

**Name:** Luka Mikec

**Chosen Topic:** 2. ("To a wise man the whole world is open. For the whole cosmos is the fatherland of a good soul.")

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## ***Introduction***

Almost all of what I think or believe in can be summed up in two small theories. The first one, which I'll refer to as *TOG* (Theory Of Games), describes the world on social level, the level of human interaction, or "our world". The second one, which I'll refer to as *TOL* (Theory Of Levels) tries to describe the world on a metaphysical level, together with how it is even possible to talk about "social" level and "metaphysical" level. I'll present the first one in informal way: in a form of an analogy (which is also the form in which I first came across it – *TOL* is slight modification of an old story about people who attend Olympic games). The second one is more *scientific* (although not *scientific*), and is basically just a logical implication of various thoughts given by philosophers throughout the history. I generally won't be mentioning the names throughout the essay, so I'll give quick overview here of included ideas and from whom they are borrowed: Plato (existence of levels of reality), Kant (human knowledge), Kurt Gödel (a neat practical example of how levels interact) and Douglas Hofstadter (whose brilliant mind connected those, and other, philosophical ideas; the base idea of existence of more than one level in *TOL* is the same as the base of Hofstadter's ideas, *TOL* just adds a few philosophical details). This essay will try to connect few somewhat distant topics (mainly the *TOG* and *TOL*), and hopefully, by doing so, give a good base to agree with the content of topic's quote: "To a wise man the whole world is open. For the whole cosmos is the fatherland of a good soul."

## **Games?**

Let's assume a football match is about to occur in a field surrounded by the fence. Who will be in/around the field? The players, of course. It's they who the match is about. Then, their managers, team presidents and so on. Then, the viewers who buy tickets for seeing the match and cheer for their favorite teams. Finally, there will be those who will be near the field, who will know about the match, but won't play, be part of teams in any way, nor part of cheering crowd. The first came for fame, the second for the money, the third for the fun. What about the forth? They are passing by the fence, occasionally looking at the field (through the fence) and see what's going on. They don't have deep emotions connected with the game (football match) itself, since they are not really affected by what's going on in the field. They might have sympathies for an element of a game or person in the field (perhaps their children are around cheering for their favourite team, and they (parents) want their children to have a good time). But they understand it's just a game. I'm talking, of course, about philosophers.

## **Levels?**

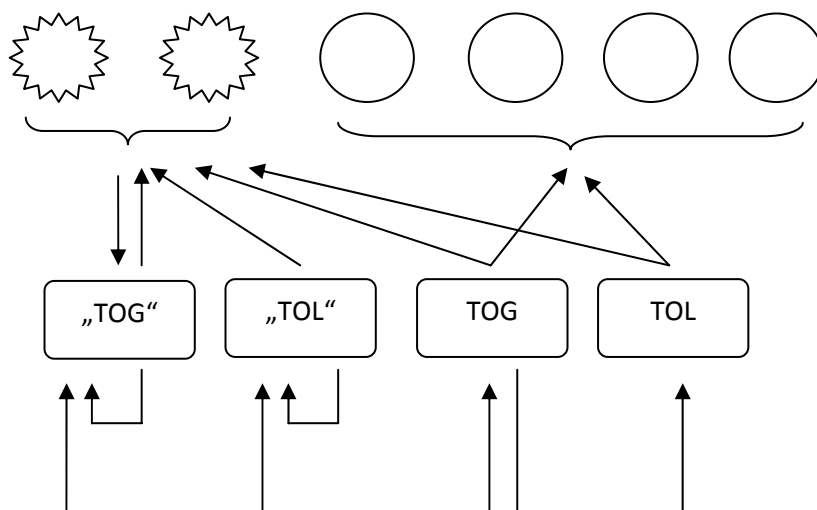
Existence is a tricky thing. There's no need to argument on that proposition, it's enough to take a look in any book on history of philosophy and see how much has been said (and denied) about existence.

To demonstrate *TOL* (which sums what I basically believe in regarding some metaphysical and epistemological conundrums), I'll use an analogy of a mind. How is it possible that a mind (and especially self-consciousness) comes from neurons? It obviously is possible (actually this physicalistic view of mind is not a proven fact, so mind might be a result of more than just neurons, but I don't have time to give details of my opinion on this matter –in short: I don't think non-physicalistic theories are probable to be true because they don't make any improvement in understanding of mind and yet introduce new unexplained variables – Occam's razor is on physicalism's side). But how

can atoms “be” thoughts? My answer is: nothing in this world exists on just one level. Neurons, or better: the thing that is on one level seen as neurons, can be seen on other levels. One of those levels is our conscious level. On one level, neurons really are thoughts. However, I don’t like the sound of sentence “neurons are thoughts”. Rather, both thoughts and neurons (with their interactions) are the same thing seen on different level. Since they are the same thing, they share certain connections. In the language of (meta)mathematics, they are isomorphic, that is a property A in level  $L_1$  has it’s cousin property B in level  $L_2$ , and A and B are connected with function (in mathematical sense of the word function; that is – there is a rule that “converts” A to B and, for some combinations of A and B, vice versa). The exact form of the function depends on mathematics we use, since no rule states that all levels share same mathematics. To make another analogy here, let’s think of human organism. If certain molecules move in a right (or better said: *wrong*) way in blood stream, they might block blood from flowing and cause death. Thus the property of atom position in level of particles is, by some (very complex) function, connected with the property of being alive (this property is, for example, on the level of living world). Sometimes levels are similar and connections are easily observed. I like to think about this property of level- similarity by imaging levels to be lines in coordinate system, where the angle between determines the similarity.

## TOG-TOL relation?

Why is TOL so important in this topic? I’ll try to show this by drawing a graphical analogy of relationship between TOG, TOL and people (the analogy will do a bit of cruel generalization for the sake of simplicity; and might also imply that people who don’t share my ideas aren’t philosophers at all, which is in no way my opinion nor intention). Star-like drawings are philosophers, spikes representing their thirst for understanding. Circle-like objects represent other people. Arrows mean “affect” ( $A \rightarrow B = A$  affects  $B$ ). TOG/ TOL without quotation marks represent the facts contained in TOG/TOL; “TOG” and “TOL” represent the one’s knowledge of TOG and TOL. (Distinction is made because, for example, the Sun itself affects all people, but knowledge that Sun exists affects only those possessing that knowledge).



(the long horizontal bottom line comes from TOG and points to all four rectangular objects; notice how everything in this picture is affected by TOG – in fact, something important isn’t drawn: the arrows themselves are affected by TOG; however it would take a long time to draw infinite number of arrows (every new arrow requires another arrow))

What I tried to show on this picture is that philosophers are people who are trying to understand the base mechanism of the world (TOG) (to be more precise, if using Aristotle's sense of the words "form" and "content", they are trying to understand the form of the base mechanism of the world). Regular people (even scientist, who deal with important questions but are not trying to understand the wholeness) are affected by the world, but they miss the TOL, they miss the complete understanding. They are stuck in their closed level loops. Limitation of any type is inability to transcend given problematic level. And since "regular" people are in one-way loop (which doesn't make them less worthy, but perhaps makes their lives harder), they can't transcend their limitations. Philosophers might not have definite answers, but they are in the loop of understanding (understanding the wholeness of the world, the meaning of "existence" (the meaning of the word, not in the sense "why we exist?", which is a different problem), and thus the fact that importance of any phenomenon is completely relative to level we are looking from).

What I tried to do up to this point is describe some of my opinions on what I believe the world, the society and the philosophy are. I already gave implicit argument for this essay topic's quote. But I think it is important to emphasize it: Firstly, the openness of the world doesn't refer to anything like "the world is opened for us, we can get in and take money, fame, whatever we want". Rather, I think of openness as "how much can I comprehend this world, how much can I be in *phase with the world*, how much of this world's true beauty can I discover". Not to be discriminating towards the ones who disagree with TOL, I'll introduce a group of theories SIFAI-TOLOTT, which will stand for "Similar in Form and Ideas - to Theory Of Levels Theory Type". Basically, I believe *the wise* are those who point their efforts in the direction of understanding the wholeness, regardless of whether they are TOL supporters. Establishing contemplative life and soul peace is, I believe, possible with TOL-like views. Similar ideas can, in fact, be found not only in western philosophy, but also in eastern philosophy which is often (without any reason at all) thought of as purely-dogmatic and anti-philosophical. Buddhistic philosophy, for example, has metaphysics similar to that of Plato, and epistemology similar to Kant's. Understanding the relativity of things we see (because in a given moment, we can only see things in one level of their existence) enables us not to worry about them, since what we are (regardless of what it is) is much deeper than manifestation given in a material world. I think that Buddhistic metaphysics in general is one of the cleanest and best-argued theories in the whole SIFAI-TOLOTT.

## Positive nihilism?

I'll make a slight digression from the topic, to talk about nihilism. A quick remark since the word nihilism is used in many different meanings: I'll use the word "nihilism" to refer to the view that says "everything we know of is meaningless", or more precisely "No process-doer we know does any process that has purpose." This proposition follows from TOL. Because all we see is just one of many ways of looking at things, and even knowing of TOL doesn't make it possible to actually know all the ways, any apparent purpose exists only in one, or at best in few<sup>1</sup>, level. However, universally ("unilevelly") speaking, purposes do not exist.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "few" is used in set theory's way at looking at set sizes; so a set A can have fewer elements than B even if both are infinite in size (so a set of natural numbers has fewer elements than a set of real numbers)

I believe nihilism is positive because it opens the world (“opens” in an already described meaning of the “openness”). It helps us to transcend problems of any sort by knowing that at the end of the day (or life), it doesn’t really matter if everything went the way we planned (nihilists, contrary to popular belief, can have plans and act in a way that will lead to fulfilling a goal – for example, a hedonistically oriented nihilist will want to enjoy him/herself purely because enjoying feels good, even if enjoyment as such is meaningless and without (intrinsic) purpose).

Nihilism is also “positive” in another sense: nihilistic world-view it is the result of almost any positivism-like philosophy (which is any philosophical system that has ideas similar to principle of verification, that only sentences that can be checked are sentences at all). That doesn’t mean any nihilism is a product of positivism, but the link between the two is so strong that I believe no harm is done by calling nihilism “positive” in that sense. Whether TOL can be checked (and by that, whether nihilism can be *checked*) is very hard question. Whatever is the answer, TOL does seem to provide us with interesting possible explanation of self-consciousness. Also, it is fully consistent with discoveries in logic and philosophy of mathematics of the last century: The core idea behind Gödel’s incompleteness theorems is that mathematical statements can be seen on at least 2 levels, and neither of these levels is in any way more real than other.

## A good soul?

Instead of summing up the previous paragraphs, I’ll try to answer what wisdom is. How does one become wise? It’s not enough to be a philosopher, since that word is today used in too much senses, and some of them – including all sciences (because of their particularistic nature) – don’t have direct connection with wisdom. I don’t think such areas of philosophy they are less worthy (in fact, I started exploring the philosophy because of them). But to be truly wise is to not just to have noble philosophical thoughts (although it is necessary), but to *follow* own philosophy. That is, to make practice no different from theory. This is truly hard in today’s society, where the people corresponding to TOG’s forth type of people are considered illusionist or fanatics. However, if one does manage to connect the two – practice and theory – he will be able to lead a contemplative life filled with compassion for others – understanding my “self” is not different from self of others makes one less egoistic. The path of such philosopher is a path for becoming a good soul, for becoming a true child of the universe whose mind doesn’t oppose the nature but flows with the nature knowing it is a part of it. And the universe, unlike often egoistic, over demanding and compassionless human beings is a parent to whom being a child is hard to resist.