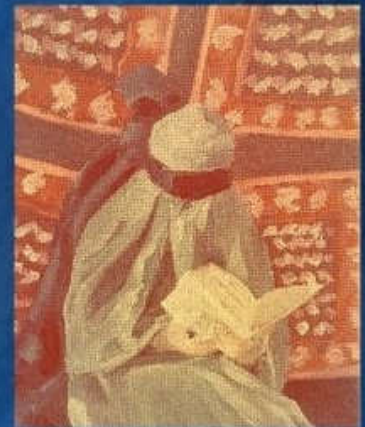


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ALETHEIA



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ABOUT



The Aletheia is an international digital journal dedicated to rigorous inquiry across Psychology, Technology, Economics, Philosophy, and History. Founded by a global team of thinkers, engineers, and

researchers, we illuminate the biological, technological, and philosophical forces shaping human culture.

Our Community

The Aletheia is powered by a global network of over 50 writers, researchers, editors, and community contributors spanning six continents.

Journal Divisions & Topics

Psychology — Neurobiology of memory, false identities, and cognitive dynamics.

Technology — AI, cultural impact, digital renaissance, and future innovation.

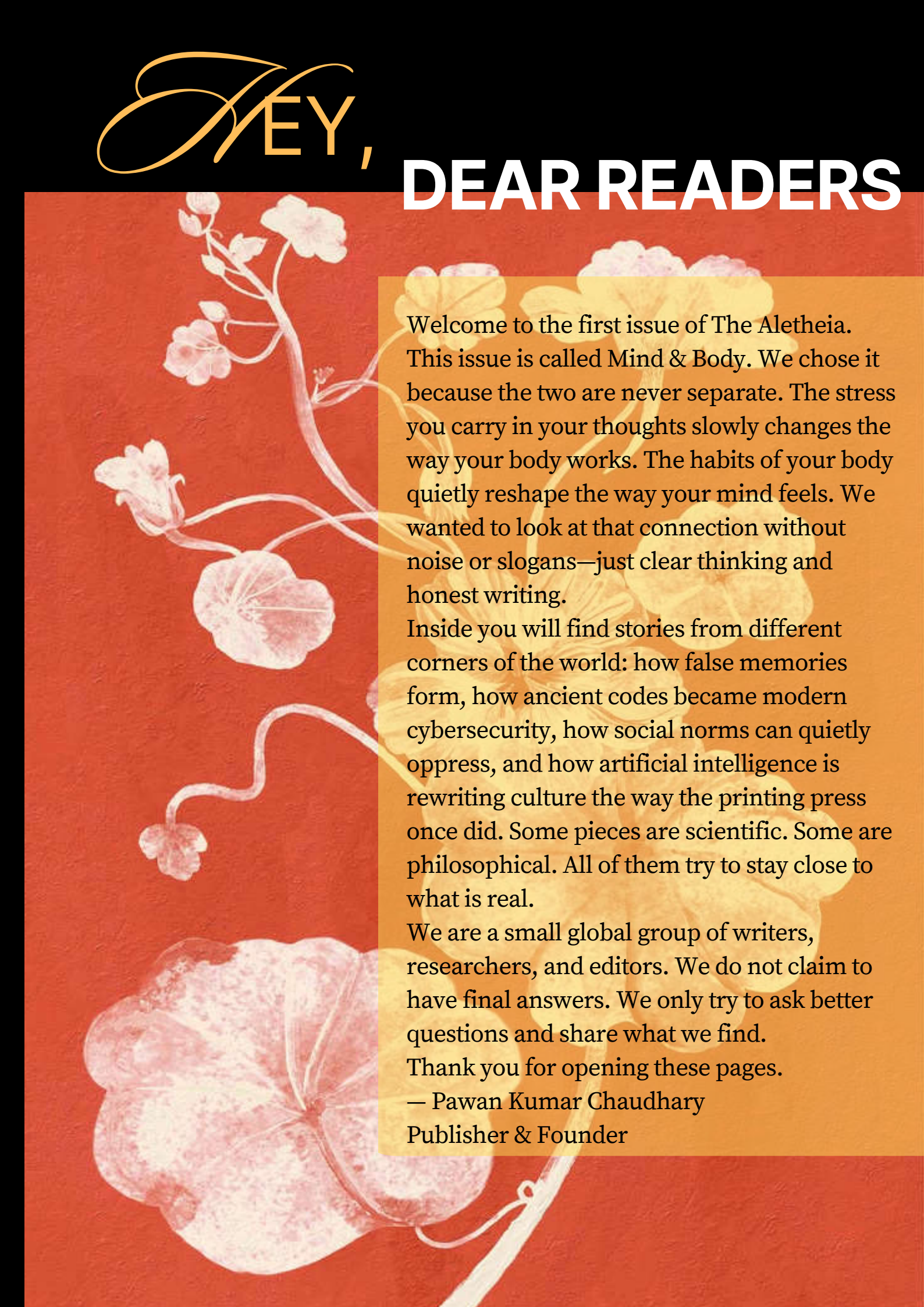
Economics — Global wealth distribution, taxation models, and economic history.

Philosophy & History — Ancient legal systems, ethics, cryptography, and historical turning points.

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HEY, DEAR READERS



Welcome to the first issue of The Aletheia. This issue is called Mind & Body. We chose it because the two are never separate. The stress you carry in your thoughts slowly changes the way your body works. The habits of your body quietly reshape the way your mind feels. We wanted to look at that connection without noise or slogans—just clear thinking and honest writing.

Inside you will find stories from different corners of the world: how false memories form, how ancient codes became modern cybersecurity, how social norms can quietly oppress, and how artificial intelligence is rewriting culture the way the printing press once did. Some pieces are scientific. Some are philosophical. All of them try to stay close to what is real.

We are a small global group of writers, researchers, and editors. We do not claim to have final answers. We only try to ask better questions and share what we find.

Thank you for opening these pages.

— Pawan Kumar Chaudhary
Publisher & Founder

WHO RULES THE COSMOS? COMPARING THE WORLD'S GREATEST MYTHOLOGICAL GODS



01

Across every culture, people have looked up, named the stars, and imagined gods who shape the heavens. From the Olympians and Norse Aesir to the Egyptian Pantheon and Hindu Trimurti—who truly rules the cosmos?

BY PAWAN KUMAR CHAUDHARY (RAJASTHAN, INDIA)

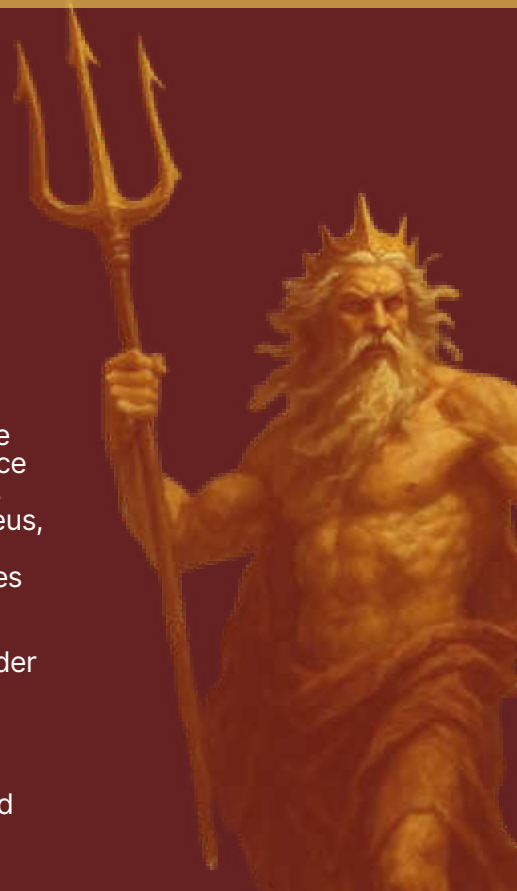
WHO RULES THE COSMOS? COMPARING THE WORLD'S GREATEST MYTHOLOGICAL GODS



The Olympians: Rulers of Sky, Sea, and Underworld Greek mythology presents some of the world's most famous deities, anchored by the three brothers: Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. After defeating the Titans, they divided the cosmos among themselves. Zeus claimed the sky, Poseidon won the oceans, and Hades inherited the underworld.

Across every culture, people have looked up, named the stars, and imagined gods who shape the heavens—but who, if anyone, truly rules the cosmos? These gods can create storms, make mountains, judge the dead, and even generate the universe itself. People still wonder: which gods are the most powerful? It is hard to compare deities across mythologies because each originates from a unique worldview and cultural cosmology. Yet, exploring how different civilizations conceptualized power, creation, destruction, and order reveals fascinating insights into human history.

By comparing the gods of Greek, Norse, Egyptian, and Hindu traditions, we see how humanity has sought to understand the ultimate forces governing existence. The Olympians: Rulers of Sky, Sea, and Underworld Greek mythology presents some of the world's most famous deities, anchored by the three brothers: **Zeus**, Poseidon, and Hades. After defeating the Titans, they divided the cosmos among themselves. Zeus claimed the sky, Poseidon won the oceans, and Hades inherited the underworld. - **Zeus**: As ruler of the heavens, Zeus wielded thunder and lightning, making him supreme among the Olympians. His victory over the monstrous Typhon demonstrated his capability to maintain cosmic order and defend the realm from chaos. - **Poseidon**: Lord of the seas, Poseidon commanded ocean storms and seismic earthquakes. His iconic trident symbolized both constructive and destructive natural forces. - **Hades**: Sovereign of the underworld, Hades possessed a helmet of invisibility that allowed him to walk unseen among gods and mortals alike. He judged departed souls, determining their eternal destiny.



WHO RULES THE COSMOS? COMPARING THE WORLD'S GREATEST MYTHOLOGICAL GODS



Together, the Olympian brothers embodied divine power through the mastery and control of natural domains.

The Norse Gods: Wisdom, Strength, and Fate The Norse pantheon approached divinity through the twin pillars of wisdom and martial strength, framed by an awareness of mortality.



Odin: The Allfather differed fundamentally from Zeus. Rather than relying solely on brute force, Odin sacrificed relentless personal comfort for ultimate knowledge. He traded an eye for a drink from the Well of Mimir and hung himself from the cosmic tree Yggdrasil for nine days to unlock the secrets of runic magic. Odin's authority stemmed from foresight, strategy, and deep cosmic wisdom.

Thor: Odin's son Thor represented raw strength and protection. Armed with his hammer Mjölner, he summoned thunder, shattered mountain ranges, and defended gods and humans against giants. Crucially, Norse mythology included Ragnarök—the inescapable prophecy that even the supreme gods would eventually perish. This demonstrated that no matter how powerful a deity was, none could escape cosmic fate.



EGYPTIAN GODS: MAINTAINING COSMIC BALANCE (MA'AT)

Egyptian mythology centered on maintaining Ma'at—the divine principle of balance, truth, and cosmic order.

Ra: The sun god Ra was the prime generator of life. Each day, he traversed the sky bringing light to the world, and each night he descended into the underworld to battle the serpent of chaos, Apep. Ra's daily cycle demonstrated that power was not merely static; it was a continuous triumph of life over death. Furthermore, Egyptian tradition held that Ra created reality by speaking true names into existence. For the Egyptians, supreme power was defined not by overwhelming force, but by sustaining harmony and ensuring the universe continued to function seamlessly.

For the Egyptians, supreme power was defined not by overwhelming force, but by sustaining harmony and ensuring the universe continued to function seamlessly.





THE TRIMURTI: COSMIC CREATION, PRESERVATION, AND TRANSFORMATION

Hindu philosophy offers a profound understanding of divine power through the Trimurti—the trinity representing the fundamental cycles of existence

Brahma: The Creator, who brings the universe into existence from the unmanifest and establishes its laws.

Vishnu: The Preserver, who maintains cosmic order (Dharma) and descends to Earth as avatars whenever the world requires balance.

Shiva: The Transformer/Destroyer, who facilitates renewal. Shiva's destruction is not malevolent; it clears away stagnation so creation can begin anew.

In Hindu tradition, divine power is not about dominating nature, but about being intrinsically unified with the eternal cycle of the universe.

Reflecting on Divine Power Comparing these mythologies shows how human understandings of power evolved across cultures:

The Greeks emphasized physical strength and control over nature. "The Norse" valued wisdom, courage, and acceptance of fate.

The Egyptians prioritized cosmic balance and renewal.

The Hindus envisioned power as an eternal cycle of creation, preservation, and transformation. Mythology is not about declaring a single "winner." Instead, it represents humanity's timeless exploration of fundamental questions: How did the world begin? What keeps it running? Why do things change? Each culture crafted its own profound answer, creating a rich tapestry of human thought that still inspires us today.

THE BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CHRONIC STRESS ON MENTAL HEALTH

02



You probably know the situation when you are before an exam, a meeting or a presentation. Your hands start shaking, your heart speeds up and your head occupies a lot of thoughts. This is stress - a natural organism's reaction to danger.

THE BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CHRONIC STRESS ON MENTAL HEALTH



You probably know the situation when you are before an exam, a meeting or a presentation. Your hands start shaking, your heart speeds up and your head occupies a lot of thoughts

This is stress - a natural organism's reaction to danger. Sometimes when short-term stress becomes long-term, instead of helping us, it can cause serious issues. Nowadays, an increasing number of people, especially young people, struggle with chronic stress and its effects. This article will illustrate how chronic stress affects your body and mental health and how these two are connected.

WHEN STRESS NEVER SWITCHES OFF

Let's imagine a person at 2 AM, they check their phone. The first thought race "what if I can't", "what if I am not as good as them". This is not the first night like this. It happened yesterday, a week ago, a month ago. It was like a nightmare which they can't wake up from. Thoughts of unfinished projects, unpaid bills and family problems were racing through their mind, contrasting sharply with the flawless lives of people on social media who always seemed to thrive. But stress like this doesn't stay only in the mind. It reaches deep into the body.



THE BODY UNDER SIEGE

The Body Under Siege

Your body's built-in bodyguard is called cortisol - a hormone that gives you the focus and energy to push through when you're under threat. But when this bodyguard remains on duty too long, it starts destroying what it was meant to protect. Before long, memory starts to fail - you have trouble remembering where you put your car keys or what someone said (a sign that the hippocampus, the brain's memory center, is struggling).



THE BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CHRONIC STRESS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Your brain is always in a state of readiness - it reacts to everyday stimuli as if it were a threat (a sign that the amygdala, the brain's fear center, is stuck on high alert). Emotions are getting out of hand, concentration difficulties creep in, and the capacity to think logically or make decisions starts to slip away (a sign that the prefrontal cortex, the brain's control center for judgment and decision-making, is losing its grip).

But the influence of this guardian doesn't end with the brain. It can compromise the immune system. Chronic inflammation, slower wound healing and frequent infections become a daily reality. A body that can't defend itself can't rest, either. That's why chronic stress so often means trouble falling asleep, waking up in the middle of the night, or sleep that never feels deep enough. And with less rest, the body has even less strength left to fight the next wave of stress



A VICIOUS CYCLE

A Vicious Cycle: Brain Meets Behavior Biology and behavior don't operate in vacuums; they are deeply intertwined. High cortisol changes how the brain functions, and a changed brain becomes more vulnerable to anxiety and depression. Those psychological symptoms then trigger even more stress, and more cortisol. Breaking in at any single point isn't enough. The real challenge is breaking the entire cycle

THE MIND PAYS THE PRICE



The Mind Pays the Price The same person who once handled deadlines without blinking now feels a knot in the chest before opening an email. Anxiety doesn't need a clear trigger anymore, it just shows up on ordinary days. Motivation fades too. Things that used to feel exciting turn into one more task on a list, and low mood can slide into something closer to depression. Concentration keeps slipping, plans get abandoned halfway, and even small decisions start to feel exhausting. Many people in this state don't call it depression or anxiety, but the data tells a clearer story: nearly half of young people report experiencing anxiety or depression as a direct result of stress. What starts as tiredness ends up changing how a person sees their whole life.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Bottom Line It's 2 AM again, but something is different this time. The person checking their phone still feels the same tightness in their chest, still remembers the unpaid bills and the unfinished projects. They know their body isn't broken - it's just stuck in alarm mode. That knowledge doesn't change things overnight, but it brings a crucial shift: the realization that this state isn't permanent. Understanding chronic stress is the first real step toward loosening its grip.



BREAKING THE CYCLE

Breaking the Cycle The loop can be interrupted, but not with one trick. Regular movement lowers cortisol and helps the body remember what "off duty" feels like. Consistent sleep gives the brain the recovery it was denied for months. Mindfulness and breathing exercises calm the amygdala stuck in alarm mode. But none of these tools work in a vacuum. Opening up to someone—whether it's a friend or a therapist—is still our best defense against letting chronic stress spiral into something worse. None of these are quick fixes. Breaking a loop that took months - or years - to build requires time, patience, and consistency. But every small step is a signal to your body that it is finally safe to step off the treadmill.



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03

ANCIENT CRYPTOGRAPHY: FROM CAESAR'S CIPHER TO MODERN CYBERSECURITY AND AI

From Caesar's battlefield codes to AI-powered encryption, cryptography has always been humanity's most consequential intellectual arms race. Discover how secrets shaped civilizations — and how they continue to shape our digital world.

BY ZARA MAHEEM (PAKISTAN)



Secrets have always been at the heart of human civilization. Long before digital passwords and encrypted messaging applications existed, people devised ingenious methods to conceal their most important communications from enemies, rivals, and strangers. The history of cryptography — the science of encoding and decoding secret messages — stretches across thousands of years and dozens of civilizations, from the ancient Mediterranean world to the laboratories of modern artificial intelligence research.

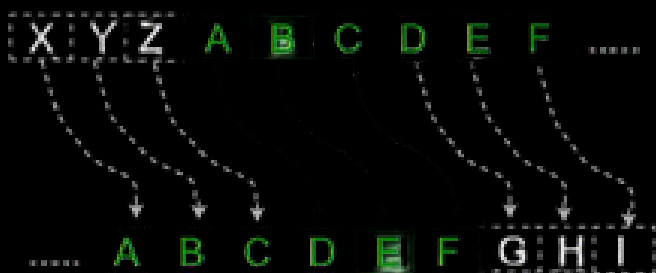
Understanding this history is not merely an academic exercise. It reveals something fundamental about who we are: creatures who simultaneously crave connection and fear exposure, who trust selectively and protect fiercely.

The journey from Caesar's simple cipher to today's quantum-resistant encryption algorithms is a story of escalation — each generation of cryptographers building something stronger, and each generation of codebreakers finding a way through. It is also a story of unintended consequences, of tools invented for secrecy that ended up shaping mathematics, computing, and the entire structure of the digital economy.



CAESAR'S CIPHER - SIMPLICITY AS STRATEGY

The earliest encryption methods were elegant in their simplicity. Around 50 BCE, Julius Caesar developed what historians now call the Caesar Cipher: a substitution cipher in which each letter of the alphabet is shifted a fixed number of positions. Using a shift of three, the letter A becomes D, B becomes E, and so on through the alphabet. To read the message, the recipient simply shifts every letter back by the same number.



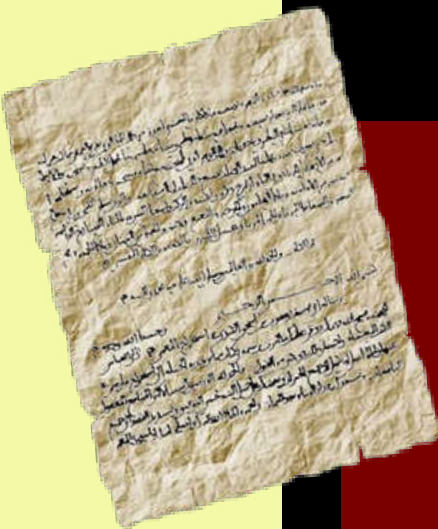


The Caesar Cipher worked not because it was mathematically sophisticated — it was not — but because it exploited a practical reality of the ancient world: most people could not read at all, and those who could read had no reason to suspect that a message in apparent gibberish contained hidden meaning. In an environment of widespread illiteracy, obscurity was its own form of security.

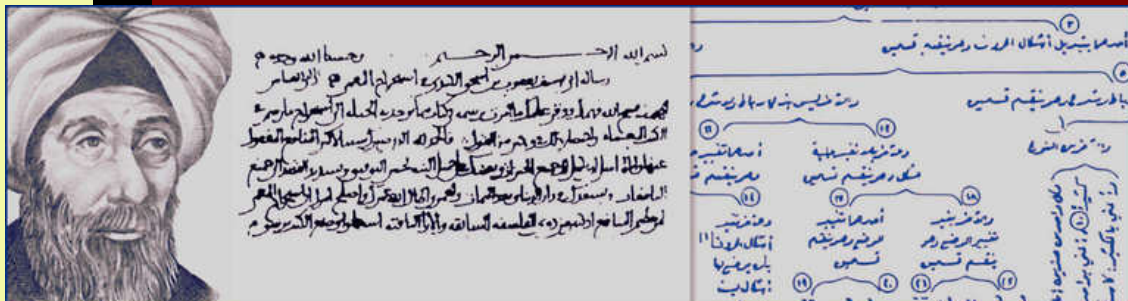
Yet even in ancient times, thoughtful observers recognized the cipher's weakness. If an intercepted message is known to be encrypted with a Caesar Cipher, a patient adversary needs only to test 25 possible shifts before finding the correct one. This brute-force vulnerability meant that the Caesar Cipher's effectiveness depended entirely on the enemy not knowing what kind of cipher was being used — a principle that later cryptographers would recognize as fundamentally flawed. Modern cryptography operates on the opposite assumption: a cipher should remain secure even when the enemy knows exactly how it works.



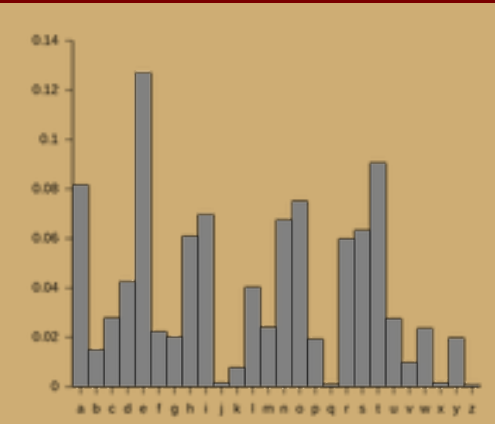
THE ARAB CONTRIBUTION: BREAKING THE UNBREAKABLE



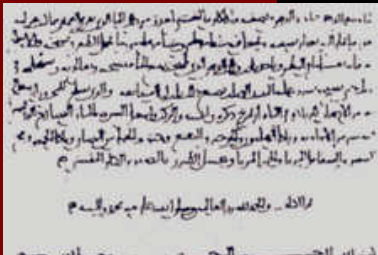
For centuries after Caesar, substitution ciphers remained the dominant approach to encryption. The standard method evolved beyond simple shifts into more complex systems in which each letter was replaced by a different symbol or letter according to a fixed but arbitrary key. These monoalphabetic substitution ciphers seemed to offer much stronger security, since the number of possible keys was astronomically large.



Then, in ninth-century Baghdad, a scholar named Al-Kindi changed everything. Working during the intellectual golden age of the Abbasid Caliphate, Al-Kindi wrote a treatise titled "A Manuscript on Deciphering Cryptographic Messages" in which he described a technique now known as frequency analysis. His insight was profound in its simplicity: in any language, certain letters appear far more frequently than others. In Arabic, for instance, some letters dominate ordinary prose. In English, the letter E accounts for roughly 13% of all letters used. If an encrypted text replaces every E with, say, the letter Q, then Q will appear with unusual frequency in the ciphertext — and a careful analyst can use this statistical signature to crack the code without knowing the key.



Al-Kindi's frequency analysis was a revolutionary intellectual achievement. It demonstrated that even a cipher with billions of possible keys could be broken by someone who understood the mathematical structure hidden within language itself. It also established a principle that remains central to cryptanalysis today: ciphers do not operate in a vacuum; they interact with the statistical patterns of human language and human behavior, and those patterns are exploitable.



THE RENAISSANCE AND THE POLYALPHABETIC RESPONSE



Al-Kindi's breakthrough forced cryptographers to adapt. The solution, developed across Renaissance Europe by scholars including Giovan Battista Bellaso and later popularized under the name of Blaise de Vigenère, was the polyalphabetic cipher.

Instead of using a single substitution alphabet throughout a message, the Vigenère Cipher used a keyword to cycle through multiple different alphabets. Each letter of the keyword determined a different Caesar-style shift for the corresponding letter of the message. This cycling destroyed the simple frequency patterns that Al-Kindi's method exploited, because the same plaintext letter would be encrypted differently depending on its position relative to the keyword.



The Vigenère Cipher was considered unbreakable for nearly three centuries — so secure that it was called "le chiffre indéchiffrable," the indecipherable cipher. It was eventually broken in the 1800s through a technique that identified the repeating structure of the keyword by looking for repeated patterns in the ciphertext. Once an analyst determined the length of the keyword, the cipher collapsed back into a series of simpler Caesar ciphers, each breakable by frequency analysis.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
A	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
B	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A
C	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B
D	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C
E	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D
F	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E
G	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F
H	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
I	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
J	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
K	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
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M	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
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P	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Q	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
R	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
S	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
T	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
U	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
V	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
W	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
X	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
Y	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Z	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y

This pattern — a new cipher, followed by the discovery of its weakness, followed by a stronger cipher — would repeat itself through the centuries with increasing speed and sophistication.

WORLD WAR II: THE MACHINE AGE OF CRYPTOGRAPHY

The twentieth century brought both new powers of encryption and new powers of codebreaking. During World War II, Nazi Germany deployed the Enigma machine — an electromechanical cipher device that used a system of rotating rotors, a plugboard, and reflector elements to create an encryption scheme of staggering complexity. Each day, Enigma operators reset their machines according to a new daily key distributed in printed codebooks. The number of possible Enigma configurations ran into the quintillions. Breaking it by hand, letter by letter, seemed literally impossible.



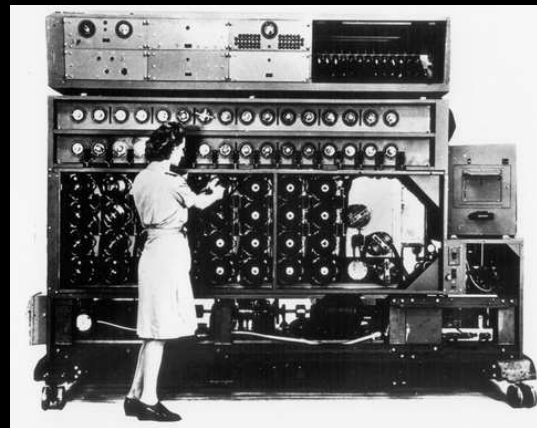
But at Bletchley Park, a wartime codebreaking center in England, a remarkable collection of mathematicians, linguists, chess champions, and puzzle enthusiasts worked to do exactly that.



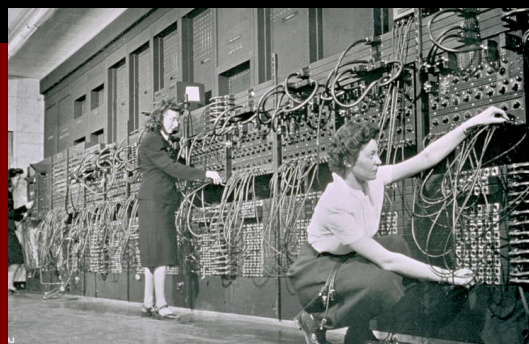
Central among them was Alan Turing, a Cambridge mathematician who designed a machine called the Bombe specifically to exploit structural weaknesses in Enigma's operation. The Bombe could test thousands of possible configurations per minute, eliminating wrong answers through logical deduction and narrowing down the field to a manageable set of candidates.



Turing's work at Bletchley Park is credited with shortening World War II by an estimated two to four years. But its deeper significance lies elsewhere: in building a machine that could systematically test logical propositions at speed, Turing had laid the conceptual foundations for modern computing. The codebreaker and the computer were born from the same intellectual problem.



THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION: PUBLIC KEY CRYPTOGRAPHY



The development of computers in the mid-twentieth century created both a crisis and an opportunity for cryptography. On one hand, computers could encrypt and decrypt messages far faster than any human, enabling much more complex ciphers. On the other hand, computers also made brute-force attacks vastly more powerful: a cipher that would take a human lifetime to crack could be broken in hours by a machine testing millions of keys per second.

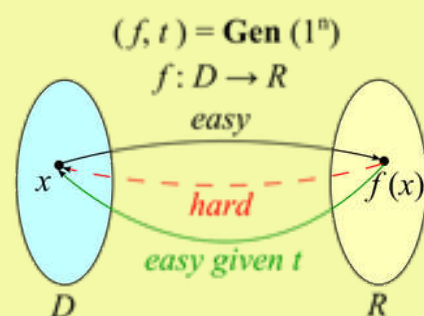
The deepest conceptual problem, however, was not speed but logistics.

All encryption systems up to that point were symmetric: sender and receiver had to share the same secret key before they could communicate securely. But how do you share a secret key over an insecure channel? You cannot encrypt the key using the same system it is meant to unlock. For centuries, this had meant that secure communication required physically transporting keys — a serious limitation for any large-scale system



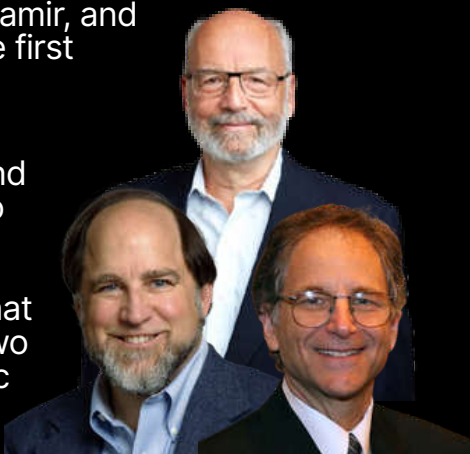
In 1976, mathematicians Whitfield Diffie and Martin Hellman published a paper proposing what seemed like a mathematical impossibility: a method by which two parties could establish a shared secret over a completely public channel, without ever having exchanged anything private.

The solution relied on what mathematicians call a trapdoor function — a mathematical operation that is easy to perform in one direction but computationally infeasible to reverse without a specific piece of secret information.

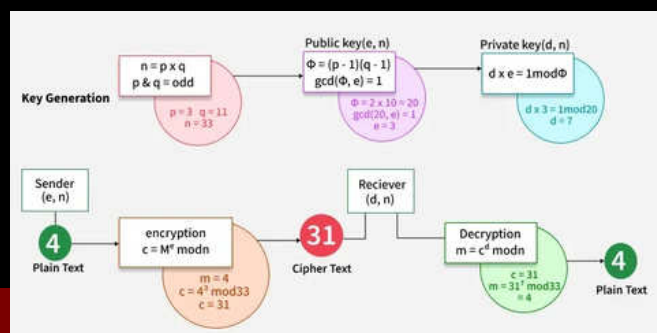
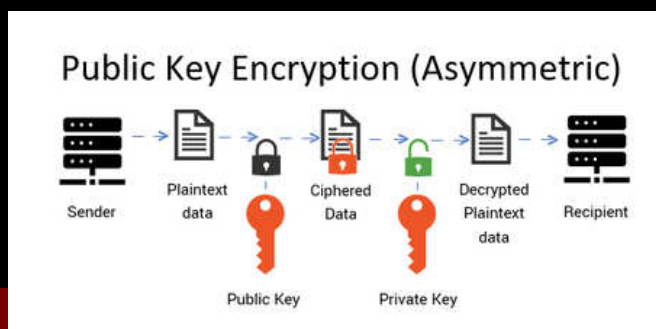


The following year, Ron Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Leonard Adleman developed RSA, the first practical public-key cryptosystem.

RSA exploits the mathematical relationship between multiplication and factorization: it is easy to multiply two large prime numbers together, but extraordinarily difficult to take a large composite number and determine what primes produced it. RSA generates two mathematically linked keys — a public key for encrypting messages and a private key for decrypting them. Anyone can encrypt a message using the recipient's public key, but only the recipient, who holds the private key, can decrypt it.



Public-key cryptography made the modern internet possible. Every secure website connection, every encrypted email, every online banking transaction relies on descendants of the mathematical insight that Diffie, Hellman, Rivest, Shamir, and Adleman developed in the 1970s. From Caesar's three-letter shift to RSA's mathematically intractable prime factorization, the evolution of encryption had traveled an extraordinary distance.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE NEW CRYPTOGRAPHIC FRONTIER

Today, cryptography faces its most complex and multifaceted challenge yet: the simultaneous rise of artificial intelligence and quantum computing. Both technologies are transforming the landscape in ways that demand new cryptographic thinking.

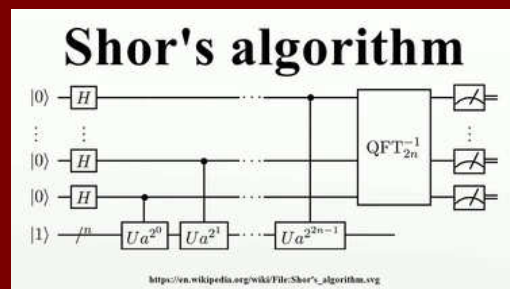


Artificial intelligence has become a powerful tool for both attackers and defenders in the cryptographic arms race. Machine learning systems can analyze patterns in encrypted traffic — not breaking the encryption itself, but inferring information about the content from metadata such as timing, packet sizes, and communication patterns. AI systems can also automate sophisticated social engineering attacks, generating convincing phishing messages tailored to specific individuals, or exploiting human error rather than mathematical weakness.

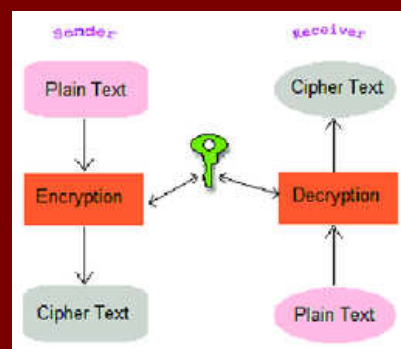
On the defensive side, AI is being used to detect anomalies in network behavior that suggest an attack in progress, to automate vulnerability scanning, and to assist in the design of new cryptographic algorithms. Researchers are also exploring the use of neural networks in steganography — the art of hiding information within innocent-looking images, audio files, or text — creating channels of secret communication that are invisible not only to human observers but potentially to traditional detection software.



The more existential threat, however, comes from quantum computing. Quantum computers exploit quantum mechanical phenomena to perform certain calculations at speeds that make classical computers look stationary. The most significant cryptographic implication involves an algorithm called Shor's algorithm, developed in 1994, which can factor large numbers exponentially faster than any known classical algorithm. If large-scale quantum computers become practical, they would be able to break RSA and most currently deployed public-key cryptosystems in hours or days rather than the billions of years that classical brute-force methods would require.



In response, the global cryptographic community has spent the past decade developing post-quantum cryptography — encryption systems based on mathematical problems that appear to resist quantum attack.



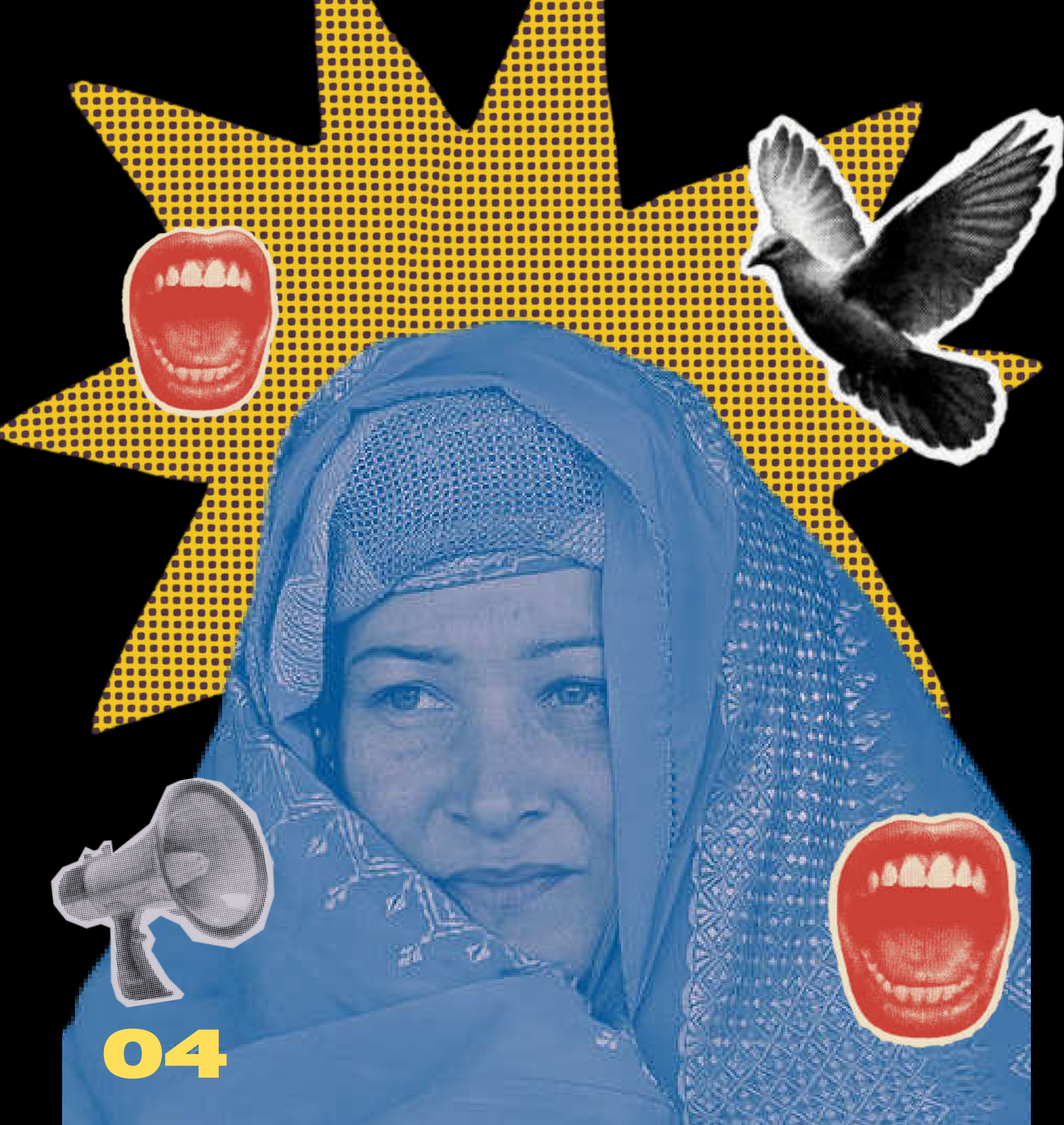
In 2024, the United States National Institute of Standards and Technology finalized the first post-quantum cryptographic standards, based on the mathematical hardness of problems involving lattices and hash functions. The transition to post-quantum cryptography is now underway, a process that will take years and affect virtually every computer system on the planet.

THE UNENDING ARMS RACE



The history of cryptography is ultimately the history of an arms race that never ends. Every breakthrough in encryption is eventually followed by a breakthrough in cryptanalysis. Every new cipher creates new vulnerabilities; every new attack stimulates new defenses. What makes this race different from most is that the stakes grow higher with every iteration: where Caesar's cipher protected military orders, modern cryptography protects the medical records of billions, the financial infrastructure of nations, and the communication of dissidents living under authoritarian governments.

The lesson of cryptographic history is not that perfect security is achievable — it never has been, and probably never will be. The lesson is that security is a process, not a destination: a continuous negotiation between the power to conceal and the power to reveal, conducted in the language of mathematics, refined by the pressure of adversity, and shaped by the full complexity of human ingenuity. From Caesar's three-position shift to quantum-resistant lattice cryptography, that negotiation has never stopped — and shows no sign of stopping now.



04

BEYOND SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

Five years ago, I remember being rushed out of school as news spread that the Taliban had taken control of Kabul. It was supposed to be one of the final days of our exams, but instead it became the last day I would see many of my friends and the last time I would walk through the doors of that school as a student with a future. At the time, I could not imagine that it would be my final day at school.

BY LAILA JASOR (AFGHANISTAN)

BEYOND SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

ALTERNATE LEARNING PATHWAYS FOR AFGHAN WOMEN

In recent years, Afghan women have faced unprecedented restrictions on their access to formal education. With schools and universities closed to many girls and women, countless learners have been forced to seek alternative ways to continue their education. These alternatives have never been meant to replace schools and universities, but they have become a means of staying connected to knowledge, society, and hope for the future.

Despite numerous obstacles, many Afghan women have turned to online courses, social media platforms, books, and informal learning communities to keep learning. This essay explores how Afghan women continue their education beyond formal schools and universities and examines both the opportunities and challenges they encounter along the way.

Alternative Sources of Learning

Alternative Sources of Learning

Over the past five years, Afghan women have turned to various alternative forms of education to continue learning. Although these opportunities are limited and cannot fully replace formal schools and universities, they have provided many women with a chance to remain connected to knowledge and personal development.

One of the most important educational resources available to women is private courses. Despite strict regulations, many courses continue to operate by separating male and female students in terms of schedules and classrooms. These courses offer subjects such as English, mathematics, computer skills, foreign languages, drawing, and sewing. However, the range of subjects available to women remains limited.

Online education has also become a significant source of learning. Free and paid online schools, educational platforms, and courses supported by international organizations provide opportunities for women to study from home. Platforms such as YouTube, Khan Academy, Coursera, and online schools supported by organizations and individuals have become important alternatives for many learners.



Social media applications, especially Telegram and WhatsApp groups, have also created informal learning communities where women can exchange educational materials, attend online classes, and support one another.

Religious schools and Dar-ul-Ulums represent another available option. These institutions mainly focus on Islamic and Arabic studies, while some general subjects are still taught. However, scientific subjects are often limited and practical laboratory work is largely unavailable.

As a student in one of these institutions, I found the transition challenging. The intensive focus on Arabic studies during the first months, combined with returning to general school subjects after a four-year interruption, created significant academic pressure.



In addition, nursing and midwifery institutes remain among the few higher education opportunities still accessible to women, although these programs have faced repeated uncertainty and interruptions. Through conversations with students attending these institutes, I have frequently heard concerns about sudden closures, changing regulations, and uncertainty over whether their qualifications will be officially recognized.

Although these alternatives cannot fully compensate for the loss of formal education, they demonstrate the determination of Afghan women to continue learning despite extraordinary challenges.

ARE THE RESOURCES EQUALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Although these educational resources have created new opportunities for Afghan women, they are not equally accessible to everyone. Most alternative forms of education, including online schools, private courses, and digital learning platforms, depend heavily on internet access. However, internet connectivity in Afghanistan remains relatively slow and unreliable, making online learning difficult for many students. In addition, the high cost of internet services prevents many families from maintaining consistent access to these resources



Geographical differences also have a significant impact on educational opportunities. Women and girls living in rural areas often have fewer options because private courses and educational centers are concentrated in larger cities. Poor internet connectivity, limited infrastructure, and financial hardship further restrict access to learning. From conversations with friends living in other provinces, I have learned that many have no access to private courses or religious schools at all. Educational opportunities vary greatly across Afghanistan, leaving many girls with far fewer alternatives than those living in major cities.

Language is another important barrier. Many online educational resources are available only in English or other foreign languages, making them difficult to use for students with limited language skills. Similarly, in some religious schools, the strong emphasis on Arabic-language instruction can become overwhelming and discourage students from continuing their studies.

Family and social expectations also play a crucial role. Not all families support girls' participation in online or offline courses. Many young women are expected to spend most of their time on household responsibilities and caring for family members, leaving little time for education. In my experience, even when learning opportunities exist, they often depend on whether a girl's family is willing to support her education.

As a result, economic hardship, unequal internet access, geographical differences, language barriers, and family expectations create significant inequalities in access to alternative education. While some women are able to continue learning, many others remain excluded from even these limited opportunities.



WHAT BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES DO WOMEN FACE?

Despite the availability of alternative educational opportunities, Afghan women continue to face numerous obstacles in pursuing education. One of the major challenges is the limited range of subjects available. Religious schools and Dar-ul-Ulums primarily focus on Islamic and Arabic studies, and students are generally required to study these subjects alongside the remaining general curriculum. The strong emphasis on Arabic-language instruction can also make learning particularly difficult for students with no previous background in the language. From my own experience, adjusting to this system after years away from school was both academically and emotionally challenging.

Another obstacle is the gradual modification and removal of subjects from educational curricula. Since 2021, reports have documented changes to textbooks and academic programs, including the removal or revision of topics related to arts, music, civic education, and human rights. More recent reports have also suggested that several university subjects and hundreds of school curriculum topics have been revised or removed, further limiting educational diversity. Educational opportunities themselves are often unstable. Private courses may be temporarily suspended or permanently closed, and some institutions no longer admit female students. In addition, many online and offline programs do not provide officially recognized certificates, leaving students uncertain about the long-term value of their education. The quality of education also presents significant challenges. A shortage of qualified teachers, limited educational resources, and the absence of laboratory facilities for scientific subjects often result in learning that is largely theoretical.

Some online programs are also short-term or inconsistent, making it difficult for students to maintain a stable educational path.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is uncertainty about the future. Many young women continue studying without knowing whether their efforts will eventually lead to higher education, employment, or professional opportunities. In my own experience, this uncertainty can be more discouraging than the educational barriers themselves. Nevertheless, many women continue learning because education remains one of the few ways to preserve hope for the future.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THESE ALTERNATIVES REPLACE FORMAL EDUCATION?

The alternative forms of education available to Afghan women offer both valuable opportunities and significant limitations. On the one hand, they allow women to continue learning and remain connected to society as active learners. They provide opportunities to develop new skills and pursue knowledge despite the loss of formal education. Learning English, for example, can open doors to international communication, remote employment, and teaching opportunities. In my own experience, learning English not only became a way to continue my education but also gave me the opportunity to teach others and remain connected to the academic world.

However, no alternative can fully replace schools and universities. Most of these educational opportunities do not provide widely recognized qualifications, limiting their value for higher education and employment. Furthermore, many academic disciplines remain unavailable, preventing women from pursuing the fields they are genuinely interested in.

The lack of practical training, laboratories, and structured academic programs also means that learning is often incomplete.

Beyond academics, schools and universities offer something equally important: a sense of community. They provide opportunities to build friendships, learn from experienced teachers, participate in discussions, and grow alongside classmates. Losing these experiences has affected not only education but also the social development of many young women.

Perhaps the greatest limitation is that none of these alternatives can guarantee future educational or professional opportunities, either within Afghanistan or abroad. Although these resources have helped many women continue learning, they remain temporary alternatives rather than true replacements for formal education. They preserve knowledge, skills, and hope, but they cannot fully restore everything that schools and universities provide.



HOW ARE AFGHAN WOMEN ADAPTING DESPITE THESE RESTRICTIONS?

Despite years of restrictions, Afghan women have continued to demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to learning. Many have turned to books and self-study as a way of continuing their intellectual growth. Reading novels, self-development books, and educational materials has become an important source of knowledge for many women, while others have begun writing, translating, and sharing their own ideas through literature and online platforms. Free and accessible resources such as YouTube, educational applications, and online learning platforms have also become valuable tools for education. Informal learning communities on WhatsApp and Telegram allow women and girls to exchange study materials, teach one another, and stay connected with fellow learners. In many cases, these communities have become small virtual classrooms where students encourage and support each other.

Interest in learning English has also grown significantly among many Afghan girls and women. As an international language, English provides access to global knowledge, scholarships, and remote work opportunities. In my own experience, learning English completely changed the direction of my education. What began as a way to continue learning eventually became a skill that allowed me to teach other students and help them continue their own educational journeys.

Perhaps most importantly, Afghan women have learned to rely on one another. Through informal study groups, online communities, and the sharing of educational resources, they continue to support each other despite uncertainty about the future. From what I have witnessed, this sense of solidarity has become one of the strongest forms of resistance against educational exclusion.

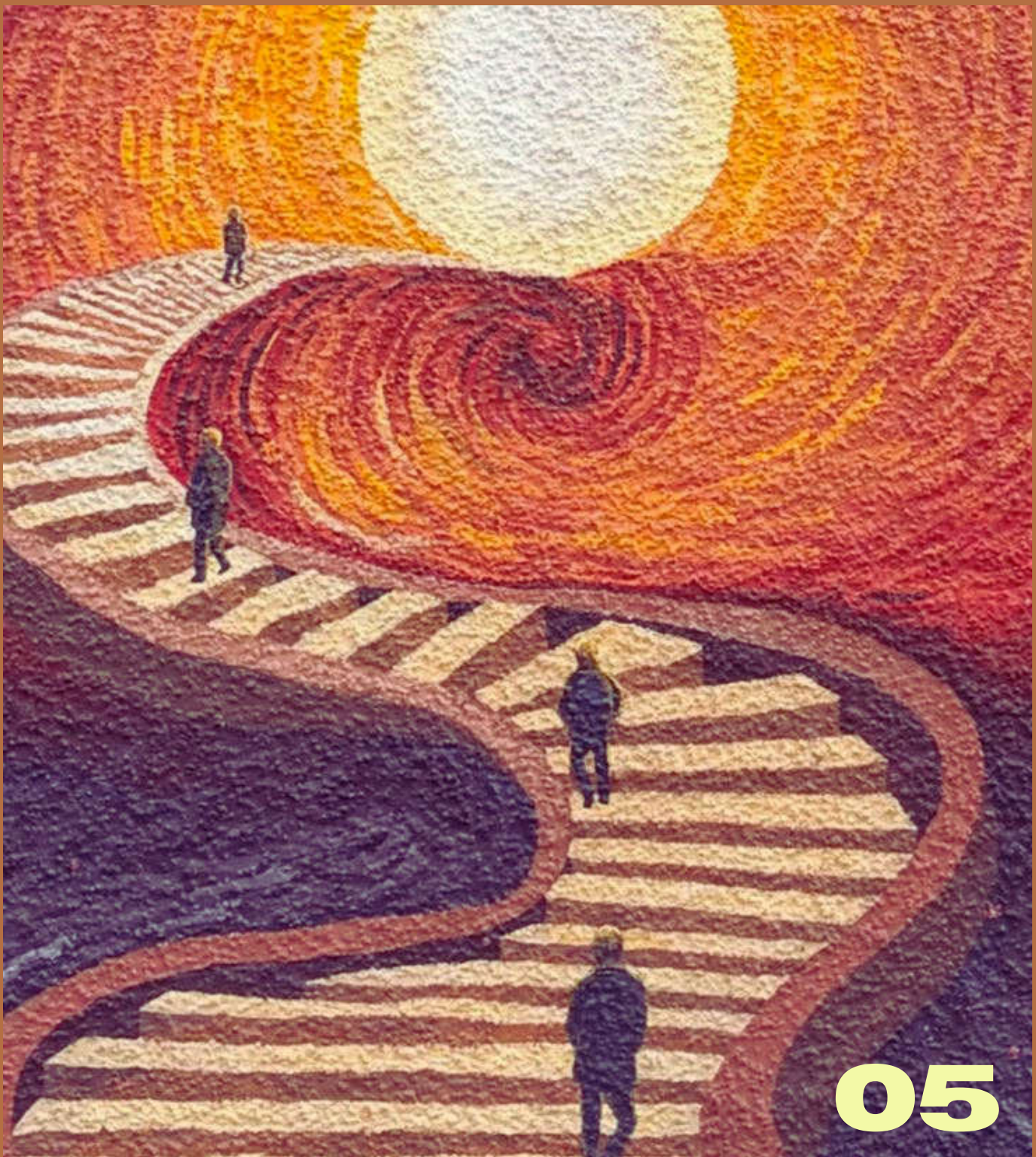
Although opportunities remain limited, Afghan women continue to prove that the desire to learn cannot easily be erased. Their determination demonstrates that education is not only about classrooms and diplomas—it is also about resilience, hope, and the refusal to give up on the future.



CONCLUSION

The closure of schools and universities forced countless Afghan women to seek alternative ways of learning. Private courses, online platforms, self-study, and informal educational communities have helped many women remain connected to knowledge and continue developing their skills. Yet, despite their value, these alternatives cannot fully replace the academic, social, and professional opportunities that formal education provides.

Five years ago, I walked out of my school believing I would return after my exams. I never imagined that it would be my last day there as a student. Like many Afghan women, I was forced to find new ways to continue learning. Although these alternatives changed the path of my education, they also showed me that the desire to learn can survive even in the most difficult circumstances. The story of Afghan women is therefore not only one of educational loss but also one of resilience, adaptation, and determination. As long as women continue to learn, teach, and support one another, the hope for education remains alive—even when the classroom doors are closed.



05

DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?

Few ideas in human history have sparked as much controversy as the notion that 'the end justifies the means.' Does success justify the choices made to achieve it, or do our choices define our worth?

**BY RAWEEN BANDAR ALJUHANIIS
(SAUDI ARABIA)**

Few ideas in human history have sparked as much controversy as the notion that "the end justifies the means." At first glance, this idea seems very practical—and even logical. If the result we achieve is noble, why should we scrutinize the path we took to get there? Throughout history, people, governments, revolutionaries, and even ordinary individuals have tried to justify some highly questionable actions. They always claim it's for the "greater good" in the end. But behind this seemingly simple idea lies one of the oldest ethical problems in philosophy: is success valuable enough to justify the means used to achieve it? Or do our choices define our worth more than our achievements?



Humans tend to judge actions by their outcomes. A doctor might perform a risky surgery and save a patient's life, even though it deviates from standard procedures. A leader might deceive an enemy to avoid a devastating war. A parent might tell a white lie to protect a child from unnecessary pain. In such situations, the outcome seems more important than the questionable means. The immediate benefit tempts us to overlook the moral cost. It is easy to praise success when it brings tangible results.

But ethics become more complex when we ask ourselves: would we have accepted these same actions if they had failed? Would we have forgiven the lies, manipulation, or violence if the desired goal had not been achieved? This question reveals that we often judge ethics based on outcomes, not on principles.



UTILITARIANISM VS. MORAL LIMITS



The phrase itself suggests that goals carry greater moral weight than actions, as if the good achieved in the end can erase the wrongs committed along the way. This line of thinking reflects a philosophical perspective known as "utilitarianism" or "consequentialism", in which the value of an action is measured by its consequences.

If a difficult decision saves millions of lives, some may view it as worthy of praise, regardless of the suffering it causes. This logic has influenced political revolutions, military strategies, scientific experiments, and economic reforms throughout history. It fosters speed and decisiveness in situations where hesitation could lead to the loss of lives. But at the same time, it opens a dangerous door: when outcomes become the sole measure of morality, almost any action can be justified simply by the promise of a better future .

History repeatedly demonstrates how easily this principle can be abused. Many of the world's darkest chapters began with promises of peace, prosperity, security, or justice. Leaders claimed that temporary oppression would create lasting freedom. Wars were justified as necessary sacrifices for a brighter tomorrow. Innocent people suffered because someone believed that future generations would benefit from their pain. These examples remind us that noble intentions alone cannot guarantee moral actions. Every individual who commits injustice believes, at least in their own mind, that a greater purpose excuses their behavior. If intentions become the only standard, morality loses its ability to protect the vulnerable.



THE DILEMMA OF ABSOLUTE PRINCIPLES

On the other hand, rejecting the principle entirely may also seem unrealistic. Real life rarely presents perfect choices. People frequently face situations where every available option causes harm. A firefighter may destroy a building to stop a wildfire from reaching an entire neighborhood. A government may impose strict emergency measures during a deadly epidemic to protect public health. In such moments, refusing to act because every option carries moral cost could create even greater suffering. Ethical decision-making therefore requires more than rigid rules. It demands wisdom, judgment, and an awareness of consequences without becoming enslaved by them.



The real danger may not lie in difficult decisions themselves but in how easily humans convince themselves that their cause is unquestionably righteous. Certainty can become more dangerous than doubt. Once a person believes they are fighting for absolute justice, they may stop questioning their methods altogether. Compassion gradually disappears because every victim becomes merely an obstacle standing in the way of a glorious future. Ironically, those who begin with noble dreams may eventually resemble the very people they once opposed. In this sense, the means slowly reshape the end itself. Violence breeds fear. Lies destroy trust. Cruelty normalizes cruelty. The destination is no longer as pure as it appeared because the journey has transformed everyone involved.

CHARACTER, DUTY, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RELIEF



Character is built through repeated actions rather than isolated achievements. Every decision leaves a mark not only on the world but also on the person making it. Someone who repeatedly lies for good reasons may eventually become comfortable with dishonesty. Someone who accepts injustice for temporary convenience may lose the ability to recognize justice altogether. Means are therefore not separate from ends; they are part of the same moral process.

The road shapes the traveler just as much as the destination defines the journey. A society that sacrifices honesty for prosperity may become wealthy but distrustful. A nation that abandons freedom in pursuit of security may discover that security without liberty carries its own form of imprisonment.

Philosophers have long debated this conflict between outcomes and principles. Some argue that moral rules should never be broken, regardless of the consequences, because human dignity cannot be measured by success. Others insist that refusing to prevent preventable suffering in the name of absolute principles is itself unethical. Neither position offers an easy answer because reality constantly tests moral certainty. Every generation inherits new technologies, political conflicts, and social challenges that force humanity to reconsider where ethical boundaries should be drawn. Perhaps philosophy does not exist to eliminate these dilemmas but to ensure we never stop questioning them.

The phrase "the end justifies the means" also reveals something profound about human psychology. People naturally desire simple answers to complex problems. We prefer clear victories over uncomfortable ambiguity. Believing that a good outcome automatically redeems harmful actions offers emotional relief because it removes the burden of moral uncertainty.

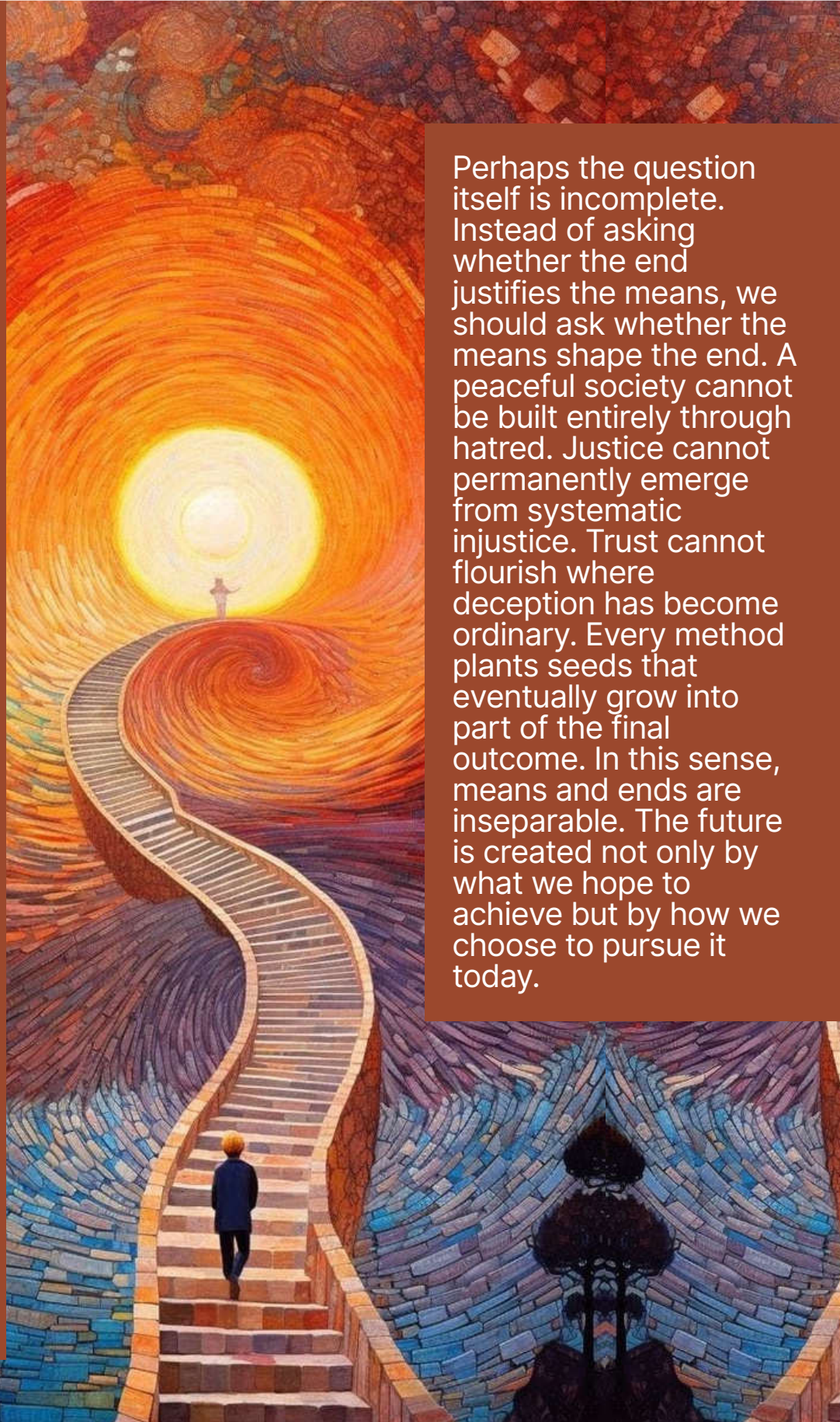


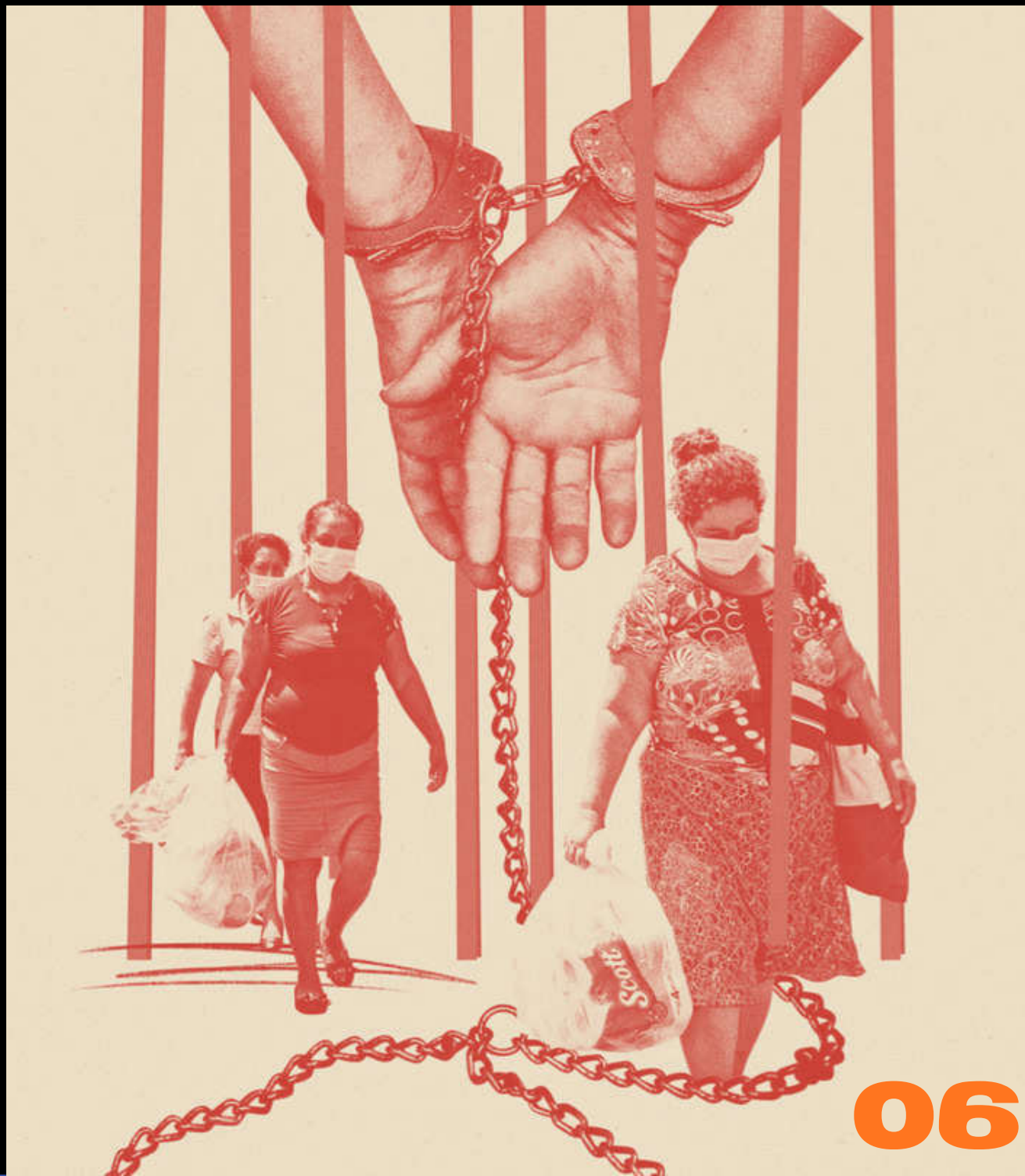
Yet genuine wisdom often requires accepting uncertainty rather than escaping it. Mature ethics is not the confidence that every difficult decision is correct, but the humility to recognize that even necessary actions may leave lasting moral scars.

CONCLUSION: BALANCING IDEALISM AND PRACTICALITY

Ultimately, the phrase remains compelling because it reflects the tension between idealism and practicality within every human being. We all face moments when moral values collide with urgent necessity. There are circumstances where compromise appears unavoidable, yet every compromise carries a price. The challenge is not simply to achieve worthy goals but to remain worthy while pursuing them. Success achieved through the destruction of integrity may appear victorious from a distance, yet it often leaves invisible wounds that endure long after the celebration has ended. A truly meaningful achievement is one that preserves both the dignity of the destination and the honor of the path that leads there. In the end, history remembers not only what humanity accomplished, but also the kind of humanity it chose to become while accomplishing it.

Perhaps the question itself is incomplete. Instead of asking whether the end justifies the means, we should ask whether the means shape the end. A peaceful society cannot be built entirely through hatred. Justice cannot permanently emerge from systematic injustice. Trust cannot flourish where deception has become ordinary. Every method plants seeds that eventually grow into part of the final outcome. In this sense, means and ends are inseparable. The future is created not only by what we hope to achieve but by how we choose to pursue it today.





BREAKING INVISIBLE CHAINS: HOW SOCIAL NORMS BECOME FORMS OF OPPRESSION IN SOUTH ASIA

Imagine living in a world where invisible boundaries are woven into everyday expectations. Explore how gender, class, ethnicity, and culture shape structural oppression in South Asia.

BY UMAIMA (PAKISTAN)

Imagine living in a world where invisible boundaries are woven into everyday expectations. Explore how gender, class, ethnicity, and culture shape structural oppression in South Asia.



Because these norms are deeply embedded within society, they are often mistaken for common sense rather than recognized as mechanisms of social control. Unlike overt forms of oppression, social norms rarely rely on physical force or legal restrictions. Their power lies in their invisibility. They influence individuals to internalize unequal expectations, normalize discrimination, and accept existing hierarchies as inevitable. These invisible systems of oppression are reflected in the social constructs of gender, class, ethnicity, and culture. Together, these intersecting social norms create structural inequalities that shape people's opportunities, rights, and lived experiences.

GENDER OPPRESSION - THE INVISIBLE BURDEN OF PATRIARCHAL NORMS



Among the many invisible forms of oppression embedded within society, gender-based social norms remain one of the most pervasive. From the moment a child is born, expectations shape their identity and future based on gender rather than abilities. Families, educational institutions, workplaces, religious traditions, and media reinforce these expectations as natural rather than socially constructed. According to UN Women, women perform more than three-quarters of all unpaid care and domestic work globally, leaving them with fewer opportunities for education, paid employment, leadership, and economic independence. In South Asia, gender inequalities are particularly pronounced: UN Women reports that the presence of children in a household is associated with a gender pay gap of approximately 35%, compared with 14% in households without children. In many South Asian societies, patriarchal norms assign distinct roles to men and women. Women are frequently expected to prioritize caregiving, domestic responsibilities, and family honor over education, career aspirations, or leadership opportunities. At the same time, men are expected to embody strength, emotional restraint, and financial responsibility, leaving little room to challenge traditional notions of masculinity.



CLASS OPPRESSION: THE INVISIBLE DIVIDE OF SOCIAL HIERARCHIES



While gender shapes opportunities through social expectations, class determines access to the resources needed to achieve them. Class oppression is often hidden beneath the belief that success depends solely on individual effort. In reality, social norms frequently reinforce the idea that wealth reflects merit and poverty reflects personal failure, ignoring structural inequalities.

According to the World Bank, approximately 700 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than US\$2.15 per day. In South Asia, rapid economic development has lifted millions out of poverty, yet the region remains home to significant income inequality.

According to the World Bank, approximately 700 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than US\$2.15 per day. In South Asia, rapid economic development has lifted millions out of poverty, yet the region remains home to significant income inequality. Class is closely tied to social status, family background, occupation, and place of residence. Children from disadvantaged families attend under-resourced schools, leave education early to support household incomes, and face restricted career opportunities. Informal workers, domestic workers, and daily wage laborers experience low wages and unsafe working conditions, yet these inequalities are often accepted as ordinary rather than unjust.



ETHNIC OPPRESSION: WHEN IDENTITY BECOMES A BARRIER

What if the language you speak, the community you belong to, or the ancestry you inherit determined how society valued your life? Unlike personal achievements, ethnicity is an identity people are born into. Yet across many societies, it has become a basis for discrimination and exclusion. According to the United Nations, nearly 120 million people were forcibly displaced by the end of 2024, many due to ethnic conflict, persecution, and violence. In South Asia, ethnic and linguistic minorities have historically faced unequal political representation, limited access to public resources, and social exclusion. Ethnic oppression is reinforced through everyday stereotypes, biased media portrayals, unequal employment opportunities, and social prejudice that normalize exclusion.



CULTURAL OPPRESSION: WHEN TRADITION SILENCES FREEDOM

Culture is often described as the soul of a society—a source of identity, belonging, and shared history. Yet, when cultural practices evolve into rigid social expectations that cannot be questioned, they can quietly transform into a mechanism of oppression.

According to the World Values Survey, societies with stronger traditional values generally place greater emphasis on conformity, obedience, and preserving established social roles. When preserving tradition becomes more important than protecting individual dignity and freedom, culture becomes another invisible chain sustaining inequality.

The most powerful forms of control are exercised through the fear of disappointing one's family, community, or cultural expectations. Across South Asia, family honor, collective identity, and community reputation frequently take precedence over individual choice. Decisions surrounding education, marriage, gender roles, and personal aspirations are influenced as much by cultural expectations as by personal ambitions.



BREAKING THE CYCLE - A CALL FOR INCLUSIVE CHANGE

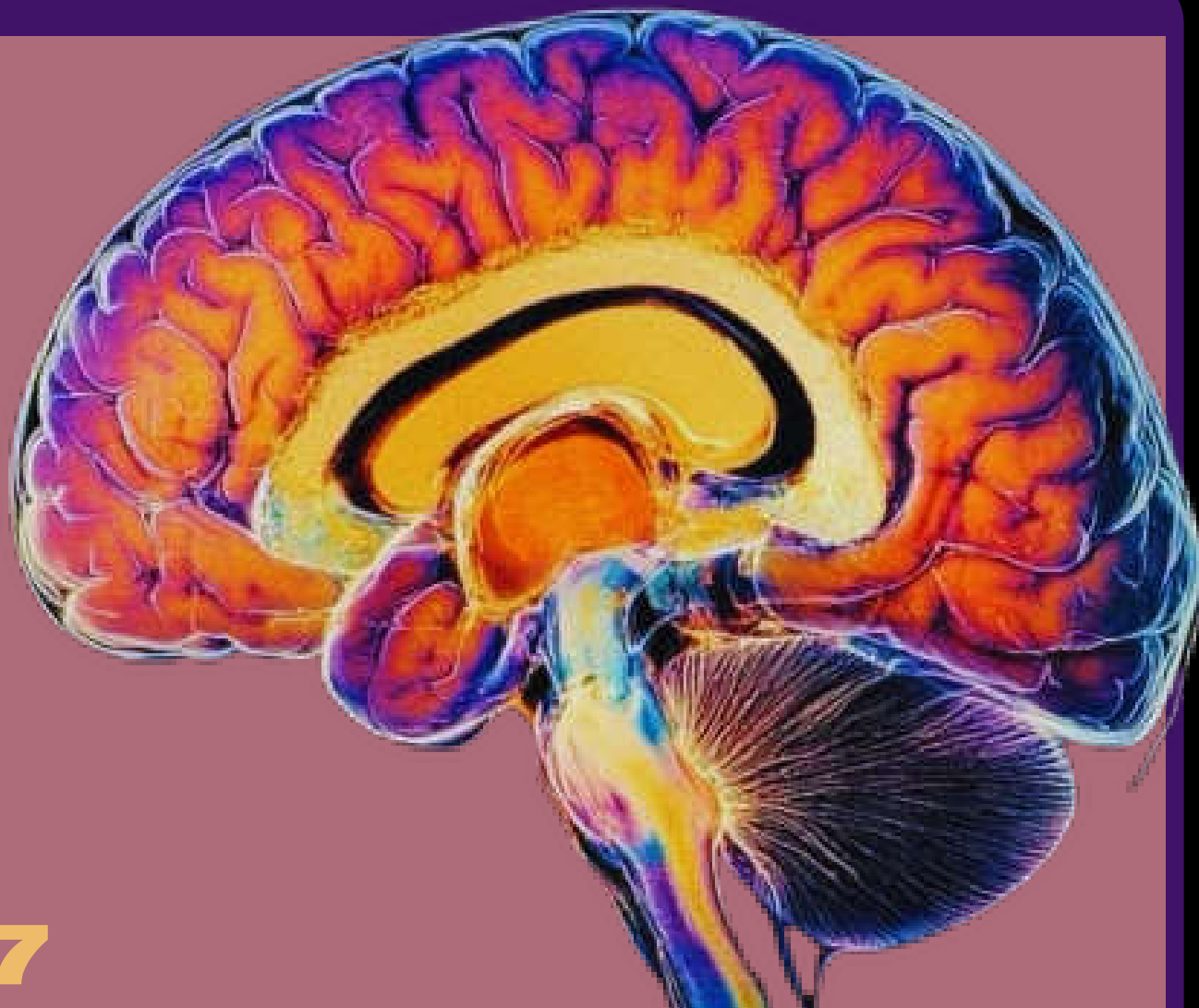
Breaking these systems of oppression does not require abandoning culture or tradition; rather, it requires distinguishing between values that promote dignity and those that perpetuate inequality. Cultural heritage should inspire belonging, not exclusion. Social norms should foster respect, not discrimination



Creating a more just and inclusive society demands collective responsibility:

1. Governments must enforce anti-discrimination laws and ensure equal access to quality education, healthcare, employment, and justice.
2. Educational institutions should encourage critical thinking, empathy, and diversity.
3. The media must portray different genders, ethnicities, cultures, and social classes fairly and responsibly.
4. Individuals must examine their own assumptions, speak out against discrimination, and support those whose voices have long been silenced. Invisible chains remain powerful only when they are accepted without question. Lasting change begins by ensuring that every individual—regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, or cultural background—is free to define their own future with dignity, equality, and respect.





07

THE MEMORY THAT NEVER HAPPENED: THE SCIENCE OF FALSE MEMORIES AND IDENTITY

BY FATIMA ZAHRA (QATAR)

Our memories shape who we believe we are. But what if some of those memories never really happened? New research shows how easily the mind can be fooled.

We believe our memories. They assist us in identifying loved ones, remembering childhood, and creating the stories we tell about ourselves. From birthdays to family vacations to life-changing milestones, memories are the very fabric of our identity. What if some of those memories were never true to start with?



Modern psychology and neuroscience have discovered a surprising fact: memory is not an accurate recording of the past. Rather, it's a dynamic, reconstructive process that can sometimes produce vivid memories of events that never actually occurred

False memory – Memory of an event that is distorted, exaggerated or completely false. False memories often feel as real as true memories. False memories are not lying. We think they are real. They are not signs of mental illness or low intelligence, but rather a normal aspect of how the human brain encodes and retrieves information.



HOW FALSE MEMORIES FORM

False memories can be formed in many different ways. Sometimes a suggestion from another person is a seed planted. Sometimes the idea gets familiar through repetition, so familiar that the brain thinks it's something we actually saw or did.



One of the most famous studies was done by psychologist Elizabeth Loftus, who showed that even asking people leading questions about a "lost" childhood event was enough to make them confidently remember something that never happened, like getting lost in a mall as a child.

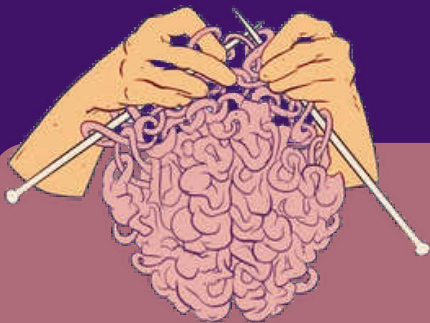
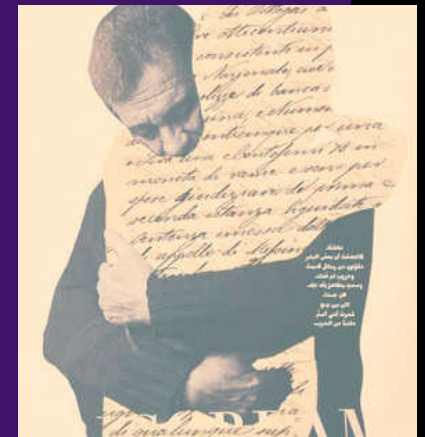
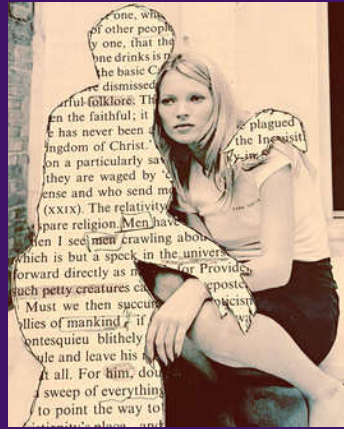


In recent years neuroscience has demonstrated that when we remember something our brain reconstructs the memory rather than simply retrieving it as a file in a computer. Every time we remember an event, we rewrite it. We add details, fill in holes, and sometimes distort the truth without realizing it.

THE BRAIN'S CONFIDENCE TRICK

False memories are powerful because they often feel like they are true. The brain does not label memories as "true" or "false"; instead, it draws on a feeling of familiarity and confidence.

If we are told something happened to us, or if we imagine it with enough detail, our brains may store it as if it were a true memory, with the same emotional heft. False memories activate many of the same areas as real remembering, including those involved with emotion and sensory detail, according to brain scans.



"The mind can't always tell the difference—and neither can we.

WHEN MEMORIES BECOME IDENTITY

Memory is the basis of our selves. We are the sum of our experiences. Or at least, the story we tell ourselves about those experiences. But what if parts of that story are not true?



Studies have shown that false memories can have subtle but lasting effects on identity. For instance, a person who "remembers" that they are a natural-born leader may tackle challenges with more confidence, even if that memory was entirely fabricated. On the other hand, a false memory of failure or rejection can lead to unnecessary emotional wounds.

This becomes especially complicated in therapy. Most memories that patients bring are accurate, but therapists need to be cautious when working with recovered or repressed memories – memories that may seem real but don't have any real evidence to back them up.

The point is not to deny someone's experience, but to help them see the difference between what may have happened and what may have been remembered.

WHY IT MATTERS



False memories aren't just a psychological curiosity; they have real world consequences. They can impact courtroom testimony, affect personal relationships and influence how we view ourselves.

And knowing that memory is reconstructive, not perfect, can be empowering. It lets us hold our memories more lightly, with curiosity instead of certainty.

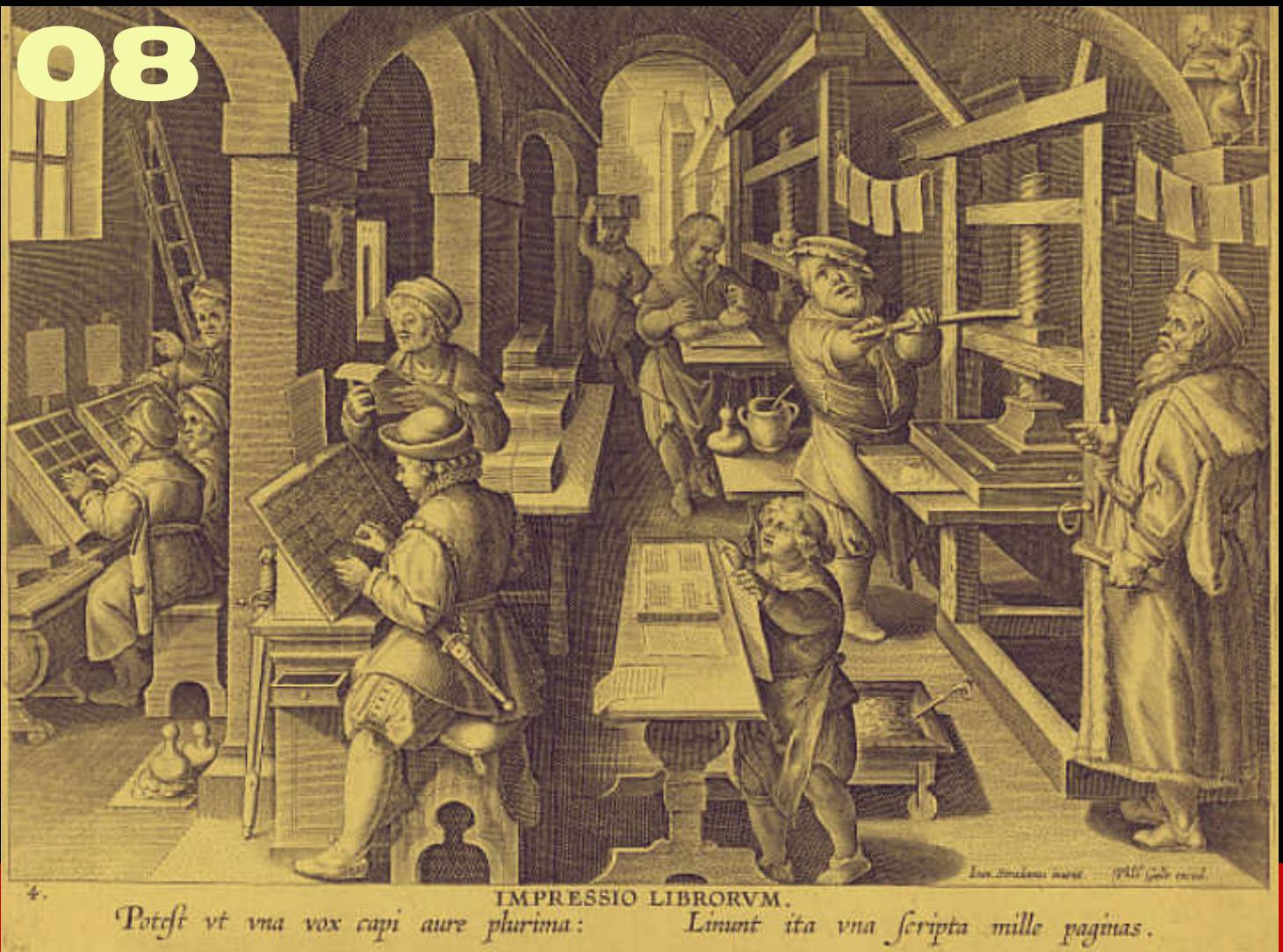
In the end, our identity isn't about remembering everything exactly as it was, it's about how we choose to learn, grow and move forward.

The next time you replay an old memory, remember: what feels so real might be your mind's best story—beautiful, flawed, and uniquely human.

DIGITAL RENAISSANCE: COMPARING AI'S CULTURAL IMPACT WITH THE RENAISSANCE AND THE PRINTING PRESS

When you look at history, there are a few moments where everything seems to change. Artificial intelligence is becoming the printing press of the digital age.

08



BY NIMISHA (JAIPUR, INDIA) &
ADELAINE (INDONESIA)

MOMENTS OF PROFOUND HISTORICAL CHANGE



When you look at history, there are a few moments where everything seems to change—how people think, how they learn, and how they share ideas. The Renaissance is one of those moments. So is the invention of the printing press.

HOW THE PRINTING PRESS FUELED TRANSFORMATION

The printing press did far more than make books. It enabled the rapid spread of ideas about religion, history, science, poetry, art, and everyday life. People could read, learn, and debate in ways that had never been possible before. Religious ideas spread beyond church authorities, contributing to movements like the Reformation.

Imagine living in a world where knowledge existed, but access to it was limited. Before the printing press, books were copied by hand, making them expensive, rare, and available mainly to scholars, religious institutions, and the wealthy. Then, in the 1440s, Johannes Gutenberg introduced the printing press, an invention that transformed human history.

Before the printing press was invented, books had to be copied by hand, which made them costly and difficult to obtain. As a result, only wealthy individuals, churches, and scholars usually had access to knowledge. The printing press made it possible to produce books and written materials quickly and in large numbers. Information became more available, literacy increased, and ideas could spread rapidly across societies.

Martin Luther's 95 Theses raced across the continent, sparking religious change and challenging established institutions. Scientific works by Copernicus and others challenged old dogmas, laying the groundwork for the Scientific Revolution. Radicals found voices. Writers and poets found larger audiences for their work.



The consequences were enormous and long-lasting. The print revolution changed education, politics, religion, and society itself. It gave reformers and radicals a platform to challenge established beliefs and institutions. Most importantly, it created a growing reading public that could access information more easily than ever before.

THE RENAISSANCE: A REVOLUTION IN THOUGHT

At the same time, Europe was experiencing another great transformation: the Renaissance. The Renaissance was not just about art and music. It was a change in the way people thought about the world and themselves. People became more curious, questioned old assumptions, and sought knowledge in science, literature, philosophy, and the arts. Classical texts inspired new ways of thinking, while writers, artists, and scholars explored human potential in unprecedented ways.



AI AS THE PRINTING PRESS OF THE DIGITAL AGE

Today, we may be witnessing a similar turning point. Artificial intelligence is becoming the printing press of the digital age.



Just as the Gutenberg press made information affordable and abundant, AI makes knowledge instantaneous and intelligent. Just as the printing press transformed the way information was shared, AI is transforming how information spreads across the globe in seconds. Social movements, political debates, cultural trends, scientific discoveries, and major world events can influence millions of people almost instantly.

Many experts compare the rise of artificial intelligence to these great historical moments. The Renaissance encouraged people to think in new ways and explore new possibilities. Artificial intelligence is changing how people learn, create, communicate, and solve problems. It is becoming an important part of education, healthcare, business, entertainment, and scientific research.

The comparison between AI and the printing press is particularly compelling. The printing press revolutionized society by making knowledge more accessible. AI is doing something similar in the digital age. It is not simply making information easier to produce; it is making information easier to access, organize, analyze, and understand.

DEMOCRATIZING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

Tasks that once required hours or even days can now be completed in minutes with the help of AI-powered tools. Artificial intelligence can translate languages, summarize complex information, identify patterns in massive datasets, and assist people in making informed decisions.



Students can receive personalized learning support. Researchers can process information more efficiently. Professionals can increase productivity and focus on higher-level tasks. In many ways, AI is helping democratize access to knowledge for people around the world.

BEYOND DISTRIBUTION: AI AS CREATOR OF KNOWLEDGE

However, AI is not merely repeating the role of the printing press—it is expanding upon it.

The printing press was primarily a tool for distributing existing information. Artificial intelligence can generate new content, analyze information, answer questions, and assist in the creation of knowledge itself. AI can write text, create images, help solve problems, and support innovation across numerous fields. This makes AI fundamentally different from many previous technologies. It is not only a medium for sharing knowledge; it is becoming part of the process of learning, creating, and discovering.



AI AS THE PRINTING PRESS OF THE DIGITAL AGE

Another key aspect of this Digital Renaissance is speed.

The printing press helped spread ideas quickly and contributed to major social, political, and cultural changes throughout Europe. Yet what took the printing press centuries to accomplish may take AI only years. New AI technologies are being adopted across industries at remarkable speed, transforming how businesses operate and how individuals interact with information.

Yet, like the printing press, AI brings challenges alongside opportunities.

The print revolution raised concerns about the spread of false information, controversial ideas, and challenges to authority. AI raises similar questions about misinformation, deepfakes, privacy, bias, intellectual property, and the reliability of digital content. As access to information grows, so does the responsibility to evaluate it critically.

Every major innovation brings both benefits and risks, and AI is no exception. Discussions surrounding ethics, regulation, employment, and responsible use reflect the profound impact this technology is already having on society. The choices we make today will help determine how AI shapes the future.



What makes this Digital Renaissance unique is not only the technology itself but also the opportunities it creates for humanity. Like the Renaissance, AI has the potential to empower new voices, accelerate scientific discovery, expand access to education, and transform culture. It can help people overcome barriers of language, geography, and expertise, creating possibilities that previous generations could scarcely imagine.

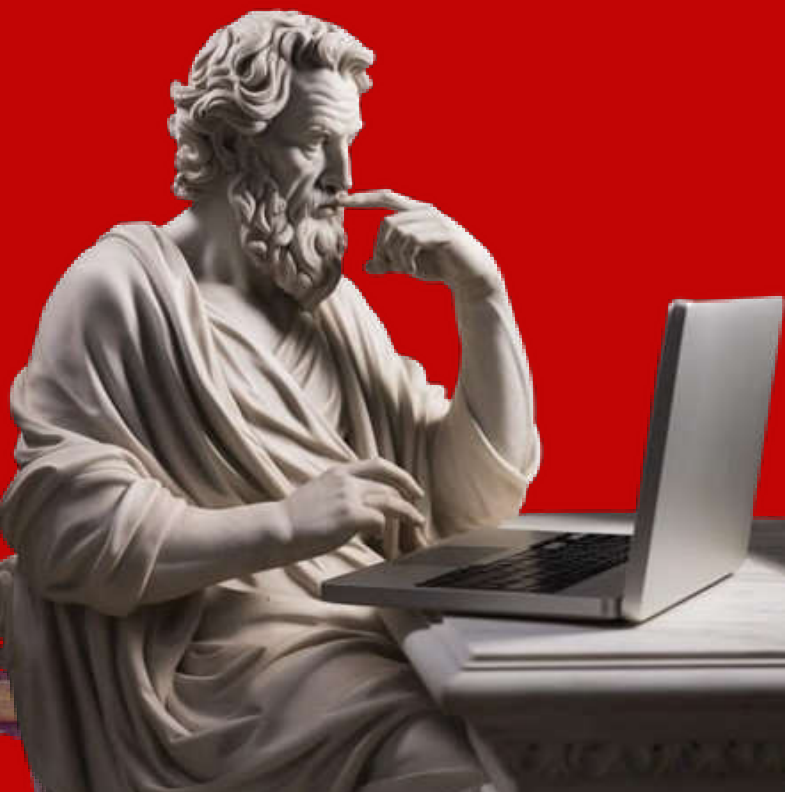
The printing press fueled the Renaissance, empowered new voices, advanced science, and transformed culture. AI has the potential to do the same for the twenty-first century.

HOW THE PRINTING PRESS SPREAD IDEAS

The future of AI will depend not only on what the technology can do, but on the choices we make. If guided by curiosity, creativity, ethics, and responsibility, AI could help humanity experience a new era of learning, discovery, and human progress.

That is why many people see artificial intelligence as the beginning of a new Digital Renaissance. Like the Renaissance and the printing press before it, AI is changing the way we create, share, and use knowledge. While we cannot predict every consequence, its influence is already visible in our daily lives and institutions. The Digital Renaissance has already begun.

The question is not whether it will change the world—it is how we choose to shape that change.





SOCIOLOGY & HUMAN RIGHTS: HOW DIFFERENT CULTURES AND GROUPS FUNCTION

09

Understanding how different cultures and social groups function allows us to challenge stereotypes, promote human rights, and build inclusive organizations and communities.

BY MARTA (POLAND)

Let us consider if we would be disrespected by other people, not because of who we are, but only because of our nationality or religion. People who judge you often have no knowledge about your whole existence, except descriptions based on your culture. Situations like this happen more often than we realize and have a significant impact on how people interact with one another. This is exactly why sociology seeks to understand how societies, cultures, and social groups shape human behavior and attitudes.

Sociology is a branch of the humanities that studies human behavior in families, school life, workplace environments, and broader society. Understanding how different cultures and social groups function allows us to challenge stereotypes and build more respectful relationships with others. In the end, sociology reminds us that every individual deserves to be treated with dignity, regardless of their cultural background or beliefs.

Understanding how different cultures and social groups function allows us to challenge stereotypes, promote human rights, and build inclusive organizations and communities.



STEREOTYPES, RACISM, AND CULTURAL BIAS



A common phenomenon—especially in primary schools, high schools, and workplaces—is discrimination and racism. As a result, international students or minority groups are often excluded from social groups. We can see this mechanism reflected in adult lives as well. One notable example is the workplace: studies indicate that more than 20% of Black women aged 25 to 34 have been sent home from work due to racist attitudes regarding their natural hair.

In everyday life, people mistakenly assume they have the right to harbor ethnocentrism, cultural bias, or anti-migrant sentiment. However, these attitudes do not represent everyone. Many people choose to respect and learn from different cultures instead. People from different nationalities often build strong friendships and work together successfully, proving that cultural differences do not have to divide us. By understanding how these positive relationships are formed, sociology helps us see that diversity can be a source of strength rather than conflict.



SOCIOLOGY IN MARKETING AND GLOBAL BUSINESS



Referring to earlier points related to discrimination in adulthood, sociology is pivotal in business and marketing. Marketing needs to understand how different cultures and groups work in order to connect with people from diverse backgrounds. Companies today operate within multicultural segments of society. Sociology helps businesses understand how different social groups think, communicate, and make decisions. Purchasing habits are influenced not only by price or product quality, but also by culture, traditions, religion, social class, and family values. For this reason, companies conduct sociological research before introducing new products or services to the market.

A marketing strategy that succeeds in one country may fail in another because cultural values and social norms differ. Colors, symbols, humor, or gestures can have completely different meanings across cultures. Companies that understand these differences build trust with customers and avoid misunderstandings

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Sociology also plays an important role inside organizations. Modern businesses increasingly employ people from different nationalities, religions, and cultural backgrounds. Diverse teams often generate more creative ideas because employees bring different experiences and perspectives. However, diversity can also lead to communication difficulties if cultural differences are ignored. Sociological knowledge helps managers create inclusive workplaces where employees feel respected, valued, and motivated.

Furthermore, businesses have a social responsibility to respect human rights and promote equality. Many successful international companies invest in diversity and inclusion programs because ethical treatment of employees and customers strengthens their reputation.



CONCLUSION: RESPECTING DIVERSITY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

To conclude, sociology helps us understand that human behavior is strongly influenced by the society and culture in which we live. It explains why stereotypes and prejudice exist while showing how education, communication, and mutual respect can reduce these problems. In today's globalized world, respecting human rights is not only the responsibility of governments but of every individual. By treating others with dignity, regardless of their nationality, religion, or cultural background, we contribute to a fairer and more peaceful society. Ultimately, sociology encourages us to appreciate diversity, challenge harmful stereotypes, and recognize that our differences should unite us rather than divide us.



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HOW ANCIENT PHILOSOPHIES INFLUENCE THE MODERN LEGAL SYSTEM

10

From Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to Cicero and Confucius, explore how two-thousand-year-old philosophical ideas continue to shape modern constitutional law and landmark court rulings.

BY GABRIELLE PARFETT (GUYANA)

On 24 September 2019, the United Kingdom Supreme Court gave one of the most important constitutional decisions of the twenty-first century. In *R (Miller) v Prime Minister*, the Court found that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue Parliament was unlawful because it frustrated parliamentary sovereignty and democratic accountability. While the judgment settled a modern constitutional controversy, the legal ideas that informed the decision were older than two millennia.



The theory of government being governed by law rather than being superior to the law finds its philosophical roots from Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman philosophy. The connection between philosophy and law was initiated during the time of Greek polis in the fifth and fourth century BC where instead of focusing on the aspect of politics, philosophy focused on the purpose and morality of law.

Law was accordingly understood not only as an instrument of state power but as a system to promote justice, rationality and the common good. These philosophical issues remain the foundation of modern constitutional law, criminal justice, and international human rights.

SOCRATES, PLATO AND THE PURPOSE OF LAW



Socrates was one of the first to contribute to legal philosophy. He wrote nothing himself, but his ideas, mainly recorded in the dialogues of Plato, have had an enduring effect on legal theory. After his conviction for impiety and corrupting the youth in 399 BCE, Socrates refused to escape execution. Plato's work portrays Socrates as stating that the people in any society have a moral duty to comply with the law due to the fact that defiance of the law is a threat to the stability of the state. The dilemma created by the decision of Plato is whether individuals should conform to the laws or act based on moral principles. Plato built on the work of his mentor through discussing the connection between justice and political power.



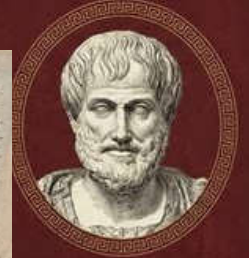
In *The Republic* he argued that justice could only be achieved when rulers ruled by wisdom and virtue rather than by personal ambition or material interest. His notion of philosopher-kings has never been implemented, but the broader claim that public leaders should be honest, competent, and devoted to the common good remains influential. These principles are reflected in modern judicial systems as requirements for judicial independence, impartiality, and freedom from political interference.

ARISTOTLE'S DISTRIBUTIVE & CORRECTIVE JUSTICE

One of the most enduring legacies in legal theory is the contribution of Aristotle. He coined the theories of distributive justice and corrective justice in his work "Nicomachean Ethics." The former pertains to the equal sharing of wealth and opportunity, while the latter involves remedying of legal injustices in order to achieve justice. The two theories remain extremely relevant even in today's legal framework. Governments strive for distributive justice through their taxation laws, while civil courts pursue corrective justice. Aristotle also came up with the doctrine of equity, where he asserts that the enforcement of the statutory rules strictly may not necessarily lead to a just outcome because legislators cannot predict every situation. In this case, the judges must construe the laws based on their spirit and not by the letter of the law when the application of the literal meaning will result in an injustice.



THE NICOMACHEAN
ETHICS
ARISTOTLE



THE LYCEUM PRESS

ROMAN LAW, CODIFICATION, AND DUE PROCESS



Although Greek philosophers were responsible for formulating the theories of justice, it was the Roman jurists who turned these philosophies into an actual legal code. With the adoption of the Twelve Tables about 450 B.C., there came one of the early examples of making the laws accessible to the public eye.



Roman law was at its most advanced during the reign of Justinian I, who compiled the Code of Civil Law from AD 529 to 534. This systematic approach involved arranging regulations related to contracts, property, inheritance, commerce, and civil processes. The codex has influenced all of continental Europe and still forms the basis for civil law in nations such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, and Brazil.

Roman juridical thought also made it a requirement for disputes to be solved based on evidence, logical arguments, and judicial decisions instead of politics and revenge. Such an approach gave rise to the modern concept of due process and is still reflected in such ideas as the presumption of innocence, legal counsel, and proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.



EASTERN TRADITIONS & NATURAL LAW

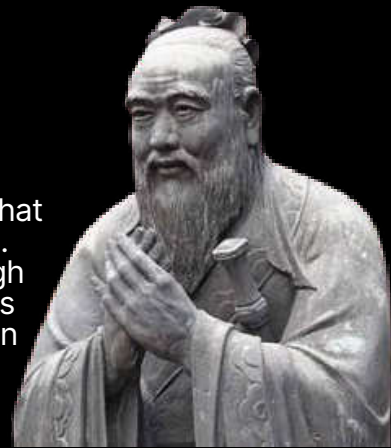
An Existential Reading of the CONFUCIAN ANALECTS



Andrew Zhonghua Yu



Outside the Greco-Roman tradition, Confucius formulated a philosophical ethics which had a considerable impact on governance across East Asia. Contrary to the Legalists, who favored the use of law and harsh penalties, Confucius held that good government required good men, education, and ethics. As stated in The Analects, rulers rule more effectively through virtue and not force. While the modern legal system depends on legislation, the influence of Confucianism on legal tradition in China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore is still evident through mediation, conciliation, and social harmony.



Cicero, a Roman political theorist, refined the theory of natural law by suggesting that principles of justice operate independently of political power. Cicero holds that laws which are not rational or moral do not have any legal validity (Cicero, 1998). He has greatly impacted many future political philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau whose ideas gave rise to modern constitutionalism and human rights.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT & MODERN PRECEDENTS

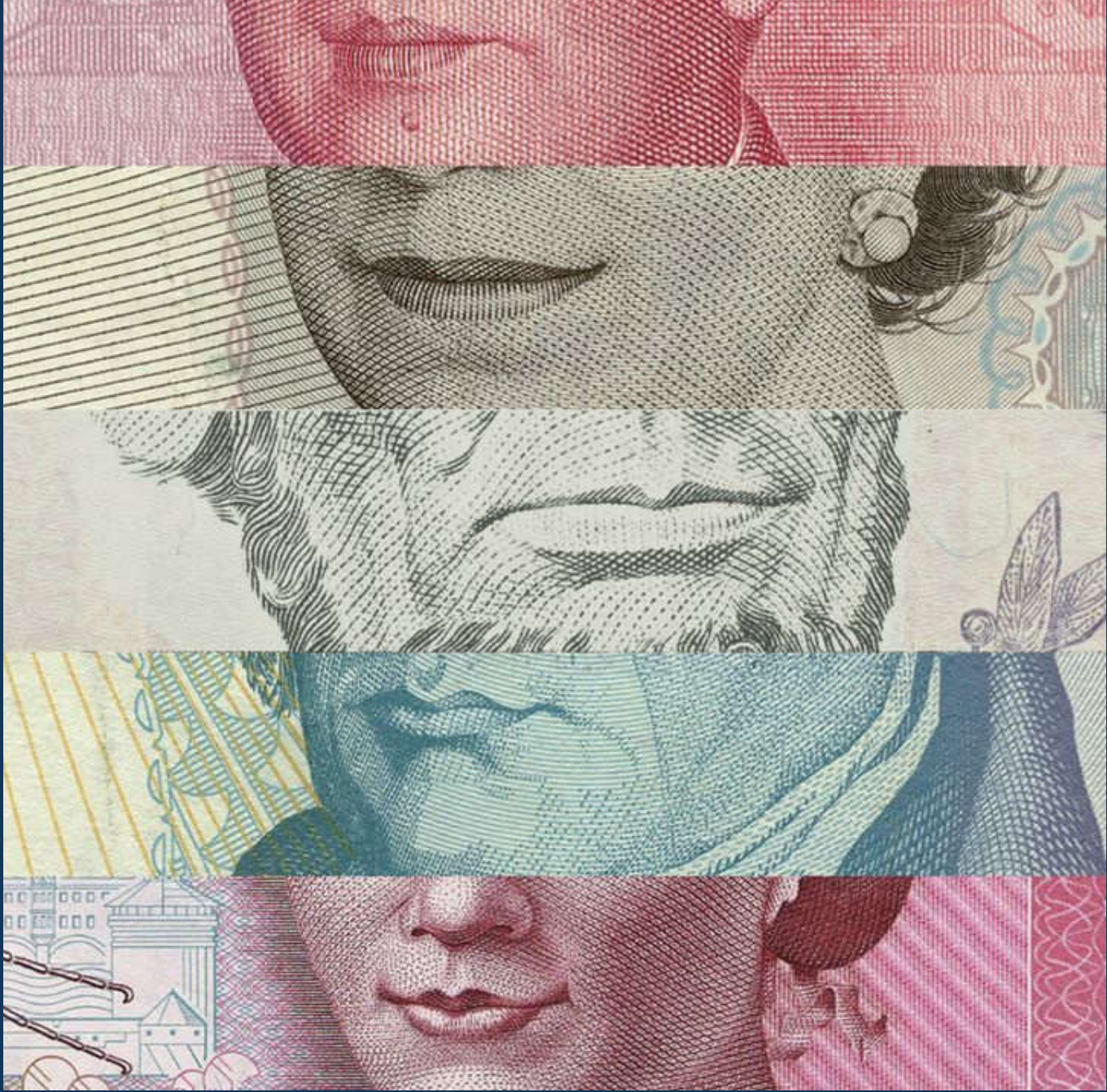
In the period of the Enlightenment, such ideas were institutionalized in constitutions. In accordance with John Locke's ideas, the legitimacy of the state depends upon the consent of those who are being governed, and the key task of the government is to protect life, liberty, and property (Locke, 1689/1988). Montesquieu was the one who put forward the concept of the separation of powers and stressed the importance of independence of different institutions (legislative, executive, and judicial powers). These principles served as the foundation of the US Constitution (1787) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789).



The relevancy of ancient philosophy in today's world is illustrated through decisions handed down by courts. In the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation was unconstitutional because it denied equality, based on the philosophy of distributive justice by Aristotle and the philosophy of natural rights by Cicero. The decision made by the United Kingdom Supreme Court in *R (Miller) v Prime Minister* (2019) is also an indication that executive power is limited by constitutional and legal principles. It is evident that there is a strong influence of classical theories of law on constitutional decision making in modern times.

Contemporary jurisprudence is still founded on philosophy from antiquity despite contemporary times. Whereas modern nation-states have replaced ancient polis and modern courts of law have come to replace ancient courts of law, the objectives of law are still the same. These include ensuring justice, protecting the rights of individuals, maintaining order in the community, and preventing any form of tyranny. No matter whether it is legal duty through the philosophy of Socrates, equity through the philosophy of Aristotle, natural law through the philosophy of Cicero, or good governance through the philosophy of Confucius, philosophy still influences jurisprudence.





11

WEALTH DISTRIBUTION AND 'TRICKLE-DOWN' ECONOMICS: HOW HAVE THEY IMPACTED TODAY'S SOCIETY?

Imagine a world where the richest one percent have more wealth than the rest of the planet combined. Has wealth really 'trickled down'?

BY GABRIELLE PARFETT (UK)

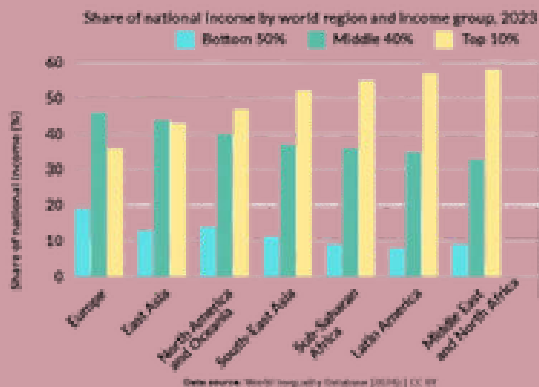


Imagine a world where the richest one percent have more wealth than the rest of the planet combined, for many this is no hypothetical scenario, but a reality that defines contemporary society. The distribution of wealth has become one of the defining economic issues of 21st-century life, from house prices that keep rising and wages that are flatlining to the growing wealth of billionaires. At the heart of the debate is the controversial theory of trickle-down economics, the idea that cutting taxes and regulations for the rich and corporations will benefit everyone in the long run. Backers say the policy has spurred investment and economic growth, while critics say it has exacerbated inequality and failed to improve the lives of working people. The question persists decades after its prevalence: has wealth really "trickled down".

WEALTH DISTRIBUTION & GLOBAL REALITIES



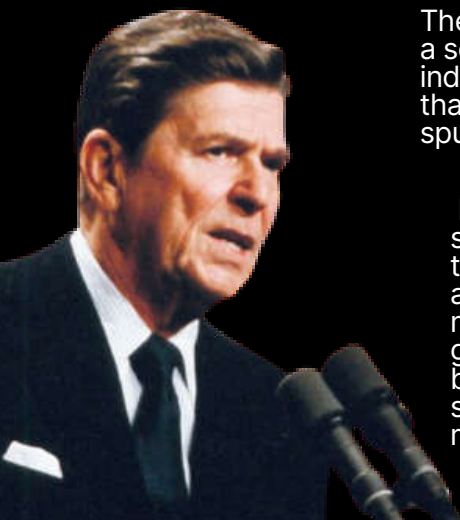
Wealth distribution is the distribution of wealth among the entire population of a nation. In a perfect economy, economic growth provides opportunities to everybody, from the poor to the rich. But in many countries, the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small percentage of the population.



According to the World Inequality Database (2024), the top 10% of the wealthiest people in the world hold about 76% of the total wealth in the world, whereas the bottom 50% of the population holds just 2%. These statistics have led to debates about equality,



THE ORIGINS OF TRICKLE-DOWN ECONOMICS



The governments of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher followed a set of policies whereby the corporate sector and high income individuals had low taxation and were less regulated. It was believed that allowing businessmen and investors to retain their profits would spur growth and employment

Increased investments, it was claimed, would spur growth which would eventually improve the situation for workers. For some time, it appeared that the policies were working as many economies enjoyed phases of rapid growth, increasing productivity and higher business investments. New sectors emerged, stock markets flourished and innovations multiplied.

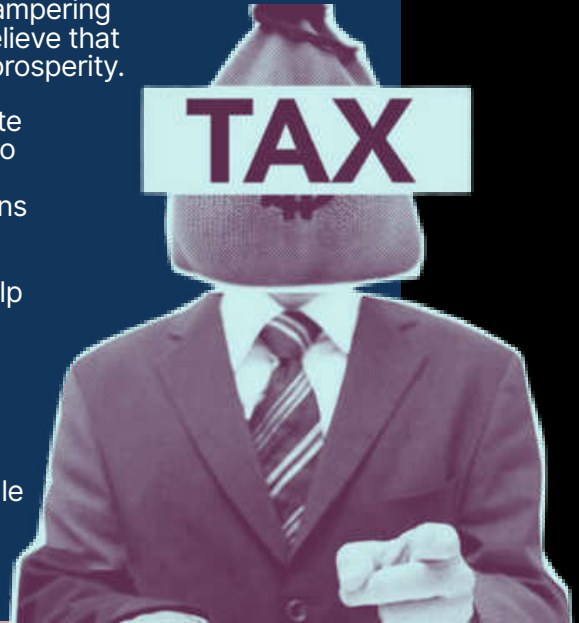


THE ARGUMENTS: INCENTIVES VS. UNEQUAL GAINS

Advocates of the reduction of tax rate claim that low taxes will incentivize entrepreneurs to assume risk, create firms and innovate in order to improve the quality of life. Moreover, the advocates argue that high taxation deters investment and makes economies less competitive, thus possibly hampering development in the country. However, the opponents of tax cuts believe that economic development does not always translate into widespread prosperity.



IMF and OECD studies indicate that tax reductions may lead to increased investments under certain conditions, yet the gains from tax cuts are uneven. Increased profits and stock value of large corporations help the owners and managers much more than the common people do. In the past few decades, productivity levels have seen an unprecedented boost in many developed countries, yet salaries of middle and lower class families have not kept pace with that.



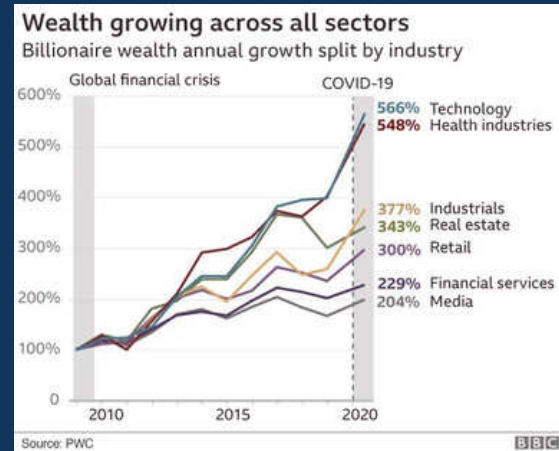
MOBILITY, AUTOMATION, AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

Students from poor families may encounter financial problems that hinder their academic and professional growth. It is, therefore, a vicious circle of economic status, whereby one inherits economic privileges regardless of their performance. Those who support the concept of trickle-down economics would say that the findings cannot be attributed to taxes. They identify technological change, automation, globalization and international competition as the key drivers of wages and employment. Instead, manufacturing jobs have shifted increasingly to countries with lower labor costs, with many routine jobs replaced by automation. Seen in this light, inequality is not a failing of a particular economic theory, but rather a symptom of larger changes in the global economy.



THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL CRISES & DIFFERING MODELS

This discussion has gained even more relevance in light of the current global COVID-19 outbreak. As millions of people found themselves unemployed and businesses shut down, while some big companies saw unprecedented earnings growths and some billionaires got richer owing to rising stock markets and booming digital economy, discussions of implementing wealth taxes and investments into public goods became relevant once again. The states around the world were forced to introduce various economic stimulus packages, financial compensation schemes, and increased social assistance to ease the negative economic effects and thus demonstrated their increasing role in times of crisis. Various states use different strategies to counteract inequality of wealth. Nordic states such as Sweden and Denmark implement a combination of market-oriented economy, high taxes and good public services that results in less inequality of income in comparison with many other developed countries. Nations that depend more on market forces tend to have larger inequalities in wealth.



he arguments regarding which model is better at striking a balance between efficiency and equity in terms of wealth continue among economists because there is no universal solution. Indeed, the issue of inequality of wealth and trickle-down economics is much more complex than mere statistics and taxation. Rather, it touches upon the type of society the government wants to establish. Economic growth is needed in order to create jobs, encourage innovations and increase prosperity; however, growth does not automatically mean that prosperity will be evenly distributed.

POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Taking into account the increase in the cost of living, new demographics, and rapid technological revolution, the issue of the wealth distribution will remain central to the policy-making processes around the globe. Regardless of whether governments stick to the trickle-down economic model or opt for more inclusive and interventionist policies, there is one undeniable truth about the modern economy – its success cannot be assessed solely in terms of its productivity or economic growth anymore. The distribution of wealth among the citizens becomes as important as the rate of economic growth since the improvement in the standard of life for all social strata depends on the efficiency of this process. Income inequality, lack of access to decent education, healthcare, and jobs show that now there is an urgent need for policies promoting the equity of social and economic systems. Thus, modern policymakers should work to achieve the goal of eliminating the wealth gap through the means of progressive taxation, provision of public services, creation of job positions, and promotion of the equal access to opportunities regardless of one's socioeconomic status.



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