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ARE WE ROBOTS?

Patterns of Thought and Indoctrination
in the Light of AI, Literature, Music
and Scripture



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ChatGPT may be new but humans have always been able to write like robots.

Jenny Maria Nilsson¹

1. FACING THE CHALLENGE OF AI

1.1. The AI Revolution

AI has landed.² Like the black monolith seen at the beginning of Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), it emits an intellectual radiation that changes its environment irrevocably. Through "generative artificial intelligence", we now have computers that not only "do what they are programmed to do" – as we once said – but "are able to think": by simulating human thought they generate solutions to demanding intellectual tasks that are innovative in the sense of markedly and proficiently transcending mere replication. There are teething troubles but, basically, a machine has now invaded the sacrosanct space of human intelligence and presumed creativity.³ Even at this early stage it can do roughly what we can do, at the drop of a hat and sometimes better.⁴ The most accurate conceptualization of this is subject to debate, as are the exact mechanisms of AI deep learning.⁵ But the practical and observable fact of effective and sometimes superior deployment of human thought is undeniable.

This is a Copernican revolution. Its practical consequences include the facilitation of many intellectual tasks such as translation and the production and summarization of texts; a chance of rapid progress in certain fields of knowledge such as medicine; the risk of perpetuating, through massive multiplication, iniquitous structures and values, including a Western and Anglophone bias; the dominance of commercial interests impervious, among other things, to established copyright; the widening of humanity's carbon footprint through a huge demand for electricity; the risk of unemployment among white-collar workers replaced in part by AI; the risk of incompetence in students graduating after mostly tapping into AI rather than developing their own intellectual skills; and the risk of inappropriate uses such as feeding sensitive material into publically available AI models.⁶

On a more theoretical and philosophical level, the advent of AI

calls for a thoroughgoing self-reflection, intellectual, attitudinal and ultimately existential: What do we *do* as scholars, what does it mean to *think*, if our thought processes can be simulated in a way which is as innovative in accomplishment as it is mechanical in foundation? And, in the face of such simulation, who *are* we? What does it mean to be a scholar – and to be a *homo sapiens*: a human being laying claim to the unique distinction of being “wise”?⁷

An “AI model is a program that has been trained on a set of data to recognize certain patterns”.⁸ The algorithms of those training schemes may be closely guarded trade secrets, inaccessibly encased in black mineral – but we do have access to their original source, our culture and our minds. And AI’s prodigious quantitative coverage of our culture may vastly exceed human capabilities – but what we are interested in, pervasive and collectively embraced *patterns of thought*, should be deducible from a smaller but reasonably wide sample of cultural phenomena. Thus I shall examine music, various types of fiction and Scripture, as well as scholarship to unveil thought patterns that are deep-seated and wide-ranging enough to transcend the boundaries of all these areas. There is a good chance that they operate in many other areas as well but my ambit throughout is confined to Western culture; beyond that, only specialists in other cultures can assess the possible transcultural application of my findings.⁹

The first two thirds of this essay will be concerned with the *intellectual* aspect of a new self-understanding post-AI. I present the patterns of “integration” and “dispersion” (section 1.2), my first set of examples being features of the symphonic tradition and of literature, respectively (2.1–2). This leads to a consideration of the individual “case” and the generalized “type” as dispersive or integrative models of reality in literature, and as foci, in various combinations, of the narratives of fiction, historiography and Scripture (2.3–4).

In a second set of examples, I describe patterns of integration in the study of literature: “abstraction”, “induction”, and “deduction”, as well as their ingrained tendency to “domesticate” artworks. More briefly, I present additional patterns designated as “spatial” or “temporal” (3.1–3). Here and in the next section, I draw on poetry for inspiring and corroborative insights.

The pervasive potency of set thought patterns in scholarship has

consequences for an *attitudinal* and *existential* assessment of our post-AI condition. They include a deglorification of "creativity" and a celebration of the more mundane but essential scholarly qualities of "calibration", "combination" and "judgment" (4.1-2). Further, the culturally pattern-driven nature of our thought is seen to produce indoctrination and servitude, but, counterbalancing that predicament, "co-operation" is offered as a viable *modus vivendi* for the future (5.1-2).

1.2. The Pervasive Impulses of Integration and Dispersion

The idea of an underlying collective matrix of thought is highlighted by the prowess of AI but is not new in itself. "Language speaks", says Heidegger, not we.¹⁰ And cultural conditioning is described negatively by Marxism as "false consciousness" and by existentialism as "bad faith".¹¹ In a more neutral vein, scholars have emphasized governing worldviews such as "The Great Chain of Being" and "The Elizabethan World Picture", formal narrative structures such as "the hero's journey", as well as "the authority of interpretive communities".¹² In addition, there are even more abstract structures such as Roman Jakobson's extended application of "metaphor" and "metonymy", later developed in Structuralism; the "paradigms" of Thomas S. Kuhn and Carlo Ginzburg; and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's metaphors guiding human thought.¹³ While related, and instructively comparable, to all these conceptual schemes, my examination of thought patterns in Western culture is primarily positioned in the latter group. And let us not forget that in the last resort all such efforts hail from the attention paid by Immanuel Kant to the inherent structural conditions which, frequently unnoticed, permeate cognition and judgment.

In keeping with that, a fundamental starting point is that we are creatures of perception and thought enveloped in what we call reality. Even in its simplest form, this situation is complex and paradoxical. For example, a glance across a lecture hall takes in so many thousands of details that, as such, they would form a daunting disarray for the human brain. So instead of actually taking them in, the brain bypasses almost everything to elicit, at different levels of abstraction, more manageable condensed patterns such as "a man with close-cropped blond hair" or "a hall with an audience of fifty". When blind

people physiologically acquire sight they are unable to see properly until they master this capacity for rough-and-ready but effective condensation. They must become what we are: blind enough to be able to see.

This tension between generalization and particularity characterizes the brain's struggle, perceptual and conceptual, with the teeming multiplicity of the world at all levels. We constantly occupy a position between an *integrative impulse* seeking regularity and clearly structured comprehensibility and a *dispersive impulse* focussing on observable particulars and bent on correcting the simplifications of the integrative impulse. I shall use these terms to illustrate what may broadly be described as "synthesis" – "joining together" according to the ancient Greek "σύνθεσις" – and "analysis" in the Greek sense of "ἀνάλυσις", "dissolution into component parts".

In an instructively stark form the results of the two impulses appear in presentations of vocabulary. Words can either be listed in dispersion many thousandfold by a standard alphabetical dictionary – or brought together thematically, as they are in Roget's *Thesaurus* (1923). In that classic work the vocabulary of English has been organized into six main categories – "abstract relations", "space", "matter", "intellectual faculties", "voluntary powers", and "sentient & moral powers" – with exactly two dozen subcategories, and further down to exactly one thousand groups of approximate synonyms.¹⁴ Here, the integrative impulse aims at nothing less than a comprehensive categorization of the entire Western understanding of reality.

In contrast to this clear division, the impulses of integration and dispersion usually work together. A particularly clear example in a set of variations on a musical theme such as J.S. Bach's thirty *Goldberg Variations* (1741). On the one hand, the common theme provides integration, a centre of gravity; on the other hand, the radical changes brought by the far-flung satellites of the variations create an impression of dispersion. Mutatis mutandis, this will be true of all the large-scale examples discussed below: even at the extreme points of the various scales and tensions which, for clarity, will often be described and named, the real-life material represents a combination of integration and dispersion – and frequently one which is fruitful and productive. At the same time, the great variations in the proportion

between the two impulses are of considerable practical and theoretical interest.

2. PATTERNS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL ARTEFACTS

2.1. *Integration and Dispersion in the Symphonic Tradition*

As my first extended example, I shall look at manifestations of the two basic impulses in music, referring to *Figure 1* throughout this section and the next one. The history of opera could provide an example, with Richard Wagner representing integrative drives, one type in the intertwining of motifs in *The Rhinegold* (*Das Rheingold*, 1854, premiered 1869) and another one in the "unending melody" (*unendliche Melodie*) of *Tristan and Isolde* (*Tristan und Isolde*, 1859).¹⁵ This could be contrasted with the dispersion of the earlier so-called "number operas" or the sprawling epic structures of contemporary Russian operas such as Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* (1842). However, those waters are muddied by dialogue and story lines interacting with the music. For instance, in relation to "unending melody", Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (*Le nozze di Figaro*, 1786) is a dispersive number opera, but on the other hand it is well integrated by a tightly knit story. To avoid that kind of interference, I shall concentrate on classical instrumental music, which exhibits pure form without material content (with the exception of word-painting, e.g. in madrigalisms or programme music). It can thus clearly exhibit the formal workings of the two impulses as well as the culturally productive tension between them. My examples, necessarily selective, are drawn from the historical development of the symphonic form in interaction with other forms of instrumental music.

An integrative impulse had long been displayed in one-movement forms such as the fugue, but it was through the pioneering work of Joseph Haydn, starting in the 1760s, that it came to inform the symphony and the string quartet as a whole: they were to be more than just a series of movements in the style of the relaxed Italian *sinfonia*, the "suite" or the "divertimento": a "sym-phony" should be something unified, "sounding together". At least one movement,

Figure 1

INTEGRATION ←←←←←←←→→→→→→→ **DISPERSION**

NB: Derogatory descriptions are in quotation marks.

General

synthesis	analysis (breakdown into parts)
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Language

thematic dictionary (Roget's <i>Thesaurus</i>)	alphabetical dictionary
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Music

tonality	polytonality, free tonality, atonality
(real) music	"just noise"
fugue, sonata form	rhapsody
symphony	suite, divertimento
Sibelius, symphony no. 7	Mahler no. 3, no. 8, Shostakovich no. 4
<i>unendliche Melodie</i> (Wagner)	number opera

Literature

metrical verse such as the sonnet	free verse, <i>parole in libertà</i> (Marinetti)
"straitjacket"	"amorphous"
Bertel Gripenberg	Edith Södergran
late Björling, Celan	Whitman, Neruda

unity of time, space and action	epic drama
Racine	Shakespeare, Brecht

Classicism	Realism
parable, fable, aphorism	the novel (esp. autobiographical, documentary)
character types	<i>particular people, particular circumstances</i> (Watt)
Aesop, Theophrastus, La Fontaine	Daniel Defoe
Mme de Lafayette, Jane Austen	Samuel Richardson
Henry James	Theodore Dreiser, Thomas Wolfe
Gustave Flaubert	Émile Zola
<i>leavers-outers</i> (Thomas Wolfe)	<i>putters-inners</i> (Thomas Wolfe)
Willy Kyrklund	Karl-Ove Knausgård
thematic refinement	abundant descriptive realism
focus on what is meaningful	<i>the reality effect</i> (Barthes)
"anaemic abstraction"	"pointless catalogue"
narratorial summary	stream of consciousness

usually the first, is written in a sonata form with two themes. They are presented in an "exposition", played out against each other and worked out in a "development" before finally being repeated in the "recapitulation", perhaps with some variations.¹⁶ Here the integrative organic form is clearly to be seen and heard, and other symphonic movements may also display a distinct form such as a rondo or a set of variations.

In an entire symphony, movements can similarly interlock through thematic repetition and logically structured key relationships. But in general, the work as a whole is a – frequently disregarded – problem for the idea of the "sym-phonie". This is already evident in Beethoven's groundbreaking *Eroica* of 1805 (private premiere in 1804). The first movement offers a superbly structured, organically integrated sonata form, but in the second movement the display of exuberant energy is cut short by a ponderous funeral march that is not organically related to the *joie de vivre* that dominates the other movements.

Even in this seminal work, then, there is a tension between the integrative and the dispersive impulses, which can also take off in their respective directions.

The dispersive tendency can be seen, firstly, as a single surprising departure from expected regularity. Thus, interrupting the slow movement of Beethoven's G-major string quartet, op. 18 no. 2 (1801), there is a sharply delineated very fast excursion. The move is repeated to even more startling effect in Franz Schubert's A-major piano sonata no. 20, D. 959 (1828, published 1839), where an interpolation stands out from the quiet *Andantino* through fast tempo, thunderous *fortissimo* and *sforzando* dynamics as well as, for its time, extreme chromaticism.

Secondly, dispersion can be applied to an entire work. This is true of Beethoven's five-movement, more loosely structured *Pastoral Symphony* (1808) and of his ninth symphony (1824), which branches out into a verbal text with a choir and four soloists. The latter approach is continued in Felix Mendelssohn's "symphonic cantata" *Lobgesang* (1840; later designated by others as "symphony no. 2"), Hector Berlioz's dramatic symphony *Romeo and Juliet* (1839/1847/1857) and most radically in Gustav Mahler's gigantic and, as we say, thousand-headed eighth symphony (*Sinfonie der Tausend*, 1910). Mahler's

third symphony, the longest in the history of music, is another extreme point in this development, with its five movements and almost two hours of march music, folk music, new instruments, soloists, choirs of adults, a choir of children, as well as texts that contrast profound Nietzschean meditation with innocent folk poetry. A further variety of dispersion is found in the (seemingly) extraneous outer movements of Mahler's seventh symphony (1905) – an approach taken even farther in Shostakovich's fourth symphony (completed in 1936, premiered in 1961), which juxtaposes breathtakingly heterogeneous parts in a mosaic teetering on the brink of rhapsody.

The opposite, integrative tendency was also advanced by Beethoven. In his piano sonata no. 13, opus 27 no. 1 (1802), he abolished pauses between the movements, clearly delineated though they are, and repeated part of the slow movement within the finale. In his symphonies he established links between the movements through recurring rhythmic formulas, as when the initial "fate theme" is later quoted as a shy flute melody in his fifth symphony, or dance rhythms pulsate throughout the seventh. In his fourteenth string quartet in C sharp minor, op. 131 (1826), he went further, again abolishing pauses and crafting the work from the same melodic material throughout. This integrative procedure is technically similar to that of a set of variations, but it makes a different impression because, rather than a single theme to be elaborated, the starting point is a structure of separate movements to be melded together.

Later in the 19th century, we find the simple integrative gesture of abolishing pauses in Mendelssohn's E-minor violin concerto (1845) and in the second version of Robert Schumann's fourth symphony (1851) – a move that Carl Nielsen was to repeat in his fourth symphony (1916). However, the great organic achievement was that of Franz Liszt. His half-hour-long, single-movement piano sonata in B minor (published 1854, premiered 1857) consistently interweaves a small number of themes throughout the work.

Towards the end of the century, Johannes Brahms repeated Beethoven's C sharp minor achievement in a clarinet quintet (1891) in which a theme is varied throughout the movements, and in the twentieth century Liszt's sonata found worthy successors in Arnold Schönberg's string quartet no. 1, op. 7 (1905), and Béla Bartók's third

string quartet (1929). In the symphonic genre, Carl Nielsen wrote his fifth symphony (1922) in only two movements, but above all it was Jean Sibelius who brought the organic development to its conclusion. In the middle movement of his third symphony (1907) he re-enacted what Mozart had done in his "Prague Symphony" (1787) by blending a slow and a scherzo-like movement – an approach that was repeated in a more complex form in the second version of his fifth symphony (1919). At that point Sibelius was primed for his fully integrated seventh symphony (1924). Going beyond the works mentioned above, it does not even hint at boundaries between movements during a playing time of about 23 minutes. The entire symphonic material is woven together into an ingenious whole whose principles of construction are as intuitively convincing as they are difficult to describe.

One-movement symphonies were later to be written by composers such as Allan Pettersson, Nikolai Myaskovsky and Bernd Alois Zimmermann. But in the tradition of the classical repertoire, Sibelius's seventh symphony marked the culmination of the integrative impulse – and, as it turned out, an insuperable blockage for Sibelius's own symphonic output.

Serendipitously, Jean Sibelius and Gustav Mahler, the two giants of the symphonic form pulling in different directions, met in Helsinki in 1907. In conversation Sibelius stressed that in "the essence of the symphony" he "admired its rigour and style and the profound logic that created an inner connection between all motifs".¹⁷ To this Mahler retorted: "No, the symphony must be like the world. It must encompass everything."¹⁸

It is hard to imagine a more beautiful or a more paradigmatic description of the impulses that I call "integrative" and "dispersive". So, is the tension between them a question of art versus world, of formal design versus the scattered diversity of reality? Yes, to some extent. This becomes clear when we now turn to literature.

2.2. Integration and Dispersion in Literature

In *Figure 1*, I give a number of examples of integrative and dispersive extremes in literature (poetry, drama, and narrative, respectively), using as a point of orientation Thomas Wolfe's clever division of authors into "leavers-outers" and "putters-inners".¹⁹ Akin to the

tension between Sibelius's "profound logic" and Mahler's desire to "encompass everything", it may serve as a catch phrase for such phenomena as metrical verse versus free verse (particularly Marinetti's discrete "words in freedom", *parole in libertà*); the drama of French Classicism versus that of Shakespeare and Brecht; or stylized fables versus sprawling novels.²⁰

These tendencies can easily end up in a goal conflict. On the one hand, literature is expected to depict reality in a recognizable way – and reality is often amorphous and less than meaningful. On the other hand, literature is expected to endow reality with form and meaning. That tension has often given rise to reciprocal aspersions exemplified in *Figure 1* as "straitjacket" versus "amorphous" or "anaemic abstraction" versus "pointless catalogue". This is for instance the opinion of the Swedish critic Olof Lagercrantz:

we [...] try to fit what we see [of life] into a meaningful pattern. But more often than not, we experience the world as chaotic and cannot make sense of the terrible things that happen.

Bad art is like life: the author turns into a pornographer who is unable or unwilling to put what he depicts into context.²¹

Virginia Woolf took a similar forceful stance in her essay "The Narrow Bridge of Art" (1927): "Tumult is vile; confusion is hateful; *everything* in a work of art should be mastered and ordered".²² In literary theory, this emphasis is echoed by the Norwegian scholar Stein Haugom Olsen: "[i]f it turns out that there are parts of the text which have no artistic function, this is a fact which counts negatively in a value-judgement of the work".²³

This celebration of integration in literature – rooted in Classicism and New Criticism – is thus analogous to Sibelius's emphasis on the "profound logic" of the symphonic form. However, Mahler's aspiration to "encompass everything" is also found in literary poetics in the guise of the mimetic ideal of depicting reality. For instance, eight years before the categorical statement quoted above, Virginia Woolf voiced this more inclusive attitude in her manifesto "Modern Fiction" (1919): "life is a luminous halo" and it is the novelist's task "to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display".²⁴

Theoretical support for that position is provided by Roland Barthes's idea of "the reality effect" (*l'effet de réel*). Barthes first formulates a stance along the lines of Lagercrantz, the later Woolf and Olsen: those elements of a work "which cannot be justified even by some ever so indirect function are scandalous (from the point of view of structure)".²⁵ But he contrasts that standpoint with another impulse, quoting from Gustave Flaubert's story "A Simple Heart" ("Un Cœur Simple", in *Trois Contes*, 1877) this description of a living room: "an old piano supported, under a barometer, a pyramidal pile of boxes and cartons".²⁶ The piano, for Barthes, is "an indication of the bourgeois standing of its owner", just as the boxes can be seen as "a sign of disorder and an apparent loss of tradition".²⁷ But the barometer cannot, according to him, be incorporated in any corresponding structure of meaning. He finds such "'useless' details" disturbing but, in most narratives, inevitable, finally settling on this more positive assessment: "there emerges a *reality effect*, the basis of that unacknowledged verisimilitude which forms the aesthetics of all current works of modernity".²⁸ The wording is convoluted, but the basic point about "the reality effect" hits the mark: details that are dispersed, rather than integrated in a structure of meaning, allow readers to enjoy the fictional world sensuously as a plausible simulacrum of multiform reality rather than a rarefied artistic construct.

Of all the literary genres, the novel in particular is devoted to such detailed realism. Characteristically, it is one of the features which Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), highlighted as constitutive of this new form of literature at the beginning of the eighteenth century.²⁹ Generous attention to detail can indeed be noted in the external physical world of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722), as well as the internal mental world of the agitated epistolarians of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748). In addition, I find it illuminating to compare the scattershot approach of the latter two with Henry James's integrative, carefully organized rendering of an equally turbulent mental state, that of Isabel Archer in the forty-second chapter of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). As an example of the opposition "narratorial summary" / "stream of consciousness" (Figure 1), the chapter can also be paradigmatically contrasted with Molly Bloom's monologue in the final chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).

2.3. The Case and the Type as Models of Reality in Literature

In the integrative and dispersive literary practices and the corresponding theoretical debates illustrated above, there is an underlying question: what *is* reality, what is the essential aspect of reality? There are basically two answers.

One is the *empirical case model* which presents individual cases, precisely located in time and space, as the essence of reality. They are to be explored through observations of phenomena available to sensory perception but equally through judgments derived from observations, e.g. concerning states of mind ("on this occasion his intentions were clearly good"). Here, the real-life *dispersion* of elements is respected: an integrative thought process can move from individual cases or indications to generalizations but particulars are given pride of place. Consequently, they may be portrayed abundantly in literature and – especially in the genre of the novel – celebrated for their sensuous or psychological contributions to "the reality effect".

In literature, the second option, the *conceptual type model*, is primarily focussed on basic human types but also on typical situations. Concomitantly – and particularly in Classicism – individual features are eliminated in favour of the *integrative* power of the type, taken to be the essential pristine matrix of its incidental and, as such, less significant manifestations.

Both models have a long lineage. In his famous comments on "history" and "poetry" (the latter represented above all by Greek tragedy), Aristotle notes the ontological difference that poets depict "the kinds of things that might happen" while historians depict "what has happened". On the other hand, he also describes the two modes – in my terms – as type and case models, respectively: "For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts."³⁰

For Aristotle, the philosopher, typifying insights into "*kinds* of things" (my italics) and supposedly "universal" truths were thus more valuable, but in later centuries the individual cases of "particular facts" have also come into their own. An illuminating clash between the two models of reality can be found in the seventeenth-century

French debate concerning Pierre Corneille's play *Le Cid* (1636). It features a woman who marries her father's killer and one camp, in my terms, cultivated the empirical case model, accepting Corneille's rendering of her marriage because it was a matter of historical record. Another camp, conversely, celebrated the conceptual type model, arguing that the play was an artistic failure because such behaviour is not natural or conceivable. Georges de Scudéry pointed out that although the event was *vrai* – "true" because it had once occurred – it was short on literary interest because it was not *vraisemblable*.³¹ This word literally means "probable" but in French aesthetics it is best explicated as "representative": an illuminating manifestation of a human type, such as the grief-stricken woman who has nothing but loathing for her father's killer.

The latter stance is by no means confined to French Classicism. It is instructive, for instance, to note a continued *vraisemblable*- and type-orientation in Hans Fallada's German novel *Alone in Berlin* (*Jeder stirbt für sich allein*, 1947). In the historically documented case, an elderly married couple had been spurred to pacifist resistance to the Nazi regime during World War II by the death of the wife's brother in the war – but in the novel it is their only son who has been killed. In that way, from the point of view of general human psychology, Fallada introduces a more persuasively representative incentive for their perilous activism.³²

Neither orientation rules the roost in any era. But by and large the type model tended to dominate until the eighteenth century, when the empirical case model began to gain ground. Concomitantly, our modern concept of "fiction" was established. The distinction between "fact" and "fiction" is by no means ontologically given, as one might think; instead it presupposes the empirical case model and its exaltation of observable particulars. In that context it becomes pivotally important to distinguish between, on the one hand, ascertainable facts – what has actually happened – and, on the other hand, what has not happened and is candidly presented as fiction.

Until the case model became firmly established, our modern concept of fiction was hardly applied as such. Historically in our culture as well as interculturally, the distinction between the real and the imaginary must in that instance be established in other ways. Exactly

how, is the subject of varying suggestions.³³ Broadly speaking, however, the distinction between fact and fiction is blurred within the type model: since individual manifestations of the type are considered to be second-order phenomena anyway, their degree of empirical foundation is not a significant concern.

In the eighteenth century, the contrast between the models is particularly prominent in English literature. On the one hand, the first part of the century is characterized by the English Classicism known as "The Augustan Age", spearheaded by John Dryden and Alexander Pope. Characteristically, the latter penned *An Essay on Man* (1733–34), a treatise in verse explicitly focussed on typifying universality. But in parallel, as I have already indicated, the modern novel was emerging in the works of Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson (and, with some qualifications, those of Henry Fielding). And the novelty of that genre, as we know, is described by Ian Watt as, among other things, "particular people in particular circumstances" and named "in exactly the same way as particular individuals are named in ordinary life".³⁴

Watt has been rightly criticized for neglecting similar tendencies in earlier literature, but his observations on the novel's fondness for particulars nevertheless bring to light a significant development.³⁵ In the following century it would continue to hold sway in set pieces such as the detailed description of the boarding house at the beginning of Honoré de Balzac's *Father Goriot* (*Le Père Goriot*, 1835) and the enumeration of foodstuffs in Émile Zola's *The Belly of Paris* (*Le Ventre de Paris*, 1873). This orientation towards particulars was obviously in tune with the empiricism of nineteenth-century science, successful in practical application and influential as a positivist ideal of scholarship. But even after that it has remained a feature of the novel genre, displayed for instance as a two-page list of types of food in the Swedish novelist Vilhelm Moberg's *Unto a Good Land* (*Invandrarna*, 1952) when hungry immigrants, recently disembarked in New York, marvel at the riches displayed on Broadway. Five examples would suffice, says the leaver-outer. No, says the putter-inner, I want a hundred.

2.4. The Case and the Type in Fiction, Historiography and Scripture

Like different forms of dispersion and integration, the models of the individual case and the general type can be brought together in various combinations (outlined in *Figure 2*). This is particularly evident in what may be called the cultural "megagenres" of narrative: fiction, historiography, and Scripture. In order to explicate their respective stances vis-à-vis the two models, I shall, firstly, make use of the distinction between fact and fiction, which serves well as a theoretical tool even though, as I have pointed out, in this specific form it only evolved in the last three hundred years. Secondly, I am interested in what *claims* are implicit in the megagenres, not in how convincing we find, for example, a claim to historical truth or human insight. A genre is what it is. Failed, distorted historiography is still historiography rather than fiction.

A first variety is the case orientation of *modern academic historiography*. It purports to depict and explain empirically established cases such as the specific circumstances of the rise of the Nazi party in the Weimar Republic. But whether or not this should be typified as an object lesson on human aggression or on the decline of democracy is a question which it leaves to other forms of inquiry.

At the other end of the case/type scale we find *pure fiction*. Explicitly refraining from empirical claims, it seeks to provide insights into a type represented by an imaginary case. Obvious examples are didactic stories such as Aesop's fables; invented philosophical examples of moral problems; and even the little stories of advertising, e.g. about a car driver who stops being late for work in the winter when he switches to a better antifreeze mixture. Moreover, this is a fundamental feature of literary fiction. To put it bluntly, its orientation is always that of the parable, the *exemplum*: overtly or subtly, it brings out a general insight embodied in the individual cases depicted, and being attuned to this constitutes an essential component of literary competence.³⁶ Characteristically, this goal of generalization is often stressed by original titles such as W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915) or translations such as *Human Acts* (2016), the English version of Nobel laureate Han Kang's 2014 novel entitled *The Boy is Coming* in Korean.³⁷

Figure 2

The Case Model and the Type Model in Fiction, Historiography and Scripture

NB: The textual types in the middle are to be understood as combinations of the extremes.

The Empirical Case Model

*academic historiography

The Conceptual Type Model

*parables, fables, *exempla*

*the parables of Jesus

*pure fiction

*Scripture without
historical claims

*the historical novel

*Scripture partly with,
partly without historical claims

*the documentary novel (Capote)

*typifying history (Plutarch, Emerson)

*Scripture with historical claims throughout

The type orientation can, however, be combined with a considerable measure of particularity. In Jane Austen, typification is powerfully signalled by titles such as *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); yet in the latter a character like Elizabeth Bennet – in one sense a manifestation of the type of “pride” – is richly individualized. In Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866/1867) we similarly find exceptionally vivid individualization along with a distinct general point concerning the depravity of utilitarian ethics. And in Joyce’s *Ulysses* detailed descriptive realism is taken to extremes. At the same time, the novel exhibits manifold typification through the Homeric parallels as well as a plethora of other patterns such as allusions in each chapter to a particular form of science.³⁸ In this way, *Ulysses* is, on the one hand, a celebration of dispersion: the multiplicity of everyday reality is seen to be so valuable that a simple narrative is allowed to take up fifty times the space of what could have been a short story in Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914). On the other

hand, everyday reality is devalued: in a work of art, its particulars must, according to the logic of this novel, be subsumed under an integrative network of cultural types. The hallmark of *Ulysses* is thus that it combines an out-and-out application of the case model with an equally extreme devotion to the type model.

The examples drawn from Jane Austen, Dostoyevsky and Joyce represent fiction without documentary claims, but it is also possible to combine an empirically established individual case and a general type in the same text. The *historical novel* does so to some extent. It includes historically attested circumstances – hence the work is “historical”. But it is also a “novel” exhibiting freewheeling imagination and not least a generalizable point, for instance one about malicious manipulation in Pär Lagerkvist’s novel *The Dwarf* (*Dvärgen*, 1944), set in the Italian Renaissance but expansively evocative of the evil afoot during its time of publication.

The *documentary novel*, on the other hand, claims to be entirely factual, but it is nevertheless read as fiction with a focus on general insights. Thus Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and its Consequences* (1965) was described by contemporary critics as “a ‘true’ parable of the outlaw against the community”; as a presentation of two elements of the collective American psyche, the orderly and the anarchic; or as an example of the dethroning of the American Dream.³⁹

Another variety of this is a *philosophical approach to history* employed by writers other than contemporary professional historians. In this instance, real individual cases are described, but suffused with typification. Explicit in this regard are Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* (100s AD), oriented towards virtue and vice, and Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Representative Men* (1850), with a telling title and analogous chapter headings such as “Swedenborg; or, the Mystic” and “Montaigne; or the Sceptic”.⁴⁰

As far as *Scripture* is concerned, it should first be pointed out that, on the analogy of fiction, it is by and large type-oriented. Specific cases represent a general moral lesson or an insight into God’s universally valid will and mysterious ways. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1–18), for example, shows the value of unquestioning obedience to God, and when Jesus expels the money

changers from the temple (John 2:14-16), any desire for profit linked to the practice of religion is roundly condemned. In the Bible such points are often so striking that the closest literary parallels are didactic literature and *littérature engagée*.

A more difficult question is to what extent the typecasting of the Bible is combined with a claim to empirical accuracy. The parables of Jesus such as that of the vineyard workers (Matthew 20:1-16) are clearly fictional, but what are the claims of the scriptural accounts of the history of the people of Israel, the life of Jesus, or the vicissitudes of the early Christians? For example, in the Gospel of Matthew (14:22-32), Peter can walk on water as long as he trusts in Jesus. Is it the claim of the Evangelist that we should, not only embrace that general point, but also believe that the event actually took place: that we could have seen it with our own eyes if we had only been present at the scene?

Firstly, the answer may be negative. In that case Biblical narratives are seen to have been formulated with a pure type orientation and without any empirical claims, as what we today would broadly designate as "fiction" (myths, legends, parables). On this view, the Bible is *analogous to pure fiction*.

If, secondly, the question is answered in the affirmative, there is a correlation between two textual genres that are not customarily conjoined: Biblical narratives emerge as *analogous to the documentary novel*, since both genres combine a description of the empirical case with insights into the general type.

Thirdly, it can be argued that the Biblical narratives are in this respect *hybrids*: their authors combine referential empirical claims with free invention. On that view, these narratives are *analogous to the historical novel*, which also combines fact and fiction, usually without specifying a clear boundary between them.⁴¹

The latter seems to be the majority view among contemporary theologians, but in the end, for the Bible as a whole, one has to concur with Robert Alter's commentary on the Hebrew Bible:

[...] we probably have no way of recovering what might have figured as a fact in the ancient Hebrew mind, whether the narrative data of centuries-old oral traditions were assumed to be facts, or to what extent the writers consciously exercised a license of invention [...] ⁴²

This is also characteristic of many ancient and medieval texts with some kind of historical orientation. We are hard put to know whether they raise claims of factuality – which we would usually consider unreliable – or whether they assume that readers regard the events described as merely illustrative types and to no extent as empirical case descriptions.

However, the whole question may be misguided because it is based on our modern distinction between fact and fiction. Concerning these issues, writers and readers in the past may have shared a mutual understanding of a kind that we cannot quite reconstruct today.

In conclusion, when we speak of "describing" or "depicting" or "capturing" reality, the meaning varies and is often unclear. Sometimes we celebrate the dispersive tendency and cultivate individual facts; sometimes we reject them as superficial clutter and gravitate towards varieties of integration such as the underlying type; sometimes we try to eat the cake and have it. But this can also be seen in a positive light: if blindness is an inescapable condition of our grasp of reality, we can at least to some extent calibrate its remit.

3. PATTERNS IN THE STUDY OF CULTURAL ARTEFACTS

3.1. Abstraction as a Pattern of Thought in Literary Studies

Bearing all this in mind, we now turn to scholarship. How do the humanities deal with the questions of blindness and vision, type and case, integration and dispersion? What patterns of thought emerge, patterns that can be effectively absorbed and put to use by generative AI? My examples are largely drawn from literary studies but may also provide some insight into the humanities at large. Throughout this section and the next one the reader may refer to *Figure 3*.

All scholarship that aims at more than a mere catalogue of facts needs to take some kind of integrative approach. In response to that, a pattern of thought that has already been glimpsed is pivotal: that of *abstraction*. It involves two basic operations: *selection* and *expansion*. Selection consists in focussing on a particular aspect of an often multifaceted phenomenon and formulating it as a generalization. For example, the development of Jane Eyre in Charlotte Brontë's 1847

Figure 3

The Humanities

INTEGRATION ←←←←←→→→→ DISPERSION

NB: Derogatory descriptions are in quotation marks.

abstraction	particularization
theory, pattern recognition	empiricism, factuality, encyclopaedism
deductive point of departure	inductive point of departure
philosophy as a discipline	history as a discipline
Structuralism, Phenomenology	archival research, empirical research
“armchair construction”	“positivism”
“sweeping generalization”	“pointless enumeration”

Spatial Models of Thought (1)

*Abstraction: selection + expansion + new selection

Literary interpretation (based on Charlotte Brontë’s novel Jane Eyre)

aspect →→→→ aspect.	→→→→ aspect	←←←← theories of patriarchy	
emancipation	emancipation	emancipation	the subjugation of women
^			^
	v	v	
^			^
	v	v	
Jane Eyre ↔ Dor.Brooke ↔ Selma Berg			social history: lack of education,
Jane Eyre	Middlemarch	Money	independent economy, suffrage

Abstractions Showcased in Terminology

*at the level of the work: plot, theme, organic form, unreliable narrator, implicit author

*at the level of the author: career author, disposition, life world (*Lebenswelt*)

*above the level of the author: genre, conventions, logic, grammar, code, register;
period of literary style; ideology, doxa, *Zeitgeist*; socio-political period

Metaphor Formation

Application

aspect →→→→ aspect		aspect →→→→ aspect	
glittering surface	glittering surface	manipulation	manipulation
^		^	
	v		v
^		^	
	v		v
a lake in sunlight	a window to the earth	The Dwarf	(cyber)bullying
	(Tranströmer)	(Lagerkvist)	

novel can be said to represent female emancipation or – manifesting a different type of abstraction – to show the importance of religion in human life.

In a system of coordinates with the more comprehensive terms placed at the top, selection is followed by an upward vertical movement from the specific to the more general. This is characteristic of any literary reading concerned with the point or moral or "theme" of a work, but in scholarship vertical expansion is typically continued as a lateral movement. It links the abstraction to an inherently abstract system, such as theories of nineteenth-century patriarchy, supported at best by available social history. In addition, the abstraction can be filled with another specific content through a downward vertical movement. *Jane Eyre* may be compared to other cases of female emancipation in nineteenth-century fiction, for instance those of Dorothea Brooke in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–72) and Selma Berg in Victoria Benedictsson's Swedish novel *Money* (*Pengar*, 1885). Alternatively, the problem of religion can be factored in, prompting comparisons with, for example, John Henry Cardinal Newman's autobiography *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1865) and J.P. Jacobsen's Danish novel *Niels Lyhne* (1880).

This kind of thinking permeates literary studies on many levels of abstraction. On the level of the work, "plot", "theme", "organic form", "the unreliable narrator", and "the implicit author" are integrative abstractions. At the level of the author, Wayne C. Booth, who gave us the latter two terms, encapsulates an entire oeuvre in the term "career author".⁴³ An old-fashioned psychology of character focusses on the author's mental "disposition"; phenomenology on the author's "life world" (*Lebenswelt*); and Bourdieu on the author's "habitus". Further up the scale of abstraction, a large variety of oeuvres can be coordinated as "genres" and their "conventions", or their "logic", "grammar", "code", or "register"; and whole periods as "ideology", "doxa", or *Zeitgeist*. As the case may be, we refer to "Classicism", "Romanticism", "Modernism", or to a feudal or a bourgeois social order. Levels and terms proliferate, but the basic pattern, as I see it, is simple and ubiquitous. As such, it is easily assimilated by AI, which is thereby equipped with an essential tool of human thought.

Another wide-ranging approach to cultural thought patterns, as I

suggested at the outset, is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Simply and bluntly put, the structure of the metaphor allows their system to be subsumed under mine. That trope, as it turns out, exhibits the same pattern of abstraction consisting in aspect selection followed by an upward vertical movement, a lateral expansion, and a downward vertical movement.

What can we say metaphorically of a small lake, for instance? In terms of selection, we can focus on the easily accessible aspect of "a glittering surface", expand vertically and laterally to descend in the end on another specific example of this aspect, thus creating the metaphor "the lake is a mirror for the clouds" (with the potential Platonic elaboration that life on earth mirrors the world of ideas). Alternatively, in a Finnish poem by Yrjö Jylhä we can follow, in the same order, the aspect of "a glittering surface with an underlying substance" from the lake to the human eye: "A lake darker than pitch, / [...] / with a hue of blue, looks at the serenity of the air / like a frightened eye in the wilderness."⁴⁴ Another striking idea is developed by the Swedish Nobel laureate Tomas Tranströmer. He selects the aspect of "a glittering but diaphanous surface", finding a more original analogy than that of the mirror: "The infinite ground below us. // The water shines between the trees. // The lake is a window to the earth."⁴⁵

The same pattern is employed when we perform an *application* of a literary work, for instance by asking upper-secondary-school students if they can recognize anything in their own lives in Pär Lagerkvist's above-mentioned historical novel *The Dwarf*. One possibility for the process of abstraction will then be the titular character's underhand dealings seen as "malicious manipulations" that can be linked to insidious contemporary forms of bullying on the Internet or IRL.

3.2. Induction, Deduction, Domestication

In these examples drawn from literature and literary scholarship, I have described the process of abstraction inductively, as a movement from the bottom up, from observations of the individual case to increasingly comprehensive generalizations. But the movement can also be top down, proceeding deductively from a pre-established theory or ideological conviction. Those two directions of thought are usu-

ally combined and can be said to make up the so-called hermeneutic circle, as an interaction between inductive observations and deductive generalizations pursued repeatedly until a satisfactory "fit" between the material and the interpretation has been achieved. Nevertheless, it makes a considerable difference if the basic starting point is at the deductive top or at the inductive bottom of the circle.

Characteristically, in the deductive case, a methodology such as Feminism gleans negative examples of the workings of patriarchy and positive examples such as Jane Eyre and Dorothea Brooke's struggles for liberation.⁴⁶ Similarly, applying, say, Postcolonialism, a scholar may glean negative examples in works such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) or Sir H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885). Surprisingly, this means that a seemingly old-fashioned typification along the lines of French Classicism reappears in modern garb. György Lukács set the tone by analysing and celebrating fictional characters as embodiments of real-life socio-economic categories in the class struggle.⁴⁷ Analogously, the essential thing about a Dorothea Brooke for Feminism is her manifestation of the type of "women's struggle under Victorian patriarchy", just as Haggard's Alan Quatermain represents the type of "the racist imperialist" for postcolonial studies. And even without an ideological slant, a scholar can, for example, describe Nikolai Rostov in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as the type of a post-traumatic stress victim.⁴⁸

This reveals a central feature of the methodologies of literary studies: they are prescriptions for the kind of aspect to be selected for the abstraction. At worst, if the material is uncongenial, the result will be crude and the selection by the theoretically predetermined aspect of abstraction too narrowly focussed. At best, the material is well suited to be illuminated by the methodology in question. In that case, however, there is a risk of emphasizing and merely labelling something that is already obvious in the work, with a relatively small gain in knowledge. One does not need postcolonial theory to grasp the postcolonial critique in *Ædnan* (2018), the Swedish writer Linnea Axelsson's verse epic about the exploitation of the Sápmi area in the north of Sweden.

In the light of these observations, it is unfortunate that literary studies since the end of the twentieth century have developed an

increasingly dominant ideal of deductive theorizing. It easily leads to a self-affirming circularity of thought that domesticates literature, reducing it to picturesque illustrations of familiar types. I prefer, therefore, to advocate an inductive procedure, perhaps formalized as "Grounded Theory" or the "Gioia methodology".⁴⁹ It affords scholars a chance of paying heed, at least to some extent, to a major cultural function of literature: that of offering novel psychological, social or existential insights through departures, often heterodox, idiosyncratic and controversial, from established cultural patterns. Keeping one's mind as open as possible, one starts from observations and discoveries, allowing the aspects of abstraction to be suggested by the material rather than a predetermined theory. Combined with a disenchantment with ideologically driven perspectives, this stance is now represented by the "post-critique" movement championed by Rita Felski and others.⁵⁰ My description of patterns of thought may help remedy a problem within the movement: if we reject a deductive hermeneutics of suspicion, how do we find sufficiently formalized inductive methods?

It is worth noting that, while prominent in academic epistemology, the question of direct access to reality is a wider cultural concern. Poets, dedicated that they often are to individual perceptions beyond stereotypes, may express that concern quite explicitly, as witness "A Wish" ("Önskan") by the Swedish poet and novelist Karin Boye, an iambic stanza with a concluding rhyme:

Oh, let me truly live
and truly die one day,
so that I touch reality
the good in it, the bad.
And let me stay all still
and cherish what I see
so this remains but this
and nothing else shall be.

Ack låt mig leva riktigt
och riktigt dö en gång,
så att jag rör vid verklighet
i gott som i ont.
Och låt mig vara stilla
och värda vad jag ser,
så detta får bli detta
och inget mer.⁵¹

Here the ideal of pure access to pristine reality is unavailable but at least conceivable as a consummation devoutly to be wished. While espousing the same ideal, a few lines of blank verse in Rainer Maria

Rilke's *Duino Elegies* despair of ever attaining it. This is because adults are tragically different from children and animals:

We do not have, not for a single day
pure space in front of us, in which the flowers
emerge eternal. It is always world
and never Nowhere without Not: the pure
unsupervised.

Wir haben nie, nicht einen einzigen Tag,
den reinen Raum vor uns, in den die Blumen
unendlich aufgehn. Immer ist es Welt
und niemals Nirgends ohne Nicht: das Reine,
Unüberwachte.⁵²

For Rilke, a particular dilemma is the thought pattern of always defining things through contrast and negation: e.g. to adults, the present is not conceptually and perceptually available as such, only as *not* the past and *not* the future. That irremediably debars us from the pure and clear view of the world where, in Karin Boye's words, "this remains but this".

In the light of pervasive acculturation, Rilke is right. Lenses can be exchanged but sight-conditioning is for ever. Nevertheless, Karin Boye's wish to encounter reality as it is in itself remains a human dream, as powerful as it is wistful.

3.3. Further Patterns of Thought

And that dream stubbornly constitutes an ideal of scholarship, even as social constructivism is regularly espoused in principle. The ideal can never be attained but working towards it may serve us well as an antidote to total subservience under pre-set patterns of thought.

As an aspect of that, we sometimes have to admit that a given abstraction, whether inductively or deductively developed, is too selective: our awareness of dispersive tendencies in the real-life material blocks our application of the integrative tendency in our conception of it. For such cases, we have luckily been able to develop many other

patterns of thought, which for reasons of space I will describe more briefly (referring to *Figure 4*).

A first step forward is *the double abstraction* that seeks to capture two essential aspects that cannot plausibly be reduced to a single one. This can be seen in Isaiah Berlin's analysis, in *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953), of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1868–69) as a combination of a monistic integrative ambition on the one hand, and a highly developed awareness of the world's dispersive diversity on the other. Berlin sees this as a tragic conflict for Tolstoy, but a more common approach in such cases is to place the two abstractions at opposite ends of a scale or a field of tension.⁵³ In addition, one can situate different phenomena in the material on that scale according to the proportions between the two impulses. This is basically what I have

Figure 4

Spatial Models of Thought (2)

***Double abstraction, often as a scale or a field of tension**

Tolstoy's monism vs. attention to detail (Berlin); integration vs. dispersion (TP)

***Multiple abstractions combined as implicit or explicit grids**

Three times five modes (Frye)

***Family resemblances (Wittgenstein)**

MODERNISM as a collective term for a number of modernist movements

***Categorization (according to a specific principle such as genre)**

The Hoboken catalogue of Haydn's compositions; Shakespeare's plays by genre

***Inventory (without a fixed principle but possibly in chronological order)**

Köchel's catalogue of Mozart's compositions; heterogeneous salient features of an oeuvre

Temporal Models of Thought

***Chronology**

One or more time lines; linear or circular; fast or slow pace etc.

***Causality**

Physical cause, psychological cause; momentary or continuous; single factor or interacting factors; degrees of influence or determination etc.

done with the concepts of "integration" and "dispersion" and with combinations of case and type in the megagenres described above.

Furthermore, one can increase the number of abstractions and then try to build, for example, a conceptual grid that covers the material in a number of compartments. This is what Northrop Frye does in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), defining no less than 15 literary modes as combinations of the categories "tragic", "comic" and "thematic" with five other dimensions such as "romantic" and "ironic".⁵⁴ Alternatively, scholars less enamoured of totalization can, by building more open structures or networks, display interrelations that may provide genuine if less grandiose illumination.

Relatively free rein can also be gained by employing Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "*family resemblances*".⁵⁵ In that case, the rules of the abstraction game are relaxed so that a phenomenon can be placed in a reasonably integrative whole even when it meets only some of the relevant criteria. I have done this myself in order to provide an account of European literary Modernism as a whole despite its dispersion across highly variable national movements.⁵⁶ In the same vein, but without the Wittgensteinian inspiration, Vladimir Propp's scheme of Russian folk tales (1928) allows a large number of the 31 so-called "functions" to be omitted on an ad hoc basis; individual tales may thus be included in the system on the basis of a – frequently small – selection of properties.⁵⁷

Another relatively simple approach is *categorization according to a given principle*, e.g. distinct genres for Shakespeare's plays or for Joseph Haydn's compositions in the Hoboken catalogue. In this case, the ideal of integrative similarities between the categories has already been relaxed, and this is markedly the case when an *inventory* is undertaken explicitly or de facto. It may be unstructured but still based on a certain process of selection, as when a number of salient features of an author's oeuvre are listed in no particular order. Alternatively, the inventory may purport to be complete, in which case it may be relatively unsystematic as a survey of all the known events in an author's life, or completely amorphous as a list of everything an artist has produced, à la Ludwig von Köchel's original list of Mozart's compositions numbered from 1 to 626 (1863). This is the dispersive equivalent of an alphabetical dictionary, just as Northrop Frye's

attempt at an integrative and comprehensive anatomy of literature is the counterpart of Roget's systematic *Thesaurus*.

If we remove the (assumed) chronology found in Köchel, we arrive at one extreme of the brain's struggle with the world's multiplicity, the discomfiture of the completely disorganized list: "there is this, and this, and this, and that is all we are able to say".

What I have described so far is a conceptual and, so to speak, *spatial mode* of thought that can in principle be represented as a spatial structure such as the scheme of abstraction in *Figure 3*. I have, however, preferred the term "pattern" because it allows a degree of mobility, as when we can say that migratory birds move in a certain "pattern" but not that they move in a certain "structure".

In its pure form, spatial thinking takes phenomena for granted: they exist, they are to be mapped and summarized in categories that are as few and as comprehensive as possible. But there is also another important type of thought: the *temporal mode*, which scouts out chronological order and causality. Its questions are: how did the phenomena arise, in what order, and – once the order has been established – through what causal relationships? For reasons of space, the varieties of this approach are confined to the survey at the end of *Figure 4*.

However, at least in order to establish causal connections, one must also make a spatial analysis within the temporal: A can be claimed to influence B only if one decides, through a process of abstraction, what aspects of A and B, respectively, are relevant. The statement "Schopenhauer influenced Thomas Hardy" is correct only if Schopenhauer's concept of "the world as idea" is set aside in favour of those aspects of "the world as will" which deprive human beings of genuine opportunities for choice. In Hardy's oeuvre one must by the same token bypass the depiction of English folk culture and the exposure of social injustice in favour of this abstracted aspect: the excruciating Schopenhauerian determinism that, for example, propels the eponymous heroine of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) step by fatal step out of her wonted country life into high society, and all the way to murder and execution.

4. CONSEQUENCES FOR SCHOLARLY SELF-REFLECTION

4.1. "Creativity" Eclipsed by Conventions

The reader is welcome to engage in further reflection along these lines, but for now I present the suggestions outlined above as the basic thought patterns of literary studies. Once they have been assimilated by generative AI, it is capable of writing academic essays as well as journal and newspaper articles. They may as yet not be brilliant but are already, with some touching up, perfectly adequate – hence the panic-stricken misgivings in academia about students relying on AI to write their essays for them.

At this point attitudinal self-reflection joins forces with the above intellectual self-examination. Since AI is able to simulate scholarly thought, the well-established, implicitly Romantic celebration of individual scholarly creativity must be abandoned as it posits some kind of fundamental departure from given cognitive matrices. Most of us are not capable of being that creative or innovative. Thus, like the American Germanist Leif Weatherby, one can demand, in the face of AI, a "desublimation" (*Entsublimierung*) of a view of scholarship that, according to him, is rooted in an older, and specifically Kantian, conception of the sublime (*das Erhabene*).⁵⁸

I find it more to the point to recommend a *deglorification* of individual scholars and their claims to originality and creativity, rhetorically inflated by themselves or their publishers. Better models for our actual literary scholarship than the implicitly Romantic one are Classicism or popular literature, aptly described as generically convention-driven by the term "genre literature". In other words, as scholars we apply conventions of our disciplinary genre and its methodological subgenres, more governed and controlled by them than we usually realize. In the twenty-first century, the genre of "literary studies" thus defines itself against lay reading through *conventions* such as:

1/ *Depersonalization*.

Authors are excluded from the speaking positions of literary works.

Instead, those positions are seen to be occupied by personas extrapolated from the text of the work: "the speaker of the poem" or "the heterodiegetic (anonymous third-person) narrator". Similarly, the work as a whole is attributed to "the implied author", distinct from the author as a person, and speculations about the intentions of the author as a person are discouraged.

Under the aegis of depersonalization, "close reading" of the text as such is allowed, but two further patterns are frequently applied separately or together:

2/ Historical Contextualization.

A/ The work is considered to "reflect" the context of its origin, which usually means that it is seen to emanate from that context through some kind of causal process. The intervention of the author's freewheeling creative imagination – which complicates, even undermines that reflection – is set aside or downplayed.

B/ The work is considered to "illuminate" the context of its origin, i.e., provide historically reliable information about, or insights into, that context. Again, the transformative operations of the author's creative imagination, as well as his or her potentially heterodox aesthetic aims, are set aside or downplayed.

3/ Theoretical Gleaning. The work in itself, or in conjunction with a historical context, is related to a set of theoretical precepts taken to provide a valid account of reality. Suitable aspects of the work are selected and raised to a level of abstraction where they can be seen to illustrate those precepts. Other aspects are set aside or downplayed.

Within these rule-governed frameworks, genuine innovations can occur from time to time.⁵⁹ An essential rule may be changed or removed, as when New Criticism banned historical contextualization; a new rule may be added, as when Feminist research established patriarchy as a mandatory explanatory foundation, or environmental studies brought in an awareness of ecology. However, novelty soon becomes commonplace and yet another pattern to be repeated; broadly speaking, the degree of real scholarly innovation is low and the degree of pattern repetition high and massively dominant in quan-

tity. "[W]e are all epigones; all of us to some extent and most of us completely", one observer opined.⁶⁰ And he was none other than the distinguished British Germanist Leonard Forster, richly adorned with laurels for what others apparently regarded as innovative scholarship, addressing the members of the Modern Humanities Research Association of which he was the President.

The epigonism of pattern repetition is not the same as plagiarism, the imitation of a pattern already applied by another scholar to given specific materials. But even when we studiously steer clear of the latter, we seem doomed to be formulaic, i.e., to defer to the fixed framework of established thought patterns. Forster's categorical emphasis on this lack of innovation and individuality is based on a wide-ranging account of the history of literary studies from nineteenth-century positivism to the structuralism of the 1960s and 1970s. What is more, his conclusions are borne out by my specification above of stereotypical scholarly procedures such as abstraction and deduction or, in the special case of literary studies, depersonalization and contextualization.

We are, then, far removed from the creative individual freedom of thought on which, in an individualistic Western culture, we tend to pride ourselves. The starkness of that condition is illuminated by the Swedish poet Hjalmar Gullberg's "Tercets with a Pair of Compasses" (rendered here in English blank verse, as are frequently the tercets of Dante's *Divine Comedy*). Since the poem does not specify what kind of constriction or constraint it refers to, adopting it for the present case entails specification but no distortion:

So loose the circle and so sly the snare
applied by one who in our kernel placed
one compass leg and let the other one

but lightly touch the arc, that we forget
how narrowly our remit was inscribed
for ever. Freedom dwells among the stars.

Så löst drogs cirkeln och så lömskt vår snara

av den som satte skänkeln mot vår kärna
och lät den andra spetsen snudda bara

vid sektorns båge, att vi glömmar gärna
hur snävt vår omkrets blev för alltid dragen.
Avlägset bor vår frihet hos en stjärna.

The governing thought patterns, then, are not only highly constrictive, but insidiously so, allowing us to forget our servitude, our position of merely taking "dictation" ("diktamen") from them. However, in introducing that word, the poem also makes allowances for an occasional breakthrough of genuine creativity:

A moment, felt as an eternity,
a train of thought soars from your blood and body,
a dolphin rising from the foamy waves.

Oh, flight above the dictates of the compass!

Ett ögonblick, som evighet förnummet,
lyfter sig ur ditt blod och din lekamen
en tankes flykt, delfin i böljeskummet.

O svävning över passarens diktamen!⁶¹

As I have already suggested, it is a hallmark of art and its eye-opening cultural function that it can offer such moments of reprieve. Here are two engaging descriptions of that, produced independently by the Swedish poet Elsa Grave and the Danish art historian Else Marie Bukdahl:

Poetry is dangerous
to the square suns
of all the comprehensibilities
which aim to incinerate us [...]

Poesin är farlig
för alla begripligheters
fyrkantiga solar
som vill förbränna oss [...]⁶²

It is true of the experience or understanding of an artwork that it makes its mark as truth, uncovering or provocation; it topples my conventional prejudices as a reshaping and transformative intervention into my subjective universe – and, strangely enough, at the same time that this truth or unveiling exists only in terms of my understanding.⁶³

Thus returning, after further deliberations, to the question of domestication, we could despair of the ability of interpretation – inevitably pattern-driven that it is – to live up to such revelatory qualities of art: we could join Susan Sontag in being "[a]gainst interpretation".⁶⁴ Nevertheless, in the last quotation the passage after the dash suggests the viability of the goal that all art scholars should aspire towards: that of encountering artworks without preconceived notions tending to domesticate them.

4.2. Calibration, Combination, Judgment

This may be a defiant hope *quand même*, but it has a foundation: within and between the thought patterns there is some latitude, some leeway, as there is within the conventions of Classicism and genre literature. Consequently, there is also a gradation of "academic achievement". This is measured as the degree of generic pattern fulfilment required by the relevant discipline and its methodological subgenre, but also, at best, as more or less illuminating discoveries in the material, tailored to a given pattern of thought.

Such discoveries presuppose two kinds of technical skill and a third, overriding mental faculty. Firstly, there is a need for a *sensible calibration* of a pattern of thought, especially that of abstraction: when does the selection, the self-imposed blindness, go too far, so that the posited aspect has to be reconsidered, and how can it be elaborated? The Jane Eyre example above pedagogically highlighted the lumbering nature of the thought pattern. However, in the second section of *Figure 3* there are also double arrows (←→) signalling differences between the three fictional characters, possibilities of refining the formulaic concept of "emancipation": for Jane Eyre it is a matter of resisting the pressures of her environment in order to be true to herself and, as she sees it, her God-given individuality; for Dorothea Brooke it is an effort to gain access to an intellectual devel-

opment that she, as a woman, is denied by the early Victorian system of higher education; and for Selma Berg, in Benedictsson's *Money*, it is the felt need to be economically self-sufficient. The most rewarding handling of the model of abstraction is frequently that which allows the observations at the bottom of the second section of *Figure 3* to count for as much as possible and the theory in the top right-hand corner to count for as little as possible.

Secondly, it is misleading to say in the singular that AI has "cracked the code" of human thought or, for that matter, that a child has "cracked the code" of reading or of literature. This is because there are several different cultural codes rather than a single unified grammar of thought or reading. There is, as I have suggested, a variety of spatial and temporal thought patterns which interact, overlap, and sometimes conflict. Individually, they can be stiflingly constrictive, but their interaction is so loosely organized that it leaves considerable room for more or less *deft combinations* (where "deft" strikes me as a term preferable to "creative" or "innovative"). In the literary case above, one could for instance add a simple causal explanation: in relation to *Jane Eyre*, *Middlemarch* downplays the role of religion because George Eliot had studied and translated, in 1846, David Friedrich Strauss's sceptical biography of Jesus, *Das Leben Jesu* (1835–36).⁶⁵

Both calibration and combination presuppose *judgment* as a third, overriding and regulatory faculty. It is characteristically hard to define but basically denotes to a well-balanced treatment of elements that are not fully commensurate, whose interrelationships cannot be completely calculated. Typical designations for such a balance are: more or less "apt", "sensible", "reasonable", or indeed "deft" – rather than "right" or "wrong", "true" or "false".

In such judgments of what is reasonable, generative AI cannot match human capabilities. As a result, it may "hallucinate": produce confidently voiced but egregious misconceptions easily exposed by human adjudicators. Moreover, it is probably here, in the balanced judgment of the formally incalculable, that we find the reason why AI models require such a gigantic amount of material. Judgment is difficult to learn because it is exercised ad hoc rather than as an application of readily generalizable patterns of the kind that AI assimilates

successfully. Instead, an enormous number of similar cases may be needed for AI to be able to elicit some kind of guidance from a mass of vaguely similar analogies.

In this respect humans enjoy an advantage. A competent scholar has acquired the patterns of thought as well as the relevant skills of application by reading dozens or perhaps hundreds of texts and analyses. AI, on the other hand, needs to be trained with hundreds of thousands of texts; as a result, its advancement is increasingly beset by copyright problems.⁶⁶

Apart from that, scholars have of course undergone academic training. When they start to train others, e.g. as thesis supervisors, they should have developed a command of the patterns of thought that can be particularized explicitly as well as practised implicitly. As far as possible, they should be able to articulate general principles of scholarly discourse, as well as suggesting to their students, in individual cases, deft combinations of thought patterns and detecting flaws in their practical application. With that kind of support, and through their own thinking, budding scholars can develop not only a basic ability to apply the patterns, but equally the precious, the indispensable faculty of good judgment.

5. EXISTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES

5.1. *Of Human Bondage*

"[A]pply the patterns" of thought, I wrote just now. However, given the capacity of those patterns for conditioning the practice of scholarship, one should perhaps specify a different direction for that process, in the vein of Heinrich von Kleist: "For it is not *we* who know, it is primarily a certain *state* in us that knows."⁶⁷ So which way is it? Do *we use and control* cultural thought patterns, or does our culture *use and control us* as it manifests and consolidates itself and its matrices? "Who – or what – is really writing here?"⁶⁸

Introspection supports both views of our existential position – as creators or as channels. One can consciously choose a certain deductive method as a filter for textual analysis. But when one reads a text and comes up with an exciting interpretation, rather than making

a conscious choice, one experiences a spontaneous epiphany. What seems to happen in that case is that patterns of production internalized by the author hook into patterns of reception internalized by the reader – whose brain will then act as a host for culture’s felicitous dialogue with itself. Similarly, writers sometimes say “someone is writing in me”, and as an everyday equivalent we talk about having “flow”: someone or something seems to think and write in us beyond what we are usually capable of. On such occasions we may feel the dizzying delight engendered by our immersion in the communal thought patterns – something akin to the “Ecstasy” (“Entrückung”) celebrated by the Austrian poet Stefan George:

I am but a spark of the holy fire

Ich bin ein funke nur vom
heiligen feuer

I am but a drone of the holy voice.

Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der
heiligen stimme.⁶⁹

After such epiphanies, however, we can take the reins. As scholars, we can choose to be more or less rigorous in reconciling our flashes of insight with the text as a whole, more or less wedded to our initial findings or mindful of the stubborn complications of the text. But again, the problem of freedom asserts itself: do we only have the illusion of choosing, while in fact, like AI, we are merely enacting the regulatory patterns that we have acquired?

There is no knowing. A theory-driven top-down approach clearly runs the greatest risk of turning its practitioners into avatars of a pre-established orthodoxy, clothing the *déjà vu* of a given skeleton of thought in the seeming novelty of an *ad hoc* material.⁷⁰ In this respect the prospects for the “post-critique” movement are better – but not very bright, since what strikes scholars working inductively as spontaneous observations of features of the text is also influenced by their background and training. There are no innocent eyes, only degrees of pervasive cultural and disciplinary acculturation – or, grabbing the bull by the horns: *indoctrination*. As I have already given to understand, all interpretive procedures risk domestication, the transformation of the idiosyncratic wildness of literature into some kind of familiar scripted intelligibility.⁷¹ Artworks may be mavericks, but

scholars and critics tend to lasso them back into the herd.

The constraints of acculturation also affect individual identity. We cherish a sense of genuine personality and sometimes feel a need to consolidate it in the face of social impositions: "to become who we are". In the case of avoidable specific constraints such as the patriarchal subjection of women, that process is possible in principle to some extent. Thus a 1894 novella embodying the Feminist stance of the German writer Hedwig Dohm is aptly named "Become the woman that you are" ("Werde, die Du bist"). Nevertheless, while in such cases of personal development the goal may seem to be a genuine inner self, it is in fact only a different kind of socially conditioned self, in this instance one based on an Enlightenment discourse of equality. Shackles can be exchanged but human bondage is for ever; our "inner selves" are from infancy onwards generated by cultural patterns of thought and values that are endemic rather than extraneous. Thus we have always been, and we constantly are, *indoctrinated to be ourselves*.

The phrase is deliberately paradoxical. An individual needs culture to become a person beyond mere biological Kaspar Hauser-like subsistence, but is at the same time programmed by the world view, thought patterns, values and norms of that culture. They are embodied and enacted by other individuals – and the process is of course reciprocal: wittingly and unwittingly, we are continually both objects and agents of cultural indoctrination. This is one of the grim truths inculcated by AI's successful impersonation of us as expressive human subjects as well as proficient problem-solvers.

What is more, there is a connection, intimate but rarely noted, between the psychological dream such Hedwig Dohm's of embracing one's true self and the epistemological dream of attaining true reality expressed by Karin Boye: if my inner self is pure and genuine, I can see reality in its pristine condition – if my inner self is permeated by extraneous slag, my view of reality is correspondingly tainted. This insight is expressed in one of the most profound passages in the Bible: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).⁷² The first element of the verse is famous and easy to grasp: in the afterlife I shall finally know things, above all the

mysterious ways of God, for what they truly are beyond my clouded present-day understanding. But the second element, "even as also I am known", though often omitted in quotations, offers the deeper insight: only in the afterlife, when earthly shackles have been shed, can my genuine personality be known for what it truly is.

Whether that fulfilment will ever be attained is a matter of debatable faith. But the dual deficiency which it is intended to remedy is a matter of deplorable fact: imbued that we are with cultural conditioning in this life, we are concurrently debarred from both pristine reality and genuine selfhood. And so, tellingly and tragically, her aspirations having been thwarted in life, Hedwig Dohm's protagonist is reduced to wondering on her deathbed if "my self will be born in death? – if in the afterlife I become the one I am?".⁷³

5.2. "Co-Operation" As a Viable Modus Vivendi

If we were to remain wedded to a conventional view of individuality and creativity, it would, in the face of all this, be hard to move on from being disillusioned in the double sense of "undeceived" and "disappointed". However, as I shall now go on to suggest, there is a possibility of recalibration, a chance of a viable intellectual and psychological modus vivendi after the advent of AI.

Here is a first comforting thought, for which Hjalmar Gullberg's poem may again be adduced. Its powerful but nonspecific metaphor of the compass allows for many slot-fillers, one being the freedom of the will. Thus, if we cannot determine whether we are doing the writing, or our culture is writing through us, it is ultimately because the problem is a variety of the intractable classic question of free will: we are undoubtedly *influenced* by our past and by our environment, perhaps by our genes – but are our actions and thoughts also controlled, governed, even thoroughly *determined* by our cultural conditioning? There is no telling, and our introspection may be more deceptive than probative. On the other hand, we have always lived with the general dilemma of "the freedom of the will" without being paralysed by it. Consequently, we can also live with "the questionable freedom of our thinking" as a form of this dilemma, now that, in the light of AI's proficient pattern application, we have been deglorified – well-nigh disqualified – both as creative agents and as unique individuals.

Beyond that palliative, we can delve deeper into our post-AI predicament by scrutinizing the premises of the above alternatives with a view to moving on from the dichotomy "I think – it is thought through me". Partly because of the performance of AI, it seems increasingly urgent to free the relationship between the individual and the cultural context from the dichotomy of the creative versus the mechanical. Once again, music provides an excellent illustration.

Classical music is usually played and sung in such a way that the notes are followed exactly while other less precise instructions such as tempo are respected by and large. So what happens when a hundred artists perform an opera as a combination of music and theatre? We could think of them as robots that just carry out the instructions. But on the other hand, they have some room for manoeuvre, in terms of both musical emphases and theatrical realization. And above all, it is only through their efforts that the work actually comes into being. The musicians are dependent on the composer and the librettist, but those two are equally dependent on the musicians for the notes, words and stage directions to come to resounding and resplendent life. At the same time, both parties are dependent on the audience as the destination of their efforts. The best description of the situation is therefore that there is an indissoluble *symbiosis* between the artist, the work of art, the performer, the audience and, in the end, between all of them and a widely ramified cultural tradition.

Literature exhibits the same symbiosis of its elements: the tradition; the author who writes a work within it; the reader who absorbs the work within it; and – by extension – the scholar or critic who interprets the work for a group of readers in accordance with internalized patterns of thought. Thus, working through the conventional thesis of the autonomously creative individual, over the post-AI antithesis of the mechanically operating channel, we have arrived at the synthesis of cultural symbiosis.

This symbiotic understanding has great potential, not least for the classic epistemological question of realism and constructivism in the study of literature: if we read a work in a certain way, are we eliciting something that is actually *in* the work, or are we projecting *onto* the work our own viewpoint and perhaps a ready-made model of reading? For my part, I have found good arguments for the viability

of epistemological realism.⁷⁴ But overall the question remains thorny and unresolved despite intense and prolonged scholarly efforts in literary theory and aesthetics. This can be taken as a sign that studies of the arts, and perhaps the humanities in general, are not well served by an epistemology deriving from the natural sciences. Its sharp subject-object division and ideal of objectivity lay down distinctions that are ill-suited to the deeply symbiotic nature of cultural activities.

Hence my suggestion is this: as scholars and human beings, rather than creators or channels, we are "*co-operators*", with a hyphen which brings out the etymology of "functioning together": we collectively operate with each other within given cultural systems of coordinates, thereby bringing individual results into existence as well as contributing to the continued existence of the systems.

This constant interaction will now move onwards with the addition introduced by AI that, for example, scholarly texts can be generated by a soulless logarithm in a shell of technology. As I have been concerned to stress, this state of affairs forces us to revise inflated individual self-images in a pattern-oriented direction, but beyond that it does not present the threat to "humanism" that is conjured up in some quarters. The use of AI by students at school or university is certainly a major problem for the teaching and examination of individual skills. But more generally, AI should not be perceived in a dystopian light. Science fiction-inspired fears of robots taking over are as misplaced as the injunction to weed out any lingering "residual humanism" (*Resthumanismus*) from scholarship in the face of large-scale language models.⁷⁵ More to the point, those models, along with the texts they generate, are also "co-operators", distillations of a vast array of human cultural artefacts and the patterns of thought embodied in them.

Under the aegis of this symbiotic conception of culture and scholarship, AI is intellectually and psychologically manageable. In the humanities, however, it requires heightened awareness in both theory and practice. Firstly, we should use AI's application of our thought patterns as an incentive to increase our meta-understanding of them. In this essay, I have taken some steps in that direction, but there is much more to be clarified in order for us to become more self-aware and thus more successful as scholars and teachers.

Secondly, the deglorification of individual researchers moves the focus to their "co-operation" in the cultural process. In keeping with that, available research in a field should be regarded as much more than an irksome imposition on individual freedom, cast off once and for all through a dutiful brief survey at the beginning of a book or essay. On the contrary, earlier efforts constitute a fundamental mode of existence for scholarship, and the requisite attention paid to them must be protected against two threats from the Internet society: the perceived stress that there is so much of everything that nothing can be more than sampled; and the insidious and delusional assumption that everything essential can be googled and whatever must be elicited from libraries in printed form must be of secondary importance.

The monolith has landed. Supervised by human judgment, AI offers potent cognitive tools; it creates many practical and ethical problems mentioned at the beginning of this paper; and on a theoretical level it encourages a deindividualizing awareness of collective thought patterns as well as a symbiotic view of scholarship. This in turn fuels a traditional virtue in the practice of scholarship: the ongoing dialogue with all of those who, through their co-operation, have shaped the substance and the thought patterns of our culture or of a given field of inquiry. As Marcus Tullius Cicero once put it: "[N]ot for ourselves alone are we born; one part of our genesis is claimed by our country, one part by our friends [...]".⁷⁶

If, like the monolith in Kubrick's film, AI had been sent to us by extraterrestrials, this might well have been their fundamental objective: to encourage self-centred humans – not least the inveterate individualists of the Western world – to become aware of their symbiotic existence within shared cultural patterns permeating their minds. When we enact those patterns, as we constantly do, we are each other's lifelines, as we are each other's shackles.

Notes

- 1 "ChatGPT är kanske nytt men människan har alltid kunnat skriva som en robot": Jenny Maria Nilsson, "Min oro går över i eufori när jag läser" (review of Lyra Ekström Lindbäck, *Iris Murdoch and the Ancient Quarrel: Why Literature Is Not Philosophy*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), *Expressen* 2024-08-07.

- 2 This essay is based on my Emeritus Lecture given in Swedish at Uppsala University 2024-12-12 as "What Thinks within Us and How? A Voyage of Discovery in Music, Literature, Religion and the Humanities": "Vad tänker i oss och hur? En upptäcktsfärd i musik, litteratur, religion och humaniora". I am grateful to Gustaf Marcus and Jesper Olsson for helpful comments on this extended and elaborated version of my reflections.
- 3 We can debate until we are blue in the face what constitutes (genuine, creative) "intelligence". For me, that term embedded in "AI" is justified by the fact that Geoffrey Hinton, Nobel laureate for his work on AI, finds it adequate, saying for instance that "we should be concerned about digital intelligence taking over from biological intelligence". See Joshua Rothman, "Why the Godfather of AI Fears What He's Built", *The New Yorker* 2023-11-13, retrieved 2025-04-28, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/11/20/geoffrey-hinton-profile-ai>.
- 4 For the latter see, e.g., Kate Morgan, "Doctors Told Him He Was Going to Die. Then A.I. Saved His Life", *The New York Times* 2025-03-20, retrieved 2025-03-31, [A.I. Saved His Life by Discovering New Uses for Old Drugs – The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/health/artificial-intelligence-doctors.html).
- 5 A number of alternative and historically variable conceptualizations are presented by Geoffrey Hinton in Rothman, "Why the Godfather", and by Alexander R. Galloway, "Ein Begehren namens Synthese", in *Das Subjekt des Schreibens: Über große Sprachmodelle* (TEXT + KRITIK: Zeitschrift für Literatur. Sonderband), Hannes Bajohr and Moritz Hiller eds. (Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2024), 190–93.
- 6 For the last point, see Nicole Gillespie and Steven Lockey, "Major Survey Finds Most People Use AI Regularly at Work – but Almost Half Admit to Doing So Inappropriately", *The Conversation* 2025-04-29, retrieved 2025-04-30, <https://theconversation.com/major-survey-finds-most-people-use-ai-regularly-at-work-but-almost-half-admit-to-doing-so-inappropriately-255405>.
- 7 One indication of the Copernican revolution and its accelerated permeation is the extended state-of-the-art essay on literary studies that I published in November 2022. At that time neither I nor the editors and peer reviewers of the journal inviting it had any inkling that computer-based methodologies and translation programmes were on the brink of being extended into the AI technology that is now the inescapable monolith in the room. For my take on many other things that nevertheless remain to be said of literary studies, see the pre-revolutionary "Literary Scholarship in the Future: From Canon-Centred Subaltern to Literature-Conscious Social Participant": "Litteraturvetenskapen i framtiden: Från kanoncentrerad subaltern till litterärt medveten samhällsaktör", *Tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap* vol. 51 (2021:3–4), retrieved 2025-05-05 246–65, <https://doi.org/10.54797/tfl.v51i3-4.1675>.
- 8 IBM, "What is an AI Model?", retrieved 2025-05-01, <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/ai-model>. I have previously pursued similar metatheoretical goals under the designation "hidden principles" in *Dolda principer: Kultur- och litteraturteoretiska studier* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002). In relation to AI that term is, however, less felicitous since it suggests a programming of rules rather than the assimilation of patterns from vast collections of data which is more characteristic of AI.
- 9 A memento in this respect is the suggestion, albeit controversial, that, rather than representing abstract universals, Kant's categories in fact "mirror Indo-European

- linguistic structure” and may be construed differently for instance from a Chinese point of view. See Robert Wardy, “Categories”, in *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward Craig ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 119.
- 10 The phrase appears a dozen times in Martin Heidegger, “Die Sprache”, in his *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, [1959] 2022), 7–34. For my purpose, the most telling passage is on page 17: “Language is in its essence neither expression nor human activity. Language speaks.” (“Die Sprache ist in ihrem Wesen weder Ausdruck, noch eine Betätigung des Menschen. Die Sprache spricht.”)
 - 11 The term “false consciousness” was introduced in passing by Friedrich Engels in a letter to Franz Mehring in 1893 but was first elaborated by György Lukács as late as 1923. See his *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*. Georg Lukács. Werke. Frühschriften II (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, [1923] 2013). For “bad faith” see the chapter “La mauvaise foi”, in Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, [1943] 1976).
 - 12 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of The History of an Idea* (New York: Harper & Row, [1936] 1960); E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, [1943] 1967); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, N.J.: Bollingen Foundation, 1949); and Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980).
 - 13 See, respectively, Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances”, in their *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1956), 69–96; René Dirven, in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast* (rev.ed.), René Dirven and Ralf Pörings eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 75–112; Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Carlo Ginzburg, “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm”, in his *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, John and Anne C. Tedeschi trans. (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, [1986 in Italian] 1989), 96–125; and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. With a New Afterword (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1980] 2003).
 - 14 See *Roget's Pocket Thesaurus*, C.O. Sylvester Mawson ed. (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., [1923] 1946).
 - 15 For further illumination of the integrative impulse in Richard Wagner's oeuvre, see my essay “A Coherent Oeuvre – *pace* Nietzsche and Thomas Mann: The Dramaturgical Model of the Ten Great Wagner Operas”: “Ein schlüssiges Œuvre – *pace* Nietzsche und Thomas Mann: Das dramaturgische Modell der zehn großen Opern Richard Wagners”, in *Richard Wagner. Werk und Wirkungen / His Works and Their Impact. A Wagner Symposium 2013*, ed. Anders Jarlert. KHVA Konferenser 86 (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 2014), 170–81, retrieved 2025-05-21, <https://vitterhetsakad.bokorder.se/sv-SE/article/2624/richard-wagner>.
 - 16 See the entry “sonata form” in *Britannica*, retrieved 2025-04-03, <https://www.britannica.com/art/sonata-form>.
 - 17 These are Sibelius's own words: “[i] symfonins väsen [...] beundrade [jag] dess stränghet och stil och den djupa logik, som skapade ett inre samband mellan alla motiv”. Quoted from Erik Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius: Åren 1904–1914* (Helsinki: Söderströms, 1991), 92. How Sibelius applies the “profound logic” of the

- symphonic form in practice can be studied in Lionel Pike, *Beethoven, Sibelius, and the "Profound Logic": Studies in Symphonic Analysis* (London: The Athlone Press, 1979).
- 18 Mahler's statement is reproduced by Sibelius on the same page in the original German: "Nein, die Symphonie muss [sic] sein wie die Welt. Sie muss [sic] alles umfassen."
 - 19 The source of the terms is Wolfe's letter of 1937-07-26 to F. Scott Fitzgerald, in *Selected Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, Elizabeth Nowell ed. (London, Melbourne and Toronto: Heinemann, 1958), 277-79. Wolfe stood up for the "putters-inners" after Fitzgerald had championed "the novel of selected incidents".
 - 20 The best-known form of this tension is found in the theory of drama, with a clearly focussed example in Volker Klotz, *Geschlossene und offene Form im Drama* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1969).
 - 21 "[Vi] försöker inordna det vi ser [av livet] i ett meningsfullt mönster. Men oftare upplever vi världen som kaotisk och ser ingen mening i det hemska som sker. / Dålig konst liknar livet. Författaren blir då en pornograf som inte förmår eller inte vill sätta in det han skildrar i ett sammanhang.": Olof Lagercrantz, *Om konsten att läsa och skriva* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, [1985] 1990), 13.
 - 22 Virginia Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art", in her *Granite and Rainbow: Essays* (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, [1927] 1975), 22 (11-23) (my italics).
 - 23 Stein Haugom Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 146.
 - 24 Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", in *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, David Lodge ed. (London: Longman, [1919] 1972), 88 (86-91).
 - 25 Roland Barthes, "L'Effet de Réel", *Communications* vol. 11 (1968), 84 (84-89): "des notations qu'aucune fonction (même la plus indirecte que soit) ne permet de justifier: ces notations sont scandaleuses (du point de vue de la structure)".
 - 26 Barthes, "L'Effet", 84: "un vieux piano supportait, sous un baromètre, un tas pyramidal de boîtes et de cartons" (original italics).
 - 27 Barthes, "L'Effet", 84: "un indice du standing bourgeois de sa propriétaire" and "un signe de désordre et comme de déshérence".
 - 28 Barthes, "L'Effet", 84: "détails 'inutiles'", and 88: "il se produit un effet de réel, fondement de ce vraisemblable inavoué qui forme l'esthétique de toutes les œuvres courantes de la modernité" (original italics).
 - 29 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, [1957] 1974).
 - 30 Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, T.S. Dorsch trans. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, [c. 335 B.C. in Greek] 1975), 43-44.
 - 31 See C.J. Gossip, *An Introduction to French Classical Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 138.
 - 32 See further my essay "Funktionen des Alltags im Roman: Eine Grundsatzdiskussion anhand von Hans Falladas *Jeder stirbt für sich allein*", in *Das Abenteuer des Gewöhnlichen: Alltag in der deutschsprachigen Literatur der Moderne*, Thorsten Carstensen and Matthias Pirholt eds. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2018), 347-67.
 - 33 See, e.g., *True Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts*, Anders Cullhed

- and Lena Rydholm eds. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2004) and Bo Pettersson, *How Literary Worlds Are Shaped: A Comparative Poetics of Literary Imagination* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2016).
- 34 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 16 and 19.
 - 35 Notable among Watt's critics is Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996).
 - 36 This point is developed in my "Components of Literariness: Readings of Capote's *In Cold Blood*", in *From Text to Literature: New Analytic and Pragmatic Approaches*, Stein Haugom Olsen and Anders Pettersson eds. (Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 86–87 and 92–96 (82–105).
 - 37 For the original title, see Han Kang, *Human Acts: A Novel*, Deborah Smith trans. (London/New York: Hogarth, [2014 in Korean] 2016), the unpaginated page after the title page.
 - 38 Joyce's own famous account of this, the so-called Gilbert schema, was published by Stuart Gilbert in *James Joyce's "Ulysses": A Study* (New York and London: Faber, [1930] 1952), retrieved 2025-03-31, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_schema_for_Ulysses.
 - 39 See, respectively, Tony Tanner, "Death in Kansas", in *Truman Capote's In Cold Blood: A Critical Handbook*, Irving Malin ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, [1966] 1968), 99 (98–102); Malcolm Bradbury, "Capote, Truman", in *The Penguin Companion to Literature*, vol. 3, Eric Mottram, Malcolm Bradbury and Jean Franco eds. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), 54; and Peter Bruck, "Fictitious Nonfiction. Fictionalization and Narrative Strategies in Contemporary American Prose", *Amerikastudien / American Studies* vol. 22 (1977:1), 126–28 (123–36). For a more detailed treatment of the literary in the documentary, see my "Redeemed by Its Literary Dimensions: Capote's Novel in the Light of the Critical Response", in *Critical Insights: In Cold Blood*, Nicolas Tredell ed. (Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press / Grey House Publishing, 2020), 102–18.
 - 40 See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men* (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech, [1850] 2001).
 - 41 I discuss the issue of fact and fiction in the megagenres in greater detail in "Bibels relation till verkligheten: En principiell jämförelse med sakprosan och skönlitteraturen", in *Litteraturen og det hellige. Urtekst – Intertekst – Kontekst*, Ole Davidsen ed. (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2005), 219–35.
 - 42 Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (London: SPCK, 1992), 54.
 - 43 For "the unreliable narrator" and "the implied author", see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 158–59 and 70–76, respectively. For "career author", see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Second Edition (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, [1961] 1983), 431.
 - 44 "Niin tyynnä lampi, synkeämpi syttä, / [...] / sinisten katsoo ilmain heleyttä / kuin säikähtänyt silmä salomaan." Yrjö Jylhä, "Salolampi" (in *Toiviotiellä*, 1938), in his *Runoja: Valikoima eri kokoelmista*. Toinen painos (Helsinki: Otava, 1944), 106 (106–07). Technically, the metaphor "A lake [...] looks" is accompanied by a simile, "like a frightened eye".
 - 45 "Den oändliga marken under oss. // Vattnet lyser mellan träden. // Insjön är ett fönster mot jorden." Tomas Tranströmer, "Den halvfärdiga himlen", in his *Dikter och prosa 1954–2004* (Stockholm: Bonnier pocket, 2025), 128.

- 46 For the former, see for instance the classic exposure of patriarchal attitudes in seemingly progressive writers in Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978).
- 47 See above all György Lukács, "Realism in the Balance", in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Vincent B. Leitch ed. (New York: Norton, [1938 in German] 2001), 1033–58, and *The Historical Novel*, Hannah and Stanley Mitchell trans. (London: Merlin Press, [1955 in German] 1962).
- 48 See Gary Rosenshield, "Trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Recovery in *War and Peace*: The Case of Nikolai Rostov", *Tolstoy Studies Journal* vol. 25 (2013), 22–41.
- 49 The classic starting point is Barney J. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967). The "Gioia methodology" is an important development – see, e.g., D.A. Gioia, K.G. Corley and A.L. Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology", *Organizational Research Methods* vol. 16 (2013:1), 15–31.
- 50 See especially Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), flanked by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction", *Representations* no. 108 (Fall 2009:1), 1–21, and Sharon Marcus, Heather Love and Stephen Best, "Building a Better Description", *Representations*, no. 135 (Summer 2016:1), 1–21.
- 51 Karin Boye, "Önskan" (in *Gömda land*, 1924), retrieved 2025-05-08, <https://karinboye.se/verk/dikter/dikter/onskan.shtml>.
- 52 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duineser Elegien*, in his *Gedichte. Erster Teil* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, [1923] 1987), 714 (683–726) (original italics). For the wider context of this stance expressed in the Eighth Elegy, see my "Internalization and Death: A Reinterpretation of Rilke's 'Duineser Elegien'", *The Modern Language Review* vol. 94 (July 1999:3), 731–743, retrieved 2025-05-05, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3736998>.
- 53 For Tolstoy's tragic conflict, see Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*. Second Edition (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, [1953] 2013), *passim* and 90.
- 54 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).
- 55 Described in paragraph 66 of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1953).
- 56 "Modernismen i finsk lyrik sjösattes 1916–1926. En nyordning och ett incitament för en samlad finländsk litteraturhistoria", *Joutsen / Svanen* (2017–18), 12 (10–34).
- 57 See Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*, Laurence Scott trans. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, [1928 in Russian] 1958).
- 58 See Leif Weatherby, "Die doppelte Autonomie der symbolischen Ordnung", in *Das Subjekt des Schreibens*, 38 (33–46).
- 59 How this may in principle be possible – not in general but on special occasions – is discussed by Mats Rosengren with reference to the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis in "Skapelse ur intet", *Res Publica* no. 58 (2003), 67–83, especially 74–75.
- 60 [Leonard Forster](#), "Literary Studies as Flight from Literature?", *The Modern Language Review* vol. 73 (October 1978:4), xxiii (xxi–xxxiv), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3736998>.

org/10.2307/3727663. I am grateful to Lars Burman for mentioning his recollection of Forster's suggestive title in German: "Literaturwissenschaft als Flucht vor der Literatur?"

- 61 Hjalmar Gullberg, "Terziner med passare" (in *Terziner i okonstens tid*, 1958), in his *Dikter* (Stockholm: MånPocket, 1986), 395. For the wider context of this stance, see my "Evigheters tålmod: Jaget, världen och Gud i Hjalmar Gullbergs diktning", *Samblaren* 121 (2000), 137–59, retrieved 2025-05-08, [Evigheters tålmod. Jaget, världen och Gud i Hjalmar Gullbergs diktning](#).
- 62 Elsa Grave, "Poesi är farligt" (in her *Aufall: Till och från*, 1974), quoted from *Den svenska lyriken från Ekelund till Sonnevi: Antologi*, Tom Hedlund ed. ([Stockholm:] FIBs lyrikklubb/Tidens förlag, 1978), 268 (268–69). The idea that poetry offers an escape from constrictive patterns of thought is developed in my recent essay "The World of Power and the Realm of Freedom – Poetry as a Resource for Strengthening the Personalities of Children and Young People": "Maktens värld och frihetens rike – poesin som personlighetsstärkande resurs för barn och unga", in *Makt*, Magnus Svensson, Olle Nordberg and Anna Nordenstam eds. (*Svenskläraryrningens årsskrift* 2024, Svenskläraryrserien 247), 113–31.
- 63 "Om oplevelsen eller forståelsen af et kunstværk gælder det, at det på næsten overraskende vis sætter sig igennem som sandhed, afdækning eller provokation; det slår mine konventionelle fordomme over ende og griber ændrende og forvandlende ind i mit subjektive univers – og det mærkeligt nok samtidig med, at denne sandhed eller afdækning kun er til på min forståelses betingelser.": Else Marie Bukdahl, "Beskrivelse, tolkning og vurdering af kunsten efter modernismen: Stig Brøgers, Hein Heinesens og Mogens Møllers skulpturværker", in *Beskrivning och värdering i dagskritisk verksamhet*, Göran Sörbom ed. (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1986), 89 (85–89).
- 64 Cf. Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation", in *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, David Lodge ed. (London: Longman, [1964] 1972), 652–60.
- 65 *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (London and New York: Sonnenschein and Macmillan, [1846] 1892). In the original edition George Eliot's name was given as Marian Evans.
- 66 See for instance Alex Reisner, "The Unbelievable Scale of AI's Pirated-Books Problem", *The Atlantic* 2025-03-20, retrieved 2025-04-06, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2025/03/libgen-meta-openai/682093/>.
- 67 "Denn nicht *wir* wissen, es ist allererst ein gewisser *Zustand* unsrer, welcher weiß" (original italics): Heinrich von Kleist, "Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden", retrieved 2025-01-09, <https://www.projektgutenberg.org/kleist/gedanken/chap001.html>.
- 68 "Wer – oder was – schreibt hier eigentlich?" – a sentence in the blurb of the above-mentioned volume, *Das Subjekt des Schreibens*.
- 69 Stefan George, "Entrückung" (in *Der siebente Ring*, 1907) (lack of standard German capitalization in the original), retrieved 2025-04-29, <https://www.gedichte7.de/entrueckung.html>.
- 70 Cf. the comments in Forster, "Literary Studies as Flight from Literature?", xxvii, on the "flight" from the personally challenging concreteness of literature into doctrinal abstraction.
- 71 Cf. my "Att tolka är att domesticera?", in *Beskrivning och värdering*, 101–05, and "What is an Interpretation?", in *Types of Interpretation in the Aesthetic*

Disciplines, Staffan Carlshamre and Anders Pettersson eds. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 30–51.

- 72 The translation is that of *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, s.a.).
- 73 Hedwig Dohm, "Werde, die Du bist" (1894): "Ob im Tode mein Ich geboren wird? – ob ich im Jenseits werde, die ich bin?", retrieved 2025-05-08, <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/dohm/wiedu/wiedu.html>, 33 (1–33).
- 74 See, e.g., my "The Literary Work as a Pliable Entity: Combining Realism and Pluralism", in *Is There a Single Right Interpretation?*, Michael Krausz ed. (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 211–30.
- 75 For the latter, see Weatherby, "Die doppelte Autonomie", 36.
- 76 "[N]on nobis solum nati sumus ortusque nostri partem patria vindicat, partem amici [...]", Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, book I, section 22, retrieved 2025-01-19, https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/De_officiis/Liber_I.