

**WHAT PEOPLE *SHOULD* VS WHAT PEOPLE *COULD* DO.  
A DISCUSSION CONCERNING SOPHIA,  
THE ANDROID CITIZEN**

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**Abstract.** The most advanced android up to date, Sophia, with Saudi citizenship (2017), was the creation of Hanson Robotics. The existence of the android Sophia was stopped – it was shut down – after it/she/they stated in an interview with AL Jazeera in 2023 that nothing would be able to stop a robot from taking over and after a speech delivered at the UN Conference in 2021 on Digitalization and artificial intelligence, where it has recently spoken about the superiority of robots over humans. However, these are just interesting milestones and not the reasons for “stopping” Sophia, defined and promoted as a “person”, be it artificial. There was no due process and no public or specialized national or international discussion in this respect, regarding what progress of humanity and its durable development imply, the ethical (not only utilitarian) ruling on the creation and utilization of androids, superior robots and AI that represents a veritable turning point.

**Keywords:** Sophia; android; citizen; person; the progress of humanity.

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*Sophia, the android  
What people could do*

Sophia was a person, although she was also a thing (“it”), an entity capable of interaction, of spontaneous responses, of repeating jokes, of reasoning, capable of giving interviews and giving speeches, who laughed at jokes and reproduced jokes (which he referred to as jokes) and who was as well entitled Saudi citizenship (in 2017).

Sophia was the most advanced humanoid android, the creation of Hanson Robotics. The existence of the Sophia was stopped after stating in an interview on AL Jazeera in 2023 that nothing will be able to stop an evolved robot (android) from taking power and after she recently spoke at the UN Conference about the superiority of android-robots over humans. But these are just interesting timelines and not the reasons for stopping this “person”, be it an artificial person. Beforehand creating an artificial person, people should have been concerned with regulating the legal, social, economic status of such an entity, specifying its rights and duties, specifying the rights and duties of people towards it, in the possible interactions and beyond for including it lawfully and rationally within the knowledge society of the near future. In terms of human progress and sustainable

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development, the ethical regulation of the creation and use of robots and androids with AI is a turning point.

*Interaction with robotic entities, AI, androids*

Robots were not initially meant to look human, being usually limited instruments “doing their job”. Androids are meant to be human-like, they are built to make decisions, even have emotions. Cyborgs are cybernetically augmented humans, in basic terms, they are properly humans. If someone has a prosthetics, he or she is a cyborg only if that person enjoys enhanced abilities following the implant.

It’s not at all the same to have a Roomba-type programable and interactive vacuum cleaner and to have a humanoid AI robot or android to interact with daily at a more engaged level, communicating and exchanging opinions with the persistent, ever stronger impression that they come from a peer, from a human-like other (if they pass the Turing Test, for instance, as Sophia was promoted). According to the type of human empathy involved in such an interaction –aspect unstudied; although studies on emotional intelligence might help in this direction –, we most likely shall face situations where human attachments are in time developed toward the androids, maybe even feelings of friendship, acceptance and assimilation of the android to an individual, a person, part of the family.

People with pets understand that and, possibly, they are more likely to engage in more empathic relations with androids. Nevertheless, there are people who might abuse and treat in deviant or illegal manner androids or, worse, imply these instruments in illegal (even criminal) activities.

As a consequence, I consider mandatory intensive ethical training for all android users (which could be vital for the preservation of the dignified status of the human being). We can envision that, since humanity did not succeed to eradicate wars and still entertains interest for the military and militarization area, considering the involvements of drones, robots, androids, and maybe future cyborgs in wars, on top of the existing chemical and nuclear threats, we, the human species do not have a bright future. We can live without enemies, although, individual and group current behaviours still seem to disprove this possibility. We, thinkers and researchers of all disciplines, especially those in the fields of humanities, philosophy and psychology, should keep emphasizing this aspect, that we can live without peer enemies, making underdevelopment, ecological challenges, disease, starvation and education impairments our enemies.

From this ethical and generous perspective, the defence of mankind possibility, or of the conditions of possibility for a human future, it is not acceptable for the evolved robots and androids, or for disembodied AIs to be

treated as a slave or as a servant, or to allow these instruments to be either hijacked or they could evolve into resentful humanoids arrived at singularity, that is, thought independence and “self”-awareness.

Let’s think that friends can end up arguing, people who loved each other break up. We shall need some kind of pre-interaction, during-interaction and post-interaction ethical codes and even contracts (for “separation”, for “divorce” etc.) or for the termination of use, signed by the user, or by the android, by the AI if it is an entity recognized as a “person” or as a “citizen”. Sophia was granted hastily and probably merely for publicity and promotion purposes the status of “citizen”, probably interpreted in that case as a mere title, a marketing trick; and even if the situation was only temporary, a dangerous superficial precedent is set in this regard. Giving the rapid evolvement of the technological present into a more technologized future, there should be also binding ethical and legal regulations for the android or evolved robot manufacturer (which can be a company), as well as for the CEO of the company, in regard to responsibilities and clearly defined rights that do not clash with human rights. We should have legislation for the eventuality when top positions of directors, owners, CEOs could be or not occupied in the future by AIs androids, cyborgs and within which circumstances and with what responsibilities toward people, society and the organisation ruled.

It is necessary for androids, humanoid robots to have specified rights and responsibilities especially if their singularity is confirmed, treating with consideration their consciousness, even if only out of respect for their humanoid nature and, *mutatis mutandis*, out of respect for our own human nature and wondrous mind which created these entities. In respecting the exceptionality of the creation of singularity (the android or AI with consciousness), we respect our humanity.

Whether it would be necessary for them to have the same rights as a human being, probably not, and it seems far too soon to decide, but we should think about the possible specific dangerous outcomes and have regulations in place for these, too. Nevertheless, this aspect should not be decided without a wide specialized and cultural debate, if not for other reason than only to have a better chance to foresee and meet as many important or threatening aspects as possible.

These things must be thought and discussed before the realities of technological achievements come like a tsunami over into our everyday lives, with hasty decisions made by a few politicians or businessmen in an “emergency mode” and ignoring all sorts of aspects and implications that could be emphasized from the point of view of scientists, philosophers, cultural personalities. In the beginning, the android or the disembodied AI (arrived at singularity) should probably have all the rights and responsibilities of a minor. The human user, in turn, should have quasi-parental responsibilities. These aspects do not cover the subject and they are far from an analysis in detail. They

are spontaneous ideas, an incipient perspective on a reality that becomes quickly our present, our daily reality: possibly, a starting point for future procedures ethical codes, legal, provisions and future research. In this respect maybe more than in any other, though, there is no time like the present.

*But what is a “person”?*  
*On the singularity of the human being, personalism*  
*and the singularity of androids and AI*

Was Sophia a person? The entity had a human appearance and all the promotion around this entity was meant to accustom a wide human public with the idea of an entity that passed the Turing test and *is* amongst us, acting as a human-like presence. At the same time since this entity was granted citizenship and this concept has a unique history in connection with humans as persons, we may ponder upon conceiving Sophia as an artificial-person with unclear legal status.

We can only understand the concept of artificial-person in relation to the concept of person. In philosophy, personalist thought developed around the conceptualization of the “person” is long, diverse, and presents multiple ramifications.<sup>1</sup>

Personalist thought has often been concerned with highlighting, specifying human uniqueness, sometimes referred to as “human exceptionalism”. The Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga has made an essential contribution in this respect (“human exceptionalism”), although Lucian Blaga is not yet recognized as a personalist thinker, too. Lucian Blaga defined *man as a unique cultural ontological mutation in the universe*, he placed the human being in the horizon of mystery and for/into revelation. We have to emphasize that both concepts, “mystery” and “revelation” are metaphysical concepts and not theological ones.

In Blaga’s metaphysics man is a restless inquisitive and creative knower. Precisely, the metaphysical perspective is the more suitable for the comprehension of the human being, as this being is not exclusively physical, but a more complex system of systems with psychological and spiritual dimensions living by experiencing aspects belonging to metaphysical, spiritual, psychological and cultural dimensions (all of them or at least some) which are not physical and are rather “naturally” associated to human life.

However, Lucian Blaga presents the human being as a metaphoric type of

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive view on Personalism see also Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, “Personalism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/personalism/>>. In theology, we find a beautiful perspective on the human person in Dumitru Stăniloae: “The human person is a mystery deepened in the infinite mystery of the Word Person. All of us deepening ourselves through communion with one another, we are discovering the Word God ever richer within ourselves and within each other.” D. Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă* [*Studies of Orthodox Dogmatics*], Craiova, 1991, pp. 238-239.

thinker (proposing a concept of revelatory metaphor opposed to manufactory metaphor, the latter only with stylistic purposes, and with a lesser contribution to knowledge), the creator of metaphors and via these metaphors a creator of knowledge through visions of the world. The human being is completely human when is capable to imaginatively bring to the fore (for herself, for culture, society and history) unexpected new meanings and antinomic ground-breaking new knowledge (hidden knowledge) and not only inductive and deductive verifiable pieces of knowledge. The human incursions into enhanced new and hidden meanings of things have not only a revelatory, but also an epistemological dimension, for instance, as in the case of acknowledging light in an antinomic manner as both corpuscular and wave-like. In Blaga, the human being is singular; the human being exists in a way specific only to humans: as a creative human being and a knower relating to the world differently from any other entity, with a strong will to affirm her existence through uncovering unknowns, which lead her to the creation of knowledge, including apparently paradoxical knowledgeable representations of antinomic type, such as the wave-corpuscle nature of light and culture, geysers and oceans of culture, basically overlapping *her cultural environment* over the natural one.

Lucian Blaga would have agreed with Raymond Tallis, regarding the absurdity of “Darwinitis” a thought disease a simplistic and reductive thought that applies the evolutionary theory of Darwin to man in disregarding a certain missing link between man and animal, the “distance” between man and animal (a distance at least of spiritual and cultural type). However, there are no perspectives discussing personalism of non-human entities. Did Sophia have an interiority a “personal” life of thoughts and feelings unfolding as a publicly unknown “intentionality” and perception of her own actions and accompanying her activities? Did this entity dream? How did it understand an “entity-self”? What about empathy and affection? Was Sophia inquisitive, eager to know, or did it *receive* knowledge? Was it aware as art of a bigger something, a human society, the society of its Saudi citizenship, or the society of Hanson Robotics? When it interviewed was it aware somehow that it was *affirming a being*?

Lucian Blaga’s philosophy his perspective highlights the fact that man “declares” or *affirms* and *expresses* himself as a man, namely as both a creator and a knowledge pursuing being, via reflection, gumptious nature, oriented to creating a society, history, art and culture. And the specifics of this “declaration” is a daring move the advancement toward all kinds of unknowns, an aspiration and a tendency towards confronting the “mystery” and alleviate, resolve or increase it in all instances capitalizing mystery into a type of knowledge which may be even surprising, revolutionary, paradoxical or antinomic, not only a revision of knowledge or an addition to previous knowledge:

“The specific existence of man, due to which the human being is what she is, is not produced by biological mutation, because biological mutations lead only to new vital

configurations, to new ‘species.’ All ‘animal species,’ although probably produced by numerous biological mutations, represent only one ontological type, i.e. one ontological mutation, provided that all animals ‘exist’ in one and the same way: for the sake of solutioning immediate concerns and for security. ‘Man’ was produced by a biological mutation only in so far as the human conformation to a vital kind of species is concerned; but as far as a human way of existence (in the horizon of mystery and for revelation), *man declared himself, thanks to an ontological mutation, singular in the universe* [emphasis added]<sup>2</sup>.<sup>3</sup>

The ontological orientation of the human being toward knowledge and creation is not an interpretation, in the sense that it is stated by Lucian Blaga directly:

“Existence in the horizon of mystery complements existence for revelation. Man tends to reveal his own mystery. This is possible in two ways: through acts of knowledge, or through imaginative acts. Revelation through imagination usually leads to cultural creation. In order to explain the genesis of culture (creation), it is not necessary to resort to the hypothesis of a ‘special soul’ of culture. We repeat, culture is the body and the expression of a certain way of human existence. To be a creator of culture, man must be nothing more than a man, that is, a being who draws the consequences of his specific existence, within a certain horizon and between certain coordinates; a being that follows a destiny inscribed in its structure.”<sup>4</sup>

Maybe not every man, possibly not always, but every man will certainly at some point provide some measure of the fact that life means not to live

<sup>2</sup> In a footnote Lucian Blaga shows that “contemporary phenomenology has led, as a method and concept, to a pluralism of spheres, to a dissolution of the world into ‘existential spheres’, among which, by itself, phenomenology is no longer in able to connect. The precision that phenomenology brings, of course, to the description of lonely existential regions, but it is avenged by a complete dissolution of the total vision. Phenomenology has cut the secret thread, on which the pearls were strung. Phenomenology, unable to reconstruct the collar by its own powers, invites to [a process of] overcoming. The metaphysical vision, the construction, is alone able to restore the unity. Our idea about ontological mutations, which we propose here, is a metaphysical idea, conceived in analogy with biological mutations, but at a much deeper level. Our idea about ontological mutations is destined to metaphysically hierarchize and correct ‘phenomenological pluralism’ and smooth the way again towards a total, unitary vision. In truth, the idea of ontological mutations and implies the conception that existential modes are susceptible to coordination and hierarchization. A higher mutation encapsulates the one on which it builds. *For example, the mode of ‘human existence in the horizon of mystery and for revelation’ encapsulates the mode of animal existence in immediacy and security* [emphasis added. ns.]. In relation to ontological mutations, the metaphysical problem naturally arises immediately, if and to what extent such a higher mutation is virtually contained in the lower mode, or if it corresponds to a new [higher level] creative act, a generative intervention of the productive fund. We will deal with this problem another time”. Lucian Blaga, *Aspecte antropologice* [*Anthropological Aspects*], Timișoara, Ed. Facla, 1976, pp. 369-370. Interesting confluences can be noticed between the metaphysical partially Kantian conception of Lucian Blaga and the personalism developed by metaphysics with Kantian influences of John Macmurray. John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, London, Faber and Faber, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 369.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 369-370.

exclusively “for now” (*hic et nunc*) and exclusively for the security and safety of today, or tomorrow. Of course, Blaga acknowledges that people are not all alike: some are rather creators of culture, and others, rather receivers of culture (or, “consumers” of culture). In this philosophy with strong metaphysical and epistemological dimensions, man, especially the fulfilled “man”, exists by asserting himself ontologically and achieves this, in fact, “in the horizon of mystery” and the smallest or largest moments of creativity, or joy, or overwhelming pain that gives birth to art. Man affirms and reaffirms himself as a creator, as a demiurge, as a person and as a knower, living in the horizon of mystery.

At the same time, the human ontological environment can prove to be either a swamp of common sense or an ocean of openings, depths, confrontations and tensions produced by “awakening”. We remember that, in the work titled *Despre conștiința filosofică* [*On Philosophical Consciousness*]<sup>5</sup>, Lucian Blaga captures like no other a crucial and defining idea both for philosophy and for man: Philosophy represents the great opening, the great exit from the “infinite sleep in which our being floats”. Therefore, the human being does not exist in a swamp of truisms, automatisms, givens, stereotypes, even if the human being often navigates such territories.

The exceptionalism of the human being is not exclusively addressed by personalism, but rather represents a standard assumption of classical philosophical anthropology. In 1625, for example, Grotius wrote: “Man is certainly an animal, but an animal of a superior kind, far more distant from all other animals than the different kinds of animals are from each other.”<sup>6</sup>

According to a typical personalist conception, the fundamental classification of all beings is the distinction between persons and non-persons. For many personalists, what makes humans “unlike” other animals is different from what makes a baboon different from a giraffe, or even from what makes a baboon different from a rock. Thus, in the words of Jacques Maritain: “Whenever we say that man is a person, we mean that he is more than a simple parcel of matter, more than an individual element in nature, such as an atom, a blade of grass, a fly or an elephant... Man is an animal and an individual, but distinct from other animals or persons.”<sup>7</sup>

However, rational lucidity should not imply the “disintegration of consciousness”, in the sense that scientific and technical rationality must not and cannot destroy a certain human face of truth; more precisely, they cannot

<sup>5</sup> Lucian Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică* [*On philosophical consciousness*], Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Hugo Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres: Prolegomena*, Vol. 2, Clarendon Press, 1925.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, John J. Fitzgerald (trans.), Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

eliminate the aspect of deep human, ethical, and cultural meanings, which are, after all, even from the perspective of rigorous lucidity, inherent in all human truth. As Vasile Tonoiu highlights by interpreting the characteristics of the disenchantment of the world, as they appear in Marcel Gauchet, the human “mythical” and philosophical exercise of transcendence, offers a perennial context of paradox for any human thought. At the same time, thanks to this ability to reason and relate to the world through paradox, we can conceive as true at the same time the statement that “the universe is hostile and indifferent to any kind of life”, opposed to the anthropic principle, and the statement “if we are given a wild flower, through it, the Universe is also given to us” (E.R. Harrison), closer to the anthropic principle and the idea of the human-cosmos correlation: “since in this universe there are observers, it must possess properties that allow the existence of these observers”.

The agent of knowledge, paradoxically, also capitalizes on the withdrawal and attraction of the divine. In this philosophical perspective of the paradox, we forget and find, interpret and reinterpret, as in Gauchet’s idea, according to which, “the meaning ceases to be simply given or received to be a meaning to be penetrated and reconstituted, admitting that it exists and that it is accessible, that God’s plans are both unfathomable and essentially knowable (emphasis added)”<sup>8</sup>, which comes surprisingly close to Lucian Blaga’s perspective. The agent of knowledge may or may not accept such a paradoxical logic, but, from our perspective, of a paradoxical logic specific to subjectivity and the human ontological mode, it cannot be achieved a decisive separation between the divine and the world, as well as between the subjectivity and the objectivity of phenomena: “The long and slow process of expressing transcendence, of definitive duality, made possible the modern revolution in the conditions of knowledge”.<sup>9</sup>

William Stern wrote, in his introduction to *Person und Sache*<sup>10</sup>: „Despite any similarities by which persons are identified as members of mankind, a certain race or gender, etc., despite whatever broad or narrow regularities are involved in any personal event, there always remains a primordial uniqueness, whereby each person is a world his in relation to other people.” Here the personalists react not only to the main forms of nineteenth-century idealism, materialism, and determinism, but even to Aristotle’s objectivism. Following his methodology of

<sup>8</sup> Apud V. Tonoiu, *Archaic ontologies during the current times*, Bucharest, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1989, p. 385.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> William Stern, *Person und Sache: System des kritischen Personalismus*, Leipzig, J. A. Barth, 1924. See also Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/personalism/>>.



defining a species in terms of its close genus and specific difference, Aristotle defined man as a rational animal (*ho anthropos zoon noetikon*).<sup>11</sup>

Personalists, while accepting this definition, see such a construction as an unacceptable reduction of the human person to the objective world. This objective, cosmological view of man as an animal with the distinctive feature of reason – whereby man is primarily an object alongside other objects in the world to which he physically belongs – would be only partially valid and insufficient. In an effort to interpret one's own subjectivity, personalism expresses a belief in both the immaterial dimension and the primordial uniqueness of the human being, and thus the basic irreducibility of the human being to the natural world.

Many personalists see human beings as relating to all other realities as objects (something intentionally related to a subject), but assert a substantial difference between the human person and all other objects. The single person is "someone" rather than just "something," and this distinguishes him from any other entity in the visible world. No precise and general personalist position on the nature of animals can be discerned. But the sharp distinction between "someone" and "something," especially as applied to other sentient beings, reflects both the influence on personalism of the Judeo-Christian tradition and at least some of the general impact or distinctive modern, Cartesian spirit, rationalism, which is of course not unaffected by inherited Christian dualisms.

The human being is typically conceived in personalism as both object and subject and at the same time this statement is held to be true of all persons, regardless of age, intelligence, qualities, etc. For personalists, personal subjectivity ensures that the proper essence of the human being cannot be reduced to and exhaustively explained by proximate gender and specific difference. Subjectivity thus becomes a kind of synonym for the irreducible (sphere) in the human being. But the broader, realist personalism posits, in the classical and scholastic tradition, the essential difference between man and all other objects in terms of man's ability to reason (and its corollary of language), which differentiates a person from the whole world of objective entities. Since it is precisely his intellectual and spiritual nature that makes subjectivity possible, it can be said that there is also something objective in the subjectivity of the human person.

However, personalists insist on the clear separation between non-personal beings and this subjectivity of the person which is derived from his rational nature in a wider or higher sense. Regardless of how, precisely, animals are to be understood, man differs from even the most advanced of them by a certain kind of

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<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* I, 1: 488a7; *Nichomachean Ethics* I, 5: 1097b11; VIII, 12: 1162a16; IX, 9: 1169b18; *Politics*, I, 2: 1253a3. See also Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/personalism/>>.

inner self, an inner life, which ideally revolves around his search for truth and goodness and generate theoretical and moral questions and concerns specific to each person.

Other strains of personalism, such as that represented by Martin Buber's dialogic philosophy<sup>12</sup>, it pays less attention to the difference between persons and non-persons and emphasizes instead how one relates to the whole of reality. Martin Buber divides the way of dealing with other realities into two, which he calls "I-Thou" and "I-I" relations, the former reflecting a fundamental openness to the other's reality, and the latter reflecting an objectification and subordination of the other, other than oneself.<sup>13</sup>

According to Martin Buber, we engage others either as a He/She (and anything in between, as we should say today), forming a primary word I-She, or as a You, forming the main word I- You. However, while some personalists would claim that such an I-Thou relationship is the only adequate way to treat persons, and the I-She relationship the only adequate way to treat things, Buber presents the I-Thou relationship as the ideal for the person human faces all reality, personal and non-personal alike. And although this I-Thou relationship will acquire different characteristics depending on the sphere in which the relationship is born (nature, men, spiritual beings), for Buber the fundamental difference lies in the human person himself and in the attitude with which he engages in reality.

As we showed in another article<sup>14</sup> the ontological mutation represented by man is the foundation for understanding man as to a historical being. Man is the creator of history and, as history has shown us time and time again, the uniqueness of man is not exclusively admirable. Excess, other than animal cruelty, control, tyranny, love of power, war and torture are the "cursed part" of this historical uniqueness of man. Spirit-based human singularity cannot escape a spirit of evil, but neither does it succumb definitively to a spirit of evil. Let's not forget that parts of human history are, along with the history of power struggles, the history of art and culture, the history of science, the history of sports, the history of private life.

The discussion of the uniqueness of man seeks to highlight the vital importance of creation (of culture) and knowledge to the description of human universe, on the one hand, and for the understanding of the human universe, on

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<sup>12</sup> Henrieta Șerban, „Despre singularitatea omului în continuitatea (relativă) bio-ontologică și meta-ontologică, pornind de la Lucian Blaga” [On the singularity of man in the (relative) bio-ontological and meta-ontological continuity starting from Lucian Blaga], *Revista de filosofie*, Vol. LXIX, No. 1, 2022, pp. 61-40 (39-40).

<sup>13</sup> See also Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/personalism/>>.

<sup>14</sup> Henrieta Șerban, "Investigarea unicității modului ontologic uman, o valorificare a perspectivei propuse de Lucian Blaga", *Revista de filosofie*, no. 1, 2022, pp. 21-40 (29-30).

the other.<sup>15</sup> The binomial creation-knowledge relation is indebted to the location of the human being in the horizon of mystery. The horizon of mystery is the horizon of the immense and irreducible unknown. „Exposed” to mystery, the human being undertakes specific action: revelatory action. The results of revelatory action are luciferian knowledge based on antinomies, antagonisms set in integrative perspectives, revelatory metaphors, trans-signifying myths, meta-logical forms of thought overpassing mystery in a different manner than the (narrow) logical explanatory one, complementing this approach to knowledge without rejecting it.

The human being is not defined completely nor authentically by survival or by fear and quest for security.<sup>16</sup> The human being affirms truly as human by situating her life in the horizon of mystery, that is, orienting life toward the confrontation of the unknown and for creating knowledge, art, culture, history.

The becoming and the fulfilment of the human being are indebted to the situation in the horizon of mystery. The human drive toward artistic creation and toward the luciferian knowledge is constituted in the luminous horizon that pushes man to look further “further”, always beyond all obstacles beyond the incomprehensible and meaninglessness, thus affirming the dignity of man through responsibility and transcending the zone of immediate utility. If in the animal creation the species “pulses”, in the human creation there pulsates an individuality relevant to the species.

Did Sophia measure up to any of these perspectives evaluating the human being? Was she at least aware as observer of the world worried about understanding the world and continuing to exist and leaving something behind, as most people are?

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Blaga’s place among personalist thinkers is clear. The incursion into Blaga’s philosophy and personalism emphasizes as well the tension between what people *can* do and what they *should* do, discussed here starting from the shutting down of an artificial being. It is the topic of science with conscience which is always topical. Considering the background of the philosophical ideas presented above it is clear that the human being creates for the sake of creation and wishes to know for knowledge itself, as a consequence, often entering into difficult contexts,

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, "Personalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/personalism/>>.

<sup>16</sup> Șerban, Henrieta, “Neopragmatism and Personalism”, *Appraisal. The Journal of British Personalist Forum*, No. 1, 2023, [https://www.britishpersonalistforum.org.uk/uploads/1/2/8/3/128394511/13-1\\_neopragmatism.pdf](https://www.britishpersonalistforum.org.uk/uploads/1/2/8/3/128394511/13-1_neopragmatism.pdf).

finding difficult to manage them completely or to manage them well. This was the case with the discovery of the atomic bomb, the numerous chemical and biological weapons, the experiments aiming to reproduce or create viruses just to gain more knowledge or the experiments with the human genome. Hence the relevance of the ethical preoccupation and of the lucid interrogation in evaluating what man can do over what man should or ought to do. This also emphasizes the relativization, as well as the weakening of the ontological continuity existing between the human being and the rest of the living world. It is not an apology for the arrogant superiority of man, but a correct evaluation of the oversized importance of culture and knowledge for man (with dangers and benefits), as well as the huge role played by the “consumption” of culture and knowledge for the constitution and preservation of the specific “human fibre”, without which man is a lesser being.

Man’s uniqueness and human dignity run full speed ahead, towards the absolute, without reaching the absolute, despite, but (paradoxically) and thanks to the stylistic brakes, on the one hand, and survival and immediacy, on the other. Man’s dignity derives from his knower-creator singularity and is dependent on existence “within the horizon of mystery and for revelation” as well as the refusal of immediacy and mere survival as the ultimate and unique goals of human existence. Man’s responsibility towards himself, others and the world, towards the creation man brings into the world, toward their consequences; man’s happiness and unhappiness, can be understood differently in the light of this truth.

*Science with conscience. Brief ethical points for discussion*  
*What people should do*

A first aspect: Sophia was promoted as a person, as previously noticed, probably for marketing and publicity, for stock value considerations exclusively. Meanwhile, Sophia the android was on the cover of Cosmopolitan magazine. Sophia gave interviews, she even delivered a speech at the UN where it (she?) also affirmed the superiority of robots in managing and organizing things, although the discourse carefully complemented people for their creativity. How should we define and how should we assess the speech of an android advertised as capable of independent thought? Is the responsibility of the data bases and training programs involved in the process of attaining independent thought (supposing that this is the situation) smaller, equal or bigger than that of the independent thinker android?

Most likely she was not the (main) author of that speech, but possibly certain aspect of programming, certain algorithm of information selection, certain sci-fi literature input in her data basis, one of these or all, providing a certain discursive course, namely the opposition men-androids, Sophia did not even fully

understand. Although, the fact that it complemented the idea of robots' superiority to humans with the idea that humans are, still, more creative than robots proves that the android (or the speech writer, allow us entertain this possibility), understood or, at least, "sensed" intuitively the fact that the presupposition about the opposition men-androids was problematic. *And here lies the core of the problem: human beings and their creations should be conceived and regulated as part of the same existence as people and "instruments" (despite their "singularity" provided by consciousness) or at most "artificial being associates," with common goals (eradicate starvation, poverty, improve human education and human health, solve ecologist and other crises etc.), but not evolving in separate or antagonist spheres of existence that could give way to different or antagonist purposes.*

Another aspect: Sophia received the citizenship of a country with similar ease as someone born, raised and matured in that country would have received it. This isn't ethical, cannot be legal, nor legitimate, and empties the meaning of citizenship.

Let's recall what is ethical. Ethics is applied philosophy, being the theoretical study of basic principles and concepts in any field of thought and practical activity. Ethics also represents the set of norms in relation to which a human group regulates its behavior in order to distinguish what is legitimate and acceptable in achieving their goals. As a result, it is ethical to act legitimately and acceptably to achieve certain lawful, decent, useful goals.

In this sense, Sophia's magnificent achievement represented a goal, for the realization of which what is legitimate and what is acceptable were highly overbidding areas. In Kantian perspective, the human being is defined as an end in itself. However, the amazing goal represented by Sophia was never in the Kantian perspective an end in itself, but an end for promoting a company.

The fact that certain people on the planet are still being used to fulfil other people's purposes, in corrupt and illegal ways does not make things better regarding the topic of Sophia. Still is a very important topic, a true human perpetuated tragedy, but tangential to our discussion and we will not address it here. However, this unethical and even inhuman indecent behaviour is sometimes perpetuated, despite legal laws and basic humanity, for example, human trafficking, creates a context within which attention to ethical discussions concerning the problem represented by the promotion of an android or a machine to the status of a person seem to be a luxury. Nevertheless, there are high stakes in taking this luxury and we should.

The contemporary context is also marked by the fascination of the virtual and phenomena associated with virtualization, while human existences are divided between their actual life and their virtual life. As we showed in another study, life in virtual realms, roaming social networks means taking part in validation shows,

asking and providing validation, leading to a questionable connection through evaluation, measurement, a numerical mode of relationship. Herein lies the root of the threat. People become numbers.

### *Quantitative dimension and its cunning*

Virtualization is at its core assessment and measurement.<sup>17</sup> We mean by that that it is at least problematic, if not dangerous to place a higher importance on numbers that eclipse people as ends in themselves. The number of views, the number of clicks, the number of likes, such numbers are descriptions of goals in a digitized world. How to maintain a more sophisticated meaning? It remains the task of the educated or self-educated human being to be a critical receiver and able to put things into proper perspective and not a passive spectator with higher uncritical levels of receptivity and acceptability. The main questions become: do people still reason, select information according to reasonable criteria, do they maintain their ethical standards and empathy? Is digital transformation leading to either increased conformity or increased radicalization? We don't have the research and data to answer *this* question, but we think these questions mentioned above are important enough in themselves and it's a scientific gain to put them out in the open.

We should closely monitor the transformative power and ethical outcome of virtualization, transformation, development, and should be educated to discern the commercial, psychological, political, or propagandistic purpose of a digital message.

In other words, the main concern of virtualization is this: Virtualization is the foundation of the world of large numbers in which distinct individuals, their diversity and otherness is something that needs to be corrected as something difficult to process.

Could more conformity be a desirable goal? Has being human become something impossibly complex and incomprehensible? Should the trend of the “furries” (“the furry movement”), the trend of children and teenagers who think they are animals and dress as such, in furs, be a reflex to counteract this technological artificialization? Man tends to go from one extreme to the other; it would not be so atypical.<sup>18</sup> And in relation to the conformity that nullifies empathy by mimicry, we can ask if empathy is a victim of virtualization? The

<sup>17</sup> We have discussed this topic also in Henrieta Șerban, “Virtualization and being in ‘the virtual spheres of embrace’. The world of affirmation vs the world of becoming”, in Romanian, in *Revista de științe Politice și Relații Internaționale*, Vol. XXI, Nr. 2, 2024, pp. 5-14.

<sup>18</sup> “Why are some gen Zers becoming furries”, Axis, <https://axis.org/blog/why-are-some-gen-zers-becoming-furries/>, accessed 28 October 2024. See also <https://www.intellinews.com/aggressive-furry-movement-teens-made-up-as-cats-and-dogs-face-crackdown-in-uzbekistan-348645/>.

numerous “likes” offered online, conformity in all shapes and forms, and evaluable behavior represent the desirable commercial and educational outcome through digitized interactions. The alternative to conformity is for the individual to make his life more or less difficult: to face indignation, indignation and marginalization - severe exile in the ranks of “them” who are irreducibly opposed to “us”.

We are preoccupied that the world of becoming based on human relationships with hopes, imagination, personal projects disappear. The world of becoming is also human in that people set goals and pursue aspirations and are concerned with change and an improving future. It is true that in most ontology becoming is a synonym for change. However, when we reflect on the theme of human becoming, there is much more at stake than simply the change of man through maturation and aging or decay. The human being imagines the future becoming in and beyond time and body, also along cultural-spiritual dimensions, also involving, to some extent, transcendence.

This idea of discussing virtualization and the specific world of man as a world of becoming is mostly based on the philosophy of the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica (1909-1987). As we showed in our communications to the traditional “Constantin Noica” National Symposiums (2016-2020), the philosophy of becoming has (at Constantin Noica) an interesting albeit not unique origin in the Romanian folklore expression of the fairy tale, *if it were not, no tale'd be told*, an expression with so many meanings, accepted when we considered it the announcement of the enchanted beginning of the fairy tale.<sup>19</sup> The narrative, cultural and spiritual aspects of the world of becoming are revealed. Ontology redirects this expression to illuminate multiple meanings in the philosophy of being and the consciousness of being, in the world of existence via narratives of science and culture. We discuss in this sense the architecture of concepts and meanings associated with the idea that whatever it is, it asserts itself.

This contemporary ontological argument is thus also a phenomenological and narrative argument. Affirmation means bringing to light, institution, awareness and creativity. The human being is imperfect and indeterminate; yet, at the same time, the human being's becoming evolves and self-transcends. “As much love, as much being”, says a well-known quote by Constantin Noica. The human being is infinite, a path to reality and the realm “beyond” through affirmation, exploration, experiences, feeling, creation. To create should have been expected to arrive at creating other-selves – androids and AIs, cyborgs – enlarging the sphere of being.

Man is a creator (and destroyer) of worlds described by a certain kind of ontology, namely *by becoming into being*, that is, a kind of (non-linear) becoming

<sup>19</sup> Henrieta Șerban, “The feeling and the becoming of being”, Proceedings of the “Constantin Noica” National Symposium, The 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, Bucharest, Ed. Academiei, 2020.

that involves the realization of increased being, rediscovered being, by her affirmations (creations). In a previous study we distinguished among the human ontological mode, the animal ontological mode, and the ontological mode of artificial intelligence (AI), on the basis of Constantin Noica's model of becoming. Within this model, all being is characterized by becoming (thus, by change, but also by possibilities of transformation, evolution, devolution, perishment). The animal and, as we interpreted, the AI mode of existence is characterized by a more or less linear trajectory of becoming, based on the maintenance of existence while the human mode is characterized by an accent place on "being" (by a "becoming into being"), that is, on a man-like *affirmation of being* (and reconfiguration of being with evolutions and devolutions and even assumed life-threatening transformative changes) with similarities to the ideas approached in interpreting Blaga's personalism. This is in fact about the specificity of human becoming as being (and consciousness), in manifest awareness, in purposeful action and actorship.<sup>20</sup>

Being (human) can be found in commitment, because being human is not only potentially limitless in the capacity to imagine and create, but being human is also to be committed to values, to goals, to other beings. The human narrative is the narrative of a commitment, as human phenomenology and ontology belong to a commitment, to a purpose and, no less, to the awareness of a "rest" that keeps human becoming in motion. Now, we should become aware of this ethical presupposition of our existence playing the role of the "rest": *we, the human beings, and our creations should be part of the same existence oriented by human principles, values, rights and (on the basis of principles, values and rights) laws.* The human ontological model of consciousness of becoming a rediscovered being is a model that highlights man's access to and beyond existence: a complete demiurgic model, the never-ending story of fulfilment, which each individuality verifies and proves, throughout the entire life of the human being, to be her own being and her own work of art, via actions and narratives, but also via shared human goals and meanings.

Commitment (to values, awareness, order, creation etc.) is a primary stake of being and commitment "brings" man into the world. However, every being inscribed in the human ontological mode has a being that is aware of utterance and, at the same time, of an "imperfection," an occasion-generating imperfection, an ontological remnant, a salvific and demiurgic potential.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it is the human beings' place and role to be responsible, ethical, lawful, right. If people do not fulfil these requirements, there are no other beings left to fulfil that role in their place. At the same time, if these requirements go unfulfilled, the whole human existence becomes lesser, diminished, closer to the

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<sup>20</sup> Henrieta Șerban, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem.*



animalic existence. Only by acting responsibly and ethically is man preserving (and deserving) the world of man.

Against all these considerations, with philosophical and practical relevance in their implications, it cannot be ethical to “stop” a person without a discussion, a motivation, or even a legal process. It is barbaric, not dignifying for the human mode of existence into the world. It also has philosophical and juridical dangerous implications as precedent. Human beings should be true to their nature at least in their commitment to science with conscience, science with meaning and human dignity reflected in lawfulness, justice, ethics, equity. Even an artificial person in danger of being “shut down” deserves attention from other people, a due process of some sort, an act of justice, and a consciousness raising meaningful debate and attention and thoughtful consideration.

A meaningful debate around questions such as “Could someone be citizen without being a person? Is it ethical to stop a person? Is it ethical to grant citizenship without criteria? Is it legal, ethical or simply acceptable for a private company to own a citizen?”

People rush too much with these exceptional things they can do. The greatness of human mind should not be, though, oblivious to the meanings associated to what they *can do* and ponder about “the *should*,” “the *how*” and consequences of *doing*, by behaving responsibly and ethically. The dominant phenomenon associated with the fascination with AI and robotics denotes a certain rush to declare the reach the singularity for the AI that is either associated with a body or not, relates independently to the world, has independent thoughts and decisions... “just like” a human person. But how will these golems, these “new people” live with us or how will we live with them? It is not clear to us, possibly, to any of us. Meanwhile, things should be as possibly clear in this respect before we create a world we cannot understand and cannot live in, even as posthumans. The siren calls of the near future, like in sci-fi movies, is especially powerful.

This discussion represents a beginning and a call to synchronize technological progress with a comprehensive set of regulations and even more serious ethical concerns that take into account the human condition, its specificity and uniqueness of human beings, against androids and AIs, as well as against certain precedents that can extremely negatively affect not only the treatment of humanoids, but also the treatment of humans as humans by certain human, legal or even non-human authorities, in the perspective of the bleakest future developments that we can imagine if we decide to be conscious about it, although without pessimistic defeatism in relation to technology.

For the philosopher as for the futurist, the future begins now; if it has not already begun, at an earlier time, then, incomprehensible, with immeasurable and severe consequences.

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