



Memory, Freedom, and Identity: Challenges to “Virtual Consciousness”

Memoria, libertad e identidad: desafíos para la “conciencia virtual”



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Abstract

This comprehensive text explores the intricate interplay of memory, virtuality, consciousness, and personhood in shaping the human experience. Memory is depicted as a core process integral to identity formation, transcending mere recollection to become a reflective exercise in self-discovery. The advent of the digital age raises concerns about the impact of virtual connections on authentic encounters and the preservation of individual autonomy amid algorithmic homogenizations. In examining consciousness and experience, the inseparability of life and consciousness is emphasized, alongside the significance of corporeality in self-awareness. Abduction is proposed as a mode of creative reasoning that expands our comprehension of the human mind and its relationship with the universe. Furthermore, the text delves into the notion of personhood, highlighting the complexity of identity formation through interaction with the world, others, and history. Through a reflective and pluralistic approach, traditional conceptions of being are challenged, inviting a deeper understanding of the multifaceted human condition.

Resumen

Este texto explora de forma exhaustiva la intrincada interacción entre memoria, virtualidad, conciencia y personalidad en la conformación de la experiencia humana. La memoria se presenta como un proceso central integral para la formación de la identidad, trascendiendo la mera rememoración para convertirse en un ejercicio reflexivo de auto-descubrimiento. El advenimiento de la era digital plantea preocupaciones sobre el impacto de las conexiones virtuales en los encuentros auténticos y la preservación de la autonomía individual en medio de las homogenizaciones algorítmicas. Al examinar la conciencia y la experiencia, se enfatiza la inseparabilidad de la vida y la conciencia, junto con la importancia de la corporalidad en la autoconciencia. Se propone la abducción como un modo de razonamiento creativo que amplía nuestra comprensión de la mente humana y su relación con el universo. Además, el texto profundiza en la noción de personalidad, destacando la complejidad de la formación de la identidad a través de la interacción con el mundo, los demás y la historia. A través de un enfoque reflexivo y pluralista, se desafían las concepciones tradicionales del ser, invitando a una comprensión más profunda de la condición humana multifacética.

Key words

Memory; identity; consciousness; virtual; cognition.
Memoria; identidad; conciencia; virtual; cognición.

Fechas

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1. Introduction

Memory, as a central process of human experience, plays a fundamental role in the constitution of individual and collective identity. It is not limited only to the retention of past experiences, but also to the constant effort to integrate and understand oneself in the world. In this context, memory not only questions apparent certainties, but also reveals gaps that invite reflection and the search for a deeper and more transcendent understanding.

The analysis of memory reveals its reflective dimension, in which the act of remembering is intrinsically linked to the understanding of the self and the perception of the other. This reflective approach highlights the importance of recognition, considering memory as a “small miracle of recognition,” capable of revealing both familiarity and strangeness in the face of the past.

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By exploring the works of Paul Ricoeur and Sigmund Freud, we understand memory not only as an individual tool, but also as a collective process that influences historical narrative and the understanding of human experiences. The interaction between personal memory and collective memory sheds light on issues of mourning, melancholy, and reconciliation with the past.

Furthermore, it cannot be dissociated from time, as it is closely linked to the temporality of human existence. While remembrance can be understood as a return to past events without considering their chronological order, memory is treated as a singular entity, which shapes our understanding of the world.

Reflection on memory also leads us to consider its relationship with freedom and identity in the contemporary context, marked by the rise of technology and digital communication. While digital connection promotes the superficiality of relationships and the standardization of social standards, true freedom resides in the ability to recognize others in their otherness and practice hospitality as the supreme expression of universal reason.

By examining the relationship between consciousness, life and experience, we understand that consciousness is not merely a cerebral phenomenon, but a manifestation of the organism's vitality in its environment. This interconnection between life and experience leads us to reflect on the foundations of knowledge and the logical processes underlying the understanding of the world. Thus, memory emerges as a fundamental piece in the construction of identity, in the practice of democracy and in the search for true freedom in a world in constant transformation.

The affinity between nature and the subject of knowledge, as Peirce highlights in his theory of abduction, is a central issue that permeates the understanding of the relationship between the individual and the world that surrounds him. This affinity, often seen as a “hope” and regulating principle, lays the foundation for the imaginative insight characteristic of abduction. By exploring Peirce's concept of Firstness, which describes



Through the analysis of the constitutive layers of person-attitude, such as language, action, narrative and ethical constitution, Ricoeur proposes a broader and more dynamic understanding of personal identity, which goes beyond objective sameness and embraces ipseity engaged in promises ethics

the way things are as they are, we can better understand this fundamental relationship. Firstness is defined as that which is simply possible, without reference to anything else, consisting of qualities of feeling or mere appearance. This phenomenological description highlights the importance of possibility and variety in the constitution of Firstness. However, to achieve an adequate ontology of the person, it is necessary to go beyond the impersonal description of the human being and enter the scope of the experiential experience of the body itself. It is in this context that the notion of "own body," introduced by Ricoeur, gains prominence, revealing itself as the place of subjectivity and objective identification for others. In this sense, reflection on the person, consciousness and autonomy emerge as a central theme, questioning traditional conceptions of the subject and proposing an approach that considers intersubjectivity and ethics as fundamental elements in the ontological constitution of the individual. Through the analysis of the constitutive layers of person-attitude, such as language, action, narrative and ethical constitution, Ricoeur proposes a broader and more dynamic understanding of personal identity, which goes beyond objective sameness and embraces ipseity engaged in promises ethics. In this way, philosophical reflection on the person not only challenges traditional notions of the subject, but also invites us to constantly rethink our understanding of human identity and subjectivity, recognizing the complexity and interconnectedness of these concepts in our lived world.

2. Memory and freedom

Memory is a central human process, which acts as a constitution of identity itself, which arises not only through the persistence in the memory of past experiences, but also through the act in which I seek to create unity. Therefore, we can affirm that this "thinking about oneself" must be an exercise in encountering oneself, a way of being in front of oneself to be in the world. Memory has a role in questioning what may seem given, in showing the gaps through which doubt will penetrate and, in doing so, destroying apparent certainties, seeking another, supra-human plane (while still passing through the human itself).

The defense for the original and primordial characteristic of individual memory has its links to the uses of ordinary language and the summary psychology that endorses these uses. In each of the registers of living experience, whether it is the cognitive field, the practical field or the affective field, adherence is not so total in the subject's act of self-designation to the objective aim of his experience. In this view, the use in French and other languages of the reflexive pronoun "si" does not seem fortuitous. Remembering something, you remember yourself. (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 115)



In this way, the memory approach is a reflective approach. That's why we can talk about its dimension of recognition. Memory can be said to be "happy" because it is possible, because of the "small miracle of recognition." Instead of neutralizing the past of the event, the phenomenological analysis of acts of recognition has the task of recognizing a complex alterity, which can range from absolute familiarity to the unsettling strangeness of the indeterminate "already seen." Under the heading of "impaired memory," Ricoeur analyzes the pathological manifestations of injured memory, as they appear in clinical work. Its main inspiration is Freud's proposal. At this moment, his return to Freud takes place towards the work *Mourning and Melancholia*, from 1915, where the Austrian doctor studies the resistance that the work of analytical interpretation can encounter from the moment in which he demands from the analysand a work of remembrance. In this way, Ricoeur explores the Freudian perspective on the repression of traumatic memories that are altered by repetition behaviors.

The act of remembering refers to a memory of what has already happened in the past, which is why it is inseparable from time, it is closely linked to temporality, as the act of remembering already implies something that already happened a certain time ago

Grief, said at the beginning, is always the reaction to the loss of a loved person or an abstraction constructed to replace that person, such as: homeland, freedom, ideal, etc. An opening is thus provided from the beginning in the direction we subsequently take. And the first question that the analyst asks is to know why in some illnesses we see melancholy arising "as a result of the same circumstances, instead of mourning." (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 87)

The act of remembering refers to a memory of what has already happened in the past, which is why it is inseparable from time, it is closely linked to temporality, as the act of remembering already implies something that already happened a certain time ago. There is a fundamental difference between remembrance and memory. Memory brings the facts back in order as if the past had not happened, the thing no longer comes and the image of the thing that comes. Memories are always in the plural, whereas memory is treated in the singular and with capacity.

Based on the questions "What do you remember?" and "Whose memory is it?" Ricoeur proposes a phenomenology of memory, anticipating questions about the object of memory to those of the subject who remembers, by considering that all consciousness is consciousness of something and remembering something would be remembering it. If from you. In this way, memories can be approached as discrete forms with a certain degree of precision that stand out against what we could call a foundation of memory.

In opposition to the polysemy that, at first sight, seems appropriate to discourage any attempt, even modest, to order the semantic field designated by the term memory, it is possible to outline a fragmented, but not radically dispersed, phenomenology, whose last guiding thread continues to be the relationship over time. (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 40)



Therefore, memory in the most meaningful way to express what happened is essential in the path of recognition of the individual, who transmits his experiences and his existence. In other words, testimony is understood as essential in the passage from memory to history, opening space for a hermeneutic field.

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From epic poets to writers who survived the massacres of the 21st century, through the multiple philosophical exercises, always repeated, that explain the enigma of the real, the memory of men is constructed between these two poles: that of living oral transmission, but fragile and ephemeral, and that of conservation through writing, an inscription that perhaps lasts longer, but which draws the shadow of absence. Neither the living presence nor the fixation on scripture can ensure immortality; both, in fact, do not even guarantee the certainty of duration, they only testify to the splendor and fragility of existence, and the effort to say it. (Gagnebin, 2009, p. 11)

Memory is as important to think about as history, we cannot make history without making and understanding memory. Therefore, it is extremely important to also think about it in a reflective dimension.

The reflective dimension of memory allows, in a grand finale of the first part, in addition to convincingly facing the antithesis between personal memory and collective memory, to offer decisive clarifications on the question of the subject, a central question in an ancient philosophical tradition that goes from Augustine to Husserl and which we can call the "school of the inner gaze," question reposed in antithetical terms in the objectivist climate of the "human sciences." In fact, memory can be attributed to all grammatical people, to oneself and to others, to strangers and those close to them. A subject that can be plural, because it is also finitude, living corporeity and historicity. (Jervolino, 2001, pp. 89-90)

Therefore, we have the notion that time exists, because memory exists, which allows us to think about such facts that are sometimes trapped in the course of time, if we have the notion of being it is because as time passed, we were discovering this notion, so I cannot and cannot think about memory without thinking about time as a fundamental basis for thinking about memory and then history.

We can also talk about a memory that is a habit, which is typical of human nature, when, for example, repetition becomes a habit, when he learns a certain thing and for him this is incredible, he will repeat this new learning several times. times, and as a consequence, this fact that has become a habit will be fixed in memory, in this case there is a memory that has become a habit, we have repetition as the cause of this habit. According to Ricoeur, memory and habit form a pair.

Habit memory is the one in which we present ourselves when we recite a text without mentioning one by one each successive reading that was done during the



learning period. Thus the reading learned 'is part of this, like my habit of walking or writing; it is lived, it is a representation'. On the other hand, the memory of such a particular lesson, of such a phase of memorization does not show one of the "usual characteristics." (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 31)¹

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With this conception of memory, Ricoeur shows that man is capable of accomplishing something, as habit has already made him confident in his actions, in his theories. Therefore, forgiveness is thought of as a possibility, as an anticipation of a happy or reconciled memory. Ricoeur wonders whether it would be an act of will in search of a reconciliation with the past, which remains between culpability and reconciliation, that is, "a type of non-punctual work regarding the way of expecting and accepting typical situations: the inextricable, irreconcilable, irreparable" (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 509).

3. The virtual, the real the language

Pain shows us the real. We first perceive reality in the resistance that hurts. The permanent anesthesia of the palliative society "derealizes" the world. Digitization also increasingly reduces resistance and leads to the disappearance of adversarial confrontation. The continuous "like" leads to a dullness, a deconstruction of reality.

Where is freedom and identity in a world dominated by algorithms? The fact is that our freedom is linked to not only rational and logical elements reproducible at exponential levels, but above all linked to places where we do not inhabit, unconsciously. The salvation of humanity is related to the impossibility of reproducing unconscious elements by AI, as well as the recreation of cognitive aspects such as memory, in the terms discussed above, in its reflective dimension. On the other hand, we perceive the constitution of a world of extreme symbolic impoverishment and little exercise of freedom, as it is inserted in patterns constructed by mimetic mechanisms.

In hate speech, for example, there is a refusal of the other and their otherness. No differences are allowed, it is seen as heresy. Human life is, in turn, marked by desiring subjectivity that finds space in democracies to express itself. In this world, artificial intelligence seems to have a clear path.

The democratic process is the process of perpetually putting into play this invention of forms of subjectivation and cases of verification that contradict the perpe-

1 La mémoire-habitude est celle dans laquelle nous présentons quand nous récitons un texte sans mentionner un par un pour chaque lecture successive qui à été fait dans la période d'apprentissage. Donc, la lecture saisie « fait partie de cela, comme mon habitude de marcher ou de l'écriture; he is vécue, he is a representation ». D'autre part, le souvenir de cette leçon particulière, telle phase de mémorisation ne montre pas « l'un des caractères habituels ».



tual privatization of public life. Democracy means, in this sense, the impurity of politics, the rejection of governments' claim to embody a single principle of public life and, with this, circumscribe the understanding and extension of that public life. If there is an "unlimitedness" specific to democracy, this is where it resides: not in the exponential multiplication of needs or desires that emanate from individuals, but in the movement that continually shifts the limits of the public and the private, the political and the social. (Rancière, 2014, p. 8)

Having an experience means that it happens to us, that it hits us, falls upon us, knocks us down and transforms us. Its essence is pain. The same doesn't hurt

The contemporary individual connects more than he bonds: although he communicates more and more, he meets others less and less. He prefers exactly the superficial relationships that he establishes or abandons as he pleases (Breton, 2018, p. 12).

Digital connection and intense communication do not make meeting others easier. They serve, rather, to pass straight through the strange and the other and find the equal and the one of equal inclination, and they ensure that our horizon of experience becomes increasingly narrower. The negativity of the other and

of the metamorphosis constitutes the experience in an emphatic sense. Having an experience means that it happens to us, that it hits us, falls upon us, knocks us down and transforms us. Its essence is pain. The same doesn't hurt.

The proliferation of the same is a plenitude in which only emptiness still shines. The expulsion of the other brings an oily void of plenitude. Obscene are hypervisibility, hypercommunication, hyperproduction, hyperconsumption, which lead to a rapid stagnation of the same. Obscene is the connection of equal with equal. Seduction is, on the other hand, the ability to snatch like from like, to let them escape from themselves. The subject of seduction is the other. Its way of being is play as a countermode to performance and production (Han, 2023, pp. 18-19).

Equating ultimately leads to an emptying of meaning. The sense is incomparable. The violence of the global as the violence of the equal annihilates the negativity of the other, of the singular, of the incomparable, which harms the circulation of information.

Hospitality is not a fantastic, exaggerated representation of law, but rather a necessary complement to the unwritten code. It is the supreme expression of the universal reason that has arrived at itself. Reason does not consist of a homogenizing power. With her affability, she is able to recognize others in their otherness and welcome them. Affability means freedom. (Han, 2023, p. 35)

Hospitality connects with reconciliation and forgiveness. The degree of civilization of a society can be measured precisely by its hospitality and affability. Artificial intelligence does not have a horizon of otherness, it does not present any aspect of consciousness, experience, and life.



4. The problem of consciousness: life and experience

If consciousness is functionally organized, then the preservation of functional structure may be crucial to its identity, while its realization on appropriate material substrates is of secondary importance.

For Searle,² the functionality of a system is not only linked to the causal structure and arrangement of its parts, but also results from the respective specific properties of the material. Thus, a perfect reproduction of the biological foundations of consciousness with other materials is unlikely to lead to a system that can develop consciousness itself, much less its phenomenal consequences. Consciousness, therefore, does not only require a biologically constituted basis to be able to exist, as it only arises through its specific insertion into a biological body in its environment.

Being conscious is close to a fundamental experience of being alive, and this experience, as psychiatrist and philosopher Thomas Fuchs points out, is essentially based on the singular embodiment of the individual

There is an internal connection between life and experience. Being conscious is close to a fundamental experience of being alive, and this experience, as psychiatrist and philosopher Thomas Fuchs points out, is essentially based on the singular embodiment of the individual.

Experience, whatever the level of consciousness, is always the self-awareness of the organism in its real relationship with the environment. It is not a mere mental space, or a phenomenal tunnel created in the brain, but rather a manifestation of the vitality of the organism as a whole. (Fuchs, 2012, p. 149)

The environment participates in an informational way in the updating of the organism. The structure of the environment, as given in experience, is a reflection of the control of its sensory apparatus by the organism's information: for the full intentionality of a self-conscious mind, the environment appears as a set of external objects, arising from sensory perception.

We can say that consciousness is an organizational invariant: that is, systems with the same causal organization structures have the same states of consciousness, regardless of whether this organization is in neurons, in silicon or implemented on another substrate. (Chalmers, 1995, p. 309)

Traditional Logic and Theory of Knowledge distinguish two types of reasoning: deduction (which proves that something must be, is a necessary inference that extracts a conclusion contained in certain premises, the truth of which leaves, however, open)

2 Searle, John. (1995). Intentionalidad. Martins Fontes.



and induction (that proves that something really is, is an experimental inference that does not consist of discovering, but of confirming a theory via experiment). Artificial Intelligence could reproduce these forms of reasoning.

However, we can affirm the existence of a third type of logical reasoning: abductive. It is a hypothetical inference, proving to be a method for creating new explanatory hypotheses (the only logical operation that, according to Peirce, is capable of expanding knowledge, in general). The abductive inference model can be translated as follows: "A surprising fact, C, is observed. But if A were true, C would be natural. Hence there is reason to suspect that A is true."

Abductive reasoning consists of the imaginative process that starts from the particular and seeks the universal that subsumes it in order to be able to deduce the particular from the universal found. The irregular, the random does not call for an explanation because the irregular as such does not provoke expectations (CP 7.191).

The entirety of logic and the entirety of reasoning rests on the assumption that the universe, each universe, is governed by a Reason to which ours is similar

From the statement of natural law, we arrive at the hypothesis of evolution, the hypothesis according to which natural laws underwent an evolutionary process. Abductive reasoning must therefore allow empirically verifiable predictions. The principle of evolution is a regulatory principle that aims to eliminate the unexplainable. At the same time, it must relate to this generalizing process that is abduction. This principle requires us to explain the various laws based on a single law: a law underlying the totality of known laws (CP 6.101). From this principle we can affirm the synthesis of the totality of the diverse.

Abduction is the only type of reasoning that introduces new ideas (CP 2.96). It is an activity of the imagination that discovers the general from the particular. There is a difference between the logical criteria for adopting a hypothesis and the discovery of hypotheses. Just like mathematical knowledge, abductive knowledge is not justified through logic: whatever the way in which man acquired his ability to divine the ways of nature, it was certainly not through self-controlled or critical logic (CP 5,173)

This faculty can only be justified by an insight into the general elements of nature, which "is a faculty of animals in that it goes beyond the general powers of our reason and directs us to facts completely beyond the reach of our senses" (CP 5,173). The possibility of synthetic reasoning seems to be based on something that is not completely logical and rational. Imagination emerges as the faculty of abduction, that is, through the discovery of the general conditioning the particular. It is something close to instinctive certainty, just as we know that its effect is the general discovery. The entirety of logic and the entirety of reasoning rests on the assumption that the universe, each universe, is governed by a Reason to which ours is similar.

Thus, we can state that abductive logic is one that allows the attestation of chaotic and unpredictable elements. It's a kind of "logic of randomness." Through the concept of Firstness, we can affirm the impossibility of artificially generated consciousness. It precisely lacks randomness, unpredictability (CP 8.328):



Firstness is the way of being of what is as it is, positively and without reference to anything else [...] perfectly simple and without parts. Typical ideas of Firstness are qualities of feeling or mere appearance. [...] It is simply a peculiar positive possibility without observing anything else. [...] The first is predominant in feeling. By feeling I want to indicate an example of that type of consciousness that does not involve any analysis, comparison or any process. [...] The entire content of consciousness is made up of qualities of feeling, just as the whole of space is made up of points or the whole of time, of instants.

Any impersonal description of human existence, such as that asserted by any interpretation of the brain in a body, cannot achieve an adequate ontology of the person

We can see that the notions of possibility (*the possible way of being of what is as it is*) and variety (*expression of ontological chance*) constitute a central characteristic of what Peirce wishes to mean by phenomenological firstness. Thus, the phenomenon is not absolute, but always appears as an infinite possibility. Memory, consciousness, are in a “flow of firstness.” It would therefore be impossible to think about the “logic of creativity,” abductive reasoning virtually. This is precisely the most profoundly human logic.

5. The Person, conscience, and autonomy

Any impersonal description of human existence, such as that asserted by any interpretation of the brain in a body, cannot achieve an adequate ontology of the person. As far as the phenomenal body is concerned, it is impossible to separate it from the body in action. Otherwise, we would be dealing with a purely theoretical world, where corporeality exists without the influence of will.

An impersonal description of the human being often neglects the crucial importance of their capacity for self-development over time, reducing their existence to a personal identity based solely on their physical body. According to Ricoeur, the term “own body” emerges from Husserl’s tradition as a way of contrasting with the concept of “foreign body.” He describes the subjective experience of the body as “my body,” a place of subjectivity and objective identification for others.

The third level, which is my body or situation center, is not linked to the body of action in the same way that it is related to the phenomenal body. My body is not a mere manifestation within the world, for the body of action is not always involved, and therefore behavior is not always linked to a subject. For the body of action to engage, a fundamental transformation is necessary, manifesting not only the general will, but mainly the individual will.

It is crucial to understand this transition, which requires investigating the transformation of the body of action into an engaged body. The body itself is experienced and cannot simply be observed through scientific abstraction. Science studies the body according to its laws and behavioral processes, but only those who experience the body can truly understand it.



The development of personal identity over time involves a deconstruction of the self. Ricoeur emphasizes the living body as the epicenter of this tangibility of the human self through the other, while symbolic and imaginary relations reflect this living bodily exchange. He seeks to regain the notion of ego through voluntary action and involuntary suffering, expanding the limits of subjectivity beyond perception.

He criticizes the excessive emphasis on the Cartesian cogito, proposing a more complex vision of human identity based on interaction with the world, others, and history. His philosophy seeks to unfold an ontology of subjectivity through the concepts of attestation, ipseity, sameness and otherness

Ricoeur rejects the idea of “consciousness” as transparent and self-evident, arguing that psychoanalysis and philosophical critiques challenge this notion. He proposes a turnaround in the idea of person, highlighting its importance in legal, political and social contexts, introducing the notion of person-attitude based on crisis and engagement.

Our philosopher adopts a reflective approach, highlighting the importance of ethics in the ontological constitution of the subject. He criticizes the excessive emphasis on the Cartesian cogito, proposing a more complex vision of human identity based on interaction with the world, others, and history. His philosophy seeks to unfold an ontology of subjectivity through the concepts of attestation, ipseity, sameness and otherness.

6. Conclusion

In summary, we can affirm the complexity of memory, the influence of the virtual on reality and language, the problem of consciousness in relation to life and experience, and the person, their consciousness and autonomy. Throughout these reflections, a rich and multifaceted vision of the human condition emerges, which unfolds in the interaction between past and present, individuality and collectivity, real and virtual.

Memory is a central process in the constitution of identity, which transcends the mere memory of the past to become a reflective exercise in self-discovery. The relationship between memory and time is highlighted as fundamental for understanding history and existence itself.

On the other hand, we seek to examine the challenges posed by the digital age, where virtual connection often obscures the true encounter with others and with reality. Reflection on freedom and identity in this context points to the need to preserve spaces of autonomy and resistance in the face of the homogenization caused by algorithms and the “like” culture.

In the context of consciousness and experience, it is necessary to emphasize the inseparability between life and consciousness, as well as the importance of corporeality in the experience of the self. The discussion of abduction as a mode of creative reasoning expands our understanding of the human mind and its relationship to the universe.

Finally, reflection on the person, their consciousness and autonomy, leads us to rethink the notion of identity in more fluid and dialectical terms. The emphasis on interaction



with the world and others, as well as ethics and history, invites us to a reflective and plural approach to human existence. Ultimately, the text challenges us to rethink our traditional conceptions of being in the world, paving the way for a deeper and more inclusive understanding of the human condition.

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