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## Scientification and the Crisis of Meaning: Rethinking Human Existence in the Age of Reason

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**Abstract.** Western philosophy has profoundly shaped global civilization, influencing understanding of the world. This dominance, however, presents both opportunities and challenges. This paper argues that the current paradigm of Western philosophy, rooted in modern philosophy's emphasis on rationality, has become dogmatic and ultimately selfdefeating. The pursuit of scientific knowledge, while valuable, has been driven by a narrow conception of rationality that prioritizes logic and empirical evidence while neglecting other crucial dimensions of human experience. This overemphasis on scientification, as Nietzsche argued, has led to a dehumanization of existence by reducing human life to mere rationality, disregarding the importance of narrative, historical memory, and contextual understanding. This paper will critically examine the limitations of this dominant paradigm through a review of Western philosophical thought. By highlighting internal contradictions within modern philosophy itself, we aim to demonstrate how the current emphasis on scientification has stifled the diversity and richness of philosophical inquiry. Ultimately, we argue for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to philosophy that recognizes the multifaceted nature of human experience and embraces a broader range of perspectives.

**Keywords:** Modern Western philosophy, limitations of reason, dehumanization

**Conflict of interest.** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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# Наукознание и кризис смысла: переосмысление человеческого существования в эпоху разума

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Аннотация. Западная философия внесла всеобъемлющий вклад в формирование цивилизации, оказав существенное влияние на понимание мира. Однако это доминирование представляет как возможности, так и проблемы. В этом исследовании утверждается, что нынешняя парадигма западной философии, укорененная в акценте современной философии на рациональности, стала догматичной и в конечном счете саморазрушительной. Стремление к научному знанию, хотя и ценное, было обусловлено узкой концепцией рациональности, которая отдает приоритет логике и эмпирическим доказательствам, пренебрегая другими важнейшими измерениями человеческого опыта. Этот чрезмерный акцент на сциентизации, как утверждал Ницше, привел к дегуманизации существования, сводя человеческую жизнь к простой рациональности, игнорируя важность повествования, исторической памяти и контекстуального понимания. Критически рассматриваются ограничения этой доминирующей парадигмы посредством обзора западной философской мысли. Подчеркивая внутренние противоречия внутри самой современной философии, мы стремимся продемонстрировать, как нынешний акцент на сциентизации подавил разнообразие и богатство философских исследований. В конечном счете мы выступаем за более тонкий и инклюзивный подход к философии, который признает многогранность человеческого опыта и охватывает более широкий спектр точек зрения.

**Ключевые слова:** современная западная философия, ограничения разума, дегуманизация

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### Introduction

Western philosophy has profoundly shaped global civilization, influencing our understanding of the world and constructing what we now consider "modernity." From the classical Greek thinkers like Socrates and Plato to contemporary figures like Habermas and Taylor, Western thought continues to exert significant influence [1]. However, this dominance has been accompanied by a complex and often problematic history. Post-colonial scholars, for instance, have critiqued how Western civilization has been imposed on other cultures [2], often through acts of colonization and the suppression of diverse worldviews [3]. This includes the development of concepts like race and sex, which have been used to justify systems of oppression and inequality [4]. The concept of "white supremacy epistemology" [5] further highlights how Western knowledge systems have been privileged while marginalizing other forms of knowledge. It's crucial to acknowledge that this critique does not aim to denigrate all of Western philosophy. Instead, it focuses on specific principles and practices within Western thought, particularly the emphasis on scientification and a particular conception of rationality.

Unlike many other philosophical traditions, such as those found in China or among indigenous peoples, Western philosophy has often positioned itself as the sole arbiter of truth and knowledge, dismissing other forms of thought as inferior or "non-philosophical." This self-proclaimed authority has contributed to the dominance of Western philosophical ideas and the marginalization of diverse perspectives. Furthermore, the Western definition of "science" has been heavily influenced by European and American hegemony, particularly the rise of positivism and its emphasis on empirical data and quantitative methods [6].

This approach has permeated various fields, including social sciences, sociology, and even the humanities, shaping how knowledge is produced and validated. This paper aims to critically examine this dominant paradigm within Western philosophy, particularly the concept of rationality. We will argue that this seemingly objective and universal principle can, in fact, be irrational and even oppressive. This study will begin by defining Western philosophy to establish a clear framework for analysis. Following an exploration of the core concepts within Western philosophy, we will argue that it possesses inherent ideological underpinnings. This analysis will then extend to examine the ideological nature of scientific projects, which are often informed by Western philosophical assumptions.

We contend that the concept of "scientific man," characterized by a reliance on rational epistemology, presents a limited and potentially dehumanizing view of human existence. Human life is not solely defined by rationality; it encompasses a rich tapestry of emotions, experiences, and relationships [7]. Human beings are not merely machines or cogs in a system; they are unique individuals shaped by their narratives, historical contexts, and lived experiences. The interactions between individuals and their environments, including other human beings and the natural world, contribute significantly to the formation of selfhood [8]. A truly human life acknowledges and embraces this multifaceted existence.

## Western Philosophy: A Historical Overview

Western philosophy, a rich and multifaceted intellectual tradition, traces its roots to ancient Greece. Figures like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid the foundation for subsequent philosophical inquiry, grappling with fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, morality, and the nature of reality [9]. This intellectual legacy continues to exert a profound and enduring influence on global civilization, shaping our understanding of the world and our place within it. While encompassing a diverse range of thinkers and schools of thought, Western philosophy can be broadly defined as the intellectual tradition originating in Europe. This tradition has played a pivotal role in shaping various aspects of human society, including politics, international relations, and scientific inquiry [10].

The historical dominance of Western philosophy is evident in its pervasive influence on global knowledge production. For instance, the study of International Relations often centers on Western historical narratives, overlooking the contributions and perspectives of non-Western civilizations [11]. This Eurocentric bias can lead to an incomplete and distorted understanding of global history and contemporary international relations.

In post-colonial contexts like Indonesia, the impact of Western philosophy is particularly pronounced [12]. The colonial era witnessed the imposition of European values and intellectual frameworks, including those derived from Greek philosophy. This influence is evident in various aspects of Indonesian life, from the adoption of democratic systems and legal frameworks to the shaping of economic policies and social structures [13]. For example, the ongoing debates in Indonesia regarding the balance between socialist and capitalist principles within the framework of Pancasila ideology can be traced back to the philosophical debates on justice and social order that emerged in ancient Greece and continued to evolve through thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, and Machiavelli.

While acknowledging Western philosophy's internal critiques and evolving nature, it's crucial to recognize its historical trajectory [14]. From its Greek origins, Western philosophy has undergone significant transformations, encompassing diverse schools of thought and engaging in continuous dialogue with itself. This dynamic process, characterized by reflexive thinking and critical debate, has been a defining feature of the Western philosophical tradition [15].

The relationship between Western and Eastern philosophies is complex and multifaceted [16]. While Western philosophy has often been presented as superior, it has also been significantly influenced by Eastern thought. The encounter between East and West, marked by periods of both dialogue and conflict, has enriched both traditions [17].

The rise of modern philosophy, beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, marked a significant turning point. This period witnessed the emergence of figures like Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume, who challenged traditional authority and ushered in an era of intellectual and scientific revolution [18]. The emphasis on human reason, individual autonomy, and the scientific method became defining features of modern thought. Figures like Kant, with his emphasis on human reason and self-determination, profoundly influenced Western philosophy and continue to shape our understanding of knowledge, morality, and human existence [13].

## Scientific Man and the Tyranny of Reason

The rise of modern science in the West was intertwined with a profound shift in perspective. Following the religious conflicts of the Reformation, a new kind of faith emerged: faith in "reason" itself. This emphasis on rationality, championed by figures like Descartes, Hobbes, and Hume, was seen as a means of liberation, offering a path to autonomy and emancipation from religious dogma [19]. This shift ushered in the era of the "scientific man," a figure defined by their reliance on reason, empirical evidence, and scientific methods. However, this emphasis on scientific inquiry and the rise of positivism – with its focus on measurable data and quantitative methods – gradually marginalized philosophy itself. The pursuit of scientific knowledge, while valuable, often neglects the complexities of human experience, reducing it to a set of quantifiable variables and overlooking the significance of emotions, intuition, and subjective experience [20].

As Nietzsche argued, this "scientification" of human existence can have dehumanizing consequences. By prioritizing logic and empirical evidence, it can lead to a fragmented and impoverished understanding of human life, neglecting the importance of narrative, historical memory, and the subjective dimensions of human experience [21]. Furthermore, the pursuit of objective knowledge can sometimes lead to a dangerous form of instrumental reason, where knowledge is primarily valued for its ability to control and manipulate the natural world and human behavior.

The dominance of positivism within the human sciences has further exacerbated this trend. By prioritizing quantitative methods and measurable outcomes, it has often marginalized philosophical inquiry and critical reflection. This reductionist approach, exemplified by the widespread adoption of frameworks like Bloom's taxonomy in education, can stifle creativity, critical thinking, and the exploration of more profound questions about human existence and the meaning of life [22].

Moreover, the pursuit of "objectivity" within the scientific enterprise can often lead to a form of "tyranny of reason". This occurs when the pursuit of knowledge becomes an end, driven by a desire for control and domination rather than a genuine

quest for understanding. The emphasis on standardization, measurement, and control, as exemplified by the increasing influence of neoliberal values in academia, can stifle intellectual curiosity and critical inquiry, reducing human beings to mere cogs in a system of measurement and evaluation [23].

The rise of digital technologies has further intensified this trend [24]. The increasing reliance on data collection, algorithmic decision-making, and the quantification of human behavior threatens to erode further our sense of self and our capacity for critical reflection. As human experience is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, we risk becoming mere data points, our lives, and identities shaped by algorithms and the pursuit of quantifiable metrics.

This "datafication" of human existence raises profound ethical and philosophical questions [25]. How do we ensure that the pursuit of knowledge and technological advancement serves human flourishing rather than dehumanizing us? How do we cultivate a more nuanced understanding of human experience that goes beyond the limitations of data and algorithms?

While the rise of modern science and the emphasis on rationality have undoubtedly contributed to significant advancements in human knowledge, it is crucial to recognize the limitations of this approach. A truly human existence requires a more holistic perspective that embraces the complexities of human experience, including emotions, intuition, and subjective experience. This requires a renewed commitment to critical thinking, ethical reflection, and the cultivation of human values that transcend the pursuit of mere efficiency and control.

## The Death of Philosophy: The Tyranny of Reason and the Decline of Critical Inquiry

The pursuit of a unified and totalizing rationality within Western philosophy has ironically led to its demise. This "death of philosophy", as some scholars have argued, stems from the very attempt to establish a single, overarching framework for understanding reality. The rise of modern science, with its emphasis on empirical observation and logical deduction, challenged traditional philosophical inquiries into metaphysics and ontology. Movements like logical positivism, in their attempt to establish a more rigorous and scientific foundation for knowledge, sought to exclude metaphysical claims from the realm of legitimate philosophical inquiry. This, however, inadvertently led to a narrowing of philosophical discourse, confining it to the realm of epistemology and the analysis of language.

As Adorno astutely observed, this focus on epistemology can become a form of "dogmatic knowledge", hindering rather than fostering genuine philosophical inquiry [26]. By prioritizing the analysis of knowledge claims over the exploration of broader social, cultural, and existential concerns, epistemology can become a form of intellectual self-imprisonment, confining philosophical discourse to a narrow and self-referential domain.

The Kantian project, with its attempt to reconcile subjective experience with objective reality, also highlights the inherent contradictions in the pursuit of a purely rational and objective understanding of the world. Kant's emphasis on the

subject as both the source and limit of knowledge, while groundbreaking, ultimately revealed the subject's inherent limitations. This "twofold status of the subject", as Foucault and others have pointed out, creates an inherent tension between the subject's capacity for self-determination and its inherent limitations [27].

This tension manifests in the modern scientific method, which often seeks to impose a rigid framework of objectivity onto the complexities of reality. The attempt to control and manipulate reality through the application of scientific methods, as Adorno argued, can lead to a Kant-style epistemic blockage: in which the subject's pre-given categories and conceptual schemes, inherited from Kantian philosophy, end up blocking or limiting genuine understanding of reality. Furthermore, the rise of modern technology, with its emphasis on control, manipulation, and instrumental reason, has further marginalized philosophical inquiry [28]. The technological paradigm, with its focus on efficiency, predictability, and control, has effectively replaced philosophical investigation of fundamental questions about being, existence, and the human condition.

This "technological turn", characterized by the rise of cybernetics, information theory, and artificial intelligence, has not only marginalized philosophy but also dehumanized human experience [29]. By reducing human beings to mere cogs in a system of production and consumption, and by prioritizing technological advancement over human well-being, modern society has often lost sight of the deeper meaning and purpose of human life. The increasing reliance on data collection, algorithmic decision-making, and the quantification of human behavior further exacerbates this trend [30]. The "datafication" of human existence threatens to erode our sense of self and our capacity for critical reflection. As human experience is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, we risk becoming mere data points, our lives and identities shaped by algorithms and the pursuit of quantifiable metrics.

This "tyranny of reason", driven by the pursuit of control, efficiency, and quantifiable results, not only limits philosophical inquiry but also poses significant challenges to human flourishing [31]. It can lead to a narrow and instrumental view of education, where the focus is on measurable outcomes and standardized tests rather than on cultivating critical thinking, creativity, and a deeper understanding of the human condition. In conclusion, the pursuit of a purely rational and objective understanding of reality, while a noble aspiration, has often led to unintended consequences, including the marginalization of philosophy, the dehumanization of human experience, and the rise of a "tyranny of reason" that threatens to stifle critical thinking and individual autonomy.

To overcome these challenges, we need to cultivate a more nuanced and holistic understanding of human existence, one that embraces the complexities of human experience, including emotions, intuition, and subjective experience. This requires a renewed commitment to critical thinking, ethical reflection, and the cultivation of human values that transcend the pursuit of mere efficiency and control [32]. It requires us to reclaim the space for philosophical inquiry [33], to question the dominant narratives of our time, and to explore the deeper meanings and purposes of human existence.

#### Conclusion

The undeniable dominance of Western philosophy, with its roots in Greek thought and further shaped by Jewish, Christian, and Eastern influences, has profoundly impacted global thought, including in the Global South. However, the modern era, marked by the rise of science and the emphasis on rationalism, has witnessed a narrowing of philosophical inquiry. The pursuit of objective truth through the lens of positivism and analytical philosophy has led to a dogmatic reliance on reason, often at the expense of other crucial dimensions of human experience. This "tyranny of reason", as argued earlier, creates an inherent contradiction. How can an objective truth be achieved through a subject that is inherently limited and subjective?

This pursuit of a singular, objective truth through scientific methods often leads to a dehumanizing effect. By reducing human experience to quantifiable data and measurable outcomes, it neglects the multifaceted nature of human existence, including emotions, intuition, and the subjective dimensions of human experience. True human flourishing requires a more holistic approach, one that acknowledges the limitations of reason and embraces the richness of human experience. This includes recognizing the importance of narratives, historical memory, cultural identity, and the search for meaning beyond the confines of purely rational inquiry. In conclusion, while reason plays a crucial role in human understanding, it should not be elevated to the sole arbiter of truth. A truly human life necessitates a balance between reason and other dimensions of human experience, including emotions, intuition, and spiritual and cultural values.

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