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—JARED DIAMOND, *Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Guns, Germs, and Steel*

Yuval Noah Harari

**Sapiens**  
A Brief  
History of  
Humankind



FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF SAPIENS

Yuval Noah  
Harari



# Homo Deus

A Brief History of Tomorrow

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF *SAPIENS*

Yuval Noah  
Harari



# 21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**J. Charles Davis:** Yuval Noah Harari on Justice  
**Victor Ferrao:** Thinking the Nude

## Esther Macedo Chopra: Palliative Care

### **K. Pandikattu SJ: Living as Hidden Christ:**

Fr Cherian Nereveettil

## Nishant Irudayadason: Reclaiming Freedom



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### **Contents**

Editorial: Following Unexpected Paths .....	3
A Critique on Writing of Yuval Noah Harari on Justice: Our Sense of Justice Might Be Out of Date <i>J. Charles Davis</i> .....	6
Thinking the Nude: A Call to Authenticity and Humility <i>Victor Ferrao</i> .....	15
Palliative Care: The Practice of End of Life Care <i>Esther Macedo Chopra</i> .....	20
Living as Hidden Christ: A Homage to Fr Cherian Nereveetil (1971-2021) <i>Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ</i> .....	35
Reclaiming Freedom Despite Its Denial: A Critical Reading of Harari on Liberty <i>Nishant Irudayadason</i> .....	40

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## Editorial

### Following Unexpected Paths

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Pope Francis began a new cycle of catechesis at the General Audience on Wednesday, June 23, 2021. He dedicated to themes proposed by Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Galatians.

In the Epistle, Pope noted that St. Paul makes many biographical references that allow us to understand his conversion and his decision to place his life at the service of Christ. He also touches on important subjects such as freedom, grace, and the Christian way of life – topics that “touch on many aspects of the life of the Church in our times.”

The Holy Father highlighted that it is an important and decisive letter, not only for getting to know St. Paul better, but above all, for showing the beauty of the Gospel. The first feature from the Letter to the Galatians, the Pope pointed out, is the “great work of evangelization” by the Apostle who visited its communities at least twice during his missionary journeys. The Pope noted that the Galatians were an ancient Celtic population who settled in the

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extensive region of Anatolia, with Ancyra as its capital (present-day Ankara in Turkey).

Pope Francis went on to highlight Paul's pastoral concern, when, after founding the Churches, he discovered that some Christians who had come from Judaism had started to sow theories contrary to his teaching. These Christians argued that even the Gentiles had to be circumcised according to the Mosaic Law, and, by implication, the Galatians would have to renounce their cultural identity in order to submit to the norms and customs of the Jews. Further, the adversaries of Paul claimed that Paul was not a true apostle and therefore had no authority to preach the Gospel.

Pope Francis noted the uncertainty that filled the hearts of the Galatians in the midst of this crisis, especially since they had come to know and believe that the salvation brought about by Jesus was the beginning of a new life, in spite of their history that was interwoven with slavery and subjugation to Rome.

Bringing the situation into the present day, Pope Francis remarked the presence of preachers who, especially through the new means of communication, present themselves as “keepers of the truth” on the best way to be Christians, instead of announcing the Gospel of Christ.

He lamented that these preachers strongly affirm that the true Christianity is the one that they adhere to – a Christianity that is often identified with the past – and proffer as a solution to the crises of today, a return to the past “so as not to lose the genuineness of the faith.”

Pope Francis lamented that some preachers strongly affirm that the true Christianity is the one that they adhere to – a Christianity that is often identified with the past – and proffer as a solution to the crises of today, a return to the past “so as not to lose the genuineness of the faith.”

Today too, as then, the Pope added, “there is a temptation to close oneself up in some of the certainties acquired in past traditions.” Pointing out that the teaching of Apostle Paul “will help us to understand which path to follow,” the Holy Father underlined that it is the “liberating and ever-new path of Jesus, Crucified and Risen.”

“There is a temptation to close oneself up in some of the certainties acquired in past traditions.” – Pope Francis

“It is the path of proclamation, which is achieved through humility and fraternity; it is the path of meek and obedient trust, in the certainty that the Holy Spirit works in the Church in every age,” the Pope emphasised. May we dare to follow the unexpected paths in hope and joy!

The Editor

Mayaki, B. (2021, June 23). Pope at Audience: Evangelization requires us to follow unexpected paths. *Catholic Media*. <https://catholicmedia.org/2021/06/pope-at-audience-evangelization-requires-us-to-follow-unexpected-paths-2/>



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# **A Critique on Writing of Yuval Noah Harari on Justice: Our Sense of Justice Might Be Out of Date**

**J. Charles Davis**

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**Abstract:** Today, it is difficult to know what consequences our actions have and whether we are causing harm to the world. Size matters. In the complex modern global world, causal relations are highly ramified and complex. Harari rightly says that we may peacefully sit at home without physically harming anyone, yet we may be complicit in many unjust acts happening elsewhere in the world. Am I responsible for child labour in making shoes, which I am wearing? The concept of justice demands new meanings. The answer to our questions on justice, according to the author, does not lie in abandoning the ancient concept of justice but in reviving it in smaller ways as well as in bigger ways simultaneously. The answer lies in the goodwill to change structures that are entangled with injustices.

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Hope is enriching. Helplessness frustrates. Religions offer hope and change.

**Keywords:** Justice, Yuval Noah Harari, Global Ethics, Truth

## Introduction

Size matters. In primitive times, humans knew the consequences of their actions, for they understood how their moral and immoral acts affected others. In distinct tiny human worlds of the past, where cause and effect relations were clear, it was easy to evaluate human acts. Stealing was a moral wrong because it robbed someone of something what is due to others. It was unfair to take away what is due to others. Unfairness and injustice were easy to see. But this is no longer the case. Today, it is difficult to know what consequences our actions have and whether we are causing harm to the world. Size matters. In the complex modern global world, causal relations are highly ramified and complex. Harari rightly says that we may peacefully sit at home without physically harming anyone, yet we may be complicit in many unjust acts happening elsewhere in the world. Am I responsible for child labour in making shoes, which I am wearing? The concept of justice demands new meanings.

## Insights of Harari on Justice

Harari's vast knowledge of the world is commendable. He speaks on almost all affairs of social, political, religious and cultural realm. He rightly acknowledges that humans are no longer able to grasp what the practical world of universe wants to communicate. Harari says, "the bitter truth is that the world has simply become too complicated for our hunter-gatherer brains." The more humans explored the mysteries of the world, the more they know how little they know. A rather long quote from Harari himself says it vividly: "A primeval hunter-gatherer knew very well where her lunch came from (she gathered it herself), who made her moccasins (he slept twenty metres from her), and what her pension fund was doing (it



was playing in the mud. Back then, people had only one pension fund, called ‘children’).” Harari explicates the inability of the human minds to grasp the vast size of happenings in the world. It is not easy even for academicians to be aware of all the events around the world that affect humans primarily. Harari says: “Years of research might expose the fact that the government I voted for is secretly selling weapons to a shady dictator halfway across the world. But during the time it takes me to find that out, I might be missing far more important discoveries, such as the fate of the chickens whose eggs I ate for dinner.

“The greatest crimes in modern history resulted not just from hatred and greed, but even more so from ignorance and indifference.”

Changing starts from knowing. It is important to know that “most of the injustices in the contemporary world result from large-scale structural biases rather than from individual prejudices.”

The system is structured in such a way that those who make no effort to know can remain in blissful ignorance, and those who do make an effort will find it very difficult to discover the truth.” Which side should we choose to be with? Definitely, knowledge is better than ignorance. Harari himself warns, and so rightly: “The greatest crimes in modern history resulted not just from hatred and greed, but even more so from ignorance and indifference.” Changing starts from knowing. It is important to know that “most of the injustices in the contemporary world result from large-scale structural biases rather than from individual prejudices.” It is thus inevitable to change the structures that propagate biases. Everyone must take responsibility for actions of others, too, because we are part of one human world. In trying to comprehend and moral dilemmas of the issues of magnitude, Harari points out that people resort to one of four methods:

- (1) The first is to downsize the issue: to understand the Syrian civil war as though it were occurring between two hunters, one bad and one good.
- (2) The second is to focus on a touching human story, which ostensibly stands for the whole conflict. People do not show interest in statistics and data that explain the complexity of the conflicts of the world; but a personal story about the fate of one child activates their hearts and makes their blood boil (to donate) to save that child. Charity for larger scales are less effective.
- (3) The third method to deal with large-scale moral dilemmas is to weave conspiracy theories, such as, that multibillionaires are behind the scenes. How does the global economy function, and is it good or bad? That is too complicated to grasp. No one really understands what is going on in the world, and so no one is capable of pulling the strings effectively.
- (4) While the above four methods try to deny the facts, the fourth and ultimate method is to create a dogma that offers a safe haven from the frustrating complexity of reality.

However, Harari appears to be sceptical of a just world, and ends up with an aporia of being at loss without knowing which way to proceed: “Should we call it quits, then, and declare that the human quest to understand the truth and find justice has failed? Have we officially entered the Post-Truth Era?”

### Personal Evaluation

Neither *Truth* will ever disappear, nor *Justice* will lose its meaning. The fact is that we are not really happy with the prevalent situation of abject poverty and useless wars in the midst of the world that has sources more than what humanity needs. Why are the sources of the world not equally distributed? Quitting is not the answer. Questioning is the beginning for change. Questioning and

dethroning the corrupt dons and electing honest leaders are important for a better democratic world. In a structured global world, we, too, are certainly complicit in evil acts happening somewhere, at least or more so, while benefitting the fruits of those acts. Every part of humanity suffers even when one part of humanity suffers. A perfect world is not possible either. What we need is a better, humane world of justice and equality. Religions are not mere promises of a safe haven but companions of the poor. They bring smile in their face. Inequalities may not disappear forever, but a just world is not impossible either.

To understand Harari's comments on modern demands of justice, we shall revisit various forms of justice: commutative, distributive and contributive. Commutative justice is blind and demands equal sharing that is due to everyone without discrimination. A commutative law may be blind but just and equal in its application to the rich or the poor independent of social evaluations and its resultant value is the same. Distributive justice refers to just sharing of common resources by the state to each citizen according to her or his need. Contributive justice refers to the contribution of the members of a society to the state. Distributive and contributive justice may also differ and depend on the capabilities of individuals. The Catholic church, in addition, promotes social justice, which includes a special concern for the poor. The principles solidarity and subsidiarity are offshoots of this social justice. Neither the principles, such as justice and equality, nor their meanings have become out of date. The spirit of their original senses continues to guide humanity. New problems require new solutions and not alterations or adjudgments in principles. Principles may unfold themselves with new meanings in new situations but they do not lose their content.

Instead of abandoning the complex world of knowledge and injustices that exist, we can begin to work for justice at every level. Small changes everywhere can help to bring about a bigger change in the global world with moral problems. Humanmade problems can

be corrected to a larger extent by humans themselves. Climate change and artificial intelligence (AI) are major challenges of today. We need global ethics of environment and AI. The world of science and technology will lead us to a great danger without ethics (Davis, 2014). We should not throw away the age-old norm of justice, but should be brought back by international communities to defend rights of discriminated folk and promote a more equal world. The world might become complex but basic human values are same. Injustices and corruptions are not mere outcome of structures but are caused by humans. We cannot blame a nonhuman system or structure, simply because they cannot change by themselves. Humans have created them; thus, change has to take place in the hearts and minds of individuals and communities, particularly, in those who make political and corporate decisions. Unfortunately, today's world has politicians who create more fake news than actual promises. I am convinced that change is possible if the enlightened minds do not prefer silence to the essential of speech. Injustices might continue to happen as long as just minds don't speak. Evilness is intrinsic to humans as they are free persons to choose to do good or bad, so is also goodness is intrinsic to humans as they are images of God of goodness. A solution for any humanmade problem is possible, if humans will. The solution does not lie merely in discovering a new theory that would change the future course of human actions, but much more in correcting the way we live now. We need to correct the fake stories and false storytellers. Returning to the values of the past would enable humans to mend the ways of humans in the complex world as well.

### Application to the Present Day

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a “*Lebensstil*” (lifestyle) discussion particularly in Germany. The question then was – and it is still pertinent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: how affects my *Lebensstil* the life of people in the so-called “third world or developing countries.” Are Europeans responsible for conflicts and wars in Africa, because their weapons are used? Are we responsible for poverty in Africa,

since their coffee is bought at cheaper rates? There is a global structural injustice – perhaps one could also find a connection to “original sin,” that humans make mistakes and are sinful by nature. Just like, dignity is inseparable from the human condition, so also sin is inseparable from the human condition. Humans are existentially free to choose what they wish: to do good or to do evil. Humans are inherently ordained with freedom. We know we are free being but have not understood freedom and its scope fully. We know what justice means yet understand it differently. One thing is clear that our intentional and unintentional activities have their repercussions on the human as well as material world. What we can do personally? We need to check our own desires and wants, adapt to a simple, humble and a just need-based lifestyle that would not steal the needs of others. A personal conversion is vital for a societal change.

### Concluding Remarks

Harari ends Chapter 16 with an “aporia”: the author, and perhaps also the entire humankind, secular persons and atheists, is/are at a loss: what to do? For a scrupulous person, this “aporia,” namely, being at a loss is a heavy burden, it can block one’s good will etc. In this context, the prayer of Oscar Romero has a consoling message for us: “We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.” This prayer may not count for Harari. He is extremely critique of religious dogmas. Although the Christian religions in Europe have contributed to developing the concept of human dignity and of human rights, the political representations of the Christian minds have not managed to eradicate this “aporia.” Perhaps, they have contributed much to create such situation. The answer does not lie in abandoning the ancient concept of

“We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.”

justice but in reviving it in smaller ways as well as in bigger ways simultaneously. The answer lies in the goodwill to change structures that are entangled with injustices. Hope is enriching. Helplessness frustrates. Religions offer hope and change.

The prayer often and widely shared as ‘The Óscar Romero Prayer’ brings forward the powerful message which Romero was conveying (Romero, n.d.). Interestingly, these words are commonly attributed to Óscar Romero, but they were never spoken by him. The prayer was composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden in 1979 at a celebration of departed priests. Pope Francis used this prayer in December 2015 in his Christmas address to the Roman Curia.

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.*

*Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.*

*No prayer fully expresses our faith.*

*No confession brings perfection.*

*No pastoral visit brings wholeness.*

*No program accomplishes the Church’s mission.*

*No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we are about.*

*We plant the seeds that one day will grow.*

*We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.*

*We lay foundations that will need further development.*

*We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.*



***We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.***

*This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.*

*It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.*

*We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.*

*We are prophets of a future not our own*

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## Thinking the Nude: A Call to Authenticity and Humility

**Victor Ferrao**

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**Abstract:** What is human life? This question strikes at our very birth and death. Job from the bible seems to answer it for us when he says, ‘naked I came, and naked I will go.’ It reveals the vanity of clothed life. Nude, therefore, does not represent the body. It represents an idea or better still an ideality. It stands for the idea/utopia of human life that is exposed to our gaze that is immobilised before the fixity and eternity of the beauty of the nude. What is the idea that the nude portrays about our life? Can we really think the nude? In our days the nude seems to have met its end. People are hurt by the portrayals of nude images of gods and goddesses. We have lost the distance that the nude marked and made us comfortable. The author concludes by affirming that We cannot always hide our nakedness by clothing in our society. One day or the other we have to face our nakedness. True life is always a naked one.

**Keywords:** Naked Life, Nudity, Ideality, Clothed Lives, Search for Authenticity

Humans like clothed life. We enjoy cooked food. We dress and live our life clothed with culture, religion, tradition, science and technology. Nudity is nauseating us yet in the artistic works we can

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trace that it is celebrated. Nude is artistic-metaphysics par excellence. It is usually abstracted from the dimensions of the particular. The nude portrayals are anonymous to us. Even if we know them like Adam of Michel Angelo, Adam is sufficiently distant to us across time and space and does not upset our aesthetics sensibilities. The artistic works usually manifest the nude as fixed, immobile and timeless beauty. These works of art take us to the sublime. Such works raise the raw naked question: What is human life? This question strikes at our very birth and death. Job from the bible seems to answer it for us when he says, ‘naked I came, and naked I will go’ (Job.1:21) It reveals the vanity of clothed life. Nude, therefore, does not represent the body. It represents an idea or better still an ideality. It stands for the idea/utopia of human life that is exposed to our gaze that is immobilised before the fixity and eternity of the beauty of the nude. What is the idea that the nude portrays about our life? Can we really think the nude? In our days the nude seems to have met its end. People are hurt by the portrayals of nude images of gods and goddesses. We have lost the distance that the nude marked and made us comfortable.

Job from the bible seems to answer it for us when he says, ‘naked I came, and naked I will go.’ It reveals the vanity of clothed life. Nude, therefore, does not represent the body. It represents an idea or better still an ideality. It stands for the idea/utopia of human life that is exposed to our gaze that is immobilised before the fixity and eternity of the beauty of the nude.

### **Nudity Fails and Succeeds**

To a large extent, the nude fails as well as succeeds. It is an absolute-being-in-itself that is simultaneously an absolute-being-outside itself. The nude is silent. It is wordless. It does not speak. Since it does not have the luxury of verbal language, the nude is even more naked. Therefore, it is always ek-static/ outside itself in a state of utter disorientation (Riley, 2015). But the

nude breaks the silence. It speaks without speaking. We are faced with the gaze of the nude. The meaning that the nude communicates without speaking exceeds our systems of signification/meaning. It becomes an open sign that speaks directly to the on-looking spectator. Its speech cannot be closed to one singular meaning. It speaks without speaking in many tongues. The spectator and his or her gaze also contribute to the polyvalent speaking of the nude.

This is why the nude can be called pure signification. It is the first exposition of our life. It manifests our raw life. In it, the nude, nudity and the flesh melt into one another and/or oscillate in a movement that refuses to resolve into a standstill closure. The nude is always open and does not come to the closure of signification. It is fecund in meaning and keeps generating it in its interaction with the onlooker. The nude lives on the liminal edge questioning the clothedness of our life. Nude is completely detached from clothed life. It shares our life with animals, plants and other life that do not need clothes. It seems to remind us what Derrida said when he wrote: The animal, therefore I am. The nude interrogates the clothed life of its onlooker.

### Immersed in Our Clothed Lives

Perhaps we need to strip bare our clothed life to understand life itself. Our naked coming and naked going is hidden from our consciousness because we are totally immersed in the clothed life. Maybe we have to come to terms with the nudity of our clothed life which has very often become the hiding place for many evils. Nudity introduces us to an endless interrogation of our clothed life. Very often our clothes fail to hide our nudity. Nudity is an open signifier that semiotizes and hence takes up the clothes of meaning that

Nudity is an open signifier that semiotizes and hence takes up the clothes of meaning that remain open. Therefore, the nude is not really nude. It clothes itself in the intersection of its gaze with the gaze of the onlooker.

remain open. Therefore, the nude is not really nude. It clothes itself in the intersection of its gaze with the gaze of the onlooker (Reed, 2010). Clothed life is a closed signifier. It has reached the closure of its meaning and has attained a fixation and a kind of semantic immobility and hence we can think that clothed life is actually nude and tending towards nudity. This means we can think together nudity and clothed life. They do cross each other.

But the nude that artworks have revealed are portraying the immanence of our raw life that is totally exposed and unprotected. This means our clothes, cultures, science and technologies etc., can never fully protect us. We are always naked even in our clothes. We have to come to terms with the fact that our life that is always as Heidegger tells us is moving towards its own impossibility/ death. This is the naked fact of our life. We are born naked and we die naked even in our clothes. We are prone to disease and death and hence stay naked in our clothes. This nakedness in our clothes reminds us of our finitude and frailty (Williams, 2011). Our clothes cannot save us from it. We are still nakedly finite, frail and fragile in our clothes of all hues and colours.

## Concluding Remarks

Acceptance of nakedness makes us real and humble. Otherwise, we live under the false security provided by the mask of clothing. The nude is divine. It makes us transparent. God loves nudity. The masked/ clothed is a hypocrite to the divine. The nude is a sign of human and divine authenticity. Clothes/ masks are often a sign of inauthenticity. The reflection that I have done here does not leave us with a choice between nudity and clothed life. We have seen how the nude can be clothed and the clothed can be nude. We have thought the nude and the clothed together. We have attempted to arrive at non-dual thinking that thinks beyond the either/or structure of our habitual thinking. The reminder that naked we have come and naked we will go invites us to choose authenticity and humility. We

are always naked before God. We cannot always hide our nakedness by clothing in our society. One day or the other we have to face our nakedness. True life is always a naked one. Let us have the courage to choose the nudity of our naked life.

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## **Palliative Care: The Practice of End of Life Care**

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**Abstract:** Providing care to the sick is not an obligation but a duty that is bound with human connectedness to each other. Palliative care picks up the strings along with curative treatment to try and provide a comfortable death. Palliative care is provided after a complete assessment is done on the symptoms and the stage of the disease and the condition of the patient. This discipline works not in isolation but with the patient's family or care giver. The family becomes a part of providing treatment to the patient and they are also given emotional and mental support.

**Keywords:** Palliative Treatment, Pain Management, Process of Dying, Comfort Care, End of Life Care.

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## Introduction

The process of dying was considered earlier as a phenomenon that was a part of life, however modern times explicates death as a sin. Sometimes making the dying process torturous by caring out procedures that may be futile. Death and dying is considered a failure of medicine, a failure of one's ability to maintain a healthy life or an accident that could have been avoided. Due to all these and many more reasons terminally ill patients are considered as lesser human beings. Palliative care strives to negate that sense of hopelessness and instil the intrinsic value of a patient till the very end of life.

Cicely Saunders was instrumental for the modern movement of hospice care in St Christopher's Hospice in London in 1967 (Rajagopal, et. al. 2017). Cicely Saunders in her own words, at a time when modern medicine and technology was not as common as today they had to struggle with whatever bare minimal medical aids like instruments and medicine to treat patients (Cicely Saunders, 1966).

Palliative care defined by WHO is "the prevention and relief of suffering of adult and paediatric patients and their families facing the problems associated with a life-threatening illness. These problems include physical, psychological, social and spiritual suffering of patients and psychological, social and spiritual suffering of family members." (WHO, 2018).

Palliative care is not about providing false hope to a patient that they will live forever or that they will be cured. Palliative care is about being honest with a patient and their family and providing hope that end of life comfort care will be provided till the patient lives. The art of palliative care is to provide dignity and respect to even the most anguished patient. Going back to human's innate quality of being humane is the only answer to this demanding request to be allowed to die.

Palliative care becomes a part of treating a patient when, it participates in the active total care of patients with life-limiting disease and their families by a multi professional team, when the disease is no longer responsive to curative or life prolonging treatments (Twycross, 2003).

Palliative care works as a team with highly skilled professionals from other fields, such as doctors, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, social workers, dieticians. Caregivers and volunteers need not be highly skilled but they need to have compassion and willingness to work alongside a palliative team for the comfort of the patient. When curative treatment becomes unsuitable and futile palliative care is considered in the hope of bridging a balance between quantity and quality towards the end of life.

## **Palliative Care**

### **a. Managing Pain Is Main Aim of Palliative Care**

Managing pain symptoms: Margo McCaffrey's definition of pain has been identified universally as, "whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever the experiencing person says it does" (Bernhofer, 2011). Pain is one of the most dreadful symptoms that a patient can feel during an illness. Pain that is felt for short intervals are acute pain and pain that is felt for longer periods are known as clinical pain that lasts for more than six months. All the adequate inventions in scientific treatment, the one goal that medicine began with was to treat the pain of an ailing patient, sadly that is not being taken care of completely.

The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, recognised that "the medical use of narcotic drugs continues to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes".

Communication for assessing pain becomes very important for the palliative team so that they can provide effective pain relief to the

patient. Once a patient is referred for palliation, the team assesses the current clinical and emotional status of the patient by discussing with the patient what they are feeling and what are they looking for. Based on these symptoms medication is administered to relieve the pain. The most daunting part of treating cancer is the process of diagnosing the pain felt by the patient. According to a report by WHO in 2011, cancer causes more deaths than all coronary heart diseases or strokes (Ferley, et. al., 2015). With more than 14 million cases of cancer diagnosed worldwide in 2012, and by 2025 the number is expected to reach more than 20 million, where India has new cases registered at 11,57,294<sup>1</sup> in the year 2018 (Chwistek, 2017), due to which we will witness an escalating requirement for managing pain. Drugs are administered for pain control, however there is a lot of fear that surrounds the usage of drugs as many feel that patients might become addicted to the drug. The assessment of pain in treating patients needs to be carried out carefully as the dosage of drugs is dependent on the amount of pain a patient has and treating it correctly is vital. According to Cicely Saunders, “tolerance and drug dependence is too often due to faulty management (Saunders, 1967).

Physicians should give their patients the pain killers before they demand for it, rather than wait for the patient to complain and then request for it. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (Rodgers, 2002), recommends strong opioids for pain control for the care of people with advanced and progressive disease. Patients that suffer from pain are not only cancer patients but also patients that have heart failures and neurological diseases as well (Bennett, et. al., 2012).

Providing drugs for pain relief is a major concern for patients suffering from severe pain as -

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<sup>1</sup> “International Agency for Research” on “Cancer is a Global Initiative of Cancer Registry Development.” By WHO.

- a. Speaking to some doctors, they discussed that they don't prescribe narcotic drugs to relieve the pain as they might lose their license due to the complicated rules and regulations. There is an amendment in the of the 2014 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Amendment Bill, that allows the medical profession to access essential drugs for their patients that were very stringent in the 1985 bill (Bajwa, 2015).
- b. There are difficulties in getting access to the drug as there is a lack of knowledge and attitude among professionals and also the public in general.
- c. Medical facilities have to go through mandatory and rigorous steps in maintaining accurate documentation of stored drugs and its usage for patients.

The one sentence that is heard by many who have family members being treated for a terminal disease is, “there is nothing more we can do, please take your patient home”

When patients choose palliative or hospice care the one aspect that they look forward is, for pain relief. Here, both places work towards reducing pain and giving comfort. Drugs administered here can range from opioids to non-opioids.

*Nonopioid analgesics - non-opioids-* (Berry, et.al., 2001)- These drugs relieve a variety of pain that can be from acute pain to chronic pain. They are used for trauma, postoperative, cancer, arthritis pain. Somatic pain is used to distinguish pain that does not arise from the viscera, i.e. internal organs, of the body (Murphy, 2007). Often this is used in somatic pain as well for joint pain or bone pain as well.

*Opioid analgesics (opioids)*– Opioids are administered on patients when they do not get relief from nonopioids. They are used as a combination of nonopioids so that the dosage of opioid used is not too high. Morphine is the most frequently used drug for pain management for those patients suffering from cancer (Bharti, 2009).

As watching a cancer patient being treated very closely, the aim of the palliation doctor was to administer the pain-relieving drug

before the patient started feeling the pain; this was usually in about 5 hours of clock time. After an interview with the patient's haematologist-oncologist in a palliative setting, he said, "that as physicians that treat cancer patients, usually we don't wait for the pain to start or increase" they have an approximation of what time they need to administer the next pain-relieving drug. Statistics in 2018 in India: Show an estimated number of people living with the disease: around 2.25 million. Total: 7,84,821, Men: 4,13,519, Women: 3,71,302.

Recent legislative changes have made it easier for doctors to prescribe morphine in India under strict guidelines (Sengupta & Chatterjee, 2013).

## **b. Psycho-Social Assistance**

Patients that suffer from a terminal disease are confronted with psychosocial<sup>2</sup> problems as well. The main reason for this feeling is that they are left out of social activities by family members and society, leaving them in an isolated space not only physically but mentally as well. Sometimes patients are kept away from family as they might be suffering with a contagious disease. This feeling of being kept aloof from mundane activities and others can be very distressing and emotional. Palliative care workers spend time with the patients allow them to speak their mind out without being judgemental and listen to what they have to share. Social and psychological specialists try to analyse where the problem lies. Listening is the key element when treating a patient that has psychosocial problem.

There may be a financial problem that the patient is worried about. The cost of treating a terminal disease is very high in such a case if the patient comes from a lower or middle segment of society their

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<sup>2</sup> "Psychosocial" means "pertaining to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour, and to the interrelation of behavioural and social factors" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). OED Online. (2012). Oxford University Press. Dictionary on line <http://www.oed.com/>.



worry is that they might be eating into the family income. This situation might finally lead them to run out funds for basic requirements such as food, shelter and education. Another problem that does not remain far behind is that family members might have to change their daily routine and might have to become care takers of a family member. Caretakers might have to give up socialising, go out on holidays and other social gatherings. This might lead to mental exhaustion. Caretakers that are emotionally involved with a terminally patient might get emotionally burnt out too. One may not verbally tell the patient that they are becoming an encumbrance but their actions can be louder than their words. These can be some of the reasons that a terminally ill patient might suffer from psychosocial problems.

Some palliative care centres like Pallium India in Kerala have a day out for their patients, “On January 15, about 60 patients, who are ordinarily bed-bound or wheelchair-bound, and their families got together at Shankhumugham beach to celebrate the State Palliative Care Day.” (Pallium India, 2015). Thus, we find that involving patients even in their final months or days of life can be very uplifting for them and can change their entire emotional and mental state towards their end of life care. “Depression and anxiety are the most common psychiatric comorbidities in palliative care” (Wilson, et. al. 2007).

While applying scientific methodology for the care of a patient many of them may feel very anxious and upsetting about the impending fear of death. There is also a spiritual upliftment therapy for both, the patient and the family. Patients might want to do something or say something to their loved ones, doing this might bring them considerable peace. Patients may feel they need to perform some religious activities before or after their death, assuring them that they will be done will put a patient into a calmer space. Integrating the spiritual care by psychosocial workers uplifts the patient’s melancholic feeling that surrounds the death and dying process.

### c. The Truth in Palliative Care is Dealt with Care and Compassion

Many patients die or suffer due to uncontrolled symptoms or futile interventional procedures, doctors are taught only to cure and if a patient is not cured it is a failure on the part of medicine and the treating doctor. The ability of a doctor to effectively communicate with a patient is the core part of the treating process, “the way we saw it, and the way our professors saw it, the purpose of medical schooling was to teach how to save lives, not how to tend to their demise” (Gawande, 2014). Palliative care does not give false hope to a terminally ill patient that they will be cured. Patients are in very subtle manner provided with information that their final journey will be made as comfortable as possible. The disease is neither prolonged nor hastened. However, in some countries like France, Palliative sedation is legal, it is the intentional lowering of awareness towards, and including, unconsciousness for patients with severe and refractory symptoms (Twycross, 2019). When a patient’s pain is intolerable to the extent that even being aware of themselves causes immense pain and is beyond their control, in such cases palliative sedation is provided. It is the medication given to patients in their final days or hours towards death if needed.

Deep sedation takes a patient into a state of unawareness of the self, similar to that of going into a coma; however deep sedation is given only to control the pain. Providing deep sedation is not something that is discussed openly or put up on a chart as it is intentionally like, putting a patient into a state of a controlled and temporary coma.

### d. Affirming the Value of Life even at the End

Palliative care affirms life and its value by providing support to the patient till the end even when all meaning and hope is lost. Palliative care assists patients that are dejected, work to reclaim their autonomy by involving patients in their treatment, talking to them, assisting them with honest opinions in a mindful manner when

choices are to be made. There was a historical landmark ruling that was issued on March 9, 2018, the Indian Supreme court gave out a ruling that ‘allows passive euthanasia’, this made the decisions of withdrawing and withholding of treatment an option for patients that were kept on life support that may be futile.

If a patient seeks to discontinue treatment or does not want to undergo a procedure after being given the prognosis of the treatment, their choices are respected.

Palliative care makes a patient know their intrinsic value by caring for them with compassion and allowing them to be as human as possible. Even if patient’s breakdown or weep, and are anxious and depressed they are still treated as persons not as a bag of diseases or an ailing and dying body.

Palliative care has an agreement, that withstanding intolerable pain is a heroic challenge by itself but it is not necessary for the sufferer to be the hero every time. However, fighting this intractable suffering for some will be a form of spirituality to not undermine the power of human strength. People find their worth in life by searching for its meaning as Viktor Frankl’s book *Mans Search for Meaning*, (Frankl, 2008) it is precisely what human worth is based on if they find their meaning in the desire to continue to fight their disease or accept their terminal disease life becomes worthy.

### **Challenges of Palliative care**

While palliative care is still struggling to be known and recognised as a service that strives for a patient as a whole. The healthcare industry is booming. Before we proceed to understand the challenges faced by the

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Palliative care fraternity there is one aspect that we may observe about hospitals, they were previously called the “healthcare service sector” today it is known as “healthcare industry” It is so because this sector will cater to a \$250 billion industry by 2020. (Netherlands Enterprise Agency, 2020)

### **a. Government assistance is necessary for Palliative care growth**

The Indian Ministry of Health & Family Welfare does not allocate separate funding for palliative care, which is a grave concern for organisations that provide palliative care. Palliative care comes under the ‘Mission Flexipool’ under National Health Mission (Bhatt & Sandhu, 2016). In 2018-19, the government spending on healthcare in India was only slightly greater than 1% of the GDP. There is a need for palliative care for over six million people each year in India, but only two per cent of them have access to palliative care.

### **b. The Communication Gap Barrier**

Disclosing their sickness to a patient is the first important step to treating the disease. Doctors try to be as casual as possible when letting a patient know of a terminal disease. However, the patient is met with an indifferent attitude. The doctor might be as depressed as the patient but sadly physicians are not taught how to deliver bad news.

An area that is concerning and that needed to be addressed was the doctor-patient communication. For students in India that are pursuing a degree in medicine, there is a communication course as a workshop added to the syllabus (Choudhary & Gupta, 2015). “The patient will never care how much you know until they know how much you care,” said Terry Canale.<sup>3</sup> Communication is the underlying cornerstone of medical treatment provided by the health

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<sup>3</sup> Dr Canale is an orthopaedic and he was talking at 2000 American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons Vice Presidential Lecture in 2000.

industry today. The reason it is more difficult for a physician to communicate is due to the humongous amount of information that is available through media.

### **Right to Palliation Treatment**

Every patient has the right to receive palliative treatment. Since many physicians are not knowledgeable about pain relief medication or analgesics they don't provide it to the patient. There is a certain fear of the double effect, as many would also consider it as bringing death nearer or it can be considered as physician-assisted suicide (Mudigonda & Mudigonda, 2010). Providing drugs is a concern due to its difficulty in accessing it. The one important aspect in a country that is developing is the taboo that surrounds the usage of any kind of drug.

### **Treating Doctors Rarely Send Patients To Palliative Care**

There are a marginal number of patients that actually receive palliative care, in fact, most of the patients are not provided with the option of care. One of the major concerns is that it might undermine the credibility of the treating physician. The hospital industry is not very welcoming in sending patients across for palliative care as it undermines the capabilities of surgeons and specialists. Physicians feel that by telling patients to get palliative assistance it is a way of letting the patients know that they have not been able to cure their disease. The fear of losing trust in the patient becomes the main hinderance of bridging patients across to palliative care. However, we are now witnessing a gradual feeling of co-existence of

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each other. This can be pragmatically witnessed, if one is to visit hospitals in the city, there are a few of them that accommodates a palliative department. These are small beginnings but very welcoming to patients that face death and are in the dying process.

## Conclusion

This study shows us that palliative care is pragmatic in nature and care provided to patients in a holistic manner. Palliative care is the inclusion of many fields to form one comprehensive discipline to make the last journey as comfortable as possible. We can use the instrumental value of palliative care to attain the means of preserving life. Exemplifying palliative care as the instrumental worth to sustain life is worthy.

As Dame Cicely Saunders once said, “You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully but also to live until you die.”

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## **Living as Hidden Christ: A Homage to Fr Cherian Nereveetil (1971-2021)**

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**Abstract:** Fr Cherian Nereveetil was a Papalite and editor of *Sathyadeepam*. He died recently at the young age of 49. He has touched numerous people and has been an inspiration for many. His committed work, passionate love especially for the poor and larger vision for the good of the country and of the Church will motivate many young people to dedicate their whole lives to God. He has lived his life fully, with joy, gratitude and dedication. Truly he has been a hidden Christ, living, love and suffering with us and thus bringing us solace and consolation! This article is a homage to his life of commitment and devotion.

**Keywords:** Cherian Nereveetil, Ernakulam-Angamaly Diocese, Papal Seminary, Sathyadeepam.

Fr Cherian Nereveetil (49), a Papalite and former chief editor of *Sathyadeepam* a Catholic weekly run by Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, passed away in Kochi at 2 P.M. on Thursday, May 27,

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2021. He was undergoing treatment following an accident on May 13. He suffered severe head injury and was admitted to the ICU of a private hospital in Kochi (TNN, 2021).

According to the hospital sources, Fr Nereveetil suffered a heart attack and his health condition worsened leading to his death. The Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese Archbishop, Mar Antony Kariyil, had visited him at the hospital on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 (Staff Reporter, 2021). The funeral rites were held at Mary Queen Church in Kalamassery at 4 pm on Friday, May 28, 2021.

### **The Person of Fr Cherian**

He was born at Edappally in June 1971. In 1997, he got ordained priest by Bishop Mar Jacob Manantheodath on January 1, 1997, after his theological studies at Jnana Deepa, Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Pune. He was also part of the Jesus Youth International Council as its spiritual leader for nearly 17 years. From 2015-2019, he had served as the chief editor of *Sathyadeepam*.

"Fr Nereveetil was a symbol of Christ himself. He always had a smile on his face and was very gracious. It is a real loss for us," said Fr Mathew Kilukan, spokesperson of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese (TNN, 2021).

In 2013, Fr Nereveetil donated his kidney to a plus one student Rincy, a resident of Thoppumpady in Ernakulam. Fr Benny Maramparampil, a senior priest belonging to the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese, said that Fr Nereveetil was against gaining popularity as a kidney donor.

### **His Inspiration**

He has been quite popular in social media and praises have been outpouring soon after his demise. The *Mangalam* newspaper, a prestigious Malayalam paper gave a one full page report on him, on June 6, 2021 "The Christ who lived in hiding." One blogger wrote in his Facebook, "When Christ decided to come to earth and live in hiding, he found Fr Cherian." Another woman wrote: "Knowing naturally that his body is not his, but God's, he donated part of his body without making much noise about it."

Fr Joyce Kaithakottil, who has obtained a Doctorate in Biblical Theology, Gregorian University, Rome, claims that Fr Cherian was inspired by his

theology studies at Papal Seminary, Pune. “Cherian loved me like his own brother and used to call me ‘Chetta’ [elder brother],” said Fr Joyce. If Cherian has been an inspiration for many, it is because of the Jesuit fathers at Papal Seminary. This Seminary, which was administered by the Society of Jesus, was called, “The Home of love.” According to Fr Joyce, some of the priests in Papal Seminary and its sister Institute, Jnana Deepa, have influenced him much (Sebastian, 2021). One of them is Fr Lionel Mascarenhas, SJ, who gave a new direction to Papal Seminary formation soon after Vatican II. According to Fr Joyce, this priest who used to walk with a sling bag, used to clean his own room daily and who used to clean the bathroom of the staff members every week has tremendously impacted Fr. Cherian, who was translating Lionel’s simple life style to his own life. Another person who impacted Fr Cherian was Fr Clausen, SJ, who would go every day in the evening to a colony with a simple cloth bag. Fr Cherian got his inspiration to live and work with the poor from this humble priest. Fr Cherian got the inspiration for a Christ-centered theology and for the interpretations of the Gospels for the poor and marginalized definitely from the famous third world theologian, Fr. George Soares-Prabhu, SJ. Fr Joyce notes that Fr Cherian’s life is a witness to the fact that he has succeeded in imitating Christ and making his own life a sacrifice (Sebastian, 2021).

### Worthy of the Divine

Fr. Paul Thelakat, Editor of *Light of Truth*, lived under the same roof and worked together with Fr Cherian from 2015-2019. He was the editor of *Sathyadeepam* and Thelakat the editor of *Light of Truth, the English version*. “We thought, discussed, debated, consulted and prayed together and brought out the two Catholic periodicals. All through these years I read him as brother priest and observed he had an identity of his own. He had a childlike attitude to things and events like Oskar of Gunther Grass who refused to grow and join the elders and their culture. I have not heard from his cubicle sounds of scolding, quarrelling or shouting. He had a soft and silent tongue touched by a strange fire from above. He wrote the editorials for the paper, but never wrote a signed article. Writing is his secondary consideration, the main thing—practical life. He primarily was writer of his own book of life. Fr. Cherian preferred to proclaim the divine gospel in word and deed, and to cleave to this true, eternal faith right up until death. Thinking perhaps was for him learning the art of dying. He

was writing in flesh and blood his edition of the Bible, which is simply the highest form of writing.” Fr Thelakat affirms that Bible is the supreme task of writing.

Fr Thelakat adds: “He lived in orality, believed in the grammar of human speech, which bore the underwritten assumption of God’s presence. The covenant between word and world constitutes one of the very genuine renewals of the Spirit in history. The Word’s presence in the word was obvious for him. As the spiritual guide of the international Jesus Youth Movement he always preserved the possibility of relationship between the Self and the Other in the midst of the cacophony of differences. He presented freedom as the best access we have to the otherness. The power of music, the breath of the emotion of faith before the God of Jesus Youth Movement was for him greater than that of reason or logic, which transcend languages. The translation of music into meaning carries with it what somatic and spiritual cognizance we can have of the core mystery that we are.”

He had also difficulties, acknowledged Fr Thekalat. “But his ability to withdraw into anonymity was awesome. He could transcend, transcendence no longer hangs over man; he becomes, strangely, its privileged bearer. He could easily forget himself and join hand with others and walk the talk. He is our pride and challenge to appear worthy of the divine.”

### Conclusion

Fr Cherian has touched numerous people and has been an inspiration for many. His committed work, passionate love especially for the poor and larger vision for the good of the country and of the Church will motivate many young people to dedicate their whole lives to God. He has lived his life fully, with

Fr Cherian has touched numerous people and has been an inspiration for many. His committed work, passionate love especially for the poor and larger vision for the good of the country and of the Church will motivate many young people to dedicate their whole lives to God. He has lived his life fully, with joy, gratitude and dedication. Truly he has been a hidden Christ, living, love and suffering with us and thus bringing us solace and consolation!

joy, gratitude and dedication. Truly he has been a hidden Christ, living, love and suffering with us and thus bringing us solace and consolation! May he continue to inspire us to live dedicated, self-less and joyful lives for Christ and His brothers and sisters!

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## **Reclaiming Freedom Despite Its Denial: A Critical Reading of Harari on Liberty**

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**Abstract:** For Harari, freedom has always been an illusion. But, as such, it was at the basis of the democratic and humanist project. Suddenly, the abandonment of our autonomy in favour of optimizing our satisfactions will mark the end of modernity, especially since the principle of equality will no longer hold. New technologies and medical advances will indeed be reserved for the elite who will control the processing of information and its advances in an attempt to achieve immortality, like the gods. Concomitantly, the disappearance of a large number of trades, supplanted by machines, will create a huge class of people who are economically useless and dominated both socially and intellectually. Having lost the illusion of being able to choose their own destiny, these citizens without a well-defined identity will seek the meaning of their existence in algorithms. Harari can therefore suggest that the cult of the sovereign individual will give way to that of data processing. Is the advent of the new cult inevitable? Should we be afraid of this new religiosity? Can we reclaim our freedom? Attempts to answer these questions involve a breath-taking analysis.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Autonomy, Choice, Desire, Freedom, Free Will, Liberty, Myth.

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“This storm will pass. But the choices we make now could change our lives for years to come” - Yuval Noah Harari

## Introduction

Containment tests our need for freedom. When every act of everyday life—leaving home, going to a store, going to the hairdresser or taking the bus—is subjected to draconian conditions, or outright prohibitions, and our fundamental freedoms are compromised. This new reality has led some observers to reject in principle any infringement of public freedoms, as if the protection of public health was not also an obligation of the State towards its citizens. But in doing so, it is also the very idea that we have of freedom that is questioned. To be free is human person’s noble aspiration, as old as humanity!

Modernity—which embodies the epoch of human history when each generation considers itself more learned and therefore better inspired than the previous ones—today looks with amused condescension at the way in which the ancients considered the ideal of freedom. How to trust the proclamations of freedom of a Sophocles or of a Moses, when we know that the Greeks, like the Hebrews, accepted slavery? In the eyes of contemporary human person, no freedom is worth, if it is not valid for all. Of course, this current prejudice against the great thinkers of Antiquity is due more to ignorance than to an enlightened judgment on their message that is still relevant for us. The simple fact that Sophocles’ *Antigone* (442 BCC) either read and staged, or that the biblical Exodus is still considered a universal model of the fight for freedom, are more convincing in this respect than any scholarly analysis. In fact, the contempt often displayed in our time for the wisdom of the Ancients shows that “the paradox of cultural relativism” (Lévi-Strauss, 1977, 329), well anchored in the West accommodates the conviction that we know everything better than our ancestors.

However, the situation in which the world has reached today illustrates a sad paradox, which means that human freedom has never been so threatened as since human rights became universal. What we mean by this is that no other era in human history has made such an emphasis on individual freedom, and yet we are living in the decline - and some would say, the end - of a long period of progress in freedom, which began with

the rise of modern democracies in Europe, America and elsewhere. The examples of this paradox are countless. To understand how this is possible, let us analyse the work of a highly visible representative of contemporary political thought, Jerusalem University professor Yuval Noah Harari.

## Choice and Freedom

Harari believes that most of our decisions are not a matter of our free will. Certainly, we have intentions and desires, but where do they come from? Did we really choose them? Are they not rather organic or the result of impressive networks? Based on neuroscientific studies, he argues that the vast majority of our decisions (who we date, who we vote for, etc.) do not result from our free will. Gaspard Koenig underlines the paradox of this opinion which is far from achieving consensus in the neuroscientific community. Indeed, if we do not have free will, then why not capitulate to artificial intelligence and accept the comfort and convenience it gives us?

Freedom, for human person, refers to the power to decide freely, the power to do and choose what he thinks is best. Spontaneity is therefore not enough to qualify the free act. Spontaneous or unconstrained movement can be mechanical or habitual. I may spontaneously grab a cigarette and no one stops me. However, this spontaneous and mechanical gesture means nothing, from the point of view of freedom. It is only when reflection comes to suspend action that freedom comes into play. The free act is the act that results from a choice, after one has deliberated (Aristotle, 2009, 41-45).

It is therefore in the experience of choice that freedom is discovered. Any choice assumes the idea of the possible. This is obvious. Without possibility, there is no choice, and this, in a first sense first: as we have seen, there is no freedom, if there is constraint. But that any choice presupposes the possible is also true in a second sense, which is more fundamental, no doubt: it is because man is this being capable of projecting himself into the future, and of aiming for the ends that arise in him the question of choice. What will I do with my life? Which profession will I choose? Will I get married? Will I have children? What political commitment will be mine? So many questions, so many decisions that I will have to make and that no one, in principle, can assume my place. These serious questions involve the subject's freedom, which can be tested

to the point of anguish. This is probably why it may sometimes seem easier to hand over to others to make choices for one's life. Submission to authority and conformism are attitudes which bear witness to the difficulty that human person experiences in exercising her freedom.

Choosing is therefore judging what is best among several possible options. Yet to be free is not only to judge, but also to act. Here again, freedom cannot be taken for granted because of one's powerlessness and the insufficiency of his one's to achieve what is considered the best. Human person is thus divided between two opposing instances, that of the good which she chooses, and that of the evil which she realizes. Am I free to will, as I am carried along by the weight of sin? wonders Saint Paul: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Rom. 8:15). Opposed to the idea of free will as an absolute power of choice, Luther would become the theoretician of the bondage of the will in his work *De Servo Arbirtio* (Luther, 1957). Human person is not free, and yet she is guilty: only divine grace can save here. Without entering into the theological debate, let us acknowledge the problem here: am I free to do what I want, when I am chained by the past of my upbringing, socialization, education, and even heredity?

However, except to "deny that man is a moving principle or begetter of his actions, as of children" (Aristotle, 2009, 46), should we not lay down freedom? After all, we may not be free when it is time to act, because we have developed bad habits, though we were free to have developed them or not, says Aristotle. We are brought back to the question of choice. Could we have chosen to act differently than we did?

To this question, we spontaneously tend to answer positively, thereby affirming the existence of our free will, understood as absolute power of beginning. I made such a choice, but I could make another: this is our conviction, based on which the feeling of remorse, regret or repentance can be explained. But a belief does not prove anything. It is not enough to believe yourself free to be free. The belief in free will is perhaps, ultimately, only an illusion. And illusion is what makes us mistake our desires for reality. To which desire does the desire for free will correspond? Is it not, as Nietzsche suggests that, "the demand to bear the entire final responsibility for one's actions oneself and to relieve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society of responsibility for it, is [...] an

attempt to pull oneself into existence out of the swamp of nothingness by the hair, with more audacity than Munchhausen”? (Nietzsche, 2009, 21).

Thus, divided between the belief in free will and the feeling of our powerlessness, between pride and humility, we are divided and uncertain. Conscience given over to free choice seems doomed to be a torn and unhappy conscience. To overcome these philosophical problems, Harari admits the hypothesis of a specific form of freedom. The heart of the debate is not the existence or absence of freedom. According to him, in most cases, people make choices, including the most important ones in their lives, that are not real choices. The problem with the idea of free will is its formulation. Freedom is presupposed to be something that we have, when we should struggle and fight for it. Freedom is the end, not the beginning. It is dangerous to think that we are exercising our free will in every decision, because that does not make us question ourselves about who we are and what is the nature of our desires. Moreover, it makes us easily manipulated by others, which is extremely problematic in our liberal democracies. Hence it is important that we defend freedom as an end, without which we become too quickly and too easily manipulable subjects to conform to very idea of the attack on civil liberties as a necessary prerequisite for liberal democracies.

Are liberal democracies the end of history, as Fukuyama seems to think? (Fukuyama, 1992). According to Harari, liberal democracies are the most adaptable political regime among other regimes that we know so far. They have managed to adapt and progress through a series of crises, the severity of which reached its peak in the twentieth century (the two World Wars, the Great Depression of 1929, etc.). Thus, Harari is the bearer of a message of hope: if today our liberal democracies are again in crisis, they have a good chance of being revived.

### **The Contemporary Paradox of Freedom**

Long before the Coronavirus, he already denounced the “attacks on liberty” committed by the Israeli government, accusations which he recently repeated, on the occasion of the very effective measures taken by Israel to protect its citizens against the pandemic. Like many proponents of post-modern thinking, Harari considers infringements of the freedom of the individual more dangerous than the evil against which they protect him, whether it is terrorism or pandemic. Coronavirus. Warning us against

the risk of every citizen being watched and kept under surveillance, in the name of the fight against the pandemic, Harari affirms in an interview that “a big battle has been raging in recent years over our privacy. The coronavirus crisis could be the battle’s tipping point” (Harari, 2020). The professor from Jerusalem has thus become an international herald of freedom that is threatened by the fight against the Coronavirus.

Yet, according to him, freedom does not exist! As he confidently asserts, freedom is an invention of human person and just like other universal and immutable principles it exists “in the fertile imagination of the Sapiens, and in the myths they invent and tell” (Harari, 2014, 89). Thus, according to Harari, we should defend our freedom, knowing well that freedom does not exist. More than a simple fallacy, this statement expresses very precisely the post-modern approach to the condition of human person. We are at the heart of the contemporary paradox of freedom. Today’s Europe and the entire post-modern West claim to defend human freedom (and human rights) even though they no longer believe in human freedom. Human person is not free, because she is enslaved to the political and economic structures which dominate him (according to Marxist doctrine), to her drives (according to Freudian *doxa*), or even to her neurons (according to contemporary cognitivism). Thus, we can claim freedom for the individual, while denying human freedom.

Once human person is considered to be no more than an information processing system, defending the freedoms of the individual only amounts to defending the “right to privacy” or “data confidentiality”, as the new champion of freedom, Yuval Harari, explicitly states. These principles are certainly honourable and important, but which do not deserve that we risk our lives and health for them, unlike the generous ideals of the founding fathers of modern democracy.

Freedom, as a constitutive element of the human condition, has broadened in practical terms, along with economic and technical development, but at the same time it has shrunk in its theoretical meaning. Instead of the proclamation of the ideal of human freedom, central element of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1791 (“men are born and remain free and equal in rights”) and of the US Constitution of 1789 (“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings

of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America)”, we only have the “General Data Protection Regulation” of the European Union.

Behind every piece of legislation, there is a philosophy and a certain idea of the human being. The elevated and generous conception of human person, on which liberties guaranteed by the first constitutional texts and by the *Bill of Rights* were based, has thus given way today to a much more dull, technical and stunted conception of the human being. The new “Law Tablet” of the French Revolution, given to the French people who were freed from their chains, under the gaze of the Supreme Being—secular and revolutionary transfiguration of the revealed Mosaic Law given by Moses to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai—culminated today in a banal bureaucratic settlement of the European Union, where there is neither a religious spirit nor a secular spirit.

### **The Triumph of Neural Sciences and the End of the Individual**

Who can still say today that humans are born and remain free? Certainly not the present-day proponents of a determinism with a biological or neurological basis. In his *Homo Deus*, a new Bible of a sick and faltering humanity, which no longer believes in man and his freedom, Harari writes: “Over the last century, as scientists opened up the Sapiens black box, they discovered there neither soul, nor free will, nor ‘self’—but only genes, hormones and neurons that obey the same physical and chemical laws governing the rest of reality” (Harari, 2015, 282). Gaspard Koenig, essayist and novelist, in his book *The End of the Individual*, investigated the artificial intelligence industry and the conceptions that underlie it. This fascinating book, subtitled *A Philosophical Journey into Artificial Intelligence*, is the travel diary of a moderner, visiting Silicon Valley and the other places where so-called “intelligent” robots are made. At the end of his journey to the four corners of the globe in the footsteps of the untraceable “Artificial Intelligence”, and after his interaction with Harari, Koenig thinks that the ultimate meaning of *Homo Deus* is not mastery of autonomy, but pacifism as a personal path to bliss (Koenig, 2019). Thus Harari along with other supporters of the neuronal human being, makes a sad prognosis that we can find in the neuronal human, the key to the paradoxical negation of freedom, in which the West has been stuck ever since it renounced free will, the most precious idea inherited not only from

the Enlightenment, but also from the entire two-thousand-year-old Judeo-Christian tradition.

Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Princeton, author of the best-selling book *Animal Liberation* is a leading theorist of anti-speciesism ideology, which aims to free animals from human oppression. His essential credo is that the Judeo-Christian doctrine of the “sanctity of life” must be abolished and replaced by the notion of “quality of life”. In a 2009 article in *Foreign Policy* magazine, titled “The Sanctity of Life”, Singer wrote: “During the next 35 years, the traditional view of the sanctity of human life will collapse under pressure from scientific, technological, and demographic developments. By 2040, it may be that only a rump of hard-core, know-nothing religious fundamentalists will defend the view that every human life, from conception to death, is sacrosanct” (Singer, 2009).

Much like Peter Singer, the animal rights ideologue, who claimed to replace the “sanctity of life” with a pale and insignificant “quality of life”, Harari abolished the “myth” of human freedom, to erect the Golden Calf of a banal “right to happiness” promised to a human-machine, “freed from her insane desires”.

## Conclusion

The liberal discourse postulates that our choices, in particular political ones, are guided by our free will which it tacitly confuses with our feelings. We do act according to our feelings, but these have nothing to do with any free will leading us to make reasoned choices. Feelings are inherited biochemical mechanisms, shaped by evolution from our distant ancestors to allow us to optimize our chances of survival and reproduction. In the Brexit referendum, how many British voters, even the most learned, had sufficient knowledge of the issues to make a reasoned choice? Most just followed their feelings.

However, these intrusive evolutions of the artificial intelligence will always be more essential. Medical algorithms will detect diseases before symptoms appear, decision support systems will tell us which profession to exercise or whom to marry. In turn, our capacity to make decisions will diminish. The heads of state themselves will end up arbitrating between solutions developed by computer systems. The dictatorships of the twentieth century were less efficient than democracies because of their inability to process information centrally. Artificial Intelligence could



give them back the advantage: going beyond the wildest dreams of the tyrants of yesterday and today, bio-sensors will make it possible to detect the intentions of citizens, even to manipulate them.

Science fiction is full of stories of robots that gain consciousness and revolt against humans. However, the main danger of artificial intelligence in the short term is not the uprising but the total docility of machines applying with appalling efficiency and without any discernment the orders they have received. Artificial intelligence amplifies the natural stupidity of men. The digital dictatorship is lying in wait for us if we do nothing to advance consciousness.

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## Pope Francis' Advice to Young French Priests

(June 7, 2021)

1. Be shepherds with 'the smell of the sheep grounded in the situation of your flock.
2. Do not go into the field to apply theories without considering the environment in which you will be working or the people entrusted to your care.
3. Priests should be people capable of living, of laughing and crying with their people, in a word, of communicating with them
4. Be careful with some reflections and thoughts on priesthood because sometimes these reflections and thoughts are laboratory sample: this priest, that priest and so on.
5. Priesthood isolated from the people of God, is neither a Catholic priesthood nor a Christian one.
6. Strip yourselves of your pre-constituted ideas, your dreams of greatness, your self-assertion, in order to put God and people at the center of your daily concerns.
7. For a priest who would like to be an intellectual, not a pastor, it is better for him to be lay person.
8. When living with other priests be careful about Individualism, self-assertion, and indifference as these pose great challenges of living together.
9. Beware of the temptation to create small closed groups, to isolate oneself, to criticize and speak ill of others, to believe oneself superior, more intelligent.
10. Gossip is a habit of closed groups, of "bachelor" priests who talk and malign others, undermining all. Let go of this habit and look at and think about God's mercy.
11. Think of the other priest and welcome one another as a gift.
12. In a fraternity lived in truth, in the sincerity of relationships and in a life of prayer, priests can form a community in which we can breathe the air of joy and tenderness.

## Pope Francis' Advice to Young French Priests

(June 7, 2021, contd)

13. The priest is a man who, in the light of the Gospel, spreads the taste of God around him and transmits hope to restless hearts
14. St. Joseph is a model of priest. May priests rediscover the face of this man of faith, this tender father, model of fidelity and trusting abandonment to God's plan.
15. St. Joseph teaches us priests that faith in God includes believing that God can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses.
16. Our frailties as priests is a "theological place of encounter with the Lord"
17. A fragile priest who knows his weaknesses and talks about them with the Lord, will do well. On the other hand "superman" priests end up badly.
19. Do not be afraid to dare, to risk and to go forward.
20. A priest who does not have a sense of humor is not liked, something is wrong. "Imitate those great priests who laugh at others, at themselves and even at their own shadow"
21. A sense of humor is one of the characteristics of holiness.
22. Remember that you have been anointed with the oil of joy and are to anoint others with the oil of joy.
23. It is only when you are rooted in Christ will you experience a joy that moves you to win hearts.
24. Always be thankful to God for what you are despite your limitations, frailties and tribulations. Gratitude is always a powerful weapon which allows us to keep the flame of hope burning in moments of discouragement, loneliness and trials.