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Global Social Witnessing:

An Educational Tool for Awareness-Based Systems Change in the Era of Global Humanitarian and Planetary Crisis

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Abstract

'Global social witnessing' was originally proposed by Hübl and Ury (2017) and was developed as a practice of "contemplative social cognition" (Singer et al., 2015). Though 'global social witnessing' is applied in various contexts by group facilitators of contemplative practice (Cmind, 2014), the concept has not yet been subjected to thorough research and has not yet arrived at a common scientific understanding and definition, which needs to be addressed throughout the research methodology of applying this concept. This paper aims to propose 'global social witnessing' as an educational tool for awareness-based systems change by highlighting its philosophical and psychological foundations in search of its ethical implications for bearing witness, a term often used in psychotherapy (Orange, 2017). This body of work draws on Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of relational responsibility, and focuses on transformative, systemic learning. As a consequence, this exploration will hopefully generate further research questions that can serve as focal points for interdisciplinary projects of awareness-based systems change (e.g., philosophy, sociology, psychology, education, neuroscience, and physics).

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Keywords
global social witnessing, bearing witness, relational responsibility, whole-system-awareness, interdependence, interpenetration, social field

Introduction

At the 75th anniversary of the liberation of German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz on January 27th in 2020, the Holocaust survivor Batsheva Dagan raised an intriguing question in her speech: "Where was everybody? Where was the world, who could see that, hear that, and yet did nothing to save all those thousands?" (Morris, 2020). This question of hers very much acted as a powerful warning signal for humankind in the 21st century, where we are constantly confronted with terrible crises, such as climate change, the refugee crisis, a political trend towards to the right, nuclear weapons, poverty across the globe, the covid-19 pandemic etc. At this time of global crisis, questions such as Ms. Dagan's should be asked again and again: "Where are you? Where is the world that knows, but does nothing?" Are we witnessing the world?

Seeing people's suffering on the news—children in famine in countries across Africa or a grief-stricken mother holding her lifeless child in Syria—many people feel empathy and com-passion. These kinds of tragedy are a frequent occurrence in our world today, but the impression they leave is not permanent, because the overwhelming stream of such news has desensitized many people to the world's pain and suffering. These kinds of everyday passive attitudes are deeply rooted in an individualistic dualism: I (subject) and the world (object) are separated. Through global issues, such as climate change and the refugee crisis, however, many people have begun to realize that we are in fact connected to each other. Thus, we can testify to the suffering of other people with a belief that we are not separate from them. Instead, 'we' and 'they' are parts of a greater system. This kind of cognitive and emotional observation can be referred to as empathy, which has been studied intensively in past years in psychology and neuroscience (cf. Bateson, 1991, 2009). However, there still is a critical question remaining: Is empathy enough? We and the world are interrelated, but in the "lived world" (Nishida, 1911) we are still fragmented and do not experience our interconnection as such. I might see myself as a separate closed system and cannot recognize a larger transcendental system in which 'I' (subject) and the world (object) are interconnected, as "history is repeating and there's nothing we can do about it" (Trilling, 2018). When one from Western society sees a crying child in Syria on the news, one might feel empathy and compassion with this child. At the same time, one can feel helpless, powerless, and a sense of despair, and have a peripheral feeling of interconnectedness with the world. How can one actually become present mentally, emotionally, and physically with all human and living beings who experience intense and profound moments of struggle, doubt, and suffering? The question above "Are we witnessing the world?" is therefore not easy to answer.

The aim of this paper is to propose 'global social witnessing' as an educational tool for awareness-based systems change by highlighting its philosophical and psychological foundations. In the next chapter, 'global social witnessing' will be presented and redefined as a contemplative, educational tool. In chapter 3, the author will present three philosophical and psychological foundations of 'global social witnessing' as an educational tool for awareness-based systems change: (1) bearing witness, (2) relational responsibility, and (3) whole-system aware-ness. Chapter 4 will point out that 'global social witnessing' should be explored further from multiple academic perspectives in order for it to be acknowledged in an educational context.

Global Social Witnessing

'Global social witnessing' was originally proposed by Hübl & Ury (2017) and developed as a practice of "contemplative social cognition" (Singer et al., 2015). Herrmann, Matoba, and Wagner (2018) define this method as:

> Global (G) refers to large-scale events and processes affecting large numbers of people or the planet as a whole. Social (S) refers to the fact of interrelatedness of humanity. Witnessing (W) points to the capacity of fully attending to and testifying to critical events. GSW, then, is at its core the emergent human capacity to mindfully attend to global events with an embodied awareness, thereby creating an inner world space mirroring these events. (p. 1)

As a practice of "contemplative social cognition", GSW involves a sequence of "micro-actions" (Petitmengin et al., 2017): An active choice to pay attention to world events, to allow oneself to be affected by them, to become aware of phenomenal impressions on various levels (mental, emotional, somatic, relational...), and to attentively stay with these impressions and their unfolding within one's awareness. GSW can be practiced individually or by a group. In a group context, the practice consists of three stages: First, when initiated through a shared intention of the group, a practice is done in which each individual member of the group mirrors different aspects of a particular global event through information sharing. Secondly, each individual member senses into this event, and finally the collective entity's social field then mirrors the complex systemic dynamics of this global event and its potential unfolding (Hübl & Ury, 2017).

In a GSW process, participants are invited to connect with a global event by first learning about the context and the facts of the event and then engaging with it through images, such as studying a picture of the event. The intention behind doing this is to allow oneself to be affected by the event, to become aware of phenomenal impressions on various levels (mental, emotional, somatic, relational, etc.), and to attentively stay with these impressions and their unfolding within one's awareness. This process can be facilitated with the

following prompts: (1) Witness what happens in your mind; (2) Witness what happens in your emotion; (3) Witness what happens in your body; (4) Imagine you are in a dialogue with a person affected. What would this person ask you? And how would you answer their questions? (5) Witness what happens in your mind, emotion, and body in response to this imagined dialogue.

The internal process of GSW takes place in three stage. At the first stage, the *observing stage*, the participant experiences the world by seeing and listening to an event/person as an object and constructs its meaning individually. This *observing stage* cannot bring about perspective transformation, as it still remains isolated in an "I-perspective" through which one thinks, "Without you I would have no problem" (Matoba, 2015, p. 17). At the second stage, the *sensing stage*, the participant experiences the world by looking at the *face* of the *Other* and sensing the person behind this face. This experience is "the process of creating an understanding of or perception of a situation, which often appears to be a direct participation in an event" (Jarvis, 2005, p. 72). Direct participation enables the participant to empathize with the *Other* in a situation and construct its meaning in which the *I* and the *Other* feel strongly interrelated. This stage of sensing provides the participants with the ability to identify with the perspectives of the *Other* and to increase their opportunity for taking on an "I-Thou-perspective" through which one realizes, "Without you I could not solve the problem" (Matoba, 2015, p. 17). In the third stage, the *witnessing stage*, the *Other* can be experienced by embodying interconnectedness between "me" and "you" through mental, affective, and bodily responses. The consciousness of separation between *I* and the *Other* can be suspended by deepening empathy, which can transform into felt-oneness. In this process of witnessing, the separation between the witnessing I and the witnessed *Other* is transcended so that the participant can realize their potential for becoming more liberated, socially responsible, and aware of extending the self-system in thinking, feeling, and sensing from "we-perspective" though which one becomes aware that "Without you we could not learn together" (Ibid.). Those who find themselves in this stage go back to the real world and respond to the world by bringing "global empathy" (Bachen, Hernández-Ramos & Raphael, 2012, p. 438) into action.

Theoretical Foundations For Global Social Witnessing As Awareness-Based Systems Change Method

In the description of the GSW process in the previous chapter, some important components were suggested, such as witnessing, social responsibility, and extending the self-system. These components play a crucial role in improving GSW as an educational tool (social technology) of awareness-based systems change. In this chapter, each of these components will be discussed more precisely as 'bearing witness', 'relational responsibility', and 'whole-system awareness' in order to position them as theoretical foundations of GSW as an awareness-based systems change method.

Bearing Witness

The most important component of GSW is bearing witness, which is a psychological term that refers to sharing our experiences with others, particularly engaging with others who have had traumatic experiences. Pikiewicz (2013) points out that “bearing witness is a valuable way to process an experience, to obtain empathy and support, to lighten our emotional load via sharing it with the witness, and to obtain catharsis”.

In general, empathy is understood as the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within the other’s frame of reference, by seeing through the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling through the consciousness of another. Bateson (2009) distinguishes eight different psychological views of empathy: (1) Knowing another person’s internal state, including their thoughts and feelings; (2) Adopting the posture or matching the neural responses of an observed other; (3) Coming to feel as another person feels; (4) Intuiting or projecting oneself into another’s situation; (5) Imagining how another is thinking and feeling; (6) Imagining how one would think and feel in the other’s place; (7) Feeling distress at witnessing another person’s suffering; (8) Feeling for another person who is suffering. The first six concepts concern our competence to know another’s thoughts and feelings, but the last two concepts are not based upon “sources of knowledge about another’s state, they are reactions to this knowledge” (Bateson, 2009, p. 9). He posits that (7) and (8) can generate motivation to help other people who are suffering, with the understanding that the motivation that comes with (7) does not appear to be directed toward the ultimate goal of relieving the other person’s distress, but rather one’s own (“egoistic motivation”) (Bateson, 1991). On the contrary, feeling for another person who is suffering (8) is likely to motivate one to respond to the suffering of another with sensitivity and care (“altruistic motivation”).

In the last decade, “social neuroscience has already begun to recognize at least some of the distinctions [of these eight psychological views of empathy], and has started to identify their neural substrates” (Bateson, 2009, p. 12). In this way, certain aspects of bearing witness can be described and defined in psychology and neuroscience through the framework known as the “empathy-altruism hypothesis”, which says that “prosocial motivation associated with feeling empathy for a person in need is directed toward the ultimate goal of benefiting that person, not toward some subtle form of self-benefit” (Bateson et al. 1988, p. 52).

Another aspect of bearing witness is rooted more in spiritual and religious traditions and practices. Taoism points clearly to the connection between the metaphysical unity of the world and an ethical imperative to care for everything. The “oneness hypothesis” of Ivanhoe (2015, p. 237) states that “we are fundamentally one with all things and should care for them as more distant extensions of ourselves because of our primordial connection with every aspect of the world”. Holton and Langton (1999, p. 209-32) argue that a sense of oneness, rather than empathic concern, is what motivates people to help others. Their

research relies upon the idea that "most often people feel and act in a benevolent manner not because they experience more empathic concern for another, but because they feel more at one with the other—that is because they perceive more of themselves in the other" (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 91).

Relational Responsibility

In the previous chapter, bearing witness was explained from two perspectives: the "empathy-altruism hypothesis" and the "oneness hypothesis". Ivanhoe (2017), one of the advocates of the latter, points out that our concern for others transcends selflessness and altruism. This would mean that it becomes inevitable that we expand the western concept of the self as reified (a self-conscious individual) toward Emmanuel Levinas's (1969, 1996) notion of the self, existing only through its relationship to the *Other* (a contextual (in)dividual). Although Levinas' philosophy remains positioned in the western tradition of the dichotomy between me (self) and you (the *Other*), the emphasis is placed on the *Other*. Levinas (1969) derives the primacy of his ethics from the experience of the encounter with the *Other*. For Levinas, "the Other precisely reveals himself in his alterity, not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness" (1969, p. 150). The irreducible engagement of the face-to-face encounter is a privileged phenomenon in which both the other person's proximity and distance are felt strongly. The fundamental intuition of Levinas's philosophy is the non-reciprocal nature of responsibility. The phenomenological descriptions of intersubjective responsibility are unique to Levinas. Levinas's *I* lives outside its embodied existence according to modalities, consumes the products of the world, enjoys, suffers from the natural elements, constructs dwellings, and carries on the social and economic transactions of its daily life. However, no event can shake an *I* consciousness more effectively than an encounter with another person. The *I* first experiences itself and can account for itself in this encounter; the *I* responds from the intrinsic relationality. With this response, the beginning of response is the beginning of dialogue.

Levinas (1969) provides a crucial path for understanding human relatedness, a relatively new concept indispensable to psychological and metaphysical discussions about empathy and bearing witness. Moreover, his philosophy offers a theoretical backdrop against which to understand important concepts of relational life, ethical responsiveness, and the complexities of human uniqueness. Below, Levinas's theory of "relational responsibility" is discussed, with an emphasis on its vital importance for practitioners and scientists of social development. The author maintains that it provides a crucial dimension from which to understand how GSW can create a new experience for the world.

One conceptual contribution of bearing witness is the development of a discourse of responsibility that challenges the dominant paradigm of rights and self-interest, which results directly or indirectly in the suffering of others. One important theoretical suggestion is the idea of ethical responsibility for the *Other*, which lies at the heart of Levinas's philosophy (1969). His work can be

read as a radical inversion of dominant ideas concerning the autonomous and self-sufficient individual. We come into being as an individual through a prior relationship with an *Other* and are always tied to the *Other* in a relationship of responsibility because their irreducible 'face' always transcends our concepts, representations, categories, and ideas. This *Other* "shows a face and opens a dimension of height, that is to say, it infinitely overflows the bounds of knowledge" (Levinas, Peperzak, Critchley & Bernasconi, 1996, p. 12). Levinas's work enables us to rethink liberal rights, which are based upon a discourse that assumes that the individual and the pursuit of self-interest is a primary human value and endeavor. In our modern economy, responsibility for others and the environment is secondary. We really are now facing the consequences and paying the price for generations of unfettered pursuit of self-interest, in particular with regards to population displacement and environmental issues. Early scientific and Enlightenment ideas granted man in the western civilization a superordinate position over non-western civilizations and cultures, the earth, and its species. Strangers and the earth—the *Other*—have been objectified and are not seen as entities to which we are tied in a relationship of responsibility. For Levinas (1969), the *Other*, for whom we are infinitely responsible, cannot be reduced to objective knowledge, to our horizon of knowing. A key problem with Enlightenment rationality is, according to Hoskins, Martin, and Humphries (2011, p. 23), "the view that everything is potentially knowable and therefore we can arrive at universal and totalizing truth".

Levinas's concept of "relational responsibility" (Levinas, 1996) can help open up a wider range of interaction in global social contexts, in which the majority of people from a western context are informed of interrelatedness of the self and the world, but do not want to acknowledge their active responsibility for contributing to solutions to many global issues, such as climate change. Many of us know and observe what happens in the world, but remain bystanders. Bystanders who cannot enter into a connection of relational responsibility with those who are suffering are not much different from perpetrators. Furthermore, the distance bystanders feel when they receive information about people suffering on the other side of the world through media, without knowing them personally and experiencing them individually, makes it hard for them to relate. How can a relationship emerge, if the suffering individuals seem so far away? Are we bystanders? Are we perpetrators? And how can we be upstander?

Whole-System Awareness

Are we bystanders? Are we perpetrators? These questions can be regarded as one lens through which one could take on these interconnected global challenges in order to design systems change initiatives. Systems change through making distinctions and recognizing systems, relationships, and perspectives has the potential to raise awareness about one's role in the interconnectedness. This lens focuses on three roles when suffering arises: victim, perpetrator, and bystander. Victims are defined as those who suffer physical and mental damage caused by

perpetrators' conscious or unconscious actions. The former is therefore referred to as the *conscious perpetrator* and the latter the *unconscious perpetrator*. The latter can either reflect on their unconscious behaviors and resulting consequences, or not. Unconscious perpetrators who engage in reflection have the potential to become rescuers, a fourth possible role, by developing empathy. By contrast, non-reflective unconscious perpetrators become bystanders. When confronted with the suffering of victims, they are not able to express their sadness or anger, or might freeze their feelings completely. Without any action, both reflective and non-reflective unconscious perpetrators (bystanders) end up leading to the same result: a profound lack of engagement and moral imperative to do anything. Regardless of whether or not fear and self-preservation might play a role, the result is the same: frozen feelings and no action.

In situations involving victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, people generally like to think that they would not be bystanders (Philpot et al., 2019). What do we need to know and do in order to avoid being a bystander? If we are bystanders, how can we become upstanders? An upstander is someone who "takes a stand and engages in proactive roles to address injustices" (Grantham, 2011, p. 263). When an upstander sees or hears someone being bullied, they speak up. Many people in western countries, however, are rarely able to be upstanders, because they are saturated with images of suffering and violence– even if only through media. People become blunted and paralyzed in their responsiveness and sensitivity to suffering in the world, even though they essentially contribute to this suffering, in direct and indirect ways. A sense of overwhelm can result in silence and skepticism, procrastination, or avoidance of the issue. It has been observed that this also leads to distancing behaviors from the issues in the world, such as physically walking away or mentally closing down the senses (Wilson, 2010).

If we don't want to remain as bystanders, but want to be upstander– especially when we are flooded with overwhelming information through media– *bearing witness* has been proposed as a transitional practice (Orange, 2017). The act of bearing witness in GSW is of utmost im-portance, because it enables whole-system awareness, which integrates the three separate systems of victim, perpetrator, and bystander into an extended system and puts global empathy in action to transform the world. As described in the GSW process in chapter 2, GSW can help participants to think, feel, and sense how things (elements and systems) are related, and how they influence one another within a whole.

Whole-system awareness can be seen as a method to understand how people can be related to each other, their influence, and their function (Meadows, 2008). The aim of whole-system awareness in GSW is to recognize the witnessed, i.e., a human being or another object within society such as the natural ecosystem, as part of the great totality. It must be understood that the witnessed is part of a system and is influenced by this system. These influences affect all aspects of the witness and the witnessed. This awareness of the wholeness can only be made possible through an unlimited, all-encompassing view. One must free oneself

from old, rigid, or obstructive mental patterns, abandon fixed rules and limits imposed by society and its history, and concentrate on the superordinate processes or structures. Only by understanding all the components of a system can one also understand what influences it, and how to use these influences (ibid.).

Through GSW promoting whole-system awareness, victim-and-bystander relationships, cause-and-effect relationships, and interconnectedness, other influencing factors may be more easily recognized, and possibly even influenced. Table 1 shows the difference between bystander, witness, and upstander by illustrating subsystems and the overarching whole system in terms of the cognitive conscious mode (observing), witnessing awareness mode (bearing witness), and prosocial behavior mode (responding).

Subsystem		Whole-system	
Bystander	Cognitive conscious mode	is enfolded and insensible	Subsystem I Bystander observe Subsystem II Victim
Witness	Witnessing awareness mode	is unfolded and informative	Whole-System (Subsystem I + II) Information Subsystem I Witness Bearing witness Subsystem II Witnessed
Upstander	Prosocial behavior mode	needs to be responded to	Whole-System (Subsystem I + II) Information Subsystem I Upstander Bearing witness Subsystem II Witnessed Respond

Table 1: Bystander, witness, and upstander in whole-system awareness

A bystander observes somebody who is suffering as a victim. In this "cognitive conscious mode" (Brazdau, 2014) of observation, two subsystems (the bystander and the victim) are separated and a new, larger inclusive system is hidden or enfolded and insensible as a whole system. In the "witnessing awareness mode" (ibid.), through practicing GSW, a witness does not only observe a victim but also witnesses the victim as a human being–the victim becomes the witnessed. In this "witnessing awareness mode", the witness can "look at [her/his] own body, thoughts, feelings, and [her/his] own awareness as a neutral witness, from outside", in other words: "The pure conscious experience of *I am*" (Brazdau, 2014, p. 2). This experience is reported as being frequently accompanied by "an interconnectedness between all there is, between the I and the other human beings, and all the other life forms and nature around you" (ibid.). The separation between the bystander and the victim as subsystems can be transcended through the strong feeling of interconnectedness between the two subsystems, as well as the feeling of interpenetration between the witness and the witnessed. An increased sense of interconnectedness "gives the individual the freedom to be conscious and perceive parts of reality that were hidden" (ibid.). This, in turn, reveals a whole system which includes all subsystems. Locating one's self inside this whole system enables one to receive new information about the whole and to embody a participatory worldview. With this worldview one becomes more motivated to choose prosocial behavior to benefit other people or society as a whole, i.e., the prosocial behavior mode. Many studies in neuroscience have suggested that "the ability to mentalize the experiences of others so vividly can lead us to take prosocial steps to reduce their pain" (Armstrong, 2018). In this prosocial mode one is no longer an observer, but an upstander who takes action with respect to other people and society, as they feel the need to respond to the information from the whole system.

Further Research Questions

When we witness the states of others, we replicate these states in ourselves as if we were in their shoes and feel interconnected. This sense of interconnectedness causes prosocial behavior, which refers to "a broad range of actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself—behaviors such as helping, comforting, sharing, and cooperation" (Bateson & Powell 2003). Prosocial behavior is not only local but also global when actions are taken on the global level, such as donating to help suffering children in war areas or working as a volunteer in a refugee camp.

In order to propel global prosocial behavior, we need to establish incentives and platforms that can link individual witnessing to clear actions and visible impact. The author and some researchers of Witten/Herdecke University, who organize an annual international conference of GSW (www.globalsocialwitnessing.org), are developing a new Master's program in GSW. Its aim is to enhance students' witnessing competence for their transformative action research projects in the world.

In order to verify the hypothesis of ‘GSW as an educational tool for awareness-based systems change, which puts bearing witness into action to transform the world’, the following research questions should be investigated more deeply in the context of GSW:

- Transformative learning: Kiely (2005) How can transformative impact of witnessing self/world on personal and social transformation be described and measured?
- Intercorporeality: Fuchs (2016) To what extent can GSW be conceptualized in terms of social cognition? E.g., how does the practice of GSW increase one's capacity to empathize with and mentalize others' (potentially large group's) inner states?
- Motivational psychology: Kohlberg (1958), Selman (1980) How might the practice of GSW lead to an increased sense of (embodied, global, personal) responsibility?
- Social neuroscience: Singer (2012), Singer et al. (2015), Siegel (2012) Does GSW have the potential to activate and strengthen neural circuits of perspective-taking, empathy, and compassion?
- Discourse analysis in institutions: Brown (2005) Might GSW be able to shift identities from ethnocentric to world-centric in order to foster world-centric narratives?
- Social fields theory: Boell & Senge (2016) How might GSW facilitate the emergence of generative social fields?
- Quantum entanglement: Walach & Stillfried (2011) Can the witness‘s consciousness of the witnessed event be entangled in impactful ways with the physical event witnessed?

Concluding Thoughts

Three theoretical foundations of GSW–bearing witness, relational responsibility, and whole-system awareness–are all components to connect the parts (subsystems) and to uncover the whole system. Through bearing witness, the witness can perceive their co-existence in the same system as the witnessed and feel responsible for that person. The relationships between the witness and the witnessed and between them (subsystems) and the whole system are characterized as interdependence and interpenetration. These two phenomena are illustrated metaphysically in the story of Indra’s net, which was originally referred in the Atharva Veda scriptures of Hinduism, and developed by the Mahayana school of Buddhism in the third century and the Huayan school of Buddhism between the sixth and eight centuries.

> Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In

> accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each "eye" of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering "like" stars in the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring. (Cook, 1977)

The phenomenon of interdependence is that "all the strands of the net are connected, loosen one, and all are loosened, and sever one, and the whole is weakened" (Thiele, 2011, p. 18). Interpenetration means that "the part is not only connected to the whole by way of multiple linkages, the part actually includes the whole" (ibid.). The Japanese Zen master Suzuki (1959) defines interpenetration as "the One in the Many and the Many in the One" and "the One remaining as one in the Many individually and collectively" (p. 28). For Zen Buddhism's interpenetration asserts that connectedness itself constitutes the most fundamental reality, while interdependence refers to things existing in connection. Some Japanese philosophers such as Izutsu (1983) and Ishii (1998) regard interpenetration as interconnectedness with a cosmic-social power which penetrates and controls the fundamental spheres of human-human, human-non-human, and human-superhuman relationships.

The concept of interdependence and interpenetration of Mahayana Buddhisms influenced the systems theories of Francisco Varela and Niklas Luhmann (Nishi, 2018). Luhmann (1987) brings psychic systems (consciousness) and social systems (communication) under a general description of autopoiesis, without collapsing them into living systems (biotic body-brain). The productions of living systems–consciousness (mind) and communication (society)–are redefined as different kinds of meaning-events. "Meaning becomes the medium in which elements of consciousness and communication may interpenetrate while maintaining operational distinction into separate systems" (Clarke, 2014, p. 13). In interdependent and interpenetrative relations with the Other, which can be experienced through GSW, its participants can realize that 'I' and 'the Other' are always in a joint action which cannot be carried out alone and requires the coordinated actions of both participants. It is not 'me vs. the Other', but 'we' who generate meaning together with relational responsibility. Such a meaning-generating process (meaning-events) experienced by participants of GSW is the awareness-based systems change which may permeate their self-referential boundaries and enable them to become aware of the collective social autopoiesis within the 'social field'. Scharmer, Pomeroy & Kaufer (2021, p. 5) define 'social field' as "the entirety of the social system with an emphasis on the source conditions that give rise to patterns of thinking, conversing, and organizing,

which in turn produce practical results". Moreover, they posit that the source conditions are "co-shaped by the inner condition of individuals and quality of the 'social soil'". In the case of GSW, the inner condition of individuals is their awareness of relational responsibility and the 'social soil' is the coherent container of GSW, cultivated and provided with nutrients by competent facilitators who know "becoming attuned to the interdependence and the interpenetration of all things [...] stimulates creativity and community" (Thiele, 2011, p. 19).

In the 21st century, schools and universities have a major responsibility to create spaces in which a "cosmopolitan society" (Beck, 2002) can be prepared for the future. In these spaces, students are encouraged to explore the contours of "cosmopolitan identity" by developing "capabilities to deal with their diverse ways of thinking and diverse contexts of social interaction and to suspend their personal and social identities [...] for reflecting on a question 'who might I be really'" (Matoba, 2015, p.14). They can practice GSW, promoting bearing witness, relational responsibility, and whole-system awareness with the open awareness of the transformative attitude with which teachers and students move from a cognitive and affective reaction to the events of the world, to an empathic receiving of this detailed information, and toward a response to this information. If our future is to be cosmopolitan, we need to establish cosmopolitan education in schools and universities. This kind of education is proposed by Scharmer & Kaufer (2013) in the form of a "global action leadership school that integrates science (the third-person view), social transformation (the second-person view), and the evolution of self (the first-person view) into a coherent framework of consciousness-based action research" (p. 242). For this innovative educational concept, GSW can add one more viewpoint: the 'we-perspective' (the first- and second-person view) which promotes relational responsibility. This 'we' is not exclusive, but inclusive. 'We' includes the Other who shows me their face and wants to be witnessed by me. Moreover, this 'inclusive we' is "a multi-species and multi-existent we" (Smith, 2013, p. 30), so that GSW can be extended conceptually in order to establish a new ecology of the human-nonhuman relational responsibility, which meets the exigencies of the moment in view of the perceived impending planetary crisis.

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