

The End of Ahistory

Right, left.
Conservative, progressive.
Plastic, elastic.
Sameness, difference.
Cycle, arrow.
Stasis, entropy.
Ahistory, history.
God, Time.

Some Definitions and Context

In order to try to stitch these dichotomous pairs together with a common thread within the context of humanity, it is necessary to go back to the beginning. Humanity did not always exist. Religion will say that deities (and, likely, non-human creatures) predate humans. Science will cite the fossil record. Religion will be returned to later. For now, let us consider the advent of humanity through an evolutionary lens.

There are two important but contrary facets of evolutionary survival, namely *sameness* and *difference*. Sameness allows one to survive in the now. If one maintains that the future will not be too much different than the present, then developing some form of *routine* will allow one to best cope with the rigors of a current environment. In essence, the strategy is to turn a problem into one that has been solved before as much as possible. Difference, on the other hand, allows one to develop the wherewithal to survive under changing conditions. Sameness best prepares us for the expected, and difference for the unexpected.

Let us now add a layer over top of humanity, that of *history*. It is possible to define history within the context of humanity. Prehistory is defined as the time before humans started making historical records, which occurred about seven millennia ago. Protohistory refers to an instance time when a group's history is being recorded, but not by that group. This result is due to the discovery, observation, and possible occupation of a prehistorical society by a historical

society. For example, one could argue that all non-human animals are protohistorical, as they are incapable of conceiving of and recording their own history, but humans often attempt to record some version of their history. One could also conceive of colonialism broadly as a war between the historical and the protohistorical.

It is possible to put history in parallel with chronological time to define a historical *rate* as the amount of change (of some defined parameter) within a given time interval. Moore's law, which claims that technology doubles approximately every eighteen months based on the number of transistors that can be fit on a computer chip, is an example of a historical rate. In this case, it is of a quantifiable aspect of technology that has repercussions that are central to current human society, which is rapidly changing due to increases in computing power.

For the purposes of the present argument, a rate will be defined qualitatively as *historical* if it refers to a change that is likely to occur at a greater frequency than an average human's lifespan, and it will be called *ahistorical* if such an occurrence is unlikely to occur with such frequency. Further, a rate will be defined as *active* if it is related to a change that humans have some control over, and *passive* if it is related to a change that humans have no control over. Based on these definitions, Moore's law would define a rate that is highly active and historical. Not only does the frequency of this change occur many times within a given lifetime, but it is also highly dependent on human prowess. On the other hand, the eruption of a supervolcano with ejecta volume larger than 1000 km² (a VEI 8 eruption) is highly passive and ahistorical. The last two occurred approximately 26,500 and 74,000 years ago and even if humans wished another one to occur, it would not be clear how this could be actively brought about.

Within this context, limiting the question to *active* rates, the general trend is an exponential one. When humans gained consciousness, it is likely that they inherited some

primitive notion of survival that allowed them as hunter-gatherers to seek sufficient shelter and sustenance in order to survive. This hunter-gatherer behaviour would go on for a very long time, but would slowly evolve from a very passive activity where it might be largely based on the luck of finding the correct berries or an animal to kill, to a more active activity. For hunting, better weapons and traps could be developed to kill animals more efficiently, and better preparation and cooking techniques could be used to limit disease from meat. For gathering, environments with more resources and greater safety would be increasingly identifiable and sought after. The advent of agriculture and domestication would then motivate a large shift in sustenance going from passive to active. The increasing abilities of humans to use tools to construct their own shelters rather than relying on caves and other natural formations or environments would also increase control over location and defense. Greater control would result in greater efficiency and positive feedback to the increasingly historical and increasingly active development of human society.

If one follows this trend into the future, it points to an increasing need to embrace difference rather than sameness, to wish for *progress* of humanity away from a given state of affairs rather than to *conserve* it. In this way, we would be more inclined to consider time as an *arrow* leading us in one direction towards the future, rather than as a *cycle* where the repetition of a single paradigm is desired. This would also lean more towards the governing laws of physics, wherein the second law of thermodynamics maintains that the *entropy* (number of possible future microstates that a given event or decision can bring about) should be constantly increasing, rather than maintaining a more *static* and predictable state of affairs.

The Elasto-Plastic Mind

The Euler-Bernoulli theory of bending is a key component of materials engineering. It states that there are two types of bending, *elastic* and *plastic*. Intuitively, if one applies a force to a (held) bar made of rubber, the bar is going to bend under the applied force until the force is removed, whereupon it will (for the most part) return to its original orientation. If the force continues to be applied to the point of failure, the bar will tend to break cleanly along a single plane. If the same procedure is performed on a bar made of glass, the glass would tend to stay in its original position rather than bend with the force and the glass will remain in its original position if the force is removed. With a large enough applied force one might begin to see cracks in the glass, which would be permanent and could not be undone by the removal of the force. If there is sufficient applied force to break the glass, it is expected to break in a very non-linear manner, perhaps into multiple pieces, or shatter completely. The latter would be referred to as *catastrophic* failure.

Suppose that the human mind worked in an analogous way. The first question is why would this be so? The first argument goes something like this. For every individual human being, this species-story described above plays out, but on a highly condensed timescale. When a baby is born, they are thrust into a world similar to the first human beings; without knowledge of how to independently proceed with their survival. Their independent knowledge is then developed through a combination of personal experience and guidance. At the outset, it is sameness that is crucial. A child must be fed, must be clothed, must get a sufficient amount of sleep, etc. This is facilitated by establishing routine. A child *must* follow the prescribed steps in order to maximize its ability to flourish. The notion of food, shelter, clothing must be *plasticized* so that the child would only reject it on overwhelming grounds because to do so would dramatically reduce its

well-being, at the present time or any time in the future. On the other hand, if we do not wish that all of our children grow to be copies of one another, they must also have some element of *elasticity* so that they can have some say in the creative process of defining their future selves. In other words, the plastic notions must be steered against change only because they relate to concepts that are *inherently ahistorical*: whether one lives today or thousands of years ago, there is an equivalent necessity for food, shelter, clothing, etc. in order to maximize one's chance to survive in this era or that. The elastic notions are those that are more inherently historical. Being able to identify which berries are edible is going to be far more important thousands of years ago than it is today, while learning medicine is going to be much more relevant today with the knowledge that we have now than thousands of years ago; what would a prehistorical "doctor" even be able to do? Thus, there are two not-unrelated facets of this elastic trajectory towards the historical, namely relevance and content. Ethnobotany has become far less relevant than it would have been in hunter-gatherer times, but it has also become much more nuanced and specialized due to increased knowledge of geography and biochemistry; we are asking far more probing questions than whether a certain type of berry is edible or not. However, both relevance and content inherently relate to the increasing entropy that results from humanity moving forward. The more possible microstates that may occur in the future related to a single concept x , the more that x is relevant and the greater is the content related to x that should be developed and pursued. Moreover, the greater the variety of these potential microstates, the greater the flexibility of the mind must be when considering possible ways forward, and the more important it is to have an adaptive strategy should things not go as one predicts.

It is argued therefore that the *external* conditions placed upon a human being reinforces this elastic-plastic dichotomy, but it can also be argued that the *internal* workings of the human

mind and the learning process imply it as well. One learns through a combination of personal experience and external guidance, but underneath both lies a *narrative*. Repetition of a story (in the broadest sense; it may be told, acted out, or understood in a different way) that produces a given outcome is going to reinforce a sense of predictability. Here again is a correlation between the ahistorical and sameness. If doing A always leads to B no matter time or place, then it is an ahistorical phenomenon and upholding the notion of sameness and repetition provides the highest probability of survival. If, on the other hand, the outcome of A is highly dependent on a given state of affairs and would tend to be different in different time periods, it is a less predictable, more historical process and being able to prepare oneself for as many possible outcomes as possible is the best strategy going forward.

The elastic-plastic dichotomy is itself elastic in relation to time. Although those basic ahistorical notions of survival are unlikely to be questioned throughout a lifetime (unless humans develop photosynthetic properties, for example), the precedence of elasticization or plasticization of mind depends on the changing conditions of one's life. As a teenager, one might have a very broad and very ephemeral notion of what is important in the future. One may wish to be a doctor one day and an engineer the next, but once one begins to work as a doctor or an engineer, one must work to reduce the entropy of one's actions in order to safeguard a patient or a building as much as possible against failure in the future. On the other hand, one's scepticism towards things that one learns in school may increase with worldly experience, providing a means by which one's mind begins to entertain alternate interpretations of things that one may have thought were set in stone at one time. For example, if one grew up constantly seeing portrayals of difficult conditions in rural Africa (from commercials designed to garner sympathy in order to galvanize financial support), one might suspect that the entire continent is as such. However, if one were to

travel to Africa and see for oneself a very different reality, then present or future claims of realities pertaining to Africa that contradict one's own experiences will be met with greater scepticism and criticism.

The single necessary precondition for an elastic mind is opportunity. First, there needs to be opportunity in the external that an elastic view of something is warranted. Second, there needs to be the opportunity to access information that would suggest a plausible alternative viewpoint. If community A has accorded and upheld a given religious system for one hundred years that has gone unchallenged, then there is little reason to develop an elastic interpretation of that system, nor is there information available that could provide a plausible line of alternate reasoning. In such a situation, an alternative cannot even be conceived of, and it is only natural to expect that this singular reality would be plasticized into the minds of much of the citizenry. This is in contrast to a community B that has a plurality of religious belief at present and throughout its history and open discussion about its merits and disadvantages. In case B there is at least the *opportunity* to have a more malleable interpretation of religion than in community A, though it is expected that many individuals would still have a fairly strong faith in a single religious reality.

It is suggested that contrasting the psychological failure of an elastic versus a plastic belief is analogous to the physical failure of an elastic versus a plastic bar. If the physical force on a bar is replaced by the psychological force of an argument against a position, the elastic belief will bend under the pressure of the argument. If the argument is strong enough to cause the failure of the given belief, then the smooth transition of the critical process implies that a clean break from the previous belief to the new position would be made. A major disruption to one's identity and outlook is not expected. On the other hand, the notion that humans could gain sufficient energy and nutrients photosynthetically, for example, would require a very forceful argument. If

sufficient force caused the failure of the well-established belief that this was not possible (for example via repeatable and repeated demonstrations wherein no other plausible explanation could be accorded to the results), a dramatic shift in humanity's association to regular foodstuffs would be expected, for better or worse.

To give a more reasonable example, the notion of radicalization may be considered as an example of the catastrophic failure of a plasticized belief. Consider three individuals, X, Y, and Z in community A described above, who have developed a well-plasticized belief about a given religious interpretation and its ability to substantiate reality. They then leave their well-insulated community and spend sufficient time in other areas where they see alternative conceptions of reality. Suppose person X goes back having an unchanged mind about this belief. The force was not sufficiently strong to threaten the previously accepted belief. However, some irreversible plastic damage will have occurred: the individual now has seen that the position can at least be challenged by the fact that others can lead a decent life with an alternative viewpoint. This cannot be unseen and will introduce a small amount of doubt that did not exist before. Suppose there is a sufficient force to convince person Y to change beliefs. A radical transformation will then occur in the way that the individual conceives of herself, her outlook on the future, and her values and goals. There is, in a sense, a catastrophic failure of identity wherein the previous identity cannot be salvaged from the fragmented pieces of the supplanted belief. For individual Z, suppose the force is insufficient to change the religious belief, but sufficient to force a new belief that rather than this belief being intuitive, it is in fact under threat and must be defended at all costs. This is another form of catastrophic failure of belief, not of the belief itself but of the belief about the belief. Such a model of psychical plastic failure could go some way to explain the militarization of belief, such as in ISIS or other radical and violent religious groups.

The differences in the reactions of individuals X, Y, and Z to the new information may be reflective of context. It is expected that a peasant who lives in poverty is far more likely to change views towards a given power structure than a member of the nobility whose position and advantage is predicated on that system. The reason is that knowing that we only live once, there is a *desire* for those that live in misery to see a change to their reality, whereas those who live like kings will want said reality to continue. Propaganda wars then occur wherein the ruling class tries to convince that the given system is ahistorical and unchallengeable while the underclass wish to convince that the current system is historical and can be changed.

The End of History?

Although Thomas More and others argued that there should exist an achievable state of affairs where improvements to society would no longer be needed, Hegel was the first major thinker whose philosophy gave history a foundational role. His general idea was of humanity as a collective being that was working together to correct all of the wrongs and contradictions that affected it. This notion of *dialecticism* maintained that every given thesis (crisis/contradiction) would eventually be confronted with its antithesis (resolution), and the coming together of the two would result in the synthesis of a slightly improved world where the negative effects of said crisis would no longer exist. A so-called “end of history” could then be conceived of wherein all of these crises had been resolved and the resultant historical state of affairs was completely shorn of contradiction.

Given the trajectory of humanity towards progress and improvement as well as the increasing need for more malleable interpretations of ideas due to a rapidly increasing historical rate and greater uncertainty, the only conceivable means by which an ahistorical interpretation of

a given state of affairs can be seen as valid is to claim that such an end of history has been reached. We may with some confidence declare an end to history regarding the relationship between humanity and the necessity of food and be highly sceptical about developments on that score. However, some of the so-called “Right Hegelians”, those who uphold and espouse conservative interpretations of Hegel’s philosophy, have at times tried to declare that we are at an end of social history. The most striking example of this is Frances Fukuyama’s declaration in *The End of History and the Last Man* that the fall of the Soviet Union signals the inalienability of western-style governance as the pinnacle of human government. Specifically, that the combination of parliamentary-style democracy and market economics cannot be superseded. This is equivalent to declaring that these facets of current society are now to be treated as ahistorical. That is, there is no need to consider alternatives because no better one can be found. According to such a belief, from this point forward whether one looks ten, one hundred, or one thousand years ahead, these central principles will still dominate human governance (should humans continue to exist that long). In other words, this central tenet should now become plasticized within every human consciousness just like the human need for food.

In accordance with the suggestion of how context may affect the decisions of individuals X, Y, and Z towards disinterest, flight, or fight, declaring an end of history defined by parameters that are disproportionately favourable to those that declare it is entirely expected. Those that will benefit the most from parliamentary democracy and market capitalism are naturally going to be the first to declare it the pinnacle of human socio-political achievement, and that this should become universally accepted without criticism. The major problem with these types of declarations—that they are never democratic—has not changed throughout history. An example would be to look back to 1689 at Locke’s *First Treatise of Government* which argued

against Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* that no, the divine right of kings should not be upheld as an ahistorical declaration. In particular, he maintained "If the Agreement and consent of Men first gave a scepter into any ones hand, or put a Crown on his Head, that also must direct its descent and conveyance." At any particular moment in history, the percentage of people in the world having the power to make their voice heard is small, but steadily growing. The more that power is shared through education, information, and the opportunity to declare without oppression, ignorance, or coercion what one really wishes of the future, the more resistance there has been to the status quo. This is because the default setting for the protohistorical is that it is ahistorical. If one cannot understand or fathom one's own historicity, then it is impossible to conceive of it as something that can be changed. As with colonialism, the protohistorical cannot be seen as being able to make an informed decision to consent to a historical projection of truth onto their position. However, in most cases they also do not have the power to resist because although they will have seen minor skirmishes and tribal wars, large-scale hegemonic and imperialistic practices with highly efficient weapons will be impossible to fathom and would be expected to contribute to a catastrophic failure of how they perceive of the world and their place in it, once these developments have been seen and cannot then be unseen. Thus, in addition to inferior fighting ability, psychical confusion about the failure of well-plasticized notions of reality will force them into a transitional phase where these fragments must be gathered together to create a new form of identity. Often they will (actively or passively) accept that this greater might must be right and emulating it is the best strategy for survival.

Regarding the specifics of western-style governance, three of the dominant ideologies that inform it are in and of themselves ahistorical, those being monotheism, liberalism, and capitalism. This is not only true of each of them separately, but also of their modern confluence,

as explained in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Monotheism asks us to consider only the time interval in which we exist as a testing ground for whether we are deserving of eternal paradise or eternal torture. All that is relevant to this is contained in one's own life, and therefore to think beyond the boundaries of birth and death, except in an effort to reinforce the given paradigm through historical example or future recruitment to the cause, is unwarranted. Further, to place historical time in the hands of a supreme legislator, i.e. God, is to make the ultimate ahistorical declaration, namely that history itself is ahistorical because no matter when you live, God is ultimately in control.

The current spirit of capitalism and liberalism are also both ahistorical in nature, this can be seen by looking at their most extreme conception, namely market libertarianism. The general idea here is that markets are the ultimate democratizer of power and resources. Yet this is inherently ahistorical because it fails to deal with the historically unequal distribution of resources and its effect on equality of opportunity. If everything is decided by market forces, then risk is maximized for the poor and minimized for the rich, therefore opportunity is minimized for the poor and maximized for the rich. Take the following scenario of ten individuals bidding for a project that has estimated costs of around \$1,000 and a return of \$5,000 upon completion. If nine of those individuals have \$1,000 and the other has \$1,000,000, then there is nothing equal about this. The nine individuals with \$1,000 are taking on a huge risk while the millionaire incurs essentially no risk. Failure for the nine is potentially fatal, while the millionaire can at any time increase the cost budget or walk away and look for better opportunities elsewhere.

The ahistorical obfuscation of capitalism is to conveniently forget about the unequal distribution of resources for those entering the market, as well as the continuity of power

represented by inherited wealth. In this way, capitalism can be seen as little more than a legitimization of the feudalist model where power and opportunity is concentrated in the hands of the few to the detriment of the many. The predictive nature of capitalism is that those with power will have a disproportionate claim to a familial or tribal legacy of power in both the past and the future, while those without power are predominantly expected to struggle. Though an impoverished individual may be bombarded by the false hope of the American Dream, for example, a more realistic prediction is that they have come from historical disadvantage in the past and should expect disadvantage in the future as highly likely relative to their more well-off peers. It also reinforces the notion that a meritocratic society predicated on proficiency and knowledge rather than wealth is unlikely to occur if those currently in power continue to decide socio-political policy. On the one hand, the richest individual in the land is likely to have very rich progeny, while the smartest person in the land has no such guarantee that their children will have above average intelligence. On the other hand, the essence of wealth relies on scarcity and the finite nature of available resources. If property is owned entirely by one individual, then it cannot be concurrently owned by any other individual. Contrast this to knowledge or proficiency wherein everybody can conceivably have the same knowledge and abilities at the same time, within reason. Wealth is therefore a zero-sum game while knowledge is not. Power through wealth is due to unequal distribution, power through knowledge is maximized by sharing, hence why we have peer-reviewed scientific journals.

The rise of Protestantism and the emphasis on religion as individual rather than collective brought with it the dovetailing of monotheism and capitalism to create a new ahistorical extreme. No longer was it the case as per Augustine that we had a moral duty to collaborate to create the City of God. Rather, one's individual wealth or opportunity could now be embraced as a gift

rather than seen as a reflection of greed and sin. In other words, history could now be forgotten completely. You *deserve* the historical conditions that you are born into, whether positive or negative, and therefore there is no reason to see historical inequality as a problem. God not only controls time but legitimizes inherited wealth and opportunity. There is no longer external sympathy for one's initial condition nor an internal ability to escape from one's fate. A historical interpretation of the human relationship to time ceases to exist completely since nothing is in your control no matter what era you are born into. Better surrender yourself to God as the only hope of salvaging your situation.

The End of Ahistory

The growing rate at which the ahistorical and protohistorical becomes historical liberates the minds of those who have previously been ideologically oppressed. This occurs via the increasing elasticization of central ontological and teleological beliefs about existence and purpose. The result is not only an increase in entropy allowing for the freer association of an individual with a greater variety of potential future microstates; it also reduces the potential trauma that would result from the catastrophic failure of a purely plastic psychical state. The more one can create and follow a smooth narrative between two potential microstates, the less individuals are forced to uncritically accept dogma in order to safeguard their identities and the momentum gained from how they have lived thus far. Liberation of mind in this manner improves the likelihood that a declaration of position or belief is a free and autonomous one.

The monopoly on information by those in power, who were best served by keeping their subjects as ignorant as possible and feeding them a narrative that uncritically legitimizes the status quo, has helped to minimize the collective momentum towards a more historical

interpretation of reality. Given the exponentiation of the liberating of minds due to increased access to information first by radio and television, and now by the sudden universalization and democratization of information that the internet has provided, the present time should be seen as the worst time to declare an end to history on anything except the most basic of survival needs that have gone unchallenged for millennia. For the same reason, any ahistorical theory of power, such as capitalism or monotheism, should be looked at with suspicion. The only way that it is possible to legitimately declare an end to history is, as Locke maintains, to have the agreement and consent of all, including those who cannot currently give their consent due to a sense of powerlessness facilitated by the projection of an ahistorical reality onto them by those in power. It is therefore argued that what we need now more than ever is not to declare an end of history, but rather to declare war on ahistory until everybody has equality of opportunity to decide the best way forward.

Finally, the rejection of monotheistic religiosity does not equate to a complete dismissal of spirituality. It only suggests that it should be shorn of those ahistorical elements that allow it to be used as a weapon of oppression. Whether God exists or not is essentially unfalsifiable. However, a sceptical religious argument can be made that whether such a monotheistic God exists or not, we must remain committed to one god, and that is Time. Time is the all-knowing, all-seeing, *disinterested* judge of humanity. For example, one does not need a hypothetical Heaven or Hell to decide where Hitler is now. Time has spoken and almost universally condemned him to an existence wherein we torture him in our minds whenever we consider his legacy. The only attribute that a monotheistic God has that Time does not is conscious agency. In this way Time does not take sides or reward one group of believers over another. This is

inherently problematic to those that wish to oppress through the plasticization of spiritual tribalism.

In contrast, the fundamental ahistorical reality that Time teaches us is not that we have no control over our future, but rather that we have no control over our being *judged* in the future for how we have acted and what we have done with the time we have been given. To quote Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*, "Man is condemned to be free because once thrown into the world he is responsible for everything he does." The responsibility for our actions, is our only (knowable) source of liberation, and the only form of judgment. Irrespective of God, future generations will judge us whether we like it or not. However, in contrast to any sort of Final Judgment, this judgement will not be based on our adherence to dogma or belief, but rather in the historical nature of our actions as being beneficial or detrimental to the future well-being of our species. The paradox of humanity without God is that there can be no egoistical moral payout; eventually all of us will no longer be aware of the world and will not be able to either bask in any praise or be condemned to struggle under the weight of any censure that we may receive from future generations. It therefore only makes sense that if we truly care about ourselves, then we must extend that care to the humanity of the past, present, and future. The best way to do so is by developing our historical sense of magnanimity while condemning any ahistorical threats against it.

Meaning as Destabilizing History

In mathematics, stability theory is used to define the stability of a solution to an equation or set of equations. If a solution is stable, then if you "nudge" or perturb the system from its solution, then it should remain localized, either in the form of regular oscillations or by converging back

to the original solution. If it is unstable, then large or irregular amplitudinal changes will result and it will not return to this solution. One can consider these two scenarios by imagining a semi-circular bowl and a small ball. If the bowl is placed upright and the ball inside, the ball will roll towards the bottom of the bowl and, after some increasingly damped oscillations, will come to a stop at the bottom of the bowl. If the ball is pushed in any direction, it will again eventually come to a stationary position at the bottom of the bowl. This could be considered a stable solution. If, on the other hand, the bowl is placed upside down, the ball can be balanced on the very apex of the bowl, but if smallest force is exerted on it, will quickly run away at speed. This would be akin to an unstable solution.

If one considers this notion of stability theory within the context of history in general and dialecticism in particular, then historical stability would only be desirable if all contradictions within human existence had been dealt with sufficiently. Chief of these would be the achievement of equality of opportunity irrespective of the conditions of birth that one has no control over. That is, stability should only be justifiable if the individual born to a poor family in Somalia has the same opportunity to thrive in life as the individual born to a rich family in Norway. Whether these opportunities are taken advantage of in full is another story and is, arguably, of no concern when it comes to the notion of true equality. It is not in society's interest to provide the same resources to the lethargic as it does to the productive. Yet it stands to reason that such equality of opportunity can only be achieved through a historical conception of meaning, and so the ontological momentum of society that brought it to this point should preclude such lethargy, as such lethargy would be seen to create no meaning and be a waste of one's single chance at life to pursue. Of all the resources that one may have access to during one's life, time is both the most constant and the most finite. Time is always passing, but once a

moment has passed, it cannot be accessed again during a future time. As much as humans can (in theory) acquire more money or physical resources at any time in the future as compared to the present or past, there is no such option with time: one can always make more money given sufficient opportunity, but one can never get one's time back.

Until such a state of stability can be achieved, it stands to reason that true ontological meaning can only be achieved through the perturbation of ahistorical conservatism towards an improved future state of being: to act so as to provide the greatest probability that some form of thesis-antithesis-synthesis—implying such an improvement—will be brought about by such an action. Indeed, history sets the precedent for this. If one considers the names that survive to this day, they are not those that accumulated the most resources or held the greatest power over others, but rather those whose contributions have facilitated society's continued rise from a state of primitivism to the present. Despite their writing over two millennia ago, we as a society still consult Plato's *Republic* and *Dialogues*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* and humanity would be poorer for their lack of contribution. In contrast, those ancient Athenians who instead devoted their lives to the zero-sum game of accumulating wealth and power made no such contributions and have been largely forgotten. That we remember those that have contributed to the future of humanity with ideas that have perturbed our course of history should imply that such individuals led *meaningful* lives, as their non-existence would have been undesirable for all. And it only makes it more compelling that we should attempt to pursue such meaning when we reflect on the fact that this is our one chance at life and death is an inevitability for us all.