LECTURE NO. 12

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

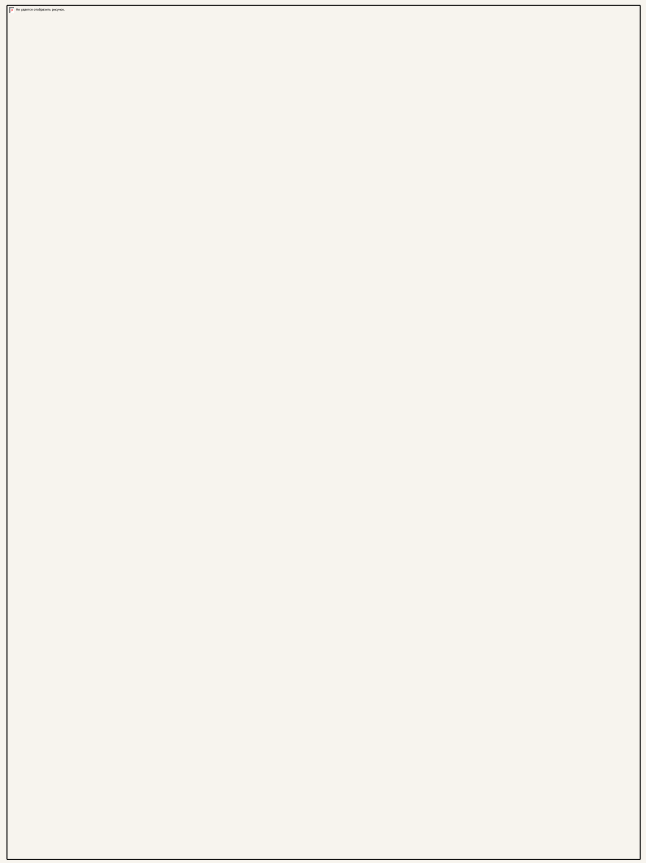
Society, history, inequality, individuality, and the future of humanity

Philosophy • Society • History

Lecture Plan

Six major thematic blocks of the lecture

1. Society as an object of philosophical analysis
2. Social structure and stratification
3. Driving forces and subjects of the historical process
4. The direction of history: progress or cyclicity?
5. Society and the individual
6. Global problems and the future of humanity



From the structure of society to planetary responsibility

PART 1

1. Society as an Object of Philosophical Analysis

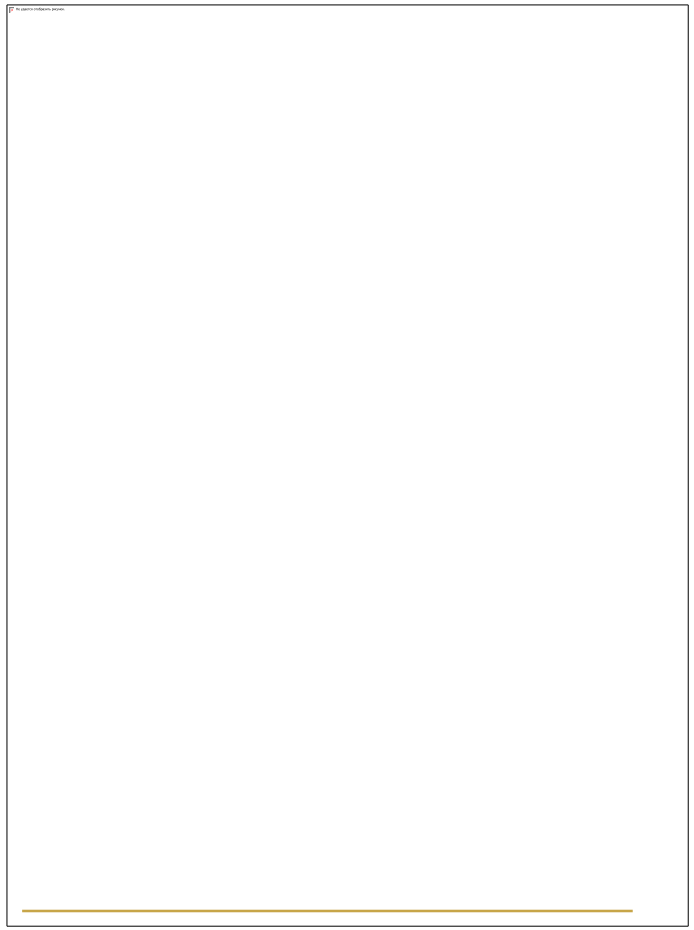
Why society is more than a crowd of people

- Society is a self-developing system rather than a mechanical sum of individuals.
- Unlike nature, social life is built from meanings, goals, values, and conscious action.
- The philosophical task is to understand how order emerges from freedom and plurality.

What Social Philosophy Studies

The field asks about the meaning, structure, and destiny of collective life

- It investigates society as an integral organism with its own logic of development.
- It asks what binds individuals into institutions, communities, and civilizations.
- It studies the meaning of history, the causes of crises, and the prospects of the future.
- It connects economy, politics, culture, and ethics into one analytical framework.



What • Social • Philosophy • Studies

Society and Nature: A Fundamental Difference

Natural processes follow physical necessity; social processes include meaning and choice

Natural world

- Governed by blind elements and physical regularities.
- Processes unfold without conscious purpose.
- A tree grows because of biological causality.

Social world

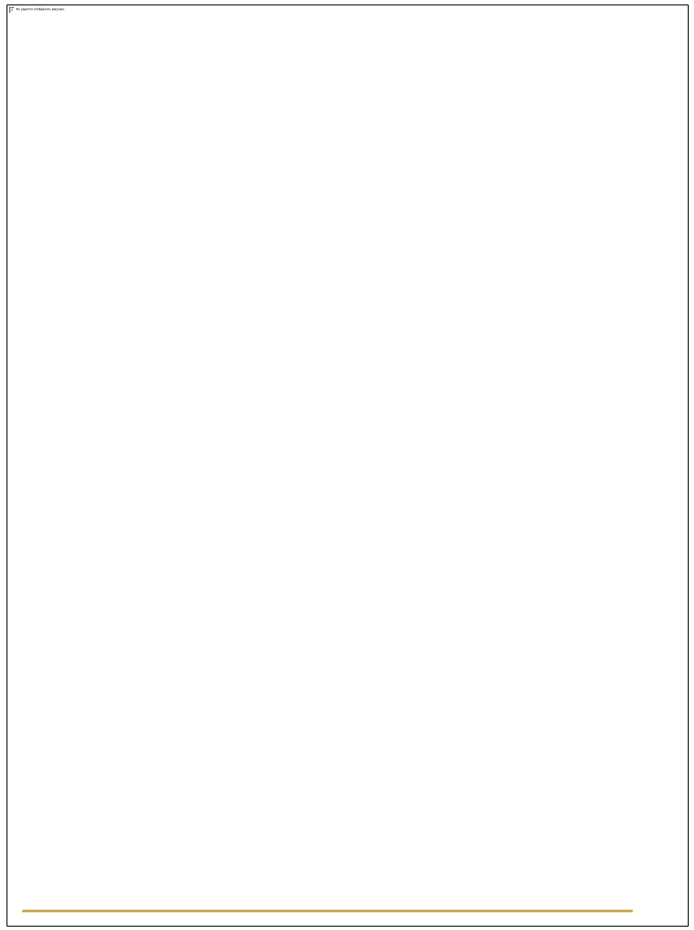
- Built from human intentions, values, and goals.
- Action presupposes interpretation and decision.
- Even stable patterns pass through human will.

Key philosophical contrast

Social Laws as “Law-Tendencies”

A social law is not a rigid formula but a tendency emerging through countless actions

- A law of nature acts with necessity under the same conditions.
- A social law appears as a persistent trend, not an immutable constant.
- It becomes visible only through the interaction of millions of decisions and institutions.
- Random acts exist, yet over time they form recognizable regularities.



Social • Laws • as • LawTendencies

Naturalism and Its Limits

One classical lens tries to read society as an extension of nature

What naturalism emphasizes

- Biological drives and survival mechanisms.
- Geographical and environmental conditions.
- Human beings as part of a broader natural continuum.

What naturalism cannot explain well

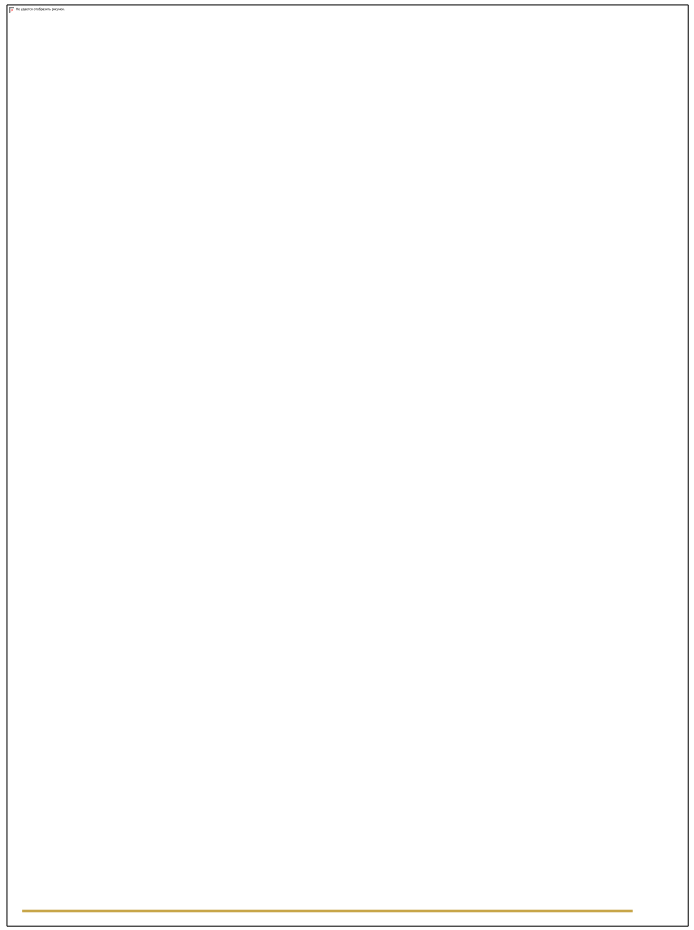
- Culture, symbols, moral choice, and historical creativity.
- Why meaning can overturn biological expediency.
- Why society is more than a “super-anthill.”

Key philosophical contrast

Idealism: Society as a World of Meanings

The idealist lens puts spirit, values, and ideas at the center of analysis

- Ideas, beliefs, ethical norms, and cultural codes shape institutions and behavior.
- Changes in religion, ideology, and values can transform the entire historical landscape.
- Society is understood not only as material organization but as embodied meaning.
- This view highlights the symbolic dimension that purely economic explanations may miss.

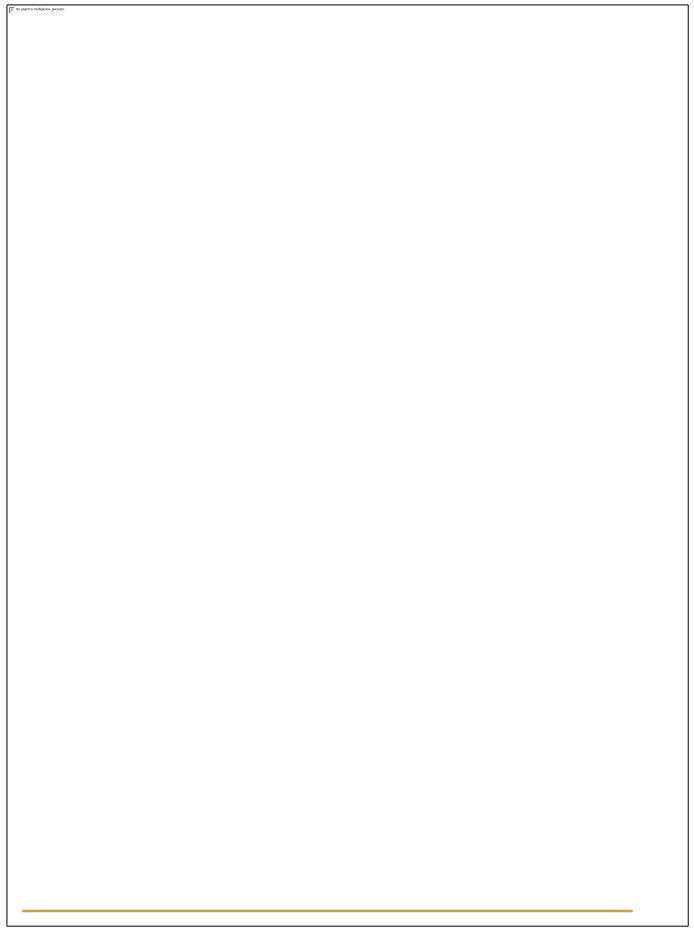


Idealism • Society • as • a

Materialism: Society as a System of Production

The materialist tradition grounds social life in labor and the economy

- Before art or philosophy, people must secure food, shelter, and survival.
- The mode of production influences institutions, political order, and consciousness.
- Economic relations become the base on which other forms of social life are built.
- This approach shows how material conditions set limits for ideas and reforms.



Materialism • Society • as • a

The Systems Approach: Four Interdependent Spheres

Modern analysis combines structure and meaning

1 Economic sphere

Provides material survival, production, exchange, and the resource base of society.

2 Political sphere

Organizes power, decision-making, security, and the management of collective processes.

3 Social sphere

Regulates relations among groups, classes, communities, and institutions.

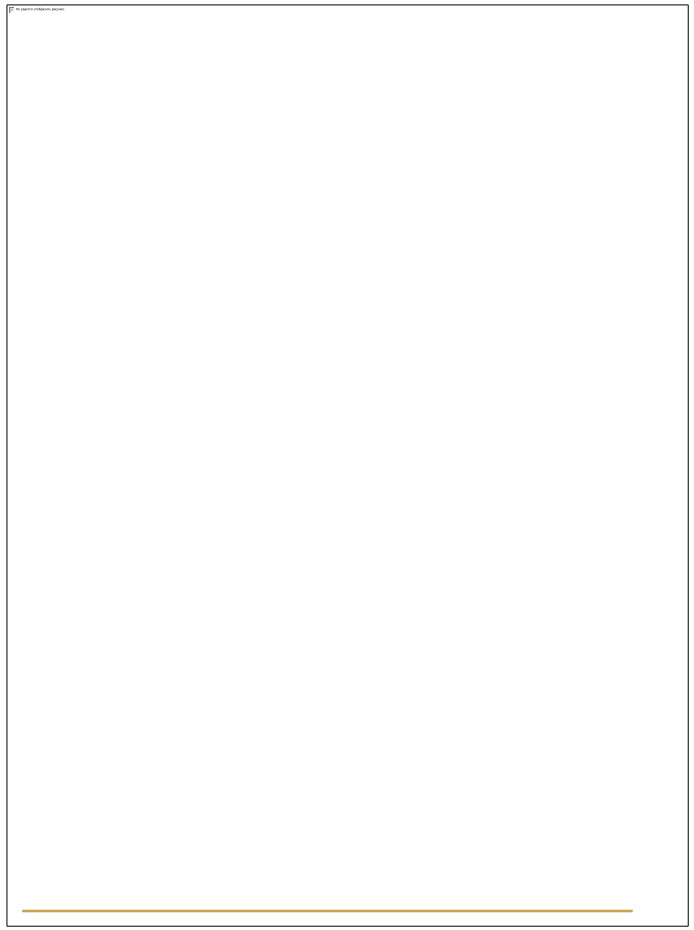
4 Spiritual sphere

Produces values, meanings, ideals, science, and cultural orientation.

Interdependence of the Social Spheres

No sphere exists in complete isolation

- An economic crisis can destabilize politics and deepen social conflict.
- A spiritual vacuum can weaken public solidarity and civic responsibility.
- Political collapse disrupts institutions that support everyday life.
- The health of society depends on the balance of all four spheres at once.



Interdependence • of • the • Social

PART 2

2. Social Structure and Stratification

Why every society develops hierarchy, institutions, and mobility

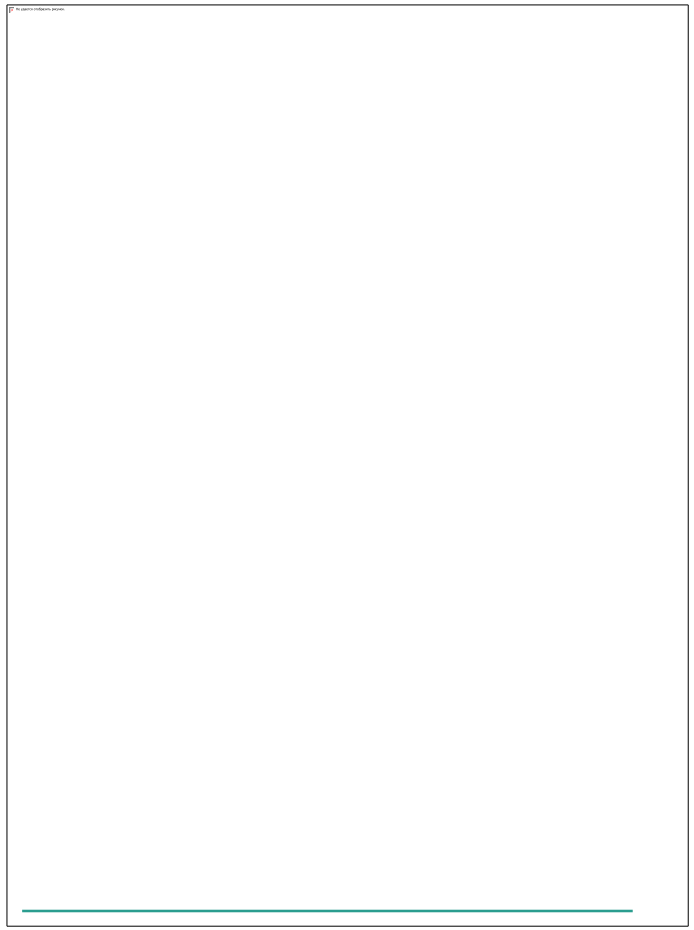
- Society is internally organized through institutions, roles, and group divisions.
- Inequality is not random: it follows patterns of wealth, power, prestige, and education.
- Mobility determines whether hierarchy stabilizes society or turns it explosive.



The Architecture of Social Life

Society is layered from persons to institutions

- Individuals are the simplest social units, but they rarely act in total isolation.
- Groups and communities unite people by profession, belief, identity, or common interest.
- Institutions provide stable rules that coordinate behavior across generations.
- Social order therefore rests on patterned relations, not spontaneous encounters alone.

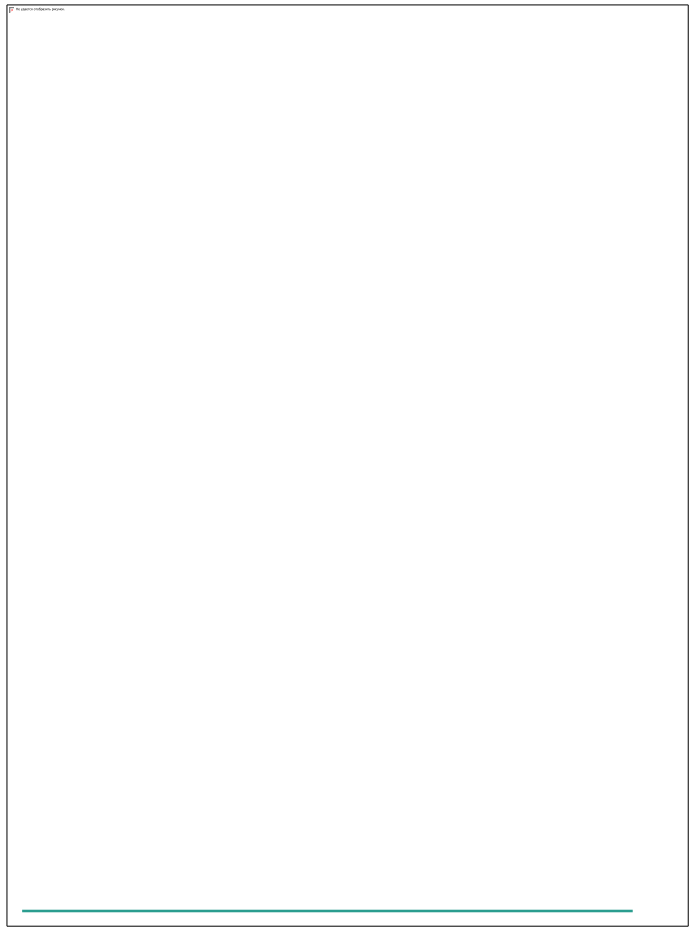


The • Architecture • of • Social

Social Institutions as the Framework of Society

Institutions convert biological existence into social life

- Family transmits care, primary norms, and early socialization.
- Education reproduces knowledge and prepares people for complex roles.
- The state and law stabilize order, power, and legitimate authority.
- Religion and culture provide shared symbols, values, and moral orientation.

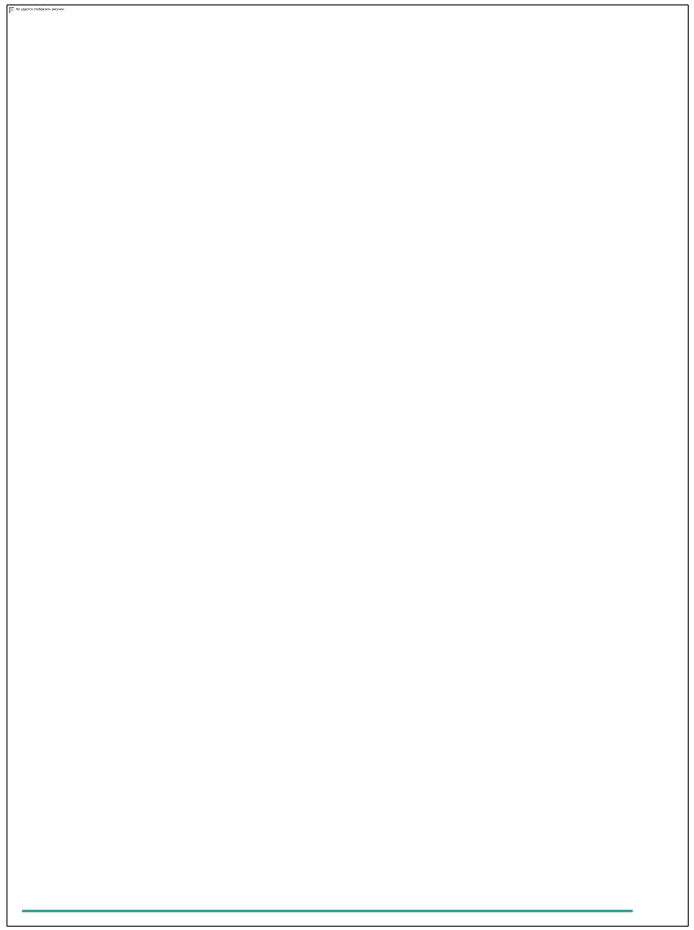


Social • Institutions • as • the

Why Stratification Appears

No real society remains completely homogeneous

- Resources, authority, prestige, and opportunities are distributed unevenly.
- Different social roles acquire different rewards and recognition.
- Hierarchy can coordinate complex systems, but it also generates tension.
- The central philosophical issue is where inequality becomes destructive.



Why • Stratification • Appears

Marx: Class Theory

A classical economic reading of inequality

Main criterion

- Ownership or non-ownership of the means of production.
- Class position shapes interests, conflict, and ideology.
- Society divides around control of labor and resources.

Philosophical implication

- Economic structure becomes the root of social antagonism.
- Class conflict is a motor of historical transformation.
- Justice cannot be separated from material relations.

Key philosophical contrast

Weber and Sorokin: The Strata Model

Modern stratification is broader than property alone

Additional criteria

- Education and professional qualification.
- Volume of power and access to administration.
- Occupational prestige and social status.

Resulting insight

- Inequality is multidimensional.
- A person may be rich without prestige, or prestigious without power.
- Modern hierarchy must be read through several axes at once.

Key philosophical contrast

The Ethical Dilemma of Inequality

Between necessary differentiation and social injustice

Why some inequality may function

- It can reward effort, innovation, and responsibility.
- It may stimulate initiative and movement.
- It helps differentiate social functions in complex systems.

Why excessive inequality is dangerous

- It destroys solidarity and trust.
- It blocks fair opportunity and recognition of merit.
- It turns society into a “powder keg” of resentment.

Key philosophical contrast

Social Mobility: Horizontal and Vertical

Mobility shows whether social hierarchy is dynamic or frozen

Horizontal mobility

- Change of job, residence, or group without major status change.
- Important for adaptation and circulation.
- Does not deeply alter hierarchy by itself.

Vertical mobility

- Movement upward or downward in social status.
- Determines whether talent can be recognized.
- Strongly influences the dynamism of society.

Key philosophical contrast

Channels of Vertical Mobility

The "social lifts" that can move a person upward

1

Education

Transforms knowledge and discipline into qualification and status.

2

Military

Provides rank, authority, and institutional advancement.

3

Business

Creates wealth, autonomy, and new elite positions.

4

Religion

Can offer symbolic authority and community leadership.

5

Marriage / networks

Connect individuals to new social circles and opportunities.

Historical development is a sequence of linked stages, not isolated events.

Mobility and System Stability

Why blocked lifts become politically dangerous

> *“When legitimate paths to the top are closed, discontent seeks destructive forms”*

- A stagnant elite loses adaptability.
- Talented lower groups lose faith in fairness.
- Radical movements appear when reform channels fail.
- Mobility is therefore not only humane, but system-preserving.

PART 3

3. Driving Forces and Subjects of the Historical Process

Who makes history, and what actually moves it forward

- History is shaped by both collective forces and exceptional personalities.
- Material, technological, ideological, and natural factors interact in every era.
- Reform and revolution are two different ways societies resolve contradictions.



The Heroic Concept of History

One tradition emphasizes the power of outstanding personalities

What it claims

- Prophets, reformers, commanders, and thinkers redirect history.
- Exceptional will and vision can reshape institutions.
- Certain moments depend on personal courage or genius.

Its limit

- No leader acts outside social conditions.
- Even great individuals need a historical demand for change.
- A personality alone cannot create a world that society will not sustain.

Key philosophical contrast

The Masses as Historical Force

Materialist approaches relocate the center of history

What this view emphasizes

- The people generate the social energy for transformation.
- Work, suffering, conflict, and collective need create real pressure.
- Large-scale change cannot happen without broad participation.

Its correction

- Mass energy still requires form, strategy, and direction.
- Leadership influences the speed and shape of events.
- The “flagpole” matters even if the banner is collective.

Key philosophical contrast

Objective Factors of Historical Development

Human agency always acts within objective conditions

1 Natural-climatic

Sets the initial environmental conditions of civilizational development.

2 Techno-technological

New inventions reorganize labor, communication, and power.

3 Economic

Productive forces and production relations structure society.

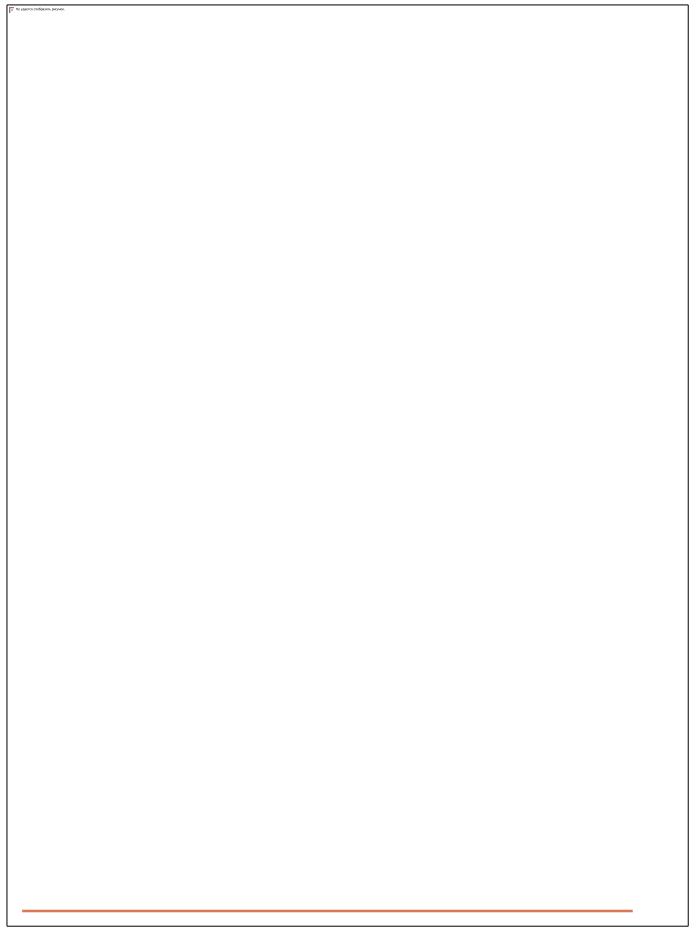
4 Ideological-spiritual

Religion, science, and collective ideals motivate action beyond utility.

The Ideological-Spiritual Factor

People do not live by utility alone

- Religions, scientific worldviews, utopias, and moral ideals can mobilize millions.
- Ideas become historical detonators when they give suffering a language and direction.
- They often move people against immediate self-interest or fear.
- Thus meaning is not a decoration of history, but one of its engines.

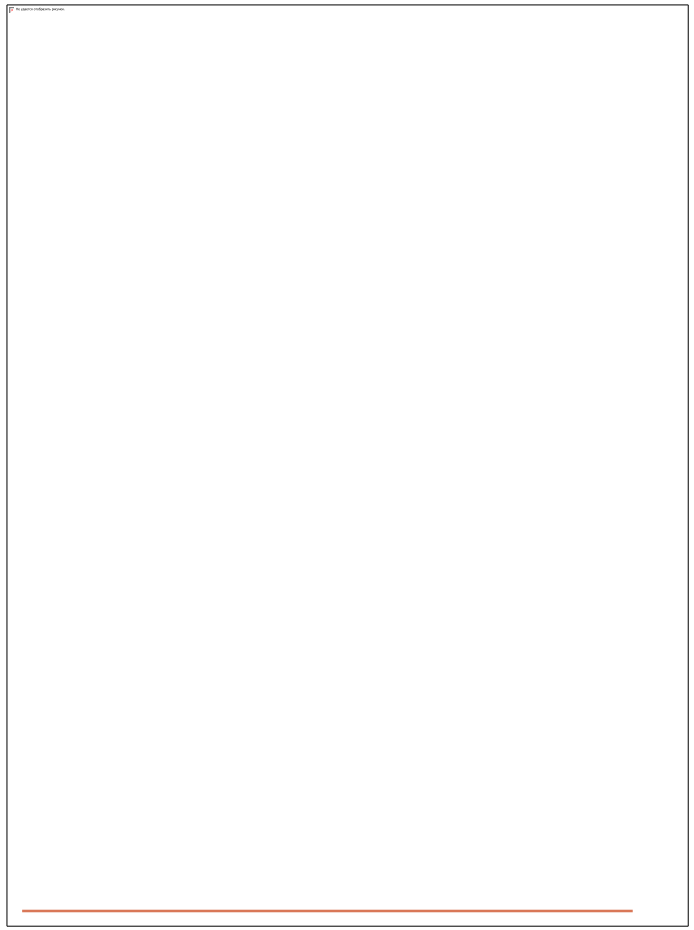


The • IdeologicalSpiritual • Factor

Reform: Evolutionary Renewal

Reform changes the system without destroying its foundations

- It is gradual, institutional, and often initiated “from above.”
- It adapts old structures to new realities while preserving continuity.
- Reform is the path of stability through controlled change.
- Its success depends on whether elites can recognize contradictions in time.

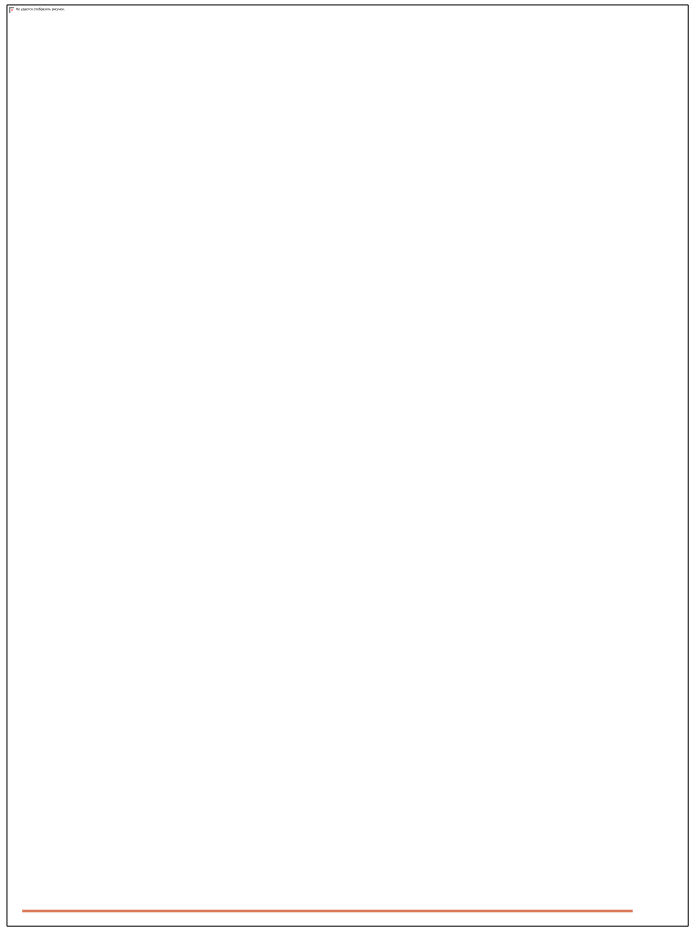


Reform • Evolutionary • Renewal

Revolution: A Qualitative Leap

When contradictions become intolerable, change takes an explosive form.

- Revolution breaks the old framework instead of correcting it.
- It is triggered when institutions can no longer contain new needs and pressures.
- Violence often accompanies it because the entire order is at stake.
- In philosophy, revolution is the verdict on a past that refused timely renewal.



Revolution • A • Qualitative • Leap

Reform and Revolution Compared

Two answers to the same problem of contradiction

Reform

- Preserves legal continuity.
- Prefers negotiation, adaptation, and institutional repair.
- Seeks change without systemic collapse.

Revolution

- Breaks continuity and redefines legitimacy.
- Uses rupture when normal mechanisms fail.
- Rebuilds the social order on a new foundation.

Key philosophical contrast

PART 4

4. The Direction of History: Progress or Cyclicity?

Three great ways to read the historical process

- Linear theories see history as ascent toward freedom, reason, or technical mastery.
- Cyclical theories read civilizations as living organisms with birth and decline.
- Postmodern thought rejects a single vector and depicts history as a rhizome of multiplicity.

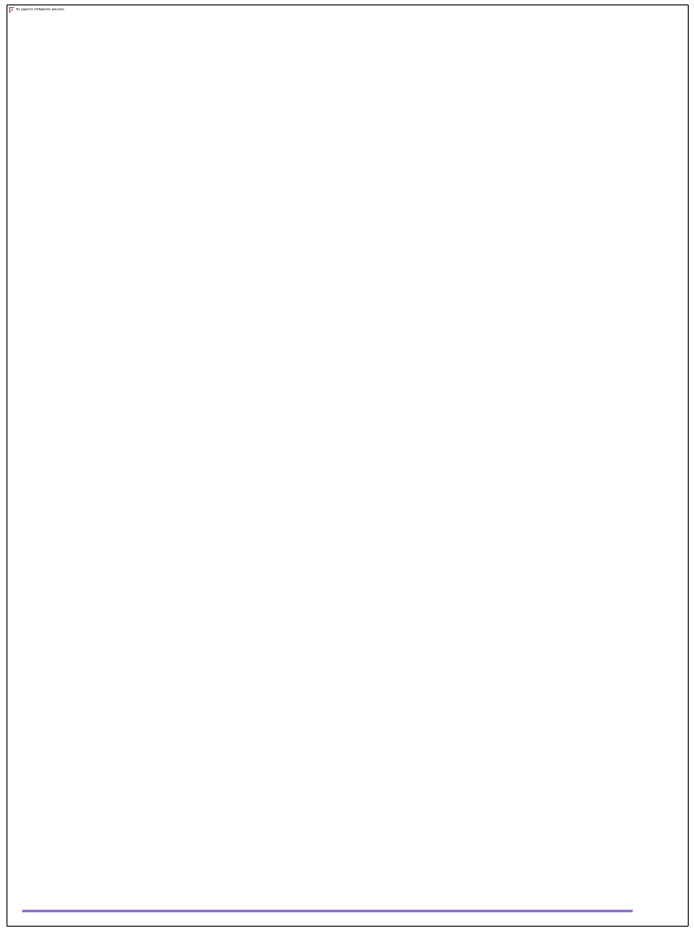


SECTION 4 Direction of History

The Linear Idea of Progress

For a long time, European thought trusted in the upward road of humanity

- History was imagined as movement from primitive forms to more advanced ones.
- The future appeared “better” than the past in knowledge, freedom, and organization.
- Enlightenment and Marxist narratives both shared this progressive confidence.
- Progress supplied history with a common direction and a moral horizon.



The • Linear • Idea • of

Technological Determinism and Social Stages

A modern lineal model ties historical growth to technical development

1

Agrarian

Land, tradition, and subsistence dominate the social order.

2

Industrial

Factories, machines, and mass urban labor restructure life.

3

Post-industrial

Knowledge, services, and information become strategic resources.

4

Digital

Networks, code, and algorithms organize communication and power.

5

Question

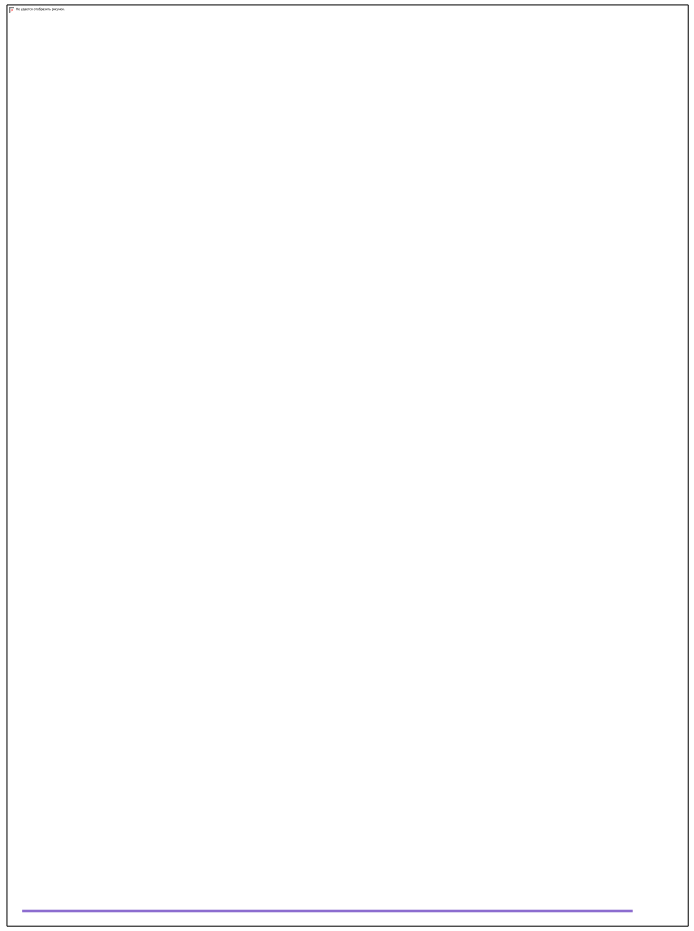
Does technical growth automatically mean moral progress?

Historical development is a sequence of linked stages, not isolated events.

Cyclical Theories of Civilization

Spengler, Toynbee, and Danilevsky reject a single universal route

- Civilizations are treated like living organisms with birth, bloom, crisis, and decline.
- History becomes a plurality of local cultural worlds, not one human storyline.
- “Progress” is reinterpreted as a temporary self-image of a flourishing culture.
- Each civilization has its own rhythm, style, and destiny.

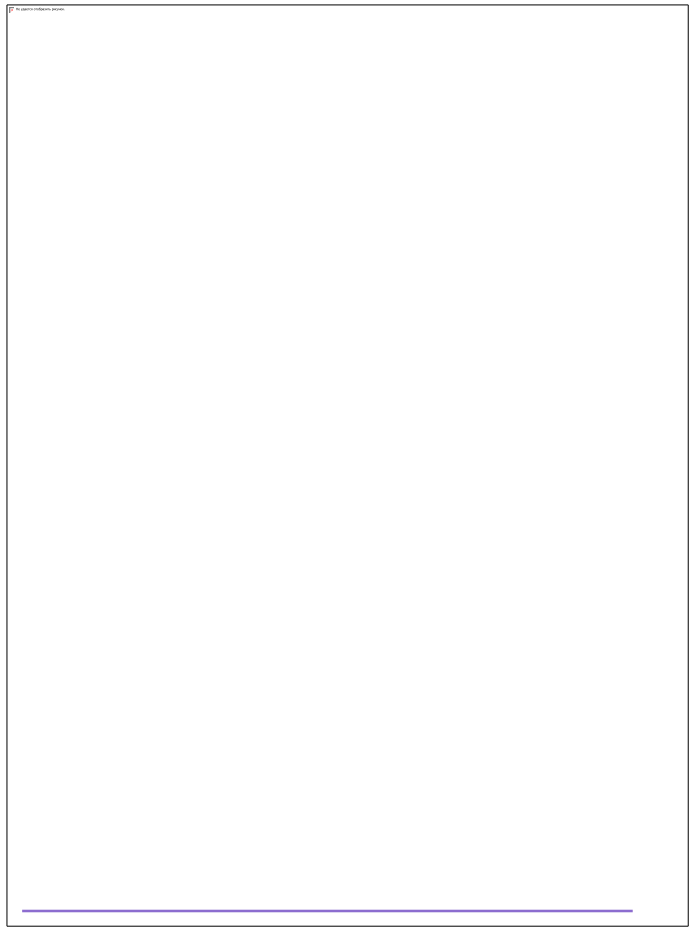


Cyclical • Theories • of • Civilization

Postmodernism: History as a Rhizome

A third view rejects both one line and one cycle

- History is imagined as a tangled root-system with many directions and no center.
- There is no single universal subject, telos, or final meaning.
- Reality is read through plurality, discontinuity, and competing narratives.
- The gain is sensitivity to diversity; the loss is a stable common horizon.



Postmodernism • History • as • a

SECTION 4 Direction of History

Three Major Readings of History

Each model captures something real - and omits something important

1 Linear

Strength: gives direction and hope. Limit: can ignore catastrophe and plurality.

2 Cyclical

Strength: explains rise and decline. Limit: can underplay novelty and agency.

3 Postmodern

Strength: values multiplicity and difference. Limit: weak common meaning.

4 Philosophical task

To read history critically without collapsing it into one dogma.

PART 5

5. Society and the Individual

How a person becomes social without losing the personal self

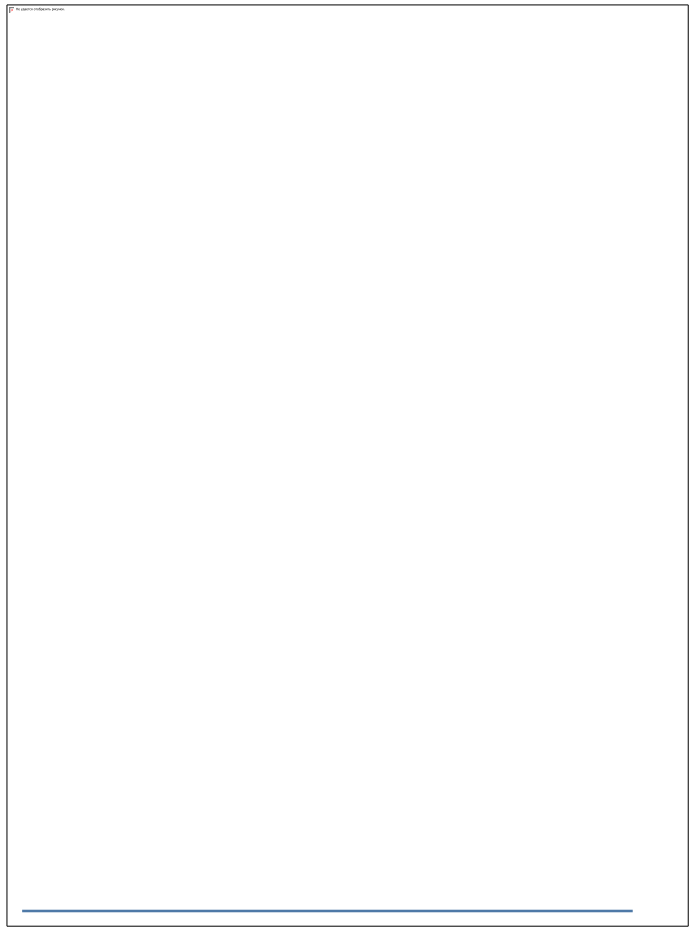
- Socialization turns a biological being into a participant in culture.
- Freedom is meaningful only together with responsibility toward others.
- Mass society and globalization threaten individuality through standardization.



Socialization: Becoming a Person

No one is born fully social; one becomes social through life with others

- A child enters language, norms, roles, and values through interaction.
- Society provides patterns of behavior, but also mirrors in which identity forms.
- Personality emerges through dialogue, education, and practice.
- Socialization is active: a person does not only absorb norms, but reworks them.



Socialization • Becoming • a • Person

How Social Roles Build Identity

Roles connect the personal "I" to the shared world

1

Family role

The first experience of trust, duty, and belonging.

2

Educational role

Learning discipline, knowledge, and social expectations.

3

Professional role

Taking responsibility in labor and public life.

4

Civic role

Acting as a bearer of rights and obligations.

5

Personal synthesis

Integrating roles into an authentic self.

Historical development is a sequence of linked stages, not isolated events.

Freedom and Responsibility

Freedom in philosophy is not whim, but self-aware action

False freedom

- Understood as pure arbitrariness or private impulse.
- Ignores consequences for others and for the common world.
- Collapses into egoism or social chaos.

Mature freedom

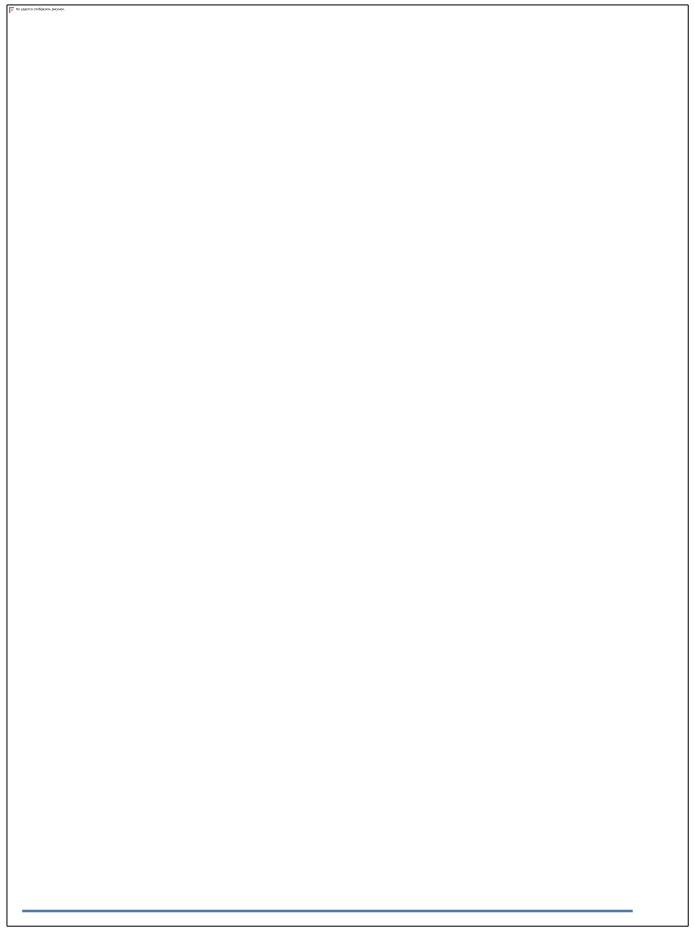
- Acts in light of necessity and moral awareness.
- Combines autonomy with responsibility.
- Preserves the self without denying the social whole.

Key philosophical contrast

The Phenomenon of Mass Society

Modernity creates standardization behind the promise of choice

- Mass culture, mass education, and mass consumption level personal differences.
- The “mass man” is easy to manage because desires are preformatted.
- Comfort and belonging are often purchased at the cost of individuality.
- The challenge is to remain a subject rather than a function of the system.

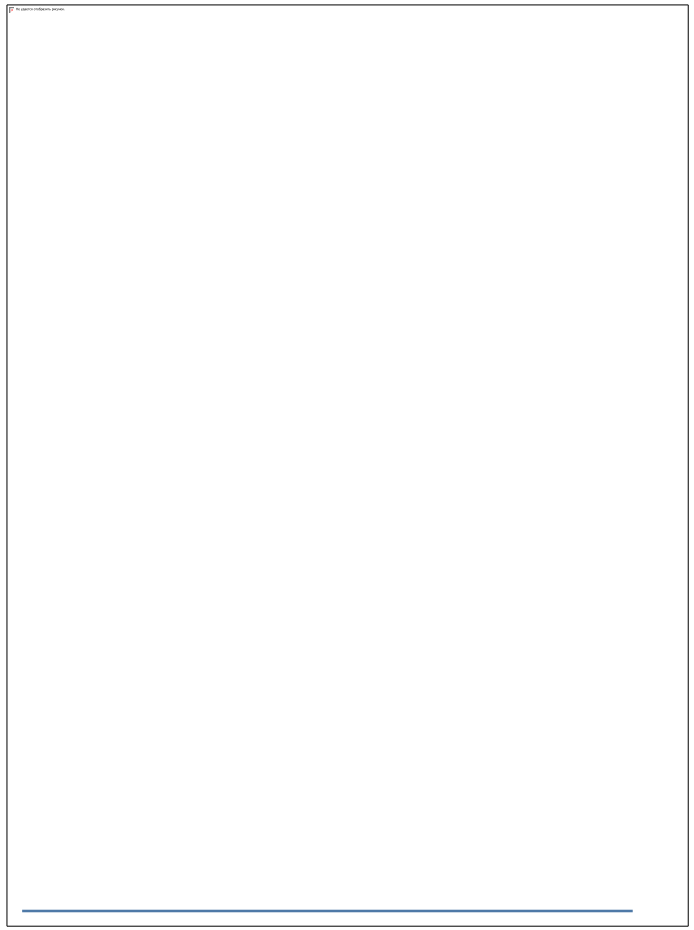


The • Phenomenon • of • Mass

Globalization and the Loss of Uniqueness

The global whole expands opportunity but can flatten difference

- Global flows spread the same brands, narratives, and behavioral templates.
- Local traditions risk becoming decorative fragments in a standardized environment.
- Identity is pressured to fit universal models of success and desire.
- The central question becomes how to belong without dissolving.



Globalization • and • the • Loss

Critical Thinking as Protection

The mind remains the primary filter against manipulation

> *“To preserve a face in the mass, one must preserve the ability to judge”*

- Critical thinking resists emotional engineering and social imitation.
- Authentic human ties protect the person from total abstraction.
- Reflection helps distinguish values from fashionable signals.
- Without inner work, individuality is easily replaced by a ready-made persona.

PART 6

6. Global Problems and the Future of Humanity

From globalization to sustainable development and planetary responsibility

- Humanity has become one interconnected system with shared risks.
- Technology empowers, but also deepens control, surveillance, and ecological strain.
- The future now depends on conscious responsibility rather than historical luck.



Globalization: Integration and Unification

The same process has emancipatory and destructive faces

Integrating effects

- Fast exchange of knowledge and communication.
- Growth of interdependence and global awareness.
- Possibility of universal human cooperation.

Unifying pressures

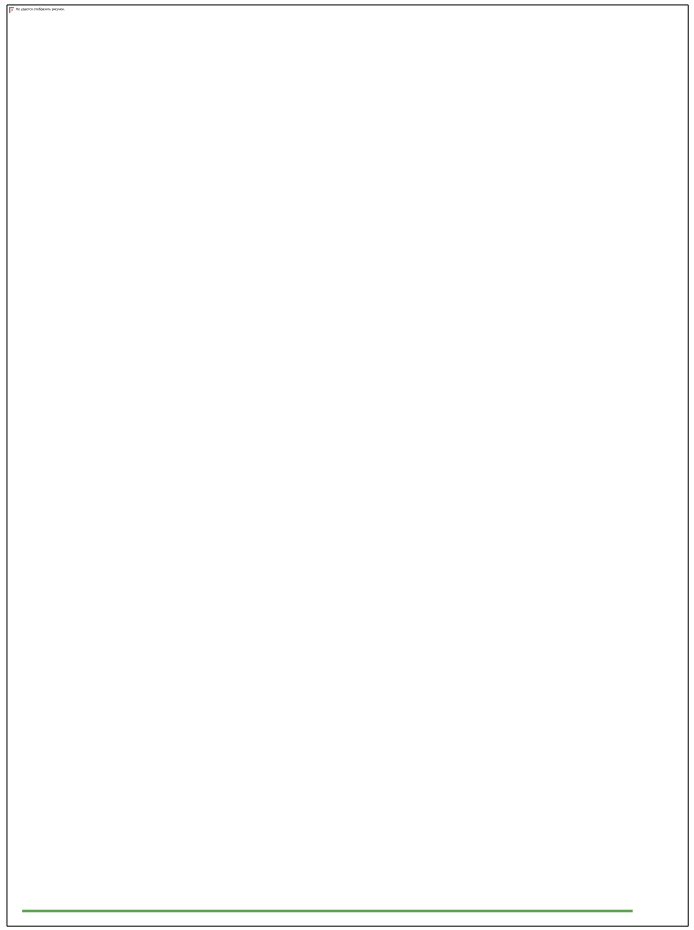
- Erosion of cultural distinctiveness.
- Imposition of uniform consumption standards.
- Concentration of power in a few centers.

Key philosophical contrast

The Information Society

Data and algorithms become the strategic resource of a new era

- Information replaces raw material as the key source of influence and wealth.
- Control over code increasingly means control over social processes.
- Digital infrastructures shape work, communication, memory, and politics.
- The structure of power shifts from territory alone to networks and platforms.

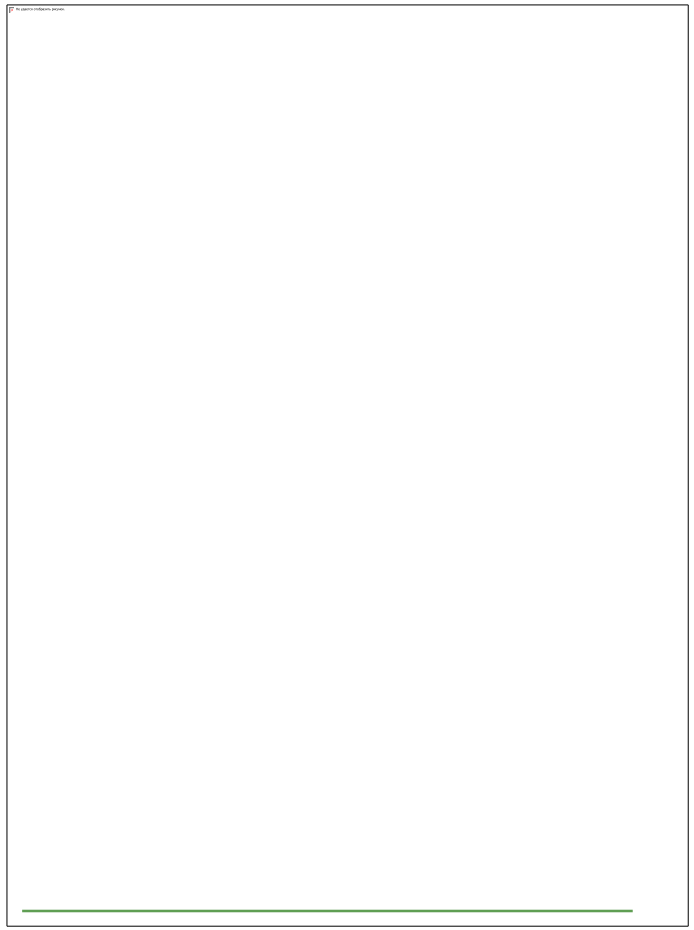


The • Information • Society

Digital Sovereignty and Privacy

Can a person remain free when every action leaves data behind?

- Digital traces make profiling, prediction, and manipulation easier.
- Privacy turns from a default condition into a scarce and defended value.
- Algorithms may know preferences before the subject reflects on them.
- The philosophical issue is how to protect autonomy in a coded environment.

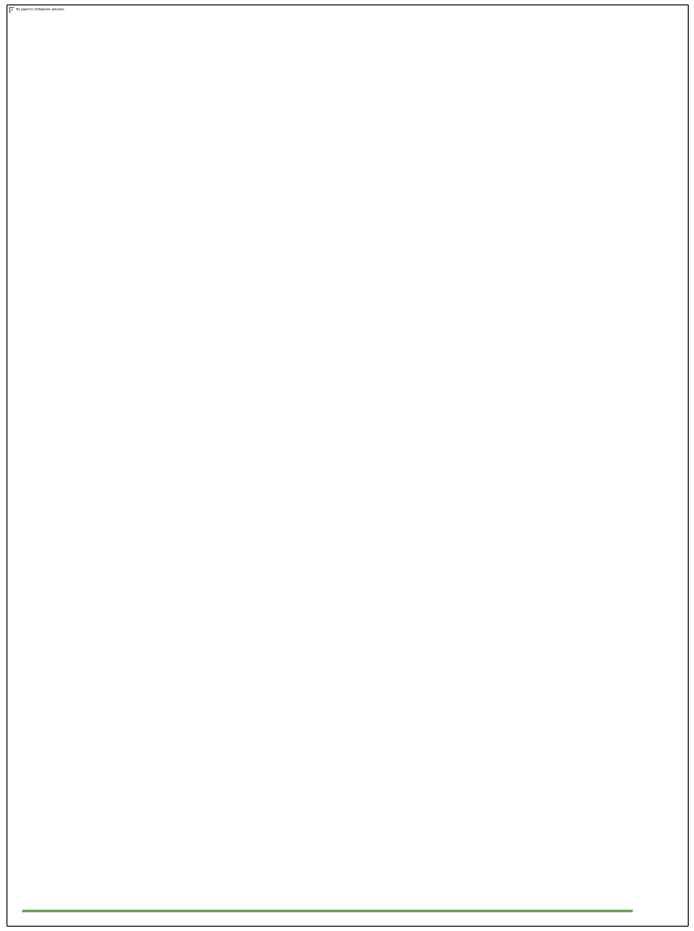


Digital • Sovereignty • and • Privacy

Sustainable Development

A philosophical strategy of survival rather than a simple ecological slogan

- It seeks balance between present needs and the rights of future generations.
- It rejects unlimited consumption on a finite planet.
- It calls for a transition from exploitation to co-creation with nature.
- Without this shift, technical progress can become civilizational self-destruction.



Sustainable • Development

Global Problems of the Twenty-First Century

Problems that no single state can solve alone

1 Ecological crisis

Global warming, biodiversity loss, pollution, and planetary limits.

2 War and nuclear threat

Local conflicts can escalate into existential catastrophe.

3 Demographic imbalance

Population explosion and aging societies create opposite pressures.

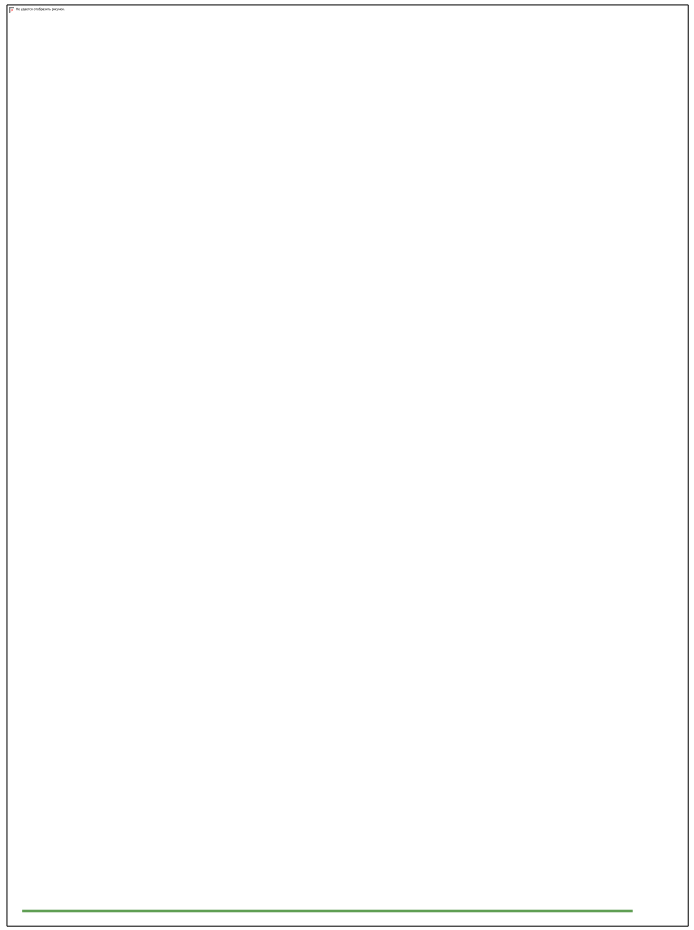
4 Pandemic and inequality

Biological insecurity and the “North-South” divide intensify global fragility.

Glocalization and Responsibility

The global is solved through the local

- A planetary issue such as ecology becomes real in a specific river, city, or forest.
- Global processes are always refracted through local identities and conditions.
- The future ethic is therefore solidarity across scales.
- A local step now has planetary consequences.



Glocalization • and • Responsibility

The Future of Humanity

Final philosophical conclusion

> *“The future of humanity has ceased to be a matter of chance; it has become a matter of conscious responsibility”*

- Society is not something that merely happens to us.
- We recreate it daily through action, thought, and choice.
- Justice, sustainability, and freedom depend on shared responsibility.
- Social philosophy turns spectators of history into participants in its making.