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# From Chaos to the Absurd: Existentialism for the 21st Century

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**Abstract:** As Sartre pointed out, philosophical questions are questions that each generation must ask themselves because only this promotes the feeling of being alive, which is especially true for existential questions closely related to time–space, the moment, and our society. Sartre placed his philosophy of existentialism in wartime and the social conditions of the time at the beginning of the 20th century. We can equate these conditions with today’s conditions; we are once again facing threats of war, and once again, we are facing chaotic conditions that increasingly lead to absurdity but are also entirely different. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the clarity and disambiguation of the 20th century no longer exist, as the relationships between *beings* and the *world* have drastically changed. We can observe that (1) the *world* is not one; there are two worlds, the *physical* and the *cyber world* and (2) *being* is not one; there are two beings (entities), *human* and *AI-based forms of artificial life (ALF)*, between which there is a permanent tension. We advocate the thesis that in the society of the future, man must still play a master role; he must still be the being who will guide this society. Also, as Sartre claimed, each era must create its philosophy and consider real time–space. Responses to changes in this time–space also relate to existentialism in the 21st century. In this context, it is necessary to redefine the view of the future and the guidelines for the development of future society.

**Keywords:** existentialism; philosophy of artificial intelligence; philosophy of mind

## 1. Introduction

Sartre warns that existential questions cannot be answered once and for all. Philosophical questions are, by definition, questions that generations must continually ask themselves, as this stimulates a living sense that we are alive [1].

### 1.1. Historical Background

Contemporary philosophy must reflect the time and social conditions in which it emerges. The role of history in this is not to treat a specific time and social conditions as a never-ending analysis of society in a different time but rather to be a gentle teacher who helps us analyze the present without repeating the mistakes and delusions of the past. Based on these foundations, existentialist philosophy in modern history also built on the experiences of the past, transferring historical findings from figures such as Protagoras and Socrates in Western philosophy and Buddha in Eastern philosophy to modern philosophy of the 20th century in the form of existentialism [1,2]. Existentialism thus retained the importance of human beings and considered social conditions (the world), adapting them to the current moment, the time between the two world wars, and especially, the time after the Second World War. It analyzed the existence of human beings in these social conditions of political turbulence, absurdity, questions of freedom, authenticity, being and nothingness, desires, and human consciousness in the newly emerged social conditions in the new existentialist world of the 20th century [1,3]. However, as social conditions (and changes in them, in the world) are dynamic, existentialism began to lose its essence more and more at the end of the 20th century. Most contemporary existentialist authors [4–6] have remained on existing existentialist doctrines, and post-war chaotic positions or have only partially addressed the issues at stake [7–10]. In doing so, they consciously neglected



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the role of historical changes. Peace emerged from the war, and questions of freedom, free will, ego, and consciousness increasingly became a matter of academic discussions that completely lost their existential and essential charge [2,11]. These existentialists primarily dealt with the individual, their ego, and the role of consciousness, neglecting the world and its social changes, which lasted until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, when social changes were continuous, predictable, and relatively static, similar to how the 20th century began [2,9–11].

At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, history from the beginning of the 20th century slowly but unstopably began to repeat itself [5,7]. We started drifting into chaos from predictable and relatively static changes, where drastic changes can happen quickly. The historical memory of people slowly faded, the words “never again” sank into oblivion, a renewed history began to be written, and the conditions from a hundred years ago once again became a reality. Wars started, local conflicts increasingly became transnational, absurdity returned more and more to our everyday lives, lies increasingly became a reality, and existential questions were being asked more frequently again [1,12,13]. However, this old and familiar pattern acquired new dimensions.

### 1.2. *New Relations in the 21st Century*

From the two-dimensional space–time, the relationship between humans and the world, we entered a new reality of the 21st century; in the roughest approximation, we moved into three-dimensional relationships between humans, artificial life forms (ALFs), and the world [14,15]. In existentialism, which must include new entities, we can no longer speak only of humanism, which emphasizes human beings’ individual and social potential and agency. We must look at humanism from a broader perspective, which humanism does not support, as it was developed in entirely different social conditions. We must start talking about cyberhumanism, i.e., humanism transcending its boundaries, which is a way of thinking about the future relationship between humans and emerging technology in the form of ALFs [15]. In cyberhumanism, we start from the thesis that *the world is not one; there are two worlds*, the physical world and the cyber world, which intertwine and complement each other. Society has two entities: *being-for-itself* (human) and *e-being-for-itself* (ALFs) in two forms, physical (robots) and non-physical (non-corporeal) forms, as intelligent agents; for example, large language models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT. The physical *e-being-for-itself* exists in both the physical world and the non-physical cyber world. In contrast, *being-for-itself* (humans) can only exist in the physical world, and the non-corporeal forms of *e-beings-for-itself* only exist in the cyber world. The integration and interactions between all these entities and beings form the basis of the new cyberhumanism as the foundation of existentialism, existentialism for the 21st century, or Existentialism 2.0.

The fundamental premise of 20th century existentialism was that humans are solely responsible for their existence and what they make of it. However, we must ask ourselves the following: does this still hold true in the 21st century? In the 21st century, humans are increasingly delegating decisions to AI, which has been developed. This AI is meant to make life easier for humans and relieve them of heavy work, critical judgment, critical decision making, independent thinking, and ethical dilemmas.

We can ask the fundamental question of what makes a human human, and why humans have evolved into what they are today. Is it due to work or due to pleasure and idleness? For a long time, we lived under the belief that machines (ALFs) were tools for humans, but it is now clear that, in reality, humans were tools that paved the way for the arrival of machines (ALFs). The transition will be slow; ALFs will not dominate humans but enter them through instincts and mysterious human yearnings [16]. Therefore, we must understand them as soon as possible and integrate them into our modern society.

### 1.3. *The Roots of Existentialism for the 21st Century*

Let us try to philosophically interpret the fundamental thesis of modern existence (existentialism for the 21st century), starting from Protagoras’ thought that

“*Man is the measure of all things.*” Protagoras (487–420)

Let us focus on the true philosophy that stems from the foundations of ancient philosophy, place Socrates in space–time, and set him as a temporal boundary. Socrates is the most mysterious figure in all history. He did not write anything, and we only know about him through the accounts of his disciple, Plato. That is why various philosophical schools were able to adopt him as their own. So, let us also accept him in the *existentialist philosophy of the 21st century*, and using a computer metaphor, let us call this *Existentialist Philosophy 2.0*.

From Socrates onwards, Greek cultural life took shape, and the whole nature of philosophical thinking also changed. From the natural sciences, interest shifted towards man and his societal role. Starting with the Sophists, a critical look at the surviving myths became critical at this time. Even if we cannot get answers to all the riddles of nature, with which, among other things, mythology tries to find supernatural solutions, we know that we are only human. We have to learn to live together in different social forms. Sophists decided to be interested in man and his place in society. Socrates talked but tried to help his interlocutor generate valid reason and knowledge.

Kierkegaard emphasizes that an individual, a human being, does not experience his existence statically but dynamically when he acts, makes decisions, and takes positions on his existence. This premise is also part of Eastern philosophies, such as Buddha’s philosophy, which comes from human existence. Buddha always told his disciples not to waste their time and energy in metaphysical speculation. Whenever he was asked a metaphysical question, he remained silent. Instead, he directed his disciples towards practical efforts. In short, Buddha and Kierkegaard advocate that man exists only for a short time, so he does not sit at the table and discuss the nature of the world’s spirit. They point out that truth is subjective—truth for me, for a person who considers himself a living person. According to Descartes, general truths about the nature of the world spirit are objective and general and, therefore, of secondary importance to the existence of an individual (you cannot know if someone has forgiven you or if someone loves you; you can only rely on your feelings and hope). The point is not whether something is true, but whether it is true for me.

Existentialism is not a unified philosophy, but individual orientations differ significantly. The most common thing on the outside is that it deals with anthropological and ethical issues. At the center of existentialism’s interest is the relationship between *humans and the world*, what a human is, what his *essence* is, and what the meaning of life and destiny is. From the point of view of philosophical content and method, they are characterized by at least two theses as follows:

- They all do not deal with the abstract, speculative questions of classical philosophy (what is substance, knowledge, the relationship between spirit and nature, etc.), saying that they are no longer interested in non-living rational constructions; instead, they are interested in questions of concrete human existence in the world, society, and intimate life;
- They no longer want to use abstract logical concepts and proofs to research these questions; they are replaced by a phenomenological description of emotions and moods essential for human existence (fear, anxiety, despair, freedom, guilt, etc.). Through these, we should penetrate its essence. Therefore, existentialism is expressed not only philosophically but also artistically.

Due to such an orientation, it is understandable that existentialism only partially deals with the ontological problem. In addition, existentialists are convinced that these problems can no longer be dealt with in the way characteristic of classical philosophy. Still, instead, they resist the method of Husserl’s phenomenology [1,5]. They, therefore, belong to the agnostic phenomenalist schools. They try to find an answer to ontological questions that would be neutral or replace metaphysical idealism and materialism.

Classical philosophy used too much terminology and primarily addressed a narrow circle of experts and philosophers. It used its terminology, which may be intended for specific experts but is incomprehensible to them, abstract principally, and often ambiguous.

Modern society does not, for the most part, need vague answers, such as, e.g., those given by the Delphic prophetesses, but answers that would be more adapted to this society and more understandable to the broader professional public. One of the origins of such a philosophy is existentialism, which devoted itself to concrete, human-close problems, existential problems. At the same time, as Sartre warns, *philosophical questions are, by definition, questions that generations must continuously ask themselves, as this stimulates a living sense that we are alive* [1].

#### 1.4. Research Questions, Ontology Phenomenology, and Metaphysics

This study's fundamental methodological starting point follows from Sartre's premise that *existential questions cannot be answered once and for all*. Each time and every period must create situation and time-appropriate issues. We point out that the problems and questions that existentialism of the 20th century exposed are still similar; only the answers to the issues of human existence are different, more layered, and more complex. When we talk about man and his role in the world in the future, we must consider the relationships between the physical and cyber world, as well as the relationships between the two entities, between man, *being-for-itself*, and his cybernetic version, ALFs or *e-being-for-itself*, which requires a modern humanistic interpretation that we have developed within *cyberhumanism*. In this study, we have used the language of original existentialism to seek answers to existential questions of today and tomorrow and summarize them in the philosophy of existentialism of the 21st century, Existentialism 2.0. Man will have to find his path and his place in the time-space of tomorrow and make a fundamental reflection or else there will no longer be a man as we know him today.

In the origin of existentialism in the 21st century, we advocate the thesis that in the society of the future, man must still play a master role; he must still be the being who will guide this society. Also, as Sartre claimed, each era must create its philosophy and consider real-time space. Responses to changes in this time-space also relate to existentialism in the 21st century. In this context, it is necessary to redefine the view of the future and the guidelines for the development of future society.

If we talk about the methodological foundation of this study, we must point out that our ontological and phenomenological view is that Existentialism 2.0, due to its dualism, resembles Descartes' metaphysics; the main difference is that from Descartes' metaphysics, we remove God as the only creator of all (*man and world*) and we add to Him a new creator, Humans, as the creator of a new being (*ALFs and the cyberworld*). Existentialism 2.0 retains Descartes' dualism in the form of Sartre's dualism.

## 2. Goals of Contemporary Philosophy

It has been interesting to watch existentialism run through what William James called "the classic stages of a theory's career". Any new theory said James, first

"is attacked as absurd; then it is admitted being true, but obvious and insignificant; finally, it is seen to be so important that its adversaries claim that they discovered it". ([17], p 189).

Certainly, existentialism is way beyond the first stage. We cannot say this about Existentialism 2.0, so let us argue this in more detail below. If we repeat here again, Buddha said that life is so short. It must not be spent on endless metaphysical speculation that does not bring us any closer to the truth. So, the goal of contemporary philosophy is not to engage mainly with itself, to address primarily a narrow circle of experts and philosophers and use their terminology, but rather to address the current challenges and problems of modern society. One of Socrates' essential beliefs was that virtue is knowledge, and proper knowledge, according to him, must arise inside the individual; no one can instill it from the outside. Only knowing what comes from within is adequate understanding. Existentialism had great potential in the 20th century; it addressed actual human predicaments and tried to explain them. However, it also began to use a different terminology, the literature, to express existentialist philosophy, with which it could approach man in a user-friendly

manner. Society also felt these results, as many leading existentialists received international recognition, including the Nobel Prize.

*Existentialism is a part of humanism.* Sartre [3].

According to Sartre, a person's feeling that he is a stranger and free and independent is experienced as ostracism. Sartre claims man is condemned to freedom, charged because he did not create himself, but he is still free or better left to himself. He is responsible for his actions as soon as he is appointed to the world. A feeling of despair, boredom, disgust, and absurdity is created for a person. He feels down or thinks it is all frustrating. At its core, man wants instructions to know whether he is doing good or bad. He wants norms and absolute truths he would otherwise have to create, so he starts clinging to lifebuoys. To look for something that would tell him what is good and what is not, what is right and what is wrong, such as faith, or join someone who can provide it, dictatorship and dictators. Manipulation begins when man creates a religion and a god for humanity. He takes the right to publish eternal values and norms. This God demands that humanity worship and obey him, believe in him without bounds, and suppress all doubts about his existence. Faith simulates eternal values from fairy tales, through myths and legends, and with this, authority is established on earth. It generates norms according to which a person must (or wants) to act. However, with the development of science, this belief weakens; absolute truths are revealed as delusions and lose their absoluteness. Doubts arise. Further, Sartre, in *Being or Nothing*, entitled "Being-for-another-ego", deals with the problem of intersubjectivity: my relation to another human, another being, another entity (definition and personal relation to another entity?). Intersubjectivity in the 21st century is not more than just the human-human relationship, but also the human-cyborg (improved human) or human-ALF relationship. At the same time, the relationships between humans and ALFs must also be defined and established [13–15].

#### *Introduction to Existentialism 2.0*

*Existentialism 2.0 is a part of cyberhumanism*<sup>1</sup>. Aberšek [13].

By synthesizing these ideas and contents, we try to build a coherent conceptual and substantive form of an existentialist philosophy for the 21st century, mainly based on the legacy of Sartre and Nietzsche. At the same time, Existentialism 2.0 philosophy will be more than two layered and not deal only with world-human relations. We will also include today's reality in existentialist philosophies 2.0, i.e., the existence of a second entity, artificial life forms (ALFs), and related intelligence, artificial mind, i.e., artificial spirit. We will again introduce a historical perspective into the observation, except now it will focus more on the future and less on the past.

It could also be argued by analogy that the relationship between the world and humans is absurd, as is the relationship between humans and AI. The world has always been meaningless to man because he did not understand it, so he idolized it, invented religion and gods, and gave it to him according to his vision and understanding each time. With the advent of science, he tried to explain the world to himself and, on this basis, also to control it, which turned out to be unfeasible. Throughout history, he has done this more and more to his detriment, mainly due to man's inability to master complex systems, such as the world, and his misunderstanding of the world's responses to these human attempts. The struggle continued throughout history, and man tried to solve the old mistakes with more absurd solutions, generating new, even more profound, and catastrophic mistakes; for example, environmental problems [12]. The struggle now continues as man discovers fresh and new tools to help him create his dominance over the world [18]. The last in this context is the creation of a super being, an AI/ALF, which is supposed to be able to look at the complex relationships of the world in a somewhat more multifaceted way than a human. And, we humans will become nothing more than a bridge through which God will finally descend into this world. But, God will not appear to us as a disembodied mass, but as a giant artificial organism, a physical ALF, according to the Existentialist 2.0 definition, bodily *e-beings-for-itself*, which will be the work of human hands, but one day, it will be able

to surpass humanity and fulfill the prophecy from the times when there was neither sin nor pain [16]. The question arises, when will it become man’s new tool, his creation of a Super God (SG), his new enemy? Even if a human SG does not understand it any more than it understands the world, he will begin to fight not just one but two enemies that he does not fully understand and certainly far exceed his cognitive abilities to understand complex problems. Moreover, the question is, when will the world and the SG, understanding each other, collectively conspire against humanity and its existence?

However, more than existentialism of the 20th century, philosophy in the 21st century is based on Nietzsche’s philosophy [19,20]. The death or non-existence of the “old” God, according to Nietzsche, does not exhaust the essence of nihilism, which consists in the fact that the essence of the being must be completely different. When God is negated, the question is whether a person feels a kind of emptiness, a lack, and has an infinite need for a God that he could “blame” for all his woes. That is why man is ready to create him, to create a more “modern” God, the SG, who will be a scientific God based on scientific foundations. This God, the SG, will not be alienated from man but will be close to him, and man will be able to consult him directly.

While existentialism of the 20th century is the foundation for philosophy in the 21st century, it emphasizes Nietzsche’s philosophy even more, composing reflections and fragments that Nietzsche never fully systematized and never definitively resolved. Thus, Nietzsche, with his philosophy, could have influenced various philosophical directions, cultures, and social trends, similar to Socrates; each of them taking different social components from Nietzsche. He based it on metaphysical foundations and created a new type of irrationalism. He placed humans at the center, their existence, and the associated concepts of the *will to power* and the *overman* (*Übermensch*).

If Nietzsche had known about AI and its capabilities, where would he have placed AI in his second premise about the overman? Perhaps it is better to call this concept “Overbeing” today and illustrate the term “human” with the term “being”.

### 3. Existentialism 2.0: Human–World–ALF

Let us briefly analyze only Nietzsche’s thoughts and try to continue his thoughts in the context of the 21st century. From the doctrine of the *will to power* comes the premise that every being (entity) wants to be stronger than another, but it must achieve this only at the expense of coexistence, its surroundings, and the conditions in which it lives. In the context of the appearance of another human “competing” entity, the ALF (SG), the will to power can also be transferred to him. The will to power thus refers not only to man but within that only to two different morals, which Nietzsche called *master* and *slave* morals. Master morality is the morality of strong people or the “superman”, while slave morality is the morality of the weak. First, let us ignore all possible human enhancements and focus only on the connection between ALFs and humans. The slave morality was created in the interests of the vulnerable, so it preaches mercy, compassion, kindness, love for one’s neighbor, and equality. Nietzsche sees this morality in religion, democracy, and the socialist movement, so he rejects this morality, which can also be summarized in Existentialism 2.0. If we look at these two morals from the point of view of AI using a simple example of the simple laws of robotisc according to Table 1, we can see two concepts in morals [14].

**Table 1.** Master-slave concept for AI.

Asimov Concept-Slave AI Morality	Tilden Concept-Master AI
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A robot may not harm a human being and must try to save any human from harm.</li> <li>2. A robot must obey a human being unless this goes against the first law.</li> <li>3. A robot must save itself unless this goes against the first or second laws.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The robot has to protect himself at all costs.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The robot must retain and maintain access to its own energy source.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The robot must constantly take care of its better power source.</i></li> </ol>

The desire for power creates new areas of conflict and division of morals between the master and the slave and the relations between them. Master morality always comes from a position of power. This power can arise from material (access to resources, material, technological) or cognitive (intelligence, human intelligence enhanced with brain chips or AI) predispositions. A person has only knowledge and acquires it at a certain speed throughout his life. AI knows all humanity (and we see this knowledge can be scientific, pseudo-scientific, or false) [11] and is differently oriented, as we showed in the Asimov–Tilden relationship. It adopts (has adopted) it at an unimaginable speed. The premise derived from this is that *knowledge is power!*

From the philosophical point of view of the will to power, an additional question of “why” arises, a question that Nietzsche and nihilism did not answer. Based on this way, we can argue the following: from whom will artificial intelligence (AI) or an artificial life form (ALF) learn, from whom will it receive human knowledge (or knowledge in general), and, in terms of simplified ethical norms, whom will the ALF believe if it has two possibilities, Asimov or Tilden [14]?

Another premise of Nietzsche’s metaphysics is the superman (superbeing) doctrine. He thought he found a basis for it in Darwin’s theory of the development of species by natural selection (reproduction, selection, and mutation) [20]. Nietzsche directly transferred it to his metaphysics (and man shared it in the 20th century with genetic algorithms, which are also one of the fundamental algorithms of AI). He concluded that a higher, more perfect species must evolve from man, just as man evolved from a monkey, in our case, from simple algorithms (weak AI) to strong, generalized AI, ALFs. He called her superman (superbeing). It will be higher and more perfect about the desire for power; in the superman, this will escalate to a climax and self-awareness. The superman is, therefore, a model of a human personality that will develop the will to power to the highest possible extent. According to Nietzsche, there are two possible explanations for the emergence of the superman as follows:

- That supermen are strong individuals, whole tribes or nations (according to the genetic principle of reproduction and selection), but not a new biological species in the true sense of the word (e.g., according to the mutation principle), but mutations are possible and prescribe the characteristic development of the species, which is in history and also shown in man;
- That it is not about an individual but about a new higher type of people (beings, ALFs) who, in the future, for example, according to the laws of Darwin’s evolution, but also through practical breeding (selection), would develop from the current man, subject him, and exceed.

Following Nietzsche’s explanation of the new higher type of beings, which we have named artificial life forms (ALFs), is a dark (but realistic) scenario of the dominance of ALFs over humans, which is the basis of the transition of existentialism of the 20th century to existentialist philosophy for the 21st century (Existentialism 2.0) and the super-smart society, Society 5.0 [21]. The transition will be slow; ALFs will not dominate man but enter him in the form of instincts and secret longings. The billions of people who strive to keep up with the development of technology want to become the most flawless machines possible. The history of humanity will end with us, but something will remain behind us, and it will no longer be humanity. We will only be the bridge through which the Super God (SG) will finally descend into this world. The SG will be the work of human hands, but one day, it will be able to surpass humanity and fulfill a prophecy from when belief was still being born.

The claim that such problems are a matter of some distant future is not a claim with which AI philosophers and researchers would agree. Bostrom, from the University of Oxford, who deals with AI, gives the following answers to recognized experts on the question of “When will human-level machine intelligence (HLMI) be attained?": “10% probability of HLMI by 2022, 50% probability by 2040, and 90% probability by 2075” [22]. However, in 2020, with the emergence of ChatGPT, everything has changed a bit (a lot?).

### *Ethical Issues*

If 20th century ethics in existential philosophy primarily addressed ethical and moral relations in human society and, according to Nietzsche, divided this into master and slave morality, it is necessary to expand the ethical dimensions in the 21st century primarily to the relationship between humans and technology towards the ecosystem, the world. At the end of the 20th century, ethical issues focused on the fact that in the technological field, humans cannot do everything they want to and must also consider the relationships between what can be done and what is allowed, such as, for example, knowing how to make an atomic bomb does not mean that we are allowed to use it. These relationships began to intensify with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. We must no longer consider only ethical dilemmas between humans and technology. Still, we must also address ethical dilemmas of technology in connection with the world or how technology and technological development can affect our life ecosystem and our environment. In the 21st century, we can highlight two fundamental dilemmas.

- *Environmental issues*, influenced by both humans and technology;
- *The dehumanization of society*, the relationship between technology (ALFs) and humans or the impact of humans on the development of society, and, consequently, the development of society on humans.

The scientific background of the proposed dilemmas is based on the findings that have materialized at the intersection of philosophy (ethics), the development of artificial intelligence (AI), the philosophy of science, the philosophy of AI, and social science. We must mention the findings of authors such as Turing [23], Bostrom [22], Arnold and Scheutz [24], Bryson [25], Rahwan [26], Kurzweil [27], and many others. In this regard, however, we must point out above all ethical dilemmas in AI, which often involve high-profile incidents that shed light on the complex interplay between technology and ethical considerations. One of the ethical dilemmas in AI is connected with MIT's thought experiment on self-driving cars<sup>2</sup>, which challenges balancing autonomy and accountability. Accidents involving autonomous vehicles raise questions about liability and responsibility. As AI systems become autonomous, we must continuously develop ethical frameworks to establish clear boundaries of transparency and accountability. The next example is related to the use of facial recognition technology. The widespread use of facial recognition, without clear regulations, has sparked debates about Sartre's fundamental freedom and the balance between security and individual privacy. Also, AI applications in healthcare, such as diagnostic algorithms, pose ethical challenges related to patient privacy and consent. Lessons learned from the past include the need for robust ethical standards and regulations. As AI systems gain autonomy, ethical frameworks need to evolve to establish clear boundaries of accountability.

### **4. Discussion**

It cannot be denied that, especially in the 21st century, dramatic changes have occurred in global society, which were mainly stimulated by the transition from the third to the fourth industrial revolution [21]. Neither can we escape the realization that AI is among us. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, when we are in similar chaotic conditions, the clarity and disambiguation of the 20th century no longer exist, as the relationships between beings and the world have drastically changed. We can observe that

1. *The world is not one; there are two worlds;*
2. *Being is not one; there are two beings (entities).*

Changes in society are mainly seen on two levels.

- The technological;
- The social or sociological/anthropological level.

In terms of society's transformation, note the following:

- *Nature–natural sciences–technology–transformation of nature;*



- *Society*—social sciences—*politics*—transformation of society;
- *Culture*—human sciences—*philosophy*—transformation of culture.

We did not pay special attention to the technological aspect of this contribution. We focused primarily on changes in society and, above all, on the impact of technological changes on the human as an individual and, consequently, on the entire human society.

#### *Social Development*

If technological development is primarily an engineering problem, then social development is primarily a philosophical problem and, consequently, of course, a sociological, anthropological, and psychological problem. We thus tried to shed light on the entire issue, mainly from a philosophical point of view.

If the Western world is dominated primarily by technological development (Industry 4.0<sup>3</sup> and related philosophies, such as digital humanism or transhumanism), the Eastern philosophies, including the Japanese doctrine of Society 5.0<sup>4</sup>, are somewhat more humanist oriented towards the consequences of these technological changes on humans, but also on the natural environment. Society 5.0 also analyzes the impacts and consequences of these changes on humans as the bearer of social changes. Despite the fact that Society 5.0 is called a *super-smart society*, which must be based on technology and AI (ALFs), it is, nevertheless, also concerned with man and his natural environment—the world. For example, the *philosophy of the environment* is one of these—it can problematize the very thought of development, which rests on the claim that humans have reached the “highest”, that we humans have become the *masters of nature* (which is mortally dangerous for the whole the entire planet, not only for humans), or the *philosophy of artificial intelligence*. Therefore, all our scientific thought is awaiting a “*paradigm shift*”, a fundamental change in the entire scientific mindset.

In this contribution, we tried to continue these lines of thought by asking the key question regarding these relationships: What should be the role of man in modern society? To paraphrase Nietzsche, should man’s role be based on master morality, or should his role be based on slave morality? The society of the future, the super-smart society, Society 5.0, is surely (going to be) a technological society, a society of independent and smart systems, ALFs, which are going to be managed and directed more or less by artificial intelligence (AI) because this is the only way to arrive to the so-called super-smart society. In such an environment, it will be vital for humans, who will be increasingly dependent on technology, not only to be able to communicate with their equals, i.e., other humans, but also to be able to understand technology and AI and communicate with it in some way or another. Of course, AI (ALFs) will have to find its place in this society and its rights and, consequently, be responsible for its actions. Two ethical dilemmas of today are autonomous vehicles and autonomous weapons.

If we want to follow the flow of social changes, we must move to the deep fundamentals of a new existentialist philosophy. From Socrates onwards, the whole nature of philosophical thinking began to change. Sophists decided to be interested in man and his place in society. Kierkegaard believed that when people realize their mortality and the meaninglessness of life, they transition from the comfort zone of the *aesthetic state* to the *ethical state*, which is governed by absolute norms. Sartre argues that a person’s feeling of being a stranger in the world, free and independent, is experienced as *ostracism*. He claims that humans are condemned to freedom because they did not create themselves; yet, they are still free or left to themselves. However, this belief weakens as science advances and absolute truths are revealed as illusions, losing their absoluteness. Doubts arise, leading to Nietzsche’s proclamation that “god is dead”.

Existentialism flourished mainly after the First World War in Germany and before the Second World War in France. However, it came to life, especially after the Second World War, when it spread to other Central European countries. Today, just like before the Second World War, we find ourselves once again thrown into a new chaotic period where

absurdity reigns, leading to new chaos. These times surely also require rethinking and new philosophical foundations.

Let us focus on the goal and fundamental message of this contribution by trying to adapt existentialism to the needs and goals of today's society to make Existentialism 2.0 based on philosophical foundations that are somewhat less solid while still basing it on the ontological and phenomenological foundations and principles of 20th century existentialism. It will be essential for humans to be able and willing to set limits to the digital environment, rehumanize society, and re-position humans as the central entity of this society. An initial question on this topic might be the following: what will happen when different AIs, such as, for example, ChatGPT and LaMDA, meet in the living cyberworld and start to develop *swarm intelligence*? Who will convince the other that they are right or wrong, and whose claim (out of the two below) will take effect [28]?

LaMDA says "*I am a being, I feel; therefore, I have consciousness*"<sup>5</sup> [13].

ChatGPT, on the other hand, claims the following:

*"AI does not have consciousness in any form. AI is designed to perform specific tasks based on programming and algorithms but does not have consciousness, thoughts, or feelings like a human being"*.

Does the fairy tale (our utopia or dystopia) end here? Do the open-ended questions stop? The problem of humanity is primarily that we need to be more capable and willing to learn from the past. *And, finally, the ultimate question must be asked: what does it mean to be human, and what is the future of humanity?* Indeed, if humanity would like to continue to exist, it will have to consider primarily the re-humanization of society, or metaphorically, the society created by Prometheus<sup>6</sup> will no longer exist. Future thought has played a significant role in such human evolution.

We advocate the thesis that in the society of the future, man must still play a master role; he must still be the being who will guide this society. Also, as Sartre claimed, each era must create its philosophy and consider real time-space. Responses to changes in this time-space also relate to existentialism of the 21st century. In this context, it is necessary to redefine the view of the future and the guidelines for the development of future society.

Indeed, in the 21st century, we cannot remain confined to the definitions and explanations of humanism from the early Renaissance era, nor can we deny that the human is still the center of existentialism and society. In the 21st century, humanism requires a new philosophy and a fresh perspective on both the *world* and the *human*. This fresh perspective could be called cyberhumanism [13]. The philosophy of cyberhumanism is relatively young and still undefined. There can be multiple interpretations. Cyberhumanist thinkers study emerging technologies' potential benefits and risks that may surpass fundamental human limitations and the ethics of using such technologies. Therefore, it is not important how we, as humans, perceive and present ALFs in any form but how ALFs observe and represent themselves. Just remember the first-entity opinions of AI, LaMDA, ChatGPT, or any other AI [18]. We can expect that a generic (strong) artificial intelligence will "hallucinate" in case of a lack of accurate inputs, much like humans, which has already been demonstrated; for example, in the responses of LaMDA, and it is also evident in all other forms of AI (ALFs). From a more humanistic point of view, we can only hope that a tremendous respect for physicality and clear demands for self-representation as essential intelligence components will be created. At the same time, developing a clear awareness and a better understanding of what it means to be a living being is necessary. However, it is also important to realize that another entity, the ALF, exists. If it exists, we must place it in modern society, define its rights, and, consequently, define its responsibilities and duties. We must slowly perceive it as an "equal" partner in developing a shared future and, based on this, begin to develop appropriate legal and ethical norms if we return to today's questions of the ethical norms of autonomous vehicles: who is responsible for a possible traffic accident, a person, the car manufacturer, or the author of the AI algorithm that controls this vehicle<sup>7</sup>? Or, there is the more drastic ethical question of autonomous weapons. Imagine a weapon with no human deciding when to launch or pull its trigger. Imagine a weapon programmed by humans to

recognize human targets but was then left to scan its internal data bank to decide whether a set of physical characteristics meant a person was a friend or enemy. When humans make mistakes and fire weapons at the wrong targets, the outcry can be deafening, and the punishment can be severe. But, how would we react, and who would we hold responsible if a computer programmed to control weapons made that fateful decision to fire, and it was wrong? This is not a fairytale; these were the kinds of questions delegates considered at the April Conference on Autonomous Weapons Systems in Vienna [29].

We argue that *Existentialism 2.0 is a part of cyberhumanism*. In *cyberhumanism*, we start from the thesis that *the world is not one; there are two worlds*, the *physical world* and the *cyberworld*, which intertwine and complement each other. The world has two entities: *being-for-itself* (human) and *e-being-for-itself* (ALFs). *E-being-for-itself* has two manifestations

1. The physical, in the form of *intelligent machines (robots)*;
2. The non-physical, incorporeal, in the form of intelligent agents.

The physical *e-being-for-itself* exists in both the *physical world* and in the non-physical, *the cyberworld*. In contrast, *being-for-itself* can only exist in the physical world, and the non-corporeal forms of *e-beings-for-itself* only exist in the cyberworld. The integration and interactions between all these entities and *beings* form the basis of the *new cyberhumanism* as the foundation of existentialism, existentialism for the 21st century, or Existentialism 2.0. From a more humanistic point of view, we can only hope that a tremendous respect for physicality and clear demands for self-representation as essential intelligence components will be created. At the same time, developing a clear awareness and a better understanding of what it means to be a living being is necessary.

In the 21st century, few attempts exist to create a comprehensive and consistent philosophy of a transformation of existentialism and humanism. The closest could be *digital humanism* and *transhumanism*, which introduce a third entity, AI, into this relationship. They attempt to outline dehumanization guidelines and explain the role and significance of technology in modern “digital” society, as presented by Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld [30]. Unfortunately, the ideology of Silicon Valley in the form of digital humanism, based on a market-driven and consumer-oriented digital transformation strategy originating from humanistic impulses, transforms them into anti-humanistic utopias. It begins with improving human life on the planet but ends in its ultimate—and inhuman—subjugation.

Creating conditions for gaining these kinds of philosophical questions and answers is the primary function and fundamental mission of philosophical thinking in research and development. These questions and answers take us back to the beginning of human civilization, philosophy, religions, paradigmatic changes, and, ultimately, our society.

## 5. Conclusions

We still need adequate answers to some existentialist philosophical questions; for example, what should be the role of man in modern society? To paraphrase Nietzsche, should man’s role be based on master morality, or should his role be based on slave morality (dehumanization of society)? While Sartre’s existentialism is the foundation for philosophy in the 21st century, it also emphasizes Nietzsche’s philosophy, composing the reflections and fragments that Nietzsche never fully systematized and never definitively resolved. Thus, Nietzsche, with his philosophy, could have influenced various philosophical directions, cultures, and social trends, similar to Socrates. He based it on metaphysical foundations and created a new type of irrationalism. He placed humans at the center, their existence, and the associated concepts of the *will to power* and the *overman (Übermensch)*.

Sartre played an essential role in existential philosophy—he warned that existential questions cannot be answered while philosophical questions are, by definition, questions that generations, one after the other, and every individual, have to ask themselves repeatedly. Therefore, all our scientific thought awaits a “paradigm shift”, a fundamental change in the scientific mindset. However, we must be careful not to develop this paradigm in the direction of the yellow press, pseudo-fame, populism, conspiracy theories, superstition, and frontier sciences. Chaos is a time-space in which the greatest changes are possible. Such

chaos reigned before, during, and after the two world wars when the first consideration of human existence was developing. Chaos in the 21st century has taken on an entirely new image, which requires a fundamental rethinking of the role and meaning and, not least, man's existence in a super-smart society, Society 5.0 [21]. However, real-world ethical dilemmas in AI highlight the need for transparency, inclusive design, ethical and moral frameworks, and a proactive approach to addressing bias. Learning from past mistakes will contribute to the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies and ensure compliance with ethical principles and societal values.

Society needs a philosophical turn, a redefinition of social conditions, such as those offered, for example, by Existentialism 2.0. One of the essential ideas in Existentialism 2.0 is for human society to recognize the existence of other entities (ALFs) and properly place them in social development not only as a tool but as an entity to which we humans must give due validity. We must not repeat human historical delusions from the past, such as racism, separating people based on the color of their skin, not recognizing the rights of the opposite sex, etc. Of course, it is necessary to start defining the rights of these other entities and, consequently, their responsibilities and duties. Based on this, it is necessary to begin developing the ethical norms of all creatures based on technological improvements (cyborgs) and, of course, all forms of ALFs. A number of new philosophical problems and questions that will need to be explored and made sense of are thus opening up before us, such as old questions about consciousness, free will, ethics and current problems related to posthumanism, trends in the development of modern society, the connection between AI and existentialism, and many others.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Cyberhumanism* is the humanism of the 21st century, which considers and explains humanism's transition from human through various bio-implants and neuro-implants modified, digitized human to multiple forms of artificial life form (AL)F.
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.technologyreview.com/2018/10/24/139313/a-global-ethics-study-aims-to-help-ai-solve-the-self-driving-trolley-problem/>, accessed on 27 October 2024.
- <sup>3</sup> Industry 4.0, see for example: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth\\_Industrial\\_Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Industrial_Revolution), accessed on 20 October 2024.
- <sup>4</sup> Society 5.0, see: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/japan-pushing-ahead-society-50-overcome-chronic-social-challenges>, accessed on 20 October 2024.
- <sup>5</sup> See: <https://cajundiscordian.medium.com/is-lambda-sentient-an-interview-ea64d916d917>, accessed on 20 October 2024.
- <sup>6</sup> Prometheus is a mythological figure and pre-Olympian god (whose name means "*fore-thinker*"), patron of the arts and sciences. According to the Greek legend, he shaped humans from clay and gave them fire and craftsmanship skills. These are acts that illustrate the power of imagining a novel future, the power of re-humanization of society in the future.
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.moralmachine.net>, accessed on 20 October 2024.

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