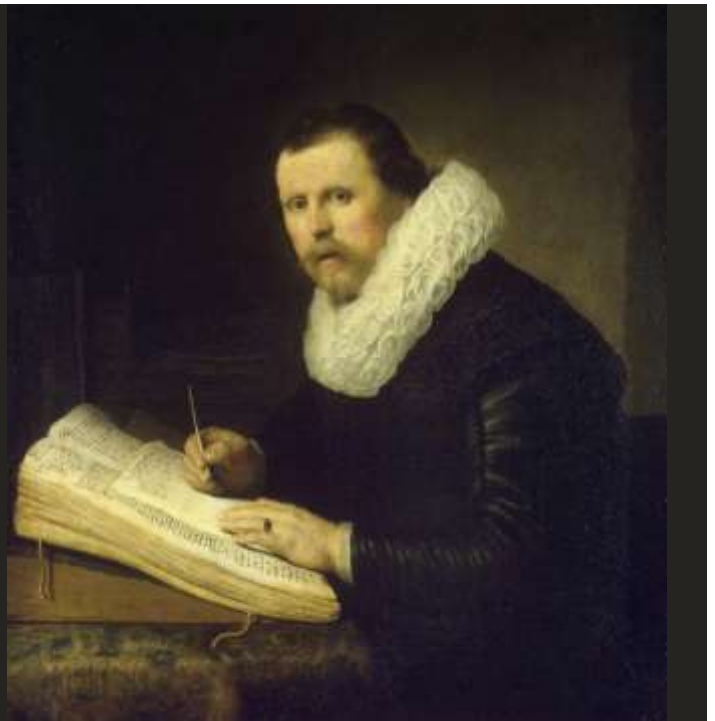


Sapere Aude – Dare to think: In Defence of the Enlightenment

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1

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn:
Portrait of a Scholar 1631



2

Let me start by paraphrasing Iskander Rehman from his article: “An early modern guide to information overload”

“To be overly fascinated by [current affairs], ... [is] to run the risk of being ‘captivated to the truth of a foolish world,’ mired in grubby, unedifying sequences of events rather than engaging in more elevated forms of philosophical or poetical reflection” (Rehman, 2024).

3

So....this lecture is going to be about
understanding

I will attempt *to think* through the *meaning of the spirit of our times*, as Jan Patočka would say, **to understand** our ‘foolish world,’ caught up in grubby, unenlightening sequences of events.

I will not attempt to explain those events on the *empirical* level of their unfolding but to try to see *through* (some) of them to (perhaps) understand what is driving them.

4

Let me start with a quote from a recent article (10 April 2024)

“In our classrooms and lecture theatres, young Australians are being increasingly taught ‘**what to think**’ – not ‘**how to think**’”
[...] (Peter Dutton in Tillett, 2024).

5

‘what to think’ – ~~not~~ and ‘how to think’

And this is, indeed, what I want to address today, although not explicitly: What it *means* to ‘think’.

I want to posit that those two aspects of thinking – what and how – are not in opposition. Rather, they are important characteristics of thinking, especially, *critical* thinking.

...but let me return to Peter Dutton, as a *representative* of this view of education, since he is not the only one...

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The claim is this:

“In our classrooms and lecture theatres, young Australians are being increasingly taught ‘what to think’ – not ‘how to think’,” [...] **“Context and complexity is being glossed over in favour of propaganda and polemics”** (Peter Dutton in Tillett, 2024).

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Does Peter Dutton speak of, what Francisco Goya express so well in his painting of 1799, –

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters?

8

Is this a call to revive the *critical spirit* of the Enlightenment, expressed in 1784, by Immanuel Kant:
Sapere Aude – Dare to think for oneself?

9

Is this a call *against* ‘propaganda and polemics’?

“The Albanese government has failed to provide the moral clarity which distinguishes the lawful from the lawless, which differentiates civilisation from barbarism, and which discerns the good from the evil.

“[...] I believe we need a reassertion of our cultural values to clear the moral fog” (Peter Dutton cited in Tillett,

2024).

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So, let me unpack Dutton's claims to give me a framework for my argument, which I propose to use as a diagnostic tool to discern **whether today**, what we are experiencing are **'symptoms' of 'decay'**, or whether we are already in **the stage of a terminal disease**.

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Does Dutton present a summary of our present, mired in lawlessness, barbarism and evil?

"We need to re-assert our cultural values to clear the moral fog"

- To distinguish the lawful from the lawless
- To differentiate civilisation from barbarism
- To discerns the good from the evil

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How can we think about these claims?

- What are those *cultural values*?
- Are the cultural values defined by the tradition?
- What tradition?
- **Why is this an issue of *moral clarity*?**
- WHAT *criteria* can we 'apply' to clarify:
 - What is the lawful and what is the lawless?
 - What counts as civilisation and what is barbarism?
 - How do we distinguish between what is the good and what is the evil?
- What kind of **empirical criteria** can help us?

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Tradition, Values, *Moral* Clarity

- What is *good* and what is *evil*?
- The good and the evil are categories of the Christianity
- If we uphold that God is dead, yet, invoke these religious categories, how can we think 'tradition'?
- What are the roots/what is the ground of the European tradition?
- Where do categories of civilisation and barbarism belong?
- How can we think *lawlessness* without clarifying what *law* is?
- Do we trace the *idea* of law **to the Christian tradition or, even further, to the Ancient Greek tradition?**

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Tradition, Values, *Moral* Clarity

- What do we *mean* when we speak of tradition – *where do we start?*
The Ancient Greece, Christianity or our modern scientific culture?
- Does our modern scientific culture represent *an absolute break, or is it just a pause to realign 'forces of history' – caesura* – in the linear time from the past to the present?
- Accepting that the power of God is no more in our scientific, secular society, then, it seems that we are talking about the *break*; transformation of the past under the sign of the modern science
- So, then, where can we locate those *cultural* values, if the past is no more? Do we turn to the idea of *universal values*?
- But then, *what are universal values? Are they the same as 'our cultural values'?* Is it just a matter of a different 'name'? Are our cultural values universal after all, and we simply *ignore* the break with the past and continue as if all is the same?

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Tradition, Values, *Moral* Clarity

- Or can we say that *our cultural values are ornaments, left over from Christianity, embellishing our scientific culture?*
- We keep Christian values but divorce them from the worldview defined by God
- *The Christian values become cultural values* (or universal, depending on your preference) and all is well...
- We admire them in their 'outward' manifestation in the form of artefacts, as Richard Dawkins, a British evolutionary biologist and zoologist, recently announced.

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“I do think that **we are a culturally Christian country, I call myself a cultural Christian**. I’m not a believer, but there is a distinction between being a believing Christian and being a cultural Christian. **I love hymns and Christmas carols. I sort of feel at home in the Christian ethos**. I feel that we are a Christian country,” Dawkins said.

“**I like to live in a culturally Christian country although I do not believe a single word of the Christian faith**” (Richard Dawkins in Anderson, 2024).

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Tradition, Values, *Moral* Clarity

- So....why to insist on *cultural* Christianity, while “not believe a single word of the Christian faith”?
- How can we think about **this idea of cultural Christianity**? Why not simply accept that the Christian faith is no more, and science is now our world?
- Brian Leiter’s reading of Nietzsche’s ‘prediction’ of the death of God, sums up this dilemma:
 “**Christianity as *dogma* perished of its own morality ...; in this manner Christianity as *morality* must now also perish – we stand at the threshold of *this event*”; yet, as Leiter notes, “it is still striking that even among atheists, “everything goes on as before” in matters of morality”** (Leiter, 2019, 388, italics in original).

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Tradition, Values, *Moral* Clarity

Interestingly, or perhaps not so much, **in the name of empirical “rationality of capitalism”** defined as “what is the most efficient way to get what you want”, Leiter **refutes the metaphysical “supernatural agency called “God””, as “an obviously incredible belief”**. After all, as he says, since God does not “interfere[] with the price mechanism, his dominion is bound to shrink”.

Without any proof offered for his final claim, he asserts:

“So God is dead, but morality may yet outlive him” (Leiter, 2019, 399).

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The death of God

Let us recall here that the *idea* of the death of God is usually associated with the idea of nihilism, traced to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).

According to Jamie Parr, “these ideas [the death of God and nihilism] are unsettling: **few of us have the courage to confront the possibility our idols may be hollow and life has no inherent meaning**”

In other words, the death of God leads to a horror that life has no meaning

The reasons offered are **“the growth of scientific understanding after the Age of Enlightenment had gradually made it impossible to maintain faith in God”** (Parr, 2020).

Why is this so? And is it *really* the case?

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The death of God

For Parr, the “beauty and severity of Nietzsche’s texts draw from his vision that we could move through nihilism **to develop newly meaningful ways to be human**”.

Perhaps, but how can we move from meaningless life that seems to be the outcome of scientific rationality to a new way *to be human*?

As Parr explains the starting point of this malaise: “If we weren’t suffering to get closer to God, what was the point of life? From whom now would we draw the strength to endure life’s difficulty? **God was the origin of truth, justice, beauty, love – transcendental ideals** we thought of ourselves as heroically defending, **leading lives and dying deaths that had meaning and purpose**” (Parr).

We seem to have made a bad deal – we ‘traded’ the idea of meaningful and purposeful life, guaranteed by God, for the meaningless life of the scientific age.

What are our options now?

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Indeed, for Parr, the “consequences of the death of God are horrific, but also freeing”

In the first place, “**this state of nihilism – the idea that life has no meaning or value – cannot be avoided**; we must go through it, as frightening and lonely as that will be”

So, where is this going to lead us?

“Our quest for honesty **has given birth to a “passion of knowledge.”** Now **the search for answers to life’s hardest questions**, and not the worship of God, **is our greatest passion. We hunt for the most accurate reasons for our existence and likely find the answers in science rather than religion**”

(Parr).

So, are we ‘hunting for reasons’? Where is this ‘passion for knowledge’?

In Google searches? In Wikipedia? In rabbit holes?

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To reflect on those quandaries, let us recall
Hannah Arendt from 1958:

We need “... a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears. This, obviously, is a matter of thought” because we live in the age of “thoughtlessness – the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths’ which have become trivial and empty” ... In short, “What I propose, ..., is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing” (Arendt, 1998 [1958], 5).

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And since I am not a doer, I propose only to
think about our present...

I will simply make a couple of dogmatic claims here – dogmatic in a sense that I am not going to argue for them. I have already done this before, and it would take us into a different argument. So:

- My claim is that since the beginning of modern age and its reconfiguration of nature via modern science, **the ground of knowledge and moral certainty secured by God was replaced by scientific reasoning**
- **Yet, we have never dealt with the 'death of God'** in our society. We *think* we have, yet **we still maintain moral beliefs** (among other beliefs) that **cannot be explained empirically**, however hard we try
- Let me make clear that I am not talking here about belief in God – there are many people and communities who are believers

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- The best aspect of scientific reasoning is its 'belief' on impossibility of omniscience. Our knowledge is cumulative and never final, it changes as we progress toward more knowledge...as we have more instruments that help us to penetrate to the largest and the smallest regions of nature
- *Scientific* scepticism is an important bulwark against charlatans claiming to know all....but it is rather problematic in another way; **modern science has nothing to say about our human existence**; it has no 'advice' in the form of the *moral guidance* that was a prerogative of God, which was a defining characteristic of our previous configuration of society
- Moreover, some of the concepts of the Christian tradition, such as apocalypse, when stripped of its original framework, become the opposite what they were intended to be: Instead of the beginning of the new and just world, an apocalypse now represents a destruction of the world...

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So, how can we think about our human condition

- I think that the first step might be to reflect how our conceptual 'toolbox' is drawn from the tradition – Ancient Greece and Christianity
- Only by *preserving* our tradition and *critically assessing* it in light of "our newest experiences and our most recent fears", we can rethink it, instead of 'cancelling' it
- Moreover, we can only comprehend the present as problematic, if we reflect on the history of ideas to *understand* what brought those problems into being. Otherwise, there is no awareness that anything is wrong, no possibility to rethink it

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There are two ways to think about it that I consider here:

- One way is to realise (and many might not) that the "crisis consists precisely in the fact that **the old is dying and the new cannot be born**; in this interregnum **a great variety of morbid symptoms appear**" (Gramsci, 1999, 556).
- Another is to *creatively* use the words of George Santayana, who in 1905 writes:
"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (Santayana, 2011 [1905], 172).

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To return to Dutton's accusation of the moral fog descending on our hapless society, let me start with transcendence

Transcendence is one of those ideas that is described by Arendt as: "hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial and empty ..."

Recall here Parr's claim that "God was the origin of truth, justice, beauty, love – **transcendental ideals** ..." (Parr).

Note here that for Parr, this is a religious idea

To complicate the matter a bit, the ideas of transcendence differs from Christianity and Judaism to Islam

The basic though is – and I am simplifying beyond defendable here – God is not in the time and space of humans; he is the transcendent and transcending being

Important as these ideas are, I want to take you to a different path...

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Transcendence

First, let us acknowledge that transcendence is an idea that can be traced back to the Ancient Greece and this is what, I think, is important to reflect on if we want to reformulate it for the present – which, obviously, I want to 😊

I am thinking of transcendence as 'meaning bestowing' idea, which is not necessarily tied to God

Yet, the significance of religious idea of transcendence is important in a different sense – especially in Christianity, God safeguards *human* meaning against scepticism

As Patočka claims, "The Christian faith is not a meaning sought by humans and autonomously found by them"; it is secured by God (Patočka, 1996, 66–67).

For Christianity, **Greek rationality** of "the "wisdom of the world" (*sophia tou kosmou*)" **is rejected by St Paul in favour of the "wisdom of God in his mystery" (*sophia tou theou en mysterio*)** (Honnefelder, 2008, 466).

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The Christian Transcendence

For this reason, for Patočka, “Christianity remains thus far the greatest, unsurpassed but also un-thought human outreach that enabled humans to struggle against decadence”, and, I would add, nihilism, because of God’s guarantee of meaning and purpose of human life, as well as morality for the community of believers (Patočka, 1996, 107–108).

So, what happens with transcendence and human meaning and morality with the beginning of our scientific age?

And recall here the change of the *idea* of apocalypse I mentioned above.

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The Change in the Idea of Transcendence

According to Arendt, with the modern, scientific, age, we have lost *kosmos* and God; all we are left with is self-consciousness:

“modern man at any rate did not gain this world when he lost the other world, and he did not gain life, strictly speaking, either; he was thrust back upon it, thrown into the closed inwardness of introspection, where the highest he could experience were the empty processes of reckoning of the mind, its play with itself. The only contents left were appetites and desires, the senseless surges of his body which he mistook for passion and which he deemed to be ‘unreasonable’ because he found he could not ‘reason,’ that is, not reckon with them. The only thing that could now be potentially immortal, as immortal as the body politic in antiquity and as individual life during the Middle Ages, was life itself, that is, the possibly everlasting life process of the species mankind” (Arendt, 1998 [1958], 320–321).

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The Change in the Idea of Transcendence

- Let me start with A. H. Maslow (1971) to see how the idea of transcendence that has given security to human meaning is reconfigured in our age...

“Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos” (Maslow, 1971, 279).

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Transcendence...

“Transcending the opinions of others, i.e., of reflected appraisals. This means a self-determining Self. It means to be able to be unpopular when this is the right thing to be, to become an autonomous, self-deciding Self; to write one’s own lines, to be one’s own man, to be not manipulatable or seduceable. These are the resisters (rather than the conformers) in the Asch-type experiment. Resistance to being rubricized, to be able to be role-free, i.e., to transcend one’s role and to be a person rather than being the role. This includes resisting suggestion, propaganda, social pressures, being outvoted, etc” (Maslow, 1971, 273).

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So, how do we do that....?

“behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos”?

How does consciousness relate to the cosmos, for example?

For Maslow, we are guided by “Values of Being (B-Values)”:

We “devote [our] lives to the search for what I have called the “being” values (“B” for short), the ultimate values which are intrinsic, which cannot be reduced to anything more ultimate”.

So where are those B-Values and how do we *recognise* them if all we have is the self-consciousness and *self-transcendence*?

We simply reconfigure values as needs:

“These B-Values behave like needs. I have called them metaneeds” ? (Maslow, 1971, 43–44).

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“There are about fourteen of these B-Values, including the truth and beauty and goodness of the ancients and perfection, simplicity, comprehensiveness, and several more”
(Maslow, 1971, 44).

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The Sicknesses of the Soul

And Maslow explains further, if we are deprived of the B-Values, it leads to “certain kinds of pathologies which ... I call metapathologies – the sicknesses of the soul which come, for example, from living among liars all the time and not trusting anyone. Just as we need counselors to help people with the simpler problems of unmet needs, so we may need metacounselors to help with the soul-sicknesses that grow from the unfulfilled metaneeds. In certain definable and empirical ways, it is necessary for man to live in beauty rather than ugliness, as it is necessary for him to have food for an aching belly or rest for a weary body. In fact, I would go so far as to claim that these B-Values are the meaning of life for most people, but many people don't even recognize that they have these metaneeds (Maslow, 1971, 43–44).

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So, if B-Values are needs, how do we avoid pathology of the self?

“These people are often all wrapped up in value problems. Many are youngsters who are, in principle, very wonderful people, though in actuality they often seem to be little more than snotty kids. Nevertheless, I assume (in the face of all behavioral evidence sometimes) that they are, in the classical sense, idealistic. I assume that they are looking for values and that they would love to have something to devote themselves to, to be patriotic about, to worship, adore, love. These youngsters are making choices from moment to moment of going forward or retrogressing, moving away from or moving toward self-actualization (Maslow, 1971, 43–44).

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“to be patriotic about, to worship, adore,
love”

Since transcendence is now transformed into needs regulated by a set of positive rules that should guide us in the world without God, it can only be reconfigured as a transcendence of the self, floating alone in the world of other atoms. B-Values are now needs and their lack ‘causes’ the human pathology

Let us return to Arendt again

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In the moment of action, annoyingly enough, it turns out, first, that the ‘absolute,’ that which is ‘above’ the senses – the true, good, beautiful – is not graspable, because no one knows concretely what it is. To be sure, everyone has a conception of it, but each concretely imagines it as something entirely different. Insofar as action is dependent on the plurality of men, the first catastrophe of Western philosophy, which in its last thinkers ultimately wants to take control of action, is the requirement of a unity that on principle proves impossible except under tyranny. Second, that to serve the ends of action anything will do as the absolute – race, for instance, or a classless society, and so forth. All things are equally expedient, ‘anything goes.’ Reality appears to offer action as little resistance as it would the craziest theory that some charlatan might come up with. Everything is possible. Third, that by applying the absolute – justice, for example, or the ‘ideal’ in general (as in Nietzsche) – to an end, one first makes unjust, bestial actions possible, because the ‘ideal,’ justice itself, no longer exists as a yardstick, but has become an achievable, producible end within the world. In other words, the realization of philosophy abolishes philosophy, the realization of the ‘absolute’ indeed abolishes the absolute from the world. And so finally the ostensible realization of man simply abolishes men — (From Denktagebuch, September 1951, in Arendt, 2005, 3).

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What is the answer to our turn of Ideas into achievable (empirical) ends and why did we end up here?

- The issue is, of course, the beginning of modern science and mathematisation of universe
- As I already said, modern science's basic presupposition is accumulation of results that are never final
- In other words, science is based on scepticism of its findings
- Karl Poppers' thesis of falsifiability is *one* expression of this characteristic
- In other words, only those propositions, which can be falsified are accepted as scientific

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- "Falsifiability is the assertion that for any hypothesis to have credence, it must be inherently disprovable before it can become accepted as a scientific hypothesis or theory."
- Important to note is that "although falsifiability is not universally accepted, it is still the foundation of the majority of scientific experiments".
- According to Popper, some disciplines clearly fail this litmus test, such as, astrology, metaphysics, Marxism and psychoanalysis. They are not empirical sciences, because they cannot be falsified.
- So, two things are important here: only empirical sciences that are mathematizable are scientific, and (for my argument here) moral claims cannot be falsified, hence ethics is not a science.
- And this is the basic problem – scepticism in science is very commendable, but when it comes to moral claims, if we try to establish a framework for moral conduct, we fail.

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The issue here is 'normativity'. What is the 'law' that can assure an adherence to the moral rules?

As a side note here: How do you falsify B-Values?

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Another problem is our understanding of Humanism and the Enlightenment

- So let me now finally turn to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)
- First, he tried to answer the challenge of David Hume (1711–1776)
- **The First Critique**: to assure the possibility of science (physics) after Hume's critique of induction (cause and effect are not in the world but in the 'observer's mind' based on habits)
- **The Second Critique**: why should I behave ethically if there is no possibility of *knowing* God
[the key word is, of course, *knowing*. Why? Since we cannot experience him, we cannot *know* him]
- **The Third Critique**: how can I judge if there is no universal law under which particular instances can be subsumed (*sensus communis*)

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The Enlightenment is also called the age of reason.

Reason is finite; hence, the critique must be an essential component of the human reason.

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Kant's *Sensus Communis*

- For Kant, *sensus communis* simply means that we all share common sense
- In community with others, we all participate and, at the same time, shape this common sense
- For Kant, *sensus communis* is *not* sedimented or internalized knowledge encoded in the traditional 'bigoted' way of thinking that is passed on categorically (that would be *heteronomy*)

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- To deny the *heteronomy* of the tradition, the Enlightenment asserts the notion of the *rational* individual who can transgress all that is bigoted and petrified in the shared way of living *through her reasoning capacity: thinking autonomously*
- But note – it is not ‘cancelling’ the tradition, it is rethinking it by giving reasons for it and not accepting it unquestioningly

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The Kantian maxims of [the way of] autonomous thinking:

- “(1) *to think for oneself*;
 (2) *to think from the standpoint of everyone else*; and
 (3) *to think always consistently*.

The first is the maxim of an *unprejudiced*, the second of a *broadened* [or as Arendt translates: enlarged] mentality and the third of a *consistent* way of thinking.”

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- [Think for oneself] “The first is the maxim of a reason that is *never passive*. A propensity to a *passive reason*, and hence to a *heteronomy of reason*, is called *prejudice*; and the greatest prejudice of all is *superstition*...*Liberation from superstition is called enlightenment*” (Kant, (1790) 1987, § 40, italics in original).
- [Think from the standpoint of everyone else] Reason “is necessarily exercised within a social context” (Reiss, 256).
- [Think always consistently] the maxim of always *thinking in harmony with oneself*, the *consistent* [thinking] (Kant, 1988, Introduction, section VII, 62-3, italics and square brackets in original).

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What is Enlightenment?

The founding moment of modernity, enunciated most clearly by Enlightenment thinkers, proceeded from the recognition that even God must obey the ‘objective laws of nature’ discovered by human reason. The inevitable consequence was the assertion of the *autonomy* of human reasoning against the imposition of any arbitrary *heteronomy*

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“Have courage to use your own understanding!” (Kant, 1991 [1784], 54).

“Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity” (Kant, 1991 [1784], 54).

After all, for Kant, it is a citizen’s duty to argue in front of the “whole community or of a society of world citizens” (Kant, 1997 [1784], 85).

Indeed, everyone should be “free to make use of his reason in matters of conscience” (Kant, 1997 [1784], 88). To prohibit the use of public reason “is to injure and trample on the rights of mankind” (Kant, 1997 [1784], 87). A monarch who is “himself enlightened, is not afraid of shadows” and allows the public exchange of ideas (Kant, 1997 [1784], 89).

“argue as much as you will, and about what you will,” but when you are carrying out an employer’s order, “only obey!” (Kant, 1997 [1784], 89).

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A note of caution

- Consider what ‘scholar’ in Kant’s time might mean as opposed to the present: TV, radio, legal bodies, internet, the legalised grievances’ procedures; etc.
- What kind of ‘public space’ is opened up to us through Facebook, Twitter, alternative media, etc.
- The last, but not least: **consider Kant's remark about the conscience of a clergyman:**
 When you are carrying employer’s orders, you must obey, otherwise nothing would be done. If you are a clergyman, you need to follow the rules of your church. Yet, it is your duty *to criticise* them in the role of a scholar, in order to bring change.
 However, if those precepts are against your *moral conscience*, you have to resign!

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Humanism

- Let me return with a brief note on humanism
- First, as Michel Foucault argued, humanism is incompatible with the Enlightenment, because it must be, by definition, based on the idea of what is a human and this idea is historically changeable;
- Second, according to Patočka, humanism is harmonism. In other words, it reduces the idea what a human is to a consistently improvable 'version' of future humans marching towards the general harmony. Sure, we have some glitches along the way, but nothing that cannot be 'improved', or reengineered with the new approaches.

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Foucault: Humanism

“In the seventeenth century, there was a humanism that presented itself as a critique of Christianity or of religion in general; there was a Christian humanism opposed to an ascetic and much more theocentric humanism. In the nineteenth century, there was a suspicious humanism, hostile and critical toward science, and another that, to the contrary, placed its hope in that same science. Marxism has been a humanism; so have existentialism and personalism; there was a time when people supported the humanistic values represented by National Socialism, and when the Stalinists themselves said they were humanists ... at least since the seventeenth century, what is called ‘humanism’ has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics”

(Foucault, 1997, 314).

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According to Patočka, **our self-understanding is largely determined by the ideas of the 19th century, whereby life is essentially unproblematic and can be 'engineered' to handle and improve.** Think here about education, as understood by classical positivism and Marxism, and, sadly now, by our latest version of neoliberal education.

The 'rational government of the day' can introduce 'reforms' to tame those impulses that try to escape this harmonious, rational vision of what we all supposed to *be*.

Hence, we have those 'deplorables' who are not following our well-meaning reforms and rationality, but 'searching' for a different way to give a new meaning to their wretched lives.

In reality, of course, there is no harmony that defines humans. Life cannot be completely mastered, it has its 'highs and lows' and this should be reflected not only in the educational process, but also in the institution.

Disharmony is not a defect, but a natural state of life, which has neither itself nor the world fully in its hands, and yet tries to make its own law to define life where there is no God to impart meaning to it.

Patočka speaks about **philosophy of amplitude.**

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Transcendence: Plato

- And this brings me to a final suggestion regarding the idea of transcendence in a world not determined by the transcendent Platonic Ideas or God
- So, as I said above, the first to think about the 'stabilising' human meaning after the collapse of mythological explanation of the world were the Ancient Greeks, in particular, Plato
- It is, of course, debatable if he actually formulated the *theory* of Ideas... but, as he is generally interpreted, the Ideas *transcend* the world of our living, they are unchangeable and *normative*, securing the changeable meaning of human understanding

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Transcendence: Christian God

- Transcendence in Christianity is (as I already pointed out) the best approach how to secure the unstable human meaning: God
- Transcendence of the modern age is problematic. If science is 'secured' precisely by a sceptical method, the human *existential* meaning becomes homeless, so to speak
- So, how to think about it?
- I suggest that one way is to start from the idea of Patočka's philosophy of amplitude – *human meaning is always unstable, but we always strive for meaning*. The only way is to accept this problematic nature of meaning and, *returning to the Enlightenment idea of a permanent critique and questioning, we can search and secure meaning, not as something permanent but as a way....*
- But that would require to learn *how* to think and *what* to think as a permanent questioning.
- Can we do it? I do not know, but rethinking what education might be should be the first step...

57

And here I came back to the promise for this lecture....

How can we think about Jesus' cry on the cross as recounted by Mathew 27:46: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

How can we think about our present if a possible God's response were – 'My son, I was never with you in the first place,' thereby marking the abolition of transcendence that defines our scientific age.

And, as I tried to show, transcendence is only possible in a negative way – we can think ideas that transcend our lives, but we need to think them in community with others as a permanent critique and a question...

58

So, what in the end?

I do not have an answer, such as:

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

59

And even this answer is already modern...

We do not see this as an expression of a perfect balance or harmony of two sides:

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

60

We see it as the beginning of the infinite mathematical series...

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

$$4 + 4 = 8$$

$$8 + 8 = 16$$

.....until infinity

61

Know thyself: Γνῶθι σαυτόν (*Gnothi sauton*)



Roman mosaic: Know Thyself

62

Wankernomics and Our Values

- All about the idiocy of managerial speak
- Funny but all too real
- Our values:
 - Integrity
 - Respect
 - Innovation
 - Courage
 - Care
 - Money?



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