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## THE THREE SYMBOLICITIES

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### *Abstract*

I intend to explore the three phylogenetic levels of symbolicity in humanity.
1- Assertion of Existence: existential symbolism.
2- Description of Experience: Experiential and "ethical" symbolism.
3- Creation/invention of Transcendence: transcendental symbolism.
I intend to follow the phylogenic development of human symbolism from the emergence of Homo Sapiens to today with three vast periods.
I then will consider the phylogeny of the symbolicity of humans from isolated "first" words to complex conceptual language leading to the triad of creative symbolism:
1- Construction and transmission of knowledge: science, technology, education.
2- Artistic creation in the linguistic field (poetry, fiction) and in the non-linguistic fields (music, carving, painting, dancing, singing even).
3- Spirituality in Life (survival, coping with death, the supernatural); in philosophy (explaining life and death, an ethical approach); in religion (answer the simple question: where does this world, plus life and humanity, come from?)
The conclusion will reject post-postmodern approaches, often left-leaning, such as Marcel Gauchet's, Ray Kurzweil's, Yuval Noah Harari's, with the "program" of humanity set on absolute individualism; the sole model of representative democracy; the excessive prediction of a singularity to happen soon (science and technology for Kurzweil; religious for Harari and his Homo Deus; social for Gauchet in the form of the "revolutionary" upheaval of the masses).
My conclusion will go the same way as Kai-Fu Lee and Chen Qiufan in their book (2021) AI 2041, Ten Visions For Our Future. Nothing is written in advance in human history and scientific research.

Keywords: symbolism; transcendental symbolism; Homo Deus; phylogeny;

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We are dealing here with a purely human dimension, which developed along with humanity, starting probably before Homo Sapiens 300,000 years ago, with Homo Erectus who was the first long-distance migrating Hominin, and Homo Neanderthalensis and Denisovan Hominins. We could even discuss the case of Homo Heidelbergensis who is stated as a migrating Hominin. Migration requires a collective project, great coordination, and a lot of communicational and surviving competencies. The first

of these surviving competencies is the capability to have man-made weapons or tools, and their fabrication requires a long process of mental designing, manual work, and sharing-cum-improving knowledge from one generation to the next generations. This requires some communication and even some vocal communication that will produce with Homo Sapiens modern human language. All that requires some level of mental vision and symbolicity.

That symbolicity develops into three symbolisms. The first symbolism is the fact that these tools, these weapons, the communicational vocal or non-vocal means, the knowledge behind it all is an assertion – and development – of the existence of the species, which means some consciousness of the necessity to guarantee the survival of the species, the community, individuals. These three survivals require some symbolicity and symbolism to be effective and with Hominins, we cannot only follow instincts. Surviving becomes a human project. This is **existential symbolism**.

The second level of symbolicity has to do with the description and recording in the collective memory of experience, what has been done, how it was done, where it was done, the routes traveled in the migrations or the hunting parties, all the signs seen and discriminated during the migration or the hunting party; the experiential techniques devised both accidentally and purposefully when cutting or polishing stone tools or weapons; the observational knowledge acquired when preparing, cooking or seasoning food for eating, or beverages for drinking; the common methods to take care of the dead by burying, burning, exposing the corpses in a way or another; and probably all methods at once and overlapping within a community or over several communities. This is **experiential symbolism**, and it brings up an assessment: what is good hence useful, or bad hence useless. This is the very beginning of some ethical symbolism with the emergence of some "norms" or "normal ways" of doing things.

The third level has to do with what is neither direct material existence nor direct material experience. Here we are dealing with something that is only mental, that is a creation or invention of something that does not really materialistically exist or that cannot be really touched, embraced physically. Here we are dealing with mental representations that idealize reality and state the existence of a supernatural, surreal reality that can only be evoked via some representation, either material in and on stone, horn, bone, ivory, wood, or evanescent because only vocal and here is the melting pot where language is going to develop. Language itself has three articulations that dictate the phylogeny that produced all the languages in the world. But this is not the object of this paper. This symbolism transcends material experience or existence to reach mental **transcendental symbolism**.

## 2- PHYLOGENIC DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SYMBOLISM: ARTICULATED LANGUAGE

Here again, we can find three phases in this development within Homo Sapiens. This phylogeny was the development of what Homo Sapiens received from the other Hominins they developed from, in fact, Homo Erectus and Homo Ergaster. There must have been some elements too among both Homo Neanderthalensis and Denisovan Hominins, but apart from their weapons and tools, we do not have much from them. The fact that these two Hominins evolved from Homo Erectus (with the alternative that in Europe, Homo Neanderthalensis may have evolved from Homo Heidelbergensis who would have migrated from Africa and who might be a Hominin branching off from Homo Erectus) but in two separate areas, Europe for Homo Neanderthalensis and Asia for Denisovan Hominins (with proved reproductive contact between the two around the Urals), make them connected to Homo Sapiens, but Homo Sapiens does not descend from them. Yet the fact that their DNA is in our DNA in varying quantities shows that Homo Sapiens was "compatible" enough with these two species at the level of communication and physiological compatibility. Note Homo Sapiens met with Homo Neanderthalensis in the Middle East and then Europe, whereas they met with Denisovan Hominins in Central Asia, the Himalayas, and Southeast Asia. The fact that the DNA of these two Hominin species is in our Homo Sapiens DNA shows the Neanderthalensis and Denisovan women who got pregnant from Homo Sapiens males were integrated into the Homo Sapiens communities, be it only to guarantee the proper growth of the children, and their feeding for at least one year on the mother's milk. The fact that in Southeast Asia and Melanesia the Denisovan DNA proportion is at least twice as much as in the rest of Asia or with Neanderthalensis DNA in non-Asian Homo Sapiens, seems to indicate the integration of the Denisovan Hominins there was more than just a few mothers who were impregnated by Homo Sapiens males. Note that the fact these two Hominin species did not survive seems to prove the extra DNA necessary to keep and increase the dynamism of the species was not integrated into these two species, whereas their DNA was integrated

into the Homo Sapiens species, providing the latter with outside DNA, and increasing their physiological power. It is well-known in-breeding leads to degeneracy.

The point here is that as soon as 300,000 years ago, in Black Africa, Homo Sapiens started emerging and they developed symbolical activities. Beads have been found in Morocco that are just as old as that emergence (which may prove it started earlier) meaning some Homo Sapiens must have traveled there in those distant times. But it is important to understand that these symbolical activities (beads, the use of ochre, the use of fire, be it only for changing the color of ochre, but also for cooking and maybe other technical possibilities with weapons and tools, with processing animal hides, etc.) require communication to explain how it is done, to transmit it to younger people and later generations, and this communication requires the development of language, and this is the first very systematic and well shared symbolical production and activity of Homo Sapiens. It is necessary to state this development of articulated language as soon as 300,000 years ago, and there is no articulated language that is not symbolical. Even the non-articulated calls of monkeys are symbolic because they mean something that they are not, they mean danger and even the type of menace that is endangering the peace of the monkey community, though the vowels and consonants they use in these calls are in no way linguistic because they do not use any rotation of these vowels or consonants. The calls are opportunistic, but they are stabilized in monkey species and communities. There are two reasons for that. The first one is that the monkey cannot produce more sounds than the five or six sounds they use. So, they make do with what they have, and they make do a lot less than what humans with the rotation of vowels and consonants would actually produce. The second reason is that these calls are shared by the communities within each species because they are always addressed to other members of the community who are all from the same species. The limited means are physiological but the common extension of these means in the calls themselves is educational. Monkeys learn from other monkeys the calls and the symbolic value of the calls.

A note should be added here about some recently observed practices among Chimpanzees in which a mother uses some bugs to heal a wound on her son, which seems to mean they can observe and elaborate some knowledge from trial and observation and implement it. Bugs do contain some antibiotic, antiviral, and anthelmintic properties. Such prosocial and empathetic behaviors are quite common among animals, especially from mother to child, but here a naturally available element is used to heal a wound. This requires a lot more research to make sure it is not mimicry (what does it mean to be in the wild with humans all around?) and is really effective.[1]

Homo Sapiens inherit from their ancestors, Homo Erectus and Homo Ergaster, what is probably a limited rotation of vowels and consonants with a limited number of vowels and consonants because the articulatory apparatus of these ancestral species is less developed than the same articulatory apparatus in Homo Sapiens, and that is due to the shift with Homo Sapiens from plain walking, maybe slightly fast (hence each step starts from the heel to the toes, to bipedal running long distance and fast, each step starting from the toes and not implying the heel that does not touch the ground and works like a spring, and this shift required a complete restructuring of the respiratory and articulatory breathing system coordinated to the rest of the body. Articulated language is a collateral side-effect of this shift to this type of running.

What I say here is that there would have been no migrations out of Black Africa if human language had not been developed. All the older Hominins species from which Homo Sapiens was or was not descending would probably not have disappeared, though without articulated language survival was not exactly made easy. But what some call the "symbolical revolution" that they position around 70-50,000 years ago would never have been possible if articulated language had not been evolved and produced over this very long time starting around 300,000 years ago and ending with the last migrations out of Black Africa between 70,000 and 50,000 years ago. It is this 230,000-250,000-year-long period that is neglected by most historians, archaeologists, and other anthropologists because we cannot find any evidence of symbolism, particularly of course of this linguistic symbolism. This neglect is only possible because you cannot find any hard evidence of the existence of oral linguistic communication before writing has been invented and preserved on durable media. Sorry, we do not have any recording of the communicational abilities of Homo Sapiens 250,000 years ago, not to speak of all the other Hominins. That's amazing that Hariri for example falls into this trap. It all started 70,000 years ago, he says. This is

absurd and simply unrealistic. Maybe we should lend a couple of tape recorders to these early Homo Sapiens to record some of their linguistic production.

But we have to be slightly more precise and explore the communicational symbolicity's matrix that we can also call the communicational situational matrix. Here is a sketch of this matrix.
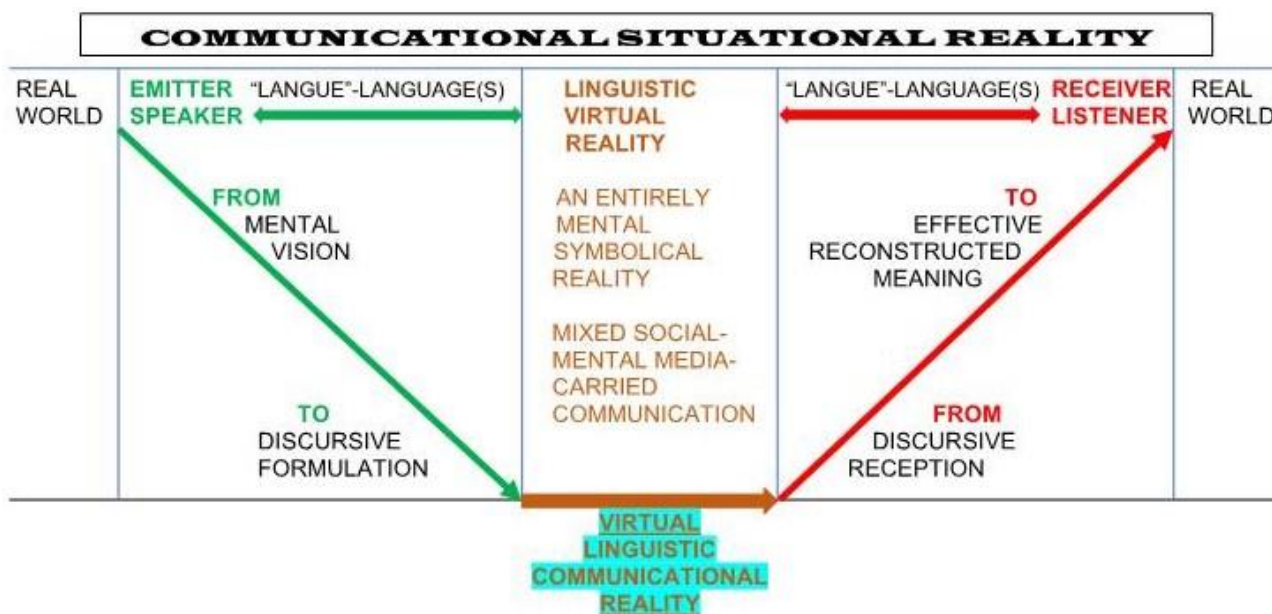


The formal model is that of Gustave Guillaume's "radical binary tensor" (see below for the discussion of this model).[2] This is a reality, and it exists as soon as two human beings in a common locale enter a conversation. The heart of the model is the vertical and central "Linguistic Virtual Reality." It is a reality because language is an entirely mental symbolical reality that is invested in the communicational situation that is both social and mental, and furthermore carried by the various media that are enabling the communication itself. This heart is the Virtual Linguistic Communicational Reality of this matrix, and the embracing phrase "Virtual Reality" is of course intended to allude to all communicational media that create a reality that is not really real, like the radio, television, the cinema, and many other media of the sort, actually including the telephone, and of course the Internet.

We have to develop the first tensor, the Emitter's or Speaker's tensor. It starts with some pre-linguistic context that brings up some communicational elements that are not linguistic, in nature, like the identities of the two (or more) people. Then it uses the "langue" (Saussure's or Guillaume's meaning) the Emitter has inherited and constructed from his practice since before his birth. This linguistic "langue" discriminates the elements the Speaker wants to bring up. It names and classifies them. It then conceptualizes these elements at various potential levels of conceptualization. The Emitter then produces with these elements the **intended meaning** that he is going to embed in a discursive utterance by bringing together the "words" he needs to produce an effective message that satisfies the semantics and syntax of the particular language the utterance is going to be in. The Speaker can then add some body language like intonation (in some languages that is part of the semantics and syntax, like in tonal languages). That's the final message or utterance with its **effective meaning**, effective for the speaker of course, but it is in fact the real message with a potential multiple meaning that the receiver is going to hear (or read).

If we have to develop the third tensor, that of the interpretation of the message by the receiver we have to start with his pre-linguistic context that may include the media or the general situation in which the message has been produced in this discursive reception. Though the Emitter and the Receiver are supposed to speak the same language, they may have differences in their respective "langues." This "langue" competence is essential here for the Receiver. He is going to use the discourse analysis he has in his mind that enables him to understand a message, which is to say to decipher the meaning, in phase with his own abilities. He has to hear the sounds properly, to recognize and identify the various units of this

discourse, meaning here mostly what we could call words, and capture the sentences, and the meaning these may carry according to the words the Receiver has recognized and the personal mental knowledge of the "langue" he has of the language. After that, the Receiver will enter a phase of **Discursive Reconstruction** by attributing meaning to the various words, phrases, and sentences of the utterance. That will be the **Effective Reconstructive Meaning** of the message, and it is important to keep in mind this Effective Reconstructed Meaning might have differences from the original Intended Meaning of the original Speaker. That should provide the Receiver with the means of understanding a situation and engaging in some kind of response that might be correct, i.e., in phase with the Intended Meaning of the Emitter, or incorrect. Then in this latter case, questions will have to come up from either participant to clarify the Intended Meaning and correct the Effective Reconstructed Meaning.

All that is absolutely mental, hence virtual, and symbolical, starting around 300,000 years ago, and yet it is a reality that commands the situation of Homo Sapiens then and governs all the projects the various communities may have, and first of all their projects of expansion and migration. Here the reality is the mental existence of this linguistic tool that is developing and growing along clear-cut phylogenic lines dictated by the various physical abilities Homo Sapiens acquired when he became a long distant fast bipedal runner.

## 3- PHYLOGENIC DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SYMBOLISM: CAVE-PAINTING (AND WRITING)

We can put some dates on these two stages of human symbolical development. The various paintings in caves in the world go back to around 45,000 years ago. The oldest writing system is identified as the Sumerian cuneiforms and is dated as going back to about 3,500 BCE. In both cases, this dating is tentative and based only on material archaeological evidence. In both cases the length of time to devise the ability, and the probable attempts on movable media that were not durable in any way like bark, even wood must be envisaged as the trying and developing media for this ability. The dating is definitely not going back enough. As for the Sumerian cuneiforms, some clay tablets with some inscriptions performed with the stylus that was to be used for writing the cuneiforms, were found in Romania and were dated as going back to something like 6,000 BCE. These tablets do not really contain anything written in cuneiforms, only inscriptions that we can consider as some kind of recording of commercial data. But the stylus and the clay tablet already existed that long ago, nearly three thousand years earlier than the official date of the invention of the writing system. When the two artifacts necessary to develop cuneiform writing were available, had been devised, then the writing system started emerging because the two artifacts were devised for that very purpose, imprinting in the clay some marks to record something, some transaction for example. The idea then of recording various data on a clay tablet with a stylus had been germinating in the minds of people even before the artifacts were invented. These tablets in Romania also show that the Sumerians were merchants, and their commercial territory was a lot vaster than their historical or political territory. It also implies that this technique was probably used by other people than the Sumerians. That should not surprise us since some researchers call this writing system the Akkadian writing system because it was used by the Akkadians, and these researchers do not see one essential fact. Akkadian was a Semitic root-language whereas Sumerian was probably one of the oldest languages left behind by the migration of the Indo-Iranians to the west who will become the Indo-Europeans, and that happened around 12-10,000 BCE. The fuzziness about the fate of the last wave of the third migration out of Black Africa that took place around 45,000 BCE is at stake here. They did not move beyond the Middle East and in fact, since the agglutinative Turkic speaking people were already in the Middle East, in what was to become Mesopotamia, they remained on the Iranian Plateau till after the end of the Ice Age. It is these Indo-Iranian people who migrated to the west, becoming the Indo-Europeans, and to the east becoming the Indo-Aryans. The present dominant language of Iran is the modern descendant of the common Indo-Iranian language from which the two Indo-European and Indo-Aryan families evolved. The fact that the Akkadians at the time when the Sumerians devised their cuneiform writing system, were the scribes of the Sumerian political entity, has fed the confusion. The writing system is Sumerian and not Akkadian. And Sumerian is not a root-language. It is not an agglutinative language either. Like all Indo-European and Indo-Aryan languages, it is a highly synthetic third articulation language. That makes it possible to have many words that are only one vowel, which would not be possible in Semitic root-languages which are consonantal, and their writing system does not

have vowels, except alef when this vowel is the initial sound of a root, like אָדָם to be read from right to left as "Adam" (alef-dalet-mem) in Hebrew.

We have the same problem with Maya and its writing system. Since the oldest archaeological evidence is represented by the glyphs on stone constructions or the ruins of these constructions, we assume the writing system was invented at the date we can attribute to these ruins or buildings. That is of course tentative for two reasons. First, the Mayas must have used other non-durable media before carving the glyphs, as we know they did all along with the famous codices that were all but four burned by the Spaniards in the 16$^{th}$ century. Second, it must have taken some time to devise this extremely complex writing system, even in its oldest forms. In these oldest forms, most glyphs seem to be representational, but some can easily be identified as diacritic, hence syntactic marks or phonological symbols corresponding to some functional marks. To invent such a writing system that would take about one thousand years to move from the oldest forms to the classic elaboration, it must have taken many generations to analyze the language into semiological units and then to attach to these discriminated elements the glyphs themselves and then to devise the composition of the glyphs, both within each glyph (most of them or composite) and within the text that is generally a line of glyphs. Without asking the simple question of where the Mayas came from and when and how they came to the idea of writing what they were saying and inventing or devising this particular writing system that is unique among the Mesoamerican people, at the time of course. And not to mention the invention and devising of the architecture that produced the buildings on which the glyphs were carved.

We cannot give any precise and objective evaluation of this devising phase of such painting, building, and writing abilities, but it must have taken quite a few generations of painters and writers to produce the elaborate forms we have, in a way, archaeologically brought back to life. Life expectancy was about 29 years then. So, we can think that one thousand years are something like fifty generations measured as being twenty years long each. One thousand years seem reasonable for the Sumerian writing system, though we found a three-thousand-year-long gap between the Romanian tablets and the "oldest" Sumerian writing tablets. For painting, it must have been even longer because of the project that has to be developed, devised, and designed, all that mentally among communities, with some individuals who are more active than the others, but a lot of communication to exchange and elaborate the project, along with probably a few sketches and trials. A tremendous number of tools and materials have to be invented and produced to have the paints, in different colors. Those colors can be produced with ochre, but they have to know how to change the color of ochre from yellow to red by heating it. Black has to be devised practically from nothing since it does not exist in nature. Black flowers are not exactly common. Charcoal is not common either. The painting reveals different tools were used as brushes. Different techniques were used including blow-painting for the handprints. And above all how could they reach the deeper layers and caves where there was no natural light, and how did they manage to have light to paint on the rockface, and that light had to come from some burning device, but these caves are limited in volume, some of them very limited, which means these burning artifacts providing light used the oxygen of these caves that were not necessarily well ventilated, and that means they had to face and control the possible asphyxiation the painter could suffer.
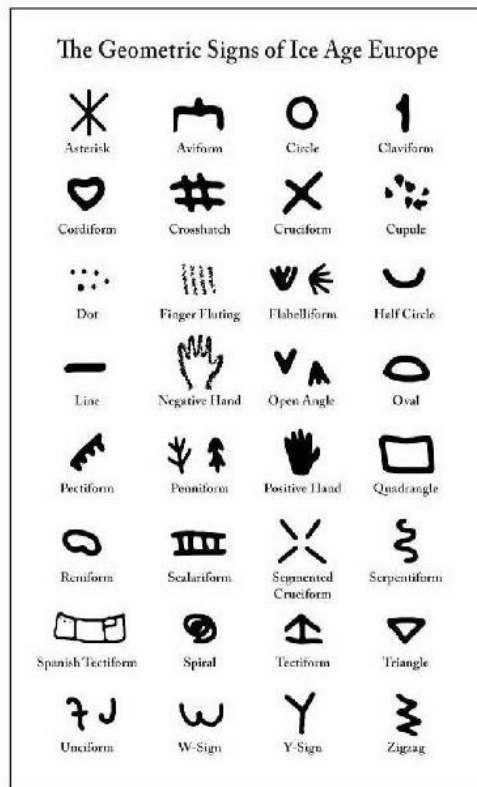
Genevieve von Petzinger's signs

All these stages or steps along the way of these symbolical representations in the caves, or artifacts carved or polished from antlers, bones, ivory horns, teeth, etc., contain a spiritual dimension. We cannot imagine they do not contain such a spiritual dimension. In fact, we can easily accept the idea that the spiritual dimension is the motivation of these representational paintings. We do not know what these spiritual considerations were, and we cannot know them, but it is not imaginable that these already advanced Homo Sapiens who had been developing their linguistic tools for more than 200,000 years did not have a spiritual objective in these representational paintings. Then the paintings are not only representational, but they are also symbolical.

But there is more. Genevieve von Petzinger[3] in her book *The First Signs* (New York, Atria Paperbacks, 2017) collected some of the diacritic symbols or signs present repetitively in the caves, most of the time in lines or clusters. She considers they are signs, and she is right about that. These signs have a semiotic dimension that makes them symbolical. We do not know what they may mean, what use they may fulfill, what function they had in what we may think was the ritualistic practices of the painters for one, and the audience for two, and the whole rockface painting, one rockface after another, in each structure of each rockface. But one thing is sure: it is symbolic. Some archaeologists consider these symbols, at least some of them, to be only the projection of inner architectural structures of our nervous and brain systems. These are called entoptic signs.

Some anthropologists have tried to study what these entoptic signs become when people are in an altered state of consciousness produced by the use of some drug (hashish for example or mood-altering drugs) or situational circumstances (isolation, isolation in total darkness and restrained space, deprivation of food and drink, of sleep, ritual suffering caused by all sorts of physical duress some may call torture). This is practiced by some ethnic groups on earth like the San people in Southern Africa, some others in Papua New Guinea, or some more in Amazonia. Most of these rituals or procedures are considered inhumane in our modern world, and may even be banned in the world, though they still exist. Then the people in such an altered state of consciousness can produce all sorts of signs, as shown in the next chart.[4]



This concept of entoptic phenomena is fascinating, and it is not at all purely visual or graphic. There are also some auditory phenomena to be considered as entoptic, even if they are no longer "optic." But it is believed people have some rhythms naturally embedded in their bodies, like the beating of the heart, and some other more complex rhythms. In the same way, many people believe sounds are embedded in our mind, coming from some resonance or special personal attachment to some sounds or clusters of sounds remembered by the mind of a person who has been in contact with them very early. It is why it is recommended for mothers, or fathers, to sing to newborn babies and children. These rhythms and sounds have then a symbolical value like in the case of hypnosis when a simple whistled note may

bring the hypnotized person back to reality. But let's push aside this dimension that has very significant importance in tonal languages of course, in intonation in any language, and in the vocal reactions of a person to an intense situation, be it of stress, trauma, or joy.

The idea here is that the "artists" in paleolithic times were painting in such altered states of consciousness I have mentioned that we could also consider, since they were willfully looked for, as "enhanced" states of consciousness. Another famous case of rock painting is in Baja California, Mexico. these have not been dated properly, and actually do not seem to be properly datable and they have not been connected to any real population, hence language and culture. Here is one example from Rock Paintings of Sierra de San Francisco.



We can also consider the artifacts Alexander Marshack studied and I have re-interpreted in my book on his main work. The simple dents or scratches or marks on the movable artifacts he studied were interpreted by him as representing the moon cycle, though such an interpretation led to no practical use for these Palaeolithic human beings. I re-interpreted them as representing the menstrual cycles of women and the pregnancy cycles of women. Then these records of such phenomena became very meaningful since they were able to predict the fertility phase of women precisely for impregnation which is essential for the survival and expansion of the communities and the species. They could also predict the difficult moments of the pregnancy cycle, its length, the end of it, etc., and here we can easily measure this pregnancy in moon cycles rather than in solar days. The connection between the two cyclical phenomena is quite easily seen as obvious. And I want to insist here that such inscriptions or records cannot be separated from "counting." Those who believe that in this already advanced phase of Homo Sapiens's development, these Homo Sapiens could not count, have it wrong. They have it wrong because the development of articulated language implies counting because it implies singular that has to be extracted from global inner compact plural and various levels of extraction before this unit with quadrial (four), trial (three) and dual (two), and probably "quintial" (five). And then multiplication could move up to the plural per se. The unit, "one" was proved by Joseph Greenberg[5] and Merritt Ruhlen[6] to be the same universal word for "finger," that is to say "tik."

> "Merritt observed that you had a very similar phonetic shape for a word that, in one
> language, could mean 'finger,' in another, 'point,' and in a third language, 'one out of many,'"

explains SFI External Professor George Starostin, who co-directs the ongoing EHL project. [EHL, Evolution of Human Languages, an international project on the linguistic prehistory of humanity coordinated by the Santa Fe Institute.] "He observed that words with this kind of phonetic shape are found all over the globe in one of these meanings, and it can't be just a coincidence." ("Remembering Merritt Ruhlen," Santa Fe Institute, August 19, 2021, https://www.santafe.edu/news-center/news/remembering-merritt-ruhlen)
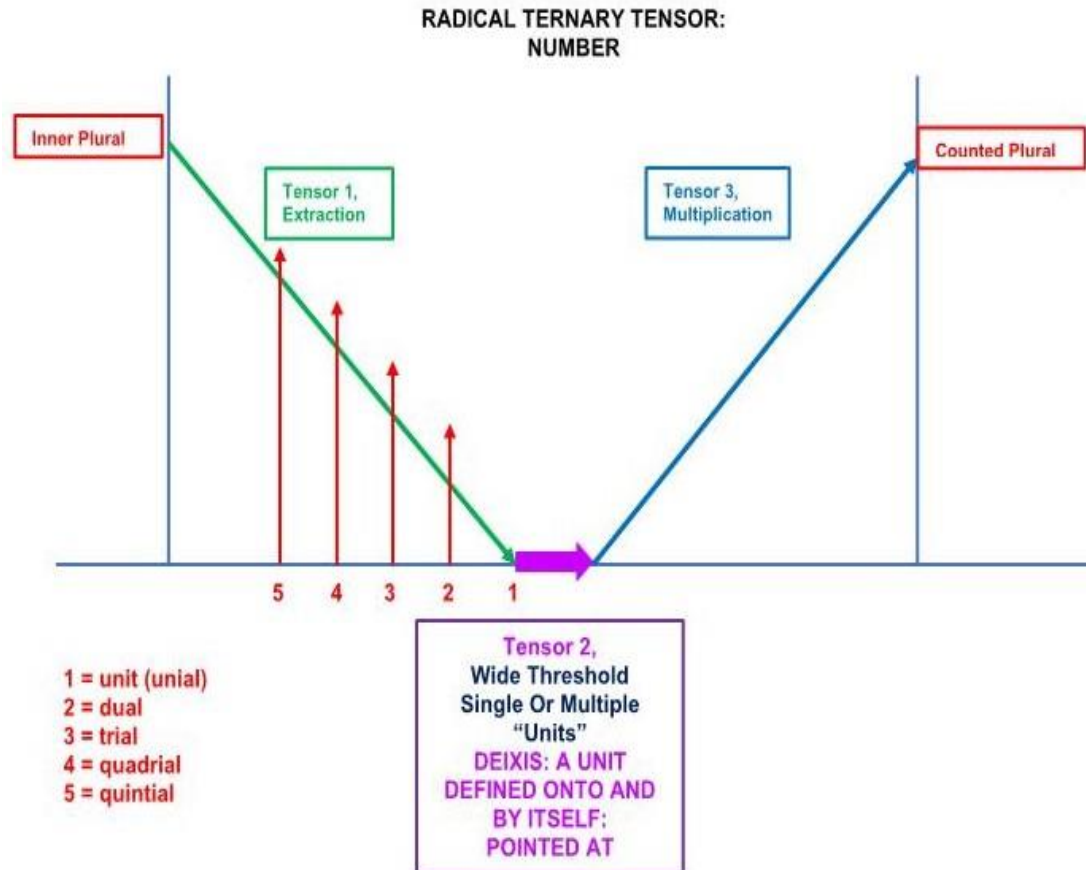


What is important here is the fact that "one" is extracted as "one out of many," that it is also a "point" and here we can see these long lines of dots in the caves which can easily appear as the multiplication of one dot into many, and that it may be the "finger" that points at you, the deictic finger. This could easily be expanded into the fundamental three operations of both numbering or counting, and definite or/and indefinite (plus in this latter case of nominal extension, "generic" extension). The extracted unit "one" (number) when it is deictically defined on and by itself is the turning point between the extraction of the singular unit from the compact undifferentiated inner plural ("one" as compared to an uncounted inner plural), then the deictic inversion of the mental movement (this "one" as compared with or referred to itself) to produce counted plural with the multiplication that ensues this extraction, and deictic reassertion.

In the same way, the extracting tensor produces the unit, and hence this extraction is the indefiniteness extension of the indefinite article (one or several units referred to a vaster but indefinite plural). The deictic is also the turning point at the end of this indefiniteness tensor and it refers to one unit or a group of several units, counted or not by the way, to itself or themselves. This is the mental basis of the definiteness tensor just the same way as the deictic in Germanic languages is the basis of the definite article that refers the concerned items to themselves or itself. When you consider the two radical ternary tensors you can see the application of the generic operation onto the two-tiered system that will produce

that generic value (one or several representing all) in three positions: plural indefinite, singular indefinite, and singular definite, not plural definite in English, whereas in French you will have three generic positions too: singular indefinite, singular definite and plural definite. In English plural definite is excluded because the definite article has kept a strong deictic value. In French, the indefinite plural is excluded because the plural indefinite article integrates the preposition "de" which is an extracting preposition.

If we go back to the symbols we were discussing, we can of course take every single "geometry figure" or "symbol" and try to find out its/their proper symbolical value. This would be difficult and Leroi-Gourhan has vaccinated us, or at least me, against projecting our own phantasms into what we consider. Leroi-Gourhan projected female and male values into every single representational element, particularly animals. This is probably not very useful. At the same time, he did not push far enough on the representations of men and women in this paleolithic art, on the rock face, or movable objects. One thing is for me sure: all the geometric figures or symbols are meaningful. Do they only represent some kind of counting, when they are dots for example, or do they represent more abstract values, incantations, discourses to other humans in the audience of the rituals, or the supernatural beings beyond the rock surface, beyond the skin surface of the men and women going through the rituals? And just as beyond the rock face an abstract supernatural spiritual world can be imagined, beyond the human skin of the person engaged in the ritual there might be an abstract, supernatural, and spiritual being that today we call the mind or the soul. The question, of course, is the type of rituals these human beings can be submitted and submit themselves to. I have discussed the case of impregnation-rituals. But there might be others like endurance, stamina, the ability to live through duress, pain, suffering, and even torture.

I consider all these paintings as being, first of all, the result of long processes of designing, devising, and producing, and second, as being a language, a story or a storyboard that only the initiated people could read, hence could tell, and if we accept the idea that most (75%) of the initiated people were the women who produced these stories, then women have a tremendous symbolical position in Pre-Ice-Age paleolithic times. This changes with the Magdalenian after the Ice Age and the development of agriculture and herding. This has to be compared with what David Graeber and David Wengrow[7] say in *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*.

So far, the symbolical elements we have identified are the very reality of Homo Sapiens who had to go through these symbolical developments to become Homo Sapiens, and it took him/her/them at least 250,000 years to reach "maturity" in the prehistorical caves he was decorating and inhabiting, or is it in the vast migrations out of Black Africa in which he/she/they launched themselves?

## 4- PHYLOGENIC DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SYMBOLISM: WRITING

The writing system that is considered the oldest one in the world is entirely symbolical since there is no representational link between the writing of a word and the item this word may refer to. Even what is considered as true for most languages, that the /m/ sound is connected to the sucking movement of the lips of the baby when breastfeeding, and through this connection, to the mother, can explain why this sound with the simple /a/ vowel refers to the mother in many languages, if not all. But even so, this is true for oral language for which /ma/ becomes symbolical of the mother, it cannot be seen as symbolical in writing, especially in Sumerian since the writing system is absolutely not representational.

In Sumerian, we have this /ma/ connection with the mother in the word "ama" meaning mother . Note the presence of another sign inside this sign, what is called a star that generally refers to the word "an" for sky generally used as an initial element in front of the title of a king to assert his divine nature. In the cuneiform symbol here this "star" gives to the "mother" a divine dimension. We should discuss the heavy presence of women among Sumerian gods, the best-known being Inanna, the "Queen of
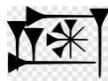
Heaven" and goddess of the city of Uruk, , which reads "dingir Inanna." The first element is a classifier, generally not produced orally, that indicates the divine nature of the character whose name follows, Inanna. This divine nature of the mother is an element that is not discussed here, but it is

extremely important. Note the word "ama" for mother starts with the initial vowel /a/ that means "water" in Sumerian and has a divine nature of its own since it is the basis of Sumerian agriculture and civilization. It, in fact, refers to "water, watercourse, canal; seminal fluid; offspring; father; flood." A long discussion would be needed here on such elements. The point for us is that we have the /m/-breast-feeding reference in this word for mother with the added divine element and the reference to water. But it is in no way representational. It is purely symbolic, even the star is a very schematic or sketchy representation of a star, though it stands as a symbol of divineness. This star symbol evolved through time and got reduced to something less referential to a star in its pattern. This introduces the idea that the writing might have been representational for some items at least at the beginning, as one source says.[8]

| 3000 BC | 2800 BC | 2500 BC | 1800BC | 600 BC | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✳ | ✳ | ✳ | ✳ | | an (sky, heaven) |
| | | | | | ki (place; ground, earth, land, country) |
| | | | | | lu (who(m), which, man, ruler, person) |
| ▽ | ▷ | ▷ | | | munus (woman) |
| | | | | | kur (underworld, land, country, mountain(s), east, east wind) |
| | | | | | geme (female worker) |
| | | | | | saĝ (head, person, capital) |
| | | | | | kag (mouth) |
| ▽ | | | | | ninda (bread, food) |

The first line at the top shows the simplification and final form of this star element that is positioned inside the sign that refers to the mother. This is also typical of other old writing systems. The development of the system turns the glyphs, the written symbols, into composite symbols that integrate references to other elements that do not necessarily appear in the oral production of the word. The written system then produces "words" that are richer in meaning than the oral words themselves as if the scribes of these old civilizations took advantage of the development of writing to enrich the written language with elements that are not integrated into the oral production except by paradigmatic association or connection.

René Labat and Florance Malbran-Labat[9] in their *Manuel d'Épigraphie Akkadienne*, Geuthner, Paris, 2002, say the same thing but it is not obvious that there is a relation between the representational glyphs and the corresponding cuneiforms that are supposed to have evolved and developed from them. We have exactly the same problem with Maya. I must say that some automatic translators, available on the Internet, of Sumerian words into cuneiform writing on a purely alphabetical procedure are not in phase with what the Sumerian writing system was. It was not alphabetical, it was rather syllabical, and even so, not systematic and with a vast number of homophones or quasi-homophones that are very different in cuneiform writing. One good example of this alphabetical trend is *Babylonian*, Cuneiform Alphabet, Free Online Translator.[10] Here is the translation of "adda" and I have set one space between each letter
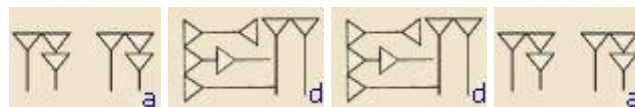


Though I cannot find the composed "ad-da," I have the "ad" element connected to "father." You can easily see it has nothing to do with the *Babylonian*'s suggestion for /a/ or /d/.



In fact, their letter /a/ corresponds to the cuneiform glyph #579 in Labat's book for the word "a" (referring mostly to water) but it is doubled up with no explanation available, and thus it corresponds to /a – a/. In the same way the letter /d/ is Labat's cuneiform glyph #335 for "da." This one-syllable word means, according to John A. Halloran, "noun, arm; side; nearness (to someone) […]. Verb, to hold; to be near; to protect. Preposition, comitative suffix, 'with'; copula, 'and' (mainly in Sargonic date texts."[11] It might be the second part of "ad-da," but I do not have any confirmation of it, except the "protective" meaning.

In the same way, when the baby is through with his breastfeeding, his lips reject the tit and these lip movements produce the consonants sound /p/ or /b/ that, when associated to the simple vowel /a/, refer to the father in most languages, if not all, with the words /pa/ or /ba/. There might be some variation on this item with the consonant sounds /t/ and /d/ which are coming later since they are dentals, and a newborn baby does not have teeth for quite some time. With the vowel sound /a/ it is an alternative to /pa/ in the form of /da/ or /ta/. That is the case with the Sumerian language.



**ab-ba**

In Sumerian there is a second possibility for the father with "ad" or "adda" which could be reconstructed as :



**ad - da**

The family structure in the world may vary, and in Black Africa, the authority in a family, despite the Christian European colonialism that tried to impose European marriage and family practices, remains in the hands of the mother's brother, the uncle of the child. /pa/ and /ta/ are thus the two possibilities for the father and the maternal uncle, or the uncle more generally. We find that in many languages again, including some European languages for "aunt" and "uncle" like in French "tante" and "tata" for the aunt, and "tonton" for the uncle ("oncle" in French) and we can note that "tonton" is the association of the /t/

sound to the initial vocalized syllable of "oncle" whereas "tata" is a direct shortening of the normal word "tante." That's true for oral language. Note we find the same duality in English with "daddy" as opposed to "paternal" or to "father" in which the original /p/ was turned int /f/ in Germanic languages. The Sumerian (of course written and not vocal) cuneiforms are in no way connected to such considerations and they are, entirely, 100%, written symbolical signs. This is not true of all other primordial writing systems like Egyptian hieroglyphs and Maya glyphs and even some Chinese characters. We find there in the older forms of these writing systems that quite a few and even a lot, at times most of the glyphs are representational. It was true of older forms of written Sumerian language, but as soon as they invented and henceforth used the cuneiform writing system, they lost most of the representational references.

To give a second example of this phenomenon, in Maya[12] it is quite frequent to have an older "head" glyph for a word, and that "head" glyph might be representational, and more recent glyphs have become in no way representational. Here is one example, without entering into too much detail.



K'IN (k'in) (T544hv) 1> noun "day" 2> noun "sun" 3> noun period of one day, used in the Maya Long Count calendar <> (John Montgomery) Represents the humanized head of an animal.

[hv = head variant. On the right, we should analyze the symbols: one over the ear that can be part of the hat or cap on the head, and one under the ear as an earring. See next glyph for more explanation.]
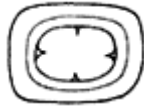


K'IN (k'in) (T544) 1> noun "day" 2> noun "sun" 3> noun period of one day, used in the Maya Long Count calendar and Distance Numbers <> (John Montgomery) Represents a four-petaled flower, possibly a plumeria flower, which symbolizes the sun and thus the "day."

[Note the flower is enclosed in a two-line frame, and the whole is enclosed in a single-line frame, which makes three lines. Three is meaningful in Maya and it refers to some bloodletting, blood-shedding, or blood sacrifice. And it can be seen as a reference to the three dots, two black and one just a black round frame of the earring of the previous glyph that thus contained the same ternary reference also attached to some blood outlet.]



K'IN-ni (k'in) (T1010:116) 1> noun "day" 2> noun "sun" 3> noun period of one day; used in the Maya Long Count calendar.

[Note we should compare the head with the first head variant for "k'in" and the three extensions on the right, plus some elements on the face itself. The "ni" extension is only the written specification or reinforcement of the final consonant /n/ of "k'in" that has to be pronounced by itself, probably reinforced in its pronunciation with a schwa vocalic element, what they call "e muet" ("mute or unpronounced e") in French that is written but not pronounced except that it autonomizes the final consonant from its previous vowel which is important in French since the final /n/ consonant is going to nasalize the previous vowels. With this "e muet" the nasalization of the vowel is prevented like in masculine-feminine couple "cousin"-"cousine"]



K'IN-ni (k'in) (T544:116) 1> noun "day" 2> noun "sun" 3> noun period of one day; used in the Maya Long Count calendar.

[Note the flower has been endowed with an empty dot in the center. This is a reference to the quincunx of Maya cardinal representation of the earth for the people with the four universal cardinal

points, plus the fifth one in the centner that represents the tree that is the center or axis of the universe going up into the sky Chaan/Kaan, semi-homophonous with "chan"-"kan" referring to "four" and "snake," and down into Xibalba, the realm of the Death Lords.]

ni (ni) (T1019) > phonetic sign
[Note the older form with a head variant on top of the pure phonetic sign]

ni (ni) (T116) > phonetic sign.
[Horizontal or vertical. This symbol could be seen as an entoptic symbol or as some flowing fluid. To go beyond we would have to analyze this representation and find out with what type of fluid it is attached. I am thinking here of water of course but also blood and that would refer to blood sacrifice that does not have to be mortal, just some bleeding scarification, most of the time on the penis of men performed by the men themselves. Women practice this bloodletting sacrifice on the tongue or the ears.]

We have forgotten that such representational elements can be found at the origin of the oldest alphabet, the Phoenician alphabet that will become the Greek alphabet which is the basic alphabet of all Indo-European languages, Cyrillic or Latin alphabets. The case of "alep" in the Phoenician alphabet and what came out of it is typical. Most people would not think that the capital letter A is nothing but the representation of a bovine head. See the table below. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_alphabet)

We also seem to have forgotten that all Runic alphabets of Germanic languages and the Ogham alphabet of the Celtic languages are representational. The representational dimension of most characters is no longer visible, but the names of the letters are words that start with this letter. See the table below. (https://omniglot.com/writing/runic.htm)

The Ogham alphabet is built the same way. The various characters are the initial letters of trees, except the last five supplementary characters imposed by the Benedictines who did not like diphthongs written with two characters. The characters themselves are purely non-representational though they are symbolical by their names. Symbolical because there is no direct connection between the characters and the sounds, and symbolical because their names are the names of trees, all of them at the time of the invention of the alphabet that could only be found in the Rhine valley around what is today Stuttgart. See table below. (https://omniglot.com/writing/ogham.htm)

| Letter | | | | | | Origin | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Image | Text | Name[12][2] | Meaning | Transliteration | Phoneme | Egyptian hieroglyphs | Proto-Sinaitic | Samaritan | Aramaic | Hebrew |
| 𐤀 | 𐤀 | ʾālep | ox, head of cattle | ʾ | ʾ [?] | 𓃾 | 𐡀 | ☐ | ☐ | א |

| Corresponding letter in | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Syriac | Parthian | Arabic | South Arabian | Geʿez | Greek | Latin | Cyrillic | Brahmi | Devanagari | Canadian Aboriginal syllabics | Mongolian |
| ܐ | ☐ | ا, ء | ☐ | አ | Αα | Aa | Аа | H /a/ | अ /a/ | — | ᠠ a, ᠡ e |

The letter "alep" in Phoenician and its evolution into other writing systems



Runes - The Elder Futhark

F Fehu cattle, wealth
U Ūruz aurochs, strength
Th Thurisaz giant, thor
A Ansuz god, odin
R Raido journey, wheel
K Kaunan ulcer, fire

G Gebō gift
W Wunjō joy
H Hagalaz hail, air
N Naudiz need, necessity
I Īsaz ice
J Jēra year, harvest

E Eiwaz yew tree, tree of life
P Perth unclear meaning
Z Algiz elk protection
S Sōwilō sun
T Tīwaz the god Tiwaz, victory
B Berkanan birch, birth

E Ehwaz horse
M Mannaz man
L Laguz water, lake
Ng Ingwaz the god Ingwaz, fertility
O Othila heritage, property
D Dagaz day, dawn

depositphotos          Image ID: 378995530 | www.depositphotos.com

Ogham Alphabet. The fifth aicme is the Benedictine supplement

This shows that, in fact, in today's alphabets, the Latin or Greek alphabets still contain elements that are directly representational though it has no value whatsoever as for the meaning of the letters that are captured as pure symbols, whereas in other European alphabets the symbolism is no longer in any level of representation in the characters but in the indirect connection with the names of trees or gods, or war artifacts, etc., whose first sound corresponds to the letter concerned.

But this is only the first level of writing symbolism, the characters used in the various systems that can be purely phonetic, alphabetical, or syllabic, and some writing systems use characters that are representational or used to be and have kept some representational elements. The Chinese writing system for example is using such syllabic characters that are inherited from the past with some representational elements turned purely symbolical. The case of Vietnamese is interesting because it used to write with the Chinese characters, but due to French colonization, they adopted the Latin alphabet which enabled them to fit the writing system to the reality of Vietnamese itself.

But the other levels of linguistic symbolism find their way into the writing system. Words are separated by spaces. Punctuation reinforces the cuts in the discourse that have to be specified in writing for this discourse to be clear and non-ambiguous. A vast number of syntactic elements are specified in writing, such as agreement marks for gender, number, person, some of the diacritic marks corresponding to these agreements are not even pronounced, except at times due to concatenating links between words, but they have to be written even if they are not pronounced. The fact that this or that diacritic letter is used for the plural of a noun is purely arbitrary, though it is the result of a long evolution in modern languages. The plural /s/ of most nouns, adjectives, past participles, etc., in French, can only be explained by the phylogenic evolution of the language from Latin but under the influence of some Celtic languages that were in Gaul before the Romans colonized it, and the Germanic tribes that were to invade Gaul when the Roman Empire collapsed. This particular plural mark in French does not correspond to the plural mark in other languages, first of all, the Romance languages French is connected to. On the other hand, it was transported into English for nouns, and nouns only, though in Germanic languages this mark is not for the plural of nouns but for the genitive of nouns, which explains why it is the genitive mark in English. In German, the plural is marked by various endings on nouns and is integrated into the declension marks on adjectives and articles. But /s/ is not a plural mark. Note in English this /s/, apart from being used for the plural of nouns and the genitive of nouns, is also used for the third person singular of the present tense of verbs.

At the level of the meaning of words, the reference to real items, material or immaterial, there is no direct or systematic connection with the sounds, the words, or even the sentences concerned. Yet we have to be careful. In a modern language, the words, the sentences, the syntax, and many other things come from older forms of this language and from the languages from which the modern language is derived. Etymology might explain a lot of details about the present form of this or that word. Yet there will be no connection with the referred-to items. It is so true that when today we want to create a feminine form for a masculine form that is being used for both men and women, we run into all sorts of difficulties. Either we imitate the cases where this differentiation exists, or we run into impossible situations that require innovative solutions. "Acteur-actrice" in French easily produces "auteur-autrice." But it could be difficult to build the feminine for "professeur" the same way despite "directeur-directrice." Then we have two alternatives. "Menteur-menteuse" or "vendeur-vendeuse" will lead to "professeur-professeuse" and yet it is rejected by people. They prefer an unpronounced feminine that only appears in writing: "professeur-professeure" on the model of many masculine nouns that have a feminine built with the adjunction of a mute /e/ to the final consonant which then has to be pronounced, like in "amant-amante." But when the final consonant is pronounced in the masculine, which is the case of "professeur" then there is no possibility to differentiate the masculine from the feminine, except from the cotext since the feminine of a noun will bring up the feminine of adjectives and articles, at least in the singular, and the feminine of pronouns, both singular and plural. Each language has its own problem of this type. Such problems that are dilemmas for some people are, in fact, the demonstration everything or nearly everything is arbitrary in oral or written languages, and that leads to the conclusion that all these elements become purely symbolical of something these words and sentences are not.

## 5- PHYLOGENIC DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SYMBOLISM: ITS FUNCTIONAL TELEOLOGY

Symbolism embodied in material activities or artifacts goes through a full phylogenic evolution in its real functions. It does not carry these functions in itself. It is endowed with the functions I am going to consider because it is in phase with these functions, compatible with them. It contains them potentially because symbolism per se is the best way to develop these finalities. These finalities are all built around one objective: communicating or communication. It is human because it targets exchanging something with other people or other entities. Communicating is the basic human dimension of Homo Sapiens, not in the very communicating itself that exists among all other Hominins and many animal species. The community dimension of Homo Sapiens cannot itself be seen as purely or typically human because all other Hominins and all animal species live, in one way or another in communities. If solitude were the objective of any species, then reproduction would be a real problem. Even the Religious Manta who eats the male as soon as she has been impregnated cannot reproduce without that coupling, even if it is temporary and will not survive the procreating act itself. What makes it uniquely human is the fact that

Homo Sapiens has been able to develop a three-tiered articulated language that enables him/her/them to exchange information on anything, including things that are not present at the time of the communication.

This being said, we can enter the phylogeny of this symbolicity and what its teleology is. This phylogeny has three phases or three levels. The three basic symbolicities I spoke of at the beginning find here a new dimension. We start from communication, but it implies something is communicated, this something becomes some knowledge that has to be constructed before being transmitted. That construction and then that transmission are only possible because language is available. This situation leads to the concept of education. The young who are dependent for five or six years and will only be adults in paleolithic times when reaching the age of twelve, and in modern times when reaching the age of eighteen, and a younger age for sexual activities, though this age is vastly discussed with the possibility for parents to intervene if the concerned individuals are underage. This debate does not change the fact that at the present moment all young people in developed countries, children or not, are engaged in some form of education, in schools or apprenticeships, up to the age of at least eighteen. But this educational objective that has probably been an objective of human communities since the very moment they started existing, implies and requires the existence of a formally constituted corpus of knowledge, observational at first but developing into technology and science. That is the first stage of this phylogeny. Anyone can check the whole world, and they will find out that even the most isolated and primordial tribes on the earth, even those that are still mostly hunters and gatherers, educate their young via experience and direct communication, and it is easy to find out too that they have a whole corpus or "data base" of all sorts of knowledge necessary to guarantee their survival, expansion, and sustainability. And anyone can also find out that in these primordial communities they do not stop at this simple utilitarian level and push their knowledge to the next level with stories about the origin of the world, about the past, about the adventures of members of the community. They also develop activities that have nothing to do with surviving and expanding. These activities might be gratuitous, and they lead directly into the second level of this phylogeny.

People have probably known and practiced the fact that language is not only spoken for a very long time, if not since even before they became Homo Sapiens. It can be sung, danced, made into music with simple instruments like two sticks you bang together in rhythm. They also, all of them, have some activities to produce what we consider pure artistic output, such as painting one's body for various occasions, decorating these bodies with scarification, tattoos, deformations, incisions, circumcisions, amputations, or ablations, etc. not to mention shaving the face or the body, and most of them are ritualistic and positive, though they can, some of them at least, be turned into negative practices. This leads to all sorts of what we could call artistic activities like music, singing, dancing, painting, carving, and polishing, and of course, they know then that language is one raw material they can use either to tell stories, meaning things that did not happen, but stories about fictional characters, hence they have to create these characters, and they can also use language as a raw material in itself and that leads to some poetry that is based on rhythm and music only created with words and linguistic sounds. In the previous phase, the symbolism was in the communicational dimension of the language, and in the virtual nature of the knowledge communicated and retained by the community, and in this community one person or two who are endowed with a phenomenal memory who can store away that knowledge. In this second phase, we are dealing with something that does not exist in nature per se. It can even not exist at all in nature and thus be entirely produced, invented, and these activities are material and existential in their being performed, but they are also virtual in the memory of people, of the special memory-individuals of the community, and thus they can be performed again, modified, enriched, developed. What is all that symbolic of? We are dealing here with the meaning of these items or activities. Take the case of dancing. It is a physical activity first, and as such is not symbolical. But it is performed in some conditions and with some objectives. As such it may become symbolic. Symbolic of something that is understood as beautiful in one way or another, and that beauty is symbolically reached via music, singing, dance, rhythm, etc. It is symbolic because we are not dealing with the "beauty" that naturally exists in the world, and we should discuss this concept of beauty. Beauty is a value judgment from human beings. Nature does not target beauty. Nature targets sustainable survival and expansion, at least since the Big Bang. Before that moment, we do not know what nature was, what existed or not, and in what shape it did exist. But what is produced here can only be kept by the community if the community is impressed by it, hence if the community finds this product beautiful if the community sees and projects some beauty into the

dance, music, rhythm, painting (body or other), dress, tattoos, or whatever. These activities and these fabricated artifacts, some of them purely virtual when not performed, are symbolical of this beauty, of this value-providing judgment that makes it sustainable in its virtual existence, hence reproducible in the future, provided the memory of it is kept and shared by those who can reproduce it. Here we reach the third phase of this phylogeny.

The third phase is the realm of elements that cannot be found in real life. These elements are spiritual and by being spiritual they may become inspirational in real life for real people, individuals, or collective entities. There are several directions in this spiritual universe because it is a universe of its own, a virtual and mental universe. The first one is spirituality in life in the form of survival and coping with death and this leads to the supernatural, what some ethnographers and archaeologists call the supernatural world beyond the surface of the rockface, a world of spirits that can be of many types: the spirits of dead people, spirits of a supernatural non-human nature. We have to be careful with such spirits because that spiritual transcendence has been captured by all sorts of other spiritual ventures, particularly by religions. Christian saints are nothing, but such spirits and their identities are nothing but cheating with life and death, "civilizing" the "pagan" spirits of the people whom Christianity, or other religions, consider primitive, barbarian or barbaric, uncivilized. These people can be accepted as fully human but needing some "education," or they can be rejected as non-human or unable to improve. It is important here to understand that we could learn a lot about how to deal with them if we adopted a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) approach to them and if we guided them towards a self-directed learning procedure, though we should be careful about locking ourselves and them in some pre-existing bias, such as refusing or banning the teaching of slavery or racism in the USA because some students, particularly white students, might come to class with a racial bias that makes them hyper-sensitive to such questions and issues and particularly hyper-impressionable with elements of this historical knowledge they – or more probably their parents – have banned from their consciousness and emotional awareness. There is no difference in essence between the pagan spirits that embody death, like the Death Lords of the Mayas, and the representation of death in the *Danse Macabre* you can find in the Abbey Church at La Chaise-Dieu, France.

This is one of the Death Lords, Kimi. Every single graphic element in this representation could be analyzed and found meaningful in the Maya writing system and symbolic representational art.



"Kimi*, the god of death, is the Lord of the Maya Underworld (Xibalbá), associated with death, war, and sacrifice. Also known as God A, he is portrayed totally or partially as a skeleton - often shown with black spots to represent the decay of flesh. His aspect is sometimes terrifying, appearing in scenes related to executions. At other times he is shown as a grotesque and laughable figure, with an enormous belly. Kimi, the Death God, lives in the lowest of the nine levels of the Underworld. His companions are the owl and other creatures related to death and evil omens. * *Kimi is a Yucatec Maya name. The Death God is the Maya equivalent of the Aztec Mictlantecuhtli. In the Popol Vuh, the Death God is presented as two gods, defeated by the Hero Twins in the Underworld.* (Ed.)"

(https://www.mexicolore.co.uk/maya/teachers/resource-maya-gods-death-god-a)

Death as represented in La Chaise-Dieu's *Danse Macabre* is a skeleton following one living character, and preceding another, accompanying them to the final destination that is death. In the following excerpt of this long *Danse Macabre*, we can see death represented three times and accompanying four living persons, normally to the left and death but this orientation goes to the choir and altar, hence to the East of salvation, or at least the hope of possible salvation. Yet, three of them are trying to go away from death by directing themselves to the right, which corresponds to the main west entrance of the Abbey Church, hence the exit back out to the world of the living, showing thus their cold feet concerning their possible salvation in death. The living characters are from left to right: "Le Ménestrel" (the singing master or troubadour), "L'enlumineur" (the illuminator), "Le Laboureur" (the laborer, in fact the ploughman), and "Le Cordelier" (the monk, a particular member of the Franciscan order). This information is borrowed from Claudie and Pierre Boisse[13].



Quite different would the representation of death be in Lavaudieu, the female convent attached to the Monastery of La Chaise-Dieu. Here Death is a woman, and she is said to be black and blind. (https://www.lamontagne.fr/langeac-43300/actualites/de-la-danse-macabre-a-la-chaise-dieu-a-la-mort-noire-et-aveugle-a-lavaudieu_12821186/)



This time she is a real representation of the French, feminine Death that kills without even looking or seeing her victims, everyone who comes too close. Note she kills people with arrows, and this should make you think of Cupid and his bow and arrow. The connection between death and sex, the latter seen as

the "little death," appears here quite visible. Every detail in this rapid presentation is symbolical of a lot of meanings, most of them being more paradigmatic than syntagmatic: the symbolical value is in the references the on-lookers in the audience are going to bring up into the image. Symbolism at this level only works if the onlookers are able to project their own symbolical values and interpretations into the "symbols" present in the work of art or the discourse.

But the point here is that no matter how you represent death, all these representations are humanized, in the form of some humanoid, if not plainly human, figure. Death is of course not an android of some type, only a phenomenon that brings any life to its end. But such spiritual and even supernatural representations reveal the importance of this phenomenon for human beings and representing it in one way or another is a way to tame it, to cope with it.

The second spiritual approach is in philosophy, and it aims at explaining life and death and devising an ethical approach or procedure to deal with life and death, and eventually other people and society, the community. Philosophy is present as soon as Homo Sapiens is able to think and behave in compliance with concepts, he/she/they have devised or assimilated. The ethnographer Paul Radin did not hesitate to consider philosophers exist in any human society or community with his book *Primitive Man as Philosopher*. He did not think everyone was a philosopher, but he thought that some in any community have the necessary qualities to develop an abstract mind and abstract ways of thinking that make them able to conceptualize what cannot be touched, manipulated, tested on a laboratory-workbench. These abstract elements can only be apprehended by the mind and this mind has to be targeting the abstract elaboration of an explanation of simple circumstantial and experiential facts. When a scientist is looking at the cosmos, he or she will try to find out how it works, where it comes from, and how it managed to be what we can see evolving under our own eyes. A philosopher will try to find out, in fact, to construct and devise, the meaning of this universe including that of its evolution.

The last element – and certainly not the least element – in this spiritual approach is religion. Religion tries to answer a simple question: where does this universe, hence life and humanity, come from? A physicist is asking the same question but he or she makes believe that the answer "the Big Bang" is the end of the debate, though it is only the beginning. From the very first principle of any physicist and chemist, nothing comes from nothing, everything comes from something. That's how Pasteur managed to capture bacteria that he could not see and then cultivate them to show their existence: he stated that diseases come from some kind of parasites and that they are microscopic, hence invisible. But nothing comes from nothing, so rabies has to come from something, even if I cannot see it. So, their answer leads to the next question: What was there before the Big Bang? Or Where does the Big Bang come from? Answering with religion, with or without (Buddhism) a god or several gods, is one answer that states a being we will never be able to touch and see. But not seeing is the proof of nothing. Stating the existence of something you cannot see is a theory, and the value of a theory comes from the value of the explanations this invisible or untouchable being suggests or permits. The explanation will not be scientific, but in modern physics, particularly in quantum physics, there are plenty of elements that are valuable within some theories, but they are and have been invisible, and even so far for some of them unprovable, but they explain some phenomena very well. Have we ever touched a black hole, visited a black hole? Of course not. One thing we know about these black holes is that you can enter them, but you will never come out of them again. Religious are some spiritual theories about the origin of life and the world, and as such, they deserve respect and research.

## 6- PHYLOGENIC DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SYMBOLISM: THE 21ST-CENTURY MONEY-CHANGERS IN THE TEMPLE

When we capture this complex human symbolicity in three tiers or layers or stories, the third one itself being triple, it is quite obvious that nothing human is non-symbolical. Everything human is symbolic. But does it represent reality or is it a purely mental construction that has no real dimension? Karl Marx's answer that the reality of the pudding is in eating it, is a little bit naïve. Of course, the reality of the bus in the street is in the fact that I will be dead if I just drop myself in front of it. The reality of the bus is in the tires and wheels that would run over me and kill me. But that's naïve. We have to encounter Marshall McLuhan here.

Anything invented by Homo Sapiens is the extension of a physical, intellectual, or mental competence of these very same human beings. Walking is the extension of our legs, and shoes are the

extension of our feet in order to walk better, faster, more easily. Anything symbolical is thus an extension of something in us. Language is the extension of so many things in us that identifying them all would be simply and probably impossible. But anything in language is symbolic of something mental. Even the simple consonants /m/ and /p/ are symbolic of sucking a tit when breastfeeding, which we have all done, even if it was a simple baby bottle, or rejecting the tit when finished sucking. And this symbolism can be followed and found in simple words like "papa" and "mama" and beyond these the third character in this fable, "tata." When we get to higher levels than vowels and consonants, the extension concerns the mental abilities of Homo Sapiens to conceptualize, to think in mental terms, to mentally live in an abstract world that seems to be cut off away from the real world, but that is an illusion. Those who think physics or God to explain the world are just symbolically looking for a transcending principle that can only be justified in the mental world of those who are looking for it. What I say here is that this search is the same for a physicist and a religious believer: looking for a transcending authority principle that can give us not an explanation but an architecture of our experience in life. Just like a Gothic vault cannot stand if there is not a central key at the top of it, there must be a key to the architecture of the human thinking of any human individual. Big Bang or God, the question remains the same: Where from?

Check all the ideological thinkers and political thinkers of today and look for the key to their thinking. Take that key out and their whole thinking falls down. Ray Kurzweil constructs his vision on the basic assumption that in 2050 machines will be more intelligent than human beings and he calls that THE singularity. What proof does he have? None. What evidence that human beings won't be collectively able to think faster, deeper, in new different ways that would leave machines dumbfounded because even those super-intelligent machines will not be able to do what human beings have done for 300,000 years: when a way to think does not produce positive effects, just drop it and look for another way, and if none exists for what you want to do, then invent a new one. There is only one way to walk: put one foot in front of the other and start again with the other foot, but there are many ways of regulating that "walking" according to circumstances and each way will have consequences on other elements that will have to be regulated for running, sprinting, running long distance, etc. And when you are finished with all the ways to "walk," then you can start other foot activities based on standing on them and doing things like dancing – and there are many dances in this world –, jumping, skipping rope, walking on one leg, etc. And when you are finished with all that you can put yourself in water and use your feet and legs to swim, feet and legs alone, or coordinated with your arms and hands, and there again there are many ways of doing it. And all that is one extension of your feet and legs, standing on them and moving around. All of them are learned, none of them exists in a newborn. None of them are natural, meaning a pure instinct, apart from maybe standing up and walking, and even so, if a newborn is kept tied up so he can't stand up and walk, after several years of that he might not be able to stand up and walk at all because his legs would have gotten atrophied, and he might have lost the capacity to stand and walk just like a feral child re-humanized at the age of six is unable to learn the proper and rich use of language. We have known that for at least two centuries.

Take Marcel Gauchet and his philosophical construction of the modern world as centered on the assertion of the individual as the only valid dimension in human society. Just bring a pandemic like COVID-19 in, and this individualistic approach of life is blown up and shattered into smithereens because the cost of the treatment will require some collective financing, the treatment itself will have to be organized collectively with a health system behind that will be the backbone of the processing of the treatment. Everyday life will be in shambles and collective discipline will have to take over and impose with regulations, laws, or ethics some collective standard behavior. But it indeed reveals a lot about individuals who are – we have seen it in many countries – coming together in massive demonstrations – some of them violent or absurd, like blocking hospitals and vaccination centers – against vaccination or wearing masks, demonstrations against the pandemic itself. As some said then, why don't you demonstrate against the coronavirus? Lat's get some climate change and then you have to adapt to regulations, laws, or ethics in order to reduce your emissions and stop doing things you may have done for decades and that may have been done for centuries. Individual freedoms are revealed as collective in many ways and their individual dimension appears as some superficial make-up for simple minds who are so un-empathetic that they cannot see beyond the tip of their own nose. Then some can even get violent about it and attack police stations, hospitals, vaccination centers to prevent vaccination, to block the entire system by hacking hospitals, doctor's offices, etc. That is Marcel Gauchet's second principle: modern

society is nothing but a vast network of networks. He borrowed this idea from Gustave Guillaume, and before him Antoine Meillet that language is a system of systems. Many attempts have been done here and there, and particularly in France, and all these attempts have failed to bring down a whole economy or a whole country by blowing up two or three critical key points in this network of networks, like blocking the distribution of gasoline to bring the country to a standstill, and it only takes a few ten thousand people, at most one hundred thousand, to do it in a country like France. Two attempts have been done in the 21st century and both times it failed because the concerned workers cannot get into an action that lasts more than one month, because they have loans and mortgages to pay, and banks do not lend money to long-distance strikers.

Take Yuval Noah Harari and his divine future with the emergence of the hybrid mechanical human that will emerge from modern science, technology, and life, and make this androidic being a new species, half nature, and half mechanical that he calls Homo Deus. Bring in a pandemic again, or a crisis like in Afghanistan, or an insecure situation like in Ukraine, and the divine Homo Deus is reduced overnight to quite different hominins like Homo Politicus, Homo Nationalicus, Homo Pokerilicus, Homo Blackmailicus, Homo Panickilicus, Homo Profitilicus and a few more species you may imagine. And if I get China into this crisis situation, then we are not even far away from anything divine, but we, in the west, are going back to the worst possible period of our recent history, and then the new Hominin that appears is Homo Yellowperilicus that is one subspecies of an older Hominin that roamed in the west not so long ago, Homo Nazisilicus. In fact, such rewriting of human philosophy to fit with a presentation that sells very well to the masses is first of all profit-oriented, market-dominated, and self-centered. These authors want to become the new prophets, or for some of them the Messiah announced in the Old Testament, as if it were safe to announce such a future event that has no certain reality. I am afraid that these "philosophers" are nothing but the merchants in the temple of human history and they deliver what is going to make them draw or win a profit. It might be illusionary as for thinking, philosophy, science, technology, even religion, but as long as it makes a lot of shekels, it is enough for them to believe and claim that they are right: you vote in likes, or, in this case, in sales, and we cannot even be sure all the sales are reads.

## 7- CONCLUSION

So, it is now time to come to concluding sentences or paragraphs.

Symbols and Reality, apart from seeming contradictory, are in fact totally intertwined because all symbols are in themselves a reality that can become the "opiate" or the "opioid" of the masses, or simply the inspiration of our actions. On the other hand, the reality is nothing, but the raw material used by our symbolizing power to produce our symbols, and the target of our ventures and attempts to make sense of our life.

They – both symbols and reality – can be very tricky in the fact that the normal tool we use to simply communicate about the problem, in one single word language, is itself a whole forest of intricated and crisscrossed symbols, concepts, abstract items, and mental artifacts that are all both symbolical and real.

The symbolism of this language inspired the history of Homo Sapiens over the last 300,000 years and it was effective in the present resultative world we are dealing with every day because this symbolical vision of the world in linguistic terms was real enough to be efficacious. Our life is floating in symbolic constrictions and expanding every minute with, via, and in symbolical entities that can become nightmarish, depressive, psychotic, etc., and all that is so real there are many, too many, million people being treated for such disorders or syndromes in French hospitals. Imagine what it globally is.

I will then conclude with Kai-Fu Lee and Chen Qiufan in their recent book, *AI 2041, Ten Visions for Our Future*.

"AI will be the defining development of the twenty-first century. Within two decades, aspects of daily human life will be unrecognizable. AI will generate unprecedented wealth, revolutionize medicine and education through human-machine symbiosis, and create brand-new forms of communication and entertainment. In liberating us from routine work, however, AI will also challenge the organizing principles of our economic and social order. Meanwhile, AI will bring new risks in the form of autonomous weapons and smart technology that inherits human bias. AI is

at a tipping point, and people need to wake up—both to AI's radiant pathways and its existential perils for life as we know it. […] By gazing toward a not-so-distant horizon, *AI 2041* offers urgent insights into our collective future—while reminding readers that, ultimately, humankind remains the author of its destiny."[14]

All that modern technology is shown as being able to solve future problems rather than menace human society, hence, to be progressive rather than dangerous. This technological optimism is by far the best thing you can think of, and it is in the line of Jules Verne. If you like great catastrophic science-fiction stories, you may be frustrated. But I find this approach of science fiction very interesting. Better than Ronald Lafayette Hubbard's science-fiction with aliens conquering the earth and the war between human survivors and extra-terrestrials. And it shows that we should not be afraid of technology. It is going to change our world, but human society will manage one way or another to control the development and use it for the better good. The fact that this book is not anti-Chinese and is rather realistic about the Chinese being just like us and interested in the progress of society that has to remain humanitarian, humanistic, humane, human-oriented makes us regret some politicians in the West can only invoke the Yellow Peril all the time, that old fashioned British and French, European if you prefer, colonial fable from the 19th century, in a period when the Americans were only engaged in bringing as many Chinese possible to the USA where they could become overexploited laborers, many of them as independent though totally dominated entrepreneurs of laundry stores and collective kitchens during the Gold Rush in California, or other places, and surviving like that on the side of the building of railroads across America. They were tolerated because they were exploited, and they were kept on the side of the good old white American society in Chinatowns that were ghettos of some sort. They were just one iota, not two, only one, higher than the slaves soon to become ex-slaves.

The symbolic value of this Chinese-inspired science-fiction is that the reality we try to understand by sorting out the multifarious meanings it may have is itself symbolic of our own attempt to survive in a life that leads always and inescapably to death. Is life symbolic of death or is death symbolic of life? That is THE ultimate question.

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