**I Wander therefore I Become: On Wandering and Language generators.**

**Summary:**

Language generators (like ChatGPT) are at the forefront of the artificial intelligence revolution. The article aims to examine how language generators (LGs), as opposed to regular web search engines (WSEs) (such as Google), constitute a paradigm shift in the relationship between human agency and knowledge. The discussion excludes conceptual questions, such as the nature of artificial intelligence, and does not deny the usefulness of LG. Instead, it focuses on the way these technologies shape subjectivity and agency.

The perspective used in the article's discussion is that of wandering. The article argues that web search embodies the idea of wandering, while language generators make wandering more challenging. The primary technical basis for this claim is that web search produces a list of websites, which, even if in practice are often driven by external interest (usually economic), still retain the possibility of excluding a section of the list based on personal choice. The search algorithm provides a set of digital sites that share some linguistic similarity with the asked question or literal string, thus offering a kind of clue, while maintaining enough open space for creating a journey. In contrast, at least on its face, LGs answer a specific question (prompt) and provide an appropriate, final, and absolute answer. When the answer is insufficient, the prompt can be rephrased and articulated, but it is articulation, not wandering.

This claim is clarified through a phenomenological investigation of various characteristics that exist in wandering, both in its common expressions — such as in the city, library, or the neighborhood — and more forcefully and digitally, in the practice of online information search. The phenomenological discussion is primarily shaped in light of Martin Heidegger's exploration of the meaning of *being in the world*, as well as by other thinkers who have dealt with the question of space, including Baudelaire, Benjamin, Husserl, Phillips, Malpas, and Perec. The article then examines wandering characteristics, such as world, space, environment, place, involvement, projection, randomness, alienation, time, purposefulness, and disruption. These characteristics reflect the complexity that wandering poses for subjectivity and agency, elements that are absent from language generators and, therefore, impair the shaping of exploratory subjectivity.

**Introduction**

In The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, Charles Baudelaire describes the *fl*âneur (the urban wanderer):

For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, amid the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. [[1]](#footnote-1)

It is essential to note that this profound quote encompasses a multitude of hidden contrasts of wandering: individuality versus the crowd, inside versus outside, feeling at home versus getting lost, seeing versus being hidden. Wandering, which people intuitively perceive, at first glance, as a casual or banal human practice, becomes here a carnivalesque performance of subjectivity. In the article, I aim to explore how many characteristics of wandering persist in digital wandering. And to add on this, to distinguish between the use of web search and the use of a language generator. That is, I would like to use the perspective of wandering to examine the difference in meaning created in the transition from web search to language generators following the AI revolution.

This article aims to examine and confirm Baudelaire's description by discussing the significance of the increasing shift in the use of language generators in our lives (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude). I do not intend to argue for the ineffectiveness of language generators or the moral problems that this raises. For the lay user (and most of us are), LGs are a mystery, but a mystery that works. The starting point of the discussion is a functional-pragmatic perspective; it is impossible to ignore the way LGs effectively implement what is required of them. Therefore, from this point of view, and without setting limits on other perspectives, it is an intelligence. The article assumes that over time, LGs will increasingly prove to be tools that greatly facilitate human daily existence, certainly in the context of humans seeking knowledge and shortcuts. As an academic, for example, LG allows us to identify key articles, receive summaries of articles and ready-made presentations, save us from endless wanderings in library catalogs, and find key quotes, among other benefits. In this respect, the present article does not come to argue that there is no future for language generators or that there is something fundamentally wrong with LGs, but to say that the way LGs are used, some practices – involved in wandering - that are "essential" to human subjectivity get lost; the argument is essentially ontological, how LG's, restructure the subjectivity and human agency. Of course, such an ontology has ethical, political, economic, and other implications and decisions, but first, we must clarify the ontology.

By agency, I mean the way the verb 'to know' refers not only to the mental and passive dimension of a consciousness that absorbs information and knowledge, but also to the active, experiential, existential dimension of a knowing consciousness: investigating, asking, intending, acting, choosing, participating, and creating. As Hannah Arendt points out, only "in word and deed do we **introduce ourselves** into the human world, and this entry is like a second birth, in which we affirm and accept upon ourselves the raw fact of our original physical appearance.[[2]](#footnote-2) [3]" Only "when someone speaks and acts, he implicitly **reveals** **who he is** .". [[3]](#footnote-3) In this, "introducing" or "revealing" is not a description of what becomes of the world, but what becomes of the self.

The article will examine the significance of the operation of LGs, mainly when it comes to conventional search in online search engines (such as Google ). In other words, the discussion will distinguish between two digital technological phenomena: a regular online search with a code word that brings up "countless" sites for search and reference, compared to a question to the language generator that brings up one "closed," "final," "complete" answer. From this perspective, the article does not view WSE as a paradigmatic shift in research, but rather as a technical refinement. On the other hand, LGs constitute a paradigmatic change in study and subjectivity. That is, the article is not essentially anti-technological as it claims that while LGs diminish human agency, digital search engines may maintain and even empower agency.

One of the central characteristics of modern technology, certainly digital and networked technology, is the erasure of distance, both in terms of time and space. It is a technology that bypasses the geographical space separating people and institutions, and it also reduces the time required for communication between them to zero. In this article, I will demonstrate that beyond these two erasures, another erasure begins to occur. Language (knowledge) generators erase the space of experience, the wandering experience that exists in the acquisition of knowledge, one that still exists in network search. In other words, if the previous two erasures exist in the world outside the network, then within the network itself, a new erasure process is taking place: the networked wandering space.

**Why Phenomenology?**

Wandering is a daily life phenomenon, a human phenomenon; all of us wander at some point. It has no specific discipline of its own. It is unlike describing the meaning of a scientific law by a philosopher of science, who must involve scientific language, be familiar with the way scientists work, the questions that drive their work, and so on. The same goes for law, morality, epistemology, and so on. Not that there is no wandering in those areas; the opposite is true: wandering cuts across all disciplines and activities, from recreational ones to professional ones. That is why when we took it upon ourselves to examine it, we needed to start with an overall human perspective. As Moran writes, "The life-world is the general structure which allows objectivity and thinghood to emerge in the different cultures. " Let me add different disciplinary languages. [[4]](#footnote-4) Phenomenology asks for a way to discuss things without caging ourselves to a specific disciplinary language.

Let us consider technology. When a technological phenomenon occurs, a sense of inferiority naturally arises in the non-scientific subject, and surely, the way AI technology has entered our lives more than any other technology in the past gives us such a feeling. How can one talk about such a complex technological phenomenon that few (including many of those who come from the field of computer sciences) have an understanding of how the "demon in the machine" works? However, the phenomenological method approaches things differently. As Edmund Husserl noted, scientific analysis, in terms of cause and effect or objective truth, casts the phenomenon in a way that differs from how humans perceive their life-world. One can indeed seek the answer for that in asking whether the technology works - and for this purpose, various tests can be conducted, including empirical, technological, and outcome-based ones - but the given answer can only provide an instrumental response to an instrumental question, nothing more. Phenomenology, however, "brackets" (suspends) the techno-scientific language, since it is foreign to human experience, and more than that, it primarily does not shape our sense of subjectivity. Thus, many of us drive a car without understanding the physics, yet we still have our ways of describing and communicating that experience. That is, human experience must be examined through the manner and language in which the subject encounters, interprets, and communicates it.[[5]](#footnote-5). What we seek is meaning, how the phenomenon is reflected in human subjectivity.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Yet, it is not only a question of what phenomenology, as an overall perspective, aims at; wandering is a pivotal phenomenon for understanding how subjectivity arises from an involved subject-object relationship. Following Husserl and Brentano, phenomenology recognized that every act of thought is always about something (intentionality).[[7]](#footnote-7) Thus, Husserl writes: " In perception something is perceived, in imagination something is imagined, in a statement something is stated, in love something is loved, in hate hated, in desire, desired, etc.".[[8]](#footnote-8) Martin Heidegger, in his monumental work *Being and Time*, continues this line of thought and critiques the classical Cartesian position that erects a barrier between the thinking self (cogito) and the world of objects. [[9]](#footnote-9) Heidegger claims shows that there is a relationship that merges man with the world, between thought and objects, one cannot be perceived without the other, one enganges the other; It is important to note that the encounter with the object is not only an encounter with its sensory qualities (shape, material, smell) but primarily with the social meanings embedded in it. The article's premise is that subjectivity, first of all, is constituted from action in space, whether it is the public sphere (Baudelaire) or digital space, and not from internal conscious activity or passive absorption, as we would semantically expect from this concept. That is, practical-public dimensions shape subjectivity, in the case of our discussion: digital technology.

It is also important to remember that from a phenomenological perspective, the encounter with technology, as an increasingly central part of the life-world, is not an encounter with a passive or instrumental object. As the postphenomenologist Don Ihde puts it, Technology "here is not “object-like.” It is a means of experience, not an object of experience in use. I have formalized this relationship as: (human-technology) —> environment. The artifact is symbiotically “taken into” my bodily experience and directed toward an action into or upon the environment". [[10]](#footnote-10) But if the medium establishes consciousness, then technology with specific characteristics establishes a consciousness that matches these specific characteristics. Ihde calls this a relational ontology, as "technologies transform our experience of the world and our perceptions and interpretations of our world, and we in turn become transformed in this process."[[11]](#footnote-11) As Heidegger puts it, "We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed ."[[12]](#footnote-12) Consider, for example, how availability has changed due to applications like WhatsApp. Such availability produces phenomena like FOMO (fear of missing out), in which we find ourselves opening our smartphones every few minutes to check whether we've missed something important in our lives, thereby immersing ourselves more and more in a normal state of anxiety and tension. Such a technological encounter leads to a situation in which technology becomes more and more mobile, and mobile technology evolves into, as McLuhan predicated, more and more "the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society' much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media". [[13]](#footnote-13)Thus, many people insist on placing their smartphones in their back pockets; otherwise, it is as if they are forgetting part of their body. To summarize, in an era saturated with technology, there is no longer a person, but a person-technology. Now we can understand the relevance of wandering to the discussion: wandering is a central human practice for encountering objects, a general encounter that centers on walking from object to object with a certain pause, observing and perhaps investigating, and possibly reflecting, and then moving on to the next object.

Both a language generator and a web search are digital technologies, but a web search technically contains within it a disposition to provide a list of sites or options within which we wander. In contrast, a language generator claims to offer a final object (an answer). In other words, a web search allows for wandering more easily; this is its default, while a language generator's default is a single answer. These are not just technical differences but two different moods (*Stimmung*).[[14]](#footnote-14) Each offers a distinct way of observing reality, interpreting it, and being influenced by it, while also influencing it in a particular manner. A language generator expresses a mindset of a true and final answer to a question, while wandering offers a perspective of inquiry, revelation, and pause. Language generators intentionally avoid wandering, where the action of gathering into a narrative disappears in favor of the super-algorithm.

Before we delve into the heart of the article, here are two seemingly unrelated stories that inspire this discussion.

**First story**: Philosopher Robert Nozick describes the following machine, which he calls the "experience machine": "Imagine a machine to which we are connected by electrodes, a machine with the help of which we are available throughout our lives to various pleasant satisfactions that have nothing to do with external reality, a kind of constant feeling of pleasure". Most people, according to Nozick, would oppose such a life experience. They would prefer a life of choice, effort, decision, and responsibility, even though failures, disappointments, and other challenges will accompany this. It is important to us that this life be **ours. [[15]](#footnote-15)**

**Second story:** A faculty member presented various artificial intelligence apps to students and lecturers in one of the faculty meetings. One of the lecturers could not contain her excitement and told us how one of these tools saved her the entire process of planning a trip abroad. Setting goals, when and how to get to the destination, how much time to devote to it, what to do in each place, where to eat, and so on. A week of preparations, conversations with the partner, arguments, disagreements, apparent agreements, and compromises. All this only to discover that in real-time, things did not turn out so accurately: the "manual" planning messed up all sorts of things, and it was necessary to improvise, cope, be disappointed, be surprised, and so on. Now, a small request from the language generator solves all this; it produces a "perfect" plan, and even if something messes up, it is the LG's responsibility.

**Characteristics of Wandering**

So, what is there in wandering if we want to break it down phenomenologically?

**Wandering space**: A space is an area that is bounded in some way. For example, a room is bordered by four walls and a door. But that still does not make it a wandering space. For a space to become a possible wandering space, it must contain an array of internal points that allow for wandering between them. Such a space does not have to be a physical or geographic location. A library is a wandering space, but text is also a wandering space, and so is memory. In this respect, web search produces an initial wandering space, an array of sites that are bounded by the narrowing search terms. A narrowed wandering space is an environment. An environment is a wandering space that is narrow enough to allow wandering and familiarization. It is difficult for a country to be a space for wandering because it requires special wandering technology (a car, for example), and even then, the actual wandering takes place when one gets out of the vehicle and wanders around on foot. But what happens to the environment after becoming familiar with it? Does it stay the same?

**Throwness**: In his discussion of how humans exist in the world, Heidegger points to how we perceive our existence as 'being-in-the-world'. But the term' world' can be confusing. Even when we perceive the way of existing, acting, and being as closely connected in the "world," the term' world' does not function for us in its semantic sense as the Earth as a whole. '*World'* in 'Being-in-the-world' refers to how we are thrown into a particular environment (community, country, language, tribe, family, settlement, culture). This environment is not global but local and not necessarily physical. The concept of 'world' is nothing more than a metaphor for the environment (in *German*, *Umwelt*). "My world is as narrow as the world of an ant," writes the Hebrew poet Rachel. In this statement, Rachel expresses a paradox. On the one hand, "narrow" expresses a cramped, limited, and confined space, certainly in its analogy to "ant," and yet it is a "world."; there is nothing beyond it; it is full as full can be. The sense of the worldliness of my local being depends on my ability to baptize all its components and be involved in them to the point where they become "my world." And this can only exist in a specific locality. Wandering can only begin when the space is narrowed enough for the possibility of wandering, mental or otherwise. After all, to wander means to touch, get close, be near, and linger. Sometimes, my private room is enough; sometimes, it's the neighborhood or the library; sometimes, it's a text; and sometimes, it's memories.

The object 'article' in the academic habitus illustrates this well. When writing an article, the author does not strive to find all the points of reference (bibliography) that touch on the topic of his discussion, but instead strives for a limited group of items that help reflect his narrow point of view. He aspires for *his* environment.

Paraphrasing the digital world, the overall 'world' is the network (World Wide Web), which is the basis for the acronym WWW. Still, we never encounter the network as a whole beyond being a hidden and vague abstract term. A web search simulates a similar process; it allows one, to a large extent, to create a space of points linked in a certain way, one's way. We should remember that the web was based on the principles of a public system that is open to all, decentralized, and lacking hierarchy or control. [[16]](#footnote-16) Thus, every WSE cuts out a section, a minor web, that also maintains these web principles, which enables wandering. On the other hand, LGs strive for a global search that allegedly yields a comprehensive and final answer. LG bypasses the idea of environment and wandering.

However, even when we have an environment, it is still an environment to which we were thrown; it is not yet "my" environment. Even when we have an environment, it is an environment into which we were thrown; it is still not "my" environment. It is not "home" for me, but the opposite; it is homelessness. As Young describes it in his commentary on Heidegger, it is a mood in which a person finds himself exiled, lost, and alienated. 'Being-thrown' means precisely that; we are part of a state of action in which we are passive, we have no choice before being thrown (we can think of the exiled person as an example of this), and therefore, the sense of home cannot exist. However, precisely such a mood brings with it an understanding, and subsequently, a push to create a place within the environment; it is not possible to create an environment that is "mine" without a prior feeling or understanding of homelessness. For "my" environment to be created, the points must be linked actively. Only then will it stop being a vague environment and become *a place*. As Malpas, a leading researcher of Heidegger's question of space, describes *place*: "[open] region within which a variety of elements are brought to light through their mutual interrelation and juxtaposition within that region. [[17]](#footnote-17)What defines a *place* is a look inward and outward, from the objects within the space to its boundaries.

In other words, what defines the place is precisely a look that connects the inside to the outside, from the objects inside the space to its boundaries. A study becomes such not because of its four walls or the "study" sign hanging on the door, but because of the objects inside it that we have placed and that "talk" geometrically to each other (the desk, the computer, the bookshelves and books around it, the desk chair, the reading lamp). Only then does it transform from an abstract room into a particular room.

An environment can be mine in the legal-proprietary sense; 'This is my house,' we say, and point to the real estate agent on the map, effectively indicating that the house belongs to me. Legal, proprietary. However, we also acquire an attitude of "mine" in other ways. 'This is my house,' we say to a friend who comes to visit, and usually, we do not intend the possessive or legal context but rather a different psychological affiliation. In the psychological sense, 'this is my house' means the opposite, 'I belong to the house'; I define myself through the house. I belong to it because I have immersed myself in the house and its objects, imbuing them with my private meanings; I have become a part of it. Let us consider, for example, the student who carved their name on the desk in class; this action expresses the student's way of bonding with the classroom environment. From then on, the self undergoes a renewed association with the classroom framework. This attitude does not allow us to escape the fact that what enables the expansion of the self is the way we engage objects in the environment, and the way this carves itself in memory. It is not for nothing that we choose to carve a signature (on a tree, on a school desk); it is symbolic, maybe even has a psychological meaning, for doing just that.

These objects acquire meanings through this interaction. Being involved means taking action on things, but at the same time, letting things be within us. It is to create a relationship where the boundary between 'I' and the world (place) dissolves, the world is what I am, and I am what it is.[[18]](#footnote-18) Let us consider, for example, a person's initial encounter with their new home. At first, everything seems strange and distant; the kitchen feels like a new country, walking up the stairs is cautious, and the furniture is a collection of indistinguishable objects. This changes over time until the moment when it is already 'my home,' not in the legal sense as we discussed earlier, but in the sense that links it to the self (selfhood)—the moment the kitchen gives a feeling of warmth, an area that gathers the family. We move automatically on the stairs; our eyes get used to recognizing every object in the space, and we miss that moment in the evening when we sank into the cozy armchair.

The world is an environment with physical characteristics, such as cartographic features (e.g., city quarters). Still, its existential power is not based on physical attributes, which are subject to scientific, mathematical, or technological analysis and expression, but rather on the relationship between this environment and myself, leading to the establishment of the inner-mental world (the neighborhood in contrast).

And suppose we convert to the world of information. In that case, we search for a subject in the library catalog using a specific keyword, retrieve a massive list of items, and then filter it by relevance, year of publication, language, a particular thinker, and so on. Here, I find an interesting passage that brings up an association that motivates me to preserve this item. Another one seems irrelevant, and I discard it. Another item looks vague and strange, yet it still raises my attention, and I preserve it, and so on. A list comes to life, and it is ours; metaphorically, it becomes a bibliographic "neighborhood."

But does wandering have a logic, a rationale, that guides the movement from site to site?

**Randomness**: When we speak of a person wandering, we mean that there is no defined path, one that has a predetermined starting and ending point, no efficient or hierarchical path, and indeed no algorithm that directs it. The idea of the network was built in advance, precisely on this logic of managed disorder. Everything is connected to everything; one can reach anywhere from anywhere, meaning there is no predefined hierarchy between the points. In this respect, the digital network has oriented itself from the beginning as a rhizome. Web search does not break the structure and logic of this rhizome, but at most, reduces the web environment in terms of complexity, management, and practicality. In practice, we obtain a linear list of points (sites) as a result, and although often oriented towards network interests, we do not have to follow this order of points. Language generators, on the other hand, strive for a global ("worldly") scan and finding a satisfying one comprehensive answer; it bypasses, out of efficiency, and gives satisfaction to the idea of environment and wandering.

It is worth noting that there is a significant distinction between natural exile and exile resulting from digital wandering. Natural exile is forced upon us by certain circumstances. We are born into a community, into a language, perhaps experiencing an involuntary exile. Malpass points out that the public structures into which we are thrown are pre-existing structures with their internal order and orientation; there is an order that imposes itself, a ready-made equipment, as Heidegger puts it, and we, as subjects, must find ourselves within them. The city has a predefined structure, the city library is arranged in a certain way, and the office building was built according to a plan that also significantly defines our ability to "walk" within it. In all these cases, the wandering is forced upon us in a certain way. However, there are also self-intentional or creative wanderings.

When we are within a foreign city, we choose a particular street and begin to move within it. We encounter an interesting alley and enter it, an uninteresting alley and take a step back, and so on. Similarly, and even more so, the Internet provides us with options for intentional wanderings. In an online search, we choose the string of words to search for, which in turn offers a section of websites within which we can begin the process of wandering and exposure. The fact that we choose the string of words indicates that we have some initial control over the wandering. Still, it is the Internet algorithm that ultimately chooses the specific list and environment for us. It takes control and provides a "random" list, from which we, as users, are required to create an environment that is "ours". The lists are indeed selected algorithmically "from within", but our control over the string of words we have chosen, the choice to replace one string with another, and the rapid exchange of proposed environments allow us to overcome the partly deterministic dimension that exists in the experience of being thrown. To a certain extent, if only as a title, we choose the environment in which we are thrown. Moreover, it provides us with the possibility of turning wandering into a varied and changing experience that cannot be found anywhere else, so immediately and comfortably. For example, the way we arrange objects within the environment (in a list) allows us to redefine the place. Unlike the public buildings that Melpas talks about, the list is under the control of the searching subject and is therefore capable of being designed and redefined. To understand the importance of the "geometric" relationship between the parts in re-establishing the place, let's think, for example, about rearranging paragraphs in this article. The paragraphs remain unchanged, but their internal arrangement is rearranged. And yet every such arrangement reconstitutes the text, writes another article. Georges Perec writes concerning a room, "When in a given room, the position of the bed is changed, can we say that we are changing a room, or what?" If the arrangement itself is the meaning of the room, then the answer is "Yes!".

**Pace, and how to get lost**: It is worth comparing digital wandering to walking. When we walk, walking expresses its phenomenology. Walking allows for a lingering gaze; it is permissible to occasionally stop for a few minutes, rest, think, observe, and then continue walking, smelling, examining, listening, moving, looking to the side, up, or turning back. Suddenly, we discover a new alley that we had not prepared ourselves for. It seems interesting, and we turn to it, abandoning the initial route. Think about the function of hypertext. It is precisely that—a new alley in the digital landscape—to create a different wandering story for that initial search. There is a transfer of both choice and responsibility to the digital subject. In LG, on the other hand, an algorithm eliminates any possibility of arbitrariness, wandering, and adventure. There is a final, closed answer that expresses the algorithm's overarching logic. It is possible to believe that the answer contains a kind of train of thought, but even if so, it is a linear, orderly, mechanical, final, absolute, and unknown reading. As a user, I can use it, but I haven't challenged it; I hadn't created it out of curiosity. It is not an expression of my agency; it is not "mine." It becomes transcendent. One can indeed have a kind of dialogue with the LG; one can continue to ask follow-up questions, but a hierarchy will always remain, in which (despite the polite language) the user is the subordinate and the LG is the master (to use Hegel's famous terminology). On the other hand, to be wandering means surrendering to the situation of wandering, to be in it, in the game. Wandering strives for a topology of *A labyrinth* in which wandering is 'getting lost' and not 'being-lost '. [[19]](#footnote-19) 'Getting lost' as a practice means surrendering oneself willingly to the unknown, living the experience of the unknown, and not rushing. It involves opening oneself in advance to what is not yet known. The wanderer does so by choice and does not necessarily intend to leave the labyrinth he creates but rather to immerse himself in it; if he does leave it, it will only happen after he has exhausted the experience of the labyrinth. In this respect, wandering is indeed an environment into which we fall. Still, one can practice being in it, learning to linger, not being afraid to stray from the path, to wander and wonder, to come to wander, and to learn to 'get lost'. Benjamin writes, "Not to find one's way in a city [a network in our case] may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance, nothing more. But to lose oneself in a city get lost in a city, as one loses oneself in a forest – that calls for quit different schooling." It demands paying attention to every city signs, as one listens to "every cricked twig in the forest". [[20]](#footnote-20) Thus, I typed 'leadership' into the search engine (Google) and got a list of websites. One offers Aristotle's philosophical discussion of the concept, and another provides a link (or route) to the issue of authority. Whether to go there or there, it is not a question of correctness or a "summary" of the concept, as the LG suggests, but rather a path option, built by the wanderer in real-time and at his own pace. Wandering is a game; as such, it brings with it the feeling of the game and what is required of us as players: to accept the rules of the game, to know that there is a chance of success in the game but also failure. Wandering can take us to a completely different environment that we did not intend for ourselves, and suddenly find ourselves in it, feeling that this is precisely the most appropriate environment for wandering; this environment reflects our most authentic desires. For example, if we ask an LG, 'What does the concept of the general will express in Rousseau?' we will get a kind of closed answer, a summary from various sources, probably agreed upon and classical, a sort of average of the answers to the question asked. If, on the other hand, we type 'general will in Rousseau' in a web search (Google), we will get many sites that carry a specific answer to the question without being committed to any coherence. From personal experience, the search I conducted yielded references that linked the idea to Rousseau, as well as to real estate prices in Israel, and a connection with disobedience in the religious-Zionist society. How exactly does such a connection occur? Here, the possibility of getting lost opens up; the online search allows me to be surprised, rather than conforming to Rousseau's schematic and agreed-upon summary (produced by the LG), and to enter into a process of wandering to the new places offered. But if the LG answers the question this way, doesn't it, at least from a purposeful perspective, position online search as an inferior action?

**Purposefulness**: When I asked the LG *Perplexity* as to vagrancy – that is, aimlessly wandering - it gave me a long list of countries where it was considered illegal and immoral. The signifier 'wandering' associates itself with the signified meanings of: unnecessary, aimless, a waste of time, a sin against the ethos of modernity (work, efficiency, sociability, instrumental rationality), purposeless activity. Is there justice in the way it is associated? Aristotle distinguishes between two types of purposes: (1) activity for the sake of that activity, and (2) activity for the sake of its defined product.[[21]](#footnote-21) If a person runs for the sake of running, he gets his happiness from the very act of running; then he meets the first definition. If a person runs for their health or to lose weight, they meet the second definition; the purpose is outside the action, as they could achieve it in other ways and be equally satisfied. Wandering certainly meets the first definition; it involves escapism, offering an experience of sensory stress relief. Many of us wander (surf) the web for no apparent reason, with no clear purpose. However, wandering is more than just a pleasurable or liberating experience for the self.

Henri Michaux wrote, "I write in order to pursue myself ." [[22]](#footnote-22) Wouldn't it be equally correct to say, "I wander in order to peruse myself"? See, for example, the following wandering by Paul Auster in his childhood memory:

"In the beginning, everything was alive. The smallest objects were endowed with beating hearts and even clouds had names. Scissors could walk, telephones and teapots were first cousins, eyes and glasses were brothers. The face of the clock was a human face, each pea in your bowl had a different personality, and the grille on the front of your parents' car was a grinning mouth with many teeth. Pens were airships. Coins were flying saucers. The branches were arms. Stones could think, and God was everywhere." [[23]](#footnote-23)

Writing here is a repetition of what already existed (in childhood) in mental experience. Still, in remembering, through writing, there is a new event that binds the self to a narrative. Husserl asks how it is possible to hear a musical work, since what exists in the present is only one note at a specific moment. What makes a musical "narrative" possible? The perception of the work as a whole? According to him, what makes this possible is the memory of the previous sounds in light of which we perceive the current sound. In light of this, we also develop an "estimated" expectation of a musical continuation. [[24]](#footnote-24). In this way, Husserl distinguishes between the initial sensation ( primal impression ) and the carrying or keeping of the previous point as a memory ( retention ) that shapes the current encounter, which is what sets the next point apart (protection). Heidegger continues this line and proposes not to see the self as a noun but as a verb (*Dasein* = *being-there*) because we are always on the verge of the next thing, the next sound, if we use the Husserlian analogy.[[25]](#footnote-25) Wandering expresses this precisely, being a continuous present; it is a specific expression for the self, which is a verb, not a noun. Wandering is an opportunity not to treat points in isolation but to connect them, to form a "melody." Each new site in wandering is reflected from the previous one and projected onto the next. Wandering, on the one hand, expresses constant movement because even when we stop in wandering, this is not a final stop; we 'stop for a moment'; we declare a halt, but at the same time also declare a continuation of movement automatically (think of a bus route and its stops). The stopping feature allows you to choose whether to connect the current point to a previous one and, if so, how. I wander among the books on the library shelf in search of a particular book, and suddenly, a specific title along the way captures my attention; I abandon the search and start browsing. After a moment, I decide whether to add this book to my reading list or skip it, and so on, until I decide, 'Enough, I've had enough.' Likewise, on the Internet, when we navigate between different sites, we browse through them quite frequently. There is something clear to us at a glance that does not interest us, and then we jump to the next page, but suddenly, something specific catches our eye, something that catches our attention. We were not looking for it consciously (perhaps vaguely or subconsciously).

Wandering expresses a mental state of openness and constant alertness, the search for a specific and unknown object, beyond expectation and belief that the moment of encounter will reveal the object of search as such. We wander to the following site, only to move on to the next one. We wander to open ourselves to the next possibility. This alertness is not casual; it reflects an understanding that we establish ourselves through movement, and thus, as long as the movement is not over, the work of establishment is not over. "Existence precedes essence," said Sartre in his famous speech. We form subjectivity from movement, decision, choice[[26]](#footnote-26). Wandering forces us to move, decide, and choose.

Sartre, 1946.

However, it is a mistake to perceive it only in this sense, as an internal purpose; it may have an external purpose. Wandering, at least the exploratory one, has certain expectations beyond it. We do not know where the wandering will take us, but we hope that it will prevent us from encountering the expected, the familiar, and the banal that others have already written about. We hope that the unexpected will suddenly emerge from the wandering, and we will encounter a point we had not considered, a point that can form the basis for thinking about things differently. In LG, there is supposedly a dimension of a question, and immediately after that, the answer jumps out, but there is no movement of the self within the question. In any case, there is no possibility of surprise. LG tempts beckons because of its efficiency, but does efficiency lead to creativity? Doesn't creativity require an early surprise? An unexpected encounter? For example, consider the need to plan a trip (story 2 in the introduction). The knowledge that if I want to travel and be happy, I must first undergo a torturous, time-consuming process, with its uncertainty, and that it may fail; and if it fails, it is my responsibility.

On the other hand, using LG prevents all of this, including ... taking responsibility. Thus, even if planning fails, we still retain the ability to place the responsibility on "him," which prevents us from arguing with our partner; "It's him, not me," we say to ourselves... and to our partner. In this respect, the ability of a Language Generator to skip the search steps brings a sense of relief from the need to engage in an unnecessary, Sisyphean process. When we receive an answer to a question we asked an LG, we receive an "accurate," safe, closed answer. From the user's perspective, even when an error occurs, the answer is considered correct until proven otherwise, as it represents the expertise, or the oracle's voice. Intelligent LGs suppress any disposition to cast doubt, ask a question, hesitate, or cope; during the interval between the question given to the language generator and the answer given, there is not and cannot be a moment of experience of disruption. For LG's algorithm, disruption in action is a serious bug; it is a betrayal of the sanctity of efficiency. For web search, disruption is hope; it is a possibility of creativity.

**Disruption**: In the documentary Israeli TV series *Why So,* in the episode"Unfortunately, Luckily."[[27]](#footnote-27) [29] Prof. Dan Ariely, a behavioral psychology researcher, meets Prof. Uri Alon, a molecular biology researcher, and they discuss the place of luck in science. Alon points out that successful scientific research in practice stems from wandering, implosions, entanglements, and constant back-and-forth movement until something interesting emerges. Alon says that this even reflects a necessary research logic, since great discoveries stem from the knowledge that the scientist does not know where they are going; otherwise, it is not new. Scientists reach discoveries through "mistakes, assumptions that must change, technical biases, surprising things that instead of throwing them in the trash, we continue to study them" (35.13) (see Penicillin, Viagra, but not only). The fact that science chooses to paint a narrative of an intelligent, orderly, and deterministic walk from the research question to the answer is a story that scientists prefer to tell, out of a desire to preserve the orderly, logical, and rational ethos of science that emerged in the Enlightenment. In practice, says Alon, we act from scientific wandering, and we need scientific wandering. Paul Feirband helps Alon in his argument, as he describes the way children develop themselves: "They use words, they combine them, they play with them, until they grasp a meaning that so far has been beyond their reach. And the initial playful activity is an essential prerequisite of the final act of understanding. There is no reason why this mechanism should cease to function in the adult.[[28]](#footnote-28) We begin to think, to become curious when there is a disruption, a malfunction, a stop, or a gap in understanding. When there is a disruption in the automaticity of action, humans awaken to reflective thinking, which is when there is a disruption in the pre-reflective one.[[29]](#footnote-29)When thinking about LGs, it is hard to think of the possibility of disruption, as one of the sites the LG scanned created a "cognitive" distress for the algorithm. LG eliminates the possibility of disruption; there is no process similar to that of wandering. An algorithm cannot tolerate disruption; therefore, it cannot accommodate thought-provoking disruption. This does not mean that the answers generated by LG are necessarily perfect or accurate. They might reflect disruption, but this disruption does not produce pause, rethinking, or wondering; it is a disruption that does not prevent the algorithmic-mechanical action from continuing its course. There is no consciousness of disruption (distress) here; it is simply a hidden fault or an error. There is no admission of guilt for disruption in the LG. However, the "profit" from the disruption and wandering is not only a deep, research-based purposefulness. The "profit" is no less than existential; it serves the inner being of the self.

We see, then, how the practice of wandering is, in fact, a practice of selfhood. On the other hand, when it comes to LGs, this conflicts with the idea of establishing subjectivity through the act of choice. The feeling is not of an environment that surrounds us, nor of an encounter (confusing, intriguing, initial) with objects in the environment, but of a large object of the type 'answer' that is opposite, singular, unique, and monolithic. The action of "wandering" was performed by the algorithm of the LG, and what it offers is nothing more than a final stop on the algorithm's journey. We can adopt the answer or reject it, but this is not a choice that stems from a personal journey, and it does not shape our selfhood. However, it is also possible to examine the relationship to selfhood not only from the side that generates the wandering but also from how the LG produces alienation between the subject and the term 'to know'.

**Alienation**: A long philosophical tradition exists for the study of alienation, as explored by thinkers such as Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Marcuse, and others. Without delving into the details of the emergence of alienation and its meaning in these theories, it is sufficient to formally identify alienation as an event in which a rupture is created between the subject and an "other" (an object, another person, or a belief). This rapture deprives the subject of a significant feature that defines it.[[30]](#footnote-30) [31]The fact that that "other" constitutes, in the eyes of the subject, an essential part of its "essence" is what leads to the fact that alienation is not only a rupture between the subject and the world but, in a deeper stage, a rupture between the subject and himself. For Marx, for example, the essence of man is labor and creation. In the capitalist system, this essence becomes increasingly separate from him. The worker does not encounter the final product in the work process; only parts of it are visible. The final product is not his. The encounter with nature and the world through work is taking place less and less; thus, in effect, man loses subjectivity, and the relationship between creator and creation loses its distinctiveness, leaving man to become just another object among objects. [[31]](#footnote-31)[32] Since the essence of man is being a working and creative being through work, the loss of his essence creates a relationship of foreignness (alienation) between him and the world around him, and even more so between him and himself. In this, Marx warns that technological development brings people to a situation where they become victims of their creative ability, of technology. [[32]](#footnote-32)In the present case, the alienation is not the result of a different economic system (capitalism), which alters the relationship between the worker and the product, but of a techno-epistemological revolution. However, the analogy remains the same. The rupture here is not between the worker and the product, but between the subject and knowledge, that is, reason-based knowledge. As reason is part of human essence, it causes alienation. That is, if we translate into feeling and language, it creates a wall between the self and the sentence "I know". To illustrate this point, let me use Hilary Putnam's discussion in his paper, "Brain in a Vat."[[33]](#footnote-33) Putnam imagines the following scenario: "An ant is crawling on a patch of sand. As it crawls, it traces a line in the sand. By pure chance the line that it traces curves and recrosses itself in such a way that it ends up looking like a recognizable caricature of Winston Churchill. Has the ant traced a picture of Winston Churchill, a picture that depicts Churchill?"[[34]](#footnote-34) Putnam answers this very simply: No, because the ant lacks intention.[[35]](#footnote-35) Without intention, it is futile to speak of representing and indeed knowing. Similarly, when we use LGs to absorb knowledge, we lack intentionality, creating a wall between the self and the statement 'I know'.[[36]](#footnote-36) Any answer given by an LG will be an answer that is 'not mine,' and we face a distant 'product.' The answer we get is 30 cm on the screen in front of us, but in reality, it is in the distance; there is no real contact between the thinking consciousness and the answer as an object; it is nothing more than a representation that the algorithm, the God in the machine, chose to bring up.

**Epilogue**: Every act of wandering ends with an unclear endpoint that leaves the environment free for the next wandering. This article also discusses no more than one possible wandering within the concept of wandering. The points I have mentioned offer only a glimpse into the phenomenology of wandering, within the partial context of examining web search versus language generators. Even if the discussion ostensibly focuses on reviewing two leading digital practices, there is no question of decision or priority here unless we define the overarching perspective. In other words, the choice in the discussion is not between a search web engine and a language generator, but rather what conception of subjectivity we are interested in developing from within it. Web search, as a technology, preserves the practice of wandering; in this, it helps preserve subjectivity as an active agency that takes responsibility and develops the self. In Clifford Geertz's terms, it enables a "thick" self. [[37]](#footnote-37) While LG, on the other hand, questions **the need** for subjectivity, it prioritizes efficiency and existential ease over active subjectivity. In his major article "The Subject and Power,"[[38]](#footnote-38) Michel Foucault notes that the philosophical project of his writing is the examination of genealogical modes. In which the person **becomes** a subject. [35] This article operates in the spirit of this position and asks itself, concerning the act of wandering, not whether artificial intelligence indeed embodies intelligence and whether it will defeat the capabilities of human intelligence, but what is the significance of the practices it brings with it in reshaping (perhaps erasing?) existing subjectivity.

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1. * Baudelaire, [*The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/25444) **N7445 .B343**

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Arendt, **BD431 .A68 1998** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Arendt, **BD431 .A68 1998. Emphasis is mine.**  [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Moran, 2000: 182; Moran describes here Husserl's revelation of the concept of life-world (181-186). In many ways, as Moran himself points out, Husserl sets the stage for Heidegger's discussion in *Being and Time* (1962, p. 182). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Husserl, 1996: 34-36. **B3279.H93 K713** [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See also Moran, 2000: 4-6, 164-166,179-186. 236-239. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Moran, 2000:16-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cited from Husserl in Moran, 2000: 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Heidegger, 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ihde, 2009:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ihde, 2016: 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Heidegger 1962 : 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. McLuhan, 1964: 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Dreyfus, 1991:40-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Nozick, 1974: 42-45 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See, as an example, this formal manifest: <https://www.w3.org/TR/ethical-web-principles/#oneweb> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Malpas 1999: 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Heidegger 1962: 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Philips, 2011; 168-197; see also Dubow, Place and Loss, 43-44 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Benjamin, 1979: 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Aristotels, 1947: 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Cited in Perek, 1999: 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Auster, 2014: 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For example, think about a ball being thrown at us. We "guess" where the ball will fall based on its initial trajectory, making connections between past, present, and future. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Heidegger , 1962 : 67-71 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPZUoxdxtLA>; *Kaan* 11, Why This Is, Chapter 3, *Bad Luck*, January 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Feirband, 1975:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See also Heidegger, 1962: 102-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: 'Alienation': 1.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The discussion of alienation in Marx is so comprehensive that it would be unfair to address it within the framework of an article; see Kolakowski 1978: 132-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Adams 1991: 150 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Putnam, 1981. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Putnam,1981: 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Putnam,1981: 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Though I take LG to represent knowledge, knowing demands more than representation. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Geertz, 1973: 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Foucault, 1982 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)