

A recipe for better thinking, a thought for
building, not destroying, with respect for the
good and dignity of all

Fr. Saint-Luc FÉNÉLUS



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A sine qua non condition of existence: Thought as the matrix of human existence, the fundamental ethical issue — values and limits in the existence of man as a "thinking reed."

Thought as the matrix of human existence and a fundamental ethical issue.

"Man is but a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him; a vapor, a drop of water is enough to kill him." (PASCAL Blaise, *Les Pensées*, Seuil, Paris 1943, p.63)

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2 Preface

"It is with profound honor and a deep sense of reverence that I write this preface for my dear friend Lucas's book, a heartfelt tribute to the incomparable Sr. Luisa DELL'ORTO, whose life and work left an indelible mark on the hearts of countless individuals. Both Fr. Lucas and I were fortunate to have attended Sr. Luisa teaching at the "Centre Salésien d'Enseignement Supérieur (CESADES). Her untimely departure in 2022, a tragic loss for the academic community and society at large, was a stark reminder of the fragility of life and the impermanence of human existence. Yet, even in death, Sr. Luisa's legacy lives on, a testament to the enduring power of her spirit, her unwavering dedication to teaching, and her unshakeable commitment to nurturing young minds.

As a devoted teacher of philosophy at CESADES, Sr. Luisa DELL'ORTO inspired generations of students to embark on a lifelong journey of intellectual exploration, critical inquiry, and spiritual growth. She instilled in them the profound truth, as echoed by the great B. Pascal, that "Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed." Her passion for philosophy was contagious, igniting a fire of curiosity and wonder in the hearts of all who had the privilege of learning from her. Through her tireless efforts, she empowered students to harness the transformative power of thought, cultivate empathy, and strive for wisdom in all aspects of life.

This book is a fitting tribute to her enduring impact, a celebration of her tireless efforts to empower students to think critically, live purposefully, and make a meaningful difference in the world. Because it is the fruit of the dissertation work of dear friend Father Lucas (Fr. Saint-Luc FÉNÉLUS) whom Sister-Dr. Professor Luisa DELL'ORTO, with love and professional dedication, taught with all wisdom for more than 23 years, where she reflects on the value and importance of thought in human existence, but above all, a positive thought that builds and does not destroy anything created and wants to invite everyone to this without distinction. It is our hope that Sr. Luisa's spirit will continue to inspire us to seek truth, cultivate compassion, and honor the sacred pursuit of knowledge. May her legacy be a beacon of hope, guiding us towards a brighter future,

where the pursuit of wisdom and the cultivation of humanity remain our highest aspirations.”

Mgtr. Bythovens Jerome

3 Introduction

Of all creatures, man is the most fragile and sensitive. Being part of the world, he is capable of suffering, like any other species, the pressures and effects of nature. Yet he is the only one capable of overcoming it through the power of reason. Thus, he has become the master of nature, dominating it and making it the subject of his reflections in the pursuit of the common good. Indeed, this being, however sensitive he may be, attracts everyone's attention by his positions in the universe because, once he becomes aware of the difficulties of existence, he always tries to face them with optimism, without allowing himself to be defeated by them. Therefore, through the proper use of his reason, man always seeks to achieve his goal, which is none other than the fulfillment of his destiny. In fact, through his thoughts, he seeks to give new direction to his existence. It is from this perspective that Blaise Pascal is able to assert that "Man is the weakest reed in nature, but he is a thinking reed." In other words, it is man's thoughts that characterize him. Thought is one of the most enigmatic and decisive phenomena of human existence. It is at once a biological process, a symbolic act, a social dynamic, and an intimate experience. From the earliest philosophical speculations of antiquity to contemporary neuroscience, thought is recognized as the place where meanings are woven, decisions are made, and the very possibility of a future is projected. Thinking is not simply processing information: it is interpreting the world, situating oneself in it, and guiding one's actions. In this sense, thought is not simply an attribute of humans, but the condition that makes humanity possible. Cognitive science shows that thought emerges from a complex network of interactions between perception, memory, emotion, and language. It is never neutral: it is shaped by personal history, social structures, cultural imaginaries, and normative frameworks. Philosophy, for its part, reminds us that thought is also an act of freedom, a space of responsibility, and an exercise in discernment. Between determinism and autonomy, human thought unfolds like a field of tension where the quality of our relationship with ourselves, others, and the world is played out. However, this power of thought carries with it a fundamental ambivalence. It can build, create, repair, and open up horizons of meaning and justice. But it can also destroy, fragment, alienate, or justify violence. Human history bears witness to this duality: the same cognitive abilities that enable scientific invention, moral empathy, or social cooperation can also lead to manipulation, exclusion, or the rationalization of evil. Thought is therefore a power, and like any power, it requires ethics. Choosing thought that builds rather than thought that destroys is not a spontaneous act, but a demanding process. It involves recognizing the cognitive mechanisms that guide our judgments, identifying the biases that distort our perception, and cultivating critical vigilance in the face of the narratives that shape our representations. It also requires an emotional and relational dimension: the ability to embrace vulnerability, to allow ourselves to be challenged by others, and to open ourselves to perspectives that go beyond our immediate interests. Constructive thinking is not only rational; it is also ethical, dialogical, and oriented toward human dignity. In a world marked by technological acceleration, information saturation, and social polarization, the quality of thinking

becomes a vital issue. The question is no longer just whether we think, but how we think, what we think about, and with whom we think. Developing constructive thinking means learning to discern, to connect, to add complexity without losing clarity, to resist destructive simplification, and to direct our intelligence toward life rather than domination. Thus, reflecting on the importance of thinking in human existence means questioning the very foundations of our condition: our ability to give meaning, to choose, to transform, and to coexist. It means recognizing that thought is not only a tool, but also a responsibility. And it means affirming that the future of humanity depends, in large part, on our collective ability to cultivate forms of thought that build, humanize, and open paths to justice and peace. To understand Pascal's thinking as expressed in this work, we will try to ask these questions, which will form the basic structure of our elaboration. A reading of reality shows us this fact: while light travels at a speed of 300,000 km/s, thoughts travel, so to speak, in a flash. Thought is subtler than ether, the conductor of electricity. On the radio, when a singer sings beautifully out of tune, you hear him perfectly at the same moment, at home and at his place. Everything passes through the wireless radio. Similarly, your mind is like a wireless machine. A wise person filled with peace, balance, harmony, and spiritual vibrations sends thoughts of harmony and peace into the world, which travel at lightning speed in all directions, enter the minds of other people, and produce similar thoughts of peace and harmony, thus circulating thought over time.

A man, on the other hand, whose mind is full of jealousy, hatred, and desire for revenge emits discordant thoughts that also enter the minds of thousands of people and give rise to identical thoughts of hatred and discord when they do not have a right and determined mind. If we throw a stone into a pond, a series of concentric waves are produced around the point of impact. The light of a candle produces waves of ethereal vibrations that spread in all directions from the flame. Similarly, a thought—good or bad—that crosses a person's mind gives rise to vibrations in the manas, or mental atmosphere, that travel far and wide in all directions. What, then, is the conducting agent that allows thoughts to pass from one mind to another? The best possible explanation is that the manas—or mental substance—fills, like ether, the entire space and serves as a vehicle for thoughts, just as purana is the vehicle for feelings, ether for heat, light, and electricity, and air for sound. Thus, we can move the world through the power of thought. Thought has extraordinary power. It can be transmitted from one being to another. The powerful thoughts of the great sages and rishis of old are still remembered and can be perceived and read by those who have the gift of clairvoyance. We are surrounded by an ocean of thoughts in our existence. We float in an ocean of thoughts in every moment of our being, *hic et nunc*. We absorb some of the thoughts from this world of thought and push others back into it. Each being has its own world of thoughts. Thoughts are living entities. A thought is something as solid as a stone. We will die, but our thoughts will never die. Any change in thought is accompanied by the vibration of its matter, the mind. Thought as a force needs a particular kind of subtle matter in order to function. The stronger the thoughts, the faster they bear fruit. Thought is gathered and focused on a certain point, and it is to the extent that it has been concentrated and directed that the work we wanted it to produce may or may not be accomplished.

Thought is a subtle force that comes from our very food. If you read certain authors and texts, such as the *Chhandogya Upanishad*—the dialogue between Uddalaka and Svetaketu, the thoughts of Blaise Pascal, and many others—you will understand this very well. If the food is pure, the

thoughts become pure as well. Those whose thoughts are pure speak very powerfully and make a deep impression on the minds of those who listen to them. Through their thoughts, they influence thousands of people. A pure thought is sharper than a razor's edge. Always cultivate pure and sublime thoughts. The cultivation of thought is an exact science. Those who harbor thoughts of hatred, jealousy, revenge, and malice are truly very dangerous people. They produce agitation and ill will among men. Their thoughts and feelings are like radio messages broadcast into the ether and received by those whose minds respond to such vibrations. Thought moves with extraordinary speed. Those who entertain sublime and pious thoughts within themselves help others, both those who are close to them and those who are far away. Thought has extraordinary power. It can do anything, cure diseases, transform mindsets, and perform miracles. Its speed is unimaginable. Thought is a dynamic force. It is produced by the vibrations of the psychic plane on the mental substance. It is a force, just like gravity, attraction, or repulsion. It travels and moves. In fact, what is this world? Nothing more than the materialization of the thought forms of God or of a being of another name, whether supernatural or metaphysical. In the scientific field, there are heat waves, light waves, and electricity waves. In yoga, there are also thought waves. Thought has extraordinary power. Everyone unconsciously experiences this force to a greater or lesser degree.

Great thinkers such as kings, emperors, and others in the history of thought used to send and receive messages from distant people using thought transmission. Telepathy was the first wireless telegraph and telephone service known in this world. Just as you do physical exercises and play tennis or cricket to keep yourself physically healthy, so you must keep yourself mentally healthy by radiating waves of good thoughts around you, eating satirical food, resting your mind in a way that is innocent and harmless to you, changing your mood when it is bad, relaxing your mind with good, noble and sublime thoughts, and cultivating the habit of being happy. We are not able to understand each other's views correctly. Hence the friction, disputes, and breakups that occur in an instant even between very good friends. Friendship does not last long. We should be in harmony with each other's mental vibrations and thought vibrations; only then can we understand each other easily.

Thoughts of lust, hatred, jealousy, and selfishness produce distorted images in the mind, cloud understanding, pervert the intellect, destroy memory, and cause mental confusion. Physics uses the expression "power of orientation." Although the mass of energy is there, the current does not flow. It must be connected to the magnet, and then, thanks to this power of orientation, it can flow. Similarly, mental energy that is dissipated and directed toward worldly thoughts of all kinds and without value should be redirected toward the right spiritual channels. Do not keep any useless information in your brain. Learn to "dementialize" the human mind. Unlearn everything that has been of no use to you. Only then will you be able to fill your mind with divine thoughts, and with its rays now gathered together, you will have a new mental strength within you. A cell is a mass of protoplasm and a nucleus. It is endowed with intelligence. Some cells secrete while others excrete. Thus, the cells of the testicles secrete sperm and those of the kidneys excrete urine. Other cells are like soldiers: they defend the body against attacks by microbes or foreign poisonous matter by digesting and expelling them. Still others transport food to tissues and organs. Cells do their work independently of your conscious will. The sympathetic nervous system controls their activities; they are in direct communication with the mind and brain. Every mental impulse,

every thought is conveyed to the cells. They are strongly influenced by the condition of the mind and its changing states. If the mind is prey to confusion, depression, or any other negative emotion or thought, all of this is transmitted telegraphically by the nerves to every cell in the body. The soldier cells then panic and, weakened, become ineffective and unable to perform their functions properly. Some people are extremely conscious of their bodies but have no idea about the Self. They live in an undisciplined and irregular manner, filling their stomachs with sweets, cakes, etc. Their digestive and eliminative organs therefore have no rest, and they suffer from physical weakness and various diseases.

The atoms, molecules, and cells of their bodies produce discordant and disharmonious vibrations. They have no hope, no confidence, no faith, no serenity, no cheerfulness. They are unhappy. Their life force does not function well, their vitality is very low, and their minds are filled with fear, despair, grief, and anxiety. Thought is the greatest force on this earth. It is the yogi's most powerful weapon. Positive thinking transforms, renews, and builds. The ancients knew, to perfection, how to discover and use the immense powers of this force in the highest possible way. For thought is the primary force at the origin and behind all creation. It is the origin of phenomenal creation, given entirely in a single thought that appeared in the cosmic mind. The world is the first idea made manifest. This first thought manifested as a vibration arising from the eternal immobility of the divine Essence. In classical terminology, this refers to *iccha*, the desire of *Hiranyagarbha* or the cosmic Soul, which began as a vibration or *spanda*. This vibration is nothing like the rapid, random movement of physical particles. It is something infinitely subtle, so subtle that the ordinary mind cannot conceive of it. But it is clear that all forces ultimately resolve into pure vibration. Modern science, after extensive research into modern physical nature, has recently come to the same conclusion. Every thought has its own weight, outline, dimension, shape, color, quality, and force. A yogi can see all these aspects immediately with his or her inner yogic eye. Thoughts are like things. Just as you can give an orange to a friend and take it back, you can give them a useful and powerful thought and take it back. Thought is a great force. It travels, it creates. You can perform miracles with the power of thought. You must learn the correct technique for using and manipulating a thought. Suppose your mind has become perfectly calm and empty of all thoughts. The moment a thought begins to arise, it will have a name and a form. Every thought has a certain name and a certain form. Thus you discover that every idea that man can have is necessarily linked to a word that is its equivalent. Form is the grossest state and name is the finest state of one and the same power that manifests itself and is called thought. These three elements are one: if there is one, the other two are there as well. When there is a name, there is a form and a thought. A spiritual thought is yellow.

A thought filled with anger and hatred is dark red, a selfish thought is brown. Thought is a vital, living, dynamic power the most vital, subtle, and irresistible force that exists in the universe. Through thought, you acquire the power to create. Thought passes from one person to another. It influences beings; those with powerful thoughts can easily influence those with weak thoughts. Nowadays, there are many books on the cultivation of thought, the power of thought, and the dynamics of thought. By studying them, you will know and understand what thought is, its power, how it works, and its usefulness. Thought alone is the whole world—great suffering, old age, death, and mortal sin, earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Thought chains man. He who controls his thoughts is a true god on this earth. You live in a world of thoughts. First there is thought. Then there

is its expression through speech. Thought and language are intimately linked. Thoughts of anger, bitterness, and malice harm others. If the mind, which is the cause of all thought, vanishes, external objects disappear. Thoughts are things. Hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell are the five ribs of the mind. Similarly, thought (*sankalpa*), passion, anger, servitude, and time. The mind is the king of *the indriyas*, that is, the senses. Thought is the root of all mental processes. The thoughts we perceive around us are only the mind in form or substance. Thought creates and destroys, and this can be seen throughout the history of the world. Bitterness and sweetness do not reside in objects but in the mind, in the subject, in the act of thinking: they are created by thought. Through the play of the mind or thought on objects, what is close may seem distant and vice versa. The objects of this world have no connection between them; it is thought, the imagination of the mind, that links and associates them. Similarly, it is the mind that gives color, form, and qualities to objects; it takes the form of any object it thinks about intensely. Friend or foe, virtue or vice exist only in the mind. Each person creates a world, good or bad, full of pleasure or suffering, solely through their own imagination. Good and evil, pleasure and pain do not come from objects but from your mental attitude. Nothing is good or pleasant in this world: it is your imagination alone that sees things that way. Thoughts are gigantic forces. They are more powerful than electricity. They control your life, shape your character, and build your destiny. Observe how one thought produces many others in an instant. Suppose you have the idea of inviting friends over for tea. The mere idea of "tea" instantly evokes thoughts of sugar, milk, cups, tables, chairs, tablecloths, napkins, spoons, cakes, cookies, etc. Thus, this world is nothing more than an expansion of thoughts. Extending your thoughts to objects is slavery, while renouncing thoughts is liberation. You must be very careful to destroy your thoughts as soon as they arise. Only then will you be truly happy. The mind is cunning and playful. You must understand its nature, its processes, and its habits. Then you will be able to control it very easily. The most extraordinary book on practical philosophical idealism is *Yoga*. Here is its essence: "Only the non-dualistic Brahman or immortal Soul exists. This universe does not exist as such. Only knowledge of the Self can free us from the wheel of births and deaths. The extinction of thoughts and *vasanas* is liberation (*moksha*). The expansion of the mind alone is *sankalpa*. *Sankalpa*, or thought, through its power of differentiation, produces this universe. The world is a play of the mind. This world does not exist in the three periods of time. Every thought has an image. A table is both a mental image and an external thing. Everything you see outside has its equivalent in the mind. The pupil is a small round thing in the eye and the retina is a tiny structure. How is it possible, then, that the image of a large mountain seen through such a small opening and structure can be imprinted in the mind? This is a great wonder. It is because the image of the mountain already exists in the mind. The mind is like a huge canvas that contains all the images of the objects seen. Careful reflection will show us that the entire universe is in reality a projection of the human mind. The purification and control of the mind are the main goal of all yogas. The mind itself is only a disc on which impressions are engraved, which are constantly expressed in the form of impulses and thoughts. The mind is what it does. Thought drives you to act, and action creates new impressions in the mind. Yoga combats the very source of this vicious circle by practicing a method of actual inhibition of the functions of the mind. It verifies, controls, and stops thought, which is the very function of the mind. And when thought is transcended, intuition functions and knowledge of the Self comes. Thought has the power to create or destroy the world in an

instant. The mind creates the world in accordance with its own thoughts. It is the mind that creates this universe. For it, a kalpa, a cosmic cycle, can be just a moment, and a moment can be a *kalpa*. Like a dream generating another dream within itself, the mind, which has no visible form, creates visible existences. It is the mind that is the very root, the cause of the tree of samsara with its thousands of shoots, branches, leaves, and fruits.

If you destroy thoughts, you immediately destroy the tree of samsara. Destroy thoughts as soon as they arise. Their destruction will cause the root of the tree of samsara to dry up and the tree itself to soon wither away. This requires considerable patience and perseverance. But when all thoughts are exterminated, you will bathe in the ocean of bliss. This state cannot be described; you must feel it for yourself. Just as fire is absorbed into its source when the fuel is consumed, the mind is absorbed into its source, the atman, when all sankalpas or thoughts are destroyed. Then one attains union with the Absolute (*Kaivalya*), the experience of Infinite Reality, the state of absolute independence. How can we accept such statements? What is thought? Is it unique to humans? Must one philosophize to be human? Does destiny exist? What is this destiny? And finally, what is the value of thought in human life?

Thus, in an attempt to provide some answers to these questions, we will endeavor in the following lines to provide a partial definition of man, taking into account his evolution in the animal kingdom, and to reflect on the condition of man as a reed. We will try to develop a reflection on thought, present its value in human existence in relation to destiny, and prove its fundamental nature in humans. We will analyze this concept in certain philosophers, namely Pascal and Descartes. Then, after all this, invite today's young people to think carefully with a view to promoting humanity and transforming society into a large global family where humans find joy in life. These are the reasons that motivate our desire to address this theme and which will form the core of our discussion.

4 Thought

Thought is a fundamental but deeply pluralistic concept that cuts across philosophy, cognitive science, psychology, and anthropology. In its most common sense, thought refers to "cognitive processes that occur independently of direct sensory stimulation"¹, including reasoning, judgment, reason, common sense, concept formation, problem solving, and deliberation. This attempt at a definition highlights the fact that thought cannot be reduced to perception: it constitutes an autonomous space where the mind manipulates representations, develops ideas, and constructs meaning. Cognitive science, an intrinsically interdisciplinary field, studies and analyzes thought as a set of mental mechanisms rooted in the brain that can be modeled in computational terms. As *the Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Cognitive Science* points out, philosophy of mind and cognitive science share a common interest in "the nature of the mind, its capabilities, and the processes underlying human intelligence"². This perspective highlights the biological and functional dimension of thought: it emerges from complex neural networks, mobilizing memory, attention, emotion, and language. Contemporary philosophy of mind

¹ See Samuels, R., Margolis, E., & Stich, S. (2012). Introduction: Philosophy and Cognitive Science. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Cognitive Science*. Oxford University Press. Available via Oxford Academic.

² See Samuels, R., Margolis, E., & Stich, S. (2012). Introduction: Philosophy and Cognitive Science. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Cognitive Science*. Ibid.

emphasizes, however, that thought is not a simple internal mechanism. Vosgerau and Synofzik point out that the Cartesian tradition considered thoughts to be transparent and immediately accessible data, but that this conception has been profoundly challenged: thoughts must be "subjected to critical investigation concerning the determination of their content and nature"³. This criticism shows that thought is permeated by biases, interpretations, and symbolic constructions that require reflexive analysis. Contemporary approaches also emphasize the computational dimension of thought. According to Mandik, the philosophy of cognitive science is largely based on the idea that "the mind is a computer"⁴, i.e., a system that manipulates representations according to formal rules. This conception makes it possible to model thought, but it also raises fundamental questions: can thought be entirely reduced to computational operations? What place should be given to emotion, embodiment, and culture? Given that thought is one of the most fundamental and complex concepts of human experience. It lies at the intersection of several disciplines philosophy, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, linguistics, anthropology each of which, in its own way, attempts to grasp its nature, mechanisms, and implications. Describing thought therefore requires an integrative approach, capable of articulating the biological, symbolic, social, and ethical dimensions that constitute it. Scientifically speaking, thought can be described as a set of mental processes that enable human beings to represent the world, manipulate information, solve problems, and make decisions. Neuroscience shows that it emerges from the coordinated activity of neural networks involving perception, memory, attention, emotion, and language. This perspective highlights the fact that thought is not an immaterial phenomenon detached from the body, but an embodied dynamic, rooted in the biological structure of the brain and modulated by the environment.⁵

Cognitive psychology, for its part, emphasizes the functional dimension of thought: it is a tool for adaptation, a means by which human beings organize their experience, anticipate the future, and construct meaning. It also reveals that thought is permeated by biases, heuristics, and interpretive patterns that guide our judgments. Thus, thinking is never a neutral act: it always involves interpreting, selecting, simplifying, or complicating reality. 's philosophy adds another layer of depth to this analysis⁶. She reminds us that thought is not only a mechanism, but also an act of freedom, a space for reflexivity, and a place of responsibility. To think is to relate to oneself, to question one's own assumptions, to challenge the obvious, and to open up the possibility of new meaning. Thought then becomes an ethical exercise: it can enlighten, liberate, and construct but it can also obscure, confine, or destroy. Philosophical criticism highlights this inherent ambivalence: thought is both a power of creation and a risk of distortion. Anthropology and the social sciences complete this picture by showing that thought is always situated⁷. It is shaped by the languages we speak, the collective narratives that permeate us, the institutions that structure us, and the cultural practices that form us. Thinking, therefore, also means inheriting: inheriting categories, symbols, norms, and frameworks of meaning. But it also means

³ See Vosgerau, G., & Synofzik, M. (2010). A Cognitive Theory of Thoughts. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 47(3), 217–232.

⁴ See Mandik, P. (2023). *Philosophy of Cognitive Science*. Oxford Bibliographies.

⁵ See Vosgerau, G., & Synofzik, M. (2010). A Cognitive Theory of Thoughts. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 47(3), 217–232.

⁶ See Lee, S. (2025). *Cognitive Science in Philosophy: Understanding the Mind through Interdisciplinary Research*. Number Analytics Blog.

⁷ See Samuels, R., Margolis, E., & Stich, S. (2012). Introduction: Philosophy and Cognitive Science. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Cognitive Science*.

End of Sample



Save our Planet

A recipe for better thinking, a thought for building, not destroying, with respect for the good and dignity of all

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