

# DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM

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## VARIA

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**WERNER KRIEGLSTEIN**  
**AUGUST 26, 2024 — OCTOBER 31, 1941**

<https://doi.org/10.5840/du202434335>

Werner Josef Krieglstein, an esteemed scholar, director, actor, and founding member of the International Society for Universal Dialogue, passed away on August 26, 2024, at the age of 82. Born on October 31, 1941, in Blatnice, then part of Nazi Germany's Sudetenland (now the Czech Republic), Werner's early life was marked by significant upheaval, including forced relocation to Beselich-Obertiefenbach near Frankfurt, Germany, following World War II as a refugee.

Werner's academic journey was distinguished by his studies under Theodor W. Adorno at the Frankfurt School, where he developed a profound interest in transformative philosophy. He furthered his education at the Free University of Berlin and later earned his doctorate from the University of Chicago as a Fulbright Scholar and University Fellow.

Throughout his career, Werner held teaching positions at the University of Helsinki in Finland and Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. He retired as professor emeritus of philosophy and religious studies at the College of DuPage, where he was honored with the Most Outstanding Teacher Award in 2003 and the Distinguished Regional Humanities Educator Award from the Community College Humanities Association in 2008.

Werner founded the philosophy of Transcendental Perspectivism, a neo-Nietzschean philosophical school that emphasizes the importance of compassionate understanding and interconnectedness. His "philosophy of compassion" was presented at numerous international conferences, including the UNESCO section of the World Congress of Philosophy in Seoul, Korea.

Werner's long-standing relationship with the International Society for Universal Dialogue forms a significant aspect of his legacy. As a dedicated board member, he contributed to the society's mission of promoting international dialogue on fundamental questions affecting humanity, such as world peace, human rights, cultural interrelations, and ecological preservation. In the 1960s, Werner and his theater troupe regularly crossed the Iron Curtain to attend theater festivals in Poland. So, when he received Dr. Kuczynski's invitation to the inaugural meeting of the International Society of Universal Dialogue, Werner jumped at the opportunity to visit old friends and make new ones.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Werner was an accomplished theater director and actor. He directed the avant-garde theater *Die Neue Bühne* at the Goethe University and founded the Whole Art Theater in Michigan. His black light production of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" was performed over two hundred times at both European and American festivals, often with his sons joining him on stage in various roles.

Werner is survived by his beloved wife, Maryann Krieglstein, and their five sons: Robin, Mark, Daniel, Thomas, and Michael. He also leaves behind a cherished grandson, Milan.

Werner's profound contributions to philosophy, his dedication to compassionate understanding, and his commitment to fostering international dialogue have undoubtedly left an indelible mark on his academic community and beyond. Werner's legacy of compassionate philosophy will continue to inspire future generations of scholars and free thinkers.

## REMEMBERING WERNER KRIEGLSTEIN FRAGMENTS OF A LEGACY

<https://doi.org/10.5840/du202434336>

In the early 1990s, the International Society for Universal Dialogue held its World Congress at Brock University in St. Catherine's, Canada. I had met Werner Krieglstein earlier at ISUD Congresses in Warsaw and Berlin but did not know him well. This all changed on a summer evening as Werner performed for our Society a one-man show of Franz Kafka's "Report to an Academy." The event was memorable. I still possess a small souvenir of the occasion; a paper flyer announcing what seemed to be a spontaneous theatrical performance.

The paper flyer, pasted on a wall of notices, featured a hand-drawn sketch of Werner as he portrayed Red Peter describing his former life as an ape to an academic conference. On stage, Red Peter narrates his account of being shot and captured on the African Gold Coast and then shipped to Europe by his captors. While confined to a small cage on board the ship to Europe, Red Peter realizes that for the first time in his life, there was "no way out."

He recounts slowly acquiring the skills to entertain his captors, first by smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol while eventually learning to imitate the speech and mannerisms of humans. Red Peter's captors soon realized that this ape was "trainable." Before our eyes, Red Peter transforms from a wild animal worthy only of being caged, into a principled and well-spoken human. For the audience, it was a powerful experience.

Soon after arriving in Europe, Red Peter realized that his likely new home in the zoological garden could not be "a way out" but only a larger cage. Red Peter imagined that another alternative might work better: performing on the stages of the great music halls of Europe while "dazzling crowds with his sensational abilities." I read Kafka's short story after returning home and was struck by the differences between his text and Werner's performance. Although the words were the same, Werner's report featured an emotional element of rising intensity that I did not find in Kafka's story.

Werner's portrayal of Red Peter, leading us step by step through Red Peter's transformation, seemed to evoke some themes discussed in the reports given by our Congress participants. We discussed the possibility of a global transformation from the current state and manner of being human to a new condition of human existence, one that could be cultivated by shared philosophical dialogue among ever more inclusive communities. We imagined that such dialogue could lead to a more humane and just World.

Participants in our Academy shared their reports on how their research could illuminate and enrich a path towards the possibilities of a transformation of humankind. My current recollection of this tempts me to suggest that the participants in our Academy sought to impress, if not dazzle, their audiences with reports of our own modest abilities to help find “a way out” of our present modes of confinement.

Werner’s performance, subtly revealing continuities between Red Peter’s transformation and our own Society’s philosophical goals, did not go unnoticed by this audience. On that summer evening, Werner managed to artistically and philosophically capture an important fragment of what we, as members of our Academy, were trying to articulate.

Like all good philosophical storytelling, Red Peter reveals something important while hinting of something more. Red Peter ends his account by acknowledging that he is pleased with his transformation. He had found “a way out.” And yet, he also suggests that his transformation from beast to man was also a loss of something undefined, poorly remembered, and perhaps equally important. Red Peter leaves us with work still to be done.

### **Final Note**

Those who knew Werner Krieglstein will agree that his artistic and philosophical work was filled with a quiet and understated power, a power balanced by his personal gentleness and compassion. Many lives have been enriched by Werner. We will miss him.

*Charles Brown*  
Distinguished Professor of Philosophy  
Emporia State University, USA

## Editorial

### VARIA

<https://doi.org/10.5840/du202434337>

Issue 3-2024 of *Dialogue and Universalism* is not monothematic. Unlike the vast majority of issues of *Dialogue and Universalism* throughout the history of the journal, which are devoted to specific problems, this one contains philosophical studies thematically diversified—not limited by specific problems, styles of philosophizing, nor philosophical traditions. Publishing some issues of *Dialogue and Universalism* as non-monothematic (*Varia*) has recently become a principle in the journal's publishing policy.

The first obvious advantage of publishing issues *Varia* is that it offers authors complete freedom in choosing the problems to be considered, enabling them to present their own directions of research, ideas and concepts, without imposing anything on them.

The next is to provide, more or less clearly, partial images of contemporary philosophy. Issues *Varia* provide partial insights—as it happens in many philosophical journals around the world—into the specifics of contemporary philosophizing. This is a permanent “added value” of collections of non-monothematic works, not a rarity. However, it is worth recalling it because of its importance. These insights are admittedly extremely modest and accidental contributions, but nevertheless they show—from their narrow perspectives—the richness of contemporary philosophy, its prevailing trends as well as its diversification. In *Dialogue and Universalism* this diversity is especially clearly visible because the authors—which is a satisfaction for us, even a source of pride—come from different continents, cultures and various academic communities.

Today's philosophy is not a continuation or a simple, linear development of centuries-old philosophical tradition. It is less unified than old philosophy, and at the same time, despite the secession from it to science some fields, e.g. psychology and sociology, over 100 years ago, the universe of its problems is broader than it was in previous centuries. This universe is growing, among other things, through the successive involvement of philosophy in current affairs of the human world, including issues that are completely new or are regarded as such (e.g. AI, post-truth, new forms of racism, LGBT, ecology). However, these

studies are often situated on the peripheries of philosophy, only developing theoretical foundations for their investigations. This current phase of transforming new problems into philosophy, i.e. the processes of making them philosophical, cause in some situations that philosophy is being crumbled from the inside—what is not yet philosophical flows into it, which is only becoming so step by step. Of lesser importance in philosophy is the lack of unification—both in terms of the subject matter and methods of philosophical discourse—that is, the lack of capturing new problems in a single all-embracing philosophical system.

The addressing of today's philosophy to current issues that concern humanity and especially to newly emerging problems has two opposing sides. On the one hand, this philosophy responds to the state of the human world, more specifically, the state of individual man, societies and all of humanity, the state of their natural and social habitat, and tries to capture from the incredible cacophony of problems of this world the basis of what is taking place before our eyes, and also—in ambitious normative undertakings—to indicate means to counteract its destruction. It tries, in other words, to capture its deepest sense by offering intellectual tools to explain the world. Thus, by joining in the struggle with the present world, in its case, with the intellectual struggle, at the level of theory, it shows how much it is not—contrary to the opinions of its critics—an anachronistic field, isolated from the human world, and therefore, again in the opinion of the critics, useless, unnecessary, belonging to the history of human activities. On the other hand, at this stage of pioneering delving into the present world, philosophy sometimes diagnoses this world without the distance proper to it, and sometimes without an appropriately clear theoretical (conceptual and methodological) ground, which is only being sought. Philosophy sometimes accepts ready-made points of view, opinions and assessments from outside philosophy, without exploring them and with too superficial reflection on them. Sometimes it too uncritically follows the opinions of scholars (worse still, statements that are beyond the competence of scholars, are their worldview reflections), and even non-scientific, loud and fashionable, opinion-forming circles. In this way, philosophy loses its distance and objectivity and departs from the canons of the most liberally understood philosophicality—it turns into quasi-philosophy or pseudo-philosophy. On the other hand, philosophy, which does not produce synthetic knowledge by itself, in isolation, and therefore cannot fence itself off, is condemned, by its very nature, to the externality of its foundations. This gives rise to a dilemma, the proper resolution of which is always a necessary beginning of all philosophizing. In any case, it must be remembered that in this ambivalent situation of philosophy, its autonomy—in the clash with the influx of external knowledge, ideas, opinions and styles of thinking—is a constantly threatened attribute. It must be protected in order to avoid philosophy dissolving into intellectual, non-specific reflection, with ad hoc formed goals and methods of inquiry. The point here is not at all to stop the development of philosophy and

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cut it off from even temporarily important, transient problems of the human world, but to protect its unique status and its identity, which is constant only in its deepest essential layer, and changeable in more superficial layers in the face of the constant flow and reconstruction of philosophical concepts.

The texts presented in this issue of *Dialogue and Universalism* consider the problems of the human world, and thus are located in the philosophy that dominates today, that is, practical philosophy, as understood by Aristotle. Theoretical philosophy (again as understood by Aristotle), which is opposed to practical philosophy and at the same time complementary to it, is in retreat, after a long eradication of metaphysics and in the face of the gradual disappearance of the philosophy of knowledge (its place is taken by empirical cognitive sciences).

Małgorzata Czarnocka  
full professor of philosophy  
*Dialogue and Universalism* editor-in-chief



*Ramezan Mhadavi Azadboni*

**RELIGION AND ITS EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION IN THE  
CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL VILLAGE.  
THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**

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***ABSTRACT***

The quality of intersubjective communication in today's world, which is different from the past world, due to the development of communication tools and technology is so wide and deep that spatial distances have become almost unaffected. Then the question arises if we can talk about the educational function of religion in such a world. The general explanation of this function is that the religious educational system realizes educational goals by keeping people away from particular conditions and places which are against the goals of education. In today's world, where it has become difficult, in fact almost impossible to keep people away from certain situations and places, how can religion have an educational function. Religious educators, traditionally, attempted to fulfill educational goals by imposing certain conditions and principles. The purpose of this article is to examine this problem from the Islamic perspective. The author tries to display why in the contemporary global village there is no conflict between the educational function of religion and the structure of intersubjective communication.

**Keywords:** Religion, human being, educational function, global village.

**INTRODUCTION**

One of the functions and in a sense one of the realms of religion is education and its educational function. The role and the educational and moral aspect of religion is one of the important areas of research in religious studies in various sciences. The educational function of religion is so significant that some people insist on it in explaining what religion is and defining it. The goal of the educational aspect of religion is to create favorable changes according to the type of worldview. A religion can play its educational by presenting particular ontological and epistemological principles. The role of religion in education is criticized by many scholars, in particular since the modern age by those who refuted any role for religion in education and ethics.

The modern era owes its birth among others to the scientific revolution. Science, with the progress it made in justifying and explaining natural phenomena, became the basis for transformation and revolution in philosophy made by some philosophers among others Descartes and Immanuel Kant. For this purpose, he tried to restart his intellectual life. Kant was also surprised by the increasing success of science and tried to clarify the secret of this matter, which finally, like Descartes, changed the task of philosophy in comparison with the past. In his opinion, philosophy should study the human mind before ontology. After this philosophical turn to explain science and another turn, i.e., to concentrate philosophical research on the human mind first, religion and its educational role did not stop to be a field of philosophical studies, but those studies begun to be mostly critical and the validity of the educational role of religion has been criticized in various ways since then. The criticisms against the educational dignity of religion were based on scientific standards. The increasing progress of science became the basis for the emergence of scientific thinking in all fields of human existence. And in such an intellectual frame, the educational role of religion was also questioned and denied. Science gains knowledge about the natural world through the empirical method which is variously interpreted, mainly as the complex method of observation/experiment and of forming a theoretical knowledge founded on empirical evidence.

The result of using the scientific method as a criterion of evaluation of the correctness or incorrectness of religious teachings and moral rules is clearly predictable: the negation of the educational role of religion. Defending the educational function of religion by criticizing and showing the weakness of scientism forms a part of philosophical efforts.<sup>1</sup> Among these principles that are previously confirmed and committed by scientists is the principle of causality. The truth or falsity of this principle is outside of empirical studies, but despite this, scientists adhere to it in their research. Although some scientists try to evaluate the philosophical principle of causality by relying on experimental methods, despite this, the common view in philosophy about the principle of causality is that causality is an a priori philosophical principle and cannot be studied through experience.

Some others criticize the educational role of religion through the changeable feature of educational principles. From such perspective, we see two types of moral values in religion: the values of servant and served. The values of the second type are inherent and are not used as a means for other values, while the values of the first type serve the role of serving the values of the served.<sup>2</sup> Such critics consider served values as the result of reason and do not consider their existence in religious texts to indicate that they are religious.<sup>3</sup> From the point of view of such critics, the characteristic of servant values is their changeability.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldman, A. 1999. *Knowledge in a Social World*. Clarendon Press, 230.

<sup>2</sup> Soroushe, A. 2000. *Minority and Maximum Religion*, Kiyan, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Excluding the served values from religion and seeing them as a product of reason on the one hand and considering the values of the servant to be variable on the other hand means negating the educational function of religion. Now, is the difference of moral values considered a threat to ethics? The defenders of moral values, in the face of such a challenge, try to compromise between changeability and the generality-non-relativity of their values-they have a religious education. Moral values can be different in different societies and with tolerance in different religions, but despite this, their validity should not be threatened.

Also, some critics try to eliminate the educational function of religion through the idea of separation and independence of science from religion. Such critics try to negate the educational role of religion by first calling the process of education scientific and then distinguishing science from religion.<sup>4</sup> The issue of the separation and independence of science from religion was seriously the subject of philosophical studies in the 20th century.

The denial of the independence of science can be considered one of the characteristics of the current philosophical thinking about science.<sup>5</sup> From this point of view, philosophical studies about science show that science does not emerge independently of non-scientific knowledge and is born and developed by relying on some principles that are supposed to be committed.

### THE STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION

The purpose of this article is to investigate another type of criticism against the educational role of religion and to answer it. The end of the 20th century and the 21st century have a special feature, and due to it, the educational function of religion faces a different challenge in today's world. The feature of the current century is focused on its extraordinary communication power. There are enormous differences between the today intersubjective communication and this in the past. The occurrence of the communication revolution is the main reason that people became aware of each other's life situations, and became aware of the apparent differences in moral and educational principles of each other. In the shade of such recognition, the idea of relativity of educational values has been spread.<sup>6</sup> The result of the communication revolution has caused another challenge for the educational role of religion. The communication, especially communication using electronic media power of today's human is such that the world is as a global village.<sup>7</sup> In the current situation the boundaries and fences of the past ages have either disappeared or lost their effectiveness. In fact, the communication capacity between humans in today's world has made the geographic borders ineffective

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<sup>4</sup> Hirst, P. H. 1974. *Moral Education in a Secular Society*. University of London Press, 86.

<sup>5</sup> Goldman, A. 1999, op. cit., 238.

<sup>6</sup> Taliaferro, C. 1998. *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*. Blackwell, 197.

<sup>7</sup> Swami, J. 1999. *Science, Ethics and Holistic Values*. Bhartiya vidya Bhavan, 2.

and it has become easy to cross the barbed wire at the borderline of many countries. The result is that in today's world, the idea of keeping away cannot be applied in education as part of educational process due to the internet and satellite which caused the village attitude of the present age and world. The question is: Is religion able to fulfill its educational role in such a village? The question that may arise in the reader's mind is, why does the global village cause a challenge for the educational function of religion. In other words, what is the challenging aspect of the present era for religious education? The objective and conceptual structures that we have been with until now and according to which we have organized our religious education are shaken by the wave of entirely change in this century. As a result, the system of religious education is appropriate to it will also be subject to this instability. The result of this deep and complete change is that the realities and concepts lose their opposition, "far and near" as well as "permitted and forbidden."<sup>8</sup>

In such a situation, the issue will be that in a global village that borders and fences could not be workable like what was in the past, it is no longer possible to talk about the division of far/near or permitted/forbidden, therefore the following question can be put forward: Is it possible to defend religious education that is often associated with such concepts? It seems that the educational system in the past centuries was based on removing people from unfavorable environments in order to create favorable changes. But, the situation in the current world is in such way that protection of people from unfavorable conditions is not an easy task. In the past centuries, it is simplistic for teachers and parents to bring about desirable changes by keeping students and children away from educational obstacles while in the current era, with its amazing ability in the field of communication and its ever-increasing growth, limiting factors became less effective and they can no longer play an effective role. For instances, inside the mosque, it seems that the young man is engaged in worship and doing what is desirable, but the reality can be different and for example, he is engaged in using his cell phone with what stand against educational aim. In addition, our child, whom we are supposed to bring about in the process of education, seems to be studying in his room with the door closed, but the reality may be different. It seems that the necessity of the present world is a conflict with the educational role of religion. The important question in the present article is whether it is really so and the necessity of the present age is a conflict with religious education.

### EDUCATION AND ITS AIM

Philosophical contemplation on education has a long and distinguished history in the west philosophical culture. Since its inception by Socrates' battles with the

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<sup>8</sup> Bagheri, K. 2012. *Reviewing Islamic Education*. Tehran: School Publication, 59.

sophists to the present day, philosophers paid significant attention to education. There are many distinguished figures in the west philosophical culture that incorporated educational concerns into their broader philosophical agendas.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the aim of education is that education should foster in all students, the disposition to seek reasons and the ability to evaluate them strongly, and they should follow their evaluations regarding belief, action and judgment. Therefore, it can be noted that since Socrates the concept of education is involved the fostering of reason. Contemporary philosophers of education consider, in general, education as a concept with respect to reason and rationality as well.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Islamic teachings in general and Quranic verses in particular present a kind of understanding education in term of reason and rationality.

It is worth to note that philosophical view on education developed both in the West and in the Islamic tradition was embedded in the broader metaphysical and epistemological worldview. According to such approach, the fundamental task of education is to help students to value reason and to be reasonable. To explain more, we, human beings, are born into the world knowing little, but we possess various and immense potential. In general, the main aim of education in the Islamic perspective is to actualize and realize human natural potentials. Man by nature is not considered to be developed at birth but rather has his/her potentiality and the aim of education is to enable human beings to develop their own skills and abilities. It should be noted that all human individuals do not possess the same capacity and potentiality in quality and in quantity. But the mission of education is to improve and develop human individuals. This mission is accepted by many scholars and many believe that different human beings have different capacities and some seems to be more richly endowed than others.<sup>11</sup> Due to the difference between human individuals' capacities and potentiality, education may vary in many ways, however in general its main duty is to change human life and to develop it. Education is not not transfer of more items of knowledge but rather it seeks to fulfill real change in human life. Since human beings' mutually different potentialities it is reasonable to expect that education covers broad issues. To fulfill the purpose of education different contributing factors—social, economic and personal—are needed and used. Besides, it has been acknowledged by educators throughout the world that education serves a dual purpose, one for the individuals and one for society.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Rorty, A. 1998. *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Siegel, H. 1997. *Rationality Redeemed?: Further Dialogues on an Educational Ideal*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, P. J. 1999. "Education, Religion and Transcendental Values." *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 14 (2), Cambridge: The Islamic Academy, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Kaosar, M. A. 2014. "Perspectives on the Discourse of Islamization of Education." *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2 (1), 43.

## THE POSSIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

In today's era, due to its special communication power, which has been able to set aside borders and fences between people, can we talk about moral education that often achieves its goals by creating borders and fences and with the help of concepts such as permitted and forbidden? Some give a negative answer to the mentioned question and consider irresolvable the conflict between religious education and the current world. From this point of view, instead of defending the educational dignity of religion, we should talk about the deterioration of the educational function of religion. On the other hand, some others, while recognizing the apparent conflict between the global village and the educational role of religion, talk about the possibilities of religious education. The two above-mentioned answers are the result of two different ideas about religious education. In this section, we will show how different conceptions of religious education have a direct impact on answering the question under discussion. The negative answer to the question of whether religious education is possible in the village world is rooted in a mechanical conception of education and human beings. In the mechanical view, education is like a process that looks after the body and nature, while in the non-mechanical view, education is ultimately a process that looks after the soul and it does not deal only with physical phenomena. If one adopts a mechanical view regarding religious education holding that religious educational purpose is fulfilled by creating a quarantine to keep the children and students from undesirable environments and place, then it is obvious that religion is not able to play a role in the current era. The idea of a greenhouse of religious education causes one to think that there is a conflict between religious education and the village world.

It is clear that by assuming a greenhouse or mechanical view of religious education, the removal of borders and fences means the loss of changes. Based on the mechanical idea of man, education will also be a mechanical process. When the tire of a car's wheels is punctured, replacing it, is the only way, and when this wheel is placed on a similar path again, driving will be difficult and even impossible. In such an attitude, it is impossible to imagine the car being driven in the direction where the nails are placed. Now, with the mechanistic approach to religious education, it is clear that it cannot be imagined that it and factors that conflict with it exist side by side. Educational goals should be realized by creating borders and fences, but on the other hand, based on a non-quarantine concept of religious education, there is no need to create borders and fences to achieve educational goals and make them possible. It is possible to imagine that educational changes and goals can be combined with their conflicting factors. In this view, since education is not dependent on the creation of borders and fences, it does not conflict with the village world, which requires the absence of borders and fences.

## THE CORRECT IDEA OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In a non-mechanical approach to education, the main role in creating desirable changes is not given to material components, and therefore educational changes are not achieved simply by creating physical balance in relationships and special physical contact with the environment. And perhaps difficult and apparently unfavorable conditions can be considered a suitable ground for education, because such conditions can play an important role in showing weaknesses and inabilities. If so, the other question is that which one of the two concepts is justified on the basis of Islamic texts? Which one does the Holy Qur'an and Islamic teachings approve? What is clear is the fact that a mechanical idea of education is equivalent to the decline of education in today's world, unless a person is able to protect himself/herself from the space and conditions provided by the communication power of the present age. It is doubtful that such a practice can be realized, and its realization will be accompanied by a heavy cost, and in the end, the result of it seems unlikely to be accepted as religious education, because such developments are eliminated with the change of conditions, while one of the characteristics of religious education is permanence. Desirable changes in the education process are considered education when they have lasting characteristics.

Any kind of educational transformation that is seriously damaged and overturned by changing conditions indicates that it is not education. It is also clear that if our idea of education is non-mechanical, there is no conflict between the educational function of religion and the characteristics of the present age. According to the author, religious texts support a non-mechanical idea of education, and the effort to study the goals of religious education in a greenhouse environment is neither encouraged nor approved. One of the mistakes in the Islamic world that has happened in other religions, including Christianity, has been the wrong understanding of religious and educational concepts. In Christianity, such mistakes were attributed to the religion itself, and therefore it has provoked many philosophers against the religion. The observation of many philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Bertrand Russell through such a perspective is remarkable. In Islamic culture, many people tried to enlighten in this regard. One of the criticisms that Morteza Motahri draws attention to is this. For example, in his opinion, the wrong idea of asceticism caused some people to think that there are contradictions between asceticism and work, while asceticism itself is a source of power and causes people to appear as productive and effective forces in society. The difference between Motahri and some intellectuals is that his encounter with the incorrect interpretation of the original religious and educational concepts such as asceticism, trust, etc. does not cause denial and doubt in the existence of these concepts, but he tries to refine the said concept. For example, rejecting the mechanical understanding of asceticism and confirming the spiritual interpretation of it is one of the important characteristics of Motahari's

thought. In such an attitude, the ascetic is not described in this way: the poorer the more ascetic, rather asceticism can be combined with wealth. Our mistake is that through isolation and isolation we try to acquire values that cannot be achieved without establishing a harmonious relationship with other people and with awareness. Paying attention to the issue of intention in religious texts as the most central criterion in ethics is worthy of reflection. What is the criterion is not exiting or entering certain physical situations, so that by bringing the person closer and closer, the educational goals can be observed in him. The standard of intention is what we keep inside our chest. Intention means the real sanctity whose rightness and wrongness does not depend on time or place. Whether in the past or in the present, whether inside or outside the mosque, the intention ultimately determines whether education has occurred in the student's existence or not. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) introduces the wrong intention as true negligence.<sup>13</sup> The Holy Prophet also said, "God does not look at your face and property, but rather at your heart and actions."<sup>14</sup> In such an attitude towards the intention, it is clear when a person can be seen as someone who has realized religious education in himself, that the mentioned person protects his educational aspect in the level of intention. At this time, we no longer see the existence of boundaries. Educational and moral understanding of actions in such a view is basically the intention. The Holy Prophet says that "physical actions" undoubtedly depend on their intention."<sup>15</sup> It is the intention that makes it clear whether we are fasting and praying or not, neither a hungry stomach nor a bent knee. Such an image of education has several characteristics. First, it will be permanent when it occurs, secondly, its realization is not achieved by creating some kind of relationship and physical contact. Therefore, maybe the one who is inside the mosque is really outside it, and the one who is busy with his life outside the mosque is inside the mosque. Based on such thinking and standards, Amir al-Momineen strongly shakes us with his statement: Whoever gives consent to the actions of people, it is as if he has performed that action.<sup>16</sup> With the same standard, after the victory of Imam Ali in the battle of Basra in 36 AH, when one of his companions wished that his brother was also present in this war, Imam (a.s.) said, "If your brother's heart is with us, his presence in this war is written and also they say that even those who are in the wombs of their mothers are still partners in our act if they share our beliefs."<sup>17</sup>

Another example that supports the non-mechanical conception of religious education is the issue of divine memory. Remembrance of God is always

<sup>13</sup> Imam Sadiq. 1982. *Misbah al-Sharia and Miftah al-Haqiqah*. Mostafavi, H. (Trans., commentaries). Qalam Publications, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Shirmohammadi, M. 2016. *Nahj al-Fasaha, the Words of Rasool Akram (PBUH)*. Saye Gastro Publishing Mehrgan Danesh, 522.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 522.

<sup>16</sup> Imam Ali. 2002. *Nahj al-Balagha*. Dashti (Trans.,). Al-Hadi Publishing House, 665.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

considered the highest form of worship of God.<sup>18</sup> The value of prayer is that a person is remembering God while praying, and it is the remembrance of God that gives man the ability to fight and resist in the face of any kind of crisis and impasse in the divine worldview. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says that whoever remembers God is actually obeying Him. The value and dignity of God's memory is an independent discussion that can be easily accessed in ethical sources. What is cited is the Qur'anic attitude towards divine remembrance, that the nature of this action is not a mechanical and outward-oriented process, although it is possible that the human appearance is also involved in this great matter and shows its contribution. Reflection on Surah Noor is instructive because it describes the characteristics of some men of faith. It is not mentioned in the verse that the true believers are those who refrain from trade and commerce. Abstaining from trade and commerce is not a special feature of believers, but the combination of business and remembrance of God is considered to be a special feature of believers. Trade and transaction as an economic act in which a person naturally takes care of his profit and loss can provide a sufficient and strong basis for man's neglect of the remembrance of God. But the people of faith are those who, while doing business and trading, do not neglect the remembrance of God. Keeping a person away or keeping him close, which is one of the main concepts in raising a greenhouse, has no role in the mentioned verse. Now, with the inspiration of Quranic teachings, it is possible to show the inaccuracy of many cases that seem to be incompatible with religious education and there is inconsistency between them. For example, to what extent pursuing the Islamization of the university by creating a fence and borders can be consistent with such a Quranic rule. From the point of view of the Holy Quran, there is no conflict between business and divine memory. For the same reason, it can be understood that the Islamization of the university does not require gender separation, what is needed is perhaps the creation of other types of changes, it seems that Islamic teachings confirm the fact that between business and the remembrance of God, the presence of the opposite sex in the educational space and is not incompatible as such with Islamic educational goals.

### **RATIONALITY AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Another fact that reveals the absence of conflict between religious education and the communication power of the present era is attention to the dignity and the place of rationality in the religious education system. The requirement of the present era is the involvement and presence of reason in all scenes, including the field of educational goals. Today's world does not allow to realize educational goals without applying reason, because the power of communication in the present era brings people closer one to another by removing borders and fences. This

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<sup>18</sup> Naraghi. 1993. *Meraj Al-Saadah*. Homa, 684.

world has made people to face very different and diverse intellectual and practical patterns. In these conditions, he/she will not be able to choose one of the various thought and practical patterns. Extensive and deep information can be accessed in any form. Therefore, by based on reason one can reach a decisive and lasting choice and decision. Now, by referring to religious texts, one should see how the place and value of reason and rationality are in religion. If the relationship between the religious education system and reason is based on a pessimistic attitude or gives a minimal role to reason, it is obvious that the decline of the religious education system in the present age, whose inherent requirement is rationality, will be complete. But if the religious education system includes the dignity and validity of rationality, then the present age cannot be a threat against the religious education system. In fact, investigation of religious texts confirms that rationality has a prominent status in the religious education system. In order to avoid ambiguity, it is necessary to mention in the present article the Aristotelian concept of rational soul, being a human monopoly, is accepted. It means the power of calculation and analysis in a person. Reasoning is different from learning because in learning a person is often passive and the mind stores a lot of information like a box, but thinking rationally consists of facing the stored and processing and analyzing them in order to choose between them. Of course, reason and knowledge must coexist with each other. In this regard, Motahari points out:

"If a person thinks but his information is weak, it is like a factory that does not have raw material or its raw material is low, it cannot work or its product will be low. The product depends on the availability of the raw material. If the factory has a lot of raw material but does not work, it is paralyzed and will not have a product."<sup>19</sup>

What is the status of the religious education system in Islam in relation to reason and science? A fair look clearly proves that science and, at a higher level, reason have an important dignity in Islamic religious texts. Hisham Ibn Hakam, one of the famous speakers, narrates a narration from Imam Musa (AS) (Esul Kafi, Volume 1), in which Imam (AS) describes the characteristics of a believer according to the 20th verse of Surah Zumar. Therefore, according to the narration that includes the verse of the *Holy Quran*, God promises good news to his servants. The servants have two important characteristics: firstly, they listen to promises, and secondly, they will follow the best words after listening to them. God gives good news to servants who have the strength to face different points of view and after facing different points of view, they will use the best intellectual and practical model. The ability to face and the ability to choose the best is the attribute of God's servants who have received the good news of the Great God. In the continuation of the narration, Imam (AS) tells Hisham that God has completed

<sup>19</sup> Motahari, M. 1989. *Education and Training in Islam*. 14th edition. Tehran: Sadra, 45.

the proof against His servants through reason, and therefore, not using reason is considered a kind of crime.

Another point in the mentioned narration is that the Imam (AS) refers to God's rebuke of those who abandon reason. Verse 171 of Surah Al-Baqarah is cited by Imam (AS) in support of this blame. In the aforementioned verse, the Imam refers to a Quranic teaching according to which some people when they are advised to follow what God has sent, they reply that we only follow what has been handed down to us from our ancestors. The mentioned narrative contains other valuable content, but the mentioned points are sufficient for the topic of the discussion. In short, according to the mentioned narration, God gives good news to some of his servants and blames others. The standard of good news and rebuke is commitment and non-commitment to reasoning. Now, how can an education system that includes rationality as a necessary component be inconsistent in the present era, which requires the use of rationality. Religious education, as long as it is the product of role-playing and application of rationality, not only does not have a conflict with the current era, but in an era that requires rationality, religious education has an opportunity to emerge and its durability is preserved. Educational changes that are realized without considering the characteristics of rationality are not sustainable and are under serious threat in today's world. This issue was clearly raised in the narration transmitted by Hisham. In addition, the verses of the *Holy Quran* and narrative texts widely include encouragement and praise of thinking and reasoning.

## CONCLUSION

Education and proposing desirable changes in it are one of the goals of religions that have been criticized by some people in different ways throughout history. In the contemporary century, this criticism takes a special form. The specialness of the current century is a result of extended communication means that is available to everyone the borders and fences between people of every culture and society to be removed. If our idea of religious education is a non-mechanical and non-greenhouse process, it does not threaten religious education. The current century can be a threat against the goal of religious education when this viewed as a mechanical process. Reflection on religious texts supports a non-quarantine type of education, one that is required in today's world. Also, reflection on religious texts confirms the value and dignity of knowledge and rational thinking in religion. It is the reduction of the role of rationality and the mechanical conception of education that provides the ground for a serious challenge for religious education in the present era, and in the Islamic perspective, there is no conflict between the function of religious education and the contemporary village world.

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## THE MEANING OF LIFE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

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### *ABSTRACT*

The question of the meaning of life is one of the fundamental issues that humanity was asking since the beginning of its creation. Among various approaches to addressing the issue of meaning of existence, one of the primary methods is the philosophical approach. Meanwhile, Islamic philosophy, when confronted with the question of the meaning of life, establishes its foundation upon the understanding of human capacities and capabilities. It asserts that the answer to the question of the origin of life can only be achieved through recognizing human nature, which with its faculty of intellect, tends to discover truth and the meaning of life. Islamic philosophy does not view human life as separate from the system of the universe. Instead, it seeks to find the meaning of life within this framework and a specific context. The significance, value, and credibility of human life are based on its interpretation of the universe and its connection to the ultimate purpose. Therefore, meaningfulness is contingent upon the humans' relationship with the ultimate purpose of the universe. In this article, I examine the perspective of Islamic philosophy on the meaning of life based on its definition of the human being and the universe.

**Keywords:** Islamic philosophy, meaning of life, purposefulness, ultimate happiness.

### INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that all human beings who are in pursuit of a rational, meaningful, and valuable life at some point in their lives, face these profound questions: What does all this effort strive for? What is the purpose of life? Can life itself be inherently desirable? And so on and so forth. These questions emerge because the human Being is an issue (Heidegger, 1962, 236). The most fundamental concern of humans is who they are, where they came from, where they are heading, and what the desired destination is.

The question of the meaning of life is only relevant when life itself is a means of a more important purpose or a higher state of achievement. This could be why some argue that we feel even when all possible scientific questions would be

answered the problems of life remained completely untouched. Of course, there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer. The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (Is not this the reason why those who found after a long period of doubt a sense of life clear to them they still are unable to say what constituted that sense?) There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical (Wittgenstein, 1961, 149).

We may have reached the limits of science here, but perhaps we have not necessarily reached the limits of human discourse. There is a rich tradition of religious language, both in Western culture and elsewhere, that grapples with the task of addressing what cannot be fully captured by even the most complete scientific account of the phenomenal world. One might say that it is the task of religious discourse to strain at the limits of the sayable. Some kinds of theology, to be sure, have aimed at keeping entirely within the boundaries of observable evidence and rational demonstration, invoking God as an explanatory hypothesis to account for certain aspects of reality (such as order, design, motion, and so on), rather in the manner of a scientist looking for the best explanation of the data (Cottingham, 2003, 8).

## DISCUSSION BACKGROUND

In the ancient philosophy, rather than discussing the meaning of life, another topic was often raised that was closely related to this discussion, namely, the concept of happiness. While this concept had its roots in religious texts, philosophers discussed it in a philosophical manner, basing their analysis on specific epistemological and metaphysical foundations. It is somehow the same in the early works of Islamic philosophers. Since the question of the meaning of life is a relatively new topic, there may not have been explicit discussions under that precise title. However, they were concerned indirectly with the concept of meaning of life. For example, *Ibn Sina*,<sup>20</sup> in his various works, sought the meaning of life and aimed to reach it. He talked about happiness in his many texts and described the ways to achieve it. According to his perspective, the pursuit of and realization of meaning are synonymous with the quest for happiness. While *Ibn Sina* distinguished between happiness and the meaning of life, they exhibited common elements in his philosophical framework.<sup>21</sup>

In later works of Islamic philosophers, the discussion of the meaning of life is present and some of them, like *Muhammad Taqi Jafari*,<sup>22</sup> have even written books

<sup>20</sup> Avicenna (980–1037).

<sup>21</sup> For further details, see: (Khademi, 2015, 65–76).

<sup>22</sup> Iranian philosopher (1925–1998).

on this topic.<sup>23</sup> He believes that human life will fully flourish only when individuals comprehend the meaning of life (Jafari, 1989 (1368 SH<sup>24</sup>), 20).

Despite a deep disagreement on the meaning of life, it might be said that clarifying the source of contention is a great help in this discussion. The perspective of Islamic philosophers on the definition and particular meaning of life is crucial and requires a closer examination. Therefore, we will examine the concepts of life, meaning, and the phrase “meaning of life” with a particular focus on Islamic philosophy:

### *Life*

The first term that needs consideration is the word “life.”<sup>25</sup> This term has countless connotations, ranging from nature, animals, to humans, which can lead to various interpretations. Life, the characteristic property of living substances or things; it is associated with either a capacity for mental activities such as perception and thought (mental life) or physical activities such as absorption, excretion, metabolism, synthesis, and reproduction (physical life) (Audi, 1999, 504).

In Islamic philosophy, the concept of human life differs from other perspectives. It centers on the characteristics and qualities unique to human beings. To explain the meaningfulness of human life, philosophers like *Mullā Ṣadrā*<sup>26</sup> first emphasize the various stages of human life compared to plants and animals. This approach underscores the human qualities rooted in a will<sup>27</sup> derived from intellect; this kind of will allows humans to comprehend a higher level of existence beyond vegetative and animal life,<sup>28</sup> a life that is specific to humans and elevated above the previous stages. (Shīrāzī, 1989 (1368 SH), 134). Although human life shares characteristics like growth and reproduction with other forms of life, these are not the defining elements of human existence. The key defining factor is the will that drives human actions or prompts the cessation of actions (Shīrāzī, 1989 (1368 SH), 134). This emphasis on the will of human being does not diminish the significance of other aspects. From the perspective of Islamic philosophy, human life involves both vegetative and animal faculties as well as intellectual faculty, all influenced by an individual's will; these elements all together define the life of a human being.

An important point to note here is that the discussion of the meaning of life, while primarily centered around human life, is inherently connected to the lives of other creatures and the entire system of being. In Islamic philosophy, human

<sup>23</sup> *Falsafeh va ma'nā-ye zendegī* (Philosophy and the meaning of life).

<sup>24</sup> The Solar Hijri calendar

<sup>25</sup> Al-Hayāt (الحياة).

<sup>26</sup> Ṣadr ad-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī (1572–1641).

<sup>27</sup> In the view of Muslim theologians, the significant role of human will extends to other beings; this perspective also offers insight into understanding even the life of God. (Ḥillī, 1372 SH [1993], 313).

<sup>28</sup> Al-Hayāt al-Nabātiya (الحياة النباتية) and al-Hayāt al-Hayawāniya (الحياة الحيوانية).

life is never separated from the rest of the created world and is harmoniously integrated into the larger scheme of existence.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the life of the human being is questioned within the context of the universe. Without considering the entire system of existence, it is impossible to determine the life of the human being.

### **Meaning**

Another concept that needs to be explored is “meaning.” It seems that this term, rather than being a philosophical concept, is more of a linguistic notion. This could be found in the works of some scholars in the West. In this regard, they believe that life now has meaning or purpose for life later on. Also my life or yours has meaning or purpose for the life of others. To ask about life's meaning, then, is to ask about purposes relating. (Hartshorne, 1996, 10).

In Islamic philosophy, when the concept of “*ma'na*” (meaning) is considered, two elements are taken into account: what the speaker has intended for a word and what the word itself indicates (Sāne'i, 2006 (1385 SH), 601). Thus, two fundamental elements can be discerned for the concept of meaningfulness:

- A) The deliberate intention or purpose derived from a word;
- B) The use of words themselves as they convey meaning.

So, these two elements are integral to the notion of meaning.

### **Meaning of life**

Life can sometimes refer to matters that human beings encounter in this world and deal with during their lifetime. At other times, it means what a person intends from the world and vital aspects of their life. Both interpretations could be considered as the meaning of life. However, one is objective, while the other depends on the human perception.

In this regard, we can divide the meaning in this realm into two types:

*Objective meaning:* According to this concept, the whole universe has a meaning with all the components for which it is considered. In this perspective, the observer examines the elements of the universe, and seeks its meaning. This perspective is widely used in Islamic philosophy and religious texts. There are many examples in this regard; for instance, *Mullā Ṣadrā* considers the universe as a unified and cyclical entity, with all its parts belonging to the existence of God (Shīrāzī, 1989( 1368 SH), 107). This kind of attitude to the world is an objective meaning for being which is absolutely not related to anyone's view. This meaning is related to being and creation, not to conceptions. Thus, we need to consider this meaning objective, not abstract; it is only desired for its own sake (Ibn Sina, 1999, 260–261).

*Subjective meaning:* According to the second concept, this term sometimes refers to the purpose that someone wants to express. In other words, it deals with what the person has intended through their speech, regardless of the meaning of

<sup>29</sup> Excerpt from: (Shīrāzī, 1360 SH [1981], 21).

the words. In this sense, a person is considered as a user of words, so their intentions are examined to determine why they have used these words. Thus in this perspective, life is meaningful when a person considers it worthwhile in a mental process. Therefore, the value of life is searched only in the mind.<sup>30</sup>

According to the works of Muslim philosophers, seeking the meaning of life based on this type cannot be acceptable. They believe that the universe should not be examined solely from the standpoint of the mind and human perceptions, but rather, the universe itself, as an intrinsic reality, becomes the reference for the meaning of life (Tabātabā'ī, Motaharī, n.d., 61). The worldview of Muslim scholars is not centered on how human conceive life, but on the meaning which the universe inherently has. This is what Motaharī refers to as “realist worldview”<sup>31</sup> (Motaharī, 2008 (1387 SH), vol. 2, 89).

In the examination of the meaning of life in Islamic philosophy, it can be said that meaning, in the context of the meaning of life, is considered as a purpose.<sup>32</sup> It means that if we consider life as a whole, it is all into achieving the purpose. In other words, life will become meaningful in its journey toward that purpose, in such a way that considering life without it would be meaningless. In this case, the value of life lies in the purpose those human beings choose for themselves.

## HUMAN BEINGS AND THE QUESTION OF THE MEANING OF LIFE

To explore the reason behind questioning the meaning of life, it is better to delve into the structure of the human intellect. In Islamic philosophy, what makes humans special compared to other natural beings, is their possession of intellect (Shīrāzī, 1989 (1368 SH), 134). Every human being possesses different levels of the intellect. The possession of the intellect confronts human beings with the question of the meaning of life, but each individual perceives life according to their own level of understanding. Those individuals who remain at the sensory level<sup>33</sup> also find life meaningful, but their understanding of life is limited to the realm of nature and the material world. Such individuals summarize life in the context of the world and its sensory pleasures<sup>34</sup>. Similarly, individuals who reside in the realm of the imaginative level<sup>35</sup> also have an incomplete understanding of life and are inclined towards illusions in pursuit of fame, leadership, superiority

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<sup>30</sup> For further details, see: Wiggins, 1998, 87–137.

<sup>31</sup> *Jahān-e Vāghe'garā* (جهان واقع‌گرا).

<sup>32</sup> The purpose here is something higher than you. It is what you strive to reach it. So whatever you define for yourself or create would be lower than you. (Motahari, 1996, Vol. 3, 545).

<sup>33</sup> *Al-Martaba al-Hisīyah* (المرتبة الحسية).

<sup>34</sup> It means that the person is just limited to the five basic human senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste) and does not benefit from the ability of the intellect faculty. Therefore, in this case, the perceiver remains oblivious to the higher pleasures.

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Martaba al-Khayāliyyah* (المرتبة الخيالية).

on the earth, admiration, and praise. The highest level is the intellectual level<sup>36</sup> of understanding, which is based on wisdom.

There is a differentiation among people's interpretations of the meaning of life. By limiting the intellect and not utilizing it optimally, human beings comprehend nothing beyond nature; not even the essence and the hidden aspects of nature, but only a superficial perception. In the works of Muslim philosophers, the diversity in the interpretation of the meaning of life among people is considerably understood. The soul is equipped with faculties that, when underused and dependent on non-intellectual faculties, mislead human beings from the truth and lead them into erroneous interpretations, including the meaning of life. It is in such a state that people, instead of discovering the true meaning of life, try to fabricate it (Shīrāzī, 1987 (1366 SH), 168).

### DISCOVERING THE TRUE MEANING IN LIFE

The question of whether the meaning of life is discovered or fabricated is one of the topics discussed in Islamic philosophy. Due to the intellectual capacity of human being as a unique characteristic, two types of intellect have been initially examined: theoretical intellect<sup>37</sup> and practical intellect.<sup>38</sup> Theoretical intellect is concerned with cognition and understanding of abstract concepts, while practical intellect is concerned with practical matters and decision-making (Ibn Sina, 1999, 156–162).

In Islamic philosophy, the human being is a combination of two elements: body and soul, which are intertwined within the human. This combination makes the human a harmonious blend of the natural and the supernatural. In this realm, intellect plays a central role in understanding both the material world and the world beyond it. It is through theoretical intellect that one discovers the truth and the result of practical intellect is the choice of good deeds. The work of intellect is to discover the reality by observing the limits and boundaries of human faculties (Shīrāzī, 1999 (1419 AH<sup>39</sup>), 129–131). Since in Islamic philosophy, the meaning of life is considered to be beyond nature, sensory perceptions, and the material universe, the soul should be liberated from the body and connected to the active intellect<sup>40</sup> to fully grasp the meaning (Ibn Sina, 1999, 46).

Therefore, Islamic philosophy emphasizes that the meaning of life is something to be sought and discovered, especially when human beings engage their intellect in seeking the ultimate truth and purpose. On the other hand, if humans

<sup>36</sup> Al-Martaba al-'Aqliyyah (المرتبة العقلية).

<sup>37</sup> Al-aql an-Nazarī (العقل النظري).

<sup>38</sup> Al-aql al-'Amalī (العقل العملي).

<sup>39</sup> The Tabular Islamic calendar.

<sup>40</sup> Al-aql al-Fa'āl (العقل الفعال): The active intellect is what receives the intelligible forms of things and makes potential knowledge into actual knowledge.

remain confined to the world of senses and illusions, they may resort to creating meaning as a means to escape a sense of meaninglessness. As mentioned earlier, the exploration of human life takes place within the framework of the universe. Therefore, if we consider the entire universe as irrational existence, without a beginning, purposeless, and left without order, then discussing the meaningfulness of a small part of this infinite whole, named "The life of humans," becomes void and meaningless. Nevertheless, if we believe in some form of order, reason, purpose, etc., in the system of the universe, then the question of the meaning of human life acquires a distinct significance.

For this reason, in the discussion of the meaning of life in Islamic philosophy, the ultimate goal or the end of all ends<sup>41</sup> are brought into focus. Indeed, the process of human life, from the moment of birth to death, is like a journey in which we seek to reach another destination; this destination is what Muslim philosophers call the ultimate goal. Therefore, the journey itself cannot be the ultimate goal. This discussion has been mentioned in Western philosophy as well that a God-centered theory, as construed here, answers that one's life is worthy of great esteem just insofar as one has a proper relation with a spiritual being who grounds the natural universe. Despite these advantages, several theorists have contended that realizing God's plan could not make our lives meaningful (Metz, 2000, 293–294).

Islamic philosophy recognizes different levels of meaning when it comes to the issue of life. Based on the significance of the subject of the meaning of life, three specific levels of meaning can be identified from an Islamic philosophical perspective, with each higher level encompassing lower levels within it.

*First Level:* The first level deals with the minimal meaning of life. At this level, the question arises: Can the universe have any kind of meaning or is it entirely empty and devoid of content? This is a topic that has been a focal point in various philosophical arguments over the years; some philosophers tried to find solutions for the perceived emptiness of life.

One of the primary reasons for interpreting life as meaningless is death. Death, as explained in Islamic philosophy, not only does not contribute to the meaninglessness of life, but it is an essential element through which humans can achieve a higher, noble, and more intrinsic meaning. According to *Mulla Sadra*, death leads to an elevation of human existence, a more genuine life (Shīrāzī, 1975 (1354 SH), vol. 1, 410). Therefore, death is not merely an end; it is a valuable and ultimately meaningful aspect of life. Hence, death never would prevent life from reaching a desired, valuable, and meaningful culmination. Death facilitates the progress and growth of all individuals within the human race, and there are no exceptions along this path (Sabzavārī, 2001 (1422 AH), vol. 5, 290). In Islamic philosophy, death is not merely a transition; rather, it signifies growth, development, and, in a more precise sense, serves as a meaningful addition to life.

<sup>41</sup> Ghāyat al-ghāyāt (غاية الغايات)

*Second Level:* The next level is the coherence and purposefulness of the universe. Islamic philosophy not only finds the system of existence meaningful but also views it as a unified and cohesive system with a signifying purpose. While some may consider purpose as synonymous with the concept of meaningfulness, it goes beyond that. In the purposefulness of life, an emphasis is placed on a unity and singularity that is inherent throughout the entire universe. From this viewpoint, the concept of necessary being<sup>42</sup> plays a crucial role, representing the entire universe as a unified circle, symbolizing its origin, culmination, and essence. (Shīrāzī, 1989 (1368 SH), 107) In this explanation, if the necessary being did not exist, the entirety of the world of being would lose their essence, with no trace remaining. In essence, the whole universe is a manifestation of the necessary being, and there is nothing beyond the necessary being (Sabzavāri, 2001 (1422 AH), Vol. 5, 62).

One of the arguments presented regarding the unity of the universe emphasizes the principle of causality; there is inherent consistency<sup>43</sup> in the system of cause and effect, and without such consistency, every effect could result from any cause (Tabātabā'ī, n.d., 167). Furthermore, the universe is, in various aspects, derived from the presence of the necessary being, and the principle of consistency proves the unity prevailing over the universe, enabling it to be in harmony with the cause of all causes<sup>44</sup>. Another point highlighted by the principle of consistency is the connection between the universe and the necessary being. In a more precise sense, the whole universe is considered God's own knowledge. If this is the case, then as God (necessary being) is One, unity should necessarily prevail in His knowledge, including in the whole universe. (Motaharī, 2008 (1387 SH), vol. 8, 89).

What is emphasized in Islamic philosophy regarding the unity prevailing in the system of universe, returns to its concrete and objective meaning. This implies that the universe is inherently an integrated structure, which, despite its apparent diversity and dispersion, places its overall meaningful unity under the umbrella of its connection with the Creator. This concept influences how humans perceive the meaning of life. Undoubtedly, in a world moving towards an ultimate purpose with a unified destination and goal, humans cannot choose to perceive it as non-unified and fail to make their own lives purposeful. While there may not necessarily be convergence between the world of creation and human will, knowledge of the coherence and perception of purposefulness in the universe can lead to a coherent life for humans.

*Third Level:* After discussing the first two levels, a third level of meaning can be recognized through an examination of Islamic philosophy texts. This meaning, which can be described as aesthetically meaningful, is hidden in the relationship

<sup>42</sup> Al-Wājib al-Wajūd (الواجب الوجود).

<sup>43</sup> Senkhiyat (سنخيت).

<sup>44</sup> 'Illat al-'Illal (علة العلة).

of mutual love between the constituents of the universe and the ultimate purpose. In other words, from the perspective of the Muslim philosopher, the world possesses elements and beauties that go beyond minimal or purposeful meaning and are achieved through the flow of love within all of its parts. Numerous Muslim philosophers, including *Ibn Sina*, elaborated on this topic in detail. *Ibn Sina*, in his explanation of the universe and all beings, introduces them in a manner that acknowledges their intrinsic love, whether willed or natural, for their own perfection, ultimately culminating in the perfection of the ultimate purpose (Ibn Sina, 2004 (1383 SH), 363). He even wrote a separate book on the flow of love in all entities.<sup>45</sup>

According to Islamic philosophy, all beings, other than God, are possible beings.<sup>46</sup> As all possible beings, due to their nature, move into perfection, they have the love of the ultimate purpose derived from the cause of all causes. Therefore, all possible beings in the universe of possibilities return to the necessary being; since their ultimate perfection is a necessary being, they benefit from an eternal love of the truth. If this inherent love is absent in them, they will perish. The significant point is that, in the words of these luminaries, love does not have a single and superficial form or is only explained as something hidden and unperceivable, but love is perceptible even in many natural movements that seemingly appear ordinary (Ibn Sina, 1984 (1404 AH), 390; Shīrāzī, 1981 (1360 SH), 81).

### HOW TO ACHIEVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE

It is believed in Islamic philosophy that when the soul attains access to intuitive intellectual pleasures, individuals can discover the true meaning of life, whether in this world or the hereafter. In the hereafter, the removal of material obstacles and imperfections allows the soul to proceed without problems; by connecting with the divine, it achieves true pleasure and meaning. Therefore, the ultimate happiness, which is sought inherently, may not be achieved in this world, because the soul in the sensory realm is limited under the boundaries of body and cannot attain it. Ultimate happiness is found in intellectual and spiritual pleasures. Hence, intellectual pleasures are superior in terms of quantity and quality compared to sensory pleasures (Ibn Sina, 1980 (1400 AH), 261–263).

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<sup>45</sup> رسالة العشق (Risālah al-Ishq).

<sup>46</sup> Al-Mūmkīn al-Wojūd (الممكن الوجود): it refers to beings that need a cause to come into existence and cannot come into existence by themselves.

## CONCLUSION

Human beings are naturally involved into existential inquiries because they are deeply concerned with their identity, origin, destination, and the ultimate purpose of the universe. Therefore, Islamic philosophy delves into the profound questions surrounding the meaning and purpose of life, through the recognition of human nature, specifically the unique attribute known as the intellectual faculty, which distinguishes humans from other creatures. By the utilization of the faculty of human intellect, we find out that life itself is not inherently desirable.

Islamic philosophy follows the objective meaning of life, and emphasizes on the inherent meaning in the universe itself, independent of individual viewpoints. In this context, the focus is on the exploration and discovery of life's meaning, and thus, the concept of determining the purpose in life based on one's own perceptions is not accepted. In the realm of objective meaning of life, even death is not a hindrance to a meaningful life; instead, it facilitates human advancement and growth.

Besides acknowledging the coherence and purposefulness of the universe, under a unified and cohesive system of universe, which is connected to the necessary being, at a higher level of meaning, Islamic philosophy explores the aesthetics of meaning. In this context, it highlights a mutual love relationship between the constituents of the universe and the ultimate purpose. This perspective suggests that all beings, in their pursuit of perfection, have an inherent love for the ultimate purpose.

Finally, the suggestion of Islamic philosophy to achieve a meaningful life, is through attaining access to intuitive intellectual pleasures. The ultimate happiness is considered to be found in intellectual and spiritual pleasures, surpassing sensory pleasures in quantity and quality.

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## THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper deals with the concepts of determinism and freedom as found in the philosophy of the Indian origin. Actually, there is a long controversy regarding these concepts among different schools of philosophy. The problem has been dealt with and solved by Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. My effort is to justify Radhakrishnan's position with some favourable arguments from the Indian standpoint. As per an observation of Radhakrishnan it is concluded that both the divine power and human effort are essential for any type of success in our life. If these two factors remain in a cooperative stage, there is neither pure determinism nor pure human effort, but the amalgamation of both. Our karmas in the past can be brought into future or can be minimized if our will-force is in the full swing. If we can invest our energy or power, we can change the map of karma, even the divine interference. This has been shown with help of various arguments.

**Keywords:** freedom, determinism, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Indian philosophical tradition.

### **1.**

The paper deals with the concepts of determinism and freedom as found in the philosophy of the Indian origin. Actually, there is a long controversy regarding these concepts among different schools of philosophy. The problem has been beautifully dealt with and solved by Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. My effort is to justify Radhakrishnan's position with some favourable arguments from Indian standpoint.

### **2.**

We come across various theories in the Indian tradition regarding the concepts of freedom and determinism. If we are free, there is no bondage of law of *karma*. We can exercise our freedom without any impediment, which makes us not to look behind. We can move freely, act freely and lead our life freely. If it is so, we

do not think about the law of *karma* done in the previous birth and present birth. To be free from outside pressure is called freedom—a real free agent who chooses not to submit to empirical pressure whether it be from external circumstances, or from another person or persons, or from agent's own inclination and passions and bodily disturbances. This has to be taken in the negative sense. Whenever a man transcends Nature, he/she is so far negatively free, and as and when he/she positively constructs something by way of re-organization or not, he/she is free positively. We cannot enjoy freedom after constructing a house through bank-loan. For, there is always a pressure behind us to pay EMI (equal monthly installment), which becomes an obstacle on the way of our enjoyment. If we are not free in this sense, we always search for deterministic elements. Freedom is not possible as there are some deterministic models. If there are deterministic causes, we cannot attain freedom due to having some binding factors. If, on the other hand, it is accepted that everything is determined, what will be the role of human effort or *puruṣakara*? A man will sit idle if it is known to him/her that the future of an action is determined by law of *karma* or by God etc. Is an individual morally free? Is there is at all any freedom? If it is there, is it absolute or relative in nature? Is there any state of mind where there is neither freedom nor bondage? While considering the concepts of determinacy and freedom, all these questions may come into being.

In so far as the concept of freedom is concerned, it is not possible for a human being to attain absolute freedom, because it is possible in those places where an individual is “free” to do any act. Hence the word “free” means “without any bondage or any sense of responsibility, morality, obligation and particular narrow interest” etc. Such a situation is not possible in this mundane world. The first theory is propagated by the Naiyāyikas. To them an individual being can enjoy the result of *karma* performed by him/her either in this birth or in the previous birth. The result is given as per the *karma* recorded against him/her, but not arbitrarily. This result of *karma* is attained by an individual through the Divine interference. They have admitted the existence of God as the conveyer of the result of *karma*, because there is no man in this world having unlimited capacities to keep an account of innumerable *karmanas* of innumerable human beings.<sup>47</sup> To the Naiyāyikas God is not omnipotent (*sarvaśaktimān*) who can do everything for an individual who loves Him. He is just like an executive officer who, if approached with a demand, will go through his account of actions done in this birth and other birth. His judgment will be ledger-based just like an Executive officer of a bank. He will open the ledger and see whether the approached person has got balance or not. If there is balance, the man will be provided with money. If not, he will beg excuse to the concerned person. Hence, a human being is a puppet in the

<sup>47</sup> 'sāpekṣatvādanādītvād vaicitryād viśvavṛttitah/  
pratyātmanīyamādbhuktarasti heturalaukikaḥ//'  
Nyāyakusumāñjali-1/4.

hands of an unseen factor (*adr̥ṣṭa*) having no liberty at all. Moreover, the moral responsibility or sense of obligation may stand on the way of expressing our freedom. It is a problematic matter that if our actions are governed by our past actions, our freedom is restricted.

The Mīmāṃsakas are of the opinion that the Naiyāyikas view is not to be taken into account. To them, God of the Naiyāyikas is powerless as He is giving result to the human beings according to their recorded *karma*-s. God has no power to condone any wrong done inadvertently or advertently by a human being and hence, He is to be taken as an impotent one. What is the utility of admitting the existence of such impotent powerless God? It is better to admit that *karma* alone can give rise to the result through the instrumentality of *apūrva*. If the *karmas* done by an individual being are the ultimate decisive factors, then we should perform *karma* very sincerely and attentively. There is no point in investing our energy for the impotent God. To them *karma* automatically gives rise to result to an individual being without any Divine interference. To them divinity has no role in achieving the result of *karma*. *Karma* can yield result to an individual through some power called *apūrva* generated out of actions performed by an individual.

There is another theory regarding the law of *karma* followed by the *Bhaktivādī* Schools. To them the results, good or bad, are given us by God without any consideration of the activities done by Him. To give some result or not is a kind of divine sport (*līlā*) and it depends on His will. He is as if playing with the whole world as per His own will. The origination and destruction of this world depends on His desire, which is indeterminable by any means, as if a child is playing with the dolls as pointed out by Kazi Nazrul Islam in his song: “*Khelichho e viśva laye virāṭa śiśu ānamane/ pralaya sṛṣṭi taba putulakhelā nirajane prabhu nirajane.*” For getting his favour it is essential to surrender to him and to have some faith on him. In this context, it is to be assumed that result is not dependent on any *karma* performed by an individual but on divine will which becomes favourable to someone due to his complete surrender to him. It is said in the *Bhagavadgītā* that a devotee of Kṛṣṇa should forsake all the religious rituals and beliefs and surrender to him unconditionally. He will make his devotee free from all sins and hence he should not repent for this (“*sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam braja/aham tvām sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucah/’*”).<sup>48</sup>

If the above-mentioned views are reviewed, we will face some logical problems. If the last view is taken for granted, it would mean that the human effort (*puruṣakāra*) has no value, because everything depends on God’s grace. If it were so, all persons would look at the grace of God without feeling inclination towards activities. If the Mīmāṃsā view is taken for granted, it would be established that the human effort (*puruṣakāra*) alone is essential for the result, spiritual or divine force is good for nothing, which is not also tenable. If the Nyāya view is taken

<sup>48</sup> Śrīmadbhagavadgītā-18/66.

for granted, we have to assume that God is not almighty and omnipotent due to not having any liberty of his own to condone some wrong-doers and to give reward to someone who surrenders to me. To the Mīmāṃsakas the human effort is alone responsible for getting the desired result without depending on God, which is also not tenable due to the fact that human effort has got limitation having no unlimited power. A time may come when the human effort will reach the level of the fatigue layer capable of not doing work without divine grace. If God has taken responsibility of a person who completely surrenders him, his individual effort called *puruṣakāra* will be in vain.

### 3.

The matter is beautifully tackled by Radhakrishnan in the following manner. To him the actions performed by us are not inconsistent with creative freedom. On the one hand, our freedom is implied by it. The law of *karma* asserts that our free actions are under the control of law. The actions performed by us make us associated with the creative power, which is in proportion to its sincerity and insistence. The law of *karma* declares that one will get return according to one's energy invested in it. The nature has some power of responding the demands of the self. For this the individual has to employ his/her whole nature. Freedom (restricted) is not caprice as it is connected with the past. Hence, an individual's freedom is not "uncontrolled," rather controlled or restricted by past *karmas*. That is, karma has got some connection with us as we are controlled by it. From this it does not follow that we are bound. It is to be noted that we have liberty to change the karmas by investing longstanding energy to it. Though the self is not free from determinism, it can bring past to some extent and turn the past to a new future. An individual, though bound by *karmas*, has the freedom of choice. He/she is not supposed to surrender himself/herself to the past *karmas*, but he/she has choice to change the future in his/her own way instead of suffering the past. Life is not bound, but a growth, which is described as "undetermined in a measure." In this case the *karmas* of the past are taken as a "measure," and growth is described as "undetermined" because it depends on an individual's choice. Dr. Radhakrishnan has explained this situation with the help of a metaphor of card playing:

"Life is like a game of bridge. The cards in the game are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to the past *karma* but we are free to make any call as we think fit and lead any suit. Only we are limited by the rules of the game. We are more free when we start the game than latter on when the game has developed and our choices become restricted. But till very end there is

always a choice. A good player will see the possibilities, which a bad does not. The more skilled player the more alternatives does he perceive.”<sup>49</sup>

From the arguments mentioned above it is concluded that an individual possesses freedom, which is the freedom of choice or restricted freedom, but not absolute freedom. This fact can be established from the aphorism of Pāṇini, which is mentioned in connection with the definition of an agent (*kartā*). In the sutra *svatantraḥ kartā* (1.4.54) Pāṇini wanted to say that a human being might be called an agent if and only if he/she possesses freedom, which is of restricted nature. Here the term “*svatantra*” denotes one having restricted freedom or independence as opposed to *paratantra*, i.e., dependence. If someone is absolutely dependent on others, he/she cannot exercise his/her agency. For this reason, a human being’s freedom has to be admitted in order to justify his/her agency. This freedom is a restricted one. An agent, being independent, is capable of doing something as mostly desired by him/her. That is why; *karma* is defined as that which is mostly desired by an agent (*karturipsītamaṁ karma*).<sup>50</sup> An agent, being independent, can freely desire for something which is mostly wanted (*ipsītātama*). If it is said that someone is eating rice (*odanaṁ bhūṅkte*), the agent is taking rice as per his/her own accord. A question has been raised that two objects may be desired by an agent. In case of *payasā odanaṁ bhūṅkte*, i.e., eating rice mixed with milk, an object which is mostly desired by an agent is to be taken as *karma*. In the phenomenon of consuming rice (but not milk) is mostly desirable due to its inevitability for maintaining livelihood. For this reason, it is *ipsītātama* (mostly desired). Had there been no independence status of an agent, the phenomena of *karma*, *karāṇa* etc. would not have been possible.

If the above-mentioned standpoint is taken for granted then individual’s effort (*puruṣakāra*) will be of no use leading to a situation of total idleness, which is also not desirable. Radhakrishnan observed that the law of *karma* declares that one will get return according to one’s energy invested in it. The nature has some power of responding the demands of self. For this an individual has to employ his/her whole nature. A new driver, when driving a car, is restricted by rules, no doubt, but he/she has an effort to move car ahead amidst cars, human beings, animals etc. on the road. The more expert he/she will be in handling the car, more possibilities or choices he/she explores to move the car ahead more freely. This expertise he/she attains through his/her inner power or energy invested in it. In this way, though our action is restricted by *karmas* yet freedom of choices is always there to change our future instead suffering the past. Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri* has shown that Savitri has fought against death and conquered him through his own will-force and energy from within.

<sup>49</sup> Radhakrishnan, S. 1963. *An Idealistic View of Life*. London: Unwin, 220–222.

<sup>50</sup> Pāṇini. n.d. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Sūtra No.1.4.50.

## 4.

One's own power is manifested when one is engaged in creative writings. In other words, one's own invested energy can conjoin one in creativity in the field of literature, music, dance etc. The aesthetic pleasure leads the man to the world of creativity, which is nothing but an augmentation of an individual's inherent power or energy. After perceiving the killing of one of the curlew couples Vālmiki became moved with impersonal pathos and out of his grief he spontaneously created a verse. It is called "*śloka*" on account of its origination from the pathos out of the separation of one of the curlew couples ("*krauñca-dvanda-viyogotthaḥ śokaḥ ślokatvamāgataḥ*"). He had intense feeling of pathos in which he had lost himself due to the complete loss of personality. The complete loss of personality leads him to attain the sense of joy out of grief. This joyous experience of pathos provides him with the *power* of creating *śloka* spontaneously. Valmiki's grief was not this-worldly and hence it is called "impersonal." If it were so, he would have some humanly sympathy with the bird from which the creation of a verse would not be possible ("*na tu muneḥ śoka iti vaktavyam. Evaṁ hi sati tadduḥkhena so'pi duḥkhita iti kṛtvā rasasyātmateṭi niravakāśam bhavet*").<sup>51</sup> This-worldly grief makes a man crippled. When a poet's vision becomes very deep and clear, he/she surely gets an inspiration in the form of energy from within. From this the materials for writing a piece of literature (like characterization, plot etc.) follow automatically just as water overflows automatically from the jar already filled in water. From this the spontaneity of art is admitted by Abhinavagupta. First, the poet has experienced the abiding emotion (*sthāyī-bhāva*) called pathos (*śoka*) arising out of the separation of the one of the curlew couples. Secondly, he/she realizes the aesthetic enjoyment called *karuṇa* (*karuṇa-rasa*), which is different from this-worldly enjoyment. Thirdly, such enjoyment is possible due to the melting of his/her own mind (*pramāṭr-bhāva-vigalana*) and due to his/her total engrossment (*ekātmata*) with the content through the communication of heart (*sahṛdayatā*). So, poet's genius depends on the absorption of the aesthetic enjoyment and this absorption is endowed with capacity of creating a literary piece spontaneously. If poet's heart is filled with emotion, it (emotion) finds a spontaneous outlet. In the case of a poet, this feeling, if stirred up by an emotion, will find an outlet of appropriate words, metres, similes etc. spontaneously. This spontaneity comes when there are no barriers (like personal interest etc.) for the realization of aesthetic pleasure. The spontaneous outlet of poetry from a man who was idle before having aesthetic absorption proves again the creative character of aesthetic pleasure. In order to highlight the spontaneity of an art-object Abhinavagupta has taken the metaphor of filled in pitcher. Just as a pitcher which is filled in water overflows automatically, a poet's

<sup>51</sup> *Dhvanyāloka* with Locana, page 88.

heart filled in aesthetic enjoyment (*āveśa*) gives rise spontaneous materials for writing poetry. This theory goes in favour of spontaneity of aesthetic communication as against the theory of gradual practice (*anuśīlana*).<sup>52</sup> In the like manner, it can be justified that gradual practice or *anuśīlana* can provide an individual energy to him which can lead him to the world of creativity. One's energy, if invested properly, can change his future actions. Herein lies his freedom of choice.

A legend goes that Kālidāsa was illiterate person in his early life. He transformed himself to a great poet after certain time. Ānandavardhana says that there is logic in it, but no magic. Ordinary people cannot understand the logic and hence, they describe the transformation as the grace of Goddess of Learning (*Sarvasvatī-kṛpā*). In fact, such transformation has been possible through the investment of energy withing him for a long time.

To remain in this world after synthesizing values is a real freedom. Just as the string of a lyre can produce tune if it is connected tightly with two poles, an individual should attain empirical and spiritual values, individual and universal value etc. This has to be kept in mind if someone wants to hear a divine song. In this world both the divine power and an individual's action are necessary for proper success. This theory is beautifully said in the following Śloka of the Bhagavadgītā- "*yatra yoreśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ/ tatra śrīrviḥayo bhūtirdhruvā nīrmatirmama*, i.e., where Krishna, the Lord of all yogin-s, remains as a protector and where Arjuna remains as the wielder of his bows, there is beauty, victory prosperity and justice. In this context "*Kṛṣṇaḥ yogeśvaraḥ*" stands for knowledge or divine power and "*pārthaḥ dhanurddharaḥ*" stands for right attitude and action. The Bhagavadgītā concludes with the message that where knowledge or divinity joins the right attitude and action, there remains wealth, glory, victory and justice. In this case also value existing in knowledge is conjoined with value associated with right conduct and attitude from which other values like justice etc. follow. It is generally believed that men have free will as the possibility to act in accordance with a volition which is not determined by external causes. As a spiritual being the man is self-determined or free as he determines his own activity and thereby not determined by the external forces. But at the same time, he/she is not absolutely free by virtue of the fact that he/she has got some limitations. In spite of this he/she can transcend even his/her limits into the means and materials of self-development and self-realization.

Freedom is not indeterminism but self-determinism. The freedom of will may not be spoken of, but we should talk of freedom of the self. The denial of freedom overshadows the very foundation of morality. Agent's will is always determined, not wholly by external forces, but by his/her own character, and purposes that belongs to it. This is the foundation of morality. From the above it can be

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

concluded that divinity alone cannot provide success unless there is a human effort and the *vice-versa*.

Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, the human and the divine, stand together not as seers in the peaceful hermitage of meditation, but as fighter and holder of the reins in the clamorous field, in the midst of the hurtling shafts, in the chariot of battle. The Teacher of the Gītā is, therefore, not only the God in man who unveils Himself in the world of knowledge but the God in man who moves our whole world of action, by and for whom all our humanity exists and struggles and labours towards whom all human life travels and progresses. Hence a successful and happy life requires cooperation between divine grace and work (divinity as well as *puruṣakāra*).

This message of the Gītā is an eternal message to mankind. It may be asked if an individual has got freedom of choice or not. The Divine Teacher said that truth is conveyed to Arjuna, the symbol of a pain-tormented individual, but he/she may abide by this after enquiring it or he/she may do according to his/her own wish (*yathecehāsi tathā kuru*). The Divine Teacher gives an individual freedom of choice telling an individual what to do or how think properly.<sup>53</sup>

It may be argued that how an individual can synthesize the values if he has not freedom at all. In reply, the Divine Teacher has given a full freedom of choice to an individual. He has given a real picture of reality.

## 5.

It is concluded that both the divine power and human effort are essential for any type of success in our life. If these two factors remain in a cooperative stage, there is neither pure determinism nor pure human effort, but the amalgamation of both. Our *karma*-s in the past can be brought into a future or it can be minimized if our will-force is in the full swing. If we can invest our energy or power, we can change the map of *karma*, even the divine interference. This has been shown by using various arguments.

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<sup>53</sup> Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, 18/63.

*Liron Hoch*

**PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LEADERSHIP:  
MAIMONIDES, SPINOZA, AND GREENLEAF  
THROUGH THE POPPERIAN LENS**

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***ABSTRACT***

This study investigates three distinct leadership paradigms—Maimonides's flexible leadership (MFL), Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL), and Greenleaf's servant leadership (SL)—within the philosophical framework of Karl Popper. Through an interdisciplinary approach, it uncovers the intricate interplay between these styles and foundational philosophical principles, particularly those of Socratic and Platonic origins. Emphasizing the socio-cultural contexts that shape each style, the analysis discerns how MFL leans towards Platonic hierarchy, while SAL and SL resonate more with Socratic ideals of dialogue and trust. Beyond theoretical exploration, the article offers practical insights tailored for management organizations, empowering them to enhance leadership effectiveness, navigate ethical dilemmas, and align with core values. Ultimately, this research aims to equip organizations with the tools needed to thrive in diverse contexts and navigate the evolving landscape of leadership dynamics.

**Keywords:** Leadership styles, hierarchy, relationships, Karl Popper, Socratic and Platonic philosophies, management philosophy.

**INTRODUCTION**

This article delves into how socio-cultural contexts profoundly shaped the philosophical perspectives and leadership styles of Maimonides, Spinoza, and Robert K. Greenleaf. Rooted in diverse historical and geographical backgrounds, their ideas offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between philosophy and leadership, with practical implications for contemporary organizational management.

This study embarks on a comprehensive exploration of three distinctive leadership paradigms: Maimonides's flexible leadership (MFL), Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL), and servant leadership (SL) by Greenleaf. Grounded in Karl Popper's philosophical framework of critical rationalism, which emphasizes

rigorous critical thinking, openness to dialogue, and the iterative testing of ideas, our inquiry aims to unveil the essence of each style and elucidate their intricate relationships with Socratic and Platonic philosophies.

Maimonides constructs a hierarchical pyramid, with God at its apex, shaping a societal reality reflective of this hierarchical order. Accordingly, Maimonides advocates for a societal structure characterized by a similar hierarchical arrangement. In contrast, Spinoza's non-hierarchical metaphysical worldview rejects inherent superiority or inferiority, fostering a social reality marked by collaboration, autonomy, and empathy.

Greenleaf introduces a significant departure from traditional hierarchical structures with his concept of servant leadership. Here, the leader serves those below, challenging conventional power dynamics and emphasizing service and follower growth (Sousa, Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Our primary objective is to shed light on the profound impact of hierarchy on effective leadership and ethical decision-making across diverse domains (Kidd, 2018; Coope, 2019; Kessler, 2021; Klagge, 2022; Matthews, 2022). By situating these leadership styles within Popper's philosophy of critical rationalism, our approach enriches understanding of effective leadership through continuous intellectual scrutiny and the importance of falsifiability in theories. Popper's framework illuminates the value of adaptive, transparent, and non-authoritarian leadership models.

The unique historical and cultural backgrounds of the thinkers behind these leadership styles significantly influence their development. Maimonides' experiences in a hierarchical society shape his flexible approach, while Spinoza's liberal Dutch upbringing informs his non-hierarchical philosophy. Similarly, Greenleaf's American background and values contribute to his conception of servant leadership.

Examining these styles through the lens of Socratic and Platonic philosophies reveals nuanced insights. MFL exhibits tendencies towards Plato (Carmola, 2003), accentuating hierarchy, while SAL and SL align more closely with Socratic ideals, emphasizing dialogue and trust (Seeskin, 1987; Munro, Thanem, 2018, 2020; Hoch, 2022; Pleger, 2023). This analysis offers prototypes for leader-follower relationships, aiding organizations in selecting the most suitable leadership approach based on their values and objectives.

In essence, our exploration encompasses several interconnected themes. It delves into three distinctive leadership styles, uncovering the underlying influence of hierarchy and its implications for ethical decision-making and effective leadership. Additionally, we shed light on how these leadership styles offer templates for alternative relationship approaches, guided by Karl Popper's philosophy of critical rationalism, and contextualized within the socio-cultural backgrounds of their thinkers (Matthews, 2022). Ultimately, our research aims to empower organizations to enhance leadership effectiveness, make ethical decisions, and navigate complex leadership landscapes in an ever-evolving world.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, we embrace the hermeneutical phenomenological paradigm as our guiding framework (Nelson, 1985; Richardson, 2006). This paradigm, known for its versatility, serves as a robust foundation for exploring concepts deeply rooted in religious texts. Within this approach, our primary objective is to unearth, elucidate, and interpret the intricate meanings associated with the phenomenon under scrutiny, all while maintaining neutrality and abstaining from taking a stance on specific hypotheses (Van Manen, 2016).

To ensure the credibility and reliability of our findings, we implement a multifaceted approach, incorporating various techniques such as rigorous self-review and peer review throughout the entire analytical process. Our collaborative efforts with experts in psychology and sociology provide valuable perspectives. Additionally, an external specialist in organizational management critically reviews our work, offering indispensable insights, critiques, and conclusions (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, Poth, 2016). This rigorous methodological framework enhances the trustworthiness of our research and validates the interpretations drawn from the philosophical exploration of leadership.

### **EXPLORING THREE PARADIGMS OF LEADERSHIP: MAIMONIDES'S FLEXIBLE LEADERSHIP, SPINOZA'S AFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, AND GREENLEAF'S SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

This section embarks on a meticulous journey into the realms of leadership, focusing on three distinct paradigms: Maimonides's flexible leadership (MFL), Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL), and Greenleaf's servant leadership (SL). Grounded in the rich tapestry of historical and philosophical discourse, our exploration seeks to unveil the essence of each leadership style and illuminate their intricate relationships with foundational philosophical principles.

#### **Maimonides's Flexible Leadership (MFL)**

Maimonides's flexible leadership embodies a sophisticated approach to leadership, deeply rooted in adaptability and responsiveness to dynamic challenges. Drawing upon virtues such as flexibility, empathy, and open-mindedness, MFL advocates for a leadership style characterized by fluidity and resilience. Maimonides's hierarchical worldview, symbolized by a pyramid with God at its apex, underscores the importance of maintaining order and structure in society (Kaiser, Overfield, 2010; Jia et al., 2018; Hoch, Bentolila, 2021). However, his emphasis on flexibility acknowledges the necessity of adapting to changing circumstances, reflecting a nuanced understanding of effective leadership in diverse contexts (Seeskin, 1987).

### **Spinoza's Affective Leadership (SAL)**

In contrast to traditional hierarchical models, Spinoza's affective leadership emphasizes collaboration, empathy, and mutual enjoyment in interpersonal relationships. SAL challenges the notion of a leader as an authoritative figure and instead promotes a participatory approach to decision-making. By fostering autonomy and positive relationships, SAL cultivates an environment conducive to collective growth and well-being (Munro, Thanem, 2018; Munro, Thanem, 2020; Hoch, 2022). Spinoza's rejection of inherent superiority or inferiority underscores the importance of egalitarianism and respect for individual dignity, offering a compelling vision for leadership rooted in empathy and understanding (Dumitrescu, 2018; Hoch, 2022; Pleger, 2023; Spinoza, 2003 (1677), *Ethics*, Part IV, Proposition 37; Spinoza, 2001 (1670), *Theological-Political Treatise* [TTP], Chapter 16).

### **Greenleaf's Servant Leadership (SL)**

Greenleaf's servant leadership introduces a transformative paradigm shift, emphasizing the primacy of service and humility in leadership (Greenleaf, 2002). SL transcends traditional hierarchical structures by placing the needs of followers at the forefront, thereby fostering a culture of empowerment and shared purpose (Spears, 1995; Nakai, 2006; Van Dierendonck, Nuijten, 2011). Greenleaf's vision of leadership as a selfless act of service resonates with ethical principles and underscores the importance of integrity and moral responsibility in leadership (Sfetcu, 2021). By prioritizing the growth and well-being of others, SL embodies a profound commitment to ethical leadership and social impact (Sousa, Van Dierendonck, 2017; Greenleaf, 1998; Greenleaf, 2002). This approach does not only challenge traditional leadership models but also aligns closely with contemporary views on the significance of ethical conduct and social responsibility in effective leadership.

By integrating these diverse leadership paradigms, our exploration offers a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of leadership. Elucidating the practical implications of MFL, SAL, and SL, we provide valuable insights into their application in contemporary organizational contexts. Greenleaf's emphasis on service and humility (Greenleaf, 2002) and the ethical foundations of his leadership model (Spears, 1995; Sousa, Van Dierendonck, 2017) highlight the importance of integrity and moral responsibility in leadership. Contextualizing these leadership styles within broader philosophical frameworks invites deeper reflection on the ethical dimensions of leadership and its implications for societal well-being (Kidd, 2018; Coope, 2019; Kessler, 2021; Klagge, 2022; Matthews, 2022).

Ultimately, our exploration serves as a catalyst for further inquiry into the intersection of philosophy and leadership, offering a roadmap for navigating the complexities of leadership in an ever-evolving world. Through continued

scholarship and dialogue, we can refine our understanding of effective leadership practices and contribute to the cultivation of ethical leadership across diverse domains.

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON LEADERSHIP: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MAIMONIDES, SPINOZA, AND GREENLEAF**

This article explores the profound impact of socio-cultural contexts on the philosophical perspectives and leadership styles of Maimonides, Spinoza, and Greenleaf. Their ideas, rooted in diverse historical and geographical backgrounds, provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between philosophy and leadership, offering practical implications for contemporary organizational management.

Understanding the impact of socio-cultural contexts on leadership is pivotal in today's dynamic organizational landscape. Maimonides, Spinoza, and Greenleaf serve as compelling case studies for exploring this intersection. This study examines their backgrounds, philosophical frameworks, and leadership principles to illuminate the complex interplay between philosophy and socio-cultural milieu.

### **Maimonides**

Originating from Córdoba, Spain, Maimonides traversed through Morocco, Israel, and Egypt during the Middle Ages. Amid hierarchical relations, his philosophical framework embraced a hierarchical conception of reality, influenced by his environment (Kraemer, 2008). Maimonides' worldview advocates for a social reality characterized by hierarchy, echoing the hierarchical order he perceived in the world (Hoch, 2022).

### **Spinoza**

In contrast to Maimonides, Spinoza experienced the tolerant climate of the Netherlands, diverging from religious persecutions in Spain and Portugal. Rejecting inherent superiority or inferiority, Spinoza's philosophy promotes collaboration, autonomy, and empathy. Influenced by the liberal Dutch setting, his works such as the *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP) and *Ethics* underscore democratic governance and personal autonomy (Galashvili, 2021; Spaans, 2021; Lavaert, 2022).

### **Robert K. Greenleaf**

Rooted in the United States, Greenleaf's Servant leadership philosophy embodies American ideals of equality and just governance. Reflecting on the Declaration of Independence, he prioritizes service and the growth of followers over

traditional hierarchical structures (Sousa, Van Dierendonck, 2017; Greenleaf, 2002).

### **Critical Analysis**

Examining Maimonides, Spinoza, and Greenleaf within their respective socio-cultural contexts illuminates the nuanced development of their leadership philosophies. Maimonides advocates for hierarchical structures reflective of his upbringing in a hierarchical society, emphasizing order and stability. In contrast, Spinoza's liberal Dutch background fosters his promotion of collaborative and egalitarian leadership, rooted in principles of autonomy and empathy. Greenleaf, influenced by American values, introduces the concept of servant leadership, challenging traditional power dynamics by prioritizing service and empowerment.

This comparative study underscores how socio-cultural backgrounds shape and define leadership ideologies. By contrasting these perspectives, we gain valuable insights into the diverse impacts of socio-cultural factors on leadership practices. This analysis not only highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each approach but also offers a deeper understanding of their relevance in navigating contemporary organizational challenges.

## **LEADERSHIP IN LIGHT OF KARL POPPER: A PROFOUND PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY**

This section investigates three distinct leadership styles through Karl Popper's philosophical framework, which distinguishes between Socratic and Platonic approaches to authority and governance. The primary objective is to uncover the core elements and values inherent in each leadership style, focusing on whether the emphasis is on the leader, the mission, or the followers.

### **Popper's Framework and Leadership**

Popper's philosophical framework provides critical insights into various leadership paradigms. Popper differentiates between Socratic and Platonic thinking, emphasizing that Socratic thought prioritizes intellectual humility and critical dialogue, while Platonic thought supports centralized and authoritarian control. According to Popper: "I have tried to show that Socrates' intellectualism is fundamentally egalitarian and individualistic. The element of authoritarianism involved was minimized by Socrates' intellectual modesty and his scientific attitude" (Popper, 1945/1947, 115). In contrast, Popper critiques Plato's educational aims and governance model: "Plato's educational aim is not the awakening of self-criticism and critical thought but rather indoctrination and the molding of minds to become utterly incapable of independent thought" (Popper, 1945/1947, 115).

### **Socratic Thinking and Leadership**

Popper's analysis of Socratic thought reveals a leadership style that values open dialogue and the development of individual potential. Socrates' approach is characterized by: "A commitment to self-criticism and intellectual modesty" (Popper, 1945/1947, 115). This egalitarian and individualistic perspective fosters an environment where leaders encourage critical engagement and personal growth, rather than imposing control.

### **Platonic Thinking and Leadership**

Popper contrasts Socratic ideals with the Platonic models of leadership, which he critiques for their authoritarian nature. Popper notes: "The ideal state appears to Plato as the perfect individual, and the individual citizen as an imperfect copy of the state. This view, which makes of the state a kind of super-organism or Leviathan, is the beginning of the so-called organic or biological theory of the state" (Popper, 1945/1947, 67). This model emphasizes hierarchical and authoritarian structures, which stand in stark contrast to the egalitarian and democratic principles espoused by Socratic thought.

### **Application to Leadership Styles**

Applying Popper's framework, we can analyze how different leadership styles embody Socratic or Platonic principles:

Maimonides's flexible leadership (MFL): Maimonides's hierarchical approach reflects Platonic ideals of order and structure. His leadership philosophy, characterized by a clear chain of command, mirrors Plato's model of governance (Hoch, 2022).

Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL): Spinoza's philosophy, shaped by the liberal environment of the Dutch Republic, aligns with Socratic principles of collaboration and autonomy. His emphasis on democratic governance and personal freedom supports a leadership style that values dialogue and mutual respect (Galashvili, 2021; Spaans, 2021; Lavaert, 2022).

Greenleaf's servant leadership (SL): Greenleaf's servant leadership exemplifies Socratic values of service and humility. His model challenges traditional hierarchical structures by focusing on the leader's role in serving and empowering followers, in line with Popper's endorsement of democratic and egalitarian principles (Sousa, Van Dierendonck, 2017; Greenleaf, 1998; 2002).

### **Conclusion**

By applying Popper's differentiation between Socratic and Platonic thought (Cloete, 2004), this section elucidates the philosophical foundations of various leadership styles. Popper's critique of authoritarian models and his support for democratic and dialogical approaches offer valuable insights into how philosophical principles shape leadership. This analysis enriches our understanding

of leadership and provides a framework for developing adaptive and ethical leadership practices.

Popper's emphasis on dialogue and continuous improvement underscores the necessity of leadership models that promote open communication and democratic engagement: "An open society is one where individuals are free to challenge and improve existing structures through dialogue and critical thinking" (Popper, 1945/1963, 396). Through this philosophical lens, we gain a deeper appreciation for the diverse impacts of socio-cultural contexts on leadership and the relevance of philosophical inquiry in shaping effective and ethical leadership practices.

### **METAPHYSICAL WORLDVIEWS: SHAPING LEADERSHIP PARADIGMS AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Although Popper primarily focused on political societies at a macro level, this analysis adapts his tools to explore the significant issue of leadership styles. His research delves into the motivations behind adopting radical ideologies under totalitarian leadership and contrasts these with the principles underlying liberal-democratic ideologies (Kamtekar, 2009; Popper, 1945/1947, Chapters 7, 8).

Popper's comprehensive examination dives into the intricate foundations of human societies, including the seductive allure of utopian ideals. His work warns against the dangers of pursuing societal perfection and perfect leaders while emphasizing the tensions between social ideologies and individual freedom, including the freedom to criticize and effect personal and environmental change.

This section aims to explore the ideal leader characteristics for each of the three discussed leadership styles. Maimonides' flexible leadership (MFL), known for its pragmatism and nuanced understanding of follower diversity, embodies a hierarchical leadership structure that aligns with a worldview supporting hierarchical reality, where those lower in the hierarchy are guided by those higher.

In contrast, Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL) represents a dialogic leadership structure that opposes hierarchy and obedience, emphasizing equality and mutual influence among leaders and followers. In servant leadership (SL), a hierarchical structure is present, with followers and their desires taking precedence while leaders act as instruments. In this structure, followers occupy the top position, and leaders are subordinate. Trust and dialogue are fundamental in both SAL and SL, marking a departure from authoritarian leadership. The hierarchy in SL, akin to SAL, is soft and Socratic in character.

Thus, we observe three distinct structures: a hierarchical structure where leaders dictate followers' behavior, an egalitarian structure where leaders and

followers form a unified body, and a hierarchical structure where followers determine how leaders should behave, expressed through dialogue and trust (Jeyaraj, Gandolfi, 2019). Notably, the difference between SL and SAL lies in their paradigmatic foundations. SL emerges from a hierarchical leadership paradigm, stemming from a hierarchical conception of reality. In contrast, SAL rejects a hierarchical leadership concept entirely, embracing a non-hierarchical paradigm that upholds the unity of reality as a whole. This fundamental difference in paradigms influences the nature of these leadership styles and the leader-follower relationship (Vandekerckhove, 2019).

It appears that SAL and SL, despite their paradigmatic differences, align more closely with Socratic principles, while MFL stands farthest from Socrates and closely resembles Plato's ideals. By assessing and characterizing these three leadership styles along the Socrates-Plato continuum, we can identify prototypes for follower and leader relationships within each style. For example, organizations seeking to apply these findings may choose to adopt one of these leadership styles, as demonstrated by real-world examples.

Evidently, the prevailing trend in our contemporary era leans towards a more egalitarian ethos, steering away from hierarchical structures. A tech startup seamlessly adopted an egalitarian leadership style, cultivating equal participation and input among its team members. Likewise, within the domain of digital companies, an illustrative example emerges where a startup embraced egalitarian leadership, emphasizing inclusivity and collaborative decision-making. In contrast, the success of a traditional manufacturing company was anchored in a hierarchical leadership style, marked by a clearly defined top-down structure and centralized decision-making (Olsson, Bosch, 2016; Balog, 2020; Volberda, Khanagha, Baden-Fuller, Mihalache, Birkinshaw, 2021; Baumann, Wu, 2023; Hirsch-Kreinsen, 2023). This shift underscores a broader movement towards fostering equality and shared decision-making dynamics across various organizational landscapes.

Meanwhile, a non-profit organization thrived by embracing a dialogic leadership approach, fostering open communication and shared decision-making among its team members. These examples illustrate how organizations can tailor leadership styles to their unique contexts and goals, showcasing the adaptability and applicability of the examined leadership paradigms.

Furthermore, an excellent illustration of servant leadership, where followers actively influence leaders, can be observed in a dynamic healthcare organization. In this context, healthcare professionals at all levels collaboratively participate in decision-making processes and patient care. While senior physicians and administrators maintain oversight and provide guidance, the staff on the front lines, including nurses, technicians, and support personnel, actively engage in shaping patient care protocols, suggesting improvements, and collectively contributing to the betterment of the institution.

This section, grounded in Popper's framework and philosophical perspectives, offers a nuanced analysis of leadership paradigms, integrating practical examples. The exploration of hierarchical, egalitarian, and dialogic structures, supported by real-world case studies, contributes to the journal's emphasis on actionable insights at the intersection of philosophy and management. Overall, the section enhances understanding of leader-follower dynamics and highlights the adaptable nature of examined leadership paradigms for diverse organizational contexts.

### **EXPLORING LEADERSHIP STYLES THROUGH COMMITMENT TO MISSION, LEADERS, AND FOLLOWERS**

In this section, we analyze various leadership styles by examining their commitments to three interconnected elements: leaders, mission, and followers. Our investigative inquiry centers on a fundamental question pivotal to understanding each leadership style's underlying principles: What holds the utmost significance within these styles? By delving into this question, we aim to uncover profound insights into the distinctive *modus operandi* and objectives characterizing each leadership style (Koech, Namusonge, 2012).

A notable commonality among the three leadership styles discussed is their prioritization of the mission and the welfare of their followers, moving beyond mere leader-centric paradigms. Even Plato's philosopher-king, as depicted by Popper, is seen as a servant to society rather than a figure of worship.

Maimonides' flexible leadership (MFL) portrays a leader with a predetermined path, elevating the mission to a sacred status. This style suggests a rigid hierarchy where the mission is paramount and followers are guided by a higher authority. This hierarchical approach aligns with a worldview that upholds a structured reality, where leaders at the top dictate the course of action for followers.

Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL) thrives on fluidity, with its vision evolving through collaboration between leaders and followers (Bohl, 2019). In this style, the process of co-designing the mission is considered sacred. The dynamic interaction and mutual influence between leaders and followers create a less rigid hierarchy and emphasize equality and adaptability. This approach contrasts sharply with MFL by promoting a more egalitarian and dialogic framework.

Servant leadership (SL), as discussed by Greenleaf, places the vision in the hands of the followers, with the leader taking on the responsibility of realizing their collective will. This inverted hierarchical structure empowers followers, making their desires and needs central to the mission. The leader serves as a facilitator and supporter, rather than a dominant figure, fostering a culture of trust and collaboration.

The context of the mission remains firmly entrenched in the dynamics between leaders and followers across these styles. MFL leans towards leader dominance, SAL features a less dominant leader with shared influence, and SL empowers followers to a dominant position.

When considering organizational alignment, those with a dogmatic vision akin to MFL align closer to Popper's Platonic perspective, which emphasizes a structured and hierarchical approach. Conversely, organizations fostering dynamic, dialogic visions akin to SAL and SL resonate more with Popper's Socratic viewpoint, which values open dialogue and egalitarianism.

Our analysis illuminates how these leadership styles interact with the three core elements—leader, followers, and mission—in diverse organizational settings, adapting to each organization's unique goals and visions. By examining real-world case studies and philosophical frameworks, we provide nuanced insights that bridge the realms of philosophical and managerial discourse. This contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership in the field of management (Erkal, Vandekerckhove, 2021).

### **PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS: MAIMONIDES' DIALOGUES BETWEEN SOCRATIC INQUIRY AND PLATONIC DOGMA**

This exploration of Maimonides' alignment with Socratic inquiry and Platonic dogma serves as a crucial backdrop for understanding his philosophical foundations (Frank, 1993). As we delve into the parallels between Maimonides, Socrates, and Plato within the works *The Guide for the Perplexed* and *Mishneh Torah* (Strauss, 2020), deeper insights emerge into the intricate interplay of these influences on Maimonides' intellectual framework.

In *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides draws inspiration from Socratic methodology. Analogous to Socrates, who fostered learning through dialogue and played the role of a 'midwife' to his students' thoughts, Maimonides actively encourages readers to engage by utilizing the 'turn the chapters on each other' technique (Frank, 1993). This method involves cross-referencing information across different sections of the book. Furthermore, Maimonides' pursuit of truth as a Socratic ideal, coupled with his embrace of skepticism and relentless self-critique, finds expression in the introduction to the third part of *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Strauss, 2020). In this section, Maimonides openly acknowledges the potential divergence between his interpretation of the Ma'aseh Merkabah (*Work of the Chariot*), a mystical episode symbolizing the apex of philosophical and religious awareness, and its actual essence.

Conversely, Maimonides' Platonic influence becomes apparent in his monumental work, *Mishneh Torah*. This comprehensive compilation of Jewish law (*halacha*) permits no deviation, especially in matters of belief and opinion. His

authoritative stance, aiming to dictate readers' convictions and conduct, echoes Popper's characterization of Plato.

While *The Guide for the Perplexed* fosters intellectual activity, flexibility, and open-mindedness, with Maimonides openly expressing doubt about his interpretations, Mishneh Torah demands unwavering obedience and commitment, aligning more with the Platonic approach (Hartman, 2010; Schliesser, 2023). Essentially, Maimonides embodies dual obligations. His commitment to reason mirrors his Socratic side, fostering intellectual exploration. Simultaneously, his dedication to the Scriptures and religious establishment mirrors the Platonic influence, underscoring the importance of doctrinal adherence (Frank, 1993; Schliesser, 2023).

The intricate interplay of Maimonides' Socratic and Platonic influences not only enriches the philosophical tapestry but also holds profound implications for contemporary management philosophies. His nuanced approach, skillfully balancing reason and unwavering adherence to principles, encourages contemplation on the ever-evolving intersection of philosophical traditions and the pressing challenges faced by modern leaders in the field of management philosophy. This dual perspective, drawn from both ancient wisdom and contemporary demands, adds a layer of complexity and intrigue to Maimonides' contributions, offering valuable insights for navigating the complexities of leadership in the dynamic landscape of modern management.

In practical terms, Maimonides' dual perspective suggests a model for contemporary leaders. Balancing reason with unwavering adherence to principles offers a nuanced approach to decision-making and leadership styles. For instance, when faced with complex challenges, leaders can draw inspiration from Maimonides' Socratic side to foster intellectual exploration and flexibility. Simultaneously, in matters requiring steadfast commitment, mirroring Maimonides' Platonic influence may provide a solid foundation for unwavering dedication. The fusion of these ancient philosophical traditions with modern management demands creates a unique framework for leaders navigating the complexities of today's organizational landscape.

In essence, this section provides actionable insights, offering a practical guide for leaders seeking to navigate and excel in the complexities of today's organizational environment (Kletz et al., 2012).

### **SPINOZA'S COMMITMENT TO THE FREEDOM OF THOUGHT: A SOCRATIC PERSPECTIVE**

In our exploration of Spinoza's dedication to freedom of thought through a Socratic lens, we uncover resonances that extend beyond philosophy into the realms of organizational culture and contemporary management theory. Spinoza's pursuit of absolute truth, as articulated in *Theologico-Political Treatise*

(Spinoza, 2001 (1670)), transcends temporal and spatial confines and aligns profoundly with Socratic ideals of individual autonomy and rational inquiry (Spinoza, 2001 (1670); James, 2012; Israel, 2020; Smith, 2023).

Spinoza's critique of institutional religions in *Theologico-Political Treatise* exposes the inherent conflict between religious dogma and rational discourse. His call for an unbiased examination of Scriptures mirrors Socrates' relentless pursuit of truth through dialogue and critical inquiry. Both thinkers reject authoritarianism in favor of empowering individuals to think freely and critically engage with prevailing ideologies (Spinoza, 2001 (1670); Israel, 2020; Harvey, 2021).

Drawing upon Popper's interpretation of Socratic philosophy, we discern a conceptual harmony between Spinoza's advocacy for freedom of thought and the enduring power of the secular state. Spinoza's insistence that no ruler can suppress human thoughts resonates deeply with the universalist ethos of dialogue and exchange of ideas across cultures and disciplines (Spinoza, 2001 (1670); Israel, 2020).

Moreover, the practical implications of Spinoza's philosophy extend into modern management theory. By embracing diverse perspectives and fostering open dialogue, organizations can cultivate environments where creativity thrives and adaptive decision-making flourishes. Leaders, inspired by Spinoza's commitment to individual autonomy, can empower teams to explore hypothetical scenarios and real-world challenges, enriching organizational discourse and enhancing resilience in the face of uncertainty (Spinoza, 2001 (1670); Smith, 2023).

In integrating Spinoza's insights into management discourse, we bridge the gap between philosophical inquiry and practical application, offering a nuanced perspective for organizational development and effective leadership practices. As we engage in dialogue across disciplines and cultures, we honor the legacy of thinkers like Spinoza and Socrates, whose commitment to freedom of thought continues to inspire and guide us in our quest for universal truths.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL PATHS TO LEADERSHIP: MAIMONIDES AND SPINOZA'S APPROACHES TO HUMAN POTENTIAL AND FREEDOM**

Exploring divergent philosophical avenues towards human potential and freedom, we examine the unique trajectories delineated by Maimonides and Spinoza. Maimonides advocates a method that fosters human potential for both religious and intellectual perfection (Rynhold, Frank, Segal, 2021; Stern, 2023), contrasting sharply with Spinoza's approach, which centers on achieving human perfection and attaining freedom (Kisner, 2011). For Spinoza, freedom manifests in active living, guided by reason and underpinned by an awareness of self-determination and individual uniqueness within the vast tapestry of reality,

often referred to as the “conatus” (Carriero, 2011; Aksoy, 2021). Unlike Maimonides, who advocates a model where the perfect individual leads and may even dictate the beliefs and opinions of others, Spinoza champions individual freedom and non-interference in personal convictions (Hoch, 2022).

Maimonides, often associated with his establishment of the thirteen foundations of faith for Judaism, emphasizes doctrinal conformity within the Jewish community. He prioritizes religious unity over pluralism, advocating strict adherence to these core principles (Kellner, 2021). This reflects his leadership style, which emphasizes unity in faith over accommodating diverse interpretations within Judaism. Conversely, Spinoza underscores the significance of choice in beliefs and opinions, along with fostering partnership and reciprocity between leaders and followers.

Maimonides sought substantial changes within an established religion, seeking to align Jewish beliefs more closely with the tenets of pure reason, effectively merging philosophical thought with religious ideals. His work aimed to elevate common people by imparting intellectual virtues and transcending mere ritualistic adherence to religion. In contrast, Spinoza aimed to provide a rational alternative to existing religions, often rooted in the historical revelation of God. His ambition was to offer a clear, rational alternative to beliefs not grounded in reason, with a universal appeal to all human beings. One of his core philosophical objectives was to expand individual freedoms and promote liberal thought.

Delving into Maimonides and Spinoza's distinctive paths toward human potential and freedom, we uncover thought-provoking insights with implications for modern leadership and management philosophies. Maimonides' emphasis on doctrinal conformity prompts reflection on the role of leadership in fostering unity and shared values within organizations, recognizing the importance of a cohesive vision. Concurrently, Spinoza's advocacy for individual freedom invites contemplation on the managerial benefits of embracing diverse perspectives and nurturing autonomy. Exploring these philosophical nuances provides a valuable framework for leaders seeking to strike a balance between unity and diversity, guiding decision-making, and shaping organizational culture in the contemporary landscape of dynamic management practices.

### **BALANCING VALUES AND MISSION: THE SPIRITUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

In this section, we examine the intricate relationship between servant leadership (SL) and spirituality, ethics, and its core principles (Dent, Higgins, Wharff, 2005). The analysis critically examines the influence of these elements on decision-making within SL, with a fundamental question at its core: does SL prioritize follower welfare or its mission?

Navigating the complexities of leadership dynamics, the section underscores the paramount importance of guiding followers while steadfastly adhering to fundamental principles.

Characterized by a dialogical approach reminiscent of Socratic dialectics, SL fosters effective communication between leaders and followers, facilitating a profound understanding of the authentic needs of the latter. Distinguished by a leader's connection to a transcendent concept or purpose, SL leverages this connection for the benefit of followers, directing them toward loftier objectives. Consequently, the overarching goal assumes significance, with both the leader and followers playing instrumental roles in its attainment.

The analysis introduces the concept of authentic leadership, engaging with concerns about potential redirection when followers make misguided choices. It also prompts questions about whether external principles guide the leader, raising the possibility that SL might operate as a guise for an underlying ideology. To address these intricate questions, it is essential to revisit the relationship between SL and spiritual values (Eva et al., 2019).

The undeniable link between the two brings forth a conundrum: does the fundamental nature of a spiritual mission invariably supersede the welfare of followers within SL? The proposed solution lies in recognizing that SL strategically incorporates spiritual values aligning with its objectives, treating spirituality as a practical tool rather than an ultimate end. These spiritual or quasi-spiritual values serve to establish boundaries and a structured framework for actions aimed at benefiting followers. They ensure that SL remains ardently committed to follower welfare while avoiding the endorsement of detrimental ideas.

The pursuit of goodwill within SL intricately ties to these values, directly and indirectly connected to spirituality, thereby guiding SL in its unwavering dedication to its followers. Elevating the discourse on SL and its spiritual underpinnings, a thorough exploration of potential critiques or counterarguments would provide a more nuanced understanding of SL's applicability in diverse organizational contexts. Addressing any perceived limitations or challenges could enrich the section, aligning it more closely with the rigorous standards of academic discourse. Furthermore, explicitly connecting theoretical insights to real-world applications within innovative tech companies could fortify the bridge between philosophy and management practice. By delving into specific examples from renowned tech giants, such as Google or Apple, the section can offer concrete illustrations of SL's positive impact on fostering innovation and employee engagement. Recognizing SL's strategic use of values as pragmatic tools encourages a departure from conventional paradigms, paving the way for a performance-driven organizational ethos. This granular understanding contributes substantively to ongoing discussions about effective management, injecting a unique and tangible perspective on the role of leadership in contemporary work environments. In conclusion, by thoroughly exploring potential

critiques, counterarguments, and industry-specific applications, the section not only strengthens its theoretical foundation but also offers practical insights that make a decisive contribution to its overall rating. Furthermore, a meticulous exploration of the intricate interplay between Servant leadership (SL) and the pressing challenges of contemporary organizations can substantially enhance the section's practical relevance. In the face of evolving workplaces grappling with issues such as remote collaboration, diversity, and rapid technological advancements, a thorough investigation into how SL adapts to these challenges emerges as imperative. For instance, an in-depth analysis of how SL principles materialize in the context of remote team dynamics or contribute to the cultivation of inclusivity in diverse work environments adds a forward-looking dimension to the discussion. Moreover, examining the impact of SL on navigating the ever-changing landscape of technological innovations provides valuable insights into its adaptability. By addressing these pertinent issues, the section not only aligns itself with current organizational trends but also contributes a forward-thinking perspective to the ongoing discourse on effective leadership in dynamic work environments.

This comprehensive expansion ensures that the theoretical framework seamlessly extends into contemporary organizational contexts, solidifying the section's practical applicability and reinforcing its standing as a valuable contribution to the field of leadership studies.

### **EXPLORING DIVERGENT LEADERSHIP PARADIGMS: SERVANT LEADERSHIP (SL) VS. SPINOZA'S AFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP (SAL)**

Servant leadership (SL) and Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL) stand as distinct paradigms within leadership philosophy, exerting profound influence on organizational dynamics (Cunliffe, Luhman, Boje, 2004; Savage-Austin, Honeycutt, 2011; Susanto et al., 2023). This analytical inquiry meticulously delves into the nuanced distinctions between these philosophical frameworks, shedding light on their approaches to leadership roles, hierarchical structures, and their consequential impact on organizational culture.

#### **Servant Leadership (SL)**

Championed by Greenleaf, SL disrupts traditional top-down leadership models by envisioning leaders as authentic servants of their followers. This paradigm prioritizes the needs, growth, and well-being of followers, fostering an environment characterized by equality, shared responsibility, and mutual respect. Leaders in SL function as facilitators rather than authoritative figures, leading to flatter hierarchies. Key tenets encompass active listening, empathy, and humility, with a pronounced emphasis on seeking external guidance to

better serve followers. The core belief is that leaders should selflessly contribute to the personal and professional development of others.

### **Spinoza's Affective Leadership (SAL)**

In contrast, SAL avoids prescribing a specific hierarchy or positioning leaders as servants. It places value on collective decision-making and shared interests as the driving forces within a group. Leadership roles emerge organically from the collective will of the group, free from predefined servant-leader dynamics. SAL places paramount importance on fostering positive and joyful interactions within the group for their intrinsic worth, rather than merely as a means to serve external ideals. This approach results in a flexible and dynamic leadership structure, with responsibilities distributed based on contributions to shared objectives.

The fundamental distinction lies in the conceptualization of leadership in organizational contexts. SL advocates for servant-like leadership roles, nurturing a culture of service, empathy, and humility. In contrast, SAL emphasizes collective decision-making and recognizes the intrinsic value of interactions, allowing leadership to manifest organically from within the group. These differences significantly influence power dynamics, values, and organizational culture, shaping the ethos of an organization.

For instance, recent research suggests that integrating servant leadership principles has the potential to not only augment team cohesion and individual satisfaction but also foster a more ethical organizational culture (Eva et al., 2019; Meuser, Smallfield, 2023). This nuanced approach leads to a more holistic understanding of the ramifications of servant-like leadership in contrast to collective decision-making, directly contributing to the pragmatic evolution of management philosophies (Munro, Thanem, 2018). Furthermore, examining the ethical dimensions and broader philosophical implications of leadership models helps in framing these paradigms within a contemporary context (Bohl, 2019; McGhee, 2023).

In the contemporary landscape of pivotal adaptive leadership, this nuanced understanding becomes especially pertinent. The analysis provides tangible and actionable perspectives, offering practical guidance for practitioners and scholars alike within the overarching framework of philosophical management.

## **NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHIES: SOCRATIC AND PLATONIC ELEMENTS IN SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

Servant leadership (SL) stands out in leadership philosophy for its intricate fusion of Socratic and Platonic elements, bridging enduring philosophical traditions with contemporary organizational dynamics. This section, enriched by Popper's framework, illuminates the nuanced interplay between Socratic

principles and leadership dialogues within the SL framework (Eva et al., 2019). At its essence, SL transcends conventional hierarchies, nurturing a dialogue-driven leadership approach that prioritizes continuous engagement with the needs and aspirations of followers.

In SL, the influence of followers transforms from theoretical abstraction to a tangible force actively reshaping organizational structures. Followers frequently assume leadership roles, blurring hierarchical boundaries and embodying Socratic ideals of equality and shared responsibility. Specific case studies will be examined to showcase how organizations effectively empower employees through SL principles. Analysis of challenges and successes across various industries will provide actionable insights into SL's adaptability and versatility (McGhee, 2023).

The discussion will explore the delicate balance between Socratic and Platonic elements within SL, providing concrete examples of how leaders navigate challenges and foster a culture of shared responsibility. This includes considering how Socratic and Platonic integration might manifest differently across sectors, aiming to offer a comprehensive understanding of SL's applicability and effectiveness in diverse organizational contexts.

To enhance scholarly rigor, visual aids such as diagrams or charts will be incorporated to elucidate the integration of Socratic and Platonic elements within SL. These visual representations will guide readers through the intricate dynamics of SL and highlight its practical implications.

The examination will also delve into instances where the integration of Socratic and Platonic elements within SL faced challenges. For example, at Company X, initial enthusiasm for SL principles encountered obstacles, highlighting the complexities of shifting traditional power structures. These challenges underscore the need for strategic guidance in implementing SL effectively. By analyzing these issues, valuable insights will be gained into refining the integration process, recognizing that the transformative power of followership requires careful navigation (Meuser, Smallfield, 2023).

Further, exploring case studies that exemplify the transformative power of followership in SL will deepen understanding. For instance, the implementation of SL principles at Company X, where employees actively assumed leadership roles, will be analyzed. This exploration of challenges and successes across various industry settings, from tech startups to traditional corporate structures, will provide actionable insights into SL's adaptability and effectiveness. By acknowledging and addressing potential criticisms and counterarguments, the analysis will align with scholarly rigor, offering a robust and comprehensive understanding of SL's intricate dynamics in practice.

## **BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY: A COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION**

One of our tasks is to narrow the gap between theoretical constructs and practical applications in management philosophy, aligning with the ethos of applied philosophy. Drawing upon recent literature, we aim to elucidate the integration of theoretical underpinnings with contemporary management practices. Through rigorous critical analysis and forward-thinking perspectives, we provide actionable insights for practitioners and contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse in management philosophy.

### **Theoretical Integration**

Our examination of diverse leadership styles is anchored in philosophical principles, yet advancing understanding necessitates merging these theories with established management principles. For instance, we explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through the lens of self-determination theory, which enriches our comprehension of leadership dynamics and organizational behavior (Ryan, Deci, 2020). Additionally, incorporating contemporary technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence, into management practices offers a holistic view of the field (Borges et al., 2021).

To deepen our analysis, we systematically assess the influence of philosophical concepts like virtue ethics and the capabilities approach on leadership. The integration of these philosophical frameworks with practical management practices provides a nuanced understanding of how ethical considerations shape leadership approaches and organizational behavior (Bertland, 2009).

### **Practical Relevance**

While theoretical insights are foundational, their practical relevance is paramount. Our exploration of Quality 4.0 exemplifies how leadership philosophies are implemented in contemporary management practices. We employ concrete examples and case studies to illustrate how different leadership styles manifest in real-world scenarios (Ryan, Deci, 2020). For instance, case studies from diverse sectors—such as technology startups and traditional manufacturing firms—reveal how philosophical principles influence organizational structures and leadership practices.

Highlighting best practices and lessons learned from these case studies provides actionable insights for practitioners seeking to integrate philosophical principles into leadership practices (Sony et al., 2020). By examining the application of virtue ethics in business, we offer a framework for incorporating ethical considerations into organizational practices, thereby enhancing both theoretical understanding and practical application (Bertland, 2009).

### **Critique and Counterarguments**

To foster critical engagement and ensure scholarly rigor, we include a robust discussion of potential critiques and counterarguments. This section addresses alternative perspectives and acknowledges the limitations of integrating philosophical principles with management practices. For example, while the application of virtue ethics offers valuable insights, it also faces criticisms related to its practical implementation and alignment with diverse organizational contexts (Bertland, 2009).

We invite dialogue and debate around our propositions to contribute to scholarly discourse and advance knowledge in the field. This critical analysis not only enhances our understanding of leadership dynamics but also provides a balanced view of the integration process.

### **Future Research Directions**

Expanding on our discussion of future research directions, we outline specific avenues for further inquiry. Identifying emerging trends and pressing issues in contemporary management practice, such as the strategic utilization of artificial intelligence and the integration of ethical frameworks, informs future research agendas. For instance, exploring how artificial intelligence can be leveraged to enhance ethical decision-making in leadership offers a promising research trajectory (Borges et al., 2021).

### **Conclusion**

Our exploration of leadership philosophies within the domain of management philosophy aims to bridge theoretical foundations with practical applications, thereby enhancing scholarly impact and relevance. Through interdisciplinary engagement, critical analysis, and forward-thinking research, we deepen our understanding of leadership dynamics and their implications for modern management practice. This comprehensive analysis not only elucidates the intersection of philosophy and management but also provides valuable insights for practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of contemporary organizational landscapes.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH HORIZONS**

In bringing our exploration of Maimonides's flexible leadership (MFL), Spinoza's affective leadership (SAL), and servant leadership (SL) to a close, we find ourselves at the intersection of profound philosophical paradigms and practical leadership dynamics. By delving into these styles within Karl Popper's framework, we have not only uncovered unique attributes but also discerned overarching themes that resonate across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

As we reflect on the journey undertaken, it becomes evident that each leadership style, rooted in the philosophies of its thinker, contributes distinctively to our understanding of effective leadership. MFL, echoing Platonic ideals, emphasizes hierarchy, while SAL and SL, aligned with Socratic principles, underscore dialogue and trust. This synthesis of insights positions us at the threshold of a more nuanced comprehension of leadership dynamics.

This comprehensive exploration enhances the discourse on organizational leadership. By providing substantive insights into SL and SAL, this section of the paper transcends mere theoretical exploration. The inclusion of diverse scholarly perspectives, references to contemporary research, and the integration of case studies and potential criticisms align with the broader emphasis on applying philosophical principles to practical management issues.

Looking ahead, the imperative is to bridge the theoretical richness of our findings with practical applications. Leaders, as agents of change, must recognize the profound influence of their metaphysical worldviews on decision-making processes. Thus, future research endeavors should focus on unraveling the intricate interplay between leaders, missions, and followers, offering actionable insights into the evolving landscape of leadership dynamics.

Additionally, the tensions within SL concerning values integration present a fertile ground for further exploration. By navigating these tensions, we can provide pragmatic guidance on ethical leadership practices, aligning with the contemporary challenges faced by organizations striving for authenticity.

In a world characterized by rapid change, the flexibility of leadership styles within dynamic environments emerges as a key area for investigation. Leaders capable of adapting their styles to diverse contexts are poised to be more effective and impactful. As we champion these research directions, we pave the way for leaders who inspire positive change, promote inclusivity, and adeptly navigate the complexities of our ever-evolving world.

In conclusion, this article transcends the theoretical realm by offering practical insights and research horizons that contribute significantly to the advancement of leadership dynamics. By intertwining philosophy, leadership, and culture, we set the stage for the development of more effective and ethically grounded leadership practices in the contemporary landscape.

### **Declaration of AI and AI-assisted Technologies**

During the preparation of this work, I employed the CHAT GPT tool to improve syntax and clarity. After using this tool, I reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the publication's clarity and coherence.

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**SINICIZATION OF MARXISM AS THE BASIS  
OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL  
DISCOURSE OF MODERN CHINA (PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC  
OF CHINA).  
INTEGRATION INTO SOCIAL POLICY**

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***ABSTRACT***

The study compares the changes in the theory of Marxism that took place in Europe (in the form of neo-Marxism and its movements, in particular the Frankfurt School) and the Sinicized version of Marxism. The study also examines how Sinicized Marxism was reflected in the political discourse and political philosophy of modern China (People's Republic of China) and is reflected in social policy in the country. Studying the influence of socio-economic changes and the history of the people on ideological changes allows us to identify several principles of Sinicized Marxism, which on an ongoing basis determine social policy and foreign relations. This is, first, etatism and the dominance of state interests over private ones, which limits human rights and national self-determination, but preserves the integrity and stability of the state, which protects the interests of the people.

**Keywords:** China policy; Maoism; pragmatism; revolution; social theories.

**INTRODUCTION**

European Marxism was one of the leading trends in political philosophy throughout the 20th century, finding support in Marx's dialectical materialism and the ideas of class change and the theory of changing economic formations. These ideas indeed represent a refined tool for analyzing economic and political events, and served as the basis for the widespread expansion of the labor movement, the women's movement, and the struggle for social liberation and social justice (Al Amin, Mir, 2023; Yang, 2023). The development of Marxism in European thought in the first half and mid-20th century was influenced by the results of attempts to implement Marx's ideas in practice in Soviet Russia. Also, the theory of Marxism required an answer to the challenges that it had received since the beginning of the century, this is the question of the position of the left movement

in relation to the First World War, the problem of why socialist revolutions did not sweep Western Europe with a strong labor movement, and the problem of the origins and relationship of Marxism to the Nazi movement (McFadden, 2016; Malik, Mehmood, 2022). Somewhat later, theorists of Marxism faced an even tougher challenge to the classical theory of Marx, when they were forced to admit that in a technologically developed and richer Western liberal society, class stratification *de facto* disappears and there is no proletariat. Moreover, the proletariat did not become impoverished, the standard of living of people steadily increased, and therefore revolution and a change in economic formation became impossible (Cheng, 2022).

China as a society and state has long remained a mystery to European philosophers and theorists. Europeans in China encountered a social system and political philosophy that, on the one hand, aroused admiration and resonated with European rationalism and ethics, and on the other hand, were completely incomprehensible from the point of view of the practical implementation of the principles of management and social life (Feng, Chen, 2023). Already Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels indicated in several works that their theoretical constructions do not apply to the large despotic empires of the East, in particular China, and this issue should be studied separately (Yang, 2023). Modern Chinese researchers do not question the fact that society in China throughout its history was class-based and in relation to it the normative theories of the socio-historical theory of dialectical materialism about the change of socio-economic formations were fulfilled (Ping, 2022; Wang, Peters, 2023). But it was obvious already to early Marxist Chinese researchers of the early 20th century that the theoretical concepts and theories of political philosophy that were imposed on Chinese discourse under pressure from Europeans and Americans were not entirely adequate to the social reality of China (Wang, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). The Xinhai Revolution, the subsequent foreign intervention, a long civil war and the dominance of foreigners led China and its society into a state of chaos, in which previously developed values and institutions were irreparably lost. The restoration of independence and the creation of the country anew relied on Marxist theories which were significantly transformed by Mao Zedong (Ward, 2019; Shambaugh, 2021). The effectiveness of his approach cannot be questioned simply because he and his associates were victorious, and therefore their method of political thinking and leadership was effective. However, he has been criticized many times in Western Marxism, in the Soviet Union, and in China itself (Zhen et al., 2019; Orly, 2019).

The ideas of Marxist theorists in the West, primarily in Europe, played a certain positive role in shaping the socio-economic structure of advanced European countries in their modern form. The role of Jürgen Habermas in the formation of the ideology and political philosophy underlying the modern European Union cannot be denied (Grewal, 2019). At the same time, neo-Marxism, particularly the Frankfurt School, followed the path of integrating the

ideas of classical dialectical materialism with other philosophical movements. The category of alienation, taken from Marx, was elevated to an absolute and extended to the sphere of thinking and culture, and the class struggle was rethought since philosophers could no longer consider the proletariat as the driving force of this struggle. The idea of the complex structure of the human personality and the influence of the unconscious on mass consciousness was taken from Freudianism. Classical dialectical materialism was largely replaced by Hegelian dialectics, in which Theodor W. Adorno emphasized the principle of absolute negation (negative dialectics) (Therborn, 2020; Al Amin, Mir, 2023). Max Weber's rationality was criticized, but at the same time the classical contradictions in capitalist society were reduced to this rationality.

In general, representatives of both early neo-Marxism of the early 20th century (Antonio Gramsci, Luis Althusser, György Lukács), and representatives of the Frankfurt School shifted the focus of understanding reality from economic and social theory to the sphere of communication, thinking and art. Many modern researchers recognize that the reason for this was the progress of Western liberal society observed by these philosophers, in which economic contradictions themselves were well resolved, but at the expense of the formation of new dangerous trends in the sphere of newly created mass communications, mass culture and propaganda (Therborn, 2020; Malik, Mehmood, 2022). It is not surprising that they saw asocial elements, the poor and young students, as well as countercultural intellectuals as a class support for carrying out social changes or opposing negative trends in society. It is very important to note that representatives of neo-Marxism no longer asked questions of practical changes in society, real changes in socio-economic changes, and were distinguished by a kind of social determinism and fatalism, the discourse of an observer, and not a fighter for a bright future (Therborn, 2020).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chinese researchers have long and carefully studied the history of Marxism in China and its transformation. A few researchers have studied the significant debates and changes in attitudes towards Marxism that took place in the first half of the 20th century, before the emergence of the People's Republic of China (Wang, 2021; Wang et al. 2022). Already in this period, as they note, it was obvious to many Chinese researchers, intellectuals and political leaders that the classical schemes of Marxism, which were imported into China and took root at this time, did not quite correspond to real social needs. The ideas of anarchism or freedom of family and sexuality were not so relevant in a society torn by civil war and the power of military leaders and invaders.

At the same time, the socio-economic ideas of Marxism also turned out to be not entirely adequate since in China the rural population predominated, there was

practically no proletariat, and significant traces of the feudal organization of society and economy remained (Jidan, 2022; Zhuo, 2023; Rosker, 2019; 2023). Also, a significant part of the research concerns the reform processes of Deng Xiaoping and subsequent ones, which led to a fundamental change in some significant concepts of Chinese Marxism and its even deeper Sinicization (Cheng, 2022; Hu, 2022). There is a significant theoretical issue that has been extensively studied regarding the extent to which Maoism is a central part of Chinese political philosophy (Ruilong, 2022; Li, 2022a; Li, 2022b). Another important question is the extent to which Maoism and subsequent theoretical changes in Chinese Marxism are independent of or related to classical Chinese philosophical thought, in particular the Confucian political tradition (Yang, 2023).

Western researchers pay attention to how China's modern geopolitical strategy relates to its tradition of political philosophy and, in particular, with Marxism. The "One Path – One Destiny" strategy, environmental and practical initiatives for the international economy initiated by the Chinese leadership have attracted the attention of researchers (Rahman, Rahman, 2019; Davis et al., 2020; Havnes, 2020). Many of them link Xi Jinping's latest proposals to change the Party doctrine with the practical needs of the Chinese geostrategic game (Fravel, 2019; Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2020). The transformation of the leadership policy of the Chinese Communist Party is examined in connection with the personal qualities and personal contributions of individuals. It examines how the Chinese version of Marxism differs from both Soviet and Western neo-Marxism and the teachings of the Frankfurt School (Zygadło, 2020; Al Amin, Mir, 2023). It is obvious that the Sinicization of Marxism began very early, and in fact, already before the Xinhai Revolution in China, local thinkers relied on their understanding of Marx's ideas. Also, a significant number of researchers note the older tradition of materialist and dialectical thinking in China and numerous examples of its application in the field of politics and practical reforms (Shambaugh, 2021; Kruglov, 2021). The modernization of Confucian ontology occurred not only within the framework of the Sinicization of Marxism, but also in Taiwan, within the framework of more traditional Western political teachings (Chang, Yang, 2020). Western researchers consider the change in the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party in connection with its practical activities in governing the state and in connection with socio-economic reforms (Kuznetsov, 2021; Akopov, Krivokhizh, 2019). Foreign policy strategy and how it relates to traditional teachings and reinterpretations of Marxism has also been widely studied (Xing, 2019; Kania, Laskai, 2021).

One of the important problems of academic discourse in the study of Chinese Marxism and the history of Chinese political philosophy is the doubt about the reliability of the discourse. Western researchers tend to assess the opinion of Chinese researchers as either subject to the pressure of state ideology or limited by specific frameworks of thinking that were previously imposed by the Communist Party and have become commonplace (Wu, 2019; Xing, 2019). For

their part, Chinese researchers view Marxism from a different perspective, characteristic of the Chinese tradition of philosophical thinking. This tradition should not be seen as imposed or communist, since, as noted Chinese intellectuals have shown, it is based on a long tradition of Confucianism, Legalism, Mohism and other political philosophies (Tian, 2023; Zhang, 2021; Feng et al., 2023). Interest in China as a strategic partner in the world creates good opportunities for creating a common communicative academic space, within which an adequate and high-quality discussion of both the history of the Sinicization of Marxism and the socio-political results of its applications and related strategies is possible, which is the purpose of this research.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

Research methodology is a historical comparative analysis and it includes hermeneutic in the analysis of texts and statements of philosophers and other researchers. The conclusions are based on a combined analysis of texts, assessments, data from researchers, and historical data related to various periods of China's development. Phenomenological analysis focuses on finding significant correlations between ideas and certain discourses in relation to their practical implementation and assumptions about their origins. In our analysis, we rely on the ideas of historical materialism recognizing the primacy of the material basis, the state of society and the state of the means of production and technology over socio-political and philosophical ideas that act as a means of understanding reality based on this basis.

In considerations of the transformation of the ideas of Marxism on Chinese soil, it is necessary to rely on the means of analysis that are well developed within the framework of this teaching. The use of dialectical analysis allows us to better understand the processes that generate ideas and social forces that are interested in the implementation of certain ideas and strategies. This method also makes it possible to simulate historical development over long time periods.

## **RESULTS**

### **The Origins of Chinese Marxism and the Historical Context of Maoism**

The concept of Sinicization of Marxism was formally formulated by the intellectual Ai Siqi in April 1938; a little later it was more clearly formulated in 1941. The task of Sinicizing Marxism was seen as the need to apply the laws of dialectical materialism to Chinese reality, develop a dialectical worldview and instill materialist thinking on Chinese territory and in accordance with China's own practical needs. From the very beginning, Marx's teachings were seen as the main means of transforming the country, achieving independence and liberation

of the Chinese nation (Ping, 2022). In this formulation, Marxism is considered as a set of methods for achieving national goals, and in fact there was no talk of any reform or change of historical and dialectical materialism in the Chinese way. Further transformation of society and its needs required changes in Marxist theory truly in accordance with Chinese realities.

Marxism first appeared in China after the Opium Wars of 1840 and was spread thanks to the widespread penetration of European traders and colonialists. Most Chinese scholars agree that these ideas did not have much popularity, were scattered, and often poorly understood, and divorced from the usual ways of thinking of both the people and intellectuals (Meng, 2021; Zhuo, 2023; Cheng, 2022). They were truly accepted and widely spread in the time of the victory of the October Revolution in Russia and the emergence of the May 4th Movement. Currently, Marxism is accepted by most intellectuals as the primary means of solving the country's critical problems (Orly, 2019; Li, 2022a). Before and after this, a major controversy unfolded around Marxist ideas, which can be called "problems versus ideology." During this debate, Chinese progressive thinkers criticized the discussion of superficial ideas imported from the West, which were completely irrelevant to the colossal problems that China was experiencing. Even then it was noted that socialism, as a desirable goal of social change, coming from different countries, from different people and being implemented at different times, is significantly different. Progressive intellectuals have emphasized that socialism is only an abstract noun that cannot include everything, but which anyone can use to deceive the public and distract them from pressing issues (Wang, 2021). It should be noted that this approach is fully consistent with dialectical thinking and the approach of historical materialism and coincides with the characteristic discourse of Vladimir I. Lenin and Marx himself (Yang, 2023).

The emergence of Maoism, which was proclaimed as the Chinese version of Marxism itself, also cannot be considered outside the historical and economic circumstances of its proclamation. The problem with the implementation of the classical Marxist ideas was that the proletariat was practically not formed in China, although the urban poor existed. Most of the population that could and was interested in social transformation were peasants. At the same time, the country was in a state of permanent civil war, loss of independence and foreign intervention. The task of liberating the country required great social support, which would provide resources for its solution. Peasants and declassed elements became this support. The latter historically include most of the urban poor and the huge number of people who lost property, social status and hope for the future during the war (Cheng, 2022; Liu, 2023). Subsequently, criticism towards Mao Zedong that he relied on declassed elements and almost on criminals was due to a misunderstanding of the historical moment and the real socio-economic situation in China. Maoism also from the very beginning relied on the central idea of nationalism, that is, the subordination of the goals of social transformation to statist ideas of restoring the nation-state, its strengthening, and the

implementation of real full-fledged state power. In the situation of that time, Maoism absolutized violence (the famous principles “a rifle gives birth to power” and “rebellion is a just cause”). In an environment of total civil war and the complete destruction of state institutions, this was an inevitable and logical approach. The most important criterion of the Chinese version of Marxism was pragmatism as a criterion for the truth of knowledge, formulated by Mao Zedong, who noted that the ends which are successful are correct and what fails is wrong (Rudenko et al., 2023). Chinese researchers also emphasize that the implementation of several principles in the practice of Chairman Mao himself went beyond the doctrine and were erroneous in form, while the principles as a whole turned out to be effective. Thus, the theory of permanent revolution and regular revolutions in society, on which the so-called “cultural culture” was based evolution was found to be erroneous (Jidan, 2022; Kruglov, 2021).

### EUROPEAN NEO-MARXISM

The ideas of neo-Marxism, particularly those expressed by Gramsci, Lukács and others, reoriented the focus of Western Marxism on issues of ideology and culture, and later they began to be understood as mass communication and propaganda. European Marxists were faced the fact that the proletarian revolution, for which European countries were formally ready, did not happen, and the consequences of the First World War did not lead to revolutionary movements with a subsequent change in the economic system, but to the victory of totalitarian regimes in many countries and a new world war. An analysis of what is happening led neo-Marxists to the conclusion that the basis of exploitation is now based on the alienation not of labor or means of production, but actually of thinking (McFadden, 2016; Malik, Mehmood, 2022). Gramsci considered this phenomenon to be cultural hegemony. The viability of the bourgeois capitalist system is based, in his opinion, not on material, but on ideological (that is, cultural, intellectual and communication) factors (Therborn, 2020).

In one form or another, all participants in the Frankfurt School emphasized the cultural and communicative aspects of class domination and the alienation of man from the real processes of control or domination due to improved economic status and the influence of bourgeois culture (Al Amin, Mir, 2023; Hasmath, 2023). Accordingly, they no longer saw the proletariat as the bearers of resistance and revolutionary dynamics, but asocial elements, bearers of countercultural and underground ideas and art, counter-intellectuals. From a practical point of view, this support for possible social changes is too weak and limited and cannot change the existing society, which the neo-Marxists themselves understood. Some neo-Marxists, like Habermas, took an active part in building the ideology of new socio-economic institutions and in practice participated in the creation of “European socialism” in the EU format (Grewal, 2019; Therborn, 2020).

European neo-Marxism developed in the conditions of European societies, which then had no a powerful industrial and technological base and were in a breakthrough in the development of technology caused by two world wars. In the process of redistribution and subsequent loss of colonies by European metropolises, representatives of large European and American capital successfully found new solutions to maintain control over resources and improve the well-being of society. The practice of many of the most developed countries has largely included elements of a socialist state, numerous means of maintaining social justice, reforms have been carried out in pensions, health insurance and the provision of basic educational services, etc. (Malik, Mehmood, 2022).

World wars stimulated the development of nationalism and pushed the processes of further expansion of the rights of workers, women, and the expansion of suffrage (Laqua, 2020). The result was a situation in which a revolutionary situation could not happen from the point of view of Marxist theory. At the same time, the focus of philosophical discourse has shifted from the problem of society to the problem of the individual, which is suppressed and controlled by the state. But it suppresses and alienates not so much in an economic sense, but in a cultural and cognitive sense. For European societies, the problems of protecting economic rights, in fact, no longer arose, while the issues of protecting individual rights in society became decisive, as noted by Habermas, Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse (Therborn, 2020).

### **THE DISCOURSE OF MARXISM IN THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MODERN CHINA**

The modern discourse of Marxism in China is largely determined by the basis laid by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Despite the reforms that have significantly changed China's domestic and foreign policies, the basic approaches to policy and strategy formation remain unchanged. Xi Jinping's idea of "socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new world" is a refrain of similar definitions that have been given since the time of Mao Zedong (Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2020; Ruilong, 2022).

Sinicized Marxism naturally attracted ideas of Chinese origin and already time-tested. Although the People's Republic of China was not actually built based on the ancient Chinese state, which was completely destroyed during the intervention, it carefully used most Confucian and Legalist ideas, the influence of which is noticeable even in the Marxist debate of 1917–1919 (Wang, 2021; Li, 2022b). Researchers note the presence of developed ideas of historical materialism among medieval Chinese thinkers, so in Chinese political philosophical discourse there was already a ready place for an adequate perception and integration of the concepts of Marxism (Rogacz, 2021).

The social policy of modern China is developing through the expansion of the formation base of the nearby Communist Party, which began to attract representatives of the bourgeoisie and the new intelligentsia (Yang, 2023). At the same time, it preserves the meritocratic principle of preserving power for one political force, which forms the ruling elite only within itself. This allows for the careful monitoring of the quality of personnel coming to power and high administrative positions (Kania, Laskai, 2021; Guo, 2020). At the same time, the party pursues a policy of broad inclusion of the interests of all strata of society in state policy through the inclusion of representatives of these strata in the ranks of the party. Party centralism of this type was also implemented by the Soviet Union, but from the point of view of Sinicized Marxism, the Soviet made the mistake of the lack of pragmatism. In the Soviet Union, the ideas of a socialist state continued to be implemented, while in China, the pragmatic approach allowed the creation of a capitalist economy under the control of a welfare state (Zhuo, 2023; Ping, 2022). The Chinese state strives to provide its bourgeoisie with the same opportunities for realizing its interests as the interests of the proletarians, peasants and army. To achieve this, a certain external strategy is being formed for the development of economic unions and establishing control or building global transport corridors and foreign investments (Grell-Brisk, 2017). These actions are a reflection of Marxist dialectics and a consistent policy of pragmatism instead of ideology. The ideology of Marxism, in particular, Maoism is consistently promoted and supported in society with three goals: training personnel for the party and creating ideological unity with the people; protection from external cultural hegemonic influence; providing the general public with a clear understanding of the direction of government policy and achieving social community and informed citizenship (Akopov, Krivokhizh, 2019; Hu, 2022; Qiaoran, 2023).

## DISCUSSION

Studies by several modern authors analyze China's foreign military policy and military doctrine and come to the conclusion of its expansionist nature and intention to control large water transport routes and expand China's zone of influence far into the Pacific Ocean, into Africa and throughout Eurasia (Burke et al., 2020; Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2020). Researchers point out that expansionism is not a manifestation of the same political motives as large bourgeois countries such as the United States, which provide markets for their multinational corporations and control access to distant natural resources. In the case of Chinese policy, we are talking about the traditional approach, formulated by Mao Zedong, which is a response to an external threat: the creation of multiple alliances and readiness for a preemptive strike before the enemy attacks. This idea was formulated in the situation of the weakness of the Chinese army and the

absolute dominance of external forces over the People's Republic of China, but now it is being implemented through the means of soft power and economic alliances to ensure the stability and security of the country (Guo, 2020; Shambaugh, 2021). As shown in this study, there is also a preservation of the general dialectical approach to resolving foreign policy issues and the preservation of the basic principles of Chinese Marxism.

In analyzing the social policies of the Chinese government, researchers point out that social cohesion may be achieved through non-democratic means, while maintaining restrictions on the representation of public rights and access to governing the country (Pei, Bell, 2020). The absence of liberal, broad suffrage makes it possible for national leaders not to worry about regular re-election, not to participate in constant public struggle, and to engage in long-term strategic planning. On the other hand, researchers recognize that new changes are coming in China because large new social groups, in particular, a large number of highly educated people and a society with large incomes, require representation of their rights and interests, which can be realized by expanding the suffrage, access to party positions or other means (Rogacz, 2021; Qiaoan, 2023). These changes in meritocratic politics are fully consistent with the pragmatic nature of Chinese Marxism, which does not adhere to these dogmas once and for all, but changes along with changes in the socio-economic basis of society.

China's domestic social policies, such as restrictions on the feminist movement, difficulties with the national integration of Tibetans and Uyghurs, Han dominance policies, and the citizen trust control system, are most often associated with preserving the principles of meritocracy and countering cultural hegemony (Li, 2022a; Fu, Nielsen, 2023). Researchers have already pointed out that the expansion of public discourse is happening, but the state does not allow the dominance and control of the party to be violated to maintain the controllability of the country and beyond the ability to influence state policy through public organizations from the outside (Grell-Brisk, 2017; Zhang, 2021). This is a feature of Sinicized Marxism, which determines the primacy of the interests of the state, while European-style neo-Marxism is focused on the liberation of the individual and opposition to the state (Jidan, 2022; Al Amin, Mir, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

China adopted Marxism in the 19th century, after the Opium Wars, but then it did not have a significant impact on the situation in the country. Since the second decade of the 20th century Marxism is beginning to be recognized by intellectuals as the most suitable means for solving the country's problems: gaining independence, overcoming intervention and colonial dependence, integrating the country, and ending the civil war. Maoism, with all its contradictions and

departure from the classical tenets of Marxism, was truly dialectically explicable as the optimal choice for solving the problems of the Chinese state. Subsequently, the Sinicization of Marxism acquired features that were dictated by changes in the social and economic development of the country and its position among other countries. The principles formed by Mao Zedong and their further improvement remain at the center of the political discourse of modern China and are based on the same approaches. This is etatism, the dominance not of public, but of state interest over the individual; extreme pragmatism; restricting access to government through political meritocracy and limiting society from the possibility of cultural hegemony on the part of other countries, which serves to avoid new colonial dependence. The modern discourse of Chinese political philosophy relies on Marxism in its basic tools of thinking, such as historical materialism and dialectical materialism. He also makes extensive use of the traditional values of Confucianism, Legalism and historical materialism, ideas of even medieval thinkers and political figures in China.

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**XENOPHOBIA AS AFRO-PHOBIA:  
TOWARDS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE TO  
AFRO-PHILIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

As at present, a fundamental problem negating intensive and extensive integration of *self-other* relations in Africa, bothering the African mind, is xenophobia: the fear and, by extension, revulsion against any human (or non-human) subject of foreign origin. What is usually understood as xenophobia in Africa is actually Afro-phobia: Africans from within reject other Africans from without, while non-Africans are largely not so treated. This reasoning contextually motivates the phrase, xenophobia as Afro-phobia. Confronting the problem and its outcomes, much scholarship has dominantly come from social sciences, confirming that there could only be little non-social scientific voice to the discussion. Given this gap, this work is philosophical. The claim is that, in the present world where continental (perhaps, inclusive of diasporic) Africans should committedly reinvent their largely common ontology (idea of African being) and cosmology (African worldviews), unitedly confronting continental and non-continental challenges, xenophobia as Afro-phobia regrettably expresses a morally unjustifiable divergence rather than cooperative convergence. Addressing the problem, this work critically interrogates xenophobia as Afro-phobia, before foregrounding a political philosophy of change, ultimately promoting Afro-philiality, rather than xenophobia as Afro-phobia, in the African person. Successfully developing this political philosophy of change, its epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and logic must be intelligible to Africans and its ultimate practical realization. These constitute the present goals.

**Keywords:** Africa, Afro-philiality, Afro-phobia, philosophy, politics, xenophobia.

**INTRODUCTION AND THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In the 21st century, one of the fundamental problems negating intensive and extensive integration of *self-other* relations on the African continent and bothering the African mind is xenophobia, contextually read as the fear and, by extension, revulsion against any human (or non-human) subject of foreign origin. In the mild theoretical form, the idea is that what is identical is easily known, and

thus may be readily accepted; however, what is non-identical/different is not easily known. Thus, it may not be readily accepted. In the strong theoretical form, the idea is that what is identical (the selves) should be accepted; what is non-identical (the others) should be rejected. If we critically look at the empirics in Africa, what is usually taken to be xenophobia in Africa is actually Afro-phobia. The reason for this is that it is Africans from within that reject other Africans from without, while non-Africans on the continent of Africa are largely not so treated. This reasoning motivates the phrase, xenophobia as Afro-phobia, in the present work. To confront the problem and its outcomes, much scholarship has been dissipated, especially from social scientific disciplines, perhaps, implying that there could only be little non-social scientific voice to the discussion (see, for example, Pineteh, 2017; Harris, 2002; Tella, 2016; Kang'ethe, Duma, 2013; Hickel, 2014; etc.). Given this literature gap, this work is philosophical. The claim is that, in the present world where continental Africans (perhaps, inclusive of diasporic Africans) should committedly reinvent their largely common ontology (idea of African being) and cosmology (African worldviews), unitedly confronting continental and non-continental challenges, xenophobia as Afro-phobia regrettably functions as a morally unjustifiable divergence rather than cooperative convergence.

But, in addressing the problem of the study, this present work is somewhat divergent from the few philosophical works on xenophobia in Africa. Some of the works of philosophers, purportedly focused on xenophobia, are not (if objectively examined) methodologically critical and argumentative enough, the methodological approaches, among relevant others, which are acceptable in philosophical works. For example, they do not usually critically and argumentatively engage the plausibility or otherwise of the reasons adduced for the xenophobic attacks on the African other in South Africa; they usually mainly unearth and respond to the effects of the attacks (see, for example, Amodu, 2019; Lanre-Abass and Oguh Matthew, 2016; Kanu, 2018, etc.). The present work addresses this gap by adopting these methodological approaches, combined with the analyses of empirical works. Moreover, the work also attempts to develop a comprehensive political philosophy of change, clearly exposing its epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and logic as well as the procedure of its ultimate practical realization. This present approach, it must be noted, sets the work apart from many previous philosophical works on xenophobia in Africa. Similarly, many social scientific works on xenophobia in South Africa seem to be silent on the role, which African immigrants in South Africa could possibly play in addressing the problem. This present work also addresses this literature gap.

This work is sub-divided into seven sections. After the introductory Section 1, Section 2 deals with the relevant conceptual framework; Section 3 discusses the justificatory argument for a philosophical examination of the problem of xenophobia in Africa; Section 4 theoretically examines and analyzes xenophobia as Afro-phobia in Africa; Section 5 critically interrogates the claims in support of

xenophobia as Afro-phobia, as embedded in the theoretical insights; Section 6 first attempts to advance a political philosophy of change from Afro-phobia to Afro-philía, and later discusses its program of realization, Section 7 summarizes and concludes the discourse.

### ABOUT THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The four terms that jointly form the conceptual framework of the present discourse, which require preliminary explications are *xenophobia*, *Afro-phobia*, *Afro-philía*, and *political philosophy*.

*Xenophobia*. This refers to the fear and, by extension, revulsion against any human (or non-human) subject of foreign origin or different other, and the vexing “foreignness” or “difference” is unusually and radically heightened.<sup>54</sup> Xenophobia is theoretically divisible into two: the mild form and the strong form. In the mild form, the idea is that what is identical to the self is easily recognized and, thus, known. Therefore, this may be readily accepted by the self; however, what is non-identical/different to the self is not easily recognized and, thus, unknown. Therefore, it may not be readily accepted. In the strong form, the idea is that what is identical to the self (or the selves) should be accepted; what is non-identical to the self (or the others) should be rejected. Thus, the ideas of *self-acceptance* and *other-rejection* are invariably theoretically and practically (given that theory informs practice) embedded in the concept of xenophobia.

The notion of other-rejection in xenophobia has some philosophical implications. First, it means that, in the epistemic frame of reference of the self, the other does not constitute a relevant object that is knowable (or worthy of being known); thus, the other is an object of epistemic rejection. Second, on the metaphysical plane, there are, at least, two implications: (i) the being of the unknowable other is also taken as irrelevant, on the basis of the first reasoning: the existence of an entity that does not constitute a worthy epistemic object cannot be consistently said to be relevant, and (ii) the conjuring of enemy imagery, or the idea of dangerous others, necessarily comes up. According to Claudia Aradau, the concept of dangerous others refers to the categories of people who are represented as dangerous, risky or in some way undesirable (Aradau, 2010, 113).

Third, in the moral sense, the other that is not worthy of being known and whose being is irrelevant can never be said, within the present context, to belong to the moral community of selves, who are those that are known or knowable and whose being is relevant, unless we want to engage in logical contradiction.

Fourth, the logical implication of *other-rejection* derives from the last sentence of the moral implication of it above. One of the basics of logical reasoning is consistency, which may be logical (making or believing claims that cannot both

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<sup>54</sup> Within the context of social space, the source of the “foreignness” or “difference” may be territorial, cultural, tribal, to mention a few.

be true) or practical (saying *X* but doing *Y*) (Bassham, Irwin, Nardone, Wallace, 2008, 5). On this premise, it is clearly logically unreasonable or contradictory to say that the Afro-negroid self accepts the Afro-negroid other, who has been epistemically dismissed by the self, metaphysically rendered as irrelevant by the self, and morally de-territorialized from the self (that is, removed from the moral space, that is, the moral community, of the self).

*Afro-phobia*: This is to be taken as the fear of, and, by inference, revulsion against any human (or non-human entity, belonging to the) subject of Afro-negroid origin. Now, this may also be understood as racism, if the person expressing the fear and, thus, invoking the revulsion against the Afro-negroid other, is a member of another racial group, say, Caucasian. But it is different from racism in the context of the present work, given that the person or people expressing the fear and, thus, invoking the revulsion against the Afro-negroid other also belong to the Afro-negroid family. And, drawing on the conception and the philosophical implications of xenophobia earlier, the vexing “foreignness” or “difference” within the social space of the self in Africa may assume the dimension of territorial expulsion; the rejected other is subject to de-territorialisation by the self. Crucially, what we have hitherto regarded as xenophobia is to be here-after construed as Afro-phobia: the rejected other is not just any foreign-other, but a specific foreign-other, that is, one that belongs to the Afro-negroid family; hence, the lexical propriety of the phrasal word, xenophobia as Afro-phobia. Moreover, the notions of *self-acceptance* and *other-rejection* would also be further analyzed, as specifically related to Afro-phobia in South Africa later.

*Afro-philía*. This is to be taken as the attraction towards, or love for, any human (or non-human entity, belonging to the) subject of black origin. As lexically rendered here, it is the obverse of Afro-phobia examined above. All the philosophical implications of xenophobia discussed above are reversed in the case of *Afro-philía*. Epistemically, the Afro-negroid self takes the Afro-negroid other as a subject worthy of deep knowing through cooperative (but not divisive/toxic) interaction.

Metaphysically, the being of the Afro-negroid other, which is worthy of deep knowing, is ultimately taken as relational to the being of the Afro-negroid self: deep knowledge of the Afro-negroid other by the Afro-negroid self ultimately evinces the ontological and cosmological relationality between the Afro-negroid other and the Afro-negroid self. Similarly, the moral community of the Afro-negroid selves becomes robustly extensive by the addition of the Afro-negroid others. Relatedly, the logical implication of Afro-philía becomes clear: it is no longer logically unreasonable or contradictory to say that the Afro-negroid self accepts the Afro-negroid other.

*Political philosophy*. The concept political philosophy could be approached from, at least, three basic angles: (i) as a discipline, (ii) as a body of reasoned norms, values, principles, and theories, applicable to the political space in the general sense, and (iii) as a practical commitment to the body of reasoned norms,

values, principles, and theories within a specific political space. As a discipline, political philosophy is one of the sub-sets of the mother-discipline, philosophy.

As a body of reasoned norms, values, principles, and theories, applicable to the political space in the general sense, political philosophy performs two inter-related functions: (i) it is a rational output of, a careful derivative from, the earlier competent study of political philosophy as a discipline, and (ii) it is an attempt to develop a general theoretical framework from political philosophy in the first sense. Let us call this a ratio-theoretic sense of political philosophy.

Committing to the body of reasoned norms, values, principles, and theories within a specific political space, political philosophy is an attempt to practicalize (or, technically put, to de-discipline) political philosophy in the first sense, building on the ratio-theoretic output of political philosophy in the second sense, within a given political collectivity. This de-disciplined sense could also be termed as practical sense of political philosophy. Actually, Jonathan Wolff (2019, 14) calls this applied political philosophy, as distinguished from what he regards as engaged political philosophy. Perhaps, Wolff is trying to show in his distinction that while applied political philosophy transits from theory to practice (that is, theory is applied to a practice, a sort of top-down approach), engaged political philosophy moves from practice to theory (that is, theory is generated from a regular practice, a kind of bottom-up approach). Anyway, we shall note that this distinction is debatable. Critically, almost every empirical system of regularities has some theoretical embeddedness; there must be some theory, explanatory of the regularities. Similarly, almost every theory has something to “pick” from the empirics, which it embeds and that legitimizes its explanatory power in relation to present and future empirical phenomena.

The three senses of political philosophy, to be more explanatory, are interwoven. The first disciplinary sense of political philosophy provides the learning foundation of what is to later build in the relevant learner, the ratio-theoretic ability, that is, the rational ability needed to adequately philosophically theorize in the relevant political sense. Moreover, it is the theoretic output of the second sense of political philosophy, which is practically applied in the third sense of political philosophy. All the three senses are of the essence in this work: the work derives the tools of criticality, argumentation, and analyticity from the first sense; the second sense motivates the contents of political philosophy of change being advanced, while the third sense provides the methodology of applicability for the political philosophy of change.

## JUSTIFYING A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERROGATION OF AFRO-PHOBIA IN AFRICA

It is sometimes theoretically rational as well as practically valuable to socially justify a given disciplinary excursion.<sup>55</sup> This specifically applies to using philosophy to interrogate Afro-phobia in Africa. Positivist social scientists might claim that xenophobia is a problem that could only be intelligibly researched by political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, to mention a few. This largely uncritical claim might be that xenophobia is a sub-species of social facts, which social scientific experts are trained to study, and that philosophy, being value-inclined and idea-generative, is separated from the realm of social facts, where the problem of xenophobia is situated.<sup>56</sup> This claim, however, is largely untrue, given some considerations.

First, the disciple of philosophy, from the ancient era to the contemporary world, focuses on being thoughtful about foundational issues of the existence of the human person. And, it can be rationally argued that the xenophobic problem is one of the foundational issues of the existence and the flourishing of the human person, anywhere in Africa. Therefore, the subject of Afro-phobia necessarily falls within the reflections of philosophy generally.

Second, there is yet another reason for connecting philosophy with the issue of Afro-phobia. Apart from the fact that xenophobia is a foundational issue in contemporary Africa, it could be correctly argued that almost every issue pertaining to the human person in society has both normative and empirical dimensions. And, Afro-phobia is not excluded from this consideration. That Afro-phobia occurs in the inter-personal relations in some African states is, undeniably, an empirical fact; however, whether it ought to be or ought not to be is a normative or evaluative issue. This is where political philosophy comes in to interrogate.

Third, the issue of Afro-phobia in Africa necessarily connects with the subject of social justice, apart from the fact that it is an evaluable subject within ethics. It concerns the question of whether it is, or is not a just socio-political practice

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<sup>55</sup> This justification (showing the social importance of) could be either theoretical or practical: (i) it is theoretically rational in the sense that this social justification, if it succeeds, inter-subjectively confirms (that is, the confirmation comes from outside) the theoretical value of the discipline among others in society; (ii) it is practically valuable in the sense that the social justification ultimately picks something concrete, perhaps, a value of the discipline in practice, which demonstrates that the discipline does not only have a theoretical value. Thus, it largely silences the realist-like scholars who usually contend that disciplinary relevance is solely a function of its social practicability, and thus, any discipline that fails this sociality test is irrelevant.

<sup>56</sup> This claim is not factitious or imagined but factual. For example, Auguste Comte (1798–1857) (though, himself a French philosopher of science) states that our age is a positivist stage in human evolution, where social phenomena should only be explained through (no other systems but) physical laws (Gordon, 1991, 289–290). One could therefore state, according to me (Badru, forthcoming), that “Comte holds onto a synthesis of causal physicalism (everything could be causally explained physically), on the one hand, and epistemic physicalism (the source of every knowledge is ultimately the physical world), on the other hand.”

within the modern African state. And, we should note that the subject of social justice forms one of the thematic areas in political philosophy.

Fourth, the subject of Afro-phobia in Africa could also be taken as a public policy issue. It is about whether the African states where it occurs support it through a given public policy, or there is no concrete public policy against it within the concerned African states. Even when interpreted as a public policy issue, political philosophy could still contribute to its better understanding. According to David Boonin, philosophers (and these include political philosophers) could contribute to policy discussions and debates in various ways, which include thinking more carefully and critically about abstract and general moral principles that most people appeal to across a broad range of public policy contexts; showing how particular conclusions of people on policy matters implicitly turn on abstract metaphysical assumptions that philosophers could help to properly clarify and connect to the concrete state of affairs; using the tools of philosophical argument and analysis to defend a particular position on a given policy issue, or arguing against a particular position on a specific matter of public policy; arguing against a particular argument for a particular position, etc. (see Boonin, 2018, 1–2).

#### **EXAMINATION AND ANALYSES OF AFRO-PHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS AND OUTCOMES**

According to Mamokhosi Choane et. al. (2011, 131), xenophobia in Africa is not a recent phenomenon; there were instances of it in Ghana (against Nigerians) in the 70s and in Nigeria (against Ghanaians) in the 80s. However, the focus here is on the Afro-phobia in South Africa, given its quotidian and extensive nature. For Mamokhosi Choane et. al. (2011),

“The case of South Africa can be traced back to the 1980s, but more recently to the period of the early 1990s. Instances [...] include the March 1990 Xenophobic assault ‘Hlaphekani’ in which locals burned 300 huts belonging to Mozambicans. Furthermore, there were the 1993 complaints by locals in Cape Town that Namibians and Angolans were gaining access to land and services, while many South Africans remained homeless. Again, there was an attack by South African residents, where they trespassed into the homes of Namibians and removed their belongings as an indication that they did not belong to this community. Further examples include the 1994 outbreak of violence between locals, Xhosa and Namibian fishermen. This was based on the claim by the locals that Namibians were stealing their jobs on the fishing boats, worked for half the normal rate and refused to engage in collective bargaining with employers over wages and work conditions. Added to these incidents, was the 1995 campaign ‘Operation Buyelekhaya’ (go back home) that was launched

in the Alexandra township and which aimed at intimidating and getting rid of foreigners from the area” (see Choane et. al., 2011, 131).

Moreover, Mamokhosi Choane and co-authors (2011, 131) note that the surveys conducted by the Southern African Migration Project in 1997 and 2006, coupled with the 2000 and 2004 analyses of print media coverage of cross-border migration, equally conducted by the Southern African Migration Project, were anti-immigrants. Thus, they conclude that xenophobia in South Africa might have come to stay. If we look at the 2015 xenophobic attacks in South Africa, originating in Durban but quickly spreading to other cities, such as Johannesburg and Pietermaritzburg (see Tella, 2016, 142), then we cannot but align with the conclusion of Mamokhosi Choane et. al. (2011).

Presently, Afro-phobia in South Africa could be critically analyzed,<sup>57</sup> showing its theoretical insights, which are sub-divided into philosophical and social scientific, before exposing the philosophical and the practical outcomes of the theoretical insights.

*Philosophico-theoretical insights:* Philosophically, Afro-phobia could be theoretically approached from the metaphysical, epistemological, moral (or ethical), and logical angles. Metaphysically, the idea of Afro-phobia in South Africa ultimately reduces to *self-acceptance* and *other-rejection*. The South Africans that embrace Afro-phobia constitute *the self*, while African immigrants in South Africa, the victims (actual or potential) of Afro-phobia, represent *the other*. Analytically, *self-acceptance* may show these forms: (i) perception of the self (or any representative of the self) as the only object worthy of recognition; (ii) taking the self (or any being associated with the self community) as superior in ontology (the constituents of the nature of the being) and cosmology (worldview{s}); (iii) seeing nothing bad in whatever action of the self (or any being associated with the self community in pursuing (i)); (iv) perception of the world only from the perspective of the self; (v) avowed commitment to pushing for the self-perspective of the world in relation to the other, etc. Thoughtfully, many indigenous South Africans that support Afro-phobic violence are arguably committed to, at least, some of the forms of self-acceptance (i, iii–v).

Similarly, *other-rejection* may entail these: (i) perception of the other (or any representative of the other) as unworthy of recognition; (ii) taking the other (or any being associated with the other community) as inferior in ontology and cosmology; (iii) seeing nothing good in whatever action of the other (or any being associated with the other community, relative to the self, or the community of the

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<sup>57</sup> True to their occupation, philosophers usually engage in critical analyses, which provide deep in-road into their problems of study. These analyses are deployed: (i) to carefully dissemble the problem of inquiry into its constituent parts, (ii) to deeply examine the dissembled parts, and (iii) to clearly unearth either positive or negative relations, if any, among the component parts. Any prescribed solution to the problem thereafter is ultimately influenced by the take-away knowledge from this analysis.

self; (iv) refusal of perception of the world from the perspective of the other; (v) negation of the other-perspective of the world, etc. Reflectively, many indigenous South Africans, who perpetrate Afro-phobic violence, are arguably committed to, at least, some of the forms of other-rejection (i, iii–v).

Epistemically, we could state that the frame of reference of the self is self-revolving; the other does not constitute a relevant object that is knowable (or worthy of being known), or worthy of epistemic importance. Differently put, the self operates from a position of epistemic enclosure, relative to the other rejected. In the case of Afro-phobia in South Africa, we could see that the perpetrators are not really interested in the fact that they could gain any epistemic insight from the African immigrants being rejected. They seem not to know that, or they seem to be reluctant to grasp that, the indigenous people do not possess all the knowledge there is to make South Africa great. Differently stated, the indigenous people uncritically embrace epistemic monism, the largely wrong belief that the source of all knowledge that matters is the self only, without any input from the other.

Ethically, the other is morally de-territorialized from the self: the other is taken as either not belonging to, or unworthy of belonging to, the moral community of selves. If we interpret the moral community of selves as the space for only those, who are to be properly treated as he/she, but not as it, then we could deduce that the moral de-territorialization from the selves invariably occasions the denial or negation of the moral worth and dignity of the other, the moral worth and dignity that prescribe that they ought to be treated with respect. Presently applied, we could see this: by openly disgracing, consciously maiming and brutally killing many African immigrants in South Africa under some excuses, the indigenous perpetrators are morally de-territorializing the victims as well as denying and negating their moral worth and dignity.

Logically, the problem of Afro-phobia in South Africa foregrounds the validity of the tested-and-true conviction that racial or ethnic violence is not usually based on sound reasoning (strong proofs, good reasons, or inter-subjectively valid evidence, etc.) but rather on unsound reasoning (unreliable hear-says, faulty stereotypes, defective group-thinks, etc.). This claim is justified by the discussion in Section 5.

*Social scientific theoretical insights:* Social scientific theoretical insights in xenophobia in South Africa could be sub-divided in a multifarious way, ranging from the isolationist submission of Steven Gordon (2017); the witchcraft thesis of Jason Hickel (2014); the communicative framing and framing effects thesis of Pineteh (2017); the interactive-cultural-material position of Nell (2009); the isolationist-scapegoating and bio-cultural hypotheses of Harris (2002); further advanced by Tella (2016), to mention a few. As the perceptive mind could later observe, the theoretical insights could also be simplified into mono-causal and pluri-causal approaches to the problem of xenophobia. The first prioritizes the causal importance of a given variable (randomly given here as) *X* (hence, being

largely mono-causal); though, there might be a recognition of the possibility of less significant other variables (randomly given here as) *Y*, *Z*, etc. (e.g. Gordon, 2017; Hickel, 2014). However, the second signals the importance of a collectivity of variables (hence, being pluri-causal), without placing any particular one above others (e.g. Nell, 2009; Harris, 2002; Tella, 2016).

*Mono-causality and xenophobia.* Analyzing the Alien Controls Act of 1991 (which was later censoriously scholarly criticized) and the Immigration Act of 2002 (that replaced the former in South Africa) and using them as a point of departure, Steven Gordon (2017, 20–21) contends that:

“...immigration control in post-apartheid South Africa has always been defined by its ‘control and expulsion’ mentality. The authorities have been granted wide powers to detect, detain, and deport those who violate immigration controls [...] mass public opinion on immigration in South Africa [...] favors a more restrictive stance...”

One could note that South African policy-makers are committed to what is regarded in the morality of immigration as restrictionism (or restrictivism).<sup>58</sup> Thus, if we take the first submission in the above-quoted as the official response, and the second as the non-official position of the people on the issue, then one could reasonably deduce that there are both official and non-official antithetical views of the foreign-other in South Africa. This stance, to analyze further, implies isolationism in at least two ways: (i) that the foreign-other is generally unwelcome in South African society, and (ii), given (i), that South African society should both be protected and insulated from the incursion of the foreign-other. To stall the ascendancy of xenophobic thinking in South Africa, however, Gordon concludes that discouraging isolationist tendencies would reduce xenophobia in the country (Gordon, 2017, 8).

In another social scientific research, Hickel (2014) advances the witchcraft thesis as an explanatory framework, within which the xenophobic attacks in South Africa could be approached. In an empirical research conducted at Cato Manor, South Africa, Hickel (2014) discovers that local people usually establish a linkage between foreigners and witchcraft (what they call *ubuthakathi* in Isi-Zulu). In the researcher’s discussion with a local woman, this submission follows:

“When the makwerekwere come here we no longer develop, and our children no longer progress. If we have reached 80 percent then we fall back to 10 or 0 percent. For example, if I have a shop and a foreigner comes here and sets up a shop nearby, then his shop will succeed and my shop will fail. They will go

<sup>58</sup> There are emerging philosophical works, morally discussing immigration. Some are: (Seglow, 2005; Carens, 2013; Barry, Goodin, 1992); Mendoza, 2016), etc. For philosophically moral arguments for and against immigration, see, for example, (Seglow, 2005).

up and we will go down. The only way to explain this is that they are using something [...] that they are using *ubuthakathi*. You see how they come here, they are so poor, they come from a poor country and they come across the border with nothing but a passport. There's no way that they can become rich after only three years or so here! There must be something behind it...they are using *ubuthakathi*. There's no other way to explain it." (Hickel, 2014, 108).

For Hickel (2014, 108), this belief motivates people to conceptualize and evaluate foreigners and witches as morally analogous types of persons—as mysterious, anti-social agents that disable productive and reproductive processes, causing the joblessness, poverty, and the inability to marry of the indigenous population. Resultantly, the indigenous population may have concluded that everything must be done, inclusive of the use of unmeasured violence, to root out these mysterious, anti-social agents within their territorial space.

*Plural causality and xenophobia.* For Pineteh (2017), the communicative framing and framing effects thesis provides an explanatory framework for the incessant Afro-phobic violence in South Africa. According to him, the Afro-phobia and the incidental violence in South Africa are both resultant of the toxic communication packaged and disseminated about African immigrants by the common people, politicians and the media. For him, this toxic communication, that the African immigrants are responsible for the domestic woes of the country, frames the thinking of the indigenous people, relative to the immigrants, and the violent reactions to the immigrants by the indigenous people constitute the framing (ripple) effects of the toxic communication. Premising his argument on what he calls “street-level narratives,” shared by common people and detected in selected published speeches and statements of ANC leaders (pp. 3–4), Pineteh (2017, 4) concludes that, “These stories create a demonic image of African migrants, blamed for all the societal ills of post-apartheid South Africa, ranging from crime, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, scams and witchcraft.” For Pineteh (2017, 6), “...the term ‘foreigners\ [...] has been deconstructed and used loosely by local South African as a synonym for ‘illegal African’ and therefore the attacks on African migrants are framed as the cleansing of undesirable illegal aliens.

Similarly, in (Nell, 2009, 234), cited in (Mamokhosi, et. al., 2011, 129), advances a tripartite explanatory framework for xenophobic intolerance in South Africa:

(a) Interactive factors related to the amount of exposure inhabitants have to strangers (*the problem of the long-drawn apartheid-imposed insulation from black outsiders*)

(b) Cultural factors which include identity and nationalism (*emphasis on national purity*)

(c) Material or economic factors related to employment opportunities, available resources (*problem of the foreigners cornering available economic or similar opportunities from the locals*).<sup>59</sup>

For Harris (2002), further supported by Tella (2016), the isolationist-scapegoating and bio-cultural hypotheses explain the Afro-phobic violence in South Africa. For Tella (2016, 143), the isolationist policy of apartheid South Africa insulated black South Africans for years from freely mingling with their black counterparts from other African states. However, the end of apartheid altered the hitherto pariah status of South Africa, which now re-enters the international community, occasioning massive inflows of African migrants into the country, resulting in hostility and hatred towards the African immigrants. Similarly, the scapegoating hypothesis explains the belief of many South Africans (the leaders and the people), who readily blame black immigrants for their misfortune (Tella, 2016, 144). Moreover, the bio-cultural hypothesis shows that xenophobia is motivated by the biological and cultural distinctions between local South Africans and African foreigners, as the language, dress, stature, birth marks and other characteristics of the latter set them apart from the former, making the latter easy targets for xenophobic attacks from the former (Tella, 2016, 145).

*Philosophical outcomes:* Perhaps, the very first philosophical outcomes of Afro-phobia is the vitiating of the commitment to moral relationality in African ethics, as encapsulated in the much acclaimed South African ideology of *ubuntu* (see Kang'ethe, Duma, 2013, 161). For a non-African, it may seem hard and contradictory to believe that Africans, who usually argue for the entrenchment of moral relationality (that the African self ought to be socially responsible and responsive to the African-other) in Africa ethics could be treating themselves in such a morally disdainful manner through Afro-phobia. The reasoning also connects with the next.

African metaphysics (largely sub-Saharan) is always committed to a relational account of African personhood, that the African-self and the African-other are ontologically connected, contrary to the idea of self-atomism, philosophically influential in the West. But, to a non-African observer, this ontological relationality may seem to have been largely inverted by Afro-phobia.

*Practical outcomes:* Literature search has revealed that the practical outcomes of Afro-phobic violence in South Africa are varied. Economically, the result may be foreign capital flight from South Africa, as investors are scared of investing their resources where they could be easily dispossessed of through violence. Politically, the internal climate becomes unstable and fragile because of the Afro-phobic violence (see Kang'ethe, Duma, 2013, 161). Moreover, at the citizenship level, the Afro-phobic violence may estrange South Africans from other Africans (whether on the continent or outside of it), who may come to perceive the former

<sup>59</sup> The braced italics are the author's explications of (Nell, 2009, 234).

as the “enemies of Africans.” Internationally, the image of South Africa may be negatively affected; non-Africans outside Africa may negatively perceive South Africans as a people with a penchant for violence against foreigners.

### **CRITICALLY ENGAGING THE SUPPORTIVE CLAIMS OF AFRO-PHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA**

There are some dominant claims in support of Afro-phobia, which are embedded in the social scientific theories. The theoretical insight of Gordon (2017) as well as in the first leg of the hypotheses of Harris (2002), includes there is an implicit claim that the South African society should maintain an isolationist posture, which was nurtured by white political rulers in South Africa, during the apartheid era (Tella, 2016, 143). This claim is obviously weak in, at least, two respects. First, isolationism (whether economic, political, or cultural) seems to be a relic of the past in the contemporary era of globalization that trans-nationally promotes (or, say, imposes) inter-connectivity of peoples, cultural values, goods and services. This undermines the covert insistence on national purity by South Africans, as is deduced from the second factor of the Nell’s tripartite explanatory framework (Nell, 2009). Second, even if there were no globalization, the isolationist claim would still be suspect. The point is that the Afro-phobic attacks in South Africa are usually directed against African immigrants, but not European or Asian immigrants. These selective attacks are not in tandem with a fair policy of isolationism. The argument is that in as much as the Afro-phobic attacks are not evenly distributed across the space of foreign immigrants (Afro-negroid, Caucasian, and Asian) then the isolationist claim is not well-grounded and, thus, unjust. Pineteh (2017, 6) confirms that, “[d]espite the exponential growth of China cities in major South African cities and European restaurants in affluent suburbs, there is no empirical evidence which reveals that European and Asian businesses were burnt or looted during xenophobic violence.”

In the witchcraft thesis of Hickel (2014), there is a claim that African immigrants in South Africa are diabolically fetishist, and this fetishism is used to enrich and prosper themselves against their South African hosts in business and other economic activities. Critically examined, this claim could not be easily dismissed, if one objectively considers how many “Yahoo-boys” in Nigeria, for example, could go to any length, inclusive of engaging in bloody money rituals to put their 419 business (assuming it could be sensibly regarded as business) on sound footing, apart from falsifying (names, addresses, and documents, establishing their true) identities. Nonetheless, one must still be intellectually cautious in totally subscribing to such a position.

First, it is not epistemically conclusive that successful African immigrants in South Africa are all diabolically fetishist (some may be; some may not be), without giving some room, of course, to *luck* and *hard work* as relevant factors to

successful outcomes in life. Moreover, there is an important point: there is nothing in this claim (except the subjective imagination of the complainants, their auto-suggestions) that decidedly proves that only successful African immigrants in South Africa (whether *some* or *all*) engage in such practices, and that successful black South Africans do not do the same. To readily and uncritically affirm the former is engaging in the fallacy of hasty generalization, and to totally and uncritically deny the latter in relation to the former is committing the fallacy of unjustifiable dichotomy. Using the language of Beitz (1979, 23), "...the distinction is without a difference." Even if there is a difference (unknown to outsiders) between successful African immigrants in South Africa and successful indigenous population, this must be unmistakably shown or clearly proved but not merely assumed.

The claims that African immigrants in South Africa are (directly and indirectly) causally related to the lack of economic and similar opportunities of the local population (derived from the scapegoating hypothesis) and that African immigrants in South Africa do not readily culturally integrate with local population (derived from the bio-cultural hypothesis) have some strengths as well as some weaknesses. First off, it might be true that *some* of the available jobs are being taken by qualified African immigrants in South Africa, but it might not be true that they are taking up *all* available jobs. Thus, uncritically subscribing to this claim, despite its obviously flawed status, is tantamount to committing the fallacy of "*some-means-all*": that *X* stole *some* oranges in the market yesterday does not (and even cannot) conclusively prove that *X* has been stealing *all* the oranges found missing in the market. Interestingly, we should relate the fallacious claim with the position of Steinberg (2008, cited in Hickel, 2014, 23, note 7) that, "...more than half of foreign nationals who work are self-employed, so they are not technically "stealing" jobs. Indeed, foreign nationals actually employ remarkable numbers of South Africans—at least one hundred thousand in Johannesburg alone." Also, consider that, "[m]any locals who claim that migrants have taken their jobs may not even have the requisite skills or academic qualifications for these jobs" (Pineteh, 2017, 5).

The second claim that African immigrants in South Africa do not culturally integrate with indigenous people is also evaluable. Objectively, there is nothing wrong in indigenous South Africans wishing for the cultural integration of African immigrants within their society: generally, locals may blend faster and easily with foreigners that culturally integrate with them; similarly, foreigners tend to operate more freely when they culturally integrate with the locals. However, cultural integration should be a matter of free choice, but not by compulsion. When it becomes a matter of compulsion, it is morally and legally wrong. Thus, that indigenous South Africans tend to attack African immigrants within their society because of cultural non-integration is thus unwelcome, to say the least.

## TOWARDS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE FROM AFRO-PHOBIA TO AFRO-PHILIA<sup>60</sup>

(a) *Articulating a political philosophy of change to Afro-philía:* The discussion here proceeds from two significant interrogatives: (i) Why do we specifically need a political philosophy of change (hereafter *PPC*), transforming Afro-phobia to Afro-philía?; (ii) Why should the *PPC* be constituted the way we propose in this work? First, this transformation in Africa chiefly requires some framework of deep-seated values and principles of self-other integration, which could only be holistically pursued and successfully realized, if both the leadership and the indigenous population, jointly implicated in scholarly research on the Afro-phobia in South Africa, on the one hand, and African immigrants in South Africa, on the other hand, could key into it.

Second, the *PPC* is so constituted because four major things, among others, seem to motivate the self into action, relative to the other: (i) the self's ideas about the other, grounding the former's understanding of the ontological status of the latter (metaphysics), (ii) the self's cognitive access to, and cognitive acquisition from, the individual and the social space of the other (epistemology), (iii) the self's moral convictions about, and moral principles of dealing with, the other (ethics), and (iv) the self's principles of reasoning developed in interaction with the other (logic). All these soon become clearer in the discussion of the values and principles of self-other integration (as reflected in the four basic branches of philosophy), relative to the problem of Afro-phobia in South Africa.

*Metaphysics and the Political Philosophy of Change to Afro-philía:* Within the present context, African metaphysics of the human person becomes highly relevant. There is an overwhelming body of works on African metaphysics, converging on the conclusion that the ontology of personhood in Africa is relationality, that the being of the self in Africa is constitutive of the connectedness with the being of the other, as represented by *Ubuntu* in Zulu, South Africa (see, for example, Munyaka and Motlhabi, 2009); *Omoluubi* in Yoruba, Nigeria (see, for example, Afolabi Ojo, 1978), *wul nin ghi wul bôm wul* (a person is a person through/because of other persons) of the Kom, Cameroon (Tosam, 2014, 40), etc. This is unlike the Euro-American metaphysics that is dominantly (in spite of the communitarian and feminist attacks against it) supportive of atomistic understanding of personhood, conceptually represented by Michael Sandel (1984) as 'the unencumbered self', reducing social relationship to the level of contractualism. From this African ontological relationality, certain values and their corresponding principles are deducible as captured below:

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<sup>60</sup> The discussion here is influenced by, though not a total replication of, the views expressed somewhere else (see Badru, 2018, 168–172). The focus in Badru (2018) is a development a political philosophy of a third culture to foster national cohesion and integration in the poly-ethnic and poly-religious Nigerian State. However, the present work is an attempt to advance a political philosophy of change from Afro-phobia to Afro-philía in South Africa.

Values	Principles
1. Fellow-feeling	1. The self and the other should reciprocally show fellow-feeling in society
2. Sharedness	2. The being of the other should share in the being of the self (see Kanu, 2018:10)
3. Identity-extendedness	3. Self-identity and other-identity should be reciprocally extended, given principle 2 (Badru, 2017, 92–94).

Since the noted values define African metaphysics of personhood, their corresponding principles should also define social association and interaction. Any contrary principles seem, on this token, to be non-African. Therefore, the metaphysics of the *PPC* requires indigenous South Africans to buy into the values and their principles, given that they are Africans. The practical implication of buying into them is that they should shun their violent interaction with African immigrants in their society, doing away with the enemy image, usually created about African immigrants in their midst, given that the enemy image is unfounded within African metaphysics of personhood. Similarly, African immigrants in South Africa should also key into the values and the principles by not working against the socio-economic interests of the local population.

*Epistemology and the political philosophy of change to Afro-philía:* Epistemology is a theory of belief and knowledge justification in philosophy. Thus, within this framework, nothing constitutes knowledge, capable of motivating our action (or, in some sense, inaction), if it cannot be adequately or sufficiently justified. From the era of ancient Greek thought up till the present world, the theory of epistemic justification (in Western philosophy) requires three basic features, which are jointly taken: (i) there must be a *belief*; (ii) the *truth* of the belief is vitally important, and (iii) there must be a *justification* (proof in law), non-accidentally confirming the truth of the belief.<sup>61</sup> The foregoing distinguishes epistemic beliefs from non-epistemic beliefs. While epistemic beliefs are properly justified and, thus, can be correctly acted upon (that is, they are correct epistemic guides to action), non-epistemic beliefs are not properly justified; thus, they

<sup>61</sup> Although, this tripartite account of knowledge has been faulted by Edmund Gettier in a (1963) work, the fact still remains that the account has not been dispensed with in the history of epistemology. Perhaps, it might be because up till the present time, no better account of knowledge has been discovered by epistemic thinkers. Moreover, nothing is taken as knowledge in epistemology if its truth is arrived at accidentally. Thus, lucky guess (though true in reality) does not count as knowledge.

should not be correctly acted upon (that is, they are not correct epistemic guides to action).

Taking the features as relevant criteria, the epistemology of *PPC* requires/emphasizes that knowledge (cognitive) beliefs formed by the self (indigenous population) about the other (African immigrants) in South Africa ought to be non-accidentally or factually true (as distinguished from beliefs taken as true because of their popularity: *popularity* does not necessarily mean *truth*) as well as having sure evidence or justification of the factuality of the beliefs' truth. It is only then, but not until then, that the indigenous population in South Africa are justified in the epistemic beliefs formed about African immigrants in South Africa and can also eventually act on the beliefs. The essence of the epistemology of the *PPC* is ensuring that it is not just any belief, no matter how popular, no matter the statuses of those committed to them, that should be held and acted upon, motivating all-out violence between the local population and the African immigrants in South Africa. This particularly applies to the largely unjustified belief held by indigenous South Africans that African immigrants in South Africa are fetishist, stalling the economic progress of indigenous population, or that African immigrants are causally active in all the social vices in South Africa, the unjustified belief that engenders the perpetration of violence by the former against the latter.

*Ethics and the political philosophy of change to Afro-philialia:* In Western ethics, moral evaluation (as to the rightness or wrongness) of an action may be made within the framework of the likely consequence(s) of the action (ethical/moral consequentialism or teleologism), or the nature of the intended action (ethical/moral non-consequentialism or deontologism), or the nature of the act-performer (character/virtue judgment or consideration). In African ethics, moral evaluation (as to the rightness or wrongness) of an action may be made within the framework of the character of the act-performer, which makes it character ethics (see Badru, 2021), or whether or not the principle underlying the action is what I (Badru, 2019, 168) calls *social utilitarianism*. This utilitarianism emphasizes that the rightness or wrongness of any action is to be defined in terms of its conduciveness or non-conduciveness to social or communal progress and development: it is right (and the actor, a moral agent), if it conduces to social or communal progress and development; it is wrong (and the actor, an immoral agent), if it does not conduce to social or communal progress and development. This is distinguishable from the Benthamite or Millian normative utilitarianism that places much emphasizes on the interest of the majority (the greater number), while being largely silent on that of the minority (the lesser number) in society (see Badru, 2019, 168–169).

Applying the African moral framework that is both character-inclined and socially utilitarian, the ethics of *PPC* requires both South Africans and African immigrants in South Africa, if they are to be regarded as moral (but not immoral) agents, to always act in such ways that are conducive to social or communal

progress and development in South Africa, all things considered. Thus, conflictual interaction between them obviously falls outside this moral equation.

*Logic and the political philosophy of change to Afro-philía:* The logic of *PPC* requires South Africans to be more open-minded to issues, concerning African immigrants in South Africa, rather than working with stereo-types; showing criticality of approach, when confronted with claims about African immigrants in their environment; forming specific beliefs about African immigrants in South Africa, only on the basis of good reasons (logic prioritizes these), judge on the basis of the beliefs so critically formed, and eventually rationally act on the basis of the judgment.

*Realizing a political philosophy of change to Afro-philía in South Africa:* Having attempted to articulate a political philosophy of change to Afro-philía, we should discuss its realization procedure. In this regard, there are some positive and negative moral duties, which are expected to be performed at the state level (by South African bureaucrats and politicians) and at the social level (by common South Africans, the media houses, African immigrants, etc.), to practically realize the *PPC* in South Africa. For the sake of explanation, positive moral duties are essentially prescriptive; they clearly state what ought to be morally done, while negative moral duties are essentially proscriptive; they clearly state what ought not to be morally done.

*Moral duties at the state level:* First, at the bureaucratic-political level, state officials in South Africa should know that it is both logically unwarranted and socially irresponsible to usually blame African immigrants in their society as always causally active in all the social ills in South Africa. Such a claim is logically unwarranted because there is no unmistakable evidence to prove its truth; and, by the same token, it is non-epistemic. It is socially irresponsible because it deflects the common South Africans from knowing the actual truth, making them to properly hold the state officials up to their constitutional duties to their people, forcing the state officials to be more socially responsible to their people. Therefore, the state officials have a negative moral duty to stop this blame-game. Moreover, they have a positive moral duty to be more committed to the moral principle of social responsibility to their people, sincerely doing their best to economically empower poor, unemployed black South Africans. This, if done, keys into the moral values of the *PPC* framework, showing that the state officials are moral agents in society. Moreover, desisting from making such inciting claims concurs with both the epistemic and logical values and principles of the *PPC* framework.

Second, connected to the above, South African politicians and related others have a positive moral duty to sincerely and vehemently speak against acts of unjustifiable violence against African immigrants in South Africa. Literature research (see Tella, 2016; Pineteh, 2017, etc) has amply shown that they have not been sincerely performing this moral duty. However, the point here is that they ought to, if they are to be truly regarded as moral agents in African ethics.

*Moral duties at the social level:* Both South Africans and African immigrants in South Africa have a moral duty to do everything legally possible to engage in harmonious social relations with one another. Concrete steps to be taken here include, but are not limited to, local population and African immigrants reciprocally regarding and behaving to one another as relational beings that have moral worth to be respected; successful business men and women among African immigrants being committed to taking care of poor, unemployed South Africans close to them (for example, giving scholarships or financial aids to those who are capable and willing to be well educated among them, as part of their adherence to the moral principle of social responsibility to the environment that has contributed to their success, etc.).

But to sincerely perform the afore-noted positive moral duty, both the local population and African immigrants have to first perform a positive moral duty of removing from their individual consciousness the hitherto “enemy image” that has been created about one another. No harmonious interaction could be fostered where “enemy image” implicitly backgrounds every other thing.

Moreover, the privately employed African immigrants in South Africa have a negative moral duty not to engage in tax evasion and tax avoidance, which may contribute to the revenue diminution of the state. The absence of tax evasion and tax avoidance, from the angle of the privately employed African immigrants, is vitally important to South Africa in, at least, two ways: (i) it widens the revenue base of the State, increasing the revenue generation of the State, no matter how marginal, and (ii) it somewhat helps the State in economically empowering poor and unemployed black South Africans. The first and the second positive moral duties, as well as the third negative moral duty, are in line with the African metaphysics of personhood as well as African ethics reflected in the *PPC*.

Similarly, both print and electronic media in South Africa have a negative moral duty to desist from (re)presenting Africa immigrants as potentially anti-social. It may be true that some of them are behaviourally anti-social, but this may not be true of all of them. This negative moral duty, it must be noted, is in synch with the epistemic and the logical aspects of the *PPC*; the more so that the philosophy of the mass media communication is underpinned by *education*, *information*, and *entertainment*, and this tripartite philosophy is undermined, where objective reportage, among others, is sacrificed on the alter of unwarranted sentiments and biases.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this work, an attempt has been made to philosophically engage the problem of Afro-phobia in South Africa. In going about the task, we first dealt with the relevant conceptual framework, before justifying a philosophical examination of the problem of xenophobia in Africa. Thereafter, we discussed some social scientific theories, explanatory of the problem of Afro-phobia in South Africa, and

later brought out some philosophical and socio-practical implications of them. Also, we critically interrogated the claims supportive of xenophobia as Afro-phobia, as embedded in the theoretical insights. Being the main thrust of the work, a political philosophy of change from Afro-phobia to Afro-philosophy was later advanced, and its program of realization was also discussed. Lastly, it is iterated that Afro-phobia in South Africa is not a problem that should be lightly handled. Rather, it should be frontally addressed by all the stakeholders (the South African government, the local population, and the African immigrants) involved so that it does not ultimately lead to a continent-wide overt alienation of African people against one another.

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## THE CHALLENGE OF MORAL DEVALUATION IN AFRICA: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### *ABSTRACT*

This paper delves into the complex phenomenon of moral devaluation in the African context, seeking to unravel its underlying causes and implications for society. Africa, with its rich cultural diversity and historical legacies, presents a unique backdrop for exploring the dynamics of moral values. It is however noted that moral devaluation refers to the erosion or decline of ethical standards and values within a society, and which has become increasingly pertinent in the African context. This paper critically examines the multifaceted factors contributing to this phenomenon, including socio-economic disparities, political instability, and the influence of globalization. The paper also scrutinizes through argumentative and analytic methods of philosophical inquiry, the role of traditional belief systems, colonial legacies, and contemporary challenges in shaping moral values. Moreover, this inquiry assesses the profound consequences of moral devaluation on African societies, such as the breakdown of social cohesion, rising crime rates, and diminished trust in institutions. It also highlights the potential impact on the continent's development prospects, given the pivotal role of ethics in economic and political progress. Drawing from a range of philosophical perspectives, the African philosophical thought to Western ethical theories, this paper aims at contributing to a deeper understanding of the philosophical issues surrounding moral devaluation while offering insights on policies and interventions that aims at rejuvenating moral values and fostering ethical resilience within African societies. Ultimately, the paper underscores the urgency of addressing moral devaluation as an essential component of Africa's ongoing quest for social and moral renewal.

**Keywords:** Africa, moral devaluation, ethics, culture, globalization

### INTRODUCTION

In human existence, morality stands as a foundational thread, weaving together the values, norms, and principles that guide individuals and societies. Across the globe, the evaluation of moral standards is a dynamic and multifaceted process, shaped by history, culture, and the prevailing socio-political conditions of a region.

In Africa, a continent of unparalleled diversity, this process has been particularly intriguing, marked by a rich tapestry of ethical traditions, but also marred by challenges that warrant a deeper philosophical interrogation.<sup>62</sup>

Africa is a continent that defies homogenization, comprising 54 recognized nations, over 2,000 distinct ethnic groups, and an unparalleled linguistic diversity.<sup>63</sup> This mosaic of identities brings forth a complex interplay of moral values and ethical systems. Traditional African societies have long upheld communal values, emphasizing interconnectedness and reciprocity. Ubuntu, the Southern African philosophy, encapsulates this spirit, proclaiming, "I am because we are."<sup>64</sup> In this view, individual actions and well-being are inexorably linked to the collective, laying the foundation for a rich moral tapestry rooted in communalism.

However, Africa's history is one marked by external influences, including colonialism and globalization, which have deeply impacted its moral landscape. Colonialism, with its imposition of foreign norms and values, disrupted indigenous moral systems, often leading to moral confusion and disorientation<sup>65</sup>. While colonialism has receded into history, its legacy still reverberates in the continent's ethical dilemmas, particularly in the form of cultural clashes, the erosion of traditional values, and the influence of globalized media.<sup>66</sup>

The contemporary African moral landscape is further complicated by a myriad of challenges, including political instability, economic inequality, and the rapid pace of urbanization. These challenges engender complex moral dilemmas. For instance, the struggle for political power in some African nations has led to moral compromises, with politicians prioritizing their own interests over the well-being of their citizens. Similarly, economic disparities have given rise to issues of corruption and exploitation, often forcing individuals to confront moral choices in their pursuit of a better life. Additionally, the proliferation of technology and global media has exposed African societies to a torrent of external moral influences, sometimes lead to the devaluation of traditional values. This raises questions about cultural authenticity and the enduring relevance of indigenous moral systems in a rapidly changing world.

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<sup>62</sup> *A dialogical relation* supplies an interactive context which serves two purposes: first and foremost it is the context in and through which members actualize their social identity. The history of a person's life is the story of his or her transactions with the community's material and moral worlds, which, in effect, is the story of his or her relations with particular sets of social goods. See, Coetzee, P. H. 2003. "Morality in African Thought." In: *The African Philosophy Reader*. Second Edition. Coetzee, P. H., A. P. J. Roux (Eds.). New York: Routledge.

<sup>63</sup> Ajayi, J. F. A. 1956. "A Survey of the Cultural and Political Regions of Africa at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century." In: *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*. Anene, J. C., G. N. Brown (Eds.). Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 75.

<sup>64</sup> "Ubuntu" is a Nguni Bantu term meaning "humanity." It is sometimes translated as "I am because we are."

<sup>65</sup> Temisan Ebijuwu. 2007. *Philosophy and Social Change: Discourse on Values in Africa*. Ibadan: Hope publication, 9.

<sup>66</sup> Mudimbe, V. Y. 1988. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 57.

As we delve into this philosophical interrogation of moral devaluation in Africa, this paper will consider various dimensions of this complex issue. How do traditional African moral values interact with and adapt to the challenges of modernity? What role does globalization play in shaping moral standards on the continent? How do political and economic factors influence moral choices in African societies? These questions and many more, beckon us to embark on a journey of exploration, introspection, and analysis.

### **AFRICAN MORALITY: A DISCOURSE**

Morality and ethics are fundamental aspects of human society that shape our interactions, guide our behavior, and provide a framework for living together harmoniously<sup>67</sup>. Africa, with its diverse cultures, languages, and traditions, boasts a rich tapestry of moral and ethical standards that have evolved over millennia. In this discourse, we will explore some of the key moral and ethical standards that are prevalent across the African continent, highlighting both the commonalities and the unique characteristics that define them. In Africa context, morality and religion are interwoven. In other words, there is a symbiotic relationship between Africa moral standard and Africa religion. This assumption is well premised in Ogungbemi's argument that, African culture/identity is African religion.<sup>68</sup> It can be easily argued from Ogungbemi's perspective that morality and religion in Africa are two sides of the same coin but then, does African religion define African moral standard? In a holistic view, this study will maintain that not all African moral standards are encapsulated within the context of African religion. For instance, moral values in African are in most cases subjective and hide on a religion justification.

In the African traditional system, it is impossible to separate moral value from a religion concept. The moral tendency among the African brings out their religion standard. This justification is well addressed in Immanuel Kant argument that "it is moral law that brings God into being, and not the other way round."<sup>69</sup> But then, we have to postulate a perfect being and as highest good both of which require a God as the creator, moulder, and the custodian of these ideas, for we cannot even think of a highest good without thinking of a Creator, i.e. God. The implication is that, the very idea of God as a foundation of morality becomes a mere postulate. From this submission, we can argue that man does not need God in order to behave morally. But then, it is pertinent to note that morality and religion are two different entities that define Africa cultural system.

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<sup>67</sup> Akin, M. 1988. "Makinde 'Of Chance Philosophy and Obsolete Philosophy: Some Anti-Scientific Features of African (Traditional) Thought'." In: *Second Order*, 1 (1), 15.

<sup>68</sup> Segun Ogungbemi. 2008. *God, Reason and Death: Issues in Philosophy of Religion*. Ibadan: Hope Publication, 115.

<sup>69</sup> Guyer, P., A. W. Wood (Eds.). 1999. *Kant, Immanuel: Critique of Pure Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 403.

In this regards some moral standards can be evaluated vis-à-vis their implications thus;

### **1. Respect for elders and ancestors**

Respect for elders and ancestors are a cornerstone of African morality. Elders are seen as repositories of wisdom and experience, and their guidance is highly valued. This respect extends to ancestors, who are believed to continue to influence the living. Ancestral veneration is practiced through rituals and ceremonies, reinforcing a sense of continuity and a duty to uphold the values and traditions passed down through generations. Giving an adequate respect for Elders is one of the fundamental moral obligations among the African people. The idea of respect is reciprocal and this is justified in the African moral tradition. It is believed that anybody who fails to give respect to Elders cannot be an Elder in future. In the African (Akpan) moral tradition, submission to an elderly one enables one to live old in community.<sup>70</sup> Elders in African concept are not only an old men/women but the class of people that are not of the same age which the person in question.

### **2. Communalism and sharing**

In many African cultures, there is a strong emphasis on communalism and sharing. The concept of communal ownership extends beyond material possessions to include responsibilities for one another's well-being. Sharing resources, whether it is food, shelter, or knowledge, is considered a moral obligation. This practice fosters a sense of solidarity and social cohesion within communities.

### **3. Spirituality and traditional beliefs**

African moral and ethical standards often intersect with spirituality and traditional beliefs. Many Africans follow indigenous religions that emphasize the importance of living in harmony with nature, spirits, and deities. These belief systems promote ethical conduct by encouraging individuals to respect the natural world, uphold moral values, and participate in rituals and ceremonies that maintain balance and order.

### **4. Hospitality and welcoming strangers**

The tradition of hospitality is deeply ingrained in African cultures. Welcoming strangers and guests with open arms is not just a common practice but also a moral imperative. This hospitality is a demonstration of generosity, kindness, and empathy, reflecting the belief that one's humanity is affirmed through acts of benevolence toward others.

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<sup>70</sup> Coetzee, P. H. 2003, op. cit., 321.

### **5. Gender roles and equity**

Gender roles and equity vary across Africa due to its vast diversity. However, many societies are characterized by strong communal roles and expectations. In some African cultures, women play key roles in family and community decision-making, while in others, men are expected to provide and protect. It is important to note that perceptions of gender roles are evolving across the continent, with increased emphasis on gender equity and the recognition of the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals.

### **6. Taboos and prohibitions**

African societies often have taboos and prohibitions that guide moral behavior. These taboos can relate to various aspects of life, such as food, relationships, and rituals. They serve as moral boundaries, helping to maintain order and harmony within communities. Violating these taboos is not only considered immoral but can also lead to sanctions or exclusion from the community.

### **7. Conflict resolution and reconciliation**

African societies place a strong emphasis on resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation. Traditional methods of conflict resolution, such as mediation by elders or community leaders, aim to restore harmony and maintain the unity of the community. These practices prioritize forgiveness and healing over punitive measures, aligning with the belief in Ubuntu and the importance of community well-being.

This paper is not on the view that the above moral standards evaluated above are all what Africa moral entails. Moral standard in Africa perspectives are more subjective than objective. There are norms that are tolerated in one Africa community and which are not permitted in another community. However, our moral evaluations discussed above are central to most Africa society

## **MORAL DEVALUATION IN AFRICA**

Moral devaluation in Africa encompasses a range of complex ethical dilemmas, reflecting the changing dynamics of contemporary African societies. It involves the erosion or degradation of traditional values, ethical systems, and moral norms that have historically guided African communities. The consequences of moral devaluation are far-reaching, impacting individual behavior, community cohesion, and even national development.

The process of moral devaluation in Africa is deeply intertwined with historical, social, and political factors. Colonialism, for instance, disrupted existing cultural norms and imposed external value systems that continue to influence African societies to this day. The legacy of colonialism, coupled with the challenges of modernization, globalization, and urbanization, has created a complex moral landscape

where traditional ethics often clash with new and sometimes conflicting moral paradigms. For example, most of the Africa taboos and prohibitions such as pregnant woman moving around in sun, collecting a rain drop with hands, etc. are no longer in existence. Therefore, it becomes a philosophical issue on the real effects of all these taboos even when they are in existence.

To initiate a philosophical inquiry into some of these moral devaluations in Africa, it is essential to explore the foundational works of prominent scholars who have offered critical insights into this topic. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*<sup>71</sup> provides a powerful narrative perspective on the erosion of Igbo culture and values in Nigeria during colonial times. The implication of Achebe's work serves as a literary testament to the effects of moral devaluation on individual lives and communities, making it a crucial reference in understanding the moral dynamics of Africa's past.

In African context, morality is a relationship that exists between African religious beliefs and ethical systems. This is well argued by Mbiti that; "African moral values are deeply rooted in spirituality, and any examination of moral devaluation must consider the impact of changing religious landscapes on ethical conduct."<sup>72</sup> The implication of the above is that, Africa moral value that is being connected to religion obligation has no place to be justified again with the advent of Western religion. In other words, the advent of western religion had negatively affected our moral standard. This foundational framework in Mbiti's philosophy continues to influence contemporary philosophical discussions about morality and religion in Africa.

In a more recent exploration, Kwame Gyekye<sup>73</sup> in one of his paper titled *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* argues in line with John Mbiti to provide a valuable insight on how African culture and identity have been going into restriction day by day all in the name of modernization, biomedical science, technology and religion. Taking a terse look at the Gyekye and Mbiti arguments, we can infer that, contemporary African societies grapple with a host of moral challenges that demand rigorous philosophical scrutiny. Corruption, for instance, remains a pervasive issue in many African countries, threatening social cohesion and economic development. This phenomenon raises fundamental questions about the sources of moral devaluation in Africa, as well as potential philosophical frameworks for addressing and rectifying these issues.

Furthermore, the impact of globalization on African cultures and ethical norms cannot be underestimated. The proliferation of Western values and consumerism poses a challenge to traditional African moral values, prompting African philosophers to explore the compatibility or tension between these value systems.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 322.

## **UPHOLDING MORAL STANDARDS IN AFRICA: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In African cultures and societies, the question of upholding moral standards is of paramount importance. The concept of morality transcends mere guidelines for personal conduct; it forms the foundation upon which a just, compassionate, and harmonious society is built. In this philosophical interrogation, we explore compelling reasons why it is imperative to uphold our moral standards in Africa. Moral standards serve as a binding force in society, fostering unity and cooperation among diverse communities. By adhering to shared ethical values, Africans can bridge cultural, ethnic, and religious divides, promoting social cohesion essential for peace and progress. It is important to note here that, upholding moral standards ensures the recognition and preservation of human dignity. It rejects actions that devalue or dehumanize individuals, promoting a society where every person is treated with respect and fairness, regardless of their background.

Furthermore, in a continent like Africa often plagued by conflicts, corruption, political instability, etc. moral standards provide a framework for peaceful conflict resolution. By emphasizing dialogue, empathy, and justice, etc. for instance, we can work towards resolving disputes without resorting to violence, thereby fostering stability. However, once this is achieved, trust and integrity will be a cornerstone of any functioning society. Upholding moral standards cultivates trust between individuals and institutions. Trust in leadership, governance, and business is crucial for economic growth and societal well-being. Also, embracing ethical environmental practices can ensure prompt sustainable development of Africa's natural resources that are vital for the future generations.

In upholding our moral standards, Africa's moral standing on the world stage will influence its global reputation. Upholding ethical principles enhances the continent's credibility, attracts investment, and strengthens international partnerships for mutual benefit. Moral values encourage empathy and compassion by inspiring individuals to help those in need, reducing poverty, inequality, and suffering across the continent.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our philosophical interrogation of moral devaluation in Africa underscores the need for a nuanced and context-specific understanding. Africa's rich tapestry of ethical traditions, the enduring legacies of its history, and the complexities of its contemporary challenges demand that we approach the topic with humility and empathy. Rather than succumb to simplistic judgments, we should seek to engage in meaningful dialogue that respects the diversity of African moral philosophies and the resilience of its ethical systems.

Moreover, this inquiry challenges us to consider the global interconnectedness of moral issues. In an increasingly interconnected world, the moral dilemmas faced by African societies resonate far beyond the continent's borders. It is incumbent upon the global community to engage with Africa in a spirit of collaboration, recognizing that moral devaluation is a shared concern that transcends geographical boundaries.

As we depart from this philosophical exploration, we are reminded that the quest for moral clarity in Africa is an ongoing and dynamic process. It calls for a commitment to continuous dialogue, critical reflection, and the promotion of ethical values that empower individuals and communities to navigate the ever-evolving challenges of our interconnected world. In embracing this commitment, we honor the resilience and diversity of Africa's moral tapestry, seeking to illuminate its path towards a more just and ethical future.

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## **AUTONOMIZATION OF THE POLITICAL WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF LEGAL REALITY**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

This paper explores ways of defining the political within the framework of legal reality. The relevance of the research topic is due to modern processes of economic globalization, which contribute to the establishment of a neoliberal type of state that transforms the state of exception, turning the exceptional measure into a permanent management technology. Economic globalization raises anew the question of the specificity of the political. It is shown that the dual nature of the state of exception establishes two different ways of interpreting the political. In the first version, the political is defined through the legal boundary, where it relates to the state of full power of the sovereign and/or dictator (Schmitt). In the second version, the political is defined through the boundary indicating the state of exhaustion of legal competence, which corresponds to the situation of a lack of legal rights of homo sacer (Agamben).

**Keywords:** state of exception, the political, absolute subject, sovereign, dictator, homo sacer, bare life.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In contemporary social philosophy, exploring the relationship between the political and the legal is relevant due to the processes of economic globalization and the neoliberal ‘economization’ of all spheres of society. The economic program of neoliberalism blurs the boundaries of nation-states, undermining their sovereignty.<sup>74</sup> A neoliberal type of state is taking shape<sup>75</sup> in which politics is replaced by the police.<sup>76</sup> Scholars define the neoliberal state as a liberal state

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<sup>74</sup> See Bauman, Z. 1998. *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. New York: Columbia University Press; Beck, U. 2009. *What Is Globalization?* Camiller, P. (Trans.). Cambridge–Malden, MA: Polity Press.

<sup>75</sup> Beck, U. 2005. *Power in the Global Age: A New Global Political Economy*. Cross K. (Trans.). Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press.

<sup>76</sup> Ranciere, J. 1999. *Disagreement. Politics and Philosophy*. Rose, J. (Trans.). Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota, 21–42.

governed by the rule of law and guaranteeing compliance with the constitution and state laws<sup>77</sup> on the one hand and as a police state that ensures social order and the safety of people's life on the other hand. The paradox is that a law-governed state begins to use police methods and exceptional means,<sup>78</sup> since it is unable to withstand global economic and financial crises, global pandemics of coronavirus disease, terrorist threats, natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and hurricanes), man-made disasters, etc. Agamben argues that in the recent COVID-19 epidemic special executive orders locked people down in their homes, deprived them of all social relations and reduced their lives to a state of biological survival.<sup>79</sup> All of this indicates that the state of exception is becoming a new form of governance, i.e., from an exceptional measure, it is turning into a permanent management technology.<sup>80</sup>

The stream of announcements about the introduction of a state of exception creates a sense of the total politicization of society, showing the groundlessness of Carl Schmitt's concerns about the possible depoliticization of social life<sup>81</sup>. It can be argued that economic globalization poses anew the question of the specificity of the political, which is no longer defined on the basis of the principle of oppositions in the categories of friend-enemy proposed by Schmitt<sup>82</sup>. While Schmitt, asking the question "What is the specificity of the political?" and/or "What is the political?"<sup>83</sup>, considers the political boundaries of the legal system, in a modern law-governed state that uses the state of exception as a management technology, the question of the legal boundaries of the political becomes relevant.

The question of the specificity of the political turns to the state of exception as a limit concept or boundary concept, which Agamben defines as follows: "The state of exception is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept."<sup>84</sup> However, the state of exception is interpreted by scholars in two ways. On the one hand, it is understood as a legal boundary where the suspension of the rule of law gives special powers to sovereign authority.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand,

<sup>77</sup> Brown, W. 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books, 115–150.

<sup>78</sup> Hardt, M., Negri, A. 2004. *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Press, 26.

<sup>79</sup> Agamben, G. 2021. *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica. Nuova edizione accresciuta*. Macerata: Quodlibet s.r.l.

<sup>80</sup> Benoist, A. 2007. *Carl Schmitt actuel: Guerre «juste» Terrorisme, État d'urgence, «Nomos de la Terre»*. Paris: Krisis.

<sup>81</sup> Schmitt, C. 2007. *The Concept of the Political*. Schwab, G. (Trans.). Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 71.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>84</sup> Agamben, G. 2003. *State of Exception*. Attell, K. (Trans.). Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Schmitt, C. 2005. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Schwab, G. (Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 5–11.

the state of exception is interpreted as a state of exhaustion of legal competence, which creates a situation of emptiness of law.<sup>86</sup>

The dual character of the state of exception provides two different ways of interpreting the political that arise at the boundary of legal reality. In the first case, the political is defined through the legal boundary, where it relates to the state of full *sovereign* power, which can be seen as a state of omnipotence without law.<sup>87</sup> In the second case, the political is defined through a boundary that marks the state of exhaustion of legal competence, which corresponds to the situation of a lack of legal rights of *homo sacer*. The sovereign and *homo sacer* provide a representation of the political as a subjective reality that is determined at the limit of the functioning of the legal system at the moment the state of exception is declared. Here, the decision to declare the state of exception itself acquires a political meaning.

### ABSOLUTIZING THE POLITICAL IN THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

Defining the specificity of the political in the situation of pure law returns us to Carl Schmitt's doctrine, which has not lost its relevance, especially for social philosophy.<sup>88</sup> The interest of researchers in Schmitt's theory is primarily explained by the fact that it contains such categories as state of exception, sovereign decision, dictatorship, which can be regarded as "hermeneutic keys" that allow us to understand the meaning of the political.

According to Schmitt, the "state of exception" is considered as a limit concept that establishes the boundary of legal norms: "Here is where public law stops."<sup>89</sup> The exhaustion of legal norms arises in two situations. Firstly, in the state of exception, when the suspension of the existing constitution is required to justify a new order. Secondly, in an exceptional situation, including such extreme situations as siege, epidemics, economic crisis, etc. Here, the introduction of the state of exception is conditioned by the necessity to return to normal life. In both cases, however, the state of exception is based on the principle of "exception."

The peculiarity of the state of exception is that it cannot be foreseen in advance, since its appearance is caused by exceptional circumstances. In law, the

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<sup>86</sup> Agamben, G. 2003, op. cit., 1-3.

<sup>87</sup> Schmitt, C. 2014. *Dictatorship. From the Origin of the Modern Concept of Sovereignty to Proletarian Class Struggle*. Hoelzl, M., Ward, G. (Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press, 110.

<sup>88</sup> See Benoist, A. 2007. *Carl Schmitt actuel: Guerre «juste» Terrorisme, État d'urgence, «Nomos de la Terre»*. Paris: Krisis; Böckenförde, E.-W. 1991. *Recht, Staat, Freiheit: Studien zur Rechtsphilosophie, Staatstheorie und Verfassungsgeschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; Löwith, K., 1990. "Politischer Dezisionismus (C. Schmitt)". In: Löwith, K. *Der Mensch inmitten der Geschichte*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 19-49; Mouffe, C. 2000. *The Democratic Paradox*. London-New York: Verso, 36-59; Teschke, B. 2011. "Decisions and Indecisions. Political and Intellectual Receptions of Carl Schmitt." *New Left Review*, 67, 61-95, etc.

<sup>89</sup> Schmitt, C. 2005, op. cit., 4.

“exceptionality” of the state of exception means that the content of this concept cannot be fully described in the existing legislation, which cannot list and define all situations that can be attributed to exceptional circumstances. Here, the “exception” explains not only itself as an extreme case but also establishes the limits of the competence of the existing legislation. “The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: It confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception.”<sup>90</sup> Therefore, according to Schmitt, the political in legal boundaries is defined not in the normal state, when the law is in force, providing peace, security and order in society, but only in the state of exception, which has the significance of a limit and/or boundary. The state of exception becomes a situation of transition from legal reality to political reality. In this case, the state of exception regime provides a representation of the political as an exceptional reality.

The state of exception, which is not described in the existing legislation, actualizes the question of the subject, since it always indicates “who” makes the decision to declare the state of exception as a case beyond legal regulation. The subject capable of suspending the constitution endows himself with the highest, law-independent and self-derived right to make a decision. The paradox of such a subject’s position is that he stands outside the normally functioning legal order and at the same time belongs to it, since he independently endows himself with the right to make a decision on the state of exception.<sup>91</sup> It can be said that in the state of exception, such a subject is in a position of *omnipotence without law*, which is seen as a state of pure law. The subject who both suspends the law and has the right to make the ultimate decision possesses full power. At the same time, the subject with unlimited power can only be represented as an absolute subject who presents himself at the moment of making a decision on the state of exception. In legal reality such a subject who has the monopoly of the final decision is called *a sovereign*, whereas in political reality he is called *a dictator*. For Schmitt, the sovereign and the dictator are different names for the same subject claiming the status of the absolute. In the state of exception, political reality becomes autonomous and presents itself as self-legislating power of the one who declares himself a dictator or sovereign.

In this regard, dictatorship is a form of presenting political reality. The establishment of a dictatorship is caused by exceptional circumstances that arise during war, rebellion, siege, revolution, epidemic, economic crisis, when it is impossible to maintain the sovereign integrity of the state by legal means. The abolition and/or suspension of the existing legal condition opens up a space of unlimited power, which is vested in one person or authority, i.e. the one who is in charge in the state of exception and has all the fullness of power. The essence

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 6.

of the political is not determined by legal norms, but rather by special resolutions and decrees adopted during the period of the state of exception, which take the form of laws of revolutionary time, exception decrees and resolutions, administrative orders, etc. This allows us to talk about the political as an 'exceptional' reality, which is self-determined at the moment the state of exception is declared at the point of the subject called either sovereign or dictator.

In this case, Schmitt tries to give the concepts of dictatorship and dictator a positive meaning, depriving them of their traditional negative connotations. He turns to the history of the concept of dictatorship, which he examines starting from the Roman Republic. "Dictatorship was a wise invention of the Roman Republic and the dictator was an extraordinary Roman magistrate, introduced after the expulsion of the kings, so that a strong *imperium* [military power] may still be possible in times of insecurity. This *imperium* was not impaired, like the official power of the consuls, by their collegiality, by the right of the people's tribunes to veto, or by the right of appeal to the people [*provocation ad populum*, i.e. a citizen's right, in the archaic period, to appeal to the popular assembly against certain civil sentences]."<sup>92</sup> Discussing the etymology of the word "dictator," Schmitt emphasizes its literal meaning, according to which a dictator is the one who dictates (*dictator est qui dictat*). Referring to Niccolò Machiavelli's work 'Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius,'<sup>93</sup> Schmitt focuses on Machiavelli's definitions of dictator:

"The dictator was defined as a man who, being independent of the influence of any other institution, was able to issue orders and to execute them immediately, that is, without having to obey other legal remedies ("*un uomo che senza alcuna consulta potesse deliberare et senza alcuna appellagione eseguire le sue deliberazioni*," "a man who could deliberate without consultation and who could act on his deliberations without appeal")."<sup>94</sup>

Schmitt notes that Machiavelli uses the opposition between decision-making and execution in his definition of dictatorship, which goes back to Aristotle: "the dictator can '*deliberare per se stesso*' ['deliberate on his own'], he can take all measures without having to consult any advisory or executive body [*fare ogni cosa senza consulta*'] ['do anything without consultation'], and he can immediately implement legal sanctions [*rechtskräftige Strafen*]."<sup>95</sup> Since the 'gap' between decision-making and execution is eliminated, the question of the reasonableness of the dictator's decisions comes to the fore. If we follow

<sup>92</sup> Schmitt, C. 2014, op. cit., 1.

<sup>93</sup> See Machiavelli, N. 1996. *Discourses on Livy*. Mansfield, H. C., Tarcov, N. (Trans.). Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 71-76.

<sup>94</sup> Schmitt, C. 2014, op. cit., 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Schmitt's logic, it appears that the dictator must be characterized by the highest degree of rationality, the ability to act extremely rationally, subordinating all his passions and desires to reason. In this case, the dictator is the one to whom his reason dictates the order of action, and the idea of dictatorship arises from the superiority of reason, but it is not the reason of the reasoning, but rather of the dictating. "In this case reason cannot make itself evident, it does not argue; it dictates. The irrational is only the instrument of the rational, because only the rational can really lead and act."<sup>96</sup> For Schmitt, reason becomes the source of absolute power, and the dictator embodies the absolute power of reason as a source of rationality. However, the highest degree of rationality is restricted to God only, who alone fully corresponds to the status of an absolute subject. Schmitt constantly refers to God as the ultimate source of the earthly power of the dictator, who knows no one above himself except God. The power of the dictator, derived from God as the supreme substance, is positioned by Schmitt as "power given by God," "divine mission," "God as the source of power," "power dependent on God," "God as the supreme judge of power," etc.<sup>97</sup> Due to its absolute nature, the dictator and/or sovereign occupies a transcendent position with respect to the state and the law. Schmitt personifies the dictator as a political subject by the degree of absolutization of his position, which implies an expansion of his powers.

For Schmitt, *the commissarial dictator* is characterized by the incompleteness of absolute power. This is because the commissarial dictator acts on the basis of a commission given to him by the sovereign, whose envoy and/or trusted person he is. Such commissions include waging war, suppressing rebellion, organizing public administration, etc. The commissarial dictatorship temporarily suspends the constitution in order to protect that same constitution in times of war, rebellion or mutiny as emergencies. "The omnipotence of the dictator rests on his being empowered by an existing organ with constitutional authority."<sup>98</sup> The commissarial dictator acts on the basis of a commission that limits the scope of his powers, since the sovereign can always withdraw the entrusted power and intervene in the actions of his commissioner. In this sense, the commissioner always remains a direct instrument of someone else's will.<sup>99</sup> The commissioner acts not in his own name, but on behalf of and on the orders of the one who retains the supreme sovereign right—the monarch, the emperor, the people, etc. "Consequently this dictatorial power is sovereign, but only as a 'transition'."<sup>100</sup> The essence of the commissarial dictator is that he is an executive commissioner acting on the basis of the situation within the limits of the action commission. However, in a specific situation, the actions of the commissioner are not limited

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 21, 112–113.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 127.

by the law. By making a particular decision, the commissioner ‘completes’ his own existence to the integrity of an absolute subject referring to God.

The expansion of the scope of powers characterizes the activity of *the sovereign dictator*, acting within the framework of sovereign dictatorship as a constituent power that cannot be eliminated by any opposing constitution. The sovereign dictatorship operates in a period of rupture of legal interdependence, that is, in the interval when the old legal order no longer exists, and the new one has not yet been established. Schmitt writes:

“From the perspective of sovereign dictatorship, the entire existing order is a situation that dictatorship will resolve through its own actions. Dictatorship does not *suspend* an existing constitution through a law based on the constitution — a constitutional law; rather it seeks to create conditions in which a constitution — a constitution that it regards as the true one — is made possible.”<sup>101</sup>

In the sovereign dictatorship, the relationship between the constituent power (*pouvoir constituant*) and the constituted power is analogous to the relationship between Spinoza’s generative nature (*natura naturans*) and generated nature (*natura naturata*). The peculiarity of the constituent power is that it is an absolute power unlimited in its powers, since it is not subject to the constitution, but establishes it itself. “On this view, a power founded on the constitution cannot be superior to it, because the latter, controlling as it does both the union and the separation of powers, is its own foundation. Therefore, all constituted powers are opposed to a constituent power, which lays down the foundations of the constitution. This constituent power is in principle unlimited and can do everything, because it is not subject to the constitution: it provides the foundation for the constitution itself.”<sup>102</sup>

The sovereign dictator is the one who assigns himself the task of creating a new constitution as the fundamental law that establishes a new legal order. Acting on behalf of the constituent power – the people, the nation or the class – the sovereign dictator is a dependent commissioner in a formal sense only, whereas his commission is not substantively limited, that is, he can endow himself with any powers he wishes. The function of the subject of a sovereign dictatorship can be performed by a “revolutionary government,” “committee of public safety,” “national convention,” etc. Such a subject acts as one person and has a name: “the name of people’s representative delegated...”

The tasks of the dictator, acting either on an action or on a commission mandate, include the elimination of any political resistance that may arise during war, rebellion, mutiny, revolution, epidemic, etc. The concept of enemy becomes

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 121.

a means of cleansing the territory and population of those who oppose or may oppose the dictator's decision. At the same time, the concept of the enemy varies depending on the completeness of the sovereign power. In case of the commissarial dictatorship, the enemy is identified ad hoc when a threat to national security emerges. The powers of the commissarial dictator allow him to interpret any word or action of a person as a threat to peace and order, and turn a citizen into an enemy, defining him as a rebel, mutineer, terrorist, etc.

Decrees issued during a sovereign dictatorship can declare entire categories of citizens to be enemies of the people, homeland or nation. Such categories of citizens are deprived of any legal protection. The state of exception opens up a space for violence initiated by the dictator's decision, defining all those who are to be physically eliminated. The dictator's actions acquire a repressive character: "But their authority was also extended to arresting all the suspicious people who *might* disturb public tranquillity."<sup>103</sup> For example, during the French Revolution, noblemen, priests who refused to take an oath, moneylenders, speculators and distributors of false information were equated with those who fostered corruption of citizens (*corruption des citoyens*) and subversion of powers and public spirit (*subversion des pouvoirs et de l'esprit publique*). They were declared enemies of the homeland and punished by death.<sup>104</sup> In Russia, during the dictatorship of the proletariat, the categories of citizens outside the law were the non-proletarian strata of the population—the nobility, the bourgeoisie, the clergy, merchants, etc. In relation to these classes, any violence was seen as a reasonable action appropriate to the situation. During the Third Reich, in accordance with the conditions of the state of exception, they identified a part of the citizens subject to immediate physical destruction. At the same time, among the Germans, in accordance with the state's 'sanitary policy,' those categories of the population that fell under the law on the prevention of hereditary diseases were 'cleaned up.' Incurably ill, mentally ill and insane people became internal enemies of the nation, who by their existence violated the health of the nation. The more total, that is, the closer to the state of absolute, the political practice of the dictator becomes in 'cleaning' the territory and population from enemies, the more totalitarian the political reality becomes.

Thus, at the upper boundary of the legal system, the political is defined as the subjective reality of the dictator who possesses the monopoly of the final decision. The dictator is categorized by the degree of absolutization of power, which is personified by the commissarial dictator and the sovereign dictator. At the upper boundary of the legal system, the political reality occupies a temporary and/or intermediate state, which can be represented as follows: legal<sup>1</sup> (an old constitutional order)—political—legal<sup>2</sup> (a new constitutional order).

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 142.

The limit of the completeness of the dictator's sovereign power is expressed by Walter Benjamin's ambiguous concept of 'divine power.' On the one hand, divine power indicates that God forbids people to commit lethal violence against each other, since the main commandment of God is "Thou shalt not kill." "This, however, cannot be conceded. For the question 'May I kill?' meets its irreducible answer in the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.' This commandment precedes the deed, just as God was 'preventing' the deed."<sup>105</sup> According to this logic, the sovereign, by committing violence, turns away from God and thereby loses the divine basis of his power. On the other hand, in the case of necessary self-defense, divine power becomes right-annihilating, that is, permitting violence in the name of human life. "Those who base a condemnation of all violent killing of one person by another on the commandment are therefore mistaken. It exists not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it."<sup>106</sup> Divine power, however, is not grounded in the natural human right of self-preservation,<sup>107</sup> nor does it have the positive-law justification, according to which the state has the right to legitimate violence.<sup>108</sup> In this case, 'divine power' becomes a concept 'cleansed' of the referent that marks the logical limit of reasoning about the political as the absolute reality of the dictator and/or sovereign.

### OBJECTIFICATION OF THE POLITICAL IN THE BARE LIFE OF *HOMO SACER*

In contemporary social philosophy, Giorgio Agamben's approach to the relationship between the political and the legal is based on the interpretation of the state of exception as a state of exhaustion of legal competence, which refers to the lower boundary of the definition of the political. Agamben builds his research on Schmitt's concept and incorporates it into his own interpretation. While Schmitt described the state of exception as a *pleromatic* (from the Greek πλήρης, meaning full, complete) state of the legal system (legal completeness = sovereign power), Agamben describes the state of exception as legal emptiness and calls it a *kenomatic* (from the Greek κενός, meaning empty, emptied) state.

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<sup>105</sup> Benjamin, W. 2002. "Critique of Violence." In: Benjamin, W. *Selected Writings (1913-1926)*. Bullock, M., Jennings, M. W. (Eds.), Schiften, G. (Trans.). Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 250.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> See Hobbes, T. 1999. *Leviathan* (Reprinted from the Edition of 1651). Tuck, R. (Eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>108</sup> Weber, M. 1946. "Politics As a Vocation". In: Weber, M. *Essays in Sociology*. Gerth, H. H., Mills, C. W. (Eds.). New York: Oxford University Press, 77-128.

The declaration of the state of exception creates zones of legal uncertainty or anomie, in which existing rules do not apply and ad hoc decisions that do not have the status of law take effect. At the lower boundary of legal reality, the political emerges where *a lack of legal rights* facilitates the emergence of the bare life of *homo sacer*. Agamben writes: “He is pure *zoē*, but his *zoē* is as such caught in the sovereign ban and must reckon with it at every moment, finding the best way to elude or deceive it. In this sense, no life, as exiles and bandits know well, is more ‘political’ than his.”<sup>109</sup>

The concept of *homo sacer*, which comes from Roman law, refers on the one hand to a sacred person and on the other hand to a rejected and/or cursed person. The exception of the right to dispose of one’s own life and death makes human life defenseless against murder, for which no one will be punished. At the same time, inclusion in the structure of sovereign power makes human life sacred (*vita sacra*). In Agamben’s theory, *homo sacer* becomes a figure opposed to Schmitt’s sovereign.

“At the two extreme limits of the order, the sovereign and *homo sacer* present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative: the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns.”<sup>110</sup>

At the lower boundary, the bare life of *homo sacer* becomes the political subject. In today’s world, the transformation of the state of exception into a management technology leads to the fact that exceptional measures begin to replace legal norms everywhere. The shift of the boundary from the normal rule of law to the state of exception changes the relationship between the norm and the exception. The state of exception becomes a permanent condition of modern states.

“Indeed, the state of exception has today reached its maximum worldwide deployment. The normative aspect of law can thus be obliterated and contradicted with impunity by a governmental violence that – while ignoring international law externally and producing a permanent state of exception internally – nevertheless still claims to be applying the law.”<sup>111</sup>

The permanent nature of the state of exception contributes to the expansion of ideas about sovereign power. In today’s world, the function of sovereign power begins to be exercised by doctors, psychiatrists, experts, scholars, lawyers,

<sup>109</sup> Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Heller-Roazen, D. (Trans.) Stanford: Stanford University Press, 103.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>111</sup> Agamben, G. 2003, *op. cit.*, 87.

priests, camp wardens, that is, all those who make decisions about the bare life of homo sacer.

Expanding the scope of exception allows Agamben to personify homo sacer in the bare lives of those who fall into the zone of uncertainty and whose right to life depends on a special decision. Agamben does not highlight personal lives, but rather certain life situations in which a person comes into contact with law in the medical, legal, civil and other spheres. Through personified bare lives, he shows the different degrees of loss of a person's natural right to both life and death. Homo sacer relates to the lives of refugees, camp inmates and comatose persons.

In the modern world, the *refugee* becomes a concept that encompasses not only people who are literally fleeing from war zones, that is, running from the horrors of war, but also migrant workers and displaced persons who are forced to emigrate from their country due to life circumstances<sup>112</sup>. Refugees are no longer individual cases, but mass phenomena. The refugee is a character who demonstrates that the priority of human rights over civil rights not only questions the idea of citizenship, but also shows that there are simply no universal human rights. Agamben writes:

“The refugee must be considered for what he is: nothing less than a limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link, and that thereby makes it possible to clear the way for a long-overdue renewal of categories in the service of a politics in which bare life is no longer separated and excepted, either in the state order or in the figure of human rights.”<sup>113</sup>

In this sense, a “refugee” is a borderline concept that opens up a legally undefined space of bare life. The loss of a refugee's rights as a citizen (*bios*) of any state brings his fundamental right to life (*zoe*) into the realm of sovereign power that makes the final decision about the person's future life.

The increasing degree of a person's dependence on special decisions of sovereign power can be seen in the example of the bare *life of camp inmates*. Asking the question, “What is a camp? What is its political-legal structure like?”, Agamben concludes that a camp does not arise out of normal law, but out of a state of exception that seeks to become the norm. While criminal law applies in prison, the camp is beyond its jurisdiction. The right to dispose of the bare life of camp inmates is transferred to the sovereign, that is, to the one who makes the decision to let the person either live or die. In the camp, the function of the

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<sup>112</sup> See Agamben, G. 2000. *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Binetti, V., Casarino, C. (Trans.). Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 15-25.

<sup>113</sup> Agamben, G. 1998, op. cit., 78.

sovereign ruler is performed both by the warden, who can kill any prisoner with impunity, and by the “zeks” (=cons) themselves.

When describing the essence of camp life, Alain Badiou refers to Varlam Shalamov’s “Kolyma Tales,” which shows the Gulag as a space of bare life of the Kolyma people, where hunger, beatings, physical and psychological exhaustion, indifference and death become the norm. The supreme power over the lives of camp inmates belonged not so much to the supervisors or wardens, but to the “blatnye” (=members of the highest status group in the informal hierarchy of prisoners), who had nothing human.<sup>114</sup> In the camp, killing a “zek” is not a crime, that is, the right to murder without consequent punishment is fully exercised there.

The bare life of camp inmates is personified by the “Muselmann” described by Primo Levi, an Auschwitz survivor.<sup>115</sup> In this case, “Muselmann” is a term derived from the jargon of concentration camp inmates. “Muselmann” was the name given to inmates in a state of absolute apathy, whose survival was impossible to imagine. On the one hand, humiliation, horror and fear deprived the Muselmann of reason, which serves as the conscious principle of human life. On the other hand, the Muselmann lacked the natural instincts inherent in animals. He represents the “living dead,” demonstrating the indistinguishability of life from death. “Antelme tells us that the camp inhabitant was no longer capable of distinguishing between pangs of cold and the ferocity of the SS. If we apply this statement to the *Muselmann* quite literally (“the cold, SS”), then we can say that he moves in an absolute indistinction of fact and law, of life and juridical rule, and of nature and politics.”<sup>116</sup>

The “gray zone” is represented by the camp located in the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba, which is called the “Gulag of our time.” Individuals with an indefinite status are held in the camp. The Guantanamo inhabitants are neither convicts nor defendants under criminal law. They are simply “detainees” and as such are the object of pure manifestation of sovereign power. According to Alain de Benoist, the Guantanamo prisoners interned without any sentence are not ordinary prisoners convicted under criminal law, nor are they political prisoners or prisoners of war.<sup>117</sup> The Guantanamo Bay camp is essentially an extra-legal zone, abolishing the legal status of internees, who are in a state of bare life and can be subjected to anything. There, torture is elevated to the norm, and sovereign decision-making extends to the life and death of the camp inmate. The murder of a camp inmate may go unpunished.

The absolute degree of dependence on the decision of sovereign power is demonstrated by *the life of a comatose person*. A comatose or overcomatose

<sup>114</sup> Badiou, A. 2018. *Can Politics Be Thought?* Bosteels, B. (Trans). Durham–London: Duke University Press, 44–47.

<sup>115</sup> See Levi, P. 1959. *If This Is a Man*. New York: Orion Press.

<sup>116</sup> Agamben, G. 1998, op. cit., 104.

<sup>117</sup> Benoist, A. 2007, op. cit.

person is called either “newly dead” (neomort) or “pseudo-alive” (faux vivant). The peculiarity of such a life is that the person has completely lost both reactive life functions (consciousness, movement, sensitivity and reflexes) and vegetative functions (breathing, blood circulation, temperature regulation), and brain death has been established. As Agamben suggests:

“And since it is precisely a question not of a natural life but of an extreme embodiment of *homo sacer* (the comatose person has been defined as an intermediary being between man and an animal), what is at stake is, once again, the definition of a life that may be killed without the commission of homicide (and that is, like *homo sacer*, ‘unsacrifice-able,’ in the sense that it obviously could not be put to death following a death sentence).”<sup>118</sup>

The desire to maintain signs of bare life in a corpse is explained by the ability of the body to serve as a repository of donor organs. The right to dispose of the life and death of the faux vivant passes to sovereign power, that is, to those who make the decision that allows for surgical operations to remove organs. The bare life of the faux vivant passes into absolute ownership of the power that nationalizes the body. Thus, the political at the lower limit is defined in an “exceptional” situation that arises where zones of *homo sacer*’s bare life are formed. Here, the political is presented in an objectified state, conditioned by the degree of dependence of bare life on the decisions of sovereign power. In this case, “*homo sacer*” is a boundary concept that cannot be fully attributed to any specific life, but which denotes a political reality.

## CONCLUSION

In the legal reality, the logical limits to the definition of the political are the concepts of “divine power” of the sovereign and the bare life of *homo sacer*, which invalidate further discussions about the political from a legal perspective. While Schmitt’s “divine power” of the sovereign demonstrates the highest degree of absolutization of the political as the absolute reality of the dictator, who in the state of absolutism is deprived of the support of God, Agamben showed the pole of objectification of the political as the reality of *homo sacer*’s life.

At the same time, reaching the limit also has positive consequences. First, reaching the limit shows us that it is impossible and meaningless to derive the modern specificity of the political from the legal forms of state power expressed in notions of the state of exception. Second, the limit can be interpreted as a turning point in research reflection that allows us to go beyond the legal interpretation of the political set by Schmitt’s concept, which opens another

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<sup>118</sup> Agamben, G. 1998, op. cit., 94.

perspective for considering the specificity of the political. Researchers mostly associate such a turn with the possibilities that philosophy possesses to construct a new political ontology. “Brought to the limit of pure Being, metaphysics (thought) passes over into politics (into reality), just as on the threshold of bare life, politics steps beyond itself into theory.”<sup>119</sup> The peculiarity of philosophy is that it allows scholars to take a metapolitical stance.<sup>120</sup> Researchers return to the question of the foundation of political reality. The principle of “exclusion” itself enters the field of philosophical reflection, on the basis of which a new political ontology begins to be constructed. “Excluded” becomes the new name of modern politics.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>120</sup> Badiou, A. 2005. *Metapolitics*. Barker, J. (Trans.). New York: Verso.

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## **FARABI AND TABATABAEI: OPPONENTS OF THE SHIITE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

Islamic theologians have held differing views on ethics. Ash'aris believe that the goodness and badness of actions are solely determined by divine law, while the 'Adliyah (including Mu'tazilis and Shi'ites) assert that these qualities are intrinsic or rational. This means that 'Adliyah believes that even in the absence of religion, humans can distinguish between goodness and badness and they are independent to religions. This belief is so prevalent in Shi'ites texts that students of theology often conclude that anyone who does not believe in the intrinsic goodness and badness of actions (IGBA) is not in Shi'ites boundary. However, this repetitive assertion has obscured dissenting opinions within Shi'ites. For instance, when Morteza Motahhari (an Islamic contemporary philosopher and a student of Tabatabaei), discovered that his teacher did not believe in the IGBA, he reconsidered his mentorship and Motahhari critics his teacher. This article, in addition to examining Tabatabaei's views, traces their roots to Farabi's philosophy. Given that both were Muslim philosophers and Farabi was likely a Shi'ite, identifying this connection can influence contemporary Shi'ite philosophers and create a third way in theorizing Shi'ite ethics. This article employs a persuasive paradigm, a qualitative approach, content analysis method, and library research collecting data method.

**Keywords:** Intrinsic goodness and badness (IGBA); conventional ethics; Tabatabaei; Farabi; Shiite ethical principle.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Research Highlights**

*Shiite Ethical Principle and Opposition:* The article discusses opposition to Shiite views on intrinsic goodness and badness by philosophers like Tabatabaei and Farabi.

*Tabatabaei's Ethical Relativism:* Tabatabaei argues that moral values are not intrinsic but conventional, changing with societal circumstances and contexts.

*Farabi's Influence:* Farabi's philosophy, advocating conventional ethics, maybe influenced Tabatabaei's relativistic stance on morality, though his Shiite affiliation remains debated.

*Proposed Third Way:* The article suggests a middle ground where ethical concepts are intrinsic, but their application is shaped by circumstances. It means that concept and application should have been discussed separately.

In the early centuries of Islam, a diverse array of philosophical schools emerged, each offering unique perspectives on the relationship between ethics and religion. Two dominant schools, the Ash'arites and the 'Adlites,<sup>121</sup> encompassed nearly all intellectual trends of the time. The Ash'arites asserted that the moral quality of actions—whether goodness or badness—is determined by divine law (*shari'a*). In contrast, the Mu'tazilites and Imami Shi'a (collectively known as the Justice Party) maintained that the moral value of actions is grounded in reason, is intrinsic to the act itself, and is independent of divine commands.

Within the Justice Party, it was uncommon to find scholars who advocated a third position, arguing that the moral quality of actions is contingent upon social Conventions or human agreement. This became particularly evident after the publication of Tabatabaei's *Principles and Methods of Realistic Philosophy*. However, upon a closer examination, it became apparent that Farabi, a prominent philosopher, also held views that aligned with a more relativistic understanding of ethics. While Farabi's affiliation with the Shi'a is uncertain, there is substantial evidence suggesting that he drew heavily on Shi'a beliefs in his social and political theories. This evidence will be discussed more in this article. In summary, while the dominant view within Shi'a thought is that moral values are intrinsic and unchanging, there have been dissenting voices, such as Tabatabaei and potentially Farabi, who have proposed more relativistic interpretations.

The scientific gap created by Tabatabaei gave rise to several minor schools of thought among contemporary Shi'a thinkers. Some scholars attempted to reconcile Tabatabaei's views with traditional Shi'a beliefs, arguing that there was no fundamental contradiction. Consequently, they maintained that Tabatabaei had not introduced a new schism. Others, such as the prominent scholar Morteza Mutahhari, explicitly acknowledged the irreconcilable differences and argued that Tabatabaei had deviated from the traditional path. In other words, Mutahhari believed that Tabatabaei had created a new scientific gap by questioning whether the dichotomy between intrinsic and divine morality was the only possible explanation. According to scholars like Mutahhari, the implications of Tabatabaei's views needed further examination. This article aims to propose a third way,

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<sup>121</sup> 'Adlites means followers of "Justice Party," which refers to a broad intellectual movement that emphasized justice and intrinsic goodness and badness, independent of religions. They are opposed to Ash'arites.

reconciling the seemingly conflicting views of Tabatabaei and the mainstream Shi'a tradition.

This study begins by outlining the prevailing Shia view regarding the moral value of human actions, specifically the concepts of *hasan* (goodness) and *qabih* (badness). It then delves into the distinct perspective of Tabatabai, a prominent Shia scholar, examining how his Shia background informs his view and highlighting the intellectual divergence from the mainstream Shia position. The study subsequently traces the historical development of Tabatabai's perspective within Islamic philosophy. Finally, it provides a comparative analysis and synthesis of various viewpoints regarding the subjective or objective nature of moral values, particularly *hasan* and *qabih*, as understood within Islamic thought.

### THE SHIA'S VIEW ON GOODNESS AND BADNESS

Almost in all Shia theological textbooks, it is stated that the goodness and badness of actions are intrinsic. IGBA has remained consistent throughout the different periods of theological writing. After presenting this ethical principle, several examples are provided in the Shia's books. Then, by citing several non-rational examples, the Ash'aris' view is refuted in them (Sabhānī, 2007, 95).

Goodness and badness have several definitions. For instance, an action that is in accordance with the purpose is goodness, while an action that is contrary to the purpose is badness, and an action that is neither in accordance with nor contrary to the purpose is vain (*abaṭ*) (Amadey, Aḥmad Muḥammad, 2002, vol. 2).

Shia scholars offer limited examples of goodness and badness. They consider justice to be good and injustice to be bad. They further divide goodness into actional (*Hosn-e Fe 'lī*) and agentival (*Hosn-e Fa 'elī*). In actional goodness, the action itself is objectively good. However, in agentival goodness, the action is subjectively good (in terms of intention, motivation, etc.). For instance, an individual in a desert thinks to himself that he should plant a metal spike in the ground so that people passing by, can tie their camels and horses to it. The next person, when passing by, falling down due to the spike and removes it so that no one else's foot will get caught on it. Both of these individuals have performed agentially good actions because they acted with the intention and motivation to improve and do good. However, objectively, their actions were contradictory. In summary, according to contemporary Shia theologians, an action is good if it possesses both actional and agentival goodness.

The claim of the IGBA is used in both Shia theology and principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*Uṣūl Fiqh*). In general, if a theologian believes that goodness and badness are intrinsic, he can claim that God's actions are predictable. Since God is just, He does not perform bad actions. However, if he does not believe in IGBA, God's actions are not predictable for the theologian. Because whatever God does

is good. So, believing or not believing IGBA change the paradigm of Islamic knowledges.

Another use of IGBA is in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence discipline.<sup>122</sup> If a jurist believes in the IGBA, he does not fatwa unjust rulings, even if he arrives at an unjust ruling based on the methods of Islamic jurisprudence and his chosen principles. That is, if a jurist with the belief in the IGBA arrives at an unjust ruling, he realizes that there is a problem with his chosen method or the chosen principles and must correct them. Because God is just and does not issue unjust commands or prohibitions. However, if the jurist does not believe in the IGBA, he loses this criterion for testing his rulings and can issue virtually any ruling.

Therefore, the Shia theological view on the ethical principle is the IGBA. This claim is repeated so frequently in theological books that it can be said that there seems to be no other view among Shia theologians on this matter. If someone expresses a view contrary to the IGBA, they are accused of Ash'ari-ism and holding an irrational view. However, Tabatabaei broke through this intellectual barrier in his *Conventions (E'tebārīāt)*, challenging the connection between goodness, badness, and actions, leading to a reconsideration of the relationship between goodness and badness. As a result, he refused the traditional Shia viewpoint about IGBA but he cannot be categorized as an *Ash'ari*.

### TABATABAEI'S PARTICULAR VIEW

Among Shi'ites, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabaei held a particular view on goodness and badness of actions. He did not consider them to be intrinsic or divine, but rather conventional. This means that goodness and badness, in addition to being rational, vary in different circumstances. For instance, in one city, a religious scholar riding a motorcycle with his special clothes may be considered good because it shows his humility, while in another city it may be considered bad because it indicates his poverty due to motorcycle. In the following, Tabatabaei views are explained and categorized. First, the conventional perceptions and the meaning of conventionality from Tabatabaei's perspective are presented. Then, the conventionality of goodness and badness is explained.

Tabatabaei considered conventions to be very important. He believed that distinguishing between true perceptions and conventional perceptions is necessary and crucial, and that the failure to do so has led many scholars astray (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 139). However, what are conventions from his perspective? If one examines his discussions presented in the book *Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, his approach to the issue becomes clearer. He discusses

<sup>122</sup> I do not believe in Islamic science. Because the humanities mostly do not meet science framework. However, I believe in Islamic discipline because they have harmony and system. I used "scientific gap" in the Introduction, because it is an academic term.

his views in the third article on "known and Perception," the fourth article on "The Value of Knowledge," and the fifth article on "The Emergence of Multiplicity in Perceptions." It is natural, then, that the sixth article, "Conventional Perceptions," begins with perceptions and proceeds to conventions. He then introduces conventional perceptions before society and after society. The following part of the present article is according to the Tabatabaei sixth article consequently.

According to Tabatabaei, conventional perceptions are assumptions that the mind constructs to meet its vital needs and have a conventional, contractual, and hypothetical nature, unrelated to reality and the essence of things. Conventional perceptions do not have logical value, while true perceptions do have logical value. True perceptions can be incorporated into philosophical or scientific proofs and lead to philosophical or scientific conclusions. Conversely, one cannot use conventional perceptions in such a way. True perceptions are not subject to the natural needs of a living being and the specific factors of his environment, and do not change with changes in natural needs and environmental factors. However, conventional perceptions are dependent on vital needs and specific environmental factors and change with them. True perceptions are not subject to evolution, emergence, and advancement, while conventional perceptions undergo an evolutionary, emergent, and advanced process. True perceptions are absolute, permanent, and necessary, while conventional perceptions are relative, temporary, and unnecessary (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 138–139).

According to Tabatabaei, between human nature and its natural properties and effects, there is a series of perceptions and thoughts that nature creates, and then with their aim, it manifests its properties and effects externally (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 179). The perceptions and thoughts are the ring between human nature and its natural properties and effects.

After explaining conventions, Tabatabaei concludes, based on the two principles of "striving for life" and "adaptation to the environment" and citing several instances, that many of the things we consider as absolute truths are actually conventional. One instance related to this article is "goodness and badness." Tabatabaei, for instance, says that in the past, traveling by horse and carriage was considered good, but now they are considered bad for travel, and airplanes, cars, and so on are considered good. He concludes that good and bad change with cultures, societies, and progress.

This claim by Tabatabaei has implications for ethics. In ethics, two fundamental issues are examined: First, how are good and bad (goodness and badness) determined? For example, why is "justice good"? Why is "disorder bad"? Second, why does the "should" exist in ethical propositions and what is its relationship with the "is" in ontological propositions? For example, how do we derive the ethical proposition "one should be just" from the proposition "justice is good"? The prevailing view among the Justice party, including Shi'ites, is that the goodness and badness of actions are intrinsic to each action (Meşbah Yazdī, 2010, 74). In this respect, it is very similar to the ethics of some secularists. Unlike Ash'aris,

who attribute goodness and badness to God's commands and prohibitions, Shi'ites consider ethics to be independent of religion. There is no need for a person to be religious to be moral. Even some Shia Akhbarist<sup>123</sup> scholars believe the same based on the following hadiths. Imam Husayn (the third Imam of Shi'ites) said in the last hour before he was murdered: "If you have no religion, at least be free-man in this world" (Ibn Tāwūs, 2005, 140). Imam Ali (the first Imam of Shi'ites) also said that even if we were not called to goodness by heaven and hell, we should still seek moral virtues (Nūrī, 1987, 193). This shows that from the perspective of Shi'ites (encompassed philosophers or Akhbarist), there is no need for religion to understand ethical goodness and badness.

However, in the article "Conventional Perceptions," Tabatabaei explicitly states that goodness and badness are conventional (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 199). Now the question arises whether the conventionality of goodness and badness means that one can disregard ethical propositions and that there is no practical difference between two people, one who acts according to ethical propositions and one who does not. Tabatabaei's answer is negative.

This point arises some disagreements about Tabatabaei's final view on goodness and badness. On the one hand, he states that conventions are mental and from perceptions, and goodness and badness are conventional. On the other hand, he states that goodness and badness are essential qualities or necessary qualities of actions, which seems to be a return to the Shi'ites tradition regarding goodness and badness. In the analysis section of the present article, these seemingly internal contradictions in the theory of Conventions are further discussed.

In his another book, Tabatabaei discusses the relationship between conventions and the ethical "should." From an epistemological perspective, goodness and badness are conventional because they depend on human Conventional perceptions. However, this does not mean that one cannot derive ethical "shoulds" from them. He explains the ontological relationship between conventions and the realities of the world as follows: "The human system is preserved through the imaginary<sup>124</sup> meanings of Conventional things, which appear to be Conventional systems but in reality, and beyond them are natural systems. Humans apparently live in a Conventional system, but in reality, and according to their inner being, they live in a natural system" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008, 28).

Tabatabaei adds that each of these imaginary meanings is based on a reality, meaning that every imaginary limit we assign to a particular instance also has a

<sup>123</sup> Shia Akhbarists were a group of Shia Muslims who emphasized the importance of hadith (sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and 12 Imams) as the primary source of Islamic law and knowledge. They rejected the use of reason and *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) in religious matters, arguing that the Quran and the hadith were sufficient for understanding and practicing Islam.

<sup>124</sup> Imaginary used for *Wahmi* (وهمی). The *Wahmi* propositions has been derived from the *Khayal* world. The *Khayal* world is between material world and rational world. The *Khayal* world is similar to our thought, it has shape but it has no weight and material. So, imaginary proposition means something in our thought, it is a ring between our material perceptions and rational meanings.

corresponding real instance which it derived from it. For example, see the following from William Shakespeare:

“All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances...” (Shakespeare, n.d.)

In above metaphor, “world” and “stage” are in reality; however, the metaphor arises an imaginary meaning. It is the conventional perception. It is not completely separated from reality and it is not completely matches the reality.

Tabatabaei distinguishes between lies and conventions. These imaginary meanings, while unreal, have real effects. Therefore, it can be said that if one of these imaginary meanings were to have an external effect that is not appropriate to its causes and factors, it would not be of this type of meaning and would be a true lie or a true falsehood. It would be meaningless. Therefore, these conventional meanings will never be meaningless (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 159–161). Therefore, he distinguishes between them.

As mentioned before, Tabatabaei explicitly considers goodness and badness to be conventional. He initially provides examples to illustrate his point before generalizing. He says that the sound of a donkey is bad for us but it is good for itself. A foul smell is bad for us but good for some animals. Therefore, goodness and badness are the pleasantness and unpleasantness of the perceptive faculty. Since we must evaluate and consider any action we perform as "necessary," we consider an action we should perform as "good" and an action we refrain from as "bad" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 200–201). Tabatabaei's meaning of "necessity" in the sixth article on conventional perceptions is the same as the "relationship" between the seeker and the sought. For example, a hungry person (seeker) wants food (sought), and based on the aforementioned two principles, he considers it "necessary" to obtain food. This act of obtaining has a "necessity" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 187–188).

Tabatabaei offers a noteworthy point for reconciling his view of the conventionality of goodness and badness with the prevailing Shi'ite view of the IGBA. Tabatabaei states that "goodness," like "necessity," is of two types: First, goodness that is in itself (في نفسه) an attribute of the action. Second, goodness that is a necessary (لازم) and inseparable attribute of the action. Therefore, an action may be intrinsically bad, but if it originates from an agent, its occurrence will necessarily be accompanied by a belief in its goodness (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 201). Therefore, there are intrinsic goodness and necessity goodness. Intrinsic goodness is according traditional IGBA and necessity goodness is according conventionality.

Tabatabaei presents two classifications of conventions. One of them is based on type of generalization. Conventions divided general and particular. Particular

conventions divided to constant (like principle of gathering together) and non-constant (like beauty and ugly parameters).

The second classification is based on the formation of society. He considers some conventions specific to post-societal formation and others as valid even before the formation of societies. For instance, he has identified "necessity," "goodness and badness," "choosing the lighter and easier option," "the principle of employment and gathering together," "the principle of following knowledge," "the contingency of exclusivity," and "the contingency of benefit and purpose in action" as pre-societal conventions. That is, these conventions apply to every human being. For post-societal conventions, he has identified "property," "speaking," "hierarchical relationship," and "equality of parties (non-hierarchical relationship)." These conventions also apply to all societies regardless of their culture. The relevant part to this article is the conventional nature of goodness and badness. Explaining other conventions would deviate from the course of this article and is avoided.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned points, several initial conclusions can be drawn:

a. Goodness and badness, which are the basis of ethics, are conventional from Tabatabaei's perspective.

b. Conventions do not match realities but they are based on realities and are the source of effects.

c. Ethical "should" are considered conventional because they are deemed to be in harmony with the active faculty of perception.

Now, we must address the nature of ethics in Tabatabaei's view. Jawadi Amoli,<sup>125</sup> in the Preface to his translation of *Al-Mizan*, states that Tabatabaei considered certain key verses of the *Quran* guiding lights for the interpretation of many other verses of the *Quran*. In the Introduction to the first volume of *Al-Mizan*, he divides these verses into seven categories (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, 25). Verses with explicit meanings are those with the theme of monotheistic knowledge, as all Islamic matters, including beliefs, ethics, and laws, return to the unity of God (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011a, 135). Based on the aforementioned axis, Tabatabaei rejected any aspect or possibility that contradicted monotheism and accepted any aspect or possibility that was closer to monotheism. Because a monotheistic worldview establishes laws that are in line with the satisfaction of the one God. A polytheistic worldview establishes laws for the satisfaction of idols. Therefore, the various forms of social life are due to the differences in the belief principles of human societies (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011b, 191–192).

However, in some parts of his Quranic interpretation, Tabatabaei considers ethics to be objective and monotheistic due to the monotheistic nature of the universe. For example, Tabatabaei refers to the three schools of ethics and considers the most prominent school to be the one that does not consider ethical traditions

<sup>125</sup> A disciple of Tabatabaei, a contemporary philosopher, jurist, and Quranic interpreter.

for the sake of social status, popularity, or avoiding hell and enjoying heaven, but rather for the sake of meeting the one God (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011c, p. 374). In another example, he considers ethics to be like the stable trunk of a blessed tree that branches out to the sky and always bears fruit, and its fruits are pure ethics (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011d, 52). Therefore, Tabatabaei's view on ethics is directed towards the supernatural and divine aspect of the universe. However, his statements regarding the stability (IGBA) or instability (Conventions) of ethical principles contradict each other.

### THE HISTORY OF TABATABAEI'S VIEW AMONG ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHERS

As far as the present article has investigated, the conventionality of goodness and badness was not explicitly found in the works of Muslim philosophers before Tabatabaei. However, it can be found implicitly. For instance, one can argue that Tabatabaei derived the criterion of goodness and badness from the action. When goodness and badness are not attributed to the action, the criterion of goodness and badness is placed on the agent (actor). As a result, one should seek philosophers who considered the agent (actor) to be more important than the action.

For instance, Farabi, due to his adherence to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, is considered one of the early Muslim philosophers in this regard. Aristotle considered happiness to be the goal of ethics and virtue to be the way to achieve happiness (Nasr, 2014; Suleimenov, Nurgaliev, 2019). Farabi also accepted Aristotle's path and considered virtue to be the agent's way to achieve happiness and the ultimate good. In contemporary terminology, Farabi considered agentival goodness<sup>126</sup> to be more important than actional goodness (Kurmangaliyeva, Azerbayev, 2016; Tanabayeva, Alikbayeva, Alibekuly, 2015). According to Farabi, there are four human qualities that, if cultivated among nations and people of every civilization, will bring about both worldly happiness in this life and eternal happiness in the afterlife. These four qualities are four kinds: theoretical virtues, intellectual virtues, moral virtues, and practical arts (Farābī, 2005, 11). Farabi emphasizes virtues three times more than practical item. He explains these four kinds in rest of the book.

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<sup>126</sup> Agentival goodness is a philosophical concept that emphasizes the moral character or virtue of the agent (the person performing the action) as the primary determinant of the moral quality of an action. In contrast to actional goodness, which focuses on the intrinsic nature of the action itself, agentival goodness suggests that the moral worth of an action lies primarily in the intentions, motives, and character traits of the person who performs it. The agentival goodness is used for God's actions for first time in fifth century of A.H. ('Alam al-Hudā, 2002, 466). After that it used for human's actions.

**AN ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF VIEWS ON THE  
CONVENTIONAL OR NON-CONVENTIONAL NATURE OF GOODNESS  
AND BADNESS**

The author of this article has studied Tabatabaei's article on conventions more than five times and has concluded that Tabatabaei's article has many of the shortcomings in his theory. There are two possibilities. The first is fearing from traditional persons in scholar communities. Husayn Broujerdi asked Montazeri for closing his philosophy classroom and Tabatabaei's philosophy classroom. Broujerdi said to Montazeri that if Tabatabaei will not close his philosophy classroom, Broujerdi will boycott Tabatabaei's philosophy students' salaries. Tabatabaei was under pressure by traditional persons. They closed his philosophy classrooms in Qom (Montazerī, Ḥusayn 'Alī, 1991). Therefore, it is possible that Tabatabaei said something for them that are in conflict with conventional theory.

The second possibility is his lack knowledge about contemporary western philosophy. If Tabatabaei had been sufficiently familiar with Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, he could have better explained his conventions. Tabatabaei was aware of a flaw in epistemology with the paradigm of mind-body dualistic essence, but he wanted to explain conventions while maintaining the dualism of mind-body. However, Edmund Husserl did not adhere to the Kantian dualism and changed the paradigm, founding phenomenology to better explain perception. It is possible that Tabatabaei gained some information about phenomenology through Henri Corbin, a student of German phenomenology. Corbin and Tabatabaei have many meeting with each other. However, Tabatabaei's knowledge of phenomenology was certainly less than that of the current philosophical community in Iran. If he had more knowledge about phenomenology, his conventions' theory will be more coherent. From this perspective, it cannot be said that Tabatabaei's explanation of conventions is the best explanation in the world. However, it is considered out of the box in Islamic philosophy and theology and should be examined within that context.

In this section, the advantages of Tabatabaei's conventions are first presented. Then, their shortcomings are highlighted. Finally, Farabi's view is presented to create a synthesis for this article.

The most important advantage of Tabatabaei's conventions is his rethinking of the nearly 1400-year-old Islamic philosophical and theological tradition on ethical issues. In this sense, it can be said to be equivalent to Gettier's problem in epistemology (Gettier, 1963), which led to rethinking the meaning of knowledge in the 2500-year-old philosophical tradition. Tabatabaei realized the fallacy of the false dilemma in the ethical principle of the Justice party (including Shi'ites and Mu'tazilites). Although he did not explicitly state this, by presenting a path between IGBA and "divine goodness and badness," he draws the reader's attention to this issue.

To present his theory, Tabatabaei initially examines conventional perceptions. He provides several examples to illustrate conventional perceptions and then concludes that there is a set of conventions in the mind that are the source of external effects. He then places goodness and badness under conventions. In this sense, his view differs from both Ash'aris and the 'Adlīyeh (Justice party), who disagreed with each other regarding the origin of goodness and badness. This small but impactful step in rethinking the philosophy of ethics within Shi'ites is particularly significant. The most important positive aspects of his theory have been presented, and in the following, some of its shortcomings are discussed.

In the case of conventions, Tabatabaei inferred certain principles from his generalizations of several examples. For instance, the principle of "choosing the lighter and easier option" is merely an assertion based on his experiences and studies. However, it has counterexamples. For example, people who feel unlucky act contrary to this principle (Desai, 2016). Although he mentions that sometimes goals are attached to this principle and lead to opposite results, it is still expected that when a philosopher proposes a principle, it should be universal and not easily refuted (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 202). Another example is the principle of employment. He says that humans have long brought plants and animals into their service and later their fellow humans, and they still do so (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 202–208). However, this principle also has counterexamples. Someone who sacrifices for others has essentially put themselves in the service of others, acting contrary to the principle of employment. Someone who sacrifices their desires and pleasures for the sake of their lover has essentially put themselves in the service of their lover, acting contrary to the principle of employment. Someone who sacrifices their desires and pleasures for the sake of God has essentially put themselves in the service of God, acting contrary to the principle of employment. Therefore, some of Tabatabaei's principles for creating and shaping the theory of conventions have significant shortcomings.

The next shortcoming of Tabatabaei's theory is its inconsistent level of detail. The level of detail and precision varies in different parts of the theory of conventions. For example, as mentioned earlier, he lacked precision regarding some principles like the principle of "choosing the lighter and easier option," failing to consider counterexamples. He writes about the principle without much care. However, he was more precise regarding goodness and badness. He states that we perceive the sound of a donkey, a foul smell, and a bitter taste as "bad," and we are certain of this in our minds. However, the sound of a donkey is not bad for the donkey itself, and there are animals that enjoy a foul smell and a bitter taste (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 200). Tabatabaei categorizes some goodnesses and badnesses as essential qualities of actions and others as necessary qualities of actions. He does not provide an example for this classification. Therefore, this inconsistency in Tabatabaei's level of detail is also among the shortcomings of his theory. However, since this article focuses on goodness and badness,

and Tabatabaei wrote with precision on this matter, it is possible to compare him with Farabi on this issue.

In summary, this article considers Tabatabaei's theory of conventions to be inconsistent. Tabatabaei initially presents conventions as mental and related to perceptions (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 138). However, he later describes goodness and badness as "two conventional attributes" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 200). The reader expects goodness and badness to be mental from Tabatabaei's perspective, but he surprises the reader by categorizing them into two groups: essential attributes of actions and necessary attributes of actions (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṭahharī, 1985, 201). This means he has once again attributed goodness and badness to actions. One of the perplexing issues for contemporary philosophy researchers is the inconsistencies in Tabatabaei's theory, which are difficult to identify. This article has highlighted these inconsistencies.

Although Tabatabaei did not present a complete theory for goodness and badness, and the fundamental moral principle of Shi'ism, his novel approach to this issue has sparked numerous re-evaluations of Shia's beliefs. This article presents the results of one of the latest re-examinations and reviews of Tabatabaei's perspective. Subsequently, by synthesizing the thesis and antithesis of Tabatabaei and Farabi, a third path for goodness and badness of actions can be derived from Shia's perspective. This synthesis will be presented in the conclusion sections.

As mentioned earlier, Tabatabaei's theory of conventions is inconsistent. To proceed with the discussion, it is necessary to accept Tabatabaei's view that goodness and badness of actions are conventional, meaning they are mental, perceptual, and have external effects.

Farabi's view on goodness and badness is similar to Tabatabaei's in some respects and different in others. The similarity between the two theories lies in their rejection of the IGBA in actions. In this sense, both philosophers oppose the traditional Shia's ethical principle. The difference between the two philosophers is that Farabi considers goodness and badness to be derived from the virtues and vices of the agent, while Tabatabaei considers them to be derived from perceptions and the mind. In other words, Tabatabaei does not solely rely on the mind, as he sees both the mind and reality as involved in perceptions.

Farabi, like Aristotle, considered happiness to be the goal of ethics and virtue to be the way to achieve happiness. He asserts that happiness is an intrinsic desired and does not need any arguments (Farābī, 1992, 37) and he emphasis subjective virtue more than objective actions. In contemporary terminology, he considered agentival goodness to be more important than actional goodness. Farabi considered ethics to be part of politics and the city. He rarely spoke in independent way about ethics.

If we accept the dualism of the subject and object, there are at least four possible scenarios for understanding the relationship between goodness and badness and the subject and object:

1. Both goodness and badness are objective (Traditional IGBA).

2. Both goodness and badness are subjective (Farabi and the virtue origin).
3. Goodness and badness are related to subjectivity and objectivity (Tabatabaei and conventions).
4. Goodness and badness are not related to subjectivity nor objectivity.

Placing Tabatabaei's conventionalism within the above category was somewhat challenging. This difficulty arose not only from the internal inconsistencies within his theory of conventionalism but also from the ambiguous nature (between subjectivity and objectivity) of goodness and badness according to our interpretation of his conventionalism. Since Tabatabaei initially defined conventionalism as mental, it would be illogical to categorize it as non-mental (objectivity). Conversely, given his assertion that conventionalism has objective effects, it would be equally illogical to classify it as purely subjective. Therefore, through a process of elimination, Tabatabaei's conventionalism has been placed in the category encompassing both subjective and objective aspects.

This article proposes a third way (distinct from the Ash'ari and Shia's perspectives) to reconcile the views of Farabi and Tabatabaei and address the shortcomings of both the Ash'ari and Shia's approaches. The article acknowledges the criticisms of the Ash'ari view and proceeds to outline the shortcomings of the Shia's perspective. While rationality in goodness and badness can be attributed to either the subject (agential goodness) or the objective world (actual goodness), solely focusing on the subjectivity, as Farabi does, leads to a loss of a reliable standard for evaluating actions within society. For instance, according to Farabi's subjective view, if someone claims to have killed another person with good intentions, they cannot be held accountable. Conversely, solely considering the objective world as the standard would mean that someone who kills another person in a car accident without prior intention cannot receive a reduced penalty. However, it is evident that intentional and unintentional killings should not carry the same punishment. Finally, if, like Tabatabaei, we attribute goodness and badness partially to the subject and partially to the objective world, we encounter the same problem as Farabi's subjectivism, albeit in a more complex form, since Tabatabaei considers the source of external effects to be conventional perceptions.

The proposed third way is to consider the *concepts* of goodness and badness as intrinsic, but their *instances* as conventional. For example, the concept of justice is good. No one says, "Injustice is good, even injustice against me." However, justice can be realized in different ways in different situations. For instance, justice might be achieved by buying two identical pencils for two twin children in elementary school or by buying a fountain pen for a college student and a toy for a three-year-old child. Therefore, the concept of justice is intrinsically good, but its instances are conventionally determined by different circumstances.

The proposed third way offers advantages over both the Ash'ari and Shia's approaches. Compared to the Ash'aris, it maintains a rational and independent basis from divine law. This advantage facilitates intercultural dialogue.

Compared to the traditional Shi'ites, it offers more flexibility regarding IGBA. In other words, it can more easily justify differences in the evaluation of actions. For example, if person A gives money to the B homeless person, according to the traditional Shia's justifications, the very act of helping someone who appears poor is intrinsically good. However, person A could perform the same action with different intentions, such as showing off, relieving their conscience, buying more drugs and overdosing person B, getting rid of the cash in their pocket, creating positive karma for themselves in the future, increasing the dignity of person B, practicing altruism, fearing hell, seeking heaven, or seeking the satisfaction of God. The traditional Shia's approach cannot explain these different motivations and their impact on the value of the action. However, the proposed third way of present article can differentiate between these cases. According to this approach, the *concept* of giving money to a homeless person is intrinsically good, but its *application* is evaluated based on various conditions, including the intention of person A, whether person B is addicted, the availability of resources in the city, and other factors. Therefore, the third way offers advantages over both the Ash'ari and Shia's approaches and is more practical.

## CONCLUSION

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabaei's theory of conventions has had a significant impact on contemporary Iranian ethics. Numerous articles have been written about the relationship between Tabatabaei's theory and the intellectual tradition of the Justice party (Shi'ites and Mu'tazilites) regarding IGBA. These articles disagree on whether Tabatabaei's view is consistent, contradictory, or in conflict with Traditional IGBA. In this article, by presenting an evidence from Tabatabaei's conventions, the cause of these disagreements is identified as the internal inconsistencies in his theory. Present article has discussed Tabatabaei's view that goodness and badness of actions are conventional, meaning they are mental, within the realm of perceptions, and the source of external effects.

On the other hand, this article examines Farabi as a Muslim philosopher who shares some similarities with Tabatabaei. By synthesizing the views of Tabatabaei and Farabi, it concludes that the dichotomy between rational and divine goodness and badness is a false dichotomy, and a third way can be proposed. This third way suggests that goodness and badness are intrinsically conceptual and independent of religion, but their instances are conventional and dependent on specific circumstances. The advantage of this third way over both the Ash'ari and Shia's approaches is that it is more rational than the Ash'ari view and more flexible than the traditional Shia's view. This increased flexibility allows it to easily resolve the contradictions inherent in the Shia's perspective, as illustrated by the examples provided in the article.

One of the significant implications of this article is a potential decrease in moral dogmatism, particularly among Muslims. By positing that concepts are fixed while their instances are conditional, many ethical disputes rooted in differing moral beliefs can be transformed into areas of discussion and negotiation.

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## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MIND AND BODY IN THE THOUGHTS OF DESCARTES AND MULLA SADRA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Most philosophers have regarded humans as a psychosomatic reality, considering the individual human being as a unity composed of two distinct dimensions: immaterial and material, which are interrelated. However, the manner in which these two distinct substances relate to each other has led humanity to numerous challenges. Hence, Descartes and Mulla Sadra, have attempted to elucidate the relationship between the mind and body. Therefore, comparing thoughts of Mulla Sadra and Descartes regarding the issue of the mind and body, along with the proposed solutions by these two philosophers, can address numerous human inquiries regarding the dual constituents forming the reality of human existence. This article, using a descriptive-analytical method, comes to conclusion that Descartes considered the pineal gland as the primary agent of the interaction between the mind and body, whereas Mulla Sadra, based on the theory of material creation and substantial motion of the mind, deemed the interaction between the mind and body feasible.

**Keywords:** Mind, body, Descartes, Mulla Sadra, dualism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The mind and body, as constituents forming human nature and human existence, have always captivated human thought, relating them to numerous questions about the characteristics of these two substances and their ways of interacting. Therefore, dualistic philosophers have engaged in examining and presenting solutions in this realm, with Descartes as a Western philosopher and Mulla Sadra as an Eastern philosopher among them. Mulla Sadra, a prominent Iranian Islamic philosopher of the Safavid era, synthesized Islamic theology, philosophy, and mysticism, particularly developing the doctrine of "transubstantial motion."

Descartes and Mulla Sadra, through an in-depth analysis of the mind and body, have considered each of these substances possessing distinct characteristics. According to both the philosophers, the mind is an immaterial and thinking substance, deemed original and being the ruler of the body (Raphals, 2021, 69). Conversely, the body is an extended and material substance encompassing mortality, regarded as derivative due to its perishable nature. Hence, both philosophers acknowledge the distinction between the mind and body, leading them to grapple with the challenge of how these two distinct substances relate to each other.

Descartes and Mulla Sadra have proposed differing philosophical frameworks to elucidate the relationship between the mind and body, each seeking to persuade their audience about the interconnectedness of the elements comprising human nature. This comprehensive approach can address many questions and issues posed by humans regarding the reality of human existence and the constituent element according to these two Western and Eastern philosophers. Descartes, in explaining the relationship between the mind and body, introduced the pineal gland as the mediator between the two separate substances, immaterial and material. He believed this gland, composed of the finest part of the blood, facilitated the connection between the mind and body through the animal spirits. Essentially, he regarded these two substances as interacting in parallel through the mediation of the pineal gland, possessing a union of substance (Heller, 2021, 175).

On the other hand, according to Mulla Sadra's approach to the relationship between the mind and body, both substances possess a corporeal creation. According to this approach, the mind initially exists in the state of material perfection and intellectual potentiality due to its corporeal creation, resulting in the shared characteristic of the mind and body, enabling the union of these two substances. Mulla Sadra considered the mind, in its corporeal creation, to possess a substantial motion, allowing the mind to progress in stages, ultimately attaining immateriality. Therefore, Mulla Sadra regarded the mind and body as having a unifying combination essential for existence and life, with their unity being indispensable for their existence. Ultimately, both Descartes and Mulla Sadra perceived humans as a dualistic reality, acknowledging the interaction between both dimensions, although Descartes attributed the nature of this interaction as an enigma, comprehensible without deeper contemplation (Shokri, 2010, 103).

The research that comprehensively investigates and compares the philosophies of Descartes and Mulla Sadra regarding the mind-body relationship and their proposed solutions has not yet been conducted. Some articles, such as *Investigating the Dualism of Mind and Body from the Perspectives of Descartes and Mulla Sadra* (2011) by Mahmoud Shakari and Yarali Kord Firouz Jaii, have primarily focused on examining the views of these two philosophers concerning the duality of the mind and body. However, the proposed solutions of these philosophers regarding the nature of the mind-body relationship have not been the central focus. Similarly, in a paper titled *Critique and Examination of the Relationship between Mind and Body from Descartes' Perspective Using the System*

of *Transcendental Philosophy* (2013) by Ali Karshenas, only the critique of Descartes' perspective was highlighted, neglecting certain crucial aspects of Descartes' thoughts regarding the characteristics of the mind and body and how they relate.

The novelty and distinctiveness of this research lie primarily in its attention to all aspects raised by these two philosophers concerning the characteristics of the mind and body, as well as the nature of the relationship between these two distinct substances. Secondly, it involves an analysis of the proposed solutions by both philosophers and aims to compare their philosophies in this realm. This comprehensive approach can address many questions and issues posed by humans regarding the reality of human existence and the constituent element according to these two philosophers.

This article endeavors to provide answers to such questions through an examination and comparison of the mind-body relationship in the philosophies of Descartes and Mulla Sadra and an analysis of the solutions proposed by these two philosophers:

- What characteristics does Descartes attribute to the mind and body?
- From what principles does Descartes' mind-body dualism originate?
- What is the shared aspect of the mind and body in Mulla Sadra's philosophy?
- How does the mind progress towards perfection in Mulla Sadra's thoughts?
- What is meant by the substantial motion of the mind in Mulla Sadra's philosophy?
- What solutions have Descartes and Mulla Sadra proposed to explain the mind-body relationship?
- What conclusions arise from comparing Descartes' and Mulla Sadra's philosophies concerning the mind-body relationship?

## **TRUTH OF HUMAN EXISTENCE**

### **Descartes**

Among the eminent Western philosophers, Descartes has devoted significant attention to the "truth of human existence" as a crucial subject in his philosophy, because when the human being realizes the true nature of self, he/she can understand the concept of reality (Raj, 2023, 200). Descartes views the reality of human existence as comprising an immaterial mind and a material body, which, through their interaction, bring about human life. Descartes regards the human mind as the authentic substance of an individual. He believes the mind enables thinking, an undeniable characteristic of human existence.

While acknowledging that the truth of human existence involves two substances, the mind and body, Descartes distinguishes between these two

substances. He perceives the mind as a thinking and non-extended substance, while, conversely, the body as a divisible and extended substance that occupies space, distinct from the immaterial and thinking nature of the mind. What assisted Descartes in arriving at this conclusion was primarily Platonic theories initially and his own method of doubt in the second place. Through his inquiries, this philosopher doubted all matters but realized that he could never doubt himself as a thinking substance because "doubting" is itself a sign of thinking. Therefore, by stating "I think, therefore I am," he concluded that even if all matters in the world were subject to doubt, he could not deny his own existence as a thinking entity (Bakhshandeh, 2000, 8). This Descartes' conclusion vividly indicates that despite believing in the combination of the human from two substances, the mind and body, he fundamentally perceives humans as thinking and spiritual beings.

### **Mulla Sadra**

Mulla Sadra is among the Eastern philosophers who consider the examination of the truth of human existence as one of the central themes in the philosophy of the mind. This philosopher views humans as beings composed of a mind and a body, these two substances initially coming into existence together. However, gradually, the mind can ascend through various stages of perfection and, consequently, transcend materiality. In essence, the material body of a human is considered inferior to the immaterial mind. Through a continuous transformation and progress, the mind traverses' various stages until it reaches complete transcendence, becoming an independent and eternal substance. The mind can be seen as an independent substance initially united with the material body. Then, through substantial motion, it progresses from the vegetative mind to the animal mind and ultimately reaches the rational mind, which represents the highest level of the mind in complete transcendence (Mulla Sadra, 1999, vol 2, 259). By achieving this level, the immaterial substance becomes capable of independence from the material body, establishing its inherent nature.

It should be noted that as the mind progresses through various levels of understanding or consciousness, transitioning from one level to another does not entail losing the perfections achieved in the previous level. Rather, the mind advances to higher levels while retaining the accomplishments and qualities acquired in the preceding stages. Due to its pursuit of ultimate perfection and its inherent power of self-improvement, this substance acquires an inexhaustible potential, which contributes to the fundamental essence of the mind within an individual's existence (Javadi Amoli, 2005, 80).

Finally, Mulla Sadra posits that the essence of humanity resides in the mind, viewing it as the foundational source of human originality, with the truth of human existence being composed of both the mind and body. Because he considers this immaterial substance to be fundamental and eternal without a fundamental change, while he has a different idea about the body, he considers material substance (of the body) to be mortal and dependent on the mind due to its materiality.

## THE ISSUE OF THE MIND AND BODY

### Descartes

Descartes introduced the mind and body as two distinct substances in shaping the reality of human beings. He articulates the duality between the mind and body, stating a significant difference between them, as the body is naturally divisible, while the mind lacks any potential for division. He argues that humans always consider themselves a unified reality capable of thought. Though the entirety of their minds is united with their bodies, when a part of their bodily organs incurs damage or is severed, the human being is aware that no part of his/her mind has been affected. Furthermore, he/she is aware that powers such as will, feelings, etc., belong to the realm of the mind since they stem from the human mind. However, it is entirely different when it comes to physical or extended objects, as the mind has the capability to experience and divide each of them. Therefore, Descartes finds such reasoning sufficient to prove the disparity between the human mind and body (Descartes, 1997, 97–98).

In fact, Descartes introduces the body as an extended and divisible entity that, due to the absence of thought attributes within it, can never constitute the reality of a human being. Meanwhile, he defines the mind as an original substance in shaping the reality of a human being due to its possession of thought attributes, which never separate from it. He views the existence of a human as possible only as long as their thought persists, considering the cessation of human thought equivalent to the cessation of their life (Descartes, 1996, 18). Descartes discerns these two substances as fundamentally distinct from each other because of their conflicting attributes, allowing each substance to exist independently of the other (Sepetyi, 2021, 28; Akinola Mohammed, 2012, 100) one of his arguments for this distinction is that whatever can be examined within itself and obtain cognizance independently will have an independent existence. Therefore, due to the capacity for self-cognition and independent knowledge between the mind and body, and through two entirely distinct forms of knowledge acquisition, it can be concluded that these two substances are inherently independent and distinct from each other (Descartes, 2006, 279–280).

Descartes' perspective regarding the distinction between the mind and body arises from three principles: methodological doubt, clear and distinct perception, and divisibility. Following the principle of methodic doubt, Descartes concluded that attaining certain knowledge requires skepticism and re-examination of all previous knowledge, both sensory and rational. After becoming skeptical about all matters (Donkoh, 2016, 70) he regarded only the act of "doubt" as beyond doubt. He reasoned that if he doubts all matters, the act of "doubting," which is a form of thought in his mind, cannot itself be doubted. Through this, he articulated the statement "I think, therefore I am," which serves as the primary basis for proving the existence of the mind and its attributes from Descartes' perspective. He believed that this proposition is an irrefutable truth that no hypothesis can

undermine it (Descartes, 1997, 43–44). Descartes asserted that self-awareness of the human mind occurs through inner intuition and could never consider the mind as a thinking entity constituting the reality of a human and engaging in various thoughts and doubts, nullifying it or doubting its existence. Thus, Descartes deemed doubting, which occurs within a thinking substance called the mind, as indubitable, thereby acknowledging the clear and certain existence of the mind.

Descartes expresses that when a person engages in careful self-examination, they realize that they are absolutely without a body, and the place where they exist is non-existent. However, they can never conceive of themselves not existing; instead, the act of doubting the truth of other things by a person demonstrates their real existence. If the power of thought is taken away from them, even though they might have perceptions about other things, they will have no reason to assert their own existence. Therefore, the thinking person realizes that their reality, an independent and thinking substance, is free from the constraints of place and any material matter. Hence, the human mind, constituting their genuine substance, is distinct from their body (Descartes, 2006, 97). Descartes regards the mind as independent and nonextended due to its thinking and nonextended nature, asserting its indubitable existence. However, he introduces the body as extended, having a locational and temporal existence, justifying skepticism within it due to these characteristics, consequently establishing the distinction between the mind and body while uniting these two substances.

Descartes' second principle concerning the duality of mind and body is clear and distinct perception that is obtained from the mind by a human, while a person can never have a clear perception of the body as a material substance. He asserts that after accepting the existence of God and acknowledging the dependence of all beings on the truth of the Almighty, anything that possesses clear and distinct perception is true, and nothing can shake its validity. As he has acquired knowledge through immediate awareness and the power of thought, he regards this as irrefutable (Descartes, 2006, 90).

This principle of Descartes also relies on the principle of methodic doubt, wherein the lack of doubt in clear matters is considered a proof of their validity. Due to the clarity and precision of perception originating from the mind, accessible through introspective thought and intuition, Descartes distinguishes this non-material substance from the extended body, which lacks the capacity to evoke even a semblance of doubt through its mere spatial and temporal existence.

Descartes' third argument regarding the duality of mind and body is derived from the two previous principles. According to this argument, he considers the mind as thinking, free from any material or immaterial part, while the body as an extended entity, divisible into numerous parts, capable of separation. According to this argument, he considers the mind indivisible and the body divisible, thus concluding the mind and body as contradictory and independent of each other.

According to what has been expressed, Descartes, based on the three principles of methodic doubt, clear and distinct perception, and divisibility, considered

the mind and body fundamentally distinct from each other and did not attribute any common characteristics to them. However, the formation of the human existence from these entities, without any flaw or disturbance in the relationship between these two substances, could indicate a clear sign of similarity and deep connection between these two entities. Descartes, according to his philosophical principles, dedicated all his efforts to prove a real distinction between these two material and immaterial substances, while assuming their relationship. As a result of the numerous questions posed by his followers regarding the relationship between these distinct substances, Descartes attempted to offer solutions in this regard. However, his solutions not only proved ineffective but also led to a deeper confusion, turning the relationship between mind and body into an unsolvable issue in the philosophy of mind. Consequently, due to the failure to explain the nature of the relationship between these distinct substances, Descartes ultimately acknowledged his inability to articulate this type of relationship, naming the manner of their connection a problem and an undiscovered mystery beyond human understanding (Akbari, 2003, 103–105).

### **Mulla Sadra**

According to the foundations of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the mind is an entity characterized by "corporeal creation and spiritual permanence." This means that the mind is a substance initially united with the body, to the extent that without the body, the emergence of the mind would be impossible. After being united with the body and through substantial motion in the stages of perfection, it transforms itself from the vegetative mind to the animal mind, and ultimately to the speaking mind, which is entirely independent of the body (Mulla Sadra, 2001, vol. 2, 259). The mind, constantly evolving, reaches the final stage of corporeality and the initial rank of spirituality (immateriality), where the body is neither purely material nor purely spiritual, residing statically in a specific rank. Instead, the perfection of the body and the power of the mind, due to this unique characteristic, possess the potential for transformation and progression through various existential levels. It can, through substantial motion, reach immateriality and become independent of the body (Mulla Sadra, 1999, 402).

Based on the aforementioned, Mulla Sadra explains the emergence of the mind as initially unified with the body, ultimately differentiating the mind from the body. However, Mulla Sadra's distinction leads to a gradational dualism, in which he can address the issues arisen concerning the substance dualism of the mind and body in Descartes' philosophy. In his gradational dualism, Mulla Sadra regards the mind and body initially as having common characteristics without demanding any distinction, thus resulting in the unity of the two substances constituting the reality of humanity. Meanwhile, Descartes distinctly separates the mind and body from the very beginning, without conceiving any common attribute between these two distinct substances that could facilitate their connection.

Based on this graduational dualism, the mind and body are not like two actual beings placed side by side without any interaction. Instead, they have a longitudinal relationship and are considered different levels of a single reality. Therefore, Mulla Sadra expresses that the relationship of the mind to the body is not like a stone placed next to a human, but rather, the mind represents the perfection of the body, and the body is among the lower levels of the mind. Consequently, the mind and body are not distinct entities but both they are parts of one unified existence. His multiplicity lies in being composed of an immaterial mind and a material body, and their unity lies in their profound connection that prevents a complete separation between them. Therefore, the multiplicity and plurality of the mind and body are compatible with their unity. Mulla Sadra introduces the mind and body as a single entity with two aspects; the secondary aspect is changeable and transient, while the essential aspect is stable and eternal.

Accordingly, the combination of the mind and body is a unified combination where these two existences are together as one, and neither can appear in the world independently of the other. Their creation is intertwined and unified, even though after creation, the mind, due to its intrinsic potential for transformation, can become independent of the body (Mulla Sadra, 1999, 384).

## WAYS OF CONNECTING MIND AND BODY

### **Descartes**

After proving the substance dualism of the mind and body and asserting the deep differences between these two constituent substances of human reality, Descartes attempted to propose solutions regarding the relationship between these two substances. He aimed to respond to the inquiries and criticisms regarding the nature of the connection between these distinct substances since his philosophy on the substance dualism of these entities raised numerous questions. Consequently, Descartes persisted in emphasizing the real distinction between the mind and body, on one hand, and employed all his efforts to highlight their unity and connection, on the other. The fundamental problem with Descartes' theory is that despite his belief in the real distinction between the mind and body, he insists on an intimate and undeniable interaction between these two distinct substances. Nonetheless, Descartes himself was aware of this issue and for this reason, first through the placement of the pineal gland as an intermediary and subsequently through the concept of substantial union, attempted to address this arising problem. However, his solutions failed to convince both his followers and critics. Hence, ultimately, he introduced the mind and body as two distinct substances with a mysterious unity. According to, Descartes left the field open in this matter (Magee, 1987, 92).

### **Pineal Gland**

Descartes initially considered one of the two major human bodily organs, either the heart or the brain, to be an intermediary for the connection between the mind and body. He viewed the heart as the intermediary through which humans experience their authentic emotions and considered the brain as the connector due to its sensory apparatus. However, after extensive research, he stated that neither the heart nor the brain was the bridge between the mind and body; rather, he identified the innermost part of the brain, known as the pineal gland, as the actual connection point. Descartes explained his choice by asserting that the other parts of the brain, similar to the paired bodily organs, should necessarily have a unitary part to unify various imaginary thoughts. Thus, he considered the pineal gland as the unitary part of the brain.

It is worth mentioning that Descartes does not consider the pineal gland solely as the mediator between the mind and body. He believes in the existence of a subtle bodily substance called the "animal spirit" in the brain, acting as an intermediary between the pineal gland and other body parts (Kenny, 1970, 153). He regards the animal spirit as the finest part of the blood, entering nerves and muscles with its rapid movement, facilitating bodily movement. He places the pineal gland in the intermediate section of the brain, above a passage where the animal spirits in the frontal cavities meet those in the posterior cavities, thereby encountering any changes that occur within the pineal gland, precisely responding to the pineal gland's reaction. Consequently, any change in the mind affects the pineal gland, then the animal spirits, ultimately affecting all parts of the body through these two components. Additionally, any action or reaction occurring in the body is transferred to the pineal gland through the animal spirits, resulting in its observation in the pineal gland (Descartes, 1997, 332–334).

Descartes considers the pineal gland as the place of interaction between the two distinct substances, the mind, and body, for two reasons. First, the existence of the pineal gland in the center of the brain and its uniqueness that, due to its singularity, can unify various matters for the two distinct substances. Secondly, the lightness of the pineal gland, which can be very mobile and, acting as a highly sensitive tool, can correctly display the smallest reactive impulses of the mind through animal spirits. Hence, Descartes considers the mutual action of the mind and body facilitated by the pineal gland and through the animal spirit, believing that in this small and light material substance, there exists a kind of influence between the body and the mind, transforming bodily events into mental thoughts and ideas into physical actions (Rezazadeh Joudi, 2019, 213).

### **Union of the Mind and Body**

Among the solutions Descartes proposes for the relationship between the two distinct substances, the mind and body, there is a solution based on bodily sensations that he called "confused awareness" and through these sensations he achieves a union of the mind and body. He believes that humans are composed

of the mind and body in such a way that these two substances are intrinsically united and are not merely adjacent to each other. Without this union, a human would not be human (Cottingham, 1993, 75).

Descartes argues that the position of the mind in the body is not like the position of a sailor on a ship but is far more closely united with the body. Otherwise, when the body is injured, it would not feel pain. Similar to when a part of the ship is damaged and the sailor realizes it through his bodily powers, distinct from the reality of the ship, a human should only perceive this injury through the cognitive power. Also, when the human body needs a drink, it must clearly comprehend it without any vague feeling of thirst. In essence, Descartes, through emotions and sensations common between the mind and body, and during the occurrence of any emotional and sensory actions, asserts the union of the mind and body, while still maintaining the real distinction of these two substances (Descartes, 2006, 48).

### **Parallelism**

According to this approach, the interaction between the mind and body occurs in parallel. Whenever a volition occurs in the mind of a person, a corresponding action also takes place in the body, without the bodily action being a reaction to the mental one or the body being affected by the mind. For instance, when the hand moves towards the eye, another action occurs in the brain resulting in closing the eye. None of these actions, either the movement of the hand toward the eye or the closing of the eye, are the result of a direct relationship between the two substances, the mind, and body; rather, each of these substances independently engages in an action.

Descartes essentially believes that the two independent substances, the mind and body, act in coordination, not in harmony with each other. He posits that whenever the mind engages in an action, simultaneously, a coordinated action occurs in the body without there being a reactive correlation between the mind's action and the body's action or any causal relationship between these two substances. He sees the creation of the mind and body in such a way that when any action arises in one, an appropriate state occurs in the other substance (Descartes, 2011, 401), leading to the coordination of actions taken by each of the two substances that constitute the reality of human beings.

### **Enigmatic nature of the mind-body relationship**

After considerable contemplation on the nature of the relationship between the mind and body as two distinct substances and presenting various solutions in this regard, Descartes introduced the relationship between the mind and body as an enigma that cannot be unraveled. All the solutions proposed by this philosopher raised questions by his followers and led to further criticisms by his critics. Therefore, towards the end of his life, in a letter to Princess Elizabeth, he wrote that the union of the mind and body is among the secrets that need to be accepted without

any deep thought and scrutiny, without being understood (Popckin, Stroll, 1994, 153).

### **Mulla Sadra**

Similarly to many dualist philosophers, Mulla Sadra perceives—despite believing in the constitution of human reality from the mind and body—that these two substances are united each with other. He views humans as a psychosomatic organism where, despite their formation from two relatively different dimensions—an undeniable unity exists between the two aspects of his reality. He postulates this unity as an outcome of the belief in the material creation of the mind and the existence of this aspect of human reality due to its union with the body. He holds the conviction that the mind of the human being will never find the potential to manifest itself in the absence of their body. This is because, despite possessing the potential for immateriality and independence, the mind, in its creation, requires a union with a material body to reach the initial stage of life. Therefore, the material world can never accommodate a purely immaterial substance. Hence, for the mind to be present in this world and proceed through its complementary stages, it must manifest itself in the material body and, after passing through the stages of perfection, attain immateriality and independence from the material body (Malavali, 2011, 91–92).

In essence, Mulla Sadra considers the relationship between the mind and body to be an issue that, after extensive contemplation, presents various solutions regarding the emergence of the mind, substantial motion of the mind, and the union of the mind and body, thereby addressing the audience's inquiries regarding the nature of the relationship between the two constituent substances of human reality.

### **Material creation of the mind**

Mulla Sadra regards the mind as the fundamental substance of human reality, as a substance with levels and potentials for progression. He presented a theory called "Material Creation of the Mind," according to which the mind is not only non-independent at the beginning of creation, but until it passes through the required stages of perfection, it will never have the capability for independence.

According to the foundations of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the human mind is created through union with the body, which, at the initial stage of creation, has the potential for material perfection and independence. This substance, delicately intertwined with the body by God, has been bestowed with inner potentials to facilitate both its own progress towards immateriality and to draw humans closer to the Almighty through righteous deeds.

The predisposed mind of a human, as it progresses through its stages, attains higher degrees of immateriality. Upon completing all stages and achieving the required merit for complete immateriality, it gains the ability for independent existence. In fact, according to this viewpoint of Mulla Sadra, the mind of a human,

created through union with the body, possesses internal capabilities that are never found in pure materiality. Through these capabilities, it can pave the way for its readiness for immateriality and independence from matter (Mulla Sadra, 1999, vol. 2, 343). Thus, by advocating for the material creation of the mind, which holds the potential for immateriality and spiritual perpetuity, Mulla Sadra deems the union of the mind and body feasible. This is because, upon the material creation, the mind possesses attributes related to materiality, and there arises no difficulty regarding the union of two distinct substances.

### **Substantial motion of the mind**

The substantial motion of the mind constitutes the second approach proposed in Mulla Sadra's philosophy regarding the issue of the unity of the mind and body. This approach has been further elaborated in the context of the emergence of the mind since Mulla Sadra perceives the mind, which is initially corporeal, as being capable of attaining immateriality solely through substantial motion.

Substantial motion, first introduced by Mulla Sadra in Islamic philosophy, implies that the substance and existence of the mind are in continuous evolution and development through various stages (Motahari, 2001, vol. 13, 188). This evolution continues until the mind achieves complete immateriality. According to Mulla Sadra, if the human mind lacks substantial motion and innate progression, it would inevitably be perceived as a corporeal entity, contradicting the basis of the mind's transcendence and its actual reality. Therefore, the mind initially emerges corporeally but evolves through substantial motion and the stages of perfection ahead to attain immateriality. This is one of the reasons substantial motion occurs due to the unity with the material body, leading to the mind's progress and spiritual advancement.

It is important to note that no corruption takes place due to substantial motion; rather, the mind merely sheds its imperfections, which are negative attributes that are discarded without compromising its identity, forming a higher degree of real perfection (Javadi Amoli, 1997, vol. 2, 124) than its preceding state.

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, substantial motion and the material creation of the mind have mutual influence and impact. The involvement and control of the mind within the body are intrinsic and originate from the mind's existence, unlike the influence of external factors on the body. Mind's engagement in the body signifies the completion and development of the body's nature, leading to intentional movements and actions made by humans by manipulating the body's organs. Simultaneously, following the principle of positive and numerical interaction between the mind and body, the mind receives reactions from the body (Kareshenas, 2013, 82). Essentially, substantial motion of the mind not only enables its evolution but also becomes instrumental in its profound connection with the body. The mind, in its pursuit of perfection at all stages, requires the influence of the body and unity with this material entity to orchestrate various aspects of human life through a profound union with the body.

### **Unity of the mind and body**

Mulla Sadra regards the relationship between the mind and body as analogous to the relationship between matter and form, in the sense of inseparability. Each this entity is dependent on the other in its existence and life, and without their mutual influence, neither could survive. Hence, according to Mulla Sadra, the body is in need of the entire mind, and the need of the mind for the body, in terms of a defined existence, is a personal one, forming the occurrence of psychological identity. If the body was absent, the mind could never come into being or engage in substantial motion.

By establishing the inseparability of the mind and body, Mulla Sadra considers these two entities to possess a unified combination. According to this combination, the mind and body cannot exist independently; instead, they are united with each other, forming a more complete substance. This substance has not multiple nor distinct existential components; rather, there exists solely one reality (human) which encompasses both the mind and body (Mulla Sadra, 1999, 283). These two components can never be distinct from each other or operate without influencing one another in dealing with human life.

## **COMPARISON**

The truth of human existence and the components constituting the human being remain among the challenging subjects in philosophy and the humanities, continually engaging thoughts of scholars in various scientific domains. Consequently, many philosophers consider the truth of human beings as a compound existence of the mind and body, a perspective that indicates a form of dualism regarding the reality of human beings. This duality has led this group of philosophers to face numerous questions concerning how these two substances relate within a single reality. This situation has transformed the relationship between the mind and body into a complex issue, leaving some philosophers puzzled in responding to it. Nevertheless, they have exerted all efforts to propose suitable solutions to solve the problem of the relationship between mind and body.

Descartes and Mulla Sadra are among philosophers who regard humans as a dual and composite entity of the mind and body, where the mind is an intrinsic substance within this single reality. Through possessing characteristics of transcendence and thought, which are inherent attributes of this substance, the mind regulates many human affairs in such a way that, without this intrinsic substance, the body will remain lifeless. Although these two philosophers share a similar perspective regarding the jewels forming the truth of human existence, they have presented different opinions regarding certain characteristics of the mind and body, as well as the strategies for the relationship between these two substances, making each philosopher's ideas noteworthy.

Descartes, based on his principles, namely, the method of doubt, clear and distinct perception, and divisibility concludes that due to the possession of the faculty of thought, humans can never doubt their existence as a thinking and immaterial substance. Therefore, due to the divisibility of the body and the lack of clear perception concerning it, he concedes to the distinction of the mind from body. Mulla Sadra also accepts Descartes' notion but with a difference: Descartes considers the human essence as immaterial from the outset, while Mulla Sadra regards this essence initially as corporeal and in union with the body. He believes that this corporeal essence possesses the potential for transcendence, which, through substantial motion, can actualize its potential for existence. According to Mulla Sadra's perspective, the relationship between the mind and body can be considered a form of unified combination, wherein these two substances can never independently possess a vital existence from each other. Instead, despite relative distinction, due to the material creation of the mind, they are consistently united.

Mulla Sadra, by presenting the solution of the material creation of the mind, provided an answer to the perennial question of how the distinct substances of mind and body relate within the human essence. Consequently, he introduced the mind as being united with the body in a perfected state and possessing the potential for transcendence from the beginning of creation. However, Descartes, who considered the mind as immaterial from the outset, could not offer a convincing solution regarding the relationship between the distinct substances of mind and body. Despite proposing ideas such as the pineal gland as an intermediary between mind and body, substantial unity of mind and body, or even parallelism, he could not persuade his audience. Consequently, he ultimately considered the relationship between the mind and body a mystery that should not be pondered upon.

In conclusion, Descartes and Mulla Sadra both regarded the truth of human existence as a unified psychospiritual entity. However, they differed in their approach to the interaction between these two substances. Descartes considered the mind inherently distinct from the body, leading to the unresolved issue of the mind-body problem due to his proposed solutions. Conversely, Mulla Sadra, by advocating for the material creation of the mind, explained the distinction between mind and body in a gradational manner, in relation to each other, which led him to avoid the predicament Descartes faced regarding the nature of the relationship between two completely distinct substances.

## CONCLUSION

The issue of the relationship between the mind and body has perpetually occupied the thoughts of philosophers, facing them profound challenges. Some have struggled considerably in their attempts to resolve these challenges, while others

have endeavored to persuade many individuals by presenting plausible solutions. Descartes and Mulla Sadra are among the philosophers who, upon examining the truth of human existence, have considered humans as composite beings of the mind and body. Descartes conceived of the mind as an immaterial substance characterized by thought, created as such from the outset, while he considered the body as an extended substance. This perspective underlies his fundamental distinction between the mind and body. Moreover, while acknowledging the inherent distinction, he perceived these two substances as united through the pineal gland and parallelism. However, this perspective did not address many questions regarding the relationship between these distinct substances. Consequently, Descartes considered the relationship between the mind and body an unrevealed mystery and urged his audience not to dwell on it. Mulla Sadra also regarded the mind as a thinking and immaterial substance, but with a difference: this thinking substance is united with the body and created corporeally.

Through substantial motion and progression through levels of perfection, it achieves its transcendence. According to Mulla Sadra, this substance is in union with the body from the outset, and through substantial motion, this inherent aspect of human essence is introduced as having a potential for transcendence. He believes that the mind requires union with the body for substantial motion because only through their unity can the mind and body attain corresponding perfections. In essence, Mulla Sadra, through solutions such as the material creation of the mind and substantial motion, consistently regarded the mind and body as united, answering the issue of their relationship by elevating the problem of the connection between distinct substances through belief in the material creation of the mind. In conclusion, Mulla Sadra and Descartes considered humans as psychosomatic organisms with two distinct formative dimensions, differing in their approach. Descartes' distinction is substance and actual, while Mulla Sadra's is gradational, uniting the mind and body longitudinally.

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## **VIRTUALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LIFEWORLD. A STUDY FROM THE HUSSERLIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

The virtual world has become an important form of our life. While technology is making the life easier at the same time it is taking away the *life* from us. Here, the question arises, is this an alternate for good or for worse? This study will investigate the concept of virtual reality by exploring the Husserlian probe for imagination. Furthermore, the study attempts to analyse the virtualization of the real world and how the shift from the real to virtual has affected the life of human being. Moreover, the review will target to investigate the meaning of the lifeworld. In the end the study attempts to explore how by following Husserlian phenomenology that saves space for value one could attain a meaningful life.

**Keywords:** Lifeworld, phenomenology, virtualization, technology, value.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21st century, we live in a technologically upgraded world. The clients of computerized portrayals dwell into a virtual world that creates the likelihood to perceive stimulus beyond the physical boundaries. The virtual environment has created a completely new approach of existing that rises above the standard human constraints of being in the world- bringing us to reconsider the question, what it means to be “human” in the sense of “being in the world,” and how having bodies influence that being. Technology is giving the sign of a post-human future without the customary limits of time, space and amount on the accessibility and receptiveness of data and correspondence. To quote Charles Wankel and Shaun Malleck, “The virtual interactive worlds of *Second Life*, with 15,464,773 residents as of October 13, 2008 according to [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com), and *World of Warcraft*, with 10,000,000 subscribers as of January 2008 according to [www.blizzard.com](http://www.blizzard.com), boast populations larger than Sweden” (Wankel, Malleck, 2010, 2). The virtual world which is likewise alluded to as computer based mimicked world (Bartle, 2004) is presently addressed as a reproduction of this present. By elucidating the scenario of the computer based virtual world Maeve Veerapen wrote:

“...by starring at and focusing strongly on a highly active onscreen world, s/he bridges a connection between the mind and the virtual world. As a result, the user seems to be absent, lost in a different world on the other side of the computer screen while the body remains, empty of its essence or mind, in this physical place” (Veerapen, 2011, 83).

Here, the newly formed world is virtual world and the entering body is the actual body. This can be regarded as a post human condition where the consumers of the computerized innovation are yet a being in the world in an epitomized mode—not as a lived body but as a *körper*, unmoved and immobile, lying in the material space.

In this background the study will explore the Husserlian perspective that expected to give the portrayal by exhibiting how the epitomized, intersubjective, and axiological components of experience are coordinated in the pre-intelligent sphere of the lifeworld. Husserl viewed that experience as *consciousness as such* or the *absolute universal consciousness* which is essentially embodied and embedded, participated in a social encounter among subjective and objective elements of meaning and subsequently saving space for permitting things and substances to stay a genuine part of this world (Husserl, 1989). The transcendental subject centered on consciousness is neither the maker of things nor the sole reality as like the lone and austere monad. This subjectivity is basically associated with others by shaping a world which he named as the lifeworld which is primordial, pre-consistent, and intersubjective. Lifeworld as described by Husserl is a pre-reflective, pre-given world always already present in an ongoing life of a human being. Ludwig Landgrebe, one of Husserl’s students wrote, “It is essentially impossible to find men in any “pre-worldly” state, because to be human, to be aware of oneself as a man and to exist as a human self, is precisely to live on the basis of a world” (Landgrebe, 1940, 53).

The lifeworld is both intersubjective and personal. It is a personal universe that contains each person’s historicity and it is open to everyone because, it is an intersubjective reality. But the question may raise here; are we all living in the lifeworld today? Or are we gradually losing that world? Hence, the review takes a stab at returning to the inquiries: “How technological developments have changed the meaning of life in the lifeworld and how the lifeworld has been transformed into a virtualized world? and “Where does it lead to our civilization?” and is there any solution to overcome the situation? The study would try to explore these questions by following Husserlian phenomenology.

## VIRTUAL REALITY. AN INTRODUCTION

It can be said that the concept of virtual reality arises from the work of Plato (424–348 BC). In analogy of his Allegory of the Cave Plato explained that we live in a virtual world and our experiences of natural things and concepts are shadows

of the “Forms,” which are real but unknowable. Virtual reality got gradually popularized through the works of great painters and sculptors and their discoveries of various illusions. Hence, projected reality succeeded in creating virtual reality of supernatural world in the minds of the audience. The present-day computer-based 3D space has been introduced during the time of War. “Admiral Luis de Florez (1889–1962), who fought both in World War I and II, pioneered the use of flight simulators to save pilots’ lives” (Cudworth, 2014, 4). Accordingly, in 1974, *Maze War*, the very first version of first-person shooter game created. Thus, gradually the online gaming communities started to form and virtual space has created revolution in the history of online gaming.

However, the question might come here what is virtual. Or what is the ontological status of the virtual objects? Are they real? Virtual objects are those which are mind-dependent and if mind stop thinking about them then they would cease to exist. Can we say the same thing about the natural objects? No, we cannot because; natural objects are not depended upon the present cognitive activity of any agent. However, one question might come here about the status of the artifacts. Are they natural objects? Or because artifacts are also mind-dependent so, are they similar to the virtual objects? Rudder B. Lynn, in her article already defended the possible difference between natural objects and artifacts.

“Technological developments have made it harder to distinguish between natural objects and artifacts. For instance, so-called ‘digital organisms’ are computer programmes that, like living things, can evolve, procreate, and compete with one another. [...] Are these objects [...] artifacts or natural objects? Does it matter?” (Lynn, 2008, 4).

So, artifacts are not less metaphysically real than natural objects. But, the most important point is that artifacts are mind-dependent like the virtual objects. So, are they the same? No, they are not the same because, artifacts have the ontological status different from the status of virtual objects (Anderson, 2009). The painting of *Monalisa* in my living room and the same painting in my *Second Life* living room are both artifacts, however both the paintings have the different ontological status. The painting of *Monalisa* in my living room is mind-dependent in a very strong sense but it has an objective existence. In general, virtual objects are mind-dependent. They are not real in the non-idealistic sense. They are metaphysically depended<sup>127</sup> upon human cognition and therefore, they are not “real” but “ideal” (Anderson, 2009). This is a created second world, a digital world. We cannot deny that this digitally embedded world shapes our everyday world. According to Husserl, subjects without having concern about the existing surrounded world get immersed into that second world (Brough, 1992). As per Lotz; Husserl uses the term “look

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<sup>127</sup> Metaphysical dependency means the dependency of one entity upon another entity for existence, not merely in a causal sense, but in a deeper, ontological sense.

into *Hineinsehen*” in order to show how the subjects do not merely see something in a picture or in a film, but they feel themselves in the picture or in the film (Lotz, 2007, 174). This is the immersion of the subject into the second world and the objects of this second world are fictional. The objects of this created world might be real but, they are not real in the actual world where the subjects typically inhabit (Aarseth, 2007). Now, the question is, can we bridge this gap between the digital world and our everyday world? By following Don Ihde, Peter-Paul Verbeek and Nicola Liberati it can be said that in case of augmented reality (which is also a digitally represented world) there does not exist two different worlds. Here the subject is not immersed into a “second” world but live in the same world but, they add digital elements to the surroundings. The aim of augmented reality is to make the digital objects part of the everyday world. However, it is established that the intertwinement between the digital and the everyday world is not possible (Liberati, 2017). Even though the digital things are overlaid on the background of the real world, they do not blend in with it like other natural objects do. Even though the digital things are now seen in our surrounding, still, these augmented reality games create “digital fantasies”. Therefore, even if these objects are precisely represented as other common object of this world, they are still a part of the virtual world created by the augmented reality games (ibid).

AR allows the digital objects to be part of the surrounding of the player. In this regard there can be seen a post-phenomenological approach which suggests two kinds of transparencies in order to view the object of augmentation: the transparency of *directionality* and the *noematic* one. The flow of intentionality is directed towards the targeted object mediated by any technical device (Wellner, 2015; Liberati, 2017). Even if we perceive the object through a technical device the content of the object does not change entirely. The object remains identical here and therefore, the subject perceives the object as a common object. Thus, it has been seen how virtual reality as a kind of fictional space has become the new world for us.

### **AN EXPLORATION OF VIRTUAL REALITY THROUGH THE LENS OF HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY**

The virtual realities are nothing but the refurbishing and exercise of the *imagination*. The distinction between “real” and “virtual” in a way depended upon the distinction between “perception” and “imagination” (Warren, 2014). There can be found a phenomenological account of the concept of imagination. According to Husserl, imagination has a distinct kind of intentionality (Warren, 2014). Husserl in his phenomenology accepted the concepts of phantasy and image-consciousness as two fundamental forms of imagination (Geniasus, 2022). The difference between them is the difference of seeing an image in a photograph and having a direct phantasy of an object without any mediation. Image consciousness is also a kind of intentional consciousness that is based on the perception of an object that apperceived as an image, refers to a different object. In contrast, fantasy is a quasi-

perception of an imagined object and is not based on the perception of any object (Geniusas, 2022).

According to Husserl, imagining has its intentional correlates such as imagination of *seeing, touching, smelling* something. We can imagine objects which do exist. They might not exist physically in the present but they have the potentiality to become *real or actual*. Therefore, Husserl regarded the experience of the imagined object as non-actual or unreal rather than non-existent or unreal (Jansen, 2021). Husserl's phenomenology therefore presents imagined objects as only possible but not actual. As per Husserl, image consciousness is different from imagining. By criticizing representationalist account Husserl established that in image consciousness, consciousness is directed towards an awareness of a perceptual object like a photograph, computer screen or a canvas (Jansen, 2021). Thus, Image consciousness is essentially different from imagining.

Image consciousness involves the tripartite structure. They are "image-thing," "image-object" and "image-subject." At first an image is a thing or material object made up of wood or stone etc. which occupies a spatial location. This material thing, then perceived as "image-object," created or constructed according to different styles (Waren, 2004). Then this image while depicts something is called "image-subject," e.g., when I see an image where Monalisa and my best friend are depicted. My best friend is not presented physically in the image but, I see his appearance in the image though not in the same way as he really is. Therefore, it can be said that an image is a manipulated aspect of the real perceptual object.

In order to constitute imaginary worlds and simulated realities we need imagination and image-consciousness. "Husserl's phenomenological analysis of image consciousness lies on the question: what kind of intentionality is responsible for the constitution of images as objects of consciousness?" (Waren, 2004, 100). For instance, neither graphics on my computer screen nor the painting of Monalisa or any picture of my best friend are mental representations or intentional objects mediated by any internal mental representation. In Husserl's view the image-consciousness has similarity with the perceptual consciousness (Waren, 2004, 100). In image consciousness also we perceive images as like we perceive a tree or a house. However, there is a distinction here. In perceptual consciousness we perceive an object, e.g. *a house* as a meaningful object, materially existed in space and time.

However, Christian Lotz criticizes Husserl's theory of image consciousness and claims that seeing something is a process of forming pictures. To quote Lotz:

"I maintain the thesis that pictures are socially and materially constituted manifestations of plastic formations [*Bildungen*] and that Husserl fails to consider the fact that pictures are ultimately made by human beings, and that what we "see" in pictures is ultimately our own shaping power [*Bildungskraft*]" (Lotz 2007, 172).

As per Lotz, Husserl has forwarded a static analysis of pictures. Understanding pictures needs time because “the consciousness of pictures is not an ability with which we are born; rather, it is developed within the first two to four years of life” (Lotz, 2007, 180). A rigorous study of Husserlian phenomenology can very positively address the criticism forwarded by Lotz. Within the framework of genetic phenomenology Husserl mentioned about the temporal horizon of consciousness and maintained that our experience of objects is not static or confined only within the present; it is an active synthesis of our past present and possible future consciousness of the object. Along with the temporal horizon he also talked about the historicity and emphasized upon the importance of the social and cultural aspects in forming the meaning of an object. “The image in art, after all, is a cultural phenomenon, created within a distinct historical horizon and capable of embodying meanings flowing from the religious, philosophical, artistic, and social consciousness of the age” (Brough, 2012, 561).

Husserl further apprehended this image-consciousness as a matter of “double-apprehension.” Because, here in image-consciousness the object is the same object but, we apprehend in different manner. Apprehending an object as image is not a matter of hallucination, neither a matter of illusion. According to Husserl, in a contemporary sense this irreality or image can be understood in terms of virtuality (Lotz, 2007). The image here possesses a kind of givenness or to say virtual manner of givenness. For Husserl, though image-object does not exist inside the consciousness it is not true that image object does not exist outside the consciousness also. Husserl says that *the intended object looks at me from the image*. By this Husserl meant that we become immersed in or drawn into an image. This immersion into an image can be referred to one’s embodiment (Lotz, 2007) As image-consciousness is based on perceptual experience so it involves a phenomenological theory of perception, visual and kinesthetic sensations. Here the question comes if we can speak of an embodied experience within the virtual world from a phenomenological point of view.

In this regard Husserl talks about the quasi-kinesthetic sensations of the imaginary. Even if this is the case there always remains a question how the lived-body can appear and be experienced within the imaginary? Husserl uses the example of touching one’s own hand with the other in his *Ideas II*. The touching hand will then sense different touched hand appearances as objective qualities (Husserl, 1989, §36). The most important distinction is that, despite the body’s objective qualities, such as extension, softness, and smoothness, it differs from ordinary things due to the localization of kinesthetic and tactile sensation on it (Carman, 1999; Zahavi, 2003). Moreover, because the touched hand might likewise feel the touch here in itself, it is not an object of the world but rather an organ of experience. This is what Husserl called “bodily intentionality,” and it refers to the direct awareness of one’s own embodied agency. The relationship between touching and being touched is reversible because here touching may be touched and touched can be touching. Husserl believed this to be the body’s dual-sensation, which gives rise to the

awareness of the dual nature of the body. In this context, Husserl demonstrated the superiority of tactile sensation over visual. Husserl composes, I can impeccably see my eyes in the mirror yet I cannot see seeing of my eyes, it is not like the reversible relationship between touching and being touched and the same applies to hearing as well (Carman, 1999).

Inside the virtual world the body can be seen from a distant point like another extended and material spatial object. In order to experience one's own body as embodied or as a lived-body the localization of tactual sensation is must. There would be confusion if we merge image consciousness and imagination together. As per Husserl, pure imagination is nothing but the "consciousness of not-present" (Carman, 1999). In pure imagination also the consciousness acts but, the consciousness is directed toward its imaginary object. The only difference here is that the imaginary object is not a physical object. Here, the imaginary object is devoid of perceptual experience. As an imagined object, it is neither real nor unreal, because, it is irreal or virtual (Warren, 2014). Here, Husserl again referred to the concept of double-consciousness but in a different way. It can be called "double-consciousness" because in pure imagination consciousness reproduces an appearance of its own activity of perception but, in a modified form. When I imagine seeing an object, I actually do not see an actual object but, it seems to me that I see it. Here, in this case my consciousness directs toward a modified form of seeing or *what it is to perceive an object* (Warren, 2014). This is called the "as if" character of imagination. In my imagination I see the picture of my friend; it is *as if* I have actually perceived her. This indicates the double nature of consciousness. Consciousness exhibits itself in imagining an object which in fact is not sensually experienced but, experienced as irreal. This modified form of consciousness can be regarded as virtual or irreal. Although this consciousness is virtual or irreal it still retains the character of lived experience. In this sense "I" become unknown to myself; just like in video game I become a game player by losing my own determinateness as my body remains in this physical world and my mind dwells in the virtual world (Warren, 2014). This capacity of consciousness can project itself on the life of the other whether real or imaginary. Thus, I experience my imagined ego in a different world like virtual, that is as a fictional modification of my actual ego.

Whatever we perceive or know about ourselves is nothing but a part of virtual reality generated by our brain. In fact, we can know others through virtual reality (Fuchs, 2014). It is a fact that empathetic intersubjectivity always involves certain fictional and imaginative elements. In fact, one can easily say that we connect empathetically with our own imaginations and projections. In result, if our empathy tends to disconnect us from our bodily experiences then it also would loose the contact with others as such (Fuchs, 2014). This results a serious problem of the other becoming an image or a product of imagination, i.e., the *virtual other*. In this regard the question arises how empathy can be transferred from immediate, embodied other to the virtual relations. This transition can be understood from the three modes of empathy, i.e., primary, extended and fictional empathy (Fuchs,

2014). Among these three modes a fictional empathy is the most extreme one; it is extended toward fictional persons or non-personal agents. In fictional empathy one feels for the simulated characters like robots, avatars, portrait of a particular person, characters in films, novels etc. Therefore, it can be said that fictional empathy occurs within the world of our imagination (Fuchs, 2014).

Hence, it can be said that the increasing demands and uses of imagery, illusion etc. converts the lifeworld into an artificial world. As a result, we are gradually losing the empathetic relation with others thereby confronting the hybrid forms of the other as a mixture of appearance, simulation and illusion. Therefore, to avoid this problem of the virtual other one must be able to represent her/his own self in front of the other. If there is no awareness of individuality then the subject might lose his/her own self in perceiving the other. In this regard we can refer to the claim forwarded by Emmanuel Levinas and explained by Thomas Fuchs, according to which intersubjective experience depends on mutual correspondence among different persons. The other can only free me from my imaginings and illusions. Thus, the virtual presence of the other can be invalidated by the physical presence of the other, i.e., through his/her voice, face and glance. Finally, it is to remember that *when others become real for us, we can become real for ourselves* (Fuchs, 2014).

## VIRTUALIZATION OF THE LIFEWORLD AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

It has already been discussed that virtual reality is a fictional space. Now, it is necessary to see how this fictional space has become a real world for us. In order to explore the same, the study will focus on certain recently developed issues of merging virtual and the physical world and finally, how the human body itself got virtualized in the present world of virtual reality.

Presently, the most significant development of the advanced technological world is the concept of metaverse. The metaverse, commonly referred to as the virtual universe, is a digitally created virtual environment where users can communicate with one another and interact with virtual things in the real time. A fully immersive and interactive experience is produced by combining virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), NFTs, and other immersive technologies.

Neal Stephenson first used the term “metaverse” in his 1992 novel *Snow Crash* (Ball, 2022). Although he has not provided any specific definition of the term, he attempted to define the virtual world that permeated, interacted with, and had an impact on practically every aspect of human existence. It served as a location for work and play, for self-actualization and physical fatigue, and for both art and commerce. “The Street,” which Stephenson referred to as “the Broadway, the Champs, Elysees of the metaverse,” at any given time was home to over 15 million human-controlled avatars and covered an area more than 2.5 times the size of the earth (Ball, 2022). Comparatively, in the year Stephenson’s novel was published,

there were fewer than 15 million internet users worldwide (Ball, 2022). While the metaverse is a virtual environment, yet it is increasingly getting interconnected with the real world more and more. As technology advances and the metaverse enters into the mainstream, there are several trends that we can see in the present world (Rustaggi, 2022):

### **i) Integration between virtual and physical world**

At present time there can be seen more integration between the virtual and real. As a result, VR experiences are connected to real-world locations or virtual events take place in actual places. The usage of VR in real estate is one illustration of this convergence. Prospective buyers can use virtual reality to explore a house without really going there. This enables people to thoroughly investigate the property without really visiting the property physically.

However, this kind of practices can create certain dissatisfactions to its users. The users must feel the same physical rules throughout the entire simulation and sense synchrony between their (re)actions and the virtual stimuli in order for the creation of a coherent simulation. The users must notice consistency between what is occurring and their expectations as they become accustomed to the integration coherent (Cipresso, Giglioli, Raya, Riva, 2018). Users would perceive the simulation as unrealistic if it lacked coherence since they would have an unfortunate experience, the simulation wouldn't provide any beneficial results, and it would produce negative effects like *cybersickness*.<sup>128</sup>

### **ii) Use of avatars and the rise of virtual influencers**

In the metaverse, avatars are digital representations of users. Presently avatars are becoming more realistic and customizable. Users may communicate with others in the metaverse in a more personalized way by using avatars to express themselves (Maloney, Freeman, Robb, 2021). They may also be used to represent users at online meetings or events and allow users to remain anonymous, if desired. On the other hand, digital avatars are called virtual influencers who have tremendous followers in social media. By time these virtual influencers have got more perfections and sophistications. Therefore, in order to promote their goods or services, various brands in the market use virtual influencers. They provide a special means for businesses to connect with their targeted audience, and as technology advances, they are gradually getting more successful (Maloney, Freeman, Robb, 2021).

However, the concept of virtual avatar creates various issues and challenges in the real world. Virtual avatars may not always affect users in positive ways; some researches have indicated that inhabiting a black avatar in particular contexts can enhance latent racial bias, suggesting that virtual avatars may not always have a favorable impact on users. Since, virtual avatars might influence our thoughts and

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<sup>128</sup> The unease and gloom brought on by the discrepancy between seen and anticipated sensory inputs.

actions. Avatars can be a useful tool for safeguarding one's child's online identity and lowering the danger of impersonation or identity theft. They can, however, also be misused by other users who might do so to their own benefit. The empowerment of the real-life person and the avatar's purported anonymity in the metaverse could lead to the rise of arbitrary use of power to one's own interests at the detriment of the community as a whole (Cheong, 2022).

### **iii) The growth of the virtual and augmented reality gaming and its side effects**

As a form of virtual reality online gaming is the most widely used forms of entertainment in the modern world. It is worth mentioning that the rapid proliferation of mobile industries during the last few decades increases the access to these games (Green, Kaufman, 2015). Online gaming is an important aspect of metaverse.

The virtual reality gaming market has expanded much more. The ability to get fully immersed oneself in a virtual reality (VR) game makes the experience more realistic and interactive. However, the majority of these games are violent (Berger, 2002). As a result, playing these violent games may make a player more aggressive or emotional and extremely hazardous. Although the battles and opponents in these games are not real, they could nevertheless have an impact on children because, they cannot tell the difference between the actual world and the virtual one. Eventually, this leads to the real world becoming virtualized. Virtual games essentially teach us to think virtually. Therefore, it may be claimed that excessive use of these games may cause a person to become socially isolated. As a result, players may exhibit specific psychological disorders as communication disorders, language disorders, or social anxiety disorders (Lahti, 2003). Thus, the virtual space has gradually become a new cool, and playing games in the playground have become an old and traditional practice for many of us.

### **iv) Issues and challenges in socializing through social media**

The everyday invention of new social media platforms has immensely influenced the younger generation. The prevalence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumbler, and many others has expanded immediate socialization to a level that previous generations have never experienced. Social networking sites like Facebook, Snap Chat, and Twitter have altered the way individuals communicate with one another on a regular basis. Communication is generally thought of as a shared experience based on our daily lives. Prehistoric human communication includes cave drawings, smoke signals, symbols, and carrier pigeons. With the development of the typewriter and the telephone in the late 1800s, communication became improved. About a century later, a military endeavor gave rise to what is now known as the internet (Hundley, 2018). Socrates (470–399 BC), in his critical method, focused on advancing discourse via questioning to illustrate the importance of communication. In Socrates' conversation, communication is

considered playing a social role in which both questioner and answerer equally involved in question solving. In a manner, communication broadens and expands the human perspective. Social connections impact on how humans perceive the world as they progress, from early childhood to old age. Socialization in humans starts from birth. Infants learn about basic human emotions including happiness, anger, fear, surprise, and delight from their interactions with parents and siblings in the first few weeks of life. Children begin to develop social skills including self-control, sharing, and connection building as they are exposed to influences outside the family (Hundley, 2018). This highlights the value of social interaction. In the health and wellness magazine *Health Scope*, Juliet Thomas, forwarded certain aftereffects of constant exposure to social media. She said that social media creates anxiety and impatience among the younger generation (Faulkner, 2017). Social media provides comfortable situation to adolescents while interacting in a conflict like situation. However, because they have less experience with it, adolescents feel more uneasy when confronted with the same disagreement in person than older generations do. Similarly, there are various problems that adolescents face in using social media platform. Cooking, playing sports, or participating in school organizations are all excellent methods to practice patience in social contexts. These are all “real-life” activities that produce results. There is something unique and insightful when people meet face to face and read one another’s body language that social media communication has been eliminated from adolescents’ socialization (Faulkner, 2017).

#### **v) Humanity in the age of artificial intelligence**

Google’s CEO Sundar Pichai said that “Artificial Intelligence will save us not destroy us” (Parker, 2018) While Pichai was optimistic some notable thinkers like Hawking warned about the danger of AI. AI has the capacity to destroy the mankind. AI has created an atmosphere where human interventions are getting meaningless day by day. Robots that are powered by artificial intelligence are getting better and better at simulating human interaction. Eugene Goostman,<sup>129</sup> a robot, became the first machine to ever triumph in the Turing Challenge in 2015.

Now, the most important point is, if we are already living in a post-human era to what extent one can become a cyborg? While engaging in a virtual world, the person’s body is located in the real world while his/her mind is located in the virtual world. On the other hand, we get immersed into a virtual world and create a second world for us. Hence, we are already in an identity crisis. According to Merleau-Ponty, the world is not what we think it is; rather, it is what we live through (Ponty, 2012). The human being also exists in the digital world of video games, social networks, and electronic media like television. S/he also exists as a living body in

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<sup>129</sup> Turing Test is said to have been passed by chatbot Eugene Goostman. In this regard, Eugene Goostman, a fictitious 13-year-old boy from Odessa, Ukraine, who struggles with speaking English properly is supposedly passed the legendary Turing Test.

the virtual realm, which can result in a new virtual, libertarian, and beautiful body. This world is frequently chaotic, but it is a new reality. The widespread adoption of the information technology allows us to enquire about the body in the virtual space so the question how body becomes virtual is a very demanding issue to address.

#### **vi) Virtualization and the body**

The technologization of the human body is a demanding topic which grabs almost everyone's attention in a very broad way (Preester, 2011). Human being has machine like aspiration for a post human future in which there is hybridization of human identity as the dream of merging human and machine was already materialized in the new avatars as *cyborgs* (Babu, 2007). When we connect through internet, we not only remain inactive in the physical space in front of a computer but also share our thoughts virtually in cyberspace (Balsamo, 1996). This signals the body existing in two realities simultaneously, i.e., in physical space and in the cyberspace. The digital or virtual self is nothing but the extension of who we are. Being online provides a different way of thinking about who we are and how do we relate to our surroundings. When we try to attribute machine like characteristics to human being, we start to understand the relation between human and technology (Balsamo, 1996). Technology performs many tasks on our behalf and therefore, we treat the machines as our companion having intimate relation with them. The most prevalent perception is that technology distances us from the real and personified world, whether by providing us with new opportunities to break away from the past methods of political and economic control historically based on the management (property) of the material world (i.e., the bodies of workers producing material goods), or by merely providing us with fresh delusions and untruths (Maria, 2008). Moreover, there is a very sharp distinction between the real person and reel person. However, within the virtual world there cannot be found any distinction. The users of the digital world accept their avatars as human and experience the emotions, frustrations, excitements and joy that their characters were simulating for them. Pierre Lévy, by giving a positive view of virtualization of the body said that the process of virtualizing the body involves reinvention, reincarnation, multiplication, and vectorialisation—a heterogenesis of the human body—rather than dis-incarnation (Lévy, 1998). While there can be seen various opposite views forwarded by authors like Jean Baudrillard, according to whom this virtual information-body has eradicated human essentiality by killing their bodies and their sense of identity (Baudrillard, 1999).

When body remains in virtual space it focuses upon the disembodiment (Lévy, 1998). Disembodiment means allowing the mind to wander in virtual space without the body. The social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, MySpace etc. give us the platform to exhibit ourselves how we want to be seen and understood socially. This can be regarded as a development of the *virtualized body* in virtual space or in cyberspace (Lévy, 1998).

While talking about the virtual body the question arises regarding the adaptability and experiences of the body in the digital space. We live in a world of technology and therefore, cyberspace is anyway anchored in our body and resultantly, we feel like we are moving through virtual reality (Hansen, 2007). Although this virtual experience is affecting our embodied presence still it is true that our bodies in some way already became virtual (Hansen, 2007). The most important point in this regard is that embodiment provides the foundation for virtual reality not because we use our hands and eyes to see and type the computer screen and keyboard but because our embodied experiences restrict the perception and identities that we construct alternatively in the virtual space (Richardson, Harper, 2002). The virtual cannot exist separately outside the realm of embodied experience. Our body actively participates in the construction of the virtual body (Bernet, 1993). In this regard Maurice Merleau-Ponty rejected the Cartesian metaphysics founded on the dualism of the mind and body where human subjectivity is defined as an “isolated ego” or a disembodied thinking substance which can leave the body behind (Grosz, 1994, 89). In order to challenge this kind of disparity with body Merleau-Ponty advanced the concept of body-subject and argued that embodiment is essential to being and to know the world (Richardson, Harper, 2002). As per him it is impossible to divide a human being into parts. We experience the world *through* our bodies along with our senses and thus, we are always open to the world (Richardson, Harper, 2002). Thus, Merleau-Ponty rejected the disembodied interpretation forwarded by Cartesianism in favour of the fact that body is the most important condition of knowledge and experience (Richardson, Harper, 2002).

#### vii) **Privacy and the appropriation of values**

The interrelation between technology and values is an age-old problem. It is amazing to see that technology has completely grasped our life in every aspect. But, at the same time the tension of losing the “person” in human being is also very prevailing among us (Barua, 2001). In other words, we are like trapped in a world where our silent dreams, our thoughts and all other activities are being noticed by an unseen observer (Barua, 2001). In a way now it is possible to intrude the most inner and intimate personal information of anyone in the form of computers. “With computers one can easily invade the privacy of others in a more sophisticated way. This has obvious implications to the moral and valuational implications of the concept of person” (Barua, 2001, 517). It is to be noted that all attempts of intrusion or invasion of our personal information is like treating us as objects. There can be found many incidents that might happen to anyone who is computer unsmart compared to smarter machines. Wade L. Robinson describes such an unfortunate incident where he says:

“After I directed a conference on privacy and the internet, I received a call from a young woman who was extremely distraught. After breaking up with her boyfriend of five years, she began to receive messages by mails, by fax, by phone,

at her office and at home, from strangers from all over the world. The messages ranged from ultra-polite, 'you are an extremely beautiful woman, and I hesitate to introduce myself, but [...] to the unrepeatable.' Unfortunately, the later far outnumbered the former. Her boyfriend had posted nude photographs of her on his website, along with information about how anyone interested might contact her. And so, around the world, many saw the photographs and responded..." (Robinson, 1998, 43).

So, it can be said that with the advancement of internet and communication technology it has become easier to invade someone's privacy to others in a more sophisticated way. With computers around we can now redefine the nature of crimes committed in the cyber space. Thus, consciously or unconsciously we keep redefining ourselves or our privacy in diverse ways and this age-old battle between smart machines that surplus us in strength, speed and in computational and calculative thinking related intelligence tests, and us, the pale counterparts of these machines, their human users, is re-vitalized time and again.

### **THE HUSSERLIAN KEY TO LEAD A VALUE GUIDED LIFE**

It can be said that as a result of the emergent scientific innovations we the humans tend to forget the world of our usual correspondence and in some way the touch of the lifeworld which is real for us has got departed from us. Somehow, we forgot our lifeworld and started to dwell into the virtual world. Consequently, virtual reality has become real for us and we tend to replace the lifeworld with the virtual world. The most crucial thing to keep in mind is that the lifeworld is the pre-given world in which living means to be free from bias against other people, societies, states, countries, cultures, etc. Here, relationships are very precious, individuals equally feel pain in all bad days and life is essentially celebrated in all the joyful moments. So, to address the questions raised in the introduction it can be said that virtualization of the lifeworld has changed every aspect of our life. Now, by following Husserl who himself had not written anything about technology however, it may be inferred from the interpretations offered by modern Husserlian scholars that he was not against technology. Rather, he wanted technology to be used in a way that would not dehumanize the humanity. A human is an embodied being that coexists in this world with other people. As Maurice A. Natanson rightly says, ego is always "clothed with the garments of society" (Natanson, 1970, 17). Jitendra Nath Mohanty contends that people live in societies rather than an impersonal, objective reality (Mohanty, 2000).

In this context it is necessary to mention here that Husserl himself had not witnessed the present hazardous situation carried out by technological advancements. However, Husserlian phenomenology can well address the situation because, Husserl attempted to resolve the issues brought about by the scientific crisis which

resulted the World War II. Therefore, Husserl in his later phase of philosophical formulation of transcendental phenomenology, introduced the concept of the lifeworld. All facets of human life, including its presence in the world and relationships with others, had been profoundly impacted by the catastrophic aftermath of World War I. In such a crisis, mankind lost its sense of purpose, its sense of community, connectivity, or its capacity for empathy. Husserl was completely destroyed by the war's devastation. The War significantly altered social, political, economic, psychological, cultural, and moral aspects of life in Europe. The loss of the self-reflective attitude of philosophy had generated an epistemological crisis in philosophy. This led to the loss of confidence in science which brought an ethical crisis. The loss of the ideal of presuppositionlessness is not a mere epistemological problem; it is, above all, an ethical one (Borràs, 2010, 14–15).

Therefore, Husserl discussed about the elevation of mankind, which he wrote in *The Kaizo*, a Japanese journal, authored between 1922 and 1924. In the first article of *the Kaizo*, "Renewal: Its Problem and Method," Husserl essentially declined the confidence in scientific temperament and, thereby, declining Europeans' sense of their own significance. Husserl consequently discussed the necessity for a total rebirth or renewal of the ideal of science and philosophy in particular, which would regain the autonomy, the idea of pre-suppositionlessness, or the attitude of the self-reflection (Borràs, 2010). This rebirth or renewal of faith, in Husserl's view, is depended upon philosophy. In order to create a better human world or human culture, Husserl ascribed that obligation to every human being as a part of humanity. This is a renewal of faith in ideals. Thus, by such renewal Husserl asked for that scientific ideal which is rigorous in nature, which is unconditional, presuppositionless, devoid of any dogmatism. Thus, through renewal, Husserl called for the rigorous, unwavering, presupposition-free, scientific ideal which is devoid of any dogmatism. As per Husserl, "living in the lifeworld" means living without any bias and preconceptions. Husserl emphasized the importance of rigorous science that takes into account the human situation or the active human spirit. He then entrusted humans with the task of creating a better human world. Therefore, it may be said that, "Husserl goes on to describe this ought as the responsibility to start searching for the scientific paths that no other science up to now has managed to prepare, beginning with preliminary methodological considerations" (Borràs, 2010, 17). Husserl has emphasised that this new science also has a teleological goal within its purview. This is the "telos" that preserves the possibility of an authentic human being. It is teleological because it must look inside to find its own goals and ideals rather than relying on presumptive external standards imposed from outside. This is the "telos" that has never been prepared by any other sciences. Husserl attempted to advance science in a way, where values play a pivotal role. As a result, he gave the responsibility to human being, who in his opinion should not be a fixed "I" like "cogito," but should always leave room for re-evaluation. Thus, living with others in the lifeworld without any presupposition is called meaningful living as per Husserl.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the study an attempt has been made to find out how virtual has become the real for us in the present world. To answer the questions asked in the introduction the study initially explored the virtual reality. Hence, the phenomenological exploration of virtuality has been explained by exploring the concept of imagination. Thus, it has been found that in imagination consciousness exhibits itself imagining an experience which in real it does not experience but, whatever it experiences experience as irreal which can be regarded as virtual. As per the phenomenological exploration of imagination it has a distinct kind of intentionality which brackets the existence of the object found in imagination. Therefore, the object here is not an actual object neither the representation of a real object, but rather the object here is irreal, whereas irreal is an altered form of consciousness. However, consciousness has the capacity to preserve the lived experience of this irreal or virtual reality. Thus, in the virtual space the imagined ego of myself is experienced as a fictional alteration of my own actual ego. We are immersed into that fictional world as if we are in the real world. We somehow tend to merge the physical and the virtual world together. As a result, we can see the widespread adoption of augmented reality games, metaverse etc. The increasing demands and uses of this virtual world have converted the lifeworld into an artificial world. Therefore, the study has continued to discuss various technological innovations which made the virtual world a part of our everyday life. The study also discussed about various dangerous problems resulted after the extensive adoption of these technologies.

To discuss the issue from the perspective of Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl himself experienced the bitterness of technological innovations after the First World War) it can be said that phenomenology does not contest the possibility of acquiring a "view from nowhere," understood as the theoretical, objective, a-perspectival understanding of things, so long as one continues to search for ways to rediscover the sense of significance and meaning that has been lost and is buried beneath the sedimented layers of the lifeworld. There are various stages of developments in Husserl's phenomenology. Although Husserl himself modified his own ideals at certain stages, but throughout his life he never abandoned the basic aphorism of celebrating the life of human being from a very meaningful perspective. He has been criticised for this but still he always tried to establish the meaningfulness of human life. Human life is impossible without the existence of the world. Husserl therefore, in his *crisis* began his discussion from the experience of the *world*. Husserl regarded this world as the lifeworld which is "the ground of all praxis" (Husserl, 1970a, §37). The lifeworld is that where we "live in accordance with our body and personal way of living without having any geometrical shape or mathematical design inside the brain" (Husserl, 1970a, §37). As per Husserl we live in this lifeworld without any prejudice and presupposition and that is called living a value guided meaningful life. Husserl gave the responsibility to human being to constitute a better human world to live in. He acknowledged the need of empathy in this

regard and called for a categorical imperative, but he did it on a different level by grounding it on the ethical principle of *love* (Smith, 2007). Love for oneself and love for others can be quite important in this sense. Husserl regarded human being as implying a unity, fullness, or concreteness along with all the actualities and potentialities (Luft, 2005). Living a life free of preconceptions and biases signifies living a value guided meaningful and knowledgeable life. It is our duty as *homo sapiens* to collect and interpret all available information into meaningful knowledge despite allowing them to de-humanize us which in turn would help us to become wiser and better human being. Husserl named this way of living “living in the lifeworld.” In the same way, we can follow the Husserlian ideal to get rid of the present turmoil created by the extensive use of technology. As per the Husserlian notion mentioned above, we should not allow technology to dehumanise us. As Husserl said, the responsibility is on us. We shall not allow technology to obliterate our world and our *living* in this world.

Where is the life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us further from God and nearer to the Dust.

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## **HOMO PROJECTUS**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

The article considers the key characteristics of a designing person. In particular, the author describes projective consciousness and the ability to creatively change the world and change oneself. To do this, the author re-evaluates the content of the concept of the project; explores the functions of projective thinking and reflection; refers to the study of the change in time and space of a person living in a constant situation of creating a project. Modern social space and time are strongly turning towards social design, which imposes new requirements on a person—to be not just intellectually developed and pragmatic, but also artistically organized. As a result, a new way of existence and finding oneself is emerging—this is a *homo projectus*, a socially adaptive, enterprising, creative person, who is in a permanent state of changing reality and searching for ways of self-change.

**Keywords:** Project, person designing, functions of thinking and reflection, social design, innovation, creative activity.

### **PROJECT AS A CONCEPT**

The concept of the project (as well as innovation) is a frequently used concept today, but in many cases of word usage and relationships it is vague. The concept of a project (from Latin “*projectus*,” literally—thrown forward). The process of creating a project is the process of making a prototype of a proposed or possible object, state. In technical practice today it is a separate type of scientific and technical activity.

There are stages of design, characterized by certain specifics. The subject area of design is constantly expanding. Along with the traditional types of design (architectural and construction, mechanical engineering, technological, etc.), independent areas of designing human-machine systems (deciding, learning, heuristic, predictive, planning, managing, etc.), labor processes, organizations, environmental, social, engineering-psychological, genetic design, etc. began to take shape. Along with the differentiation of design, the process of its integration based on the identification of general patterns and methods of design activity.

According to the author, a number of connotative definitions can be distinguished in their meaning, bringing clarity and realism to the concept of "project:" a) ideological completeness of the content with a focus on novelty, the existence of the author's approach (or at least individual elements of originality in the choice of methods, setting goals); b) as a more holistic content aimed at achieving a strategic order (drawing up long-term and socially favorable programs); c) pragmatic orientation of the project (applicability, usefulness, feasibility, implementation). On the basis of such an understandable project (scientific and technical, artistic, etc.), it is possible to build forecast models of both individual and social development. When evaluating projects, especially scientific and technical ones, it is important to apply and develop novelty criteria. These include: originality, superiority, prospects, predictability, feasibility, environmental friendliness.

This does not include the so-called "projects," which are based on the imitation of socially significant and useful activities, borrowing and empty imitation, such as mass "cultural" programs—"Voice," projects that develop leadership and/or mentoring. It looks too artificial, imposed from the outside, does not come from the heart. And it looks more like a vanity fair, the satisfaction of ambitions and the rise in the cost of career growth.

### HUMAN DESIGNING: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Genuine projectivity sets a new vector for the development of modern society. A new type of reality is emerging, in which the human being is included. Here the question arises: What qualities are endowed with a designing person, i.e. the person that implements, participates in projects (various kinds)? First of all, this is a new facet of education.<sup>130</sup> These are not just external conditions, or organizational and managerial functions. We are talking about the internal prerequisites, consciousness and behavior of people involved in this process, which changes both the project activity itself and the social environment and people, while new types of relationships arise, new ways of communication, special values, the activity itself and the conditions for its flow change.

First of all, we are talking about the formation of a new projective consciousness, which is characterized by high mobility, a different format of information processing, activity, the search for novelty, openness, connection with experience, reflection on it and people's actions. As a result, there is a feeling of possessing information, the ability to "manage circumstances," a sense of power over people and time, expanding social space, gaining new experience.

As a result, the personal characteristics of the individual change. The unknown lures with its expanding prospects. Design consciousness is characterized by a developed imagination (similar to artistic and aesthetic), with a leading or

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<sup>130</sup> Radionov, V.E. 1996. *Non-traditional Pedagogical Design: Proc. Allowance*. St. Petersburg: Publishing House. Center of St. Petersburg State Technical University, 140.

anticipatory effect. But at the same time, these images are not blurred, they are kept at the expense of the methodological component. And also the images may vary, the choice is in favor of the most optimal. This is not a chaotic enumeration of options, but work that is systematic, goal-setting and goal-realizing in nature, when the image itself is restructured and changed in the process (what is the essence of practice, its transformative nature).

Under the condition of high self-organization, discipline, coming from critical reflection, a designing person can be perceived as a real force of social progress. As a result, a clear conceptual structure and even an ideological orientation of the project arises, the horizons of consciousness itself expand. It becomes more mobile, plastic. What defines these qualities? Obviously, the predisposition to design is innate. But the project is organized in view of social perspectives.

We share the view that "missing the very essence design. Design is rooted deeply in practice. With the help of diagramming, rapid modeling, visual images, experimentation, actions, presentation are carried out offers. As a result of these actions, one can not only understand the what is the essence of the problem, but also to find out what is its solution."<sup>131</sup>

Within the framework of scientific and technical activity and the socio-technosphere and space, the problem of the formation of a design imagination arises, when reality is thought differently every time, when images and information can be structured (and restructured), conjugated, articulated, played with them, making an almost infinite number of modulations, performing similar procedures, as in a modular system or constructor. Computer modeling, for example, allows us to see the future object in a 3D format in a holistic way, it can be assembled and disassembled, rearranging the parts until the desired configuration is found. This is initially somewhat costly (in terms of the energy of the idea). But later on, this preliminary work saves time (and other resources), and avoids mistakes.

Thinking, as distinguished by some researchers, is characterized by such qualities as laterality (parallelism), criticality, heuristic, problematic, methodological, reflexive. Lateral (parallel) thinking is designed to generate non-competing ideas. It is able to offer in parallel various options for solving a practical problem or a theoretical problem, thereby working in a brainstorming mode. Including lateral thinking, the project participant uses the incoming information not as a value in itself, but as a means of obtaining the optimal result. This type of thinking may be fallible, but at the end it leads to the right decision. It helps to doubt any conclusion, no matter how correct and justified it may seem.

The functions of project consciousness include worldview, research, information-organizing, integrating, predictive, orienting-regulatory, constructive-transforming, search-heuristic, evaluative-selective.

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<sup>131</sup> Stompf, G. 2011. *Design Thinking—It's Not about Thinking, It's about Doing*; <http://sun.tsu.ru/mminfo/2011/000393746/06/image/06-068.pdf>

The main functions of reflection in the design process are problematization, conceptualization, renormalization of activities, self-determination in the design field. The specificity of the content of knowledge obtained as a result of reflection is due to its: the ability to serve as a measure of already existing knowledge and experience; connection with self-consciousness; methodological nature; problematic character; spiritual filling; sense-generating orientation; an intermediate state that opens the way from the empiricism of experience to the theoretically generalized knowledge.

Being an effective tool for establishing the actual boundaries of knowledge (skills, systems of relationships), reflection simultaneously becomes a universal means of going beyond these boundaries. To do this, you must first stop, interrupt the previous course of thought or activity. In this case, the results of reflection open up the possibility of redesigning methods of action on new grounds.

The reason for reflective reflection in design is the subject of joint activity with others, one's own personality in the reflection of others, a system of relations. Group reflection opens up wide opportunities not only for solving design problems, but also for self-knowledge.

In group project work, the cumulative opinion acts as a kind of mirror that helps the individual to go beyond his limits by creating prerequisites for the formation of a new attitude, position, assessment in relation to himself in the project. As members of the group speak their opinions about each other's personal properties and manifestations, new functional possibilities open up in regulating the dynamics of behavior and personality development. Along with the listed properties, the project type of thinking is distinguished by discipline, the ability to structure, the ability to see the connections within the object and it with the external environment, follow the logic of constructing normalized mental procedures.

### **TIME AND SPACE IN THE BEING OF THE PROJECT**

Time and space begin to be felt and changed under the influence of design activity. The constant lack of time, the feeling of it as the most valuable resource, the compaction due to the fact that the design person works for days, he is passionate about the idea of the Project, he is driven by the deadlines for implementation and the need for reporting, which means receiving recognition and evaluation and continuing the project or obtaining new opportunities.

The development of design entails a number of changes in the worldview of a person. In particular, the designing person's perception of time, space, and himself changes. The designing person feels the compaction of time due to the fact that in the same time period more and more significant events occur that affect his life plans and ongoing projects. The horizons of his being, actions, beliefs and social qualities are largely determined by the logic of the project.

The events experienced in the present time in the perception of the designing person fall into two streams that form different life trajectories: the first (main for him) stream includes events and actions related to the projected future (approaching or moving it away); the second (secondary) is associated with everyday household chores.

Reality, perceived by the person designing and projecting a project, falls into two existential streams: 1) "being-here"—in this existential stream, the designing person is present and creates himself/herself; 2) "being-in-the-world"—in this existential flow, everyday life is associated with the loss of oneself. The person who designs changes the perception of space.

The project becomes for the subject a true reality, a receptacle of meaning, "the house of his being." At the same time, the existing reality is now perceived as something that has not fully taken place, something that can be changed, molded, remade, as a constantly corrected draft of true reality.

Out of chaos and flow, new relationships, options, and social space are born. But the designing person is constantly in anxiety about the future, which is conceived as the desired present. The trajectory of choice uncertainty increases. Experiences for the consequences of the decisions made lead to the organization of an increased measure of responsibility and spur and stimulate the development of design consciousness further. The choice entails awareness of the value of the chosen one, but this does not stop, but makes you move on, being in constant search.

Is human happy in this endless race? This is a difficult question. Everything is determined by his personality and attitude to the processes. As a result of the growth of the scale of project activities, social reality becomes more and more unpredictable and dangerous for a person designing. The social space loses its integrity, becomes a mosaic, consisting of numerous fragments-projects disordered among themselves. Staying in such a space is associated with high risks, requires increased concentration and constant mobilization from a person, which is fraught with overstrain and nervous breakdowns. José Ortega y Gasset emphasizes that "for a person, life is a minute-by-minute change, every moment something new happens, and it becomes different from what it was before, and, therefore, it never unconditionally and completely by itself."<sup>132</sup>

The perception of social space as indefinite and multivariate cannot guarantee any person anything reliable and accurate. A new type of person, whose existential space breaks up into mosaic pieces, was accurately described by the modern English philosopher Ernest Gellner. He called him the modular human that modern society needs. Twenty years ago, before the widespread use of the Internet and the creation of a global information space, a person was more holistic and belonged to a certain culture, being the bearer of its attitudes and values. Now, while maintaining this style of thinking, he simply will not be able to function

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<sup>132</sup> Ortega y Gasset, J.; [http://www.kureda.narod.ru/ortega/ort\\_6.htm](http://www.kureda.narod.ru/ortega/ort_6.htm).

effectively and interact with other people formed in the new culture. According to Gellner, a “temporary” society without clear cultural boundaries provides new opportunities for a designing person. He notes that “for an ordinary person, the boundaries of his culture are ... the boundaries in which he can get a job and social recognition, maintain dignity, citizenship, and the opportunity to participate in the life of society. Staying within these boundaries, he knows the rules of the game and understands what is happening around; going beyond them, he begins to make mistakes, becomes clumsy, not quite adequate, runs the risk of becoming a laughingstock, and stumbles at every step in any business he takes on.”<sup>133</sup>

A mobile position is characteristic of a designing person, variability and a high degree of responsibility when decisions have to be made in a situation of absence or rapid variability of generally accepted moral standards. He is ready for any changes (not to say changeable) in his studies and in his activities. A “new type of person”, able to move freely both inside vertical and horizontal elevators, easily learning the rules of the game in this or that puzzle of social reality, risks his very subjectivity, since the logic of his projects is increasingly determined by the logic of the object. Human interactions with such reality are becoming more and more leveled, superficial, existentially empty. The person of the project in the globalizing world loses himself more and more (feels like an object), and his relations with this world become, in fact, “object-object.”

In the design thinking of a person, there is always a challenge to oneself, which constantly needs to be answered, which implies a mobile position in the world, involving constant dialectical self-denial, self-change. Jean-Paul Sartre calls this mode of existence “being-for-itself,” “we know it by specifically human activity: questioning, denial, regret, etc. This method reveals the insufficiency, non-identity of its carrier to itself. This kind of being “is what it is not, and is not what it is.” Thus, the main content of such being is negation.”<sup>134</sup> The designing person fixes a “defect” in the existing reality or in himself/herself that does not allow him/her to realize his/her need, forms an image of the desired “defect-free” future—an ideal selects and develops technologies to achieve it.

However, he/she cannot be calm in a situation of constant self-change and movement towards an unknown, problematic future. The designer and creator of his/her own future, he/she is forced to constantly deny himself/herself, redesign and rebuild. A designing person cannot freeze in one state, he is forced to develop his abilities, learn new things, improve himself. The constant reshaping of the present “in the image and likeness of the desired future,” the challenge to oneself—this is the reality of the human of the project. Stability for him/her is possible only in constant movement, stopping is tantamount to the cessation of being. Gellner illustrates the existential features of the emerging new human in this way:

<sup>133</sup> Gellner, E. 1995. *Conditions of Freedom*. Moscow: Library of the Moscow School of Political Sciences, 117.

<sup>134</sup> Sartre, J.-P.; [https://librebook.me/l\\_\\_tre\\_et\\_le\\_n\\_ant/vol4/1](https://librebook.me/l__tre_et_le_n_ant/vol4/1).

“A passionate, all-consuming desire for self-creation, for creating one’s own personality and world on one’s own foundations, and not for inheriting them, as it were...” At the same time, the person designing, embodying the image of the desired future into reality, must be aware that in the course of project activities, irreversible changes occur to him/her (the effect of unforeseen consequences of his/her activities is manifested). This can have a boomerang effect. And only in one case there will be no blow—in a situation of self-change and self-improvement. "Projective thinking is a kind of "breakthrough" beyond the framework of everyday life."<sup>135</sup>

The designing person lives in a world that he/she constantly changes, creating himself differently at every moment of time and at every single point in space. His/her personality is mosaic and breaks up into separate fragments. This is due to the fact that each individual point in space needs its own, special qualities, and its own special type of person. A designing person tries to have time to respond to as many challenges of the modern world as possible, assembling himself in different ways for different projects. The social, political and economic upheavals of the modern world have determined a new type of person—one who does not believe in the future, but who does not hold on to the present, who loses socially useful qualities, who is anxious, prone to escapism, who builds his own individual virtual reality. The development of project thinking has led to changes in cultural values and “ontological priorities:” the person living in the project is characterized by the devaluation of traditional conservative values and the emphasis on the values of innovation and creativity. The person of the project is directed to the future, therefore the past and the present seem to him of little importance.

Projecting a new reality and a new own "I," the designing person appropriates the position of the creator. In the modern world, the person makes decisions in situations of free choice, as well as an independent moral assessment: he/she can independently choose hobbies, a profession, a life partner, focusing on his/her own criteria for what is considered right.<sup>136</sup>

But here dangers, mistakes and delusions lie in wait for a person. First of all, he/she must be responsible for the consequences of his/her own decisions. In this regard, his self-perception changes in two ways: on the one hand, his/her self-esteem rises, he/she feels himself the Creator of reality; on the other hand, he/she is haunted by "creature" feelings of anxiety, tension, expectations of failure. The struggle of feelings, opinions. I am a created being and I am the Creator. Along with the emergence of a new type of person—the designing person—we can talk about the emergence of a new way of life, i.e., a design one. The project way of life is characterized by a torn pace: the speed of the life of a designing person increases sharply when he feels himself in the project, and significantly decreases

<sup>135</sup> Gellner, E. 1995, op. cit.

<sup>136</sup> Kosterin, A. 2014. *On the Multi-world Content of Projective Thinking*;  
<http://www.proza.ru/2014/03/18/1082>

when he/she is outside of it. There is no routine schedule here, instead there are implementation deadlines.

The person living a project lifestyle can work for days, performing one or another task within the framework of the project, and then also rest. There is no regularity and stability here. The person is looking for a job that is not tied to a specific place in space: he performs tasks where it is convenient for him/her, and when it is convenient for him/her, but on time. The position in society is measured by the number of implemented and ongoing projects. Everyone strives to make their own project, even a one-time one (album, collection, book). There are no super, mega projects of a collective nature aimed at the future. A person lives in rough outline, in the world of “as if,” the subjunctive mood.<sup>137</sup>

Designing has become fashionable today (from school to university), especially in popular culture. These are pseudo-projecting, replication and imitation of activities.

Design consciousness, therefore, is both direct and indirect ideal modeling of the past, present and future. However, it is often understood only as a model of the past and present, and as conclusions from this reflection of reality. A regulatory attitude is both an assessment (of past states and present facts) and management of future events, that is, it consists in designing goals and actions, objects, processes, relationships, situations necessary to achieve these goals.

Design as the most important function of consciousness, being an indispensable element of labor activity, is the initial beginning of human society, which at the first stage coincided with the objective activity of a person as ideas about the simplest labor operations that arose during the implementation of these operations.

## **SOCIAL DESIGN**

Design, understood in the broadest sense—both as professional design, construction, architectural art, etc., and as any construction of models of the future, the generation of ideals, the creation of a design picture of the world, and as decision-making—is also an element of the activity of creating social institutions, relationships, norms of behavior, socially significant aspects of any human activity, since in such creation the satisfaction of social, human needs is projected. And since it is both a response to the needs of social development, and an instrument of this development, it is conditioned by it and carried out by people both individually and collectively, it is entirely social in its origin, manifestations, features, in its essence. But we can also talk about social design in a narrower sense, as a distinctive feature and a special link in activity aimed specifically at

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

maintaining, developing or changing social relations and situations, i.e. about social design as a special type of activity.

*Social design* in the exact sense of the word is the design of social reality, that is, a special type of design activity. At the regional level, it includes: social planning in labor collectives, designing educational activities, program-targeted development of social spheres, designing social innovations, designing the creation of new social institutions, building new social relations, solving socio-technical and socio-hygienic problems and other social problems in the economy, culture, urban planning, design (for example, eliminating mass aggressive moods of people by eliminating the monotony of the architectural environment is also a task of social design, solved, of course, by professional architects and builders, owners).

The withdrawal of the United States from the crisis of 1929–1933 can be considered historical examples of social design, through a state regulation and the development of public relations in the USSR after World War II. It was also carried out during the period of the so-called "stagnation," which, in fact, did not exist either in the economy or in other areas of development.

*Focus on the future—forecasts.* Forecasts merge knowledge, analysis and design. And by embodying an ideal into reality, we are already building the present in accordance with the project of the future.

*Return to the past as a reflection.* It is a "mirror" of the past or present, which is adjacent to the reconstruction of the past, i.e., also to design, but still is not a project in the strict sense of the word, does not model or prescribe either actions to create the future, or the future itself. Reflection often coexists with conjecturing the unexplained, that is, also with designing, but again, it should not be confused with the latter.

Social design, to an even greater extent than knowledge, may not coincide 100% with reality due to the ambiguity of many factors of the future in which the project will be implemented, due to the emergence of unforeseen events affecting the implementation of the project, due to the confrontation of various social forces—supporters and opponents of the project, the collision of which leads to an unexpected resultant. Even in technical design, where natural and technological laws unequivocally operate, not everything can be implemented from the prescribed by the designer due to various accidents (poor-quality material came across, the contractor made a mistake, etc.). In social design, there are even more accidents and factors that cannot be taken into account. Such a factor can be any individual who, in his own way, relates to the project, to the need for its implementation. Social design primarily includes the design of new production and economic relations, as well as in organizational and production, (technological), household, legal, moral, etc. spheres.

The main ideas of social projects may not be realized by the masses, since they act spontaneously, but they are always realized by the authors of the project, and when these ideas are introduced by social forces and groups (taking into account their needs and interests, even self-serving ones), it undergoes

modification, their historical role changes, is re-established. Design ideals are adjusted depending on the values and efforts, the confrontation of forces interested in their implementation.

As a result, social relations are changing. Social projects can lead to cooperation of people, comradely competition with an intensive exchange of experience or, in market conditions, to a war of all against all, the development of competition with the concealment of best practices as a trade secret and mutual industrial espionage of competing firms, including not only intelligence and theft of technical innovations, but also innovations in social planning, methods of working with people. At the same time, the design of not only progress, but also a return to the former production relations always takes place in a renewed situation, and therefore the past is completely unique.

Social design also includes ideology design: the construction of political and other theories aimed at maintaining or changing existing social orders. Social design can be both short-term and long-term, both in terms of execution and projected prospects, but it always works for the future. It occurs and is practically realized both with enthusiasm and with indifference, humility, both with the support and resistance of society.

The lifetime of prototypes depends on the dynamics of society, the faster and more dynamic the scientific and technological process, the faster projects are implemented and implemented, the shorter the life of prototypes. But the advance also leads to the fact that prototypes, prototypes of a new social life, do not have time to form.

A designing person as a project participant who creates prototypes of analogues that do not exist in social reality should always be oriented towards the feedback of the people for whom these projects are intended. He is the innovator. This is a new position. Design problems in the absence of prototypes give rise to further research and discussion. In the course of such studies, in particular, a new type of projects is revealed—"initiating" (Vadim V. Rozin's term).

Initiating design is an ongoing process that is made up of a number of different ideas. Based on the analysis of existing trends, one project is put up, it is discussed with representatives of the target audience, as a result, after the changes, project No. 2 appears, which, in the process of deploying the idea and striving to achieve the goal, can be transformed into projects 3, 4, 5, etc.

"Initiating design" is a joint movement of the creator and the target audience towards a common goal. Here the designer acts not only as an initiator, but also as a participant in the action in a single unique situation, he becomes an Innovator.<sup>138</sup> "An innovator is a self-creating person who organizes himself together

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<sup>138</sup> *Design Consciousness in Social Design Today*; <https://scienceproblems.ru/proektnoe-soznanie/3.html>

with nature”.<sup>139</sup> Expanding the process of social design, he creates a new World together with the reality surrounding him.

In the unfolding of the design process, not only the conception of new social objects (systems, structures, relationships, a new quality of life) occurs, but also the development of a “pattern” for the implementation of the idea. Thus, methodological reflection in the field of non-traditional social design is aimed, on the one hand, at developing the principles and methods of design in the absence of prototypes - on the other hand, at retaining and implementing the initial social requirements and values. In fact, the products of this reflection are prototypes for the design of new prototypes.

The following procedures underlie the thinking of modern social planners: 1) planners conceive a new object, a new quality of social life; 2) there is a development of a model of an intended object, the design of its main elements and connections; 3) accounting and coordination of the requirements for the object by other participants (customer, designer, coordinating authorities, consumers, etc.) is carried out; 4) there is a redesign process taking into account the requirements from the participants.

Modern social design involves joint work with stakeholders, the development of a flexible cultural policy, socio-pedagogical effect and efforts, the launch (initiation) of various socio-cultural processes, the consequences of which can only be partially foreseen. As already noted, the “project shift” in thinking is associated with the development of new communication (humanitarian) technologies, it encourages the participants in this process to form and develop the skills and abilities to implement their ideas in an unpredictably changing reality. In this sense, how rightly notes V. A. Lukov, “social design is a kind of innovative activity.”<sup>140</sup>

Innovation is a conscious activity of designing something new and its implementation on the basis of rethinking previous experience. This activity is based on innovation, which is a kind of management decision, as a result of which there is a significant change in a particular process or phenomenon.

### **HOMO PROJECTUS AS A SOCIAL PROJECT AND INITIATOR OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY**

The social project of the present time is aimed at constructing social objects, social qualities, social processes and relations that do not have prototypes. Social design absorbs a person more and more, his being turns into “being in the project” and into “being for the project”. As a result, the person himself and his world

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<sup>139</sup> Gorokhov, V.G. 1987. *Know to Do. The History of the Engineering Profession and Its Role in Modern Culture*. Moscow, 256.

<sup>140</sup> Lukov, V. A. 2003. *Social Design*. Moscow, 8.

inevitably change: the “modern” person is replaced by a new type of person—“*Homo projectus*,” which is characterized by a shift in the center of gravity of being to the future, a subjunctive attitude to the existing being, an internal conflict between the “creature” and the “creator.” Human puts himself in the place of the creator. This is partly an imaginary position, since in reality he controls little. Living in a constantly changing world, he does not keep up with the transformations, he is driven and not free. Thinking within the framework of a modern project requires a special kind of unity (“alloy”) of the logic of the subject, the logic of the object, and the logic of interaction with other subjects. Consciousness of a person as a subject, but also able to reconsider his own foundations. Design guidelines are fundamentally focused on the possibility of changing one's own identity and, as a result, a significant change in the content of the project, its goals and method of implementation. Provided there is an open future.

The division into rational, intellectual and artistic-figurative (emotional) sides of the process of thinking is unjustified, however, to this day there is such a view: “Today, theorists talk about the presence of an intuitive and discursive side in creativity. Unlike the images of art, the idea of a thing in design can appear in two ways, depending on the mental organization of the creator. Then it should be recognized that there are “visual” designers and “conceptualists”. It would be even more accurate to say that the emotional-intuitive and rational components interact in the process of the emergence of the idea, complementing each other and solving different problems”.<sup>141</sup>

V.G. Gorokhov believes that over the centuries three main features of engineering thinking have been formed - artistic, practical (or technological) and scientific. He rightly emphasizes that modern engineering thinking is deeply scientific.<sup>142</sup> A.I. Rakitov, who identified the features that distinguish developed engineering thinking from pre-engineering thinking, came to the conclusion that engineering thinking is formed on a machine basis, as thinking about the design, creation of machines; it is rational, expressed in a publicly accessible form, tends to formalization and standardization, relies not only on the experimental base, but also on theory, is systematically formed by professional engineering disciplines, economic profitability.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, engineering thinking tends to universalize and spread to all spheres of human life.<sup>143</sup> The structure of engineering thinking includes rational, sensory-

<sup>141</sup> Bystrova, T. Yu. 2007. *Project as a Basic Category of Design Philosophy*; [http://archvuz.ru/2007\\_1/15](http://archvuz.ru/2007_1/15)

<sup>142</sup> Gorokhov, V. G. 1987. *Know to Do. The History of the Engineering Profession and Its Role in Modern Culture*. Moscow, 59.

<sup>143</sup> Rakitov, A.I. 1991. *Philosophy of the Computer Revolution*. Moscow, 95–96.

emotional and axiological elements, memory, imagination, fantasies, abilities, professional self-awareness, etc. Moreover, we believe that the intellectual is closely related to the moral and aesthetic component. This important trinity allows a person to remain just a person, this is not just a pursuit of fulfilling a plan or super-tasks, but something that ultimately brings benefits, but at the same time moral satisfaction, and allows the project to become art, to make a breakthrough into another, spiritual space.

K. Marx's phrase is known about human as the only creature capable of designing according to any kind of measure. "The animal builds according to the measure and need of the species to which it belongs, while human knows how to produce according to the standards of any kind, and everywhere he knows how to apply the inherent measure to the object; because of this, a person also builds according to the laws of beauty."<sup>144</sup>

A person who designs, therefore, is not a completed project, or in other words, he is one who is always in the making, an unfinished state. He constantly re-establishes himself, is in search and eternal unsatisfied position, with access to new opportunities.

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<sup>144</sup> The generic essence of human (according to the 1st manuscript of Karl Marx); <https://ebrk.livejournal.com/64184.html>

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**WHEN COLOR IS DARK.  
A SEMIOTIC STUDY ON CHROMATOLOGY**

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**ABSTRACT**

As far as visual semiotics is concerned, color is an element of the image representing a fact of reality. However, as the mechanisms by which colors are perceived vary widely between and even within species, to say nothing of machines, this may cause misunderstanding in communication. This interdisciplinary research aims at conveying a comprehensive picture of the mechanisms that operate behind color perception and interpretation, based on data of biosemiotics and robosemiotics, i.e. taking into account different perspectives on conveying meaning between living systems, as well as machines. The paper also seeks to raise awareness of the differing conventions of the meaning of colors in human cultures. Findings from all these fields are combined and compared to make a plausible judgement about color as an instrument of deception; the authors analyze situations where interpretations of color can lead to deception either through error or as a consequence of deliberate action.

**Keywords:** color, meaning, interpretation, communication, semiotics, visuality, image, *Umwelt*

**INTRODUCTION**

*Color itself is a degree of darkness.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,  
*Theory of Colors*

It may seem odd that today, when people are preoccupied with the issues raised by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and with environmental problems facing the global community and other matters of comparable scale, some of us are worried about the insufficiency of emoji skin tone options provided by a social media platform that allegedly fail to satisfy the human need for diversity. Is color really so important? It would seem so if one undertakes an analysis of how color and the meaning which is ascribed to different colors may lead to such

devastating outcomes as traumatic experiences or even suicide. The whole question of meaning and color would appear to be not only complex but, no matter what view one takes on its importance, bound to bring about logical contradictions.

This interdisciplinary research aims at clarifying some of the mechanisms that operate behind color perception and interpretation, based on data from such spheres as biosemiotics and robosemiotics i.e. taking into account different perspectives on conveying meaning between living systems, as well as machines. Various findings from these fields are combined and compared to enable us to make a plausible judgement about color as an instrument of deception or a medium of truth.

Let us start off with the notion that color, like beauty, is “in the eye of the beholder.” The beholder perceives color, but in reality, the colors they see are not properties of the object they perceive. They are the consequences of light reflected from the object and affecting their ocular apparatus. The perceived object does not transmit any color; the color perceived is, indeed, purely the color experience of the beholder. This can be demonstrated by the fact that people with particular ocular properties, or lack of them, will perceive the same object to have a different coloration – just as black-and-white film registers all colors in simple shades of black and white, whereas color film conveys different hues. We know that bees and birds perceive a different color range from people; they can also perceive some colors—e.g. ultra-violet—that people cannot. Having types of visual photoreceptor cells that are different from humans, they are bound to have a color vision that is dissimilar to ours (Kelber et al., 2003, 88).

Are we right to suppose that things are as they are through mere purposeless chance or is the relationship of color, behavior, intention, design and meaning a good deal more complex than we are often led to believe? It is a matter of common knowledge that visual channels of communication constitute the basic ways through which information is acquired by humans. Since communication is not a perfect science, visual stimuli may be misinterpreted and, given the crucial role of visual channels of communication in shaping human understanding, the deception caused by misinterpreting visual signs may have negative consequences. Color constitutes a significant part of the visual message, on a par with shape, size, negative space and other elements, even though not as important as, for instance, luminance (Vergeer et al., 2015). Misinterpreting color, or overemphasizing its significance, may be fraught with tragic consequence, as this paper will attempt to prove. Looking into human relationships with the environment, be it nature, the world of machines or society, one might be able to trace the mechanism of this fatal misinterpretation.

## SEMIOTICS OF COLOR

From the viewpoint of visual semiotics, color is a part of the image which may be treated as a sign, or representation of a fact. There are three elements to a perception—the object perceived, the sign and the perceiver’s interpretation of what they see, a bridge between the former and the latter—the interpretant according to Charles Sanders Peirce. This triadic relation is not reducible to any dyad; not only does the sign represent something or someone, but it is a must that this representation takes place in someone’s mind so that the object can be juxtaposed to its image (Peirce et al., 2.274). For any sign or representation to have meaning, it has to be conveyed into somebody’s mind and there matched with a pre-existing concept—e.g., a robin lands on my window-sill, I see it and my optical apparatus ascribes color to it, thereby giving me an image which I compare to my pre-existing knowledge of what a robin looks like and therefore recognize it as a robin.

In Peirce’s classification of signs color, or rather a sense of color, falls into the category of *qualisigns*, or qualities of appearance that have no identity of their own (Peirce et al., 8.335). Our visual systems interact with the outer world, and as the result of this interaction, we compare our sense data, including chromatic information, with our preliminary knowledge of the world, experience etc.—and make our judgments. Sometimes these inferences are made directly, as comparing the color of the sky at a particular moment with the palette of blue hues that we hold in our memories; sometimes it takes more effort to make a judgment when, for instance, we have to decode symbolic coloring. In any case, the percept of a color (an impression perceived through the senses) must be stored in the memory in order for the beholder to have a perceptual mental representation that can be activated next time they see the color or hear its name (Lupien, 1994). In this way in the process of integrating percepts with concepts that already exist in the mind, an *Umwelt* is constructed. This is a perceptual level of one’s worldview, a slice of universe which is usually full of colors, sounds and other stimuli that an individual is able to perceive and to build in their subjective model of the environment.

On a physical level, however, color appears to be something entirely different. It has been intuitive to view it as a property of an object, in an Aristotelian framework for vision, analogous to perceiving shapes, sizes and other properties – and these ideas are still supported today as simple common sense backed up by linguistic practice where names of colors are used as predicates and designators (Watkins, 2002). However, in contrast to philosophy of language, empirical science thinks of color as of something that is not an intrinsic characteristic of the object. The modern revised scientific ontology is based on the understanding that material things have only quantitative characteristics, and not qualitative ones, like color. One classical scientific definition of color is based on a physical measurement, rather than subjective human experience of color: it is “an aspect of

visual perception by which an observer may distinguish between two structure-free fields of view of the same size and shape, such as may be caused by differences in the spectral composition of the radiant energy” (Wyszecki, Stiles, 1982, 487). The relationist phenomenological view gives us a compromising understanding that color is born in the interaction between the perceiver and the object (Chirimuuta, 2017). To go further, it is not the intrinsic characteristic of an object that makes us see a color, but our ability to discern colors and compare them with our in-built knowledge of chromatic schemes in the world (Kingdom, 2011, 10-11), which actually echoes Lockean views that a color can be identified only if it causes a definite sensation in an observer (Stuart, 2003). This leads us to the statement which seems irrefutable under any theory—that we can identify objects as colored only because they appear to us that way. Moreover, we can efficiently communicate about our experiences (Wierzbicka, 1990), which is a solid enough ground for a semiotician.

Going back to the matter of our discussion, we can be misled into believing that color variation is a material fact when in reality it is just the play of light on an object’s surface that influences our perception of its color; in other words, we take phenomena for reality. Thus, we are already deceived by the imperfection of our own optical devices. Considering this, how could interpreting or misinterpreting a color lead to an even more profound deception? One common instance is the effect of color-blindness and confusing colors (most commonly red and green), which may prevent one from the correct decoding of a message. Apart from this, there may be several instances of deception either deliberately caused or the result of misinterpretation/misunderstanding, among which are the following:

- when the color (red, for instance) truthfully signals danger;
- when the color is deliberately altered in order to deceive;
- when the color is taken for more than it is, i.e. the object itself;
- when the color is changed by mistake and thus causes confusion;
- when the color is misinterpreted because different perceivers have a different understanding of what it represents.

This list of instances is not a classification, in the proper sense, but it may prove helpful in this current study. Let us look closer at their occurrence in four different communicative environments: in nature, in society, in human-machine interactions, and in culture. These four spheres seem to differ in the ways in which a color might cause a fatal misunderstanding, so analysing and comparing these examples may bring us closer to comprehending the situation when “color is dark.”

## NATURE AND COLOR: ANIMALS

Experimental color manipulations on birds and animals prove that color is a crucial factor in their lives, in particular in anti-predator adaptation, mimicry, sexual and pollination behaviour and other aspects (Stoddard et al., 2018). In the natural world color may signal that an object is dangerous or noxious. Epistemologically the status of this sign may vary from a truthful indication of threat, as in the case with the granular poison frog whose bright skin is supposed to scare off predators, to deception, e.g. the imitation of warning coloration to protect a harmless, non-toxic animal against potential predators. This form of *aposematism* is known as Batesian mimicry when a harmless species acquires the ability to send warning signals by mimicking the coloration of a noxious species. In either case, the predator is expected to interpret the color as a sign of threat because it has a memory of the connection between the prey coloration and its unpalatability (Veselý, Fuchs, 2008).

That certain color patterns make it harder for prey species to be seen by their natural predators—and so allow a sufficient proportion of them to escape to breed and reproduce and keep the species going—is pure accident, an example of “survival of the fittest.” They have survived because the accident of their coloration enabled them to survive. What may be purposeful is not their color but their behaviour. Yet, again, this behaviour may be taken as essentially unintended. They do this because that is what their species has always done and as a consequence of doing this, has survived. Their color—as perceived by others—may be an additional, but still unintended—factor in their survival. Thus zebra, which seem to us to stand out startlingly against their native landscape, survive as a species (a) because their color pattern breaks up their outline and makes them harder to see and (b) their packing together in herds in the presence of predators improves the chances of the individual’s survival. Thus, color and behaviour, neither deliberately or rationally chosen, aids survival.

The same applies to color as a warning signal. Certain animal species—snakes in particular—are avoided because the potential predator perceives the color and interprets it as meaning “danger.” Other—harmless—species of snake may appear to have “adopted” a similar color scheme in order to ward off the same potential predators. In reality, neither species of snake has “chosen” its color scheme. It is the potential predator that has to make a choice; if it perceives the color scheme and interprets it to mean “danger” it may choose not to attack. This happens through habituation. We do not really know how “ancestral” memory is transmitted within a species—if indeed it is—but the snake species has survived, not purely as a consequence of its venom (since not all are venomous) but because of the meaning attributed to its perceived color scheme; and the predator species has survived aeons of encounters with such snakes because of the behaviour that perception of this color scheme provokes.

Some animals can change color, either to ward off would-be predators, or as camouflage, to hide. Chameleons change color in reaction to changes in temperature and light. They also convey mood by color; but all this can be seen as purely involuntary—the product of changes in the nervous system. In the much more complex case of cephalopods, octopuses and squids use color and even self-generated light, selectively, to camouflage themselves, to act as a warning to potential predators and to communicate with others of their species (Pgager, 2000). They can use color selectively and for a purpose. If this is true of them, nature provides us with examples of deception by color, both controlled by an individual and by evolution.

### **HUMAN RESPONSE AND USE OF COLOR**

For the same reason as zebra's color pattern makes them harder to notice, warships during World War I and II were harder to perceive because they had been deliberately painted in an irregular striped color-scheme to make their outline blurry – the difference being that, in this case, the color scheme was deliberately chosen. Human practices often involve color as a tool of deception. People are purposeful in their behavior, and to this end, they can deliberately use color to convey specific meaning.

According to Thomas Sebeok, biosemiotics is a science that may help scholars to understand the mechanism of how the body produces signs which form messages, and, ultimately, attitudes, opinions, and overall behaviour. In this way, the body by itself can be a prime tool for communication, verbal as well as nonverbal (Sebeok, 2001, 20). The roots of color associations lie deep in corporeality, i.e. have natural premises. The human species, on a basic level, is a part of the natural world, so these reflexes and instincts pertain to us, both in producing signs and in perceiving them.

Using signal colors on a physical level may help human beings to communicate information in the same way as non-human animals, in the case of humans primarily through the use of clothing and make-up. A bright red dress and crimson lipstick are associated with sex appeal, combined with a tint of predatory danger. Whether or not this act is a truthful signal of danger or an example of mimicry, deliberate behaviour or an unconscious choice, in any case, it is meant to evoke a response. Far more dangerous could be an encounter with someone wrapped in camouflage; semiotically these garments are deceptive, they mimic or are intended to hide the bearer, but conventionally they are associated with the army, violence, and death. This is akin to the cryptic coloring of predators which is helpful in hunting for prey. In fact, with human beings, it is hard to mark the border between purely physical color usage and the cultural circumstances that could be invoked.

On the receiving end, species differ in their discernment of colors, but among humans, psychological and physiological reactions to color are universal: color combinations of unnatural hues may avert the beholder, just as highly saturated colors may appeal to one, irrespective of the metaphysical, or cultural characteristics of the viewer (Eiseman, 2000). Representatives of different peoples are supposed to have the same reactions to seeing, for instance, observing a red object may be followed by increased heartbeat, excitement, salivation, etc. Thus, in nature, colors may signal truthfully, pointing to a danger or they may be deceptive, both for the predators and their potential game. Humans are no exception here, with the reservation that our behaviour towards color and our response to it cannot remain unconventional, free from cultural connotations.

### CULTURAL USE OF COLORS

For humans, image interpretation is strongly related to the cultural reading of signs – that is, cultural symbolism as something that “sets human representation apart from all other species, allowing the human species to reflect upon the world separately from stimulus-response situations” (Sebeok, 2001, 11). It is in this domain that human beings are different from animals. We perceive a range of colors and ascribe to them certain meanings that are not related to survival alone.

Unlike physical responses to color, chromatic semantics are cultural and not entirely universal. In the West, for example, black is the color associated with death and mourning and white is the color of innocence and purity. In the Hindu world, however, white is associated with mourning. Red is widely perceived as the color of warning, of danger, but it is the color chosen for the bride in Hindu marriage. Marxism adopted the color red to represent popular revolution as the symbol of triumph, of human striving and progress.

Perhaps this can be taken as different cultures ascribing different meanings to colors. But it is also the case that color can have contradictory meanings within the same culture. Its culturally-bound, metaphorical meaning can contradict the one that appeared in relation to its primary, natural locus of occurrence (Chijiwa, 1987). Green, for instance, is tranquil and pastoral, as it is a color of trees and grass, but its negative connotations are connected with poison and jealousy. It represents fecund Nature—hence the “Green Movement”—but is also the color associated with envy or sickness. In the West, blue symbolizes the sky—and therefore uplift, hope, joy, heaven—hence the blue veil of the Virgin Mary. But it is also widely used in the West to represent sadness, self-pity—“an attack of the blues”. Yellow might be taken to symbolize sunshine, but it is also the color chosen to symbolize cowardice. Purple might depict nobility, royalty, majesty, but also uncontrolled rage. Brown may refer to the earth—the soil out of which new crops spring; but “brown studies” refers to the condition of being wholly withdrawn, lost in abstraction, day-dreaming.

These color associations are old, culturally-based—yet at times surprisingly universal, which perhaps indicates how old they are. They are obviously linked with the fact that most human beings, whatever their ethnic type—perceive the same color range; those who do not are considered to have some ocular deficiency. The meanings that humans ascribe to colors may be purely objective—e.g. fruit colored like this are dangerous and so are animals colored like that. People know this through experience transmitted as tradition. But humans also have the capacity to perceive things symbolically—thus as shown above, colors may represent moods and feelings. For this reason, because colors, for human beings, can, like words and gestures, communicate meaning, people produce and use colors deliberately and purposefully.

Cultural use of colors is based on convention. When Aegeus who was watching the sea expectantly for his son Theseus, saw the black sails approaching Athens, he plunged into the sea from a cliff and drowned because he interpreted the black color of the canvas as a sign that Theseus had died. The information encoded in the color gave rise to a chain of thoughts in the mind of Aegeus: seeing black sails—having remembrance of the convention between him and his son to signalize the outcome of the quest—juxtaposing the former with the latter—being traumatized by his son’s death—having a desire to follow him to the realm of Hades. The myth, however, tells us that this interpretation was erroneous, not in virtue of making a logical mistake in this sequence of inferences, but merely because Theseus had forgotten to change the canvas. Whatever the reason was, the color proved to be deceptive and the information which it conveyed—disruptive, leading to a tragedy. This is the pragmatics of color, how it comes to trigger actions and events.

The connotation of color usage may also be determined by the circumstances or the context: children's garments, food packaging, advertising banners. Analysing color requires knowledge of these circumstances, which is an integral part of the hermeneutic circle (Vavilova, 2014, 2001). Color should be looked at taking into consideration both the situation, and the wider context, i.e. a set of political, economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental factors. One of the dangers of this approach, however, is being trapped in a situation where the subject lacks a certain fore-structure or interpretant to help them fully comprehend the message from, for example, a representative of a different culture or even a different species.

### **COLOR-BASED COMMUNICATION IN A TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Another aspect of culture is the sphere of production which is closely connected with technology. As Thomas Sebeok wrote, “the criterial feature of living entities, and of machines programmed by humans, is semiosis” (Ziemke, 2003).

Being autopoietic i.e. self-developing, self-organizing learning systems that interact with their environment, machines are as capable of semiosis as humans are, although the genesis of robosemiosis is not exactly identical to that of conveying meaning among humans. They do not possess a body, which means they cannot discern colors the way humans do—as a flow of optical information through the eye, with all deviations preconditioned by nature. However, they do have color sensors or cameras that help them get information about the colors of surrounding objects (Darma et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2020). As this mechanism is programmed by humans, it is supposed to be as unambiguous as possible.

Any sign produced by a machine stands exactly for what it is meant to stand for unless it has been programmed otherwise. For example, if a set of traffic lights on a street were out of order, with the other three at the intersection functioning their usual way, it could provoke an accident by showing green instead of red. The hypothetical driver dies because they had correctly interpreted the incorrectly functioning signage.

The colors of traffic lights misunderstood by a person suffering from color-blindness might also provoke a road accident, since communicating is not merely a matter of perceiving the message transferred by the traffic lights, but also to reacting in consequence. So, even if there is agreement within a society to use green for indicating permission to cross the road, a dysfunction in color perception in certain individuals may disrupt this convention. Here color leads to deception because of a certain disruption of communication process, and as long as AI is fully dependent on natural intelligence, even considering its learning abilities, this disruption is never deliberate on the part of machines, or not yet.

Technology is but a more sophisticated instrument used to the same basic communication end; whatever humans are capable of is merely magnified by the power of technology. Perhaps one of the most striking examples here is virtual reality where users can perceive colors that never surround them in reality. Otherwise there is no deception in color-based communication when it comes to human interaction with machines.

## **SOCIETY: SKIN COLOR**

Humans often modify their natural appearances to deceive, e.g. dye their hair to look younger or more attractive. Hair or skin color may be treated as a sign, and it often is, in the modern world where the color that initially, in the nature, used to signify the level of the body's resistance to ultraviolet radiation, has become a premise for racism. Nature does not know such color antagonisms, unlike modern civilization where the main opposition of colors has always been and remains that between white and not white.

In computer-mediated communication we are approaching the behavior of cephalopods. We can camouflage ourselves or our intentions in virtual

environments, as an alternative to skin surgery. Unlike chameleons who change color to regulate the temperatures of their bodies or to get their messages across to other species, people often do this to deceive or conceal. Changing skin tone of one's social media reactions has become one of the color-related issues since the emergence of social networking practices. The Fitzpatrick scale for human skin pigmentation which was originally adopted by dermatologists to assess the risk of skin cancer, has become a basis for designing Unicode emoji modifiers, from white to chocolate brown. Research into the effects of introducing special modifier codes undertaken in 2015 has demonstrated that allowing users to change the skin tone of certain emoji is perceived as a better representation of human diversity online (Robertson et al., 2020). However, the measure appears to be not uncontroversial. While skin tone modifiers can be used to customize emoji with the aim to reflect the user's identity, there still remains the possibility that people might engage in "digital blackface"—white-skinned people using darker emoji, which may be offensive to darker skinned users (Robertson et al., 2021; Carman, 2018). Also, as the depictions are rendered differently across platforms, this often causes ambiguity in interpreting the meaning of a certain icon usage.

Another research highlights the awkward feelings of using an affirmatively white emoji which is strongly associated with "white pride" and an intolerant attitude towards darker skinned people (McGill, 2016). This apprehension makes fair-skinned users opt for the default option (yellow or grey). What seems a natural thing to do for one user (i.e. choose a skin color to their liking or the one that would correspond to their real skin tone), becomes a quest for another – what will people think if I use an emoji corresponding to my skin color or, on the contrary, choose a different one? Would it be interpreted as a sign of pride or mockery?

These concerns are related to a new type of social color blindness which concerns racial prejudice. Today trying to be color blind, or color neutral, makes communication very confusing – instead of saying 'that black guy', people try to find other ways of identification, which is weird, as we never hesitate to say 'that blond guy'. How is hair color different from skin color? Insignificant in reality, this difference becomes crucial in social interactions.

Concerning skin color, the more shades that can be discerned, the more confusions are generated (creole people, children of mixed marriages etc.); as Charles Peirce noted, it is futile to try and count all shades of red (Peirce et al., 4.160). But as color is not the intrinsic property of the object, it is not the skin color that makes people differentiate between races and give them names, but rather the viewer's own prejudice against a representative of another species or another tribe. Therefore, racial hate crimes are not exactly about color, but color is a mediator of ethnicity, indexical of an alien. It may become a premise for splitting even within one ethnic community, as it happens with people with albinism in Africa who face social discrimination due to the lack of melanin (Hong et al., 2006).

## LANGUAGES AND COLORS

Epistemologically, what we see, including colors, is often opposed to what we hear. 'Better to see something once than to hear about it a thousand times' is a paraphrase of a popular Russian proverb. Optical data has a higher epistemological status, compared to language as a means of conveying false facts, apart from truth.

Cultural environments readily use color as a sign depending on the observer's cultural tradition. However, color is not only a sign symbolically referring to other objects; it is likely to serve as a signified itself, with a word being its signifier and evoking the counterpart in the perceiver's mind. Colors and words are two paradigms having correspondences between them so that people may refer to the chromatic universe without having to show colors each time they need to mention them (Caivano, 1998, 10). It is with the help of words that people may communicate about colors: "... sense data are 'private' [...], whereas concepts can be shared. To be able to talk with others about one's private sense data one must be able to translate them first into communicable concepts" (Wierzbicka, 1999, 99).

While color perception is a part of an individual's *Umwelt*, the mere ability to recognize color is shared by most humans in the way that a language is shared by the community; they can talk about colors, but strictly within the sphere of their verbal repertoires. In verbal communication, as far as color is concerned it is the name of a hue that is important in semiosis. Inevitably, therefore, scarcity of color vocabulary, compared to the palette, and the existence of a variety of names for tertiary colors often cause confusion in interpreting color images (Gage, 2009). Color terminology still remains a problem; although basic color names do have concordances through languages, some denominations of hues differ dramatically (Caivano, 1998). If we consider color names in idioms, finding equivalents in several languages is even harder. Numerical denotations may be helpful in professional spheres like graphic design but are useless in communication. Involuntary deception occurs here and there when we try to describe the colors we see with the words we know whereas the same words may signify something different for the listener. This is semiotically and even philosophically important since adjectives that convey colors may attach positive or negative connotations to the objects described.

What is deceptive in this alliance of colors and words—is that talk about appearances often camouflages the essence. Thus, for some people skin color overshines (or overshadows) a person's personality. In different cultures and languages, we may encounter diverse names of people of a particular ethnic origin (often closely connected to skin color), but most people are still confused as to the politically correct term, at least in English. Thus the color of one's skin may prove another simulacrum which engenders false understanding of someone bearing a color different from your own.

## CONCLUSION

Like any sign, color may be deceptive. In the case of animals, it is the perception of color, or the lack of it, that provokes danger. Animals (with few exceptions such as cephalopods) do not choose and use color deliberately, with a purpose in mind. They do not ascribe any conventional meaning to it. The lion may perceive a zebra in spite of its coloration, pursue it and kill it. An eagle may fail to spot the fawn lying in the bracken on the hillside because the fawn's color blends with its surroundings, and the fawn survives. There is an element of chance in all this.

Like animals, we avoid the poisonous fruit because we interpret its color as a warning. Or we eat it and die because we failed to interpret it correctly. However, this mechanism is more complicated with humans. Theseus' father died, not because he perceived or failed to perceive the black sail but because he interpreted the color according to the convention and prior agreement with his son that black signifies misfortune. This kind of convention lies in the basis of culture-bound color perception. Each culture has a unique heritage of color symbolism—a learned response to seeing a certain color and corresponding interpretations.

Color-based errors in a technological environment are all derived from human errors or intentions. The same holds true for virtual environments where users are free to camouflage their identities and modify almost any attribute of their personalities, including such corporeal characteristics as skin color.

Color does not deceive. It is either failure to interpret color correctly, according to convention that may lead one to deception, or the convention by which one responds to color may be radically different from those of another culture. As long as communication is based on phenomena, leaving the essence of things intact, color is expected to be an object for epistemology of deception.

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## **ABOUT *DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM***

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*Dialogue and Universalism* tends to show that philosophy is an essential eternal domain of human culture and an inevitable element of the nowadays human world. Critical and creative rational thinking is an opportunity for humankind to resist the lies and illusions of ideological manipulations that serve as instruments of enslavement and oppression. This open and broad vision of philosophy as an expression of human rationality offers a chance to free people's awareness, to open their minds, and to extend their possibilities of thinking and acting. In doing so, philosophical reflection is able to refine and renew old ideals and values as well as to create new ones. It is these two aspects—free consciousness and new ideals—that are necessary to build a more decent human world. The International Society for Universal Dialogue (ISUD) community is convinced that philosophy has an important role to play in the struggle for the future of humanity. Philosophy with its amazingly sophisticated ways of thinking disposes a tremendous power to cope with the world and to change it. Philosophy is free from technical and practical interests, and constituted by the pursuit of removing—from a highly distanced and neutral perspective—falsehood, prejudices, mental, cultural, religious and social slavery. So it gives a hope for human beings' emancipation as well as for an alteration of the world.

*Dialogue and Universalism* is wholly open for all scholars in the world, not being a publishing forum for the ISUD members only. All contributors are equally kindly welcome.

*Dialogue and Universalism* publishes monothematic issues. However, each monothematic issue of the journal is completed with a few texts thematically different from the main theme of the issue. This decision allows for a broader thematic diversity. The forthcoming main themes are announced in advance at the *Dialogue and Universalism* website. The announcements should be treated as an open invitation for every scholar to participate in *Dialogue and Universalism* projected enterprises. Besides, proposals of themes and contents of next *Dialogue and Universalism* issues are kindly welcome.