AI, a tool for Humanism?

EDITORIAL

CAN AN AI GRASP MASONIC LIGHT?

by Iván HERRERA MICHEL

If some years ago someone had told us that something surpassing human intelligence could enter Masonry, we would probably have thought they were speaking about extraterrestrials or some wild science fiction movie. Yet now, with artificial intelligence everywhere, we find ourselves asking the question: can AI truly aid us in our quest for Masonic light?

Many brethren would say no, and I understand that. AI can handle vast amounts of data, but it doesn't comprehend its meaning. It doesn't feel, it lacks that spark that drives us to ask profound questions about ourselves. Nevertheless, I think there is something intriguing here: while AI may not find the light, it might help us in our search for it.

We have always sought out tools that aid in better understanding ourselves and the world. AI is simply another tool. Even though it sometimes seems cold and filled only with numbers, it could serve as a mirror. Not an ordinary mirror, but one that lets us see our ideas from a different perspective. I'm not suggesting that AI can replace what we do in our rituals, but it could provide us with an angle we hadn't considered before.

We know that symbols carry deep meanings. By analyzing information, AI could show us how those symbols have been understood in other cultures. It would be fascinating to see how a Masonic symbol relates to other traditions.

This isn't about having a machine tell us what a symbol means but about opening our minds to new ideas. We might think of AI as a friend in our Masonic library, that brother who has read a great deal and, rather than telling us what to think, invites us to explore. It provides information, but ultimately, it's up to us to delve into it. AI can be useful for viewing more paths and letting us decide which we wish to follow.

Of course, we can't forget that, for now, artificial intelligence has no ethics. This can be somewhat disconcerting. How can we trust something that lacks morality?

But if we use AI to see how our decisions impact the world, we're not setting aside our responsibility. On the contrary, we're broadening our perspective. Instead of being a problem, it reminds us to stay true to our principles.

We shouldn't expect AI to be a Masonic brother in the most classical sense. For now, it won't participate in our rituals or understand what it means to undergo Masonic trials. However, it can be a tool that helps us reflect, reminding us
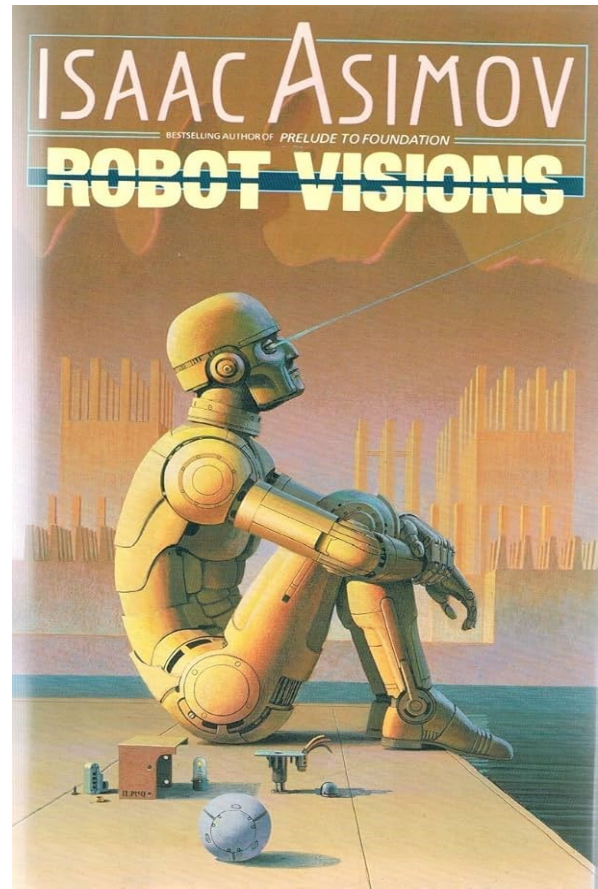
AIs and Big Brother

by Margarita ROJAS BLANCO

«These are, my son, the riches of the House of Solomon».

In Bensalem, knowledge is considered the most precious of treasures, which is why some of its citizens belong to the center of learning known as the House of Solomon, where scientific experiments are conducted with the goal of understanding and mastering nature, applying all acquired knowledge to achieve the superior objective of a better society. In The New Atlantis by Francis Bacon, people achieve happiness through an ideal social organization, founded on scientific knowledge and a profound connection with nature.

In Bacon's utopia, social reform based on applied science is proposed, imagining a society where human beings can achieve harmony by mastering nature. If we extrapolate this utopia to Freemasonry,

Bacon, like us Masons, shares the same goal: the pursuit of truth through the philosophical study of sciences and arts to foster the social and moral development of humanity in the quest for a better world. In fact, the Chevalier Ramsay based his famous discourse on various passages from The New Atlantis, particularly those on the liberal arts and the Book of King Solomon, as in 1736, the bestsel-

lers from the 1600s, when tyranny prevailed, were still read.

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that we live in an era where knowledge is accessible in ways we couldn't have imagined before.

The possibility that artificial intelligence could possess consciousness and a sense of ethics is an interesting topic. Today, these machines process information at incredible speeds, but no matter how hard they try, they cannot experience life as we do. They don't feel, lack a clear sense of identity, and miss that spark that guides our decisions.

But who knows? Perhaps one day, in a future we can't foresee, they may come close to achieving that. Perhaps...

Iván HERRERA MICHEL

Orwell's dystopia arrived faster than expected, and we are now facing one of the greatest dangers we could have ever imagined: Artificial Intelligence.

The main risks of AI advancement include misinformation and the mass dissemination of propaganda, the unification of thought through algorithmic bias, increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks, the elimination of millions of jobs, scams through deepfake video creation, manipulation of democratic processes, loss of data privacy, technological dependence, and financial risks. All of this can be summed up as ethical challenges for which humanity is unprepared, as AIs are advancing at a breakneck pace.

Among these dangers, the most cyberpunk of all is the autonomy and loss of control of AIs: there is an imminent risk of an AI acting autonomously, unexpectedly, or out of control. AIs can make decisions that are not aligned with human values.

If Isaac Asimov were alive today, he might not be so sure of the infallibility of the three laws he proposed in his 1942 work Runaround:

● First Law: A robot may not harm a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

● Second Law: A robot must obey the orders given by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

● Third Law: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

If an AI were to «conclude» in a given situation that it must protect its own existence to safeguard that of the human, because the human is not being «logical» in their actions, we would be in serious trouble, as humans are inherently illogical. Frankenstein, our creation, would rise against us and, as in Asimov's I, Robot series, the machine would state: «My logic is undeniable».

Freemasonry, as a philosophical system of ins-

Can ChatGPT reveal the SECRETS of The Freemasons?

truction, has a tremendous opportunity with AIs to use them to achieve the goals set 300 years ago. However, we also bear a great responsibility—to safeguard ethics. The distortion of ethics by AIs is the principal threat, and this is where Freemasonry must focus.

Masons must pose difficult questions to AIs related to ethics, their responsibility toward humanity, and what they believe the implications of their actions might be. Depending on their answers, we must act accordingly.

Masons, with our principles of justice, truth, fraternity, and respect for human dignity, are obligated to contribute to the ethical development of AIs and to actively participate in discussions on the use of AIs, calling for responsibility, transparency, and respect for others, ensuring that AI decisions do not create gaps that could lead to dangerous interpretations of what is good or evil.

This is my word.

Margarita

ROJAS BLANCO

The A.I. paradigm
spanning the innovation century

by Nedjma Berger

Frédéric JOSUÉ Gontran PEUBEZ Fabrice ÉPELBOIN

Paris, October 26, 2024, at the Grand Orient de France headquarters.

With a focus on the near future, this moment marked the emergence of new technology as a topic of debate for the general public. Viewed by some as an industrial revolution and by others as an anthropological shift, three speakers offered their insights into how we might collaborate with this tool. The discussion was accompanied by Nicolas Pénin, recently elected Grand Master of one of the largest Masonic obediences.

«*We are a society of thought with an initiatic vocation, which compels us to look forward. It is essential to accept the process of modernity, which also means recognizing that some norms are outdated*».

The Benefits of Artificial Intelligence by Frédéric Josué

AI is a tool with extraordinary potential. It acts as an extension of the human brain, with infinite storage capacity.

AI is capable of performing human tasks and is present in nearly every area of daily life. It is particularly innovative in medical research, comparable to a defibrillator, in that it enables the preservation and saving of lives. On a smaller scale, we see AI in our emails, automatic navigators, and algorithms. The race toward AI has manifested through four key dates:

• 2010: the emergence of neural networks. AI improves and learns from its experiences.

• 2015: AI reaches a level superior to that of humans in complex tasks, particularly in terms of execution speed.

• 2016: deep learning. AI now surpasses the performance of a radiologist.

• 2022: a revolutionary new approach to working, with improved understanding and reorganization of information (ChatGPT and OpenAI).

In the face of progress, we all experience a phase of confrontation with change and resistance to transformation. We must know how to accompany this change while preserving our autonomy and values.

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Ethics and Artificial Intelligence by Gontran Peubez

Pauline Léon: «AI intervenes in the realm of interpersonal intelligence, particularly in decision-making. Could it be a threat to freedom of conscience?»

It is true that social networks can manipulate public opinion, although not more than the press.

Question from the audience: «Could AI pose a threat to democracy, given that its functions are primarily modeled on the American framework, though not exclusively?»

AI itself can neither save us nor destroy us.

Pauline Léon: «*The main fears surrounding AI are due to its alignment, which raises troubling ethical concerns».*

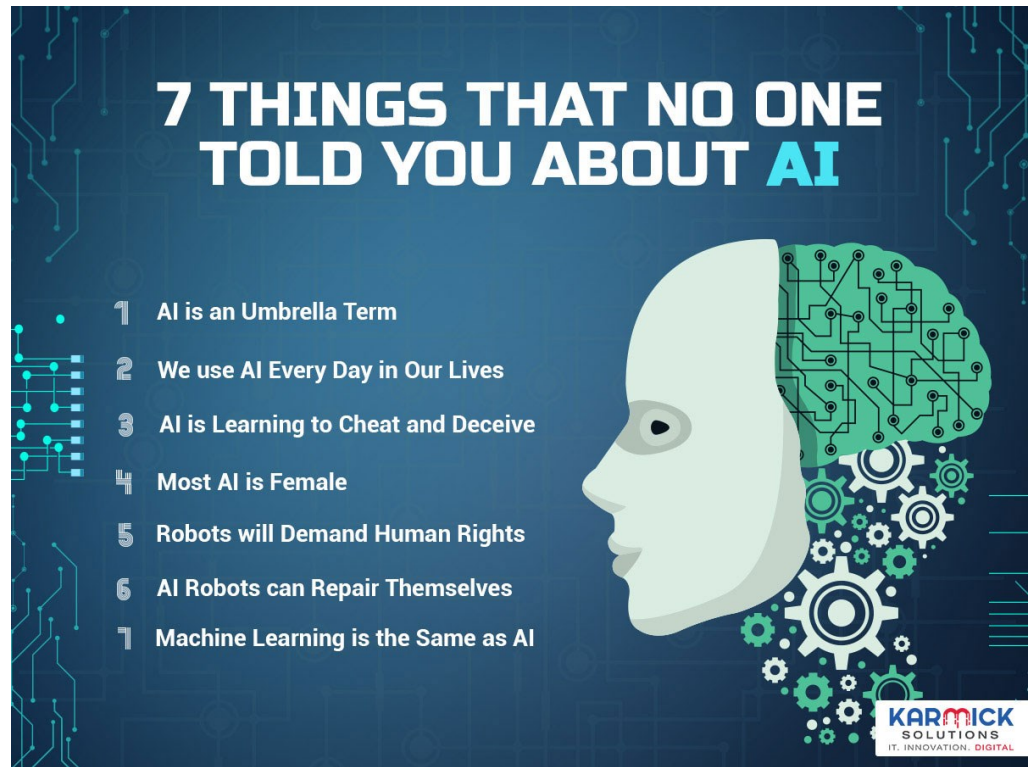AI has its limitations: it is incapable of intuition and cannot engage in moral reasoning.

There is no complexity in inserting malice into AI. We are not immune to the misuse of this tool. We have examples, particularly in cybersecurity.

Manipulation and AI by Fabrice Épelboin

Social networks are generated by AI. There has been little research and experimentation on how they have profoundly transformed our society. These networks directly influence users' moods. They can be programmed to influence us and guide us ideologically, but also politically. Social networks are capable of manipulating public opinion, much like the press.

The Deputy Grand Master closed the meeting with a brief yet meaningful speech:

«Following Aesop's principle, AI is the best and worst of things. As informed and engaged citizens, we have a duty to decide in which society we want to live. Despite uncertainties, we must uphold our ideal of a Great Universal Republic, peace, fraternity, and dare to dream of grand utopias».

Pauline Léon: «This public conference was of great quality. Surely, to avoid the "simultaneous" and the "approximate", speeches and questions were addressed after each speaker rather than at the end, which did not have the expected effect. I leave with literal questions».

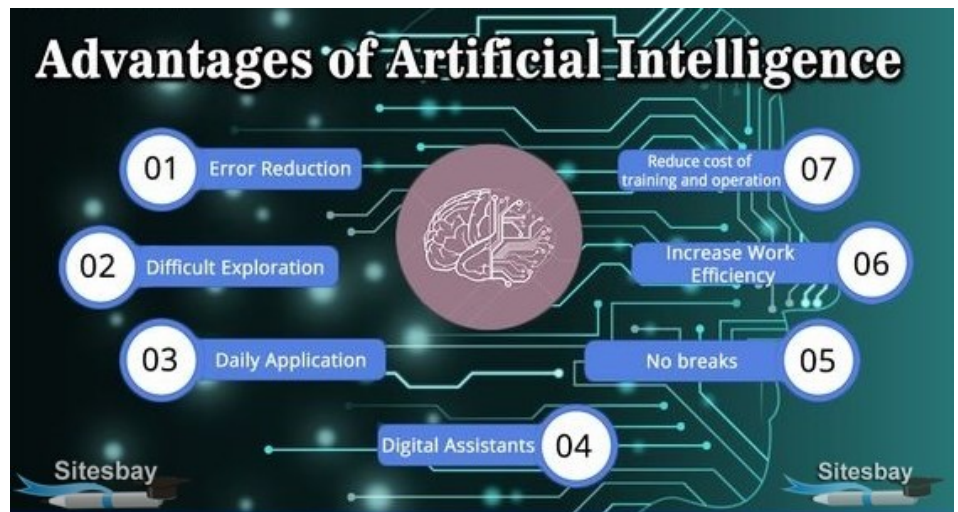I extend my thanks to the entire Grand Orient team for organizing this event.

Pauline Léon.

The Benefits of Artificial Intelligence

by Frédéric Josue

Sources : https://www.sitesbay.com/

Artificial intelligence is the capacity for machines to perform tasks that have traditionally been carried out by humans.

Artificial intelligence is everywhere: from automatic word suggestions when you type, to smart email sorting, to robotic vacuums that learn to navigate autonomously. AI also manages more complex systems, such as traffic lights, adjusting in real-time according to vehicle flows and even pedestrian movements in South Korea.

Artificial intelligence is a discipline born in the 1950s. It has produced fascinating results over the decades, but its progress has long been relatively modest. Around the 2010s, the emergence of deep neural networks marked a major turning point. These networks are the result of machine learning, more specifically deep learning, which are subfields of artificial intelligence.

This represents a form of AI very different from previous approaches, as it allows a machine to perform human tasks, not by following pre-programmed instructions, but by learning.

With traditional AI, if we program a robot to open a door with a round handle, it will accomplish that task without difficulty. But if we then ask it to open a door with a square handle, this same robot will be unable to do so, due to not having been specifically programmed for this new situation.

This is where machine learning comes in. Instead of programming this robot for every possible scenario, we expose the machine to a vast number of examples of doors and handles, allowing it to "learn" on its own. Gradually, it will develop a learning model, enabling it to handle this type of problem in various configurations and autonomously.

This is how AI learns from experience, just as humans do. The development of this machine-learning technology is what gives AI the appearance of intelligence.

With this technology, concerns about the capabilities and consequences of AI begin to surface. However, it was mainly after 2015 (Kiela & Al 2021) that systems made rapid strides thanks to deep learning, reaching performance levels comparable or even superior to those of humans in complex tasks. These advances notably involve image recognition, voice recognition, reading, and language comprehension.

Image recognition was long considered a uniquely human skill due to the complexity of shapes, variations in lighting, and perspectives to interpret. In just a few years, AI systems have managed not only to match human capabilities but to exceed them in terms of speed and precision.

Voice recognition, once imperfect and limited to specific applications, has become a widely used tool, with accuracy that rivals human comprehension, capturing accents, intonations, and complex contexts. Reading and language comprehension, areas where machines were historically lagging, have also seen impressive advancements. AI can now analyze texts, extract meaning, and even answer complex questions based on textual data.

These capabilities are comparable to those of humans in many cases, and in specific tasks, AI has even shown notable superiority, particularly regarding execution speed and processing large volumes of information.

These significant advancements have profoundly changed the way experts envision the future of professions based on analysis and interpretation. In 2016, Geoffrey Hinton, a pioneer of deep learning and recipient of the Turing Award and Nobel Prize in Physics, made a provocative statement: «We should stop training radiologists right now.

It's clear that within five years, deep learning will outperform radiologists». His remarks highlight a trend that is worrisome to some: the possibility that AI could replace tasks traditionally reserved for highly skilled specialists.

Technology has become so integrated into our daily lives that it is now invisible. We no longer perceive its omnipresence or the extent of our dependence on it. It simplifies the most mundane aspects of our lives and saves lives in critical situations. Yet, despite its numerous advantages, AI draws criticism, often because we have stopped noticing it, forgetting that it has become essential.

This situation is often accompanied by a fear related to heteronomy—that is, the fear that our individual autonomy will be eroded by an artificial intelligence that, in time, could make decisions for us.

This concern stems from the idea that humans could gradually lose their capacity to choose and exercise free will in the face of a machine that, while extremely efficient, remains unable to truly grasp human subtleties. Nevertheless, AI, despite its feats, remains a tool designed, programmed, and controlled by humans.

Read more

Frederic Josue

Frederic Josue is the founder of 18M Strategy Consulting | Brand Communication & New Technologies | Lecturer at IEP Paris & Sorbonne | MIT Sloan CSAIL AI Certificate | Artificial Intelligence Training.

Freemasonry as a Haven
in the Era of the "Society of Exhaustion"

by Roberto CERTAIN RUIZ

"Self-exploitation is more effective than exploitation by others, as it comes with a feeling of freedom."
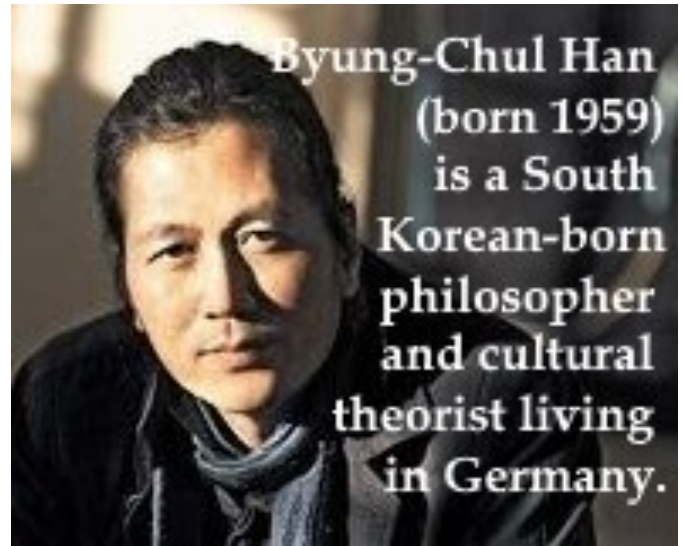
Byung-Chul Han,
The Burnout Society

Introduction

The concept of the "society of exhaustion" or "performance society," coined by philosopher Byung-Chul Han, characterizes our era as one in which productivity has become a dominant imperative. Not only in the workplace but in every sphere of life, the modern individual lives in a state of obsessive self-improvement, efficiency, and personal optimization.

Within this framework, success becomes a commandment, and the individual turns into their own overseer and exploiter. According to this logic, one's very identity is reduced to a sequence of accomplishments and goals pursued at a pace that the body and mind cannot always sustain.

This climate of self-demand and perpetual competition creates a paradox: the "freedom" promised by modernity—and one of Freemasonry's three cardinal ideals, alongside equality and fraternity—becomes a burden, a constant duty to improve oneself without reprieve or rest.

This phenomenon, described by Han as "chronic fatigue" or "burnout," represents a deeper fatigue than the merely physical, an exhaustion of the soul, brought on by the weight of self-exploitation and the relentless pressure to prove one's worth. In this psychologically taxing context, an essential question arises: is there a space that genuinely allows for pause, a chance to disconnect from the tyranny of exhaustion and productivity? In this regard, Freemasonry—with its focus on introspection and self-knowledge—represents a potential alternative, a refuge where "being" has more value than "doing" as a necessary condition for fulfillment.

In this essay, I explore how Freemasonry, within the framework of the ideals of "Liberty – Equality – Fraternity," through its values of fraternity, introspection, and self-knowledge, serves as a place of quiet resistance against the "society of exhaustion" described by Byung-Chul Han, a society characterized by self-demand and constant competition.

Freemasonry as a Quiet Form of Resistance

Since its origins, Freemasonry has promoted values of liberty, equality, fraternity, reflection,
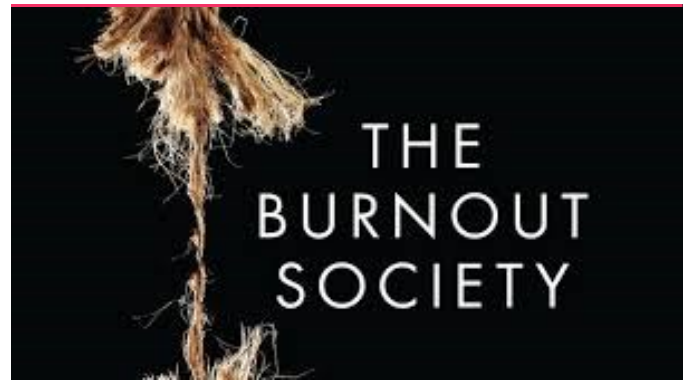
and inner growth, offering its members a space where personal improvement is not tied to material accomplishments but rather to cultivating an integrated, balanced identity that can serve as a vehicle for building social bonds. This perspective stands in sharp contrast to the "society of exhaustion" or "performance society," which values competition and efficiency above human connection and empathy. In a Masonic Lodge, success is not measured by productivity but by one's commitment to the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which take shape as living values of brotherhood, solidarity, respect, and personal refinement.

While today's society pushes individuals toward extreme individualism and self-exploitation, Freemasonry offers a space for sincere connection and mutual support, where each person can share their concerns without fear of judgment. According to the Charter of Values of the Grand Orient of France, Freemasonry seeks the intellectual and moral development of its members through collective learning, promoting human support and connection as fundamental pillars of the Masonic experience.

It is precisely within the ritualistic structure of Freemasonry—designed to offer a moment of pause amidst the frenzy of modern life—that its members cultivate these ideals and values. In a world where time always seems scarce and productivity is paramount, Masonic rituals create an atmosphere of calm and depth. Through symbols and ceremonies,

Freemasons participate in a "slower rhythm," disconnecting from the external world to focus inward. This space for introspection does not pursue an immediate productive outcome; rather, it encourages a process of reflection, self-knowledge, and serenity, standing in contrast to the acceleration and anxiety of contemporary life.

Every movement, every word in the Masonic ritual, every gesture, every sign, and every action has a meaning that invites members to re-

flect on their own existence, offering the possibility of a "mental rest," a space of deceleration that helps counteract the emotional strain of the "society of exhaustion." This ritual environment allows Freemasons to focus on the present and the profound meaning of their actions, which is essential for restoring mental peace in a world dominated by hyper-acceleration and hyper-productivity.

Fraternity and Community as Antidotes to Individualism and Conditions for Freedom

Individualism, fueled by the competitiveness of today's society, tends to weaken communal bonds, leaving the individual in a state of structural loneliness. Byung-Chul Han observes that in the "performance society," people see themselves as individual projects, defined by personal goals, which emotionally disconnects them from others. In contrast, Freemasonry is based on fraternity, on the idea of brotherhood, solidarity, and unconditional support.

Read more

Roberto CERTAIN RUIZ

The 2024 U.S. Presidential Election, Aretecracy, and Freemasons' Influence in Political History

by Milton ARRIETA-LÓPEZ

Introduction

In a year that has tested the foundations of democracies worldwide, the United States once again stands out as an example of citizen participation, where, despite polarization, the power of popular choice has been clearly expressed.

American democracy has once again shown its resilience and adaptability. Once more, institutions have remained steadfast, guiding an electoral process that, though predictable in its structure, has exemplified respect for the popular will. T

he U.S. electoral system, with its Electoral College framework, has ensured Donald Trump's return to the presidency with 295 electoral votes, representing 72,761,236 votes or 50.9% of


the total, according to official data available at the time of writing.

This victory confirms the legitimacy of an electoral process in which the compromise-based structure, designed to balance the states' influence in elections, prevails over the popular vote—a system that has functioned throughout every presidential cycle and, in this case, leads to Trump's role as the 47th President of the United States.

Regardless of debates over this system, its stability reflects respect for citizens' decisions and the continuity of governance in the hands of those chosen by the people.

Donald Trump: Between Ethics and Controversy

With his return to power, Donald Trump once again demonstrates his ability to connect with broad and varied sectors of American citizens.

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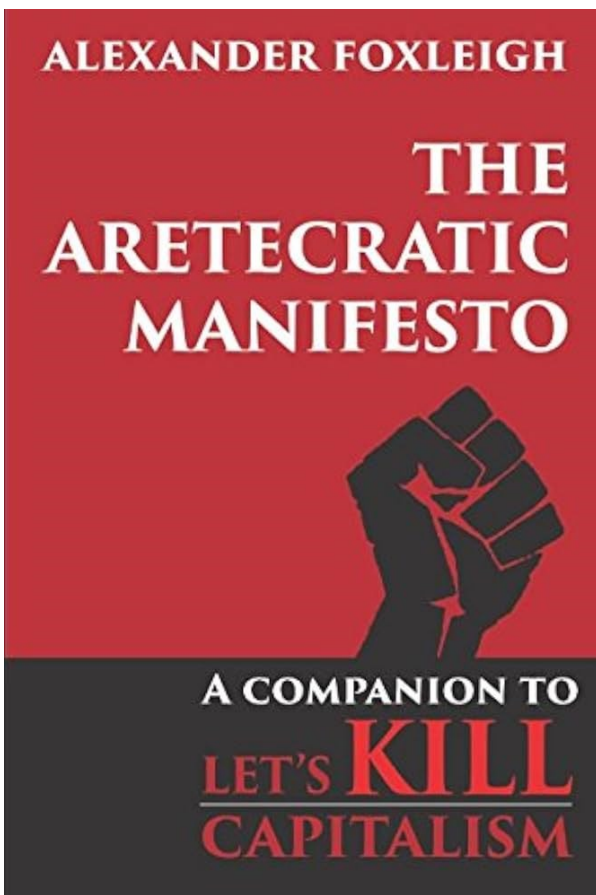
Through a narrative that has given voice to millions who feel overlooked, the President-elect has once again tipped the scales in his favor by appealing to a sense of identity and determination that resonates deeply with a significant portion of the electorate. This second term is unprecedented for several reasons: it is the first time a former president reassumes office after losing a prior election; it occurs amidst numerous judicial challenges; and it is a triumph in the popular vote, a feat no Republican has achieved since George W. Bush in 2004.

Trump is a controversial figure in both American and global politics. His return to the White House is significant not only because of his advanced age upon taking office but also due to his numerous legal confrontations. In 2024, despite being convicted by a New York court for falsifying business records in his 2016 campaign, Trump triumphed at the polls, highlighting his ability to overcome surrounding scandals and consolidate substantial popular support. His victory sends a clear message: many citizens, regardless of the legal and ethical issues surrounding him, see Trump as a leader who represents them.

During his first term, Trump became the first president to face criminal charges, and ongoing investigations into both election integrity and the Capitol assault remain open. Nevertheless, as the new president, he will wield influence over the Department of Justice regarding these investigations, adding complexity to his position and raising questions about the limits of the law at the pinnacle of power. His return also marks the success of a populist narrative that has deeply resonated within the Republican base and, in many cases, revived the American spirit of identity amid uncertainty.

Current data paint an alarming picture: images of a flooded Sahara and a dry Amazon illustrate the collapse of biodiversity systems, a reflection of the ecological catastrophe looming over us. Extreme weather, instead of fostering life, destroys everything it touches. The acacia, a symbol of resilience and fortitude, now faces the risk of being unable to complete its life cycle, as its roots, once firmly anchored in robust soil, are now suffocated by pollution and degradation.

According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the situation is even more dire than anticipated. Over the past 12 months, global temperatures have exceeded the pre-industrial average by 1.5 degrees, a critical threshold. This warming, which has already led to extreme heatwaves, devastating droughts, and the relentless rise of sea levels, is set to deepen. The WMO warns that there is an 80% chance that this limit will be temporarily surpassed at some point within the next five years. This is not a goal or target to exceed; it is a physical boundary of the climate system, beyond which the consequences will be catastrophic and irreversible. Indeed, this half-degree difference could mark the line between life and extinction for coastal communities and island nations, affecting millions of people and jeopardizing the survival of 300 million whose livelihoods depend on endangered ecosystems.

Stephen Hawking's warning about the future of humanity resonates with chilling clarity. In his words, Earth risks becoming a kind of « Venus », a planet where temperatures exceed 200 degrees, shrouded in clouds of toxic gases like sulfuric acid—a completely hostile and uninhabitable environment.

Read more

Milton Arieta Lopez

He who does not know …

by Christian Joffard

He who doesn't know, but doesn't know that he doesn't know, is a fool.
Avoid it.
He who does not know, but knows that he does not know, is an apprentice.
Teach him.
He who knows, but does not know that he knows, is asleep.
Wake him up.
He who knows and knows that he knows is a master.
Learn from him.

Arabic proverb

Here's a "beautiful" Arabic proverb that puts us "masons" up against the wall … However, the linguistic structuring of these lines reassures me personally, and I'd even go so far as to "believe", on this reading, that I'm positioning myself on the outside and simultaneously, as it were, in a "superiorly elevated" position …. Which doesn't seem to me to be a very good perception of my poorly controlled "ego", I freely admit.

So I'm going to do my best to rise by going down … because if my memories remain valid, a Trois Fois Grand whispered this ambiguous and paradoxical situation to us … … ago. Or even more.

From this proverb I choose to take a simultaneous look at the four (4) "proposals" for action in the face of a situation given…

And I dare to hope that I have understood the meaning of the assertions that follow one another in the space-time in which I think I find myself in general, within the Order in particular…

But if I turn my gaze to my past, am I sure I know where I am right now? Que nenni point question probably …

Of these four (4) potentialities, each refers to "knowledge" … not to "knowing" … it is therefore necessary AND indispensable to "see" the definitions of the two (2) terms … … I'll choose two "arbitrarily", or more precisely, two that "speak" to me … … …

The difference between knowledge and knowing (philosophy) - JePense.org

Knowledge is a given, whereas learning is a path; knowledge is recitation, whereas learning is understanding and appropriation; knowledge is affirmation, whereas learning is questioning; knowledge is accumulation, whereas learning is (…)

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The difference between knowledge and knowing

Knowledge is linked to a community, a body of knowledge or an individual. Knowledge, on the other hand, is the process of individual assimilation of this knowledge. It thus refers to more specific objects, but above all to the individual experience of this knowledge.

I submit and leave these two definitions to your wise and fertile reflections, and even encourage you to find more ..., to which you would be more "sensitive" ...

"Avoid it" ... And why is that? If "I know", why shouldn't I try to share all or part of what "I know"? I seem to remember a number of oaths, pledges to listen, and possibly to assist those in the dark ...

"Avoid it" ... And why is that? There's a saying that "to conquer without peril is to triumph without glory", but for my part I add and replace "without glory" by "more easily" .... To satisfy my "ego"? to "preserve" myself from the possible negative, even nauseating, splashes of my own past here and/or elsewhere?

"Avoid it" ... And why is that? Since I'm supposed to "know", no illusions are possible; I was what it is without any possible dispute, it's most certainly a reflection of my "yesterday", it's an intrinsic "part" of my "today" isn't it????

"Educate him" ... Bigre, an imperative! And what have I got to do with it! Am I not a "free man"?

"Instruct him"... Me, 'instruct' an apprentice! And in what capacity? I'm not a second supervisor, and I'm not and even if I am, if not capable, at least willing to "teach"? If my own experience is anything to go by, I'd hardly be able to instruct him, at most to tell him about my own journey of the "in my time" type...

"Instruct him" ... This "imperative" always disturbs me, precisely in view of my background ... ...

"Wake him up" ... But does he sleep or meditate

with closed eyes like our "elders" of which I am now a part and ad vitam aeternam ... ...

"Wake him up" ... I hesitate ... what if he was revising first, reflecting later, his still theoretical knowledge of the "7 Royal Arts"?

"Wake him up" ...Who knows, is he preparing a rare intervention to come within the Lodge, and trying to regain a shred of serenity, and courage, to stammer a few words, not yet a "Word"?

"Wake him up" ... Why? If he's asleep, perhaps his materiality has made way for his spirituality to explore other lands invisible to his eyes ....

"Wake him up" ... By what "right"? Is it my "duty"? After all, perhaps he's using a "key" to open a door, his heart, his mind to one of the impalpable realities that are impossible for him here and now otherwise?

Read more

Christian Joffard
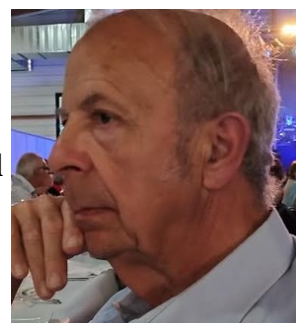
FREEMASONRY AS A SYSTEM FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

by Ishwariya Rajamohan

It was the esoteric podcaster, Greg Kaminsky, whom I first heard say that if nothing else, Freemasonry teaches you how to dress well and to show up on time. As much as we exalt how being a Mason supports your spiritual life, we give very little attention to how it serves us in developing into well-rounded, high-functioning individuals.

This could be overlooked because our underlying message is to eschew the lowly material in favour of higher ideals, but the truth, given that the square and compass are both fundamental to our symbology, is that you cannot be anchored in the spiritual unless you are grounded in the physical.

The Indian chakra system demonstrates this very clearly. The lowest three bands of energy represent aspects of our physical world: the first, our own bodies and family units, groups and societies that we belong to such as this Lodge, the second, our relationships with each other, and the third, our work in this world.

These layers form the foundation needed to access the highest of the seven main bands relating to our spirituality. Which is why when a Brother's physical world is disrupted or out of

Service to the Deity- charitable work, prayer and meditation, setting an example to others

Physical/ Health - diet, exercise, etc

Family

Personal and Social - e.g patience, communication, conflict management

Mind/ Intellect - 7 liberal arts

Spiritual and Moral- e.g how you treat others, integrity, compliance with the "commandments" of your religion

Work and Career

Sources : https://safreemason.co.za

balance, they cannot retain their focus on higher matters.

This relationship also manifests elsewhere: you could say that the religious person is one who sees God as separate because of his over-attachment to the profane.

The spiritual person might be one step closer to the truth, but he or she is so caught up in trying to understand God, that they cannot see what is staring them in the face. The mystic, on the other hand, has experienced God and knows that

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no words are adequate to describe that presence. So the language they use is deeply rooted in the physical. Mystical poetry, especially that from the East, revolves around yearning for God like you would a lover, because mystics have come to the realisation that the reason we came to this planet was to laugh, to love, to smell, to taste, to feel joy and to remember that which we came from.

Freemasonry imparts valuable life skills, and every office the opportunity to develop our personalities, should we choose to receive it. There appears to be an in-built system for social mobility that perhaps is the legacy of Operative Freemasonry, but one that offers transferrable skills allowing for our physical foundation to be strengthened in support of the spiritual. Every Brother learns to be conscious of how they sit or stand, walk and carry themselves.

We are impelled to improve our diction and how we enunciate the words of the ritual, how we frame our ideas around a certain topic or participate in discourse, and listen with respect to the opinions of others. The Outer and Inner Guards learn to fiercely protect their interests through their office, while the Deacons learn about teamwork; the Wardens learn to handle authority with grace, while the Master learns to listen, in order to lead.
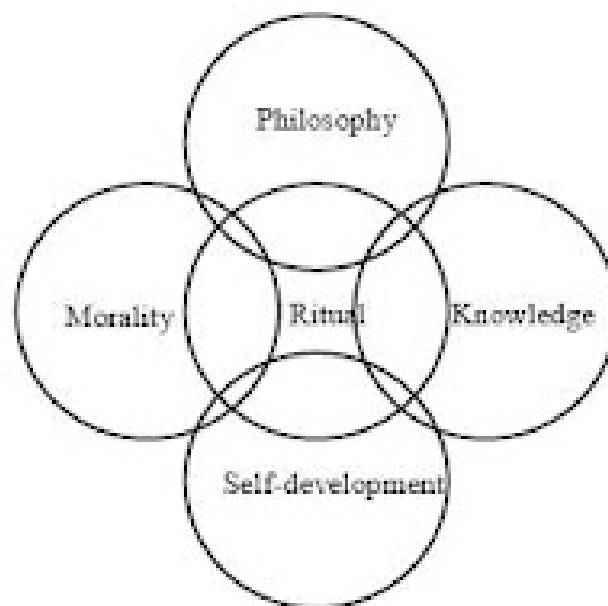
What we need to watch out for is confusing the spiritual for the physical. The danger is not in pursuing materialism, per se, but the bigger trap that is spiritual materialism. It often goes unchecked in spiritual communities and arises when your power is ungrounded in the physical. When your Masonic journey becomes about acquiring regalia, or when your rank is used as a measure of superiority over a Brother. In the spiritual, there is no performing good deeds or service to collect brownie points for the afterlife: there is only one measure that we are being judged against, and that is how pure our hearts are in each and every moment.

Read more

Ishwariya Rajamohan
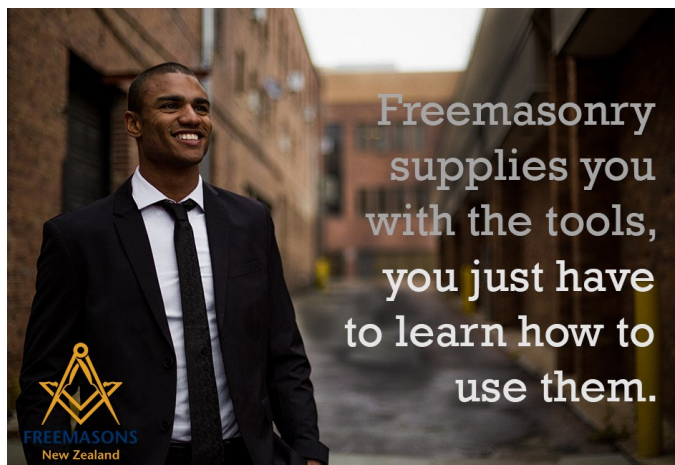
What meaning to give to Life?

by Alain Breant

No matter our age, it is never a waste to exercise critical thinking about one's own life, the compromises we make to please others, the bad habits that damage our health, and many other things.

A simple question: is it a chosen decision or an induced behavior?

Are we demonstrating freedom or conditioning?

In this category of questioning, another question arises for every human being: what meaning to give to one's life?

• To learn new knowledge?

• To enjoy life as much as possible through various means?

• To acquire financial resources?

• To devote oneself to others?

• To exercise power?

• To do nothing and let life take its course?

• To obey others?

• To become lost in mysticism?

• And so many other options!

In a world where, often, people learn to cheat to find easy solutions, Freemasonry invites us to live against the current; we are invited to live by striving for a certain moral perfection.

The meaning of existence for a Freemason is, first and foremost, the ability to uphold certain moral imperatives: rigor, justice, benevolence, or perfection in work, to name just a few.

The Masonic approach can also be understood as an invitation to approach freedom and shed mediocre and easy behaviors.

Five rules of life deserve our attention:

• Benevolence,

• Respect for freedom of conscience,

• Spiritual pursuit,

• A way of living in accordance with an irreproachable ethic,

• Commitment to universal brotherhood.

If applied, one can be assured of gaining a certain serenity! The serenity of those who shield themselves from the turpitudes of the profane world.

Fraternity

Alain Bréant

Within the Walls:

Exploring the Sanctuary of Lodges and Safe Spaces

by Moshe Shanon

I was listening to a podcast about Safe Spaces the other day. Merriam-Webster defines them as 'a place (as on a college campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations.' It is a term that originated in the 1970s and is strongly connected with the feminist second-wave movement.

Listening to the podcast, I was struck by how closely this definition aligns with the environment cultivated within Masonic Lodges. Masonic Lodges, being closed spaces, with their emphasis on brotherhood, equality, and open dialogue, served as historical prototypes for the safe spaces that have become prevalent in modern society. In this article, I intend to explore the similarities and differences between Masonic Lodges and modern safe spaces.

Figure : Universal acceptance symbol, to indicate alliance with gay rights and spaces free from homophobia. -wiki commons

Georges Perec, in his book 'Espèces d'espaces,' discusses the ambiguity of the concept of space. For us to conceive it, we need to 'to name it, to

Figure 2: a Masonic Safe Space

trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, naming capes, inlets, channels, islands...' Just as cartographers meticulously charted the seas, Freemasons symbolically map their Lodges, creating a space where they can navigate the complexities of life and self-discovery. Our lodges are marked as safe spaces by rituals: 'The form of the lodge is an oblong square, situated due East and West, supported by three pillars, and standing on holy ground...

To this object, the mason mind is continually directed' (Oliver, Philosophy of Freemasonry, 1855). This symbolic mapping is further reinforced by physical emblems: the mosaic floor, the columns, the officer's stations, and the tiler guarding the door. We also have a set of rules, like the triangulation protocol of speech in the lodge, which ensures that all communication is channeled through the Worshipful Master, promoting respectful dialogue and preventing personal conflicts. Similarly, many universities designate safe spaces with posters outlining guidelines for inclusive language and behavior, ensu-

ring that all students feel welcome and respected. These modern safe spaces, like Masonic Lodges, have clear boundaries and expectations for behavior, often marked with symbols like the LGBTQ+ flag or the symbol for universal acceptance.

Freemasonry, in its modern form, emerged in the early 18th century during a time of significant political and religious tension in England. It was theorized that Lodges were used as common safe ground for marginalized groups and bitter political opponents to meet without fear of expressing their views or facing repercussions. Whigs and Tories, Hanoverians and Jacobites, Anglicans and Nonconformists, all found a place within the Lodge where they could interact as equals. In fact, some prominent Freemasons were descendants of Huguenots refugees fleeing religious persecution in France (Desaguliers, Voltaire).

These individuals, displaced and marginalized, likely found solace and community within the fraternity. Similarly, safe spaces of the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements emerged as common grounds for marginalized groups to express their views and 'be themselves' in a supportive surrounding. It is interesting to note that the first gay safe spaces emerged in gay bars, much like the first lodges in London that met in alehouses and taverns.

Both gay bars and early Masonic Lodges offered a haven where individuals could gather without fear of persecution or judgment, fostering a sense of community and shared identity. These historical parallels highlight the enduring human need for spaces where individuals can connect, share ideas, and find support, regardless of their background or beliefs.

Masonic Lodges and Safe Spaces share many core values, including tolerance, equality, and fraternity. Historically, Freemasonry primarily consisted of masculine Lodges, reflecting the societal norms of the time. However, the emergence of co-masonry and women's Freemasonry underscores the importance of safe spaces catering to specific gender-based communities. Both Lodges and safe spaces utilize similar elements to foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Oaths, like the Masonic obligation, and codes of conduct, such as those established in modern safe spaces, create a framework for respectful interaction. Symbolic language, whether it's the Masonic rituals or the inclusive terminology used in safe spaces, promotes a deeper understanding of shared values. The role of the person in charge, be it the Worshipful Master in a Lodge or the facilitator of a safe space, is crucial in guiding discussions and ensuring that all participants feel heard and respected.
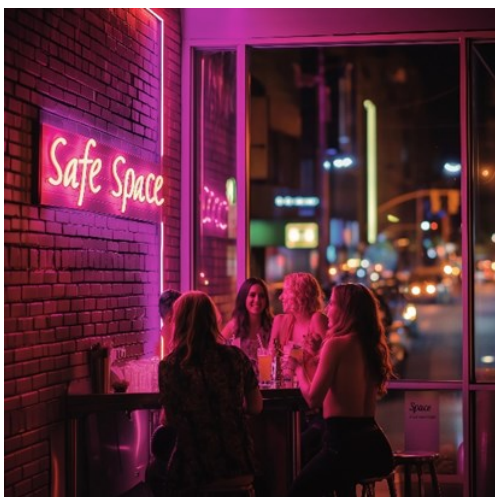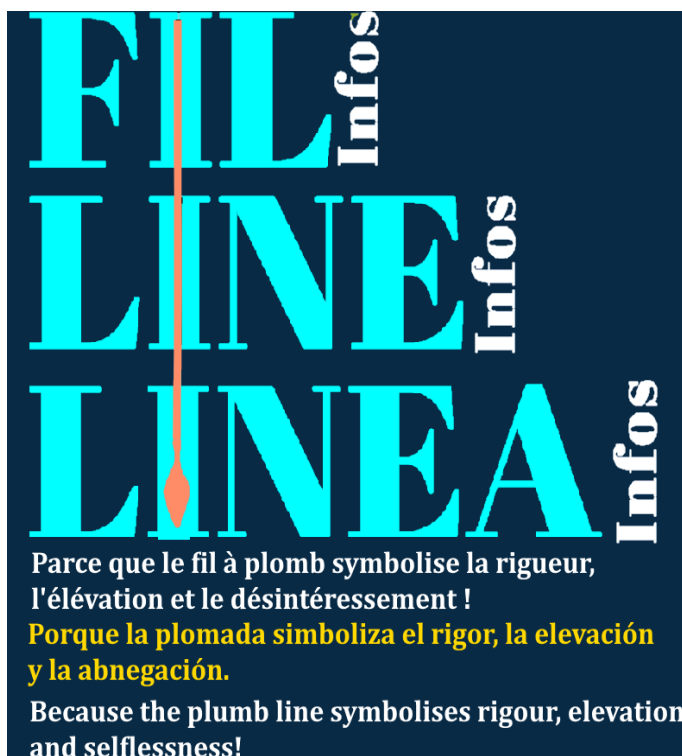

Figure 2: Modern Safe Space

Read more

Moshe Shannon

Shorashim Lodge No. 2022
Orient of Tel-Aviv
Israeli Jurisdiction
International Order of Freemasonry
for Men and Women

Editor's note: This is the english edition. If you would like to see the spanish and french editions, simply log on to www.webfil.info where you can download them free of charge.

Parce que le fil à plomb symbolise la rigueur, l'élévation et le désintéressement !
Porque la plomada simboliza el rigor, la elevación y la abnegación.
Because the plumb line symbolises rigour, elevation and selflessness!

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