

Issue No. 34 MAY-JUNE 2019

NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine

New Acropolis
Features in *The
Parliamentary Review*

The Integral Theory of
Ken Wilber

Home Education

Monkey - Journey to
the West

PHILOSOPHY
CULTURE
SOCIETY
ESOTERICA
ART
AND MORE





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.

For further details please visit :
WWW.NEWACROPOLISUK.ORG

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 **Philosophy
Culture
Volunteering**
NEW ACROPOLIS

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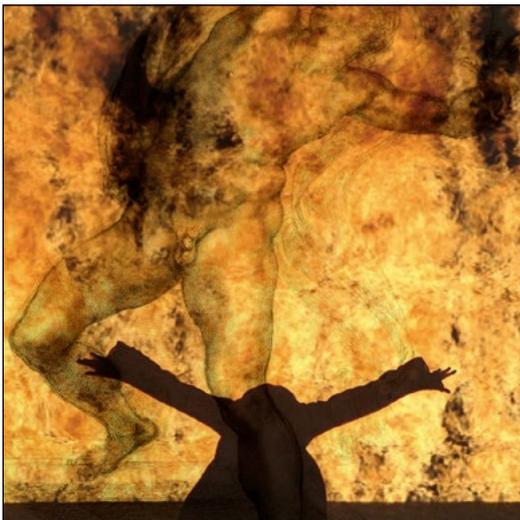
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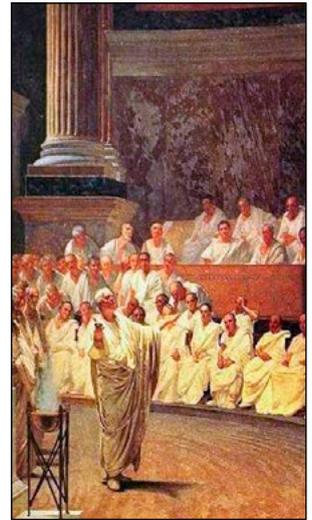


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Editorial

Should the focus of education shift from knowledge to wisdom?

The concept of wisdom is deeply rooted in human history. It has been considered a virtue in all the great philosophical and religious traditions, from Pythagoras to Plato, Aristotle and Confucius, and from Christianity to Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism. But although the literature on wisdom goes back to the early days of humanity, it seems that it was only in the mid-eighties that the first empirical work on wisdom took place, with the development of the *Berlin Wisdom Paradigm*. However, in recent years the number of wisdom-related studies has greatly increased, and in 2016 the University of Chicago launched the *Center for Practical Wisdom* where wisdom has become 'a topic for rigorous scholarship and scientific investigation.'

Wisdom rests on many pillars and its nature is so deep and rich that no one definition will do it justice. But it is generally associated with sound judgement and choices, empathy and benevolence, self-knowledge and the ability to self-reflect, a larger perspective and the understanding of long-term impact, a balance between self-interest and the common good, emphasis on purpose over pleasure, an insight into the causes of things and, as Aristotle said, knowing which ends are worth striving for.

It might be interesting to reflect why there is suddenly so much renewed interest in wisdom. Ursula M. Staudinger, a German psychologist and Professor of Sociomedical Sciences and Psychology at Columbia University, thinks that it has to do with greater pluralism in society and the fact that increasing living standards provide us with more options in life. Until the beginning of the 20th century, life was much simpler and we did not have to make so many choices. Now, we are faced with multiple options for every single aspect of our lives and it is natural that we are looking for some form of guidance to make the right decision.

At the same time, globalisation has brought different cultures with very different value systems closer together, which means that the traditional framework for navigating life has been challenged and is no longer able to provide sure references. One reaction to this increase in uncertainty and ambiguity has been fundamentalism, which is an attempt to return to clear-cut, black-and-white and easy rules. The other response to this same problem of our postmodern and deconstructivist times is the quest for wisdom, one of whose attributes has been defined precisely as tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to consider diverse viewpoints and create a synthesis.

Another aspect of our modern times is that, through the increase of our knowledge and our technological means, our power to act and the impact of our actions have also increased to such a degree that we can now also cause a lot of harm. Isaac Asimov once said that 'the saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.'

The contemporary British philosopher Nicholas Maxwell thinks along the same lines. He has devoted much of his working life to arguing for the importance of wisdom and the urgent need to learn how to acquire more wisdom. In 2003 he founded *Friends of Wisdom*, an international group of people sympathetic to the idea that academic inquiry should help humanity acquire more wisdom.

On the website of *Friends of Wisdom* he writes: 'We need a revolution in the aims and methods of academic inquiry. Instead of giving priority to the search for knowledge, academia needs to devote itself to seeking and promoting wisdom by rational means, wisdom being the capacity to realize what is of value in life, for oneself and others, wisdom thus including knowledge but much else besides. A basic task ought to be to help humanity learn how to create a better world. Acquiring scientific knowledge dissociated from a more basic concern for wisdom, as we do at present, is dangerously and damagingly irrational.'

I could not agree more. Here's to the title of his paper: *Knowledge to Wisdom: We need a Revolution*.

Sabine Leitner

New Acropolis Features in The Parliamentary Review

New Acropolis UK are very pleased to announce that we have been featured in this year's Parliamentary Review for Education Services 2019.

The Parliamentary Review is a UK government publication which highlights best practice in different sectors of activity and is designed to inform policy makers in all areas of social, economic and political life. It is described as 'an indispensable guide to industry best practice, which demonstrates how sector leaders have responded to challenges in the political and economic environment'.

New Acropolis UK was invited to contribute an article about its work for this year's Education Services Review. The article, written by New Acropolis Chair Sabine Leitner, discusses the importance of philosophy in the classical tradition, the value of culture and the ways in which volunteering can develop important human qualities. Together these form a philosophical education that can become a foundation of a future where both individuals and society can flourish.

Representatives of New Acropolis UK also attended a Gala event at the Palace of Westminster to mark the release of The Review and further promote the activities of New Acropolis. Each year the review is sent out to over 500,000 business leaders, policy makers and other relevant individuals.

New Acropolis – School of Philosophy in the Classical Tradition

Fact sheet:

- Chair: Sabine Leitner
- Location: Highbury & Islington
- Active in London: Since 1996
- Registered charity: Since 2005
- 6 teachers, 3 trainee teachers
- 50 students from all walks of life between 18 and 70

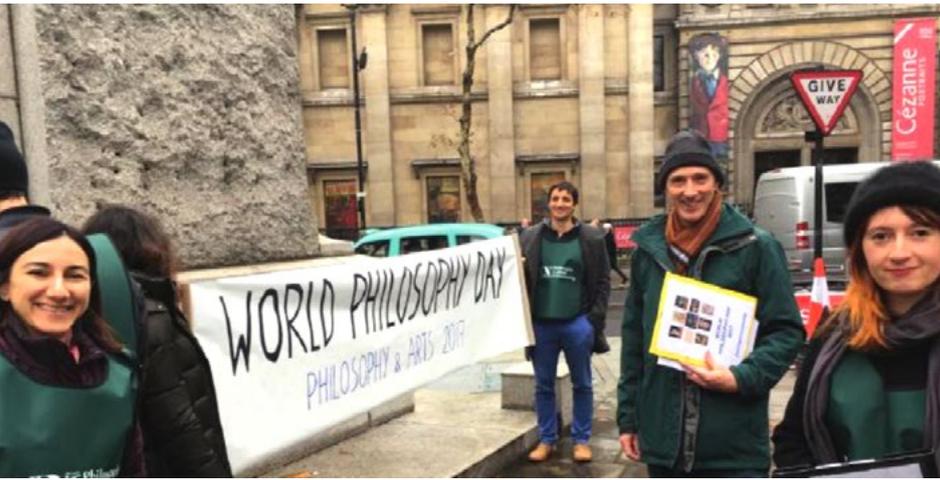
New Acropolis is an educational charity with the aim of promoting the renewal of philosophy in the 'classical tradition' and a rediscovery of the timeless values that have guided humanity throughout history. We work in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering to provide an 'education for head, heart and hands'.

Why Philosophy?

Many of the problems facing humanity today – social, environmental, moral and spiritual – will not be solved long-term with more technology or money alone. They are problems created by ourselves and a way of life that is the product of our thinking or our 'philosophy'. In order to create a future that resolves these problems the solutions must include or indeed be rooted in an inner development of our thinking and collective values, a change in our 'philosophy'. How can this be achieved? This question has inspired us and guided our activities for more than 20 years.



Chair Sabine Leitner



World Philosophy Day 2017

“Wisdom is knowing how to act, knowing what is ‘good’ and knowing which ends are worth striving for”

What is Philosophy in the Classical Tradition?

At New Acropolis we understand philosophy in its classical sense as philo-sophia, meaning ‘love of wisdom’. The discovery of wisdom through a practical and active attitude to life rather than something purely intellectual or contemplative. Wisdom is knowing how to act, knowing what is ‘good’ and knowing which ends are worth striving for.

What do we do?

We work in three areas: Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering and our approach pursues two goals: the development of the latent potential within the human being through education (from the Latin *educare*, to train, and *educere*, to draw out, to bring forth) and the renewal of culture, the soil in which human beings develop.

Our philosophical activities are centred on ongoing weekly evening classes for adults (around 600 hours of teaching a year). Our syllabus is based on the comparative study of the major systems of thought of Eastern and Western traditions. The purpose is to make the vast heritage of human wisdom accessible to all and to draw inspiration for our own actions from the universal ideas that have stood the test of time.

We organise about twenty public events a year, such as talks, courses and workshops, where we invite guest speakers from a wide range of fields, including philosophy, psychology, medicine, economics, science and ecology.

We also stage public ‘happenings’ to promote broader philosophical conversation and last year we organised an event in front of the National Gallery on the theme of *Philosophy and Art* to celebrate UNESCO’s World Philosophy Day. We find at these events that many people really appreciate the opportunity for philosophical conversation and the chance to explore their values and ideas. We always encounter surprising insights and heartfelt human exchanges. Since 2013 we have been publishing a digital bi-monthly magazine on a range of relevant topics covering philosophy and culture.

Why Culture?

We understand culture as the ‘soil’ in which individuals can find all the nutrients they need to flourish. Culture is education in the widest sense of the word because it transmits values and provides us with forms through which we can express these values. We transmit to our students the value of culture and encourage them to think what kind of culture we need to create in order to bring out the best in the human being. To support this, we organise visits to museums and trips to sites of cultural and historical interest in Britain and abroad. We revive traditions and celebrations to enable us to re-connect with nature and human history in a profound way.

Why Volunteering?

Our programme of studies is designed to provide an education that not only develops our mind but also other human faculties such

as love, compassion, imagination, willpower, perseverance and creativity. Volunteering helps to develop these key faculties and forms part of our philosophical training and we encourage our students to become active and involved in community projects.

Our own volunteering projects include helping with the planting and maintenance of the public garden in front of our school. For the last nine years we have been organising a garden volunteering day every month, which also brings together neighbours and other Londoners. This has created a much stronger community within our neighbourhood and a good cooperation with Islington Council.

We also transformed a derelict space at the back of our premises into a garden and created a bee sanctuary, as bee populations are under serious threat in the UK and elsewhere. Currently we have two beehives, which are managed in a bee-centred way, with the idea of providing a home for bees rather than obtaining honey. Every year we open our bee sanctuary to the public under the auspices of Open Garden Squares Weekend, attracting hundreds of visitors who are attended by our volunteers and receive talks about the bees.

For several years, we supported a local homeless project run by the Union Chapel Margins charity and this year we have started to put our gardening skills to use with another local charity which works with isolated elderly people in Islington. Our school of philosophy itself offers many volunteering opportunities as it is run entirely by volunteers.

Philosophy is the Foundation of the Future

How can we measure the success of our work? We think the success of our work is visible in the changes within

the people who attend our classes; that our kind of holistic and practical philosophical education awakens a clearer sense of purpose, a greater sense of responsibility, initiative, respect, courtesy, generosity and tolerance of differences. It can produce a profound transformation within the individual which in turn can lead to new ideas and transformation in society.

All our activities were achieved with an annual budget of around £30,000 and no salaried roles. Our work demonstrates that a shared vision, good will and an attitude of cooperation can achieve as much as



Volunteering day at Compton Terrace Gardens, Islington

or more than material resources. Our belief is that we need to cultivate human potential and non-material resources in our society so that we can resolve the problems we are currently facing and prepare a better society for the next generation.

“Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly.” (Václav Havel)

You can also read this article online at: <https://www.theparliamentaryreview.co.uk/organisations/new-acropolis>

The Integral Theory of KEN WILBER

The American thinker Ken Wilber is well known in some circles, such as transpersonal psychology, yet despite being the author of 25 books he is barely mentioned in academia. His unconventional approach, which tries to integrate opposites such as science and spirituality, has made him difficult to classify and has brought him into conflict with mainstream thinking.

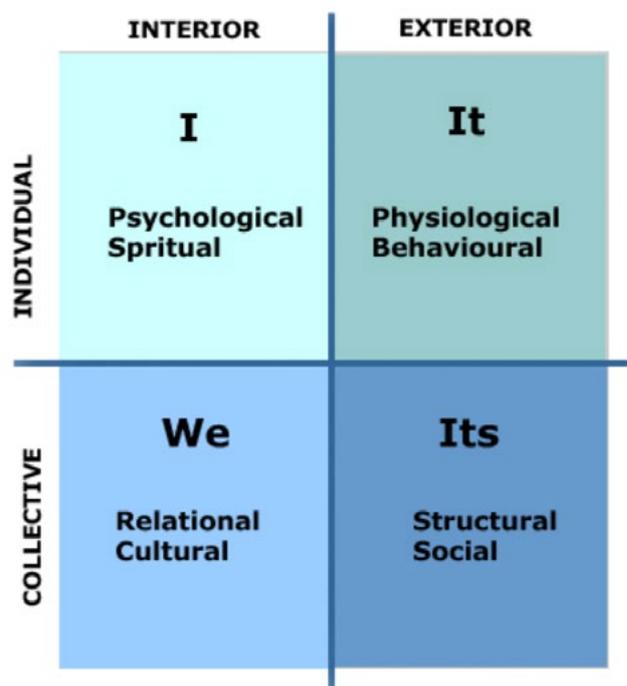
In his work *A Brief Theory of Everything* (2001) he proposes an “Integral Theory”, a theory which he developed by analysing and synthesising many different models of reality in a wide range of fields, from medicine and psychology to politics and theology. It is a way of looking at things from a variety of angles, while remaining open to adding new dimensions or changing one’s theory in order to improve it. As Wilber himself says in an interview conducted by Hector Gil in the Spanish magazine *Esfinge* (<https://www.revistaesfinge.com/>), “my best talent is probably pattern recognition.”

One of the models of his Integral Theory is shown in the opposite diagram known as the Four Quadrants, Tetra-Evolution or Aqal Model. This comprises two dualities of interior-exterior and individual-collective. This model can be used as a method for solving disputes and disagreements, for example on a political level.

In politics we find two apparently antagonistic positions: liberal (left-wing) and conservative (right-wing). Liberals have a tendency to attribute the causes of human suffering or happiness to external factors, such as social institutions, economic conditions, material well-being, environment and technological

development. Conservatives, on the other hand, will usually say that such causes are to be found in the individual, in factors such as individual choice, morality, values and meaning.

What Integral Theory does is propose a third way which, instead of opposing the two positions, tries to integrate them. The method for doing so is to start from the principle that both the inner and the outer approaches are equally real and important, accepting that there is both a need to improve external conditions and for the individual to develop inner strength and resourcefulness. However, what often happens is that neither side will see the value of the other and they become locked in a never-ending and



sterile battle.

In the same way, Wilber distinguishes between “subjective” and “objective” views of reality and affirms that both are equally valid and important. As an example, we can look at our own actions or those of others and we will see that there are always both subjective and objective elements involved. A person’s actions cannot only be interpreted in terms of their objective actions; subjective intention is equally important. Likewise, meaning, which is a subjective factor, has an impact on the way we live, to the extent that, if someone has no sense of meaning in their lives, they may commit suicide. Conversely, when someone finds a sense of purpose, their outer appearance may become transformed and they become more interesting and attractive outwardly, as a result of being more fulfilled. Victor Frankl, in *Man’s Search for Meaning*, explores this issue through his own experiences as a

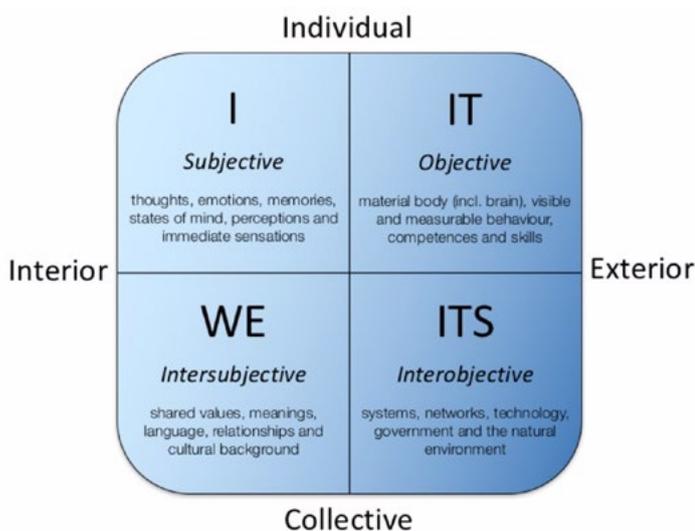
of human beings, but because it is based on a principle of integration (i.e. that all the levels are valid) this is theoretically avoided. One could imagine, though, that people who consider themselves as belonging to one of the higher levels would consider themselves superior to those on a lower level.

To explain his theory, Wilber uses the model of the “holon” and the “holoarchy”. A holon is a whole which becomes part of a greater whole, like an atom within a molecule or a molecule within a cell. The larger unit integrates the smaller so that the greater whole is more than simply the sum of its parts; each new level adds a new dimension.

By way of example, if we look at human societies, we will see that some people view things from a tribal point of view, which Wilber terms “ethnocentric”, considering their nation or ethnicity to be superior to others. Other people, with a wider outlook, view things from a larger humanitarian perspective.

However, Wilber proposes that those with a wider perspective should not reject those with a narrower perspective, but integrate their point of view and try to widen it by enlightening and educating them. Unfortunately this generally does not happen today, because those with a more enlightened worldview are afraid of being considered elitist if they try to educate the less enlightened, so they opt to denigrate them instead – which makes them not only elitist but also selfish and narcissistic, because they are more concerned with preserving their own image as enlightened people rather than with helping others. We can perhaps see here why Wilber has made himself unpopular in some circles.

This horror of hierarchies arose, according to Wilber, from the hippie mentality of the 60s. However, it is not hierarchy itself that is bad (the word, after all, means “sacred order”). The problem is the confusion that has arisen between what he calls hierarchies of development or growth, and “dominator hierarchies”, which are the ones that people rightly rebel against. A hierarchy of development is, for example, a hierarchy of states of consciousness, which go from more limited and exclusive ones to broader and more inclusive perspectives on reality. In his view of the evolution of human consciousness, Wilber classifies this development as going from the egocentric-egoistic posture, through a tribal (group) ethnocentric level to a multicentric orientation of universal care: from



concentration camp survivor.

Wilber does not believe that all positions are equal, however. Indeed, one of his more controversial claims is that hierarchies are a fact of nature which cannot and should not be denied. There are hierarchies in the development of consciousness in all the kingdoms of nature, including the human. Thus, some human beings are at a higher level of conscious development than others, without this meaning that the outlook of those at a lower level should be rejected as invalid; on the contrary, all levels should be integrated within a greater whole. It is an idea which could give rise to an elitist view



Ken Wilber

“me” to “us” (but against the “non-us”) to “all of us together”. Consequently, the higher someone rises in a hierarchy of growth (growth of consciousness), the more inclusive that person becomes; whereas the higher someone rises in a dominator hierarchy, the more privileged and exclusive they become. Confusing the two types of hierarchy and wanting to eliminate all hierarchies, however, shuts people off from the possibility of growth and supports the existing structures that seek to oppress and dominate people.

We can see an example of this in religions. Religions can become dominator hierarchies when they are taken over by unscrupulous people who use them for political ends. However, the original function of all religions, which are founded by highly developed human beings living in direct connection with God (the non-dual reality) in every moment of their lives, is, in Wilber’s industrial metaphor, to act as conveyor belts that can lead people from one level up to the next. On the lower level, according to Wilber, you have “social religions” in which people perform rites and fulfil obligations in a more or less mechanical way, hoping to win the favour of their God(s) who will reward them with good fortune and prosperity. On the next level up, the follower of a religion would try to integrate the moral teachings of the religion into their everyday lives and try to live them,

rather than just conforming to the rules and rituals for appearances’ sake. Higher still would be the mystical union with God and the direct experience of the ultimate non-dual reality.

In this way, according to Wilber’s principle of integration, all religious forms (except the “dominator” forms, which are a distortion and negation of true religion) should be embraced and integrated as necessary stepping stones to the higher, more real levels of direct experience.

To sum up, Wilber’s Integral Theory offers a way of resolving the apparent contradictions of life in a more harmonious way than is being done at present. If we had a more truly integral approach to life, we would probably be able to solve many of the serious and apparently intractable problems that face humanity today.

Ken Wilber’s own view of his work was expressed to a friend, Raquel Torrent, in the following terms: “I write so that people will fall in love with their soul, their evolutionary path, and can see themselves in the mirror of consciousness” (as quoted in Torrent’s article in the Spanish magazine *Esfinge* <https://www.revistaesfinge.com/>)

Julian Scott

Home Education

Home Education (HE) is receiving increasing media coverage these days. More and more parents are turning to this more informal system for a variety of reasons. Many choose HE because of a perceived failure of our educational system to fulfill their children's needs as individuals, or to address problems such as anxiety, bullying, mental health issues and challenging behaviour. In an increasing number of cases, schools themselves seem to be indirectly pushing parents in the direction of home education when they are no longer able to cope with the individual or special needs of the child.

According to The Guardian newspaper (2 April 2019), there are an estimated 60,000 children receiving home education across England and Wales and the figure is constantly rising. Local authorities are becoming increasingly concerned and want to monitor those families by introducing registration. In her reply to a letter I wrote recently to my local MP, Margaret Hodge, she stated that in her view home education does need to be regulated in some way to ensure that children are receiving a reasonable quality of education. Whilst one can understand the good intentions behind this, the question is a complex



one, especially if registration leads to inspections and all HE families end up somehow being judged or criticized for the way they are raising their children.

It is true that every now and then cases of lack of care or safeguarding have been brought to the attention of the public. However, this is sadly a reality that also takes place in children who attend school. Interestingly, there has never been a case of a home educated child who was radicalized, in spite of people's fears in this respect. All cases of radicalization have occurred in schools, mostly state schools in fact.

In the UK – and this isn't the case in all countries – parents are given the right to educate their children at home. The guidelines are set out on the gov.uk website: *“You can teach your child at home, either full or part-time. This is called home schooling.... As a parent, you must make sure your child receives a full-time education from the age of 5 but you don't have to follow the national curriculum.”*

To understand better what HE is all about, I decided to get in touch with someone who home educated his four children and founded Home Education UK in 2000, the oldest website supporting this choice. His name is Mike Wood and you can find out more at his website <https://www.home-education.org.uk/> He kindly agreed to be interviewed for this magazine, and a transcript of the interview is set out below.

Interview with Mike Wood, founder of Home Education UK

If you were to choose 3 words that describe what home education looks like, what would those words be?

First, you have to have the flexibility to determine your own curriculum, or even not have one as such.

Second, is being able to specialize in some subjects and topics taking into account the interests of the child and allowing the child to lead the process.

Third, is the engagement of the child.

What are the general advantages of home education over schools?

Home educators have the opportunity to follow a child-led approach and this is one of the reasons we are often successful at what we do.

Home-educated children do not behave like school children because it is far



more relaxed, and quite a lot of the time children spend doing their own things. Children learn faster as they are engaged in their learning. It is more immediate, experiential and they won't forget, as they have been involved.

Projecting into the future and what this generation needs to develop in terms of skills and knowledge, I think the important thing is that if children know

how to learn, they will pick things up. They will retain the curiosity that is needed to be able to adapt and change, and the ability to learn on your own is probably the most important skill in the future.

What, in your view, are the flaws in the state schooling system?

What is wrong with schools is that children are alienated from the learning process; everything is imposed upon them regardless of whether it is suitable to them or not. So children don't have any options to take control over their education themselves.

Schools have become more inflexible as time goes on. There is pressure on things like their need to score well within the school league table so they put a lot of pressure on the children and that causes the children stress. And this often leads to conflict between the families and school. Schools retreat behind rules and are very keen on high academic achievement by following those rules.

What most schools seem to be doing is teaching to the test and that testing regime is at the heart of why many parents home educate. Many parents express their concern about the stress of their children trying to pass tests and their impressions of how little they know.

Schools seems very rigid to me and when we get to threaten children or adults, to force parents to bring children to school, then you face the question: what on earth is going on? Why do you have to force people to access a free education? There is something not right here.

*Why do people choose to home educate?
What is the strongest reason?*

Interestingly, it used to be bullying – according to research done years ago. Now, over the past five years, it's

been a growth of people who home educate due to special needs. And that is because schools are failing to meet children's special needs by not having enough money. There is also the aspect of anxiety, which could be associated with autism or Asperger's syndrome in many cases. Many of these children find school very difficult due to noise levels, constant activity, rigid structure and their inability to control their environment. But there is also a smaller number of people who come into HE motivated by ideological reasons, not wanting their children at school. Some families experience conflict with the schools and are unable to resolve it, so they end up in HE.

What do you think is the biggest challenge in the journey of home education?

People usually have all sorts of anxieties; many are concerned about the social aspect, which in most cases isn't really a problem unless you are living in an isolated community. There are huge groups of home educators, and children take part in all sorts of activities. The other problem is money: many families think it is going to cost a lot of money, which isn't always the case. But giving up a job – in cases of couples parenting – is expensive, so you are more careful with expenses. Many home educators develop businesses from home as an alternative, or work shifts to swap with their partners. Often it is women who take that responsibility. So, money is probably the most difficult issue, not in terms of what you spend but what you no longer earn. Having said this, some single parents manage to do it on their own.

How does home education work?

Quite a lot of the time the kids spend doing their own things. You might have



an hour's conversation with your child or just a couple of hours, the rest of the time is like a normal house. The kids are reading, doing something on the computer, talking to friends or siblings, and so on. Referring to Professor Roland Meighan, and his work on purposeful conversation, a lot of the education takes place as a general conversation rather than sitting and doing work around the kitchen table. So it's more by conversation and although most parents do that, this approach is about being more purposive, paying more attention, engaging in the subject more deeply. You make use of any opportunity, you turn any situation into an educational thing. So for example, you tend to pick your holidays where there are educational things to do or things to see.

You can use anything, absolutely anything as a way of teaching. And if you do it right, the kids don't feel they have had a lesson. It's more about appealing to their enthusiasms and their interests, and eventually they follow that through and develop it by themselves. When I homeschooled my children, the way I looked at HE was not about teaching them things; what I was really trying to do was teach them research methods

inspired by how you learn things. So my kids were learning how to learn by doing their own research. In this way, parents have an animator role, where they keep their children's curiosity going and support them in the journey.

Home educating families are very visible and the problem with local authorities (LAs) is that they don't really understand much about HE. So they go into the families and they are expecting to see school at home. They want to make sure you have a curriculum and some LAs are asking parents to fill in forms that don't match our approach. As home educators, we see the whole idea of inspections as something that restricts and prevents us from doing what we do. We are against inspections, so now we are not happy about registrations either. Accepting registrations can be a stepping-stone to inspections. The way the law is written is that LAs only have a duty to get involved when they become aware of a problem, rather than going around looking for the problems.

*Interview and introduction by
Natalia Lema*

The Temples of Ancient Egypt

(Part 2)

In the last issue, we looked at some mythological and magical aspects of the Egyptian temple. In this article we will learn about the main parts which constituted a temple complex.

Apart from the temple of Luxor, most of the Egyptian temples were built along a central-axis and followed a rectangular peripheral plan. The plan of the temple followed a threefold structure: 1. Courtyard, 2. Colonnaded hall, 3. Sanctuary (figs. 1 & 2).

Each contiguous element, as it came closer to the sanctuary, had a higher elevation and a lower roof with decreased illumination and increased 'sanctity'. Each gateway or 'door' symbolised a transition to a greater state of sacredness and marked the initiatory path. Some of the most important temples followed a 7-gates symbolism (figs. 1 & 2).

Most of the Egyptian temple complexes included the following elements, with their corresponding symbolism:

1) A sacred 'way' or road: this represents the pathway which leads man (i.e. the neophyte or initiate) to the temple (in Latin *templum* is a *sacred space*) and to the presence of God.

2) The *temenos* wall: a sacred enclosure wall which surrounded the temple complex and marked out the *sacred space* inside.

3) A pair of guardian figures: these were often found outside the main gate and were often represented by sphinx-like figures, lions-griffins or giant 'human' figures (fig. 3). As symbols of protective spiritual beings they held a particular significance and relationship with the temple in question.

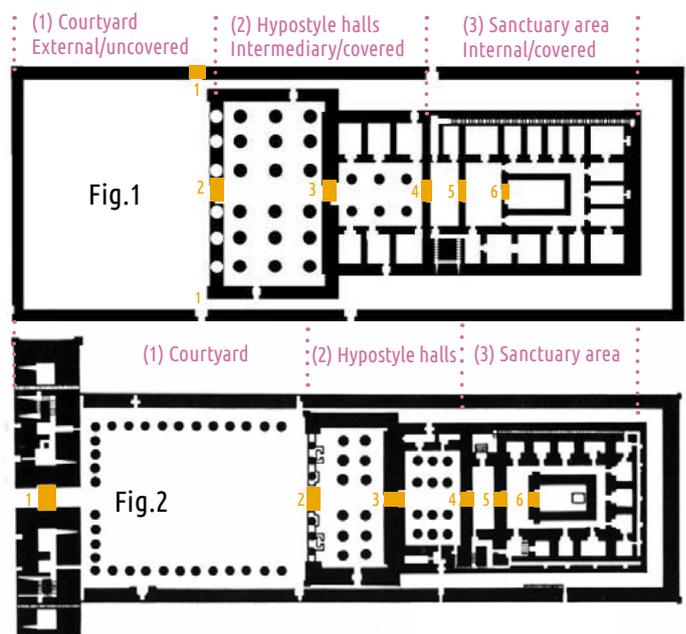
4) A sacred lake: it symbolised (a) the waters of creation (the primordial abyss from which creation arose), (b) 'the living waters', nurturer and sustainer of life, (c) the waters of purification.

5) A monumental gateway known as *pylons* (fig. 4 on the next page): this symbolises the first transitional stage along the sacred path to God. The outer pylons were specifically positioned in such a way as to allow, at a specific time of the year, the rising sun (or a particular



Fig.3

Above: Two colossal human figures 'guarding' the entrance of Karnak Temple and a statue of the 'falcon' Horus by the main entrance of Edfu Temple. Opposite: floor plans of Dendera (Fig.2) and Edfu (Fig.3) Temples. The main temple structure can be divided into 3 parts (highlighted in pink) or into 7 sections-gates (orange). The seventh 'gate' is represented by the aperture on the roof of the sanctuary (not visible on the diagram).



star) to direct its rays right through the central axis of the temple and, for an instant, to illumine the innermost sanctuary.

On their mighty walls we find depicted scenes of symbolic battles between the forces of light and darkness. In order to enter the temple and to gain access to the field of knowledge held within, all the 'external' and 'internal' obstacles had to be overcome. Those images of kings single-handedly smiting their enemies symbolise a sacred battle. The initiate-king is seen subduing his own lower desires and thoughts.

6) The courtyard or outer court: this was specifically linked to various types of sacrifice and offerings. Within their space we find altars used for blood (animal) sacrifices. In general, blood sacrifices were done in the outer court while most of the other offerings were done in the inner parts of the temple.

7) The hypostyle or colonnaded hall: these temple structures are regarded by some authors as symbolising the 'primordial forest' or a kind of 'heavenly garden'. Their peculiar type of illumination system, which follows the *camera obscura* effect, helped to convey the idea of the separation of the underworld from the true light of the heavenly world above. As found in other mystery rites of antiquity, this type of construction must also have had some theatrical purposes. The columns had various upper capitals shaped in plant forms, perhaps symbolising particular stages of man's psycho-spiritual unfoldment along the initiatory path.

8) Astronomical motifs: on the ceilings of various halls we find representations of the heavens with various astronomical scenes. The astronomical modelling is based not on 'realistic' but symbolic and spiritual representations. On the roof of many temples we would also find an astronomical observatory (e.g. Dendera Temple). Originally, astronomy (and astrology) was a temple science designed to determine the calendar and the holy days as well as the correct 'alignment' and coordination of the temple with the gods (and the sidereal bodies) in heaven.

9) Sanctuary or holy of holies: this is the innermost chamber where the (symbolical) meeting between man and god took place. Here we would find a shrine (fig. 5) with the image of the deity to which the temple was dedicated. The statue of the deity would be ritually purified and clothed as if it were a living being (these rites are still performed in Hindu temples). This chamber would be immersed in deep gloom or near-total darkness

with only an occasional ray of light falling through an opening in the roof above. It would only be accessed by the hierophant priest or the king-initiate (e.g. the Pharaoh). On the walls of the sanctuary we would also find depictions of the king-initiate standing or sitting next to the tree of life with gods or goddesses writing his name on some 'sacred fruit', therefore deifying him and making him immortal (fig. 6).

For the Ancient Egyptians, the main concern was that of maintaining a permanent and direct link between 'Heaven' and 'Earth'. But this could only be done through the agency of man - 'the fallen god'. Here we are referring, not to any 'mortal' man but to an individual who had to have already achieved a direct and conscious link with (his own) divine nature and who could act as the agent of a psycho-spiritual transmission and reception. As suggested by some students of esotericism, originally the spot where we find the above-mentioned statue would have been occupied (on special occasions) by the hierophant of the temple himself.

Agostino Dominici



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6

Bill Viola / Michelangelo

Life, Death, Rebirth

What is life, what is death, is there a rebirth? These are the big questions arising with the first spark of self-awareness. But what are the answers?

A recent exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts entitled *Bill Viola / Michelangelo: Life, Death, Rebirth* displayed some of the finest drawings of renaissance artist Michelangelo together with video installations of contemporary video artist Bill Viola.

Michelangelo was exploring profound Christian ideas often in mystical form with a strong influence of Neoplatonic philosophy. In his youth he was most likely educated at the Platonic Academy,

a philosophical school, which gave birth to the Renaissance movement. He was also a follower of a short-lived 'Spirituali' movement in the Catholic Church, whose devotional practices included meditation on the death of Christ.

Michelangelo presented through art many philosophical ideas about life. Hercules' labours show us the effort and steps that each mortal has to go through to recover their innate divine nature. Michelangelo provided sketches of how a hero first has to deal with irrational forces within himself and eventually move from carnal love to divine love.



Tristan's Ascension, Bill Viola, 2005



Study for an Ascension, Michelangelo Buonarroti

Bill Viola is a contemporary video artist born in New York. He lived and worked in Florence briefly in his twenties and later in his life travelled extensively around the world. One of the insights from his comparative studies emerged from these experiences: "I began to be aware of a deeper tradition, an undercurrent stretching across history and cultures... the ancient spiritual tradition that's concerned with self-knowledge that we can see in ancient Greece and all the great religions, in early Christianity as well as Siberian shamanism, what Aldous Huxley called the 'perennial philosophy', the link between East and West."

Viola as a visual artist understood the Platonic concept of an image. "I am interested not so much in the image whose source lies in the phenomenal world, but rather the image wholly determined by some inner realisation." This is why he was drawn towards sacred art as a carrier of another dimension. In his videos we see a lot of water, he is playing with light and time and offers us another view of reality,

something very familiar to us, but challenging our perception, which will result in a different inner experience. The observer often becomes shattered, as with the concept of Buddhist impermanence. The mortality of the body is the mortality of the world we live in, which is constantly passing from one stage into another. Such is the nature of existence. Everything is changing and the reality we perceive through our senses becomes very unstable, but the beauty can still shine through.

When we contemplate these profound ideas we have first to recognise what is real and what is not real. Philosophically what is more real is the cause, rather than its effect. Is our body an effect of life or a cause of life? Some philosophers would refer to a body as a vehicle for life, enabling us to go through experience, like a car which provides us with a means of transportation. But who is the driver? Many traditions would identify it with the soul. One of the soul's powers would be a vivifying or animating principle, which would bring the ability to move inanimate matter. Philosophically we can move into different directions, we could be pulled 'downwards' trapped by irrational drives or 'upwards' into the realm of wisdom and virtues.

This dual nature is very difficult to handle, as one who is 'below' has difficulties seeing what is 'above'. Eventually there must be a gradual ascent. But what makes this ascent happen? Could it be that this power is called Love? Could love be a pull upwards? Is this the core of the philosophical Platonic idea that inspires the artist to strive towards beauty, which is naturally followed by love?

Both artists, Michelangelo and Viola, when contemplating big questions about life and death five centuries apart used art as an answer, which is not a direct answer, but is born through our experience. It is only through the experience of an ascent that we can reach beyond image, where life is in continuous flow. This is a soulful place, a place of rebirth.

Miha Kosir

A superimposed image of Michelangelo's *The Risen Christ* and Bill Viola's *Fire Woman*



Rhetoric

the Art of Persuasion

“Rhetoric as the art of persuasion has always played an important role within societies.”



“I have a dream...”, “In this grave hour...”, “I do not come here as an advocate...” – the first lines of some of the greatest speeches that shaped the history of the 20th century. Rhetoric as the art of persuasion has always played an important role within societies. It is the main tool in all kinds of debates and the key technique for persuading a large audience. It is used by politicians, members of the courts of justice, scientists, even actors in show business and leaders of commerce and industry. Unlike Plato, who first criticised rhetoric, and especially the way Sophists used it, as immoral and unworthy to study in his famous early work, the *Gorgias*, Aristotle put it on the map and developed it into an autonomous, practical discipline,

*“Rhetoric
is the art
of ruling
the minds
of men.”*

as a counterpart to dialectic. He defined rhetoric as an art or skill: “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” He said that the message of the speaker should be supported by logic, ethics and emotional force as well.

Aristotle also pointed out that the most important element in a speech is the trustworthiness of the speaker, which is based on his character. In his later work, the *Phaedrus*, Plato revised his early judgement and distinguished good rhetoric, which is based on philosophy and knowledge, from bad rhetoric, which is based on opinions. Here, Plato recognized the possible value of rhetoric as a means of leading the soul to discernment and wisdom through discourses. However, both philosophers were agreed that rhetoric is often used for manipulative purposes by appealing to the emotions instead of the reason.

Nevertheless, rhetoric remained a key subject for centuries, from ancient Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages and Renaissance until the dawn of the modern age. Cicero and Virgil, as well as the Church Fathers later on, grew up in the tradition of classical rhetoric. It became part of the *Trivium*, the lower division of the seven liberal arts, alongside grammar and dialectic, and was used for transmitting the messages of the Church and for convincing believers of the tenets of the faith. The rise of modern philosophy and science overshadowed the value of rhetoric, as they disapproved of plausible, credibly presented thoughts and supported factual, reasoned ideas. Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes claimed that a simple, clear and short

speech is way better than a stylish, ornamented discourse. Especially in the 19th century, rhetoric was downgraded and some authors regarded fine speaking as a disease that had to be eliminated.

In the 20th century, rhetoric experienced a revival. This phenomenon was related to the rise of mass movements, the birth of modern communication and the spread of media and advertising. Rhetorical techniques became highly important for leaders of nations, who delivered their political messages to the public through speeches on the radio or television. All sides, no matter under what flags they marched, used rhetoric as a tool to convey the importance of their ideologies to the people. It was the key factor when Winston Churchill, leader of the government of the United Kingdom, exhorted the Brits to perseverance and defiance of the enemy in 1940. Or when the president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, asked Congress for more funds to allow the moon mission to go ahead in 1961.

Nowadays, the position of rhetoric remains strong and unquestionable. And as new inventions and gadgets are introduced into our lives, its importance seems assured. When we watch a tutorial video or online course on the Internet, we will find a speech based on the rules and methods of rhetoric. In the same way, when we take part in a job interview, our success crucially depends on our skill in rhetoric. Because as Plato said in the *Phaedrus*: “Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men.”

Istvan Orban

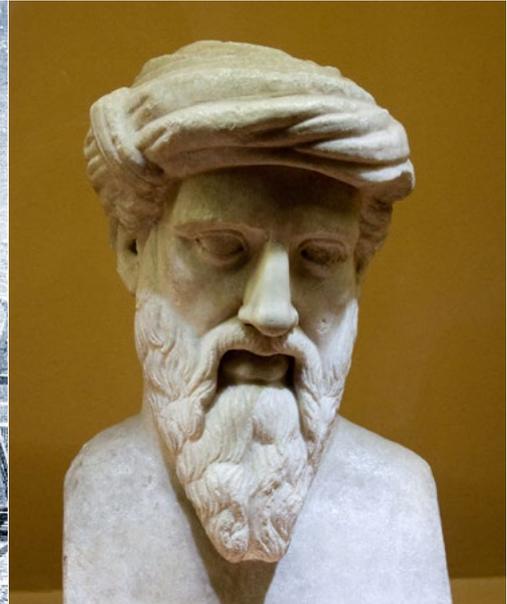
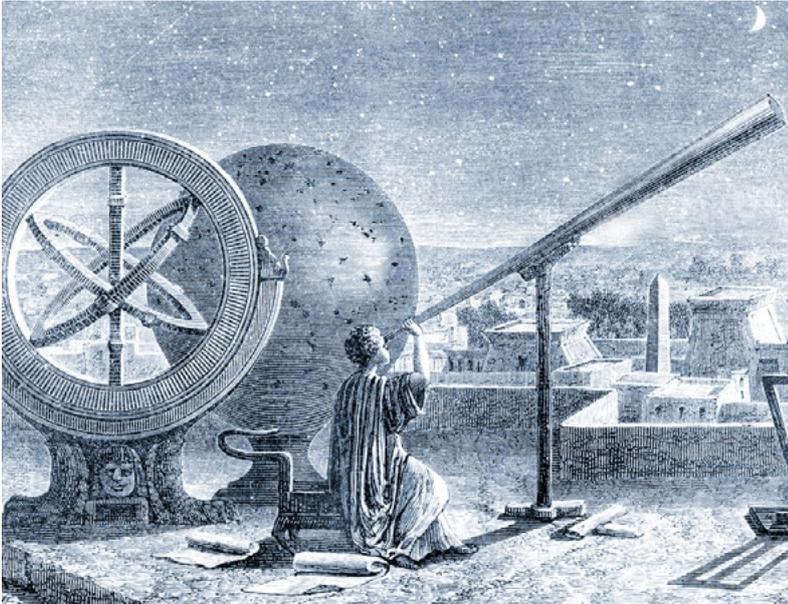
Have a little faith in SCIENCE

In ancient times, whether in Asia, Mesopotamia, Greece or Egypt, science (physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, etc.) was more a sub-division of religion, philosophy or metaphysics. In the same way, astronomy was a sub-topic of astrology, as it was more important for the ancients to understand the meaning of the constellations and planets rather than their basic movements. Science wasn't so restricted, controlled or even banned, as it was in some respects during the Middle Ages. Science was, in those forgotten times, guided by spiritual values and virtues aimed at understanding the reasons behind Nature's great mysteries. If the latest archeological discoveries in Egypt, Turkey or Lebanon have shown us anything, it is that the ancients knew more than we thought they did.

But has science nowadays lost all of its spirituality or mysticism? History shows that the sciences and religion have gradually separated since the 15th century and the Renaissance, with their final divorce taking place during the industrial revolution. But it does not mean that modern scientists are not religious, spiritual or philosophical. Many of the great modern scientific theories have come from metaphysical questioning about the origin of life and the universe.

The issue lies not in science or religion, but in dogmatism, as both parties are ultimately looking for





the truth, or at least a truth, and seeking to explain the meaning of life and the universe. It would be presumptuous to assume that only one's own path holds the truth. To say that science is the only way to look for the truth, as it is the only rational, reasoned path that can achieve this, is to greatly underestimate the complexity of life, nature, the universe and our own capacity for understanding.

Like philosophy, science starts with a question. A question based on becoming aware of our ignorance about a certain matter and our desire to know the truth. As soon as we believe that we know, questions stop and ignorance remains in place. Scientists who have stopped searching have often been left behind, even during their lifetime, as our vision of physics (from the Greek *physika*: "the natural things") has become more and more complex.

However, physicists do not go about their business in complete darkness and without any level of certainty or belief. In his book "The Eternal Law" John Spencer talks about what he calls "scientific faith", by which he means the assumptions held by pioneering physicists, as they go about the task of understanding the universe and its laws.

- *The universe is unified and rational;*
- *there is a real physical world that exists externally to any sentient creature or any particular physical object;*
- *the laws of physics are susceptible to mathematical*

formalization, and thus, in the Pythagorean/Platonic sense, the physical world seems to be composed of numbers, or to follow strict mathematical laws;

- *the relations between the numbers, expressed as mathematical laws of physics, are not physical and must be unchanging in order to account for their usefulness in predicting novel and disparate phenomena;*
- *the more powerful a law of physics, the more simple, abstract, and unifying it must be, and so the more closely it resembles the truth of the matter;*
- *some kind of trans-rational insight is required to see what others have missed despite possessing the same available data; and,*
- *in some way our minds must be in harmony, or have the potential to be in harmony to different degrees, with both the laws of physics and the physical universe, and must be able to conceive of the nature of their unity.*

These beliefs come from millennia of humanity's experience in looking at Nature as well as deep metaphysical questionings about our origins and abilities to conceptualize the laws of physics. They show not only that science on its own cannot answer all the questions, but most of all, that our questions find their root in something non-tangible, immaterial and eternal.

Florimond Krins

MONKEY JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Those of you from a vintage era may remember the 1970s Japanese TV show *Monkey*. It was the first time this Chinese novel from the Ming dynasty was brought to a mass Western audience and gathered a cult following. It provided a glimpse into a foreign land where you could enter a world of fantasy, fiction and esotericism.

The original Chinese novel, *Journey to the West* or *Xiyou Ji*, literally means 'West-Wandering Chronicles' and was written by Wu Cheng'en in the 16th century. It is one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature. The writer was inspired by the true story of a Buddhist monk, Xuanzang, from the Tang dynasty (7th - 10th century), who made a solitary pilgrimage to Central Asia and India in search of the original scriptures of Buddha's teachings. His journey lasted 15 years and resulted in him bringing back 657 Sanskrit texts to China.

The aim of this 'Journey to the West' was to reach Vulture Peak and acquire the true scriptures. Buddha, dispirited that "the land of the South knows only greed, hedonism, promiscuity and sins", instructed the Bodhisattva Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) to search China for a champion who would bring the Buddhist sutras of wisdom back to the East.

The quest is headed by the main character Tripitaka (the Buddhist monk Xuanzang). On his journey he is guided by Guanyin who inspires an entourage of intrepid travellers to gather around him and agree to serve him as disciples along the journey in order to atone for their sins in past lives. Only with such companionship could Tripitaka take on such a perilous journey. On the way, Tripitaka and his companions face countless adversities and trials as they encounter monsters, ogres, and demons.



18th-century Chinese illustration of a scene from
Journey to the West

Tripitaka or Tang Sanzang (The Three Baskets)

Although he is helpless when it comes to protecting himself, he has the support of his three disciples, Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy. With the help of local inhabitants they help him fight off countless monsters and demons who want to eat his flesh to gain immortality.

Tripitaka's name refers to the "three baskets" of Buddhist teachings. In the story he represents the triad or higher self, the earth element which symbolises the 'heart'. The demons in the story want to eat his 'pure' heart which will give them purity to make an elixir of longevity. The kanji character for heart (心) has a dual meaning in Chinese: heart and also mind. He is always trying to be present in the moment – so that his mind and his heart will not be disturbed by the chaotic elements around him. The demons refer to thoughts and emotions that constantly interrupt his efforts. When one tries to be present, the lower self (the demons) will do everything they can to disturb this.

Monkey - Sūn Wūkōng - means "Monkey Awakened to Emptiness". It refers to the Buddhist concept of *Sūnyatā* or the attainment of enlightenment. Awakening to emptiness is to let go of the trappings of the illusory world.

Monkey is by far the novel's most iconic character. He has a childlike playfulness with a

cunning mind. This, coupled with his great power, makes him a trickster hero with a heart of gold. He also has the human fallibility of being greedy, selfish and prone to sudden changes of mood and outbursts of violence. He represents the quality of "rajas".

Pigsy - Zhū Bājiè (lit. "Pig of the Eight Precepts") - refers to the eight Buddhist precepts he needs to live by to keep him on a Buddhist path. However, he is greedy, lazy and at the slightest difficulty he wants to quit the journey and go back to the comfortable life he had before. He represents the vices of the lower self and the bodily desires. He represents the quality of "tamas".

Sandy the Water Demon - Shā Wùjīng (lit. "Sand Awakened to Purity") - is a quiet but generally dependable character known to be the most obedient, logical, polite and level-headed. He represents the quality of "Sattva".

The esoteric and exoteric meaning

The Journey to the West is an esoteric text with many hidden symbolic meanings related to the path of spiritual cultivation, the control of the senses and the lower self, and the principles of self-realisation that lead to the discovery of the Real Self. Tripitaka's disciples are all fallen immortals who have been reincarnated into a world where they have to follow a path of redemption



A 19th-century illustration of the character Sun Wukong

to discover their true selves.

The outer meaning of the story concerns the adventures of the characters, their trials and tribulations, plots, schemes and victories over adversity. It serves an equally important role of providing access to the teachings from all walks of life. I invite you all to take a leap with a Monkey Mind into the journey to the west.

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Jim Pang

