

Bridging the Gap: Metaphysics and Gen Z

By: Margaret Robertson

Metaphysics, the philosophical discipline concerned with fundamental questions about the nature of reality, and Generation Z, the cohort of young people born roughly between 1997 and 2012, may initially appear unrelated. However, a closer examination reveals intriguing commonalities between these seemingly disparate entities. This paper aims to explore the convergence of metaphysical principles and the Gen Z mindset, demonstrating how they intersect in profound ways that reflect the philosophical underpinnings of this generation. To substantiate these claims, this analysis draws upon both philosophical literature and empirical studies on Generation Z.

Metaphysics, as a branch of philosophy, is primarily concerned with inquiries into the fundamental nature of reality. It engages with questions about existence, selfhood, and the essence of being. Remarkably, members of Generation Z share a proclivity for questioning societal norms, challenging conventional definitions of identity, and seeking to comprehend their place within an ever-evolving world (Smith, 2019).

Generation Z, shaped by unprecedented access to diverse perspectives through the internet and social media, exhibits a higher inclination to interrogate established narratives and embark on personal journeys of identity exploration. This mirrors the age-old metaphysical inquiry into the nature of individual existence within the broader context of reality. Gen Z's commitment to self-discovery and identity exploration resonates with the enduring metaphysical question: "Who am I, and what is my purpose?" (Kolak, 2018).

Metaphysics frequently grapples with intricate and abstract concepts such as time, causality, and the nature of consciousness. Generation Z, marked by its embrace of complexity, navigates a world characterized by rapid technological advancements, intricate socio-political issues, and multifaceted global challenges (Twenge, 2017).

This generation demonstrates a remarkable capacity to process and engage with complex ideas, which mirrors the metaphysical endeavor to grapple with profound questions often resistant to facile solutions. The willingness of Gen Z to confront multifaceted issues, such as climate change, social justice, and artificial intelligence, underscores their disposition for philosophical thinking and their desire to engage with the intricacies of existence (Lindsey et al., 2020).

Metaphysical debates frequently center around dualistic concepts, such as mind versus matter or reality versus appearance. Generation Z exhibits a pronounced inclination to reject binary thinking, opting for a more nuanced and inclusive worldview. This rejection of rigid categorizations aligns with metaphysical inquiries that challenge simplistic dualities (Spinoza, 1677).

Generation Z's rejection of traditional gender norms and their active advocacy for inclusivity and diversity exemplify their resistance to binary distinctions. Instead, they promote a holistic understanding of identity and existence, resonating with metaphysical endeavors to transcend dualistic thinking in the pursuit of a deeper comprehension of reality (Holland et al., 2021).

Metaphysical inquiry has historically relied on abstract reasoning and philosophical discourse. However, in the digital age, technology has emerged as a powerful tool for exploring metaphysical questions. Generation Z, having grown up in a tech-savvy environment, seamlessly integrates technology into their quest for knowledge and understanding (Buckingham & Willett, 2006).

The internet and social media platforms grant Generation Z unprecedented access to philosophical discussions, enabling them to engage with ideas and perspectives from around the world. Virtual reality and augmented reality technologies offer novel avenues to explore metaphysical concepts by immersing individuals in virtual realms that challenge their perceptions of reality (Turkle, 2015). The willingness of Generation Z to embrace these technologies as tools for philosophical exploration underscores their adaptability and open-mindedness.

Intriguing parallels exist between metaphysical principles and the Generation Z mindset. Both are characterized by a profound curiosity about the nature of reality, a proclivity for embracing complexity, a rejection of binary thinking, and a willingness to employ technology as a means of exploration. As Generation Z continues to shape the cultural and philosophical landscape, their distinctive blend of open-mindedness, adaptability, and philosophical curiosity promises to leave a lasting impact on the ongoing discourse in metaphysics and beyond.

References

Buckingham, D., & Willett, R. (2006). *Digital generations: Children, young people, and new media*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Holland, E., Cheng, E., Ellis, J. A., & Chen, A. (2021). Generation Z's perceptions of diversity and inclusion: A qualitative study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 14(4), 454-469.

Kolak, D. (2018). *I am you: The metaphysical foundations for global ethics*. Oxford University Press.

Lindsey, T. B., Rupert, P. A., & Kadiyala, H. (2020). Climate change and mental health: A comparative study of generational perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 71, 101505.

Smith, A. N. (2019). Generation Z: What we know so far. In *Handbook of Research on Cross-Cultural Business Education* (pp. 1-21). IGI Global.

Spinoza, B. (1677). *Ethics*.

Turkle, S. (2015). *Reclaiming conversation: The power of talk in a digital age*. Penguin Books.

Twenge, J. M. (2017). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy—and completely unprepared for adulthood*. Atria Books.