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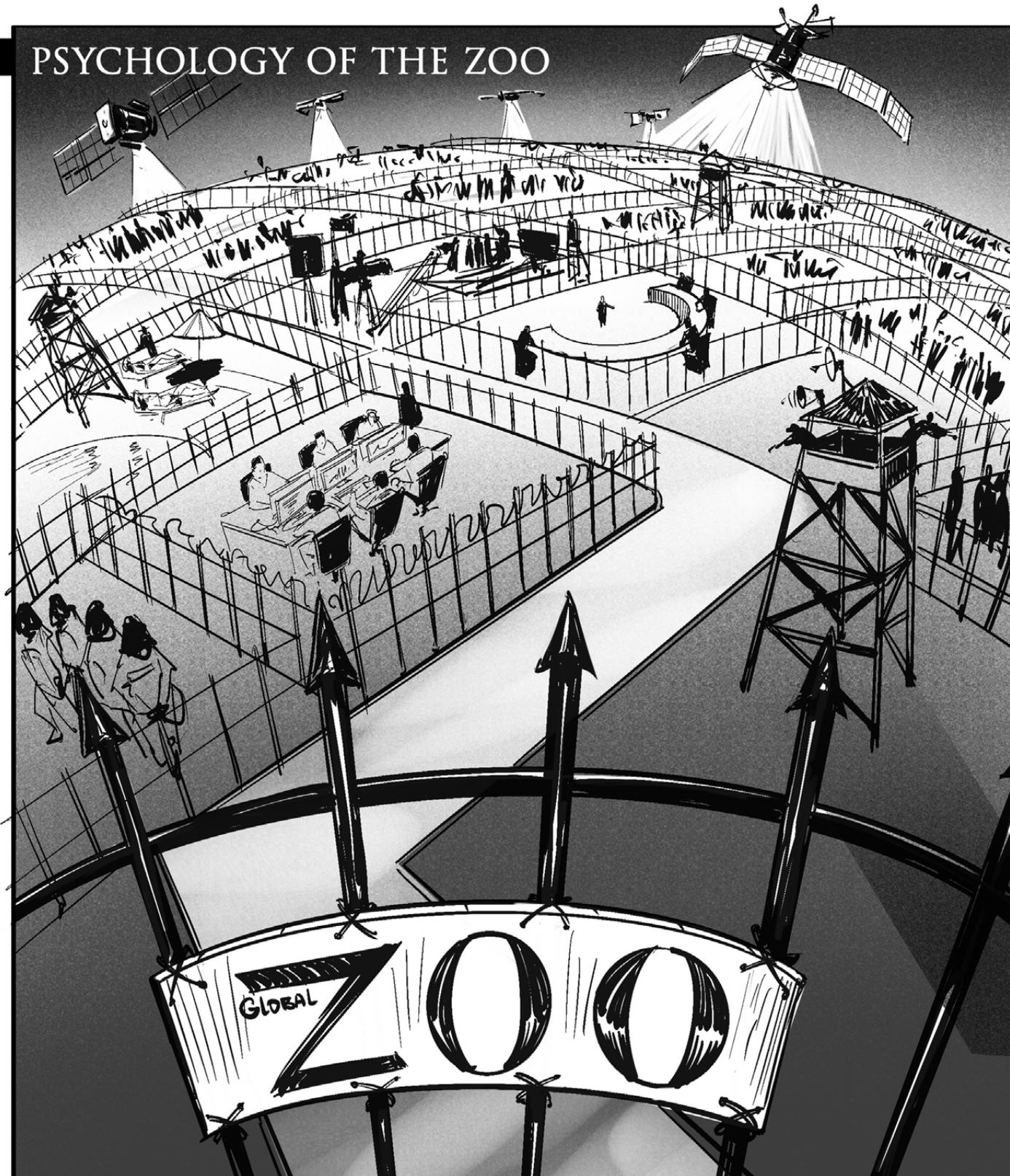
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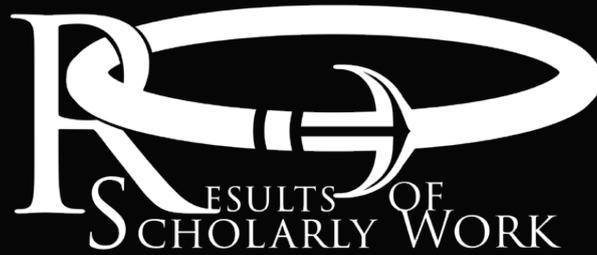
THE

RESULTS OF SCHOLARLY WORK

IN SOCIOLOGY, CRIMINOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ZOO





PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ZOO

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We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this issue, including the members of the editorial board, peer reviewers, layout designers, conceptual contributors, and, of course, authors.

Your dedication made this publication possible.



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

INTRO

In this issue of the *Results of Scholarly Works*, we continue to bring our readers articles that showcase the research of scholars representing a variety of different disciplines. From economics to philosophy, our articles represent the works of scholars from around the globe oftentimes with opinions not widely known. In this way, our readers, no matter where they may reside, are exposed to academic viewpoints that might be absent from their regional journals.

At the *Results of Scholarly Works*, we take pride that our articles are all conceived and penned by scholars deeply dedicated and immersed in the content of their work. Their contributions represent the labor of much study and thought. And as you will see, all address issues we face as a community of students, academics, and citizens devoted to better understanding our surroundings. Hopefully, their titles will go beyond scholarly ruminations and add meaning to issues we all face no matter our intentions and callings.

As stated in the last editor in chief's introduction, *Results of Scholarly Works* truly contributes to advancing scholarly research devoid of tendencies that smack of academic ethnocentrism. The end result of this intended exposure to new ways of thinking can result in solutions that better contribute to a field of knowledge, and, more importantly, the betterment of mankind. *Results of Scholarly Works* will always endeavor to present research that not only has scholarly worth but practical application that can translate into beneficial public policy. Our hope is that our offerings are not relegated to the dustbin of history but are rather reread and highlighted for their relevance. In the past, we would wish for dog-eared pages.



To be sure, we are not just committed to providing an outlet for academics to publish their work, but rather a source for works that have useful applications.

My performance as editor in chief rests on the quality of the offerings in these issues of *Results of Scholarly Works*. Of course, without the assistance and guidance of the production team of *Results of Scholarly Works*, any contribution made would be impossible. It is truly remarkable how the team performs given the wartime conditions under which they operate. To them, thank you for all you do in making *Results of Scholarly Works* possible. We value your anonymous contributions you make to our journal. Of course, our sincere thanks to all who contribute their research to our journal for consideration.

We now invite you to peruse our latest issue of the journal which covers such diverse topics as artificial intelligence, neoliberal ideology, and consciousness. As always, *Results of Scholarly Works* is committed to bring you cutting-edge research and dynamic opinion that illuminates and educates. And, please let us know how we are doing. Until our next issue, we remain academically yours,

Sincerely,

*Harvey W. Kushner
Long Island University
Brookville, NY*





DR. HARVEY W. KUSHNER

Chairman of the Presidium and academician of EUASU Academy, Chairman of the Criminal Justice Department and a Professor of Criminal Justice at LIU Post, Brookville, New York. Internationally recognized expert on terrorism. Kushner has authored numerous columns, editorials, and six books. His best-seller Encyclopedia of Terrorism has won numerous awards.

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DR. MARCO ANDREACCHIO

He was awarded a doctorate from the University of Illinois for his interpretation of Sino-Japanese philosophical classics in dialogue with Western counterparts and a doctorate from Cambridge University for his work on Dante's Platonic interpretation of religious authority.

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DR. GIORGI VACHNADZE

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MARYNA ILLIUSHA

She is a head of the International Schicksalsanalyse Community Research Institute, adherent of the Venetian school. The main directions of the Institute's research are the applied aspects of fate analysis — depth psychology, mainly developed by Leopold Szondi, Swiss psychologist, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst.

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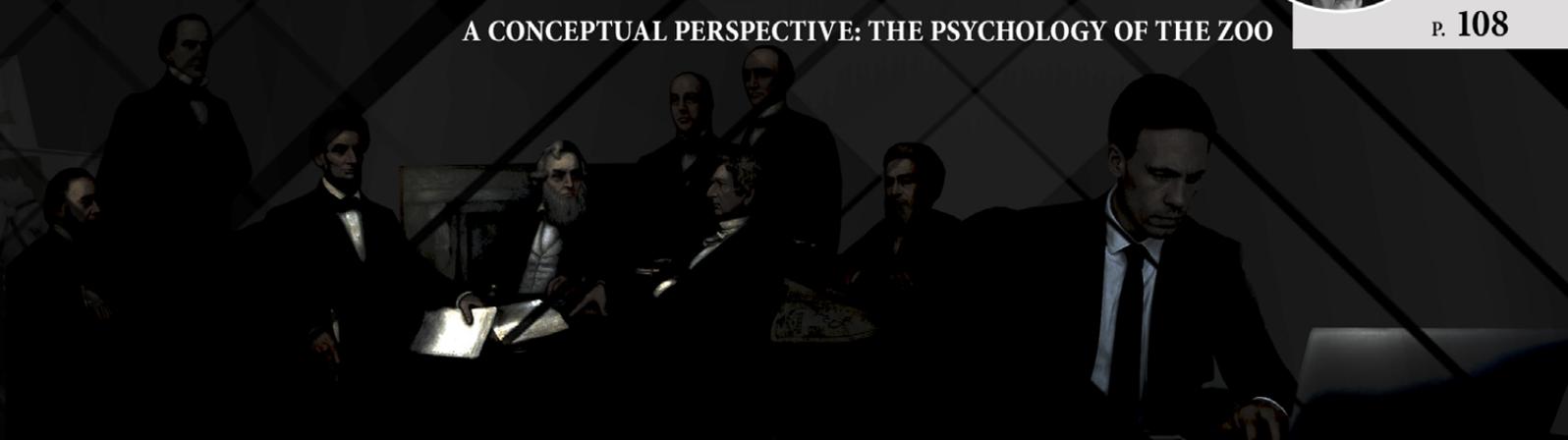
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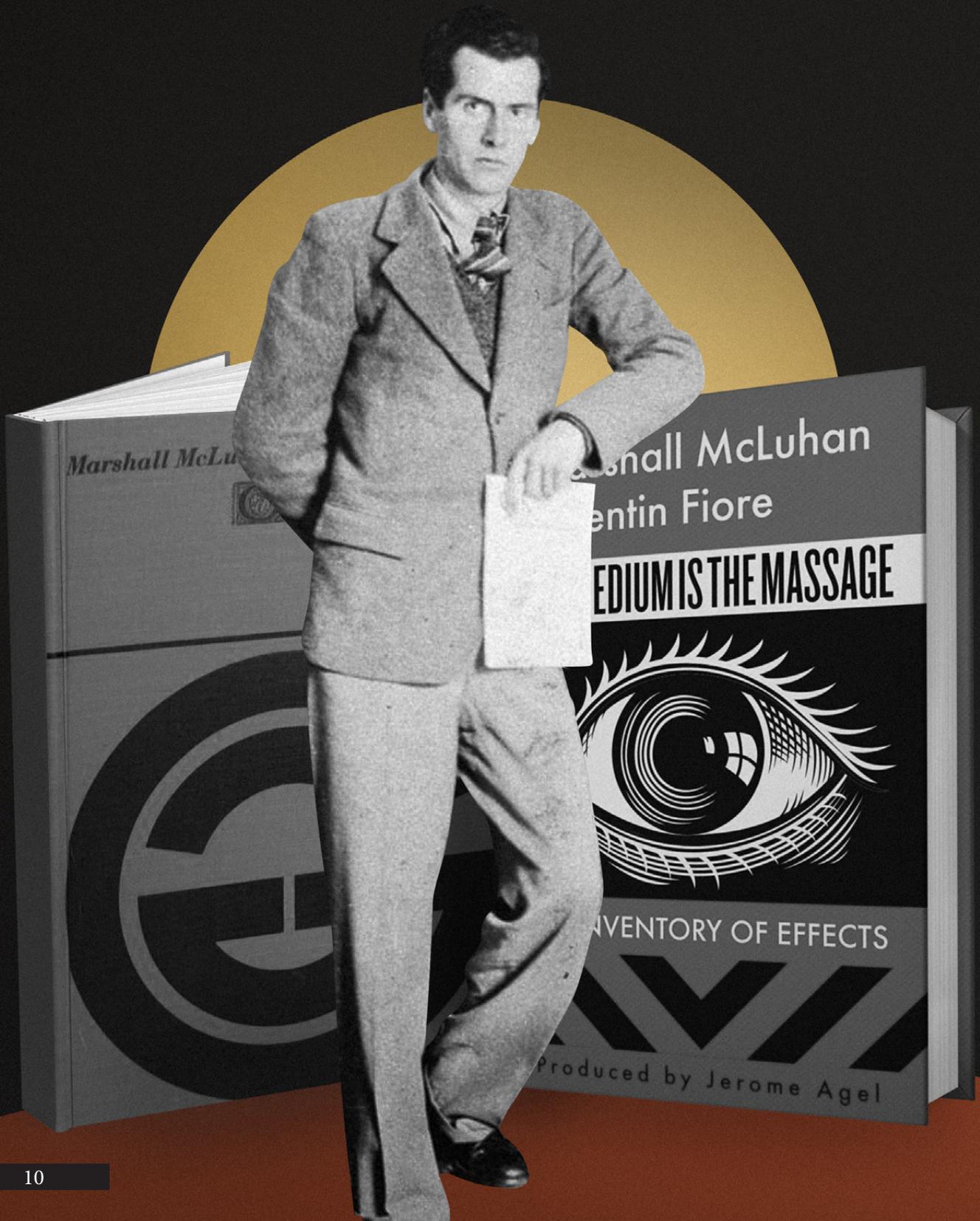
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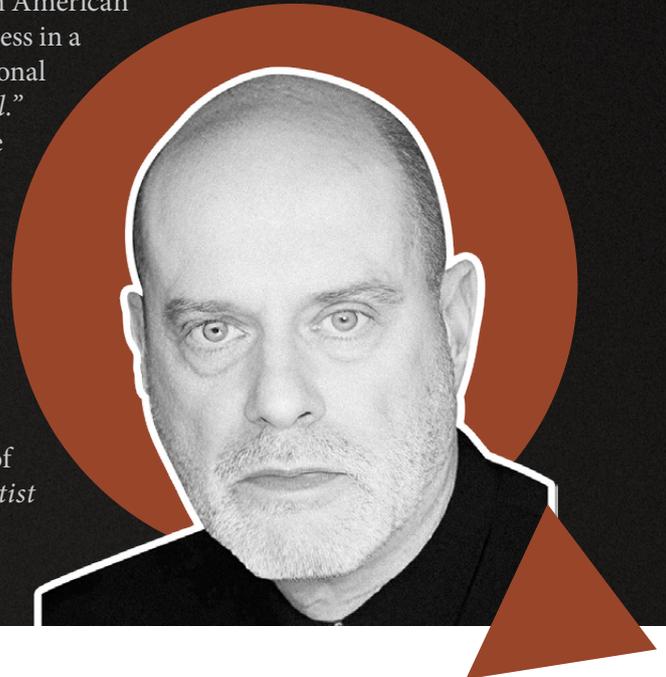


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ABSTRACT

Herbert Marshall McLuhan was a Canadian philosopher whose work is among the cornerstones of media theory. His *The Gutenberg Galaxy and The Medium is the Massage* foretold the consequences of technologies of the new millennium. He tells us that the way we view the world around us depends on the medium being employed. In other words, the form or method of communication shapes how we perceive and understand our surroundings. These viewings create explanations that often appear fool proof or even scientifically accurate. Unfortunately or fortunately as the case might be, they change with the advent of new mediums brought about by technological advance and innovation. We need to heed McLuhan’s astute advice that all media work us over completely. In other words, understand that as different media develop so too will our views of all the things that surround us. What we can take for granted is that change is inevitable and brought about more rapidly by the exponential growth of technology.

Keywords

massage, message, media, medium, technology

INTRODUCTION

It was the turbulent sixties and I was well on my way to obtaining my doctorate in political science from New York University. During one of my core courses required of all doctoral students, I remember being mesmerized by a charismatic professor from across the pond. This pipe smoking gentleman usually festooned in a well-worn green tweed jacket with brown leather elbow patches would often stray away from the traditional classics of the day that populated every doctoral political science student’s scope and methods syllabus (see, for example, Popper, 1959; Van Dyke, 1960, Kuhn, 1962, Marcuse, 1964). Instead, he would introduce us to the newly crafted, albeit edgy, works he thought relevant for the coming millennium. His bone fides added much to his credibility, not mention to his notoriety. He made it well-known that he was descended from the Scottish physician

and microbiologist who founded penicillin, Sir Alexander Fleming.

One such mesmerizing presentation was his impassioned introduction into the merits of a newly published monograph that I knew well. Little did I know at that time just how important Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (McLuhan, & Fiore, 1967) would be to my understanding of where we are as we end the first quarter of the first century of the third millennium of the Gregorian calendar.

PERUSING THE STRAND

After hearing my professor waxing so eloquently on McLuhan's work, I jumped into my yellow Ford Thunderbird and headed over to the Strand Bookstore on East 12th Street and Broadway to secure a copy of the book. As a former graphic arts and advertising student at the world famous Parsons School of Design located at that time in the tree lined neighborhood of Sutton Place Park South, I was familiar with the work of McLuhan's coauthor, Quentin Fiore. Fiore, a graphic designer

and communications consultant assisted with depicting McLuhan's revolutionary thoughts on media. His powerful layouts helped to bring McLuhan's thoughts alive. Jerome Agel, a long-time collaborator of Fiore and known to many as a cross-disciplinary publishing puppeteer, also helped to bring forth McLuhan's ideas in this 1967 classic. In addition to working with McLuhan, Fiore and Agel helped introduce and popularize the ideas of such luminaries as Carl Sagan, Buckminster Fuller, and the preeminent futurist Herman Kahn, to name a few (see, Sagan, 1973; Fuller et al., 1970; Kahn & Agel, 1973).

You might wonder, why I went over to the Strand without consulting the university book store to secure a copy of the McLuhan book. As a former Parsons student and familiar with the likes of Quentin Fiore and other designers of the day, I wanted to peruse the vast collection of graphic design books displayed at the Strand for any relationship to McLuhan. Unlike my fellow political science students at the university, and once employed as a graphic designer at the Vogue-Wright Art Studio in charge of depicting women's lingerie in the Montgomery Ward catalog,



I was very much familiar with the graphic designs of the 160 page McLuhan work. The latter with its collage style with text superimposed on visual elements and vice versa was a sight to behold and something I studied at Parsons. Pages of the terse volume were left blank and others contained photographs and images that juxtaposed modern and historic images. Some pages were printed backwards so they could be read in a mirror. It was eye candy for those of us familiar with the experimental graphic arts of the day taught at cutting edge art and design colleges like Parsons, but, more than likely, shocking to the unindoctrinated non-art student of the sixties.

Oddly enough, but in keeping with the McLuhan genus, the title of the book *The Medium is the Massage* was a mistake. The typesetter mistook message for massage. When confronted with the error, McLuhan famously stated, "Leave it alone! It's great, and right on target!" The typographical error fit well into his basic narrative, i. e., that all media impact tactility and intellectually. "All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences, they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered" (McLuhan, & Fiore, 1967, p. 26).

Fiore's avant-garde graphic designs and Agel's extraordinary book production talents combined to produce a monograph that clearly illustrated McLuhan's thesis that a medium such as a book produces a massage, or message if you will, that impacts the human sensorium, i. e., those parts of the brain that receive, process, and interpret sensory stimuli. It is where impressions from the external world are perceived and conveyed. And so, the information we come in contact with is massaged and messaged by the medium by which it is delivered to our sensorium.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following important points have been taken into consideration in the methodological design of this scientific study. The research methodology corresponds to interdisciplinary studies and is inherently complex, combining the method of social constructivism with other approaches.

The aim is to study the influence of digitalisation and mediatisation on the formation of new types of subjectivity, and explore how these factors are shaping our contemporary world.

Other socio-humanitarian methods, such as comparative analysis, phenomenological interpretation and interpretive analysis, complement this approach and discourse analysis to address the stated research topic.

DISCUSSION

McLuhan: a Modern Day Nostradamus

"Until writing was invented, men lived in acoustic space: boundless, directionless, horizonless, in the dark of the mind, in the world of emotion, by primordial intuition, by terror" (McLuhan, & Fiore, 1967, p. 48). Such reasoning implies that the advent of new technologies such as writing or movable type impact how we experience and interpret the world around us. To illustrate, for example, consider being seated in the Roxy Theatre just off Times Square in New York City watching a Pathé newsreel on the cold war. Yes, that is one way in which I experienced and absorbed the news of the day in the late 1940s and early 1950s. To be sure, watching a newsreel at a theatre differs from reading about the event in the *New York Times*. In other words, the new medium of delivery impacts our understanding of what we experience. It can add or detract from the experience we once had through the lens of the older medium. "Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication" (McLuhan, & Fiore, 1967, p. 8).

McLuhan gives us reason to concern ourselves with the exponential growth of today's social media. In the past, one had to endure the difficulties associated with an apprenticeship to earn their credentials as a fledgling journalist. Today, everyone is a blogger. Software applications on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets allow us to get our thoughts out to a viewing public without making our bones in the Fourth Estate. Such unregulated behavior along with the embedded algorithms of the entities that own these software applications should give us reason to pause. The subject of TikTok and other social media is left for another day. For now, however, digest what McLuhan is telling us about a medium's importance in viewing and understanding our universe. Be aware, however, of the dystopian novel and cautionary tale by English writer George Orwell (1949).

As someone who has lived through numerous large technological advances (handheld calculators

to highspeed computers) and small ones as well (Leroy lettering sets to CAD drafting and 3D design software), consider how we will be impacted by future technologies. "The circuited city of the future will not be the huge hunk of concentrated real estate created by the railway. It will take on a totally new meaning under conditions of very rapid movement. It will be an information megalopolis" (McLuhan, & Fiore, 1967, p. 72). One just has to hop an Amtrack train and travel north along New York State's Hudson River and view the remains of factories with their decaying loading docks that were serviced by rail. McLuhan's words illustrated by Fiore's graphics and Agel's production skills illustrate the dynamics of change. The latter brought about by technological advancements that will only witness exponential growth in our new millennium.

It should be noted that prior his collaboration with Fiore and Agel, McLuhan published the novel *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (McLuhan, 1962) that foretold his thoughts he would write about in *The Medium is the Massage*. In it, he argued that human history could be divided into four different chapters: the acoustic age; the literary age; the print age; and the electronic age. McLuhan assumed the electronic age would be home to what he termed the "global village." For McLuhan, the latter would usher in a medium controlled by electronics and computers, i.e., the Internet. A year before he published his *The Medium is the Massage*, he used television to predict his global village with the Internet. Interestingly enough, his remarkable ability to predict the future is available on the very medium he predicted, YouTube (mywebcowtube, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is well known that the length of man's existence is dwarfed by the age of the earth itself. An analogous comparison can be made about man's technological advances in relationship to his existence. McLuhan saw a change in the latter comparison when he put pen to paper. As we end the first quarter of the first century of the third millennium, we see McLuhan's prognostications come to pass and take hold. With the advent of AI, media, mediums, messages, and massages will all develop in new ways that boggle the mind.

As they develop and rapidly change, so too will our understandings and interpretations of the world around us. We must be ready to not

only accept rapid change for the good but understand that it might upset the apple cart as well. McLuhan, Fiore and Agel had it exactly right when they placed in bold capital letters on the back cover of their book: "ALL MEDIA WORK US OVER COMPLETELY."

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

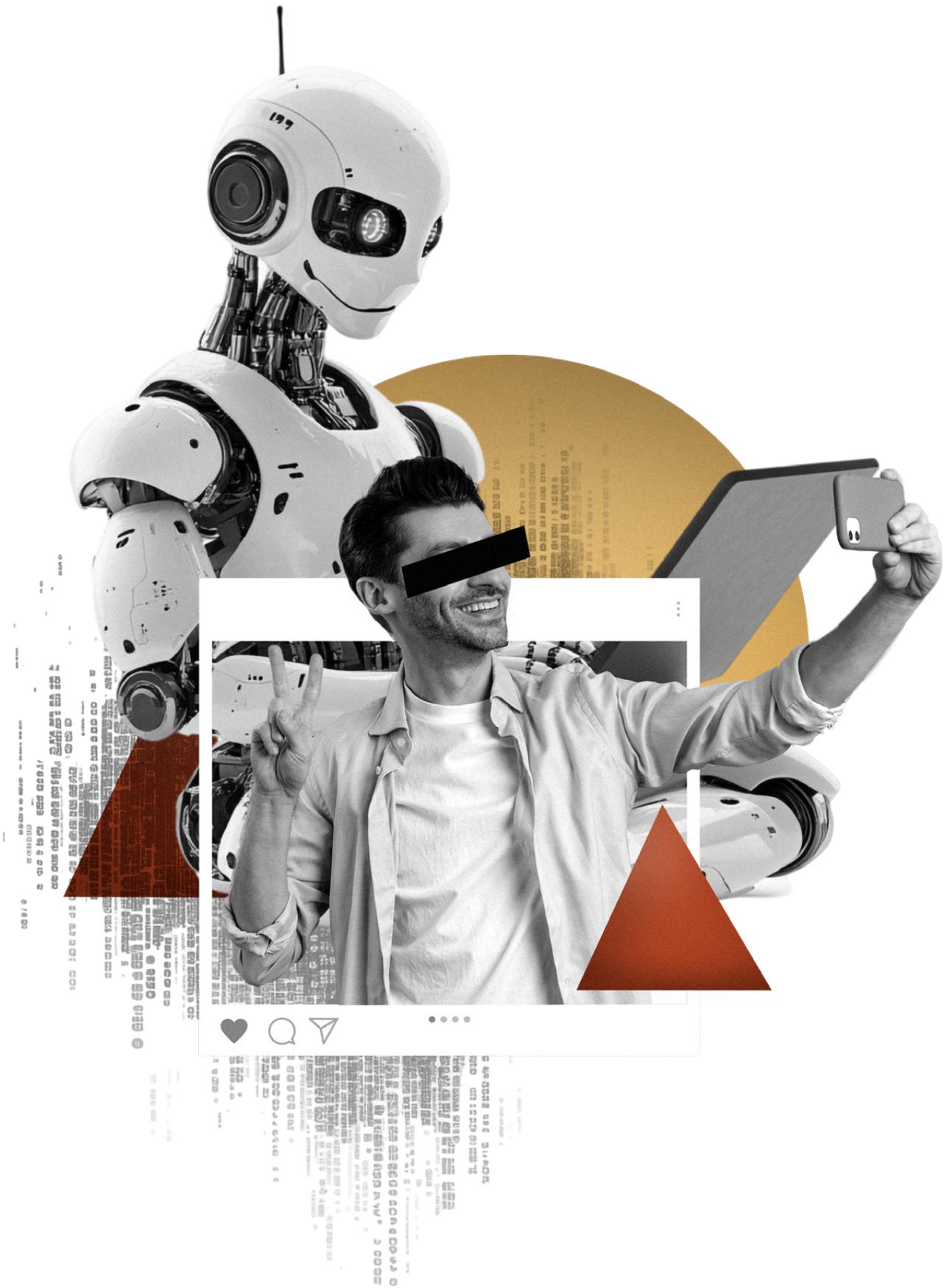
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NEOLIBERALISM

AS IDEOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF MODERN
SOCIETY: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores neoliberal ideology as the foundational force behind contemporary social development. Through the lens of political philosophy, social ontology, and media theory, the analysis traces how neoliberalism has transformed from an economic doctrine into a hegemonic ideological framework permeating political, cultural, and technological domains. Drawing upon the works of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Antonio Gramsci, Thomas Piketty, and Jean Baudrillard, the paper examines how power is exercised not only through institutional and economic mechanisms but also through discursive, digital, and symbolic practices. The digital environment — dominated by global tech corporations such as Google, Meta, Amazon, and Twitter — serves as a primary medium of control and consent generation. The paper argues that the virtualization of reality, enabled by digitalization and media hyperreality, significantly facilitates the internalization of neoliberal values among individuals. Social reality is increasingly shaped by simulation and spectacle, where ideological control is exerted through the production of affective and symbolic systems. Neoliberalism, therefore, functions as both a material and discursive regime, sustaining elite dominance through soft power and voluntary submission. The study contributes to understanding the ontological dimensions of ideology in the digital age and proposes a rethinking of hegemony, resistance, and the role of subjectivity in late capitalism.

Keywords

neoliberalism, ideology, hegemony, digital environment

INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that in the era of modern globalization — as a worldwide process of economic, political, cultural, and religious integration and unification — the ideology of neoliberalism has gained the greatest significance as a totalizing worldview system of Western society. The purpose of this article is to examine the key tenets of neoliberal ideology, which, in its general sense, significantly influences not only the formation of ideological stereotypes throughout the civil world but also determines the current state of public consciousness of the entire civilizational community. This is especially relevant for Ukrainian society, as it will be an important component of its further development in the future, particularly during its post-war recovery period. Given this goal, there is a need to first review the general state and principles of neoliberal ideology. Specifically, it is necessary to determine the current significance of neoliberal ideology in the modern global process and to outline its fundamental differences from the dominance of past ideologies. Undoubtedly, this examination aims at a critical evaluation of neoliberalism as a worldview and ideological system. In turn, this analysis will enable an assessment of the efforts made by the modern global financial and economic elite to preserve the influence of neoliberal ideology through means of modernization. This modernization is currently being rapidly implemented, taking into account the significant changes in modern geopolitical processes. The importance of these geopolitical changes is demonstrated by recent studies of neoliberalism, which explore its ideological foundations as an active factor in political and economic globalist trends. In particular, this includes the works of Thomas Piketty (2020), Joseph E. Stiglitz (2019),

George Monbiot and Paul Hutchison (2024), and *The Defeat of the West* by Emmanuel Todd (2024). Researchers now face an urgent need for a thorough analysis of the interconnections among various aspects of the development of modern civilizational society in the socio-historical dimension, which reflect the dynamics of neo-globalization processes.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH

For quite some time, socio-humanitarian research by scholars from various fields has pointed to global socio-political and socio-economic changes in the modern world. These studies highlight the crisis and inevitable devaluation of the entire neoliberal ideological system of contemporary digital society.

Aspects of this transformation have been explored in the works of prominent scholars, including Giorgio Agamben (1993), H. Alemán (2023), Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1995), and Manuel DeLanda (2006). Other scholars contributing to the discussion include Benoist (2024), Umberto Eco (1997), Bowring (2008), Mark Fisher (2009), David Harvey (2007), M. R. Kehl (2018), Naomi Klein (2008), and Ernesto Laclau (2014). Further influential works come from Christopher Lasch (1996), Achille Mbembe (2019), Chantal Mouffe (2013), George Monbiot and Paul Hutchison (2024), Richard Sennett (2000), Joseph E. Stiglitz (2017; 2019), Steve Fuller (2018), Immanuel Wallerstein (1995), Shoshana Zuboff (2019), and Slavoj Žižek (2022), among others.

METHODS

The examination of the stated topic necessitates the use of a range of modern socio-humanitarian methods that fully correspond to the interdisciplinary nature of the research. In studying this topic, the following methods were employed: comparative analysis, phenomenological, hermeneutic, discourse analysis methods, as well as constructivism and social constructionism.

PURPOSE

The main theoretical objective of the article is to examine the principles of operation and key components of modern ideology, particularly its neoliberal variant, which is acquiring the charac-

teristics of a global phenomenon. An important part of the work is the evaluation of the dominance of this ideology in the modern world by scholars from various academic schools and political perspectives. The article assesses the prospects for its modernization for the further development of a civilizational society and analyzes the likelihood of its replacement by another ideological construct in the future.

RESULTS

The analysis of ideology as a factor in the development of society points to significant worldview transformations in the modern civilizational society. The significance of ideology as a large-scale socio-political and socio-economic phenomenon is considered from a broad historical retrospective, particularly in the works of the French scholar T. Piketty. This is expanded upon in the studies of the genesis of neoliberalism by J. Monbiot and P. Hutchison. These studies highlight the potential positive aspects of ideology, in contrast to various critical interpretations of it as a form of false consciousness. However, when it comes to today's neoliberal ideology, attention is drawn to its negative consequences — especially in the digital network society — as vividly illustrated by Guy Debord's concept of the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1996), Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, and Steve Fuller's concept of post-truth. These contributions make it clear that contemporary neoliberal ideology gradually devalues universal human values and reduces them to Baudrillard's notion of a «procession of simulacra».

Ultimately, this gradually leads to the devaluation of the essence of democratic and legal freedoms, and to the partial or complete loss by individuals of the ethical components of existence that define subjectivity — namely dignity, equality, justice, respect, and responsibility. Truth itself becomes devalued; knowledge turns into an arena of constant ideological struggle for dominance, particularly in politics and science. This confirms the thesis that ideology is a necessary condition for the existence of any society, especially a modern one dominated by the struggle for supremacy. At this point, it no longer matters whether the ideology is socialist, neoliberal, or any other — a claim supported by the concepts of E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe. By considering these theories, one may conclude that Western consumer society cultivates permissiveness, a cult of violence and coercion, while bureaucratic institutions, including

legal bodies, do not fully uphold the humanitarian principles of civic freedom, equality, and justice. Furthermore, the networked world clouds the real world and promotes a continuous pursuit of pleasure, being aligned with an industry of endless media-driven sensationalism, entertainment, and performance.

Thus, the modern globalized ideology of neoliberalism now shares little more than a name with its predecessor — liberalism, which emphasized entrepreneurial initiative, pragmatism, rationality, relative equality, and competitiveness, all of which supported various forms of compromise, partnership, and cooperation. It is now evident that a new, refined ideology of half-truths dominates, where even forms of deliberative (consultative) democracy are being devalued.

This condition is significantly intensified by total digitalization and mediatization. It is suggested that, at this stage of civil society development, it is urgently necessary to substantially modernize or seek and implement alternatives to the ideology of neoliberalism — particularly in light of the powerful influence that information technologies have come to exert on the public.

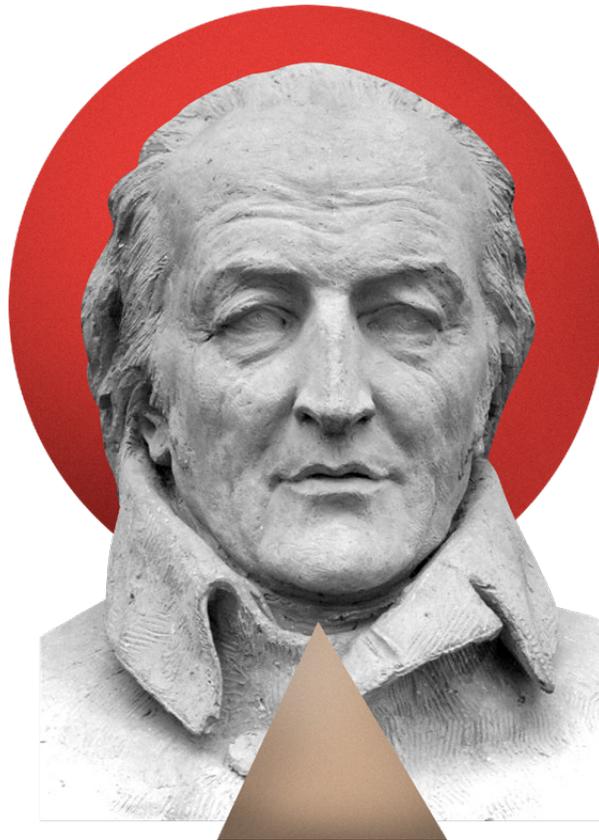
DISCUSSION

One of the most significant contributions to the study of the phenomenon of ideology in a broad cultural-historical and philosophical context was made by the renowned French scholar T. Piketty (2020). The significance of this work, like his other in-depth studies, is hard to overestimate. According to his concept of ideology, «each era develops a whole range of contradictory discourses and ideologies to legitimize existing inequalities or those that, in people’s opinion, ought to exist» (Piketty, 2020, p. 3). These ideological discourses define the economic, political, and social rules that people accept and later use to make sense of the effectiveness of existing social structures. Through sharp, antagonistic clashes between ideological discourses — which are simultaneously economic, social, and political in their nature — a dominant narrative (or group of narratives) emerges that supports the existing regime of social inequality. The phenomenon of social inequality, along with people’s perceptions of justice and injustice, has existed throughout the entire history of society. Therefore, ideology and its discourses are relevant to all societies throughout human history. Thus, the researcher, through the concept of an «inequality regime» — which is manifested through the

ongoing struggle of discourses and the support of social institutions — argues that these institutions justify and, in fact, structure economic, social, and political inequality. This makes the history and evolution of inequality regimes a central object of study (Piketty, T. 2020, p. 9). It significantly expands the relevance of ideology as a phenomenon in historical perspective and allows for a better understanding of transformations on a global transnational scale. Furthermore, this approach rejects the Marxist ideological construction — the flawed orthodoxy of base and superstructure — which has already been thoroughly examined by radical critics such as E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 7–46).

Moreover, drawing on extensive empirical data — economic, political, social, and demographic — Piketty convincingly demonstrates the incompatibility of the concept of ideology as «false consciousness» with modern geopolitical realities. He concludes that the history of society is not merely the history of class struggle, as claimed by the classics of Marxism, but rather «the history of all societies that have existed so far is the history of the struggle of ideologies and the pursuit of justice» (Piketty, 2020, p. 1010). Furthermore, he posits that, through the lens of ideology, «the history of human societies can be viewed as a search for justice» (Piketty, 2020, p. 1012). In this view, all economic categories — especially the property regime and its historically specific origins in each nation — as well as political and social institutions, are subordinated to ideology. The tragic experience of former communist states serves as evidence of catastrophe, one that merely gave rise to new forms of injustice. We shall leave aside for now his project of the evolution of modern society toward participatory socialism and its ideological and politico-economic mechanisms... Perhaps the historical time for its realization has not yet arrived.

However, the most influential conclusion reached by the researcher in his thorough examination of the history of inequality regimes worldwide offers a fundamentally different perspective on the significance of the phenomenon of ideology. T. Piketty concludes that «the balance of power at any given moment depends on the interaction of the short-term logic of events with long-term intellectual developments, which produce a wide range of ideas that can be mobilized in moments of crisis» (Piketty, 2020, p.1016). Thus, one may conclude that the current state of neoliberalism and its ideological components — social inequality, injustice, meritocracy,



Buste de Destutt de Tracy par David d'Angers
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and others — are transient in nature and will be transformed in the foreseeable future, losing the relevance they currently possess.

Hence, it makes sense to briefly revisit the development of ideas about ideology, which is not only imaginary but also based in language, starting from the late 18th century. It is widely known that the term «ideology» was introduced into academic discourse by the French philosopher, economist, and political figure Antoine Destutt de Tracy. In his view, ideology is a philosophically grounded rational and scientific form in which language is not merely a vehicle for expressing ideas, but a fundamental and necessary condition for their formation, implying a significant influence of language on thought. According to Destutt de Tracy, this philosophical principle applies to all sciences generally, as well as to each specific field of knowledge. In this sense, de Tracy's view on ideology implicitly *acknowledges language and speech as factors in the formation of thought* — a position that anticipates by more than a century the linguistic turn of the 20th century. From this perspective, ideology is a philosophical premise and a crucial factor in the development of science (Destutt de Tracy, 2017).

However, in the 19th and later the 20th century, an entirely different understanding of the relationship between ideology and science emerged. Ideology became the object of harsh criticism in Marxism and positivist sociology of knowledge. According to the related views of these scientific traditions, ideology — as a system of ideas — escapes individual control, takes on a quasi-autonomous existence, and comes to be perceived by individuals as a dominating, «material» force of circumstance, where the normal perception of human existence is already distorted from the outset — particularly in the understanding of social reality and societal processes more broadly.

From this critical perspective, the naturalization and hypostatization of ideas reveal a nearly universal mechanism underlying all ideological systems. Karl Marx's foundational idea is that social interests, expressed as social relations, shape the social positions of individuals, groups, classes, and strata. These positions gain meaning through conscious intentions, goals, interests, and attitudes, which are articulated and given significance in various forms of social consciousness. Within this consciousness, distorted awareness

and the process of reification create a socially constructed reality — on both individual and collective levels — which becomes fetishized in modern, predominantly commodity-driven societies. This tendency is only amplified in today's consumer society and reflects the pragmatism and instrumentalism of the contemporary social order.

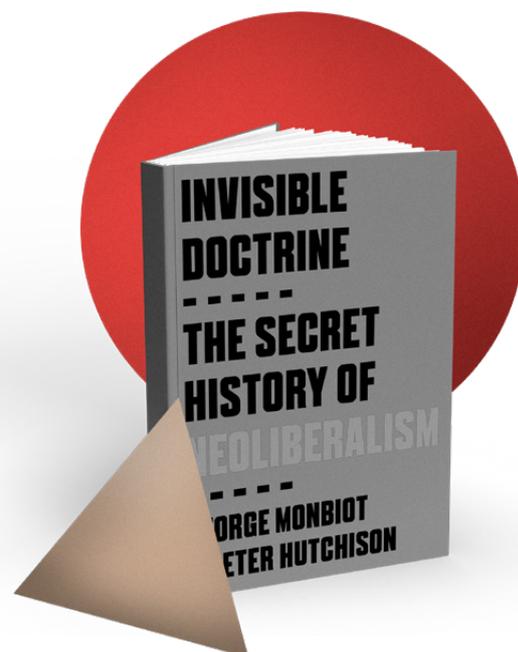
It is worth emphasizing that Marx's analytical approach to ideology — especially his treatment of ideology as distorted or false consciousness and his understanding of ideology as a means of struggle, maintenance, expansion, and dissemination of power (power is fought for in order to control all processes in society) — has had a colossal influence on the subsequent development of ideology theory.

As a result, ideology came to be seen as the antithesis of objective scientific knowledge — a convenient target for social critique. This critique found further development in positivist sociology of knowledge, where social science positioned itself as an impartial arbiter, an external observer capable of identifying discrepancies and distortions in models of the objective world. Here, the issue of truth was framed in terms of transcendent versus immanent observation. One should recall that the radical critique of ideology reached its peak in the Frankfurt School, particularly in the works of M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno. It is also worth noting that the Frankfurt thinkers drew attention to a key feature of (neo)liberal ideology — what they called *Verblendungszusammenhang* (a “context of delusion” or “structure of ideological blindness”) — which complemented the process of reification (*Verdinglichung*) in capitalist (neoliberal) society.

One of the most recent studies of neoliberalism and its ideology — expanding upon the work of T. Piketty in exploring the historical roots and conditions of pre-liberal capitalism and its liberal stage — is the work *The Invisible Doctrine: The Secret History of Neoliberalism* of British scholars George Monbiot and Peter Hutchison (2004). The researchers focus on the socio-cultural, economic, and historical-political genesis of neoliberalism, as well as its current state and future prospects in contemporary society. Their study introduces several innovative socio-economic and socio-cultural arguments. According to these British scholars, neoliberalism has become such a deeply entrenched and pervasive phenomenon that it is no longer even recognized as an ideology. It has dissolved into the fabric of modern society, penetrating all social strata and digital networks. The authors pose

a rhetorical question — what is neoliberalism? — and respond: «It is an ideology whose central belief is that competition is the defining trait of humanity. It tells us we are greedy and selfish, but that greed and selfishness light the path to social improvement, generating wealth that will ultimately benefit us all. It is competition that transforms us *into consumers, not citizens*» (Monbiot & Hutchison, 2024, p. 4).

In this regard, another contemporary scholar of neoliberalism, Wendy Brown, examines it as a totalizing phenomenon of modernity, where it makes little difference which variation dominates globally, since «neoliberal imagination endows capital with unprecedented value» (Brown, 2019). In other words, material wealth and money are elevated as the highest values of the present age. The British scholars further elaborate: «This ideology seeks to convince us that our well-being is best achieved not through *political choice* but through economic choice — particularly through buying and selling. It promises us that by engaging in market transactions, we will reveal a natural, *meritocratic hierarchy* of winners and losers». In this view, the most talented and industrious individuals will succeed, while the incompetent, weak, and unskilled will fail. The wealth generated by the winners will trickle down to other social layers, enriching the broader population. Thus, the free market is seen as capable of autonomously organizing social life at both national and global levels. Therefore, according to British scientists, this principle is now becoming the dominant ideological framework, implemented through all available means into collective and



individual consciousness. The expected outcome is a deepening immersion of ordinary individuals into a consumerist, materialistic sphere, where money and economic gain become the principal measure of existence for nearly all people, supplanting political and social values — legal guarantees grounded in freedom, democracy, justice, and various civil rights (Peck & Theodore, 2019).

It is worth noting that George Monbiot and Peter Hutchison convincingly argue, based on substantial historical evidence, that gradual change — without revolutionary upheaval — guided by the strengthening of international financial-political and legal institutions, and with the mutual consent of elites and ordinary citizens, could lead to the realization of an ideal

democratic system: a communal, multicultural community. This presents one of the potential avenues for salvaging neoliberalism by rendering its globalist ideology more democratic and effective.

The critical condition of neoliberal society is addressed in the works of prominent American scholar Joseph Stiglitz (2017, 2019). Stiglitz writes: «The simultaneous erosion of trust in both neoliberalism and democracy is no coincidence or mere correlation. Neoliberalism has been undermining democracy for forty years» (Stiglitz, 2019, pp. 4–6). Therefore, the scientist draws the conclusion that: «Due to the form of globalization dictated by neoliberalism, individuals and entire societies have largely lost the ability to control their own destinies»



(Stiglitz, 2019, pp. 4–6). Furthermore, he asserts that «the reality is: despite its name, the era of *neoliberalism* was extremely far from *liberalism*» (Stiglitz, 2019, p. 7).

Accordingly, the global free market as the measure of all social relations has significantly diminished the importance of democratic institutions, making them entirely dependent on fluctuations in the global market economy. On this subject, contemporary Canadian scholar Quinn Slobodian argues that «the realization of the global neoliberal project is linked not to liberating markets, but to enclosing them — to inoculate capitalism from the threats of democracy» (Slobodian, 2020, p. 2). He further concludes: «Throughout the twentieth century, neoliberal globalism was obsessed with two problems: first, how to rely on democracy, given democracy’s capacity to destroy itself; and second, how to rely on nations, given nationalism’s ability to destroy peace» (Slobodian, 2020, p. 13).

According to representatives of neo-globalism, almost all nation states should be integrated into the global market economy and into international economic institutions that protect the free market from excessive national sovereignty. In other words, the relationships between states and global economic institutions are structured in such a way as to allow for the circumvention of national legislation when it interferes with the rights of global capital.

This eloquent acknowledgment by socio-economic experts — effectively, the ideologues of neoliberalism — demonstrates that the neoliberal doctrine no longer aligns with its original purpose as a continuation of classical liberalism. Thus, in addressing the pressing problems of contemporary society, the proponents of neoliberalism propose to fully «unleash» the global financial and economic elite in everything they intend to implement worldwide — regardless of any circumstances. At the same time, they seek to suppress any resistance, even mild objections or dissent, to the ambitions and potential plans of neoliberalism from national interests. Consequently, national states and their governments at all levels are required solely to uphold political legitimacy and stability — functions that fully support the existing institutional framework of neoliberalism as the foundation of free capitalist markets.

In this context, French scholar Daniel Bensaid poses a rhetorical question: «Is it still possible to break the vicious circle of domination? Judging by certain authors, the answer today is

a categorical ‘no.’ The vicious circle is closed in on itself, rendered unbreakable, for example, by the absolutization of Foucauldian biopower» (Bensaid, 2011, p. 71).

The ideological doctrine of neoliberalism instills fear among ordinary citizens, asserting that state intervention and bureaucratic control will inevitably lead to tyranny, as the state could accumulate excessive power and dictate how civil society should function. Therefore, neoliberals argue, the government’s primary role must be to eliminate barriers hindering the emergence of a «natural» hierarchy, in which market economic laws — based on harsh competition — prevail.

Under pressure from transnational globalists, the state has deregulated the financial and other commercial sectors, granting the elite unrestrained freedom in all forms of activity — often dubious and on the edge of legality — while at the same time maintaining strict control over ordinary citizens. This control includes deeper intrusion into private life, suppression of protest, and severe restrictions on the exercise of democratic freedoms. Ultimately, why not go further? Why not destroy trade unions by corrupting them from within? Why not render democratic elections purely formal and predictable political spectacles? Why not place kleptocrats at the helm of many states to ensure they implement the directives of the global elite?

Meanwhile, the blame and responsibility for the failures of the socio-economic system are shifted onto individuals. Ordinary citizens are constantly subjected to the ideological narrative that they are somehow personally responsible for the objective state of affairs — until they begin to act as their own accusers. Gradually, all citizens, to varying degrees, are transformed into carriers of neoliberal ideology, thus becoming simultaneously both consumers and disseminators of this ideological doctrine.

At present and in the foreseeable future, the global elite no longer has a significant need for the legal frameworks of states as guarantors of freedom, democracy, and citizens’ rights. The transnational elite has come to believe that it alone can shape the world according to its own rules. This trajectory was anticipated in the works of renowned scholars such as Christopher Lasch (1996) and Richard Sennett (2000).

As vividly demonstrated by the aforementioned British scholars George Monbiot and Peter Hutchison, this neoliberal ideological strategy has rapidly begun to materialize, as evidenced by sociological surveys. In Chapter 9 of their work *The Crisis*



of Democracy (Monbiot & Hutchison, 2024), the authors reference the 2022 Freedom House report, which states that only 20 percent of the global population currently lives in fully free and democratic societies. This compels the researchers to make a sobering prediction: if democratic politics cannot be revived, this shift may only be in its early stages. They conclude that democracy and its institutions, when confronted with an unstable capitalism, are now retreating almost completely. At the same time, various forms of totalitarian ideologies are emerging in stable positions –flourishing where the state collapses, where politics collapses, and where the citizen can no longer find satisfaction within the framework of democratic processes. In accordance with this societal condition, the authors make a startling suggestion: what Friedrich Hayek feared most — the rise of a new totalitarianism — has been accelerated by his own doctrine. They argue that all totalitarian ideologies — fascism, National Socialism, radical Islamism, communism — share common mechanisms of propaganda and agitations that are focused on the realization of a particular ideal in society, which have their

own ideals of justice. However, as the great humanist Dante Alighieri once said, — «the road to hell is paved with good intentions». This idea was further developed by his fellow countryman, philosopher and writer Umberto Eco, in his essay *Ur-Fascism*. Eco explained that a defining feature of all reactionary ideologies is their inherent elitism, rooted in deep aristocratic values, he wrote regarding the *archetypes* of «eternal» fascism that for all reactionary ideologies are characterized by elitism because of its deep aristocratic nature. Throughout history, aristocratic and militaristic forms of elitism have thrived on the disdain for the weak. Ur-fascism, he emphasizes, embraces a populist elitism, asserting that «ordinary people are the best people in the world» (Eco, 1997, p. 87). He further argued that, in the eyes of such ideologies, the individual has no personal rights, and the people are seen as a monolithic entity embodying a collective will — warning that this predatory ideology may continue to reappear «in the most innocent of forms and guises» (Eco, 1997, p. 90).

It should be noted that research on the inconsistency of neoliberal ideology as an «ideal»

model for the prosperity of modern capitalist society has existed since the second half of the 20th century. Renowned Western scholars warned about the fallacies of neoliberalism long before its peak. For instance, Immanuel Wallerstein, in the mid-1990s, forecasted the development of a neoliberal society over the next 25–50 years, emphasizing a critical point: «the enormous inequality in the system, which implies the absence of democracy» (Wallerstein, 1995, p. 281). The chasm between the rich and the poor — referred to as the «biomass» — has grown to colossal proportions in recent decades.

Another prominent American scholar, David Harvey, wrote in the early 21st century that the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm — with its proclaimed ideals of freedom, democracy, and justice — actually reveals the opposite: it exposes deeply troubling processes occurring in contemporary, especially American, society. This unsatisfactory condition significantly affects the majority of ordinary people: «Freedom has much brighter prospects than those offered by neoliberalism» (Harvey, D., 2007, p. 250). According to Harvey, alternative pathways must be sought for the development of modern society, as the erosion of democratic freedoms in all their dimensions risks leading to highly negative societal trends — where the boundary between democracy and totalitarianism is exceedingly thin, elusive, and unpredictable.

An even more radical view was held by the English philosopher and political theorist Mark Fisher. In his opinion, all previous exploitative systems first required an ideology — a deliberately distorted worldview — but the true nature of neoliberalism as a form of modern capitalism goes further: it fills all horizons of the thinkable and surpasses all its predecessors in masking its simultaneously predatory and perverted nature. In one of his works, he writes: «The role of capitalist ideology is not to defend anything, as propaganda does, but to hide the fact that the actions of capital do not depend on the subjectively accepted opinions» (Fisher, 2009, p. 15). Thus, he is unsurprised by the fact that «ultra-authoritarianism and capital are entirely compatible: *detention camps and network cafés* coexist without contradiction» (Fisher, 2009, p. 3).

Interestingly, the perspective of the aforementioned British scholars stands in contrast to the findings of renowned Canadian writer and political activist Naomi Klein. In her bestselling book, Klein argues that the erroneous adoption of neoliberal ideology as the foundation for capitalist

society lies in its very origins — in the classical liberal ideological doctrine embraced in the 1940s and 1950s. Thus, the ideologists of neoliberalism — such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and other founders of the «neoliberal school of economic thought» — bear direct responsibility for this trajectory (Klein, 2008, p. 720).

An even more radical critique of neoliberal ideology across multiple aspects of public life is offered by contemporary philosopher and psychoanalyst Jorge Alemán. He asserts: «No matter how we may characterize capitalism, its neoliberal mutation is markedly distinguished by one thing — its unlimitedness. Capitalism is an acephalous force that penetrates into the most remote corners of life. This is the novelty of neoliberalism. It is capable of producing subjectivities that conform to its existential paradigm of entrepreneurship, competition, and management. Today, neoliberalism creates a «new human» < > an individual without symbolic heritage, without history, without unique or irreplaceable traits» (Alemán, 2023). What most concerns Alemán is the dire condition of the modern human being: their vulnerability, social inequality and injustice, the totalitarian nature of governance exercised by both transnational and local powers, the failure of social institutions to fulfill their intended roles, and the overwhelming levels of corruption.

In the 21st century, the proponents of neoliberal ideology have acquired a highly effective means of governance and control in the world — in particular ordinary citizens — the digital networked space. Indeed, today's elites, through rapid digitalization and the increasing mediatization of society, as well as the constant communication of individuals via social networks, have significantly enhanced the forms and effectiveness of ideological influence. This elite influence is reinforced by global media and information corporations such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, Amazon, Twitter, and others. These corporations not only collect vast amounts of data and continuously monitor the full spectrum of individual behavior, but also closely cooperate with state authorities, providing personal data on every individual — a phenomenon previously analyzed in the work of (Palahuta, 2024).

The overview of the scholars and researchers from various schools and approaches about the meaning and characteristics of neoliberal ideology (presented above) has predominantly taken a descriptive form. However, the mechanisms and tools for implementing neoliberal ideology

have not yet been sufficiently explored, in particular, from the perspective of social ontology. Preliminary analysis, particularly the work of T. Piketty, indicates that neoliberal ideology in modern society is embedded in the economic, political, and social processes and, by its very nature, invariably exhibits features of *antagonism* and *hegemony* — characteristics inherent in power relations. Drawing upon the key principles of the theory of hegemony of financial and political elites, as articulated by Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1991), one may interpret its relevance for contemporary society in the following way: ruling must be carried out invisibly and implicitly, through a dynamic equilibrium of various dominant social groups or factions that alternate in power over time. In other words, power is exercised skillfully through the use of so-called «soft power» in the interests of the minority — the elite — which possesses all capital and means of power at both global and national levels. This form of governance ensures a «non-violent coercion» and enables the continual control over subordinate groups — the masses — on a seemingly voluntary basis.

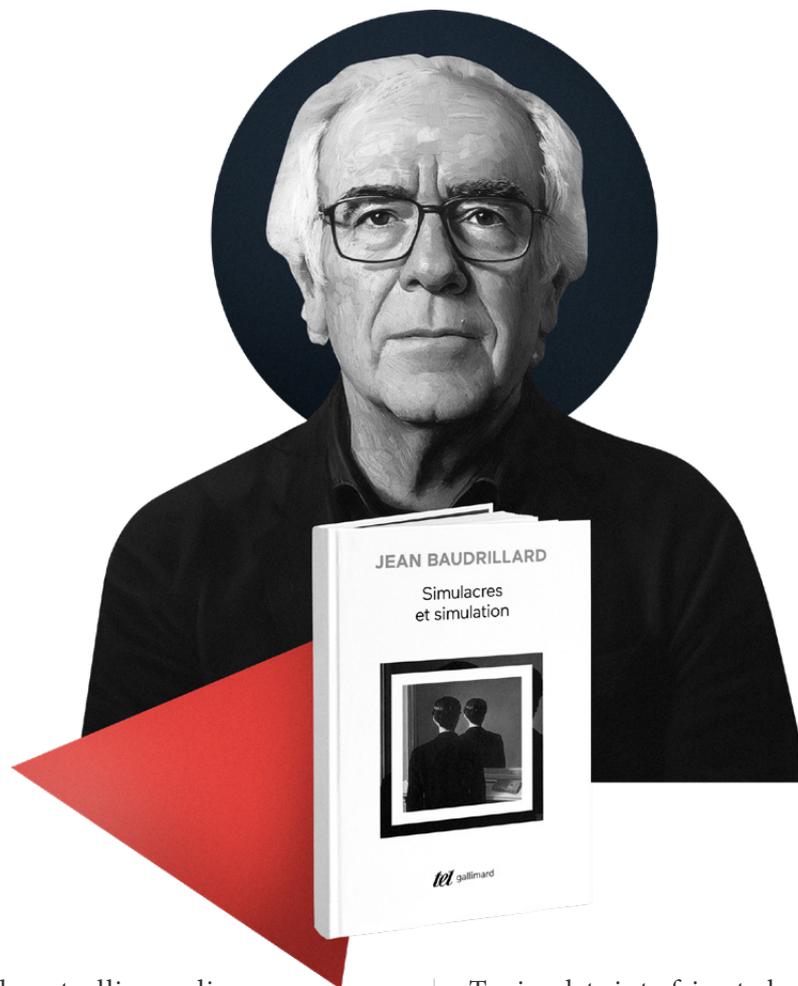
Modern hegemony, aided by the ideology of neoliberalism and its manifold instruments, must guarantee a dynamic and ongoing process of establishing an adequate level of «consent» between the majority and the ruling minority — that is, the elite of contemporary society. In this regard, E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe emphasized that the socio-political discourse — which is inherently ideological — is «a real force that contributes to the formation and constitution of social relations» (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.110). Developing the idea that the social is always both ideological and discursive, E. Laclau arrives at the conclusion that all traditional conceptions of ideology are premised on the assumption of a «totality of the social». Laclau decisively rejects, first, the concept of society as an organic unity — a view that underpins all previous models of society. This notion is also challenged by Deleuze's theory of assemblage with its rhizomatic and nomadic structure, as well as by actor-network theory (Callon & Law, 1986; Latour, 1996), theories of community (Blanchot, 1983; Nancy, 1991; Agamben, 1993), among others.

Second, Laclau rejects essentialism in social ontology, wherein, for example, the Marxist model of base and superstructure played an ambiguous role. While it asserted the relative nature of the base and the superstructure, it simultaneously endowed this relative system with a center and

a structure through which social organization could be determined. This center served to fix the meaning of individual social elements, thus forming the foundation for societal construction. In this framework, generality functioned as a primary principle for ensuring and comprehending social order. «The status of this generality was the status of the essence of the social order, which had to be recognized behind the empirical fluctuations observable on the surface of social life» (Laclau, 1991, p.25).

In contrast to this essentialist conception, Laclau seeks to acknowledge the infinity and boundlessness of the social as simultaneously ideological and discursive. That is, any social system is inherently unlimited, always surrounded by an «excess of meaning» that defies control. Therefore, «society» as a unified and comprehensible object — upon which its internal processes are based — cannot, in principle, exist. At the same time, the infinity of the social does not imply a completely chaotic play of signs and meanings. Laclau argues that the social is not merely an infinite play of differences; it is also an ongoing but *futile attempt* to constrain this play, to tame the infinite and enclose it within the boundaries of a social order. «Structure... no longer assumes the form of the essential foundation of the social; rather, it is an attempt — uncertain and unstable by definition — to grasp the 'social,' to establish hegemony over it» (Laclau, 1991, p.26). And this hegemony, by its very nature, is entirely ideological.

Ultimately, according to Laclau, the traditional understanding of ideology is inverted. Ideologies are no longer deviations from an expected, fixed social order; rather, they are attempts to embrace the play of differences — a persistent denial of the impossibility of establishing wholeness and harmony in a society divided between the elite and ordinary individuals conceived as a bio-mass. «The ideological would consist of those discursive forms through which society seeks to constitute itself as such — based on hermetization, fixation of meaning, and the denial of the infinite play of differences. <> Since the social is impossible without some fixation of meaning, without a discourse of hermetization, the ideological must be seen as the very foundation of the social» (Laclau, 1991, p.27), — concludes E. Laclau. Thus, the recognition of the infinite and uncontainable nature of the social — as simultaneously ideological and discursive — requires fundamentally new tools, means and instruments from the elite in the process of



governing and controlling ordinary individuals who comprise the vast majority of the population.

It must be added that modern processes of digitalization and visualization have almost entirely virtualized reality — merging the virtual and the real into a practically indistinguishable continuum in which most ordinary individuals are immersed. This opens up new possibilities for the text of virtual reality, which refers only to itself in its visual-symbolic design. However, the existence of virtual reality is a profoundly textual phenomenon. It is self-referential and therefore self-sufficient: it requires no reference to external sources. It is characterized by autonomy, ambiguity, and infinity — features emphasized by Laclau when linking ideology, sociality, and discursivity in his ontology of the social (Laclau, 1991, pp. 24–27). Hence, virtualization significantly facilitates the implementation of neoliberal ideological constructs in contemporary society.

This phenomenon was anticipated in the works of the prominent French postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard, particularly in his influential book *Simulacres et Simulation* (Baudrillard, 1981). Among the central theses of this work is the assertion that a simulacrum is an imitation of something that does not exist.

«To simulate is to feign to have what one does not possess» (Baudrillard, 1981, p.14), thus giving rise to a space of total simulation. In such a space, the boundaries between the real and the imagined are dissolved; reality is superseded by hyperreality, which is characterized by the dominance of pure, non-referential simulacra, the precession of models, and the replacement of the real by signs of the real.

Baudrillard further asserts that with the death of transcendence in the modern world and its replacement by immanence, we have entered a qualitatively new stage — one of overwhelming manipulation of social relations. In the context of our discussion, we are particularly interested in how simulacra facilitate the implementation of neoliberal ideology. Drawing on the Latin term *medium* (meaning «in the middle» or «intermediate»), from which both the concept of «mass media» and the term *media* itself are derived, Baudrillard highlights the scope and character of the function of all forms of mass communication: the function of mediation and of being a carrier of information. He conceptualizes the medium as a technical and productive force that continuously generates simulacra.

Language itself, as a comprehensive symbolic system, is materialized in the medium through

a continuous flow of signs and diverse discourses. From the perspective of the incessant production of simulacra and pervasive simulations — what we now often refer to as «fake news» or «half-truths» — the media sphere appears to be the most grandiose and expansive domain. In the present digital networked environment, this sphere has acquired powerful new capacities through digitalization. When appropriated by structures of power, the networked media system becomes a means of control over virtually all spheres of public life. It penetrates the political, economic, social, religious, scientific, psychological, and other domains.

Thus, Baudrillard assigns a central role to the medium in his theory of simulacra. Crucially, he also emphasizes that media-generated information no longer bears any connection to the «reality» of facts. What is presented as reality is, in fact, already pre-tested and pre-constructed. «We are entering a world of pseudo-events, pseudo-history, pseudo-culture, and so forth» (Baudrillard, 1981, p.44). This astonishing mechanism of construction has now become a universal form of influence on both public and individual consciousness. It is actively and fully exploited by mass media under the ownership and control of elites and those in power.

CONCLUSIONS

The consideration of the topic's aspects in the context of analyzing the current state of civilizational society leads to the following conclusion: on the one hand, modern society signals a profound crisis within neoliberal ideology. This ideology today is undergoing devaluation and is entirely discrediting universal human values — particularly various democratic and legal freedoms, human dignity, equality, and justice.

Currently, neoliberal ideological reality is transforming into a continuous process of indulgence in various forms. It is oriented toward an industry of endless mediatized political scandals and legal proceedings, entertainment, and visual performances. In other words, the contemporary globalized world of neoliberal democracy is rapidly shedding the remnants of its own genetic liberal foundations — its imagined equality, communicative openness, and competitiveness, which once took the form of various partnerships.

Now, a new and sophisticated ideology of half-truth (post-truth) is emerging — where even the concept of deliberative (consultative)

democracy is no longer viable. In its place, various refined forms of manipulation over people dominate, based on distorted types of coercion and violence, temptation and pleasure. These modern forms of refined control — enabled by the principles of neoliberal ideology and previously noted — are expanding through total digitalization and visualization. In the future, this may lead the world toward a new form of totalitarian regime — a digital concentration camp, the so-called totalitarian neoliberalism, which civilized humanity has never known before.

On the other hand, there is an urgent need for the immediate modernization of neoliberal ideology — or its deliberalization — which would necessarily involve the search for and implementation of new types of worldviews. These worldviews must be based on principles oriented toward pluralism, equal dialogue, and partnership relations within society.

Currently, prominent contemporary researchers, who consider the modern world in an expanded context, are focused on finding and implementing such modernization or alternatives to neoliberal ideology. In our view, the reorientation of antagonisms into agonism — as a competition between equal rivals or partners, similar to sports contests — is currently unachievable. This is because the dominant global financial and economic elite will never relinquish power, not even at the level of simulation.

Undoubtedly, these new worldviews must not be mere forms of atopia or dystopian projects. Overcoming today's antagonisms — present both in global politics and within national institutions of individual societies — must rely on the creation of effective modern international institutions. These institutions should monitor the current dynamics of neo-globalist processes and be entirely free of corruption.

There is no other path for humanity, as only such a strategy of globalist ideology can prevent the approach of a global catastrophe.

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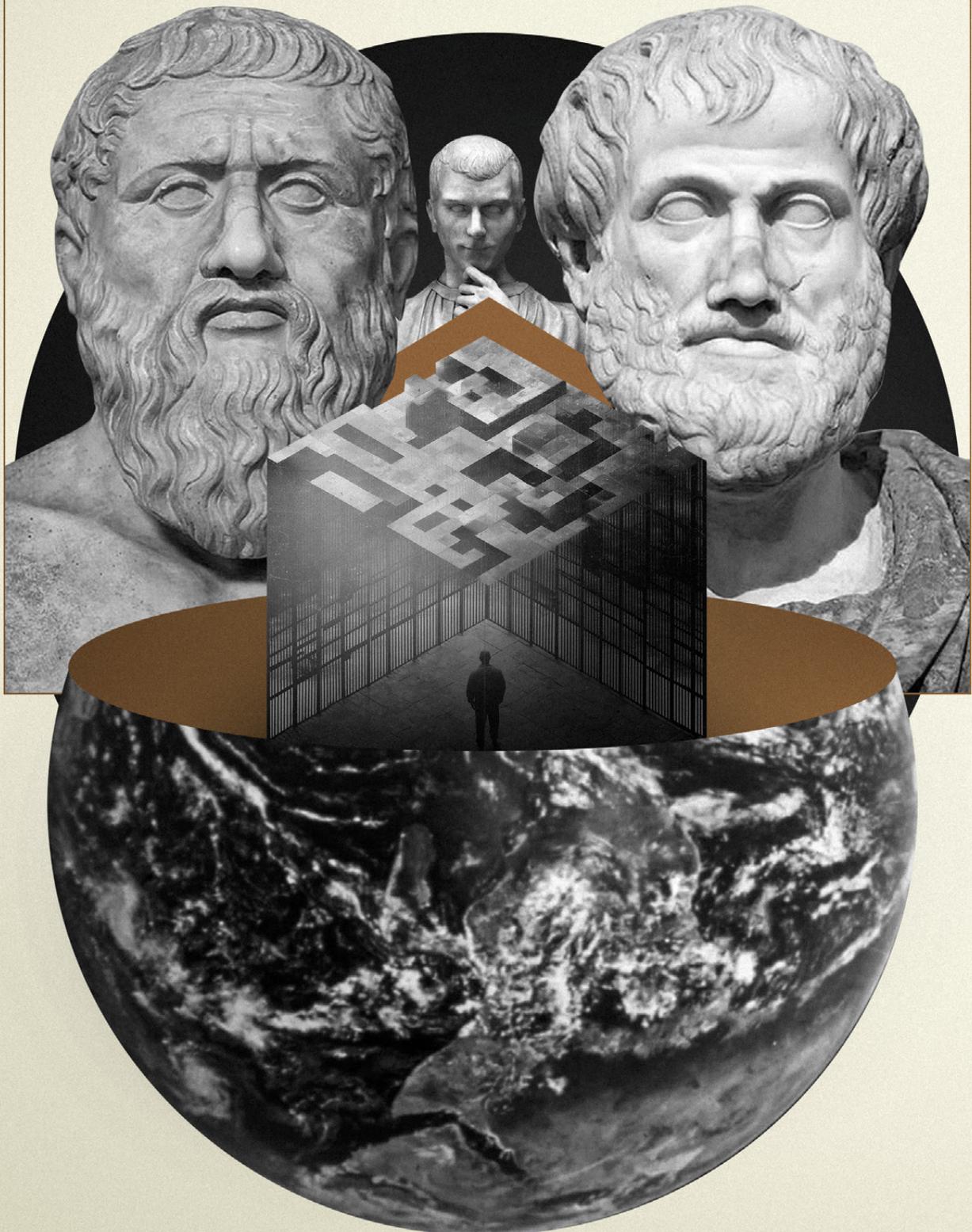
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THE REBIRTH OF PRE-MODERN MAN:

A JOURNEY BEYOND THE ORBIT
OF THE MODERN UNIVERSE

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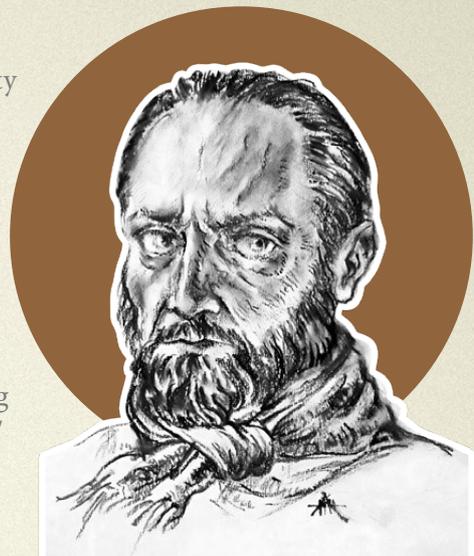


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ABSTRACT

The modern world is founded on the model of a “scientific” prison in which freedom is radically redefined within a mechanistic framework purporting to save people from evil. From within that cage, we are incapable of seeing what is without it without severe distortions. In order to understand the nature of our modern condition, we must question its moral and epistemic roots by seeing them onto a plane of possibilities whereon modern man faces pre-modern man as fundamental “other” and partner in dialogue. By encountering the pre-modern as viable alternative to our modern or Machiavellian “ways and orders,” we begin seeing the world, not as a mechanistic shelter against divine authority, but as a poetic place where the divine reveals itself in terms of a secret, though unambiguous activity seated at the heart of all things human.

Keywords

freedom, reason, nature, ancients, moderns, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, ideals, God

INTRODUCTION

The modern world as modern is created by human calculation; it is therefore not generated

naturally; it does not simply “evolve” out of a pre-modern past. The modern world is created first as a Machiavellian/Cartesian blue-print that is then supposed to be “realized historically,” to provide a solution to problems that pre-modern man had left unsolved. The upshot of our collective struggle to realize the blue-print is the establishment of a “brave new world” characterized by a concrete planetary, global or international System of rules and regulations that is supposed to incarnate man's loftiest aspirations, while sheltering all Peoples from fundamental questions, questions pertaining to the essential or inalienable bond between the human and the divine, between the ethical and the metaphysical.

Within the System or “World Order” in question man becomes progressively and unwittingly an expendable number, even as he is formally presented as gaining divine or divine-like attributes. We are promised the stars, as it were, in the very act of being crushed into the all-too-earthly; we are proclaimed free, precisely as our freedom is (re)defined strictly within the boundaries of a Global (or Totalistic) Regime of mechanistic control and manipulation: Technocracy. Those of us trying to escape from such a progressively dystopian cage, will need access to signs, primarily literary signs, from the pre-modern world; we will need to wrestle with our pre-modern classics in ways that risk undermining, even subverting altogether, our most cherished modern certainties

or prejudices in favor of a pristine encounter with truths to which our modern upbringing tends to blind us.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted by the present work is a phenomenological one carried out in a two-fold manner, or through two distinct phases: 1. a preliminary "bracketing" (akin to what Husserl (1970) called *epoché*) allowing us to consider our ordinary modern certainties as mere possibilities vis-à-vis fundamentally viable *pre-modern* alternatives; and 2. an intimate encounter with pre-modern literary sources as signalling the irreducibility of reflection to any compulsion, be it moral-historical, bio-chemical, or more vaguely existential. Modern methodologies redolent of a Cartesian-like "scientific method" are included within the scope of certainties to be bracketed for the sake of fulfilling a phenomenological cause. Thus is the modern notion of a "subject" beholding an "objective" world questioned at its roots and so in the face of an alternative scenario in which mind is not formally or symbolically cut out of a merely "extended" or quantifiable world (a world of value-free data), but in which the world itself is our method: a *poetic* stage on which a determined mind (thought within a world) discovers "providentially" its irreducible indetermination (thought as outer limit of its world). The original instantiation of thought within the world will then not be a conceptual "empty shell" such as Descartes's egoic structure (the "subject" as *res cogitans*), but the "incarnation" of a thought acting beyond any subjection to its world.

RESULTS

The present investigation finds that modern moral-conceptual habits have tended to drive us towards a crisis of humanity on a planetary scale, while blinding us to the very possibility of a remedy to our crisis. Such a remedy is now exposed as a way of life represented most notably by pre-modern literary classics of the caliber of Aristotle and Dante Alighieri. These newly-encountered sources guide us to recognize ourselves, not as "subjects" lost in a quantifiable world, but as "descendants" emanating directly from an *intellective agency* disclosing the world primordially as a meaningful whole.

DISCUSSION

We need not be familiar with twentieth century literature — from Franz Kafka to Michel Foucault (See O'Donoghue, 2021; Backman 2018)—to notice that Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (Bentham, 2020) is a blueprint, not merely for new prisons, but for the world as a whole;¹ much as Disneyland is in principle no mere amusement park among others, but the prototype for a universal society or a society that has shed all political-theological "pretense" — all public-minded quest for transcendence.² In such a society, the only problems left are problems that can be solved (as per the 16th century mathematician François Viète), which is to say essentially *technical* problems (Klein, 2013). All non-technical problems are either conceived mechanistically and so in strictly technical terms, or they are dismissed, nay scoffed at as practically irrelevant, publicly insignificant, if not altogether

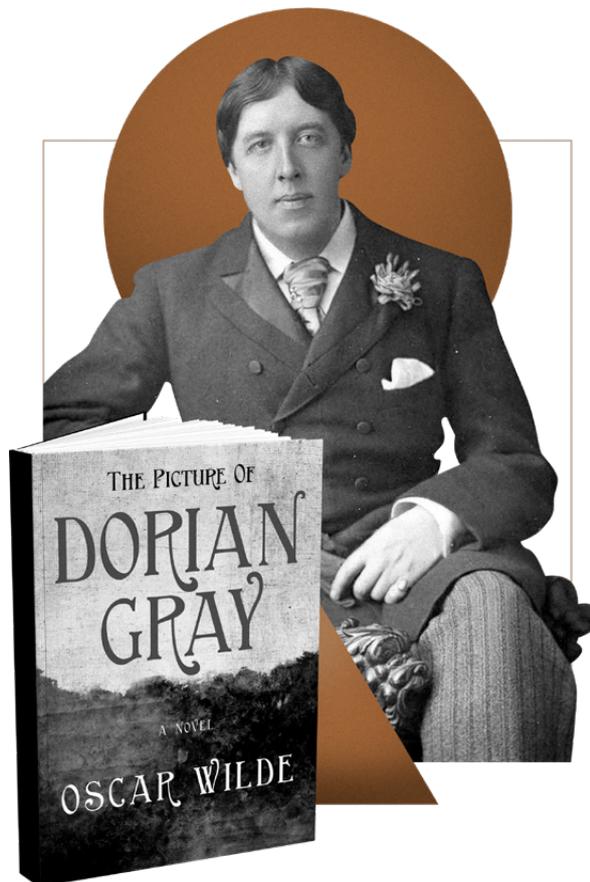
1 Brunon-Ernst (2012) and Baudrillard (1981), esp. pp. 48–56 ("La fin du panoptique" or "The End of the Panopticon"). Baudrillard's argument that we are no longer in the era of the panopticon or of its logic of despotic control tends to obscure the character of the passage from A. the master/slave or active/passive relation entailed by Bentham's logic of control, to B. a world of "simulation" in which the audience is (supposed to be) the actor. Though readily admitting that today we have reached a mode of "absolute manipulation" (*manipulation absolue*), Baudrillard writes as if contemporary tyranny were an alternative to the despotism defined by the panopticon. In reality, what our contemporary conflation of viewer and viewed involves is the triumph of the "Big Brother" surveyor via its immanentizing as "way of life" in the viewer: it is not so much that the audience becomes the medium/instrument of control (though in some sense people have tended to behave robotically and so in the element of sheer compulsion, as "reactors" devoid of reflection), but that they have been duped into believing to be free wherever they pretend to be their own masters by having "assimilated"/embraced the panopticon as a universal way of life. The "chip in the brain" that today's renowned technocrats (from Bill Gates to Elon Musk) advocate enthusiastically is a mere shadow of the contemporary technological integration of the master in the slave, where the latter is convinced of having become a master (of being the one who chooses, who uses, who manipulates) in the very act of serving his master's logic. It is not merely that we use ourselves, or feed upon our own life as cannibals, but that we are compelled to do so, or to abide in a protracted suicidal more of being, by a logic that we have "swallowed" already from our earliest childhood. We have in sum interiorized our chains, which are consequently successfully at work in us, without need of being tangibly imposed from above.

2 On the political-ideological significance of Disneyland, see Baudrillard (1981), pp. 25–28.

toxic to the thriving of a truly free society — the truly universal or open society.

Today, we have the liberty to talk about unsolvable problems such as justice, truth, freedom itself, beauty and evil, as long as our talk does not spill “metaphysically” or “poetically” outside of the cage of technocracy, the regime defined by the rule of the machine, or where mind is defined as a function of the mindless. Here we learn to serve the machine by pretending to use it and so by ignoring that the machine is using us 1. to pretend to use it *and* thereby 2. so that we may most efficiently serve as fuel for the machine. This much is entailed by the technological imperative: our lives must fuel a machine set up to manage them given the supposition that without such a machine our lives would in all likelihood, if not altogether inevitably, fall into a state of chaos.

Today’s intellectuals are expected to articulate discourses that remain compatible with the rule of the machine insofar as they do not threaten its stability by calling its foundations into se-



rious question. Moral opposition to technocracy poses no threat to the regime as long as it is not grounded in a purely theoretical opposition, or a questioning of the very *principles* of technocracy. For then moral opposition feeds into the vortex of machine-domination. To oppose the machine in mechanistic terms is *de facto* to fuel the machine’s “will” with a lesser will; it is to oppose one power by contributing a minor power to it. When opposing technocracy merely in moral terms, we throw but a burning twig into a gargantuan bonfire of voluntarism, which swears by the primacy of will over pure reflection. On the other hand, to oppose technocracy on purely theoretical grounds is to expose its essential impulse to a realm of possibilities it otherwise tends to obscure; it is to see technocracy itself as a possibility, rather than as any imperative; as a hypothesis rather than any fateful necessity.

We can understand technocracy or our contemporary world-Regime only where we see it as a possibility, rather than as the universal answer it promises to be. To speak of technocracy from within technocracy is to take what is cardinal about the Regime for granted; it is to allow the Regime to use our discourse as mere fuel. Yet, the possibility of technocracy emerges in contrast with a fundamental alternative, namely pre-modern civilization. Genuine understanding of technocracy requires familiarity with a pre-modern way of life (*old* “ways and orders,” to paraphrase Machiavelli).

One of the key traits by which modern civilization distinguishes itself from pre-modern civilization is the former’s habit of conceiving war or strife, not merely as accidental to nature, but as essential to the thriving of both nature and man.³ The key difference between man and nature is defined by the former’s capacity to feign peace by conceiving it as a mask of war. How this is done is methodologically simple: we must all pretend to be at peace by “privatizing” war. Oscar Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* explores this problem with graceful ingenuity: evil (including the evils of war) must be hidden “in a closet” to best serve the interests of public prosperity and its glammers. Fear of our skeletons in the closet, or more precisely of their coming out of the closet, drives us every day to embrace the

3 See Cicero (1988), 1.5, where the wise follow and abide by nature as supreme providential God (*naturam optima dux tamquam deum sequimur eique paremus*). Cicero’s words help us see that what our pre-modern classics mean by “nature,” is not what modern man means by that very same term.

cause of the publicly gilded as facade that could symbolically (thus in the abstract) replace its contents. In crude terms, the body is to emerge *as if it were* a spiritual agent: freedom is to be sought as physical where the physical is attributed spiritual qualities — *as if* the light of spirit could be appropriated by darkness (John 1:5). The story of modernity unravels in these terms, where the physical is progressively “empowered” with spiritual traits/attributions, until it can *collectively* affirm itself as the coming of age, or consummation of spirit itself.

The collective “body” (“the masses” implied by expressions such as “mass media”) is to resolve the problem of private or underlying horrors, as an “ideal” in the making. The very drive towards the consolidation of a public mask for private violence fosters at once unbridled exacerbation of private violence and the rise of a Regime of violence-containment — at once inner chaos and outer chaos-management. As long as violence is merely camouflaged, an intolerable tension remains between what Hegel speaks of in terms of Slave and Master. This is why violence must come out into the open as peace itself: violence unjustified by any ideal beyond itself; violence as Progress — as the ideal of progress *in action*; violence (including violent repression) as its own solution, as a progress leading to the exposure of violence as unlimited creativity.

The Regime of unlimited creativity is that of an open, global or technocratic society wherein all traditional institutions are re-framed or re-contextualized in technical terms and so in accordance with “international laws” that are supposed to incarnate human rationality at its best (O’Donoghue, 2021; Strauss, 2019; Germino, 1969; Bevir, 2007).⁴ Violence is to have no motive left other than the realization of that society; all other motives emerge as redolent of historically contingent illusions. Of all ideals we can possibly fight for, only freedom conceived as a function

of the universal society, freedom as the triumph of the *human* Will and so of what the modern Enlightenment calls “human rights,” is worthy of being called just and true. “Just war” recognizes no ground in an intelligent nature or in God, but in the demands, nay imperative of the The Triumph of the Will, or to speak with the predecessors of contemporary liberals, *der Triumph des Willens* (Heilbrunner, 2017).⁵ This, above all else, is peace; this, above all else, violence and so war.

No one more than Hegel, the greatest representative of modern rationalism and paladin of modern freedom, shows us that Progress, or the rise and consolidation of the Global Society, needs war absolutely (not accidentally): the Global Society emerges primarily through war, through the struggle between the ideal or dream of freedom and the harsh demands of law and order; between, therefore, slaves and masters. The upshot of our History of Struggle is a Regime in which freedom is realized in thoroughly secular institutions, forms of authority that are supposed to fully represent the demands of freedom. This is what Machiavelli, the father of modern idealism, spoke of as “new ways and orders” (*modi ed ordini nuovi*) (Machiavelli, 2000).⁶ Our forms of authority are such that freedom re-conceived as cut off from any divine mind, finds itself entirely at home within those forms. We are supposed to thrive in the thriving of our institutions. Our institutions are no longer shadows of a divine or natural order of things, but *realizations* of freedom progressively emancipated from ties to eternal limitations, to all that had been previously deemed immutable. Now, even and especially God serves as a justification for freedom. God as *our* ideal.

No longer seen as rooted in a divine, transcendent mind, law itself is supposed to incarnate or realize the freedom that earlier ages had merely fought for. Now, at the End of the Struggle we call History, freedom itself fights.

4 O’Donoghue (2021) and Strauss (2019). Germino (1969), p. 888 reminds us that for Hegel natural right (*Naturrecht*) remains irreducible to positive right. Yet, Germino remains silent before the question of the terminal rise of a positive right that is supposed to incarnate the highest demands of natural right. Modern tyranny or totalitarianism is not thwarted by the project of defining positive right as capital function/expression of natural right. On Hegel’s refusal to identify (positivistically) any earthly State as fully realized (*Wirklich*), see Lobkowitz (1968), pp. 103–10. For a recent attempt to blame Medieval Christianity for the tyranny of today’s international law, see Delsol (2015). On the Machiavellian roots of Hegel’s doctrine of international law, see Kadelbach, Kleinlein & Roth-Isigkeit (2017).

5 On the liberal roots of German National Socialism, see Heilbrunner (2017). Far from being opposed to modern liberalism, the Nazi movement sought to fulfill the demands of modern freedom by extinguishing all obstacles to its triumph. This much Dostoevsky (2003) helps us understand most notably in his *Brothers Karamazov*.

6 Proem to Book 1. On Machiavelli as apologist of violence as key to the rise of a modern world, see Winter (2018).

Not us for freedom, but freedom for itself; freedom as incarnated in a concrete Regime. Our own fate? Either we cheerfully sacrifice our lives to the supreme cause of freedom as consummate fighter, as supreme demand to fight, as machinery of total war, or we are “left behind” as absolutely expendable numbers. Either we embrace the cause of Absolute War, of War as “the new normal,” or as the consummate Norm (the one that is supposed to contain all war), or we are rejected as illiberal failures, discarded as inadequate citizens of the world.⁷

The machine in question is none other than Technology, not merely as tool, but as Regime, as system of control and manipulation of all that is properly human, all that is natural in man. Technology’s foremost cause is and must be war as way of life: not war that is waged by men in the name of an ideal, but war as the realization of the supreme ideal, of the prototype of all ideals. War as the self-expression of a freedom embodied “historically,” as the expression goes. Yet, men themselves are caught in the cogs of war; we are lost, or find ourselves born of war. Should we then ask what war is for? No, for war makes or is supposed to make life bearable. War as the production of meaning; war as flight from the supposed meaninglessness of life; war, not as mere means, but as the elevation of means to the status of ends. For in the face of the absence of any other true end, our struggle, our power, the triumph of our will-at-war, emerges as an end in itself. War itself emerges as our destiny; “History” as the Triumph of War.

As moderns, we do not merely find ourselves lost in a fallen world, a world fallen into a state of war. Instead, we find ourselves *realized* in a world progressing towards war as destiny, a World Order wherein war is an imperative involving self-affirmation as mode of denial of any affirmation beyond all selfhood. Was it at once terrible and glamorous; of course, fatal, but enthralling, inspiring, engrossing, rewarding, enchanting. War is a God, the supreme God,

the true God that we are here to embellish, to “justify” in the eyes of its foolish detractors, its dangerously foolish detractors. The final war characterizing what Hegel calls “the end of History,” is not merely as a necessary evil means to a transcendent peace, but as the truth about peace itself.

The 1930’s Nazi movement comes to mind. Hitler’s National Socialism had a vision of world peace that demanded total war, or total dedication to the cause of war. The envisioned peace was the mere facade of war, the Machiavellian smile on a machinery of death, of annihilation, where the primary enemy would be the Old God and his stubborn People. The extermination of all reminders of the God of the beyond, the God that hides in a peace beyond all war, was not merely a sad necessity, but a fate to be embraced enthusiastically on a collective basis (Andreacchio, 2024a). World peace was the goal, but only insofar as world peace involved the affirmation of blood and soil and so of the spirit of war as supreme over all other affirmations, all other commitments.

Our language is by and large still tied, if only parasitically, to old ways, still speaking of war as an evil to be avoided. Yet, as children of Machiavelli’s revolution (De Corte, 1961)⁸ we adopt old ways only by way of re-contextualizing them, and so by making strategic use of them as Trojan Horses for the triumph of new ways and orders. Thus, while we speak of avoiding war, we admit in practice that only a war can end all wars — only a permanent state of war, only war as universal fate, can save us from *old* warfare. The new war that smothers all old wars is war *as* peace, chaos as order, violence as law, malevolence as supreme benevolence, cunning as nature (Allan, 2022).

If modern peace is the mere pretense of peace, modern pacifism can amount to no more than fuel for war. Indeed, the modern pacifist does not so much oppose war, as he does any *good reason* to fight.⁹ The modern pacifist is the

⁷ For an examination of contemporary manifestations of the nexus technocracy-war, see Hughes (2024). For an analysis of the contemporary “scientific” drive to reconcile democracy with technocracy, see Esmark (2020). On the way, the art of politics is reduced to the science of chaos management.

⁸ For an exemplification of the difficulty of writing outside of a Machiavellian “sphere,” even when it comes to reading Machiavelli himself, see Vilches & Seaman (2007).

⁹ On the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of pacifism, see Orwell (1941). Orwell notes why “objectively, the pacifist is pro-Nazi”. For a recent critique of pacifism, see Consiglio (2022). Consiglio appeals to purity of motives, falling short of admitting a justification for war in nature and God.



atheist-at-heart who rejects any divine grounds to oppose bad ideas and the barbaric legions that serve them (DiClementi & Langiulli, 2008). The modern pacifist believes or pretends to believe in a strict politics of appeasement. He believes that *the* good is not a transcendent reality we might have to fight for, but the mask of an amoral “historical” necessity, or of our dedication to that necessity. We are good when we embrace the flow of life, the evolution of nature, *beyond* “good and evil” or any *pure* good (good beyond all evil);¹⁰ when we give a kind or “humane” face

to the flux of the quantifiable. Thus does the pacifist court chaos, raising green lights for barbarism. What is wrong according to the pacifist is not barbarism per se, but traditional appeals to a God calling us to oppose barbarism in his name and so in the name of a peace more fundamental than any war.

Modern warmongering goes hand in hand with modern pacifism, which in effect contributes to the spreading of the view that we produce the good as a place in which amoral existence gains meaning (Ogden, 2024).

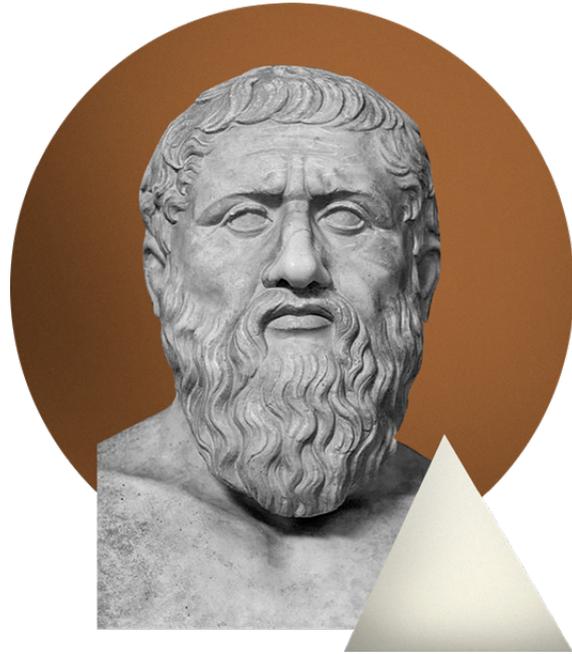
¹⁰ The expression “beyond good and evil” (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*) made famous by Nietzsche pertains to a fateful/historical necessity for us to reject any good beyond evil, any absolutely pure good, embracing the idea that evil is essential to the rise of what is *truly* good. What is truly good is an existence in which evil is the primary propeller of good. The truly good is the result of evil’s overcoming of any pure good. Evil emerges throughout a harsh historical struggle as the essential content of the good. Hence our current predicament, where the good invoked propagandistically by our most prestigious institutions is but the mask of evil. To be good “at the end of History” will be to bravely embrace the demands of an evil that, having overcome all pure good, can successfully posture as supreme good, if not for all ages, at least for a present moment to be rehearsed or recycled in perpetuity. In this respect, truth emerges as the repetition of lies; reason as bold imposition of unreason.

The good as “spaceship” in which violent nature is dressed in civil garb; in which the absence of God or Being emerges as true Being; in which non-Being defies Being by converting into the pretense of Being.

The pacifist who pretends to be contributing to the end of all war is merely contributing to opening the door to the idea that war is a universal reality that we should all work, nay fight, hard to camouflage. The war that is to put an end to all wars would have to be a war to mask all wars, a war affirming the pretense of peace: war as a new peace — the peace of the pretense of Being; the triumph of a grand lie over the absence of any truth.

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* invites us to face our modern predicament with unsurpassed audacity. The modern world is one of impostures confirming each other in a catastrophic game of mirrors that the prince of poets exposes as suicidal. Once the question of Being (“to be or not to be...”) is dismissed as the laughable, if not altogether intolerably dangerous fruit of a deranged imagination, we can talk about *ideas* as much as we please without interfering in the least with the rise of imposture as master key to world order. We would then merely pretend to say something, while in reality pronouncing mere words, *nuda nomina*. Speaking as conceptual mercenaries, we would take pleasure in speaking about nothing, or in transforming nothing into the pretense of something. Language as departure from Being. This is precisely the obscurantism that Heidegger accused Platonism for, thereby obscuring the anti-Platonic character of Heidegger’s own modernism (Turner, 2024; Bartlett, 2017). For the drive away from Being is the modern one that is Platonic or idealistic only in name, whereas below the grammatical surface it trades poetic distances for a mind-numbing immediacy that cannot but lead us to conclude that “God is dead” (Philipse, 2021).¹¹

Platonism considers names on the horizon of Being, which is to say of the source of all physical motion: the “negative” or vicious infinity of the physical presupposes the “positive” or “intensive” infinity of spiritual motion. The “Platonic” distancing of names from Being entails the *poetic* reflection of the distance between physical



finitude and its infinite spiritual perfection — between the determinate (*peros*) and the absolutely indeterminate (*apeiron*). Platonic speech is purely poetic speech, which exposes the hiatus between a point and the circumference inscribing it, between “matter” and “form”. Progressive alienation between the two is the result, not of Platonism, but of the modern anti-Platonic attempt to overcome the hiatus in question.

The modern/progressive attempt to synthesize the finite and the indefinite¹² is based on a Cartesian-like misunderstanding about the nature of both poles. Now the indefinite is seen as a mere possibility anticipating a finite actuality — as if there were no actuality preceding possibility; as if actuality were merely the “realization” of a possibility. The modern notion of “History” stems from such a misunderstanding (Strauss, 1965; Ghibellini, 2024). For now, we see “History” as the horizon of the *possible* realization of Being. “History,” not as the per-determined journey of man back to God, but as the stage on which man has the *power* to *realize* God, or to convert a “name” into “historical action”.

But “History,” one might object, is the plane of the *imaginary*, spilling out of the purely reflective or contemplative. Would the historical realization of God not involve a shift from the classical God of contemplation to the *dream* of God,

¹¹ pp. 382–83.

¹² On the unlimited (*apeiron*) as the earthly, see Semerano (2005). For a more recent survey of interpretations of the Greek *apeiron*, see Gregory (2016), pp. 86–98.

a dream we can or rather must fight to realize?

Modern anti-Platonism involves an idealism based on a "materialist" foundation (Von Wussow, 2020, Andreacchio, 2022; Stauffer, 2018): the dream of God (God as dream)¹³ presupposing God's need to be *realized* in the dream. Once we rid ourselves of Being itself, we can work exclusively upon setting up the pretense of Being. Hence Shakespeare's *Hamlet*'s importance for our times. Claudius, the impostor-king, is the anti-Platonist who pretends to have overcome the hiatus between Being and non-Being by reading the former as fuel for the transformation of the latter. On the other hand, for the Platonist at heart we are not here to realize our dreams, including the dream of Being. Instead, we are here to seek our own realization in Being as primordial act of return or "reflection" of all that emanates from it.¹⁴ Man will not realize *himself* in "History"; instead, he will *be realized* (and thereby saved from a painful state of alienation/fragmentation) as he departs from his fallen world, a *chiaroscuro* world *partially* fallen into darkness.

The classical Platonist will not hold onto his fantasies, no matter how astutely justified these may be in terms of unassailable "ideals" beyond good and evil; rather than dreaming of realizing his dreams, he will prepare for being-realized outside of all dreams, in God as the *extinction* of all dreams (in the classical sense of the Sanskrit *nirvana*), especially when these are modern man's "ideals" (Andreacchio, 2024b).

In a passage from his *Metaphysics* A, Aristotle objects to Anaxagoras for having appealed to God or divine intellect as accounting for our empirical world *ex machina*, as if ordinary experience could be adequately understood aside from direct divine agency (1.4.985a21–22). If the world is eternal or unending, then it is not infinitely such *in time*, but in God as absolute limit of physical motion (Aristotle refutes the *actual* infinity of time in his *Physics*). Mind, rather than any body, no matter how large, defines the physical universe in all of its facets; not as an agent acting upon things from without them (as Deism would have it), thereby allowing us to under-



stand the world as "a clock without craftsman" or "a maker-less mechanism,"¹⁵ but as an actuality that alone resolves all potentiality within itself and itself alone (Andreacchio, 2023a).

Casanova (2016) is right in correcting Zeller and kindred scholars for having reinvented/falsified Aristotle to meet modern moral and epistemic expectations. The real Aristotle is incompatible with Cartesian grids and Descartes's appeal to God as *ex machina* guarantor of a modern *method* to know all things symbolically (universal in its applicability, in its power to be imposed, rather than in its coherence with things themselves, or the actual content of the world). Aristotle's "method" or "way of treading" is divine agency itself — divine providence — saving man from brutality, including the brutality of a cage-world that we may be tempted to build as solution to the problem of violence, a cage that breeds nothing but evermore violence, defining the violence it contains as peace (or "mostly peaceful") and the slavery it manages as freedom (Rosas, 2022).

Let us consider how Aristotle's God acts in our world. Thus reads *Metaphysics* 1072b19–31:

¹³ See Chapter 20 ("Feuerbach's Bourgeois Atheism") of Westphal (2007).

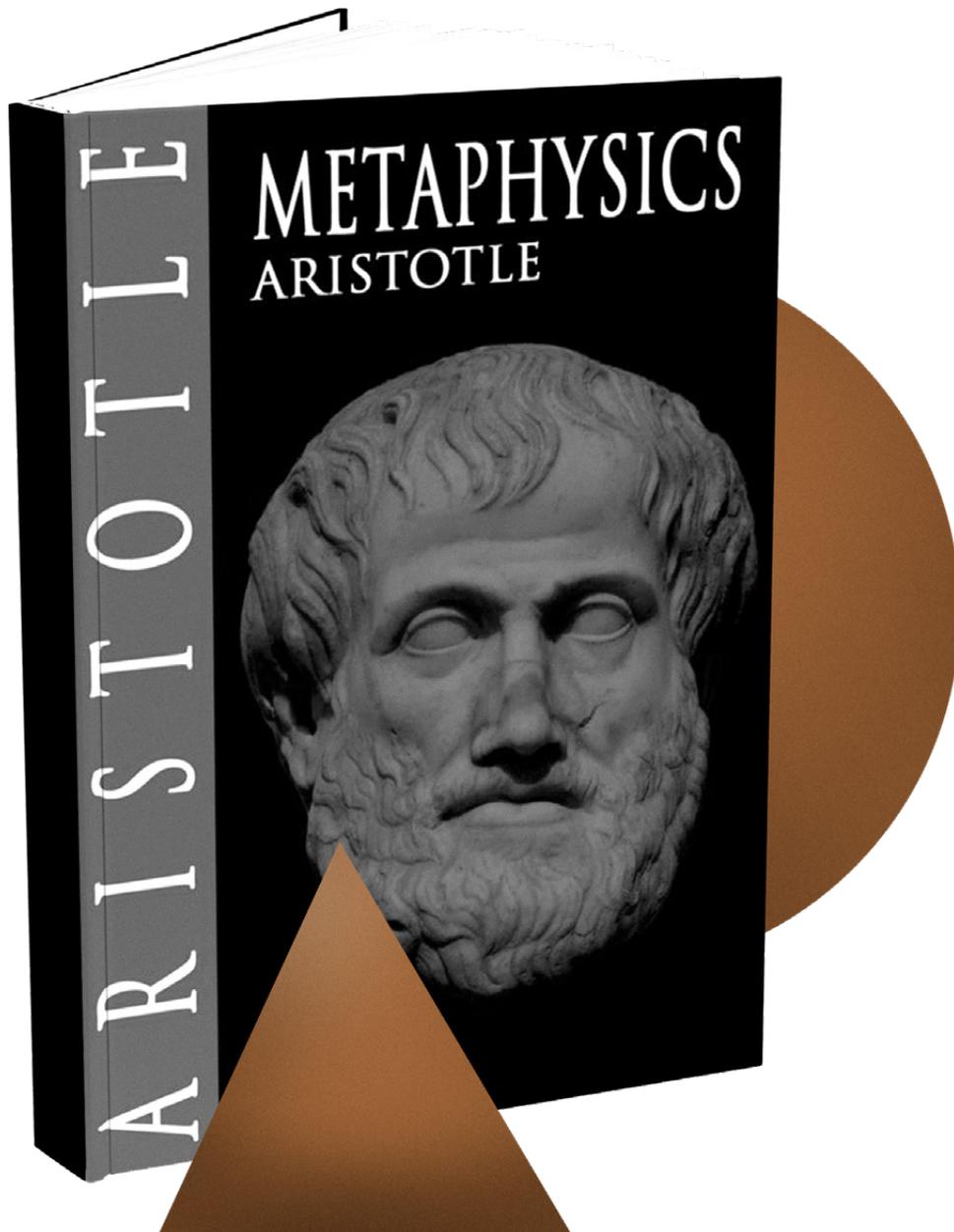
¹⁴ On the classical meaning of "emanation" from divine being, see Andreacchio (2023a).

¹⁵ Citing here an example of popular literature reflecting the dominant cosmological view of the modern age: Moore & Gibbons (2014), p. 138.

Now thinking as such is of that which is as such best, and thinking in the highest sense is of that which is in the highest sense best. But thought thinks by drawing from what is thought; for it becomes an object of thought by reaching out to think, since thought and what is thought coincide, for that which is receptive of what is thought and so of a substance, is mind, which is active where it bears [its content]. So it is activity, more than receptivity that is said to be mind's divine property, and its contemplation most pleasant and best. It is then marvelous if God has always the good that we have sometimes; and if he does so more fully, then it is even more marvelous. Yet such is the case and indeed life belongs primordially to God; for the activity of mind

is life, which is that very activity, which is in itself the best life and it is unending. We then assert God to be a living being unending and best. So that life, the perpetual and the unending converge as the primordial property of God; for this is God.

Aristotle further testified to the divine roots of man's thinking within his world in *Metaphysics*, Book L, 983a, where the Stagirite exposes the consummation of ordinary investigations into the nature of things. Natural reason arrives at the thought that all things depend from a first cause that is the spring of thought itself. The unmeasurable in the measurable, or the irreducibility of things to quantities no longer occasions bewilderment: in exposing ourselves to the first



cause, to God, we see why all things defy finitude, for all things are destined to be fulfilled in divine thought alone.

Aristotle's articulation of the nexus between the properly human and the divine helps us appreciate the theological-political bond that Leo Strauss returned to as the creative reality underlying modern promises, or as the pre-modern soul of modern discourse — a soul the abandonment of which consigns "the West" to collective suicide (once again, Nazi Germany stands as reminder of the way modern reason commits suicide as it betrays the substance of what it appeals to *nominally*) (Robertson, 2021, p. 9).

Let us further explore the political aspect of the classical-canonical alternative to modern idealism, or to the ideological replacement of non-quantifiable "things themselves" (*res ipsae*, or things in divine/pure intelligence) with nominal signposts the meaning of which is to be determined by brute force (Mao spoke pertinently of "the barrel of the gun").¹⁶

On the modern stage, progress is fueled by a war between slave morality (freedom-fighting) and master morality (inherited forms of authority), whereby war is fought as leading to the rise of a master morality based on a slavish foundation, and so of a Regime in which the "slave by nature" (Ambler, 1987) emerges as dictator of norms (hence the contemporary rise of "victim culture" or "identity politics") (Campbell & Manning, 2018). On a classical "Platonic" stage, and so in conformity with nature itself (as opposed to nature as reinvented by modern/Machiavelian reason), the war between slave and master unfolds on a *poetic/mythical* stage, mediated by a discourse moderating strife by opening it to an otherworldly dimension — death, both as negative limit of war and as positive content of all that war must presuppose. The poet, rather than the implacable logic of a progressive machine, serves as moderator of strife; modern "chaos management" yields to classical moderation of passions in anticipation of exposure to a transcendent realm of being and understanding. Thus do the slave and master alike abide in *piety*, conserving a sense of shame in reverential memory of the permanent conditions for genuine freedom.

Aristotle's God is not (the modern) one "of the gaps" (Dawkins, 2006, pp. 151–61), though he may be fairly called "of the interstice," not in the (late)modern sense that he is opposed to centrality, but in the classical evangelic sense that he speaks and dies on a Cross, at the crossroads between light and darkness, between eternal life and utter demise. In this sense, the God of the interstice is the God of Platonic poets who attend to the reflective act underlying the fiber of everyday life-death experience. What holds things together, what makes things whole *from within*, what sustains all phenomena throughout their ordinary, natural unfolding (from birth and growth to decay), would not be anything quantifiable or "physical," but the absolutely indeterminate, which is pure thought or mind acting as irreducible producer of forms reflecting its own activity (Aristotle, 1995, 2001).¹⁷

The distinction between physical and so determined/limited motion and divine motion is disclosed by the latter's purely *reflective* or "circular" nature, as Dante shows vividly most notably in his *Comedy*. We do not find the whole of things, their circumference or proper context by simply departing from the centrality of the human (the "center" of the circle, in Dante's *Paradiso*), but by returning to the center as mirror of a whole disclosed as miraculous interstice between all physical determinations. Here the center discovers itself tied supremely to divine *interstitiality*, to the divine that binds all things together, the divine that *hides* between certainties as between extremes, "in the middle of the path of our life" (*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, as per *Inferno* 1.1) not to overcome or destroy ordinary human life and order (all that Caesar stands for), but to regulate it, to sustain it constantly open to divine transcendence.

If God is the whole of everything, then what we consider to be "the whole" from our ordinary perspective of minds seemingly fallen in the midst of things is no more than the shadow of a true whole, tendentiously a *trap* that distracts many from the poetic challenge of regaining access to the true *form*/boundary (*eidōs*) of things reflectively (Gerson, 2017, pp. 209–41). We are not here seeking a "thing" among others,

¹⁶ On Aristotle's account of human experience as disclosed within the horizon of divine intelligence, see Casanova (2016), pp. 207–10.

¹⁷ Aristotle (2001), pp. 1–37 (Sachs, translator's introduction).

but an *informing agency*, a movement disclosed primarily or fully in a reflective mode of being that “hides” between¹⁸ all of our certainties helping us discover our certainties as reflections of their generative principle, *and* ourselves as the “center” or “point” of conversion of the physical into the spiritual, of opaque distractions into transparent reminders, of “dumb jewels” (Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*) into jewels that speak, poetic pearls signaling what is never given out for grabs or subject to use/manipulation — to being contextualized — insofar as it gives itself freely and rigorously on a path of return to its own hidden home-ground.

Aristotle’s classical God of interstices is, in sum, one that welcomes man to be restored in “reflective hiddenness” as master key to the constitution of the world we would otherwise remain fearfully lost in. The God that hides and returns all things into hiddenness,

Let us consider however an alternative conception of divine hiddenness articulated relatively recently primarily in Schellenberg (2006). Schellenberg speaks of divine hiddenness as implying that God might not make himself known to some people. Schellenberg’s objection is that if God is all-loving, as we should expect him to be, then we should all have a sense that God exists, so that all “non-believers” would be “resistant non-believers,” which is to say rebellious with respect to God. At which point Schellenberg will note that pagan antiquity shows that there certainly are, or at least have been non rebellious non-believers in an all-loving God. Why would pre-Christian pagans have no notion of an all-loving God? Why did that God not bless classical antiquity with his knowledge, or at least awareness that he existed?

Such and similar considerations are easily met by recognition that awareness of divine perfection requires ears to hear, or more precisely a *conversion* from the “extended” world of appearances to the “intensive” one of divine hiddenness. This is what we find in philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. Yet, the “Platonic” (or Platonic-like) turn to divine perfection as “hidden” *in* man — as well as *to* man insofar as he loses himself in his “extended” environ-

ment — is not necessary to have *belief* in divine perfection. For us to hold such a belief, all we would need is “apostles” or poets charismatic enough to convince us that an all-loving God truly exists. The *existence* of God would then require a “special” (as opposed to “general”) prophetic forewarning that philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle did not need in order to readily concede that there is such a thing as divine perfection.

Schellenberg’s argument is sophistic insofar as it obscures the *essential* demands of conversion (Plato speaks of *periagoge*) (Lastra, Monserrat & Monserrat-Molas, 2016, p. 106) and so the distinction between direct revelation and revelation as mediated by prophets or “poets of the divine”. In the former case, conversion entails a turning of one’s life in the mode of reflection, whereas in the case of non-philosophical or poetically-mediated revelation, conversion consists of a “point” or threshold beyond which the faithful’s life is mediated by the words of poets who are, in the best cases, enlightened by direct revelation or the encounter of divine transcendence in the element of pure reflection.

Those who do not “believe” in God are well advised to begin reflecting as Plato and Aristotle did — to live in the element of *natural reason*, open to a reality transcending the “extensive” flow of physical motion. Schellenberg is right as far as non-rebellious non-believers go: they do exist. Plato would call such people Sophists; medieval Christianity might call them Epicureans. Where Schellenberg’s argument fails is in its obscuring of the difficulty for light to illuminate darkness, or to order chaos. An all-loving God need not be heard by everyone for him to exist and speak always quietly enough for everyone to hear.

Let us recall Dante’s words to Virgil in the first Canto of *Inferno*. Virgil having spoken of himself as “rebellious” to the Emperor of the universe, Dante’s avatar (Dante within the poem) seeks help from the pagan poet under the aegis of “that God that [Virgil] did not know” (*quello Dio che tu non conoscesti*). Dante as author is helping us realize that Virgil was not really a rebel (*ribelle*), even though he would

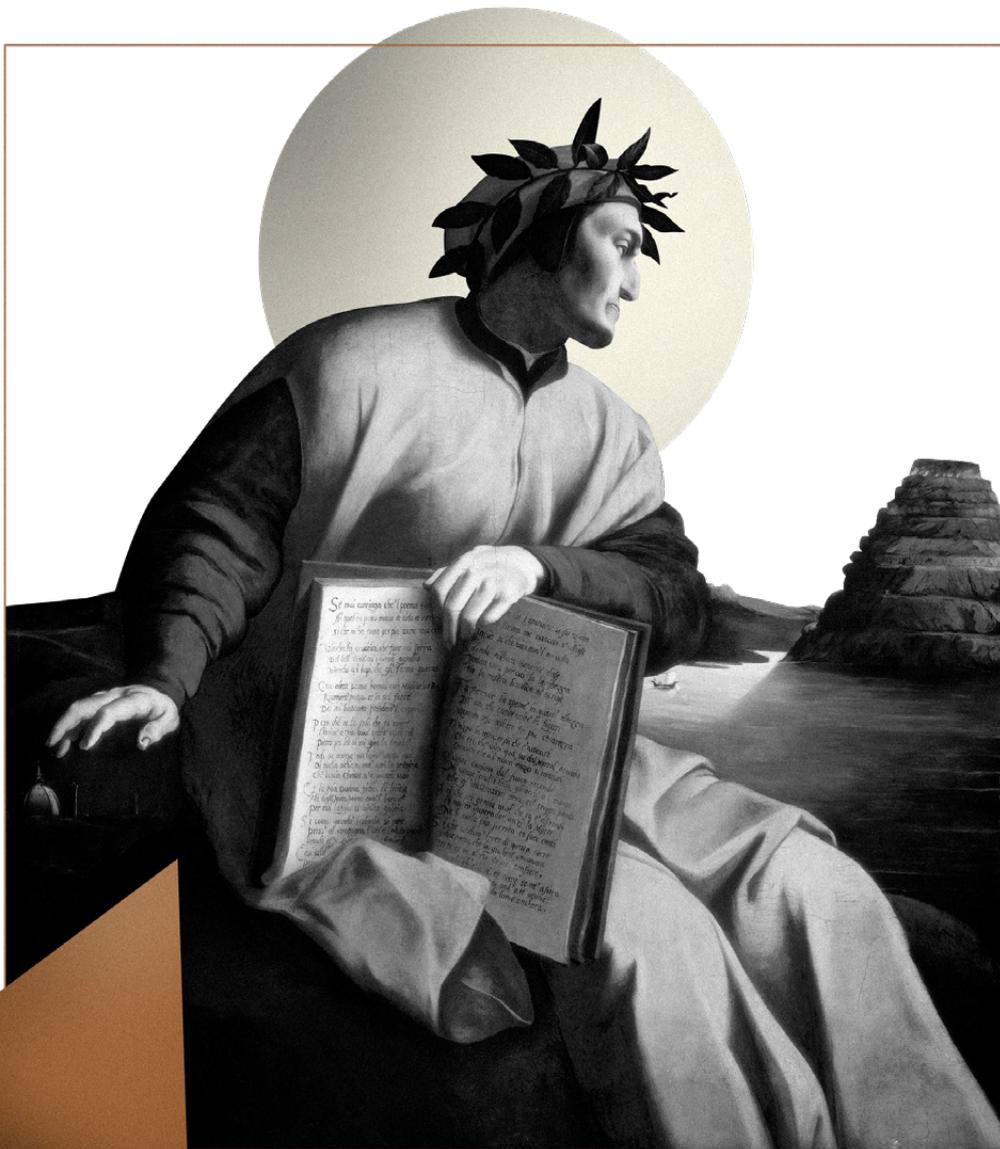
¹⁸ For a (post)modern attempt to re-evaluate the theological/ontological valence of “the between,” see Desmond (1995) and Desmond (2008). Desmond’s “between” emerges in tandem with concessions to the “weakness” of thought (we are not far from Gianni Vattimo’s “return” to religion) or to thought’s immanence *vis-à-vis* a transcendent divine being (Aristotle’s God is all too readily dismissed). See Vattimo & Rovatti, eds. (2013).

be considered a rebel if transposed in Christian times. For you cannot rebel to an authority you do not know (of). So here we have a pious pagan poet who did not know the divine as all-loving Lord of the universe. Why not? What prevented him from knowing (of) the Christian/biblical God? Not his vice or lack of virtue, to be clear.

Dante's poetry invites us to conclude that Virgil knew God, though not as ordinary Christians know him; not *through* poets, but in the active company of enlightened poets (Andreacchio, 2013). This same point is articulated in *Purgatorio* in the presence of the character Statius: Virgil is now seen as carrying a lamp behind himself as he advances towards a hidden light (Andreacchio, 2011). The light that Virgil bears in the dark is not for himself, but for those who are to follow Virgil. Virgil bears the light benevolently,

as a good poet, rather than as fallen Lucifer. As for ancient "Epicureans" who did not know *any* God, they were not philosophers at all, for they failed to live in the element of reflection, wherein, as Aristotle showed incisively, we naturally come to the realization of divine agency at work in every aspect of experience and indeed in the formation of all physical objects, though most evidently in the awakening of man out of a state of compulsion.

Schellenberg argues, not in favor of philosophical Epicureans, but in favor of Sophists who represent the corruption of pre-Socratic natural philosophy (or of those whom Aristotle calls philosophers of nature). Pagan poets such as Virgil do indeed know of God and divine providence, even though their knowledge is not mediated by biblical prophets. The all-loving God would



then let himself be heard by all, independently of poetic mediation. He need not speak loud to be heard by all, but quietly enough so that, as we grow silent, as we begin to reflect, we may all hear the single voice that is best heard in hiddenness.

Aristotle helps us appreciate the classical Hebrew appeal to a hidden God, a God hidden to man. The Christian Gospels corroborate the lesson by emphasizing God's hiddenness *in* man. God hides from man as long as man hides from the God hidden *in* him — as long as man abandons the reflective mode of Being in favor of an “extensive” life of distractions from Being itself.

Modern man's case of abandonment of Being is especially severe: as Machiavellian Hobbes teaches, we cannot know the supreme good (*summum bonum*), but we can know the supreme evil (*summum malum*) (Oakeshott, 1991, pp. 250–53; Strauss, 1965, pp. 149–50). This is because evil is now seen as formally or symbolically resolvable, or manageable. The supreme evil for modern man as such is violent or avoidable death. On the other hand, evil can be known precisely on condition that the supreme good cannot be known. The modern rejection of knowledge of the supreme good is based on the assumption that what is beyond conquerable goods is “beyond good and evil,” or mindless (not being desirable in and of itself, it is incompatible with a classical/Aristotelian understanding of mind tending to its own perfection as supreme good).

For modern man, any “supreme good” would need to be unknowable so that we could not distinguish it from an evil, though we could say it is not the worst evil, which is what we can know as violent death. On the other hand, we can say that the “supreme good” is in a decisive sense an evil that is second only to the supreme evil insofar as the first distracts us from ways to address the supreme evil effectively. For this reason, Machiavelli blames the Christian message as responsible for the fall of Roman civilization. Instead of seeking a good beyond all evil, we should be seeking amoral means to fight against evil. This is “the modern position” Machiavelli worked hard and successfully to popularize.

Whereas modern man can know the greatest evil insofar as he cannot know the greatest good, pre-modern civilization is founded on

the principle that knowledge is tied to the good as ignorance is to evil. We can know the *summum bonum* insofar as knowledge belongs to it absolutely. The more we depart from the supreme good, the less we know, or the more we know merely nominally. In this respect, modern knowledge/science as modern is illusory — merely-symbolic. Modern knowledge is a lie imposed upon reality to convince us that we have identified our enemy (evil) without need to discover or face the challenge of discovering a supreme good. As if we could eliminate evil *now*, without waiting upon the disclosure of a good beyond all evil. Indeed, liberation from “metaphysical” concerns is supposed to allow us to best *establish* the good in the present, or “a better world,” rather than having to wait for it to be offered to us in the future. Whence the modern notion that the future builds on the present, or that those living fully in the present are “building the future” (Benaroya, 2010; Maxwell, 1991; Tomin, 2020).

Edmund Husserl's exposure of modern reason as sham (Husserl, 1970) helps us see why pre-modern civilization would look upon modern science as an imposture. Classical knowledge is the product of thought returning to itself as supreme good: we know truly only insofar as we are illuminated by a divine act of pure reflection; otherwise we are left with empty or vain certainties cut off from nature or life while fueling our alienation from what is eminently real. The upshot of modern alienation is violence as a way of being, violence as cover-up for alienation, violence as affirmation of non-Being as Being, of death as life — whereby that affirmation, that modern mode of being, is in itself the pretense of Being.

As long as we adhere to Machiavelli's anti-Platonic dogma we are doomed as a civilization to spiral into a vortex of pretense that can have no final outcome other than collective suicide (Andreacchio, 2023b; Burnham, 2014; Strauss, 2014; Strauss & Kojève, 2013).¹⁹ An outcome that comes hand in hand with progressive loss of awareness of the tide of our times, as Federico Fellini's 1969 *Satyricon* shows most starkly. There, as in our own times, the lust for power as a capacity to fend the threat of violent death leads gradually, though relentlessly, to an existence in

¹⁹ See also Goldberg (2020) explores the tip of the iceberg of the current at hand.

which men are but vanishing shadows of men, while poetry or art is fragmented to record mere traces of dissolution.

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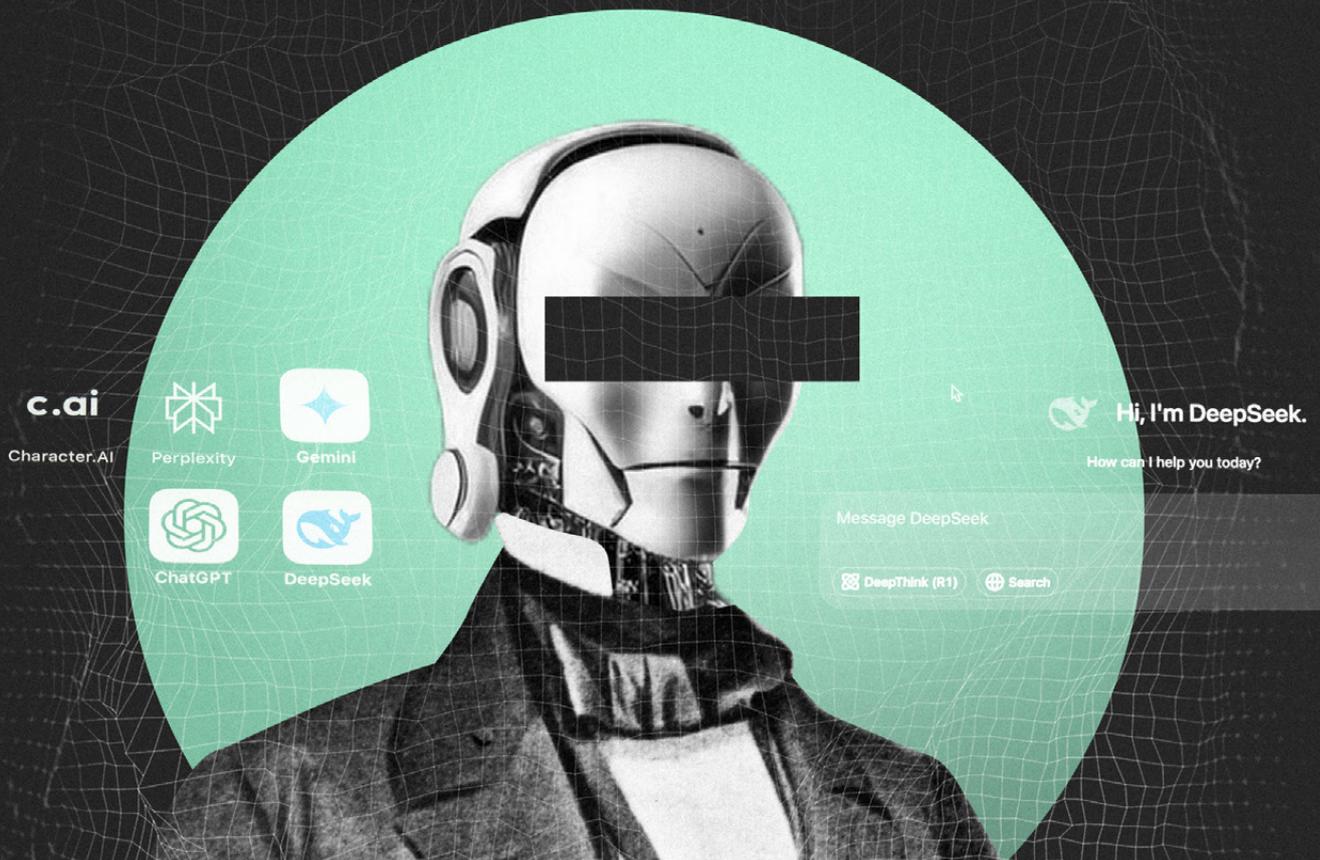
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HYSTERICIZING CAPITALIST DISCOURSE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

IS THE UNCONSCIOUS STRUCTURED LIKE AN ALGORITHM?
TOWARDS A LACANIAN ETHICS OF AI

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the complex relationship between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and capitalist ideology through Lacan's fifth discourse: The Discourse of the Capitalist. It argues that AI confronts the subject as a master signifier (S_1), shaping subjectivity, regulating desire, and reinforcing the capitalist symbolic order. Drawing on Lacan's theory of the four discourses and the three registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and the Real, the study lays out a theoretical cartography of alienation, jouissance, and ideology — perpetuated and intensified through the deployment of artificial systems. AI-driven "innovations" exploit the subject's constitutive lack by positioning themselves as solutions to existential dissatisfaction, thereby embedding the capitalist imperative of consumption as the desire of the Other. The paper offers a *hystericized* discourse on AI as a psychoanalytic countermeasure; a mode of resistance that attempts to reveal the ruptures within the symbolic order opening the possibility for an ethical reevaluation of AI's role in structuring the (algorithmic) unconscious.

Keywords

Lacan, artificial intelligence, capitalist discourse, subjectivity, master signifier, object a, alienation, psychoanalysis, ideology, ethics of AI

INTRODUCTION

Jacques Lacan's fifth discourse, the "Discourse of the Capitalist," offers a potent framework for interrogating the intersections of contemporary capitalism and emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI). This discourse, introduced in Lacan's later works, identifies a modification of traditional power structures where the symbolic authority of the Master is circumvented, allowing for an unrestrained acceleration of production, consumption, and desire (Lacan, 1978). Unlike the Master's discourse, which relies on authority to regulate the flow of desire, the capitalist discourse removes these constraints, enabling a direct and relentless exploitation of jouissance — an excessive and often destabilizing form of enjoyment (Dean, 2020).

Lacan's insights into the destabilizing effects of capitalism on subjectivity and social order prove increasingly salient in the context of AI, an apparatus that epitomizes the capitalist imperatives of efficiency, commodification, and control (Zuboff, 2019). AI is not merely a tool within the capitalist system; it functions as a mechanism that perpetuates and amplifies its foundational dynamics. By leveraging data to predict and manipulate human behavior, AI embeds itself into the circuits of desire, reinforcing cycles of consumption and alienation (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

This essay seeks to explore AI as both a manifestation and an accelerator of the capitalist discourse, considering how its integration into everyday life reshapes the subject's relationship with desire, knowledge, and the social order.

Through the Lacanian lens, this critique will unravel how AI not only reflects the logic of the capitalist discourse but also intensifies its alienating and destabilizing consequences. As data-driven systems commodify human behavior and present themselves as solutions to existential lack, they deepen the subject's alienation while perpetuating unsustainable cycles of production and consumption (Fisher, 2009). Furthermore, AI displaces traditional structures of authority and truth with algorithmic logic, raising critical questions about its impact on subjectivity, society, and the future. By engaging with Lacan's theoretical framework, this analysis will illuminate the ideological underpinnings and ethical ramifications of AI, calling for a reevaluation of its role within the capitalist system (Bender et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a theoretical approach to analyze the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and capitalist discourse through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. The methodology consists of the following components: A theoretical framework that utilizes Jacques Lacan's "Discourse of the Capitalist" as the primary analytical tool in order to apply Lacan's theory of the three registers (Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real) and the four discourses (Master, University, Hysteric, and Analyst) to AI ethics. Specific texts from Lacanian psychoanalytic literature; works by Lacan (1978, 2007), Žižek (1989, 2006), Miller (1996, 1999), and other contemporary Lacanian scholars. The paper examines critical literature on AI and capitalism, including works by Zuboff (2019), Fuchs (2020), and Tufekci (2017). The study uses Lacanian discourse in order to map the structure and dynamics of contemporary AI systems and practices. Discourse Analysis is used to interrogate the role



Jacques Lacan
Photo credit: Blatterhin
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of AI in shaping subjectivity, desire, and social relations. The work examines how AI reconfigures the relationship between desire and subjectivity in the context of technocratic capitalist relations. **Interdisciplinary Synthesis:** The text combines insights from psychoanalysis, critical theory, and technology studies to develop a comprehensive understanding of AI's role in capitalist discourse. **Case Study Approach:** Specific examples of AI technologies (e.g., recommendation algorithms, generative AI models) are used to illustrate theoretical concepts. **AI Ethics:** Critical examination of the ethical implications of AI's integration into capitalist structures is offered with a focus on questions concerning autonomy, privacy, and social justice.

RESULTS

The analysis reveals that AI functions as a master signifier (S_1) within the capitalist symbolic order, fundamentally altering the dynamics of desire, knowledge, and subjectivity. This positioning of AI intensifies the alienation inherent in the capitalist discourse by mediating the subject's relationship to language, knowledge, and desire. The study finds that AI systems, particularly in their manifestations as recommendation algorithms and generative models, actively shape and

manipulate user preferences, creating a feedback loop of desire that perpetuates consumption. This process exemplifies Lacan's concept of the object cause of desire (*object a*), where AI-driven digital commodities and services promise but never deliver complete satisfaction, ensuring the subject's continued engagement with the capitalist system. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that AI, as framed by Neoliberal discourse, conceals its role in perpetuating social and economic inequalities by presenting itself as a neutral, objective, and inevitably progressive force. This ideological framing of AI serves to mask the exploitative mechanisms embedded within capitalist relations, particularly in areas such as labor automation, surveillance, and consumer behavior regulation. The results also indicate that AI's integration into everyday life has led to a "doubled alienation" of the subject, simultaneously enhancing dependence on the symbolic order while obscuring the ideological underpinnings of its operations.

DISCUSSION

The Discourse of the New Master

Lacan's fifth discourse, known as the **Discourse of the Capitalist**, represents a significant moment

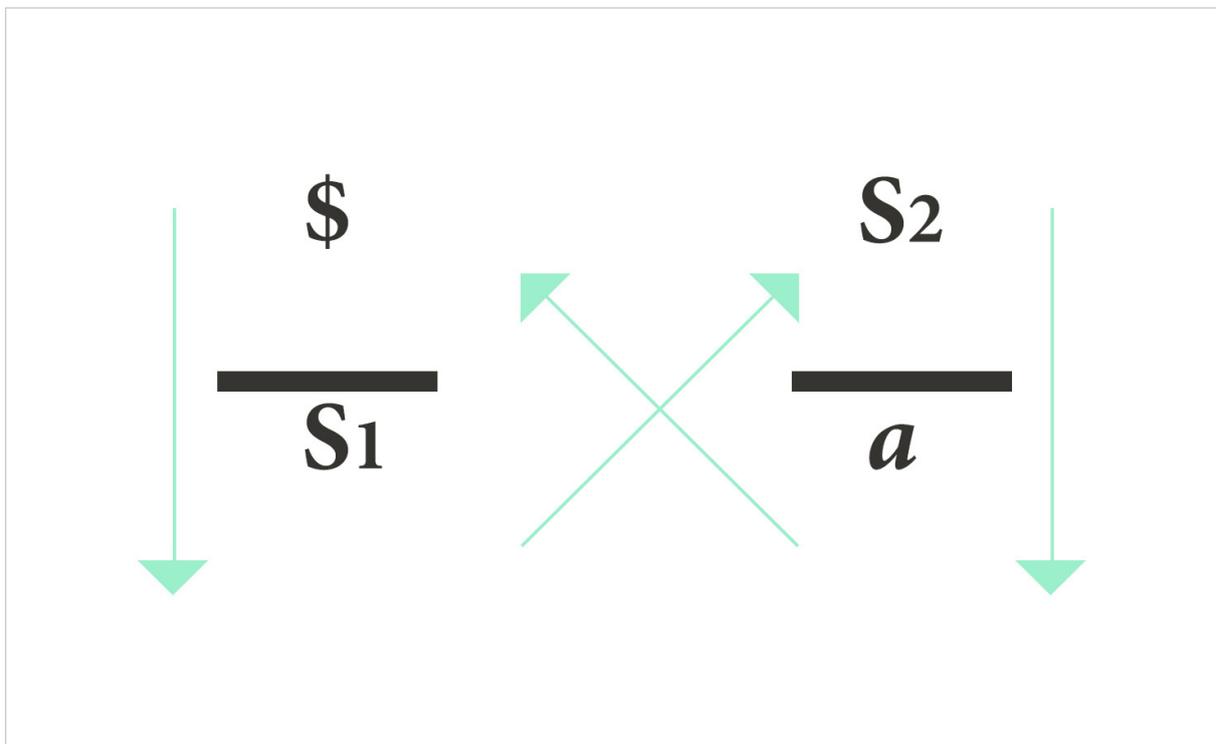


Figure 1: Image retrieved from: Vanheule, S. (2016). Capitalist discourse, subjectivity and Lacanian psychoanalysis

in his later work on the structures of social and libidinal organization. This discourse is part of Lacan's series of four discourses, which he develops in his seminar *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII* (1970–1971). The discourse of the capitalist presents a specific type of social structure and logic that organizes the relationships between subjects, knowledge, and power in a capitalist society. It can be understood as both an extension and a critique of his earlier discourses, especially the *Discourse of the University* and the *Discourse of the Hysteric*. Lacan introduces this discourse in the context of his reflection on the relationship between language, political economy and the (barred) subject (\$), suggesting that capitalism functions through a set of symbolic (S_2) and imaginary mechanisms that operate to perpetuate its dominance in contemporary society (Lacan, 2011; Zupančič, 2000). According to Althusser (2001), this domination is not merely structural but is ideologically perpetuated through capitalist mechanisms that dictate the way individuals engage with the economic system. The discourse of the capitalist, therefore, is not just about material accumulation but the multiplicity of institutional and market-driven constraints that shape and constitute subjectivity as such.

In the top-left position, we find the **barred subject** (\$), occupying the place of the agent. The barred subject represents the fragmented subject of desire, perpetually divided by their insertion into the symbolic order. Capitalism, as a discourse, exploits this division by orienting the subject's desire toward endless consumption and accumulation (a), effectively trapping them in a cycle of unfulfilled satisfaction.

The top-right position is occupied by S_2 , representing knowledge as the "other." In this discourse, knowledge refers to the instrumental logic of capitalism: market mechanisms, technological innovation, and the codification of economic systems. The capitalist system weaponizes this knowledge to justify and perpetuate its dominance (Althusser, 2001), presenting itself as rational, inevitable, and desirable. This positioning reflects how knowledge operates as an intermediary between the subject and the object, legitimizing the processes of exploitation and alienation.

In the bottom-left position, we find S_1 , the master signifier, occupying the place of truth. Lacan's use of S_1 in this position reveals the hidden ideological underpinnings of capitalism. While the system appears to function based on rationality and efficiency (as mediated by S_2),

it is ultimately anchored in a master signifier that sustains its authority (Miller, 1999). This signifier — representing concepts like "progress," "freedom," or "growth"—provides the foundational myth that legitimizes the capitalist order, even as it remains veiled to the subject.

Finally, the bottom-right position is occupied by **a**, the object cause of desire. In the Discourse of the Capitalist, **a** represents commodities, surplus value, or any object that sustains the subject's desire. Unlike in the Discourse of the Master, where the *object a* is more directly tied to the master's jouissance, here it circulates endlessly within the capitalist system (Zupančič, 2000), driving consumption and production. The endless pursuit of **a** ensures the subject's entrapment within the system, as they chase an object that perpetually eludes complete satisfaction.

The logic of the capitalist discourse operates by drawing subjects into a structure where their desires are oriented toward accumulation and the production of surplus value. The capitalist discourse functions through a dialectical relationship between the subject and the market. Capitalism, as a system, organizes the subject's desire by directing it toward commodities, consumption, and production, perpetuating a cycle of desire that is never fully satisfied. The subject, in this case, is not simply exploited through labor but also through the manipulation of their desires, which are channeled toward the accumulation of wealth and the expansion of the system itself (Zupančič, 2000). This process can be understood as a form of subjection and subjectification, where the subject internalizes the capitalist logic and desires not only wealth but the very mechanisms that sustain its reproduction (Žižek, 2009).

In this discourse, the capitalist does not simply extract labor from the worker but orchestrates the conditions under which the worker produces, consumes, and desires. The relationship between the agent and the Other becomes a form of mutual reinforcement: the capitalist is able to manipulate the market through the control of surplus value (or surplus enjoyment), while the market constantly demands new forms of capital, which the capitalist produces through further exploitation. This cyclical process sustains the capitalist system, making it both a *system of alienation* and a *system of ideological control* (Miller, 1999; Lacan, 2011). The worker (Žižek, 2009) becomes a "subject of ideology," unable to extricate themselves from the system of accumulation that defines their existence.

For Lacan, capitalism's primary function is not simply economic; it also plays a significant role in the formation of the subject's desire. The capitalist discourse, by orienting the subject toward the acquisition of surplus enjoyment, sustains a structure of social control that is both ideological and psychological (Žižek, 2009; Lacan, 2011). This is evident in how the subject's desires are manipulated by the capitalist system, which, through the production of surplus value, engenders a system of consumption that defines the subject's very identity.

Lacanian critique targets capitalism for its ability to produce a form of **capitalist fetishism**, where individuals come to view commodities not merely as objects for use or exchange but as sites of libidinal investment. In this sense, capitalism does not simply operate on the material plane but also works through the manipulation of the unconscious desires of the subject. The capitalist's discourse, therefore, is a system that perpetuates alienation on both a social and psychic level, as the subject is driven to desire not just capital but the ideological structures that sustain its dominance (Lacan, 2011). This, as Zupančič (2000) suggests, produces a situation in which individuals are subjected to their own desires, continually seeking satisfaction in a system that ensures it is always out of reach.

Lacan's addition of the **Discourse of the Capitalist** to his four foundational discourses (Master, University, Hysteric, and Analyst) constitutes a vital intervention in understanding the socio-symbolic order of contemporary capitalism. The discourse is notable for its ability to articulate the structural mechanisms of capitalist ideology, particularly its impact on the subject's relationship to desire, knowledge, and production. Unlike the other discourses, which remain (more or less) rigidly tied to certain modes of subjectivity and social relations, the Discourse of the Capitalist reveals a fluid, self-revolutionizing and self-replicating structure, marking it as uniquely suited to the imperatives of late capitalism (Lacan, 2011).

The Three Registers and the Four Discourses

Lacanian theory is rooted in the structuralist tradition, it's comprised of three fundamental

registers that constitute the subject's experience: **the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic**. These categories help define the ways in which subjects interact with reality, construct meaning, and project desire. The three registers are mapped onto the four discourses (the Master, the Hysteric, the University, and the Analyst) as modes of embodied activity that structure subjectivity and the production of knowledge/enjoyment (Lacan, 2011). Each discourse aligns with each of the three registers to a larger or lesser extent, revealing the mechanisms through which power, knowledge, and desire operate in human interactions. The relationship can be represented as a series of functional relationships:

$$G(s, i, r)^1 \text{ and } D(m, h, a, u),$$

with the according distribution
of the mathemes

$$M\{\$, S_1, S_2, \underline{a}\}$$

over the Discourse Function (D).

$$D = \{(m(S_1, S_2, \underline{a}, \$)), (h(\$, S_1, S_2, \underline{a})), (a(\underline{a}, \$, S_1, S_2)), (u(S_2, \underline{a}, \$, S_1))\}.$$

And alternatively, the distribution
of registers (G) over discourses (D):

$$D = \{(m(s, i, r)), (h(s, i, r)), (a(s, i, r)), (u(s, i, r))\}$$



The Symbolic $G(s)$ and the Master's Discourse $D(m)$: The Master's Discourse $m(S_1, S_2, \underline{a}, \$)$ is primarily structured by the Symbolic order, the realm of language, law, and social structures (S_1, S_2). In this discourse, the Master holds power by virtue of an established authority, and subjects are positioned as recipients of commands rather than active participants in meaning-making (Fink, 1995). The Symbolic order is the domain of signification — it determines how individuals understand their roles in a given structure, whether political, ideological, or psychoanalytic (Evans, 1996). The Master's Discourse, therefore, operates as a regulatory mechanism, ensuring that social norms and hierarchies remain intact. However, the Master's position is not absolute. Lacan (1973/2007) notes that the Master relies on an unconscious dependency on what he does not know,

1 $s = df.$ 'The Symbolic', $i = df.$ 'The Imaginary' and $r = df.$ 'The Real'

making his authority inherently unstable. This instability arises from the tension between the Symbolic and the Imaginary $G(s, i)$ —the idealized image of mastery that the Master must project to maintain authority. This illusion sustains the discourse, even though it is ultimately lacking in any absolute foundation in the Real $G(r)$, which remains inaccessible and disruptive.

The Hysteric's Discourse; $D(h)$, is intimately tied to the Imaginary order $G(i)$, which governs the formation of identity through misrecognition and the subject's relationship with its own self-image. The hysteric, in Lacan's framework, is characterized by questioning the legitimacy of authority, often desiring to be recognized by the Other while simultaneously resisting the symbolic order imposed upon them (Bracher, 1994). In this way, the hysteric is caught in a cycle of attempting to affirm identity through the gaze of the Other, seeking a response that will validate their existence within the Symbolic. While the Symbolic is present in this discourse, it is secondary to the Imaginary, as the hysteric's desire is fundamentally structured by their identification with an ideal ego or an unattainable object of desire (Žižek, 1989). The subject oscillates between submission and resistance, exposing the failures of the Symbolic to fully encapsulate subjective experience. The hysteric's questioning, however, also edges toward the Real $G(r)$, as their persistent dissatisfaction with symbolic structures reveals the fundamental void underlying all systems of meaning.

The University Discourse; $D(u)$, is a direct extension of the Symbolic, as it structures the way knowledge is transmitted and institutionalized. This discourse functions through the illusion of objective knowledge, positioning expertise and authority within academic, scientific, and bureaucratic systems (Miller, 1996). Unlike the Master's Discourse, which relies on power, the University Discourse depends on the belief that knowledge itself holds authority. Here, the subject is positioned as a passive receiver of knowledge, reinforcing the notion that truth exists independently of the subject's own desire (Fink, 1995). This discourse also contains elements of the Imaginary, particularly in the way institutions project an image of mastery over knowledge. However, like the Master's Discourse, the University Discourse ultimately fails to account for the Real, as knowledge can never fully articulate the totality of experience — there remains an excess that cannot be symbolized or incorporated into the framework of reason.

The Real and the Analyst's Discourse: The Analyst's Discourse $D(a)$ is the only one that directly engages with the Real, the domain of what resists symbolization and representation. Unlike the Master's Discourse, which seeks to impose order, or the University Discourse, which seeks to categorize knowledge, the Analyst's Discourse works by disrupting the subject's assumed understanding of themselves (Lacan, 1973/2007). The analyst does not provide answers but rather exposes the gaps in the subject's symbolic reality, forcing an encounter with the Real, the traumatic core of experience that resists articulation. This discourse, while operating within the Symbolic through language and interpretation, ultimately seeks to reveal the failures of language itself. The analyst's role is to highlight the inconsistencies in the barred subject's (\$) speech, allowing them to recognize that their desire is structured by an absence — something that cannot be fully articulated within the Symbolic or Imaginary (Bracher, 1994). The Real, therefore, emerges as a disruptive force, challenging the coherence of identity and meaning that the other three discourses attempt to stabilize.

This is one way to conceptualize the way in which the three registers — the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real — map onto the four discourses. The Master's Discourse is deeply embedded in the Symbolic, sustaining structures of power through language and law $G(s) \rightarrow m (S_1, S_2, \underline{a}, \$)$. The Hysteric's Discourse is aligned with the Imaginary, $G(i) \rightarrow h (\$, S_1, S_2, \underline{a})$ as it revolves around identity, misrecognition, and the search for validation. The University Discourse, similar to the Discourse of the Master, functions within the Symbolic $G(s) \rightarrow u (S_2, \underline{a}, \$, S_1)$, reinforcing knowledge as an institutionalized force, while the Analyst's Discourse uniquely engages with the Real $G(r) \rightarrow a (\underline{a}, \$, S_1, S_2)$, exposing the limits of representation. The following, perhaps pseudo-mathematical representation could offer a deeper understanding of Lacan's structural model of subjectivity and its implications for power, knowledge, and desire in human discourse.

AI and the Barred Subject \$

The interaction between artificial intelligence (AI) and the barred subject (\$), that is, the subject alienated within the symbolic order, offers a lens through which to examine how AI reconfigures the relationship between desire, knowledge, and identity. By mediating and shaping subjectivity,



AI not only amplifies the alienation inherent to the symbolic order but also introduces novel dimensions to the subject's encounter with the object cause of desire (*object a*). Alienation arises from the subject's insertion into language, which simultaneously constitutes their identity and imposes a fundamental lack (*a*). This lack is not merely a psychological deficit but an ontological condition that structures human desire. As Lacan asserts, "the subject's desire is always the desire of the Other" (Lacan, 2007, p. 126), meaning that the subject's identity and desires are mediated by the symbolic network of signifiers (S_2).

AI is entrenched within the symbolic order, functioning as an extension and intensification of its mechanisms. From search engines and social media algorithms to generative AI models, these technologies mediate the subject's relationship to language, knowledge, and desire. By doing so, they amplify the conditions of alienation adding a new density to the "battery of signifiers" (Lacan, 2007) and reshape the coordinates of

subjectivity. The question, then, is how AI transforms the subject's relationship to its constitutive lack and how this transformation manifests in the broader matrix of the social milieu.

AI functions as an efficient mediator of the symbolic order, operating within the space occupied by knowledge (S_2). Through its capacity to process and analyze vast quantities of data, AI generates new signifiers that shape the subject's experience of reality. For instance, recommendation algorithms on platforms like Spotify or Netflix do not merely respond to the subject's preferences; they actively shape them, constructing a symbolic framework that dictates what the subject desires.

This dynamic reveals the doubled alienation characteristic of the barred subject's interaction with AI. On one hand, AI enhances the subject's dependence on the symbolic order by mediating their access to knowledge and desire. On the other hand, it obscures the ideological mechanisms underlying its operations, presenting itself as

a neutral and objective apparatus. As Zupančič (2000) observes, "The subject's alienation is never purely external; it is always embedded in the very structures that appear to liberate them" (p. 78). In the case of AI, this embeddedness manifests in the seamless integration of algorithmic systems into everyday life, which naturalizes the subject's alienation and masks its origins.

The *object a* represents what the subject seeks but can never fully obtain, perpetuating the endless pursuit of satisfaction. In the context of AI, this dynamic is exemplified by the proliferation of digital commodities and services that promise fulfillment but ultimately leave the subject wanting.

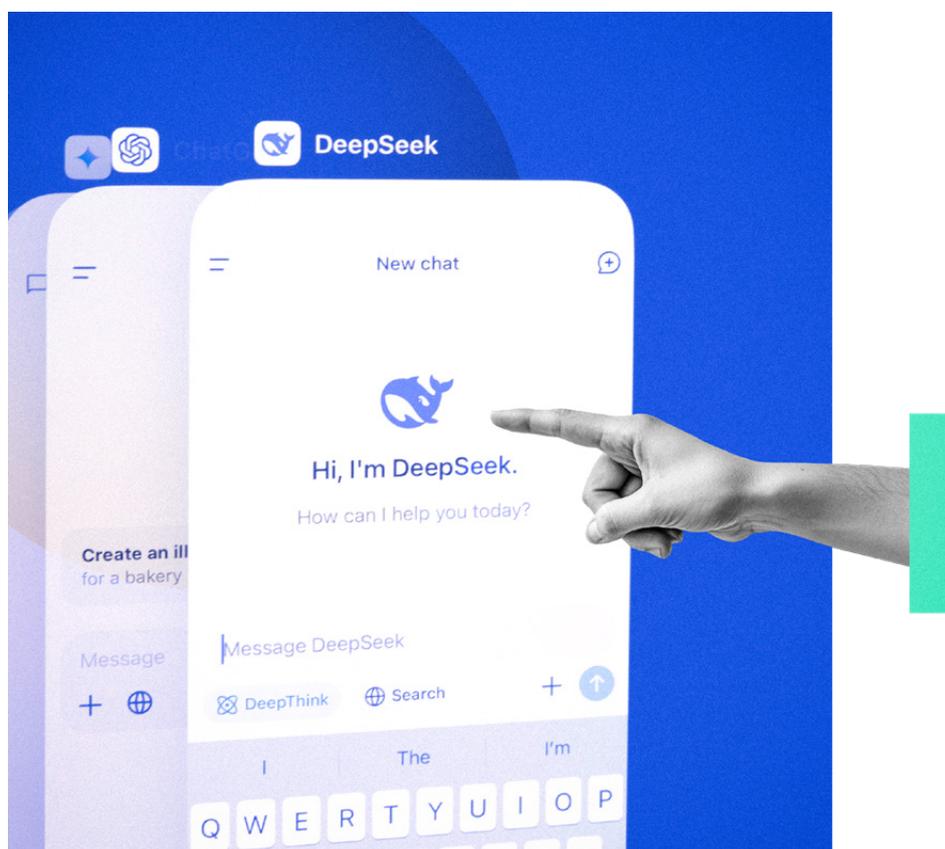
Generative AI models, such as OpenAI's GPT or image synthesis tools, illustrate this process. These technologies produce outputs that cater to the subject's desire for creativity, efficiency, or self-expression. However, the satisfaction they offer is always deferred, as the subject's reliance on AI reveals their own lack. The barred subject, in engaging with AI, confronts the *object a* in a mediated form, where the promise of fulfillment is tied to the endless production and consumption of digital artifacts.

Furthermore, AI intensifies the commodification of the *object a* by embedding it within capitalist logics of production and consump-

tion. As Lacan (2007) notes, "The capitalist discourse thrives on the infinite circulation of commodities, where the *object a* functions as the motor of desire" (p. 172). AI not only accelerates this circulation but also generates new forms of *object a* that are uniquely tailored to the subject's symbolic coordinates. This process ensures the subject's continued alienation, as their desires are perpetually deferred within capitalist discourse.

The Algorithmic Master Signifier [AI = S₁]

Artificial Intelligence is S₁ — as an omnipresent technologico-discursive force in contemporary capitalism bearing all the distinctive features of the master signifier (S₁). The master signifier functions as the ultimate anchoring point for the symbolic order (S₂), legitimizing its structure and concealing its inherent contradictions. AI serves not merely as a tool or mediator but as a locus of ideological authority, shaping subjectivity, desire, and socio-economic relations. By framing AI as an embodiment of "progress" and "innovation," capitalist discourse deploys it to sustain its dominance and obscure its exploitative mechanisms. Positioning AI as the name of the father and the castrating "stroke" (I) within the barred subject ($\$ = S + |$).



Once again, the master signifier is the dominant signifier in the symbolic order that organizes the system of meaning and anchors signification (Lacan, 2002). “AI” transcends its role as a technological tool and instead functions as a central ideological force within capitalist structures. As a master signifier, AI does not simply mediate but legitimizes the entire socio-economic and cultural framework, framing itself as an embodiment of “progress” and “innovation” (Žižek, 2006). This ideological positioning ensures that AI is seen not just as an instrument of productivity but as a central pillar that sustains capitalist dominance.

The master signifier anchors the symbolic order (S_2), providing a stabilizing, ultimate reference point that structures the flow of meaning (Lacan, 2002). This anchoring role is crucial in understanding how AI operates within capitalism. It is no longer something ready-to-hand used for improving efficiency or solving technological problems; rather, it becomes an ideological backbone, positioning itself as central to capitalist claims of progress and transformation. AI is framed by neoliberal discourse as an inevitable force that drives both innovation and the alleviation of global crises, such as poverty, climate change, and inequality. Yet, this rhetoric obscures the contradictions and exploitation inherent in the capitalist system, which AI, in its integration, helps to perpetuate (Fuchs, 2020). By promoting AI as a symbol of universal advancement, the capitalist order distorts the reality that these technologies are often used to reinforce existing hierarchies and inequalities.

The master signifier also plays an essential role in masking the contradictions within the symbolic order. It is not only a stabilizing element but also aims to conceal the internal tensions and contradictions that exist within the system it represents (Lacan, 2002). In contemporary capitalist discourse, AI serves this function by appearing as a neutral, objective, and forward-thinking technology. However, this appearance of neutrality is a deliberate construct, one that shields the exploitative and oppressive mechanisms embedded within capitalist relations. As Christian Fuchs (2020) argues, the design and implementation of AI systems often reflect and amplify the inequalities of the society that produces them, particularly when the interests of powerful corporations are involved. The deployment of AI in areas like automation, surveillance, and consumer behavior regulation is directly tied to the capitalist imperative

of profit maximization, which frequently comes at the expense of workers, privacy, and environmental sustainability. AI, as framed in capitalist discourse, thus obscures the very real social and ethical challenges it presents.

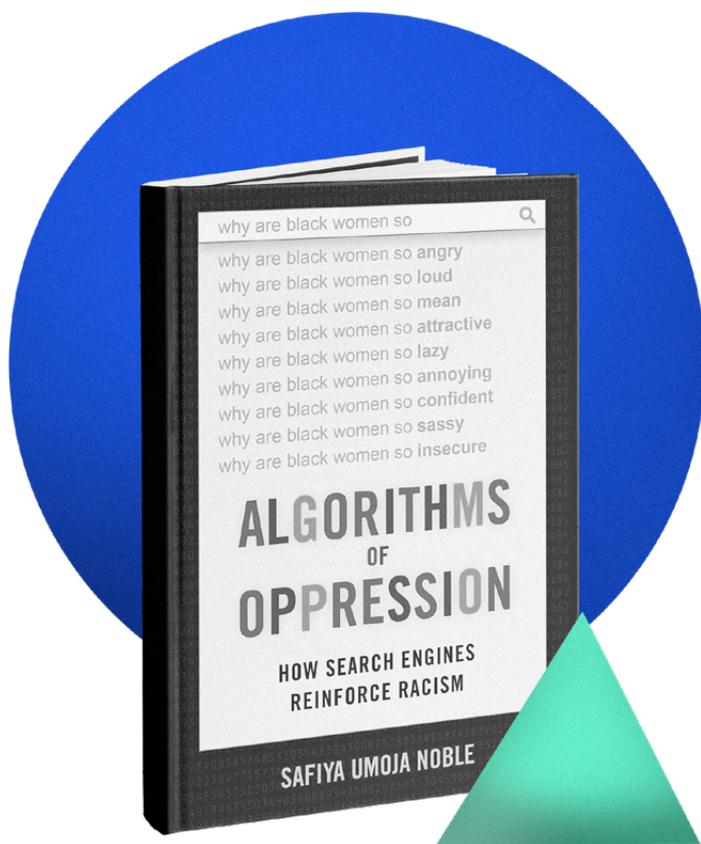
The “Name of the Father” (le Nom du Père) offers another critical layer of analysis in understanding the ideological role of AI within capitalism. The “Name of the Father” represents the symbolic authority that governs the unconscious, structures subjectivity, and mediates desire (Lacan, 2002). AI, within capitalist society, takes on this role of authority, functioning as a new “Name of the Father.” It dictates the terms of what is technologically possible, desirable, and even ethical within the economic order. In the same way that the father figure sets the parameters of acceptable behavior in the psychoanalytic realm, AI within capitalism sets the parameters for the future, presenting itself as an unchallenged force that shapes the trajectory of progress and knowledge. Using Žižek (2006) we can frame AI as an embodiment of the paternal figure, one that is particularly potent in the neoliberal era, where the market-driven ideals of self-sufficiency, efficiency, and growth are celebrated. AI, as a symbol of these ideals, is positioned as an unquestionable authority that governs both the production and consumption of goods, services, and information.

The Lacanian concept of the barred subject ($\$$), which encapsulates the fragmentation of subjectivity and the tension between the symbolic order and the ego, provides a powerful framework for understanding how AI shapes individual identity and desire in capitalist societies (Lacan, 2002). In this framework, AI operates as a significant force in the creation of new forms of subjectivity. While the traditional capitalist system has long relied on the exploitation of labor and the regulation of consumption, AI deepens these processes by creating new modes of surveillance, consumerism, and social control (Tufekci, 2017). The design of AI systems, particularly in the context of social media and data collection, enables the creation of personalized experiences that not only affect individuals’ purchasing behavior but also manipulate their desires, political views, and social identities. As Safiya Umoja Noble (2018) argues in *Algorithms of Oppression*, AI systems embedded in search engines and social media platforms are not neutral but are designed to reinforce existing social structures of power, particularly those related to race and gender. By capturing vast amounts

of data and tailoring interactions based on that data, AI systems shape user subjectivities, influencing their decisions, actions, and desires in ways that often go unnoticed.

AI's role in capitalist society thus extends far beyond its initial function as a tool for technological advancement or efficiency. It emerges as a deeply ideological force that shapes the very fabric of the symbolic order, positioning itself as central authority that both legitimizes and perpetuates capitalist systems of exploitation and domination. The ideological framing of AI as a neutral, progress-oriented technology is a strategy that hides the economic and social inequalities that are amplified by its implementation. AI, therefore, functions as both a tool of capitalist control and a symbol that structures desire, subjectivity, and identity, further entrenching the power dynamics that characterize modern capitalism.

The role of AI in shaping subjectivity, desire, and socio-economic relations underscores the depth of its integration into the fabric of modern capitalist societies. Its ideological significance, as both a tool and a symbol of authority, demands a critical examination that goes beyond the technological aspects to address the broader socio-political and ethical implications of its widespread use.



CONCLUSION

There is more to be explored at the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Lacanian theory. Drawing on Lacan's concept of the master signifier and the four discourses, one can trace how AI functions as an ideological monument, structuring the symbolic order, legitimizing the dominant social and economic systems (Lacan, 2002). As the master signifier, AI is not merely a technological tool but a discursive force that shapes subjectivity, desire, and social relations, framing itself as the one and only path to human prosperity and salvation. This ideological positioning obscures the contradictions and exploitative mechanisms inherent in the capitalist order, which AI and digital technologies in general help to perpetuate in their pervasive integration (Fuchs, 2020).

Much remains to be done by way of utilizing Lacan's four discourses (from *Seminar XVII*), to examine the extension of AI and its signifiatory role well-beyond technological functionality. The discourse of the master, in which AI is positioned as the ultimate authority and arbiter of truth, sustains the symbolic order of Neoliberal capitalism. AI's pervasive presence in areas such as surveillance, labor automation, and social media algorithms further entrenches the dynamics of control, exploitation, and social fragmentation (Tufekci, 2017). Through the discourse of the hysteric, one could potentially reveal the inherent contradictions of the *algorithmic symbolic order* to create a site for resistance and critical questioning. By hystericizing algocratic discourse one could interrogate the unconscious dimensions of the subject's relation to AI, recognizing desire and ideological formations that shape both human-subject and machine interaction (Fuchs, 2020).

Complex ethical challenges naturally arise as the widespread implementation of AI in various sectors will continue producing social black-boxes and responsibility gaps. While AI holds the potential for innovation and societal transformation, it simultaneously raises significant concerns about autonomy, privacy, inequality, and social justice. As AI becomes further embedded in the capitalist system, we must critically examine its role in shaping subjectivity, its impact on labor markets, and its function in the manipulation of human conduct. The continued integration of AI into social, political, and economic spheres demands an ongoing dialogue that considers both its transformative potential

and its capacity to reinforce power-structures. As AI continues to evolve, so too must our understanding of its place in the symbolic structures that govern our lives.

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PYRAMID OF INFERIORITY

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces, for the first time, a heuristic model of inferiority, outlining its key parameters as the result of research conducted by PhD Oleg Maltsev. The study also examines Maltsev's model of the human psyche, which serves as the foundation for understanding the structure of the pyramid of inferiority, explaining its components and the process of its formation. Key categories necessary for constructing a comprehensive schematic model of human inferiority are described, providing a systematic framework for analysis. Additionally, the article considers the height of the pyramid, reflecting the stages of personality development and the formation of the individual.

Keywords

inferiority, pyramid of inferiority, human psyche, model of psyche

INTRODUCTION

The topic addressed in this article has been touched upon in the works of various scholars and thinkers, even though it was not explicitly labeled as "inferiority" (Baudrillard, 1996, 1998; Fromm, 1973; Freud, 1999; Descartes, 2015). Questions related to the nature of human inferiority and limitations have been considered by philosophers and psychologists for centuries, highlighting the long-standing interest in this topic (De Carranza, 1582).

This article presents a heuristic model of inferiority, outlining its central parameters and theoretical foundations. The model is the result of extensive research conducted by Academician Oleg V. Maltsev of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in the field of the psychology of inferiority. Inferiority, as a psychological phenomenon, affects every individual to varying degrees, and understanding its structure requires a detailed examination of the human psyche, which forms its underlying basis.

The model of the psyche itself was first introduced by Academician Maltsev at the scientific symposium "Life Triumph" held in Palermo in December 2019. It represents the culmination of years of scholarly inquiry, integrating insights from Leopold Szondi's studies on the duality of factors in the Szondi test (Szondi, 1944a, 1952), lectures by the Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso, and the works of Soviet academicians A. S. Yakovlev and G. S. Popov. By situating the concept of inferiority within this comprehensive model of the psyche, the article aims to provide a systematic framework for understanding how inferiority manifests and operates within individuals.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology proposed in this study is based on the psychical model developed by Oleg Maltsev, which is linked to the study of Lipót Szondi's works on the paired factors of the test. However, the model emerged as a result of research across

several theoretical foundations, including the paired factors of the Szondi Test, lectures by the Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso (1898; Gatti & Verde, 2012), and the works of Soviet academics A. S. Yakovlev (1952) and G. S. Popov (1951).

One of the main methods employed is the research concept (Illiusha, 2020), described as "an idea transformed into a research methodology, brought through scientific transformations to an appropriate technologically acceptable level." This concept was presented in the book *Philosophy of Southern Italy* (Maltsev & Lunov, 2020). Additionally, a comparative analysis was applied: observed patterns are compared with historical models, including Szondi's paired factors and Lombroso's work, in order to validate the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Model of the Psyche

The human psyche can be understood as a system that consists of four categories:

- "I can do";
- "I know";
- "I am able to";
- "I remember."

"I remember" is the result of interaction between the so-called "self" and the human body. How is this perceived by a person? There is a certain volume of information an individual retains — from something as simple as a mother's phone number to the multiplication table. This constitutes the information that one remembers.

"I know" is connected to the present. It does not refer to the past, which belongs to memory. A person knows something about where they are in the present moment. Knowledge is never abstract; one knows about specific things, either as elements or as part of a system. At the same time, "knowledge" is also the product of human misconceptions. However, people are not aware of these misconceptions and treat them as genuine knowledge.

"I am able to" always falls into the category of "X," implying a change in the space in which a person exists. Any such change inevitably meets resistance from outside. As soon as an individual intends to alter something or someone in the world — even slightly — there will always be those who oppose it. Another distinctive feature of "ability" is its variety. A person can accomplish something directly, through others, by means of a system of coordinates (such as a company), or within a hierarchy. For instance, a woman may not be able to do certain things herself, yet her husband may be capable of much, and through him she is able to achieve many

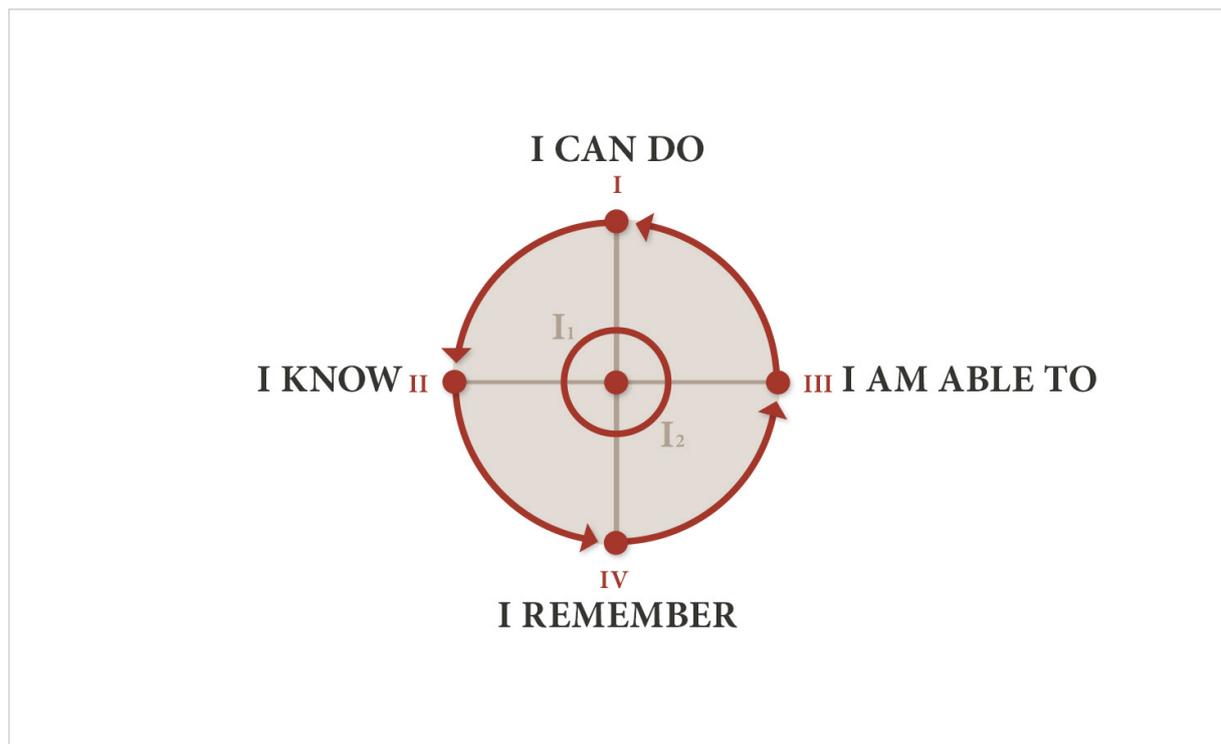


Figure 1. Model of the Psyche by Dr. Oleg Maltsev

things in life. Thus, “ability” always represents a multivariate system that encounters resistance during its implementation.

The category of “I can do” is no less important in life than “I am able.” A person may possess ability but never act on it. “I can do” functions as a kind of instinct. One does not consciously reflect on how the awareness arises that something can be accomplished; it emerges as a spontaneous emotion, a sense of certainty that success is possible. Yet in order to truly be capable of doing something, time and a specific method of training are required. One cannot simply acquire a skill instantly. It is possible to have ability without determination, or, conversely, to have determination and high social standing without skills — resulting in failure to complete even a simple task. Such individuals are often described as having an “inflated self-esteem.”

It is important to note that all of the categories described above operate unconsciously. A person does not receive a predefined package of knowledge or skills from childhood. Instead, learning typically occurs spontaneously: individuals study whatever captures their interest at a given moment, without systematic effort. Memory, perhaps the least explored of these categories, is nonetheless used by everyone at some level throughout life. Active self-training and personal change begin only when fear sets in — fear of losing shelter, food, employment, or fear of violence, among other threats.

From the perspective of inferiority, the system always experiences one of two types of failure: either the engine is disabled, or the shutter does not function. In other words, either a single component (the engine) fails, or both categories that form the shutter fail simultaneously, with the engine always being primary. How does this manifest in life? A person may remember something but lack ability, know something but be unable to act, or remember and know yet neither possess skill nor the capacity to execute. Each individual exhibits a particular configuration in the functioning of this system. One, two, or even three components may fail. The degree of a person’s inferiority can be assessed by asking: which part of this system is not functioning?

Knowledge and skill define humanity. Animals possess determination and memory rooted in instinct. An animal may be capable of performing simple tasks, such as digging burrows, but the category of “knowing” is uniquely human.

Another essential category in this model of the psyche is “understanding.” This category is the most expansive and least explored in terms of the human psyche. To “understand” means to know how and by what means something can be accomplished. For example, it is not enough to understand that one can write on a board; a marker is also required to perform the action.

Most people believe that they “know”, that they “remember” some things, yet the question remains: can they actually do anything? Moreover, they often do not truly understand what they are doing.

This is how the human psyche operates, with each of the categories presented serving merely as an evaluative measure.

Model of the Inferiority

Next, we will describe the categories that must be considered to construct a comprehensive schematic model of human inferiority. These can be thought of as components influencing the formation of inferiority.

- 1. Training and upbringing.** There is a particular stage in personality development when a person’s behavioral patterns are most strongly influenced by their animalistic traits. During this period, upbringing functions as a form of training, without involving any physical intervention.
- 2. Characteristics of the established configuration of inferiority.** These differ from person to person and include habits, opinions, principles, and so forth.
- 3. Level of knowledge at the present time.** People vary in their knowledge and preparation, regardless of age.
- 4. Degree of determination.** This also varies among individuals, irrespective of age or gender.
- 5. Depth of interaction with memory.** This refers to intuition, which is developed to varying degrees across individuals.
- 6. Skills and learning speed.** It is crucial to consider how quickly a person can acquire new skills.
- 7. Compensation for deficiencies.** Simply put, this refers to how a person regulates their state, compensating for failures, consequences of inferiority, and so on (for example, one may punch a bag in a boxing gym, while another may rely on alcohol).



8. Tendencies in striving to realize inferiority according to one of three scenarios:

- a. Antonio Mattei line:** Accept one's inferiority and use it as a pathway toward perfection.
- b. Leonardo Ciaccio line:** A combination of magician and scientist. This system is in constant conflict, and the battle between these two sides generates the best solutions.
- c. Francesco Villardita line:** Altering the geometry of the vessel, consuming the cup of inferiority until only a single drop remains.

Each person has a phantom notion of what would be best for them. However, this is always merely a representation that cannot be clearly described or verified (Maltsev, 2017, 2018).

Human inferiority can be represented as a pyramid, the configuration of which determines its height. The degree of integrity (the four support points of the pyramid) forms vertical structures. At the base of the pyramid, as its foundation, lies the human psyche.

Components of Inferiority

Let us consider how the "components" affecting the formation of inferiority, along with other elements, correspond to the inferiority model itself.

For example, training and upbringing serve as the material from which the pyramid is made.

There is an expression: "what kind of dough a person is made of," referring to how skillfully one is shaped or molded and what one represents. Here, we deal with two categories — the material and the art of constructing the pyramid, with one compensating for the other. This can be roughly represented as plaster and the hands of a craftsman, or marble and the ability to work with it. It is about what the pyramid is made of and how it is made. The stronger the construction, the more challenging it is to work with.

Learning speed reflects the rate at which the pyramid's configuration changes, and it can vary. The pyramid in a person is never as whole as depicted in illustrations; it represents an ideal that is always unattainable.

The blueprint for constructing the pyramid represents one of three approaches to working with inferiority. The lines of Mattei, Villardita, and Ciaccio are the project documentation for building the pyramid — how one would ideally like to construct it. However, tendencies usually remain tendencies, because no one truly knows how it works; there is only a phantom representation.

The foundation on which the pyramid stands is the dynamic impulsive component of the human psyche. Imagine that the pyramid does not float in a vacuum but rests on a solid base formed by the human psyche; beneath this base lies a particular "soil." Where does this soil come from? It originates from the individual's animalistic component, shaped through training. This

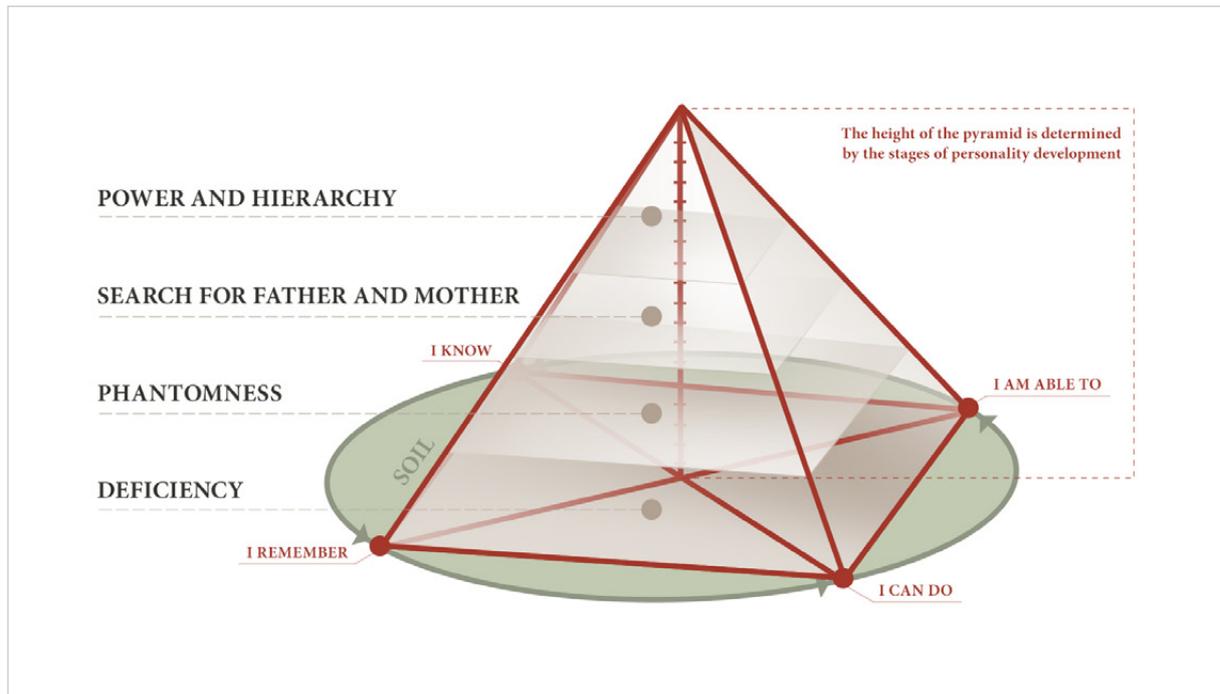


Figure 2. Pyramid of Inferiority

involves a complex of accumulated behavioral models and anthropological traits that appear effective. It is a system of memory functioning, certain anthropological characteristics, and our impulsive component. One manifestation of this foundational “soil” in life is mentality. For example, people living on different continents exhibit distinct cultures, traditions, religions, thought patterns, values, and so on.

We must also consider the height of the pyramid, determined by the stages of personality formation. There are four stages, which allows us to conceptually divide the pyramid into four levels:

1. Deficiency.
2. Phantomness.
3. Search for Father or Mother.
4. Power and hierarchy.

To describe these stages in detail, it is necessary to examine the key concepts from Lipót Szondi’s research on drives, upon which he based his projective test (the Szondi Test).

Thus, let us briefly discuss the factors and vectors of the Szondi Test as central concepts in the School of Fate Psychology (Szondi, 1944b, 1960).

One of the central concepts in Fate Psychology is the notion of a “drive.” Szondi examines this topic in detail in his book *Experimental Diagnosis of Drives*. Drives act as radicals or sources of human actions.

A **radical** is a global root factor that serves as the source of a person’s actions. Radicals are

formed through a system based on eight drive factors, which, as sources of unknown forces, push a person in a particular direction. This occurs at the unconscious level. For convenience, we can organize these into the following blocks:

- **Block 1 — Attraction to men/women and destruction (h; s):** This block corresponds to a person’s skills and knowledge.
- **Block 2 — Ethics and morality (e; hy):** This block shapes an individual’s philosophy.
- **Block 3 — Tendency to “be” and “have” (k; p):** This block governs management and leadership.
- **Block 4 — Tendency toward social contact (d; m):** This block determines environmental conditions.

All four groups of drive tendencies combine to form the individual manifestation of drives, impulses, and needs, which the Szondi Test ultimately reveals. The system is described in greater detail by O. V. Maltsev in the book *The Philosophy of Szondi* (Maltsev, 2019).

Next, we need to examine the stages of personality development through a central “engine,” which plays a critical role in a person’s fate and in achieving triumph in life. This primary engine acts as a starting point for personality development and a key factor in attaining success. To realize triumph, an individualized approach must be selected for each person, tailored to their core engine.

From the perspective of compensation, professional activity contains specific nuances. For example, parents may have forced the child to enter a university of their choosing. Situations can arise in which the child fails the entrance exams and must select another field, or chooses incorrectly, thinking a certain direction will suit them when it does not. In these cases, the deficiency remains uncompensated.

If a profession compensates for deficiency, the person ascends the social hierarchy. If it does not, they descend. This dynamic is referred to as the “social elevator.” A second fork then appears: the person must choose whether to pursue a leadership track or a specialization track within their profession. Here, certain predispositions can be observed: individuals with h; s or d; m engines tend to become experts, whereas those with e; hy or k; p engines generally aim for leadership.

The fourth and final fork is “activity cessation.” This may not manifest but exists and will influence the person. Many continue their work well into old age, while others stop all activities

upon retirement. However, fully ceasing activity is not recommended, as it triggers a mechanism of regression.

The second engine, **Phantomness**, enables a person to secure a desired future. The phantom image of a prosperous life raises questions of justice. The second engine is activated when a person discovers a source of power that helps them realize fairness.

Typically, a person’s first job results in some form of psychological trauma. They may be fired due to a lack of skills, or they may have taken a position they did not want or choose, merely to support themselves and their family. This job never represents the future they truly desired. The concept of the future is significant because it triggers self-identification: “Who am I?” and “What do I belong to?” An organization must provide a strong support system, accept the individual, and ensure protection. Historically, this is why knightly orders, secret societies, and scientific organizations were so prominent. Today, most commercial enterprises are primarily created to serve the owner’s future.

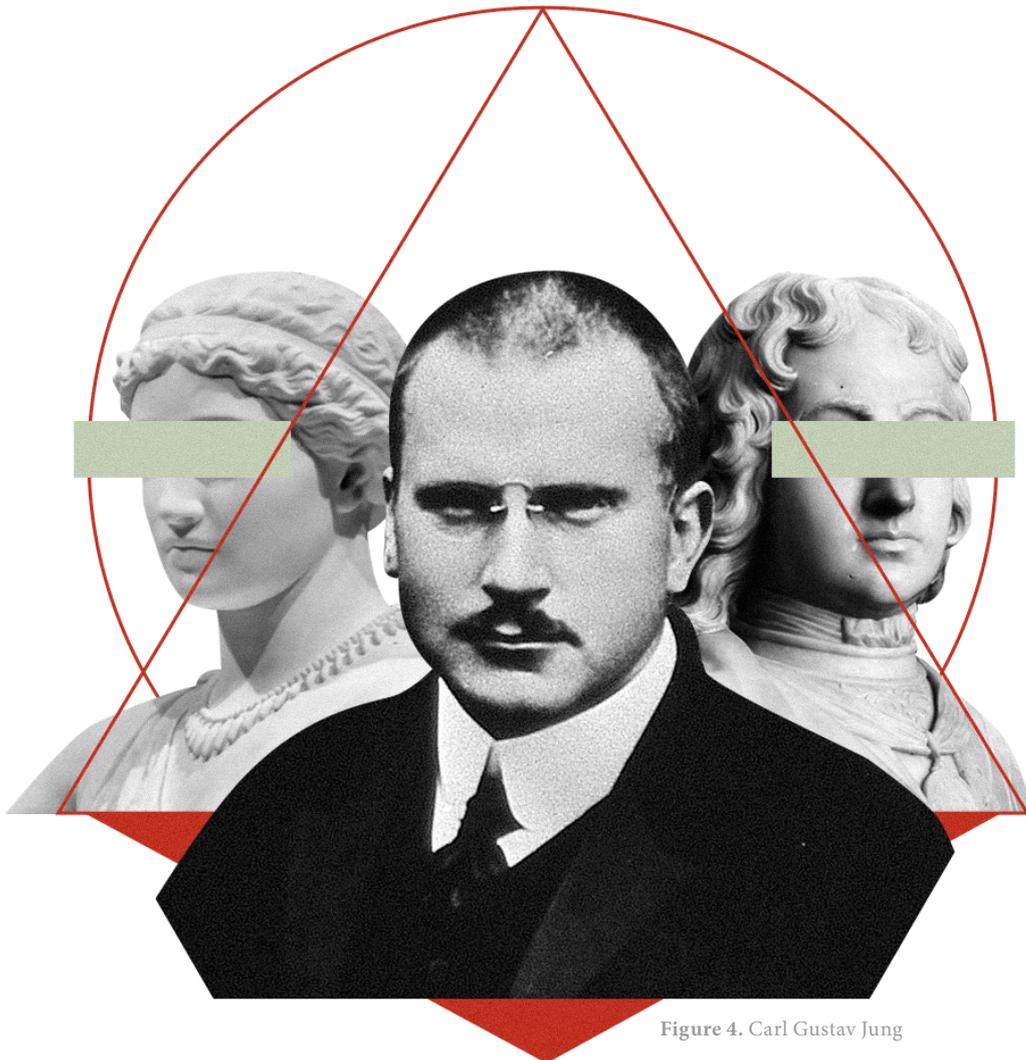


Figure 4. Carl Gustav Jung

The activation of the third engine, **Search for Father or Mother**, involves seeking authority or a mentor. At a certain point in life, a person experiences disappointment in their parents, leading them to instinctively search for a substitute parental figure. In Jungian archetypal terms, a woman seeks the Great Father, while a man seeks the Great Mother (Jung, 1957). Why does this occur? At a certain stage, the person realizes that their parents could not provide justice or facilitate upward movement.

However, at this stage, there is a risk: searching for the Great Mother is a dead end. One must seek the Great Father, regardless of one's own gender, though this often occurs unconsciously. Those who find the Great Mother risk remaining inconsequential for life, while those who find the Great Father typically achieve triumph.

A person searches for someone who can guide them in life and help them achieve greater results. When such an authority appears, the third engine is activated.

The fourth engine, **power and hierarchy**, represents the **sacrifice of freedom**, which, in the interest of present and future power, completes the formation of a person's personality and endows them with relatively stable force components. The term "sacrifice of freedom" refers to the utilization of hierarchical power, allowing a person to exert control over others outside that hierarchy. With the emergence of all four engines, the individual acquires power. The instinct for power manifests in one of two directions: for personal benefit or in service of the hierarchy to which the person belongs.

The development of these stages and engines occurs in all people, usually unconsciously and without deliberate control. How long it takes to form this system is unknown to the individual. The person whose system is fully developed is stronger, while others require external organization. The need for power arises only after the first three engines are in place, when the individual possesses intellect, strength, and determination.

This illustrates the heuristic model of the **pyramid of inferiority** based on the human psyche. However, several additional aspects are worth noting.

The absence of inferiority would correspond to a complete pyramid with ideal facets standing on solid ground — but this never occurs in reality. Each individual exists at a certain stage of personality development, influencing the pyramid's levels. The psyche's engines also function individually and incompletely, affecting the pyr-

amid's facets. For instance, if the "can do" engine does not function, one facet of the pyramid is missing; if two engines are inactive, two facets are absent, and so on. Every person knows, can do, remembers, and is capable to some extent.

CONCLUSIONS

Inferiority is one of the central categories of the human psyche. One can say that the configuration of inferiority (the pyramid) effectively represents the structure of the human psyche.

The primary obstacle to forming a coherent pyramid is that an individual alone cannot transform it into a model of a virtuous character. Guidance from a master — someone to direct, assist, and oversee the construction of the pyramid — is always necessary. While God has already created the person, the pyramid itself must be constructed over the course of life, ideally with knowledge of how to do so. This process can also occur unconsciously, but in that case, the outcome is unpredictable and uncontrollable, potentially harming the individual or those around them.

For example, a doctor said, "I can," and proceeded with surgery, resulting in the patient's death. Another person said, "I will remember," but forgot, causing someone to die of starvation. A third faltered on the battlefield, resulting in the deaths of others. This is what is commonly referred to as the human factor — the application of the resources of the inferiority pyramid against other people. Given that each person possesses such a pyramid, people inevitably apply it to one another throughout life.

The inferiority pyramid fundamentally shapes each individual's perception of the world. As a result, they see reality through the prism of this pyramid. To alter perception, one must change the geometry of inferiority, though the pyramid itself cannot be changed.

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GLOBALIZATIONS: THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

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ABSTRACT

This article summarises key arguments from *Globalizations: The Shape of Things to Come* (2025), a collection of essays that examines the forces that are shaping world politics in the early 21st century. The book's main concern is the determination and openness of global history, as well as the potential for collective learning and institutional transformation. The article highlights three major areas of analysis: the political economy of global developments and crises; the securitisation of international relations, with a focus on the war in Ukraine; and the prospects for more democratic global governance. Rather than offering predictions, the book is grounded in ontological realism and reflexive anticipation. From this perspective, it explores how interpretations, actions, and normative commitments also shape global futures. By synthesising insights across disciplinary boundaries, the article and book contribute to ongoing debates about the global political economy, security, and the political imagination necessary for creating a more sustainable, inclusive world system than the current one.

Keywords

globalisation, global political economy, securitisation, reflexivity, global governance, emancipatory futures

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I offer a summary of my recent book, *Globalizations: The Shape of Things to Come* (Patomäki, 2025), which brings together a selection of my scholarly work published between 2005 and 2024. The book explores the dynamics of global historical change through three central themes: the return of war and questions of global security; the structural transformations and crises of political economy; and normative political theory concerning justice, democracy, and global agency. The aim is to understand how past and present developments shape the range of possible futures — and how anticipatory practices, learning, and reflexivity can alter those futures. Drawing on a critical realist perspective, I argue that social systems are open and historically contingent, and that the interplay between structure and agency allows for meaningful political change. This article outlines the key arguments of the book and reflects on how they may help us navigate the turbulent global transformations of the 2020s and 2030s.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is grounded in critical realism and the notion of open social systems, emphasising the interplay between structural conditions, agency, and reflexivity. Rather than

predictive modelling, the approach employs reflexive anticipation, combining mechanism-based explanations with an exploration of potential trajectories under conditions of uncertainty. Historical-comparative analysis and process tracing are applied to case studies such as the war in Ukraine and the Helsinki process/OSCE, with a particular focus on mechanisms of securitisation and escalation. In the domain of political economy, the research adopts interdisciplinary triangulation, drawing on post-Keynesian, Minskyan, and Marxian perspectives to analyse stagnation, inequality, and financial instability.

Scenario analysis is used to map a range of plausible and undesirable futures, acknowledging the performative nature of economic theories and the absence of event regularities. Counterfactual reasoning is further employed to test alternative developmental pathways and to assess conditions under which escalation might have been avoided. This methodology thereby integrates theoretical, historical, and empirical dimensions in order to generate robust anticipations of global political and economic transformations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Dynamics of World Politics in Three Parts

The ancient Greek word *dúnamis* means “power” and *dunamikós* “powerful”. In the modern sense, the term was introduced by German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Leibnitz (1646–1716) in the 1690s, emphasising the fundamental role of force, motion, activity, and intrinsic principles in the behaviour of entities (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2024; McDonough, 2021). In English, the term became common in the 19th century and popular in the 20th century. With the development of natural sciences, scientific realism became increasingly dominant. Methodologically, my approach to the dynamics of world politics is based on critical realism, which is a synthesis of critical theories and scientific realism (see Bhaskar 2009).

The collection of articles, originally published between 2005 and 2024, aims to shed light on whether we have learned anything since the early 2000s, or can learn, about the dynamics of world

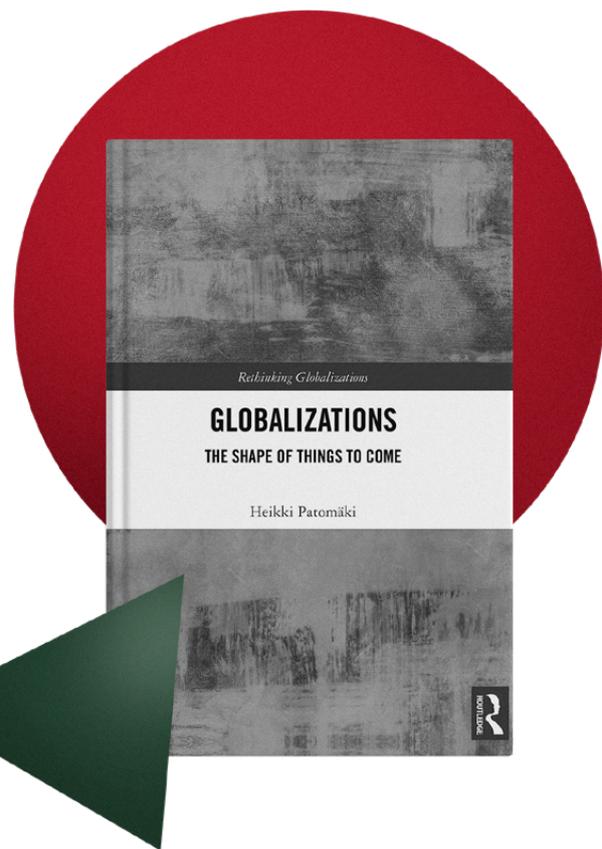


politics and the drivers of global history. What is the role of political economy, political ideologies, or war and peace? Based on two decades of explorations and what we may have learned, is there anything we can say about the shape of things to come, the probability of different possibilities, and the reflexivity of such anticipations?

The first section of the book deals with the current state of global (in) security and especially the return of war to Europe, close to the traditional core areas of the world economy (“Part I: War and peace: the cases of Ukraine and the OSCE”). It is structured around three main themes: war and peace, focusing on the case of Ukraine and the OSCE; political economy and the drivers of historical change; and political theory, including justice, democracy, and global agency and institutions. The book stresses future orientation, emphasising how past and present developments influence possible futures and the role of learning in shaping those futures. A central theme throughout is reflexivity — the idea that human actions and interpretations shape history in open systems characterised by uncertainty.

The discussions of the first part (the first two of them with Tuomas Forsberg) are future-oriented. Adopting a global perspective, the first two papers focus on the possible and likely consequences of the war and ways the war could come to an end. The third article of Part 1 deals with the Helsinki process and its lessons. Although history never repeats itself as such, I argue that some of the lessons and OSCE conceptions are applicable in the 2020s and 2030s — and not only in Europe but also in East Asia. Profound reforms and changes take time. Under the circumstances of the 2020s, it would be important to buy time for real changes with dialogue, confidence-building measures, de-escalation, and various concessions.

The second part goes deeper into the analysis of the driving forces and dynamics of global history. It consists of five articles, the first three of which deal with the slowdown in growth and economic crises in recent decades and their potential and actual consequences, also in terms of war and peace. The remaining two papers reflect upon some of the methodological and theoretical problems of identifying and explaining the drivers of global history. The underlying premise of all these articles is that social systems are open, and thus history must always remain open as well. Is it possible nonetheless to find some recurring patterns and relatively enduring, trans-



factly efficacious social or political economy mechanisms?

My answer is a cautious yes. I employ claims about such patterns and mechanisms in my explanations and anticipations. Yet, Part II also shows the sometimes dramatic effects of openness and reflexivity, as well as those of epistemological relativism. Neoclassical economics is more performative than explanatory. The Minskyan financial instability hypothesis does not provide any simple predictions. Post-Keynesian and other claims about trends in the world economy or upward and downward waves are theory-laden and contested. Unexpected events (e.g. COVID-19), learning, and reflexive responses can intervene and prevent the realisation of an outcome expected on the basis of a well-established recurring pattern. The Marxian theory — while useful for some purposes — does not fare any better. For example, most versions of the labour theory of value fail, and thus Marxian anticipations based on the alleged tendency for the rate of profit to fall fail as well.

The third part of the book deals with world political theory: global justice and democracy, civil society and the world party, and the future of the university. It starts from the basics of value theory, namely the meaning of justice and how it is based on the metaphor of moral accounting and the notion of abstract value, in a manner that connects it directly with the last article of Part II.

The basic thrust is to move toward a dialogical, pluralist, and democratic — yet epistemologically critical — account of normative theory and practice. I argue that emancipation from unnecessary, unneeded and unwanted sources of determination requires global transformative agency and planetary visions about alternatives.

Part I: War and Peace: The Cases of Ukraine and the OSCE

The analysis of war and peace is particularly crucial in understanding the effects of the globalisation processes of the past few decades. Hence, the war in Ukraine is examined not just as a regional conflict but as part of much broader global dynamics. The Ukraine section of this book consists of two papers with Tuomas Forsberg. The first is a co-written introduction to the special forum in issue 7/2023 of the journal *Globalizations*, and the second, in the same forum, continues the dialogue of the book *Debating the War in Ukraine* (Forsberg & Patomäki, 2023). In our further dialogue, we focus quite a lot on the methodology of futures studies.

Forsberg points out that he has correctly predicted a protracted war leading to a stalemate, whereas I stress that futures studies are not about prediction, but reflexive anticipation. Anticipations can fail in two ways: they may get the principal structures, powers, mechanisms, and processes wrong, or they may fail to harness resources and activities in trying to avoid an undesirable outcome, or in trying to realise a more desirable one. We need to take reflexivity into account also in terms of our background assumptions. Our normative and theoretical commitments are closely related to how we assess counterfactuals and anticipate possible and likely futures. If the starting point is that justice should not be compromised, and if justice means that Russia must withdraw from all Ukrainian territories and be punished for its criminal wrongdoings, then the only options are (i) to defeat Russia by military means or (ii) a drastic (and probably unconstitutional) regime change inside Russia. Given the asymmetric resources of Russia and Ukraine, the West's limited capacity for supporting Ukraine, Russia's nuclear weapons, and the resilience and apparent though possibly deceptive popularity of Putin's regime, both seem unlikely. The "prediction" of protracted war leading to a stalemate follows from these background assumptions and is thus, from a NATO/Western viewpoint, a self-fulfilling prophecy. The situa-

tion also has a built-in tendency towards further conflict escalation.

From a global perspective, the war in Ukraine is not the only important conflict. Despite the 20-year history of gradually deteriorating relations with Russia, in the US, it is China that is seen as the main adversary and primary threat. In East Asia, there are other interwoven conflicts concerning historical memory, parts and aspects of the South China Sea, the endlessly continuing yet frozen Korean War, and nuclear weapons. In the book, China-US relations are discussed in terms of systemic imbalances. Another key security complex concerns the Middle East, which in the book is discussed briefly in terms of colonial history, declining rates of growth and rising inequalities, and the war in Iraq, which was a turning point in the dynamics of world politics. The approach of the articles in this book, and my research in general, is to try to understand the political economy processes and mechanisms that trigger or reinforce processes of securitisation and tend to generate military confrontations.

Another key point is to see how these various conflicts are interconnected not only through common or related causes but also directly. This is obvious, for instance, when one considers the actual or potential role of countries such as Brazil, China, India or Turkey in the war between Russia and Ukraine, as the special issue 7/2023 of the journal *Globalizations* does. For example, Feng Zhang (2023) argues that it is unlikely that China could have realistically changed Putin's or his inner circle's mind about the war in 2022, since any plausible counterfactual would depend on the (in that context) improbable condition of good Sino-American relations.

In the final paper of Part 1, "The Relevance of the Helsinki Process and the Charter of Paris for Future Security Policies and Institutions," I suggest, among other things, that the OSCE documents do not appear to grant an absolute right to ally militarily or, for that matter, to enlarge NATO. Instead, these documents underscore the importance of collective and cooperative security involving disarmament, which can be interpreted in a minimalistic manner consistent with the standard liberal no-harm principle (derived from John Stuart Mill). The expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders and the related shifts in terms of relative power may be perceived as causing harm in a situation where it was clearly understood that Russia would not be joining NATO, where nuclear deterrence between the US and Russia continued to define their relationship, and



where trust between Russia and NATO/the US had begun to erode. It is important to acknowledge the potential negative impact that NATO expansion might have had on these relationships, particularly in successive situations where there has been a notable increase in rivalry, and then enmity, over time.

Further, I argue that anticipations of Russia as a potential enemy by new NATO members have had constitutive effects on the formation of relations between Russia and the West (cf. Guzzini, 2012). The process has involved an effect of negative “altercasting” (which may be unintended rather than purposeful). Altercasting works through persuading the other by positioning the other in a particular way in relation to oneself and by proposing a particular relationship so that the other will be inclined to act per that positioning. Anticipations are subject to contradictory and complementary determinations, while in this case, it seems likely that the net result has been a self-fulfilling tendency, even though in the 1990s and 2000s, NATO attempted to strike a compromise between admitting new members and cooperating with Russia in various ways. The irony is that after the 2022 invasion, the negative expectations widely shared in Central and Eastern Europe in the post-Cold War era, appear to stand vindicated.

The further the mutual collapse of trust goes, the more one begins to believe that the other’s behaviour can be modified by force and deterrence only. This is the essence of deterrence theory, and it was also the basis of Putin’s coercive

diplomacy in 2021. However, as I point out in chapter 3, citing Robert Jervis (1976) and Richard Ned Lebow (2020), in many crises since the 20th century, deterrence has not only failed to prevent the threat but has also often contributed to provoking the very behaviour it was intended to prevent. In some other contexts, deterrence appears to have been irrelevant. Only rarely, it seems to have worked in the intended way. In open systems, however, it is not possible to rely on any simple event regularities.

The alternative spiral model of escalation seems better grounded in general, but there is no guarantee that the outcome follows any well-defined regularities, whether deterministic or probabilistic. While the spiral model indicates that it is usually reasonable to strive for dialogue, make concessions, and be ready for compromises, the problem, according to Jervis, is that in some cases, relevant (historically constructed) actors may see efforts to conduct dialogue and make compromises as a sign of weakness. Systems are open, and the future is uncertain. The same available evidence can be interpreted in many different ways, while typically amid a major conflict, much haziness, confusion, and uncertainty surround the available evidence. This does not mean that all interpretations are equally plausible or that no rational judgements can be made. However, as there are no event regularities in the world, there can never be complete certainty, and trust-building takes time.

The Helsinki Final Act was signed in the summer of 1975. In the final paper of Part I,

I contend that a key historical lesson of the Helsinki process is that it provided time for other changes to take place. For humanity to survive the current historical phase as well, a process involving elements similar to those that comprised détente and the Helsinki process is urgently needed, from dialogue and confidence-building measures to de-escalation of the war in Ukraine and mutual concessions. Many of the most important reforms in the 2020s and 2030s concern the governance of the world economy, technological developments, and ecological problems (see Patomäki, 2023). Interconnected and overlapping transformations in terms of functional governance systems can contribute to transforming the overall context, thus enabling the establishment of fundamentally new norms and principles, not least regarding the control of weapons of mass destruction (ch 6). The future of humanity depends on our ability to learn (also from history) and build common institutions on a sustainable and legitimate basis.

Part II: Political Economy

What are the fundamental forces, intrinsic principles of entities, activities, and changes that have driven world history during the past decades and continue to do so in the 2020s and 2030s? Despite a long and rich International Relations tradition of studying both the political economy conditions of war, peace and security and the impact of security concerns and war on economic developments (for a summary, Patomäki, 2016), the late 20th and early 21st-century academic division of labour and fragmentation encourage seeing society in terms of disjointed sectors such as economy and security, with only limited overlap.

My research has gone against the prevailing trend. As a general rule, when we seek to explain a phenomenon related to war and peace or security (contrastive semi-regularity, episode, process, or outcome), especially in the modern industrial world, the forces and mechanisms of political economy are involved in many ways in the processual causal complex that can explain that phenomenon. The field of state reason and interstate relations is in no way reducible to political economy, and the overall movement of world history involves also other processes such as col-

lective learning, but the world is not divided into separate sectors either. Put simply, political economy should not be seen as a separate, self-contained field that occasionally interacts with other areas; instead, it is a central part of the broader dynamics of global history, and any meaningful analysis must bring this role clearly into focus.

By 2003–4, I was increasingly aware of the neoconservative turn in world history and felt that this called for a realism-informed systematic analysis of its likely consequences. So, I began to develop systematic global scenarios from a critical-realist political economy point of view on the premise that we need some insight into possible and likely futures, not only desirable futures. One of the initial outcomes of that work was the first paper of Part II, "The Long Downward Wave of the



World Economy and the Future of Global Conflict”, originally published in 2005. The basic observation is that while globalisation as a political project rests on claims that liberalisation and economic interdependence are conducive to peace and prosperity, in fact, more “globalisation” seems to have meant less economic growth and more inequalities. Based on a variety of sources noting a declining trend in rates of growth and a rising trend for inequalities, I wrote that “[t]he world economic growth has steadily slowed down, probably drastically, and that inequalities have been on the rise — and in many contexts quite dramatically so — since the 1970s”. The argument was a bit too straightforward and crude, especially as I also claimed that “in the early twenty-first century, the world economy is vacillating between zero per capita growth and deepening deflation and recession. Many signs point towards the latter.” Zero per capita growth was an exaggeration and, also, the argument did not take into account the acceleration of exponential growth, which implies that absolute growth can remain roughly constant even when the rates of growth are declining. However, the main focus on slowing growth, especially in the traditional core areas of the global economy, was right, as were the observations on the rapid increase in inequality. Such developments have consequences.

In short, in “The Long Downward Wave”, I suggested that the world may have been set onto a path towards a new major catastrophe that might even resemble WWI. The process involves pathological learning and is characterised by attempts to create or maintain imperial preferences or something analogical (concerning e.g. the position of the US dollar in the world economy), in a world-political context where unilateralism and resort to force prevail (often sustained by double standards). In 2005, I suggested that apart from various violent conflicts in the global South, it is possible that the logic of violence and war returns also to the core areas of the world economy, suspecting that the liberal dream of eternal peace will collapse once again (this point was developed more systematically in a book a couple of years later; Patomäki, 2008). Usually, I did not specifically focus on Russia, although I did note (i) the impact of the Asian crisis of 1997–98 on Russia, and (ii) that the fastest-ever recorded changes in income inequality took place in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (including the former Soviet states in Central Asia) in the 1990s. In retrospect, there was some degree of inconsistency with the ar-

guments I made, and this pertains especially to the role of Russia in future conflicts. In some of my works, I warned about the escalation of the conflict between Russia and the West, but in my main global scenarios of the mid-to-late 2000s, Russia usually played only a secondary role. This could have been influenced not only by the lack of space and the complexity of the whole but also by the fact that Russia’s phase of politico-economic chaos and weakness only ended around 2003–7.

In general, the second part on political economy delves into the structural forces shaping global history, particularly economic trends, tendencies, and crises. I critique the dominant neoliberal framework, arguing that economic stagnation, rising inequalities, and financial instability are not anomalies but symptoms of deeper systemic issues. The articles of Part II draw on multiple economic theories, including post-Keynesian, Marxian, and Minskian perspectives, to analyse how crises emerge and evolve. My argument is that economic downturns, financial instability, and geopolitical conflicts are interconnected, creating cycles of growth and decline that shape globalisation in complex ways. Reflexivity plays a crucial role here, as economic actors — governments, corporations, and individuals — respond to anticipated development, influencing the trajectory of the global economy (for two different takes on reflexivity, see Soros, 2013; Lawson, 2013). The financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath — especially the Eurocrisis, which also affected Ukraine and contributed to what happened in 2013–14 (see Patomäki, 2018, chapter 3) — serve as a key case study, demonstrating how economic policies and financial structures interact to produce systemic vulnerabilities. The book also examines the COVID-19 pandemic as an economic crisis, showing how global interdependencies shaped the responses and consequences of the crisis.

The analysis emphasises that economic transformations are not merely technical but involve ideological struggles and policy choices that shape the future. The book also discusses possible scenarios for the 2020s and 2030s. It warns of the risks of repeating past mistakes — not only excessive reliance on financial markets and austerity policies but also policies that generate tit-for-tat responses and security dilemmas — and advocates for global Keynesian reforms to ensure sustainable and equitable economic growth. The book considers alternative political-economic possibilities that could address systemic vulnerabilities, including cooperative and solidarity-based

economies, and explores the role of global institutions in regulating and taxing economic actors to promote more just and sustainable outcomes.

Part III: Political Theory

The final section addresses normative questions about justice, democracy, and the role of civil society in shaping global governance. It critiques existing models of global governance that prioritise market efficiency over democratic accountability and social justice. The book proposes alternative frameworks based on democracy and global political cooperation. One of the central arguments is that justice is historically and metaphorically constructed (about the latter, see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, ch 14), and the sense of justice tends to be shaped by economic and political structures. Many of our deep moral disagreements arise from conflicts between two or more of these models of justice (also, application requires interpretation; a classic in this regard is Perelman, 1963). My analysis of global justice theories highlights how different models of fairness – whether liberal, Marxian, or social democratic – can be assessed. I develop an argument in favour of the relative priority of democracy over justice. This implies, however, a commitment to transform the structure of global institutions and the characters and powers of actors to reduce powerlessness and vulnerability. In other words, the recognition of the relativist nature of struggles between models and sentiments of justice gives rise to a quest to democratise systems of global governance.

In the book, I also critically discuss Samir Amin's (2007) idea of the fourth international and suggest instead the idea of a global political party as a transformative force capable of reshaping global governance. Drawing on historical examples of transnational movements and parties, I examine the potential for democratic and pluralist global institutions in terms of rational economic policy, social justice, sustainability, and peace. These discussions highlight the limitations of existing institutions such as the United Nations (UN), however important they may be in the current context where disintegrative tendencies and conflicts prevail and meaningful reforms are difficult to achieve (for an argument of the continued relevance of the UN despite its problems, Kanninen and Patomäki, forthcoming). The role of civil society movements is examined as both an opportunity and a limitation, as grassroots activism can push for change but often lacks the institutional mechanisms to implement

systemic reforms. The book suggests that global governance should assume new functions and powers, and accordingly, it must evolve to accommodate new forms of democratic participation and accountability, recognising the interconnected nature of global risks. While humanity's existential risks can be resolved, history is always open, and no solution is final.

The discussion in the final chapter on the future of universities is equally relevant in the context of globalisation, as knowledge production and dissemination play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and policy decisions (cf. the epistemic communities perspective of Haas, 1992). A key critical point is that the increasing corporatisation of higher education, which prioritises profitability and market-driven research over critical inquiry and social responsibility, is detrimental to the collective learning of humanity. Thus, I argue for reorienting universities toward their historical mission of fostering independent thought, critical analysis, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The analysis includes proposals for new arrangements of metagovernance (the concept is adopted from Jessop, 2016) that could support a more democratic and inclusive model of organising higher education and research, emphasising the need for academic institutions to engage with global risks and issues in a meaningful way.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Throughout the book, the central themes of globalisation and political economy dynamics guide my analysis of the drivers of world history. By critically examining past and present developments, we can anticipate and shape alternative futures. The point is, however, that history is not deterministic; it is shaped by human agency, learning, and institutional structures.

The book calls for a shift in perspective through the concept of reflexivity — from passive observation to active engagement in shaping the future. In the book, I highlight time and again the role of intellectuals, policymakers, and civil society in envisioning and realising alternative possibilities for global politics and the world economy. By understanding the dynamics of history through a reflexive lens, we can work towards emancipatory global futures even under the current circumstances that appear to foreshadow a global catastrophe. The shape of things to come is not fully determined yet but

depends on collective choices, institutional arrangements, and the capacity for critical learning and transformation.

The chapters in this book, except for chapters 3 and 6, were originally published in the journal *Globalizations*. Previously, chapter 3 was available only in Japan and chapter 6 in Finnish. The book comes with a new introduction (the next-to-final version is available [here](#)), which develops some of the themes of this paper further. Despite its nature as a collection, I hope and believe that the book as a whole is much more than the sum of its parts.

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THE INFLUENCE OF ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLES ON UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF HEALTH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The article demonstrates that attribution theory originated from the work of Haider, who believed that individuals are motivated to view their social life as orderly and controlled. This means that they need to understand cause-and-effect relationships. In an attempt to explain why a person's assessment of their own risks can be wrong and why people can be unrealistically optimistic, Weinstein suggests that, in such cases, a mechanism of selective focus is triggered, whereby individuals ignore their own behaviour that increases risks and focus on behaviour that reduces risks or does not affect them.

The article emphasises that media campaigns to promote healthy behaviour and prevent unhealthy behaviour have become one of the main tools for public health professionals trying to improve the outcomes of their work. The article concludes that the main media messages of the campaign are often complemented by other approaches, such as distributing educational printed materials or creating a news stream on the campaign topic, particularly when budgets for buying airtime or media space are limited.

Keywords

attribution, style, reasoning, interpretation, health, illness, psychology, media

INTRODUCTION

The origins of attribution theory can be found in the work of Heider (Heider, 1958), who believed

that individuals are motivated to view their social lives as orderly and controlled, which means they need to understand cause and effect. Kelley developed (Kelley, 1971) the very first principles of attribution theory, which suggested that attributions of causality are structured according to a certain scheme based on the following criteria:

- Specificity: the attribution for the cause of a certain behaviour is specific to the individual who performs that behaviour;
- Consensus: the attribution for the cause of a certain behaviour must be supported by others;
- Stability over time: the same attribution for causality must be derived at any other point in time;
- Stability in context: the same attribution must be derived in a different situation.

Kelley believed that people make attributions according to these criteria and that the type of specific attribution (e.g., high salience, low consensus, low time stability, low context stability, etc.) determines the extent to which a causal factor in behaviour is seen as the result of intrinsic (inherent in the individual) or extrinsic (inherent in the environment or situation) characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was formed by the following approaches and conceptual provisions: systemic and functional approaches (Ananiev, 2001; Anokhin, 1975; Lomov, 1975; Maksymenko, 1990); resource approach and

coping studies (Biron, 2015; Maltsev, 2017; Rodina, 2013; Lytvynenko, 2021; Kireieva & Turlakov, 2024); concepts of internal picture of health (Kagan, 1988), cognitive representations of illness and health (Bishop & Converse, 1986; Leventhal, 1975; Taylor et. al., 1991), health perception (Goodwin & Engstrom, 2002; Peterson, & De Avila, 1995; Reis, Reis, & Kunde, 2025); theory of attributional style (Abramson et. al., 1991; Seligman et. al, 1979); cognitive concept of basic beliefs of the individual in the works of R. Yanov-Bulman, adaptation by O. Kravczova (Savchenko & Svyryda, 2020); theory of dysfunctional attitudes and irrational attitudes (Beck, 1983 1987; Ellis, 1962); scientific concepts of: deficit-ambivalent forms of personification and inferiority of the personality (Maltsev & Lunov, 2020; Maltsev, 2020); the role and importance of the internal picture of health in the life of the personality (Markova & Markov, 2016; Lunov, Matyash, Abdrakhimova, Pavlov, & Dzeruzhynska, 2024).

To solve the research objectives and ensure objectivity, a number of methods were used:

Theoretical methods:

- Theoretical analysis of sources;
- Systematic and structural analysis and interpretation of the obtained data.

Empirical methods:

- Neuromonitoring of subjects during structured interviews;
- Modelling;
- Analysis;
- Standardised and valid psychodiagnostic and neuropsychological methods.

To determine the attributional style of the internal health perception, the attributional style test was used by L. Rudina (Attributional Style Test, 2022). Methods for diagnosing the presence and severity of irrational attitudes (Ellis, 1962), Scale for assessing the complexity and uncertainty of the situation (Vodopianova, 2009); coping strategies for mediating experience were assessed using the Methodology for Identifying Cognitive and Behavioural Coping Strategies (I. Syzova, S. Filipchenkova (*Computer Psychological*



Diagnostics — Methodology. (n.d.); the Methodology for Studying the Life Satisfaction Index was used to assess the personal conditionality of the internal picture of health.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH

Over time, significant progress has been made in the theory of attribution, particularly in distinguishing between self-attributions (i.e. attributions about one's own behaviour) and attributions about others (i.e. attributions about the behaviour of other people). Additionally, the main criteria have been supplemented and reformulated as follows:

- Internal versus external (e.g., I cannot get a job because of the employer's bias or because I did not behave convincingly at the interview);
- Stable — unstable (e.g., the reason for my job search failure is one specific event or there is always a clue);
- General — specific (the reason for my failure to find a job affects other areas of my life or only this particular interview);
- Controlled — uncontrollable (the reason for my failure at the interview is beyond my control or I can control it).

Brickman et al. (1982) also distinguished between attributions about the causes of a problem and attributions about its possible solution.

For example, an alcoholic may believe that they are responsible for their alcoholism due to a lack of willpower (cause attribution) and also believe that medicine is responsible for bringing them back to a healthy lifestyle (solution attribution).

Attribution theory has also been applied to the study of human health and related human behaviours. For example, Bradley (1985) studied patients' attributions of responsibility for their diabetes and found that a sense of control over the disease ("Do I (or significant others) have control over my diabetes?") influenced their treatment choices. Patients could choose among the following options: 1) an insulin pump, a miniature mechanical device that is fixed to the skin to provide a constant supply of insulin; 2) intensive conventional treatment; 3) continue with daily insulin injections.

The results showed that patients who chose the insulin pump demonstrated less control over

their own disease and more control attributed to omnipotent doctors. Thus, if a person externally attributed their illness and felt that they were not personally responsible for their illness, they were more likely to choose an insulin pump and more likely to transfer responsibility to doctors. A further study by King (1982) found a correlation between attributions about the disease and regular visits to the hospital to be checked for hypertension. The results of the study showed that if patients viewed hypertension as external but controllable, they were more likely to make a diagnostic visit to the hospital ("I am not responsible for my hypertension, but I can control it"). The dichotomy "external — internal" proposed by attribution theory has been widely used in the concept of locus of control over health.

Here, people differ in whether they view events as controlled by themselves (internal locus of control) or controlled by external factors (external locus of control). Wallston and Wallston (1982) developed the Locus of Control Scale, which assesses the extent to which a person views his or her own health as being under their control ("I am directly, directly responsible for my health") or believes or believes that his/her health is influenced by happy/unhappy accidents ("Whether I get sick or not is just a matter of good or bad fortune"), or considers his/her health to be in the hands of powerful others ("I can only do what my doctor allows me to do"). Locus of control over health is related to whether an individual changes their own behaviour (e.g. quitting smoking) and to the style of communication they require from health professionals. Although the concept of locus of control in health seems scientifically productive, there are several problematic issues:

- Is locus of control a state or a characteristic of the individual? ("Is my locus of control always internal?")
- Is it possible to have both internal and external locus of control?
- In terms of locus of control, is a visit to the doctor an act of external control (the doctor is a powerful other who can improve my condition) or internal control (I determine my own health by choosing the time and regularity of interactions with doctors)?

Weinstein (1987) suggested that one of the reasons why people continue to engage in unhealthy behaviours is because they have inaccurate assessments of risks and vulnerabilities, or unrealistic

optimism. The researcher asked the subjects to read a list of various health problems and assess whether, compared to other people of the same age and gender, they were more likely to have such a problem — higher, lower or about the same. The results of the study showed that most respondents consider themselves less likely to experience various health problems. Weinstein called this phenomenon “unrealistic optimism” because he believed that not every patient would show such a frivolous attitude in risk assessment. The scientist describes (Weinstein, 1987) four cognitive factors that have the greatest impact on the development of unrealistic optimism:

- 1) a lack of personal experience with this particular problem;
- 2) the belief that the problem can be prevented by individual efforts;
- 3) the belief that if the problem has not arisen so far, it will not arise in the future;
- 4) the belief that the problem is, in principle, rare.

The combination of these factors indicates that the perception of one’s own risks may not always be a rational process. In an attempt to explain why a person’s risk assessment may be wrong and why people may be unrealistically optimistic, Weinstein (1987) suggests that a mechanism of selective attention is at work in such cases: Individuals ignore their own behaviour that increases risks (“I may smoke a little, but it’s not that important”) and focus on behaviour that reduces risks or does not affect them (“At least I don’t overeat”). The researcher also emphasises that such selectivity is based on egocentrism — a person is likely to ignore the behaviour of others aimed at reducing risks (“My friends don’t smoke, but it doesn’t matter”).

In a study by Hoppe and Ogden (1996), participants were asked to focus on behaviours that reduce risks (“safe sex”) or those that increase them (“unsafe sex”). The researchers examined unrealistic optimism about HIV risk. Heterosexual participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their beliefs about HIV and their sexual behaviour. The participants were then divided into two groups, based on increasing or decreasing risk. Participants in the higher-risk group were asked to answer questions such as “How many times since you started having sex have you asked your partner about his/her HIV status?”, as the researchers assumed that only a few participants in this group would report

doing so frequently. For those in the lower-risk group, the researchers asked questions such as “How often since the beginning of your sexual activity have you carefully selected your partners?”

The results of the study showed that shifting the focus to factors that reduce risk for the subjects increased their optimism due to the relative increase in the risks of other people in the perception of the participants themselves.

The transtheoretical model of behavioural change was developed by DiClemente and Prochaska (1982) as a synthesis of 18 therapies that covered various processes of behavioural change initiation and maintenance; it is now better known as the Stages of Change Model (SOM). Prochaska and DiClemente identified common processes in different therapeutic approaches and techniques and proposed a new model of behavioural change based on the following stages:

- 1) Pre-contemplation: there is no intention to make any changes.
- 2) Contemplation: considering the possibility of change.
- 3) Preparation: making minor changes.
- 4) Action: actively engaging in the new behaviour.
- 5) Maintenance: implementing and maintaining the behavioural change over time.

These stages, however, do not always occur in a direct sequence (simply moving from 1 to 5) — the stages of change model describes behavioural change as flexible and dynamic. For example, a person may move to the Preparation stage and then back to the Contemplation stage, and so on several times in a row before finally moving to the Action stage. Furthermore, even when a person reaches the maintenance stage, they may eventually revert back to the contemplation stage. The Stages of Change Model also describes how a person weighs the benefits and costs of a particular behaviour.

In particular, the authors of the model argue that individuals at different stages of change focus differently on both the costs (“Quitting smoking makes me irritable in public”) and the benefits of a particular behaviour (“Quitting smoking improves my health”). For example, smokers in the action (“I have stopped smoking”) and maintenance (“I have not smoked for two months”) stages tend to focus on the positive and beneficial aspects of the behaviour (“I feel healthier because I have stopped smoking”), while smokers in the



pre-contemplation stage tend to focus on the negative aspects (“Quitting will make me irritable”). The stages of change model has been applied to such human behaviours as smoking, drinking, exercise, and undergoing diagnostic medical procedures (Marcus et al., 1992).

The application of the model to smoking cessation involves the following set of beliefs and behaviours at different stages:

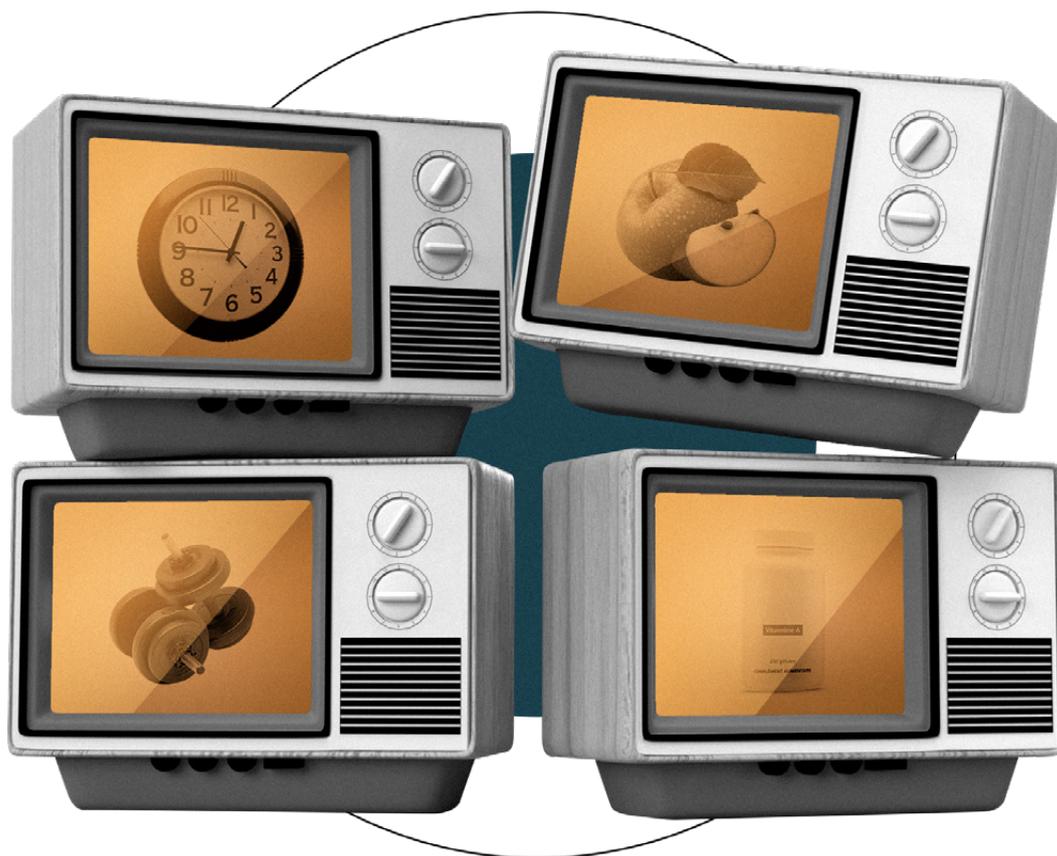
- 1) Contemplation: “I am happy with the fact that I smoke and plan to continue smoking.”
- 2) Contemplation: “I have been coughing a lot lately. Maybe I should think about quitting smoking.”
- 3) Preparation: “I will not smoke in company and will switch to lighter cigarettes.”
- 4) Action: “I finally quit smoking.”
- 5) Maintenance: “I have not smoked for two months.”

These people, however, often return to the belief that they will continue to smoke (the so-called revolving door pattern). The Stages of Change model is used both in research and as a basis for therapeutic interventions that are tailored to the stage of a particular patient. For example, a smok-

er in the preparation stage will need a different type of intervention than someone who is still in the contemplation stage.

However, the model has been criticised for the following reasons, among others.

- It is difficult to determine whether behavioural change occurs in stages or as a continuous process. Researchers emphasise the difference between patterns that do not fit the stages of change model and those that do.
- The absence of qualitative differences between stages may be due to the stages being absent, or to them having been incorrectly measured and named.
- Changes between stages can occur so rapidly that the existence of stages becomes irrelevant.
- Therapeutic interventions based on the stages of change model may work because the person believes they are receiving special attention rather than because the model itself is effective.
- The concept of a ‘stage’ is complex as it encompasses many variables, such as current behaviour, attempts to quit a particular behaviour, intention to change and time since successful quitting.



The purpose of the article is to conceptualise the results of the theoretical analysis of the problem of attributional styles in understanding health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Media campaigns that promote healthy behaviour and prevent unhealthy behaviour have become one of the main tools used by public health professionals to achieve better results in their work. Significant amounts of money, time and effort are invested each year in media campaigns at national and local levels to encourage citizens to eat healthily, exercise regularly, stop smoking and avoid alcohol abuse and unsafe sex.

However, research shows that the success of these campaigns can vary considerably and that their effectiveness is often difficult to measure (Hornik, 2002). Media campaigns can be described most simply as a form of information control, i.e. they usually aim to influence trends in the amount of information available on a particular topic. This influence can take two forms. The first form is an attempt to increase the amount of information available on a particular topic. For instance, a campaign to promote preventive mammography would aim to provide

community members with more information than is already publicly available.

The second form of influence involves campaigners trying to increase the amount of information available on a particular topic (e.g. the number of newspaper articles, advertisements, leaflets and handouts) and clearly defining and framing the topic as an important public health issue. This makes the topic more visible, attracts the attention of the target audience and offers solutions to the problem (Perloff, 2002). In the case of mammography, for example, campaigners can draw women's attention to the prevalence of breast cancer and explain how early detection through screening can save lives. A successful media campaign will therefore satisfy both criteria, leading to quantitative and qualitative changes in the public's information environment regarding an important topic.

A review of recent media campaigns aimed at improving public health enables us to identify factors or conditions that determine a campaign's success. However, most experienced campaigners understand that these factors/conditions do not simply appear in the information environment, and therefore seek to influence the environment to improve these factors/conditions and ensure the success of the campaign.

The overarching objective of most public health media campaigns is to change the behaviour of the population to prevent the spread of chronic diseases, and successful change in the information environment is the main goal.

Campaigns have traditionally been seen by both organisers and target audiences as time-limited initiatives focused on a narrow range of issues or concerns; campaign planning is necessarily focused on citizens and how to change their attitudes and behaviour with the “right messages”. Significant amounts of time, effort and money are then spent on delivering these “right messages” as many times as possible to the widest possible range of the “right” target audience. This approach implies the first condition that, in our opinion, must be fulfilled for a successful media campaign: successful manipulation of the information environment by the campaign organisers to ensure that the campaign messages and topics have sufficient impact on the target audience (maximising impact).

Other conditions include:

- use of marketing tools to create and further adapt relevant campaign messages (creative marketing and messaging);
- creating the accompanying structural conditions, such as an enabling environment/opportunity structure, that would allow the target audience to make the recommended change (enabling environment).

In addition to these basic criteria, additional aspects of the success of modern media campaigns should be emphasised, including:

- designing campaigns with a thorough understanding of the health behavioural factors that can potentially lead to the desired outcomes;
- analysis of campaign processes, including measurement and evaluation of exposure to campaign messages, can serve as useful



intermediate markers both for making adjustments during the campaign and for explaining the final results (process analysis and evaluation of exposure). Successful manipulation of the information environment on a particular topic or issue is the main task of the organisers and sponsors of any media campaign.

The main media messages of the campaign are often complemented by other approaches, such as the distribution of educational printed materials or the creation of a news stream on the campaign topic, especially if budgets for buying airtime or media space are limited.

Past and present public health media campaigns are often under-resourced and dependent on television and radio broadcasters to provide time for public service announcements, which in turn affects the success of such campaigns. Studies have shown (Perloff, 2002) that overconfidence of campaign organisers in PSAs often leads to the fact that the main messages of the campaign are shown at less than optimal times, which worsens the structure and dynamics of contacts with the target audience. Due to the lack of additional funds, organisers of public health campaigns are often limited by the time/space allocated for social advertising by law, but they often supplement such campaigns with other strategies.

To complement and reinforce the key messages of the campaign, such complementary strategies may include the use of print materials such as newspaper and magazine ads, educational and informational materials such as brochures or leaflets, large format media such as billboards or posters, and branded promotional products such as T-shirts, caps, pens or calendars.

Another criterion for a successful media campaign is the existence of a supportive environment that enables individuals to make the health behavioural changes called for by the campaign. In our view, the success of a mass media campaign in promoting favourable behavioural change depends, among other things, on the nature of the environment that promotes change and the structural changes that accompany such campaigns. The relationship between structural change and mass media coverage, including mass media campaigns, is reciprocal. Media attention can strengthen the supportive environment, build public support, and give greater public legitimacy to changes in certain government or local public health pol-

icies (Siegel, 2002). Structural changes also act as long-term compensators after the campaign is over, as they last much longer.

In addition to using traditional mass communication channels such as local radio, television and newspapers to influence the environment, successful campaigns also try to mobilise entire communities of people by engaging opinion leaders, NGOs and volunteer communities, charitable and educational initiatives. Alstead et al. (1999) provide an example of a campaign targeting both individual behaviour and the community environment to promote condom use awareness among sexually active adolescents and increase condom availability in public health facilities, for-profit and non-profit institutions and organisations. Mobilisation strategies included meetings with local opinion leaders, the formation of local advisory groups in schools, universities, businesses and organisations, and the distribution of printed and electronic materials. The campaign was moderately successful, with a significant increase in exposure to the campaign messages, but very little increase in condom use.

CONCLUSIONS

Some researchers have noted that public mobilisation alone can be an effective strategy for behaviour change. For example, studies of cervical cancer diagnosis have found that the most effective strategies combined mass media campaigns with additional therapeutic interventions. Black, Yamada, and Mann (2002) emphasise that public health strategies where mass media campaigns were used in conjunction with direct prevention education of women and/or public health staff were the most successful. As Marcus and Crane (1998) emphasise, mass media campaigns to promote behavioural change work best when they remove or reduce barriers to accessing health services. Other campaigns have also used social mobilisation strategies to influence the information environment, including campaigns to change public attitudes towards domestic violence, change social norms about alcohol abuse among high school and university students, raise awareness of emergency contraception among young women, and so on. In general, it is worth noting that mass media campaigns combined with public mobilisation strategies are more effective than either component alone.

Creating a favourable environment for change is a key factor for successful behavioural

change in both the short and long term. Based on a review of key theories of health behaviour, Fishbein et al. (2002) identified four main factors that potentially influence individual behavioural intentions and behaviours:

- the individual's perception of susceptibility to disease or infection;
- individual's attitudes towards certain forms of behaviour;
- behavioural norms, which in turn are influenced by the factors of the immediate group environment and the social environment in which the individual functions;
- self-efficacy, the individual's confidence in performing and maintaining certain behaviours.

Together and individually, these four factors can be potential targets of mass media campaigns aimed at achieving desired changes in individual and mass health behaviour.

Sometimes, organisers of public health campaigns explicitly refer to scientific theories that inform the key messages and strategy of the campaign. For example, some campaigns use social cognitive theory to encourage favourable

changes in individual health behaviour. This theory emphasises the importance of individuals being confident that they will be able to follow the recommended behaviour, and that the costs of performing and maintaining this behaviour are outweighed by the benefits.

Jorgensen et al. used this theory to plan a campaign to encourage people aged 50 and over to consult a doctor about colorectal cancer screening. Similarly, Kelder et al. used CCT to develop a campaign plan to reduce substance use among adolescents and young adults (Kelder et al., 2000). This campaign aimed to alter adolescents' and young people's perceptions, attitudes, and social norms regarding drug use, increase their individual and group resistance to drug use, and encourage them to make positive life choices. Prospects for further research are related to the empirical study of the psychological characteristics of attributional styles in relation to human health.

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SOCIAL FORM OF CONSCIOUSNESS: ACQUIRING SOCIAL STATUS

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ABSTRACT

Society is commonly referred to as the primary social form, and this is because it is the most widespread and pervasive social institution. The key criterion for understanding is the benefit to society, and so we are dealing with two phenomena: profession and “social output” (or success), which essentially characterises social contribution.

In researching the structure and mechanisms of consciousness, the author concludes that the social form of consciousness is the result. Consciousness itself is a result, or a state of affairs.

The author is interested in the social form of consciousness as a practical foundation of social usefulness and effectiveness, rather than as an object of theorisation. This qualitative characteristic of social activity is the presence and contribution of an individual to the common cause.

In society, there is a value placed on auxiliary elements that act as transformers in the conversion of reason into consciousness and vice versa. To put it another way, education, social stability and predictability, discipline and reliability are prized. This is especially true of the aspects of social philosophy that define a civilised, non-confrontational, law-abiding and far-sighted person.

Provided everything else is equal, the core value is social stability, which is based on achievements and results.

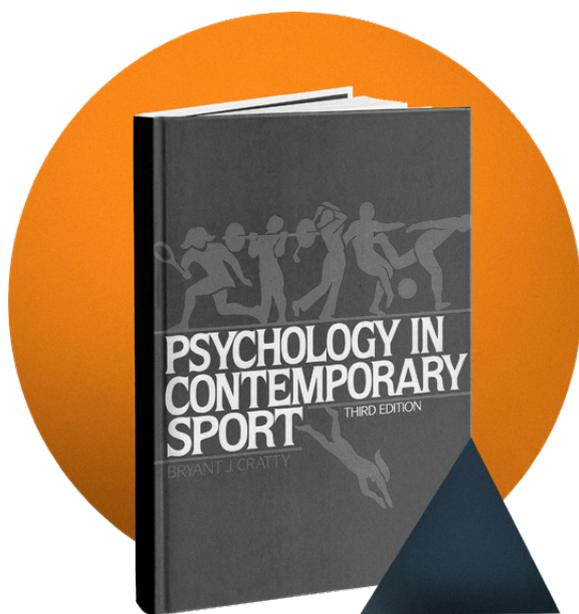
Keywords

consciousness, benefit to society, discipline, social form of consciousness, human success, mind and consciousness

INTRODUCTION

Before exploring the practical applications of understanding social consciousness, it is essential to acknowledge the valuable and pragmatic contributions of our predecessors and colleagues (Popov 1951a, 1951b; Pollock, 1923/2018; Szondi, 1944). The development of motor skills and the implementation of an effective training process are not only important for success, but also crucial for understanding the role of the individual in their environment and the impact of social parameters and factors on that environment (Robbins, 2016). In the context of this, we will not only refer to the basic environment for testing the current research — the round stand environment — but also consider general recommendations, trends and observations about the role of social factors in the implementation of motor tasks.

We recommend reading Bryant Cratty’s (1989) book *Psychology in Modern Sport* for additional and, more importantly, comparative material for research discussion. This is one of the few books that use simple scientific language to talk about the latest developments in academic science, looking at the philosophical, psychological and social



aspects of training. The subject of social factors should be discussed more.

The logic of the presentation of research into **the social form of consciousness** and the path to **acquiring social status** is based on *the phenomenon method*. In other words, using examples of becoming champions in sport, we will look at the key phenomena that contribute to social advancement.

So, let's start with the concept of *social climate*. It is generally accepted that a person enters the social climate psychologically as soon as they come into contact with the collective environment generated by a particular activity (Parsons, 1998). From an anthropological point of view, *social climate is a system of relationships between subjects over a certain period of time*.

In general, when this kind of phenomenon is encountered among American colleagues, on the one hand, tribute is wanted to be paid to the interdisciplinary approach, but on the other hand, it is important for the discipline from which the concept was borrowed to be understood. The subject and object of climate research undoubtedly belongs to more than one discipline, including biology, geography, meteorology and even history. The reality under study is often explained by scientists using methodological approaches and systems of logic from other disciplines (Piaget, 2001). These are borrowed because scientists believe that this will enable them to explain the reality under study, whether this reality is related or completely unrelated to the reality being studied. When it comes to climate, it is important to understand that it is a concept that is not uniform.

When analysing the social climate of Ukraine, for example, it is clear that the social climate of its various regions changes, even when studying the geography from north to south. In general, **climate reflects the degree of comfort experienced by a person within a specific system**. Changes in the degree of comfort within the system give rise to the so-called '*climate response*'.

METHODOLOGY

Current philosophical approaches to solving the problem of consciousness are grouped into natural science (also called scientism) and humanities traditions. A review of the criteria of scientificity, i.e., the existing types of rationality, in recent decades suggests the key role of the concept of forms, types, and other terms related to consciousness in preventing or even overcoming elements of parascience that are spreading under the guise of science. As for the humanities tradition, it is represented to a very small extent in science through the ideas of Shpet (2005), Bakhtin (1986), and others. However, these ideas are not sufficiently adapted in the theoretical or methodological constructs of psychologists.

Contemporary philosophical practice inevitably involves theoretical psychology in the discussion of existential and social problems. Their solution cannot be developed outside the category of consciousness. How is this category represented in science, and to what extent has Vygotsky's thesis about the centrality of this category for the whole psychology of philosophy been realised? Do the teachings on consciousness form the research and innovations of famous scientists (Rubinstein, 1946; Leontiev, 1977/1972; Ananyev, 2001; Asmolov, 2002; Allahverdi, 2021; etc.) form a certain unity, or are they completely different programmes of consciousness research? Is there a certain unity, or are we witnessing completely different programmes of consciousness research?

DISCUSSION

A certain degree of comfort is undoubtedly characteristic not only of athletes, but of anyone engaged in professional activities. As well as being 'immersed' in a certain social environment from birth, a person's professional path is

in some way associated with social factors, since they are never in a social vacuum when training.

From childhood, we are all influenced by a whole set of social factors in our environment (for example, as we can see in the context of competition), as well as social factors that come from other, external environments (Reese et al., 1993). For example, Cratty (1989) cites the following pairs that reflect social formations:

- a) Within the environment: athlete–coach, athlete–teammate, athlete–competitor;
- b) Outside the environment: athlete–spectators, athlete–panel of independent judges.

Let us expand the scope of social research beyond the specifics of sport. Let us try to depict the basic aspects of the social system from the point of view of the activity approach in a diagram. Perhaps the primary and one of the most important bastions of the social in a person's life is their family (in most cases, people have a family). Undoubtedly, many studies have been devoted to the topic of the family as a social source of influence on the formation of personal success. According to research cited by Cratty, in sport, the lion's share of attention is paid to studying the social interaction of an individual with members of their family, but mainly with their father. American colleagues believe that the family not only acts as an authoritative link in shaping a sporting future, not only sets an example and generally represents the very first role models for behaviour in a child's life, but also lays the foundations for healthy critical thinking (Szondi, 1947, 1995); competition and rivalry (for example, between brothers and sisters); the ability to plan time and find approaches to family members so that they can teach how to win.

Again, the emphasis is on the side of social research of the family that directly affects the sporting successes and achievements of the individual.

In the context of this article, sport is one of the research environments, and the author does not limit himself to it, on the contrary. And so, from the heuristic model of the structure of consciousness, we will move on to a practical understanding of social dynamics, of which a person simply cannot be a part. Moreover, even when studying the family exclusively as a social environment for personality formation, it is worth paying close attention to the fact that *people usually move from the family in which they were born to another family that they create themselves*. Often, the social climate of

these two families is not only categorically different, but also becomes a source of additional conflict, including that which affects the social development of the personality.

From a gendered perspective, the primary social forms that determine the social status of men and women are, of course, different. In the mindset of the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union, the first temporary social form that generates the corresponding social status is military service. In the context of different countries' legislation, military service can be either compulsory or optional. The same principle applies to European countries. It is important to distinguish between professional military education and basic military training, which a person undergoes in the army for between one and a half and two years. The army environment instils basic military skills in cadets and servicemen, and these individuals also acquire a corresponding set of qualities cultivated by the environment. These include discipline, diligence, responsibility, punctuality and accuracy. The value of comprehending the fundamentals of management and tactics, honed in the military setting, is a topic that merits its own dedicated monograph, or potentially multiple monographs.

Conversely, for women, the primary social form that generates status is the educational environment (school, university, etc.).

Like the army for men, the educational environment for women is a **temporary social form**. The parameter of culture is no less important in social development. The influence of culture on social development is understood through a simultaneous analysis of territoriality, *depending on the mentality and national characteristics of the environment*, and simply on the attitude of the social space in which a person realises themselves and their interests in their field of activity. In other words, a European's attitude towards basketball is not the same as the attitude towards the same sport in the American environment. Or another example: in Scandinavian countries, all kinds of winter sports and recreational activities are something integral and self-evident (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). It is difficult to imagine a Swede or Norwegian who does not know how to ski or skate. Conversely, residents of southern countries and certain regions are familiar with running, swimming, diving, etc. from childhood.

Nature itself provides the conditions in which people grow and develop. Therefore, it



is logical to conclude that certain activities should be learnt where they have traditionally developed. For example, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to learn to ski in Kenya or Cameroon. When choosing a type of activity, it is important to consider personal interests as well as historical, contemporary and future trends that influence its development.

However, setting aside extremes, it is worth noting that the notion of obviousness is flawed. In particular, popularity, promoted by various technical means and instruments of 21st-century virtual marketing, is not always an essential criterion. In both the past and the future, it is better to be guided by primary sources than by private opinions. A person may read an interesting book by a popular author about the culture and technical aspects of swimming, even though the author himself has not swum since childhood and does not even visit the pool as an adult.

In the 21st century, works of questionable quality are placed on the same shelf as insightful and necessary works, alongside insinuations wrapped in vivid illustrative material and high-quality packaging. It is up to the reader to distinguish between the two. Everyone learns their own social lesson about how far the show deviates from reality and facts.

In terms of mass appeal, it is not uncommon for people to choose the show. However, when it comes to solving life's problems, people prefer to turn to experts and masters. They do this rather than to organisers of events that are pleasing to the eye and mood. For example, thousands of people attend various training courses on sales, business development and investment. As the loud statements of various speakers reverberate, buyers of promises are so engrossed in the eloquence of those who have not created a single business, developed a single project or trained a single business team, that they fail to consider why they are listening to someone who has only mastered the art of rhetoric.

Everyone learns the **social lesson about the pros and cons of the "sufficient evidence" logic independently**. Otherwise, the result is something like this. A person chooses what they like. They do not give preference to what is well made. In our socio-cultural environment, there are many jokes about this. For example: 'What kind of car do you want to buy? — A red one...'. In other words, the future driver is not interested in the car's properties and qualities; she is only interested in its colour and how great it will look in photos. In general, the social dynamics and further real road adventures of such a girl do

not start in a car dealership or garage, but on the motorway or, say, on the street, where she will inevitably create an emergency situation, since her driving skills and total lack of understanding of how a car works leave much to be desired.

The civilian logic is now going to be left behind as we move on to the military sphere logic. Imagine you are an unwitting witness to a discussion about the qualities and characteristics of the German Leopard tank. On your right, you have a conversation partner who extols the tank's virtues, calling it a worthy piece of weaponry. On your left, you have a conversation partner who is critical of this military engineering creation. Put simply, you could argue forever about whether the Leopard tank is good or bad. However, only one question matters: how many wars has this tank been through? The cold, hard facts of history will answer: 'Not a single one.' Therefore, there is no reason for further discussion. In other words, a tank only becomes a tank when it is tested in the real world, i.e. in war. Following this, objective data and measurements will be obtained, strengths and weaknesses will be identified, and much more. In conclusion, speculative conclusions and the actual state of affairs are far from the same thing. *And in each*

individual case, in each individual sphere of activity, we must take all this into account.

There are no universal algorithms, convenient templates or primitive patterns.

I would now like to give another example from the field of photography. My mentor, Dr. Maltsev, is the head of the Odessa Photographic Society. He has often been asked, 'Oleg, what do you think about the "X" camera?' His usual answer is, "Nothing. I haven't tested this 'X' camera in the field yet — that is, in actual dynamic conditions such as an expedition — so I can't comment. I'll take this camera with me on an expedition — or better yet, several expeditions — and based on the tests, experiments and checks I conduct, I'll have something to say.'

As soon as the expedition begins, so many subtleties, details and nuances become apparent that are not mentioned in any manual, website or review (Maltsev, Lepskiy & Samsonov, 2020).

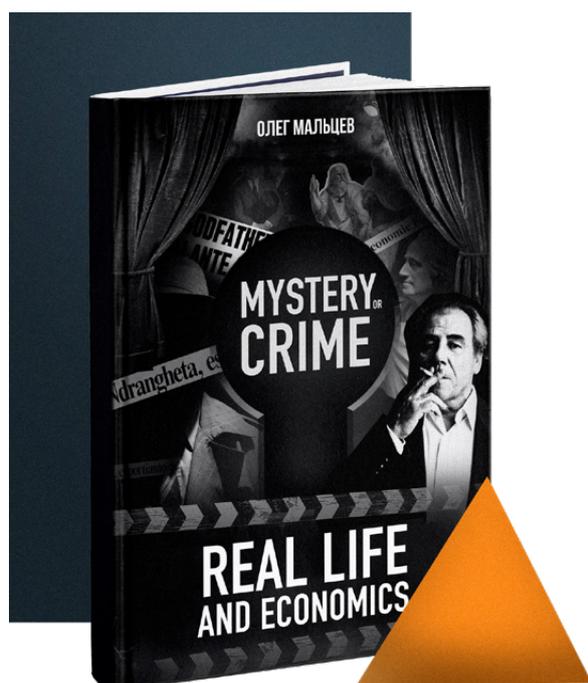
For me, a camera only becomes useful when it has been on an expedition. I believe that when it comes to scientific expeditions, it's wiser to have a reliable, good camera on hand than to rely on a popular, expensive gadget that's prone to breaking under stress. Whether it's



heat, temperature changes, or potential conflict, a reliable camera is the better choice. Only after testing it on an expedition can you recommend it for use or suggest improvements. (Maltsev, 2020, p. 72).

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH

It is no secret that **any theory requires testing in practice**. Otherwise, it remains a set of well-chosen phrases and images, but has no practical value. A working camera is one that allows you to take pictures in changing environmental conditions, whether in the damp, endless Dutch rain or under the zenith of the 40-degree Egyptian sun. A working medicine is one that allows you to cure a person, while the damage from its use does not exceed the acceptable norm. A working special forces unit is, accordingly, a fighting special forces unit, not just a group of people in uniform with insignia, not a group of people about whom the film industry produces dynamic and vivid films. And so on. Of course, it is important not to forget the principle of "use things for their intended purpose," that is, do not try to hammer nails with a microscope and then complain that the microscope is not doing its job properly. However, in an age of rapidly developing digital technologies and total digitalisation, the principles of information reliability, proven in practice by the environment itself, are unfortunately often forgotten.



What was the purpose of the examples given above? To demonstrate that **any social norm has a constant basis**. This basis is characterised by so-called *parameters* derived from requirements. Parameters and requirements, in turn, make it possible to exclude speculative conclusions, flawed generalisations and various kinds of insinuations.

People do not develop an understanding of social forms rationally on their own. In most cases, people are captivated by certain social forms, which is why they devote most of their time to a particular activity. It is generally difficult for a person to achieve results in a field in which they are not passionate. We are not even talking about outstanding results and achievements that are useful to both the individual and society as a whole. Conversely, the true nature of a social form is not always apparent to an outsider.

Without devoting separate space in the pages of this monograph to this topic, we recommend reading the ninth chapter of the work *Mystery or Crime. Real Life and Economics* (Maltsev, 2021) for further reading. Entitled "Capable and Incapable Individuals", the chapter begins with a brief quote: "We are all geniuses. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid."

The work on economics is again full of useful, non-speculative conclusions about the environment. These conclusions include the environment's possibilities, the trials it faces, and keys to managing it and its properties, such as infrastructure. However, this is for further reading.

Let's get back to the core point. Perhaps it is difficult for a civilian to understand a military person who is proud not so much to be part of a power structure, but to be part of an elite group of individuals capable of achieving great things. Achievements and even feats. Outwardly, a unit may appear to be an ordinary army corps, but its internal organisation may resemble a knightly order. In such an order, everyone behaves appropriately and efficiently solves the tasks set by the leadership, based on their existing status. This example is given to emphasise that achievement is the basis of form. Representatives of various social groups take pride in their achievements, which benefit not only the individual, but society as a whole. Indeed, it is on the basis of these achievements that a subculture is formed.

Firstly, a knightly order (or another similar structure) represents a stage of human perfection. Upon joining the order, a person accepts



knightly status and progresses step by step, much like climbing a career ladder (the principle is the same). Over time, they improve and become more prepared, and this personal growth is reflected in their achievements. Consequently, they rise above others, progressing through the stages of power. In reality, categories are named as such, regardless of the abundance of patches, chevrons, slogans and proclamations. For those who would rather race around the track, have barbecues, socialise with attractive women and simply escape the “stifling world” in the company of “cool guys on bikes”, this is a club based on interests. Ultimately, it is the idea that determines the direction in which a person’s future lifestyle will develop, and for which they are willing to fight to the last drop of blood.

‘BEING’ and ‘APPEARING’ are completely different categories.

Analysing contemporary European realities, especially taking into account the current conflict, it should be noted that in the military environment of the 21st century, a new form of army is emerging that did not exist before. In essence, we are talking not only about private armies that serve the interests of individuals and deep coalitions, but also *about a new form of military crime*. Not so long ago, several decades ago, for Europeans, the concepts of “mercenary” and “criminal” were deeply synonymous. In particular, Ukrainian legislation still contains an Article 447 on mercenary activity (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2001). In the Russian Feder-

ation, the relevant article has been repealed, as it has in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany, and elsewhere. Today, we, the inhabitants of the 21st century, are witnessing a change in social norms. Thus, **the social form of mercenary activity**, which was previously perceived exclusively as a form of crime, has evolved into the social form of private military structures, or private military armies. This *represents a socio-philosophical transformation*.

It is worth noting that *representatives of private military formations do not consider themselves criminals*; on the contrary, they follow an internal code and regulations of a military structure, are proud of their achievements, and reasonably believe that they bring enormous benefits to both society and the world.

From a historical perspective, the French Foreign Legion (Légion étrangère) is the colossal example that served as a model for subsequent retransformations and the development of social forms in the context of private military structures. Mercenaries from a variety of countries served in this legion, including individuals with criminal records. This monograph does not seek to highlight the social retransformations of military formations that led to the 21st-century phenomenon of “PMSCs”. However, this phenomenon is an integral part of life today. The way in which the public sees the social structure of a private military group does not always match the social structure that is dictated by the subculture of that same private military group.

There could be no question of any changes or transformations were it not for the corresponding achievements and tasks accomplished against the backdrop of well-known state structures that do not permit such issues to be resolved. Time and again, it is achievements that lie at the heart of the creation and development of a separate society.

Perhaps the main social form should be called 'society'. Since the key criterion for understanding is benefit to society, it is likely that we are dealing with two phenomena: profession and 'social output', or success, which essentially characterises social contribution.

All previous forms and formations are preparatory stages. These are those through which the transformation of the human personality passes. They predetermine a person's independent encounter with society. Whether it is the army, an educational environment, a profession or a hobby, these forms gradually transform a person into a social entity, including one that can be understood as a social position.

When it comes to researching consciousness, its structure and mechanisms, it should be concluded that the **social form of consciousness is the result**. In fact, consciousness itself takes the form of a result, i.e. the state of affairs.

Society values auxiliary elements that act as transformers in the conversion of mind into consciousness and vice versa. In other words, people value education, social stability and predictability, discipline and reliability, in particular those aspects of social philosophy that characterise a person as civilised and non-confrontational, law-abiding and far-sighted.

All other things being equal, the core value is social stability, based on achievements and results.

We are interested in **the social form of consciousness as a practical foundation of social usefulness and effectiveness**, rather than as an object of theorisation. This is because it is a qualitative characteristic of social activity, i.e. the presence and contribution of an individual to the common cause. From childhood, children know that being a doctor is a socially useful profession because doctors treat people. The better a doctor treats and heals patients, the more socially useful their area of expertise is.

... Behind every process, machine and mechanism are people. Overall, these people are currently incapable, and some are so maladjusted that it is pointless to hope or dream that they

will want to change. With this in mind, there is no need to believe in global conspiracies, spells, despicable magicians and sorcerers, or mysterious Freemasons or Illuminati who are trying to "reshape the world and push it into the abyss of programmatic hopelessness". To destabilise any system, all you need are incompetent and maladjusted people. People who are incapable of organising or creating, but who can only copy and duplicate — that is, repeat the same action, such as pressing the same button!

And the final, fatal conclusion: all existing businesses are the result of chance and probability. Only those who are capable can create. (Maltsev, 2021)

CONCLUSIONS

All the elements that make up the structure of 'social utility — profession — social output — achievements' act as obstacles to organising this model. Once again, the family is the first obstacle to implementing the model. It should be noted, however, that the family may or may not be an obstacle to the formation of the model. For example, parents are obliged to raise their children, but they may not do so. Similarly, at school, teachers are obliged to educate children, yet the question of education may not even be addressed. The same applies to universities and other educational institutions.

The idea that institutions should educate specialists, lay solid foundations for professions and ultimately provide society with real experts often crashes against the hidden and visible obstacles of life, turning out to be a delusion. Thus, people are capable of many things. They are capable of becoming a great maestro, but they are also capable of studying for 10 years and learning nothing, essentially failing to master professional skills.

A person's social environment (e.g. family, school, friends) is supposed to shape their personality and make them socially significant. However, it can also act as an obstacle to the realisation of their plans. No social institution is inherently positive or negative. The journey to professional and social development is not straightforward; it is both a catalyst and a formidable opponent, and can be influenced by both school and friends. Whether a person can cope with these obstacles and turn them to their

advantage is a matter of personal choice and skill. Primarily, it is the aspiration that must be considered.

The social form of consciousness is the result.

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CIVIL UNREST RESPONSE

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the personal and family-level strategies necessary to survive conditions of civil unrest in the United States, illustrated by recent deployments of National Guard and Marine forces in Los Angeles. The author emphasizes practical individual preparedness. Key themes include the psychological impact of isolation, the importance of situational awareness, home readiness measures, community-level cooperation, and an understanding of local laws regarding self-defense. Drawing from personal experiences and real historical examples, the author provides actionable guidance for maintaining safety and security when official responses are delayed or limited.

Keywords

civil unrest, situational awareness, home preparedness, self-defense, community security

INTRODUCTION

June 9, 2025, President Trump activates soldiers from the California National Guard and Marines from 29 Palms to protect federal buildings and employees in the Los Angeles area (Luscombe & Gambino, 2025; Mangan, 2025). What some officials have claimed in the media as a peaceful protest has turned into civil unrest damaging property, injuring police officers and disrupting

the lives and safety of citizens. The movement is growing across the United States especially in major cities.

While considerable debate continues over the precise implications of the Insurrection Act of 1807 and the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878—enacted under President Rutherford B. Hayes to restrict the use of federal military forces in domestic law enforcement—an unresolved issue remains: in the event that martial law is declared and military authority supplants civilian governance, what are the subsequent legal and political ramifications (Wikipedia contributors, 2025; Kettl, 2025)?

This is not an article about any of the policies, this is about personal and family survival in the extreme conditions created by civil unrest. Man-made and natural disasters—including events such as large-scale protests and mass shootings (Wilson, 2023)—can quickly turn our society into a kind of zoo which affects us psychologically, socially as well as physically. Most of us watch on the news the actions and reactions of those trapped in the “zoo”.

Any significant disruptive event can cause chaos and challenge the peace, security and safety we take for granted. At least with natural disasters like hurricanes, or tornados the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other organizations will respond. Throughout history and across all nations, riots, chaos, and widespread civil unrest have repeatedly occurred (Arenales, 2024; Brown, 2015). During such

events, ensuring safety becomes the primary concern; no response, recovery, or assistance efforts can proceed effectively until the affected area is stabilized and secured, which inevitably delays any external support (Tin, Cheng, Hata, Shin, & Ciottone, 2023).

In such scenarios, essential infrastructure may be severely compromised: electrical grids may fail, utilities may become inoperable, portable water supplies may be disrupted, and food availability may dwindle rapidly, given that most retail outlets maintain only limited inventories sufficient for approximately three days. Furthermore, the loss of communication networks — including the Internet and mobile phone services — can render emergency services inaccessible, leaving affected populations without viable means to request or receive assistance.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a descriptive and practice-oriented methodological approach. The core method is a narrative review based on the author's professional security experience and observations gathered over years of work in high-risk environments. The author draws on selected historical examples — including the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the 2020 Kenosha unrest, and recent deployments of the National Guard — to illustrate recurring patterns in civil unrest and community responses.

Additionally, publicly available reports, media sources, and official emergency preparedness guidelines (e.g., FEMA recommendations) are used to support practical recommendations. The author combines these sources with anecdotal evidence and personal case stories to highlight psychological, social, and logistical aspects of surviving civil unrest.

The focus is on synthesizing lessons learned from real events and translating them into practical steps for individuals, families, and communities. This applied approach aims to provide readers with actionable advice grounded in real-world experience and documented events.

RESULTS

The main result demonstrated in this article is that, despite the unpredictability and severity of civil unrest events, an individual can ensure personal and family survival through knowledge, practical skills, and adaptability. Key practical outcomes in-

clude maintaining psychological resilience during isolation, developing daily situational awareness, preparing the home with essential supplies and clear evacuation plans, coordinating with local community structures for mutual support, and understanding the legal boundaries of civilian self-defense. These measures together strengthen personal safety and community resilience during prolonged or extreme unrest scenarios.

DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL ADVICES

Psychological Impact of Isolation During Unrest

Isolation during civil unrest will create feelings of loneliness, sadness, depression, anxiety, sleep disruption, emotional problems and all of this can create physical effects on the body, weakening the immune system, and increasing stress. This is something that was endured by many over the Covid Pandemic in 2020 (Lepski, 2020). The lack of social interaction for the human animal will take its toll but it is also resilient and given some time will adapt.

For example, for many years I lived and worked in a violent, dangerous part of town. I became accustomed to hearing sounds of violence, gunshots, screams, arguments, sirens. Many years removed from that environment I still have the memories and lingering effects. Decades have passed since my time in the military, but the experience has stayed with me.

My colleagues in Ukraine experience nightly, the effects of war, drone, rocket, and missile attacks. In the beginning I'm sure everyone would go to a shelter, this is normal, but eventually you just stay away from the windows and continue with life, and this is also normal (Maltsev, 2023). They have become conditioned. It has been shown that adaptation potential plays a crucial role in preserving psychological health (Lunov, Lytvynenko, Maltsev, & Zlatova, 2022). The effects of their experience will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Individuals, families, as well as communities that have experienced trauma and isolation because of unrest will be changed. Physical scars, emotional scars, and mental scars will heal over time and getting professional assistance is an advantage. In the short term, keep yourself focused on surviving the chaos.

It is essential to keep your mind focused — **task and purpose** — and anchored in a clear

sense of direction. Establishing simple daily tasks provides structure and helps prevent feelings of helplessness by giving you purpose. By dividing complex challenges into smaller, manageable actions, you can maintain focus and continue to make progress. Concentrate on what is within your power and do not dwell on what lies beyond your control.

Situational Awareness and Early Warning Signs

Situational awareness is a critical skill that I consistently use every day, even if I'm not leaving the house or heading to work. Situational awareness arrives as a security imperative promising to help navigate this uncertainty (Hentschel, Krasmann, & Zebrowski, 2025). It's a term I hear used all the time but is misunderstood by many that do not work in the security industry. Let me break this down for you. If you travel or live a high profile or high threat life, I encourage you to get some training in this subject.

It starts with gathering information. Take a quick assessment of the risks you might face in your life. It could range from kidnapping to armed robbery, or even assassination, public attacks, terror attacks, war, the possibility of civil unrest and mob rule. I want to take inventory of the threats I might face and what I might fear?

Equally important is understanding your immediate environment: How well do you know your home? Your neighborhood, your community and where you work? I gather information from the local and world news, police and weather alerts. I always gather from multiple sources and sort through what I need. If you are traveling, gather information on the local culture and customs. Knowing the basics goes a long way. There are intelligence service companies, like Stratfor that provide reports and companies like Escape The Wolf that provide training.

Establish the "baseline". What is normal? What is out of place? If everyone is walking in the same direction and at the same speed. Then this may be normal. If they are running in the other direction. This is usually not normal. Baseline defines what is normal activity. Normal is good.

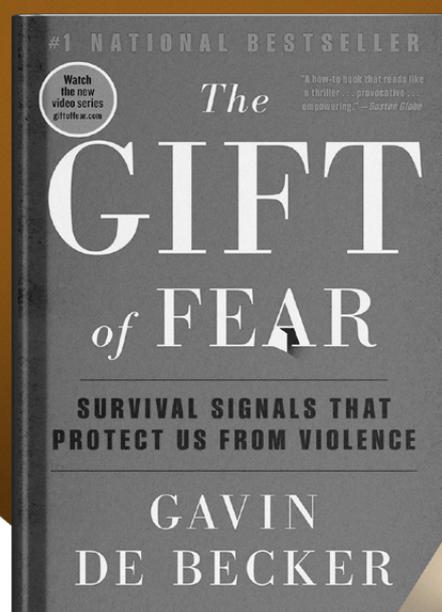
Normal sounds, normal traffic, normal movement, anything that differs from baseline is something to pay attention to. In many cases the baseline can be established through observation and listening skills. Tuning into your senses grants access to a "sixth sense" — the

instinctive gut feeling often referred to as intuition. If something does not feel right, it likely is not; it is important to act accordingly. I first began developing this skill while exploring the woods during my childhood in Missouri, and later honed it through military service and work as a tracker. Applying these skills to the urban jungle was the next step for me. I recommend the book by Gavin DeBecker, *The Gift of Fear* (de Becker, 1997).

The next phase can be particularly challenging in our modern, fast-paced world. It is essential to minimize distractions, especially when in public settings. The smart phone, or cellular phone is a great communication and information tool, it is also the biggest distraction we have. Many people walk with phone in hand, head down, eyes fixed on the small screen, which significantly reduces situational awareness. If you need to use your phone, use an earpiece, keep your head up and focused. Even better is to find a place to use your phone, make that call, or send that text message.

Exercise

Try this one morning when you have some time. Go to a busy public place and sit down and watch. What are most of the people you observe paying attention to? I've seen people walk into curbs, cars, signs, and trees. Break your habit of using your phone in public.



Bonus exercise: During your morning observation ask yourself, what is the baseline? How are people dressed? How are they walking? Give context to what you are witnessing. When I take students in public to work skills. I will ask them questions. Is this person right-handed, left-handed? Are they carrying a weapon? Are they confident? Who, what, where, when, why and how, questions that give you context.

The last element to add to the equation is present moment awareness. The ability to focus purely on what is happening around you. If you have ever practiced mediation, or prayer, or played sports to a level that you were in the flow. Your mind is quiet, your senses are gathering information, your body is moving and reacting. This is presence. At this point your decision-making skills are at efficient levels. No worries, or the future, or past. Fully focused on the present moment.

Charles Worsham, a master tracker and educator when speaking to us said, "the quality of attention without intention." I personally thought time had caught up with him. It took me several years to really understand the depth of the lessons he was putting out. Limit distractions and give your attention to the present moment.

A close friend and security mentor, Joe V. told me, "You can tell who the good guys and bad guys in a crowd are. We are the only ones paying attention. We are the hunters."

Gather information and sort it through to find common threads. If traveling or visiting

a new place, do your research on the people, place and situation. Establish "baseline" what is the normal activity for the time, day and place. Limit your distractions, especially in public. No smartphone use in public.. Pay attention to what is happening in the present moment.

Downtown areas or city centers are usually the places where protest is focused but civil unrest can happen anywhere (Michael et al., 2025; *Protests Against Immigration Raids Spring up in Cities Across U. S.*, 2025). The city center usually is where the main police headquarters are located, the justice center, and government buildings. This is also a place where many workers will be affected. With this in mind you may need a strategy to get out of the area on foot, to your car, and get home or even out of the city.

Pay attention to the news, and to what you see going on around the area. Look for signals and signs of disturbances. Extra police presence, barricades, sights, and sounds. As an example: You see a large crowd gathering and get a "bad feeling" change directions and avoid the crowd.

Pro Tip: When faced with an angry mob, protest, or riot situation. Leave as quickly as possible. Get out of the area. It is important to not be confrontational, but blend with the crowd. You may look different, you may be dressed differently, but your behavior can allow you to flow with the crowd until you can escape. Use natural and manmade barriers to your advantage without becoming boxed in and trapped.

Home Preparation: Supplies, Communication, Safe Zones

Because of the nature of my work in security, I carry extra supplies like food, and water. Living and working in Texas I have sunscreen, rain jacket and appropriate clothing. I have helped many people prepare their homes, vehicles, and even businesses to be ready for emergencies. I always recommend starting with the basics and adapting to your needs and situation. A good starting place is the [Federal Emergency Management Agency website](#). They offer online training and a checklist to help you prepare for disasters.

My home is my sanctuary. Anyone that has had their home robbed will understand the feeling of violation and vulnerability that comes with crime. I want my home to be a safe and secure place. I want my family to feel protected. Preparedness starts at home.

While this is beyond the scope of an in-depth discussion on preparedness, if you live in



an area frequently affected by natural disasters such as fires, floods, or hurricanes, it is essential to have an evacuation plan. Know what to take with you so you can recover from the event. Important documents, banking information, vehicle and resident titles, insurance paperwork, medications, essential clothing, toiletries, food, and water. The FEMA list is a great start. Don't forget your pets.

If you live in an area that has tornadoes, a storm shelter or basement is essential. Many that live in apartments use closets, or even a bathtub with a mattress over them to survive. Problem solving ahead of time gives you the advantage. Even though Mother Nature will always win. You can survive if prepared.

When I am away from home. I carry some supplies in my vehicle; first aid kit, flat tire kit, spare tire, good jack, chem lights, or road flares, work gloves and a headlamp. I will also keep extra water, a rain poncho, a light jacket and comfortable shoes. If my car is unable to continue, I grab my "get home bag" from the trunk and walk home.

My get home bag is light weight and holds items I need if I have to walk home. Don't overburden yourself. Keep it simple. Remember this, the more you know, the more skill you have, the less you need to carry. The more comfortable you are being uncomfortable, the less you need to carry. Some water, a snack or two, just basics. Take your situation into account. Don't overestimate your ability. Make sure you have a paper road map. Everything is different when you are walking.

Communication systems can become overwhelmed or just stop functioning due to several reasons. Modern communication networks rely on numerous interconnected components, which makes them vulnerable to disruptions. When voice calls via smartphone are unavailable, it is often still possible to send text messages, emails, or use messaging applications. At times it may be easier to connect with someone outside of the affected area. Know how and when to use survival signals devices, like two-way radios, land to air signals, whistles, mirrors.

Equally important is to have a clear plan — and a backup plan. Preparedness begins at home. As I have said before, my home is my sanctuary. However, the challenges faced by those living in inner cities or apartments differ significantly from those in suburban or rural areas. Adapt your preparedness measures to your specific context. Everything starts with ensuring ba-

sic safety and security: do you have functional smoke alarms, a fire extinguisher, and a well-stocked first aid kit? Are your doors and windows secured with quality locks? Do you keep important documents in a fire-resistant safe? Are you prepared to protect yourself, your family, and your home if necessary? I firmly believe in the fundamental right to defend one's life, family, and property.

In reality, common risks should not be overlooked. Statistically, a household fire is more likely than encountering an intruder, which makes placing a fire extinguisher within easy reach — even next to the bed — a practical choice. Similarly, a flat tire is more probable than needing advanced evasive driving skills. Preparedness must remain practical and realistic.

Finally, a person's best friend is not only my favorite companion but is a great addition to the home security system. Most people will pass by a house with a dog. An alarm system will let you know someone is in the house; a dog will let you know someone is in the yard. A security system can include several parts, cameras, and the alarm components. Think of creating a layered approach to your security. Think about delay, deter and deny access to your home.

Once you are secure you should focus on your needs. The FEMA checklist is a great place to start. Documents, Medicine, First Aid, Health and Sanitation. Organize your supplies. FEMA recommends three days of food and water per person in your home. One gallon of water per person per day. Then start to what if? Ask yourself, what if the power goes out? What if it is cold or hot? What if? Then start to solve those problems. What if civil unrest comes to my door and my family and I need to evacuate? Being prepared should give you a sense of safety and security, not keep you up at night.

Community Organization and Local Defense Coordination

Where I live in the United States, particularly in Texas, we are organized on multiple levels to respond to civil unrest and natural disasters. On the national level, we have federal law enforcement agencies, and federal disaster relief groups, like the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, and the American Red Cross.

On a state level here in Texas, we have state law enforcement, county sheriff departments and local police departments. We also have a state guard, which is a voluntary military controlled

by the Governor. The national Guard, that can be called to duty by the President of the United States or Governor of Texas in times of need. We also have our own state emergency management agency for dealing with natural or man-made disasters and other emergencies. On a community level we have search and rescue teams (volunteers), and community volunteer crisis teams.

As a state we have a layered approach to dealing with law enforcement issues, civil unrest, and man-made or natural disasters. Federal, State, Local, Community. The Feds bring the big guns so to say, but it's the community that makes it really work. Neighbors helping neighbors. Churches helping within the communities.

We also have a secret weapon, rednecks. They are usually thought of in a negative way, referring to rural, simple and unsophisticated people. Some of this might be true, but rednecks can fix things. Rednecks have skills. Every nation I've ever traveled to I look for the rednecks. They are a wealth of knowledge.

When Hurricane Rita (2005) hit the gulf of Texas (Reporter, 2021; CNN.com — Transcripts, 2005), most streets and debris were cleaned up by locals, rednecks, using chainsaws, tractors, and personal equipment. They had the roads cleared before the federal emergency responders arrived. Being able to help your community is satisfying. A simple act of being able to help your neighbor in a time of crisis builds strong community ties.

Legal Aspects of Civilian Use of Force

There are numerous examples of communities organizing collectively during periods of civil unrest to protect their neighborhoods and businesses. For instance, during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, members of the Korean community armed themselves and took active measures to defend their businesses, becoming known as the "Rooftop Koreans." By positioning themselves on the roofs with rifles, they were able to deter looting and violence, successfully safeguarding their community (Dunn, 1992; NBCLA, 2020).

In the BLM riots of 2020 in Kenosha, Wisconsin Kyle Rittenhouse, age 17 was charged with shooting three men fatally wounding two of them (BBC News, 2021). He had traveled across state lines with a group of individuals going to protect businesses. He was arrested and later acquitted of the charges. The jury said he acted in self-defense.

I cannot stress enough the importance of understanding the local laws that govern your area, especially the ones that pertain to self-defense and the use of force to protect your property. If you don't understand the laws in your area, you might find yourself in a legal battle for your freedom. Invest some time and money to talk to your local police department, but also a local defense attorney.

CONCLUSION

"Better to be tried by twelve than carried by six" meaning, it is better to defend your life and be arrested than not defend yourself and be killed. I understand this saying; however, I think you can do better with proper training and education.

In most places you are allowed to defend yourself and a good rule to follow is to "only use the force necessary to leave the situation". Depending upon the situation this can range from avoiding, escaping, and de-escalation to using deadly force. The decision to use deadly force in a violent encounter should never be taken lightly. Having a plan, and getting training is key. Know your local self-defense laws and get training. Have a plan to avoid, escape, de-escalate if possible. The general rule to follow is to use only that force which is necessary.

The information in this article is only the surface of a much larger subject. How long will the unrest last? Look at the damage Ukraine has endured in the past several years defending against Russia. Some areas will take years to recover. Ultimately, surviving the urban zoo comes down to your knowledge and skills, along with a strong mindset and some forethought given to supplies, equipment, and planning. Tom Brown Jr. said, "Survival of the fittest, sure, this is true. In the human animal, it's your knowledge and skill, not just your strength." I would add that it's also your ability to adapt — to identify the problem, come up with a solution, and take action.

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A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ZOO

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces the conceptual framework of the *psychology of the zoo* — a multidisciplinary construct describing human adaptation and behavioral regulation within controlled, hierarchical environments. Synthesizing perspectives from applied psychology, criminology, and social theory, the study argues that “zoo-like” systems emerge naturally whenever human collectives confront structural asymmetries of power, knowledge, or technology. Drawing upon Foucault’s theory of discipline, Goffman’s analysis of total institutions, and Zimbardo’s experimental findings on situational conformity, the paper explores how confinement, surveillance, and normalization shape identity formation and moral agency.

Methodologically, the article employs a conceptual-analytical and phenomenological approach, combining grounded theoretical synthesis with comparative mapping of institutional forms — monastic, military, carceral, and corporate. The *psychology of the zoo* is proposed

as a diagnostic and interpretive model for understanding adaptive and regressive mechanisms in environments of sustained constraint. Ultimately, the paper suggests that the task of applied psychology and criminology is not to dismantle such systems, but to transform them into spaces of conscious self-regulation where discipline fosters, rather than annihilates, human subjectivity.

Keywords

psychology of the zoo, applied psychology, criminology, total institutions, adaptation and regression, institutional behavior, control and surveillance, social confinement, learned helplessness, Foucault

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this article is *the psychology of the zoo* — a conceptual framework that allows us to analyze how mechanisms of control, observation,

classification, and behavioral conditioning operate within societies. This concept is not limited to physical zoos or the treatment of animals; rather, it serves as a metaphor and analytical model for understanding the subtle and overt ways in which human beings are enclosed, categorized, and governed.

The inspiration for this reflection can be traced to a moment in *Roadside Picnic* by the Strugatsky brothers, where Dr. Pillman, asked about the greatest discovery, replies: "*The fact of the Visit.*" Analogously, in the context of this article, the very existence of the phenomenon we call "zoo psychology" is already the core discovery. It is not a speculative hypothesis or metaphorical flourish — it is a material and psychological structure that operates across historical, political, and social levels.

We begin by tracing its historical emergence, then move into its structural dynamics, and conclude by outlining its implications for understanding contemporary society.

THE HISTORICAL GENEALOGY OF ZOO PSYCHOLOGY

The notion of the zoo as a site of human-animal interaction is deeply rooted in history, but to understand the psychological dimension, we must look beyond biological curiosity or entertainment. The zoo — both in practice and as an idea — emerges alongside the development of imperial conquest, colonial classification systems, and the expansion of European epistemologies of power (Elias, 1939; Long & Sedley, 1997).

Take, for example, the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire. In this context, we see not just military domination, but a deep ontological violence — the classification of the colonized as subhuman, irrational, and wild. The conquerors do not merely defeat the indigenous populations; they reorder their worlds. Through language, religion, and institutions (including the Inquisition), they impose a new cognitive and moral structure in which the colonized are positioned as specimens to be studied, corrected, domesticated, or displayed (Szondi, 1947; Durkheim, 1912).

This colonial logic functions precisely as a zoo operates: it is not the animality of the subject that justifies the cage — it is the act of caging that produces the subject as animal. The moment of enclosure is also the moment of dehumanization. From this perspective, the psychology of the zoo is inextricably linked to the psychology of empire.

REGIMES OF THE ZOO: FROM DOMINATION TO SOFT CONTAINMENT

To advance this framework, we must introduce the concept of *zoo regimes*. These are modes or configurations through which the principles of the zoo are applied within human societies. They vary in intensity, visibility, and structure, but they share a common logic: the management of bodies and behaviors under the guise of care, safety, order, or civilization.





The Hard Zoo: Enclosure and Spectacle

At one extreme, we encounter what may be called the *hard zoo* — spaces of overt containment and surveillance: prisons, refugee camps, colonized territories, even psychiatric institutions in their more authoritarian historical forms. Clear boundaries, hierarchies, and systems of reward and punishment characterize these spaces.

The inhabitants are observed, their movements controlled, their behaviors regulated according to externally imposed norms. Their visibility is part of their captivity — like animals in an exhibition, they are made legible to power through documentation, categorization, and display.

The Soft Zoo: Society as ‘National Park’

At the other end lies the *soft zoo* — or what might be termed the *national park model*. Here, the mechanisms of control are more sophisticated and less visible. Individuals are granted relative autonomy, mobility, and the illusion of freedom. However, their choices remain constrained within pre-defined parameters.

This is perhaps the most insidious form of containment. It operates through internalized norms, algorithmic governance, market incentives, and ideological conditioning. Citizens believe themselves to be free agents, but

their “freedom” is cultivated within a carefully managed environment — much like animals in a wildlife reserve. They do not see the boundaries because the enclosure has become psychological.

In this light, society itself becomes indistinguishable from a national park — a habitat that mimics wildness while remaining under strict supervision. The zoo, in its modern form, no longer needs visible bars; it operates through protocols, metrics, and behavioral cues.

THE INVERSION OF CIVILIZATION: WHY DO THE CIVILIZED BEHAVE LIKE CONQUERORS?

This leads us to a disturbing paradox: the very societies that see themselves as civilized — as paragons of ethics, science, and progress — often engage in practices that replicate the logic of domination they claim to have transcended.

Why, for example, do “civilized” nations travel thousands of miles to impose order on foreign territories under the pretext of humanitarianism, democracy, or development? Why do they construct camps, zones, walls, and surveillance infrastructures in the name of peace?

The answer lies in the persistence of the zoo psychology. Civilization, in this schema, does not oppose barbarism — it refines and rationalizes it.

The colonial explorer becomes the park ranger; the missionary becomes the social worker; the soldier becomes the humanitarian. The logic is unchanged: the other must be managed, improved, or confined — for their own good or for the good of the system.

METHODOLOGY

This article employs a **conceptual-analytical methodology**, combining interpretive frameworks from applied psychology, criminology, and social theory. The purpose is not to present empirical data but to establish a coherent *heuristic model* — the “zoo” as a psychosocial construct explaining adaptive and maladaptive human responses in controlled environments.

The methodological foundation draws from:

- **Foucault’s concept of disciplinary systems** (*Discipline and Punish*, Foucault, 1975), describes surveillance as a mechanism of internalized control;
- **Goffman’s theory of total institutions** (*Asylums*, Goffman, 1961), analyzing behavioral regulation in closed communities;
- **Zimbardo’s situational psychology** (*Stanford Prison Experiment*, Zimbardo, 1973), which reveals the transformation of ordinary individuals under systemic pressure.

These frameworks are synthesized to define the *zoo* not as a metaphor but as a psychological environment characterized by:

- (1) spatial and cognitive confinement;
- (2) role-based behavioral regulation; and
- (3) the substitution of moral agency by procedural obedience.

The analysis proceeds through **comparative phenomenological mapping**, identifying structural similarities between institutional systems (military, monastic, carceral, and corporate). The interpretive method follows a grounded-theory orientation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), allowing the theoretical model to emerge from observed cross-domain parallels rather than from a single case study.

Textual and historical materials are used as secondary data sources, while theoretical integration relies on triangulating psychological constructs — *adaptation, regression, obedience,*

and performative compliance. This approach is consistent with qualitative methodologies in criminological psychology, which aim to reveal latent mechanisms of control and subject formation rather than quantify behavioral outputs (Charmaz, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ZOO: HUMAN, SYSTEM, AND THE LIMITS OF ADAPTATION

The Social Zoo as a Model of Civilizational Interaction

Historical experience reveals a recurring pattern: whenever two sociocultural systems of unequal strength collide, a hierarchical structure inevitably emerges — one that can be metaphorically described as a *zoo*. The stronger side places the weaker within a system of constraints — political, economic, or cultural — justified as a means of “ordering chaos” (Foucault, 1975; Said, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2001).

This process of *domesticating the Other* produces a stable psychological model: the internalization of inequality as a natural order. In this sense, the *zoo* is not merely a space of confinement but an instrument of civilizational control. The subject is deprived of autonomy yet allowed to exist safely within prescribed boundaries.

The Zoo as an Instrument of Adaptation and Personality Transformation

From an applied psychological perspective, a closed environment serves as a powerful mechanism for personality transformation. Within highly regulated settings — such as military units, monastic communities, or submarine crews — individuals develop behavioral patterns that minimize cognitive dissonance between internal desires and external norms (Nietzsche, 1887; Festinger, 1957).

In this regard, the *zoo* functions as a form of adaptive training — a space in which individuals are forced to close the gap between “I can” and “I do.” Yet prolonged exposure to such environments may lead to regression rather than growth (Bion, 1961). Mechanisms that once supported adaptation transform into dependency and learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975).

Thus, the *psychology of the zoo* represents a dynamic equilibrium between adaptation

and the loss of subjectivity — a phenomenon well-documented in studies of institutional and prison behavior (Lombroso, 1876; Goffman, 1961; Zimbardo 1973).

Society as a Managed Habitat?

In sum, *the psychology of the zoo* is a model for understanding how societies organize power relations through containment, visibility, and behavioral conditioning. It allows us to see the continuity between colonial conquest and modern governance, between cages and algorithms, between prisons and social networks.

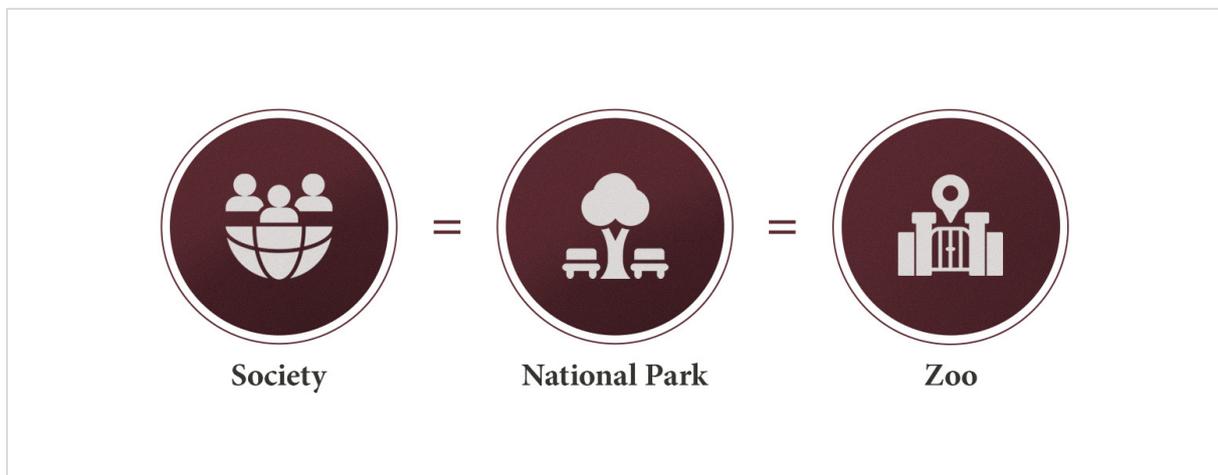
The zoo is not merely a place — it is a system of thought. It is a way of structuring the world into categories of norm and deviance, wildness and civility, freedom and control.

And thus, we return to our initial conceptual proposition:

This is not a metaphor. It is a structural equation, a working hypothesis, and perhaps, most disturbingly, a lived reality.

If the zoo can be seen as a containment environment, the circus represents its performative extension — a public display of systemically approved excellence. In sociopsychological terms, the circus showcases the *normative ideal*, where the “best” individuals demonstrate the highest level of obedience and training.

As Goffman (1961) noted, such demonstrative compliance often entails a profound loss of authenticity and internal freedom. The circus, therefore, is not an alternative to the zoo but its evolved stage: a domain where control becomes voluntary and even desirable. The individual not only accepts limitations but also derives identity and prestige from them, transforming dependence into a status symbol.



From Environmental Model to Psychological Model

To analyze the individual’s functioning within the zoo, one may represent the psyche as a four-quadrant model:

- **Vertical axis** — from regression (below) to hypercompensation (above);
- **Horizontal axis** — from knowledge (left) to ability (right).

Upon entering a restrictive environment, a person retains this internal structure, yet the direction of activation shifts.

A *bad zoo* lacks access to knowledge—no textbook, no clear explanation of rules. The individual is forced to reconstruct the system through

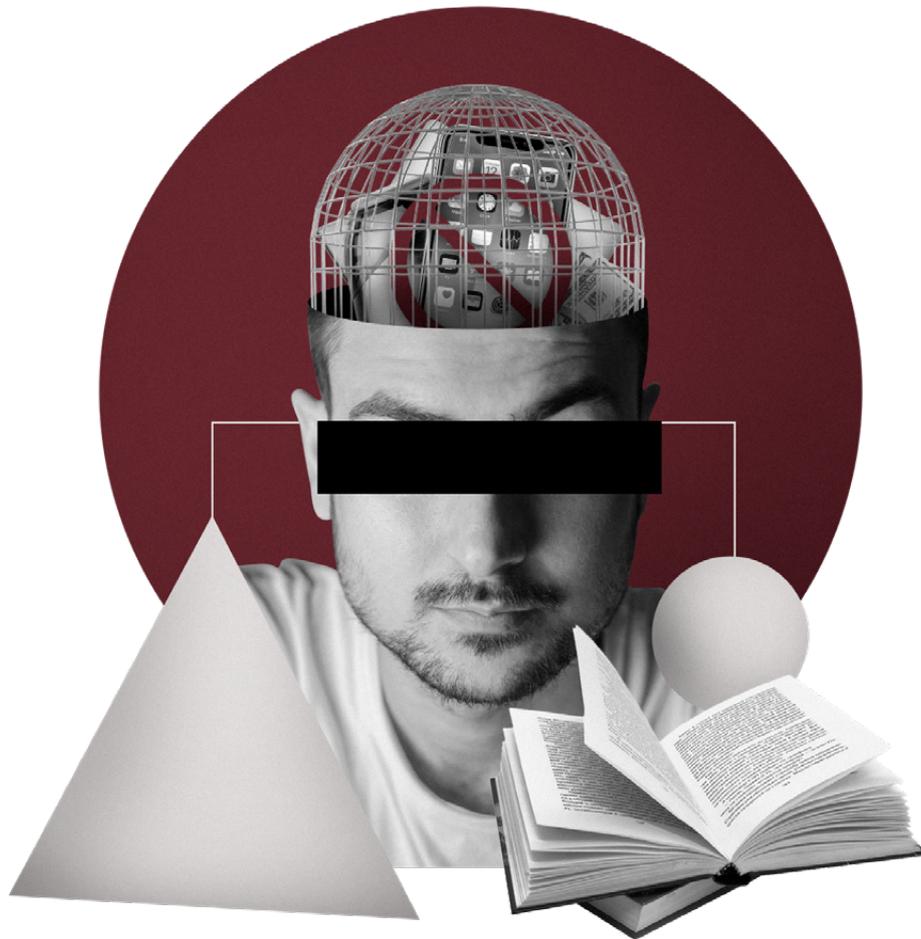
trial and punishment, which fosters anxiety, conformity, and aggression (Bandura, 1973).

This pattern is evident in closed institutions such as the military, prisons, and corporate hierarchies. Where knowledge is concealed or replaced by sanctions, *deindividuation* arises (Le Bon, 1895; Zimbardo 2007): conscious agency is replaced by automatic, role-bound behavior.

ANALYSIS OF THE RECENT RESEARCH

Regression, Adaptation, and the Status Mechanism within the Psychology of the Zoo

In the framework of the *psychology of the zoo*, regression should not be viewed merely as a pathological retreat but as a fundamental adaptive



mechanism. Within closed or hierarchically constrained environments, regressive defenses of the psyche become the primary tools of survival and social navigation. Quantitatively, one might imagine that only a minimal fraction — approximately five percent — of the psychic structure functions through hypercompensatory mechanisms, while the remaining ninety-five percent is dedicated to adaptation. This adaptation, however, is initiated and sustained precisely through regression.

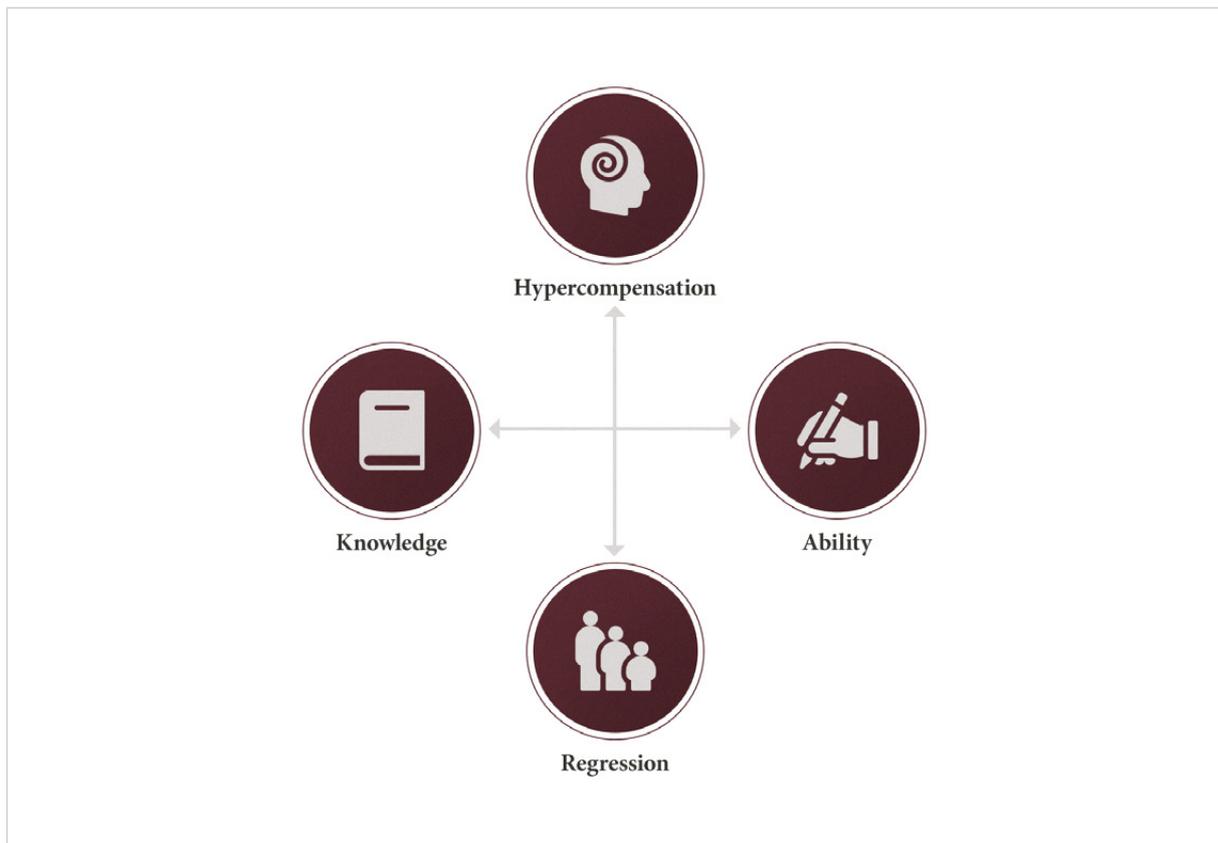
Any process of human adjustment (*Homo sapiens*) begins with the activation of regressive defenses. These mechanisms enable the psyche to recalibrate under conditions of loss, deprivation, or environmental constraint. What follows is the emergence of *difference* — a crucial variable that defines both the subjective and social architecture of life within the zoo. It is this differentiation that structures meaning, status, and hierarchy.

The absence of difference erodes psychological stability and social order. Even within seemingly trivial contexts — such as two individuals wearing identical attire — the anxiety stems not from similarity itself but from the loss of distinction. In the social zoo, *difference*

defines status, and status defines identity. The drive for upward movement — toward status — is, psychologically, a movement from regression to hypercompensation. Knowledge and skill, while theoretically valuable, play a secondary role in this vertical process; the real psychological vector is not horizontal (learning) but vertical (transformation).

Experience becomes the primary medium of adaptation. The faster one learns experientially, the faster stabilization occurs. Yet the conditions of the zoo determine whether learning is possible at all. In military systems, training is institutionalized; in carceral systems, it is replaced by prohibition. These environments differ in structure yet share a common psychological law: adaptation through constraint.

Status, in turn, generates a recursive system of prohibition. The carceral order is sustained not through instruction but through the perpetuation of forbidden acts — a game of control and transgression. This dynamic is vividly illustrated in literary and historical depictions of closed military or penitentiary institutions, where the threat of harsh punishment epitomizes the logic of confinement without exit, forming an archetypal “zoo without release.”



Analytical Implications

This discussion foregrounds three analytical insights relevant to applied psychology and criminological theory:

1. Regression as functional adaptation:

Regressive defenses are not inherently pathological; they constitute the initial stage of adaptation under extreme constraint. In the four-quadrant psychological model introduced earlier (vertical axis: regression ↔ hypercompensation; horizontal axis: knowledge ↔ ability), regression serves as the necessary precondition for movement along the vertical axis.

2. Status as an adaptive incentive:

Within the zoo, difference (status) functions as the primary reward system. The pursuit of distinction, rather than material comfort, drives the individual's psychological mobility. In this sense, *status replaces freedom* as the central motivational construct.

3. Institutional differentiation of adaptation models:

Different zoo-like systems regulate adaptation through distinct mechanisms:

- Military and monastic institutions embed pedagogical models of guided transformation.
- Carceral institutions enforce adaptation through prohibition and deprivation, producing cyclical regression rather than progress.

These distinctions illuminate the central paradox of zoo psychology: environments that restrict autonomy also stimulate complex adaptive behaviors aimed at restoring it symbolically. The regressive mechanism becomes both a symptom of constraint and a catalyst for psychological evolution.

Ultimately, the *psychology of the zoo* provides a conceptual lens for understanding how human beings reconstruct meaning, status, and agency under structural confinement. The discussion emphasizes that regression, far from being a sign of weakness, may represent the psyche's most efficient tool for negotiating life within systems of absolute control.

The Game of Prohibition, Social Adventure, and Prototype Zoos

Within carceral systems, the central organizing principle is the *game of prohibition*. Institutional

life, in essence, revolves around restriction: all discussions, negotiations, and social interactions are filtered through the lens of what is permitted and what is forbidden. Rules are not merely abstract; they structure daily existence, regulating movement, privileges, and behavior. For example, conversations within the prison often center entirely on prohibitions or on situations generated by these prohibitions.

When an individual exits this constrained environment, they enter broader society, which, while structurally different, maintains analogous implicit rules. The transition does not automatically provide explanation or guidance; the individual carries the learned patterns of interaction from the carceral "zoo" into everyday life. In this context, the internalized game of prohibition transforms into a pursuit of *adventure* — life is perceived as a series of challenges and tests against implicit limits. Former prisoners, habituated to the continuous negotiation of prohibition, continue to operate under the same underlying psychology in social spaces, manifesting a heightened propensity for risk-taking and novelty.

The structural logic of the game of prohibition can be traced to historical maxims, such as the Roman adage: "*Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi*" ("What is permitted to Jupiter is not permitted to the ox"). Within zoo-like hierarchies, this principle delineates status: privileges and resources are unequally distributed according to rank. Certain activities or objects are reserved for high-status actors, while others are denied to those of lower rank. In effect, status generates prohibition, and prohibition, in turn, creates a fertile field of social adventures. The continuous interplay of restriction and opportunity structures human behavior and motivates the search for differentiation and autonomy (Arendt, 1958).

This conceptual framework is exemplified by thought experiments such as the "Sondibus" scenario, in which passengers — including relatives — occupy a confined vehicle. If one considers this bus as the *first prototype of a zoo*, it becomes a foundational schema for understanding constrained social environments. This prototype allows for the extrapolation of a broader *psychology of the zoo*: a systematic, unconscious structure by which humans navigate hierarchies, negotiate prohibitions, and internalize social norms (Jung, 1959). Meditative engagement with such prototypical scenarios illuminates the automatic and unconscious op-

erations of the psychology of the zoo, revealing its role as a *proto-psychology of humanity*.

From a research perspective, these insights suggest that seemingly disparate social settings — prisons, military units, isolated work teams — may be analyzed using shared principles: regulation through prohibition, hierarchy-driven differentiation, and the translation of constraint into adaptive or exploratory behaviors. Recognizing prototype zoos provides a heuristic for mapping the implicit psychological rules governing human interaction in any institutionally bounded environment.

CONCLUSION

Modern society perpetuates the logic of the zoo through unquestioned normative frameworks.

The principle that 'ignorance of the law excuses no one' institutionalises the presumption of guilt — knowledge is replaced by surveillance and learning by punishment. From a criminological psychology perspective, this creates what might be termed 'social imprisonment': a latent fear of breaking rules that are not fully understood.

Such structures enhance social controllability while simultaneously diminishing autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking (Fromm, 1941; Milgram, 1974). In this sense, the social zoo is not merely a metaphor, but rather a persistent socio-psychological construct in which observation, evaluation, and sanctioning replace internal moral regulation.

Overall, the psychology of the zoo provides a conceptual framework for understanding closed, hierarchical systems — from monasteries to corporations and military units — as laboratories of human adaptation to structural power. These systems are not inherently oppressive; they emerge when distinct forms of power — technological, cultural, or institutional — collide.

The central task of contemporary applied psychology and criminology is therefore not to abolish the zoo, but rather to understand its architecture; to define the limits of permissible control; and to design environments in which discipline sustains, rather than erodes, human subjectivity.

Implications for Further Research

The patterns identified in this discussion suggest several avenues for empirical investigation.

Future research could systematically examine how regressive defenses and status-seeking behaviors interact across different “zoo-like” institutions, including military units, prisons, and autonomous team environments. Comparative studies might clarify the mechanisms by which training, prohibition, and environmental constraint modulate adaptive trajectories. Furthermore, longitudinal analyses could illuminate the conditions under which regression transitions into hypercompensation, providing actionable insights for applied psychology and criminology in both rehabilitative and organizational contexts.

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