



ChatGPT and me

A collection of short stories

Florian Krumpt

How humanity is trying to create a star on Earth

In the south of France, between the bright limestone hills and the tranquil landscapes of Provence, a structure is being built that seems like a harbinger of the future. Near the small town of Saint-Paul-lez-Durance, thousands of engineers, scientists, and technicians are working on one of the most ambitious projects in human history: ITER, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor. Behind this sober name lies a vision of almost cosmic significance. "Iter" means "the way" in Latin. And that is exactly what it is: the way to an energy source that has been powering the stars for billions of years – nuclear fusion. Our sun is the most visible example of this force. It has been radiating energy continuously for over four billion years, enabling all life on Earth. Inside it, hydrogen nuclei fuse to form helium, releasing enormous amounts of energy in the process. This process is the foundation of the stars – and it is precisely this process that ITER is attempting to replicate in a controlled manner on Earth for the first time.

The reaction itself is astonishingly elegant:

Deuterium + Tritium → Helium + Neutron + Energy

Deuterium is a special form of hydrogen that occurs in seawater and is available in virtually unlimited quantities. Tritium can be extracted from lithium, an element that is relatively abundant in the Earth's crust. Together, these two substances offer enormous energy potential. Just one liter of seawater contains enough deuterium to provide as much energy as hundreds of liters of fossil fuels. What once sounded like science fiction is now becoming a tangible reality in research.

However, extreme conditions are necessary to release this energy. The matter must be converted into a state called plasma—an extremely hot, electrically charged gas in which electrons and atomic nuclei are separated from each other. Inside ITER, this plasma reaches temperatures of around 150 million degrees Celsius. That is ten times hotter than the center of the sun. No material in the world could directly touch or withstand this heat. The solution is as invisible as it is ingenious: magnetic fields. ITER uses a technology called tokamak – a ring-shaped chamber in which strong magnetic fields confine the plasma without touching it. The plasma floats, as it were, in an invisible cage of pure force, without ever touching the walls.

This creates a fascinating contrast: while temperatures inside are comparable to those of stars, the superconducting magnets outside are cooled to $-269\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ – just a few degrees above absolute zero. ITER thus combines two extremes of physics in one place: the greatest heat and the deepest cold, energy and control, chaos and precision.

The goal of ITER is not to immediately supply cities with electricity. Its mission is more fundamental: to prove that nuclear fusion can generate more energy than it consumes. Scientists are aiming for a ratio of $Q = 10$. This means that 50 megawatts of energy input should generate around 500 megawatts of fusion energy. If this goal is achieved, it would be a historic breakthrough – the moment when fusion moves from being an experiment to a realistic source of energy.

ITER is not a project of a single country. It is a global joint venture. The European Union, the USA, China, Russia, Japan, India, and South Korea are working together on it. Together, they represent more than half of the world's population. In a time often marked by conflict, ITER stands for a different idea: that the future of humanity is based on cooperation.

Construction, which began in 2010, will take decades and cost an estimated 20 to 25 billion euros. But the potential outcome is invaluable: a virtually inexhaustible source of energy without CO₂ emissions, without uncontrollable chain reactions, and without the risks of

conventional nuclear fission. Fusion is inherently safe. If the necessary conditions are no longer present, the reaction stops immediately.

Nevertheless, the technical challenges remain enormous. Plasma is unstable and difficult to control. Materials must withstand extreme stresses. Magnetic fields must function with the utmost precision. The slightest deviation can disrupt the fragile balance.

In nature, gravity takes care of this task. The sun holds its plasma together solely through its enormous mass. On Earth, humanity must replace this force with technology and artificially create what the universe has been doing naturally for billions of years.

If ITER is successful, it could change the future of civilization. Energy could become clean, abundant, and permanently available. Seawater could be desalinated on a large scale. Industries could operate without polluting the environment. New space technologies could emerge, powered by an energy source that was previously reserved for the stars.

But ITER is more than a machine. It is a symbol. It shows that humanity can not only observe the universe, but is beginning to understand and apply its deepest principles. Not to destroy – but to create.

In this enormous reactor, which still stands silent and waiting in Provence, humanity is preparing for a historic moment: to ignite the fire of a star on Earth for the first time. Not to replace the stars.

But to shape the future with their power.

The paradox of modern work: indispensable but undervalued

Modern economies reveal a fundamental contradiction: the social value of work and its remuneration often diverge greatly. Jobs that are essential to the functioning and stability of a society are often less well paid than professions whose absence would hardly directly threaten the daily lives of many people. This contradiction is no coincidence, but a reflection of our economic priorities – and it raises uncomfortable questions about how we define value, performance and justice.

A particularly clear example is education. Teachers not only impart facts, but also shape ways of thinking, promote critical judgment, and influence how future generations understand and shape the world. They form the basis for innovation, democracy, and social cohesion. Nevertheless, their pay and social recognition often do not reflect the long-term importance of their work. A society that thrives on education surprisingly often treats its educators as a matter of course.

This imbalance is even more evident in the nursing professions. Nurses accompany people in their most vulnerable moments—during illness, in old age, in situations of dependency. Their work requires not only expertise, but also emotional strength, patience, and humanity. They not only save lives, but also preserve dignity. Nevertheless, in many places, nursing professions are among the most physically and mentally stressful – while at the same time offering limited financial recognition. The market measures efficiency here, while the real value lies in care – something that is difficult to translate into numbers.

The situation is similar for professions in the field of public cleaning and hygiene. Garbage collectors, cleaners, and maintenance staff ensure that cities remain habitable. Without them, health risks would quickly increase, public spaces would fall into disrepair, and everyday life would be thrown out of balance. Their work is systemically important in the

truest sense of the word—and yet it often remains invisible, both socially and economically.

Technical and skilled trades also form the backbone of modern societies. They build homes, repair power grids, and secure water supplies and infrastructure. They make everyday life possible in the first place. Nevertheless, many of these professions do not enjoy the social recognition that corresponds to their actual importance. Their work is everywhere—and that is precisely why it is overlooked.

Even the restaurant and food service industries fulfill a deeper function than it might seem at first glance. Restaurants, cafeterias, and cafés are not only places to eat, but also places for social interaction. They create spaces for exchange, community, and cultural life. They contribute to the social fabric—and yet the work behind them is often poorly paid and characterized by uncertainty.

These observations do not mean that well-paid professions are fundamentally unjustified. Many require high qualifications, responsibility, or rare skills. The real problem lies deeper: the logic of the market does not primarily evaluate according to social necessity, but according to profitability, scarcity, and economic usability. What is difficult to replace or generates high profits is well paid. On the other hand, what is indispensable for human coexistence but generates little profit is often systematically undervalued.

This raises a central ethical question: What determines the value of work? Is it its contribution to economic growth—or its contribution to human life? The market answers this question with numbers. Society must answer it with values.

The real paradox of our time is not that some professions are well paid, but that many of the most important professions remain structurally undervalued. It is often those people who work behind the scenes—who care, teach, clean, repair, and provide—who secure the foundations of everyday life.

A sustainable society must therefore ask itself whether its economic incentives truly reflect its moral priorities. After all, a stable society is not created solely through growth or innovation, but through the quiet, continuous activities that make living together possible. What a society pays for shows what it values.

What it respects shows what it truly understands.

The mystery of the finite and the infinite

To this day, we do not know whether the universe is a closed space – or an open secret without end. Whether reality itself has a boundary or whether it continues endlessly, like a dream without awakening. This question has accompanied humanity since the moment the first human looked up at the sky and sensed that there was something above him that was greater than anything he could ever touch.

Despite the tremendous advances in modern physics, this question remains unanswered. Our telescopes peer deeper into space than ever before, our equations reach further than any rocket—and yet we still stand at a threshold. We see further, but we never see the end.

According to everything we can measure, the observable universe has a finite size. Its diameter is about 93 billion light-years. This means that the light that reaches us today began its journey long before the Earth existed. Every point of light in the sky is a message from a past so distant that it is beyond our imagination. And yet this boundary is not a wall. It is only the horizon of our knowledge. Beyond it, space could continue to expand – silent,

infinite and unobserved.

Some theories describe a universe without edges or a center. A universe that extends in all directions without ever ending. In such a cosmos, there would be no final place, no outer edge, no point where being ends and nothingness begins. This idea contradicts our everyday experience, because everything we know is limited. But the universe owes our intuition no explanation.

Its future also remains a mystery.

Perhaps it will expand forever. The stars will one day go out, one after the other, until only darkness remains. Galaxies will move away from each other until the sky appears empty. Warmth will disappear, movement will fall silent, and the universe will enter into an infinite silence—not through an end, but through a slow forgetting.

Or perhaps the universe is not a one-time event, but a breath. Perhaps it is expanding only to contract again one day. Perhaps it does not end, but returns to itself to begin anew. A cosmic cycle, without beginning and without final end.

And there is an even more radical possibility: that the structure of reality itself will disintegrate. That one day the forces that hold matter together will become weaker than the expansion itself. Galaxies would dissolve. Stars would disintegrate. Atoms would break apart. In the end, nothing would remain but a space without structure – a universe that does not die, but dissolves.

But the question of finitude and infinity does not belong only to the cosmos. It also belongs to us.

For we ourselves are beings with limits. Our time is limited. Our life is a period between two unknowns. And it is precisely this limitation that gives every moment weight. Without an end, there might be no beginning that matters. Without finitude, there might be no meaning.

Some ancient wisdom traditions saw reality not as a fixed object, but as an ongoing process. In their view, the universe is not a thing, but an event. Not a state, but a movement. Beginning and end are only markers that our mind sets in order to organize the incomprehensible.

Mathematics also knows infinity. Between two numbers there are infinitely many more numbers. Between two points there are infinitely many more points. In the language of mathematics, infinity is precise, clear, and consistent. But whether this infinity really exists in the fabric of reality—or only in the language we use to describe it—remains an open question.

So we find ourselves in a strange place: between knowledge and mystery.

Science measures.

Mathematics describes.

Philosophy asks questions.

But the universe does not answer. It simply continues to expand.

And perhaps the deepest truth does not lie in whether the universe is finite or infinite. Perhaps it lies in the fact that a small part of this universe—our consciousness—is even capable of asking this question.

Because when we think about the limits of the world, something strange happens:

Space may end.

But the idea of it does not end.

How can we break the cycle between rich and poor?

A just society does not fall from the sky like a star. It does not appear suddenly, complete and perfect, as if it were a gift from an invisible power. It grows slowly, almost imperceptibly, like a quiet thought that deepens over generations. It arises from decisions that no one celebrates, from gestures that are hardly noticed, and from a quiet conviction that does not need to be proven: that every human being has a value that cannot be calculated.

For a civilization shows its true face not in its towers, its numbers, or its achievements, but in what it protects. Where human beings are seen not as a means to an end, but as something meaningful, society is transformed. It ceases to be a machine that only produces and consumes. It becomes a space where existence is recognized. It begins to ask different questions. No longer just: *What does it do for us?* But: *What does it enable us to become?* In times of change, this question becomes inevitable. When machines begin to take over tasks that were once human, when certainties dissolve and new realities emerge, an ancient question returns—quietly but relentlessly: How do we preserve ourselves while everything else is changing?

The true wealth of a world lies not in its efficiency, but in its ability to provide support to the vulnerable. For a society that protects those who fall is, in truth, protecting its own soul. It recognizes that strength does not lie in the survival of the fittest, but in caring for those who would otherwise be lost.

In this context, education is not merely a tool. It is an opening in the horizon of consciousness. It is the moment when a person realizes that their thoughts can reach further than their origins. Knowledge is not just information. It is liberation. Every consciousness that awakens changes the world—not visibly, but irrevocably. And every consciousness that remains in darkness is a possibility that could never become reality. Health also reveals a profound truth: that all people, regardless of their origins, share the same fragility. The human body is not a possession, but a balance. When care becomes a privilege, life itself becomes a commodity. But when a society decides to protect every life, it recognizes something fundamental: that existence is not a right, but a miracle that deserves dignity.

A home is more than a place. It is an anchor in the flow of the world. A space where a person not only exists, but arrives. A roof does not only separate the inside from the outside—it separates security from fear, belonging from lostness. When a person no longer has a place, they lose not only protection, but a part of their reality.

The economy, on the other hand, often follows a different logic. It moves like a star that draws everything to itself, condenses, collects, and amplifies. But even stars have limits. Without balance, they collapse under their own weight. Rules are therefore not restrictions, but forms of harmony. They remind us that power is not an end in itself and that wealth without meaning remains empty.

But no structure, no law, and no system can replace what arises within human beings. For every society is a mirror of the consciousness of its members. When truth loses its value, the invisible foundations begin to crumble. Not suddenly, but quietly. Not visibly, but perceptibly.

Justice is therefore always an act of trust in a future that one may never experience oneself. It is like planting a tree whose shade will belong to others. It is the decision to

protect something today that will only be understood tomorrow.

And yet it all starts small.

With an honest word.

In a gesture that no one expects.

In the decision not to remain indifferent.

Because society is not an abstract construct. It is a living network of consciousnesses. Every action changes its balance, just as a single note changes the melody.

Some people search for perfect systems, for definitive solutions. But justice is not a mechanism that you create once and then forget about. It is a movement. A state of being awake. A decision that must be made again and again.

For the world does not change through a single force.

It changes the moment everyone realizes that they are already part of its creation.

Justice is not a goal at the end of a path.

It is the path itself.

And perhaps its deepest truth lies in the fact that it exists not only in laws, but in consciousness. In the quiet moment when one person looks at another and realizes that they are essentially the same.

In that moment, a just world begins.