0. Prologue

'To understand an author's meaning all contradictory passages must be reconciled. [...] Every author has a meaning which reconciles all contradictory passages, or else he has no meaning at all.'

Blaise Pascal

Synopsis: *A political philosophy of information places information and its processing at the epicentre, perceiving everything as information and all life as information processing (1); The two basic premises of this political philosophy (2); Why a political philosophy of information? (3); The decline of the Westphalian state (4); Why now? The digital world (5); The three (informational) milestone moments in humanity's development (6); The owl of Minerva (7); A God-like, Genesis moment for humans (8).*

1. *

A political philosophy of information places information and its processing at the epicentre, perceiving everything as information and all life as information processing. Using this lens, this philosophy examines Beings and Things, placing a special focus on humans' states. This is because it assumes a common, informational basis between states and humans, a common, unbreakable link between them based on information and its processing. This concerns the entire breadth and also the bare basics of their existence, from their coming into life until their end.

2. *

Two basic premises underlie this political philosophy of information: (a) states are information platforms for their citizens, and (b) (only) humans need to augment their information processing.

3.

Why a political philosophy of information? In order to understand the transition from the analogue to the digital world that is currently taking

place, we first have to understand, to make sense of the analogue—from an informational perspective. We first need to understand why and how things around us are as they are, before projecting what we know, and what we expect to find, onto the digital world.

4. The decline of the Westphalian state*

A popular question over the past 50 years has been whether the modern state (modern, in the meaning of the type in which we currently live, which was formed around 1650 in theory by Hobbes and in practice by the Peace of Westphalia) is dead. This of course assumes tacitly that the state is something artificial, something that can die. In this way the question became a given. The state, however, can never come to an end, or die, because it is, as will be seen, natural to humans. In other words, as long as humans exist, their states will also exist.

5. Why now? The digital world*

The questions on why and how states were formed have arisen most pressingly in periods of political upheaval. Plato formed his theory in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War; Aristotle when the first kingdom subjugated all the city-states of ancient Greece; Cicero during the transition between the Res Publica and the Roman Empire; St Augustine at the point of the demise of Imperial Rome and its replacement by Christianity; Machiavelli while new kingdoms, empires and city-states struggled for sovereignty in medieval Europe; Hobbes when civil war to change the form of government cost thousands of human lives (including a ceremoniously executed king); the writings of Locke and Rousseau supported the American and French revolutions; and those of early and mid-20th century philosophers' dealt with Fascism and Communism.

In other words, these questions have never arisen pressingly during easy times. On the contrary, it is during times of social, political and financial disruption that these questions are asked (notwithstanding the two cardinal mistakes made by all of the above: first to consider the state artificial and not natural to humans; and second, to confuse the state with its government).

Are ours difficult times too? While today war, in terms of bloodshed and physical despair, may be relatively limited if compared to the above

circumstances, it is the advent of the digital world that has brought change. The digital world has brought about an unprecedented challenge to all of humanity's known ideas and beliefs as formed over the thousands of years past.

However, in order to make a jump, and discuss the digital world, one first needs to take a step back.

6. The three (informational) milestone moments in humanity's development*

Ever since humans first walked the earth, three milestone moments occurred until now, at least from an informational point of view (the first one, admittedly, undocumented):

– The first occurred when humans started talking to each other using language and acquired self-consciousness, perhaps more than 200.000 years ago. As will be seen, this is when the state first emerged.[1]
– The second occurred when writing was invented, some 5.000 years ago (agriculture preceded it, around 12.000 years ago; however, it only affected sustenance, not information processing). At this point humans leaped forward to increase exponentially their information processing capabilities; states took form in the analogue world, becoming transactional and territorial.[2]
– The third milestone, the advent of the digital world, occurred only recently, a few decades ago: We can place it, schematically, in the year 2000, although it had been in full swing for a couple of decades before that. However it was in the year 2000 AD that this milestone took centre stage for humanity.

The creation of the digital world by humans changed everything: nothing remained the same. Like the other revolutionary moments above, the digital world has changed each and every assumption humans have been living with since they first walked the earth. Everything needs to be seen in a new light, everything needs to be re-examined and reassessed.

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1 See Chap. 7.
2 See Chap. 9, par. 5.

7. The owl of Minerva*

As with the owl of Minerva, new light has only been cast on the state with the falling of dusk, that is, with the unprecedented challenge to the state caused by the arrival of the digital world. Although the state has been an information platform for its citizens since the beginning of time, it is only now that its true nature can be discerned. It is this new light, brought by the digital world, that has made the creation of this political philosophy possible.

8. A God-like, Genesis moment for humans

Returning, then, to the question asked above (why now?[3]), the answer is the emergence of the digital world. There is some urgency to resolving questions about the analogue world, because humanity is reaching a God-like, Genesis moment (in the absence of any other more suitable term): the creation of an entirely artificial, new reality, whose shaping lies entirely in its hands.

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3   In par. 5.