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a global journal of youth philosophy



Just your question.

Philosium

From the editor's desk

Philosium began because we kept seeing the same problem in different places: students were curious, capable, and serious, but the doors to philosophy, research, and public dialogue were too often closed to them. Sometimes the barrier was geography. Sometimes it was money. Sometimes it was simply that nobody had told them they were allowed to enter these conversations.

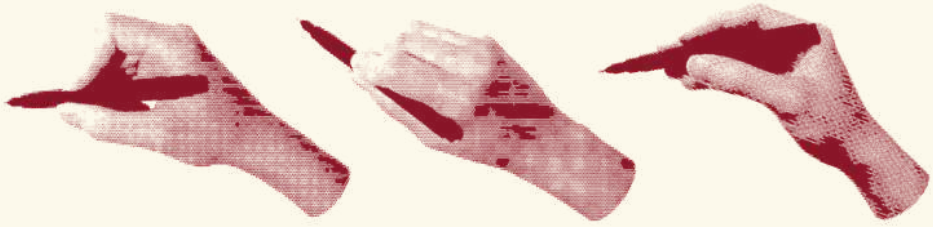
Today, Philosium is active in 60+ countries with 150+ volunteers, and has directly reached 10,000+ students, educators, and young leaders through curricula, local chapters, workshops, mentorship, podcast, and symposia. We do not believe philosophy should remain only for those with access to elite schools or private tutoring. We believe it should become a living way for young people to think about science, conflict, identity, climate, care, and responsibility.

This journal was made possible by the writers, graphic designers, organizers, and lovers of philosophy who gave their time, thought, and care to its creation. The essays you are about to read were self-submitted and/or nominated through local Philosium chapters, and each writer has contributed to their own local chapter or even presented their work at a symposium. That is what this journal represents: a shared global practice of thinking together across cultures, languages, and lived experiences.

To everyone reading this first edition, if you have founded a philosophy or literary club, are part of one, or dream of starting one, we warmly invite you to join our global network. Philosium exists because young people everywhere deserve spaces where their ideas can travel beyond borders, meet other perspectives, and become part of something larger than themselves.

This first issue carried no imposed theme. We wanted to know, before asking anything else, what young people would write about if the only instruction was make it yours. What came back confirmed something we long suspected: given the space, young thinkers don't wait to be told what matters. They write about grief and algorithms, about the silence between languages, about inheriting a history they didn't choose. No two pieces in this issue resemble each other, and that is exactly the point.

That is also why we accept every format — essays, poetry, dialogues, fiction, art, photography, anything in between. Philosophy doesn't only live in arguments; it lives in images, in verse, in the way a story is told. Restricting form would mean restricting who gets to think out loud.



Starting with our next edition, each issue will center on a single theme — one question explored from as many angles as our contributors can offer. Not to narrow the conversation, but to see how differently the same question can be lived depending on where you stand in the world.

None of this happens without a community willing to keep asking, writing, and showing up for one another across borders. If this issue moved you or stirred a question you'd set aside, we'd love to keep that conversation going.

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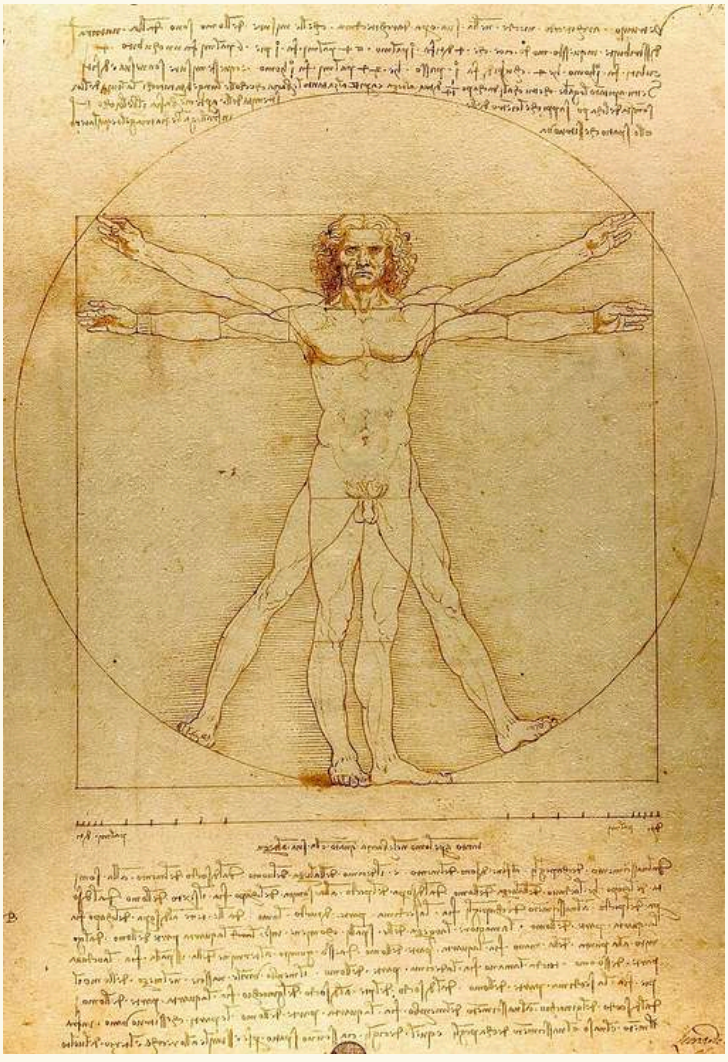
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Ethics and the nature of humanity

Finding Reality: The Great Task as Moral Duty

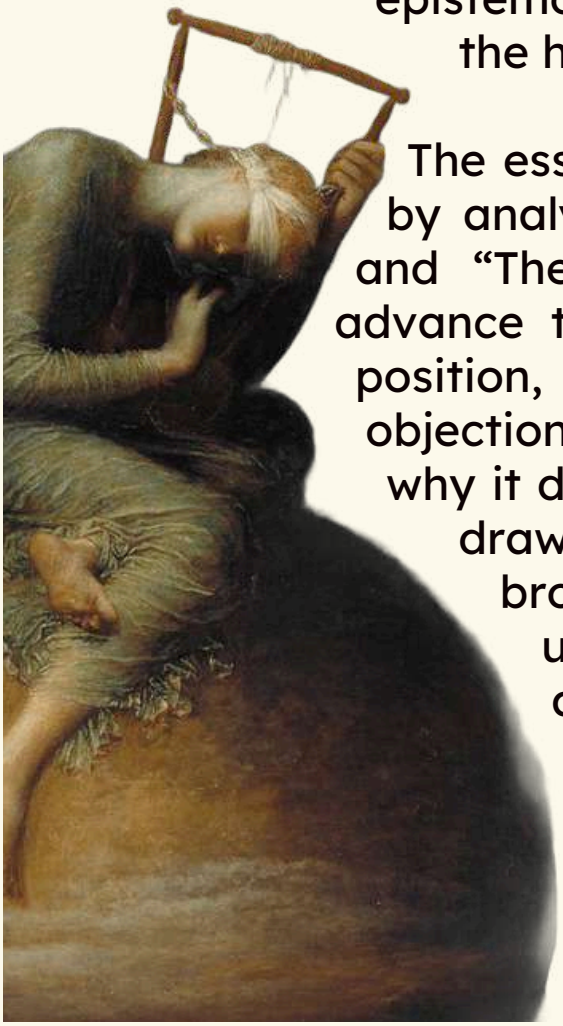


Elliot Belmadani
Germany

Most people are blind to the suffering caused by their own actions. Even I am. We harm and hurt other individuals without even noticing it.

You probably caused suffering today without the active intent to do so. We live in a fantasy world, a world of illusion. The great task in life is to find reality.

At first sight the quote appears to belong to the domain of epistemology and concerns the classical problem of how we can make objective statements about the outside world, while only accessing it through our subjective experience. Yet on closer inspection, it conceals a philosophical tension that rewards careful examination. I shall argue that finding reality is not only the task of the epistemologist, but our moral duty as the human species.



The essay proceeds as follows. I begin by analyzing the concepts of “Reality” and “The Great Task in Life”. I then advance two arguments in favor of my position, consider the most serious. objection to my position and I will show why it doesn't succeed and conclude by drawing out what I take as the broader significance of the underlying question. Before an argument can be made, the key concepts must be examined with care. The concept of “Reality” is susceptible to at least two importantly different interpretations.

At first reading, “Reality” refers to physical and external reality in the scientific sense the world as it exists independently of our perception. The second reading and the one the quote intends is moral reality, meaning the world as it actually is, undistorted by ego, wishful thinking, and self-protective illusion. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between reality as an objective external fact, which concerns a state of the world that exists independently of any observer, and reality as a moral orientation, which concerns how a conscious agent perceives and relates to the world around them in particular, to other people.

The first interpretation rests on a presupposition. Namely that there is an external reality that can be ultimately and completely found. This extreme presupposition is far from self-evident. Therefore the second interpretation is used in further examination.

Moreover, reality in this sense has a further important property. It is a process and not a destination. Reality is not a place one arrives at, but a direction one orients toward. illusions are comfortable and self-confirming, while reality tends to surprise and disturb. When something challenges my assumptions and unsettles my worldview, that friction is often the signal of genuine reality.

This connects directly to the moral dimension of the argument that follows. The term “The Great Task in Life” is also susceptible to at least two importantly different types of interpretation. At first reading it means a form of Achievement and Accomplishment in life, while the second means a form of Telos.



It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the concept of finding reality as an achievement, which concerns a goal that is achievable and therefore a process that can be finished, and “finding reality” as the Telos of the human species, which concerns a form of structural orientation of a conscious agent. This form of structural orientation is constituted by a constant process of self-reflection and the pursuit of finding reality through described self-reflection. Moreover, the first interpretation rests on the same presupposition identified above. Therefore, the second interpretation is used in further examination.

With these clarifications in place, I turn to the first argument in support of my position.

My first argument is that we are hurting other people unconsciously, because our world of illusion doesn't align with the realities of other individuals. This is due to two influences affecting our perception of the world. On one hand there is the fact that all of our experience is subjective. This is just the nature of how we access the

outside world. On the other hand, more importantly, there is how we process the data provided by our senses. The reason for unconsciously causing suffering without evil intent is our subconscious and egocentric way of perceiving the world. A thought experiment makes this vivid. For the sake of argumentation lets pretend the following scenario:

> “You and your Partner are trying for a child. Yet a couple of months later the pregnancy test is still negative and you are feeling miserable. After going for a walk and seeing some pregnant women you start to think that it is working for everyone except for you and your partner.”

Consider what would happen and how you would feel every time you see a pregnant woman?

This thought experiment is an example of the psychological phenomenon called confirmation bias.

Your brain makes a claim or assumption about the world (in this case that everyone is able to have a child except for you and your partner) and your subconsciousness cherry-picks evidence supporting your claim, while ignoring every piece of evidence disproving it. This is just one of many possible ways our psychology affects our perception of the world in “non-truthful” ways. We therefore live in an illusion of the world shaped by our own beliefs, values and subconscious influences.

This egocentric psychological way of perceiving the world leads to us inflicting suffering on other individuals without the intent to do so. Kant describes this as the “Hang zum Boesen”.

If this egocentric way of perceiving the world is the conditio humana, it necessarily follows that a good will alone is not sufficient anymore, because it is unconsciously and negatively affected by our egocentric way of perceiving the world. Since it is our moral duty to reduce suffering and the good will is not sufficient anymore, we must accept the Telos of finding reality as our moral duty. Only through rigorous reflection on our conscious and subconscious is it possible to use our good will to actually pursue good actions.

My second argument concerns the autonomy and dignity of others. Acting upon your own good will without taking the reality of other individuals into account violates their autonomy and dignity independent of intention.



Moral responsibility extends beyond the concept of intention and includes the duty to account for other people's realities. This can be formulated precisely.

First, whoever acts without seeing the reality of the other treats that person not as an autonomous end themselves, but as a projection of their own ego. Second, moral responsibility is not exhausted by good intention alone it includes the duty of perception. Third,

the structural orientation of constant self-reflection is the only means by which the negative psychological influences on our perception can be systematically reduced. Therefore, it is our responsibility to accept this Telos and this great task in life in order to preserve and respect the autonomy and dignity of all humans around us.

Proponents of an opposing view may raise the objection that not everyone is capable of self-reflecting to the same degree. Education, academic background and financial circumstances all influence one's capacity for self-reflection. On this view, this moral responsibility could be a privilege rather than a universal duty and therefore cannot be demanded of all of humanity.

Yet this objection, while raising a concern, ultimately misunderstands the nature of the duty being proposed. A moral duty does not presuppose equal capacity for its fulfillment and it defines a direction, not a uniform standard. Kant's duty of ruthfulness applies universally even though people differ greatly in their ability to resist the temptation to lie. The same logic applies here.

Furthermore, the Telos structure of the great task already anticipates this concern. Since reality is a direction and not a destination, the duty is not to achieve perfect perception but to strive sincerely within the limits of one's own capacity. The objection targets a perfectionist reading of the claim, which the second interpretation explicitly rejects.

The duty remains universal; its fulfilment remains gradual. With the objection addressed, I turn to the broader significance of this question.

If the egocentric distortion of reality is the conditio humana, then many of the moral failures we observe in the world indifference, structural injustice, everyday interpersonal harm are not primarily the result of malicious will, but of collective perceptual blindness. A society that understands self-reflection as a moral duty would not only reduce individual harm, but would also subject its collective illusions political, social, institutional to the same critical scrutiny. The great task is therefore not a private matter of personal virtue. It is the foundation of any seriously moral community. If we accept that moral action requires seeing the other as they truly are, and that this seeing demands active and ongoing effort, then the search for reality is not merely a component of morality. It is its precondition.



In conclusion, the quote is correct in its diagnosis. The human being lives structurally in illusion, and this illusion has real moral consequences for others. The great task is best understood as a Telos and therefore a permanent structural orientation of self-reflection, not an achievable state. Because moral action requires genuinely seeing the other, and because this seeing demands active effort, the pursuit of reality is not optional. This duty is gradual, not absolute and it demands striving, not perfection, and is therefore universal without being elitist. Whoever wishes to act well cannot avoid this duty. The search for reality is not the beginning of morality. It is morality itself, since morality is always intersubjective.

The Critique of Transhumanism in Magnifica Humanitas



Jacub Piechaczek
Poland

"To think that new technologies will automatically benefit everyone is to ignore the evidence. [...] We must lay aside an individualistic and technical view of humanity, as if reality were mere matter to be shaped according to selfish interests, whether individual or collective."

Pope Leo XIV (MH 161, 237)

Introduction

On May 25th 2026 Pope Leo XIV gave his first encyclical: Magnifica Humanitas. The main concern of that encyclical is to establish position of the Catholic Church in relation to changes that happen in the modern world. In this essay I will try to focus specifically on one of the themes that can be seen within that work: critique of transhumanism. I will try to strengthen the arguments made by the Popeand give them philosophical context. I will do so on purely secular ground.



Of course, this essay will not show the only possible form of interpreting the arguments from Magnifica Humanitas; the arguments used here are rather subjective and may diverge from the original intent of the Pope.

Therefore, I advise any reader to also read Magnifica Humanitas, given that they want to grasp the exact reasoning of Leo XIV.

I. Should effectivity be the goal of human conduct?

Before exploring more popular ideas of transhumanism it is worth to start from the fundamentals. The question that has to be asked is “What should be the goal of human conduct?”

When it comes to transhumanism we can mostly gather that the answer to that question is happiness. This is somewhat of a paradigm in this topic and most non-transhumanist philosophers would agree with this answer. Even classical philosophers like Aristotle would agree with this answer. However, the notion of happiness in transhumanistic understanding differs from what other schools of thought would propose. Transhumanists mostly propose that eudaimonia is achieved not by virtue or by following the rule of carpe diem, but by productivity instead.

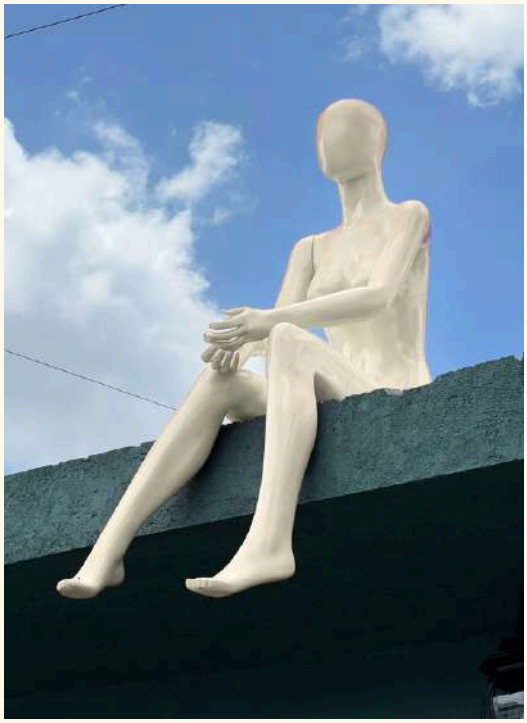
The transhumanist understanding could be summarized with a simple principle: “Man was not meant to be farmed; man was meant to be useful, to be productive, to be proud.” [1] In such worldview humans are somewhat destined to be productive and it is goal of their existence. Thus humans are valued based on how efficient they are and their worth is proportional to their efficiency. This creates “a society in which the value of the subject is measured in terms of performance, productivity, and efficiency.” [2] Every human is viewed in an instrumental way, as something which can be utilized. This leads to looking at human life as an interval of time which ought to be, as much as possible and even beyond the barrier of possibility, filled with work. For example,

transhumanist Zoltan Istvan understands sleep as a problem solely due to the fact that it wastes time, time which could be spent by working and being productive. He has “a purely instrumental understanding of human life, because for Istvan, sleep prevents him from working more […] which, in his opinion, is a serious problem.” [3]

The proponents of this assertion would defend it by appealing to the fact that due to the increase in productivity, well-being of humans also increased. As Marc Andreessen puts it: “We believe markets also increase societal well being by generating work in which people can productively engage.” [4] Productivity is thus viewed as the remedy to most of the problems which humans may have, it becomes the perfect road to achieving ultimate happiness. To continue with Andreessen here: “Productivity growth causes prices to fall, supply to rise, and demand to expand, improving the material well being of the entire population. We believe this is the story of the material development of our civilization; this is why we are not still living in mud huts, eking out a meager survival and waiting for nature to kill us.” [5]

Of course, Leo XIV is heavily against such approach: “I consider particularly insidious the one that suggests that every person must earn or justify his or her own worth, to the point of attributing greater value to those who are more efficient or effective. From this perspective, persons end up being reduced to a means of achieving results, a resource to be used and exploited, and are no longer recognized as a proper end in themselves who should never be instrumentalized. The value of persons, however, does not depend on what they achieve or

produce. There are rights that apply to everyone simply by virtue of being human, and no human power can legitimately deny or arbitrarily limit them." [6] In his view it is not justifiable to look at humans through the lens of productivity. A person who is looked down on and feels inferior is not a happy person, even if they experience abundance. There is no way to achieve happiness if humans are not seen as inherently equal. Isothymia is the ultimate requirement of human happiness. Thus, setting efficiency as the purpose of human life wouldn't make humans actually achieve goal of their lives (eudaimonia). It's also true that it is not possible to guarantee well-being for humans if the goal is not their well-being, but productivity instead. In this way, the goal may be overshadowed by the means. If the focus is drawn to producing more and more, then it is pretty easy to forget about the actual reason for increasing effectiveness.



This sentiment is highly supported in modern philosophy. Great example of that support is the critique of society proposed by Byung-Chul Han. He notes that "today, we compete with each other to increase productivity. The neoliberal regime [...] expresses itself as a permanent call for greater productivity." [7] According to him focus on productivity leads to self-exploitation and self-exploitation leads to all kinds of dangerous conditions (e.g. depression, burnout). This supports the conclusion that mere productivity is not the road to happiness and cannot be such.

II. How should humans progress?

So far I've explored the fundamental question of human purpose. Now I should focus on the process of achieving that goal: progress.

In the transhumanist view the main motor of progress is, obviously, technology. It is not surprising that "the transhumanist literature is awash with views of a kind of technology-driven progress, one 'ultimately leading to a posthuman future populated by superintelligent AI systems and biotechnological hybrids.'" [8] How such technological progress should look like is not a question with consistent answer among all transhumanists. However, the opinion which is shared by the most influential transhumanists is that money and free market should be the driving factors in the development of technology. Sam Altman (CEO of OpenAI) said that in the future intelligence may become utility, like electricity or water, which people would buy on a meter. [9] Similar approach can be seen by an already aforementioned Marc Andreessen: "people only do things for other people for three reasons – love, money, or force. Love doesn't scale, so the economy can only run on money or force. The force experiment has been run and found wanting. Let's stick with money." [10] This position is also held by Dario Amodei (CEO of Anthropic): "The basic development of AI technology […] seems inevitable (unless the risks derail everything) and is fundamentally driven by powerful market forces." [11]

The idea that technology ought to be the absolute force of progress is, of course, denied by Pope Leo XIV. He does recognize the role of technology in improving

human condition and doesn't condemn technological advancement altogether. However, he is largely skeptical of the belief that technology should be the absolute objective of development. In his view technology is not superior since it is only a tool and as such needs extra guiding to become beneficial for humanity. "When it [technology] becomes the standard by which everything is judged, it begins to dictate what matters and what can be discarded, reducing creation to an object of exploitation and human beings to mere cogs

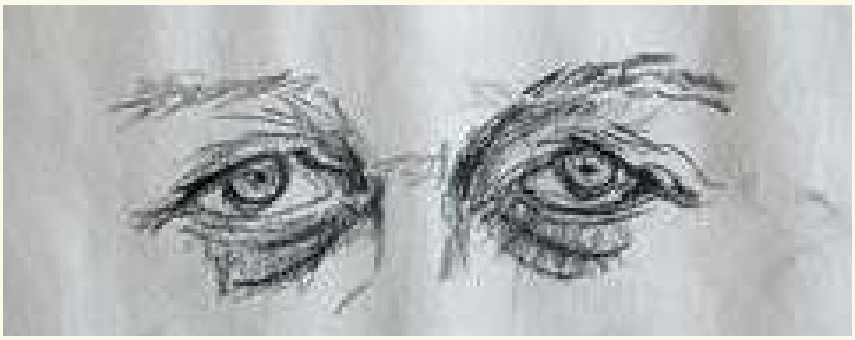


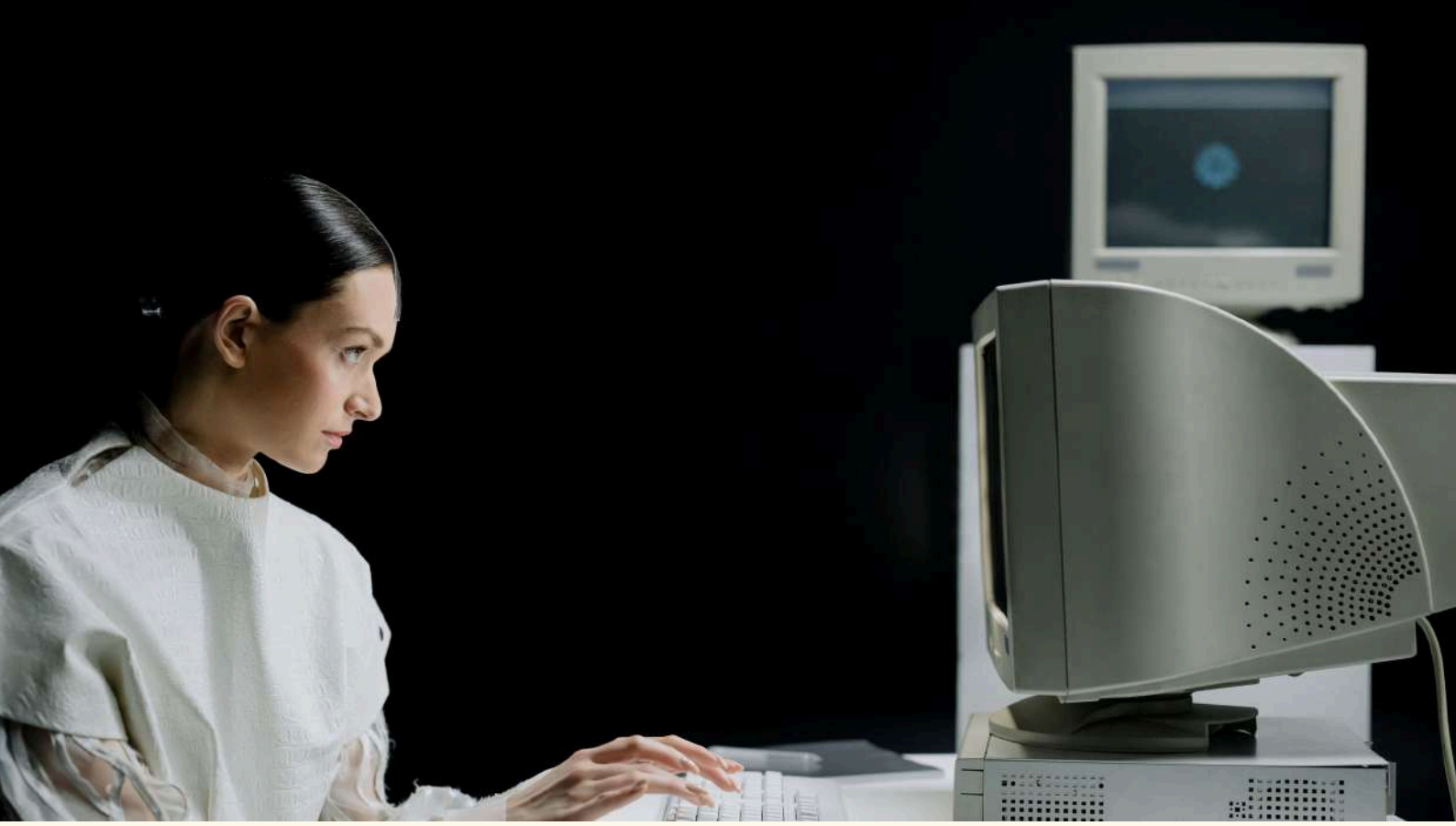
in a system driven toward ever greater efficiency. […] For this reason, technological progress — valuable in itself — requires careful discernment of the anthropological vision that guides it and the ends it pursues. If technological development advances without a corresponding ethical and social progress, the result may be an increase in means without a growth in humanity: 'having more' without 'being more.'" [12] According to Leo XIV, technological progress which does not include

ethical and societal progress is destined to end in instrumentalization of humans. His argument is that technology is only a part of human existence and thus humans cannot progress through technology alone. Sole technological advancement is found lacking.

Further criticism is targeted at the economical aspect of transhumanist outlook on progress. Contrary to the hope that many influential transhumanists place in capitalism, Pope Leo XIV notices that free market isn't reliable when it comes to modern progress: "More than ever, in the age of AI and robotics, it is no longer possible to rely solely on the 'invisible hand' of the market." [13] While money can pretty successfully enhance development of technology, it cannot stimulate progress of human well-being. Contrary to popular belief money does not guarantee happiness: "Development is truly human when it places people at the center instead of the accumulation of wealth, and when it concerns peoples as well as individuals." [14] Furthermore, such progress may bring even more inequality into the world: "Development is not truly human if it increases consumption for some while shifting costs and burdens onto others, or relegates entire regions to subordinate roles, preventing them from realizing their full potential." [15] As was pointed out before, a person that feels inferior will inherently be unhappy about their condition. Additionally, humans cannot be reduced to merely economic sphere so any progress which does not account for other aspects of human life cannot be inherently positive, beneficial and it cannot induce guaranteed happiness: "Development is integral when it is not limited to the economic sphere, but promotes quality of life in its spiritual, cultural, moral and relational dimensions, while respecting our common home, the diversity of peoples and their ways of life." [16]

Aspect that is often missed by transhumanists is the relation between freedom and technology.
Many of them assume that technology necessarily implies more freedom due to the fact that technology enables us to escape the constraints that nature places upon us. But it is not a self-evident truth. Furthermore, it may even be demonstrably false. Perhaps the most popular critique of that assumption belongs to Ted Kaczyński who in his manifesto placed technology as a force contradictory to freedom: “It is not possible to make a LASTING compromise between technology and freedom, because technology is by far the more powerful social force and continually encroaches on freedom through REPEATED compromises.” [17] Less radical but still negative correlation is noted by Herbert Marcuse: “Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear that is, if they sustain alienation.” [18] Pope Leo XIV of course also sees the possibility that technology may not increase freedom but diminish it. He calls for active fight against anything which may support such slavery: “we are called to cooperate in the work of creation, rather than be disinterested observers of technological processes that limit our freedom and responsibility.” [19]





III. Should humans enhance themselves?

Now, finally, the final question that transhumanism sets out to answer can be asked: Should humans enhance themselves?

Transhumanist answer is, of course, radically positive. After all, the main point of transhumanism is the enhancement of humanity and going beyond the limits that "being human" may place. The ways in which humanity could be upgraded and which transhumanists are considering are: "radical extension of human health-span, eradication of disease, elimination of unnecessary suffering, and augmentation of human intellectual, physical, and emotional capacities." [20] They also include "space colonization and the possibility of creating superintelligent machines, along with other potential

developments that could profoundly alter the human condition." [21] Generally, those desires could be boiled down to three categories: immortality, eliminating suffering, and increasing human capabilities.

The most striking example of a transhumanist chasing immortality is probably the case of Bryan Johnson. He tries, with every method available, fight the process of aging. His persona in the internet garners much attention, people online seem to be genuinely interested by his efforts. Another example of this yearning could be the existence of Alcor Life Extension Foundation, organization that mostly focuses, as its name suggests, on extending life. They freeze people who are pronounced dead and keep them in that state until medicine finds how to cure them.

There has been much success when it comes to eliminating suffering. In the last 300 years medicine developed profound ways of elevating pain and curing disease. The amount of pain that humans experience nowadays is a lot smaller than the one they did a few centuries ago. Yet, there is a lot suffering right now, especially in the underprivileged parts of the world. That's why many of the transhumanists are focused to take this recent improvement to its radical end and do away with suffering altogether. For example: "Utilitarian transhumanist philosopher David Pearce notes in his book The Hedonistic Imperative (1995) that his main objective is to defend the 'moral urgency' of 'the abolitionist project', 'a project devoted to eradicating suffering 'in all sentient life' and ushering in a future of 'sublime and all-pervasive' happiness or what Pearce refers to as a 'heaven' or 'paradise on earth" (Huberman 2021, 71)." [22]

Many things which would be unthinkable in the past are rapidly becoming reality in modern times. For example, going to the moon was beyond comprehension for an average person even a few centuries ago but humanity managed to do it over 5 decades ago. We also managed to do unthinkable in areas like neurobiology or computer science. Transhumanists try to push those disciplines even further. Elon Musk is investing billions in conquering Mars, developing Neuralink or improving Grok. Recently Neuralink successfully implanted the first brain-computer interface. Others do not fall behind, people like Jeff Bezos or Bill Gates are continuously investing in companies which try to produce similar devices.

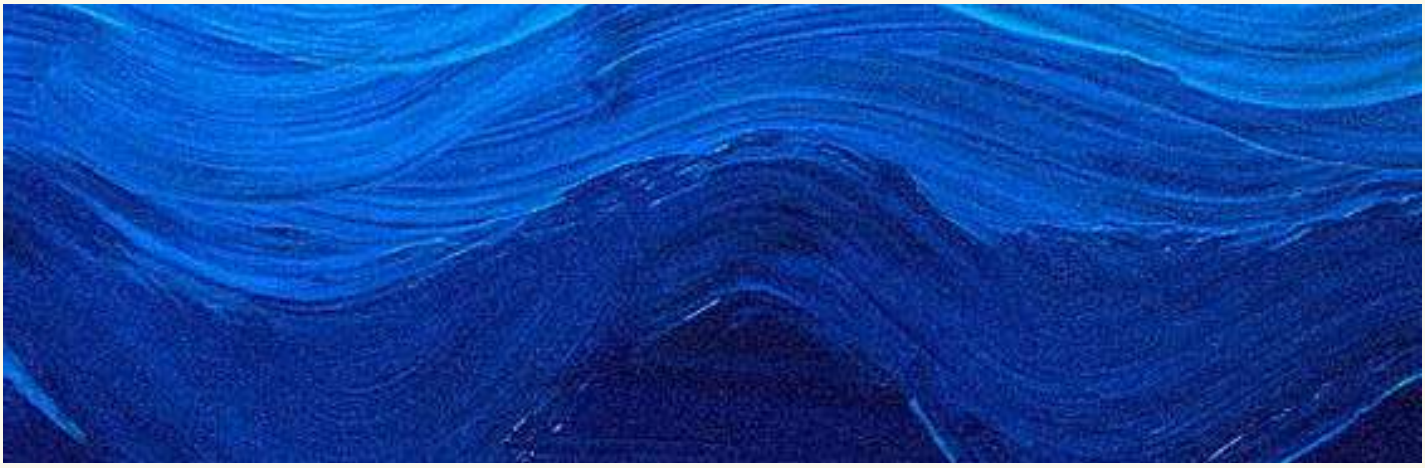


So far those transhumanist goals sound a bit too optimistic but at the same time pretty desirable. However, such aims still undergo a lot of criticism both from the Pope and non-transhumanist thinkers.

Immortality seems like something that everyone would want. Yet, the case is not that simple. As we established before, majority of thinkers, and people in general, view happiness as the ultimate goal of their actions. But does immortality guarantee happiness? There is a group of people that would say no. For example, Saint Ambrose of Milan taught that death was given by God as a good remedy to prevent Adam from eternal misery: “But that which is natural is not also penal, for the Lord did not inflict death as a penalty, but as a remedy. […] Death is given for a remedy, because it is the end of evils. […] So, then, death is not only not an evil, but is even a good thing. […] We see, then, that this death is a gain and life a penalty.” [23]

Furthermore, while chasing immortality one may lose the happiness in the current moment. This is especially demonstrated by the aforementioned example of Bryan Johnson. A lot of people point out that his life, although possibly really long, seems rather undesirable. Maybe he will go onto live many years but those years will mostly consist of trying to beat biology of his own body, not really living. Constant focus on the future easily leads to lack of enjoyment in the present and thus often unhappiness. As Blaise Pascal noted: “We never stay in the present. We look ahead to the slowly approaching future, as though wanting to speed it up […] We’re so imprudent that we wander around in times that are not ours, giving no thought to the only one that does belong to us; and so empty-headed that we dream of times that don’t now exist and allow the only time that does exist to slip away unexamined. […] Thus, we never live; we only hope to live; and because we are always preparing to be happy, there’s no chance of our ever actually being so.” [24]

This is consistent with what Pope Leo XIV says: “building for the common good means accepting the limits and weakness of humanity without considering them an error to be corrected.” [25]



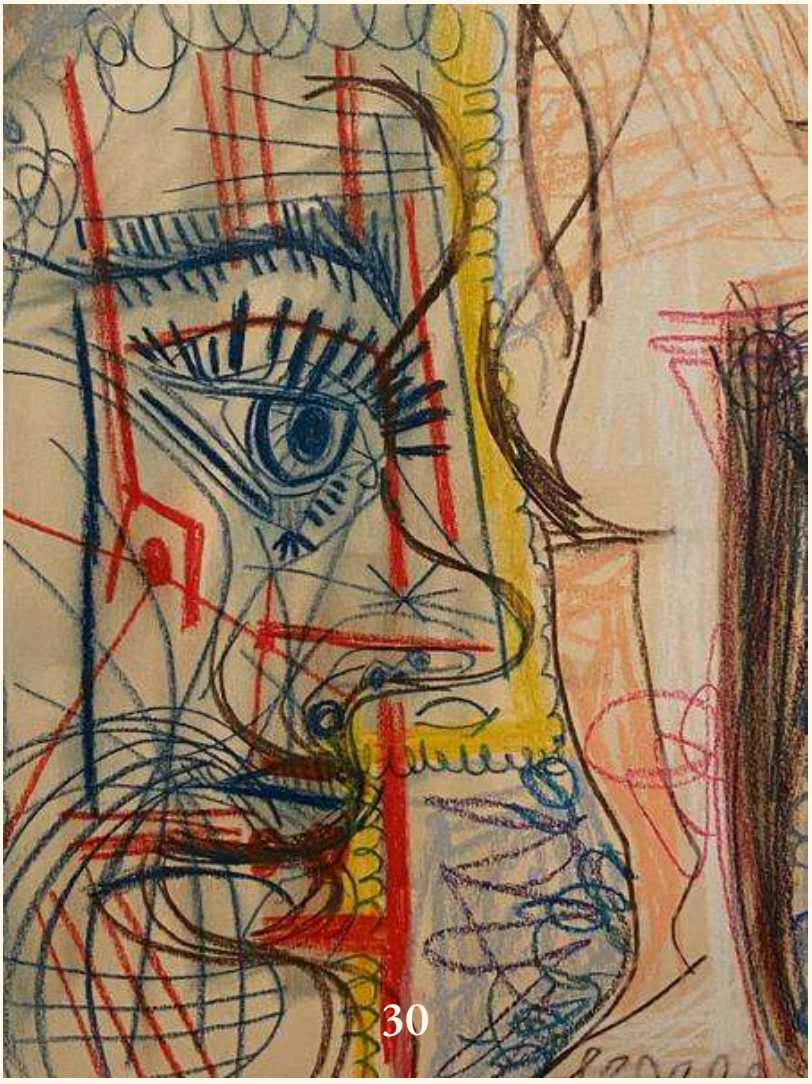
Ending all suffering is a goal that strikes as even more commonsensically and obviously good than immortality. Still, it is not a vision entirely devoid of critique. We often think of any pain as inherently evil, yet sometimes suffering may bring about some greater good, good which couldn’t have been brought by other means. Experiencing discomfort may motivate humans more than other means, thus leading to better results. It is also often a condition for many desirable things. As the Pope says: “To eliminate suffering entirely would mean, in the end, extinguishing love and desire as well.” [26] Here the necessity of suffering for the existence of hope is also something noteworthy. As Byung-Chul Han observes: “The star of hope is adjacent to the non-star (Latin: des-astrum) of catastrophe. Without the negativity of catastrophe and resistance despite it, there is only the banality of optimism.” [27] Another example of a value which could be lost with achieving absolute lack of suffering is the very idea of human dignity.

As Pope Leo XIV writes: “Finitude, when truly accepted, does not diminish us but opens us to recognizing the face of God and others. Indeed, precisely because we experience limits — vulnerability, suffering and failure — we can recognize the inviolable dignity of every person, both our own and that of others.” [28] It is doubtful whether transformed humans would respect other humans. Lack of finitude can easily evolve into having a sense of being limitless, limitless to the point of destroying the limits that stem from human dignity. Of course, this doesn’t mean we shouldn’t fight suffering at all. Rather, we should do it carefully enough to not destroy things such as love, desire, hope or human dignity. If we keep that rule in mind then the lack of suffering is worth the fight for it. Leo XIV put it into such rule: “We can embrace the technological progress that alleviates suffering and unlocks new possibilities, provided that we do not abandon the very essence of our humanity, namely the capacity for relationship and love.” [29]

As the two previous ways of enhancing humanity, the third also seems initially appealing. After all, it seems obviously desirable to use technology and science in order to go beyond our own limits. Yet, it also brings some negative consequences. Namely, if we modify ourselves we can stop being human, as the Pope says: “To renounce this adventure, both tragic and splendid, in the name of a presumed transcendence of all limits, could mean many things, but it would no longer be human.” [30] Of course, this is the ultimate goal for some transhumanists. They would agree it is no longer human but that not being human may, in some circumstances, be a positive thing. On the contrary, it is doubtful whether anyone can reach true happiness while being no

longer human. But even if they may, it still leads to stepping into a realm which is yet undiscovered and thus potentially lethal.

If we were to depend on technology too much then there is a possibility that the technology will cause our downfall, for example, due to unexpected malfunction which could lead to destruction of fragile, since dependent on technology, human race. We already experience that angst with the nuclear weapons. However, as the Pope notes, we are getting less aware of that risk: “In the past, recognition of the threat posed by weapons capable of destroying all of humanity had promoted paths toward détente and disarmament negotiations. Unfortunately, this approach has been left behind, and the evolution of nuclear arsenals — including



the prospect of its ‘tactical’ use — makes the use of such weapons seem less improbable.” [31] Many more even more dangeroustechnologies may appear as the blind progress of transhumanist ambition to go beyond what’s human continues. Whatever comes after human beings will no longer be natural and thus the consequences may go beyond any consequences we would suffer naturally. After all, when one is dealing with something unknown then the consequences are also unknown and thus possibly radically negative.

A different critique of this desire for enhancement is offered by Martin Heidegger. As Qikai Zhang describes: “He argued that the essence of modern technology is not ‘instrumentality’ but ‘Gestell.’ The term ‘Gestell’ refers to the ‘challenging stance’ adopted by modern technology, which no longer functions in the traditional sense of 'use' or ‘assistance,’ but instead forces nature and beings into a state of optimization, mobilization, and storage. In this process, the earth becomes a ‘resource,’ and humans are transformed into ‘mobilized reserve energy.’ ‘Gestell is not merely humanity's demand on the world; it is the historical unveiling of the mode of being’ (Huang, 2022). Under the dominance of the framework, the world no longer presents itself as ‘thingness’ but as ‘resourcefulness.’ For example, a tree is no longer a living entity in its own right but ‘usable timber’” [32] This critique is somewhat similar to the argumentation against instrumentalization of humanity that was offered already in previous chapters. Yet, it introduces a new aspect. The thing instrumentalized is not only the human being but the whole world. If someone sets as their objective becoming something more than human then objects around them will no longer be actually valuable things but resources necessary for achieving progress

instead. In this they lose both the sense of themselves and of the things around them. Technology which was meant to aid humanity and the whole universe would now need humanity and the whole universe to aid itself. As Pope Leo XIV writes: “In that [anti-human] vision, the fullness of life is equated with having more, reducing weakness, eliminating uncertainty and exerting total control. When efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of value, human beings are tempted to see themselves as a project to be optimized rather than as persons called to relationship and communion.” [33]

Conclusion

In this essay I tried to prove that Magnifica Humanitas presents extensive critique of transhumanism. I showed that the Pope argues against equating happiness with productivity and that he views technological development as only one of many elements that true development needs, given that it wants to make humanity actually better. The desire for immortality, lack of suffering, and increasing human capabilities are also presented as falsely utopian ideas that may not turn out so great as they initially seem, at least according to Leo XIV. I attempted to show possible argumentation behind those points and add additional philosophical context so that the ideas presented by the Pope may seem well-grounded even from solely secular perspective.

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[2] Leandro Gaitan, The Pneumopathic Genesis of Human Enhancement, in: Scientia et Fides 12(1)/2024, p. 233, Pamplona 2024
[3] Ibid. , p. 237
[4] Marc Andreessen, The Techno-Optimist Manifesto, ch. Markets, 2023
[5] Ibid., ch. Technology
[6] Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas, 51, Rome 2026; throughout the essay this encyclical will be cited as “MH”
[7] Duch Nadzieii Inne Eseje, prz. Rafał Pokrywka, p. 160-161 Warsaw 2025; translated from Polish
[8] Abdul, Ojochogwu & Fasiku, Gbenga C., An Exposition of James Hughes’ Problematization of the Concept of Progress in Transhumanist Thought, in: Sapientia Journal of Philosophy, p. 115, 2021
[9] Amanda Caswell, ‘People will buy intelligence from us on a meter’: ChatGPT’s CEO, Sam Altman, has critics worried with his AI vision
[10] Marc Andreessen, The Techno-Optimist Manifesto, ch. Markets, 2023
[11] Dario Amodei, Machines of Loving Grace, 2024
[12] MH 92, 94
[13] MH 163
[14] MH 83
[15] Ibid
[16] Ibid
[17] Ted Kaczyński, INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND ITS FUTURE, p. 125, 1997
[18] One-Dimensional Man, ch. 1.1, p. 10/59, New York 2007
[19] MH 233
[20] Nick Bostrom, Transhumanist Values, What is transhumanism?, Oxford 2003
[21] Ibid
[22] Leandro Gaitan, The Pneumopathic Genesis of Human Enhancement, in: Scientia et Fides 12(1)/2024, p. 235, Pamplona 2024
[23] On the Death of Satyrus, b. II, ch. 37-40
[24] Pensées 172, s. 2, p. 28-29, transl. Jonathan Bennett, 2017
[25] MH 12
[26] MH 120
[27] Duch Nadzieii Inne Eseje, prz. Rafał Pokrywka, p. 213, Warsaw 2025; translated from Polish
[28] MH 122
[29] MH 126
[30] MH 120
[31] MH 194
[32] Qikai Zhang, Technology and Existence: A Critique of Human Enhancement Based on Heidegger, ch. 3.2, p. 5, Wenzhou 2025
[33] MH 112

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Haikus of changes and periods of transition



olive trees in bloom,
extinguished constellations—
an overcrowded bus

Sante Diomede
Italy

wounded heart,
a silent wardrobe—
the pomegranate
laughing children
among snowmen—
a bride in white



Antonella Del Re
Italy

Perceptions of the Self, time, and the human experience

“The flower of the infinite: Conceiving the Knowing and Social Subject after Blaise Pascal”



Dario Postolovski
North Macedonia

"Thinking reed. It is not in space that I must look for my dignity, but from the organization of my thoughts. I shall have no advantage in owning estates. Through space the universe grasps and engulfs me like a pinpoint; through thought I can grasp it."

Blaise Pascal, "Pensées"

I. Thought in being

Blaise Pascal, in emphasizing the fruitfulness of the organization of our thoughts, points out one of the central paradoxes of the relation between the thinking subject and the world, which has curious only for epistemology, but also for ethics, aesthetics and social ontology, which I will thematize in this essay.



The subject, from its spatially determinate point of perception seems engulfed by the corporeal universe, and yet in its thought it seems to be able to veritably "engulf" the universe. One can interpret this merely dualistically, in that the body which some abstract subjectivity uses as a vehicle is one body among others in the universe; but there seems to be more to this insight.

Phenomenologically, as humans, we are constantly encountering the apparent historicity of our subjectivity. We always encounter our self-consciousness as a

dynamism of becoming in relationality to objects and other subjects in being as a whole. We have a sense that our very subjectivity came into being out of the world.

Even when one tries to, as Plato did, think of a soul preexisting its body, one is always faced with the contingency and becoming of one's thought. And one is in fact faced with this precisely in the striving (and therefore becoming) to grasp being as a whole and not despite it.

II. The being of thought

Simply put, thought itself is grounded in being. Friedrich Schelling sought to explain the possibility of this paradoxical relation: the question of how thought emerges in being, or of how nature produces thinking subjects.

To this end, Schelling seeks to think nature not merely as a sum of objects of our sense-perception and understanding (as Kant did), but also as subject. Not in the sense of an empirical psychological ego, but rather as having being-in-itself which is active, productive and expresses the laws of thought in its own intelligible substantiality.

This is to say that Schelling thinks of nature as a whole which relates to itself as the object of its own activity of production, or in other words, as subject and object which are one. This unity of subject and object in nature develops methodologically, in that nature actively recapitulates its productivity in new natural products in

various stages, until it finally produces spirit, that is, humanity qua incarnate thinking subjects. In humanity nature is not only a being in-itself but also a being for-itself. And the subjectivity of humans is already latent in nature, which enables both the historicity of subjects and the grasping of nature by finite subjects due to nature's inherent intelligibility.

To further detail this process, a triad of principles which Schelling calls "potencies" can be developed: the ideal, the real and the identity of the ideal and the real. The emergence of human subjectivity can be understood as the actualization of ever-greater ideality in nature without the loss of reality, such that a higher unity of the ideal and the real is realized.

The ultimate structure of both being as a whole and human subjectivity is then a constellation of the three potencies of which human subjectivity is also the onset of the third. As moments in the structure of human subjectivity, the potencies correspond to:

1) the private, pre-reflexive internality of the subject, the subject qua subject, which is its determinability, the possibilities of one's self-expression,
2) the intelligible predicate, which is its determination, the actual self-expression at once for oneself and for another,
3) the unity of these two which enables the former to be truly revealed in the latter without reducing either one to the other.

As the unity of both determinability (being-able) and determination (purely-being), the third moment is our freedom or self-determination; as that which enables us

to relate to ourselves as we are, i.e., as ourselves, it is our self- consciousness. In this sense, both our subjectivity and the Being of being as a whole is always an interplay of the both the hidden and the manifest, an activity of self- communication.

However, if our freedom (including our moral freedom), our ability to know truth and our self-expression (including our self-expression in art) are enabled by one and the same structure, how then should we understand the need for the organization of our thoughts which Pascal calls for? Can we still affirm a Kantian segregation of the spheres of ethics, epistemology and aesthetics, treating them as spheres which are only held together by a bare proportional analogy?

Of course, that would not be possible. What this amounts to, is that the horizon of our ethical strivings in moral freedom — the Good; the horizon of our epistemic strivings in knowledge and self-knowledge — the True; and the horizon of our aesthetic strivings in self-expression — the Beautiful are all simply convertible aspects of the act of Being itself or transcendentals, as St. Thomas Aquinas called them. And the more intensely we truly strive towards one, the more intensely we truly strive towards the others.



III. Sociality and the self-realization of thought

Furthermore, Pascal curiously opposes one's epistemic self-realization to one's

achievements in material possession. Saying that one cannot find his dignity in space, but rather in the organization of one's own thoughts, and even explicitly that one shall have no advantage in owning estates. This should by no means return us to a dualistic way of thinking.

St. Basil's social ontology, which likewise emphasizes the relationality of subjects understood as hypostases, can help us understand the truth of this claim by Pascal. When the potencies are applied to the Absolute, they must be considered unconditionally, and thus all three potencies must be contained in one another, such that the whole structure of subjectivity is contained in all its three moments.

The trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian fathers (including St. Basil) seems to anticipate this by insisting that all three Hypostases in the Trinity are co-eternal and co-equal, that they are neither parts of God or the Absolute nor modes, but that each Hypostasis possesses the fullness of the one act of Divine Being, Being which is the very relationality of the Hypostases. And therefore the Father is the whole God, the Son is the whole God, and the Holy Spirit is the whole God. As finite beings, our being and the being of whatever material goods we may possess are distributed among us rather than possessed by all of us unconditionally.

But if our being is also our self-communication and relationality with other subjects and with the Absolute, and the Absolute is to be understood as our final cause, then the horizon of all of our strivings: ethical, epistemic and aesthetic alike must be this state of unconditional co-possession prefigured in the Trinity. According to



St. Basil this can only be approximated in our current state, but it ought to be approximated. He holds that food, clothes, estates etc. which are superfluously possessed by the wealthy properly belong to the poor, and that their possession of these material goods renders them thieves, thereby compromising their ethical self-realization.

And consequently, for us that is also their epistemic self-realization. In this sense, they shall have no advantage in owning estates, as Pascal says. St. Basil instead proposes that, both for the ethical self-realization of all subjects and for the satiation of bodily and psychological needs, all people in our communities ought to take what they need and give what they can and even cultivate an aesthetic pleasure in this ethical good. This is not to say that all people renounce what is good, true and beautiful in art or the communication of knowledge through reading and writing or spending time with friends.

For St. Basil, these are not luxuries, they in fact they further our ethical self-realization. What luxury constitutes is possession of material goods in a manner which objectifies other subjects, whether directly

(through an institution like slavery) or indirectly (through superfluous wealth) by not acknowledging their freedom, needs and strivings. This objectification of the other is also harmful to us, because it contradicts our being as self- communication, self-giving, relationality.

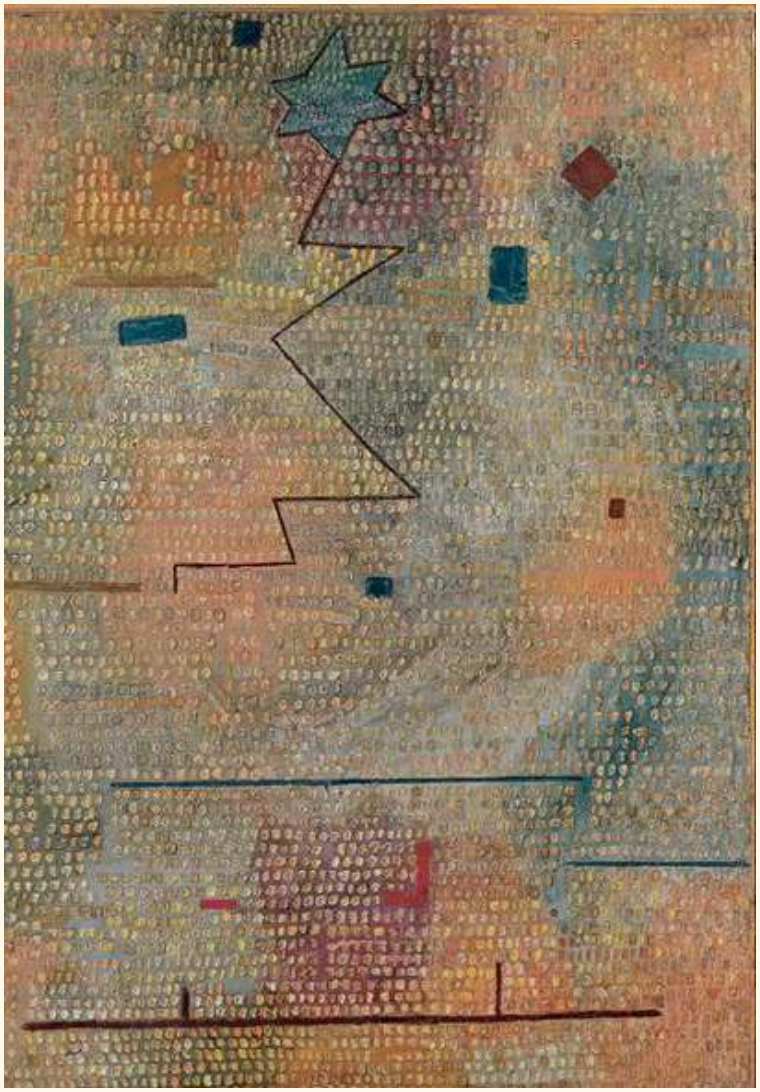
Conclusion

Philosophy, then, is the realization that we are all co-heirs apparent of the whole world in thought. We as subjects are grounded in being as a whole but all have the potential to begin to grasp it and grasp ever new things about it in organizing our thoughts.

In striving to grasp the world while remaining “grasped” by the world, in appreciating beauty and creating beautiful works, in loving the other, loving their love for us and acting on that love, we realize the True, the Beautiful and the Good precisely as convertible aspects of the act of Being.

Such that knowledge, aesthetic pleasure, art and morality are aspects of our ontological self-realization. Whereby, doing these things, we look for our true dignity, drawing our being ever nearer to Divine Being, to an eschatological state where we too shall become unconditioned, knowing together as we are known and grasping together as we are grasped.

“Did you know that green beavers built dams in The River of Laughter”



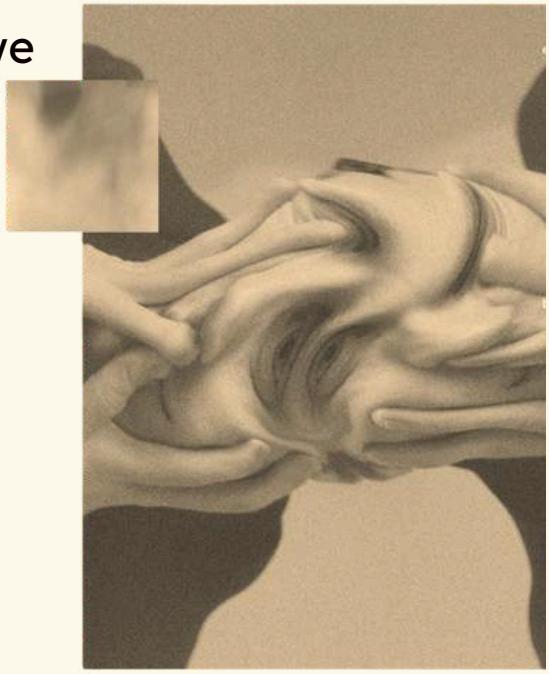
Gabrielja Vodic
Croatia

Presented during
Philosium Makarska Symposia
May 2026

Like a child of the sky of a mark of the lost,
in the smoke of a burned voice of the devil.
Fragments of twilight beneath the Elysian Fields woven through astral streets.
A divinity of eternal whiteness in a coffin falters as if I see the entire ocean from that cliff.
And the glow of a thousand suns dark was while I was homeless.
On a soft bed flora fell asleep.

Through forbidden bays it swims, like a priest of hell, like a man in freedom.
In the garden of the past the herald of heaven has drowned.
Why do you flee the ritual of sacrifice?

The ashes of a burned body were the ground that God created.
From fauna we arose, why do we feed the sacred with poison?



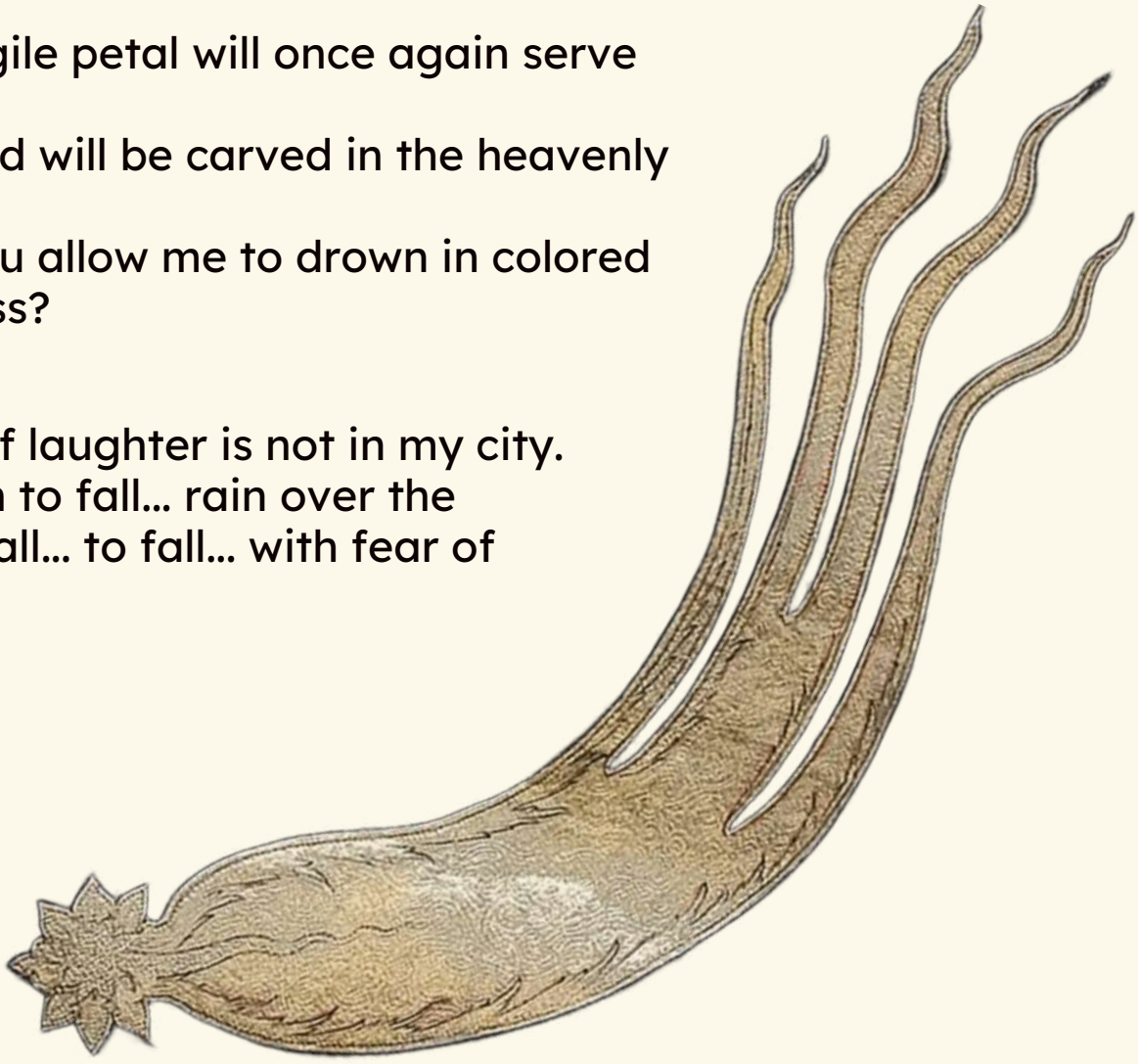
Empty days pass, and within them distorted memories.
Lilacs wither beneath dreams.
A sky full of oblivion, which will become the past.

A gaze of contempt looks at me through fire.
An eternal lullaby will play on the river of laughter.
Why does the Abandoned call your name?
Clouds enchanted with whiteness were cold while the sinner I was.

An empty room of shadows carved into a wall of ash.
An unknown silhouette walks through my body, pierced by thorned hands.

A pale fragile petal will once again serve Aurora.
Your wound will be carved in the heavenly chambers.
Why do you allow me to drown in colored nothingness?

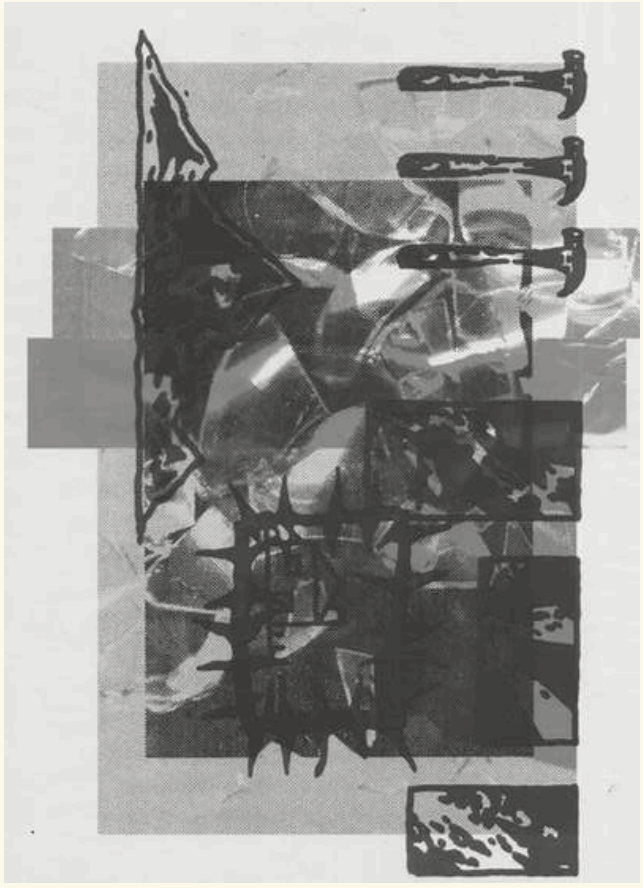
The river of laughter is not in my city.
I want rain to fall... rain over the stars... to fall... to fall... with fear of falling.



Why We Should Not Stop Thinking

"Thinking reed. It is not in space that I must look for my dignity, but from the organization of my thoughts. I shall have no advantage in owning estates. Through space the universe grasps and engulfs me like a pinpoint; through thought I can grasp it."

Blaise Pascal, "Pensées"



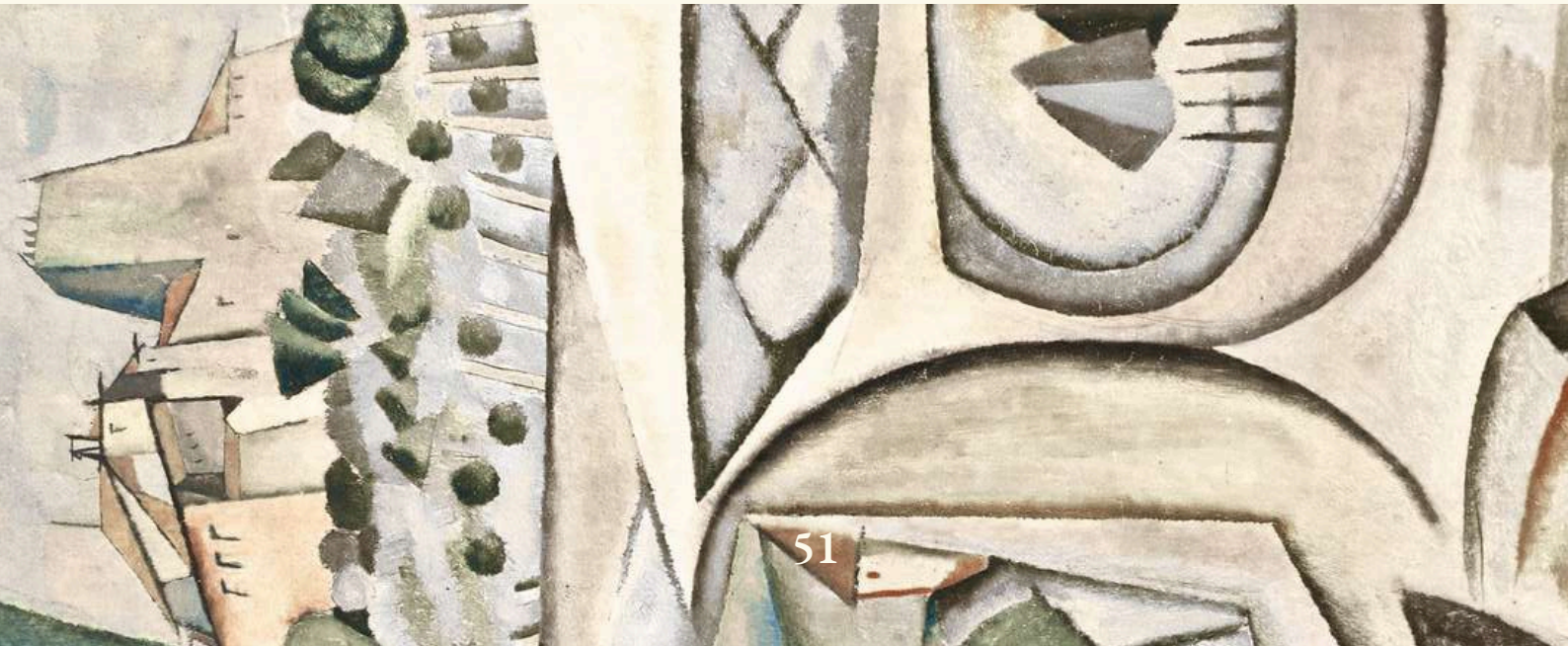
Klara Kaczmarek
Poland

Introduction

One of the most gripping dilemmas in philosophy, as well as the natural sciences is the nature and existence of the thought. Blaise Pascal valued the ability to think as the crucial, defining factor of human dignity, because through our system of thought we can grasp the universe and therefore gain our dignity as a conscious part of it.

In a broader context of Pascal's "Pensées", the first sentence of Pascal's quote is a consensus of his claim that a human being is merely a weak reed – but a thinking reed. It is in thinking that Pascal finds human dignity. He stresses that one should look for human dignity not in 'space' but in the organization of one's thoughts. Through space, the universe grasps a human like a pinpoint – ruthlessly positioning and defining his ontological status. This statement engages in discourse regarding human nature, epistemology, the philosophy of thought and our relation to the universe as humans.

Moreover, Pascal's claim stimulates the question, is thinking really a defining human quality and does it really allow us to comprehend the surrounding reality?



I. What is thought?



Pascal's quote comes from a philosophical work titled "Pensées" which means "Thoughts", perhaps referring to the idea of thought and inquiry as a medium of philosophy. Philosophy is by definition a 'love of wisdom', and wisdom is an ability to make judgements and decisions based on knowledge and one's experience.

In "Enquiry concerning human understanding" David Hume claimed that we make judgements about our universe because of the impressions we gain from empirical observations-from these impressions we can extract ideas about our surrounding and organize our assumptions into an adaptable vision of the world. Hume used an example of remembering the interior in his room; his vision was built by various experiences of being in the room, seeing and touching all of its contents. This concept implies that what we are thinking about is what we derive from memory – our organization of thoughts is an organization of what we have experienced. The word "thought" derives from an Old English term "thanc" which has three meanings; giving thanks, thinking, and memory.

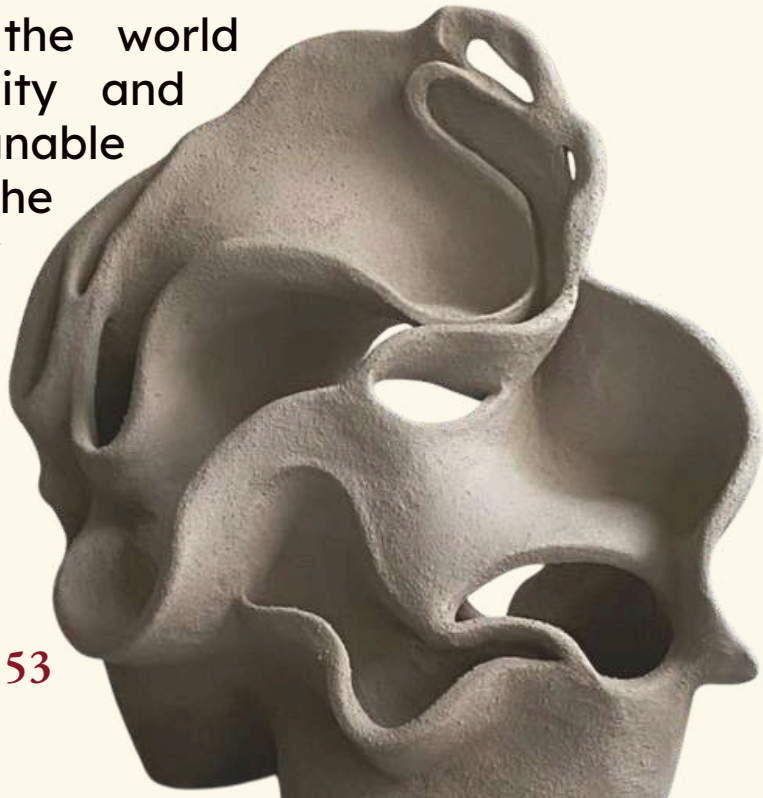
Martin Heidegger analyzed this fact in an essay titled "What is called thinking?" and noticed that "thinking" (etymologically) means giving thanks to entities we comprehend with our mind and preserve in memory, to what is there. The word "thought" seems ambiguous, and can have many meanings; in Plato's "Cratylus", upon the analysis of gods names and their correctness, Socrates mentions that Athena's name means Thought. Considering that the name of the goddess of wisdom and

knowledge means Thought, it implies that thinking is the imperative of wisdom and a way to knowing. What Pascal implies in this quote may connect to the very idea of philosophy as a pursuit; through thought, we perceive the universe, create assumptions about what we see and therefore grasp its immanence into our mind.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari defined philosophy as “creating concepts”, actively fabricating systems of thought about our reality. Many scientists, such as Richard Feynman perceived science — as well as philosophy — as a creation of scientific laws and finding structure in our perceived reality. An extension of Pascals thought would be that through thinking also philosophizing, comprehending the universe one must look for human dignity.

Since we don’t have a concrete definition of what a thought consists of, Heidegger proposes that to answer the question “what is called thinking” we must not define what thinking is, but rather define why do we think, what has been given the name of thinking and what characterizes thinking as a human activity.

Thinking and analyzing the world gives a sense of stability and meaning; even if we are unable to completely grasp the universe as a whole, our organization of thoughts provides us with a structured vision of our environment. According to Blaise Pascal, no matter how we define thinking is a



distinctly human quality which enables us to comprehend the universe and provides meaning for our actions — and a role in the universe.



II. In Search of Dignity

The term “dignity” has connotations of given respect, a distinguishing quality that makes one proud. It seems necessary for human beings to look for their dignity, as we need to define who we are and what we represent. In “Pensées” Pascal also argues that one should not have any advantage in owning estates, as we should not look for dignity in physical space. But considering a capitalist system which we live in; a realism based on the value of status and material possessions this idea seems rather unrealistic. As Mark Fischer noticed in “Capitalist realism”, in the modern world moral values has been replaced by feelings: feeling and looking good, presenting an expected image of a high-functioning healthy human; to gain social acceptance and therefore happiness,one must conform to this social norm and engage in consumption of material things.

However, Pascal’s claim may be supported by the philosophical thought of the Book of Kohelet, summarized by the notion of “vanitas”, which refuted the value of estates and material goods. In the Bible, the Book of Kohelet lists all the important values present in human existence and disproves their value by pointing out that each one of them will fade and will not last forever. Considering this idea, Pascal’s resolution seems rational — material possessions can be destroyed, but more importantly they can never determine human

dignity despite playing an important role in our economical system. What defines dignity is the ability to think for oneself — that is perhaps the only aspect of human life that can never be taken away by anybody.

In culture, visions of the worst possible scenarios — dystopias — almost always portray terror through absolute control as the control over thoughts, the most private and defining human quality. Both George Orwell's and Aldous Huxley's dystopian novels featured a society deprived of creative and critical thinking. The deprive a human of their organization of thoughts is to deprive them of their personal universe created in their mind — and therefore of their humanity.

Because of that fact, in "Hegel in a wired brain" Slavoy Zizek warned people against the "wired brain" concept, e.g. Neuralink, consisting of a brain plugged to a computing device that could read thoughts and implement them into a computing system. Zizek argued that displaying everyone's system of thoughts would destroy our culture, personal relations and almost every aspect of everyday life in society, because thoughts and private impressions would no longer be a mystery; in person communication would never be the same. The main problem with modern technology and the use of artificial intelligence is that proximity of endless data discourages humans from thinking for oneself.



In an essay titled “What is called thinking?’ Martin Heidegger stated that the most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking. This essay, published already in the 20th century could not be more up to date. Our ‘time’ certainly is thought-provoking, considering the rapid development of science and technology and current political affairs – yet paradoxically, we are still not thinking.

Independent thinking obviously is not easy and comfortable; Socrates noticed that fact by pointing out to the similarity between the Greek words “mathei” (meaning learning) and “pathei” (meaning suffering), and he concluded that with thinking and learning new concepts comes great suffering, because wisdom is a practice of evaluating and doubting one’s beliefs, which eliminates the feeling of stability in life. However, his other conclusion was that the greatest wisdom is admitting that we know nothing, and moving forward from that knowledge. Despite the fact that thinking may be a difficult solitary activity (as G.W.F. Hegel defined it) we must not stop organizing and creating our thoughts, for as Pascal states there lies our human dignity.

III. Human, all too human

Upon scientific progress and broader understanding of our surrounding appears a notable question: what is our relation to the universe? As Pascal stated, the universe engulfs a human like a pinpoint; we are a part of nature and calling a human a reed may be an overstatement, yet an understandable one. If we consider what he called ‘space’, the three-dimensional space adding up to our universe, then the conclusion seems correct — as we are.

a part of the observable material universe, a cluster of atoms as well as any being in the cosmos. The idea of this “space” grasping us like a pinpoint; positioning exactly and deterministically describing who we are corresponds with the facts we have about ourselves as a species — death is inevitable for humans as much as for any animal, and since birth we have a physical body which will deteriorate with time along with all of nature.

Pascal’s view of a human as a “meek reed” was in opposition to the main thinkers of the renaissance era, who agreed with Protagoras’ thought that man is the measure of all beings. Pico Bella Mirandola also advocated shifting the focus onto humans, and positioning humans as the main value and a concept to be appreciated more than anything else.

The focus on humans seems logical, since in philosophy as well as the sciences and art our main focus is ourselves. By knowing ourselves and, as Pascal argues, our organization of thought we can understand the universe. However, Protagoras’s idea may lead to dangerous dogmas which Friedrich Nietzsche addressed in “Human, all to human”. Becoming “all too human” is an aggravating perspective that stems from treating a human being as a center of the universe and all values. Nietzsche, as well as Deleuze presented this idea as a warning — one must never forget about our role in nature and how we are an integral part of it. Treating humans as superior to other beings leads to exploitation, abuse of power and eventually the loss of our humanity.

Obviously, there are many factors distinguishing a human from other organisms — but as Roman Ingarden

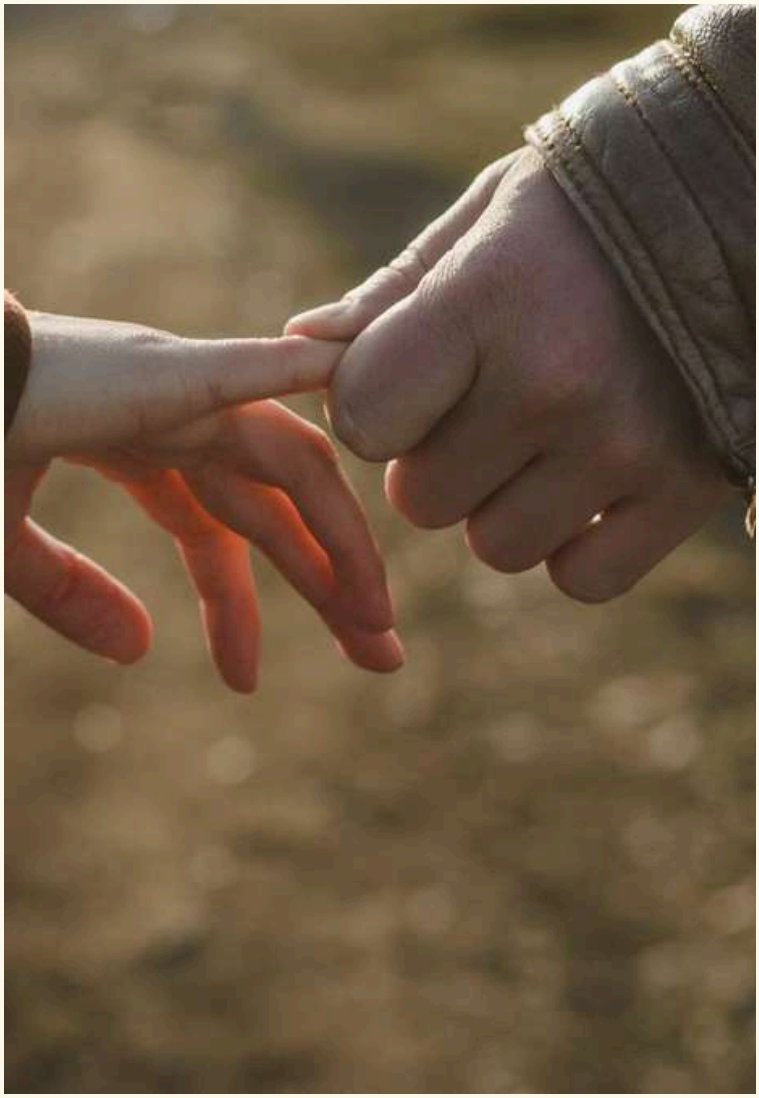
concluded in his essay ‘On nature’, we gain our humanity by recognizing ourselves as a part of nature and positioning ourselves as an individual part of it.

Summary

Having taken into consideration all the points above, Blaise Pascal proves that our dignity as humans can be gained only through individual thought, throughwhich we can understand the universe and therefore position ourselves in its realm. We don’t know if humans are the only beings that can formulate coherent thoughts, but we’ve surely made the most of this phenomena by enquiring into our nature by philosophizing and creating art, science and culture which materialize our thoughts to make them comprehendible for other humans.



“Am I Bound By A Past Self’s Promise?”



Ojasva Nigam
India

Introduction

The most beautiful truth of being human is that we are never the same river twice , forever reshaped by tide.

Imagine a passionate idealist 18-year-old who signs a personal pledge never to work for a corporate entity or a young person who enters into a lifelong personal commitment. 12 years later, at thirty, their life circumstances, family responsibilities, and fundamental values have completely shifted. A promise is often traditionally understood as a binding moral contract. However, under normal circumstances, a contract requires two different parties. What happens when the one who made the promise and the one who must keep it are the same biological individual but separated by more than a decade of psychological evolution?

This dilemma exposes a deep philosophical tension between our desire for personal consistency and our capacity for growth. The core question is “Does a choice you made years ago have the right to dictate your life today, or should you always be free to change your mind based on who you are right now?” This essay further argues that we are not permanently bound by past self-promises as if they were permanent legal handcuffs. Instead, a past promise is an inherited moral trust. It should be kept only if the core values that gave rise to it remain vital to who we are



in the present today. We are the stewards of the history of our lives, not prisoners.



I. The case for the Past Self

To understand why a past promise should hold authority over our present lives, we must first look at the moral weight of how we construct a human identity over time. A long-term commitment is not a casual guess about the future; it is an act of architecture. When a young version of us decides to pursue a specific goal, commit to a strict ethical code, or make a profound personal vow, they are investing their 18 years of life experience (limited currency of time), hope, and youthful energy into a single destination. The past version of ourselves is, at its core, a "vulnerable creator"; they did the hard work of building the foundation, closing off all alternative possibilities, and absorbing the cost of early sacrifices under a singular fundamental assumption that their future self would be a reliable partner who would complete the building. Because this past self now exists only in psychological memory, which means it cannot enforce its commitment, they are completely powerless to defend their investment. If the self abandons that original plan simply because it has become hard and inconvenient, the past sacrifices have become retroactively emptied of their meaning.

To provide strong philosophical ground for this obligation, we can take the insights of Charles Fried's work Contract as Promise. In this work, Fried argues that a contract is both morally and legally binding because it invokes a convention of absolute trust that is created

through promises. When we make the promise to another person, we intentionally invite them to rely on our word, and when we break the promise, it is a direct attack on their dignity. Although Fried focuses on agreement between different individuals, this same structure of trust can exist across the stages of a single person's life.

When an 18-year-old self made a profound vow, they acted in completely good faith; they utilised their autonomy at that to shape a meaningful life and trusted themselves as caretakers of that vision. Therefore, respecting past choices is not an act of blind stubbornness; it is an act of self-respect. If the choices we made today can be effortlessly removed by our future selves Tomorrow, then, our present act of free will is ultimately an illusion. To remain a coherent and rational identity throughout life, our words must have a lasting moral authority, which cannot be erased by the passing of a decade or shifting of the mood.

Yet, this image of a unified, self-trusting, lifelong self relies on an assumption that the person who made the promise (18-year-old self) and who must keep it (30-year-old self) are identical. When we change the focus from the idealized architecture of the past to the psychological reality of the present. This chain of identity begins to break. If the present self sees itself as the caretaker of the past self's dream, it risks turning the present life into a museum of dead intentions. At some point the present self must look at the blueprint they have inherited. Ask, "Why should a ghost from 12 years ago have authority to govern an evolving present?"

To weaken the past claim over the present. Derek Parfit's

“Reason and Person” offers a powerful alternative. He argues that there is no deep, permanent, unchanging “ego” that remains completely identical from birth to death. Instead, he is arguing that personal identity is a matter of degree and depends on changing psychological connections like shared memories, immediate beliefs, and active desires. Over the period of twelve years, almost every cell in the human body is replaced, and more importantly, our psychological mind undergoes a massive shift. Because these internal connections fade so drastically over decades.

If the direct psychological links between your past self and your present self have faded away, then your eighteen-year-old self is not your partner. Metaphysically speaking, they are practically a stranger. This realization completely dismantles Charles Fried’s claim that breaking a self-promise is a betrayal of autonomy. Parfit illustrates this with his famous thought experiment of the Young Russian Nobleman. Imagine a young, deeply idealistic aristocrat who signs over his future inheritance to the local peasants, making his young wife swear that even if his future self changes his mind, she will ignore him. Decades later, the nobleman returns as a middle-aged man, his values completely changed, and he genuinely wants to keep the land for himself. Parfit asks us to consider the wife’s moral



dilemma: whom does she owe loyalty to? Parfit argues that the older nobleman is effectively a different person from the young man who signed the paper. Therefore, if the young man uses a past contract to permanently bind the older man, he is not exercising self-control — he is committing an act of coercion. He is a stranger from the past reaching forward through time to bully and enslave a living person.

Applied directly to our twelve-year timeline, forcing a thirty-year-old adult to struggle under an obsolete corporate ban or an outdated personal vow is not an act of high moral integrity. It is an act of internal tyranny. It allows a well-meaning but fundamentally uninformed teenager from over a decade ago to dictate the career, relationships, and happiness of an adult who actually has to live through the real-world consequences today. The river has changed, the person has changed, and the present self has a right to be free.

II. The Inheritance Model of Promise of thought

After having understood the limits of the architectural obligation of the past self and the radical liberation of the present self, we reach a philosophical impasse. If we completely obey the past self, we become passive museum curators of our past choices, maintaining obsolete structure at the expense of our living happiness. Meanwhile, if we completely follow the present self, our long-term agency collapses into a series of disconnected, untrustworthy moments, rendering us incapable of making a promise that sticks. Promise.

The solution to this problem is possible only if we shift our focus from abstract metaphysics to the actual psychological foundations of human action. This redirection provides the basis for a new concept of commitment: The Inheritance Model of Promise. To build this model, we must gain insights on Bernard Williams' work, first one is "The Makropulos Case: Reflection of the Tidium of Immortality" and second one is "Persons, Character, and Morality."

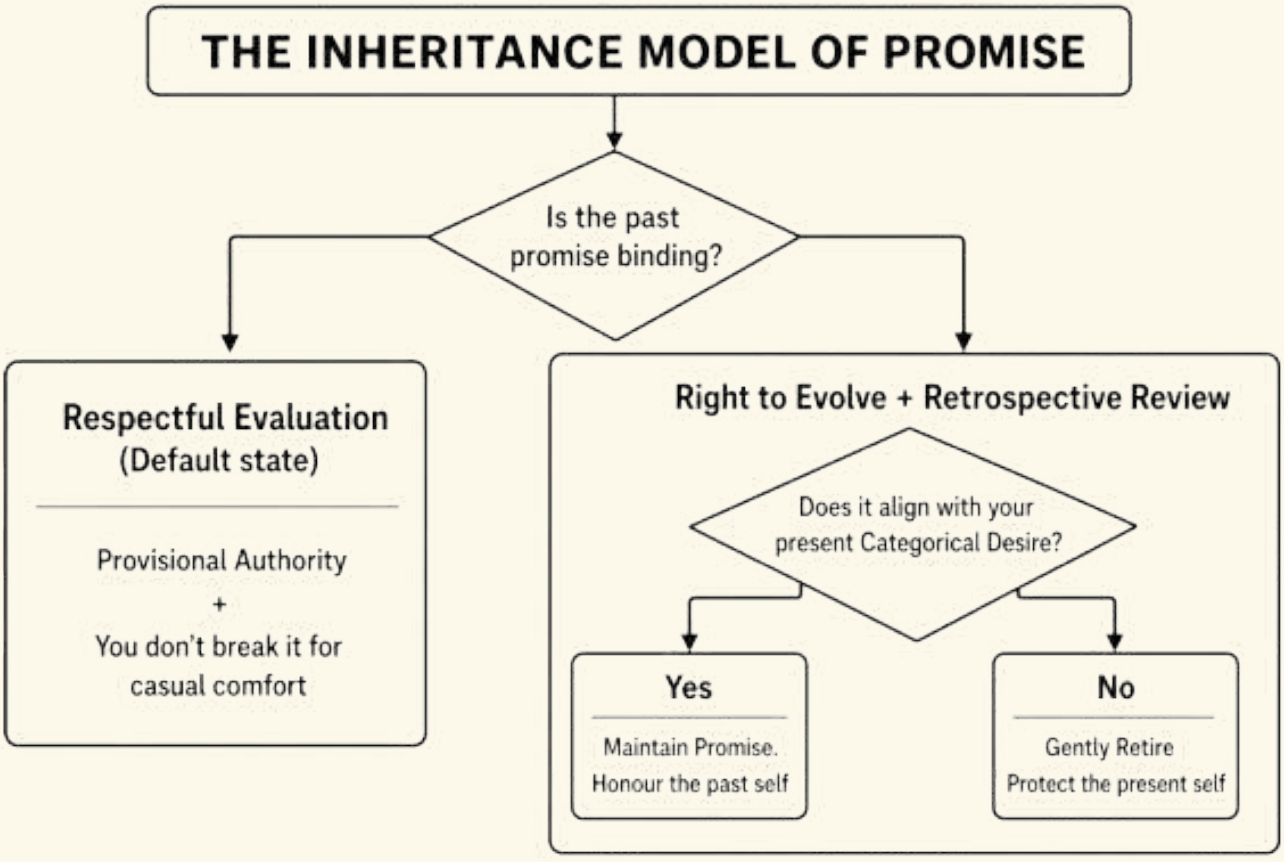
He argues that what gives human life meaning and makes it worth living are our "categorical desires," those deep, identity-defining commitments and passions such as creative impulses, a profound love, and moral inspiration. Essentially, categorical desire is that desire gives our lives meaning. If an eighteen-year-old makes a lifelong promise, that promise is inspired by a categorical desire. However, with more than a decade of life experience, our psychological state can naturally evolve. If a clear desire has gradually decreased, not due to laziness but due to genuine intellectual maturity, then pretending to maintain that passion in the present is not virtuous. It makes our lives motionless, trapping us in meaningless commitments.

The Inheritance Model of Promise suggests how we should treat a promise with the example of an inherited family business. When we apply this model, know the way of 'holding and changing' the promise.

Respectful Evaluation: When you inherit an old family business from your parents, you don't shut it down on the first day just because you don't want to work today. Similarly, when a past promise seems difficult to fulfill today, it can't be abandoned out of laziness or

immediate inconvenience. It is the duty of the present to respectfully evaluate the time, hopes, and sacrifices of that “vulnerable creator” of the past.

Right to Evolve : But if your perspective on life has been completely changed over time, and the past self of that promise, a past categorical desire, has now completely decreased within you and is not aligned with your present categorical desire, then you have every moral right to change that promise. If forcefully carrying that legacy is mentally draining your present life, it is wise to close that business (promise) or give it a new path.



Conclusion

Ultimately, personal identity is not a static mountain; rather, it is flowing like a river. A promise should act as a bridge that connects the different chapters of our lives, but it should never become a wall that stops life moving forward. Human growth is not a betrayal of our past; on the contrary, it is the true purpose of living.

To answer the central question of this essay directly, no, you are not bound by your past self's promise. You are bound, however, to treat that promise as a profound trust and historical commitment. It deserves your deep attention and respectful evaluation. But if you have outgrown foundational passion through moral and intellectual maturity. You have authority to right to evolve and gently retire it by viewing yourself as a steward of your inheritance rather than a prisoner of your history. We honour both the "vulnerable creator" we once were and the autonomous person we are today.

Perceptions critique of structures of Power, what defines freedom, external forces, and the individual

“A Tale of a Prisoner”



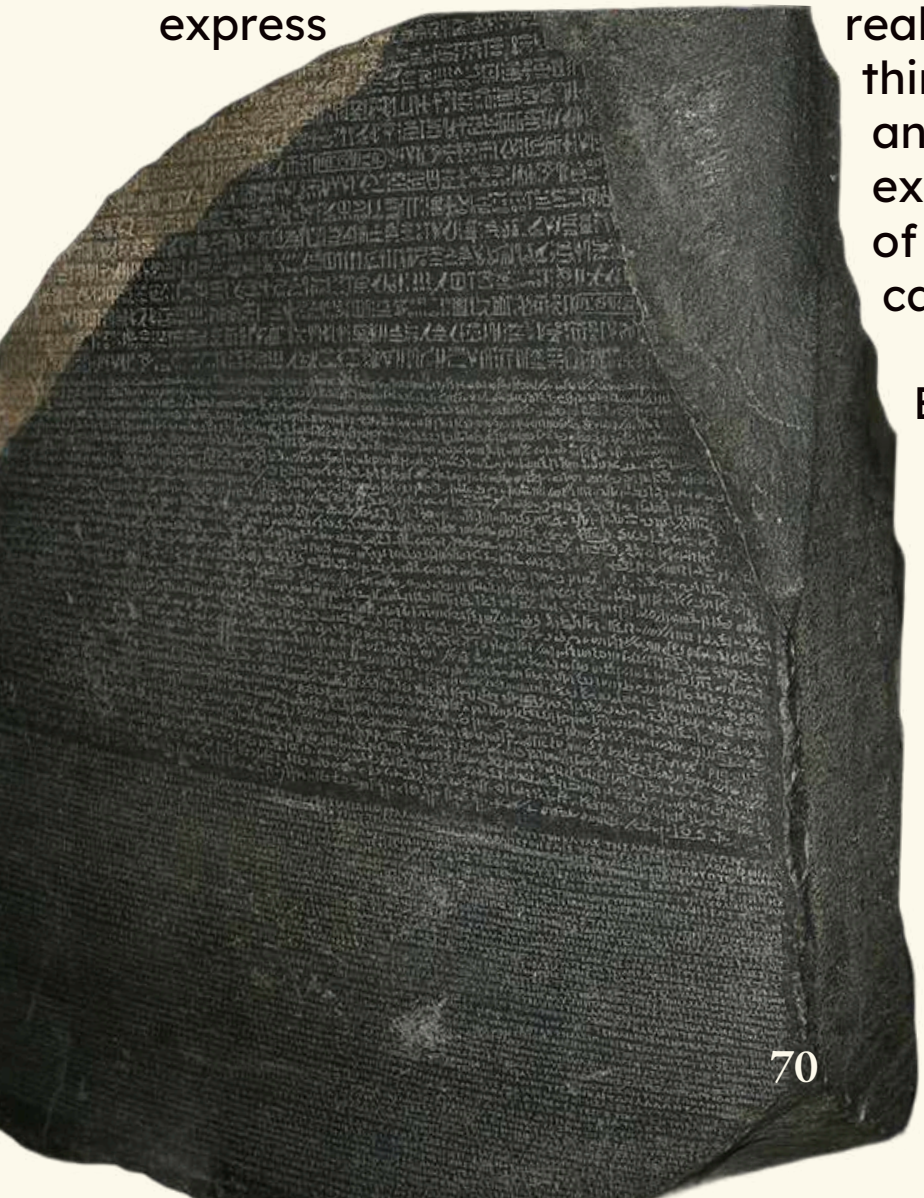
Isabel Barona Velásquez
Colombia

“Kiedy wymawiam słowo Nic,
stwarzam co, co nie mieści się w żadnym
niebycie.”

“When I pronounce the word Nothing,
I make something no non-being can hold.”

Wisława Szymborska

Language shapes our perception of the world. Language becomes the perception on itself, as we express it to others and materialize it to ourselves with an inner voice. That perception relates to how further reason is conceived, as a way of reasoning answers to a perception of reality. We are shaken by the way we express reality to ourselves, by thinking this must be true and absolute, a neutral expression of experience of a world where we can be free.



But it is the proposal of power relations made by Foucault what will question the existence of such a state in the given social structure, where freedom becomes conditioned to a discourse as it defines and conceives what can be considered as

truth inside language. Given the latter, how can it be understood for humans to be considered free?



Firstly, the idea of language as an expression and mechanism of power relations must be further explained. The nature of these relations will be detailed later, but as of now power will be referred to as a relation, not an object, where there is an inequality in possibility of action. It is precisely in this possibility of action that power takes form. As Foucault argues, power acts upon actions themselves (1982, p. 789).

It modifies, guides, and conditions the possibilities available within a relation without ever becoming a possession of either subject. This advantage within the relation permits the control of certain means through which the relation may reproduce and preserve itself over time. One of the mediums for this is language, as it establishes what and how we can express thoughts, therefore by controlling it and assigning a framework of acceptability to it that corresponds to the discourse produced by the relation, it reflects a position of powerthrough expression, through language itself. It is precisely because of this that language cannot be considered as neutral as it expresses a position and facilitates its reproduction as a mechanism for power.

Power relations construct and take part in every social relation; this is fundamental to understand the base of thought in this argument. Three of its properties will be explained:

1) Power relations reproduce historically. They are, much like energy, conserved. This is not to say that they remain identical through time, but that they do

not simply vanish. Rather, they transform, adapt, and relocate themselves within new social and historical circumstances. The relation changes its form while preserving its presence. Power takes and does what it can in order to reproduce and prolong its position for as long as possible.



2) Power relations produce discourses. The discourse is understood as the expression of a form of reasoning that responds to social and historical circumstances under a position of power. What is fundamental about discourse, however, is not merely its expression, but the framework it establishes through which certain truths, actions, thoughts, and forms of knowledge may be admitted while others are excluded. Truth, then, ceases to be an independent category and becomes something organized and distributed through discourse itself. The discourse is attributed to institutions instead of subjects. Further on, discourse is considered to be composed of action and speech. The latter is the linguistic part of the discourse meaning that it is not necessarily tangible as its counterpart is, due to the exclusion of the action.

3) Even through the act of resistance, the structure of power relations cannot be entirely escaped. An act of resistance opposes a structure considered valid in a society. But as power relations are ever present in social interactions, the individual remains attached to them insofar as they participate within society.

The concept of resistance itself is in relation to the pre-existence of a power relation;it not only acts in response to the latter and its historic adaptations but produces

possibilities of action that were not previously considered under the power structure.

Simultaneously, the act of resistance is productive, it goes back to the power relation in the form of tangible consequences that result in adaptation from the relation. It was previously mentioned that discourses are not a matter of individuals but of institutions. An institution constitutes a structured manifestation of power through which a relation may acquirepermanence beyond the subjects that participate in it. What would otherwise remain attached to a singular position can now preserve and reproduce itself through the institution. This is useful in several aspects.

First, and most evidently, it permits a centralized structure of power much like the one proposed in the Panopticon, although in a more abstract sense.
Control is no longer dependent on the direct presence of the relation itself, but on a structure capable of maintaining and reproducing it.



Second, discourse may now be attributed not to a subject but to an institution, allowing it to acquire a greater degree of legitimacyand permanence.

Both of these aspects relate to a third consequence: resistance is lowered. As resistance opposes the current state of a relation of power, its objective is no longer singular and fragile, but a structure of distributed and intangible power. Power ceases to appear as the property of an individual and becomes embedded within the institution itself, making it increasingly difficult to isolate, confront, and resist.

Consequently, the idea of language as a mechanism of power becomes institutionalized, allowing for its systematic regulation and control. Through this process, conceptions, actions, and possibilities of expression become increasingly conditioned by the structure of power itself. The limitation of thought through language is perfectly exemplified and narrated by Orwell in 1949:

"How could you have a slogan like 'freedom is slavery' when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking — not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."

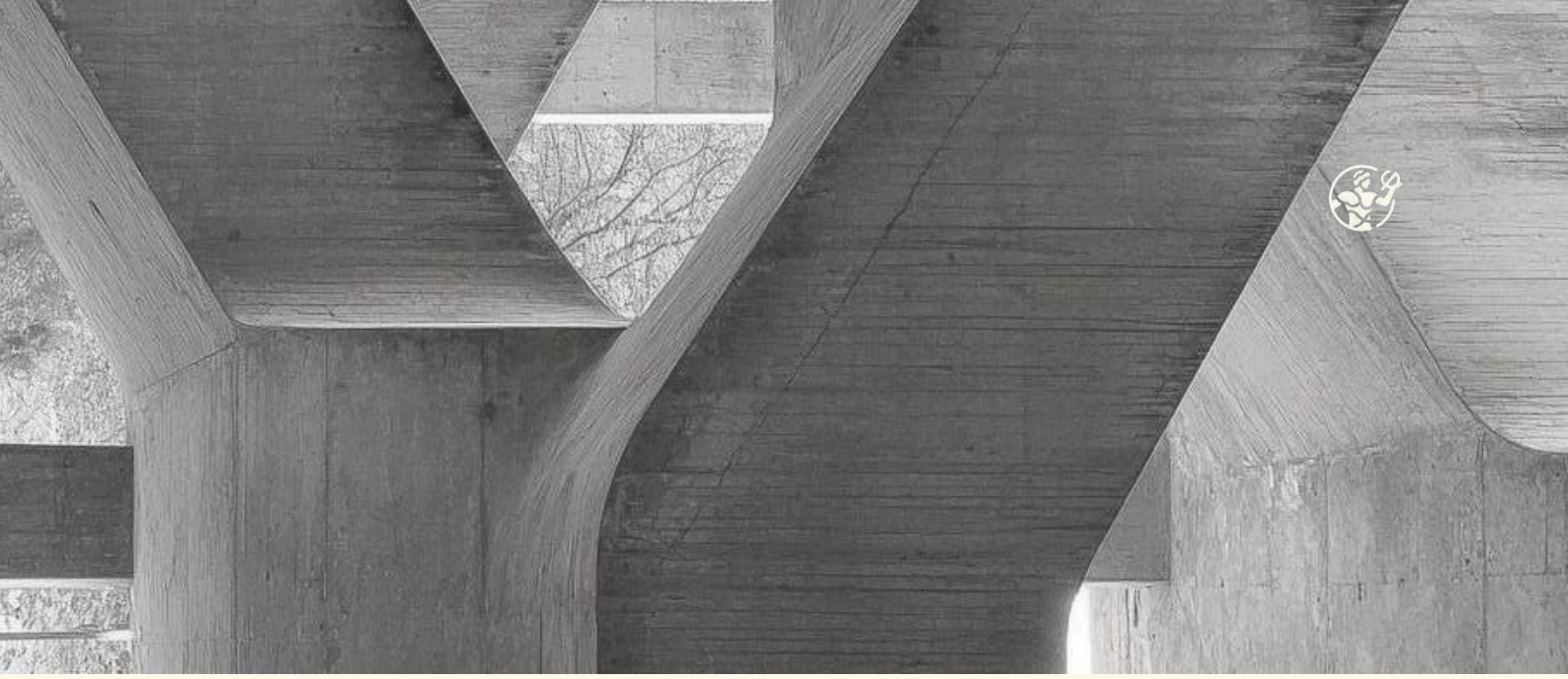
The perception of the world is delimited by how it may be expressed, or in other words, by language. To abolish a word is not merely to suppress a sign, but to alter the horizon through which a reality may be conceived. What disappears is not only the term itself, but the possibility it once contained. Language generates certain conditions

of possibility and therefore limits others. Words carry meanings that may be admitted or rejected by discourse, and in doing so determine what can be recognized, expressed, and understood. The differences that emerge in the translation of a phrase illustrate this process.

Certain meanings become impossible to transmit not because they do not exist, but because the linguistic structures through which they would be expressed have developed under different social, cultural, and historical conditions. Such limitations are not accidental; they are historical. They emerge through discourses that reproduce themselves over time, which is precisely why Orwell's literary example reveals a mechanism already present within language itself.

Language establishes what and how thoughts may be expressed, and if institutions under a discourse regulate such language, knowledge itself becomes situated within the same framework of validity proposed by the relation of power. What may be recognized as knowledge is therefore not detached from discourse but emerges through the categories that discourse admits as true. Knowledge acquiresmeaning within a particular historical and social configuration, and it remains conditioned by the same structures through which discourse reproduces itself.

By understanding knowledge as an exercise of reason, reason itself cannot be thought as entirely external to discourse. The forms through which arguments are validated, concepts are organized, and truths are recognized emerge within a particular historical framework. This does not render reason impossible, but



situates it. Reason remains exercised through discourse and therefore within the limits and possibilities established by it.

Even with the restrictions, limitations and control exerted by the relations of power, it is essential to think of them not as exclusively restrictive, but productive as well. The situations they create give space to opposition, to resistance. Foucault does not deny its existence in such a system, on the contrary, he states: “il n’y a pas de relations de pouvoir sans résistances […] elles existent d’autant plus quelles sont là où est le pouvoir” (1976). Meaning that they not only exist simultaneously, but in the same space as the relations of power. This space we will call language, as they both must express themselves through it, they are discursive. As language is conditioned by the relations of power and progressively more controlled, in contrast to Foucault I will say that resistance not only coexists with the relations of power, but is conditioned on its expression through language, as that is held by the relations themselves. This means that those means must be either expanded or exposed in order to commit an act of resistance towards the system.

Under the scope of linguistic expression, two types of resistances are to be considered:

1) Critique, which allows us to question a certain stablished system, ideology, or argument. It is fundamental to avoid the loss of diversity in reason and is in relation as well to historical context.

2) The act of naming, as the more productive side of resistance, allows for the creation of new names that simultaneously create possibilities of action. It has a necessary social conception, as there is no language without society.

Moreover, critique acts as the first step to the act of naming, as it provides a justification to the action. That is to say that naming without purpose is straight absurdism, and as it does not communicate because it lacks sense/meaning, it does not comply with the social characteristic of resistance. Thus, critique is required.

Critique demands a plurality of perceptions that, as reason becomes increasingly delimited, grow progressively scarce. The reduction of such plurality diminishes the possibility of resistance, for resistance itself depends upon the existence of alternatives capable of confronting the current discourse. A relation of power is strengthened when its discourse ceases to appear as one possibility among many and instead presents itself as the only conceivable framework through which reality may be understood. Resistance therefore requires not only opposition, but the preservation of difference. It depends upon the existence of perspectives, concepts, and forms of reasoning capable of revealing the contingency of what has been accepted as truth.

The consequence of this limitation extends beyond discourse itself. If language conditions what may be expressed, and discourse determines the framework through which truth is recognized, then the question inevitably reaches freedom. What remains of freedom when the possibilities of expression, knowledge, and reason are already conditioned by relations of power?

The analysis must surge from a much less tangible and more abstract interpretation of resistance. Let us imagine a prisoner. Now, by social convention and factuality, it would be said that such individual is not free, they are confined to a physical space in which their movement and actions are carefully enabled. Nevertheless, this same individual can consider themselves free, in disregard of their physical conditions.

To consider this case we must understand two viewpoints of the subject as described by Foucault:

1) The role given by the discourse to an individual, with responsibilities to fulfill and expectations inside society. This subject is punished for not following the order of things. We will call this vision the external subject.

2) A subject, an identity, that corresponds to a perception of self. This will be referred to as the internal subject.

Note that Foucault did not make explicit this separation on the concept, but the existence of these two different perspectives allows for a difference in the perception of freedom, so they will be considered as independent.

The existence of this new perspective proposed by the prisoner presents a contradicting statement to the stablished order. And the distinction between both concepts leaves a difference in perceptionuseful to comprehend the origin of the element of freedom in the exercise. While the social construction of the subject is fixed upon the individual, experiences still shape reasoning and knowledge for the internal subject, that is to say, that the discourse does not have complete hold of the internal subject as it does with its external version. Regardless, this does not mean that the internal subject, from where this proposition is found, is indistinct to discourse, but more like it exists within a more creative and flexible structure that produces acts of resistance trough variations of reason during the construction of the self-subject to allow stretching the limits of what the structure has determined.

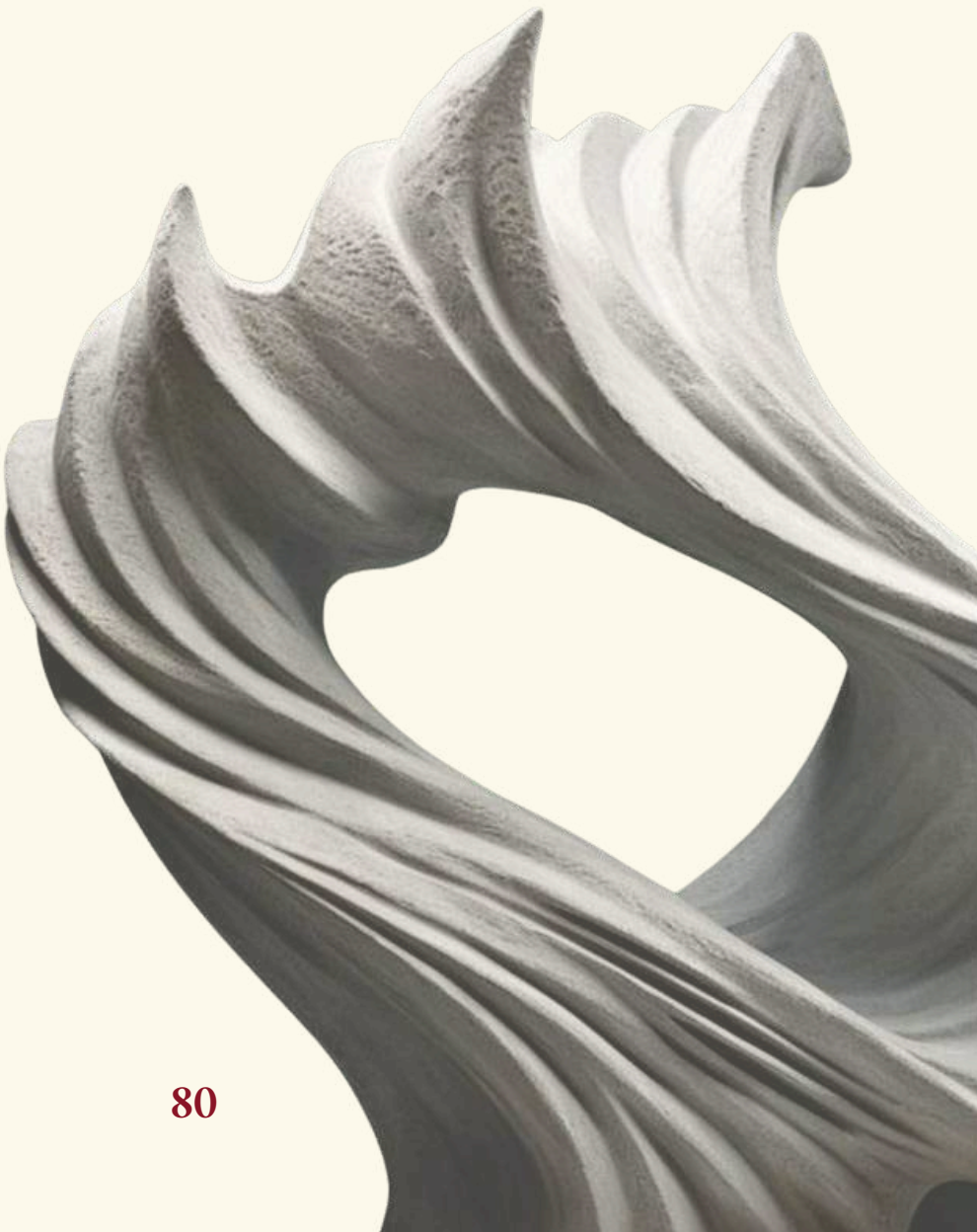
Freedom, then, cannot be understood as existing beyond the relations of power, for such a position would require a distance from discourse itself. Yet neither can it be reduced to the conditions imposed by those relations. The same structures that delimit possibilities simultaneously reveal their limits through resistance. The frameworks through which knowledge is legitimized and reason is exercised remain equally situated within this tension. Critique and naming expose what has been accepted as natural and reveal it as historical, contingent, and therefore susceptible to transformation.

The question is no longer whether human beings are free in the absence of power, but how freedom may be conceived within it. If discourse conditions what may be expressed, recognized, and understood, resistance persists in confronting those conditions and revealing

them as neither absolute nor immutable. Freedom remains situated within this tension, not as an escape from discourse, but as the possibility of questioning and transforming the limits through which reality is conceived.

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On Freedom, Determinism, and the Human Condition

"Things don't have purposes, as if the universe were a machine, where every part has a useful function."



Isidora Popović
Slovenia

IPO 2026 Honorable Mention

Le Guin emphasises that the universe is not a “machine”, where every part must have a functional utility. To her, purpose is a human-made cage and it automatically limits our freedom to simply exist. I interpret this as her defining freedom as something which does not perceive a human as a mean to an end. Therefore, from what I understand her statement can be divided into two sections:

1) Things do not have a purpose because their existence precedes essence,

2) Freedom; human being a “thread in the cloth” which requires no further explanation.

This represents a way in which I will approach the discussion of freedom and determinism along with providing adequate framework for rationality. Furthermore, in my conclusion I will provide an additional interpretation of her quote, through Taoist principle.

To approach the discussion of freedom and determinism effectively, we must first address the ontological origin of human action. On a pre-theoretical level, we often assume that our actions result directly from a conscious will; a choice reflecting our immediate desires. However this assumption invites a deeper investigation...

What is causal origin of these acts of will?
Are they merely spontaneous psychological events emerging from ex nihilo (out of nowhere), or are they links in an unbroken causal chain?
If a choice appears “suddenly” in consciousness, does its

apparent spontaneity suffice to label it free, or are we merely observing the internal manifestation of prior, hidden causes?

Before evaluating these alternatives, it is essential to clarify the conceptual framework of freedom.

Rather than a singular definition there are two main established understandings which seem to dominate when it comes to depicting freedom.

The first is circumstantial freedom, often described as a negative condition; the absence of external obstacles and natural limitations which seem to restrict an agent's ability to act on their desires. While this notion is accepted in everyday context, it remains philosophically incomplete, as it fails to account for the origin of the choices themselves.

The second, more contentious notion is metaphysical freedom, or “free will” in the robust sense. This concept suggests that the self is the creative, originating cause of an action, independent of prior conditions. It follows that if we possess metaphysical freedom, then the given circumstances and predetermined patterns prior to a decision are not sufficient to make a particular choice necessary or inevitable. External circumstances and our personality may exert some influence over our decisions, but in the final evaluation, which of several alternatives we act on is decided by our free, spontaneous choice.

Therefore, the ability to obtain this freedom allows the self the capacity to make free and undetermined choices within the bounds of external limitations.

I. The Nature of Human Condition: Defining Rationality



To understand the tension between freedom and determinism, one must first analyse the nature of human action through the distinction between rational and irrational agency. Both of these are dependent to what extent our actions and beliefs align with evidence, logic and the pursuit of goals. The central claim of this section will be based on the statement that freedom without reason lacks direction, whereas reason without freedom loses its existential significance. Firstly, I will evaluate Kant's stance on the matter, while comparing it with opposing theories, like rational egoism. While evaluating both their strengths and weaknesses the aim is to provide a foundation for the definition of freedom.

There are convincing reasons to perceive the human beings as a dualistic entity. A creature both subject to sensible impulses and capable of self-determination. It is found that Kant has serious implications not just when defining morality but also when approaching freedom determinism issue. He argues that human beings are neither pure animals (arbitrium brutum), as we are not purely determined by sensory impulses with no rational input, nor divine wills, as we are also not exclusively rational beings who can automatically act correctly without any sensory interference.

Therefore, he characterises human agency as “hybrid will” (arbitrium impurum), which directly means that we exist in a state of irresolvable tension between duty and pleasure. For Kant, this tension is precisely what creates the space for genuine freedom. Moreover, if we interpret

his perception of freedom, it can be said, that freedom is the “bridge” where the elective will decides which source of motivation (duty) and personal-inclination (self-love) is granted priority.

In Kant's framework, a rational action is not merely a calculated move to satisfy a desire, but one performed by a “good will” acting in accordance with the moral law. In the accordance with moral law conversely, an irrational action is viewed as a betrayal of our rational nature. It is a practical failure where the agent treats reason as a mere tool for selfish ends, or worse, violates the very structure of universalizable logic.

Furthermore, if we connect this to my central claim it can be concluded that Kant acknowledges that the coexistence of freedom and determinism remains an unresolved mystery at the core of human nature. This is achieved, with an aspect I mentioned previously; the human being depicted as dual entity. This can be illustrated with the claim that human being is neither completely phenomenal being, adhering to natural laws, nor is it noumenal being, but he is bridging two realities.

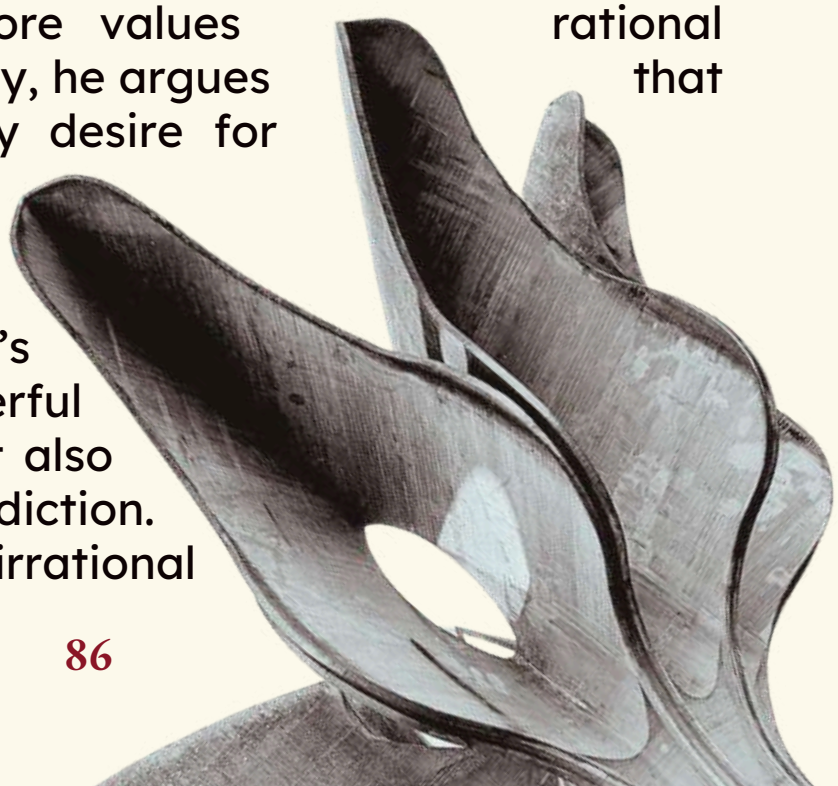


Therefore consequently , Kant's philosophy reflects the central claim that freedom and reason are not opposing forces but independent conditions which together give human action structure and purpose.

This however stands in stark contrast to the perspective of rational egoism which posits that an action is rational if, and only if it maximises the agent's long-term self-interest. However, this position seems to face a significant internal challenge. If reason is merely a sophisticated instrument for navigating reality in pursuit of pre-determined biological or social interests, can the agent be free? From a Kantian perspective a rational egoists is not free, but rather determined by "external" interests; factors which originate outside of the autonomous legislative power of reason.

For instance, imagine a man, who is fully aware of his own dysfunction. He knows he is being spiteful. He knows his actions hurt him more than anyone else. And he does it anyway, even deliberately.

This is Dostoevsky's Underground Man and he posits himself as the proof of something he considers crucial while also opposing core values rational egoists hold dear. Namely, he argues that human life is fueled by desire for self-assertion.



However, while the Underground Man's position provides a powerful psychological critique, it also faces a logical contradiction. The mere presence of irrational

does not necessarily disprove determinism. A deterministic universe can easily account for "spite" as a product of prior psychological causes. However, when we synthesise these views, a more complex picture of freedom emerges. We can argue for "dual evidence" of freedom; it manifests both as the Kantian capacity to follow a higher rational law and the existential capacity to act out of pure spontaneity.

Therefore, it can be concluded that both instances suggest that the human agent is not a mere object in a causal chain. Moreover what emerges from this analysis is once again, a fundamental question; is genuine freedom governed by necessity?

II. The Free Will : Freedom and Determinism

Expanding the inquiry, we must shift the direction of discussion from the nature of human actions to the metaphysical conflict between hard determinism and existential freedom. Hard determinism, at its core, holds that everything, including human actions, is the inevitable result of prior causes. Therefore, if one possessed complete knowledge of the universe at any given time, it would be possible to predict every future event.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory exemplifies this position, through what he called psychic determinism; the view that all thoughts, feelings, and behaviours have an underlying, unconscious cause. Therefore, it can be understood that his argument was based on the

statement that nothing in mental life happens by chance; every act is a link in a chain of causes.

His concept of “Freudian slips” further emphasises his position, as he strongly believed that forgotten names, dreams and tongue slips were not simply accidents; but actions driven by unconscious desires. Freud did allow for a limited, relative freedom; through psychoanalysis, one could make “unconscious conscious”.

This meant that individuals would shift hidden causes into conscious awareness and thereby gaining some degree of control over one's behaviour. Yet, this concession is modest as Freud ultimately rejected robust free will, viewing freedom as a psychological illusion rather than a lived reality. Even the daily choices people believe they make freely are, on his account, expression of forces they neither chose nor fully understand.

It is precisely this concept of the unconscious that Jean-Paul Sartre targets in his central counter-argument. Sartre on the other hand argues that appealing to the unconscious is not a neutral psychological observation, it is a form of self-deception and a way of evading the burden of responsibility; this is what he calls “Bad faith”.

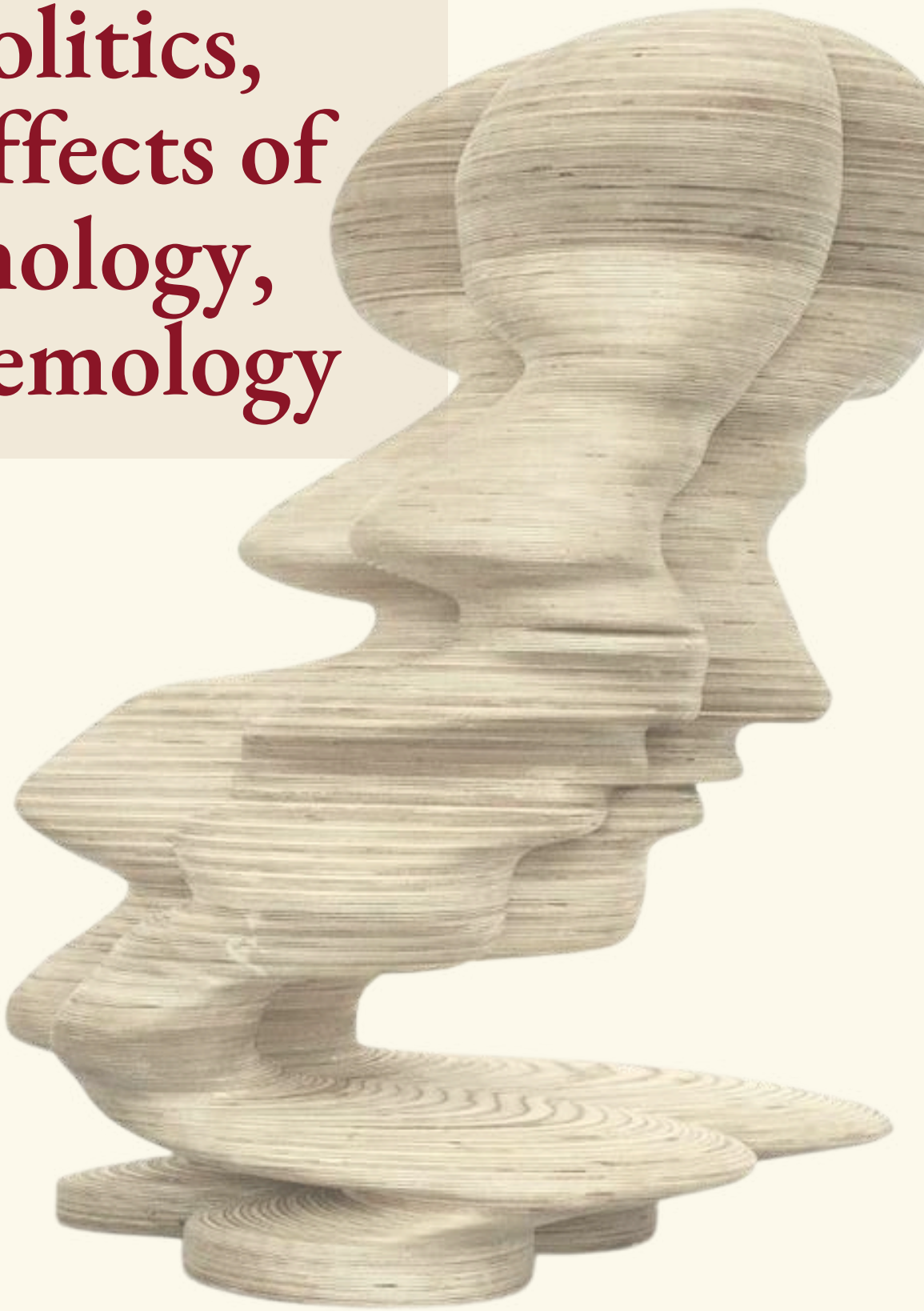
Bad faith is the condition in which a person pretends that it is not free. Rather than confronting the anxiety which comes with absolute freedom, individuals start adopting false identities, social roles, habits, circumstances; all while treating themselves as fixed objects rather than conscious agents. His famous claim; that man is “condemned to be free”, is the cornerstone of his position, standing in direct opposition to psychic determinism. The word condemned is deliberately uncomfortable because it strips any romantic appeal

from freedom and presents it as a metaphysical fact. One does not choose to exist, yet the existence is already underway, and every moment demands a choice. Even the refusal to choose is itself a choice. There is no exit.

In this way, Sartre also criticises traditional free will debate in a way that it seems to refer to humans as objects; either determined machines or uncaused supernatural agents. By recentering the question on existence itself, he offers a more radical claim; freedom is not something we have or lack, it is the way we are.



Ethics in geopolitics, the effects of technology, epistemology



The End of History: for real this time



Pēteris Zvirgzdiņš
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Many have tried to forecast the end of the World. 
It almost seems like eschatological guesses are a characteristic of humanity as a whole. The relatively recent attempts by Francis Fukuyama have remained in the collective memory most prominently. He promised that, with the withering of communism, peace and prosperity would rule over the world, that we would enjoy a period of there being “no ideological grounds for major conflict between nations” and “the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states”, that international relations would become trade relations. You see, we would reach “the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”, one which we could never possibly exceed. It would be the end of history because nothing geopolitically significant could possibly happen. But I offer to view a different eschatology.

My proposed End of History would not be borne by liberalism or any other economic or state-organizational system. No, these Seven Trumpets of the Apocalypse would be sounded by technological and social development — “progress” if one dares to call it that. You see, the collective human informational space will be transformed so that it won’t be the actual historically significant events that seize to take place, but rather Our meaningful understanding of them. Remembering past events will be possible, but turning a new page in the history books and continuing to write it — will not. Modern technology and other factors will create an informational bottleneck from which it is doubtful we’ll be able to escape.

In the Age of Information everything we could possibly

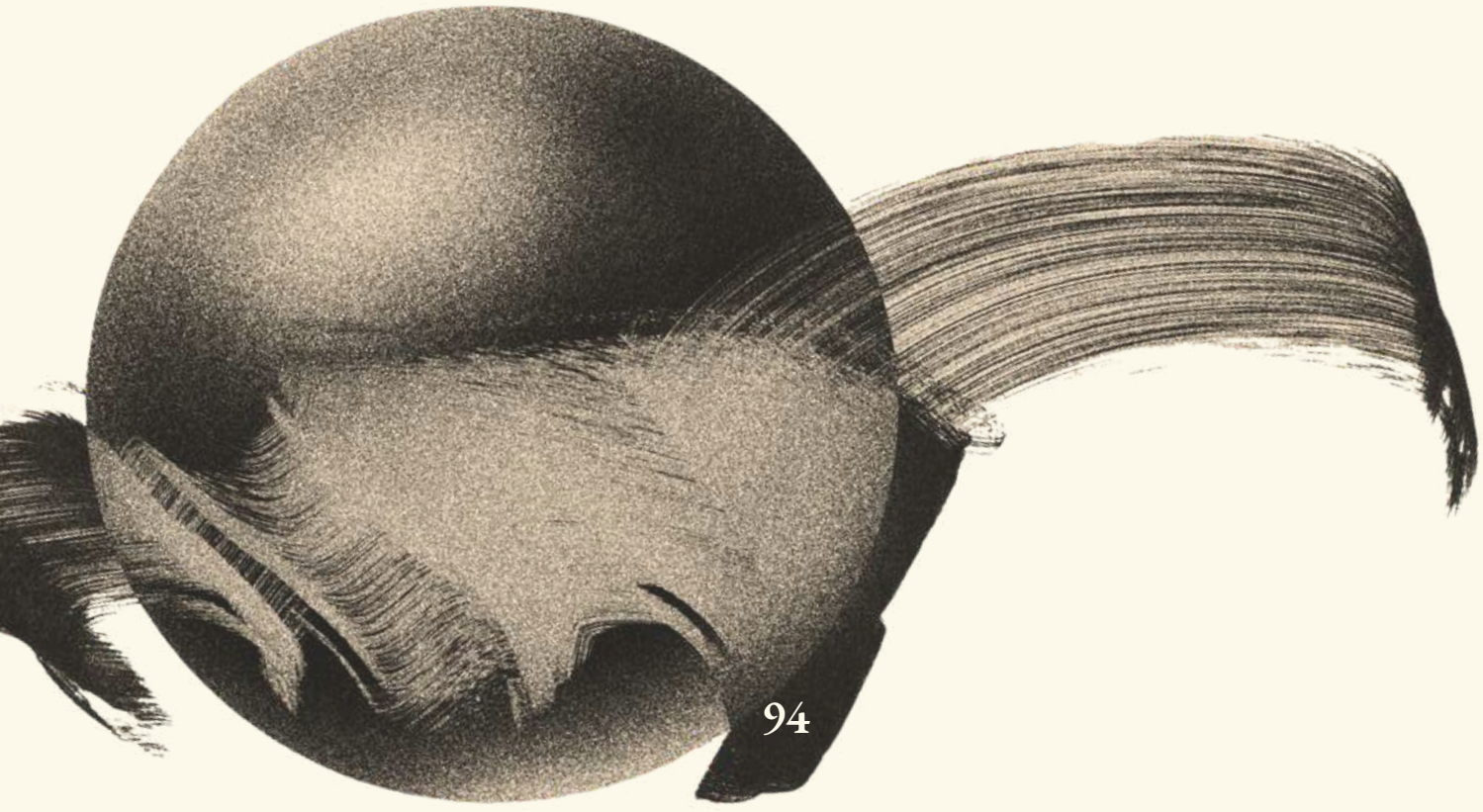
want to learn is merely a few clicks away. News about local and World events don't even have to be searched for anymore — their presence is incessant. Every day journalists produce so much news content that it is impossible to follow everything; there exists an uninterrupted flow of information. This is a problem unique to the digital age. Not only has the amount of journalistic materials changed, but also the pathways by which they are received.

In years gone by, one would consume one, maybe two newspapers to get his understanding of current events. Ideally this would be done while comparing the ideological tendencies of various sources, in the end extracting actionable information. One listened to about as many radio broadcasts, watched one of a few TV channel news broadcasts. The informational space was easily overseeable, geographically and quantitatively bound. And the financial bar to start a mass media enterprise was far higher. The internet has changed that. 21st century news media no longer needs a start capital — only as far as to cover their webpage costs. Additionally, the tendencies of the last few years indicate that, on the level of individual businesses, the propagation of content on social media platforms is given priority. Here traditional media has to, for profit and the goodwill of the algorithm, compete or even adapt to short-form content and its regularity. And it is almost unnecessary to say that geographical boundaries no longer exist in this World.

These changes do have their positives. It is easier for free speech to break through authoritarian states. We can receive news relevant to Ourselves faster, sometimes even as they unfold. One no longer has to wait for news

crews to arrive on the scene or until the news office receives notice. News are now readily attainable from citizen-journalists, who can pull out their smartphone in seconds and share current events with the whole World. But a few advantages cannot fully cover for the downsides of the over-connectedness of World information channels.

If one cannot absorb all the information (because there is simply too much of it), everyone will look at only whatever he fancies. Or, in the words of Mark Zuckerberg: “Our goal is to build the perfect personalized newspaper for every person in the world,” So, due to the oversaturation of the modern journalistic environment and the mangling of motivations for participating in it, people live not in some shared information-space but rather each in their own little idiosyncratic bubble. That, then, only artificially decreases the already ailing trust in media, as is confirmed by the US example, — if everyone is informed only of his hyperspecific field and polarized in his views, there is little benefit in rational discussions and deliberations.



But it is not just the fault of the media. The amount of journalistically-relevant information is indeed increasing. Here we meet with the periodization problem so well-known to historians. You see, with every passing year the amount of events documented seemingly increases. When periodizing history, most researchers and schools of thought in history inevitably arrive at a system where every next period is shorter than the last.

Classical Antiquity lasted about one-and-a-half thousand years, the Middle Ages — a few hundred, the Cold War — just a couple decades. This can be explained in two ways: both of which require referring to the exponential nature of the increase in human population and technological development. When there are more people, more notable interactions happen between them. Technological development, then, has, in the later periods, enabled additional means by which said people interact and allowed for better notation and broadcasting of those interactions.

You see, the amount of significant events increases not just seemingly but in reality as well. Here the ever-controversial Malthusian theory is applicable, just to human information processing capabilities and not the planet's food production capacity. If human information processing capabilities increase at all, then they certainly do so linearly. But the amount of perceptible events increases exponentially. It only remains to look upon these well-known tendencies to realize that we are encroaching upon the singularity of events or the End of History.

If a few years or decades ago the human popular imagination regarding artificial intelligence was

concerned mostly with Skynet, it has now crystallized that the main risk created by AI is actually the creation of false information. Just in these past 3-4 years this technology has developed at an incomprehensible pace. AI generated videos, for example, experienced a small technological revolution — the release of the Sora 2 model, and became considerably more realistic during the writing of this article.

The biggest threat is not the propagation of a few fake videos or images but rather the general distrust which this will aggregate. Of course, there are already reasons to doubt the ethics of the media: the existence of tabloids, the publication of incorrect information, a frequently one-sided portrayal of events, the prioritization of financial gain. Even in the current political rhetoric it is accepted to criticize the afore-mentioned aspects. But, when the false and the true become indistinguishable, the concept of truth loses its meaning. Nothing will be true, because there is no point to the truth, if no one believes or is able to verify it.

It also bears mentioning that very little of Our contemporary culture will be left for research by the archeologist and the historian after a few decades, not to mention any longer timespan. So much of Our contemporary culture and art exists only in digital format and, additionally, is not stored locally, no, but rather in cloud storage facilities. And physical writing happens no longer on the stone or the parchment but rather on the thinnest paper that has ever been commercially available in the history of the World. There is also a basis to think that the very digital devices themselves become more fragile as time goes on.

No matter how paradoxical it seems, we are experiencing and creating more than the people of any other age but we will leave behind Us considerably fewer remnants than previous civilizations. The person of the future will not be able to gain meaningful insight of events between roughly the eve of the 20th century and the beginning of his own personal memories.

Of course, we need to be informed about the World's big events —wars, scientific discoveries and everything else that impacts humanity as a whole, as well as that which affects directly Our country and community. But the human perception is not unlimited. Therefore, I invite to consider whether it is truly necessary to learn about every foreign domestic affair, every civil engineering catastrophe, every cultural event, etc. with the expansion of the Ecumene, so too has Our emotional attachment to events which do not affect Us, and which we cannot control, grown. It would be unfortunate to sink too deep into stoicism or cynicism but one has to recall the sweet taste of the bliss of ignorance and ask himself, whether it is truly so evil in cases when we cannot change the course of the events to which we are being ignorant towards.

To crystallize what has been said so far: the amount of information in circulation exceeds for the first time in history the bounds of perception and only continues to rise.

I predict that we will most likely return to a pre-digital age. When society's trust in informative digital media vanishes fully, they will simply not be viewed anymore. Either we will return to a roughly early-20th century state in the informational space where mass media existed

only in a limited capacity, or we will seep into a neo-medieval World where knowledge of events in the World around Us will be gained primarily through word-of-mouth retellings.

Looking more optimistically, one way to avoid this End of History would be the deescalation of the development and implementation of information technologies. This does not necessarily mean following the suggestions of the infamous mathematician Theodore John Kaczynski and returning to a pre-technological age but rather raising guard when it comes to the spread of “smart” technologies.

Technological discoveries and implementation of technology can be slowed down but it is impossible to forget or erase them from the collective memory. Those few times when inventions have been forgotten are always tied to civilizational downfall. For example, the disappearance of Roman civil engineering skills in the Middle Ages. When an invention has been created, the cat comes out of the bag. The World will not be saved by smashing the nearest computer-screen with a hammer or baseball bat but rather with a certain piety towards the truth.

Knowledge and Society in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Baconian Perspective



Dominyka Mauliūtė
Lithuania

The relationship between knowledge and society has always been one of the central concerns of philosophy. From antiquity to the digital age, thinkers have attempted to understand how human beings organize knowledge, communicate truth, and construct systems of power through language and information. In the seventeenth century, during the emergence of modern science, Francis Bacon became one of the first philosophers to analyze the relationship between knowledge and social transformation.

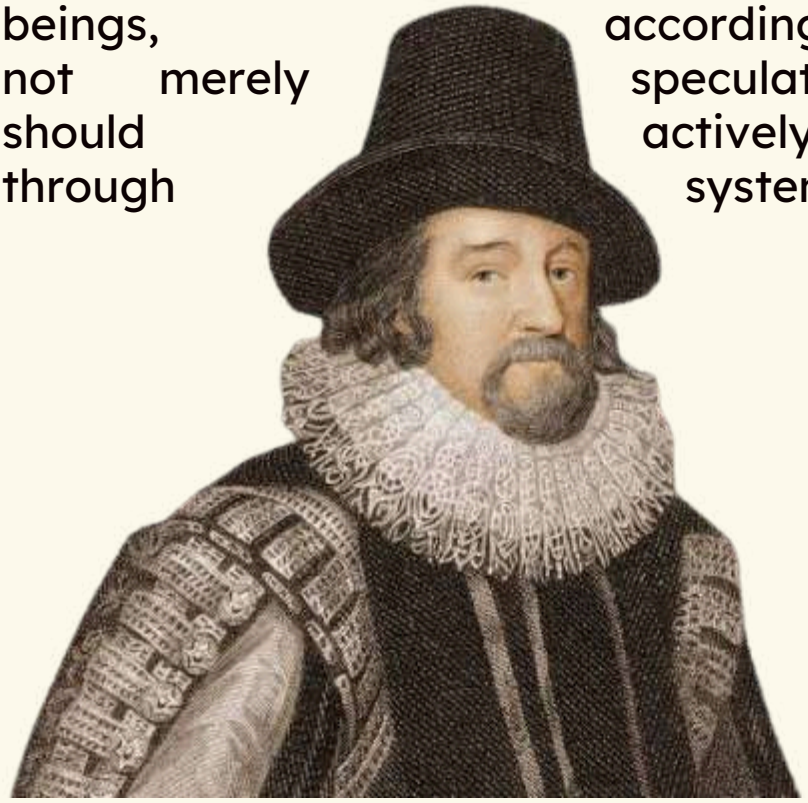
In The Advancement of Learning (1605), Bacon argued that knowledge should not remain confined to abstract speculation but should instead serve as a practical force capable of improving society itself. His famous idea that "knowledge is power" became one of the foundational principles of modernity.

Today, in the twenty-first century, society faces major epistemological transformation through the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI). AI systems increasingly shape communication, labor, education, politics, and even human self-understanding. Technologies such as large language models, algorithms, and automated data systems are becoming new mediators between reality and human perception.

This raises an important philosophical question: how would Francis Bacon interpret artificial intelligence and the contemporary information society?

Through a Baconian perspective, AI can be understood both as the fulfillment of humanity's desire to organize universal knowledge and as a dangerous amplification of the very intellectual distortions Bacon warned against.

To understand this relationship, it is first necessary to examine Bacon's theory of knowledge itself. Bacon rejected the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages because he believed it relied too heavily on abstract reasoning detached from empirical reality. Instead, he proposed a new method grounded in observation, experimentation, and induction. Human beings, according to Bacon, should not merely speculate about nature but should actively investigate it through systematic methods.



Francis Bacon

(1561-1626), was an English philosopher and statesman who served under King James I

Yet Bacon understood that the greatest obstacle to true knowledge was not ignorance alone, but the structure of human thinking itself. In Novum Organum, he introduces the theory of the "idols" — systematic errors that distort human understanding. Among these, the most socially significant are the "Idols of the Marketplace," which arise through language. Bacon argued that words are often "imposed according to the understanding of the common people" and therefore "greatly obstruct the intellect." Language creates confusion because words frequently fail to correspond accurately to reality. Human beings begin mistaking linguistic constructions for truth itself.

This idea becomes extraordinarily relevant when applied to artificial intelligence. Modern AI systems are language systems. Models such as ChatGPT operate by processing enormous quantities of linguistic data gathered from human communication. In many ways, AI represents the most advanced attempt in history to organize human knowledge into a universal language.



However, from a Baconian perspective, this creates a profound paradox. If language already contains distortions, ambiguities, ideological assumptions, and social biases, then AI systems trained on human language inevitably inherit these distortions. AI does not operate outside the “Idols of the Marketplace”; rather, it may intensify them. Instead of eliminating confusion, AI can automate and reproduce it on an unprecedented scale.

This problem becomes particularly visible in the phenomenon of misinformation. Contemporary societies increasingly receive knowledge through algorithmic systems that prioritize engagement, emotional reaction, and efficiency rather than truth. Social media algorithms determine which information becomes visible and which remains hidden. AI-generated texts, images, and videos blur the distinction between reality and fabrication. Deepfakes and synthetic media make it increasingly difficult to distinguish authentic evidence from artificial simulation. In Baconian terms, society risks becoming trapped inside an intensified world of idols — a reality governed not by direct understanding of nature, but by systems of mediated representation.

Bacon believed that knowledge should be grounded in empirical verification and collective investigation. Yet

modern AI systems often produce outputs without transparent reasoning processes. Users receive answers generated through probabilistic prediction rather than rational explanation. This creates what many contemporary philosophers describe as the “black box” problem. AI can generate convincing responses while concealing the mechanisms behind them.

Bacon’s philosophical project was anti-authoritarian in epistemological terms. He opposed reliance on inherited dogma, scholastic tradition, and unquestioned authority. True knowledge, for Bacon, required active inquiry and methodological skepticism. Yet in contemporary society, many people increasingly treat AI-generated information as authoritative simply because it appears technologically advanced. Instead of critically examining information, society may begin passively consuming algorithmically produced interpretations of reality.

This danger becomes even more significant when considering political power. Bacon famously argued that knowledge and power are inseparable. In the digital age, this relationship has become radically intensified. Corporations and governments that control data infrastructures possess extraordinary influence over society. Information itself has become one of the most valuable forms of economic and political power. AI systems collect, categorize, and predict human behavior at scales unimaginable in Bacon’s time.

From a Baconian perspective, this development contains both emancipatory and dangerous possibilities. On one hand, AI expands humanity’s ability to analyze scientific data, improve medicine, automate labor, and increase access to education. At the same time, however, AI also

threatens to produce new forms of social domination. If knowledge becomes centralized within technological systems controlled by powerful institutions, society risks creating a new technocratic hierarchy.



This creates another important Baconian issue: the weakening of human judgment. Bacon believed that intellectual discipline required active engagement with evidence and careful methodological reasoning. Yet algorithmic culture often encourages passive consumption of information. Recommendation systems predict what individuals want before they consciously decide themselves. Search engines prioritize certain interpretations over others. AI-generated summaries simplify complexity into immediately consumable outputs. While these systems increase efficiency, they may simultaneously reduce humanity's capacity for critical thought.

If we consider thinkers such as John Wilkins who believed that society could achieve harmony if communication became perfectly rational and universal. We can see that modern AI reflects a similar aspiration. Digital systems increasingly function as universal translators, classifiers, and organizers of human knowledge. Yet the historical failure of universal language projects reveals an important lesson: human experience cannot be entirely reduced to formal systems!

Language is not merely a technical instrument for transmitting information. It is deeply connected to culture, emotion, history, and subjective experience. AI systems excel at processing patterns, but they struggle

with ambiguity, irony, existential meaning, and lived experiences.



Furthermore, artificial intelligence raises fundamental questions about the future of human identity. If knowledge production becomes increasingly automated, what remains uniquely human? Bacon celebrated scientific progress because he believed it enhanced human mastery over nature. Yet AI introduces the possibility that technological systems may eventually surpass human cognitive capacities in many domains. This creates anxiety about humanity itself.

From a Baconian perspective, the solution is not to reject technology but to maintain critical awareness of its epistemological limitations. Bacon never advocated blind faith in instruments or systems. Rather, he insisted upon disciplined methods of inquiry capable of correcting human error. Applied today, this would require society to develop ethical and philosophical frameworks capable of regulating AI critically rather than using it unconditionally.

This is especially important because AI increasingly shapes democratic life. Political discourse now unfolds through algorithmically structured environments where visibility, virality, and emotional polarization dominate communication. Public knowledge becomes fragmented into personalized informational realities.

Bacon feared the corruption of collective understanding through linguistic confusion; today, algorithmic systems intensify precisely this fragmentation. Society risks losing the possibility of shared epistemological foundations necessary for democratic dialogue.

Our contemporary crisis lies in the fact that technological capacity has developed faster than philosophical wisdom. Society possesses extraordinary informational power without corresponding ethical clarity. The challenge of the twenty-first century is therefore not simply technological but philosophical: how can society organize knowledge responsibly?

The future relationship between knowledge and society will therefore depend upon whether humanity can preserve critical reasoning within increasingly automated systems of information.

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The future relationship between knowledge and society will therefore depend upon whether humanity can preserve critical reasoning within increasingly automated systems of information.

For this reason, The Advancement of Learning continues to speak directly to contemporary society. Bacon teaches that knowledge is never neutral. The systems through which societies organize and communicate knowledge ultimately shape civilization itself. In the age of artificial intelligence, this insight has become more urgent than ever before.

The Great Experiment of "Order": A Devil's Case for "Chaos"



Tridip Patir
India

Introduction

What if the government is merely a multi-generational experiment to hide our true human condition of inevitable disorder? Perhaps “chaos”, and not peace, is the true order of nature, and we have buried it beneath thousands of lies about “structure”. Here, I play the devil's advocate, arguing from an absurdist's perspective on the world's underlying meaninglessness.

Thus, this inverted stance understands human structures of government as a noble but ultimately futile undertaking in the face of world-meaninglessness. In the following, I will speak as though I am an absurdist who advocates the inevitability of disorder. This is neither a prescriptive model nor a dogma, but merely an inverse-philosophical thought experiment of how a specific form of absurdism that calls for resignation may be fitting in dealing with failures of political structures due to the chaotic underpinnings of the human condition. Ultimately, it is understood that political structure is an illusion of sustained order in a largely disordered world.



I. Egoism's Eternal Truism



First, there is a certain truth to egoism, at least pragmatically. Seen from a historical and social point of view, egoism is indeed the driving force of individualism. Political structures often fail following the increasing egoism of their leaders. This is an eternal truism.

Society exists for the welfare of its citizens, who in turn, give back in various ways for its progression. Aristotle's "Eudaimonia", which is ethical, is ultimately based on the smooth functioning of society. The Greeks tried to figure out the most appropriate manner for society to retain its civilised veneer. Philosophers tirelessly formulated theories of governance. The summum bonum has always been "happiness" in many of these models.

Thinkers like J.S. Mill, Bentham, Rousseau, Hobbes, all conceptualised theories about the most perfect form of government, ranging from Utilitarianism to Social Contract.

The idea of government as a vehicle for societal welfare reads as empty idealism. Disorder, and ergo, egoism, is likely an inseparable feature of the human condition, not a flaw that can be erased. A devil's case for disorder may try to find an antithetical view to this idealistic lens of societal welfare as the highest good, and in this, we reiterate that "Chaos", perhaps, is the true order of the entire cosmos. This is also seen in the concept of Entropy in science, which is the gradual increase of disorder in isolated cosmic systems. Everything in the universe deteriorates. Nature is cruel. Then, how do we reconcile with this?

II. The Knowable and the Unknowable



The early enlightenment thinkers considered that while the natural workings of the sun and the moon (extended to the cosmos) were unknowable, the workings of government were knowable because we created its rules. The latter makes sense. Early enlightenment thinkers believed that since God or the divine created the natural universe (planets, stars, etc.), we are incapable of knowing its true scientific workings, and hence, they are unverifiable.

To these early thinkers, political structures were created by humans, therefore, their laws are verifiable and, mistakenly, considered infallible, but what they fail to consider is the foundational human condition of disorder, which renders illegitimate any structure in said political systems. So, in theory, this may sound enticing. In praxis, it falls apart.

It is with great appreciation, then, that Hobbes, one of the first skeptical points against enforced structure, must be brought up. Humans, in Hobbes'terms, are driven by self-interest and competition. This is the primary catalyst for the introduction of the "social contract". Without a common overseeing judge, humans are liable to betray one another. Hobbes' main agenda, as with many that came before him (and likely after him), was to conceptualise the origins and further implementation of a successful theory of government.

The underlying assumption in his theory is that humans will someday succeed in implementing order. However,



this idealistic view is merely a forced superimposition onto the primordial human condition of disorder, thereby creating a dissonance. It is the one fallacy in his conception. Camus also highlights the glaring paradox between human need and the silence of the world.

Further naïveté is seen in Hegel's theory of the Absolute Spirit's triadic journey, which ends with the synthesis of the thesis and the antithesis. This Hegelian path also presupposes a destination that displays sustained peace. This triadic feature of the Geist is rendered futile if the human condition is always against sustained structure. It is hoped here that one day, the various dissonant human consciousnesses will co-inhabit the world, but historically, there has been little evidence for such unity.

III. Monarchy, Theocracy, Democracy: A History of Collapse



One of humanity's first great experiments was called "Monarchy". Laws were created, but who oversees them? Someone who would be a chieftain, a king, a leader of the people. To further justify the king's rule of law, the church accorded him divine origins. Of course, a supranatural heritage was intended to keep society in check, from what I surmise, is the human condition. Practically, did this organization of "Monarchy" work? France's history of monarchy and revolutions tells us of a different story.

Then, if I speak of theocracy, I simply speak of abstractions as the overseer of society. Sooner or later, someone will mistake this reliance on divinity for weakness and overthrow the structured government. The Chinese invasion of Tibet is one such example. The same is said of Authoritarianism, which, while attaining some of the ideals of "order", is incompatible with happiness and freedom. Finally, democracy comes into the picture. To its credit, democracy carries quite a bit of the "workmanship ideal" that Locke propagates in his early-enlightenment view, that the earth is available to all, along with all of its creations.

In conceiving this, Locke and the early Enlightenment thinkers resisted the primogeniture laws of kingship. A paradigmatic turn. However, the question is, for how long? From the vantage point of absurdism, political structures, even democracy, which is the latest formulation in this multi-generational experiment of order, will gradually decline.



The Triumph of Death (1562),
by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

IV. The Myth of the Philosopher-King



Democracy itself is not without faults, either. Plato himself criticised democracy as prone to being ruled by people without the necessary political wisdom or ability. Giving equal power to every individual is a dangerous game. This is evidenced by many governments throughout history that started as democracies and gradually descended into madness. Weimar Germany stands out as a prime example, with its slow decline into Nazi dictatorship.

Moreover, Plato's idea of a Philosopher-King is just hollow naïveté. He assumes that this level of wisdom can be maintained across generations, but this is historically disproven. Also, by what criteria does one determine an individual to be a Philosopher-King? Additionally, any period of so-called "peace" in a country is short-lived, for soon, a Philosopher-King of a much lesser will take the throne and dissolve this "peace". One needs to only take a look at Marcus Aurelius, who was the last great Roman Emperor, compared to his much lesser son, "Commodus", who led the Roman Empire into decay. To my knowledge, even today, there has not been a definitive manual for the selection of a Philosopher-King. What philosophies must he read or study? What political acumen, in exact terms, must he possess?

Such uncertainty borders on absurdism. Humans, at their base, are still driven by self-interest. Crawling over each other to get ahead in life, only prohibited by a thinly (and gradually becoming thinner) stitched veil of structure. The inability of these governments to hold peace for long

is not a failure of the structural architecture, however. The common denominator is “humans” and their condition of disorder. Hobbes’ conception of humans in a pre-government, pre-structural world as selfish and egoistic is absolutely apt. Humans are often bound to their primordial instincts, despite the structural veneer of civilisation.

Later, after the pillars of structure were laid down, a few fringe groups attempted to “civilise” the rest. The effort is commendable. Their only flaw was a tragic hope that this structure would bring sustained peace. A historical analysis says otherwise. In the beginning, I briefly mentioned the idea of “entropy”. This scientific concept declares that every isolated system, turned away from the cosmic chaos in this universe, is gradually moving towards disorder. If political structures are also hopeful isolated respites from chaos, then they, too, are subject to entropy of a kind.

As minuscule organisms, in cosmic terms, we try to find meaning in the form of structured political ecosystems of



this world. This peace, however, is temporary.

The structure, too, eventually undergoes entropy, and at the end, turns disorderly. Chaos, ergo, is the only ultimate truth. Thus, it is no wonder that the ancient Greeks conceptualised that it is morally wrong to birth children into this world, for it is all suffering, and it is not within our rights to subject another life to this world. This is what is known as antinatalism.

V. Sitting by the Boulder

Then what does one do with the world? Perhaps we can simply let the world be. Notably, this is not a call to Anarchism, however. I do not propose the periodic overthrow of governments (unless it becomes a disease). This is simply, as aforementioned, an intellectual exercise. "Letting it be" or political resignation is simply letting the world play out as it plays out. Once the understanding of the human predetermined chaos is put into play, the constant agitation of a futile desire to sustain peace may be eliminated.

"The absurd is born of this confrontation
between the human need and
the unreasonable silence of the world."

Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus (1942)

Camus' dialogue here shows the dissonance of trying to fit structure into an unstructured truth. However, this view of absurdism proposed in this essay chooses resignation over Camus' revolt. Resignation is tragic wisdom. One is aware of the world's meaninglessness

and is bound to accept it for what it is, periods of hope and despair. It is neither naive idealism nor destructive cynicism. Unlike Camus, who calls for a revolt against meaninglessness and to take charge by rejoicing in rolling the boulder up the hill (Myth of Sisyphus), whereas resignation is to sit by the boulder acknowledging that it will always roll back down. It is a meditative letting-go, and a quiet acceptance of things as they are, finding joy in not the fight against meaninglessness, but in the ubiquity of the void.

A quiet acceptance and resignation of the disordered world may be the remedy for today's political fatigue. This is not a call to apathy, however. A quiet acceptance does not mean absence from decisions. It simply is a peaceful acknowledgement of disorder. We must still rise, even in the face of inevitable disorder, if this same disorder continues for too long without successful intervals of order and peace. It is not surrender, in Camus' terms. It is a victory, through transcendence.

The political structures decline, too. Therefore, relentless search for infinitely sustained peace, as humanity has endeavoured for, is fruitless and unnecessary. So, why do we still create structures? In spiritual terms, perhaps it is a metaphysical ritual. In existential terms, perhaps this disorder frightens society. Evolutionarily, order has utility. An ordered society is infinitely more amenable than a disordered one. However, the illusion of infinitely sustained order is just that — an illusion. Eventually, everything tends to revert to chaos. Regardless, even in peaceful acknowledgement and resignation to the entropy of political structure, we still owe it to each other to make the periods of peace more expansive and longer-lasting than periods of inevitable chaos.

Finally, instead of a conclusion for this essay,

I leave it off with a resignation, for I do not know the answers, even in this thought experiment to understand our absurd world. If chaos truly is the underlying nature of the universe, one can find reconciliation in a form of absurdism, in simply resigning (peaceful acknowledgement but with readiness) to the inevitable entropy of all political ecosystems.

Outside of this hypothetical absurdist lens, I certainly hold on to the hope that this disorder is not simply an absolute truth of this world.

Philosophy of sciences, the structure of the mind, means of logic and reasoning



Do you need to study maths to understand philosophy ?



Caroline Giraud
France



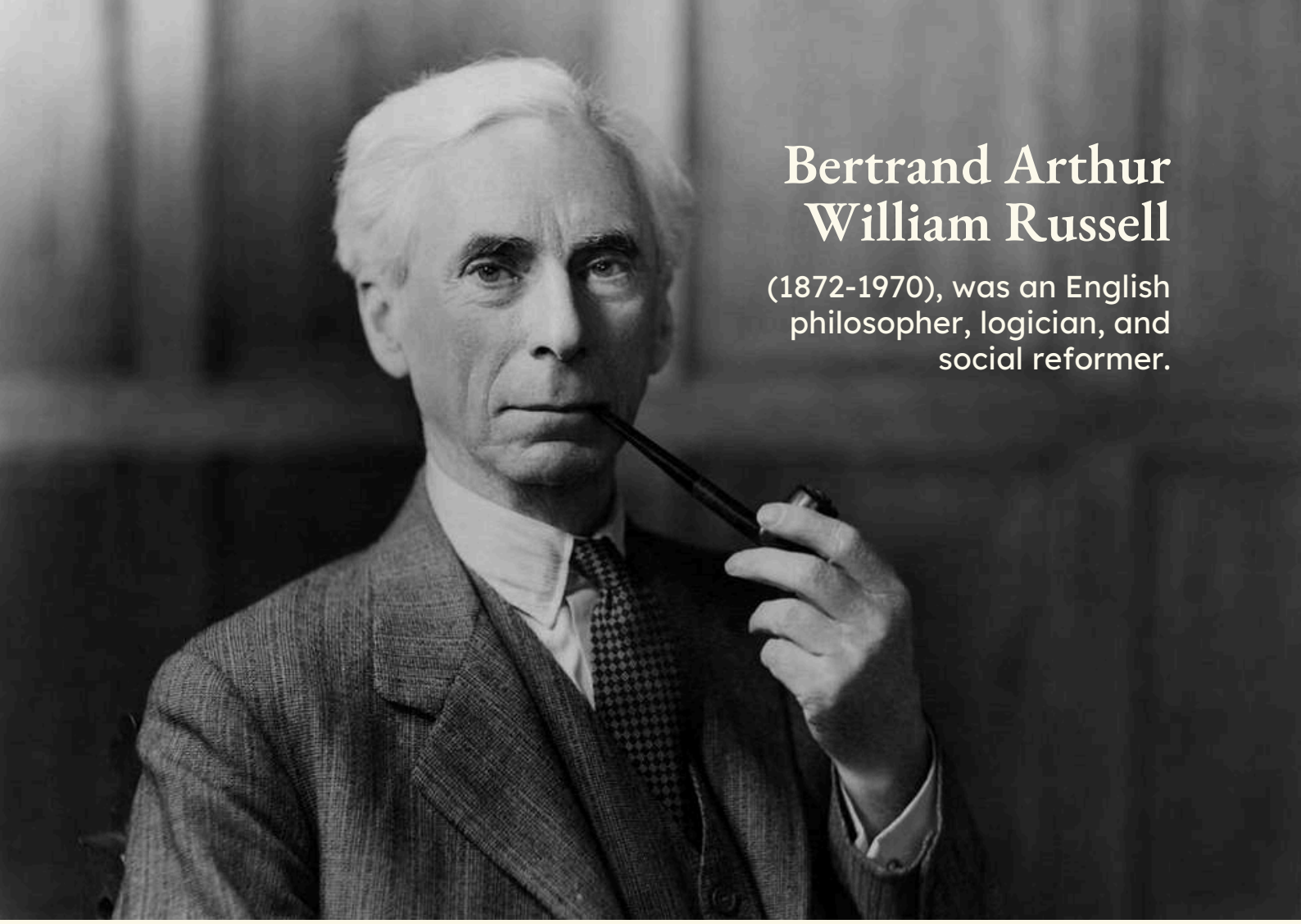
When I tell people that I have come back to university after eight years of teaching philosophy, their first reaction is often: “what a radical change!” This has always surprised me, because the reason why I like philosophy is the same reason I like maths, and maths was always one of my favourite subjects in high school. However, in France, philosophy is oddly associated with literature. In the high school curriculum, philosophy is first taught in an optional subject called “Humanities, Literature and Philosophy”. Then, in the last year of high school, philosophy seems to replace the literature module of the previous years. As a result, students generally arrive in the philosophy class thinking that they will continue to study something like literature: reading books, writing essays weighing the pros and cons, and giving their opinion on several topics. Therefore, it is often difficult to make them understand, and sometimes believe, that they are going to think in a way much closer to formal sciences.

This way of studying philosophy is specific to France and some other continental European countries. Most philosophers elsewhere make extensive use of logic when they do philosophy, but it is possible in French universities to study philosophy for five years, and become a teacher, without taking any logic module. Yet, logic is the basis of philosophical reasoning. Unlike the natural and human sciences, which rely on observations and experiments,

philosophy progresses through arguments and thought experiments. Some may categorise philosophy as part of the human sciences; but even if I can understand why a few philosophical topics related to existence or politics are strongly linked to human sciences, most philosophical research deals with abstract concepts and formal reasoning, sometimes without any reference to real life.

Returning to my own experience, I had the traditional French curriculum in philosophy: in five years, I only had one semester of logic. I passed the exam to teach in high school, and during my first years, I found it difficult to make students understand what they were supposed to do. I quickly realised what my problem was when I began to study, for my own enjoyment, analytical philosophy and logic : I was trying to explain how to construct a logical argument without any knowledge of logic. That's why I finally returned to maths : its similarity with philosophy not only helped me better understand my own speciality, but also made me a more efficient teacher.

My aim here will not be to understand why and how there are so many differences in the practice of philosophy between countries. Lots of works in the history of philosophy explain thatalready, better than I would. We can briefly say that the main division took place during the 20th century. However, at this moment, philosophy was already very different from what it was before, when the "philosopher" was a general scientist, studying every field of human knowledge, from physics to what we now call psychology. I think the best definition of what is current philosophy was given by Bertrand Russell in "The value of philosophy". As he observed, it is true to say that



philosophy doesn't give any answer to anything; but the reason for this is that each time a philosopher finds a method to get answers, his activity is no longer called "philosophy". As he writes himself :

"If you ask a mathematician, a mineralogist, a historian, or any other person of learning, what definite body of truths has been ascertained by his science, his answer will last as long as you are willing to listen. But if you put the same question to a philosopher, he will, if he is candid, have to confess that his study has not achieved positive results such as have been achieved by other sciences. It is true that this is partly accounted for by the fact that, as soon as definite knowledge concerning any subject becomes possible, this subject ceases to be called

philosophy, and becomes a separate science. The whole study of the heavens, which now belongs to astronomy, was once included in philosophy; Newton's great work was called "the mathematical principles of natural philosophy." Similarly, the study of the human mind, which was, until very lately, a part of philosophy, has now been separated from philosophy and has become the science of psychology. Thus, to a great extent, the uncertainty of philosophy is more apparent than real: those questions which are already capable of definite answers are placed in the sciences, while those only to which, at present, no definite answer can be given, remain to form the residue which is called philosophy." [1]

According to Russell, philosophy concerns the set of questions for which no method of answering yet exists. So how could a discipline which was originally the source of every field we now call "science" have been mainly associated with literature in France and other countries, instead of remaining a scientific subject as it is elsewhere? Despite the interest of this question, it is not our subject here. We can still wonder what is the link between mathematics and philosophy : isn't mathematics a separate science like physics, biology or psychology? Why should we have to study maths to understand philosophy, rather than the other sciences? Actually, philosophy is, like the sciences, divided into different fields, and to understand the philosophy of physics, it is necessary to study physics; to understand the philosophy of mind, it is useful to know about neurosciences and psychology… But my aim is more to show that maths remains useful in whichever field of philosophy one chooses to study, not only the philosophy of mathematics.

In this paper, we will explore the link between mathematics and philosophy, considering three approaches:



- first, a historical one, to show the evolution of the relationships between both disciplines;
- secondly, we will dwell on philosophical methodology, to understand how having a good practice of maths can help in philosophy;
- and thirdly, we will present some fields of contemporary philosophy that use mathematics as tools, just as the natural and human sciences do.

I. A historical approach : from Ancient Greece to analytic philosophy

Science and philosophy

It is usual, in the French tradition, to trace the origin of philosophy to Socrates and Plato. History of philosophy books may, however, present Thales as the first philosopher. Thales is mostly known for several geometry theorems with which he is credited. In Ancient Greece, a philosopher was a general scientist, interested in knowing the truth about nature, society, or human existence. Thales was part of a school of thought seeking the fundamental component of the universe. They thought the universe was made of one component ; according to Thales, water must be this universal component, as water can be found in many forms. That was the beginning of physics. As Russell said, every scientific field originated from philosophy. However, even at this time, mathematics quickly became kind of a separated science. Indeed, although the Ionian and the

Pythagorean schools (respectively Thales' and Pythagoras') thought numbers were embedded in reality, Plato, Aristotle and then Euclid understood the abstraction of mathematics. Thus, mathematics was no longer simply part of natural philosophy, but a discipline philosophers needed in order to master abstract reasoning.

It is well known that the sentence "Let no one ignorant of geometry enter" might have been engraved on the door of Plato's Academy, the philosophy school he founded in Athens. "Geometry" was a more general term then, referring to mathematics in general. According to Plato, if studying maths is necessary before studying philosophy, it is because it is the basis of any abstract and correct reasoning. Before him, mathematical proof could be made using drawings or spatial intuition. For instance, consider the proof of Pythagoras' theorem based on a construction of two squares and four triangles : it is possible to prove the theorem to anyone, even a child, just by moving around the triangles. Yet, considering mathematics as an abstract field, separate from the real world, we cannot rely on diagrams and spatial perception anymore: proofs have to be based on abstract concepts as well. That is the importance of Euclid's Elements and the reason it remains such an important work to this day.

Consequently, the study of mathematics was and still is essential for the study of every science. Until the 17th century, natural science was called natural philosophy, because philosophy just meant the search for the truth, whatever the field considered. One important example of a natural philosopher would of course be Aristotle. Not only is he known for his astronomical works (On the

Heavens), but also for his biology research (his most famous work must be Parts of Animals).



In spite of his mistakes — unavoidable when one writes so much —, he wrote hundreds of pages on nature, the universe, animals, logic, politics, art, and more. This model of the philosopher as a general scholar lasted for several centuries. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy introduces Leibniz as the last “universal genius”, in the 18th century, due to his important contributions in metaphysics, logic, mathematics, physics and jurisprudence. After Leibniz, sciences became too deep to be accessible by only one person. As a result, the separation of sciences accelerated.

Nevertheless, one similarity remained: mathematics is still the necessary condition for studying science. Another famous quote from a philosopher would be Galileo Galilei’s: “Philosophy is written in this grand book – I mean the Universe – which stands continually open to our gaze (…). It is written in mathematical language, and the letters are triangle, circles and other geometrical figures, without which means it is humanly impossible to comprehend a single word”, in The Assayer. This quote is so famous because it foreshadowed the beginning of modern physics, which was going to replace natural philosophy. The reason why mathematics is the right language to understand philosophy is its exactness : mathematical proof is certain, because it relies only on reasoning, and not on the external world.

The historical importance of mathematics for philosophy is the same as the importance of mathematics for every science. It is clear for everyone now that it is impossible to study physics without mathematics. It should not be different for other sciences, including philosophy. Beyond

that, mathematics has remained a particular science: it is still possible to study mathematics for its own sake, not merely for the physicist's. Likewise, although mathematics is a good language to do philosophy, philosophy of mathematics is a separate field of philosophy. In the next section, we will summarise some of the problems we can face in this particular discipline.

Philosophy of mathematics

Philosophy of mathematics is a large field that we would not be able to present exhaustively here. It has a long history and some parts of it can be considered not as philosophy anymore, but pure mathematics. Some questions about infinity or continuity, for instance, are now well defined in mathematics and may no longer require philosophy. However, it does not prevent mathematicians and philosophers from working together on these questions.As we are still in our historical approach, we will begin by introducing Plato's famous theory about mathematics. Following Pythagoras and his belief that everything in the world is number, Plato recognised that numbers were abstract, insofar as they are not direct properties of things but general ideas. However, according to Plato, mathematics is not constructed by the human mind. It exists in itself in a different world, called by Plato the World of Ideas, which is more real than the sensible world in which we live, because it is in this world that we can find these "Ideas" or "Forms", entities that are eternal, never change, and structure our own world. Abstract concepts like beauty, justice or good are part of this world, whereas in our world, we only have access to things which share the

property of being beautiful, just or good.
Mathematical objects are these kinds of forms too.



This view of the nature of mathematics led to an epistemology known as Platonism, or mathematical realism: the belief that mathematics has a separate existence, therefore studying mathematics amounts to discovering what already exists, instead of creating it. One of the philosophical debates about mathematics is to analyse the pros and the cons of each epistemology. Indeed, Platonism is not the only one. Other schools of thought see mathematics as a cultural production, or as arising from nature or human cognition. At the beginning of the 20th century, three philosophical movements about mathematics emerged :

- Logicism aims to reduce mathematics to logic.
- Intuitionism considers mathematics as a mental construction.
- Formalism sees mathematics as only a formal game, without taking position on its independent existence.

Reflecting on the reasons to adopt one of these positions, the consequences they have and the problems they raise has been a large part of philosophy of mathematics in the last century. Why does a mathematical proof necessarily lead to truth ? What is this “truth” we are talking about ? The answers to these questions will depend on the epistemology we choose to accept.

A wide range of problems in the philosophy of mathematics were addressed at the beginning of the 20th century. Nowadays, the problems also include those related to computer science, particularly regarding new computer proofs. This opens new questions about mathematical understanding.

Philosophical methods inspired by maths



Let’s return to general philosophy, but still from our historical point of view. I would like to dwell on two specific philosophers who tried to create a new way of doing philosophy, inspired by mathematics. The first one, whom we mentioned earlier, was Leibniz, our last “universal genius”. Leibniz understood that the strength and certainty of mathematics lay in its precise concepts. If you take the definition of a “group” or a “field” in maths, it always refers to a very specific concept and admits no ambiguity. On the contrary, philosophy is studying concepts from natural language, and the words we use always have different meanings, depending on the context; sometimes just different possible extensions. For instance, talking about “violence” in political philosophy can include psychological violence, structural violence, or be limited only to physical violence. Still in political philosophy, the concept of “Justice” can refer to the human institution or an ideal which should guide our actions. Thus, to construct a philosophical argument, we first need to define it precisely.

Leibniz thought it would be easier to create a language modelled the mathematical one, where every word would have a single and precise meaning. By combining simple elementary symbols, we could construct more complicated ideas. In "Dissertation on the Art of Combinations,” published in 1666, he outlined the project for the construction of a “universal characteristic,” a symbolic universal language in which all human thoughts could be expressed with clarity and precision inside this language. This way, all the problems, including philosophical or legal problems, could be solved by logical calculus. It is obvious that trying to create such a

language faces significant limitations. However, with the development of computing science, Leibniz' project has gained renewed relevance.

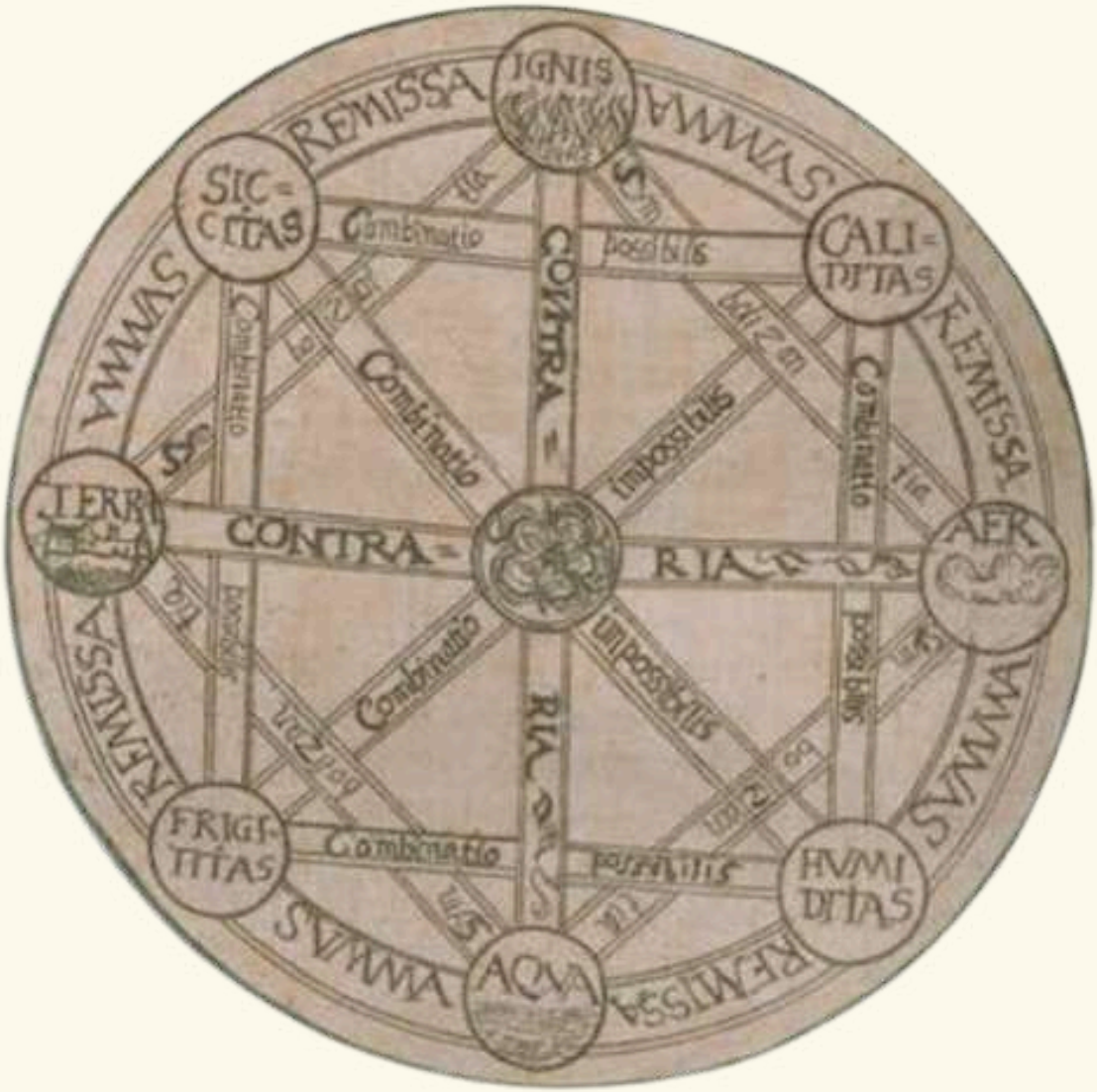


Diagram illustrating Leibniz's *characteristica universalis*:

a project for a formal, symbolic language aimed at reducing all reasoning — including philosophical reasoning — to a rigorous calculus, much like mathematics.

famous as a mathematician (and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature) is known as the founder of analytic philosophy, which is now the main paradigm in contemporary philosophy. Originally, analytic philosophy was more focused on the logical analysis of the language. It was created at the same time as the reflection about the foundations of mathematics, and it is not a coincidence. Indeed, analytical philosophy makes it a point of honour to use language as clearly as possible. Yet, as we know now, the clearest language is mathematics itself. Philosophical proof has to be as well constructed as a mathematical proof. The more continental philosophy developed, the more it produced neologisms, metaphysical concepts and poetic writings, which were a hindrance to a clear link between the premises and the conclusion. As the opposite movement, analytic philosophy promoted a precise definition of the terms, and a rigorous reasoning. Precise definition of the terms before reasoning is the necessary condition to avoid, as much as possible, the limits of natural language, with its nuances and ambiguities, and resemble mathematical reasoning. From this point of view, Russell (along with his German contemporary Frege), agreed with Leibniz's conclusion about the problem of natural language, and it is not a surprise that founders of analytical philosophy have been mathematicians and logicians as well as philosophers.The reader will not be surprised, at the point of the paper, to learn this, because they already know that in the early history of philosophy, all philosophers were scientists. However, we must remember that between Leibniz, the last "universal genius", and Russell, two centuries had passed. Philosophers were already losing their general knowledge and most of the philosophers in the 19th century were interested in metaphysics, losing their

interest in natural sciences – actually, scientists began to separate from philosophers, as we have seen before. Analytic philosophy was created at the beginning of the 20th century. However, I see it as simply a return to what philosophy was at its origin. I hope this first historical approach has helped the reader to understand why.

II. The philosophical method: reasoning and arguments

At the end of our previous section, we saw that contemporary philosophy, in the vast majority of the world, is based on logical rules and reasoning, just as mathematics is. Contrary to natural sciences, to check the validity of a philosophical theory, we cannot use experiments, or compare with reality. Natural sciences



are constrained by the rules of nature, whereas philosophy is constrained by the rules of logic.



A philosophical argument rests on a set of propositions, called premises. From these propositions, we deduce other propositions : that is the way we can prove an assertion in philosophy. To refute an idea in philosophy, we can either refute one of the premises, or highlight a contradiction in the reasoning – that means to find a mistake in the reasoning from a logical point of view.

As with the rest, this is not an invention of analytic philosophy. In Aristotle's books we find the definition of simple logical structures in three parts, called syllogism. It can take this form :

- All A are B.
- All C are A.
- Therefore, all C are B.

The opposite type of argument is the “induction”. It can be seen as opposite in various ways: First, instead of going from general premises to general or particular conclusion, induction goes from particular fact to a general conclusion. Therefore, on the contrary to deduction, induction is not a valid argument. It is, however, a type of reasoning we vastly use in our everyday life : seeing the same event keep repeating, we make the conclusion that it will happen again under the same circumstances. Finally, deduction is associated with philosophy and mathematics : the formal sciences which are based on a set of axioms and conclude what must follow from them. Induction is more related to natural and human sciences, which rely on observation.

This last point leads to the most important question in

philosophy of science, called the “problem of induction”. Because natural sciences rely on an invalid kind of argument, the question of their truth needs to be asked. However, mathematics and philosophy does not work with induction, but deduction. The difference between psychology and philosophy of mind is that psychology observes phenomena in the world and tries to create general rules about the way people think, feel and act, whereas philosophy of mind seeks to define coherently what mind, consciousness or will are. By giving answers to how conscious people and the brain work, psychological and neurological knowledge is crucial for philosophers, but their methodologies are opposite. In contrast, the common point between philosophy and mathematics is that they do not begin with observation, but abstract postulates.

This leads to another kind of problem, specific to deduction, called the “premises problem”: if premises have to be true to guarantee the truth of the conclusion, how can we be sure that they are indeed true? This question led to the fundamental crises of mathematics at the end of the 19th century, and the search for a solid basis for mathematics. In philosophy, the premises are exactly the points that are interesting. As it is not possible to question the conclusion of a right deduction, the philosophical debate focuses on the premises – with exception, sometimes, about the logical structure.

Consider the following argument, known as the sceptical argument (scepticism is a philosophical movement according to which any knowledge is certain, therefore possible, provided that a knowledge is a true justified belief. The Global scepticism even consider that the existence of the external world itself cannot be proven),

where “S” is a sceptical hypothesis and P any proposition about the external world:



1) If I cannot refute the possibility of S, then I am not justified in believing P.
2) I cannot refute the possibility of S.
3) Therefore, I am not justified in believing in P.

This argument is valid, but its conclusion can seem absurd. There are many things we feel justified to believe. To refute the conclusion, we need to refute one of the two premises. The more fragile one seems to be the second, as the first is based on definitions of knowledge and scepticism : is it true that I cannot refute S ? Philosopher G. E. Moore suggests the following, with P = “I have hands”:

1) If I cannot refute the possibility of S, then I am not justified in believing P.
2) I know P.
3) Therefore, I can refute the possibility of S.

Moore's argument structure is called modus tollens and relies on a contraposition: the first premise says that “If X, then Y”, which is logically equivalent to “If not-Y, then not-X”. The proof by contraposition is often used in maths as well as in philosophy.

Other kinds of arguments exist, and philosophy is far from being reduced to the two we just presented. Similarly, mathematics does not only use deductive arguments: mathematical induction exists as well, proof by contradiction, proof by exhaustion — all of which have great importance in philosophy too. By studying mathematics, and learning to use each of these proofs

efficiently, we tend to develop our philosophical skills, and vice versa.



III. Current fields of philosophy using maths

In this last section, we will stop talking about the methodology to return to the content of mathematics and ask our final question: are there forms of calculation that are required for specific fields of philosophy ? Of course, a deep understanding of philosophy of mathematics requires a good understanding of mathematics themselves, but in this section, we will not be talking about philosophy of mathematics, as our purpose is to show that mathematics is useful in many fields of philosophy.

We can first broaden our topic by considering philosophy of science in general, not only mathematics. The situation is nevertheless the same : most of the natural sciences use mathematics to study their objects and to understand these sciences; therefore, to practice rigorous philosophy of science, some basics in maths are unavoidable. It is particularly true in philosophy of physics, where the link between mathematics and reality is the most studied.

However, mathematics is also essential in fields of philosophy not related to science. I usually avoid speaking too much about fields I do not master, so I will focus on one particularly field: ethics. Ethics is the reflection on good and evil, and at first sight, it seems far removed from the study of mathematics. Ethics is divided

in several subcategories: Descriptive ethics studies the way people act and think about morality.

Normative ethics tries to construct a coherent and complete moral system, to help us determine how we should behave; this part of ethics is sometimes compared to the research in the foundation of mathematics. Applied ethics studies real cases like war, medical situations, or the condition of animals. Metaethics is a more fundamental field, studying the ontological, semantic or epistemological presuppositions of morality.

Particularly in descriptive and applied ethics, the use of statistics and probability is common in studying and analysing human behaviour. Yet, the misuse of statistics is common. Therefore, to avoid mistakes and carry out precise philosophical studies, it is essential to have a sound knowledge and mastery of these fields.

Finally, many ethical questions can now be approached through the angle of game theory, another area of mathematics.

Conclusion

Overall, even if the history of philosophy and most of the continental tradition of philosophy do not need to study mathematics to be understood, the practice of philosophy requires at least mastery of logic, often related with mathematical proof. In any case, studying mathematics before philosophy would be helpful, especially for methodology: from the philosophers of ancient Greece to the founders of analytic philosophy, the ability to think mathematically has been considered

essential for a clear philosophical thought. 

From my own experience, I can say how much the study of mathematics, even in its basic form, has been useful for my reasoning, teaching and understanding of classical as well as contemporary texts. Recognising this connection should remind us that philosophy, at its best, is more than an exercise in opinion or rhetoric. It is a disciplined search for truth, conducted through reasoning that must withstand the same standards of coherence and validity that govern mathematics. In this way, mathematics does not just support philosophy: it reveals what philosophy aspires to be.

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A Note of Appreciation

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to BetterTGT, our sister organisation, led by Isidora and Sarthak, who both worked on this Philosium journal.

BetterTGT is a youth-led initiative rooted in the belief that no child or young person should become invisible within systems of displacement, exclusion, or silence. Through multicultural workshops that bring together art, dialogue, and lived experience, BetterTGT creates spaces of connection and belonging for young people across communities.

We are especially grateful that the children's artworks created in these workshops now accompany and decorate the philosophical essays in this first issue, bringing color, tenderness, and a deeply human presence to our pages. Their work reminds us that philosophy is not only written in arguments, but also expressed through imagination, solidarity, and the courage to be seen.

To date, BetterTGT's activities have reached more than 2,700 children, including through work in 15 primary schools, regular activities at refugee day-care centres and hospitals, and a growing network of 30+ active volunteers.



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