THE NOOSPHERE

In the summer 2023, I decided to attend an international seminar organized by David Sloan Wilson (DSW). It was based on Teilhard de Chardin's concept of the Noosphere. It was less the content of the seminar that interested me (I must have read one of Teilhard's books some 50 years ago) than attending a class given by DSW himself that got me to participate. Among the guests invited was also the great Terrence Deacon, the author of *The Symbolic Species*. Both of them have a sense of what collective entities are all about: human communities as a unit of selection in a multilevel account, for DSW, and human communities as organized around the institution of language, for Deacon. Their work continues to inspire mine. As a retired professor, with 30 years of teaching experience, it was nice to become a student once again.

As I understand it, the Noosphere for Teilhard is a sort of universal human consciousness about the constitutive superorganism of humanity as a whole. The geosphere comprises earth and its natural resources. The biosphere includes all the living organisms that we find on the planet. The noosphere is a third level.

The general theme was contained in the title: the science of the noosphere. The idea was to adapt the notion to our times and to provide a scientific basis for it. This scientific outlook would be a third story, in addition to the first, comprising myths and religions, and the second, modern science. The third story would be some kind of synthesis of the other two, that is, a scientific story that gets its inspiration from religious notions, such as those provided by Teilhard.The seminar was a virtual one and took the form of a zoom meeting. Our task was to attend the classes and then write about what we had learned or about some issue to which we would want to raise. We were invited to write different reflections for each of the ten seminars.

During the seminar, different issues were discussed that kept us thinking and that were debated all along during the whole ten weeks. The first one was the relationship between religion and science. Some were attracted to the seminar because of Teilhard's religious orientation, while others were concerned only with the scientific approach. In my third week reflections, I suggested that there must be an ethical component involved in the third story and that it concerns the respect that must take place between religious persons and persons that consider themselves to be naturalists and adopt a scientific outlook. The solution involves the adoption of alethic pluralism, that is the view according to which we must acknowledge the existence of different concepts of truth, or more precisely, acknowledge different uses of the word 'true'.

A second debate was whether in a sense the noosphere already exists or if it is just an ideal that will hopefully be attained one day. My own answer was that, in some sense, the noosphere already exists, and in another sense, does not yet exist. In a sense, we are now more than ever aware of humanity as a whole, as forming an organic whole. The globalization of economy, the globalization of communications and mobility (transportation), climate change and the pandemic have generated a sense of our interdependence in all human beings and human societies. At the same time, and in

another sense, cooperation has not yet been achieved. Cooperation is a necessary condition that must be met if the superorganism of humanity as a whole is to be a truly functional one.

A third debate one that really concerns me. If humanity can be inclusive, it can only be through mutual recognition of our individual and collective differences. You do not recognize a human being if you choose to ignore her gender, her sexual difference, her sexual orientations, her distinct experience as a person of different color, her posture toward religion, her status as immigrant, her distinct nationality, her different language, her distinct capacities. The problem is mostly acute at the collective level. It is easy to fall prey to what Samuel Huntington called the clash of civilizations. It is so easy to entertain Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Russophobia and Sinophobia. Here too, larger societies cannot be more inclusive and form a complex whole if their components fail to recognize each other. We do not overcome these differences by ignoring them. In the reflections I submitted for week tenth, and therefore for my last reflections, I applied the same account concerning the relationship between men and women. To put it simply, I argued that no humanism is possible without feminism.

Another topic that was important for me was the issue of individualism. I devoted one reflection to this issue but it was present throughout our meetings. The universal consciousness cannot be about a superorganism simply composed of 8 billion individuals. For the individual organism that belongs to a person, a similar account would amount to say that that person is simply a compound of billions of cells. If the account is unsatisfactory, it is because these cells are conjoined in multicellular groups which themselves serve to create organs that are functionally organized together. If individual human consciousness applies to our bodies, these must be understood as comprising multiple levels. Similarly, we cannot therefore characterize the noosphere as the universal consciousness of the 8 billion individuals that see themselves as citizens of the world, ignoring the different groups in which they find themselves. This concern was already present in the very first reflection, but it came back later when I discussed the case of indigenous peoples.

Other very important problems were discussed, like for instance, climate change and the relationship between the noosphere and the biosphere and geosphere. Now I think that here too, indigenous peoples play a major role in opening our minds. Their relationship to land is of fundamental importance. For them, land is like an ecological niche, it is an extension of their identity. This is a lesson that must be learned by humanity as a whole.

During all these weeks, I was so surprised to see how many participants wanted to avoid having to talk about actual nation states and, more broadly, peoples. Some have suggested that history is a process that has led us to move from imperialism to nation-states, and that we now have entered an era where networks replace nation states. But what could those networks be if they are not participating in the creation of a 'bottom up' network of peoples. There are 6 000 peoples in the world, including 5000 indigenous peoples. That's quite a network, but the temptation appears to be to engage into NGOs instead of national movements.

Others entertain a view of the noosphere as something that we reach if we engage into a psychological individualistic and subjective experience. By reaching one's inner core, we can according to that view gain direct access to a universal consciousness. It is like a shortcut. This mystical experience must not be discarded. It must be respected, that is, not only tolerated, but also understood and accepted. Still, the hard work comes about at the collective level and it cannot be avoided, at least if we agree along with DSW, that there are social organisms and that they are moral agents. A truly universal consciousness will not occur if this experience allows for antisemitism, islamophobia, Russophobia or Sinophobia to insinuate themselves into our account of the world.

With that in mind, I was surprised to see how for so many, the best illustration of evil was provided by Vladimir Putin. As I often like to say, we are easily tempted to denounce the Russian Bear or the Chinese Panda, but we do not seem to be willing to see the Elephant in the Room. No one in the seminar dared to admit that the USA were not only at the origin of the war in Ukraine, and not only did they do everything to provoke it, they as a matter of fact made it inevitable.

Reaching the Omega point of a full human consciousness at the level of humanity as a whole, is an ideal, a utopia, that cannot be reached if we choose to replace geopolitics by Noopolitics, as some have suggested. Throughout these seminars, I argued in favor of a Rawlsian approach. If our utopia is to gain traction, it must be realist and the way to show some realism is not to escape reality, ignoring geopolitics altogether.

In a way, I can understand that intellectuals and academics living in the USA may want to escape the nation-state. As members of the USA, they belong to an imperialist state whose president is the Commander in Chief. It is a country that has been engaged for so very long into wars, coups d'État and military interventions. Political elites believe in American exceptionalism. The country has 800 military bases in 150 countries. It spends 900 billion dollars each year in the military industrial complex. It has performed military interventions more than one hundred times all over the world since 1991. They have imposed sanctions to more than 40 different countries representing one third of the whole population of the globe. So this is why some may be tempted to take refuge in a state of denial and voluntary decide to ignore the horrors perpetrated by their home country.

In a way, these escape routes perfectly suit the ruling elites. My approach is quite different. Like Leonard Cohen, I « love the country, but I can't stand the scene ». So I concluded my participation to the seminar by adding Cohen's song « Democracy » to the Youtube Science of the Noosphere » playlist. What follows is the entire set of reflections, divided in ten small chapters, published during the seminar.

Michel Seymour, September 19, 2023

Week 1: Social Groups in the Noosphere

What are social groups? Of course, they cannot be defined as mere collections of individuals, for this does not tell us anything about the glue that holds them together into a single entity. We can also question perhaps the idea that the tie that binds them together can be explained by invoking nothing more than a shared psychological collective self-representation and a mutual commitment of the members to act together in accordance with shared goals.

This is the theory embraced by philosophers who attempt to reconstruct, as if we were in a laboratory, how self-sufficient individuals can come together to become members of social groups. Initially present in the work of Georg Simmel, this idea was taken up by Wilfrid Sellars. It is also present in the work of many of the world's leading social group theorists. For them, the essential ingredient involved in a social group is a collective conceptual component present in the minds of individuals. This is true of Raimo Tuomela's ''we-intentions'', of Margaret Gilbert's ''plural subject'', of John Searle's ''collective intentionality'', and of Michael Bratman's and Seumas Miller's accounts. Their idea is that we can form social groups as soon as we entertain in our minds a collective mental representation and a will to act together.

However, one should wonder how these mental concepts got there in the first place. After all, mental notions such as "we-intentions", "plural subject" and "collectivity" don't appear out of nowhere. If we do have them, it is perhaps because we already belong to social groups. It is our objective belonging to these social entities that is responsible for the presence of a collective self-representations occurring in people's minds. Collective self-representations are an important component, but social groups cannot be reduced to these mental states.

Another individualist approach would be to think that the concept of social group is based on the idea of a generalized cooperation taking place among members. According to this view, cooperation explains the tie that binds individuals together. By cooperating together, people tend to form social groups. Here too, however, it is possible to see things quite differently. According to Robert Axelrod, cooperation becomes a stable feature of evolution on the basis of a *tit for tat* strategy when confronted to *repeated* applications of the prisoner's dilemma. The reason why repetition is important is because it becomes irrational to act solely in accordance with one's own interest if one is to encounter the same people all the time. But the fact that one can meet the same people all the time presupposes that we are already part of a social group. And so, cooperation is not what explains the existence of a social group, for it is something that can be generated only within already existing social groups.

Individuals are both autonomous persons and also parts of social groups. These social groups are characterized by collective features such as language, culture, religion and ethnicity.

I just argued that cooperation is something that can be generated if we are in repeated contact with the same persons. This is what happens when we are part of a fairly small group. Conversely, if the group is larger, it will be less probable to repeatedly meet the same persons, and so less probable to secure the stability of cooperation, at least from the standpoint of what counts as rational choice in decision theory. If we consider the 8 000 000 000 individuals that compose the noosphere, it is hard to see how cooperation could take hold. How are we to solve that problem? One way would be to reinstate a variant of the prisoner's dilemma at the level of social groups. If small groups of roughly the same size are bound to stick together, because they are close neighbors and have an advantage to cooperate together, then it can be rationally expected that they will sooner or later find out about these mutual advantages. This, in turn, will create favorable conditions for cooperation between individuals belonging to these two different groups. One can easily imagine how this could go on and on, constantly enlarging the circle of groups that can find a mutual interest in cooperation.

But why can't we enlarge the members, above those present in the initial group, by including new individual outsiders, without considering the groups to which they belong? I believe that the inclusion of new members will be difficult if we do not respect their cultural differences. As I said before, individuals are both autonomous persons and also parts of social groups. Their group need not be treated as valuable, but it certainly deserves respect. Now it is going to be difficult to engage with someone into cooperation if we are disrespectful of some aspect of that person's identity. Recognizing the distinctive features of another social group appears then to be a necessary condition for the recognition of new human beings outside of the initial group. To put it in different terms, it means that we have to adopt 'politics of difference'.

Hence, we must avoid an individualistic conception of the Noosphere. There is no direct route from our individual conscience to the universal conscience of global humanity, because our existence in this world is in part mediated by our presence in social groups. Just as a musician can all at once be an autonomous individual able to play an instrument with a certain amount of virtuosity and, at the same, be just a part of an orchestra, human beings can all at once be individuals and be parts of social groups. We have no choice. The access to the Noosphere can only be incremental and social groups play a major role in the enlargement of the cooperating population.

What are those social groups? They are not only the 193 peoples organized into sovereign states. There are 6 000 peoples, including 5000 indigenous peoples. Cultural diversity is an asset like biodiversity or a diversified economy. The only way to seek for unity is through diversity. Can we promote the idea of blending cultures together, or 'coalesce' cultures into a single one? If 'coalescence' means 'fusion', this is certainly a problem. At the level of cultures, most of the time, if not all the time, fusion amounts to assimilation. We can of course favor the construction of federations of peoples, but politics of difference requires us to respect the internal self-determination of constitutive peoples.

Some will still react negatively to the idea that social groups should be considered as among the basic units in the noosphere. The problem that they see is that the noosphere should bring together entities that have something in common, a common humanity, while nations mark differences, not similarities. Although we have a common humanity, we are different by being parts of different cultures, languages, historical trajectories, religions and ethnicities. But the converse is also true. There are several differences at the level of individuals: sex, gender, sexual orientation, capacities, talents, interests, beliefs, values, interests and goals, while social groups have similarities. They are all institutionalized linguistic groups forming 'societal cultures' (Will Kymlicka), or 'social unions of social unions' (John Rawls). So it is false to suggest that we are individually the same and that we only differ because of our nationality or cultural group. We must then perhaps recognize our differences as persons and as peoples in order to be able to recognize each other, as being in some sense the same.

Another question concerns the nature of the cultural features to be recognized. To put it bluntly, some cultural features are despicable and must be denounced, not recognized. Patriarchy, apartheid, colonialism, nazism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, homophobia, chauvinism and various forms of oppressive regimes might be part of someone's culture, but they certainly cannot be features that we should recognize. We can however distinguish, along with Will Kymlicka (*Liberalism, Community and Culture*, pp. 166-168) between the character of culture and the structure of culture. The structure of culture relates to the language of the group, to the institutions in which it is mostly spoken and to the historical trajectory of these institutions. The character of culture, on the other hand, relates to the particular myths, narratives, beliefs, values, norms, customs, goals and traditions of the group. The structure and character are two very distinct forms of cultural particularism. Recognizing a distinct culture should amount to no more than respecting its structure of culture, and not necessarily its character.

Another immediate worry is the possibility that the collective entity could oppress its individual members. We must therefore denounce any view that purports to assert the supremacy of the collectives over individuals. Autocratic regimes must not be favorably considered. Is it possible to recognize the fundamental rights of social groups and at the same time defend individual liberties? Consider the philosopher John Rawls. He is famous in the Anglo-American world for his contributions to political philosophy (*Theory of Justice* 1971, and *Political Liberalism* 1993). He is recognized by the vast majority of political philosophers as the most important advocate of political liberalism. Hundreds of articles and dozens of books have referred to his work and thousands of authors have been influenced by his ideas. As a liberal philosopher, he provides strong arguments in favor of regimes in which fundamental citizen's rights and freedoms are guaranteed. And yet, at the same time, he considers peoples, understood as societies, to be moral agents and autonomous sources of valid moral claims (*The Law of Peoples* 1999). So it appears possible to take into considerations the rights of peoples without oppressing individual citizens.

Week 2: Major Evolutionary *Linguistic* Transitions

The classic cultural view of the origin of language assumes that it appeared around 50,000 years ago, at the same time as the great cultural revolution of that era. In contrast, those who assert the existence of an innate language faculty appeal only to the theory of natural selection, and postulate the existence in the brain of a language organ (a syntactic engine) comparable to the eye (Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*). This requires a process spanning several million years. Terrence Deacon opposes both approaches. In *The Symbolic Species*, he argues for the co-adaptation of language and brain. On the one hand, the brain is increasingly adapted to language, but language is also increasingly adapted to the brain.

More precisely, according to Deacon, language first had a cultural origin and it is symbolic in nature. Unlike icons (a picture, for example), symbols do not resemble the thing represented. And unlike indices, symbols can signify things absent from context. Symbolism first appears in rituals. So, for example, by symbolizing the union between a man and a woman in a ritual, we can explain how a society can be characterized by sexual competition, division of labor and monogamy. These three societal traits can coexist if, although often physically distant from each other, man and woman remain symbolically together. "Symbolic culture was a response to a reproductive problem that only symbols could solve: the imperative of representing a social contract. (*The Symbolic Species*, p. 401) On the other hand, since brain development is much slower than cultural development, it took two million years for the brain to adapt to language. When it is understood in terms of symbolic rituals, we can say that language began two million years ago.

I'd like to focus on the issue of temporal sequence and reflect on Deacon's claim that language has such a distant origin. After all, by his own admission, our brains don't differ much from those of chimpanzees. We are also very flexible (brain plasticity). Perhaps it's the protolanguage that goes back two million years. Perhaps the group was subjected to enormous external influences that helped speeding things up. In short, the emergence of language could perhaps be more recent.

To understand Deacon's position, we need to invoke the symbolic sphere, understood as having a ritualized form. Other species may master icons and indices, but only humans master symbols. Deacon writes: "...I do suggest that the first use of symbolic reference by some distant ancestors changed how natural selection processes have affected hominid brain evolution ever since." (*The Symbolic Species*, p.322) Just as beavers' creation of dams subsequently modified them to become aquatic beings, "symbol use itself must have been the prime mover for the prefrontalization of the brain in hominid evolution." (*The Symbolic Species*, p. 336).

Why does the dividing line between language and non-language lie in the symbol? For Deacon, the symbol is important insofar as it involves an important cognitive leap for the brain. When the perspective adopted is that of the brain, the symbol is the place where language appears. However, some could also want to adopt the perspective of the group and claim that the imperative of social cohesion is what played a crucial role in the creation of language.

We were then already deeply involved in fierce inter-group competition. Some groups would even run the risk of being eradicated by others. The pressure was enormous for the weaker group to ensure maximum cohesion among its members. It had an interest in ensuring that everyone is endowed with an effective means of communication that is easy to produce and learn. Among all the symbolic 'memes' available, gesture, song and dance could have been good candidates. But phonemes were by far the most effective. They are the easiest to produce, the easiest to reproduce, and the most likely to spread throughout the entire group. Whereas rituals of dance, song and gesture are often performed by a sub-group and accomplished only occasionally and only for a short period of time, phonemes can be produced at any time by everyone and be used indefinitely. They have a greater fidelity by virtue of being made up of discreet expressions, as opposed to the continuous sound of a song. They have more fecondity in the sense that they can be heard over and above immediate visual presence, and thus superior to gesture. Last but not least, they are also longer-lasting because they are easier to memorize than a dance performance. In *The Meme Machine*, Susan Blackmore writes:

"If the theory is right then human grammar should show signs of having been designed for transmitting memes with high fecundity, fidelity, and longevity, rather than to convey information about some particular topic such as hunting, foraging or the symbolic representation of social contracts." (p. 105)

Thanks to the greater fidelity, fecundity and longevity of phonemes, they could be used by everyone at all times. From the point of view of maintaining social cohesion, this is a major advantage. Memetic theory is plagued by a thousand problems that make it ineffective in explaining many cultural phenomena, but it can be useful in accounting for the important transition from symbol to phoneme. From the perspective of the group, it may thus be tempting to locate the creation of language only when the group as a whole was able to use phonemes on a regular basis. This might have happened more recently than two million years ago.

Others, however, take the view that language arises only with the emergence of a language faculty.

How did our syntactic (and phonological) skills come into being? If the only way to account for the occurrence of innate abilities is to start from actual linguistic practices, and if it is impossible to infer deep syntactic categories just by being confronted with the surface syntax of actual utterances, knowledge of syntactic categories will have to be derived from another source. Innate syntactic abilities could then have a semantic origin. Derek Bickerton, for example, argues that the thematic roles of Agents, Themes and Goals, as they occur in the social intelligence deployed in protolinguistic coalitions, are responsible for the acquisition of syntactic skills. (Bickerton, "How Protolanguage became language", Chris Knight et al (eds), *The Evolutionary Emergence of Language*, Cambridge U. P., pp. 264-284; see p. 269. See also (with William Calvin), *Lingua ex Machina*, MIT Press, 2000, chapters 10 and 11.)

Whereas Deacon locates the origin of language in the very first symbols, and Blackmore's group-oriented perspective locates its origin in the occurrences of phonemes used by all, symbols and phonemes are for Bickerton only protolanguages. The thesis of the semantic origin of innate syntactic ability nevertheless forces Bickerton to accept Deacon's central proposition: "The remarkable expansion of the brain that took place in human evolution, and indirectly produced prefrontal expansion, was not the cause of symbolic language but a consequence of it". (*The Symbolic Species*, p. 340)

Despite the important differences between Deacon, Blackmore and Bickerton's three approaches, they all reject the idea of postulating a sudden macro mutation caused by a catastrophe. They can also admit that our language adaptations are exaptations carried out on already existing skills. ("How Protolanguage became language", p. 277; *The Symbolic Species* pp. 322-334).

A unified perspective could then allow us to see the evolution of language as characterized by a Gouldian punctuated equilibrium, understood as a continuum in which on various occasions, rapid major transitions take place. Symbolic rituals may have appeared two million years ago. Protolanguage phonemes spread throughout the population may have appeared much later, while syntactic skills may have emerged even more recently (followed by written and now digitized languages).

The word 'language' has many different uses in different language games, depending on whether the perspective adopted is that of the brain, the group or the emergence of an innate faculty. Taken together, these approaches perhaps allow us to consider a unified perspective. The genetic assimilation of language would then be an adaptation of the individuals to the group, enabling them to function in a social and cultural ecological niche at the heart of which lies the institution of language.

Week 3: The Ethical Component of the Third Story

If the First story refers to « worldviews rooted in myth and ritual prevailing before the scientific revolution » and the Second Story involves worldviews « built on deterministic laws, a random universe, and the ideal of technological control from the scientific revolution to the present », the Third Story, yet to be told, attempts to develop « worldviews combining the First Story's sense of purpose with the universalizable applications and laws of the Second Story ». If the plural applies to the « worldviews » even in the Third Story, it is perhaps because there may be different ways of combining the First and Second ones.

David Sloan Wilson offers one way of combining the two initial stories together. He fully endorses a rigorously scientific adaptation of the Teilhard de Chardin's Noosphere, and adopts religion, as defined by Émile Durkheim, as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden–beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."

Unfortunately, if science and religion can be coherently entertained, they are also regularly opposed to each other. Is there another way to achieve harmony between science and religion? In his monumental book entitled *The Secular Age*, Charles Taylor illustrates in a second way how science and religion can be harmonized. His perspective is one that stems from what he considers to be the experience of Western modernity. The passage from the medieval period to modernity in the West is for him characterized by the fact that religion no longer is the unique frame of reference for understanding the world. It becomes only one option among others, but Taylor also believes that it is still an option that we must not neglect. His main idea is that we have to accept the plurality of worldviews, because they are all at best *interpretations* of reality.

In so doing, Taylor adopts the standpoint of 'philosophical hermeneutics.' Hermeneutics used to be understood as the interpretation (exegesis) of biblical (sacred) texts. Then, under the impetus of Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Schleiermacher, it was transformed into a general theory of interpretation. Finally, it became 'philosophical hermeneutics' through the influence of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Those who subscribe to philosophical hermeneutics use the concept of interpretation as a foundational or metatheoretical notion. According to this account, worldviews are just interpretations. Personal identity itself can be understood in terms of the concept of interpretation. According to Taylor, human beings are 'self-interpreting animals.' In other words, interpretation becomes a way of organizing reality as a whole. Taylor insists that this is at least the way we now think within the Modern Western world.

If scientists and religious people can live in harmony, it is because they all understand the fragility of their respective worldviews.

If we authentically accept modernity in the Western world, we must according to Taylor see that our own worldview is possibly false, since it is only an interpretation. Religious persons must be assailed by doubt. They must constantly think that the naturalist approach could be the right one. Conversely, naturalists must also be haunted by the possibility that they are missing something about their relationship to the world. It is perhaps something that religious persons are able to experience. In both cases, the worldviews may be subjected to revision and doubt.

All this is fine, but we also have to acknowledge the fact that the relationship between science and religion is not always so harmonious, even within modern western societies. At one end of the spectrum, we find people who are critical of science and whose lives are entirely determined by a religious framework, postulating the existence of a supranatural being. At the other end, there are those for whom the scientific outlook is the only game in town. Fallibilism may be an essential component of their scientific practice, but religious worldviews are not ones that they could possibly endorse. How can these two opposite worldviews, located at both ends of the spectrum, learn to live side by side and be able to respect each other? Is there a third way to harmonize science and religion?

I believe that the solution to this problem lies in the adoption of 'alethic pluralism', that is, the view according to which there are many different substantial concepts of truth, each having a purported domain of application. The first concept of truth is the most common one. It is truth as correspondence to empirical facts (scientific truth). Another concept of truth is metaphysical truth, which involves a different type of correspondence, since it entails an unfalsifiable connection with a suprasensible reality. According to this second concept, a theory could be false even if it were respecting all canons of rigorous science: repeatedly confirmed, never confronted to recalcitrant facts and having a very high predictive capacity. This is a concept that Hilary Putnam wanted to refute (as a consequence of adopting the Löwenheim-Skolem theorem) in favor of the more pragmatic concept of an 'ideal warranted assertability.' A third concept of truth is present in Taylor's argument. It is the concept of truth as authenticity, understood by Heidegger as referring to the presocratic '*aletheia*', or unveiling. It is a concept that could be used in psychoanalysis, supposing a constant process of self-discovery. It should not be confused with the idea of achieving an empirical adequation with oneself, because it involves an indefinite continuous process and, most importantly, because it is one for which, at any time in this process, all we have is a particular interpretation, or experience of the world. Truth understood as consensus, as developed by Richard Rorty, is yet another concept coming from the presocratic tradition, meaning *doxa* (opinion) accepted by the group. If we tend to reject this concept, it is according to Rorty because we do not realize that our opposition to a given consensus is based on the intuition that a better consensus is available. There is also truth understood as coherence. It is a concept that we are tempted to endorse if we think that a basic requirement for science involves the capacity to synthesize different theories together, as if they were different pieces of a puzzle. Finally, there could be an anti-realist concept of truth, understood as proof.

As argued by Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the meaning of a word is in general provided by the variety of its uses in different language games, expressing different forms of life. This idea applies to the word 'truth'. The word has many different uses; hence the different concepts of 'truth'. By the way, this is not relativism, for each substantial concept of truth has its own domain of application. We are thus not suggesting that what appears to be true with one concept of truth in a given context of application may turn out to be false if we adopt another acceptable concept of truth in the same context. One must not confuse Wittgenstein's pluralism with relativism.

For instance, truth as correspondence applies to natural sciences, while metaphysical truth applies to a realm of transcendence (Greek Gods or Allah in Islam). The use of 'truth' as *aletheia* may, as already suggested, be relevant for psychoanalysis, or useful in art (as suggested by Heidegger in 'The origin of the Work of Art' where Van Gogh's painting of a pair of shoes is described as unveiling the experience of peasantry), or as in Charles Taylor's account of religious and scientific worldviews, since they are nothing more than different experiences within the modern western tradition. Finally, truth as consensus would be useful for saying that 'true' norms require the democratic support of the population.

How is all of this related to, and relevant for, the ethics of mutual respect between religious and non-religious groups? For those who see scientific and religious worldviews as providing nothing more than two different interpretations of the world, and use the term 'true' as *aletheia*, the harmony appears to be possible. But what the relationship between about hardcore scientific naturalists and those who are overwhelmed by the idea of an existing suprasensible Being? Can these two groups do anything more than tolerate each other? If they are to see themselves as sharing the same status of citizens of the world, they must show respect for each other. In addition to toleration, they thus must show understanding and acceptance.

This is where alethic pluralism comes into play. Hardcore scientists may understand the concept of metaphysical truth even if they believe that it has no domain of application. They will still be in a position to understand and accept the form of life expressed in such a language game. Even if they do not for a second entertain doubts about their own naturalistic worldview, they will also be in a position to respect those who see religion as the provisional result of a process of self-discovery. Believers are not people who simply intellectually endorse propositions that are unfalsifiable, and thus 'untrue'. Faith is for some an overwhelming 'true' emotional experience that must not be confused with the cognitive endorsement of certain propositional contents. In short, the different uses of the word 'truth', occurring in different language games, express different forms of life understood as differentiated identities. There is no hope to have access to an encompassing universal group if we do not recognize subgroups. We gain access to the noosphere not by avoiding subgroup identities, but by recognizing them. This is a first ethical step in the direction of an inclusive noosphere.

Week 4: Competing Ideas in the Noosphere

Many evolutionary biologists think that some of the principles governing the natural world can be extended to the cultural world. I believe that they are right. However, it is not as though we were left at that level with mere speculative explorations. Competition and cooperation have been taking place at the cultural level in the realm of ideas for quite some time; namely in political theories, ever since Plato.

Early in the 1970s, utilitarianism was accepted by almost everyone. This is the view according to which justice should be defined as the maximization of well-being, that is, as the promotion of anything that creates an outcome involving the production of the greatest good for the greatest number. The problem with this view of distributive justice is that it is compatible with an increase in the gap between the rich and poor. This is what happens if the poor increases her revenues just a little and the rich enriches herself quite a lot. Utilitarianism is also presupposed by those who believe that we achieve the maximization of well-being within society as a whole if each one of us pursues her own individual well-being. This is the doctrine of the Invisible hand. Utilitarianism is also presupposed by those who have suggested that the richest in society contribute to the well-being of the poor. This is the trickle-down theory of economics. Most people nowadays reject the doctrine of the invisible hand and the trickle-down theory of economics. But what about utilitarianism?

In 1971, John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice*, a book in which he developed a very sophisticated argument against utilitarianism. This work has had a tremendous impact in Anglo-American political philosophy, and eventually, all over the world. Here is the argument in a nutshell. He relies on our self-representations, as having a sense of justice and as being rational. If we do have these self-representations, we should then accept the method of the veil of ignorance. Having a sense of justice entails that we think we are able to determine what is just independently of our interests, revenues, social class, etc. So we can accept the veil. Representing ourselves as rational means that, ignoring who we are under the veil, we want to have anything that a rational person would want to have. Under those circumstances, knowing that utilitarianism may increase the gap between the rich and the poor and thinking that one might perhaps be among those who are left behind, the rational person will reject utilitarianism. Accepting it would require a radical form of altruism. Rawls thinks that we can at best presuppose a society conceived as a system of cooperation for our mutual advantage. This is already quite an idealization and Rawls is perfectly aware of it, but cooperation may take hold in small societies where individuals may find themselves repeatedly confronted to one another. In such societies, cooperation is the most rational thing to do. He presupposes reciprocal altruism, as conceived by Robert Axelrod.

The reflection under the veil of ignorance takes into account the fact that the individuals are members of a single society whose basic structure determines the distribution of goods in its various basic institutions (social, cultural, economic). The basic structure is the primary object of a theory of justice because it determines our roles, our hopes and our social class at a very young age.

The reflections under the veil of ignorance lead one to adopt the following two fundamental principles of justice: (I) (a) a principle asserting the fundamental character of civic or negative liberties (freedom of expression, association, conscience, thought, etc.), illustrative of the freedom of the Moderns, and of (I) (b) political or positive liberties (responsibility to vote, participative democracy, deliberative democracy), illustrative of the freedom of the Ancients; (II) (a) a principle asserting the equality of opportunities for all (for example, free tuition fees), along with a corollary (II) (b) principle of difference (a maximin principle seeking to reduce as much as possible the differences between the rich and poor). These are the principles that one would be inclined to endorse if one reflected rationally on anyone's interests under the veil of ignorance. It is interesting to note that these principles are applicable to both capitalist and socialist societies. The right to property is recognized, but not the right to the property of the means of production. In a capitalist society, the application of the above principles of justice would yield a 'property owning democracy' (for example, most companies would be functioning as cooperatives). In a socialist society, the same principles would yield 'liberal socialism'.

Rawls's theory of justice is more than ever relevant nowadays, because we experience a very high concentration of capital, means of production and decision centers opposing the 1% to 99% of the rest of society. If we all agree on the two principles of justice, an interventionist state will be entitled to enforce the two principles. Rawls is therefore opposed to Robert Nozick's neo-liberal libertarianism. The libertarian believes that someone who has talents, is able to innovate and owns a company is entitled to be the main beneficiary of the profits generated by the company. This flies in the face of the fundamental interdependence of people within society.

To secure the stability of the different principles of justice, the agreement reached must not be just a *modus vivendi*. The whole population must be sincerely convinced by the principles. To secure even more the stability of the principles, we must to impose a condition of publicity (or transparency) such that everybody knows that everybody endorses the principles.

Another fascinating aspect of Rawls's theory of justice is the application of a second veil of ignorance at the level of peoples as a whole (*The Law of Peoples*, 1999). For him, peoples are moral agents and thus important autonomous sources of valid moral claims. They are institutionally organized social organisms. Like individual citizens, peoples have rights and obligations. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this breakthrough. Liberalism is in general associated with moral individualism, but in his late works, Rawls insists on trying to formulate a version of liberalism which is disengaged from the moral individualism of Emmanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. (*Political Liberalism*, 1993) This is what allows him to account for the moral collective rights of peoples (to independence, self-determination, secession and federalization), in addition to the moral individual rights of persons.

When Rawls wrote *The Law of Peoples*, he did not believe in the existence of a global basic structure for the society of peoples, similar to the basic structure of a single society present for individual citizens. This is understandable, because even if the globalization was already under way at the beginning of the 20th century, it has expanded rapidly at the turn of the 21st century. The interdependence of all peoples has also dramatically increased with climate change and the pandemic. We can thus now safely say that there exists a global basic structure present at the heart of the society of all peoples. Since according to Rawls there was not a global basic structure, he did not consider the application of an international difference principle similar to the one advocated at the level of single liberal democratic societies. Therefore, from the point of view of distributive justice, *The Law of Peoples* is a disappointing work. But it is still a very important book, not only because peoples are treated as moral agents, but also because Rawls argues that it is possible for liberal societies to agree on a set of basic principles with non-democratic societies, which he calls «decent hierarchical societies», as long as they accept some core liberal values (negative liberties). The work may be appreciated from the point of view of politics of recognition and may perhaps be interpreted as a response to his colleague Samuel Huntington who argued that Western Societies were facing a 'clash of civilizations', especially with China and the Muslim world. Rawls had written an article also entitled "The Law of Peoples" in 1993. All the main ideas of the book were already there, but he had not given an example of a decent hierarchical society. In the 1999 book, he suggests that a good example would be an imaginary Muslim society named 'Kazanistan'. Arguing that a dialogue and a consensus may be reached with Muslim societies, it is tempting to believe that he was reacting to Huntington.

One final problem should be raised. As I already alluded to, Rawls describes society as a system of cooperation for mutual advantage. However, this is in large part an idealization, especially if we consider diverse identities such as #metoo, #blacklivesmatter, LGBTQ, indigenous peoples, disabled people, immigrant groups, etc. Rawls's social contract may fail in this regard and can be interpreted as a « sexual contract » (Carole Pateman), as a « racial contract » (Charles Mills) or as a colonial contract (Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks*). Rawls is well aware of the fact that seeing society as a system of cooperation is at best an idealization. He acknowledges that his principles of justice should be preceded by an even more basic principle: « … the first principle covering the equal basic rights and liberties may easily be preceded by a lexically prior principle requiring that citizens' basic needs be met. Certainly, any such principle must be assumed in applying the first principle. » *Political Liberalism*, p. 7)

If this more fundamental principle was not formulated in *Theory of Justice* or in *Political Liberalism* under the veil, it is perhaps because the fundamental traits of the person did not include a sense of empathy. We do not see ourselves only as rational and as having a sense of justice, but also as having (feminine!) empathy. With such a sentiment, we can more easily put ourselves in the shoes of persons and peoples and their differentiated identities.

Week 5: Indigenous Peoples as part of the Noosphere

Recognizing differentiated identities is a necessary condition for establishing cooperation at the level of the Noosphere. We must not just be inclusive of this diversity, we must do more. There won't be cooperation if we do not recognize our differences, that is, respect each other, which means to understand and accept and not only to tolerate.

A first way to bring about universal cooperation would have been to sign the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural expressions*. 148 countries signed the Convention. There were only two states opposed: the USA and Israel. Similarly, enshrined in the constitution of existing sovereign states, there should also be recognition of the collective rights of component minority peoples.

Some might want to justify the failure to recognize indigenous peoples by arguing that, even if cultural evolution is not linear, we nevertheless have evolved from 'tribes' or 'ethnic groups' to 'modern nation states.' Unfortunately, this claim does not bring us closer to the Noosphere, for it suggests that the only acceptable collective entities are the 193 nations present at the UN. What brings us closer to the Noosphere is the *UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples* (UNDRIP) adopted in 2007. Unfortunately, out of the 'five eyes', four members (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) were initially reluctant to endorse the Declaration. Ultimately, they did accept it but since it is only a declaration, they do not consider it as legally binding.

Canada has adopted Bill C-15 in which the *Declaration* becomes legally binding, but as a law and not as part of the constitution. This is also a major defect, according to the indigenous constitutionalist Russell Diabo. Indeed, article 2 of C-15 stipulates that the law must comply with the Canadian constitution and thus be applied in accordance with article 35 of the constitution in which it is asserted that indigenous peoples have ancestral rights or rights determined by treaties. Now since C-15 must comply with article 35, this means that the treaties cannot be reopened. The provisions of the *Declaration* stipulating that no economic development can take place on indigenous lands without their prior, free and informed consent, cannot be used against those treaties that were imposed by force in the 1870s.

Furthermore, the four reluctant countries refuse to interpret these clauses of UNDRIP (art. 19, 32) concerning consent as implying the existence of a veto that could be used by indigenous peoples. For these governments, these articles merely impose an obligation to consult indigenous peoples. So if after being freely informed prior to a project, indigenous representatives still reject it, the government will consider this consultation sufficient for going forward. This is actually what happened to the Wet'suwet'en indigenous community in British Columbia. The Transmountain pipeline project, formerly undertaken by Kinder Morgan and now by the federal government, and the Trans Canada Energy's Coastal Gaslink pipeline project are currently underway despite their rejection by the five hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en community.

The Noosphere must be a social 'union of social unions' (to use John Rawls's phrase). It must not be an attempt to blend different cultural groups into a unique encompassing syncretic cultural group. Peoples always appropriate features belonging to other groups, but they nevertheless remain different from one another. A unipolar world governed by a single government that would not recognize its component differentiated identities is the opposite of a Noosphere. It is imperialism.

There are great cities inclusive of many different cultures around the world. But if we mention only New York, London and Los Angeles, adding perhaps Singapore, what we have is not the Noosphere, but rather the Anglosphere. One does not become cosmopolitan simply by travelling to the US, Canada, the UK, New Zealand and Australia. The Noosphere should not be an entity with five eyes. There are 6000 eyes.

Recognizing the collective rights of all 6000 peoples in the world, including the 5000 indigenous peoples (and in particular the more than 500 ones living in the USA), is a necessary condition for learning from them and eventually be influenced and transformed by them. Indigenous peoples see their territories as ecological niches that extend their identities. If they have legal rights over these territories, it is not because of an existing external land ownership, understood as a Lockean right to a private property. Their legal rights are justified by the fact that their environment is an ecological niche which is part of their identity. This view is stated everywhere in the indigenous literature. We can find it in the works of Taiaiake Alfred, Isabel Altamirano, Robert Ardrey, John Burrows, Vine Deloria, Walter R. Echo-Hawk, Pamela Palmater and Georges Sioui. It has been claimed by Tyson Yunkaporta. It is also the view expressed in the report of the Canadian *Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples*. That is why, according to the UNDRIP, indigenous peoples have the right to "maintain and strengthen their spiritual relationship with the lands, territories, waters and coastal seas which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used". (UNDRIP, art. 25) We must oppose the doctrine of *Terra Nullius* which supposes that territories belong to no one, as well as the neoliberal idea that they belong to everyone. Peoples have collective rights over their territories.

By recognizing indigenous peoples, we are in a good position to learn from them. Recognition is essential to achieve cultural appropriation. It is not simply a ladder that can be pushed aside after having reached that knowledge. The fact that something is a means to an end does not imply that it has merely an instrumental value. (The arms of someone are *essential* means for having hands!) It is tempting to do as the Canadian government tried to do in 1969 with its White Paper developing a *color blind* policy toward indigenous individuals. As Glen Coulthard writes, "...the White Paper attempted to suppress the collective, aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal nations by appealing to the logic of individual equality. In this case, formal and legal equality was to be used as a cannonball to pulverize Aboriginal and treaty rights, with the state proposing to unilaterally enfranchise Aboriginal people as Canadian citizens. "

We can learn from indigenous peoples the fact that peoples belong to the territories they occupy. What else can we retain from them? Many other things. In their important book, *The Dawn of Everything*, David Graeber and David Wengrow recall that The Baron of Lahontan visited the native communities of the Americas and learned important lessons from his exchanges with Kondiaronk, the great Wendat chief and intellectual. Kondiaronk was the native chief who signed the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 and it is in his honor that the Belvedere on top of Montreal's Mont-Royal Mountain was named. Lahontan was an associate of Frontenac, Governor of New France, and Kondiaronk was regularly invited to debate various subjects with them. It is these exchanges with Kondiaronk that have been recorded in the *Dialogues avec un sauvage*. In these, the indigenous intellectual talks about equality between men and women, the absence of political hierarchy and the social control measures against free-riders. The popularity of the *Dialogues*, translated into English, Italian, Dutch and German, then reprinted over a hundred years, engendered a style frequently taken up by Enlightenment authors. Graeber and Wengrow write:

"Most remarkably, almost all the great figures of the Enlightenment tried their hand at the style of social criticism popularized by Lahontan, and set about analyzing their own society through the medium of a fictional stranger. Montesquieu chose a Persian, the Marquis d'Argens a Chinaman, Diderot a Tahitian, Chateaubriand a Natchez, while Voltaire's Ingénu was half Wendat, half French. "

According to the authors, we can safely conclude that Kondiaronk's intellectual stature and oratorical skills partly inspired Europe's Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is at the heart of the Enlightment. It is not only a European invention, but to a large extent also a native one.

I wish to mention another important lesson. Given their conception of territory, the indigenous peoples of British Columbia, North Dakota, central United States, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, etc. are at the forefront of the battle against climate change. Some ask why we should focus on the collective rights of peoples, when global warming is so much more important. In response, we can quote Maria Luisa Mendonça, director of the Network for Social Justice and Human Rights in Brazil and a visiting scholar at the City University of New York (in an interview with Amy Goodman at *Democracy Now*):

"Brazil's indigenous communities are very well organized and are asking the international community to pay attention and continue to monitor the situation. We have also seen, for example, a recent UN report stating that industrial agriculture is one of the main causes of climate change, and that one of the ways to prevent this is to protect indigenous communities, who have been protecting the land for many generations. Climate change and the protection of indigenous communities are therefore key factors in tackling the crisis we face today."

The Noosphere must not include and recognize only the citizens of the world. It must also include and recognize all the peoples of the world.

Week 6: Peoples in the Noosphere

How can we get everyone to embrace and share a universal sense of belonging to the world? One of main part of the discussion on this issue between Peter Turchin and David Ronfeldt centered around the debate between noöpolitics and geopolitics. It is a debate that opposes utopians and realists. I would suggest considering John Rawls who attempts to formulate a 'realist utopia'.

The discussion we had focused at one point on the vocabulary. Some expressed concern about the very word « noöpolitics » as being too 'academic' and not in touch with ordinary citizens. It is argued that it is perhaps not very realist to expect that notion to gain traction among the population. Again, we experience here the tension between idealism and realism. As I see it, the problem goes well beyond the choice of vocabulary. The problem is not that we make use of complex terminologies. As Turchin noted, we in the academia are eager to see some of our ideas penetrate society with less technical and abstract terms. I think the ultimate problem concerns the different kinds of things we intend to refer to, and not the terms that we use in order to refer to them.

How do we elevate ourselves to the noosphere? What are the building blocks on the basis of which we can reach the top of the pyramid? We tend to oppose states and tribes and consider them as two potential candidates. In geopolitics where realism is the dominant view, states seem to be the only good candidates. If we prefer utopia, we shall do everything to circumvent state powers. We will welcome tribes, NGOs and various other networks that develop themselves below and beyond the states.

The utopian realist reacts in a different way. What we call states are actually nation-states, that is, peoples that have achieved political sovereignty. What we call tribes are actually other sorts of peoples, that is, substate collective entities that do not have a state. No matter whether these groups have a state or not, these are all peoples.

In international law, we tend to use the word 'people' to refer to those ethnic collective entities, independently of their political status. When we refer to the peoples that do have a state, we use the term 'nation'. The problem with this strict terminology is that it creates an artificial divide between two sorts of collective entities: peoples and nations. In opposition to this, we could want to say that whether they have a state or not, they are all nations. The word 'nation' is in all cases used to refer to an institutionally organized people whether these institutions include sovereign states or not. Peoples may be institutionally organized into sovereign states, while other peoples could be institutionally organized with other kinds of institutions (language, history, culture, traditions, religion, rituals, ceremonies, flag, and sometimes non sovereign government, etc.). From the tribe to the nation-state, there is a continuum of nations understood as institutionalized peoples.

International law reflects the will of nation-states and this is why it sharply distinguishes between peoples and nations, and it is as though peoples were less than nations. The distinction is also artificial because we often describe indigenous peoples as forming nations, while the populations of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc., are also often described as peoples. So we can interchangeably use the two terms to refer to the same thing. The word 'nation' is like a coin, that is, it has two sides: a population (people) and its institutional organization.

The building blocks that intervene between the individual citizens and the noosphere are the 6000 peoples that compose the world. These include 5000 indigenous peoples. Some peoples may find themselves on the same territory and integrated within a larger group, a larger people. This is possible because we may have multiple identities. An immigrant may still feel part of her country of origin while also embracing her new welcoming community. Someone may have many nationalities, that is, many passports. And more to the point, a citizen may be all at once part of the Navajo people and, as an American citizen, part of the American people. Saying this does not mean that the Navajo people is itself part of the American people. It would be incorrect to compare this situation to Russian nesting dolls. The correct comparison would be the relationship between a certain number of members within the Dead Poet Society (DPS) that would remain part of the larger group, after having formed the Living Poet Society (LPS). Even if all the members of LPS are part of DPS, LPS is not part of DPS.

If it sounds problematic to introduce an entire new vocabulary in order to refer to the entire population of the globe, it is perhaps because we do not take into consideration the already existing groups. We seem to hesitate to talk about peoples or nations. Unfortunately, we cannot escape that reality. It is revealed in international sports, especially during the Olympics, and it is also present in geopolitics. Our utopia is not realist if it is not grounded at least partly in the reality of all peoples. This is because for the vast majority of individuals living in the world, they have a special connection to a collective entity, their nation. If we ask Italians, Canadians, Nigerians, Russians, Mexicans, Germans, Indians, Chinese and Australians (etc.) what is their national affiliation, their will massively respectively answer that it is Italy, Canada, Nigeria, Russia, Mexico, Germany, India, China and Australia. It is their whole country institutionally organized as a sovereign state. The state is not an abstract entity, for it is part of their identity. It is like an ecological niche for the people as a whole. Similarly, the different members of indigenous peoples will refer to their national group as a people or a nation, not as a tribe. There are approximately 600 hundred bands or tribes in Canada, but they are organized into approximately 80 peoples or nations. National identity is not an abstraction. It is part of the experience of the vast majority of individuals

Some have argued that it is very difficult to define what is a nation or people. This is because there is no such thing as *the* nation. Like all the important words in our vocabulary, the word 'nation' has many different uses.

We can use the word 'nation' to refer to populations in which individual members share the same ancestral origin. This is true of many indigenous peoples (though not for all of them). The word 'nation' can also be used to refer to multi ethnic nations sharing the same history, language and culture (the English in Great Britain, the Acadians in Canada or the Indigenous Métis). The word can also serve to refer to some populations organized into non sovereign governments: the Flemish people in Belgium, Porto Rico, Hawaï, Scotland and Catalonia. It can refer to polyethnic and pluricultural sovereign states, such as Portugal, South Korea and Italy, containing ethnic minorities. We also use the word to refer to multinational sovereign countries, that is, those on whose territory we find many different nations, such as in Australia, USA, New Zealand, Spain, Belgium, Canada, Russia, etc. The very same term 'nation' may also serve to refer to certain types of diasporas (diasporic nations). These nations are those in which the entire group is spread in different minority subunits living on discontinuous territories and forming minorities on each of these territories. This was true of the Ashkenaze Jewish nation before the creation of Israel, and it can still be true of the Roms or of the Circassian people. Finally, a nation may be multiterritorial occupying a continuous territory within different sovereign states, such as the Kurds in Kurdistan (partly in Iran, Irak, Syria and Turkey) or the Mohawks in Akwasasne.

The notions of persons and peoples or nations connect with the vast majority of citizens of the world. So we should not be reluctant to talk about persons, peoples or nations as the main building blocks on the basis of which we can reach a sense of belonging to a universal humanity. We must avoid an individualistic characterization of the noosphere. It is not only composed of individual citizens. It must include a federation of peoples. We must also avoid essentialism and see nations as complex *institutional* identities. Peoples and nations are not mere fictions. As Benedict Anderson pointed out, they are 'cultural artefacts.' They truly exist, but not out there in nature quite apart from us, for we have created them. They also do not exist independently of a national consciousness. They are not merely subjective, but neither are they purely objective. They require a daily plebiscite. They suppose a sense of belonging. Nations are all that we've got in order to fight against climate change. Just as 148 nations signed a Convention on the diversity of cultural expressions in 2005, the different peoples of the world could sign a convention on biodiversity against the 1% of elites that ruin the planet, inspired by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (COP 15) held in Montreal in 2022. Another great step in that direction has been the 2007 *UN Declaration on the rights of the Indigenous peoples*. We can learn from indigenous peoples about the relationship of all peoples to the land that they inhabit. Their territories are ecological niches to be respected, because they are part of their identities.

So instead of the word "Noosphere", we might as well refer to citizens of the world in a (highly decentralized) federation of peoples.

Week 7: Anti-individualism in the Noosphere

As pointed out by David, one of the main contentious issues concerning AI is whether we take into consideration not only the interests of individuals but also the interests of the group. This raises the issue of individualism. This is a doctrine that comes in many different shapes and forms. It is present in philosophy of mind (Jerry Fodor on Mentalese) and in philosophy of language (John Searle arguing that meanings are in the head). There is also ontological individualism, that is, the view that reduces all human collectivities to associations of individuals. It is the Thatcherian view according to which societies do not exist. There are thus no such things as social superorganisms. Methodological individualism is the view that all social phenomena are ultimately explained only by the causal power of individual actions, intentions, beliefs and desires. It denies explanations in which the causal power of social superorganisms is involved in the ultimate explanation of regularities taking place among individuals. Moral individualism is the view according to which individuals are the only ultimate sources of valid moral claims. Groups cannot be moral agents having valid moral claims. Expressive individualism suggests that our identity is solely determined by our self-interpretations performed in a process of self-discovery. In philosophy of law, an individualistic approach will assert the supremacy of individual rights over collective rights. In the philosophy of social sciences, individualists will prefer Max Weber to Émile Durkheim. In philosophy of language, they will prefer Noam Chomsky to Ludwig Wittgenstein. In the theory of evolution, they will prefer Richard Dawkins to David Sloan Wilson.

People often confuse the debate between individualists and collectivists with another debate, which opposes atomists and holists. Atomists see individuals as self-contained autonomous human beings. They contradict John Donne's idea according to which no man is an island in and of itself. Holism, by contrast, espouses Donne's idea that we are just a part of the continent. We depend on others and others depend on us. This interdependence relation is, so to speak, a horizontal one. It involves individuals among themselves. Holism is also present in the idea that we have a dialogical identity. By contrast, the debate between ontological individualism and ontological collectivism concerns the possibility of having some kind of vertical dependency, one that involves individuals as part of an encompassing larger whole, as if they were organs into a complex social organism. Individualists deny the existence of such superorganisms as societies, while collectivists argue in favor of that view. For instance, in addition to our dialogical identity, we belong to a linguistic community institutionally organized into a set of constitutive rules prescribed by grammars and dictionaries. Our individual behaviors cannot be understood without an appeal to these constitutive rules. The situation is similar to the football players whose behavior on the field cannot be understood without reference to the constitutive rules of football. Thanks to Ferdinand de Saussure, we can in French distinguish the individual and collective aspects of language, that is, *langue* and *parole* (language as a system of constitutive rules and language as speech). Even if words do not have fixed meanings and if language, as a process, is in constant transformation, the process does not take place only at the individual level. It also takes place at the institutional level.

Now one of the main obstacles to the Noosphere understood as the universal consciousness of a universal social superorganism is the clash of civilizations. Samuel Huntington believes that conflicts on a global scale are no longer merely economic or political, for they are now fundamentally cultural. They are civilizational conflicts. For him, this is the most important change that took place since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In his view, civilization is the broadest cultural group to which a person can identify herself: « A civilisation is a cultural entity. […] [It is] the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. » Huntington, « The Clash of Civilizations? », *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, n° 3, 1993, 22-49; see p. 24.

Still, according to Huntington, we live in civilizational silos, so we can't feel we're citizens of the world, because there can't be a common cultural foundation for all humanity. In this sense, the thesis of the clash of civilizations is a direct assault on our cosmopolitical (noospheric) ideals. For Huntington, civilizations are distinguished by history, language, culture, traditions and religion: « It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by subjective self-identification of people. » (Huntington, 1993, p. 24.) It all starts with the people. Religion contributes to the individuation of ethnocultural groups: « Religion reinforces the revival of ethnic identities». (Huntington 1993 : 33)

Accprdingly, Huntington divides the world into eight different cultural civilizations. These coincide more or less directly with a preferred religion. The Christian West can be contrasted with Orthodox Russia, the Islam of Malaysia, Indonesia, Arabia, Persia and Turkey. Hinduism is in India, Confucianism in China, Shinto in Japan, Catholicism in Latin America and animistic religions characterize an "emerging" African civilization (from which he subtracts the North and the Southern Horn).

If we wish to reject Huntington's views, overcome the clash of civilization and embrace cosmopolitanism, we have to be able to develop a critical look on our own civilization. On the bright side, we can be proud of the fact that we consider fundamental rights and liberties. Even if we often fail very deeply in this regard (the treatment of Julian Assange and of whistle blowers, the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo, the enormous gap between the rich and poor, no Medicare for all, etc.), we can be proud of the increasing respect shown toward LGBTQ+. However, on the dark side, we subscribe to moral individualism (the moral supremacy of the individual over the collective) and for this reason, tend to find our civilization superior to other civilizations. Other civilizations like Russia, China or Arab countries tend to subscribe to collectivism (the moral supremacy of the collective over the individual). An approach that would bring us closer to the noosphere would be to look for an equilibrium between the individual and the collective. We won't be achieving this if the Noosphere involves only individuals conceived as citizens of the world and if it ignores collectivities.

Another confusion occurs when we consider the difference between democratic societies and autocratic societies. We tend to think that if society is democratic, then its constitutive rules are determined by the individual members and thus it must be understood as the result of a social contract taking place among individuals. This suggests that a democratic society is nothing more than an association of individuals. The mistake contained in this argument can be revealed by the following example. Consider an orchestra. We have to distinguish between what is good for the orchestra and what is good for its individual members. These two interests do not always converge. If the financial situation of the orchestra is difficult, some sacrifices must be made by its individual members for the sake of the orchestra as a whole. Now what is good for the orchestra may be determined by its musical director (or administrative council) alone (autocracy) or by all of its members (democracy). The situation is the same in society. We can distinguish between the interest of society as a whole and the interests of its individual members. This distinction can be preserved even in a democracy in which the individual members determine the rules of the game. A concrete example was offered by Josiah Ober concerning Greek democracy. It involved a social superorganism and it was democratic. As a superorganism, society as a whole was the subject of rights and individual members were the subject of obligations, they would have to develop the moral virtue of accepting responsibilities toward society as a whole. This is classical republicanism. If modern liberal societies have tended to insist on negative liberties (rights that the state must not interfere to constrain freedom of expression, association, conscience, thought, religion), classical republicanism insists on positive liberties (obligation to vote, to be informed, to participate, to deliberate). This is the difference between the liberty of Moderns and the liberty of the Ancients. Now Philip Pettit has offered an individualist version of republicanism. The republican ideal must still be distinguished from liberalism, if 'liberalism' means the view defending negative liberties, or freedom as non interference. But Pettit does not accept classical republicanism and positive liberties. The state has not only the negative obligation not to interfere, it has also the positive obligation to remove all forms of domination. It is liberty as non domination creating favorable conditions for citizens to vote, participate and deliberate. According to this view, the nation state is not a moral superorganism, that is, the subject of moral rights, and citizens the subject of moral obligations. The nation state is rather once again the subject of obligations toward individual members, but this time as an active positive agent of non domination and not only as a negative agent of non interference. Philip Pettit denies the existence of a moral collective superorganism. He defends holism but he rejects collectivism. (See *The Common Mind*) This is in sharp contrast with John Rawls who subscribes both to the liberty of the Ancients and to the Liberty of the Moderns. He accepts that societies are moral agents and thus are the subjects of moral rights as well as of moral obligations, and that individuals are also the subjects of rights and obligations. John F Kennedy once said that we should not ask what the country can do for us but rather what we can do for the country. In that sense, he expressed the view of classical republicanism. Rawls's political liberalism offers a more balanced approach, accepting rights and obligations for persons and peoples.

Week 8 : Justice in the Noosphere

Francis Heylighen adopts the following reductive approach. The Noosphere is a superorganism, yes, and yes, it must be understood as an adaptive system, but an « adaptive system is the whole of all agents evolving and mutually adapting ». For him « an agent does something that leaves traces in the environment. The other agents read the traces left by the previous agent. They will then react and build on that. » (examples: Wikipedia, termite mounds) Heylighen acknowledges that this is the principle of the invisible hand. Global order comes from local interactions. No agent knows the whole system. He knows only about his own local environment. The important notion is coordination: individuals mutually adapt to each other. When all agents are adapted to their local environments, the whole system is adapted. In that sense, as an adaptive system, the Noosphere is reducible to eight billion individuals locally adapted to each other. Finally, for Heylighen, evolution implies modifications but you don't eliminate previous organizations.

For DSW, a system can be adaptative *as a system*, and it must be distinguished from individual agents pursuing adaptative strategies at the local level. You do not optimize a system just by optimizing its parts. This does not mean that you need a dominating engineer, but the system needs mechanisms of self-organization. Now self-organization is not just a matter of coordination occurring among the members. It involves cooperation. What's the difference between coordination and cooperation?

1.- Coordination understood as adaptation to one another is compatible with mere toleration, but it might go as far as mutual respect (toleration, understanding and acceptance). Cooperation requires more than that. It requires solidarity.
2.- Coordination within a group seeks to direct the initiatives or actions of its members towards achieving minimal optimization. That minimal optimization is stability. Of course, domination is an unacceptable form of stability, but it can be overcome as long as the system has plasticity (open to diversity). Cooperation also involves a common goal, a common purpose pursued in a common venture, but it is for the common good and for the mutual advantage of everyone. What is valuable is to achieve « stability for the good reasons », to quote John Rawls, that is, a stability achieved for a common good and for the benefits of all, as long as it is approved by all members.
3.- Coordination is compatible with the invisible hand and with a policy of *laisser faire*. By contrast, for cooperation to take place, there has to be mechanisms of social control. These are not problematic if they are democratically approved. This process implies that free riders are discarded, old strategies abandoned and previous organizations eliminated.
4.- Coordination requires rationality (maximizing one's own interests) and respecting others as a means of achieving stability. Cooperation requires in addition reason, that is, a sense of justice in the attempt to achieve stability by providing an arrangement that benefits everyone and that is implemented for the common good.

In trying to select the meaning system that is beneficial to everyone and reflects the common good, DSW suggests that our set of criteria of selection must be threefold: " 1.- how does it motivate you as an individual, how inspiring is it psychologically; how much does it animate you; 2.- what does it cause you to do; 3.- How does it accord with science. These are psychological, ethical and scientific criteria.

Religions might have satisfied the first two criteria, but our task is to satisfy the third criterion as well. For human cultural evolution to be theoretically feasible and be developed in accordance with science, we must, as in evolutionary biology, describe it as process involving variation, selection and replication. The system must not only be adaptive, exhibit plasticity and authorize variation. In order to eliminate stable domination, we have to find norms of selection that will filter out free riders, wrong strategies and bad organizations.

DSW relies on the work of Elena Nostrum («Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges» Elinor Ostrom, Joanna Burger, Christopher B. Field, Richard B. Norgaard, David Policansky, *Science*, 1999) to establish the norms that will secure the selection of a good meaning system. The eight normative principles mentioned present themselves as a way to avoid the Tragedy of the Commons, that is, the tendency of groups to overexploit the resources that they have. Some groups succeed in managing their resources only if they are able to implement certain core principles. I indicate them just to show the extent to which they are also present in John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971) and in his later works (*Political Liberalism* 1993) and *The Law of Peoples* (1999)).
We need:
1.-A sense of identity (For Rawls, justice is initially applied in the simplified model of a closed society, that is without minorities, or immigration). The basic structure of society, that is the basic economic, social and cultural institutions of a nation state, is the object of a local application of the theory of justice.
2.- Proportional costs and benefits must apply as equally as possible to all the members. (For Rawls, we must adopt a principle of equality of chances as well as the difference principle, maximizing the minimum held by the poorest)
3.-Inclusive decision-making of input and consent (In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls applies the principles initially to a democratic society whose tradition is liberal)
4.-Monitoring transparency (Rawls considers that a 'publicity condition'. Each member knows that each member endorses the principles of justice. This stabilizes the system)
5.- Graduating sanctions and support for good behavior (For Rawls, this is an element belonging a non-ideal theory)
6.- Conflict resolution (For Rawls, we need a system of rights and liberties)
7.- Local autonomy (In *The Law of Peoples*, Rawls admits self-determination, independence and mechanisms for a federation of peoples)
8.- Appropriate relations with other groups (This is the second application of justice: not only within a unique group as in Rawls 1971 and 1993, but also between groups, as in *The Law of Peoples*, 1999)

For DSW, all group identities must be coordinated with the fact that we are all citizens of the world. I believe that this is true, but incomplete. All our individual identities must also be coordinated with the fact that we are all parts of the peoples of the world. Among our multiple public identities, peoples occupy a special place. You can freely choose to belong or not to a religious group, a political association, a profession, a corporation, an NGO and various other social networks. But we all belong to peoples, that is, to groups that are individuated by one or many common public languages, by common public institutions in which the common public language(s) is (are) mostly spoken and by the history of these common public institutions. We all belong to one or more peoples. We may also have different rational preferences (and rank very low our affiliation to our people) and different emotional ties to peoples (sometimes with very weak emotional ties to our own people). Nevertheless, we share the common feature of belonging to a people. We must not think that individuals are basically the same and that their differences are to be explained by their belonging to the different cultural features of peoples. Persons are not the same. There are differences (sex, sexual orientation, gender, 'race', talents, capacities). Some are individualists, others communitarians. Despite these differences, there are common institutional features that they all share as citizens. (Rawls *Political Liberalism*, Lecture 1, §5) Similarly with peoples. There are many differences (linguistic, religious, cultural, geographical, territorial). Some are association of individuals, others are political communities. Nevertheless, they all share institutional features. They are all societies. (Rawls *Political Liberalism*, Lecture 1, §7)

What about collective consciousness at the level of the Noosphere? DSW rightly points out that there are two levels of consciousness. There is a first level that runs from the subconscious to a state of awareness, and then there is a second level in which reflective self-conscious processes take place. How can we then understand the sort of collective consciousness involved in the noosphere? We can perhaps find inspiration in the different works concerning national consciousness. There are perhaps also two different levels for collective consciousness. Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities* 1983) understands national consciousness as involving imagination. He is not saying that nations are nothing but figments of our imagination. They are not fictional entities although they do not exist separately, as a purely objective phenomenon. They are 'cultural artefacts.' At the first level, imagination is required to represent ourselves as members of a large group in which most members will never be met. At the second level, imagination is the reflective process by which we construct the cultural artefact, invent a tradition and project ourselves in the future. Similarly, with the Noosphere, there must also be two levels of consciousness. We have to imagine ourselves as citizens of the world belonging to 6000 peoples, including 5000 indigenous nations. We can then reflectively imagine what a federation of peoples containing 8 billion citizens of the world would look like. It is not enough to experience the mutual interdependence of all peoples. There has to be a system of cooperation for the common good and that benefits all. Is this utopia realist? For it to be a feasible project, there would have to be empathy, sympathy, compassion and care taking place between persons inside a people and between peoples inside the Noosphere.

Week 9 : A Federation of Peoples in the Noosphere

John Arquilla describes the political evolution of the world as involving the passage from imperial powers to nation-states, and then from nation-states to what he calls 'networks.' But what are the component members of these networks? For him, it seems that they must be individuals and he is favorable to Swiss direct democracy for this reason. DWS remarks that if multilevel selection operates at the cultural level, there can also be direct democracy involving entire peoples. Those peoples who, like Switzerland, would internally be practicing direct democracy could then be peoples that externally have a direct say in the society of peoples. At the global level, then, the networks could and should perhaps be networks of peoples. We must not throw the baby with the bathing water. If the nation-state is problematic, it does not mean that all nations are to be condemned. After having performed in the past genocide over indigenous peoples, we must not once again ignore the 5000 indigenous peoples that are part of the 6000 peoples of the world.

David Bollier and John Arquilla are both skeptical of the nation-state, but this is perhaps because they are mostly critical of the American nation-state, rightly so I should add. The US state is an imperial state imposing all over the world a single lingua franca, English, and the US dollar as the international reference currency. It imposes sanctions on more than 40 countries, supporting multinational companies, and having 800 military bases in more than 150 countries. They are investing 900 billion dollars per year in their military industrial complex and intervening everywhere to support coups and regime changes. It is not a democracy but rather and oligarchy. But there are 193 nation-states all over the world and they are not all authoritarian and imperialist. As a matter of fact, nation-states are just one type of nation. There are nations with states but also nations without states. Can the 6000 nations of the world form a network of peoples acting for the common good of humanity as a whole? What does this network of peoples look like and what is the common good of humanity as a whole? A comparison can be established between the individual in a single society and peoples in the society of peoples. A people is composed of individuals present in their respective social niches (family, school and workplace) and humanity is composed of peoples also having different sorts of niches (self-government, nation-states, multination states, supernational organizations). Just as individual talents are more or less arbitrarily distributed, and their emergence, development and realization depend in large part on the social environment in which they find themselves (family, school and workplace), so the natural resources available to a people depend on the institutional instances allows for their extraction, transformation and distribution (self-government, nation-states, multination states, supernational organizations). The identity of persons depends first and foremost on the ecological niches to which they belong. This is why there is no problem in admitting that individuals have property rights over their talents. These talents are the result of both themselves and their ecological niches, but these ecological niches are themselves part of their identity. So to the extent that they have the right to preserve and develop what they are, they must have the right to their talents. It is not because these talents have been developed and put to use only by the individual. It is rather because the ecological niches that have contributed to the blossoming, development and use of their talents are part of their personal identity.

Similarly, the identity of peoples extends to their ecological niches. So there's no problem in talking about the right of ownership that peoples have with regard to their natural resources. The reason is not that peoples are the sole entities responsible for their discovery, extraction and transformation. It is rather that peoples also have an identity that may extend to ecological niches such as a nation state, a multination state or to a supernational organization. (We should not oppose peoples and the state, because the state is part of the identity of many peoples who identify themselves with their sovereign country.)

To continue the analogy, we can use John Rawls' arguments concerning the natural assets (or natural endowments) of individuals. The arguments we might formulate concerning people's relationship with their territories and natural resources could then draw on them. Rawls admits that individuals have a property right in their own talents, but he doesn't stop there. As we just saw there is the fact that we depend on niches to bring out, develop and exercise our talents, but there is also the fact that the exercise of these talents contributes to the realization of a goal that is greater than ourselves. In this sense, it's important to note that the range, diversity and complementarity of talents existing within society constitute an asset available to the community as a whole. Even if society as a whole does not own the talents of individuals, it benefits from the diversity of talents, and this is a common good for society. Society has a right to maintain its diversity of talents. Rawls could then have developed the same idea at the level of peoples, but he did not. He admits a national basic structure comprising all basic institutions (economic, social and cultural), but he does not admit the existence of a global basic structure comprising all national basic structures. At the time he wrote *The Law of Peoples*, capitalism had not yet completely become globalized, global warming had not yet had its devastating effects on the scale of the entire planet, and the pandemic did not yet manifest itself. In our time, however, the existence of a global basic structure is no longer in doubt. We're all in the same boat. So perhaps we need to explore the analogy between what is said about people in the national basic structure and what is said about peoples in the global basic structure.

The whole of humanity does not own the territories and resources of the peoples, for these belong to the peoples. They do so because the ecological niches that renders the exploration extraction and transformation of these goods are part of their identity and because they have the right to preserve and develop who they are. However, humanity as a whole possesses the diversity and complementarity of natural resources. It is a common good shared on a global scale. This diversity is an asset for all humanity.

The principle affirming the value of the diversity of talents as a good for society as a whole is not a primitive principle. It is, according to Rawls, the direct consequence of adopting the difference principle on the scale of a single society. The aim of this principle is to transfer the cooperative surplus to the less privileged members of society. Differences in income are justified only insofar as they are the best means of improving the situation of the less fortunate. The income disparities that are fair are those that favor the production of transferable wealth that brings us closer to equality. It is this transfer that has the effect of expressing value toward the contribution of all members of society.

The difference principle requires that we maximize the minimum, and therefore that we minimize as much as possible the differences between us. The consequence of this maximin principle is to promote the development of a diversity of talents throughout society. In the same way, and beyond the perspective adopted by Rawls (who rejected the extension of the difference principle to the scale of the society of peoples), the principle affirming the value of the diversity of natural resources as a good for humanity as a whole is not a primitive principle. It derives from the adoption of a difference principle applied on an international scale.

The analogy between individuals and peoples can be exploited in a number of ways. Peoples can be supported by international agreements (Convention on Cultural Diversity, United Nations Charter, Tobin tax, debt elimination, Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, etc.) and any other supernational institutions seeking to maximize the minimum and thus minimize differences between peoples.

It sometimes happens that individuals jointly develop a certain talent (e.g. John Lennon and Paul McCartney). They must then share the benefits of exploiting this jointly-developed talent. Similarly, when several peoples legitimately claim the same territory, they must share the natural resources contained therein. In concrete terms, this means, for example, that Canada's indigenous peoples can, by virtue of their ancestral rights, claim the right to co-manage mines, forests and agricultural resources, as well as hunting and fishing rights for subsistence purposes on the territories they share in common with the Canadian people or the people of Quebec. This also means that any development on their territory requires their free, prior and informed consent.

I suggest that we should investigate the case of the federation of peoples. Federalism is good if it proceeds with division of powers, decentralization, equalization, an opting out clause, the subsidiarity principle, a common currency (as the one envisaged by John Maynard Keynes, in addition to national currencies. So not a unique currency replacing national currencies, and not under the control of one country, as in Bretton Woods Agreement.). It is a federation recognizing the linguistic, cultural and social diversity of all peoples, the constitutional powers of all peoples, the self-determination of peoples, and the solidarity among all peoples. We have to reinstate the Glass Steagall act.

The society of all peoples must be one in which all companies are governed by cooperative principles in order to prevent the concentration of capital, means of production and decision. Companies are organized as Commons, and thus subjected to the eight norms put forward by Elena Nostrum. It is a democratic society in which civic and political individual rights are respected, as well as rule of law, equality of opportunities and the difference principle.

Week 10 : Women and Men in the Noosphere

As a democratic social organism, Greek society presents an extraordinary case study deserving our attention. Society as a whole appears to be a social organism. At the same time, we must acknowledge the fact that it excluded women from the *demos*. This raises the issue of gender which is the topic of these last reflections. Men and women are not just males and females. They are also associated with genders (masculine and feminine). Now these genders are fluid. Men can be more or less masculine and women can be more or less feminine. These facts depend on various performative features such as outward appearance, values asserted, behavior and self-narratives. Associated with the stereotype of the masculine: emotional restraint, strength and virility. Associated with the stereotype of the feminine: emotional expressivity, resilience and empathy. It is precisely because of these stereotypes that genders are fluid. Men may show more or less emotional control, strength and virility and women may show more or less emotional expressivity, resilience and empathy. The main features of some men might even be those related to the ones associated with women, and vice versa.

According to Judith Butler, gender identities are largely constructed. This is what she means by the performative character of gender identities. Conscious actions create, reinforce or transform gender identity. She points out that, between the two poles of traditional masculine and feminine genders, there are other gender identities. She also made us aware of the existence of LGBTQ+ people. The masculine gender can sometimes go hand in hand with a male sex, and the feminine gender with a female sex. But even in these cases, belonging to a gender is not reducible to a difference linked to genitalia. In addition to hormonal (estrogen and progesterone for women and testosterone for men) and physiological differences, there are cultural components present in gender. Butler's contribution is to have shown that human beings never fully occupy either of these two poles. We must avoid essentializing men and women. There are only stereotypes, and most individuals fall somewhere in between.

Saying that genders are fluid does not mean that we can ignore the political, historical and cultural experiences of women within society. As the pandemic has revealed, the most important jobs required empathy, sympathy, care and compassion (primary and high school teachers, nurses, patient attendants, child care workers, social workers). Now these jobs are often less paid and mostly occupied by women. It is only by recognizing these facts that things can change so that all men can themselves become able to show more empathy, sympathy, care and compassion.

Identity issues are real issues. Even if essentialism must be avoided because identities are fluid and constructed, there are nevertheless objective (political, cultural and historical) facts to acknowledge. Only through politics of recognition can we become sensitive to, and come to terms with, the historical (and still actual) political facts of patriarchy, male domination and rape culture (#metoo movement). Women have been subjected to oppressive historical, political and cultural distinct experiences. They have therefore differentiated identities.

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Our pre-social subjective identities do not give us access to our common humanity. Personal identities come indifferent fashions, in accordance either with dualism, materialism, individualism, communitarianism, animalism or narrativism. We must instead rely upon our pro-social identity. This is where we can find a common citizenship (locally and globally). However, in order to gain access to this common citizenship, we have to be able to respect (tolerate, understand and accept) differentiated identities. The experience of alterity is often difficult. We take for granted that our own experience of the world is the only good one. This is true concerning civilizations and even concerning peoples having different languages, cultures, histories, ethnicities and religions, but it is also true at the individual level. There is a natural tendency to reject all forms of alterity, at the collective level (islamophobia, Russophobia, Sinophobia) and at the individual level (misogyny, anti-LGBTQ+, bigotry). Instead of finding refuge in denial, the only way to overcome these reactions is by experiencing the negativity of alterity. We will then be in a position to see the common features that we share with different peoples, civilizations and individuals, despite their fundamental differences.

This is a lesson that we all have to learn, but it is particularly true of men. We must acknowledge the fact that respect for alterity stems from empathy, sympathy, compassion and care, which are features that women have been practicing for many thousand years. These 'feminine' features should be adopted also by men, but the best way to guarantee the fluidity of identity between men and women is to adopt 'politics of difference' in the sense of Iris Marion Young. It is in particular important to recognize the distinctive character of women experiences as well as their contributions to society. This of course does not mean that women must remain in the jobs based on the ethics of care. On the contrary, these positions need also to be occupied by men. But to attain this goal, men must be sensitive to past and present injustices as well as to the past and present distinctive contributions of women.

We must not restrict politics of difference to the domain of men-women relationships, for there are many other issues of justice involved. Kimberlé Crenshaw has shown with her concept of intersectionality that a woman can be at the center of multiple sorts of injustice if, for instance, she is a woman of color. The situation is even worse if she is also poor, immigrant, belonging to a religious minority and to an ethnic group with a different culture, or if she is disabled.

In this sense, Nancy Fraser has stressed the importance of political recognition and of political representation, and so not just socio-economic redistribution, as fundamental components of a theory of justice. For example, women are at a disadvantage when it comes to pay equity (socio-economic distribution), but the merits of professions based on the ethic of care are also not fully acknowledged (recognition), and they have yet to completely break the glass ceiling (political representation).

Justice toward women must require introducing important changes in the normative principles involved in modern social contract theories. The champion of Anglo-American liberal social contract theory in the twentieth century has been John Rawls. His theory of justice is contractual in spirit and it has been based on the methodology of the veil of ignorance. In order to accept this methodology, we have to accept that human beings think of themselves as having two fundamental moral features: a sense of justice (reason) and the capacity to act in accordance with one's own interest (rationality). Having a sense of justice entails that we think we can adjudicate whether or not a particular situation is just, without the interference of our own interests. So we should accept the veil of ignorance. And then, seeing ourselves as 'rational' entails that we think we can reflect under the veil of ignorance on what every human being would rationally want to have in order to achieve her goals. With this methodology, Rawls derives principles such as civil and political liberties, equality of opportunity and the difference principle.

The problem with the methodology of the veil of ignorance is that it ignores what has now been revealed by globalization, pandemic and climate change. In addition to reason and rationality, we increasingly think of ourselves as being in principle able to entertain empathy, sympathy, compassion and care. Ignoring these fundamental moral features turns the social contract into a sexual contract (Carole Pateman). That is, it secures patriarchy and relations of sexually differentiated domination and subordination in modern civil society.

Politics of recognition requires the inclusion of an ethics of care in the theory of justice. This is the contribution of Carol Gilligan. Ignoring all of these important contributions is an instance of epistemic injustice (Miranda Fricker). All and all, as emphasized by bell hooks, we have to acknowledge the holistic character of the oppression toward women. I have mentioned the names of Butler, Marion Young, Fraser, Crenshaw, Pateman, Gilligan, Fricker and hooks. I could and should have mentioned Angela Davis or Jane Fonda. (By the way, these women belong to the Anglo-American world, but francophone women have also made significant contributions. Many will know about Simone de Beauvoir, but there are many others.) This means that there is no hope of achieving a universal consciousness in the noosphere without the recognition of certain historical, political and cultural facts regarding women. In short, there is no humanism without feminism and more generally, no noosphere without coming to terms with differentiated identities. Leonard Cohen once said that he wished women would hurry up and take over. This does not mean that we need more people like Margaret Thatcher and Angela Merkel. It means that we need more human beings endowed with empathy, sympathy, compassion and care. But as it turned out, these features have been exemplified by women.

LEONARD COHEN « DEMOCRACY »

It's coming through a hole in the air
From those nights in Tiananmen Square
It's coming from the feel
That this ain't exactly real
Or it's real, but it ain't exactly there
From the war against disorder
From the sirens night and day
From the fires of the homeless
From the ashes of the gay
Democracy is coming to the USA
It's coming through a crack in the wall
On a visionary flood of alcohol
From the staggering account
Of the Sermon on the Mount
Which I don't pretend to understand at all
It's coming from the silence
On the dock of the bay
From the brave, the bold, the battered
Heart of Chevrolet
Democracy is coming to the USA
It's coming from the sorrow in the street
The holy places where the races meet
From the homicidal bitchin'
That goes down in every kitchen
To determine who will serve and who will eat
From the wells of disappointment
Where the women kneel to pray

For the grace of God in the desert here
And the desert far away
Democracy is coming to the USA
Sail on, sail on
O mighty ship of state
To the shores of need
Past the reefs of greed
Through the squalls of hate
Sail on, sail on, sail on, sail on
It's coming to America first
The cradle of the best and of the worst
It's here they got the range
And the machinery for change
And it's here they got the spiritual thirst
It's here the family's broken
And it's here the lonely say
That the heart has got to open
In a fundamental way
Democracy is coming to the USA
It's coming from the women and the men
Oh baby, we'll be making love again
We'll be going down so deep
The river's going to weep
And the mountain's going to shout, "Amen"
It's coming like the tidal flood
Beneath the lunar sway
Imperial, mysterious
In amorous array
Democracy is coming to the USA
Sail on, sail on
O mighty ship of state
To the shores of need
Past the reefs of greed
Through the squalls of hate
Sail on, sail on, sail on, sail on
I'm sentimental, if you know what I mean
I love the country but I can't stand the scene
And I'm neither left or right
I'm just staying home tonight
Getting lost in that hopeless little screen
But I'm stubborn as those garbage bags
That time cannot decay
I'm junk but I'm still holding up this little wild bouquet
Democracy is coming to the USA
To the USA