

Scenes of the self, and trance

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Abstract

Trance shows the Self as a process involved in all sorts and forms of life. A Western perspective on a self and its reifying tendencies is only one (or one series) of those variations. The process character of the self does not allow any coherent theory but shows, in particular when confronted with trance, its variability in all regards. What is more: the Self is always first on the scene of itself—a situation in which it becomes a sign for itself. That particular semiotic feature is again not a unified one but leads, as the Self in view of itself does, to series of scenes with changing colors, circumstances and environments.

Our *first* scene “Beyond Monotheism” shows semiotic importance in that a self as determining component of a trance-phenomenon must abolish its own referent and seems not able to answer the question, what makes trance a trance. The Pizzica is an example here. Other social features of trance appear in the *second* scene, US post traumatic psychological treatments included. Our *third* scene underlines structures of an unfolding self: beginning with ‘split-ego’ conclusions, a self’s engenderment appears dependent on linguistic events and on spoken words in the first place. A *fourth* scene explores that theme and explains modern forms of an ego—in particular those inherent to ‘citizenship’ or a ‘corporation’. The legal consequences are concentrated in the *fifth* scene, which considers a legal subject by revealing its ‘standing’. Our *sixth* and final scene pertains to the relation between trance and commerce. All scenes tie together and show parallels between Pizzica, rights-based behavior, RAVE music versus disco, commerce and trance; they demonstrate the meaning of trance as a multifaceted social phenomenon.

Who speaks about a self, experiences how that self is a process rather than a thing, an object or a fixed determination. That experience will be intensified in a state of trance but its intensity does not lead trance beyond rationality. Trance remains within the dimensions of all forms of life. Trance is like singing, writing or reciting an outstanding rhetoric form of life. It is filled with theater and representation—going off the stage or tears in the wings included. From Plato to Nietzsche, Freud and our modern times, Western culture has paid much attention to the concept of a self in life, in particular to its relation with identity.

Trance in the light of that view could be seen as a special *scene* embedded in mythology, folklore, social psychology and anthropology as well as in philosophy, drama, tragedy or religious contexts. In other words, the Western perspective on a self (where the self is deeply engraved in a *reifying* cultural context) views it as a component of one’s own identity—despite the fact that word, name, experience or institutional frame may differ for many individuals around the globe. The idea of

trance might be related to any possible experience of a self, but that self is in all cultural regards a self *as process* and as belonging to a multitude of components. An ego is thus conceived as a collection of scenes and acts, and not as a stable entity with quasi-monotheistic properties. Yet, the self is first on the scene of itself, and there it becomes a sign for itself. Any development or engenderment follows that sign on the road to self-realization.

Scene 1 **Beyond Monotheism**

The objectivist idea of a self relates to many selves that are ‘concrete’ within a great variety of languages, which fixated those selves as if this signification process were based on a global expressivity. That plurality makes it difficult to answer the question whether concepts like self and identity are always known as determinants of a human individual in cultures with trance in its trove. It could very well be, that the trance phenomenon wants to escape from such conceptualizations. A conclusion would then be, that the self as a determining component of trance must abolish its own referent, so that this component is in essence not able to reply to the question “what it is that makes trance a trance?”. The plural structure of trance parallels the plural structure of components, which ultimately form an ego by means of concordance and discordance. Trance thus withstands various forms of rationality, in particular those founded on the creation of meanings based on reference—which are dear to western culture and its appreciation of trance—and so does the ego.

There are many concrete examples for these abstract and theoretical observations. Consider deeply engraved religious social events, such as conserved rituals in Lourdes, stable orders of events and experiences during the *semana santa* in the Roman-Catholic Church or the Calvinist and Zwinglian Protestant *Holy Communion*. They sustain desires to individually experience the Plural, Global, Supernal not as transcendent dimensions, but as a tangible element of one’s own life on the one hand, and on the other to satisfy an often concealed drive for holism made concrete.

Intensification and escape from individualism—as contrasting as they seem to be— appear to belong to the dynamics of trance. They are sustained and reinforced by an extremely powerful component of trance, which is in *repetition*. Body movements, musical phrases, slogans and words, outcries and rhythmical accents with stamps, glances and the like create another world with a different pattern of light and shadows. The corn farmer loses a rational sight on his field and its corn through the continuous and repetitious movements of the crop, his hands reach out to tackle pure movement, light or wind in his transcending delight. The trance delight is in the feeling of unity with the forces around the farmer, which he may call ‘nature’ without noticing the philosophical consequences of the term. And so is the fisherman’s stability anchored in the transition from one movement of the waves into another. His

life unfolds on the basis of those movements as his floor; his activity seems to integrate and to intermit them. Do fisherman and corn farmer unconsciously practice repetition as a fulfillment of trance-like life situations, the torero in the bullfight who forcefully puts his lance between the bull's eyes experiences a state of trance on the waves of music, movement, emotion and outcries of the arena. The concentration in his eye-to-eye contact with the bull surpasses any type of rational observation. His situation is a state of mind in which his acts have changed into composites of the process called trance. The spiritual sound of the flight of ego-components transform bull and arena into a bigger, less momentary, different totality, which urges itself on fighter and public. Trance is maximally social—if trance does not touch upon all participants and lift them up, then it is senseless, not effective, powerless, totally in vein. The scene of trance changes the entire theater in an most radical manner, and pertains to acts and actors, authors and participants alike.

That radical character is at its maximum, and transcends all life styles, projects and prospects of participants: the socialization and equalization of them go hand in hand. *La Pizzica Salentina* is an intriguing example here. Originally from the Salento region in the Southern part of Puglia, the *Pizzica* is an Italian tradition in which someone behaves as “pizzicato/a”, as bitten by the Tarantula spider. A Tarantula spider bite was popularly believed to be highly poisonous and to lead to a hysterical condition. Beliefs in the 16th and 17th centuries were that the victims of the bite needed to engage in a frenzied dance to prevent discomfort, death or disease using very rhythmic music. This became known as the Tarantella, which has been a tradition in many regions of Italy and Argentina. In Puglia it maintained its essence under the name ‘*Pizzica*’. The poison leads the person into a trance, which may only be ‘lived through’ by convulsively dancing, which functions as a ‘passage’ to healing and stabilized health. The person in question, the ‘pizzicato/a’ is assisted by family and friends through providing a socially accepted ‘place to dance’—traditionally a sheet on the ground and a cushion under the head, to prevent that the *pizzicata* would hurt herself. Musicians are called to play the *Pizzica* until he/she is cured and/or exhausted. The *pizzicato/a* may then express herself freely. In this sense there is a justification of ‘crazy’ behavior in a society within which behavioral patterns are strictly regulated. A woman can become a *pizzicata* when she is suffocated by social and religious rules, and can only free herself from social coercion through the *Pizzica*. In this manner, the *Pizzica* allows to be oneself, expressing its own desolation in a socially accepted way, by escaping one’s socially coerced identity. The dancing is a metaphor: it is the complaint of a woman transformed in representation. The Roman Catholic Church has annexed this tradition and this phenomenon through indicating San Paolo as the protector of the ‘*pizzicate*’.

Today, many musicians are continuing to keep this tradition alive. Their music is very different from earlier ages—its tempo evolves faster—and there is no goal to cure anymore: the tarantella has become the brand of the Salento region and in summer it makes tourists and local youngsters dance during festivities and parties on the street, although at the long run the music will have the effect of an enduring repetition. That music is also used in the therapy of patients with certain forms of

depression and hysteria; its endocrinal effects became an object of recent socio-psycho-therapeutic research and practices.

This first scene entitled “*beyond monotheism*” pertains to the complexity and plurality of the *self*—once a concept of rigorous western insight into personality and identity. It was later discovered not to refer to a stable conceptual unity of the psyche but rather to a plurality of ego-components in process, in change, in dynamic involvements with tensions directing inwards as well as with equal power outwards to hitherto unknown and unnamed totalities of cosmic character. The self thus became a multicultural issue of importance. It challenges monotheistic notions about a fixed human nature, which defends its basic features by means of denial, incorrectly stating that trance is a theme of cultural anthropology only and by legally prohibiting any practice of trance in socio-cultural contexts.

Scene 2: Features of Trance

Trance, a name in a multicultural western culture, is open to many foreign religions and experiences with origin in far distanced countries and desires that even touch cosmic dimensions. There is one distinction, which is perceivable in every regard: the distinction between trance phenomena that are socially accepted, and other, not socially accepted trances who in extremis are criminalized. In particular trances that are based on or accompanied by religiously institutionalized experiences are accepted—their acceptance became motivated with the argument that expansions of all sorts of experiences are part and parcel of each evolving culture, and that neither moral prescriptions nor legal limitations should coerce such involvements. This acceptance states that trance could eventually be recognized as a constitutional right. Trance can on the other hand be qualified as socially unacceptable, for instance in relation with “drugs parties” or forms of dark exorcism, often in combination with cultures of sexual practices, which that are deemed undesirable in certain cultural- or religious circles.

The Old French meaning of the word has still an actual importance: the French *transe* is “fear of evil” and the Latin *transire* “to cross” or “to pass over”. The meaning makers seem to have the map of a large variety of ego-components before their eyes when they try to find an appropriate expression of that state of mind. Occidental terms describe trance by means of (a) cognitive loops provoked by repetition, (b) disabled cognitive functions, (c) extreme specification and (d) one-dimensionality of consciousness caused by the unifying power at work in a state of trance, often emphasizing repetition in this very context.

Those features shed light on variety of possible views on a subject in society. One could venture the thesis that *all governing activity risks a trance-abuse* in the hands of governing bodies (from States to Corporations). Governing social life will always subject human individuals to a filtering information process about the world

around them, which in their turn focuses on, manages or even masters sense modalities of those individuals. So there seems a direct link between forms of governance and brain functioning, eventually structures of consciousness. As a consequence, one should consider trance states as equivalent to other states of mind, like moods, emotions, intuition, inspiration and the like.

There is no reason to categorize trance as exceptional or beyond normality, let alone to criminalize trance behaviors. On the contrary: trance has been understood as an individual experience ordered in the category of rights-based determinations as a Human Rights issue—which is in particular the case with trance in the US Protestant Christian tradition. Methodists, Adventists, Spiritualists, Pentecostals and Born-again Christians are all fascinated by the trance-like experience of the “indwelling of God/the Spirit”. Many aspects of those experiences show a proximity between ecstasy and trance. Both show an intensive awareness of the human possibility to reach various levels of consciousness within one and the same life situation. All comes down to one and the same tenor, which is the question whether one is able to live inside- or outside of one self, or perhaps master both positions. The self-to-self structure, the dynamics and harmony of the inner dialogue, are at stake in ecstasy as well as in trance. If, like in neuro-physiological approaches of trance, one is interested in finding the mechanisms to understand physiological measurements to human thoughts, one should keep an eye on the map of the ego-components and its dynamics.

Ecstasy became appreciated as the dynamics of a natural as well as a drug induced form of split ego and its multiple components. An article in *The New York Times* from November 19, 2012, shows ecstasy in a particular, not everyday-manner. It describes the legal borderline situation of a MDMA induced status for medical and psychiatric purposes, in specific cases of post-traumatic stress of US veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The euphoria and radiating affection of the drug-induced ecstatic experience relaxes the tensions in mind and brain of stressed veterans in hitherto unobserved ways. Similar experiments are reported in Switzerland, Israel and Britain. All show an identical pattern of taking tensions away that were caused by the burden of integrating a diversity of ego-components, and the burden of restoring the dynamics of an inner conversation. One perceives how the induced relax initiated by the formerly (in the USA 1985) criminalized party-drug restores the dynamics of the inner ego, and produces—as the NYT articles cites— “a mental sweet spot that allows to feel and talk about the trauma without being overwhelmed by it”.

The severity, coercion and burdensome training in the military could be compared with the effect of law’s exclusive concentration on rights based images of a self when maintaining social order. A veteran is quoted to notice: “The military does a great job of turning you into a soldier, of teaching you how to control your reactions, and it is hard to turn those habits off”. Becoming a “responsible citizen” in our modern age is somewhat like the military, as the need for ecstasy to unwind the tensions in the socialized ego shows. There is a chemical/neurological basis for all this, as it seems how MDMA induces the release of the hormone oxytocin, which increases feelings of trust and affection. It also tamps down activity in some brain

regions, the amygdala in particular, which brain researchers observe to flare during threatening situations.

A particular metaphor of the NYTimes commentary clarifies the structural change in this therapy. It says that the patients are “*coming into their own*”. This *homecoming after alienation* seems a major issue in crisis and stress (post-traumatic stress in particular), because alienation from the self is part of the entire trauma structure. Observing how “one’s own” is the “place to be” creates a portrait of a society that stresses the rights-based approach of its members with all the moral forces available.

Disharmony and misreading belong to the flow-character of the *ego* itself, because a ‘self’ is never identical to what it was and it will be. “I” and “self” are verbal expressions, which are only a one-to-one indicator within the exact moment of speech within the surface structures of discourse. And what I am in view of my self is therefore also true for what I am in view of other(s): the ‘other’ of the ‘I’ is either my self or somebody else—if it is somebody else, the other of the ‘I’ that is meant to be my self is already an “other” within that very act of speech! Indeed, a riddle remains concealed in the flow that is “my self”. The alienation in the innermost *ego* is in the otherness of the other that I am for my self. However, the same alienation is in the other person in view of me, which perceives me as a component of the flow of identity on the basis of which social relations are possible. Is a commonly being in trance a perception that bridges what words cannot relate? Rimbaud’s adage from 1871: “Je est un autre”¹ upholds nevertheless the major structure of the occidental theatre of metaphysics; it does not convert any essential feature on that stage: subjects emerge as a subject within harmonious and disharmonious relations in the scene of an “I” involved in speaking to a “Self”. If that scene had a title, it would be called “The ‘I’ for an ‘I’ ” or “The Interiority of ‘Becoming’ ” or “My Self as You”.

The harmony of the inner dialogue contrasts any legal position. The apparent positive effect of the ecstasy-assisted therapy, a psychiatrist from the US army remarked, “should bring us to leave our politics at the door and not be afraid to follow the data, because there’s now an evidence base for this MDMA therapy and a plausible story about what may be going on in the brain to accounts for the effects”. Is this a belated plea for de-criminalizing the use of MDMA, or of LSD, or marijuana or other ecstatic forms of life?

In those types of trance, ecstasy included, is a fascinating tension to register. There is the strong and all-embracing attempt to *integrate* the diverse ego-components towards a holistic self. And there is an equally strong tendency to enjoy the *bursting into pieces* of the same ego-components to the limits of expressivity. A difficulty in studying the trance phenomenon is exactly here: how do we understand those ego-tensions, how do we grasp their meaning, how do we evaluate an attempt to integrate the self at an equal level as the attempt to give up the self in tarantella dances?

¹ Rimbaud: “I am an other. Too bad for the wood which finds itself a violin, and brush off the obvious, who quibble over things they know nothing about”.

This second scene shows various levels of tension in studying trance. There is often a severe social control pertaining to trance, whereby some forms of trance are accepted and other criminalized. Each researcher is challenged to take a position in that variety of appreciations. There is furthermore a level of tensions pertaining to the constitution of trance as a social reality. In the light of trance as a moment of appreciation of the dynamics of ego-components, the latter appears as a tension between inward- and outward directed forces, between the meditating, praying and writing Middle-age monk and the Pizzica-dancing individual in Southern-Italian streets. Restrain or ecstasy—a trance question par excellence.

Scene 3: The Unfolding Self

Freud discovered the structure of the *split ego* whilst studying the dynamics of psychological development. He thus reaches far beyond what so-called “ego psychologists” had in mind. The development of a human *ego* is in itself a mirror portrait of life in all its phases. To correctly achieve this picture, one has to engage into a process framework, he discovered. Lacan followed him. Freudian phrases such as “A unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from start; *the ego has to be developed*” — “the ego is based on *relations between others and its own body*” and “the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out” should remain engraved in one’s mind. They articulate *a pertinent dynamism with process character*, a challenge of immeasurable dimensions, as well as a holistic attitude, which should be considered as dominant. Each individual in process does not perfectly know the dimensions and character of that process, so that Freud concludes: “Each individual lives a double existence: as its own goal in itself and as link of a chain, which it serves against or without its own will.”²

This relates to the function of each stage in life’s unfolding—no matter in what cultural pattern. Trance is a stage process. An infant already discovers its *ego* or “I” by being confronted with its mirror image at the very beginning of such processes. Two issues mark that confrontation: first, *someone else* (father, mother, caretaker) has to *tell* the infant (here is already the *linguistic* component) that what he or she perceives is him- or her *self*. Life unfolds in the course of time as anchored in such a verbal statement. *Life unfolds on the basis of words, speech acts and other utterances of others*, as occidental cultures underlined. Secondly, the *image* is central here—the image has a key function, because recognition of that image is necessarily mediated by what it is *not* itself: by words, and not by another image. The other is therefore not solely an external datum but *an already internalized condition of identity*. Identity processes are flowing from image to language, and in this flow from narcissism to

² S. Freud: “Zur Einführung des Narzissismus” in: *Gesammelte Werke; Werke aus den Jahren 1913-1917*, Imago, London 1960, p. 142 f.

socialization, which ends the reign of imaginary identifications primarily experienced with the mother.

A riddle is concealed here: like everything in nature, an ego should always be perceived as being in a phase of a larger and more encompassing development. *Panta rei*—“everything flows” was Plato’s popularization of Herakleitos’ philosophical impetus. Can we develop ourselves into an “I” without someone having pointed to us who uttered a “you” in our direction and used the word “I” whilst talking to us about him—we should ask. Could this conversation be useful in the absence of a context within which “I” and “you” acquire a meaning that is meaningful for both “I” and “You”? That is a foundational question for those who study the phenomenon of trance. The process character and the bodily/spiritual movements have a *linguistically anchored social* meaning to be unraveled. We should acknowledge that our most private and unique ego relates to the fact that *the riddle is in language*: not in language as fixated in grammars or vocabularies, but in language in use, in speech, structure, body movement and thus beyond grammars or vocabularies. A flow of words befits the reality of an “I” better than any fragment of grammar or syntax. Indeed: life unfolds on the basis of words, on speech in the first place. Speech provides us a place in mind and society, allows us to be someone, and challenges us to unfold an identity: “I said to myself...” equals in that regard “I am who I am”. We thus understand: trance is a (non-word-) *linguistic act*.

There is hardly a stage for such dialogic scenes anymore. Deconstructionism helped destroy Plato’s vision of the world as an extension of an inner dialogue between ego-components. New roles unfolded, new egos claimed recognition on the stage. Not a national state, but new structures of corporative governance have their grip on the urge to create new egos. They tell us that their governing requires *an ego NOT STEMMING FROM WORDS exchanged between other egos but from ANOTHER TYPE OF EXTERIORITY* that stems from politico-economically determined and institutionalized structures, which create social awareness. Reference is thus, in the new scenes, orientated towards the reality as created by newly emerging social structures. A modern ego should be anchored in the abstraction of a contextualized “I” within aggregations that are in essence bundles of “I” ‘s reconstituted in the form of society, corporation, religion, etc. Such institutional forms give a command, like States did, *to accept—yes, TO BE—an identity*, which is given by them *as if that identity stems* from the conversations with another individual, and now bear names like: citizen, consumer, proprietor, criminal, shareholder, which means its essence: *as if* they are from linguistic exchanges with other persons. “The o/Other in that conversation” bears names such as “the State”, “the Rule of Law”, “the Corporation”, “the (Economic) Union” and the like. Words that stem from this language became *names* in the unfolding of modern occidental history; they are not simply *roles* to play as a fulfillment of the omnipotent role of the subject anymore. Metaphors changed accordingly: freedom had suddenly a different content; justice was obliged to change décor accordingly. With those new metaphors originated new meanings stemming from new actors and authors.

This third scene thus focuses on the self as a product and participant amidst social processes. They are of a linguistic nature and trance should be understood likewise. But the determinant word in the engenderment of an ego, which we characterized as the word of the/an Other differs when it comes from a father or mother, or when it is in any way an expressivity coming from an institution. The next scene awakens more elaborate expectations about this issue.

Scene 4: Ego, State and Corporation

Look at our lawyers and how they use the expression ‘human’ in contexts, which they never articulated before: human rights as an issue of legal textbooks, criminals as the result of legal name-giving, DNA as a germ of justice, judges as owners of interpreters of citizens as incarnated abstractions—*the state functions like a corporation*: only institutions attribute personality³. That change of theatre with new *names* created also new types of subject/person on the stage. Did those subjects not enter a dark podium to walk unknown steps? Not the architecture of the steps seems important here but the question what subject, what person walks them.

A first concern is a citizen’s ego as a changing or already changed subject—with hitherto unknown properties and self-understanding. They result from new forces creating new meanings for subjects. Cultural anthropologists know by their proper field-experience how changes in culture do not occur *around* subjects in that culture but *with* and *within* those subjects. Remember in this context the traditional Civil Law definition of a (legal) subject as a “bearer of rights and duties”. In all subjects, all ego’s, all bearers of rights and duties, is *a turning point* induced—a point in which a human consciousness experiences how it is encapsulated in hitherto unknown transitions towards a state-of-mind, that manifests itself as difference, as a new concretion of time, space and self.

And what is more: that transition is (as said before already many times) nowhere else than: *on its way*. In other words, it is a *process*, and no more than that—perhaps one should say: it denies any location, so it is *no-where*! It is not a future of things to come: it is there, and to be discovered, it is in our life, in our selves, our world and it only becomes increasingly evident in the *will* to ignorance (Nietzsche), the uncertain, the untrue, the free course of the trickster.

Today, the *indignados* wait to experience the power of that will and to fulfill its moment—a moment in which a change of consciousness is no longer determined by coercive psychiatric, economic or scientific categories or by corporations and legal names. It will be a moment in which they carry their own dignity and not solely a dignity given by the State. An urge to self-representation provides them an enormous energy. How long will States go on to pretend that they provide their citizens with a

³ See Larry Catà Backer: The Corporation as Semiosis, ‘Citizens United,’ the Signification of the Corporate Enterprise and the Development of Law, *CPE Working Paper No. 2012-2*.

dignity that is not their own? Do not forget how we know that there are always consequences concealed in the key-words and names of mankind's history. A State suggests that it represents its citizens—how long will States go on to carry that name? Multinational corporations as well as social movements already reached escape velocity from the State⁴. States are—to the bewilderment of many—becoming inadequate concepts, realities insufficiently prepared for their own future and for the future of their citizens who are no longer *their* citizens (the evil is in the possessive pronoun)! Now is a moment in the history of mankind that was never planned to happen because it stretches beyond boundaries of human self-imagination. The enormous importance of the self as subject of imagining and understanding social structures is demonstrated in this observation. Ozone holes, climate perceptions, identities washed out by banks and corporations change dimensions of being human forever. The planet is not the same home anymore and we even do not know whether it will remain a home at all.

The State used to tell me the myth of my identity, which should be the cradle of my social life. Lacan reminds us how the word of the father is what he calls “the voice of the law”. But the traditional belief was, that this myth in which we unfold our self, would never exist without the State. Anarchists reject State-originated words; they are *not against the State* but *against the tyranny of the word of the State* i.e. against a very specific discourse that makes us a citizen in the form of an individual and vice versa. The name ‘Occupy Wall Street’ wants to indicate that the meaning making processes should not take place by the *market* symbolized as ‘Wall Street’ but in *public space* and thus have a different outcome. Those who understood, practiced or even criticized ‘occupy’ because of its terminology of possession, did not grasp the deep semiotic revolve at hand. The issue is a deeply layered semiotic change from possession to being, from ‘*have*’ to ‘*be*’—its spatial metaphor-change included.

The might of State and Corporation enforces new names (consumer, investor, employee, citizen, etc.) to articulate the self. But be aware, that in the inverse, the self (investor, consumer, citizen) is also needed to articulate the corporation (as once the State)! “Corporation” is the name individuals live in, as if they were an aggregation of individuals. But that name is also the name of its opposite. States fulfilled the super-determining role of *Speaker* as the “Subject” in a Language named “State”—the battle over the first-person-singular in discourse goes on during centuries. Once it created the name of a subject in Civil Law qualification as “bearer of rights and duties”. That language still unfolds when States prescribe daily life-behaviors as a balance between rights and duties, and suggest that justice is exactly that! The burden of a treacherous suggestion is exactly that *we, the people, do possess* any of these properties or powers included in the names we bear before the State *ascribes* them to us as its owners of the name “citizen”.

The tension between possessing and being comes upfront again, right in the middle of our considerations about ‘who represents who’ in the process of naming of

⁴ Jan M. Broekman & Larry Catà Backer: *Lawyers Making Meaning. The Semiotics of Law in Legal Education*, Vol. II, Springer, 2013, Ch. 9, 10.

a citizen. Citizens do *not* possess a State, or a Rule of Law, or a democracy, although all citizens are educated to say so and to think that way. The latter suggestion seems to be the product of a rule-following behavior. It fits to all legal dimensions as well as the entire discourse of the State. The idea that we *possess* the rules and its democracy, or are the responsible *owner* of the rule of law, articulates precisely the ultimate and most necessary *meaning* created by the State in order to make the State function. There is the tension between possessing and being again. *To possess* citizenship is precisely determined by Law (and Treaties in the case of the EU) under exclusion of whatever consideration of what it means *to be* a citizen. Discussions about the *quality* of citizenship are not admitted because only the fact of *possessing* citizenship is at stake. Only a citizenship as commodity is at issue, as one can read in Art.8 of the 1992 EU Maastricht Treaty. This is the lesson to learn from the hundreds of thousands individuals named the “sans papiers” (in French—which is still the language of law and diplomacy in the EU) or the “undocumented” individuals. They *are* not citizens because they *have* no valid documents. But exactly because of their burden of a value-loaded articulation are they of enormous importance in dimensions of social and virtual justice: they show their political importance in *being* what they cannot show as *possession* and that importance limits and even annihilates their involvement in any discourse of representation!

Corporations suggest that a multiple embodiment can belong to one and the same identity. States as well as corporations want us to speak as an “original subject”, as an “I” they did not enforce nor incorporate. They want us (once called citizens) to be incorporated in them by means of the belief that we perform as an original “we”, “I”, “persona” or “subject”—which is an idea that surpasses even the most radical dimensions of Marx’ analysis pertaining to the ideological components of a State, a Democracy or an Economy.

Consequently one can understand the inadequacy of a language that describes a corporation. There is no analytical word-language anymore to express the meaning of a corporation. That is in part, because the word-language we normally use, describes indeed an object that is not itself. A Wittgensteinian problem unfolds: *can a word-language describe a word-language?* What do words about words really mean, and who is the meaning-maker in that case—a poet, an ecstatic subject, and individual in trance? In the case of corporations, meaning is not lost but is—compared to the language we daily and publicly use—inverted, perverted by means of using a grammar that was made inadequate by its speakers.

A corporation is in terms of semiotic analyses, *object* (the corporate entity), *sign* (aggregation of economic activity), and *interpretation* (systematization of the forces of production, active agent of social, political, cultural and economic power) in a *grammarless cluster of meanings*, which nevertheless preserves an extreme power of socialization. This is the grammarless character of corporations: since there is no language to express the meaning of a State anymore, individuals remain in need of meanings to maintain their language and means of communication. Together with the State, they lost reference. An earlier generation used to live in the space of occidental metaphysics, and could reduce the dimensions of their lives to that space.

Globalization makes this delineation between an *arche* and a *telos* senseless and inhuman. However, the question remains, whether an individual in the occident can understand oneself beyond that master dimension. Are we in the name of humanity obliged, or even condemned, to deny our *arche*? What state of trance can inspire to meet the question?

Scene 5: Standing

Such meaning has its peak in the long history of a “legal subject”, which Roman Law already understood as a “bearer of rights and duties”. That determination implies an appeasing balance between the often viciously split ego-parts. It creates a balance between two coherent components: duties and rights. That thought pattern functions for centuries as a force to bridge the cliff between components of the ego, between “I” and “I” in social relations, between correct and incorrect, truth and untruth, between rational and irrational in life. Civil Law has solely understood the two as completing each other, so that—not unlike Immanuel Kant—the unity of the bearer, the so-called “natural” person was guaranteed. But modern times made it doubtful whether this inherited definition of the subject in society fits to our modern thinking. A shift of emphasis can be registered in Civil Law, where, not unlike determinations in Common Law *a rights-based position gained the upper hand of a duty-based understanding*. Two arguments clash because of their contrasting positions. One is, that individuals have rights because of their practice of duties. The other is that individuals have duties as a result from practicing rights. Outlines of the social image of man depend on the managing of each position involved. An interesting profile related to the phenomenon of trance becomes already vaguely visible. On the one hand, when an individual acquires rights because of his exercise of duties, he firmly *stands*. On the other, when an individual acquires duties because of his exercise of rights, he *dances*. The contrast between these two parallels the contrast between *possession* and *being*. Rights as a *commodity* contrast duties as *being*.

When the *Council of Europe*, promoting international co-operation to develop legal standards (among which human rights), created 1949 an International Court (European Court of Human Rights) before which individuals could defend their rights bestowed upon them by a Treaty or other legal documents, a *rights-based interpretation of man* was created—a direction, which enforced concordance with existing Common Law conceptions. An Occidental civilization, worried about the global maintenance of human rights, wanted to solve its worries through legal language expressed in Treaties, Statutes, Doctrines and Court traditions.

The *human subject as a bearer of rights* seems the major actor on the global scene today. A rights position is quoted everywhere, and struggles to maintain those positions are almost global. Not only States but also non-state corporations and comparable legal personalities govern in national or international context. In other

words, to govern is no longer a prerogative for States, but also of other “legal persons” in the Civil Law meaning of the word. Their legal capacity is concentrated in the expression “standing”—the transition from *subject as bearer of rights and duties* towards a *subject with standing* might be understood as an essential feature of our occidental image of man. It is in essence an antipode of a trance-situation: all ego-parts are rigidly coordinated into one stronghold position: that of well determined rights-in-possession.

Standing is thus the word for the situation of possessing legal rights in a judicial forum to influence the conduct of others. Standing requirements must be fulfilled to have rights explored in the form of a legal case (Common Law). And standing indicates a firm position in the context of a split ego: the self is stable in a univocal rights position, which becomes threatened when a plurality of ego-components reigns. The latter seems the case when ecstatic or trance situations are publicly allowed. No wonder that legal regulations are issued in order to prevent such situations to become public.

That position is at issue in all forms of criticism pertaining to human rights in general and as a global devise in particular. Individuals from non-Western cultures do not experience any protection as the result from their presupposed ownership of rights. In Western societies, many *indignados* are not able or willing to understand the value of rights that do not fit into their cosmological, religious, ethical, socio-economic and/or environmental world-view.

Scene 6: Trance and Commerce

If governing implies a risk of trance-abuse, then modern commerce implies those risks even to a higher degree. Those risks are structurally embedded in the rights-based position of standing. If States and corporations exercise governance power in equal ways and with equal force, and if corporations (in their form of legal personality emphasizing their rights-based attitude) have even more power because of their global dimensions, then it is evident that the latter reign the souls of human individuals more importantly. In doing so, they influence the dynamics of ego-components whilst creating an inner dialogue that focuses on immediate satisfaction of emotionally loaded commerce decisions. *A rights-based view goes hand in hand with a choice-based understanding of human participants in social life and its socio-economic dimensions.* As in all considerations of this text, the essence of the self is in the dynamics of its ego-components.

Discs with trance-music—Home, Dance, Breaks, Techno etc.—that spread their energy via YouTube or other social media, are an interesting example here. Trance discs enjoy the consumer as a technical commodity, but can they contribute to the dynamics of possession as a market commodity? *One self's enjoyment relates to another self's property here.* Notice the importance of the RAVE music in the context

of Trance. RAVE(s) indicate the gathering of people around, and/or listening to, and/or dancing to electronic music played by a set of live djs. High standard techno music excelled shortly after 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall) in then illegal sets and was accompanied by drug consumption. The RAVE(s) were organized in empty factories, or in free nature, in woods, on beaches etc. They produced a deeply felt expression of resistance against commercialization and legalizing of any type of trance. The contrast between RAVE music and disco is of interest here. The disco shows how commerce tends to strip the essence from trance. A dj in a RAVE creates music in a unique way, which will never be performed in a disco where discs are heard but no music is made.

The dynamics inherent in such commercial institutions, are repeated everywhere: the enjoyment of a wonderful multiplicity of ego-components (up to its endangering dispersion) goes hand in hand with the desire for a stabilizing unification of those same components—a desire that will never come true, but constitutes the dynamics of trance.

That mechanism has global dimensions; it reaches beyond individual cultural barriers, but also the worries of multiculturalism. TV commercials, activities and architecture of shopping malls and the business of advertisement are all based on buyers' decisions preferably made *in a state of trance*. Rational and rights-based approaches are dangerous for immediate commodity-directed choices. Feeling limited by credit budgets confronts with legal views on a world that is banned from the delirium in the shopping mall. Repetition of ego-component preferences must be ordered above all rational decision-making and calculation of a rights-based ego. Large parts of our global economy are based on trance or trance-like situations, which are not provoked by drugs but by the seductions of commodities on the market. That seduction is implied in many legal cases, in intellectual property- or trademark issues, in e-communication and www provisions. Law fights the trance, which social life promotes: buy and consume first, dance your trance when enjoying your commodity—and change your ego-base later!

The relationship between trance and commerce shows one of the most influential forces that define the concept of trance: commercial structures create a psychological state of mind, which is an enchantment as if induced by a magical incantation. This induction is wrapped in images transmitted in electronic media and often no longer distinguishable from our daily patterns of communication. A fragile consciousness functions, as if it concerns a sleep in which we are awake. That psychical state is in accordance with major factors defining a trance concept. One more step can be made, if one considers that the public at TV screens or walking in our malls is often treated as individuals beyond any rights-based decision making capacity, because their state of mind is made fragile so that rational and voluntary action are poor, weakened or completely lacking. The theory of the “hidden persuaders” is effective in this regard, and trance could very well be one of their main concepts. Do these persuaders not aim at a condition of consumers in which they are ultimately liable to possession of commodities around them? An enhanced suggestibility favors those features: possession becomes a means of expressing as if it

regards a natural language, which can be heard in conversations and songs, read in the social media and expressed in the architecture of shops, malls, vacation locations and the like.

Conclusions

Scenes of the Self remain Scenes

To enter the scenes does not imply that any of them leads to a consistent theory of trance or trance-like states of mind. Trance is not an exceptional phenomenon, nor an unknown human power at the borderlines of western culture.

Platonic and/or Kantian insights in the multiplicity of the ego-components lead us to an understanding of the importance of an inner dialogue—in other words, a conversation of the self within the self. That approach serves an understanding of trance and its proximity to ecstasy.

Positions in trance do in general oppose legal positions. Both order society and provide rules of behavior—but how differently do they! The contrast might be fruitful to understand broad anthropological nuances of a multicultural society.

Our global economy tends to provoke trance-like psychological situations in order to intensify consumer behavior. The latter needs a trance-bound decision pattern rather than a rights-based rationality in decision-making.

