

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Making Choices, an exercise in ambiguity?

Yes — and perhaps more than an exercise. Making choices is often living inside ambiguity while still having to act.

Most important choices do not arrive with certainty attached to them. We rarely know:

- whether we are seeing clearly,
- whether our motives are mixed,
- whether the future consequences will help or harm,
- whether another path would have been better.

If certainty were required before action, many human lives would freeze in place.

Ambiguity enters because:

- values compete (“security” versus “freedom,” “honesty” versus “kindness”),
- information is incomplete,
- people change,
- and outcomes unfold over time rather than instantly.

Even language reflects this uncertainty. We speak of:

- “weighing” options,
- “judgment,”
- “risk,”
- “second thoughts,”
- “regret,”
- “faith.”

All imply acting without total knowledge.

There is also a paradox: choices themselves create meaning. Often, we do not discover the “right” path beforehand; we partly make a path right through commitment, responsibility, and adaptation afterwards.

Philosophers in Existentialism explored this deeply. Thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre argued that uncertainty is not a flaw in human life but one of its conditions. Freedom becomes meaningful precisely because guarantees are absent.

At the same time, ambiguity is uncomfortable. Humans naturally seek:

- stable narratives,

- rules,
- authorities,
- certainty.

That tension may explain why societies often polarise toward rigid answers during periods of fear or instability. Ambiguity demands emotional endurance.

So perhaps making choices is not merely “an exercise in ambiguity,” but an ongoing negotiation between:

- uncertainty and action,
- doubt and commitment,
- possibility and limitation.

The challenge is not eliminating ambiguity completely, but learning how to live and act responsibly within it.