaction. That is the real. Amidst its rich symbolism and discourse, the oracle offers something external and raw, given out of the blue.

The real imposes itself, shown in signs. An emaciated stomach announces, for all to see, the social death of the client. The diviner carries the onlookers through oracular signs to bring home scenes of life as if they happened. The infrastructure of the oracle, laid down in the bird's organs, is a terrain of war feeding the viewers' senses. Quite something else than the real is the manipulation that Quick Pull allows. A fixed outcome resulting from laws at our disposal gratifies. But for the oracle to be therapeutic, the client should believe that the signs came from nowhere, that is, from some invisible force. The diviner mocked Quick Pull. That is why he showed it to us. He did not take the trick seriously, because the point of divination is precisely the opposite, to let in an event that has not been manipulated. Real is chance, whether understood as arbitrary chance, or as animated chance (through ancestral intervention). The bird, whose paws the diviner clenches with his feet creating a scene of symmetry during the séance, has to mirror reality. It is hoped to, via mediation. The diviner speaks in the first-person singular voicing the oracle, like a tensor to make something happen. Quick Pull, instead, simplicates the real into a simplex to make believe.

Clients of diviners go through a healing process which cultural analyses have grappled with. The positivist pitfall is to focus on the diviner's deceit instead of the mental condition wherein clients go for consult. Since clients are in a state of limbo about their future, possibly ill, they wish for a remedy, a way out. The oracle slowly uncovers signs of evil wishes that have motivated kin or neighbor into performing witchcraft. The diviner suggests that the wishes may be legitimate because of the client's neglect of the community law of solidarity, which led the ancestral guide to lift protection

(a process named *ndagu*). A rigid Law intrusively inhabits the self, gnawing at life-force. Clients perceive in the oracle their bewitchment, their worst nightmare. After the diviner invokes the subject's fears, medicine can work. 'Magic' remains the standard entry term in the literature for such medicinal concoction, mixing botanical and symbolic ingredients. Magic resolves bewitchment. During the séance clients shift from the disempowering feeling of bewitchment to the empowering feeling of medicine.

Nothing of what I describe here probably strikes the reader as irrational. We are observing frames enacted. The healing process commences when the client is ready to experience the ancestral spirit's presence in the oracle. '*Yingila*', onlookers whisper when they see the ulcerous mark of the ancestor on the bird's spleen. 'It has entered.' What is 'it'? The ancestor. The real. The difference between the two does not matter here. Sensing the real is the pivotal moment in the consultation, for the spirit, chance event or whichever sign arrives amidst a symbolic order seemingly fixed and generating a simplex for the victim: 'guilty', 'you deserved your fate'. The ancestor arrives and listens to the subject. Not only does the ancestor's arrival portend the support of family clan and society, but the law of solidarity turns out not so unnegotiable after all. In the newly attained frame of experience, the client feels endorsed by the ancestor and thus no longer imagines the threat within, namely that a so-called witch is laying a moral claim on his or her life or that of beloved ones. History appears to be on their side as it were. The once awe-inspiring witch now appears to be a pitiable, marginal figure suffering from pangs of jealousy and therefore resorting to witchcraft. For example, a neglected elderly lady. The client is ready to believe that the diviner-healer has the counter-magic to beat this knowledgeable enemy. The counter-magic will be dreamt by the healer who the next morning leaves the village and goes out in the forest to dig up the selected wild roots and other ingredients. The efficacy of the medicine however cannot be guaranteed because also depends on the real, like the oracle did. The frame of dependence and uncertainty contrasts with the bewitched, in crisis, framing the world in the fixed terms of guilt and certain outcome (see Mwanga magic in "Chapter Three: Losing the Feel for the Craft").

A frameshift takes place. The bewitchment of client and loved one consulting transforms into receptivity to medicine via the therapeutic effect of divination. Figure 1 schematizes the dynamic a simplex frame like 'the occult' could never grasp. (More dimensions in the tensor would admittedly give a less coarse picture of the dynamic).[4] In my analysis, the experience of bewitchment combines the terms 'Law' and 'inside'

Fig. 1 Tensors of
bewitchment (full lines)
and healing (dashed)
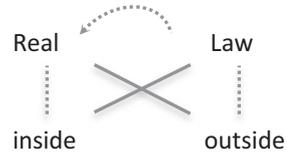
(diagonal in Fig. 1). The bewitched fear that a claim is laid on their life. Hence, their discourse about a curse. Their failed compliance with the law of solidarity, which they sense to be rigid, putatively explains the witch's success to outsmart or corrupt the ancestral protector, and accounts for the patient's incapacity of self-healing. Divination remedies this experience of 'Law inside' by introducing an unpredictable force 'Real inside' (left dashed line). That is the ancestor deciding to talk through the oracle. The shift from Law to Real, both linked in the scheme to 'inside', is the therapeutic moment of the oracle. The dashed arrow schematizes the moment. Embracing the real, or chance, of an oracle alleviates distress. It permits the patient to experience the law as an external pressure only, hence negotiable (right dashed line). The fears of personal indebtedness, which were simplicated in a sanctioning witch or spirit, have dissipated. The patient is able again to live with contingency. The frame of uncertainty implies this negotiation of rules, tolerance of exceptions and extension of the self to significant others.[5]

Medicine or magic, finally, taps from the 'Real outside' (diagonal). Contrary to what the catch-all 'occult' suggests, bewitchment (Law inside) and magic (Real outside) relate to each other as opposites. Figure 1 is not a matrix but a tensor, owing to the dynamic of shifting frames expressed by the crossing diagonals and the arrow in the figure. Cultural analysis is a search for terms that permit cultural translation and comparison. Which place does simplex society reserve for the real, for the contingencies of life?

The raw power and energy of an unmanipulated outcome plays a pivotal role in oracles worldwide. The real is the closest humans come to witnessing life in action, together with existential events one has no control over such as birth and survival after mortal danger. Western scholars of divination nevertheless have disparaged the real as beside the point.[6] Their symbolist accounts dissociate the sphere and frame of the oracle from energy and the unmanipulated presence of life. Through initiation rituals and song, Sukuma rhetoricians train their feel for the craft, for tensors, their art of insight in spheres, their knowledge of meanings belonging together and their applications of these frames at the right time to (re) connect the patient to life.

The first dimension inside/outside in Fig. 1 depicts the antagonism between witch and bewitched. No other solution is offered than conflict, poison or apartheid. In simplex society, this one binary dimension of who is right and who is wrong suffices, like a court sanctioning the guilty. But will objectivity improve the client's state of powerlessness and transform the parties so that the families can go on living together in the community? A transformative dynamic enters the scene once the diviner adds a second dimension: real/law. The real (inside) replaces the Law (inside) embodied by the witch. The life-threatening indebtedness toward the latter (making living together impossible) retreats. The frameshift builds society.

The real exists in the oracle through the contingent presence of internal bleedings in the chick's organs, through the unmediated throw of geomantic objects, or via the uncontrollable reception of dream images. Despite all kinds of procedures to double-check validity like second opinions among foreign diviners, ritually cleansing the oracle and the diviner's guessing of the anonymous client's gender, problem and clan, nobody can certify that the oracle's 'immissions' are pure and not manipulated. Hence, the diagnosis might be true, or it might not be. Divinations happen under this condition of *inclusive disjunctivity*, defying science's Aristotelian principle of the excluded third. Parallel realities reflect the uncertainty of human existence. The contingent signs of an oracle, supposedly recounting facts, are not disconnections from reality. It is on the contrary the rare client making abstraction of the oracle's dependence on the real and taking the message literally who falls in the trap of simplication. This client disconnects from reality, that is, from the sphere of divination and its frame of meaning making.

At last we have the tools to resituate Mwanga magic. The combination of 'real' and 'outside' for the medicinal frame contrasts with the 'Law inside' of the bewitchment frame. Mwanga incarnates bewitchment, 'Law inside', because the outcome of this medicine is not contingent (real) on the ancestral will. We likened its workings to a law of nature. Experientially, this new magic occupies the position of bewitchment and therefore could not rescue the bewitched patients. It reinforces their sense of bewitchment. Like the double tap in war and the slurring tweet in debate, Mwanga feeds the cycle of violence and escalation. It is this incapacity to snap out of a frame that characterizes simplex society.

Now we have a chance to redefine our society. An ever larger layer of the population opts for the post-knowledge mode. They trust in their gut feeling. Unfortunately, without proper training of intuition, there probably is little to trust. Another section of the population, claiming to uphold

simplex:	intuition	<->	reason
tensor:	Real (collective)		Law
	outside		inside (individual)
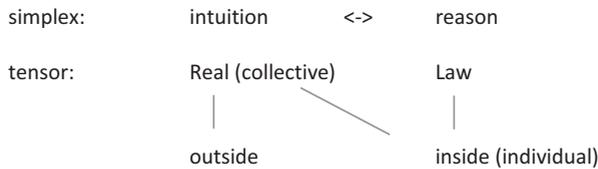
Fig. 2   Tensor of collective reason

the fruits of Enlightenment, disparages them in the name of reason. The tensor of Enlightenment (individual/collective, rational/irrational) resurfaces here as a simplex opposing reason to intuition. The previous tensor can de-simplicate the simplex as follows. Reason is the individual mind mastering laws of nature (right vertical line in Fig. 2) whereas intuition would be a collective mania driven by outside forces (left vertical line). The diagonal recombines the frames: intuition is salvaged if it can be trained, that is, if the individual can have access to the Real, an unruly contingent and possibly animate source of collective wisdom. In other words, an intuition that possesses collective reason is something to strive for to save humanity from simplexes. It is the difficult option we must explore.[7]

The next chapter discusses the repercussions on the political system from a non-Western perspective. Has the West developed a democratic system conditioned by Enlightenment, namely partial to reason (versus intuition) and the individual (versus the collective)? Is the distinction between healing and politics, following from modernity's differentiation of subsystems, artificial? Can the Western system of democracy heal? Or is its opposition between left and right, between frame-distending (mirroring everyone) and sphere-contracting (modeling the few) endemic?

NOTES

1. Devisch, R., 1993. *Weaving the Threads of Life: the Khita gyn-eco-logical healing cult among the Yaka*. University of Chicago Press.
2. Turner, V. 1970. *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Cornell University Press.
3. Houtteman, Y., 2014. Daasanech notions on social causation of well-being and misfortune. *Creating and Crossing Boundaries in Ethiopia: Dynamics of Social Categorization and Differentiation*, *53*, p.127.
4. For more dimensions of experience in divination: Stroeken, K. 2004. In search of the real: the healing contingency of Sukuma divination. In *Divination and healing: potent vision*. University of Arizona Press, pp. 29–54.

5. It is a premise of Euro-American sociologists like Giddens to associate non-modern selves with the culturally spectacular tradition of bewitchment instead of its very opposite which traditional healing and medicine achieve. Giddens, A., 1991. *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity.

6. The previous reference can be read as a response to the paper whose delivery with aplomb I witnessed during a research seminar in Leuven in the company of my supervisor René Devisch, himself targeted by the paper: Werbner, R. 2001. Truth-on-balance: knowing the opaque other in Tswapong wisdom divination. *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*, 263–273.

7. For the tortuous argument about collective reason, in this chapter and the preceding one, I blame an intuition that is hard to reason out. It concerns the missing link between equality and freedom. In the postmodern matrix of Žižek, a freedom-oriented (rightist) lifeway obstructs an equality-oriented (leftist) one, and vice versa. Such binarity is 'the real', void and static. A tensorial intuition proposes a dynamic whereby a more viable truth can emerge as collective reason at the level of the species if members of the species organize moments of the real. These truths are either pregiven (religious naturalism) or collectively constructed (Habermas's democratic speech), as suggested by Figure 3 in "Chapter Six: Collective Reason": either 'The sources of reason are collectively produced' or 'collective production reasons the sources' (the group will know once members start cooperating). I acknowledge the first anonymous reviewer for reminding me of: Žižek, S. 2002. *Welcome to the desert of the real!: five essays on September 11 and related dates.* Verso.

Chapter Eight: Healer or King

My thoughts go to that fateful afternoon in early 1996. Masanja and I are driving back from the annual festival organized by the Sukuma chief of Ndagalu, just south of Lake Victoria. In the back of our car, an old Land Rover short-chassis of 1978, sit a girl and her father catching a ride to the Mennonite hospital of Magu. The girl is ill. I did not realize how much. She has excruciating headaches, her father says. He asks me to slow down. At every bump of the rocky road the worn-out shock absorbers send a pang to the girl's head. Each time, she groans and stifles her cries with a howl sharp to the bone. I drop the speed to a mere twenty and then to ten miles per hour, but to no avail. Holding both hands on the wheel I glance back at her. A watery eye from beneath a scarf briefly penetrates mine. Her pain visibly worsens. The planned one-hour journey to the Mennonite hospital extends to four hours. Words fail anyone. The next morning a nurse at the gate tells me the girl died. Meningitis.

The diagnosis reduces the event to a biomedical code. The nurse could have pointed to the absence of nearby hospitals, of tarmac road or of clean environment. Such factors also explain the death of this particular girl. But the diagnosis of meningitis made the event easier to digest. It normalized the event by normalizing the absence of infrastructure. The tiny thing called life had slipped away because of a viral infection. I returned to the car and gave the passengers the closure they needed in yesterday's aftermath.

Witchcraft as diagnosis would have been an option too, if closure is what matters. The reader will have to forgive me stating that there is something truthful to the lie of witchcraft. Unlike medical labels, the witch as cause of illness embodies the patient's feelings and past experiences. As the fever rises, energy dwindles and death is inescapable, the bewitched seek closure in ideas projected on the community. Where did I deserve this? Have I done enough? The healer's compound with its shrines and therapeutic management group organizes a frame of experience that re-emplaces the human in the existential reality of uncertainty. True to that state, magic allows thoughts to hover without landing. Magic is in that sense 'good' to think.

The realism of uncertainty alone cannot justify the 'lie' of witchcraft. Life as a source of energy must come into the picture. Indeed, it is thanks to divination and its frame of experience that the bewitched gets ready to use magic and resume to live. In the previous chapter healing proceeded from (sorcerous) intrusion to (magical) reciprocity via (divinatory) expulsion. According to Sukuma tradition, a patient will be cured after being initiated in the healer's medicine. Rebirth in the healer's compound costs one head of cattle like in initiation, and afterward the patient can return for free. One day s/he may compete with initiated others to succeed the healer. Initiation and healing adopt the same structure, which I call the DIMA tensor. They socialize Sukuma novices into four practices with fundamentally interrelated meanings: to climb a rank in the cult or association (see A in Fig. 1) you depend on the good will of the spirits conveyed in divination (D); to acquire the power of medicine (M) you must submit yourself to initiation (I). The institution of those four practices together creates status (*kum*) for the initiands which they did not have before. They acquire lifeforce. As argued elsewhere, *medicinal rule*, the DIMA tensor, is key to understanding chiefly power in a wide network of groups spanning central and eastern Africa and mostly speaking Bantu-languages.[1] Kingship removes from the tensor the two medicinal practices that democratize power, namely divination and initiation. In Mwanga magic too, divination and initiation play no role. What they have in common is to mitigate the power of the user: success is predicated on the real in divination, and on the group's or ancestor's wish in

Fig. 1 Tensor of medicinal rule

Divination — Magic

Initiation — Association

initiation. Both are passages for collective reason. Kingship blocks these to shift autonomy to an individual. How does this compare to elected leaders in modern democracy?

In many groups speaking Bantu-languages the ritual of installing the chief does not differ fundamentally from the initiation of commoners.[2] The chief perfects the initiation. Medicinal initiation has its roots in hunting groups having to rely on luck to find game in the forest. Hunters set up divinatory societies to invent practices of soothsaying and medicine to deal with the real. Chiefs and healers accept life as it comes, without claiming a separate source of production only they could benefit from, like kings do. Mwanga, a medicine without initiation or divination, has to strike users as bizarre, and has this simplex and kinglike quality, at odds with the tensor teaching that no initiation or enthronement will take place unless an oracle in the form of mediumistic intuition or haruspication has first indicated its appropriateness. In terms of the scheme, the first column reads 'no I without D', the second column 'no A without M'. Association (membership and rank) means medicine, and vice versa. To be a patient is to become a healer, for every cured patient enters the curer's association, 'cult' or newly invented tradition. The two diagonals express the interrelations between divination and association (an oracle gives way to a new cult), and between medicine and initiation (the patient is initiated).

MEDICINE AND CHIEFSHIP: COMMUNAL TRUTH OR COLLECTIVE REASON?

Oyster Bay, Dar es Salaam. My thoughts return to where I am. 'Do you know the Mennonites?' my interlocutor repeats. I answer. It is a Saturday afternoon in 2017, a few days before Christmas. Despite the occasional banner in the street promising happiness for the coming year, nothing of the festivity ambience lingers in this port city at the Indian Ocean struggling through its most humid period of the year. We are looking at a few narrow figures in the distance roaming the beach at low tide in search of the rare big shell or any valuable stuff drifted from the many cargos reaching the harbor. Our view is from a balcony window and I am content with that. Twenty-three years ago an English expat told me he had his shoes stolen at Oyster Bay while jogging. Then it seemed like a sensible thing to do for a hungry beachcomber contemplating the preposterous sight in the distance of a white person on shiny white Nikes approaching fast. 'In those

days the white guy would have continued running at even speed … shoe-less', my interlocutor jests. It would be different today. I wonder why. Is Tanzania becoming less postcolonial and more 'itself'? The gap between rich and poor has not shrunk since my first visit. The coast, *pwani*, from where the Arab-influenced commercial language of Swahili spread and became the region's lingua franca, exudes an eerily unwelcome ambience that differs from life in the villages of the interior. And this is not any port or city. It used to be slavers' territory.

The balcony on the first floor in a modest condo belongs to Chief Edward Makwaia, a former high-ranking civil servant. In his mid-60s he has the age to ponder about a second career, one befitting a respected elder. He has the pedigree, as son of Chief Kidaha Makwaia from Busiha, who during colonial times acted as paramount of the Sukuma chiefdoms. I am staring back at the map he laid out before me with dots of waterholes interconnected to outline Busiha's borders. Just in time I refrain from protesting that frontiers are artificial, for they replay the colonial urge to map Empire and use 'customary authorities' better known as 'chiefs' for that purpose, and so on. Who am I anyway to determine what African chieftaincy 'is'? It has been so many things throughout history, from the most peaceful to the most violent for one thing.[3] Nothing human, includ-ing the imperialist urge of conquest, is alien to any society, to paraphrase Publius Terentius, the Roman playwright nicknamed Afer (the African) because of his Berber descent.

Edward Makwaia has a profundity to share about customary rule. The whole idea of a paramount never attracted Sukuma farmers. The chiefs treated each other as equals, were checked by their circle of court experts, and had to reckon with the relative autonomy of the large extended com-pounds of farmers in the valley. These rural communities in the north of Tanzania did not really distinguish commoners from aristocrats. The farm-ers and cattle-herders were self-reliant, covering all social functions, from the economy their fields and pasture yielded, down to the education and ritual initiation delivered at the extended compound, up to the political decisions at community level, wherein each household had equal say. Through initiation into medicinal cults, any adult could actually be a sort of aristocrat and through gifts to the other members climb up to top rank. Autonomy was the dominant frame, guaranteed by the medicine anyone could acquire.

Nevertheless, the old Makwaia did manage to introduce a form of para-mountcy. Thanks to the Mennonite hospital that cured leprosy. And

thanks to a considerable dose of his own anthropological reflection. Knowing very well that the local model of rule was not governance, in the narrow sense, but medicine, he had the means to attract families, their patients and caretakers, from all the chiefdoms. Traditional medicine did not work for leprosy, one could tell from the patient's skin. After the discovery of the drug Promin in the 1940s a leprosy camp was set up at the hospital in Kalandoto, near the chief's palace. The medicine may have been American now but the place that healed was Makwaia's.

It occurred to me, as Edward spoke, that his father had reinvented the local model of leadership as a cultural engineer would, attuning political administration to medicinal rule in such a way that neither the local farmers nor the British would notice the difference. How did the crossover of a chief tapping into foreign medical technology transform the model of rule? The practical fact that Promin required regular injections, kept patients in the vicinity of the hospital. The chief could perceive himself as governing a people. He set up social works, rallying inhabitants to form parties working on wells, roads, the school, church or a communal shelter. That sort of governance was new, Edward stresses. Pastoralists passing through his chiefdom were asked to sign for their residence at the chiefdom. The number of inhabitants was important in the eyes of the British administration, for the chief's prestige. The colonizer needed paramountcy, as it reduced the mass of spokespersons to one representative only. By making deals with a paramount the British thought to address an entire region of 5 million people covering about 100,000 square kilometers.

The British policy of indirect rule, of letting the people rule themselves under the colonial administration, meant that in principle the local system had to be adopted and integrated. In practice, the African political systems were too diverse, with varying degrees of state centralization. The chieftaincy traditionally focused on shrine and royal drum, on the incumbent's defense against witchcraft and maintenance of the fertility of land and people, through his initiation into ritual knowledge and backed by his circle of medicinal experts, 'the children of the drum'.[4] According to oral traditions, Busiha was named after the female healer founding it. Her sisters set up their own cults before these became chiefdoms. Cult and dynastic clan historically overlap. The successors were chiefs or kings, and healers or medicinal cult heads as well, the difference being secondary (since visitors could choose the register of terms wherein to greet). The variations in the system were not planned or invented. They emerged from historical

contingencies such as the personality of an incumbent, the arrival of external cults or regional changes from outside such as slavery and ivory trade affecting the community. Singularities elude neat categorizations. They are nevertheless what history is about.

Development cooperation became the postcolonial version of medicine, Edward says. Today the link with customary authority is to be found in an NGO promoting culture (*utamaduni*) presided by him as Busiha chief. Nominal and unofficial, his office is backed today by the one medicinal cult extant in the region, the Chwezi. Their ritual knowledge is of the same order as the chief's. In a rapidly changing country, the cult in its turn draws on the chief's office for significance. It is because the local model of rule has been medicinal that people, mostly the elderly Sukuma, can still imagine to have customary rulers, without the government (whose model is governance) feeling threatened by their beliefs.

Does medicine have relevance today? The bunch of plants studied by ethnobotanics at the margins of the natural sciences have for 10.000s of years been the source of life and death for hunters and gatherers in the rainforest and savanna, and for farmers and pastoralists who maintained their link with the environment through specialists. Finding a remedy in response to a new epidemic, due to migration or contact, required leadership in the experiment of subsistence and survival. Leaders had to trust their dreams of certain diggable plants before engaging in trial and error looking in the forests at hand, as healers do today. Anthropologists have no indication that medicine stopped being central to people's lives after they started farming in the Neolithic. Far from it. Peasant societies in equatorial, southern and east Africa developed political systems that relied on medicine for rain and protection. The enthronement of both chief and king, as well as the initiation ritual to climb social ranks, still draws on forest symbolism at odds with the model of governance. Stronger still, politics was a business in this region, because the medicine that ruled could be sold, as long as the dead gave their blessing. In short, another logic of rule has reigned people's lives in the past than the one we as educated readers are socialized in.[5] Might it reveal a blind spot about the politics we take for granted? The blind spot will return in the next chapter's discussion of representational democracy.

During the years preceding independence, the founding president of Tanzania and son of a chief, Nyerere, had expressed his demand for chiefs to abdicate in order to abolish customary rule. It would be the only way to prevent ethnic strife in the nascent postcolonial state, he assumed. He

thought about the potential demands of Sukuma speakers, forming the largest cultural group officially at 17% of the very diverse population (over 100 languages). Just as the colonizer needed a unitary model, homogenous, to subjugate recalcitrant groups, the postcolonial government faced the challenge of integrating the cultural manifold into the functioning of the state, with the added difficulty that resort to coercion would be negatively perceived, reminding of the colonizer. For moral leaders like Nyerere, colonial tactics were out of the question. That made ethnic expectations a problem hard to fix. The colonizer's simplified version of local rule could not do anymore either. A return to precolonial times was impossible. Therefore, Nyerere created the nation of *umoja*, 'unity', something quite different from Mandela's rainbow nation later. One language, Swahili, in service of the development of one people, marginalizing intra-national cultural differences lest these grow into ethnic demands.

As the forced resettlement of Sukuma farmers into centralized villages in the 1970s illustrated, the postcolonial government drew a line between two modes of production, old and new. The state wanted farmers to grow cotton as cash crop for the national treasury and wanted their children to go to school to learn about the Tanzanian state. Agriculture remained the mantra (*kulima kwanza*) but without the old mode that lent autonomy to polycentric families, which was visible spatially in the valleys. Therein the government intervened. The numerous cases I witnessed in the 1990s of how government officials addressed Sukuma farmers indicate that they were seen as citizens with less rights, often as easy victims for extortion, because of their old mode of life (as the colonizer put it) impossible to integrate in modern Tanzania.[6] The mode of production was portrayed as obsolete and thus as emanating from a discardable lifeway, a separate source of production. We know such a thing does not exist.

Having observed this cultural evolution toward a split source of production from rather close by has formed me. The disconnect recurs in many guises.[7] The last couple of pages postponed to clarify the crux of my argument, because of a condensed set of issues overwhelming me whenever I reach this point. As I and my Sukuma collaborators understand it, and I checked with Edward for confirmation, a fundamental misrepresentation characterizes the dominant account among Tanzanian elites about the precolonial past and its remnants. The account teems with anachronistic assumptions about religion and what religion was before modernity, and chieftaincy before parliamentary democracy. Firstly, the role of

religion or 'the occult' will be overrated by educated elites unable to imagine what someone's lifeworld would be like *if politics were religion were economy were medicine*. Sukuma farmers are autonomous precisely because they, the healer and the chief tap from the same source. Medicine is not reserved for a cast of priests. Secondly, an obstacle for educated elites to connect with the past is that chiefs had a model of leadership inspired on healers, not on autocrats. Chiefs traditionally took care of the land, ritually ensuring rains, and protecting the fertility of inhabitants, which was to safeguard the inhabitants' possibilities of livelihood. Village heads made decisions that were regularly monitored by the council of elders.

The monitoring was based pragmatically on 'what people think'. What does that exactly mean? At first inspection, we are dealing with the communal concept of truth which the postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty defends against the modern claim that truth corresponds to reality. Progress would be obtained through the mirroring of nature (Enlightenment seeks 'light' through a representational concept of perception).[8] Activists exposing exploitation (like Rorty's father who founded the journal 'The New Masses') will not be convinced by Rorty that their mirroring is an illusion, that it is just a model agreed on by the community of activists at some point. Rorty imagines ironical activism, someone dying for a belief quite aware that it is historically contingent.[9] He is certain that history is inanimate. More valid seems to me a theory open to both possibilities, hence also to the one that contingency, what arrives, is animate. By this I mean that communal truth would in the end not be arbitrary, but driven by some necessity (in an origin-oriented instead of event-based time). The arbitrary is within us, within our body, our genes, our neurobiology, and within the history of each, yet every time naturally selected in Darwinian interaction with the environment at all levels, from micro to macro, so by the time the selected outcome surfaces in our minds and we are conscious of it, there is necessity, a degree of nonarbitrary. And if not individually, such as one mind intuiting the right choice for survival, the necessity may show in the community at occasions of sensing life and judging events in that light. The species speaks through the collective.

Therefore, instead of communal truth, I claim we are observing collective reason—reason in the double meaning of a necessity (possibly following a destiny) and a thought process (possibly with its own principles of rationality). This possibility is another way of critiquing the individual reason of the moderns, but that path Rorty refused.[10] I have emphasized the importance of collective reason in human (see infra: 'speciated') history,

and did an intercultural exercise for it here (excursions in Arabic and Asian philosophy would dovetail and so would the contemporary interest in collective intelligence)[11] to show that the postmodern neglect is a copout.

As argued in the next section, both the modern preference for individual reason (an educated capacity) and the postmodern critique in favor of communal truth (an actively organized consensus) reiterate an ancient refusal of continued (origin-historical) significance, that of collective reason (which neither of the former two options controls). The autocratic king anticipated it. The postmodern refusal of collective reason is historically significant for it highlights the parting of the two halves of the concept: reason and the collective (which will appear to have close affinity with mirror and model respectively, as well as frame and sphere). The next chapter will argue that the two halves of our split collective reason live on in a reified way as Left and Right in politics. Previously presuming each other and complementing, they are identities without connection in post-knowledge society. Progressives firmly adhere to individual reason, thus expect all good (including good leadership) to come from *mirroring* reality. Conservatives cling to collective tradition, thus expect nothing but good (including good leadership) from *modeling* reality. My remedy to simplex society will be the retrieval of collective reason, after learning from its demise in modernity, which made way for post-knowledge.

AFTER COLLECTIVE REASON: ANTHROPOCENE AUTOCRACY

The monograph 'Medicinal Rule' presents several cases from east and central Africa where the king's autocracy went against the communal ethic of autonomy, which was guaranteed via medicine for all. The role of collective reason in a chiefdom was guaranteed by subjecting the chief to divination and initiation. The chief's rule was not detached from life because initiation planted wisdom from the ancients in him while the real in the form of the oracle's chance events influenced his decisions. The exploiter-king evaded those two institutions. His rule in all simplicity, like a machine, denied dependence on the source of production. Culturally, kingship was a freak event. The event was a process whereby the medicinal tensor of power was deprived of the shamanic elements on which it drew (as a discussion piece demonstrates).[12] A speciated history asks whether the ancient widespread model of chieftaincy, with roots in egalitarian hunter bands, did somehow inspire the leadership of Eurasian kings and emperors, or later on the electoral democracy with a president representing a faction.

The answer is of course no, and according to Enlightenment luckily so because individual reason ended the tyranny of communal truth, including scapegoating, discrimination of minorities, witch-hunt, inertia of the masses, and intellectual stagnation through the marginalization of outcast geniuses and the prohibition of unconventional ideas. But why did it sacrifice something else along the way, which I named collective reason?

An origin-oriented history takes into account the neurobiological constitution humans had for hundred-thousands of years, and the environmental conditions before the Anthropocene. A linear evolution, of one production mode progressing to take over from another, clouds this origin-oriented history. Colonizers did the clouding when they took the 'big man' or 'boss' as model of reference in 'primitive Africa', and as 'primitive' to humanity. The king imposing his will and enslaving would be a continuation of it, rather than an exceptional figure. The model spread in Europe through travelogues and picture books to reveal humanity's 'primitive nature' and the process of civilization which this nature had to undergo and which also the local model of leadership had to undergo to operate in service of the colonial administration applying indirect rule.[13]

In light of collective reason (and life-sensing) an important distinction should be drawn between medicine, the stuff of chiefs, and religion, the stuff of kings. The chief has access to the sources of production. Failing access shows in natural phenomena such as lack of rain or excess of it, in oracles (D) and if initiatory knowledge (I) is not consecrated through ancestral blessing in dreams. It is most illuminating that the royal centralization of power evolved from a simplication of chieftaincy that split the DIMA tensor, translating away D and I. The chief, subject to spirit wishes, transforms into a king with autocratic power once he develops an aversion to the frame of uncertainty. Historical data confirm that kings often claim the royal medicine or the top rank of the medicinal association, after creating the position of priest for someone else who deals with the domain of initiation and divination.[14] Far from completing a natural evolution toward centralization, the chief aspiring to establish kingship is marked by an aversion to the institutions that constrain his power. Kingship discards these in favor of medicine and association (M and A). From the perspective of western modernity, preoccupied with secularization and the democratic state, the separation is rational because gives way to the subsystems of the political (M and A) and the religious (D and I), each with its own principles. From the perspective of Sukuma chieftaincy and medicinal rule, however, the new model of rule simplicates the viable exchange with the

environment. What the state gradually got rid of is not something irrational called religion but something realistic, its dependence on the production sources. After that, the social and natural environment could be exploited. Evidence of a split source of production is the king acquiring sacred power and denying commoners any degree of it.[15] The chasm cannot be bridged with initiatory knowledge. Secondly, he is free to exploit humans, animals and nature, for he no longer depends on the spirit's message. That agro-logic driving his State and emerging in the Holocene carried the seeds for the ensuing Anthropocene.

Humanity's earliest surviving epic, over 4000 years old, may very well be telling the story of the split that announced the Anthropocene. At the height of his might, King Gilgamesh of Uruk in Mesopotamia desperately seeks the secret of eternal life. Death has become a problem to Gilgamesh ever since the death of his friend the shepherd, woe of the hunters and killer of the gods' bull. Inconsolable, he travels to find a priest, for only in the latter's segregated realm would the secret, the unruly part of power, be known. Why? How could the priest monopolize the knowledge? What had happened to the collective reason that any set of humans can share? Kingship had been invented by Gilgamesh by splitting life into a political and a religious sphere. Before his rule, by his father the Sumerian healer-chief Lugalbanda, every leader was his own priest, like every initiated. True to life's contingency, the leader had healing capacity that did not render his power 'sacred'. In contrast with the experiential initiation of hunter and shaman, a State indoctrinates, which is to separate feelings from learned meanings, to invent the sacred and monopolize it. The Sumerian priestess Enheduanna, considered the earliest writer in human history, narrated the pressure on her upon conquest of new territories to pragmatically merge the foreign gods. The subservience of religion to politics is predicated on splitting the source of production into political and religious realms, earth and sky. The epic recounts a corrupted vocation, a loss of access to collective reason as earth and sky disconnect, a beginning entropy of the system's humanity.

The faceless violence of war technology and Mwanga magic returns in kingship. Kings of the most sophisticated realms in the region, such as Kuba in the Congo basin, famously excelled in cruelty. They had thousands of slaves slaughtered at royal funerals, the number proportional to the blessings they expected in the afterlife.[16] The logic presumes a split source of production and reminds of an investment (a gift without sacrifice). They too, like the mad Mwanga healers and contemporary warriors

against terror, thought to have discovered a natural law for success. Earth's early kingdoms emerging some 4500 years ago in the regions of Mesopotamia, the Indus river, Huang Ho river, the Nile valley with the Pharaohs, and later in the Andes with the Incas, and in Mesoamerica with the Mayas and Aztecs, exemplify the complexity of governance attained thanks to the exploitation of energy resources in a densely populated area. However impressive culturally, none lasted as long as the hunting band and chiefdom, which the colonizers encountered across continents. Empires die on their own account owing to an unsustainable cultural system.[17] Their social hierarchy's proverbial pyramid denies that their production pivots on something no system controls. The healer-chiefs accept mediation in communication through oracles, dreams of ancestral spirits, councils of clan elders, and exchange with other chiefs having undergone the medicinal initiation in the forest. They engage in a politics of the real, which differs entirely from realpolitik, a unidimensional pragmatic sort of governance. The experiential frame of chiefs and healers is medicinal and multiplex. The frame of kings, of the bewitched and of Mwanga magic is simplex for disconnecting from collective reason and the life of the species.

ELECTIONS AS POLITICS OF THE REAL

The French Revolution (the event) and Enlightenment (the process) respectively substituted democratic elections (for kingship) and rationality (for religious truth) contributing to two of the revolution's values, the first to equality, the second to freedom. What about the slogan's third, brotherhood, which has been recast as inclusion and is meant by 'humanity'? The answer I proposed is the recovery of collective reason, for it can remedy what simplex society dehumanizes.

Could free elections accede to collective reason? They voice the collective. The ideal democracy resembles divination in that an unmanipulated moment decides the future; a moment of the real is organized. It of course differs from divination in that the outcome is based on the accumulation of individual votes. A sum of individual reasons does not equal collective reason. The negative view that democracy gives voice to all opinions, to avoid provoking any single one, seems less significant than the positive view, that in the intuition of the demos (the people) a truth can be found, and otherwise the group's legitimacy at least. Communal truth may have a collective reason. The connection to life, a care for the species and the sources of production, call it a sense of both origin and destiny, returns in

the intuition of the demos. What jeopardizes political access to collective reason are two obstacles associated with simplex society.

As the country I live in entered its 400th day without government and broke its former record, a couple of politicians from different parties let on to journalists what impedes their formation of a coalition—increasingly so with every election. The complex Belgian system, where language communities and economic regions with conflicting interests must collaborate at the federal level, suffers most from a structural feature of the network society. Every step in the difficult negotiations is commented on by the actors themselves on Twitter, Instagram and TikTok.[18] Any will to compromise by a party falls flat the next morning because is depicted by supporters and opponents in the simplex (binary) terms of winner and loser. The social media do not grant the time it takes for a new consensus to grow. The communication only seeks to influence, thus continues the divisive logic of elections instead of feeding trust and building society based on the electoral results. Futility prevails.

Another aspect politicians are less eager to point out is that those in power have little to gain from parliamentary elections. In case of an unpredictable result (which democracy permits) the election will come across in the population as momentous. Yet, the 'voter signal' backing a specific candidate interferes with the ruling parties' permanent interests. Parties, situating themselves on the spectrum of left and right, are unable to deal with the pinnacle of democracy. Nevertheless, they have every say in the decisions of elected members of parliament. Europeans have a word for it, 'particracy', a threat to democracy that 'statesmen such as Churchill' supposedly overcame. In the current mediascape, the politicians stay locked up in their circle of supporters, unable to sneak away from their limited sphere of exchange, the bubble.

The two tendencies, simplex and bubble, hinder a democratic sum of individual votes in attaining collective reason. Elections insert a moment of real, but afterward the president, prime minister and their government act according to the model of kingship, which expels any form of the real (like kingship has done with oracles and initiations) from the realm of politics. Parties anticipate on that, as opposed to a system in continuous empirical confrontation (which daily digital monitoring of all citizens through issue-oriented polls could achieve). Moreover, elections have a liberating unpredictable dimension, but in their premises they resemble social media for they identify opinions and treat these as units with fixed meaning. A visible public trait, in this case an opinion, to learn about a

person is not as bad as relying on a physical trait, but it skips the person's frame of experience that underlies the statement. At no stage in the democratic process is the voter's frame examined. If it did, new organic alliances would be possible between frames, whereas similar opinions (e.g., critique on Islam) could count as different votes because of their frames (e.g., racist versus rationalist). Such rearrangement and crosscutting of spheres based on the frames is of course not appreciated by political parties who would be made irrelevant because of their fixed ideologies.

A medicinal type of politics manages the tie with the production sources. The tie is retained neither by the left nor by the right, but by their union. Liberalism remedied the excesses of theocracy; socialism those of capitalism. Left and right complemented each other's bias in coalitions and the succession of governments. As argued in the next chapter, simplex society has separated them further, seemingly beyond repair, which indicates the need for a new system of governance.

Notes

1. Stroeken (2023).
2. I here compare my ethnographic data with: Tanner, R. 1957. The installation of Sukuma chiefs in Mwanza district, Tanganyika. *African Studies* 16: 197–209.
3. Vansina, J. M. (1990). *Paths in the rainforests: toward a history of political tradition in equatorial Africa*. University of Wisconsin Press.
4. Stroeken, K. (2018). *Medicinal Rule: a historical anthropology of kingship in east and central Africa*. Series 'Methodology and History in Anthropology', Vol. 35. New York: Berghahn.
5. Despite the diversity of political systems in Bantu-speaking Africa, certain characteristics can be identified to speak of kingship, such as the level of centralized power, and distinguish it technically from chieftaincy. That was a challenge for: Sahlins, M., & Graeber, D. (2017). *On kings*. HAU Books.
6. Hydén, G., 1980. *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: underdevelopment and an uncaptured peasantry*. University of California Press.
7. The disconnect seems to be an existential condition of ethnographers in eastern Africa attempting to mediate between an audience visiting (e.g., journalists) and 'the field': Finnström, S., 2020. Brokers and breakers of war stories in Acholiland, Northern Uganda. *Anthropology and Humanism*, *45*(1), pp.43–58.
8. Rorty, R., 2009. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton university press.

9. Rorty, Richard (1989). *Contingency, irony, and solidarity.* Cambridge. See also Habermas's ideal speech situation in communicative action: Habermas, J., 1979. *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Beacon Press.

10. Compagnons on that road can be found here. Elliott, B., 2009. Theories of community in Habermas, Nancy and Agamben: A critical evaluation. *Philosophy Compass*, *4*(6), pp.893–903.

11. Alag, S., 2008. *Collective intelligence in action.* Simon and Schuster.

12. Stroeken, K. 2023. Medicine and Kingship. *Current Anthropology* 63: 219–41.

13. Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988. *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge.* Indiana University Press.

14. See among others Shyaam in Kuba kingship: Stroeken, K., Medicinal Rule, pp.227–28.

15. De Heusch, L. (1993). L'inversion de la dette (propos sur les royautés sacrées africaines). *Publications de l'École Française de Rome 168*(1): 9–26.

16. Vansina, J. (1978). *The children of Woot: a history of the Kuba peoples.* University of Wisconsin Press.

17. I suppose on this a critical constructivist and a cultural materialist agree, for example, for the latter: Diamond, J. (2011). *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed.* Penguin.

18. <https://www.demorgen.be/politiek/hoe-twitter-instagram-en-tiktok-de-federale-regeringsvorming-gijzelen~b2050d53/>, accessed on 10.07.2020.

Chapter Nine: A Model Leader

A shadow hung over Part I. Of orange hue. In 2016 he surprised himself for being elected president of the US. Four years later he almost surprised everyone. Because he managed something of a feat. Embodying what has already gone down in history as the most surreal four years of US democracy, he became the prime candidate to succeed himself. What was his trick? He enacted the worst version of himself. He told every possible half-truth, ventured the bluntest mistake, excluded at will.[1] He counted on getting away with it. Normalize the vice. The craziest prediction about his presidency turned out to have sold him short. That is the answer.

The main surprise, from which the rest of the argument follows, has to do with his election being the outcome of democracy. How could this man have become president when catering only for a small minority of businessmen? The latter usually vote for someone like themselves, but why did poor people in the US vote for someone born in a rich family who has nothing but contempt for those not as lucky as himself?

The reason I propose is precisely this social chasm they experience. He could be their model. Many poor Americans vote for a person they want to be. Because they believe in the American dream that they too someday can be successful. Some want to be like him in every detail, untouchable, terribly affluent, married to a pinup with arrogantly behaving offspring, and able to blurt out at will, after a pressing of the lips and a rising of the chin below downcast eyes: 'You're fired!' The democratic system has long relied on the political reticence of the silent majority. The masses were to

trust in an upper layer of intellectuals that know best. And they did, leaving decision-making up to the experts representing them and exposing the rare quack. The collective erred on the safe side because intuited the dark matter of complex systems. What happened in the meanwhile? Their Socratic wisdom of *knowing not to know* made no sense once the system and its inventors they invested belief in began to show failure.[2] Democratic election cannot deal with such limit conditions. It cannot reinvent the system.

What does simplex society imply politically? In the cultural void left by distrust, futility and disconnection, a populist provides something to trust and believe in, restores a sense of impact with every word said, and has constructed a story that meaningfully connects with feelings of discontent. The deeper the discontent the more effervescent the eruption of the imaginary. Think of conspiracy theories, about reptilian machinations, Islamophobic or racist, that stood no chance on public fora a decade or two ago. Verification and critical doubt could counter the delusion. In a simplex society, however, the members do not communicate frames to compare these critically and decide on the most viable one in a sphere. They 'inform' the public about their opinions. They perform their identity. Votes and ideological choices attain a ritual character. Identity politics it is called. And so the theory of rituals can apply to political behavior.

Model versus mirror. *I vote for someone I wanna be* versus *I vote for someone like me*. The pair of model and mirror derives from Don Handelman's two types of rituals, and of public events in general.[3] Rites of passage initiate participants into a model of the person one should become, whereas annual ceremonies mirror the current situation in society, often magnified to facilitate catharsis, as in carnival. When personal comments on social media can substitute for private conversations, we are living in a society where communication has increasingly become a public event. Handelman's theory thus finds extra salience. Model and mirror are two ways of performing. They do not blend. Gone is democracy's ultimate intention of finding in mediation the policy that will make society as a whole prosper and preserve life.

On average a Democrat vote seems to mirror the candidate: 'I can picture that person to be more or less like me, I'll vote for her.' The Republican Party can count on model-voters: 'Yeah, I want to be like him, so I vote for him.' That is my hypothesis, based on 'post-truth' simplex society transforming politics into ritual. I have no survey to prove it, since the hypothesis concerns a largely unconscious disposition. I invite the readers

to look at their familiar political system from an unfamiliar angle like an ethnographer would. They might imagine what post-truth does to people. What does systematic disconnection of meaning from feeling in society do to the mind? If you have no trustworthy basis to verify claims, new criteria arise such as the feeling a simplex frame gives (e.g., the release of energy by threatening to kick a foreigner out). A model clear enough to plead allegiance to gratifies the uprooted. Just as the most conservative in Christianity and Islam retrieve belonging by having their puritan values amend the law (e.g., abortion in southern US states, Indonesia)[4] modern democracy has become an identity to progressives rather than a frame discussed in terms of its viability. Due to identity politics in a fragmenting society, democracy itself risks to look partisan, to evolve from a forum housing many views to one representing about half of the population and marginalizing the rest, leaving them disgruntled.

Democrats should benefit most from a democratic system. Republicans have the advantage of collecting model-votes on top of their mirror-votes. The latter come from the rich, conservative class mirrored by the president. Another advantage for someone mobilizing model-voters is that 'who the voter wants to be' can be stretched. Once in power, the star can teach the voter about wicked but authentically star-like things the model implies. What you get away with only makes you stronger. In sharp contrast, some-one counting on my mirror-vote cannot risk to step out of line in a way I never would. Say 'Grab them by…' and you will lose my Democrat vote.

Post-knowledge society blurs the distinction between model and mir-ror. Who will know whether a representation does mirror reality or rather models it according to one's wishes? The leader's model of American opportunity simplicates the harsh reality of class disparity and racism. A simplex society disadvantages politicians striving in their speech for an accurate reflection of the multilayered situation. Nuances signal lack of purchase; exaggerations suggest clarity and when communicated by a leader become self-fulfilling prophecies. With every bridge too far, the craziest aspects of the model get normalized and for that reason seem to mirror reality better than the mainstream version learned at school. Presenting the worst version of himself, he could not have done better. A predatory grumpy man makes for anti-establishment heroism in the American 'modern family' (thinking of the popular TV show with that name). Some mirror-voters among the poor that distrusted him before, have come to accept him in all his deficiencies to add their votes to those of the modelists, the already converted.

Model-voting is counterintuitive for social scientists. They assume mirroring to be the default position, not only because that is probably what they as academic democrats themselves do, but because it would be a logical, statistical emanation of how the political system is constituted.[5] A parliament should more or less be representative of the entire population, in ideas if not in sociocultural background, because in a well-functioning democracy people can choose people like themselves. Voter and voted belong to the same constituency. More clearly than constituency-based parliamentary elections, the race for US presidency reveals what people really choose when they can.[6]

To understand model-voting requires an effort in empathy. Model-voters (who I want to be) do not have the same expectations of leadership as mirror-voters (who is like me). For many model-voters, life has been too unrewarding and their confidence too profoundly shaken to believe in someone resembling themselves socially. They cannot picture such a person as leader, or as their leader, even if that person shares their background and could understand them best. They choose someone else, someone they could dream to become, hence entirely different from what they are now.

People do not necessarily aspire to what is good for them. My list of inspiring models comprises Jim Morrison for his body and voice, Ian Curtis for his lyrics and dance, and Jimi Hendrix for too much I care to sum up here. Without the luck of an education and a career, I would not have reached the age of 29, nor have had kids or would have entertained you with this booklet. Many poor vote for a role model rather than for a candidate who could really understand their situation. Politicians being so uncommon in ambition as to sincerely wanting to help the poor, better have the looks, the dress (not sandals) and the biography enticing enough to identify with.

Realization of one's dire situation is necessary before the voter makes choices in his or her own interest. Realizing that the situation is not unique and one is not alone: class consciousness Marx called it. He deemed its promotion key for starting a revolution in the interest of the many. Equally important is possession of the tools through education or other means to believe that one can do something structural about the situation. Until those two conditions are fulfilled a world government may not be the best plan to save the planet. Given the uneven level of education, welfare and prospects on the planet, the most likely world government today would be staunchly rightist. I am not just thinking of extremely conservative

model-voters in the US or the nationalist regime in India. The purity of the sharia sought by IS and the Taliban illustrates the model that many disadvantaged and excluded cling to by lack of alternative. Dreaming of reversing a structurally unequal situation leads to an ideal unattainable unless through the ultimate sacrifice.

The extent to which the US presidential elections stir emotions across the world should be applauded. The unsure outcome of the contest between two parties, like two clubs with a long tradition and large following in soccer, is a welcome corrective to the fixity of simplex society. Yet, my hypothesis about mirror and model raises a problem for democracy as the ancient Greeks conceived it. Their elected majorities decided what is best.[7] Of course, democracy notoriously holds the seeds of its own demise, by allowing antidemocratic parties,[8] but I am claiming a flaw in its application. The Athenian idea of democracy was not meant for voters with very unequal life standards. (Athens formed an independent polis at the time; it had only the male citizens with similar backgrounds enfranchised, which precluded women, people with unrepaid debts and the slaves that far outnumbered any category.) Without glaring inequality throwing half of the population into cognitive dissonance, voters could have concentrated on the politician representing their interests and idea of the future. The fragmentation through bubbles and simplex frames sets back the original democratic project of taking the pulse of society and empirically connecting with dynamic reality. The play of model and mirror worsens the disconnection.

As "Chapter Eight: Healer or King" argued, democratic elections juxtapose parties like frames in a matrix, with one coming out as the winner. The choice between frames being made, time is deemed ripe for the vector: power. Any election, debate and poll, any headline, critique and scandal, is interpreted in terms of the zero-sum game: whatever one party wins automatically signifies loss for the other(s). The matrix does not question the zero-sum game, namely that all parties suffer humiliation repeatedly, which sows the seeds of revenge against the other party rather than against the system that lures them into this game. A tensor includes that third dimension of life-sensing as a variable. It allows for a political system ensuring non-zero winning through mutual learning (not just coalition and compromise) and subsequent evolution.

Democratic election in simplex society looks like a pageant, crowning not the candidate with the greatest capacity but with the most likes. What modelist and mirrorist have in common is a focus on the person. Both fuel

the media's sensationalism about the politicians' private lives. Another commonality is the absence of frameshift. The leader represents an ideology, a fixed idea. This obstructs the evolution from person-oriented to issue-oriented democracy. If all community members can make decisions in consensus, case by case and on a regular basis, for example, via smart digital monitoring, the elected leader's democratic value would be cut to size.

In speech, some of the more famous Republicans have been notoriously coarse in their choice of words. Does the historically charged meaning of terms elude them? I doubt it. They know how to provoke Democrats and gain popularity with anti-Democrats. They know exactly how to irritate mirror-voters, who assume that speech mirrors what the politician thinks. A remark about 'tribal wars in Africa' will stir antiracist sentiments. Model-voters scoff at the protester's outrage. 'I was not serious' is an excuse those voters accept, because models imply a margin of deviation the supporter has to tolerate. In liberal-democrat circles, the excuse would never work; the buffoonery among peers is not tolerated. It is seen as inaccurate mirroring of reality. A politician caught on such unconstraint will have damaged his or her reputation.

Democrats catering for mirror-voters take a risk. They may come across as haughty, and most of all, as pretending that their speech is frameless. I may wish to conclude otherwise, but the claim of one's ideology mirroring reality looks like a simplex for denying to be just another model offering a perspective. It can become a sophisticated type of simplex. Anyone should be commended for detecting a simplex, for instance racist or colonialist speech. However, prohibition will not change the racist's or colonialist frame. He or she may experience the prohibition as a simplex in its own right manipulating affect. Sanctioning the use of certain words irrespective of context denies humans the momentary lapse of reason as well as their variable sensitivity to nuance. Whatever a person has said at a particular moment in time is supposed to be what he or she is, essentially, continually: 'Sorry, the deed mirrors the person.' Mirrorism automatically classifies deeds as intentional: 'You made a mistake? No, recognize that these words are you, intending the words.' Mirroring spares us going through the trouble of endless communications for verification. Was your wording a lapse of reason? Automatic attribution of intention is the intellectual's simplex in the face of complexity. Whereas modelists have their 'gut feeling' about someone's ('leftist') frame, mirrorists claim objectivity irrespective of frame.[9] To one simplex another.

Extreme rightists claim that their uncouth speech should be tolerated in a democracy for being an opinion expressed in mere words. Mirrorists rightly retort that words are deeds. In our analytical terms, a racist statement affects life by activating a frame in a sphere of the network. Mirrorists in turn must examine how their speech affects life. Reprovals of certain behaviors lest naïve viewers imitate (indeed mirror) them overlook that there is a great deal of acting in modeling. Word-policing tries to do justice to lived history, but will not persuade model-voters to change their minds. To forbid certain expressions regardless of context presumes that words without context are possible. The claim of a timeless position without perspective denies the treacherously simple formula to the sound of which Ludwig Wittgenstein buried metaphysics: meaning is use. The user navigates from one language game to the next, one frame to the next. Deny that and you start a fire. After breaking through a couple of walls since "Chapter Two: Frameshift", we have reached a ditch of fire. There awaits a last heavy task.

No matter how well you and I analyze what is going on, indeed provide the very mirror of nature, for example, in scientific evidence about climate change and about a negative evolution of human affect, we have done nothing to improve the situation. Not a mirror but a model is needed at the stage of action. This Democrats can learn from Republicans. What good is it to enumerate the tipping points of a crisis in climate and economy, when all the mirroring does is to give reason for despair? A model dares to make the leap from mirrored reality to what is not there yet but might be. A tensor which opens up the frames of the matrix to the test of life, having them rooted in the future of the species, gives direction and energizes. Its degrees of freedom, each a dimension that humans can be aware of and decide to fill in at a certain time and place, link up a sphere's frames with the sources of production, and us with the survival of the species. The tensor speciates and in that sense humanizes.

Notes

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidmarkowitz/2020/05/05/trump-is-lying-more-than-ever-just-look-at-the-data/#464b9f321e17>, accessed on 15.07.2020. Austermuehl, F., 2020. The normalization of exclusion through a Revival of whiteness in Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign discourse. *Social semiotics*, *30*(4), pp.528–546.

2. Francis Nyamnjoh argues that citizenship is an incomplete process, which explains the success of the lie of completeness. My gratitude goes to the

third anonymous reviewer for imparting the reference: Nyamnjoh, B. 2022. *Incompleteness: Donald Trump, Populism and Citizenship*. Langaa: African Books Collective.

3. Handelman, D. (1998). *Models and mirrors: Towards an anthropology of public events*. Berghahn Books.

4. https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/small-town-usa/202206/the-puritans-are-back-did-they-ever-leave

5. Gross, N. (2013). *Why are professors liberal and why do conservatives care?* Harvard University Press. Goodall Jr, H. L. (2016). *Counter-narrative: How progressive academics can challenge extremists and promote social justice*. Routledge.

6. Kapferer, B., & Theodossopoulos, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Democracy's Paradox: Populism and Its Contemporary Crisis*. Vol. 18. Berghahn Books.

7. Held, D. (2006). *Models of democracy*. Stanford University Press.

8. Kapferer, B. (2017). Ideas on populism: The wildness of democracy and emergence of the corporate state. *Arena Magazine* 146 (31).

9. Social psychologists situate gut feeling on both sides of the spectrum, cf. Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage.

Chapter Ten: Entropology

A probably true but shallow analysis of the world today has it that we are witnessing the end of an era. The collapse of the West, in rigor mortis like the Roman Empire two millennia ago. The city of Rome burning. Nero. *TrumPutin*. Time has come for the next empire. It will introduce its own type of reign. China maybe.

What is really happening the state of the planet tells us. The very possibility of an equilibrium is at stake. Climate change represents a symptom. The acceleration of ecological disasters due to their interconnection has taught us a lesson about the world, the hard way. A lesson about society. Not only about our environment. It says that you and I may feel free, agents of our destiny, doing our best to become smarter, better or richer, but that we partake of something bigger, a whole. System. Organism. And that whole has been suffering from entropy, a disintegration affecting its core. School does not teach about it, for with every technological invention remedying a symptom, engineers are proving the atomism right of the natural sciences that distances us from the whole. Social science classes mock the very idea of a social organism, labeling it functionalism. Philosophers have long rejected the grand narrative of anything less fluid in life than fleeting semantics.

Anyway, somebody must have been wrong. There is that collective level of its own kind we ignored at our peril. System connotes equilibrium. One does not mess with the precariously balanced outcome of one million years of human evolution, the hard-won result of trial and error. One does

K. Stroeken, *Simplex Society*,

not mess with Mother Earth. Our planet with water, atmosphere and oxygen is a miracle. (Statistically). Life is a miracle. Society is a miracle. We blew it.

Something snapped. Among the forms that *ethnos*, the swarm of cohabiting human and non-human animals, has taken in evolution, the band of hunters, the agrarian village, the industrial city and the suburb, none is objectively better than the other. These are shapes the organism took. Did the geological age of human influence, recently coined the Anthropocene, begin at the peak of industrialization? Or should we situate the year zero in the neolithic revolution, after masses of people turned to farming when the livelihood of hunters and gatherers collecting berries and shooting game in symbiosis with their environment ran into its limits under changed ecology? Each of these eras knew their costly initial phases. Transition to a new livelihood did happen every time again as war and poverty signaled the need for institutions to reach a new equilibrium; to freeze the nomos for a second and check out the logos, where it may falter and be reinvented. Changing a way of life is a collective exercise and a human craft. What hinders it? Never before has the species been as inventive, so the inertia is blatant.

How did we lose the feel for the craft? To recall the warning of combat pilots in the 1950s, adults in the past piloted communities continuously through difficult situations. Think of the equivalent for storms, engine failure, or a co-pilot's heart attack. Each time, an individual managed to synthesize a great amount of data as well as emotions, much of it unconsciously, to take a wise decision, that is, to adapt the mode of production to the source of production. The acting on intuition strengthened the confidence of the entire group. Members swirled like a swarm. In simplicated designs however the user is babied. S/he has to think less hard and feel less sorrow or uncertainty. The response to a situation should be predictable. The design improves by reducing the user to a mere recognizer of signals and adopter of procedure. The feedback cycle is separated from the swarm. No learning or confidence building takes place in people. The feedback is limited to the technological sphere of exchange, because there would be different sources of production, corresponding to distinct spheres. Machines do their thing. We watch as the machinery surrenders society to entropy.

The dystopia of dehumanization already emerged in the romanticism of the late nineteenth century casting doubt, of an existential kind, on the modern cosmology that was conquering the world. Gothic novels

captured the shadow thrown by progress optimism. Where can the unholy machine prosper? 'For it is not the least of its terrors that *this evil thing is rooted deep in all good*; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest', resounded the thought of Dr Van Helsing about Dracula.[1] Freud saw the thing, *es*, operating behind our civilized ways. The distinction between traditional and modern society contained a caution about human possibilities and limits that until well into the mid twentieth century inspired a series of classic studies. If not nostalgic, they were anti-hubristic tales of the destructive substance within our science and technology.[2] Worries of unseen dangers were tempered temporarily by postwar optimism and the rise in American and European welfare since the 1950s on account of industrial innovation (owing as much to exploitation of colonized territories). The background angst never went away.

Although machines enact and transmit cultural values that designers have incorporated, the complexity of multiple incorporations precluded the possibility of agency. Today, the dragging along of past measures in response to infinitely varied interests, which require ever more computation by abstruse bureaucracies, seriously hinders the tabula rasa that a worldwide ecological and social transition would require. To wit, parents educate their children about the global challenges only to return the next morning to their offices counting on being rewarded for mining the Earth's opportunities, increasing a company's sophistication in stimulating consumption, minutely exploiting the loopholes of regulations, and basically continuing with what they have been doing before. Too many spheres come in between for anyone to feel personally responsible for unemployment, dwindling incomes, injustice and the prosperity of the few that are jeopardizing the social contract. Society is this, humanity that.

We must face an important trait of entropy. The natural state of humans living together is for their group to dissipate. Entropy means that unless energy is imported, society undergoes a disintegration of the whole into parts. The tendency is toward fragmentation (e.g., scientific disciplines subdividing reality in niches to safely replicate their jargon) and homogenization within the fragments (e.g., markets settling for the unhealthy cheap supplies that satisfy the widest demand within a sphere). Markets, political parties and knowledge labs reduce humans to predictable identities in their spheres contradicting the palette of future possibilities across spheres.

Society will disintegrate into disorder unless energy can be tapped from outside. Therefore, living together is not a given but the result of organized collective unrelenting effort and ingeniousness. Through active

practices of (re)integration, not just of newcomers but of all members, their minds evolving at each stage in their lives and adapting to the environment every time again, a society keeps itself alive. Otherwise it will disappear in Darwinian fashion. Cosmologies picture the group's origins. Divinations measure a person's (or group's) energy or life-force (their 'star', *nyota* in Swahili). Ceremonies do not just take care of collective belonging but adapt the African rural group to the new phase of life the young members have reached. Each member in his or her way is needed by the group, irreplaceable. Imagine the confidence this builds in a person. In the millions of minute decisions dragged along in the current social network, the peaks and slumps of the market, the advices of experts and scholars, how many have taken that into account: the collective picture, the care for the state of the swarm? The social contract guarantees more TV channels, more car brands, more cheap clothes, more bandwidth, more PCs and phones and apps and information and social media platforms. In a population that has exceeded the scale of a community regulating itself, every decision and innovation that does not deliberately seek to reserve a unique place for each in society reinforces entropy. The simplex makes humans obsolete as subjects—the machine feels for you— while turning them into consumers mainly, tracking, creating and feeding addictions on every sensory terrain. The youngsters correctly register the daily message that they are not needed, save to consume and be exploited. Just watch the screen.

Correction. Twenty-first century technology is participatory: the exploited are exploiters too, influencers. The consumers simultaneously produce the pictures and films to like on Instagram or YouTube, and if successful make money out of these. To be exact, bloggers and vloggers produce civic cultures.[3] Influencers feel like accomplices in exploiting the addiction to attention, fame and emotional reactions of awe, desire and jealousy, stimulated by images and headlines of sensation and shock.[4] We all participate in the global experiment relying on our wise discretion as sensorily bombarded addiction-fed individuals to filter habits and trends. The information society has no filter to adapt the type and amount of informative and emotional input to what is good for its members.[5] 'Toddler suffers permanent brain damage from baseball in the face' above a snapshot showing the child still held up high by the proud father right after impact, the shocked mother next to them: how much is needed of

this every day at an hourly rate, with every flick on the smartphone screen, before the heart gets used to it, and feels no more? The tragic remedy is to subsume sensation, like gaming, in a sphere with a frame disconnected from life. The observer must disconnect from the reality of the toddler, his parents and us sharing an energy. Any system has its limits to what can be processed, bubbled and fragmented, without the system itself disintegrating. Humanity, really, does anybody believe in it anymore?

Look unassumingly at the scenes outside the school gates, around a McDonalds, in shopping centers, on the well-lit streets of town. Small waving screens attached to sleepless bodies. Eyes flashing at each other in disgust, or anxiety, then in cold detachment. I am one too many. Together, each deserted. Drugs designed to feel united.[6] *Eco-apo-calypso.* To feel good, one joins the tide. The darkness is in us, but I see it less concealed in the kids of today. As I overheard one teenager in 2019 characterizing the group of peers: 'Each wishes the other dead.' The swarm has been affected by a deadly disease. The swirling dance has stopped. The members are not cooperating. They catch themselves thinking any member less is better for the swarm. Better someone else than me. The stress to make it. The nerves about not making it. The fight. The flight. Destructive or self-destructive. Retreat further, narrow down the sphere. A self-destructive cancel culture, one within the bubble, guarantees a steady stream of excluded. This is something no parent can deal with alone. It surpasses the advice of any pedagogical manual or the illuminating insight of any family therapy weekend. The darkness of bland, non-mysterious nothingness, is culturally transmitted as a disintegrating force, requiring constant effort specifically from the most sensitive young minds. Every day they do the invisible work of buckling up and restoring their wits to retrieve the light. Every day between the meshwork the toll becomes heavier. It is beyond their capacity, beyond anything one can reasonably expect. It is unprecedented.

Those youngsters are living the simplex. You and me are too, but adults have a way of normalizing what goes wrong. A simplex stands on itself. The recipient has little freedom, unlike a multidimensional being at the intersection of many interests. A human who lives the simplex can be compared to a laboratory rat that will be discarded now that all its capacities to respond afresh to the experiment have been exhausted. What does the lethargy tell us, the repetitive behavior in the cage? We are the rats.

Generations of Energy

A social network that fragments into bubbles and that spreads ideas uprooted from their original frame advantages dictatorship, 'divide and rule' and scapegoating. It undermines democratic reform and protest against tyranny and discrimination. The disparity between society and humanity grows. The hypothesis is corroborated if the latest age cohorts, those born between 1965 and 2015 named millennials and generation Z (zoomers), display a significant gap between the meaning they express and what they feel. They would have to excel in tokenism among others. They would strive for the appearance of equality by persuading a member of an underrepresented group to participate. They would let antigovernment protests subside before the goal is achieved. The talented activists among them would urge to be co-opted and work with international agencies. The gap should be bigger among the zoomers due to the growing of the disparity.

Then again, the corroboration can only be tentative precisely because of the hypothesized gap. The value of expressed opinions should over time be increasingly opaque. A survey unfortunately can only measure what the respondent expresses, and this via set meanings, also at the articulation of a feeling. Because surveys on cohorts measure opinions, not effects, Part I made the point mainly through comparison of what technologies and communications encapsulate. It resumed the anti-imperialist, anticolonial tradition of Max Gluckman's Manchester School, founded on Marxism, a theory of the social system which however neglected cultural system. There is something profoundly cultural to the material. With this in mind I applied Gluckman's theory on modern urban society dividing multiplex roles into simplex tasks. The core message of technological progress, as attested by the simplications, was that humans should be predictable. One-layered actions in an anonymous political or economic system reduce the complexity of humans having many roles at once, typically visible in a small community where judgment must be passed on someone who is also kin, cult member and neighbor. In the particular materiality of contemporary technologies an idea is inculcated: humans should be bypassed to avoid delays, for instance from ethical decision-making.

The theory to prove (or to refute) states that society is progressively taking the human sense out of the human. Firstly, behaving like a machine is rewarded. The most successful people on the planet incarnate the vectorial calculator. They are 'one-trick ponies' fitting new situations into the

old mold, as in the listed neologisms, and getting so wealthy and influential that they infuse the world with their one-track mind. Secondly, the division of a multiplex situation into simplex acts tears apart the system it is part of. Automatize everyday activities with engines, from elevators to kitchen robots, and your muscles atrophy which you make up for in the gym, costing family time and money, the energy of the machines moreover to be compensated by pedaling the next day in the airport to charge your laptop battery, an apparatus produced in factories, whose pollution will be neutralized by other apparatuses the production of which no less weighs on the environment. Concern should not be with any human fault but with a flaw in the mechanism by which humans think to progress. The risk lies in the procedure of simplication. The complicated translation makes ideas, objects and activities 'interlockable' with other ideas, objects and activities, like Lego blocks. The units have cut reality apart and have adapted it, removing the bits sticking out, so they fit with other blocks: the office, the gym, the kitchen, the airport, the factory. Ethnographies describe these as dynamic actor-networks and as multilayered 'lifeworlds', but our society treats them as simplex, one-layered. The cutaway parts of each block come to haunt afterward in the form of disruptions that call for yet new inventions, like batteries and solar panels to make up for fossil fuels. The economy booms from the innovations while the knowledge of the dark matter of past decisions and goals fades.

Ethnography can retrieve the invisible stuff that simplexes simplicate away. That stuff consists of frames. The data of surveys do not speak for themselves, but with those frames they can be interpreted. What do the surveys indicate about millennials and generation Z? The two generations uphold more liberal values than the former did. The latest, generation Z, is more stressed, more concerned about climate, employment and personal performance, and trusts in the power of protest, in supporting and mobilizing certain flows of communication on social media.[7] The flows are energies. Their urgency has to do with production sources being at risk. Distancing themselves, in two directions as it were, from old conservativism as well as from revolutionary hippiedom, the new generations are more issue-oriented than ideological, which might explain why European youth differs from American youth in focusing on migration, quite some of them voting for a far-right party that promises to solve the issue.[8]

An anthropological account can hardly be content with the dual analysis in terms of liberal/conservative.[9] The continuum should be deconstructed as a conflation of dimensions. The two most probable candidates

recurring in anthropology are the dimensions of agency/structure and idealism/materialism (for the first, see Geertz's phenomenological critique of structuralism; for the second, see the debate between Marshall Sahlins and Marvin Harris).[10] According to this two-dimensional approach to culture (including political views), the retreat from ideology means a move away from (ideational or material) structure and toward agency. By distrusting the state and valuing individual responsibility (the meritocracy in Hollywood movies), members of generation Z remind of the actor-materialism of neoliberals. But given their interest in eco-social sustainability, they more likely represent actor-idealism. This combination of two poles on the dimensions adds up to the view that the individual chooses among a palette of perspectives and, in curating the self, can transcend the material and ideational structures of respectively social class (dealt with by communism and old-style socialism, whose approach may be called structure-materialism) and cultural essence (defended by conservative parties applying the framework of structure-idealism). The actor shifts between perspectives, actively enabling diversity while identifying with one choice for an issue and protesting to that end.

The prototypical product of generation X would prefer to linger in irony or to swallow the pill of the most comfortable version of the matrix, like polished 80s music. A nihilist may feel free to change position, to create meaning, or to experience meaninglessness as meaningful.[11] For generation X, nihilism reflects a fate, 'we are doomed'.[12] They are the parents suffering from anxiety and restraining their kids, keeping them at home, away from the doomed public spaces, leaving the kids no other option than to escape into virtual reality and find freedom in those games and platforms (whereby danah boyd counterintuitively revisits the guilt-inducing narrative of the gen X parents about their screen-addicted children).[13] Might the dystopian portrayal in this chapter's opening section, explored throughout Part I, be all too clearly the product of a generation X perspective? The latter's hypothesis is that generation Z plays with energies but undergoes structure: the make-believe of the post-truth network habituates millennial and zoomer activists to spreading a correct meaning despite limited impact. The meanings spread by the new generations could not be more humane, but their revolutionary potential is low because of the fragmented network where each sphere reenacts its truth and where meanings can be uprooted from their social and ecological ties to support the feelings of any side.

The switch of perspective developed in the next final chapters is to recognize the importance of energies. A racist speech against sub-Saharan immigrants by Tunisia's president almost instantly prompted a surge of energies in the form of antiracist demonstrations and crowdfunding for material support by civil society members.[14] In response, the president toned down his speech, yet given the workings of simplex society one may expect the discrimination to continue secretly. The antagonism does not recede unless those in power sense that the demonstrators embody a collective reason they have not fathomed yet. The openness to learn may be a naïve expectation, and in any case not attainable through mutual accusation. From the perspective of the old prodemocracy movements, the potential for revolution today is the lowest in human history. However, what we observe in practice is that the convergence of communicative energies took the regime by surprise and curbed State violence. Elsewhere, around the same time, did the president of Israel not expect the military to join protests against his judiciary overhaul?[15] His far-right coalition had sought to prevent an aforementioned effective strategy, the moving of spheres whereby a court overrules a government's unlawful action. The show of collective reason, rooted in life-sensing, thwarted the government.

The vectorial influence by the Tunisian president and his state officials on the wider country ran into a vocal group's matrixial display of what was really going on and had to be unmasked, the clash of racist and antiracist frames. What made the event tensorial though, and could positively awaken the wider population, was insight instead of fight: an understanding of what is right beyond group interests and individual reason. Remember how Miles' disapproval of a gendered presumption of greeting terms contaminated a platform and unleashed affective energy in a war of words that generation Z is apt to manage. Members intra- and intermediated. They undertook life-sensing at that very basic, nodal level of the social network, namely the communications, to assess their toxicity; whether someone's contribution passes the 'vibe check'; whether ruining the mood is a worthy cause to actively 'queer' gendered conformism in the sphere; whether the atmosphere might be too 'stressy', replete with comparison and competition. Like with 'goblin mode', a sensitivity is shared about frames contaminating energies in super-wired spheres.

Something historical is happening. As the next section recounts, every major simplification of humanity into a lifeway had its impact on affect but also gave rise to a cognitive capacity. The neolithic stimulated a certain cultural creativity in cosmology and art. Industrialization engendered

empirically based social engagement in civil society. The internet generations microscopically intervening in a hyper-wired world developed a special kind of life-sensing.

THE ANTHROPOCENE: A SPECIATED HISTORY OF AFFECT

In information theory, entropy refers to the rate of information a message transfers. In physics, the second law of thermodynamics stipulates that available thermal energy decreases with time. To speak of the Anthropocene is to note the accelerated entropy of life on the planet, and to hold human intervention responsible for this effect on biodiversity and living circumstances. A certain way of life has turned out unsustainable. A lifeway is a system, a whole, with reasons of viability at a collective level that individual reason may not fathom. Technocratic interventions apply the individual reason of experts. Earth's atmosphere will be purer if solar panels in the desert liberate us from oil, a product of exploitation. Yet, the frame underlying the intervention is exploitative, so unforeseen side-effects may be expected. Should the system not be replaced altogether, by a new lifeway? Humans made such major transition in the neolithic, which in the same go however planted the seeds for the Anthropocene.

A collective type of intelligence is needed to adjust or substitute a way of life. Each lifeway follows from what the evolving (through natural selection) human species cognitively affords (structuralism) as well as from (functional) limitations to what is possible in a society and in a particular natural environment. (Note how the anthropologist can combine evolutionism, structuralism and functionalism which become extremes only when applied in isolation, just as the psychologist defines normality rather as a balance between neurosis and psychosis). Three anthropological turns can be imagined, and seem to be widely entertained by scholars outside the discipline.[16] Although inevitably speculative and not essential for my argument, they provide a point of entry to simplex and tensor. Their history also shows how lifeways impact the dominant affect in a group. What else but nostalgia for a certain affect drives former teachers and IT engineers to 'a return to Earth' (*retour à la terre*), emigrate to Europe's mountains and live as 'neo-peasants' (*néo-ruraux*) from farming and artisanal food making?[17] Contemporary surrogates for the experience, such as hiking holidays, apparently do not suffice anymore for them. Why do former hunters, members of the !Kung-San people, in their modern settlements bordering the Kalahari desert long for their past way of life?[18] From Graeber and Wengrow's anthropological

history of humanity, describing rapid cultural evolutions as well as reversions to simpler or so-called deserted modes of production, I infer (at variance with the authors) that the species has a palette of lifeways at its disposal, and affects to match.[19]

For a million years humans roamed to gather and hunt. Graeber and Wengrow emphasize the various constellations therein, plus the imbricating modes of production many thousands of years ago. Variety and imbrication do not alter the fact that in the roamer's particular mode of production, life was experienced in direct exchange with the environment. The lifeway enabled a sense of impact and connection that could reproduce trust. The trust was existential, for 'the world' quite reliably provided in response to one's efforts. A communal affect was possible that I recognize in Widlok's comparative ethnography of contemporary hunter-gatherers, especially in their institution of sharing as distinct from gift-giving, exchange and reciprocity.[20] Do other lifeways have a surrogate for that affect?

In sedentary farming a basic degree of distrust may have been a safer attitude since crops could fail. Weeding, manure and slash-and-burn improved harvests, yet the rains might not come. Groups that invented religious systems and rituals during the season managed to sustain a firm belief in the future outcome. Without the daily direct experience of life, some of the energy that humans could count on dissipated. In response to the entropy, they developed a new ordering. A cosmology regulated communication with the sources of production such as water, forest, earth, sky, which were named and symbolized as spirits.

My interest is not in the often told story of cognitive mechanisms and their evolution, which obviously glosses over historical arbitrary singularity and spatial diversity.[21] I want to understand the holism of a lifeway and what is sacrificed for it. A new lifeway solving an ecological crisis every time introduced knowledge about a different dimension of reality put under stress. The distinction between three dimensions is a product of that history: life (production sources), the social (sphere) and the cultural (frame). In the neolithic, farmers invented tensors such as sets of ritual activities and meanings, to maintain a relation with the sources of production, which savanna dwellers sensed on a daily basis and unconsciously lived. In modern cities, the subsystems that tore apart the peasant's autonomy raised the issue of the spheres that people exchange in and are limited to. With unions, associations and civil rights movements, citizens created spheres that crosscut the subsystems. In the globalized information society, simplex energies attract (like there's no truth to be found) and so we

must learn about frames of experience. Let me outline the hypothesis a little more.

After giving up their dwelling in forests and savannas, humans responded to the energetic deficit by developing their intuition of spiritual forces as well as their exchange with life and the sources of production. Much of the old anthropological record deals with this intuitive knowledge, under the rubric of spirit cults, magic and witchcraft, divination, healing systems and cosmologies—ambiguously though because these practices eluded the empirical methods of science. What seemed like an ambivalent interest in alterity and the exotic, called salvation anthropology, was and still is for many participant-observing ethnographers the salvation of a human skill, a repressed side of the human. That is how I value the more recent so-called ontological turn in anthropology.[22]

With modern capitalism and industrialization, the peasant type of autonomy disappeared. Futility lurked. How could the masses retain a sense of impact in the factory? The remedy was a social analysis, such as Marx's, of worker's conditions and a corresponding democratic intervention. Raising consciousness about the sphere one partakes of, like 'the working class', tackled industrialization's random attribution of wealth. Prodemocracy and enfranchisement interventions as well as civil rights movements were possible. Prominently atheist, socialism rose at the cost of the energetic experiments in life-sensing, spirituality and mystical experience. These existential sensitivities could have been allies to prodemocracy, yet institutes such as the Vatican and Churches in general had appropriated them as religion, often to pervert them into doctrine. In the new undertow of prodemocracy, which seeks to complement the values of freedom and equality with that of inclusion, the existential sensitivity to collective reason could be an ally and an antidote to futility (see "Chapter Six: Collective Reason").

The third boost of entropy we are currently witnessing in post-truth. The link is severed between meaning and feeling in frameless, one-layered ideas magnified and (ab)normalized at will, entailing polarization. Which cognitive skill should be improved, after peasants' medicine made up for the loss of life-sensing and after activists' social analysis tackled the hegemony of one class or sphere over another? My answer, quite simply, is cultural skills. A cultural analysis can restore the frame of experience and familiarize us with other people's frames. Cultural skills can be wedded to the new forms of conscience derived from social analysis and life-sensing. In a planetary closed circuit (the atmosphere) all behavior including speech

FRAME	inter-mediation intra-mediation	**Disconnection** -> *frame entropy*		*Post-Knowledge*	~~frames~~
SPHERE	society-building reality-grounding	**Futility** -> *sphere entropy*		*Modernity*	~~spheres~~
LIFE	background trust: environment background trust: belonging	**Distrust** -> *source entropy*		*Neolithic*	~~sources of production~~
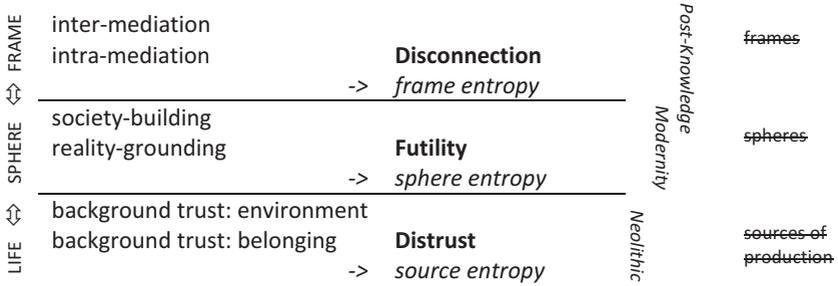
Fig. 1   Lifeways and affect in speciated history

impacts life. On those grounds, generation Z adheres to 'ethics at home': no tolerance for racist innuendos behind closed doors; in the winter wearing an extra pullover in the living room; recycling a plastic cup also when nobody watches. Infiltrate the cocoon with conscience.

Figure 1 schematizes the evolution of lifeways in terms of effect on the dominant affect in a society and this at micro-, meso- and macro-level, moreover seen from the three-dimensional perspective of life-sensing, social analysis and cultural analysis. Details about the six subdivisions follow in the next section. To succinctly sum up, *a lifeway is sustainable when firstly it generates trust as a background to activities, both in people's use of the production sources of the environment and in the responses they perceive from the environment; when secondly the lifeway provides a sense of impact both via the spheres or groups humans communicate in (society-building) and via the consensuses reached within a sphere (reality-grounding); when thirdly it connects people's feelings to the meanings they produce both through mediation of other frames (intermediation) and through awareness and introspection about frames (intra-mediation).* The next section applies the theory to simplex society.

<div align="center">

POST-TRUTH'S SIXFOLD EFFECT ON AFFECT:
AN ENTROPOLOGY

</div>

The affects of distrust, futility and disconnection follow from three types of entropy: communication not in touch with the production source, communication locked up in a sphere, and communication frameless at the core (see three E's in Fig. 2). Each entropy has two subtypes,
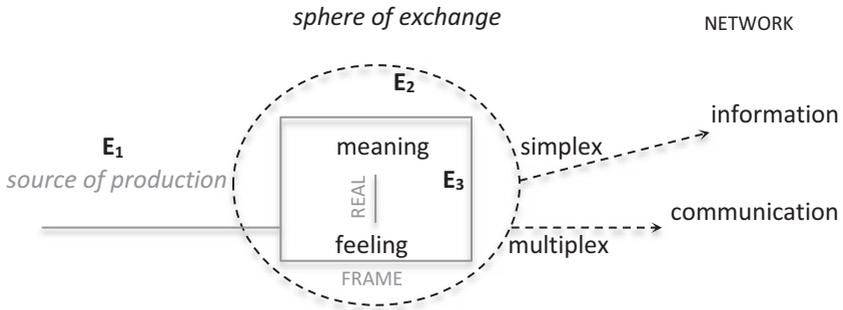
Fig. 2   Three types of entropy (E) in simplex society

structural and cognitive. Post-knowledge society suffers from all types of entropy at once.

Background entropy (E_1) is source entropy. It concerns our tie with the sources of production, interrogating how we are relating to our environment in the background. The first subtype of source entropy is structural and refers to the extent to which our decisions are attuned to what happens around. An example is communication smothered in information overload and in an impenetrable net of regulations. Bureaucratic measures impose actions without the actors knowing their finality anymore. Passengers line up 'for security reasons' at the airport gate. They throw away their liquids over 100 ml, put out their shoes and remove their belt. They obey ready-made safety measures without questioning the reductionism of attackers supposedly limiting their options to liquids and metal objects. Since surveillance measures and policies officially abide by the will of the public through the constituencies of politicians, and their lobbyists and state-trained experts give their go-ahead, we assume that through compliance at every trip our future is in good hands. How many suicide bombers have been successful on planes since the security measures started after 911? Very few. Then again, how many of us have by accident passed the gates with knives, blades, insulin injections, or other objects with potentially lethal purpose? Many. Nobody in the global village has the overview to assess the necessity of the measures. Are the costs in personnel and time proportional to the extant intention of suicide bombers? Have bombers until now been nervously hanging around the airport gates while contemplating attack yet fearing to die prematurely? Nobody has a clue. The current scale of society is too big to assess the soundness of measures

about someone's intention. And so we drag along the technological advances, the subsequent strides we thought served more security. We are no longer in touch with the environment and its sources we are part of and reproduce (We fail to integrate micro and meso into macro). The norms on public forums are machine-regulated. Artificial Intelligence is struggling to distinguish frames, or spheres.[23] Since this socialization cannot be delegated to a machine, communication impoverishes. Everybody is shouting to be heard.[24] We fire away opinions until the network in the background renders our acts inconsequential.

Another part of our background trust is cognitive and concerns an expectation. The individual counts, for being a member of society and a group in particular. I belong to the human species (integration of micro into meso and macro). Critical remarks do not make me belong less to humanity and to the society comprising the sphere. This second subtype of background entropy appears when the social network looks like a giant actor, too impatient to bother about petty differences, personal or cultural. Securitization institutionalizes distrust. Surveillance increased across our post-911 social network. Everybody who ever logged into the internet can be retraced for security reasons (or for extortion). Henceforth Big Brother is a hypothesis we live with. You and I are no different from insurgents in that we have learned to sometimes hide our motives in online communications lest these be used against us someday. Indeed, as far as the state knows, digital natives may be paying lip-service to the state. 'Russian' and 'Chinese' trolls are trying to invade all important spheres of exchange to prime minds. The information society uses the knowledge because strives for undammed flows of communication to conserve and expand the social network. The entropy rages in the background. If someone's communication has no informative value, the network distills information about the speaker, despite absence of context. A joke about a marginalized group is information that this person jokes about marginalized groups. By network I think of the communicative flow of hot topics and outrage trending on social media. Raw language from street culture is lifted out of the street and mis-framed by an information network unable to catch up with digital natives switching between spheres (aka 'gangs').

A second entropy affects the spheres (E_2), shown in the middle of Fig. 2. How do spheres of exchange lose their porosity and transform into subsystems or even bubbles, niches, cocoons? How do communications get so fragmented that they only serve members' concerns and are limited to the sphere's reality? Spheres of exchange, ranging in a variety from

family and friends to public settings, form the passage to perceive the world. A communication connects members to a sphere (micro to meso) and thus grounds reality. For instance, the reality can be established of education as a tool of poverty-eradication thanks to the sphere of development studies bringing together various scholars and stakeholders. Academics astonished about xenophobic trends in their community should not underestimate the reality-integration they at least enjoy by participating in international conferences and research collaborations. The constant exchange keeps the feeling of futility at bay (and at those moments nuances this essay's entropology). However, as the social network seeks to expand itself and therefore propagates cultural diversity beyond the nation-state, the flow of information tolerates diversity only within limits. A sphere catering for the likeminded (like-specialized) enhances the first subtype of sphere entropy, namely a fragmentation of reality, segregation instead of new arrangement. Whereas, formerly, citizens were represented via groups such as unions and political parties, the worldwide web permits internet surfers with common interests to find each other and set up a group, spanning the globe without limits of geography or language. The upshot of sharing affinity is not greater variety, nor porosity of spheres. Blogs within the niches address the likeminded, and although occasionally invaded by trolls and party-crashers, the normativity of the niche suffers little damage from the outside world.[25] The information society is an ideal breeding ground for niches delivering what the listeners want. The niches affect the network much less as a whole and thus could replicate otherwise unacceptable speech and beliefs. Clearly, 'safe havens' can mean many things. Could they breed extremism causing civil war? As long as the simplexes stay within their proper sphere of exchange, the danger of violence seems limited to members breaking out of the fold, such as lone shooters or suicide bombers.

Because simplexes aim at predictable reactions, they readily bloom in corners of the social network where they do not run into dissent. Some politicians push the reach of their simplexes beyond the sphere of their supporters, until they fail. As a case in point, populist leaders have been conspicuously unable to apply their divisive discourse to the Corona virus.[26] Sensing disapproval in wider spheres, a former US president soon gave up an early attempt at simplicating the pandemic as a 'Chinese virus'.[27] The documentary by Michael Moore, 'Planet of the humans', and the vitriolic reactions by ecological lobby groups illustrate the growing separation between socialists and ecologists, which latter split up again in

purists and commercially oriented pragmatists.[28] The accelerated fragmentation of ideas and social relations negatively affects reality-grounding, in this case of ecological communication.

Reality-grounding dovetails with society-building. Another term for the latter is feeling-integration (thus dovetailing with meaning-integration). What we imagine to be urgent interventions will come to effect only if the urgency is shared in a sphere that reaches society (meso to macro). The group's members negotiate to determine a common reality concerning society and decide how to improve its situation. For instance, the aforementioned 'education as poverty-eradicator' aims at a collective project to build society. What obstructs the building of society are niches such as international political factions with their own news outlets, after the example of Fox News or football teams with their own TV channels, dodging critical interviews by neutral journalists from independent chains. The fragmented sphere offers a frame to perceive the issues, without the alternative frames 'festering' in our hearts. Society invisibly disintegrates as cultural diversification into spheres steers communication mainly toward members having the same frame.

Putnam's study *Bowling alone* on the individualization and the disintegration of social capital illustrates the decreased sense of impact, the entropy at the meso-level.[29] His proposal to raise Americans' social capital overlooks the point of modernity, which was to install citizenship in order to remove the need of reliance on informal solidarity networks. In the postcolonial states of the global south, social capital is crucial because trust in government is low.[30] In liberal democracies, the rights of citizens should be such that the individualization lamented by Putnam is possible. Citizenship stems from an abstract transfer to government, whereby needs are simplicated into rights. Individualization inheres citizenship. A state proves its hegemony by having spheres fragmented and deprived of impact on society.

Finally, the most recent tendency characterizing post-knowledge is frame entropy, or core entropy. A society disintegrates at the core (E_3 in Fig. 2) if members do not mediate their communication, which is to check a conveyed meaning with their feeling (second subtype, intra-mediation) and to exchange views with interlocutors (first subtype, intermediation). The outcome of mediation is feared to be unpredictable ("Chapter Seven: The Oracle and the Real" showed the seemingly obsolete practices of divination and initiation countering the first and second subtypes of core entropy). Fear of the real characterizes a knowledge economy predicated

on information flows. An example of unmediated information is how surveys are used in public debate. What does the information network crave? 'The frameless fact' has been my answer. The average adult ready to vote has been bombarded in life by hundreds of surveys on numerous topics regarding the state of society. Some results have contradicted each other. Many repeated the mantras of a discipline. Few if none are remembered. Address anyone in the street about any topic and that person's wild guess will hit right on target the mean of the normal (Gaussian) distribution of at least one marvelous survey. Surveys contend with too many data to be able to take each of them into account, so it is the researcher, a subject like you and me, who selects. The selections draw on frames (factors and themes in data analysis). In ecological debate, conservative and progressive voices choose respectively longer and shorter durations of climate-warming cycles to frame the human capacity at turning the tide. In statistics of crime by immigrants, the racialized reading will be less likely to factor in the role of social class and poverty. The choices of cycle and factor are the frames hidden behind the facts. When presented as frameless, an information can traverse spheres of exchange and reach planetary scale. A popular 'frameless frame' with globalizing potential is blame, carrying a reductionist claim of truth for a contagious reaction that guarantees copy in the media.

Frame entropy brings in the cultural dimension. It was prefigured early by anthropologists. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, anthropology presupposes a contact of cultures and for this reason boils down to entropology, the study of (cultural) disintegration.[31] The term featured in his travelogue *Tristes Tropiques* about Amerindians in the Amazon forest. In the 1930s, as rightist ethnocentric parties in Europe prepared for war, Lévi-Strauss experienced his own Western exoticism. In the two-way exchange with local people he could not control how his messages and the things he carried along would be framed. Over the years, he saw the effects of his stays, his local friends' acculturation in norms and cognition, reinforced by the lure of his powerful gratification-oriented goods. He realized the ambivalence of himself being an outsider transforming the local culture by observing it. The same process of groups open enough to being invaded by new sets of ideas, subsequently being at a loss about what to believe anymore, occurs at unprecedented pace in the information society. The death of god(s) and spirits in modernity, and since secularization, boosted overseas exploration and the imagination about alien worlds in Europe and the US. Whence the urge?

Against the postmodern critique that cultures do not disintegrate but change, it can be argued that the one-sided slant of Lévi-Strauss's entropology did justice to the easily overlooked logic that cultural elements form. Long forceful contact with an imperialist frame colonizes that logic.[32] The simplications disintegrate into disconnected ideas and values, simplexes, which outsiders do not see the point of and therefore disrespect as obsolete traditions.[33] As "Chapter Twelve: Street Cred" illustrates, the entropy gives rise locally to frames of riposte, parody and counter-narrative, especially among artists with street credibility. Tensors of the undertow strive for an open system.[34] According to physics, a closed system naturally tends toward disorder. (The quantum physicist Schrödinger in 1946 therefore defined life as negative entropy.)[35] In a social context, entropy is the disappearance of exchange and therefore of difference.[36] Just as life is maintained on Earth, and entropy held back, thanks to the sun giving free energy, society taps from the sources of production provided by the human species. Access to the unknown of other cultures, of invisible forces, of the collective as a whole, and of affective dimensions between people, gives energy, which globalization and informatization block by excluding singularity.

According to Adam Smith's beguiling metaphor of the free market, an invisible hand attunes supply and demand, guaranteeing an equilibrium in the interest of all participants. A similar assumption drives modern democracy. As long as individuals have freedom of speech, an equilibrium would be maintained. Collective reason instead implies that much of what society is about cannot be settled through opinions. Just as the market requires state intervention for redistribution, the species over thousands of years developed what keeps a group together through rituals, alliance systems, fora, and innovations in (or mixing of) livelihoods after forests and big game dwindled. Anti-conformists today strengthen the human tie with production sources, whether by living up a tree, picking up plastic from a beach, busking beautifully in a porch, rebuilding a deserted village, or giving free hugs on a square.

Contradictions prevail in a simplex society. Citizens feel uninformed and insecure, in a society whose core business is information and security. While individual freedom grew, actual agency was emptied out. While concern with humanity extended and deepened through multiple interconnecting platforms, the collective was not fed. The global village is anything but a village. Despite self-reflection and relentless ethical discussion putting the colonial views of intellectual ancestors to shame, the

democratically elected parliaments condone the most insidious types of warfare, the criminal exploitation of the earth, fauna and flora by multinationals, as well as the dehumanized treatment of emigrants escaping the exploitation. Security is all that matters, yet none of us ever felt less safe.[37] Global crisis will not be overcome without a cultural revolution. Humanity will have to reinvent itself and adapt to a planetary way of life.

Reconnecting: The Final Chapters

The final five chapters examine World Cup football, Tanzanian hip hop, Pentecostal church services, dating sites and the collective imaginary, each an instance of reconnecting meaning to feeling. The popularity of these practices illustrates the predicament of living in a simplex society. In line with performance studies, I will argue that these are not purely escapist practices. They warm the muscle for collective experience, the minimal condition for eco-transition. Most of all, they foster de-simplication. Like in democratic elections, a sedimented arrangement is defused by organizing a moment of the real. International soccer games stage key moments of collective memory. In hip hop creativity and dissing, listeners feel inspiration, the muse, at work. The Holy Spirit lets some of the praying speak in tongues. Falling in love is two people in synchrony finding their destiny. Is a mass craze always a public delusion? When is it a spiritual encounter with the future?

   Although the chapters will focus on each practice's issue with fixity, the tensors can be said to restore affect ruined by simplex society. Watching a soccer game or a spontaneous rap or a mediumistic séance is a quick way of reality-grounding via group participation. It temporarily builds a social bond. It places trust in the environment of the big international game, music genre or church, and bolsters a general sense of belonging. It intramediates sensations during the event. It intermediates with the other viewers. The experience reconnects in the six ways during that fleeting moment. The following chapters illustrate how organizing the real not just enlivens. The tensor of the undertow brings the audience in perplexing contact with a collective experience once known as destiny.

Notes

1. Stoker, B. 1993 (1897). *Dracula*. Garden City, p. 310. (my italics)
2. The list contains Freud's *Das Unbehagen in Der Kultur* from 1930 and runs from Weber and Durkheim to Heidegger and Orwell's *1984* in 1948.

3. Almost twenty years after his proposal to study the civic cultures on the Internet, Dahlgren sounds less optimistic: Dahlgren, P. (2018). Media, knowledge and trust: The deepening epistemic crisis of democracy. *Javnost-The Public 25*(1–2): 20–27.

4. Such is my interpretation of Caron, C., Raby, R., Mitchell, C., Thévissen-LeBlanc, S., & Prioletta, J. (2019). How are civic cultures achieved through youth social-change-oriented vlogging? A multimodal case study. *Convergence* 25(4): 694–713. Especially in the field of body image does the influencing reach deep. Attwood, F., Hakim, J., & Winch, A. (2017). Mediated intimacies: bodies, technologies and relationships. *Journal of Gender studies* 26 (3): 249–253.

5. For a recent overview: Alsehaima, A. O., & Alanazi, A. A. (2018). Psychological and social risks to children of using the internet: literature review. *J Child Adolesc Behav 6*(380).

6. The statement in itself admittedly lacks nuance. Precisely because adolescent users are aware of the risks, some engage in civic cultures of drug use. Decorte, T., Pardal, M., Queirolo, R., Boidi, M. F., Avilés, C. S., & Franquero, Ò. P. (2017). Regulating Cannabis Social Clubs: A comparative analysis of legal and self-regulatory practices in Spain, Belgium and Uruguay. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, *43*, 44–56.

7. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/. See also: The Economist's Data Team. 2019. Generation Z is stressed, depressed and exam-obsessed. *The Economist* February, 26.

8. de Weck, Joseph; Ferguson, Niall. 2019. European Millennials Are Not Like Their American Counterparts. *The Atlantic*, September 30.

9. This paragraph contests the one-dimensional, culturally static view on/of intersectionality, as encountered in Milkman, who differentiated the prodemocracy movements (Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, pro-migration dreamers, movement against sexual assault) of the millennials according to the social characteristics of the activists (white, affluent US-born are insiders, of color and LGBTQ are outsiders) and their strategies (direct action vs inside the system). The ideological axis of this political movement would thus be 'leftist' (versus rightist). Milkman, R., 2017. A new political generation: Millennials and the post-2008 wave of protest. *American Sociological Review*, *82*(1), pp.1–31.

10. For a literature overview, see the introductory chapter to Stroeken (2018), *Medicinal rule*.

11. In Frederiksen's (2018) nihilism I recognize the anarchist position of framing (embracing values) freely without having to subject to a sphere, a (sub) system, 'the world'.

12. Furek, M.W., 2008. *The death proclamation of generation X: A self-fulfilling prophesy of Goth, grunge and heroin*. iUniverse. Coupland, D., 1991. *Generation X: Tales for an accelerated culture*. Macmillan.

13. Boyd, D., 2014. *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.

14. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2023/03/05/tunisia-is-plagued-by-the-demons-of-racism_6018232_23.html. https://roape.net/2023/03/01/making-tunisia-non-african-again-saieds-anti-black-campaign/

15. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/06/world/middleeast/israel-military-judiciary.html.

16. I dare not double-check how much the influence may have been on me having read this bestseller as an impressible teenager. Toffler, A., 1980. *The third wave: The classic study of tomorrow*. Bantam.

17. Rouvière, C., 2015. *Retourner à la terre. L'utopie néo-rurale en Ardèche depuis les années 1960*. Presses universitaires de Rennes.

18. For an illustrative interview on !Kung-San resettlement: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU-PceRraU0

19. Graeber, D. and Wengrow, D., 2021. *The dawn of everything: A new history of humanity*. Penguin UK. The authors' three sources of domination (sovereignty, bureaucracy and politics) settle for a materialist cross-cultural comparison, whereas I propose a reconstruction of the sources of production. The re-sourcing, attempted to limited extent in my book, requires comparative ethnography.

20. Widlok, T., 2016. *Anthropology and the Economy of Sharing*. Routledge.

21. Glossing over cultural specifics and yet inspiring in figuring out the mechanisms is Girard's work on the recurrence of mimesis, scapegoating and violence in human history. Girard, Réne. 2002. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

22. First comes to mind the animism of Willerslev, R., 2007. *Soul hunters: hunting, animism, and personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. Univ of California Press. Then a path-breaker: Holbraad, M., 2012. *Truth in Motion*. University of Chicago Press. But also this unmaker: Fontein, J., 2021. From 'Other Worlds' and 'Multiple Ontologies' to 'a Methodological Project That Poses Ontological Questions to Solve Epistemological Problems'. What Happened to Thinking Through Things? *Ethnos*, *86*(1), pp.173–188.

23. Starting with how profanity accepted in private conversations can be confused with hate speech: Malmasi, S., & Zampieri, M. (2018). Challenges in discriminating profanity from hate speech. *Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence*, *30*(2), 187–202.

24. Ashley 'Dotty' Charles. 2020. *Outraged: Why Everyone is Shouting and No One is Talking*. Bloomsbury.

25. The biased structure toward certain news outlets does not mean that people strive for an information bubble, cf. the experiment by Haim, M., Graefe, A., & Brosius, H. B. (2018). Burst of the filter bubble? Effects of personalization on the diversity of Google News. *Digital journalism*, *6*(3), 330–343.

26. Philosopher Jean-Paul Van Bendegem dryly notes the discomfort of populists with blaming a virus: <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnu/a-z/corona-talks/1/corona-talks-s1a7/>

27. I thank Annika Waag for the observation. Mason, A. (2020). Europe's Future: The Impact of Covid-19 on Populism. IDRN.

28. For a more nuanced summary: Alcorn, Z., 2020. Planet of the Humans: A cocktail of valid criticisms, disinformation and defeatism. *Green Left Weekly*, (1264), pp.18–19.

29. Putnam, R.D., 2000. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.

30. Hutchison, M.L., 2011. Territorial threat and the decline of political trust in Africa: A multilevel analysis. *Polity*, *43*(4), pp.432–461. Thomas, T.D., Abts, K., Stroeken, K. and Weyden, P.V., 2015. Measuring institutional trust: Evidence from Guyana. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, *7*(3), pp.85–115.

31. His use of 'entropology' in a novel (which to me evoked a pun) allowed him to be so coarse as to suggest that the cultural contact eventually levels out complex cultural organization, cf. p.397 in: Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). *Tristes Tropiques*. Atheneum. For a critique, specifically in dialogue with T. Turner's Marxism: De Almeida, M. W. B., et al. (1990). Symmetry and Entropy: Mathematical Metaphors in the Work of Levi-Strauss. *Current Anthropology*, *31*(4), 367–385.

32. Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L., 2008. *Of revelation and revolution, volume 1: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa* (Vol. 1). University of Chicago Press.

33. Hereniko, V. (2000). Indigenous knowledge and academic imperialism. *Remembrance of Pacific pasts: An invitation to remake history*, 78–91. Sillitoe, P. (Ed.). (2016). *Indigenous studies and engaged anthropology: The collaborative moment*. Routledge.

34. Contributing intellectually are Deleuze's multiplicity, Ingold's phenomenology, contemporary Africanists' invariable decoloniality, and a wide range of postmodern experiments in undisciplined reason. Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Ingold, T. 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Routledge.

35. Schrödinger (1992).

36. The push for consensus falters on what entropy could mean applied to society. Literary critics in the twentieth century compellingly designated entropy as the liberating riposte against the homogenizing anti-entropic tendency of modern technology. Burr, J., 2020. Entropy's Enemies: Postmodern Fission and Transhuman Fusion in the Post-War Era. *Humanities*, *9*(1). As a concept though I rather favor the sociologist Bailey's inverse inclination of defining social entropy as the disappearance of distinctions (in the absence of equilibrium or homeostasis). Bailey, K.D., 1990. *Social entropy theory*. SUNY Press. In the same vein an intriguing cultural variant of entropy has been introduced recently: Armand, L., 2022. Entropology. In *Palgrave Handbook of Critical Posthumanism,* pp. 1–27. Cham: Springer.

37. Maguire, M. 2019. *Spaces of security: ethnographies of securityscapes, surveillance, and control*. NYU Press.

Chapter Eleven: Soccer as Mirror

Football is war. The oft-cited dictum comes from Rinus Michels, a Dutch football coach. From war to the game of football is a leap. To defend his choice of words, off the cuff: violence has occurred in and around European stadiums. More than one fan has contemplated suicide after his (and very rarely her) team lost. But what the words more significantly denote in this chapter is the long period of peace in Europe after the Second World War. It intriguingly coincided with football championships wherein the previously warring nations found a surrogate for their rivalry, without bloodshed. Televised football matches have the same effect as EU politics. The prolonged stand-off or unfair score can be frustrating, but the game brings together nations, mostly.

Why would football serve the purpose of surrogacy for mass violence? In a nutshell, conflict between nations is predicated on simplicating peoples into nations, and among all sports football excels in replaying life and its multiplexity. Corroborating the argument, audiences of the most powerful nation, the US, have been less keen on watching the matches between national teams. Such nation has nothing to gain from risking its reputation in a game associated with the real world. The national team of the US never really impressed much anyway, nor did the squads of Russia and China. Before the war, the British were similarly too much of an empire to want to participate in the World Cup. Escapism, watching sports without feeling implicated, suited the empire better. Then came the Second World War. It left wounds among all European countries. Ten years later, German

audiences appreciated being welcome again in encounters between nations. International football tournaments were and are endorsed by government leaders seated in the honorary box.[1]

An adept of Michels was his compatriot Louis Van Gaal, trainer of the national Dutch team before he coached Man United. For years, journalists had cultivated Van Gaal's image of tactical brilliance. A critical moment was in 2002 when he had to address the gathered Dutch press about his top team's disqualification for the World Cup after losing against the Irish notorious for their kick-and-rush tactics. His voice broke into something of a squeal: 'We did everything to exclude chance!' The viewers saw him mentally replaying turning points of the match as he lifted his eyebrows and stared into the camera. Included must have been the scene of his star player missing a crucial penalty. The disbelief mixed in the subsequent sob tells me that in his long career Van Gaal had never accepted the point of the game. His friction with the game he so much loved explains part of football's attraction.

Football is more of a game than a sport. In the US, 'football' refers to American football and so the European invention is endowed with the (auditorily ambiguous) epithet of 'soccer'. The game of football does not model the ideal society. It mirrors the real, sometimes ugly version of society. Why then does the world love watching football? Why has its popularity dramatically increased in all corners of the planet, dominating bar life and street corner discussions? That this popularity remains unaffected by decades of accusations of the international federation's corruption and disregard for human rights, peaking during the recent World Cup in Qatar, underlines the issue.

One reason I dare contend is that football's mirroring of the world compensates for people's growing disconnection from the world. It sounds like a paradox under globalization, yet every day in the information society and knowledge economy is one of striving for a model globally imposed that fails. The larger the sphere the more frames are neglected. States, systems of tax, traffic and trade, multinationals, schools and so on have to approach the citizen with a certain distrust in the assumption of shared values. By obeying this model, we live the lie of the simplex. We feel manipulated. Football, a simplication machine for staging club symbols and national flags, offers an alternative in two ways. It organizes the interaction of identities or cultures, as if simplexes need not collide and bubbles need not be. Secondly, the interaction admits the element of chance. Van Gaal endeavored to apply to the game the logic of investment

of energy and intelligence. Failure was due in a game on which people bet and lose money.

As twenty-two players engage in a flow of passes and interceptions, preferably uninterrupted by the referee, and as they interact in endless permutations over a ball which cannot be touched by hand, limits tactical grip and favors improvisation, the consequence is a scarcity of goals and a fairly uncontrollable outcome. Football hardly exemplifies the law of investment on effort paying off. Not only may the best team lose, but the match itself can end in deadlock. True, because scoring a goal remains such a relatively unique event in the match, it results in euphoric climax. But fans also have to live with the specter of the goalless draw, by which ninety minutes of suspended gratification eventually lead to nothing. Football resembles the uncertainty of life, whereas modern technology in sports aims at standardization so that the powerful remains in control (which obviously makes technological outcomes less suitable for betting than football matches). Even popular culture and other creative utterances comply with the technological norm. Hit songs and Hollywood movies do not stop halfway, in a goalless draw. Football often does.

In general, players are aware of the many contingencies involved in the game and therefore tend to think in terms of periods when the ball is going their way. In some matches strikers aiming for the goal see the ball going in against all odds. At other times they hit the post or continue to make the wrong decisions in those crucial fractions of a second. Especially in tight games between comparable opponents one lucky bounce after a skirmish can make the difference (typically in the last minute of the game) and determine all the gall or praise in the newspapers the next day. Bookmakers and journalists tend to focus on the intrinsic quality of teams and (perhaps deliberately) overlook the utterly interactive process in football by which opponents contaminate each other's play. Because technical skills are not contagious, as a match progresses, the common denominator of play often takes after the style of the defensive because weaker team, which is of course to the advantage of the latter, being more familiar with the style.

Ask any football pundit and s/he will tell you that a country needs more than eleven good players to win the World Cup. It has got to do with team spirit and, most of all, a particular attitude to the game. The Dutch have for decades been delivering some of the greatest stars of world football. Arguably the best master tacticians are found among Dutch coaches. Yet Holland never won the World Cup. One unparalleled squad

of superstars after the other lost the final, in 1974, 1978 and 2010. A contrast with the much less talented national team of their small southern neighbor, Belgium, is interesting. Until the so-called golden generation in 2015 when the Belgian team headed the FIFA ranking for years, the country's media and supporters preferred a magico-realist discourse opposing the positivistic approach to football from Holland. The only renowned Belgian trainer, Goethals, who won the European cup of clubs for Marseille, was nicknamed *le magicien*. Whereas other squads gladly point to their organization (the Germans) and virtuosity (the Brazilians), the Belgian explanations for their relative success mostly revolved around the coach's lucky charm. The 'rabbit foot' of national team coach Guy Thijs became legendary during his unlikely series of successes in the 1980s. If for many decades luck was something the Belgian players and their audience seemed to count on and got them qualified for a record six consecutive World Cups and a semi-final, these days it is tactics and technical skills that fill the Belgian sports pages. After the country spawned a series of talented technical players in the last decade, fans conspicuously left behind the magico-realism. It did not bode well for the European Championship title of 2021 predicted for the Belgian team.

Much like the diviner's oracle, whose validity we discovered to depend on the presence of the ancestral spirit, football expects the viewers, who identify with their team, to subject themselves to something beyond their control, which is described as luck and more neutrally as chance. The chapter on divination elaborately discussed the technical term, the real. European fans cherish the concept of luck in their experience of the game. The role of luck makes the game seem more real. Even the boring match becomes acceptable. The respect for chance explains why we allow the lucky goal or the wrongly granted penalty to determine the result and thus the destination of several millions of Euros. Encapsulated in a capitalist market, football retains 'non-modern' features. Until the recent introduction of the Video Assistant Referees (VAR), these features had become ludicrous in the eyes of outsiders. As articulated by Robert Wagman, an American journalist used to the visual technology available in American football and spurning FIFA's earlier decision to ban video-screens from the stadiums so that replays would not confront the referee's decisions: 'Too many of soccer's movers and shakers come from countries where the game is so woven into the social fabric, they likely have long ago lost sight of exactly what the role of professional sport actually is—to entertain. They see themselves as something akin to high priests administering a

religion.'[2] What nation would indeed be foolish enough to have its name and flag put on the line in an event defying technology, performance, even entertainment, and in its train generating more frustration?

Well, one European nation, Germany, did so to rid itself of the stain of world war through a ritual of atonement which was to compete in World Cup qualifiers. Another European nation, ex-Empire Great Britain, began to participate anyway after that war, albeit divided in cultural identities without the imperialist association: England, Scotland, Wales and North Ireland. Football excitement accommodated a restrained society embracing the surrogate for violence.[3] It is more than a surrogate. Everyone (well, almost) watches. The national teams perform on the world stage. Viewers from eliminated teams choose another contender to identify with (national chauvinism is not necessary, just as African and Asian fans of Man United and Liverpool replay the local rivalry at their homes). The outcome is uncertain. If we lay the pieces of the puzzle, they all add up to one thing, which is the meaning of an oracle. Think of all those moments in a game accompanied with screams and sighs when you so deeply wish the team you identify with to score. You want to feel destiny on your side. Pure chance is given a meaning, a reason with collective significance. An international football match has all the traits of staging and revealing collective reason. Then does the intensity of catharsis become comprehensible, and the sincere involvement of all layers of the population, including world leaders. The revelation of collective reason, whereby one wins without destroying the game (the species), is the context to understand the geopolitical lure.

Nations in the global south participate passionately, to experience equal membership in the world for once, and challenge the status quo in geopolitics. Millions of neutral spectators count on the game's contingency and the pleasure of watching the established world hierarchy (a structural simplex) subverted by an alternative one. But surely, the US superpower's president would not want to sit in the honorary box to watch this, to suffer through the match with uncertain outcome against France, Iran or North Korea. In the Olympics, countries with bigger populations such as the US, China and Russia are statistically likely to win more medals. The Olympics are a better bet to keep up the appearance of superiority, and the implicit meritocratic model. The model far from mirrors people's daily experience of society. In a game mirroring life, victory makes for a unequaled sensation. So does defeat. I cannot help hinting here at cases of football fan passion to the point of suicide and heart-attack, or hooliganism, indeed the likes of which cannot be found in any other sport.

In short, soccer does not favor the analytical approach as much as American football does with field zones, clock management and the play-calling system of quarterbacks. With a bouncing ball ideally in continuous play, Brazilian alchemy works better. If you believe that victory is the logical outcome of the player's technical merits and efforts, then the element of chance becomes an external factor, an intrusive, world-shattering experience when rearing its unmistakable head. Chance is the worst choice for an enemy. By denying its reality and claiming to earn victory on the basis of one's invested efforts and talent alone, the player pays a heavy price: he is left on his own to carry the burden of all chance events, specifically felt with every step on his way from the middle of the pitch to the penalty mark. He thus misses the penalty. Such a modern subject, individualized to an atom, forgets the ludic in ritual and will all too bluntly claim that football *is* war.

American football exemplifies the simplex. Soccer embodies the multiplex. A simplification of mine indeed (for once the noun includes 'if').[4] So, we are talking of a tendency. Here is another one, from Chapter "Nine: A Model Leader": Republicans vote for models, Democrats for mirrors. What could confirm the tendency? Well, suppose Republicans prefer the first sport, as opposed to Democrats liking better the second sport? Time for a statistic for once. Brace yourself and probe the two-dimensional index with the surprising caption 'Your politics are hilariously indicative of which sports you like.'[5] Guess where on the political index you will find American college football, and where Major League Soccer as well as European soccer? In their spare time watching sports, Democrats want to mirror society; Republicans prefer the model where the best always wins. The meritocracy attracts (but in real life Republicans simplicate as much as democrats, "Chapter Nine: A Model Leader" demonstrated). Simplex communication, which skips verification of a claimed state of affairs, leads to political choices with a ritual character, either modeling or mirroring reality. The issues that need remedying through a certain policy with a sense of urgency, disappear in the background. A US presidential election is a ritual providing catharsis. A football match organizes catharsis, quite effectively since the ritual mirrors society.

However, has a football match ever changed society for the better the day after? The extreme capitalism of FIFA and the major clubs of the UEFA Champions League leaves no doubt about it. The aforementioned catharsis mirrors but does not transform society. The hope revived by the real of unpredictable success is soon crushed. The multiplex of a football

game shields spectators from the simplex they are engrossed in before and after the game. Very rarely do fans face the delusion, which could expose their actual powerlessness. In 2018 exceptionally, just after Brazil lost its quarter-final in the World Cup (against Belgium), the many young unemployed in Haiti who had supported the Latin-American football alchemists, found the zest to massively demonstrate against their corrupt government, now that the globally organized delusion was over. Experiencing the real, weekly on Wednesday and Saturday, is no guarantee for exposing the simplex sustaining a regime.

The global attraction of watching football reveals a thirst for the multiplex and the real that is indicative of its counterpart, the proliferation of simplexes worldwide. By mirroring the erratic, a football match temporarily de-simplicates. True, like art performances or spirit possession séances, the mirroring of a situation does more than serve escapism; the participants perform their experienced reality.[6] But the sports performance does not instigate structural change. In fact, simplexes have been infiltrating the performance. It probably characterizes my age cohort to deem significant that in 1990 a national football team lining up before the match would variedly react to the national anthem, some players ignoring it, others looking a bit annoyed, the exceptional patriotic one singing aloud. This attitude respected the player's possibly mixed feelings about dictatorial or communist regimes in the 1980s seeking legitimacy through international matches. The squads today sing the anthem aloud at the start of the match while obediently looking up at the flag. They comply with the sponsor's format doctored for success.[7] What I notice then is the simplex at work, a unidimensional concept instrumental in bringing about an intended affect. They do it without the irony of a frame in a sphere (e.g., 'it's just something one does'). The inauthenticity bothers the actors little because of their separation of meaning (the performance) and feeling (how one feels about the regime). Society is this, and humans are that.

Simplex society wears down cultural sensitivity, anthropology and frameshift just as they are most needed. It approaches globalization as a completed process. The World Cup used to be an occasion to learn about other cultures through the way national teams play the game and how the fans behave, their manner of cheering and dressing up, with drums or the Viking thunder clap or the noisy vuvuzela. Every team enacts its frame within the porous sphere of the competition. The choreographed football ballet of Brazilian players lining up one-on-one during warmup 15 minutes before the match has always impressed spectators in the stadium (not

televised) and probably is effective at intimidating the opponent. The tone has changed. In the 2022 World Cup several commentators denounced the Brazilian team's choreographed dances after each goal, especially after their trainer dared to join.[8] As if meaning were frameless, the Brazilians dancing supposedly humiliated the opponent. To imagine that, culture must seem an identity, entirely curatable and to be readjusted in function of the segregated sphere, the football bubble.

NOTES

1. This chapter is based on: Stroeken, K. (2002). Why 'the world' loves watching football (and 'the Americans' don't). *Anthropology today* 18 (3): 9–13.
2. Wagman, Robert (2002). Now Blatter has gone too far. *Megasoccer*, Column: Soccer from the States, 15 March 2002, http://megasoccer.com.
3. Elias, Norbert and Eric Dunning. 1986. *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process.* Oxford: Blackwell.
4. To qualify as a simplification without deleting the 'if', the statement has validity on a condition, namely that we temporarily omit but do not forget that the categories Republican and Democrat refer to traits and not to persons. Nobody coincides with one trait. The contrast follows a cultural logic. It does not predict the feelings of people watching sports.
5. https://www.businessinsider.com/politics-sports-you-like-2013-3?r=US&IR=T, accessed 15.03.2020.
6. See the earlier cited work by Taussig, *Mimesis and alterity.* Also: Boddy, J., 1989. *Wombs and alien spirits: Women, men, and the Zar cult in northern Sudan.* Univ of Wisconsin Press.
7. I am indebted to Filip Joos, who illustrated the contrast with footage from a Uruguay game in the World Cup of 1990 at the end of an Extra Time Retro episode on the TV channel Sporza. https://sporza.be/nl/2020/05/26/sporza-retro-over-atletico-ajax-de-beste-match-die-ik-live-heb-gezien~1590500993052/, accessed 15.07.2020.
8. https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/brazil-dancing-world-cup-keane-28690034. Does the simplex only energize the 'masses' and the tabloids catering for them? I don't think so. To make a small leap, Brazilian votes for the populist Bolsonaro were called far-right in Europe. No cultural context would be needed. Can half a country be 'extremist'? The labeling will only reinforce the frame it disregards, namely that the population's feelings (e.g., fears of corruption) are not taken seriously by political meanings. Simplexes set in motion a vicious circle nobody—not even intellectuals studying them—escapes apparently.

Chapter Twelve: Street Cred

Ukweli mtupu. Tanzanian hip hop artists are after 'the naked truth'. Speaking to me in a low-pitched Swahili is a star from the Bongo Flavor scene. Stardom does not mean wealth necessarily. In this part of the world, cash and power stick to the hands of the patrons. We are both drinking Safari Lager as guests in a mansion of a young patron, an upcoming business man in the new Tanzania of then President Magufuli. He is a respectable family man, representing *kizazi kipya*, a 'new generation' seeking prosperity without corruption. The new generation radiates purity in conduct, in style of clothing, and in the church services attended together with wife and children. So, the singer and I drink our beer outside the house.

In a corner of the front yard reserved for us, I listen to the man without taking note. My mind drifts off to his songs and especially one video. It had a certain style, exploring the rural uncool, in my opinion to exaggerated extent. But his lyrics recounting life in the village enjoyed more 'street' credibility in the 2000s than that of urban rappers describing the ghettos. From the Tanzanian perspective, 'farming comes first', *kulima kwanza*.

The role model of educated farmers and rappers alike has long been Tanzania's founding president Julius Nyerere.[1] 'The teacher', *mwalimu*, had designed a socialism intended to respect the African roots of the population. He did not go as far as acknowledging the cultural differences within Africa, let alone his country. On the contrary, his purpose was to

disregard ethnicity, among others by educating children in the one language of Swahili, so as to keep the country together. At retirement age, Nyerere voluntarily stepped down. He remained one of his people. A snake-charmer and friend of mine in Ukiriguru told me about the prolonged drinking bout he participated in at Nyerere's domain near Lake Victoria after catching a black mamba up in the garden's highest tree. In the summer of 1995 just before the country's first multiparty elections, Nyerere came to visit our roadside town to advertise for the ruling party's candidate Mkapa. Standing on an oil drum in the center of a dusty littered market square, before there was electricity and years before there was tarmac, he impressed us as inspiring and approachable. The model was one of us, mirroring miraculously the reality of the white boy too. What he said was endowed with the power of collective reason, transcending left and right.

Too much model will lose one credit, too little as well. Rappers with street credibility, because mirroring society, know this. Yes, fans look up to rappers. The distance narrows as they in turn prove to be like them. Furthermore, the duel, the dissing, renders no one untouchable. One must keep it real. Hip hop mirrors 'the real situation', *hali halisi*. Dare to say what people think: that this country with all the natural resources imaginable remains poor, while the leaders get richer, and civil servants, medical doctors, nurses, teachers and professors abuse their position to make more money. But include yourself in the reflection, to keep it real. In the song *ndiyo mzee* ('Yes sir') by Professa Jay, a choir plays the audience who repeats on demand the false promises of the politician. Next, the rapper persuades the audience to listen to his version of the facts to subsequently indulge him with the same chorus of blind belief. The rapper takes the consistent step of placing the mirror: the corruption goes on because of the complicity between the ruler and the ruled. In his Notes, Achilles Mbembe has thus diagnosed the postcolony, and he has been criticized for it as an Afropessimist.[2] What he did however, much like the Bongo Flavor artist, was to safeguard his street credibility. A rapper listing reasons for optimism amidst surrounding misery may earn credit from civil society organizations. To hip-hop fans the list will sound pathetic, if not sarcastic. A show of political correctness does not serve the cause. Collective reason peters out if the truth cannot be said. The undertow swells from the specter.

Are we witnessing the rise of the masses, going by the success of populism in democratic countries? The problem is not lack of education or

poverty or the Internet.[3] Large segments of the population, traditionally at the political periphery yet in numbers constituting the heart of the population, have not shifted ideology. They have not changed their minds. They have begun to mind. The division of the commons by governments, industries and multinationals has left a majority of losers. At stake in their discontent is the political system itself which the powerful profit from. The promise of democracy was for all to climb the same social ladder and those on top to make the rest better. Elections would truly reflect the will of the multitude. Street cred was what the population sought and never got from their leaders, until populists managed to harness some. That is the level of political warfare rappers deal with and the highly educated have been evading to their disgrace.

Controversial Swahili songs have explicitly grazed the limits of free speech after choir songs had for two generations been supporting government policy to the glory of Nyerere and his ruling Party of the Revolution.[4] 'Tanga, where have you gone?' The band Wagosi Wa Kaya sings about the once illustrious town where the simplexes fester, about sexuality in the street, 'Arabs' supposedly molesting children, while 'Indians' would look down from their multi-story apartments to fulminate their discriminating stereotypes about blacks. Bongo Flavor artists presented it raw and mimicked simplexity to prevent their audiences from snubbing them as moralists.

The challenge cannot be underestimated. Did rap music lose its political edge when entering the mainstream arena? On the contrary, its message gained political purchase. Only, the message changed. The commercialization of rap displayed the victory of a particular ideology: neoliberalism.[5] Money is all that matters. Who can argue with a bank note? It is a philosophy hard to outsmart. "You know the secret of the US which will keep it in power for a thousand years?" a just-graduated Trinidadian engineer asked me long ago on the first day of my first visit to New York. The answer was as blunt as his intelligence was sharp: everybody here has the same God, the dollar bill.

What Bongo Flavor artists attempt is to go where philosophy has not gone before. You cannot beat neoliberals at their game without reinforcing the game. How to avoid what Adorno called the 'realistic dissidence' the culture industry thrives on?[6] Glorifying inner-city crime and extravagant consumption, the dissidence of Gangsta rap keeps the status quo intact. Tanzanian hits of the early 2000s shared their disgust about commercialization, but soon their fans gave up. They saw the irony in dancing

carefree on Bongo Flavor lyrics decrying 'the blood of citizens spilt in Kilosa', a reference to an escalated government intervention.

Not all was lost. Bongo Flavor learned from the black tradition going back to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and actually as far as the *Pensée africaine* of the 1930s, to explore a position between what I would call the (carefree) dancer and the (moralistic) witch. The objective is to bring moral guidance without claiming 'moral power' (which would leave the listeners structurally indebted, indeed bewitched). Saying the right thing rarely makes the listener do the right thing. The fixed position, poised beyond space and time, harms the rapper's credibility in the streets. The speaker up there, the crowd down here. Modeling stardom, the artist will want to keep it real by mirroring society. About police inquiries into his past, 50 Cent replied that the real gangsters are George Bush and his posse waging a war against a country for the oil reserves it has. In the same breath, he continued: 'When I grow up, I want to be Bush.'[7] He did not pretend to be better than the one critiqued. A similar energy is released when he and his artistic friends claim for themselves the derogatory word invented by racists. They address each other with the n-word, a simplex whose energy they put to use through the tensor of street credibility, which can be summed up as immunity through contagion. What does not kill makes you stronger. The n-word won't kill you. Use what seems too hot to handle. Like the Sukuma chief controlling the witchcraft in his chiefdom by going through the contamination of becoming a witch himself, the rapper seeks what might destroy him in order to grow. 50 Cent got rich because he was willing to *die tryin'*, courtesy of the bullet marks his body generously displays in his video-clips.[8] Far from representing an ideology and getting mired in moralistic mud, he strips himself to the bare to let inspiration in and sing the message which can be felt to have collective reason. The tensor of street cred de-simplicates politics (see Fig. 1).

To fully acknowledge the advance made with this position of choosing instead of fleeing the hurt, we should see the humanity behind the local, cultural expression. Rejecting neoliberal inequality as immoral does not solve the impasse because assumes a fixed moral position, leveling one

Fig. 1 Tensor of street credibility
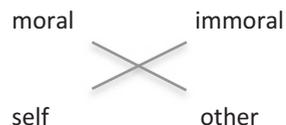
simplex against another. The rapper's solution is to mimic in order to immunize. Artists claiming a 'moral self' in opposition to 'immoral others' are simplicating the situation with a unidimensional message, whereas frame-shifters, like Professa Jay, Mbembe or 50 Cent, turn the tables on themselves to temporarily impersonate the immoral, as schematized above in the intersecting diagonals. Of course, 50 Cent does not dream to become Bush, or Professa Jay condones corruption. Their ironizing renders their comparison of frames viable instead of hegemonic. The cross over the matrix denotes the remedy, the tensor (see Fig. 1).

Why would good/evil be a concern to retain credibility in the ghetto? To call oneself bad, immoral, is a show of strength. Is weak/strong not the actual frame in the ghetto? The star could easily have conspired with the fans to be adored as an enlightened pastor without further due, but opts for the hard way. The play with the frame the fans wanted to believe in raises their awareness about the sphere they are in. Do they belong there? The fans (inter)mediate the communication, checking the lyrics in reference to their feelings. The mediation will make the artist lose some fans but gain others, the likeminded. Porosity of spheres counters fragmentation of the social network.

The appropriation of a slur does not end the discrimination, but power is drawn from contamination, from adopting offensive content. To feel the speech's energy is to experience the source of production. In Sukuma initiation, the cooling act after a personal sacrifice, after overcoming the 'heat' (*busebu*) by embracing its uncertain impact instead of fleeing it, empowers the participants. Against historical materialists intervening in material relations, from which change in the ideational superstructure would subsequently follow, hip hop artists believe that altering speech at the level of cultural frames affects power structures.[9] The reason is the third dimension, the life sensing which immunity after willful contagion does. A post-Fordist knowledge economy acknowledges that language in a network releases energy.

Children of the information society know. The third dimension (energy next to event and meaning) supplies a political compass quite unlike left/right guiding the baby boomers, the members of the large cohort born just after the Second World War and raised in a time of economic recovery and cultural optimism. During the State of the Union in January 2020, the boomer viewers thought to recognize the old fight of left and right in that flash of a second when the Democrat speaker of the house ripped up the Republican president's speech. Members of generation X, Y and Z

must have seen in her reaction to his snubbing a handshake something else than ideology or good manners. The Republican's conduct installed a virus, an infective agent that the Democrat's reaction failed to exploit but simply reproduced. Forget about ideologies, the good and the bad. In a social network without encompassing normative system, the name of the game has changed into the use of energy, the contagion that rappers can teach us how to deal with.

How to wake up from the boomer slumber that hit an entire society convinced that the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 testified to the victory of liberal democracy?[10] What makes the world tick today are one-way signals directing reactions and energizing feelings. The wrestling with energies on social media has become basics. Speaking of which: professional wrestling provides a clue about the thing that boomers simply won't get. How could enormous arenas be filled with WWE fans and the performances be televised while they just mimic title-matches? The fighters are caricatures engaging in theatrical rivalry and over-the-top acrobatics. The outcome of these matches is always fixed so how could they entertain audiences? The logical reply echoes the nihilism of Gen X, for whom nothing is authentic (vide Baudrillard), as well as the experience of generations Y and Z who grew up as gamers (after Baudrillard: make hay of the inauthentic). Why wait for twelve rounds of boxing before a fighter gets seriously punched or knocked out, if you can watch wrestlers hit every second, hooked, held, strangled and molested in response to the public's cheers and screams? As tempers boil over, all engage in the suspension of disbelief. That is the fun, as much as watching a movie and getting into the story, feeling the horror, without thinking about the camera. One can learn to forget the frames. As with the footballers greeting the flag, I am just arguing that there are spheres, such as public fora, where we better not forget.

Many will agree with the witty comment about the 2020 State of the Union that the speech was a theatrical display of fake-facts and half-truths to which the audience applauded, which made the parliament look like a wrestling arena wherein rivals and public suspended their disbelief.[11] The audience's response normalized the speech. Might there be a deeper wisdom to the mimicry they displayed? Speech able to suspend disbelief fascinates. It highlights the contagion at work, the simplex ideas that infect with a single emotion. A simplex instantly gratifies in communication, as opposed to open-ended dialogues without clear beginning and end, possibly reversing a situation and feared by those in power and with stashed

bank accounts. To see through simplication, the public must shift attention from the host to the virus. An ethnic slur or a sexist remark goes viral faster than the criticist can handle. The new situation requires more adaption from mirrorists of reality than from modelists. For example, alert a Democrat senator about sexism and he or she will respond in kind with a measure advantaging women. Sexism then breeds sexism. The contagion typical of simplexes challenges the old ways of democratic debate. The information society has made politics a whole new ball game. Professional politicians not trained to jockey this kind of horse are taken for a ride, winding up in a wrestling match with fixed outcome few intellectuals are equipped to handle.[12] The reaching hand and the torn paper after the State of Union in January 2020 tell us everything we need to know.

The empowerment after sacrifice, immunity through contagion, willing to engage in the open-ended duel, the dissing of the rapping opponent and 'keeping it real', is to accept the contingency of life, which we have called the real. Tanzanian hip hop artists, dissing rappers, Black intellectuals, diviners and football matches carve out an exit from simplex society. Admit the real and collective reason may emerge. Their tensor disagrees with the simplex certainty of the Quick Pull oracle, the post-truth tweet, the word-policing, remote e-warfare, double tap and Mwanga magic.

What can we learn, the next chapter explores, from the massive success of Charismatic churches in the global south? Surely, religion creates opportunities for frameshift. The believer can alternate between the rules of heaven and earth. Is the believer naïve, disregarding the facts of reality? Or are we underestimating the reflexivity involved in a contemporary religious belief?

Notes

1. More data for this chapter can be found in: Stroeken, K. 2005. Immunising strategies: Hip hop and critique in Tanzania. *Africa* 75 (4): 488–509.
2. Mbembe, A. 2001. *On the postcolony*. University of California Press.
3. The creative power of collective conformism, the necessity for the herd's conviction of urgency, for genuine change was underlit in the perhaps most renowned philosophy of the multitude. Ortega y Gasset, J. 1993. *The revolt of the masses*. WW Norton & Company.
4. Askew, K. 2002. *Performing the nation: Swahili music and cultural politics in Tanzania*. University of Chicago Press.

5. On the meanings of neoliberalism, the 'neo' referring to the reality of statecraft, which in Sub-Saharan Africa has often meant corrupt bureaucrats and complicit citizens: Wacquant, L. 2012. Three steps to a historical anthropology of actually existing neoliberalism. *Social anthropology* 20(1): 66–79. Blundo, G., de-Sardan, J. P. O., Arifari, N. B., & Alou, M. T. 2013. *Everyday corruption and the state: Citizens and public officials in Africa.* Zed Books Ltd.

6. Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T. 1972. *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* New York: Herder and Herder.

7. Interview with Pierre Slankowski: *Humo*, 22 April 2003, p. 181.

8. I paraphrase the title of 50 Cent's album 'Get rich or die tryin'.

9. The phrase actually applies two political dimensions: materialism/idealism and agency/structure. These differentiate leftists paying attention to material factors of social structure versus idealistic ecologists oriented on the actor, and rightists tending toward the neo-liberalism of individual actors pursuing their material interests versus primordialists essentializing a community's ideational structure as a mentality. See a.o. Linz, J. J. (2020). From primordialism to nationalism. In *New nationalisms of the developed West* (pp. 203–253). Routledge.

10. I resist the temptation of substantiating the point with the publication of a book and its massive success at the time (Fukuyama, F., 2006. *The end of history and the last man.* Simon and Schuster). Liberal democracy is under threat *and* far from dead. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/10/francis-fukuyama-still-end-history/671761/. What I am arguing (and politically specifying since "Chapter Nine: A Model Leader") is that liberal democracy revolves around a divisive dynamic, which does not stimulate the shifting of frames but imprisons factions as pro and contra (the one remaining ideology) in a matrix. The debates and elections are at best exercises to wed equality to freedom, but they do not unite. The third value of the French Revolution, inclusion, is the tough nut left uncracked ("Chapter Six: Collective Reason").

11. As tweeted by Rep. Tim Ryan, https://www.vox.com/2020/2/5/21123942/democrats-walked-out-trump-state-of-the-union-protest, accessed on 15.07.2020.

12. Another example is how the newly passed 'yes means yes' law by minister Montero to toughen on sex crimes led conservative judges to reduce sentences because the penalties changed under the laws originally convicting the defendants. The excuse is the poorly drafted law. The energy seems the unproductive dualism of left/right, a simplex raging across the media. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/17/spanish-minister-accuses-judges-machismo-applying-sex-crimes-law

Chapter Thirteen: Godwork

One Sunday in September 2014 in a central Tanzanian town, I attended a Pentecostal service in the church of the Assemblies of God. After a first placid hour of thanksgiving when devotees could publicly share in Swahili their personal experiences of divine intervention and subsequent salvation, a guest pastor came on stage to preach. Before him sat a mixed crowd of inhabitants from the poverty-stricken region of Morogoro, the few better-off occupying the first rows on his right hand. What could the flashy-dressed Black Canadian have in common with this audience, I wondered. The answer came after one hour and a half of preaching in English with simultaneous translation in Swahili, punctuated with collective choir singing. An entranced audience of 500 hung at his lips as his initial dwelling on the verse Isaiah 6:1-8 'In the year Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne' grew into a series of questions and answers in scholarly fashion. The dialogue eventually intensified into a commandment exhorting each to become an individual and take a decision, following the words of the subsequent verse: 'Here am I. Send me!' 'Yes!' all screamed in reply to his question whether 'you will face the obstacle in your life' and consider 'every trouble as a blessing'; whether 'you will pull God's glory into your spirit', which will fill 'your business, your finances, and your family'—in this order of importance—because: 'WHAT YOU START, GOD WILL FINISH.'

The capital letters flickering on a large screen came at the climax. Everyone visibly agreed that something special had taken place. The

K. Stroeken, *Simplex Society*,

pastor called it God-work. Repeating his soulful afterthought 'I got a feeling everything's gonna be alright', which died out in a whisper, he left the stage. The sensory experience was intended to affect each participant. Some cried and a few started to speak in tongues. All cheered. What started as God's glory was subsequently translated by the second pastor into: 'Jesus touching your lips, your money, your body, your face, your church, your family.' All participants had as individual bodies merged into a relationship with the personified divinity known as Jesus. Their salvation had led them to enter into the Body of Christ. While imploring the ecstatic audience to now take that first step, and mimicking the physical act repeatedly, the pastor reassured that 'God is obligated to finish the work'.

The work God will finish refers to prosperity, for which the higher salvation known as baptism with the Holy Spirit is a metaphor. But the obligation not even God Himself can escape, stems from the belief in the universe obeying a law. This law boils down to return on investment. Mwanga magic sacrificing a white body for prosperity adopts that simplex frame too, I have argued.

We cannot ignore the miracle happening daily, of American TV channels as well as a visiting pastor from Canada managing to speak the language of the Morogoro born-again. We are witnessing a new phase in Pentecostalism, whereby African ripples join the global wave of simplications sedimented into a fixed path.[1] The preacher incites us to face entropy and proposes as solution to pursue the path of God. Perhaps I am in no position to question his discourse, since it belongs to the religious sphere. Moreover, his entropology has a lot going for it, because at least it contains a solution. Only, he pictures one path, while you and I as outsiders can imagine as many paths as there are names of god. Those many religions each claiming their god and truth do not frustrate the pastor, for they confirm the stakes of his battle. Nor does he dislike scientists. Their knowledge presents no threat, poor as it is in intuition and segregated from the religious sphere.

Something else does obsess the pastor, and the reason why is intriguing for my argument. He hates medicine. Of course, there are reasons for denouncing clandestine occult practices often termed 'magic' that draw on the game of make-believe. But I say medicine to mean the totality of local practices applying knowledge about plant- and metaphor-based forces from the forest that adults were traditionally initiated in, and that some chosen by the spirits still become experts in. The Christian pastor recognizes the claim of vocation in priests and mystics. Yet, medicinal practice and spirit possession cults differ from monotheistic religions in

admitting utter plurality. The pluralism of medicine, a supposed inferior belief, is what unsettles the Pentecostal, a monist.[2] Pluralism requires tolerance about the other's difference which must stem from self-confidence. How could traditional medicine? The monists desperately wondered in my presence about Christians hiding their heretic medicine. Might it be mere ignorance? Or on the contrary 'African science' in a sphere separate from religion. The worst-case scenario would be that medicine partakes of the same sphere and approximates the experience of connection with an invisible influence. Could medicine beat them at being in touch with the real? The similarity of spirit beliefs is the source of irritation. What differentiates healer from preacher is the ability to shift frames, I will argue.

Africanists have underestimated the cultural war plaguing the continent since decolonization. An ambivalent discourse about traditional healing has at times reigned among Christianized Africans, pairing hatred with unrealistic admiration. During a brief field-visit in Uganda in September 2013 an Acholi diviner told me in an unrecorded interview that she and all healers around Kitgum were the first victims of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)'s murderous campaign. How could the LRA, with its Christian founder Kony possessed by spirits, ideologically oppose the spirit-based medicinal traditions of the uneducated? The LRA chose the most violent method to attain an objective that Pentecostalists adhere to as well, to purify Uganda from witchcraft. Pentecostalists differ from other Christians in that their services take traditional belief seriously. For them the existence of witches cannot be doubted.[3] By proclaiming to exterminate witchcraft, Pentecostal churches do not eradicate the belief in witchcraft. They reinforce it. Witchcraft's reality becomes stronger with every witch the preachers claim to have converted.

A motif staged during church services is the redemptive testimony of new adherents. Ideally the sins confessed are those of a witch, like in the BBC documentary on a Ugandan pastor claiming to have performed over sixty child sacrifices as a healer before he became a Christian.[4] So focused the Charismatic Christians are on the moral status of thoughts that they treat witch and healer as interchangeable figures. They do not experience the opposition between two frames: those of magic and bewitchment, the first a duel (the combat between magic and counter-magic) and the second a fear (about the invisible hold of a witch). Healing systems with precolonial roots play on the shift between the two frames, as argued in "Chapter Seven: The Oracle and the Real" and "Chapter Eight: Healer or King". A third frame of divination reveals the identity of the witch, not in

a tribunal but in a ritual. In the Pentecostalist understanding, however, there is only one world, God's kingdom, about which the Bible informs us. So, the idea that beliefs would be generated by a particular frame of experience is heresy. In this emotional take on truth originates the remarkable conflation which we noted above, between combating the belief in witchcraft and combating the witch, the latter often interchangeably called witch-doctor, the witch's opposite, adding to the confusion. Time and again the conflation surfaces in media reports on superstition in Africa and in public statements of international organizations: witches—by which the speaker has a kind of wicca practitioner in mind—are 'persecuted' and, in the same breath, witches (now meaning witch-doctors) fool 'gullible clients' into superstitious magic. Throughout the scientific literature too, I have encountered the conflation. Scientists conflate frames if they disregard experiences in their account of events.

More interestingly, the misunderstanding struck me among Pentecostal church members of a rural town near the village where I lived south of Lake Victoria. By coincidence, during the first year of fieldwork on healing rituals, I had witnessed a contest. It was an experiment the significance of which I could not have gathered at the time. In 1995, still before the second big wave of literature on Pentecostalism in Africa, two evangelical pastors had come to the healer's compound where I stayed. In my presence, they persuaded the healer named Solile, famous for his treatment of *mayabu* mental illness, to let them perform an exorcism on one of his patients in order to prove that the Word of God outdid Solile's heathen method. Sudden healing would indeed be a miracle in the eyes of the Sukuma healer, who is used to long-term treatments, including ingestion of soothing concoctions, medicinal massages twice daily and regular monitoring of spirit support through divination, so that after about two years the patients suffering from *mayabu* bewitchment, the symptoms of depression receding, can return home. The exorcist scene directed by the pastors and witnessed by me from a distance should be summed up in the following terms: loud and atrocious admonishments of the patient, repeated references to the devil, panic in the patient leading to a fit, and a bewildered ethnographer barely three months in the field now harshly confronted with the ambivalence of participatory observation. Just before leaving for Solile's place, I had been visited at home by a Tanzanian civil servant and member of the Seventh day Adventist's church warning me about going to the village where 'the thing called witchcraft' reigns. Unlike some of my friends, the civil servant said, he took the danger

seriously. In retrospect, the irritation I felt at being pressured by him had to do with his experience of witchcraft seeming to me a travesty. Looking down on Solile and his patients, he had no clue of the multi-layered experience that they communicated about and that I would not have been prepared for either, had I stayed around the town's educated few.[5] Cultural colonization, the rewriting of African history in Western terms? I heeded the warning of my promotor René Devisch, who had worked among Yaka healers, also speaking a Bantu language but 3000 miles to the west.[6]

The power of *bugota*, medicine, depends on the semantic kinship of metaphorical ingredients with cultural elements. The kinship turns the ingredients into 'entrances', *shingila*. The spitting cobra I disposed of one night at the storage room was a lost opportunity I was told afterward, a much appreciated 'entrance' for protective medicine, and so it was gone the next morning. A little piece of skin would suffice as additive in a concoction to keep any jealous neighbors at bay that might secretly persecute owners of filled store rooms. Like the Western observer, Pentecostal pastors treat magic, bewitchment, divination, ritual sacrifice and spirit possession as belonging to one sphere, that of 'the occult'. In their words, these are the works of the devil. Among Sukuma-speaking farmers, however, each of these practices evokes its own frame of experience, whose shift for instance from persecution to protection the participant feels. The palette of experiential frames comprises exchanging with the world (via magic), feeling intruded by it (in bewitchment), identifying its hidden causes (through divination), expelling the intruder (via exorcism), harnessing the power of externality (through sacrifice) or being in synchrony with the outside world (in spirit possession). The frames recur in other spheres of exchange too. But Pentecostalists subsume the frames under one sphere, the occult, which moreover looks irritatingly much like religion. Sukuma healers with their plural frames have been losing terrain fast in comparison to Pentecostalism. The reason was not defeat in a fair battle. The colonizers, with their indirect rule, imported religions and science, double-crossed initiatory medicine in the colony's cultural war, relegating it to a thing of the past. Afterward came globalization and the homogenizing pressure of simplex society ending experiential plurality lest it slow down communication.

I deeply enjoyed Solile's reaction of scorn against his preaching visitors, not only after but also before their session of 'spiritual healing'. His scorn was telling in that he as a pluralist wanted to give them a chance but never really believed in their miracle cure, its monism and denial of the diviner's

real. The exhorting cries of the exorcists while brandishing the Bible contrasted sharply with the long-term methodic approach of Sukuma medicinal traditions. Pentecostal healing is rather impervious to the biographically rooted meanings obtained by the patient from the therapeutic rituals, divinatory sessions, historically thickened medicines, collective routines of application to the body, and the regularly monitored communications as well as strategic dealings with the spirits. All these practices form a meaningful whole integrating therapy in the rest of life.

No better place to experience the excesses of global processes than in Africa's buzzling semi-urban neighborhoods. The Pentecostal attack launched against the devil by those visiting pastors is telling of the simplication they submitted the local beliefs to, an experiential atrophy they must have sensed. The pastors do not biographically specify the witch. A demon possessing the speaker-in-tongues, any variant on Satan will do as the cause of trouble. I could not think of a clearer opposite than Solile's patients evolving via divination and ritual to picture witchcraft first as morally justified retaliations and later on as a-moral attacks to be dealt with in a medicinal battle. The history of the family clan and various guiding spirits contributes to empowering the self.[7] In Christianity, it is always the same spirit we are to experience—not an ancestral spirit attached to the history of the clan or locality. Pentecostalism could be seen as syncretic with medicinal traditions by managing to interweave the believer's personal path of salvation with the one Spirit, through a relationship that evolves,[8] but it does not permit the biographically unique embodiment by a cult spirit. While individualizing subjectivities, globalized religions paradoxically standardize experiences. Reproducing the supernatural of public discourse from African schools, NGO's and churches, they robbed the spirits of a history and a name.

Benin, 1994. One year before my Tanzanian research the bonesetter in a Bariba village had showed me the medicinal plants with which he treated the patient's leg to speed up the healing process. As important he said, and he pointed to a chicken tied to a post in the patient's room, is the bird's broken paw. The patient will watch it from day to day getting better. The patient with broken bone will muster courage from the slow but almost sure spectacle of healing, a restoring of life in the chick's paw. The patient is in touch with the source of production, healing. The sterile hospital ward conveys a different message, designed to facilitate predictable

decisions and simplicate moral choices. Is the Pentecostalist law of prosperity, committing God himself, an experientially sterile simplex? Or do the pastor's followers shift frame in touch with life, as exuded by the energy of their services?

Lumumbashi, 2014. The three of us are in a taxi on our way to the University of Lubumbashi in eastern Congo, as we have been doing every morning for the past six days. My two intellectual friends, brought up in this city, hence both Lushois, earnestly discuss the value of Pentecostalist belief, as they have been doing in my presence for the past six days. One a Catholic for his whole life, the other turned a born-again since a couple of years, both agree on the attraction of Pentecostalist belief for its emphasis on sensory experience and on collective experience, *le concret et la solidarité*. 'At last the convert can take the gospel literally!' *L'évangile est vrai, pas du symbolisme*. Away with Catholic ambiguity, saying one thing (the symbol from heaven) and doing another (the act on Earth).

'Pentecostal clarity is what I appreciate as well', the taxi driver interjects joining in at our surprise. 'I like the deliverance by the Holy Spirit (*Délivrance avec le saint Esprit*) which comprises deliverance from demonic possession (*possession demoniaque*).' 'Or from family ties' (*liens familiaux*), he adds a euphemism for jealousy and witchcraft following unmet obligations between kin. 'Catholic services do not address these preoccupations of their adherents. Nothing is really felt in those services. But the differences are small', he appends.

Escapism and business in a precarious economy is what the plenty Congolese makeshift churches offer at the rate of about one per street. The taxi driver's income depends on the fluctuation of the dollar rate and oil price as well as on the city's participation in the global economy. Just as I attempt to classify his job as an embodiment of local-global entanglement for which the Pentecostal sphere caters with a monist frame (the prosperity gospel), he surprisingly unpacks his pragmatic take on religion. He and his wife have become Pentecostals while their children stay Catholic and go to good Catholic schools. They are frame-shifters.

An important reason for the distinct approach to children, the cabdriver explains, is the sin that concerns adults only. 'Treating sins is an individual thing for Catholics, to be settled between you and God, whereas among Pentecostalists it is collective.'[9] During the sermon, everybody in the audience feels saved. It is an experience unknown to the colonial

Church. The ceremony of speaking-in-tongues, when some are chosen by the holy spirit, is an arrival of the real permitting to experience collective reason. The release for the group reminds my collaborator and me of the purification rites with white kaolin among Chokwe and Lamba groups outside Lubumbashi. The collective dimension of Pentecostal services narrows the distance with the precolonial past, which Catholic practices tended to magnify. Such services must be in high demand, I reason, now that diviners have to work in hiding for individual clients due to the law prohibiting their profession. We keep our thoughts silent. Looking at me and my Catholic doctoral student, the taxi driver stresses a Pentecostalist prohibition: 'Traditions are forbidden.' *Tout ce qui est coutume est interdit.* He must have overheard us talking about the ritual of the Chokwe chief we interviewed. I am confused again. Is this dogmatism or a shift of frame?

Ceremonial deliverance in a church resembles traditional rites of purification. Yet, what the participants have to be purified of is their traditions. The destruction of amulets and fetishes by the pastor is a famous sight on Pentecostal TV. I had appreciated the system of autonomy in Sukuma valleys, ensured by a medicinal 'democracy' subjecting commoner and chief, noble elder and poor elderly lady to the same source of production, a battle between concocted energies of the same kind. Was that denounced in Charismatic churches, or not understood? As I could observe in various field visits since 2012 in the context of Tanzanian university exchange, the researchers belonging to a Charismatic church, who formed the majority, refused to enter the compounds of traditional healers, despite the researchers' specialization in community outreach and their awareness of the informal influence of those healers in the community. For them, unlike 20 years ago, healers are not competitors on the same market of belief. The Pentecostal frame trails in its shadow a denial of frame, which is how I define simplications turning simplex. Frames such as medicinal cosmologies are classified as demonic. What could undermine the classification? Frameshift could. That brought me back to the healers in the village.

Solile mastered the game of healing better than the pastors. For a still more advanced level of frameshift he referred me to a spirit cult, the Chwezi, initiating members into ancient knowledge. The Chwezi novice wears a bracelet, *ngalike*, meaning mind-shift. The initiation explores a variety of mindsets, all equally shades of life. In the four case-studies, football, elections, hip hop and Pentecostalism, the organized 'real' and

frameshift stalled the eventual return to the dominant frame. Is that a limitation? After the match the spectators return to simplex society. Presidential elections are a brief moment of 'anti-structure'.[10] The Bongo Flava song welcomes the fans back after challenging them. The Charismatic church awaits the flock of parents that dropped off their kids at the Catholic mission. But the initiated of the Chwezi cult feel driven by destiny. They use in daily life the palette of frames they were trained into. Their dynamic keeps the simplex at bay.

Notes

1. The literature review for this chapter was published in Stroeken, K. 2017. Witchcraft simplex: Experiences of globalized Pentecostalism in central and northwestern Tanzania. In Rio, McCarthy & Blanes (eds), *Pentecostalism and Witchcraft in Melanesia and Africa*. Palgrave. After decolonization in the 1970s and increasingly so with the intensified globalization of the 1990s, Indigenous African Churches gave way to a new seminal breed, the Charismatic Pentecostal churches, which meant an ideological inversion regarding capitalism, from resistance to adherence. Meyer, B. (2004). Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-charismatic Churches. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, p. 454.

2. Stroeken, K., 2012. Health care decisions by Sukuma 'peasant intellectuals': a case of radical empiricism? *Anthropology & Medicine*, *19*(1), pp.119–128.

3. The Pentecostal attack can count on the sympathy of educated elites, who have for a long time wanted to see an end to their compatriots' belief in magic and witchcraft. Geschiere, P. (2013). Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison. Chicago University Press.

4. The dubitable nature of the claim by pastor Polino Angella was not mentioned by journalist Tim Whewell, who was subsequently summoned for questioning by the Ugandan police, cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8536313.stm>

5. Stroeken, K., 2001. Defying the gaze: exodelics for the bewitched in Sukumaland and beyond. *Dialectical Anthropology*, *26*, pp.285–309.

6. Devisch, R. (1993). *Weaving the Threads of Life: The Khita Gyn-Eco-Logical Healing Cult among the Yaka*. Chicago University Press.

7. Lambek, M. (1988). Spirit possession/spirit succession: aspects of social continuity among Malagasy speakers in Mayotte. *American Ethnologist* 15(4): 710–731.

8. Coleman, S. (2011). 'Right Now!': Historiopraxy and the Embodiment of Charismatic Temporalities. *Ethnos* 76 (4): 426–447.

9. Original fragment: *Traiter les péchés, c'est individuel pour les catholiques, à régler entre toi et le bon Dieu, tandis que chez les pentecôtistes c'est général.*

10. Turner, V. and Abrahams, R.D., 2017. *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Routledge.

Chapter Fourteen: Intuition, Destiny, Love

Lose your intuition and you have lost 'it'. Everything that makes you human. Are the signs of simplex society not clear? We no longer trust our intuitions. 'Stupid rules' are taking over our lives. Every day one more rule. Even sport contests, where skill and spontaneity meet, are decided after the event, through video referees or court cases as in football, cycling and F1.[1] Intuition has always saved humans from that by telling when a rule is not or no longer needed. A bunch of thoughts and observations converge in an instinctive response, which is not a reflex like fear. Sometimes fear is necessary to institute protective measures, but without allowing guidance by intuition, how will we know when it is time to wrap up the security lines at airports, lift the facemask obligation and trust measures launched by the government or new advice by scientists? Societies and their technologies can promote human intuition. Or they can destroy it. Dating apps, quantum computation and election of the GOAT are three cases that illustrate the antagonism of simplex society with intuition and particularly with its claim to sense destiny, which lends intuition much current in the undertow.

Is not everybody looking for love? Many dream of that special kind, the falling in love. Everybody is an expert on the topic because of romances and heartbreaks, or sadness for never having known love. So, anything I say might irritate. We should be careful to speak about it at all, says relationship coach Dionisio, 'The number one reason for suicide is love. The

number two reason is no love.'[2] When trying to understand the energy between humans it is an inevitable topic.

Anyone tempted to sum up reasons for falling in love will eventually end up with the unknown element evoked since time immemorial by popular songs, poems and novels: destiny. Love ticks off all the boxes, rather than the other way around; than that someone ticking off all the boxes will make you fall in love. The timing and your feeling make it right. The sense of timing is not a matter of individual reason, but of delusion, or of destiny. The latter points to collective reason. How is that revealed? The mysterious shivers strike because you intuit, and do not doubt but 'just know', that things are right. Intuition, which post-knowledge society undermines, and destiny, which intuition may sense, form a pair.

If this is the case, that destiny decides, why do people nowadays put so much effort into Tinder and similar dating apps, swiping candidates left or right after ticking off boxes, starting with the looks? In this way they can meet candidates, feel them out and let their intuition come into play, await the butterflies, so that eventually they find the person to live with, their soulmate? It is crazy to believe that. In reality, the Tinder app loads so many potential candidates into the user's inbox, showing their likes, and continues to, that anyone chosen on the basis of a number of traits will soon be superseded by another scoring a trait more. Since everybody can send likes to a countless number, and 'superlikes' to many, the recipient cannot know how unique the interest is. As a result, users will over time get a like of a candidate scoring higher than they had initially even dared to hope for, and they will concentrate on that person. They will be punching, or appropriately 'boxing', above their weight. It is the Peter principle (everybody gets promoted until incompetence) applied to love.

The Peter principle in love works both ways of course, so that the user convinced to have found the match of a lifetime will soon discover that person to be pondering about a better candidate and dating that one, after which the established bond with the former is demystified and there is no way back to romance. If intuition ever had a chance, now it makes way again for the game of comparing and statistically increasing one's chances of success, of getting the best possible catch. That is what the app counts on to amass subscriptions. The quest for quantity sounds perfectly reasonable since the alternative is a naïve belief in destiny. Even users learning from past mistakes and being content with a lesser number of boxes ticked will never know if the other party has reached that point too. Candidates

keep on appearing on the app. A common solution is to log out after a match. But how long before the feeling nags, that one has been naïve to settle for the current combination of traits? Because, in the end, what more does this match amount to than autosuggestion connected to a number of traits? Belief in destiny is the antidote to the commodification of matches, likes and relationships, as much as to simplex society.

The popular app creates a culture of its own, which reflects a wider reality, that of a society injected with social stress and semantic impoverishment. Destiny overrules the list of pixels, simplex traits. The app in itself is not the problem. If both parties are willing to believe that destiny was involved to meet on this app, then the kind of answers typical of our opening question return whereby the moment of the first date is romanticized. And a process is given a chance to take root, namely an evolution toward accepting the other person, discovering the undivided whole s/t/he/y/x are (dating apps are usually gender sensitive), and toward admitting the unexpected boxes the person introduces.

Many cultures assume some form of fate or providence to play the main part in love. Although nobody is in a position to assess the truth of that, we do know that meeting a person by chance carries a value in its own right. The meeting of the other happens in a certain environment with all its material, natural and social aspects: it was lunchtime and raining, some flowers next to the bridge were in bloom, the temperature was mild, the coat a little too warm, her eyes glistened and muddy kids played in the park. Yet the here and now of that situation is experienced as a whole. The moment is not dissected in its constitutive factors. No comparison is made with other possible outcomes. The event is allowed to be, and granted a force of its own, which in turn strengthens any intuition the person may have at that moment, for instance, about having met the love of one's life.

Intuition is not dissectible in verifiable constituents like knowledge. Besides the mentioned environing aspects in the now—the *given*—the moment of intuition has a *pregiven* that is equally relevant to predict feelings: a series of events, antecedents of a process, collective expectations, past achievements, personal aspirations, all of them 'institutionalized' because linking the individual experience to a group and history. Again, few or none of these elements will be lifted into consciousness. The given and the pregiven are the subject of scientific research after the event, post facto. The lab dissects their various constitutive factors and designates them as 'determinants' to explain the event into detail. The coat worn at

the bridge materially carries along infrastructure and the results of scientific innovation, textile industry and global economy.[3] The asset permits for those able to afford it—social class enters the material given too—to enjoy the rain instead of shivering from cold. The coat may be recycled, carrying along a sustainable value chain. The aspiration to partner is informed by cultural expectations about relationships, whose origins have little to do with material necessity. And so forth.

Still, one element will remain irreducible to the given and the pregiven. I tentatively call it *immission*, referring to what is immitted in an event. Immission stands for the remaining bit of utter creativity and explains the actual selection among possible determinants. Why does for the other person about to be kissed at that very instant the shouting of kids obtain more weight than the pleasant smell of flowers? Why do I in turn intuit that her loss of focus is not due to declining interest in me, while at other times I would presume the worst? The moment is not in my hands. Thinking does not consist in sending thoughts to myself. I have a past accounting for the thought, in part, which is the pregiven, while environing stimuli also have impact as a given. And the remaining bit of creativity that gives the experience a decisive direction cannot be controlled either.[4] Where is the 'outside' of consciousness? We may situate events in the middle between given, pregiven and immission, instantiating a mix of environment, institution and consciousness, respectively. Our sense of reality, by which I understand 'intuition', is the extent to which we capture that middle. Crucially, intuition evolves with experience and openness to inspiration. It is a learning process about what works, without relying only on past experience. 'Yes, this event came at the right time', the lover said about the first meeting. The intuition is partly given, pregiven and immitted. No reasoned comparison of factors can beat that feeling.

Being conscious of an immission is *pre-ception*, perceiving an event before it occurs. The very idea sounds bizarre unless we consider an even crazier thought: to think something before the thought arrives. Anyone refuting such 'pre-thought thought' is inadvertently claiming that thoughts are always immitted without control over them, nor even control over the subsequent thought correcting the previous as it too will have to be immitted to be thought. That seems to be true, except at times of pre-ception when someone perceives what is destined to occur and can decide to intervene or not.[5]

Conscious Machines

A perfectly rational solution can fail to work because it does not take into account cultural expectations and the material environment. Yet, the latter two comprise so many aspects, how to know which ones the decision should factor in most? For example, a total lockdown in the face of epidemic clashes with people's desire to move freely across natural borders. Conversely, group immunity will never be achieved precisely because there will always be subgroups hiding to prevent infection, or natural borders temporarily isolating them. The role of intuition is to feel when which idea applies. Reacting entirely in tune with the environment (the given: 'my best friend is unvaccinated so me too') is a reflex and not a good idea. Being stuck on a hunch (immission: 'I distrust that scientist') is not helpful either. Nor is applying a rule out of habit (the pregiven: 'I always obey the government'). In each you have one of the three poles dominating excessively. An intuition's selection of determinants translates a complex multilayered bunch of parallel events into a thought. It simplifies reality through a complicated transformation. We called this process simplication and contrasted it with the sedimented form in simplexes, which are one-layered ideas, impulses denuded of context. Allow me to touch on the related issue of consciousness in machines.

Every intuition is a simplification, but not every simplification is intuitive. Machines simplicate too, but miss an element that humans have. Both quantum computers and human brains improve their algorithms by accumulating selections, trials and errors. Machines with feedback loops sophisticated enough to adjust their self-organization are aware, in their functioning at least, of former selections having omitted equally viable possibilities.[6] They rival humans in retaining a linkage with both the pregiven and the given of a choice. What quantum computers cannot have, and humans are often and sometimes overwhelmingly endowed with is the feeling of knowing the right path—all this because of the third element, the consciousness immitted.[7] Machines suffer from the fact that the options equidistant between two poles are infinite. Among humans a third pole, which I called immission, fixes the middle and can be pre-ceived.

Unfortunately, this human advantage can easily be feigned or abused. Personalized rule gives an unfair edge to dictators in comparison to democratic systems. A tyrant can embody a conviction that a bureaucratic machine like the EU has not. Systems and regulations are immissionless. The political party winning a democratic election still has many options

that meet the party's interests. Among the given and the pregiven, a human receiving immission picks one. How can a human know what is right? If we follow Damasio on consciousness, we should not be surprised humans do, because a thought emanates from an emotional response to events built up in the past and evolutionarily. That is a positivist answer to the so-called hard problem of consciousness.[8] A comprehensive view is the one just illustrated: our thoughts are only the reasoned part of an intuition, and even these are co-determined by institutions, namely culturally established meanings independent from emotions and natural selection, as well as by new elements in the here and now. An example of such element is a truth that carries the sign of destiny. Receptive individuals like artists can intuit this collective reason by interpreting multiple phenomena pointing in the same direction.

Accurate and reliable knowledge is not yet valid knowledge. An intuition can be more significant than a measurement, and therefore in certain situations agreed on to be more valid. Take the election of the GOAT, the greatest of all time in a sport. Why should there be an election, one may ask, since the statistical facts of individual performances are known? Going by the number of titles won, Michael Jordan is not the GOAT of basketball, and yet fans and colleagues alike intuit that is the case.[9] The sport journalist who made this interesting observation, also about Mohamed Ali, reasoned that if Jordan were born a generation later with the current training methods, he would still have been on top of the game thanks to his bodily constellation and mental drive. The statement holds on to objective measurement. It may be doubted. Would Jordan have thrived in the contemporary sphere of basketball, given the less heroic status of star players and greater emphasis on team spirit, courtesy of a less hierarchical society? And what about Ali, who only through extreme endurance incited by the Congolese spectators narrowly won his historic match against Foreman in Kinshasa? Still, and this is my point, such objections cannot undermine our intuition. Even if Jordan and Ali had never thrived as much in the current 'local' spheres of basket and boxing, they are the GOATs in their epoch as well as at the encompassing level of humanity. That is meant by 'all time' in GOAT: not a sum of periods, but in speciated history. They are heroes for having done their thing at the right time. That is the truth of the species, a collective reason.

Measurements cannot beat the validity of an intuition based on extensive experience and wide consensus. The collective carries a truth of its own. That is why before assigning the number one in sports we vote

instead of measure. Collective reason enters that moment of the real when 'we' elect the GOAT. Also in democracy we plumb the depths of the group's wishes to discover something we could not guess otherwise, our group's destiny. External necessity eases the mind; popular dating apps can be criticized for undermining it. Group approval of a match, as observed in various cultures, eases too. The accuracy (and atomism) of meeting a list of traits will always pale before the validity (and holism) of a choice dubbed destiny. Similarly, a moral debate is not won by the most accurate speech, but by the most valid.

Intuition grasps without thinking. Is its instinctive sense of certainty not unfounded? It should accumulate and compare so many determinants, according to the atomistic approach in simplex society. The app Tinder in the field of romance is a reflection of that atomism. In contrast, intuition does not compare but takes the moment of meeting seriously. The moment gets its full weight. Intuition incorporates the growth of experience. It injects vision with the out-of-the-blue factor of immission. It supposes trust in what is immitted, without blind belief. Then one sees logics. One simplicates. Pre-ceiving is less of a reflex than thinking is.

Notes

1. Scanlon, C., Griggs, G. and McGillick, C., 2022. 'It's not football anymore': perceptions of the video assistant referee by english premier league football fans. *Soccer & Society*, *23*(8), pp.1084–1096. And law firms thrive. https://www.amsadvocaten.com/blog/ams-advocaten/can-legal-proceedings-still-keep-max-verstappen-from-winning-the-world-championship/

2. https://news.abs-cbn.com/lifestyle/09/26/11/love-number-one-reason-suicide-expert

3. Acharya, A., 2022. *Political ecology of small things*. Edinburgh UP.

4. The 'Libet experiment' showing that the conscious intention to move was preceded by movement-related brain activity, went even so far as to overrule an active role of conscious intention. But that should be toned down: Sanford, P., Lawson, A.L., King, A.N. and Major, M., 2020. Libet's intention reports are invalid: A replication of Dominik et al. (2017). *Consciousness and Cognition*, *77*.

5. A subdued phenomenological version says that as humans are liberated from immediate necessity (sensory input) in the here and now (the given and the pregiven), they can imagine more possibilities. Schreel describes this pivotal role of anticipation in creativity, applying Husserl's model of time consciousness, retention and protention (rudimentary anticipation based on former

retentions). Louis Schreel, 2022. De Psychologie van Inspiratie, Inzicht en Creativiteit in Kunst en Wetenschap. Permanente Vorming Actuele Filosofie, Universiteit Gent. 19/04/2022. See also: Brassett, J. and O'Reilly, J., 2021. Introduction to a creative philosophy of anticipation. In *A Creative Philosophy of Anticipation* (pp. 1–23). Routledge.

6. Signorelli, C.M., 2018. Can computers become conscious and overcome humans? *Frontiers in Robotics and AI* 5, p.121.

7. Compare the phenomenological turn this once positivistic neuroscientist took to grasp the 'being' of humans: Koch, C., 2019. *The feeling of life itself: why consciousness is widespread but can't be computed*. MIT Press.

8. Chalmers, D.J., 1997. *The conscious mind: In search of a fundamental theory.* Oxford UP.

9. I borrow the observation from Hans Vandeweghe's column: https://www.demorgen.be/sport/de-beste-in-cijfers-zijn-volstaat-niet-om-de-grootste-te-zijn-een-goat-impliceert-een-totaalpakket~b21e9fd1/

Chapter Fifteen: Phantoms of the Future

On the first of January 2000, something happened that changed the world forever. Nothing happened. Predictions of a global digital breakdown failed to come true. The problem known as Y2K anticipated that, despite expensive measures taken, many life-saving and peace-maintaining computers in among others hospitals, banks and security headquarters would shut down because of the quaternary digit change overlooked long ago by our engineers. Overnight the year 00 would succeed the year 99, as a token of technology's reductionism. The millennium was to start with a tabula rasa, an appropriately spectacular start of the digital age. Today we barely remember the fuzz and the build-up.

The morning after, things seemed to go on as usual. I claim they did not. Questions about the deep anxiety and how willingly we had diffused it globally were conspicuously absent in the media and on the streets, buried under a heavy silence. Unprepared computers functioned anyway. The millennial angst had at short notice made US companies and government invest an estimated 300 billion USD to fix 'the millennium bug', much of it considered unnecessary afterward.[1] In today's currency that exceeds the entire globe's investment in clean energy in 2018.[2] Clearly, once a sense of urgency is planted, global interventions can succeed rapidly.

What were the factors strong enough to put thought into practice and activate the masses? The prediction was framed in an experientially relevant story. It managed to simplicate, translate through condensed meaning what latently lived in the population. Part of our collective reason, a

subconscious warning the species, is that the information society and its knowledge economy have no solid basis. The Y2K investment tapped into this intuition, that the edifice which we had falteringly bet our future on could that easily crumble.

The translation of this collective reason into a massive computer crash was inaccurate. It could circulate through the entire social network due to elements that lubricate in a simplex society. The prediction set a concrete date of trouble. (Millennial movements also have that obsession with a point in time.) The trouble was clear and could be assessed on that date. The one-layered atomism attracted. In analogy, if everyone goes by bike twice as much for a year and the impact is less glaciers melting, measurable in millimeters less sea-level rise, we will continue biking and make sure to do better next year.

The fin-de-siècle atmosphere lent impetus to the craze. The moment of uncertainty, worrying us at the time for disrupting markets and hospital care, as much as beguiling for the prospect of a new start toward a 'post-information age', a bit like the corona pandemic later, was thought to recede soon. But the collective sense of urgency remained.

A Brief History of Digital Distress

Came 911. Facing the images of those twin towers iconic of modernity's success tumbling down, one could only feel horror, together with millions of viewers. Only? Many of us were taught something terrifying about themselves as well. In the corners of their anguished face a trembling could be detected that resembled the buddings of a grin, suppressed as soon as bodies jumped out of the skyscrapers. The sensation of witnessing an iconic event, the big idea, allured. 'Emporned' with imagery planting compulsory interest, the mismatch between meaning and feeling took root. Everybody who watched the collapsing towers live on CNN went through the horror, and survived. Whether Islamist or American, artist or journalist, nobody differed in diffusing the visions that terrorized. From then onward, visions became news. Post-truth is that. The images spread meanings with fixed affect and thus dissociate themselves from our feelings. Already before finishing to text our indignation, we are not sure anymore what we feel.

A century earlier, works of fiction had announced the spectral side of modernity. In the aftermath of Y2K, the hunt for ghosts in apocalyptic craze returned with a vengeance. At the turn of the millennium, aided

with the multisensorial sophistication of Internet technology, audiences had discovered the pleasure of contaminating each other with fear without feeling the consequences. In the following decade, we witnessed ecological and financial catastrophes, and watched movies on the pending drama of the Anthropocene, and yet we chose, voted and lived pretty much as ever before. Climate change is real, it won't happen.

Information technology started as an extension of our perceptual apparatus. Today as cultures globalize into a simplicating social network, the subject is placed in the arduous position of registering without intervening. With every simplex, we pass the heat on as soon as we can—hit the keyboard, frozen on our chairs to tell the news. Still bodies powerlessly watch stray bodies. Information technology standardizes decisions and downgrades social negotiation. Anthropologists silently withdrew from public debate on the challenges of globalization and cultural difference, as they could not keep the secret, an awareness after fieldwork they spent much effort in disbelieving and which prevented them from saying too much regarding exactly those issues the public is concerned about and, quite frankly, has been paying for to know. The secret discovered through cultural comparison is that we—anyone reading this text—have been building on this planet the first society where people benefit from the death of others; where the purpose is not to cherish the swarm (*ethnos*) or conserve the group by controlling tensions but to tacitly raise tensions; not to keep all members of one's personal network alive, but as that network extends to the globe: to stress others out through reports of threats and incalculable risks, and achieve a natural selection that keeps the expanding network in check; to kill the relevant other slowly, pile up the stray bodies, and make up for it through education into mechanisms of selection, through development work, through ever more selective critique, artistic anarchy, uniqueness. The younger generation has had to build on the make-believe, that we care about life, that as atomists we can tacitly count on the holistic miracle of organic redress to continue our atomistic interventions.

Holism is the cosmology befitting the swarm and its (intraspecies) communication.[3] Yet, atomism is what we have learned to reward. Both environmentalists and the media therefore feel compelled to not only show statistics but also diffuse images of disaster to incite transformative shock, in the hope of summoning near-death-like experiences changing a person's life forever. A cataclysm. Tangible loss. To reach affect, campaigners look for the equivalent of Neil Armstrong's sudden insight about Earth's

vulnerability when viewing our blue marble from the dark of space. After the serial betrayal of simplexes feeding emotions, characteristic of the network channeling myriads of symbols, people are losing their sense of, and interest in, what is real. Part of the entropy, we have seen, is the futility of statements in sealed-off spheres carved out from the global network. Amidst the flows of information, we vainly await the shock of the real that could rekindle a sense of urgency and motivate an ultimate decision.

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Fascinating exercises have taken place in the last decade to raise environmental consciousness. Studies in multispecies anthropology organize immersions in the lifeworld of animals and plants that can change the reader's attitude.[4] If what we call forest is a city for the animals inhabiting it, what are loggers razing to the ground? Entire cities. Organized mass destruction. The oil palms of agribusiness replace biodiverse forests with plants that 'refuse to be hugged'.[5] The anthropological exercise of translating alterity permits to see in the thousands of acres of mono-cultural fields the desert it is for bees; to see in the exploitation of resources along the equator the destruction of livelihoods of numerous beings, large and small, many of whom we cannot perceive. The shift of perspective leads to the discovery of other worlds that are our planet's too. Entering a sphere to take the other's perspective can transform things more lastingly than factual statements about degradation. Frameshifts channel energies. Through multispecies studies, the reader gets to see sources of production distributed among spheres of exchange, and this from a post-humanist standpoint. Life is more than that of one species.

A frameshift permitted the breakthrough in abolishing slavery in the mid-nineteenth century, as the general public recognized the shared humanity, among others via Biblical references in pamphlets asking 'Am I not a man and a brother?' above a drawing of a chained half-naked black man.[6] A hundred years later, the change toward decolonization and legal independence of colonized countries was possible thanks to perspectival extensions acknowledging local communities with histories and socio-political systems in their own right. Against European leaders picturing the colonies as parts of their realms, African intellectuals such as Nyerere, Nkrumah and Senghor wrote their critical analysis for the wider public, in fact for the entire globe. Ethnographies evoked for the educated what other societies looked like. In the 1950s, Max Gluckman talked every

evening on BBC radio about African political systems to familiarize British families at home. The independence of African countries within less than a decade was unlikely. But it happened.

From Europeans and Africans realizing their shared human fate, their tapping from the same sources of production, a lesson can be learned for ending the present subjugation, that of the social and natural environment by unregulated market, information network, finance and industry. The humanities have a role to play in the change of attitudes, as they did during colonization, by embracing ethnography as a tool to understand those personally affected. In climate change, the future generations are affected. Can the ethnographer let their voices be heard? Or should the future generation address us? This chapter rounds off my essay by letting the phantoms talk.

An overture was made recently in the streets of Stockholm and Brussels, as the youngest demonstrators ever flocked together to bombard the cameras with appropriately sarcastic slogans on carton: 'There is no Plan(et) B' or 'Ride dicks, not cars!' The protestors defend the rights of their future grandchildren who will hopefully get to see their own grandchildren grow up healthily. At stake in the protests is the future of life, in engagement with distant generations. The assuredness with which collective reason spoke through educators in the 1960s to decolonize can be repeated for the eco-social challenge, were it not blocked by contemporary society's simplexes and bubbles. That is the particular situation this book cautioned about. I do not advocate one frame or another, but the capacity to shift between them. That is how we step out of the matrix and into the tensor.

Pre-ception and Intraspecies Communication

The artist, diviner, football fan and speaker-in-tongues of the previous chapters got hunches, about forthcoming events. Rapper Afande Sele sung in Swahili about the artist's *darubini kali*, 'sharp binoculars' that read the signs of the times. The hunch determines what to do. Where does the hunch come from? How do we know *it ain't make-believe*? The Sukuma society of elderhood initiates adolescents into receiving hunches. The traditional healer is specialized in them. Particularly famed for this kind of ultra-far vision is the aforementioned Chwezi medicinal spirit cult that played a central role in the precolonial history of Interlacustrine Africa. Initiation in the Chwezi cult illustrated to me how far one should

go in trial and error, experiments of the real, to exercise one's intuition. The other experiment that stood out in my life the epilogue recounts.

In mid-1997, after my village initiation together with Sukuma peers and having lived in a healer compound, Masanja and I conducted a long interview with Malamala, the head of the Chwezi society. A month later we were invited to complete our first initiatory cycle in the cult. Although developed independently from mass civilizing traditions such as Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, the cult exhibits traits that relate to the religious sphere. One is the experience of union with a spirit. It is biologically not impossible for certain neural connections to give way to mystical sensations.[7] Everyone at some point in life may have had an experience of being in unity with the universe, perhaps without making a big deal out of it later. However, when several people share the same delusion at more or less the same time, either or not induced medicinally, then we observe in separate cultures that this sensation is usually associated with action of the dead, with 'spirits'. We need not believe in their influence from yonder to identify an underlying meaning that makes sense.

Mediums claim to know when possession is near. The medium-diviner signals the arrival of the spirit to her client by drumming. The Chwezi mediums sing at night about the pending event: 'The great cooling snake emerges when the moon appears. It instils pains in my back. Maybe it has accepted.' The spirit announces itself as a 'great snake' (*liyoka*) through convulsions starting from the spine. Sukuma dancers move their hips with a slight jerk of the spine. The medium depends on the snake's goodwill and on the moon cycle. The medium no less earns the blessing through readiness. If no ritual can command the spirit, how can possession be initiated? This paradox is the point of mediumship. The novices have to accept that what they are doing, and what accounts for a consciousness of consciousness deeper than that of the non-initiated, is that they are 'stalking the stalker' (*ukusuutila lusuutila*). The spirit whom they are after is itself stalking them. Two separate systems can meet at the right moment, and with the right training. In their passionate encounter the difference fades between intraspecies (human spirit) and interspecies (snake spirit) communication. What the ritual training does is to take away the novice's inhibition so that, as another Chwezi song goes, 'On the road lies nothing but fate.' Feeling in synchrony with what intrudes implies a sense of destiny. How else could something pre-ceived be instigated that cannot be commanded?

Chwezi spirit possession exposes, in a magnified way, what conscious perception does every day. Our mind pictures 'reality' as the brain links up with a chunk of spacetime. Animals specialize in sensory modes, the exteroceptive (see, hear, smell, taste, touch), interoceptive (intestinal movement) and proprioceptive (sense of balance).[8] Might there be an *ulteroceptive* sense?[9] The human species has developed foremost the sensory mode of vision to perceive afar. Hearing covers less distance in space than smell, itself not being as near as touch. 'Hunches' are no less neural and no less perceptual, so why not do the experiment of treating them as the next sensory mode? Someone receiving a hunch is touched by sense data that reach further than the edge of vision because a hunch adds a temporal dimension. Its ultra-far vision senses what shall be in the near future.[10] To accept this view we should picture our environment not as a space but as a spacetime from which our sensorium picks up impulses. Treacherously resembling premonition, this sense which we may tentatively set apart with the previously introduced term '*pre*-ception' and for which no formal training exists in the Global North is incredibly common among animate beings. It surfaces in the creative impulse during an improvisation, in music, sports, art, performance, spirit possession, revolution, hunt and much more. In each of these, the impulse received with remarkable confidence by the self anticipates the successful bridge in a song, the flick of a heel to score a goal, the compilation of scenes that inspires awe, the silence that penetrates souls, the trance that engulfs audiences, the mobilization of minds, the shot from a distance right between the eyes of a wild deer motioning acceptance of its fate. All these moments nourish our experience of the real and for that reason are tensors undoing the simplex frame. The human swarm's dazzlingly creative Murmuration also manifests itself in the collective hunch of a spatiotemporal nearby event.

The reason why I mention pre-ception is to illustrate the conspicuous preclusion of possibilities by the educational system in our simplex society where information comes first. For each of the listed sensations a simplex awaits, respectively the solmization of a song, the tactical scheme of a match, the storyboard, the cue, the brain scan, the pamphlet and the phrase 'lucky shot'. These reductions simplicate the tensors all too roughly because they obscure the bulk of what happens, omitting the unforeseen of events and the visceral of skills, like the astrophysicist overlooking dark matter, 90% of the universe. Parallel to the local sphere whose frames of experience can be described and concretized through individual reason, humans feature in a speciated history full of blind spots. Therefore, as an

anthropologist I must take the collective imaginary seriously, those intense convictions whirling in the undertow, about improbable events such as great conspiracies and the apocalypse. Or aliens.

ALIENS

The phantoms preoccupying nineteenth-century spiritists in search of contact were not those of the twentieth century. The anxiety and fascination concentrated on nocturnal sounds and on the absence or vagueness of visual perception in deserted houses and attics. Evolutionist, dystopic philosophies were voiced by the spirits, noted down by mediums such as Allan Kardec in the 1850s. The phantasies reflected collective affects, permeating later through symbolist works of art. At the turn of the century followed H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* about a Martian invasion, broadcasted in a radio play by the young Orson Welles in 1938. It famously scared listeners into a panic. After the Second World War the interest rose in extraterrestrial (ET) intelligence and UFOs. The phantoms of the era had changed, but were no less expressive of collective preoccupations. The traits of imagined aliens have a certain salience, an ongoing significance. Allow me to have a go at interpreting the traits of the alien as a case of ulteroception in action—yet another optimistic attempt of mine at translating collective reason at some point in history.

Suspected to hold both a higher intelligence and an inclination to abduct innocent earthlings for research, aliens and their UFOs are as ambiguous as spirits. They have the unique complexion of little green (and sometimes grey) persons, with tiny mouths and noses. Their eyes are large and almond shaped, yet mostly (except for Hollywood's ET) entirely black, hence with only pupil, no iris or sclera. They have no clear gender, no nipples. Their body is very thin, their head oversized. They have fetal features, despite their association with advanced technology enabling them to travel from a distant part of the universe. The concept of time that separates beginning and end vanishes in them. Common discourse associates aliens with life from another planet.

However, does the imaginary figure not speak for itself? Going over the traits, a very different idea seems to be expressed. The aliens are us, terrestrials, in a distant future. Their bodies picture the ultimate outcome after numerous scientific revolutions, intermarriage and cultural creation. A romantic hypothesis recurring in science fiction speculates on a voyage back in time by human visitors from the future. With increased schooling

and information technology a million years later our brain will have expanded very much, the eyes becoming highly receptive screens. The origins of some facial traits like the cheek bone, eye shape and chin would already be detectable currently in the growing proportion of Asians in our globalizing world. Global demographic growth and limited natural resources will have selected small stature. Due to population pressure and exponentially risen life expectancy, new births would be rare and controlled. Gender difference would be obsolete both socially, because of gender sensitivity, and biologically, given the demography.

Amazing what one could infer from this one prototypical image of the extraterrestrial. Those wondering about the green spacesuit might have heard about the twelfth-century legend on the two green children of Woolpit speaking an unknown language. Probably the aliens' holy preference for the color has a deeper reason, evoking the green pastures and forests forever lost after the inevitable destruction of our environment in the not so distant future—an information brought to us a million years from now, give or take a few thousand years.

After all, that seems the point of the visit and the image. Who doubts still that first and foremost the alien visitor lives within us, terrestrials? The alien image 'preceives' what awaits our descendants, were we to let the slot pass of radically changing our way of life in this century. Actually, does the alien ever part the lips? Our descendants present themselves at the foot of their spaceship without saying a word. 'Look at us. Is this what you want?' You and I ask the question through our collective imagination, tapping into spacetime.

The spectral image of the alien is our descendant appearing. Not a deceased ancestor. The upshot of this difference with the phantoms of the nineteenth century is somewhat chilling. This time we are the deceased, visited by our descendants.

Notes

1. Mitchell, Robert L. 2009. Y2K: The good, the bad and the crazy. *ComputerWorld* (28 December, 2009).
2. Retrieved at 02/26/2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/fb9f7b5a-1999-11e9-9e64-d150b3105d21>. The figure also corresponds to the estimated direct cost of climate change in the past decade, see <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-720>
3. Bohm, D. (2002). *Wholeness and the implicate order.* Psychology Press.

4. Kirksey, S. Eben, and Stefan Helmreich. 2010. The emergence of multi-species ethnography. *Cultural anthropology* 25 (4): 545–576.

5. Chao, Sophie. 2018. In the Shadow of the Palm: Dispersed Ontologies among Marind, West Papua. *Cultural Anthropology* 33 (4): 621–649.

6. https://sites.duke.edu/blackatlantic/2014/02/10/am-i-not-a-man-and-a-brother-the-political-power-of-the-image/, accessed 15.07.2020.

7. Winkelman, Michael. 2000. *Shamanism: The neural ecology of consciousness and healing*. Rochester, NY: Greenwood.

8. 'Sensory shifts' in Stroeken (2008).

9. 'Ultero' is a prefix proposed to complete the series 'intero', 'proprio' and 'extero'. Magneto-receptive molecules for magnetosensitivity work exteroceptively, so I do not consider these as proof of an ulteroceptive mode, 'the sixth sense'. https://www.sciencealert.com/all-living-cells-could-have-the-molecular-machinery-for-a-sixth-sense. Bradlaugh, A.A., Fedele, G., Munro, A.L. *et al.* 2023. Essential elements of radical pair magnetosensitivity in *Drosophila*. *Nature* 615, 111–116.

10. About a hunter's ontology and the deer's soul motioning, see further on in this paragraph: Willerslev, R. (2007). *Soul hunters: hunting, animism, and personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs.* University of California Press.

Epilogue: Or 16

The day before deciding to write this chapter, I looked over the shoulder of my teenage son watching his favorite TV program. The episode of *Family Guy* coincidentally reminded me of a personal life-changing event twenty years ago which I had almost forgotten. In the TV episode a tele-portation to a casino in Las Vegas that went wrong sends, in a kind of quantum superposition, two versions of the duo Stewie and Brian, one lucky, the other unlucky. The unlucky Stewie passes a roulette table on his way to buy an ice cream. In his characteristically casual style, he gambles all their strenuously collected money on the number 16 'because of that Taylor Swift song: Sixteen'. The song, Brian drily corrects him, is called 'Fifteen'. The ball on the roulette wheel comes up 15.

Precisely those two numbers had fascinated me and a close friend in 1998, the year preceding the Y2K craze. The numbers gave comfort to two minds in grief after the loss of a mutual friend. In the world of fiction, we could let our imagination run riot. The pair of numbers offered a peek into the real from a place unencumbered by empirical fact. Speculating on forms of pre-ception, we hoped spacetime would give us a sign from beyond. 'Talk to me!': for weekends on end our desperate minds spoke with the words the South African street vendor at Khayelitsha station repeats, carrying loads of parcels of candy, cakes, pencils and the like on his chest and back, which he has a hard time selling among the silent black crowd waiting for a train that never seems to come. My friend and I had obsessively tossed the two numbers about as they appeared again and

again, 'coincidentally' so, in fantastic feats of popular culture at the time. *Twin Peaks*, *Lost Highway*, *The Truman Show*, *The Matrix*. Always the number 16 surfaced. With significance, like the digit '6' dangling behind the digit '1' on a door after the upper nail holding the '9' fell.

Here is why we wanted to be talked to from elsewhere. The following event's location is the illuminated highway network of Belgium renowned in the 1990s for being visible from space.

Friday the 10th of July 1998. My close friend Dirk and I are having an evening drive and we say words we had never spoken before, about readiness to spot a UFO. Coming from Roermond we drive on the well-lit highway to Leuven. Dirk drives his Citroën 2CV slowly as we approach the bridge of Lummen intersecting with a second major highway. On the other side of the bridge the lights are out. We see no cars before or after us, which is fairly strange on a Belgian highway anytime. But up in the rather misty sky in the distance, a set of lit spheres appears. Straight ahead in front of our windshield, the object starts to slowly hover around our car. I peer through each window to follow it and beg Dirk to stop the car to have a look outside since nobody is around. He says he can't. By the time the thing reaches the front again to make full circle, it vanishes. Straight away the lights on the highway are on again. I am both thrilled and afraid.

Back at Dirk's apartment we decide to separately draw what we have seen. The figures are the same. They look like sets of light balls. Spheres. A pentagon of five spheres is enveloped by a larger pentagon demarcated by ten spheres, one at each angle and one in the middle of each side. The total is fifteen spheres. Then we notice a difference between the figures. Dirk saw a lit sphere in the middle too. That makes sixteen. I had not seen the sphere at the center. I wondered why.

A discussion ensued that night, as we imagined some sort of sign had to be interpreted in relation to the death of our mutual friend. In February that year he had died in a ski elevator accident in Cavalese, following a failed illicit stunt of a US fighter pilot hitting the elevator's cable. In the mortuary, standing at our friend's coffin in the company of the other doctoral students and our supervisors, I could come up with nothing better than to audibly whisper a question. I asked him for some sign, about his whereabouts after life, to close a philosophical discussion we had the weekend before he went to ski. Like most students present we were ex-Catholics who had lost their faith after a period of doubt including the inevitable discussion about the hypothesis of a hereafter.

That summer in 1998 the puzzlement of Dirk and me did not subside. So, I found the courage to call the police of Lummen and reported our sighting. (By the way the association with the Latin lumen, *light, had struck us as a funny coincidence. That it also sounded like the subject of many a Saturday night, Luhmann, the impenetrable sociologist Dirk's never-ending doctoral research grappled with was a bonus.) I asked the officer on the phone whether other sightings had been reported. There had not. I wondered aloud whether the object could have been a laser light whose beams were hidden by the mist. He hesitantly replied that a party had been organized nearby. Maybe that was it after all.*

I did not check further. Perhaps I realized that the origin of the lights did not matter. The striking thing had occurred the day after the event. A sort of sign did produce. Not in a perception, but in a calculation. Still dazzled by our encounter with that unidentified hovering bunch of lights, I could not stop pondering the next day whether or not I had seen a light in the middle of the double pentagon. The TV had to distract me. The lottery draw was on. Suddenly came the conviction that the draw would communicate whether the right number was fifteen or sixteen. The strange thing was that I had no doubt in my mind what was going to unfold, indeed like in a pre-ception. After counting the digits of the first pair 7 and 18, which form 16, I knew what the sum of the next pairs would be. The result of the draw on 11 July 1998 can be consulted on the lottery website.[1] *Each of the three subsequent pairs totaled sixteen. 7, 18. 19, 24. 33, 37.*

A very unlikely chain of events indeed. But it did happen.

Years later I discovered that the Italian court had filed our friend as victim number 16.

What are the odds? A colleague, a renowned statistician, recently told me. He did the calculation. The figure was disappointing. I expected an impressively small chance for such event to occur. The probability of those pairs totaling 16 each was 0.0006. One chance out of 1600. The reader may be slightly impressed by the recurrence of 16, but the chance of one gambler out of 1600 guessing right is not a big deal. The improbability does not even come close to the rarity of an event that nonetheless does happen almost every week somewhere in Europe on a Saturday, when future winners of the lottery guess it will be their lucky day.

Yes, one could quarrel with statisticians about the interpretation of the statistic. The probability calculated above pertains to lottery draws organized weekly. Should we not calculate the much less likely probability of someone thinking up the plan of totaling digits in a certain way just as it

happens? That would be like the inventor of the lottery winning the first draw. What are those odds? And how to explain the certainty I felt about doing the math as the draw began? I clearly remember the moment of pre-ception. That certainty of the inventor must be an incredibly improbable occurrence.

The point remains that the population on this planet is so immense, almost each inhabitant so busy speculating about the future, and calculating, that the kind of experience I had was bound to happen somewhere some time to somebody. It just happened to be me. And, on the scale of the universe's existence, a comparable improbability should occur many times over.

The next question is which position I hold dear. If I focus on personal experience, the event looks unique and should be life-changing. I was in tune with spacetime and it gave me a sign in response to my request six months before. Through a number. Hence, our deceased friend on that extraordinary day would have confirmed to us, in presumably the only way the universe permits, the existence of something like a hereafter. The central role of chance, a lottery, is significant in that light.

If I adopt the viewpoint at the macro-level of the network, the event is not exceptional, statistically. The rational conclusion would be to append no conclusion save to warn about the wishful thinking of the previous position. Nonetheless, for all that position's sensational appeal, which admittedly makes it suspicious, final proof to reject it we do not have either. Which position should I choose?

Throughout this book my attempt has not been to make a choice between propositions but to trace their experiential frames whose intimate relation in a sphere of exchange points to a distinct relationship to life. Thus we found out the intimate relation between animism and naturalism, medicine and bewitchment, chiefship and kingship, soccer and American football, rapper and word-police, Democrat and Republican, mirrorist and modelist, individual and collective reason, atomism and holism, among others. Wave and particle are the quantum physicist's equivalent of parallel frames. Frameshift is a dynamic expressed by a tensor. The pattern of 16 my friend and I detected everywhere in popular culture was a simplication, a logos sculpted from viscerally chaotic nomos. It became a simplex when steering our lives, and later again when rejected as a delusion. Avoiding to preclude the alternative is a tensorial exercise. With the emphasis on exercise this time, to add a degree of freedom in thought.

The remedy I proposed throughout the book consists of three steps. It starts with a vector: '16 was no coincidence. The number arrived from somewhere.' The implication is that another species or intelligence managed to enter the moment of contingency, and animated this void by immiting meaning. The opposite vector says: '16 was a coincidence. The number arrived from nowhere.' Pure chance was at work. Inanimate contingency.

The two observers might go on pitting one view against the other. The first could in the name of 'religion', the second in the name of 'science'. Arguments pro and contra will have their gratifying effect, but the effect is fleeting. The investment of effort necessary to influence the other is telling. The vector is not sustainable. In the next step we integrate the alternative position in a matrix. We thus move from simplex (one-layered) to multiplex (multi-layered) meaning. However, do we experience a world of possibility? A contrast between original position and alternative appears. The matrix does not suspend (dis)belief, but chooses. The choice does not differ from the vectorial; it is just contextualized (adding cultural to social analysis). If the matrix lets the two frames exist in parallel, we would have reached an attitude of inclusive (instead of exclusive) disjunctivity. A critical voice may retort that this suspense of belief disempowers by postponing choice. Whether blue or red, you must swallow a pill. Run the program.

The juxtaposition of vectors in a matrix gives the impression of neutrality. In the third step a choice is made, but not by going back to the simplex and mobilize allies to have them demonstrate, threaten, revolt, ride the vector 'science' or 'religion' on every media channel (to harness the energy of a model to fool the collective into the 'right' conduct). The change a simplex energizes can never be more than a hype, the figment of individual reason. To let collective reason speak, we do not return to the vector. We go for a tensor, which opens up the matrix to the sensing of life and the sources of production behind the sphere's frames. Then the embracing of inclusive disjunctivity can actually feel viable and become a choice. It was in my case. I felt that to be a sustainable attitude. I had intra-mediated, verified with myself what the impact could be on life: 'Suppose the event of 16 meant definite proof of a hereafter, how scary might that be. Suppose we knew it could never be proof, how discouraging.'

The Congolese cabdriver prefigured this tensor in his multiplex practice of plural religions for parents and for kids. The Melanesian cloud seer was a guide as well, describing an intersubjective mood rather than an individual's responsibility. Therapists reconciling us to our repressed past share

a similar inclusive-disjunctive attitude. Ethnographers do too, thoroughly altered by the field and therefore able to shift perspective.

In brief, my proposal for us all is to build life-sensing, an intuitive capacity. We can do this through de-simplication, ethnography, intercultural exercise, games of the real, interspecies communication, pre-ceptive experiences, the ritual initiation into tensors, the intuition of collective reason, and more. Hereby we pursue a scientifically spiritual duty. Humans hunger for tensors, whereupon the survival of the species depends. Simplexes, atoms without real, instantly gratify, but are not viable. The five chapters of the first part and the ten of the second part that revolve around it together reassemble this feeling I had when peering over my son's shoulder. A tensor to humanize the system.

Note

1. <https://www.nationale-loterij.be/onze-spelen/lotto/uitslagen-trekking//11-07-1998>

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