

The three intelligences - a note

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Let us define (by analogy) as “anthropological” any study that defines its field of objects as peopled by “intelligent” entities, that is, those capable of entering into a relation of reciprocal presupposition with worlds to which they couple themselves in coevolutionary trajectories characterized by feedback loops. There are then three major areas of contemporary anthropological interest — the “three intelligences,” we could say, paraphrasing Guattari. These areas intersect, overlap, collaborate, and often collide with each other. For they dispute among themselves, in a more or less explicit way, the position of epistemological antecedence and/or ontological preeminence: each area may claim the title of the encompassing continent within which the other two are merely its provinces. Such tension should be seen as productive, not destructive.

The first area we will call “cultural” intelligence. Its thematic center is the difference between human ways of world-making, a difference that historically conditions the relation (political, epistemic etc.) between these ways. This is the region traversed by classical sociocultural anthropology, but also by the so-called “ontological turn” of this discipline, just as much by the problematic described by the adjective “decolonial.”

The second is “natural” intelligence. Its focus is the other-than-human ways of world-making, and as often as not the relation of these to different human ways of world-making. Here we find the works housed under the umbrella term of “multi-species studies,” but also the descriptions of abiotic processes and entities made from the point

of view of their agential capacities (ANT etc.) — although in this latter case we are close to the third noological sphere.

This third area is what we will call “artificial” intelligence. It deals with logical-material devices and assemblages with the actual or presumed capacity for world-making and for coupling to, and uncoupling from, human worlds. Here we find the numerous studies on A.I., the philosophies and anthropologies of technology, the recent interest in “cosmotronics,” the metaphysical speculations on the “posthuman” and the “inhuman,” and so on.

This triangle, which in the modern philosophical tradition could be described by the tags “humans, animals, machines,” continues to define the contours of contemporary metaphysics (*lato sensu*), even if eventually broadened in such a way as to include extraterrestrials, living things in general (auto-replicating entities), and abstract entities (computer programs). It can be imagined as equilateral, isosceles or scalene, according to the philosophical orientation which “draws” it.

At the center of gravity of this triangle is the Earth.