

NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education
for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine

fibre to fibre
recycling
turn old
into gold

PHILOSOPHY

Kant and the
Kingdom of Ends

SOCIETY

"Old into Gold"

SCIENCE

How many more G's do
we need?

ART

Rodin and the Art of
Ancient Greece



NEW ACROPOLIS

Philosophy and Education for the Future

About Us

NEW ACROPOLIS is an international organization working in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering. Our aim is to revive philosophy as a means of renewal and transformation and to offer a holistic education that can develop both our human potential as well as the practical skills needed in order to meet the challenges of today and to create a better society for the next generation.

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 **Philosophy
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Editorial

Can identity be a choice?

“Who are you?” - This is a question I usually ask in one of my classes. Asking the same question ten times in a row, I nudge the participants gently to the realization that we all have more than one identity. Some people tend to identify at first with their name, nationality, gender, profession; others define themselves through their relationships (I am a mother, a friend) and some think of themselves first and foremost as human beings, a ‘soul’, a ‘force of energy’ or as seekers of wisdom. This exercise also makes us aware that beyond our multiple identities there is a mysterious ‘inner core’ or ‘essence’ that defies definition but shines through all our different identities. We are always ourselves, whether this be at work, with our family or on our own. In each environment we express different aspects of ourselves, but deep down we are still the same mysterious ‘centre of awareness’. In short, we are both one and many.

The next stage of this exercise explores the root of our identities. Are we just born with an identity? Is it ‘God-given’ and we have no choice but to accept and bear it as a kind of destiny? Or is identity something that can change and even become a choice? Most people would say that there are certain aspects of our identity (sex, cultural roots, etc) that we cannot change. Others, however, are the outcome of choices we made at some stage. We were not born to be ‘computer programmers’ or ‘mothers’ – but we chose to become them. And, most importantly, we can always choose how much priority we give to each of our different identities, even if we cannot change some of them. What do we prioritize: our gender? Our nationality? Our status? Or our inner qualities?

There is danger in over-identifying with a singular identity and in thinking that we have no choice regarding our identity. It diminishes us because it ignores the many other aspects of ourselves and it only exacerbates the differences between us. The Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen claims in his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* that violence can easily be created when people become locked in a singular identity to the exclusion of others. Hutus massacre Tutsis, for example, when they acquire a strong and exclusive sense of belonging to a single group and no longer see themselves as

Rwandan, African, or human beings.

Unfortunately, the growing trend of *identity politics* seeks to exploit the strong sentiments that can be whipped up when people identify with one side of a particular issue. This not only fragments societies and results in divided countries like Britain after Brexit or the US after the Trump election. It also diverts energy and attention from much more important issues and offers no real solutions. What’s more, identity politics actually fails to transcend differences by flattening the differences between individuals of the same group. It makes all *Brexiters* or *Remainers* the same, ignoring the fact that they might have very little else in common. It is impossible to create harmonious and stable societies built on such movements.

For society and culture to function, we need a common basis and to learn how to transcend our differences. We need to consciously choose an identity that enables us to connect more with others and to empathise with them. Life is a journey from unconsciousness to consciousness. To be unconscious means to be impelled by inner or outer forces or circumstances. Whereas to be conscious means to be aware that we have a choice. Amartya Sen says: “To deny choice where choice exists is not only an epistemic mistake, it can also entail a moral and political failure through abdication of one’s responsibility to face the fundamental, Socratic question: ‘How should I live?’”

Choice is inescapably associated with responsibility. It seems much easier to say, ‘This is how I am, I cannot change it’. But history is full of atrocities that were committed because people felt compelled to act in line with a perceived and fixed identity. Just think of the Germans killing the Jews or the different branches of Islam fighting one another. Amartya Sen’s message is that we should choose our identity of our own free will.

The recently deceased Kofi Annan said: “To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.”

Sabine Leitner

Kant

and the Kingdom of Ends

In the second half of the 18th century Immanuel Kant formulated a new golden standard for human relations: “Act in such a way as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of anyone else, always as an end and never merely as a means.” This maxim has influenced numerous other philosophers and legislators, impacting on the constitutions of many countries and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It was one way of formulating the moral law that Kant believed we all share as rational beings.

The philosopher’s search for the moral law began with an acknowledgment of universal feelings for the good and for the “beauty and dignity of human nature”. However, being a thinker of the Age of Enlightenment he could not allow a feeling to be the foundation of morality, as feelings are changeable. According to Kant, it is thanks to our reason that we experience a need for moral obligation.

As rational beings we are endowed with the moral law within us and through our



reason we understand it, can formulate its commands, feel respect for it and the duty to act upon it. That duty is not something imposed from outside by family, society, education, etc., but grows within us naturally as a response to the moral law.

The other particular feature emphasized by Kant is that a human being is capable of acting in accordance with the moral law and is truly free to do so. This is the only real freedom we have – to be morally worthy beings. It is not freedom from any obligations, but freedom to be governed by reason and the moral law. Otherwise we are ruled by desires and inclinations, and only appear to be free. Kant says that reason causes us not to be content with idleness and pleasure, and it prompts us to develop our full potential to honour our humanity and the humanity of others. Thanks to this capacity of every individual to discover the moral law and be bound by its duties, to reason



independently, to make their own decisions and implement them, all individuals are ends in themselves. To treat ourselves as ends means to practise the moral law, to develop virtues, overcome challenges in life and acquire

moral strength and self-esteem. Kant lists some duties we have towards ourselves, which include the duty of self-perfection and the duty to be happy.

Treating others as ends includes allowing them the same freedom of choice and accomplishment, respecting their dignity. It would be a violation of one's own dignity to violate the dignity of another and treat them merely as a means. Kant defines some of these duties that we have to others, including the duty of beneficence to others, the duty to sympathize with others and the duty of gratitude.

Being ends in themselves therefore means that every person has intrinsic, unconditioned, incomparable worth, which Kant calls dignity. We all interact with others and may be means for each other in some respects. But if we don't acknowledge our dignity and the dignity of the other, we and the others cease to be ends, and such interactions diminish us.

Kant was an advocate of a harmonious and peaceful life within a community. His ideal was a kingdom of ends - "a corpus mysticum of the rational beings in it, insofar as the free will of each, under moral laws, is in complete systematic unity with itself and with the freedom of every other".

At the end of his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant offers another formulation of the moral law: "Act in accordance with the maxims [rules] of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends." In other words, he invites us to act as if we were creating an ideal morally worthy world. In order not to be overwhelmed by such a grand task, we can start by creating an ideal ethical community, which is "an indispensable vehicle of humanity's moral progress", as Kant pointed out.

Nataliya Petlevych

“Old into Gold”

At this time in humanity’s evolution, wealthy nations are living through a highly materialistic time. Vast amounts of resources, time and costs are invested into producing, marketing and acquiring “stuff” which then quickly loses its perceived value or becomes obsolete and is discarded.

The excavation of ancient rubbish dumps by archaeologists reveals miniscule amounts of ash, broken tools, and pottery, meaning early civilizations reused and repaired what they could, rather than dumping it. Fast forward through the industrial revolution of the late 18th century and we see the rise of mass production of goods, monoculture and commodification of the earth, plants, animals and human beings. What will future archaeologists make of our behaviour based on our rubbish dumps?

William McDonough and Michael Braungart in their book “Cradle to Cradle” point out that we

are still following an outmoded “Cradle to Grave” manufacturing model, dating from the industrial revolution, which TAKES – MAKES – WASTES. The term “Upcycling” was also first brought to public attention through this book and makes a clear separation between Recycling (actually down cycling!) and Upcycling (which adds value).

“Upcycling” is a modern-day response to our “throwaway” consumer society. According to Wikipedia “Upcycling” is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless or unwanted products into new materials or products of better quality or for better environmental value. I have been working within the area of textile reuse for over 20 years. Through my craft practice I have also learnt about some subtler aspects of upcycling. These aspects or “3 golden principles” are modelling from nature, power of transformation and connecting with beauty.



Upcycling draws inspiration from the extraordinary book of nature. In “Cradle to Cradle” the cherry tree is described, which gives abundantly, producing thousands of blossoms in order to create another tree. The tree also provides oxygen and nourishment for other life forms. In the book, the authors have developed a “Circular Economy Upcycling Concept”, a vision for products conceived as “Biological and Technical Nutrients”. The Biological can easily re-enter water or soil without depositing synthetic materials and toxins. The Technical continually circulates as pure and valuable materials within closed loop industrial cycles.

Upcycling transforms “Old into Gold”. When we attempt to change our world creatively for the better we begin to enter the world of Alchemy. The external aim of alchemy was to transmute base metals into gold. Internally the alchemists re-crafted themselves, awakening different planes in order to control and direct them in service of something higher. This “Great Work” was a process in stages, which can be loosely compared to the 3 stages of upcycling:

Repair and Renewal: Japanese *Boro* (meaning something tattered or repaired) was traditionally used to reinforce points of wear or to repair tears with patches, making the darned piece ultimately stronger and warmer.

Deconstruction: My own “Remember Me” service works with emotions and thoughts as I co-create with people and their lost loved ones items of clothing into new and therapeutic items.

Rebirth: Artist Lucy Orta’s “Identity & Refuge” project brought a new lease of life to old/abandoned clothing and a new lease of hope experienced by the residents of the Salvation Army refuge in Paris. A “Rags to Riches” story (Clothes to Self Awareness).

Upcycling connects us with beauty. It alters our perception of beauty, which can be found in everything (even rubbish). Both Plato and Plotinus believed that everything in the “material world” is a reflection of “perfect objects” in the realm of forms. Also that one can ascend from the appreciation of “things” up the ladders of forms, away from mere

appearance to find inner depth – the essence, pure beauty, an experience of love – the root of wisdom to connect with the divine.

I recently discovered a children’s orchestra from the community of Cateura, a slum next to a rubbish landfill in Paraguay. As a musical instrument has a higher cost value than a house, the community of litter pickers ingeniously created a full orchestra of musical instruments made entirely from rubbish for the children to learn how to play music. They now regularly perform concerts and their story can be seen in the documentary film “Landfill Harmonic” with the opening title “The world sends us garbage, we send back music”. This project plays all the 3 strings of upcycling’s “Golden Principles” It is a virtuous circle transforming not just waste materials but people’s lives through a connection to and transmission of beauty.

Barley Massey



“Remember Me”,
Derrin Pillow.
Designed by
Barley Massey.

The Magic of THOTH-HERMES

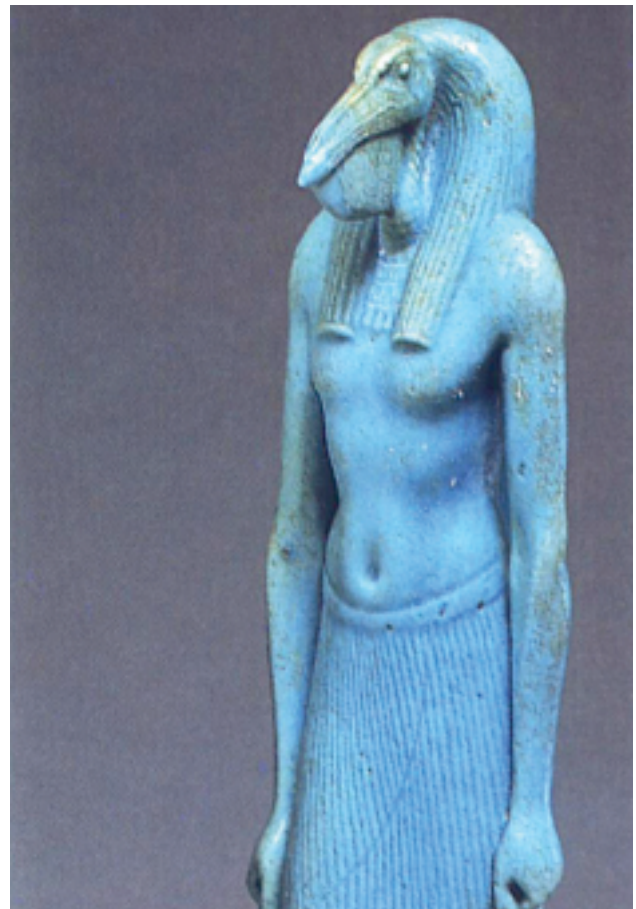
The Western esoteric tradition has its roots deeply embedded in a distant past. An important part of this 'tradition' has been preserved in the so-called Hermetic teachings also known as Hermeticism. In this article I am going to highlight some basic aspects of the Hermetic teachings focusing especially on their magical aspect. The main sources of Hermetic magic can today be found in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, a body of papyri dating from 100 BCE to 400 CE, which re-appeared in Egypt in the 18th Century.

Hermeticism was an eclectic synthesis of differing metaphysical, philosophical and magical perspectives which were in existence around the beginning of the Common Era in the eastern Mediterranean world.

At that time the Hellenised city of Alexandria had become the centre of this Hermetic synthesis where the Egyptian cult of Thoth and the Greek cult of Hermes had been united into the new cult of Thoth-Hermes.

At a cosmic level, the Egyptian God Thoth (Tehuti) symbolised the mind and memory of the Demiurge (Creator) and at the human level he was connected with the various faculties of the mind, its discerning as well as its analytical qualities. Thoth was the patron of magic because he was the embodiment of intelligence (human and divine), while his Greek counterpart, Hermes, the messenger of the Gods, symbolised the

“dimension” of the mind as the intermediate level between the human and the Divine. Hermes also came to represent those intellectual and eclectic qualities (in the human being) that were characteristic of the Hellenic spirit and that



Statuette of the Egyptian god *Thoth*. Ptolemaic period
304 - 30 BC.

allowed the birth of the Hermetic tradition. To confirm the importance of the 'mind principle', we find in the Emerald Tablet the following precept: "Use your mind to its full extent and rise from Earth to Heaven, and then descend to Earth and combine the powers of what is above with what is below. Thus you will win glory in the whole world, and obscurity will leave you at once." The Hermetic student has to be able to oscillate between the subjective spiritual realms (of the mind "above") and the objective material realms (those "below") wherein the forms and theories can be tested and perfected.

What is stressed here is the fact that Hermeticism is a science and an art at the same time; that is why in this tradition we find a philosophical-theoretical side (see for instance the *Corpus Hermeticum*) and a magical-practical side (as recorded in the magical papyri). In antiquity the two branches worked together. The magical tradition was merely the operative branch of the philosophy which is more analytical and illustrative.

The basic operating theory of Hermetic magic is dependent on a kind of "natural dualism". There is a higher world (of the Gods, daemons, angels etc.) and a lower world (humans). There is however a "natural" connection between the two. For the Hermetic magician, true knowledge and power were often revealed from an 'outside', invisible

(divine or semi-divine) source. Acquisition of true knowledge depended on a 'revelation' which came through regular contemplation and prayer and more specifically through practice of magical control.

Within the context of magical control, magic has been defined as the art of causing changes through the agency of 'spiritual creatures' rather than via directly observable physical means. The main skills of the magician therefore consisted in constraining and controlling these 'spiritual entities' using the spoken and written word, sigils, talismans, sacrifices, divination, etc.

The Greek magical papyri are witness to the different ways in which the human being sought to approach the unseen. In them, we find jumbled together practices which belonged to three separate but interrelated categories: religion, the Mysteries and magic. All these modes of communication with the 'invisible' existed side by side. Some were practised in secret and some were public. Some aimed at the highest human initiation (i.e. spiritual immortalisation) while others aimed at the subjugation of lower spirits for the gaining of worldly objectives (love, lust, money, etc.).

Agostino Dominici

Further readings : *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* by Hans Dieter Betz.



Fig.1

Fig.2

Hermes Trismegistus the alleged author of the *Hermetic Corpus*, a series of sacred texts that are the basis of *Hermeticism*. Engraving from an allchemical manuscript.

Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece:

the transcendent reality of sculpture

This Spring, the British Museum opened the exhibition 'Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece', which formed a poetic tripartite tribute to the artist, his love of ancient Greek sculpture and of the British Museum itself - Rodin famously spent hours studying the museum collections.

Side by side were maquettes, marbles and famous bronzes of Rodin next to stunning examples from the Parthenon marbles, all

displayed at eye level and allowing for a starkly intimate search of their folds, subtle gestures and characters. Opening the exhibition was Rodin's 'The Kiss' caught in spatial dialogue with two ancient Greek Goddesses also intertwined in repose. Being able to hold, in a single gaze, these two works, which whilst straddled across thousands of years are evidently tethered, created a curious flattening of time. In the company of Rodin's sculptures,



the Parthenon pieces were also revitalised and rejuvenated individually. Gone from the mind were any of the clichés which all too readily attach themselves to classical works, as was any over-familiarity that can make Rodin difficult to appreciate. Instead, placed next to one another, the works appeared to echo each other, as if to say, ‘we were formed by related minds’. They seemed able to speak to the viewer of transcendence, of the years that lapped between their feet and of the most mysterious dimension of time, of movement and permanence.

“No artist will ever surpass Pheidias... The greatest of the sculptors, who appeared at the time when the entire human dream could be contained in a pediment of a temple, will never be equalled.” - Rodin

Rodin clearly admired the art of the ancient Greeks but he was also hugely influenced by



the Italian Renaissance, Michelangelo and Donatello in particular. He spent three months in Italy, visiting Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples. From Italy he incorporated the Renaissance idea of working on the naked body before adding clothing to the final piece or image - a technique also used by Raphael. The artist first draws or sculpts the naked body, intimately knowing the musculature and peculiarities of their figures, their journey through life; and in each muscle, in each ligament and each vein, the artist imbues the body with character. The resulting works, in both Renaissance art and with Rodin, present depictions of living, breathing, archetypal human souls.

“The body is a cast that bears the imprint of our passions” - Rodin

In the exhibition we were fortunate to see the naked casts which eventually became one of *The Burghers of Calais*, a six-figure, life-size bronze which forms the climax of the exhibition. *The Burghers of Calais* is a tale of courage, sacrifice, human struggle and redemption, a complex meditation preserved in bronze, whose archetypal figures are ready to tell their stories and speak with us at a given glance.

There is a transcendental line of mastery from the ancient Greek sculpture of Phidias, echoed in the Renaissance by Michelangelo and articulated again by Rodin. The sculpture acts as an allegory of the human being and a true mirror of our human nature. Like us, a sculpture must be able to endure and speak of what and who it is within the turbulent movements and decaying forces of time. And like us, wherever a spark of clarity becomes visible, even in the smallest fragment, we can recognise the nature of the whole.

“...they are no less masterpieces for being incomplete” - Rodin

Siobhan Cait Farrar

How Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism shaped Chinese Culture

“In the beginning there was only chaos and from this chaos emerged Yin and Yang”



The Temple of Confucius in Jiading

In the beginning, so the Chinese legends say, there was only chaos and from this chaos emerged Yin and Yang, two primordial opposing forces which, when they interacted with one another, brought forth the universe. The continuing interaction of these two opposites produced the constant change that characterizes life.

For Chinese thought, it is necessary to accept the changing nature of life, not blindly, but with intelligence, adapting to it and working with it, in the same way that a farmer works with nature, planting seeds in the appropriate season and harvesting crops when they are ripe. This would also be the mark

“Human perfection, in Chinese thought, involves an inner perfection that is reflected in the peace and contentment of the individual and in the harmony of his or her relationships with others and with nature. Second, it involves excellence in the external conduct of one’s life, the ability to live well practically, dignifying the social context of one’s ordinary day-to-day existence”

John M Koller,
Asian Philosophies

of the sage and of the wise ruler. As John M Koller explains in his book *Asian Philosophies*, “The Sage ruler must understand this so that, with a mind cleared of all passions and prejudices through self-cultivation, he can respond spontaneously and harmoniously to any problem that arises.”

Much has been made of the supposedly irreconcilable differences between Confucianism and Taoism, but perhaps they can be seen as just another manifestation of Yin (Taoism) and Yang (Confucianism), which are ultimately only aspects of the one Truth that is beyond them both, just as the Tai Chi symbol includes the Yin and the Yang.

Chinese civilization over the last 2000 years appears to be most influenced by Confucianism: from 637 C.E. onwards it was compulsory for all public schools to display an effigy of Confucius, and a system of state examinations, the high value given to learning (which was regarded more highly than social class) and the importance of self-cultivation and family relationships are all particularly Confucian in character. Other aspects of Chinese culture, such as the magical aspects of Chinese medicine and the martial arts, or those well-known paintings where a tiny human figure is shown on the top of a mountain, surrounded by clouds in a vast landscape, reveal the influence of Taoism and the great value it gives to Nature, of which the human being is only a small part.

But we must also not forget the influence of Buddhism. During the Ming Dynasty, most famous today for its exquisite “Ming vases”, the Minister of War of one of the emperors was a Buddhist monk and Buddhism permeated the Imperial Court.

These three cultural expressions are summed up by Koller as “three ways of attaining the self-transformation and perfection of human beings:

- The Daoist way: by following the Inner Way (Dao) of Nature.

- The Confucian way: by cultivating human nature and the social virtues.

- The Buddhist way: through meditative insight into the mind.”

The Confucian ideal of the perfect ruler was of someone who cultivated his own conduct, identified with the interests and well-being of the state, who stimulated the arts and was friendly to foreigners. This was the so-called “Great Principle”, in opposition to the “small principle” according to which each individual merely looks after his own interests.

Despite the vehemently anti-Confucian stance of Mao Tse Tung (Mao Zedong) and the Cultural Revolution led by the “Gang of Four”, many of these Chinese cultural characteristics, such as respect for education and the importance of family and social relationships, have remained in place to this day.

From the early 20th century, the movement to modernise China in line with Western values and technology led to a downgrading of Confucius and Confucianism. But in recent years there have been moves to rehabilitate Confucius, culminating in a speech by President Xi Jinping in 2014. Now there are more than a thousand “Confucian Institutes” and “Confucian Classrooms” in 120 countries around the world.

Many Western observers see this as a cynical move by the Chinese government based on the fact that Confucius taught respect for authority. But as philosophers in the classical tradition we can at least be happy that the timeless teachings of Confucius are once again being made available to millions of people across China and the world.

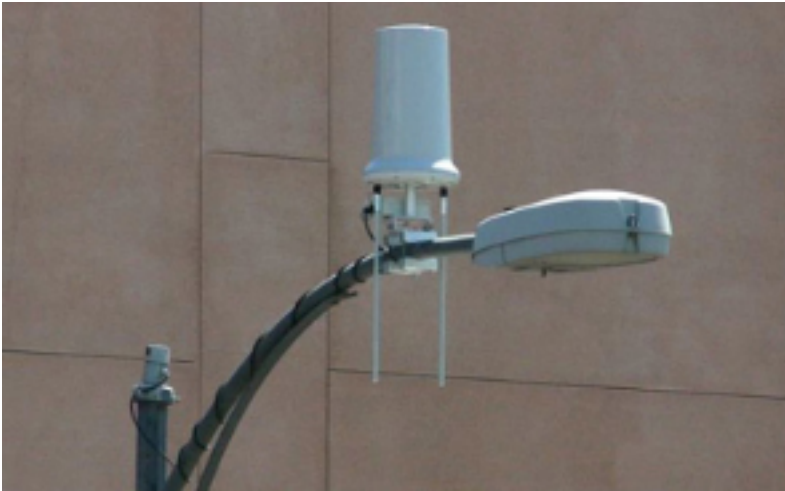
Julian Scott

How many more do we need? G's

5G or '5th Generation mobile networks' has become a buzzword that gets thrown around as a sign of the future; the next generation of communications that will let us connect faster to each other and transfer more data from one person to another. By putting this into a historical context, it is possible to see how we got here and what will come next.

5G specifically refers to the next generation of mobile networks, which provide us with calls, texts and data while we are on the move (i.e. not connected to a Wi-Fi network). Mobile networks have come a long way since the first generation, which could only carry voice messages. In the early 90s, 2G was standardised, which allowed us to send text messages and low quality picture messages. In the early 2000's came 3G, and 3G+ which included video messaging and video calling, connecting us more to each other. Ten years on from this, 4G was launched in various incarnations





in different countries, which allows us to do all the activity we do on the move today, such as gaming, high quality video calling and streaming. As this progression shows, the next generation will become faster still and will overcome many of the limitations of 4G, such as connection drop-outs in highly populated areas.

5G will operate at higher frequencies than its predecessors, which allows for more bandwidth (the amount of data transmitted in a given time), giving higher speed downloads. However, with a higher frequency signal, the range of the signal is reduced meaning that we will need more access points. Lampposts and bus stops will potentially become transmitters and receivers for data.

There are many potential benefits from 5G. The amount of time that can be saved with faster connections could free up billions each year from productivity savings. Autonomous vehicles which can communicate with traffic infrastructure using 5G could save significant amounts of time and be safer. The healthcare sector can benefit from remote health services, seeing time saved for GPs across the country. Connected home appliances such as smart fridges and waste bins can prevent waste, encourage recycling and save councils millions.

However, do we need to be more connected and where will this take us? On the one side, you have the engineers who want to push the boundaries of what is possible and to challenge themselves.

However, they are often being funded by large corporations, who want this technology to access more customers, their data, and want to do this faster. We are already bombarded daily with directed adverts and emails, and with 5G there is the potential for more advanced advertising. Targeted augmented reality adverts appearing on devices within milliseconds could be a real possibility.

5G also means that we will be reliably connected to each other digitally, which can be beneficial, but sometimes those connection drop-outs give us a timely (albeit unintended) relief from our mobile devices. Furthermore, with more digital connections, are we also losing the ability to communicate face-to-face? We also have the dangers of more personal data being freely available which, when in the wrong hands could have serious and lasting consequences.

The face of the next generation of mobile networks is not yet finalised, with many challenges still existing, but the positive and negative potential of it is already evident today. It is inevitable that 5G will come, and it will most likely be followed by an even faster 6G, which is already being researched by academic institutions. Nevertheless, it must be ensured that this technology is not misused and exists as much as possible for the benefit of society, rather than to its detriment. This is something for which we are all individually responsible.

Peter Fox

GNOMES

IN FOLKLORE AND FAIRY TALES



Arthur Rackham:
Rumpelstilzchen (1916)
(Illustration: The fairy
tales of the Brothers
Grimm.

Folklore and fairy tales are well known for describing all sorts of incredible creatures: gnomes, dwarfs, mermaids, pixies, giants and speaking animals and birds. The famous alchemist Paracelsus made a classification of these mostly invisible beings and called them ‘elementals’ or ‘nature spirits’. He said that they can be found within the Earth (gnomes, fairies and dwarfs), in the depths of the oceans, lakes or rivers (sirens, nereids, undines and nymphs), in the highest strata of the atmosphere (sylphs and elves) and in the phenomena of fire (salamanders).

If it were not for two brothers from Germany, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, however, many of these traditions would have been lost. Whilst still at university, these two philologists began a lifelong dedication to researching the early history of German language and literature, including folk tales. “The ardour with which we studied Old German helped us overcome the spiritual depression of those days,” wrote Wilhelm in his autobiography. They began their collection with the purpose of preserving the stories as they had been handed down from generation to generation, recognising that the practice of storytelling was threatened by increased industrialization.

It is not possible to cover all the nature spirits in one article, so I will just focus on the most well-known of them, who even appear to this day in some English gardens: gnomes. The word ‘gnome’ derives from the Greek, meaning ‘one who lives in the earth’, and refers to a creature about one foot tall but otherwise similar in form to a human being. Many authors of fairy tales chose to refer to these beings as ‘little grey men’ or ‘little folk’ thus avoiding getting entangled in the complex hierarchy of Earth elementals. Sometimes they are called interchangeably ‘dwarfs’ or even ‘elves’.

In Grimms’ fairy tales, gnomes or dwarfs are represented as cautious, sensible and kind little creatures (*Snow White*), who

are quick to help those in need, reward kindness or punish arrogance and pride (*The Three Little Men in the Wood* and *The Golden Goose*). They may offer their services in exchange for something precious that they desire and will scrupulously adhere to the arrangements agreed by both parties. They do not enjoy being outwitted and may be quite self-destructive in their anger (*Rumpelstiltskin*). Sometimes they act as guardians of enchanted places or treasures and prefer to communicate by signs rather than spoken words (*The Queen Bee*).

In some ways gnomes or dwarfs look different to humans, for example in the tips of their ears, which are pointed, which would explain why in the story *The Shoemaker and the Elves*, they were called elves rather than dwarfs. On another level, this tale relates to the times before work had become automated, when the little gnomes were

believed to be the craftsmen's invisible companions and helpers.

Nowadays most people treat stories involving nature spirits as pure fantasy, only useful for stimulating children's imagination. But for those interested in researching the subject more seriously there are many books recording experiences of nature spirits in different parts of the world and explaining the rationale behind these beliefs, such as Evans-Wentz's *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* or J. A. Livraga's *The Spirits of Nature*.

Nature will almost certainly outlive our present human activity and perhaps the nature spirits will also survive. But in view of the universality of the traditions it might be worth enquiring into their possible existence, which might bring some much needed magic into our lives.

Ania Hajost





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Philosophy means love of wisdom (philo-sophia) and it is essentially an active attitude of awareness towards life. In this sense, we are all born philosophers, with an innate need to ask questions and with the intuition that there are answers to be found.

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Ethics: Understanding Yourself

Ethics enquires about moral principles and the impact of individuals on their environment. But it is also related to happiness, as it helps us to find the right 'inner attitude' to deal with different life situations in ways that are beneficial to ourselves and to others.

Sociopolitics: Living Together in Harmony with Others

Sociopolitics looks at relationships in society, both between individuals and between the individual and the group. It is concerned with finding principles by which we can create harmonious communities where everyone can flourish..

Philosophy of History: Being Part of Something Greater

We are all products of history and at the same time we all contribute to making history. Philosophy of History seeks wisdom in the study of the past and how to apply the lessons of history to the present.

Philosophy for Living: Practical Application

What is the value of thinking without action? Action is the real measure of what we are, and theory and practice inform each other. Each course evening will explore the practical relevance of philosophy and its potential to transform ourselves and society.

Course Fee: £190 (£130 concessions)

NEW ACROPOLIS SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please see our website for more information

Wed 19, 26 Sept and 3 Oct (all from 7.00 – 9.30 pm)

3-week course - The Language of Symbols

1st Evening) Introduction to symbology and the universal symbols of numbers, geometric shapes and nature

2nd Evening) Sacred art and symbols of India (Buddhism, Hinduism)

3rd Evening) The symbolic dimension in sacred architecture

Course fee: £15 for each evening (£12 concs.) or £40 if booked together in advance (£30 concs.)

Thurs 20 Sept, 7.00 pm

TALK: What is Karma? Understanding Essential Concepts of Eastern Philosophy

The theory of Karma is a fundamental teaching encountered in all Eastern religions and philosophies. However, nowadays the word has entered mainstream vocabulary where it is often used in a casual way with a fatalistic ring. But what does Karma really mean and what are its philosophical and practical implications? This talk will shed light on the deeper meaning of the term and will explore related concepts such as Dharma, free will and reincarnation.

Admission: £5 (cons. £3)

Thurs 27 Sept (7.00 - 9.30 pm)

16-Week Course : Introduction to the Major Systems of Thought of East and West

First introductory evening FREE. Price for the whole course £190 (£130 concs), handouts included.

Wed 8, 15, 22 Oct (all from 7.00 – 9.30 pm)

3-week course : Mind - Best Friend or Worst Enemy?

1st Evening) How our mind creates our experience of reality

2nd Evening) Consciousness and self-awareness

3rd Evening) Develop your innate creativity

Course fee: £15 for each evening (£12 concs.) or £40 if booked together in advance (£30 concs.)

Mon 10 Oct (7.00 - 9.30 pm)

16-Week Course : Introduction to the Major Systems of Thought of East and West

First evening FREE. Price for the whole course £190 (£130 concs), handouts included.

Tues 23 Oct, 7 pm

TALK: The Spirit of Rome and its Sacred Foundations

Many of us will be familiar in some way with the legacy of Rome and the Roman Empire: from great feats of engineering and military conquests to its political structures and arts. However, all of these represent only the material attributes of the civilisation. The aim of this talk is to show that the greatness that was Rome rested in many ways on esoteric and sacred-magical foundations. We will explore the notion that it was these foundations which enabled the spirit of a true civilisation to come into being.

Admission: £5 (cons. £3)

Mon 29 Oct (7.00 - 9.30 pm)

16-Week Course : Introduction to the Major Systems of Thought of East and West

First evening FREE. Price for the whole course £190 (£130 concs), handouts included.

Thurs 15 Nov: World Philosophy Day

Celebrating the Centenary of the End of WWI: Can we find wisdom in the study of history?

The 11th of November 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I - one of the most terrible wars in the history of Europe and supposedly the "war to end all wars". We will mark this important event in combination with World Philosophy Day by exploring in context the end of the 'Great War' and the link between history and philosophy.

Cicero's dictum "History as life's teacher" conveys the idea that the study of the past should serve as a lesson for the future. However, history also shows that humanity often seems to fail to learn lessons from the past.

What is the most useful way to reflect on historical events? If we define philosophy as the search for wisdom and apply philosophical enquiry to the field of history, can we discern some wisdom from its study?

This evening will consist of various short presentations by different speakers on the subjects of WWI and the philosophy of history. There will be buffet-style refreshments provided both during the break and after the event with time for philosophical conversation.

Admission : £8 (concs. £5) per evening – refreshments included.

Instagram: @newacropolisuk

Facebook: New Acropolis UK

Twitter: @NewAcropolisLDN

Meetup: Practical Philosophy of East and West

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Tel. 0207 359 0059
www.newacropolisuk.org

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