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Plato and Music

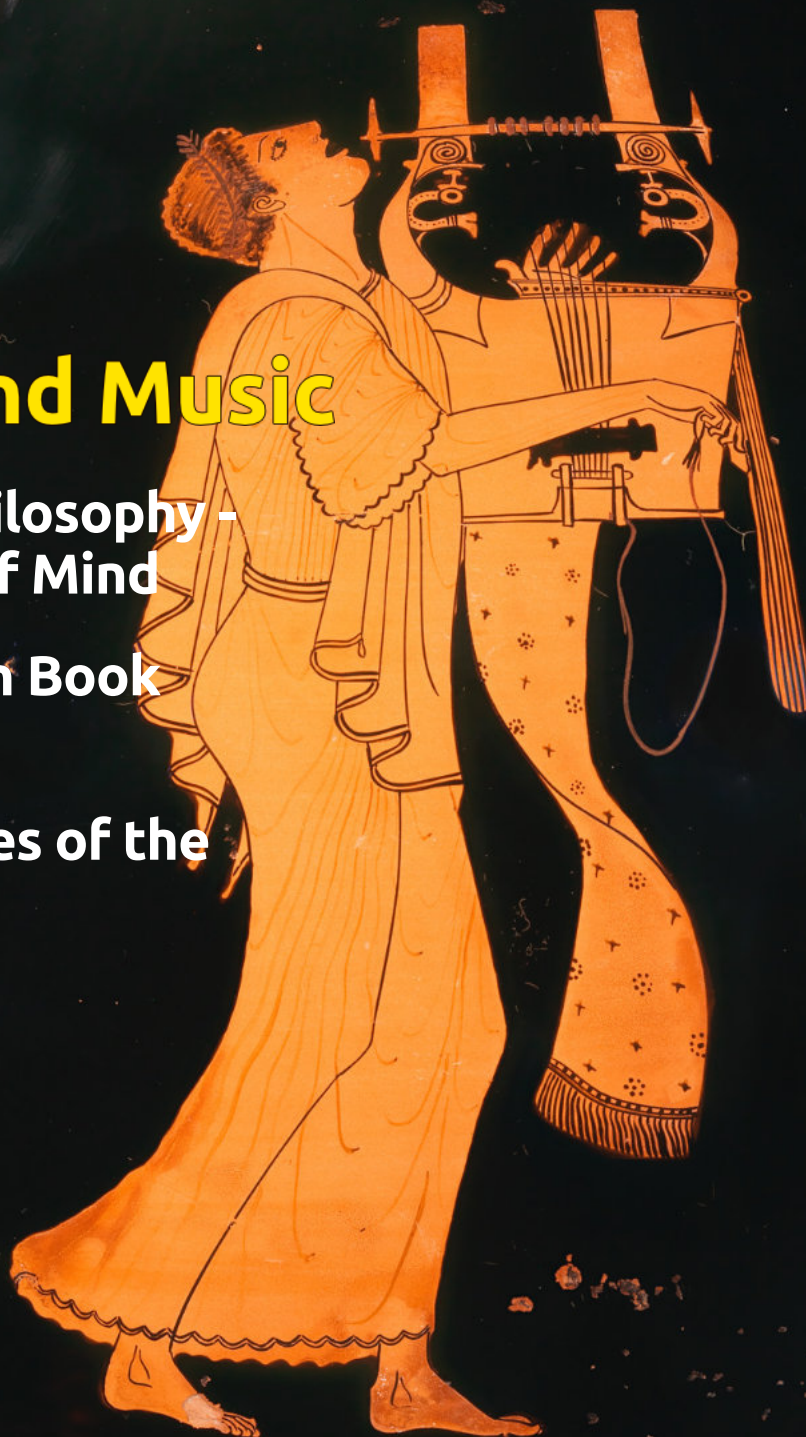
Buddhist Philosophy -
The Power of Mind

The Egyptian Book
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AND MORE





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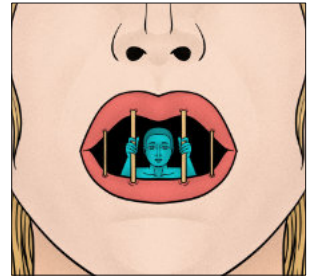
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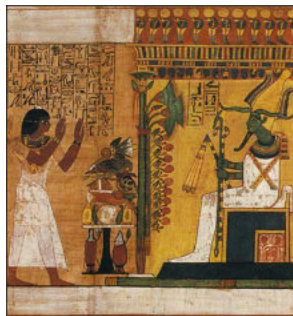


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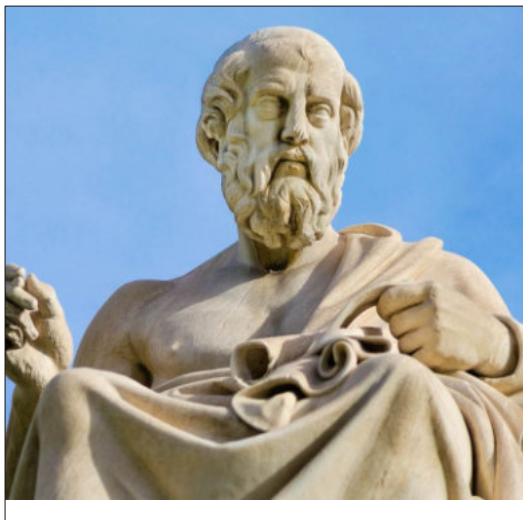
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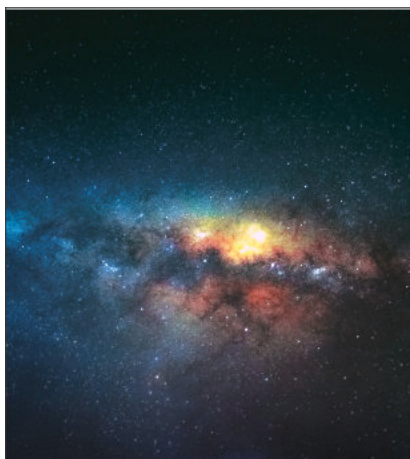


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Can we Remain Friends ?

Recently, I had a very interesting conversation with an 18-year old who mentioned at one point, with regret in her voice, that she would find it very difficult to stay friends with someone who had a very different opinion about matters that she cared about. She said she wasn't quite sure whether 'unfriending' them was the right thing to do, but she was struggling to find the right attitude to this dilemma.

Her words express something that has become more of an issue in the last few years, although it has always existed and has certainly led to a lot of bloodshed in history: how do we deal with people around us who think the opposite about the important issues of our times?

One reason why this touches such a deep nerve within us is that it can feel threatening to our identity. We generally base our identity very much on what we think and believe in. From the *'I think, therefore, I am'* we seem to follow up with the conclusion: *"What I think makes me who I am"*. There is certainly a universal truth in this, which is expressed in Buddhism or in this quote from the Chandogya Upanishad (III, xiv, 1): *"Man is the creation of thought. What he thinks upon in this life, that, hereafter he becomes."*

But does the above mean that a person who has opposite opinions about Brexit, Trump, vaccination, football teams, abortion, LGBTQ rights, religion, politics, etc. cannot be a good person? Is it the case that believing in one thing equals good character and believing the opposite equals a bad character? Is it not possible that people can have a fine character despite having a very different outlook on life?

Let's look at an example that most people don't identify with anymore (unless they live in Northern Ireland): the difference between Protestants and Catholics. They basically share the same Christian faith but have different views on certain doctrinal questions. For centuries (and it's not over yet),

they fought each other, whether violently, often burning each other at the stake, or by not giving each other equal rights. However, it is not difficult to imagine that there can be kind, just, loyal, honest, upright, moral people on both sides.

So, what matters more in a friendship? That a person is kind and of good character or whether they are Protestant or Catholic? Because we don't identify with this issue so much anymore, we would probably quite easily say: I don't care whether they are Catholic or Protestant, what matters to me is that they are a caring, loyal friend whom I can trust. But in the days of animosity between the two religions this would probably have been as difficult as a friendship between the Capulets and the Montagues in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

There will always be a 'battle' between different views, ideas and attitudes to life. This is what has shaped the history of humanity. All questions of life can be looked upon from at least two different viewpoints. We cannot all think the same and believe the same. This would actually be completely boring, infertile and unnatural.

So, what could possibly be our attitude to these admittedly sometimes very painful differences in thinking and outlook? Maybe to accept that conflict is a necessity of life and to become more resilient in accepting differences. Maybe to give more importance to character than to beliefs. Maybe to remember that no one 'has the truth' and that in this world there are no absolutes – in other words there is no absolute right or wrong, true or false. Maybe to reflect that even experts and scientists don't always agree and don't always get it right.

And lastly, maybe to cultivate more of the spirit of these words that have been attributed to Voltaire but were actually written by one of his biographers: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Sabine Leitner

Buddhist Philosophy

The Power of Mind

One question that is often asked about Buddhism is whether it is a religion or a philosophy, and different scholars have given different answers. According to M. Hiriyanna (*Essentials of Indian Philosophy*), Buddhism “began as a religion and was forced, not long after, to become a philosophy, since it had to defend itself against metaphysical schools of Hindu and Jaina thought.” H. Zimmer, on the other hand (*Philosophies of India*), claims that, in essence, Buddhism is a philosophical doctrine “meant only for the happy few”, which then, paradoxically, in its expansion to the Far East, “became the creed of the masses and shaped the civilization for centuries.”

Whatever the case, it is generally recognized that Buddhism has a strongly philosophical element, because it follows a logical line of reasoning which can be verified by rational thought processes and does not depend on any kind of faith.

Outline of Buddhist philosophy

The core of Buddhist philosophy is to be found in the so-called ‘Four Noble Truths’. These are as follows:

- 1) ‘Life is suffering’¹. In Buddhism, it is considered essential to accept that suffering exists in order to become free from it.
- 2) The cause of suffering is ‘ignorant craving’, i.e. wanting things which are by nature perishable and changeable. This ignorant craving comes from

1. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, it would be more correct to use the word ‘misery’ instead of ‘suffering’, as the Pali word *Dukkha* has the connotation of ‘dissatisfaction’.

wrong ideas we have about things. It is the mind that is responsible for ignorant craving and through the mind we can also become free from it. As the first verses in the *Dhammapada* state:

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.

If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart.

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.

If a man speaks or acts with a pure mind, joy follows him as his own shadow.

These simple statements not only show the power of mind. They also incorporate the ancient, pre-Buddhistic doctrine of Karma, the law of cause and effect. A pure mind results in joy, an impure one results in sorrow. Everything depends on the mind and we are the architects of our own destinies.

In Buddhism, it is said that all happiness, ordinary and sublime, is achieved by understanding and transforming our own mind. What an amazing thought! Our happiness lies entirely in our own hands.

How can this transformation of the mind be brought about? To answer this question, we must look at the third and fourth Noble Truths:

3) Cessation of Suffering. This is the truth that liberation from suffering is possible, by elimination of the craving that causes it.

4) The Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering. This consists of the following eight steps:

(1) correct view, an accurate understanding of the nature of things, specifically the Four Noble Truths, (2) correct intention, avoiding thoughts of attachment, hatred, and harmful intent, (3) correct speech, refraining from verbal misdeeds such as lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and senseless speech, (4) correct action, refraining from physical misdeeds such as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, (5) correct livelihood, avoiding trades that directly or indirectly harm others, such as selling slaves, weapons, animals for slaughter, intoxicants, or poisons, (6) correct effort, abandoning negative states of mind that have already arisen, preventing negative states that have yet to arise, and sustaining positive states that have already arisen, (7) correct mindfulness, awareness of body, feelings, thought, and phenomena (the constituents of the existing world), and (8) correct concentration, single-mindedness².

One can see from this that the Eightfold Path proposes a progressive journey self-purification, which will culminate in Enlightenment.

All of these steps are important, but as this article is about Buddhism and the power of mind, I will focus on the first of these steps on the Eightfold Path, and the last two.

Correct view. We said that the cause of suffering is identified as 'ignorant craving', so it is the ignorant aspect which is important here. The reason we want things that won't bring us happiness is because we mistakenly think that they will. We have an incorrect view about them.

It is really true that the view we have of things brings us happiness or sorrow. Let us take an example from the Indian tradition. What is water? For the gods, it is an elixir of immortality; for

humans it is just water; for an inhabitant of hell it is a revolting substance which he cannot swallow, even if he is dying of thirst. In this way, the reality of things is dependent on our perceptions and each of us is at the centre of a world of thoughts, feelings, memories and dreams, and from that centre we perceive the world in different ways. For one, a life of risk and adventure is delightful, for



The eight-spoked Dharma wheel symbolizes the Noble Eightfold Path

another it is terrifyingly stressful and anxiety-producing; while for the adventurer, a life of security and domesticity would be like a prison. Ultimately, to see reality as it is, we have to step out of our egocentric world view and be able to see life from the point of view of other, very different beings.

This is why freedom from the self or ego is an important part of the Buddhist philosophy of mind. According to M. Hiriyanna, Buddha did not disbelieve in the reality of the essential self, only of the personal self. But there is an impersonal and universal Self in each human being (the atman) and Buddhism encourages an identification with that essence rather than with the illusory self.

2. Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Eightfold-Path>



Photo by Craig Cameron on Unsplash

In Buddhism, the mind is compared to an ocean, in which all mental activities are like waves. Once the activities are stilled, the ocean becomes calm and transparent and we see everything clearly. This would be the state of *Moksha* (liberation) or *Nirvana*, which is not so much the extinction of self as the extinction of selfhood in the ordinary meaning of the term. As Zimmer says, “the Buddha is far from being dissolved into non-being: it is not he who is extinct, but the life illusion”.

How can we reach this state of inner calm and clarity? It is no easy task.

Correct mindfulness and correct concentration. In the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism, there are three stages in this process:

- 1) listening to and reading explanations on the mind and the nature of things;
- 2) thinking about and carefully analysing this information;
- 3) transforming the mind through meditation.

In this view, it is important to go through the indispensable stages of study and reflection before entering the stage of meditation. But what exactly is ‘meditation’? According to *Introduction to Buddhism*³, “Meditation... involves one part of the mind analysing and dealing with the rest of the mind. Its ultimate aim is to awaken a very subtle level of consciousness and to use it to discover reality, directly and intuitively”. So we can see that meditation properly speaking involves stages 2) and 3) of the process described above.

To add another element to our understanding of this issue, the same source states that in the Tibetan tradition there are two types of meditation:

1) ‘Stabilizing’ meditation, which is to practise concentrating without interruption on some internal object, which might be a visualized image, a concept, or one’s breath. The purpose of this is to develop concentration, which is essential in order to gain the inner stability necessary to be able to ‘see’ reality.

2) ‘Analyzing’ meditation: observing our mind and our actions as objectively as possible, analyzing the benefits of virtues and the disadvantages of defects, deepening our understanding of ourselves and the world, while at the same time correcting what needs to be corrected in our mind and our life, so that we become a living expression of Dharma.

The subtle state of consciousness which is, or approaches, enlightenment is something that grows over a very long time – life-times in the Buddhist view of things. All spiritual practices, in whatever tradition they may be, are aids to developing this higher intuition which in India is called *Buddhi* – from which the title *Buddha* comes. *Buddhi* is a vehicle of consciousness which is higher, truer and clearer than the reason (*Manas*). But in order to get to *Buddhi*, we have to master the mind by using our reason and developing our powers of concentration and imagination.

Julian Scott

3. *Introduction to Buddhism*, Tushita Meditation Centre, Dharamsala, India

FREE SPEECH OR CANCEL CULTURE?

The topic of freedom of speech has been much in the news in recent years. On one hand, there are those who view freedom of speech as an inalienable sacred right (especially when it comes to their own speech...) that should not be curtailed by other people, institutions, governments or corporations, regardless of the consequences or the content of

what one says. At the other end of the spectrum are those who want to “cancel” any form of speech that does not comply with prescribed rules or opinions, going to the extreme of claiming that an opinion in itself can be an act of aggression, whether it was meant as such or not. As usual, we human beings tend to go to extremes, dividing ourselves into



parties, instead of looking for a middle way. Unfortunately, both these extremes in the long term may lead to a loss of the very freedom to which we aspire.

It is interesting to note that the topics we find so contemporary were also issues that preoccupied our predecessors here and in other lands; in fact, we find the topic of speech discussed and explored in various philosophical traditions. For example, right speech is one of the steps of the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path, defined in the *Magga-vibhanga*



Detail from *The Death of Socrates* by Louis David, 1787

Sutta as “Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, and from idle chatter”. In the Hindu legal text, *manusmṛti*, it says “Speak the truth, and speak favourably. Do not tell the

truth if it is not favourable. Also, do not tell an untruth (although) it is favourable. This is the eternal dharma.”

This perhaps is the source of a very useful anecdote usually (and doubtfully) attributed to Socrates, in which Socrates recommends using three filters before one speaks: **Is it true? Is it good? And is it useful?** (Social media would probably collapse if we relied on these filters...) Socrates himself in Plato’s *Apology* says that before speaking he would listen to an inner voice, his *daimon* (perhaps his conscience?) which would tell him whether he was about to act wrongfully. In another part of the world, the ancient Egyptians found speech a very powerful force, one that could make the realities spoken about manifest. And in the Old Testament (17:28), we find the following: “Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise: and he that shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.” There are many other sources we could cite, but what is clear is that these varied, universal sources all point out that it is important to reflect about what right speech is.

The solution to this dilemma does not lie, in my opinion, in policing and criticizing “wrong” speech, nor in speaking mindlessly, without thinking of the consequences of what we say, but rather in teaching and educating about the responsibility of speech and what right speech entails.

The freedom of speech (like any other freedom) also entails responsibility. Without the responsibility of speech, freedom of speech will lead to its own demise. Freedom of speech integrated with right speech through education is the bridge that will allow us to preserve this valuable right for posterity.

*Gilad Sommer, Director of New Acropolis
in Chicago*

The Egyptian Book of the Dead



Before attempting a description of the so called *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, it is worth mentioning a few preliminary ideas which will help the reader to understand the context in which Egyptian funerary texts developed.

The Egyptian religion: *the Egyptian Book of the Dead* has been often classified as a religious text and thanks to its rich content, egyptologists have been able to learn a great deal about Egyptian religious practices and beliefs. The Egyptians were very religious people and their religious ideas were very complex and varied. We find a plethora of symbols and allegories describing the presence of spiritual forces (called *Netjeru* = 'Gods') and the realms in which they operate. An important point

about Egyptian religion is its division into an 'exoteric' and an 'esoteric' aspect. For the people at large access to the sacred took place through public cults and ceremonies. The 'gods' were often personified to make them more accessible. The properly religious teachings had predominantly a moral and ethical value. The esoteric side of religion was reserved for the few. Esoteric teachings had an initiatory character and were related to the Mystery Tradition (as found all over the classical world). The realisation of one's own divinity, the mysteries of the universe, of life and death, are some of the themes addressed by 'esoteric religion'.

The Egyptian conception of life and death: for the Egyptians, the subtle and the gross, the visible and the invisible, intersect with each other at every point. Life and death form part of a continuous process of change and transformation. In this world view, thoughts and actions performed on the physical plane have a karmic reflection on some invisible plane. Likewise, any work done at the inner level has a corresponding effect in everyday affairs. Death is seen as a natural crossing, via a 'magical' door or threshold, from one temple room to another, from one state of consciousness to the next. The human consciousness, in its cyclic journey, follows the symbolic movement of the sun which is seen every day appearing and disappearing from the visible horizon.

When studying *the Book of the Dead* an interesting question arises: is this a funerary or initiatic 'book'? Does the text deal only with post mortem processes which take place after physical death or are we in the presence of certain kinds of teachings in which these processes are experienced while the human being is still alive?

Plato reminds us that 'to die is to be initiated'. In all forms of initiatory teachings, death is a transition rite which prepares the initiated for a new, spiritual birth, which will give access to a mode of being which is no longer subject to the action of time.

A multilevel approach to reality: in the Egyptian cosmological vision, the universe as well as the human being are understood as composite realities, made up of various states of being and planes of consciousness. The human being is 'made up' of several parts, some more subtle than others. His consciousness is capable of functioning at various levels: physical level (through the *Khat*) , energetic (*Ka*), psychic (*Ba*), spiritual (*Akh*), etc.

The process of inner growth and inner transformation: the human being as a whole is like an alchemical athanor. Through spiritual practices, it is possible to transform oneself and to unfold one's latent spiritual powers. This process of inner transformation and spiritual regeneration can be fostered by *initiation*: a process which will lead to the formation of a group of spiritual teachers (headed by the Pharaoh) who will be put at the service of the people.

Magic: this plays a very prominent role in all the so-called 'funerary literature'. Magic (*Heka*) , the original power which lies behind every act of divine creation, is an important 'tool' used to control the supernatural and irrational forces which exist on the invisible or inner planes. In the present context it has a close association with speech and the power of the word (the greek *Logos*). Its mode of operation is through the principle of analogy or sympathy.

I hope that by keeping in mind the ideas sketched out above, it will be easier to grasp the overall message of this 'book', its contents and abstruse title.

The Egyptian Book of the Dead is a collection of texts which were originally placed in the sarcophagus of the deceased Pharaoh. It consists mainly of religious and magical formulas. Some of the contents included in the 'book' were drawn from older works, like the *Pyramid texts* and *Coffin texts* and date to the 3rd millennium BCE. The most complete version was recovered in the 19th century and is known as the *Papyrus of Ani*. Its original title has been translated as *Book of Coming Forth by Day* or *Book of Emerging Forth into the Light*, thus alluding to some kind of journey from darkness into light which the 'deceased' undertook. It is made up of blocks of hieroglyphic text accompanied by vignettes (images). It describes in symbols and utterances (sentences) the after-death process which takes place in the human being.

As hinted above, it belongs to a special kind of literature. Its teachings concerned the process of



The scene of the 'weighing of the heart'



death and rebirth, the process of separation of consciousness during sleep or after death, the attainment of a state of immortality, enlightenment and more.

The Book of the Dead also gives a description of various invisible planes (or states of being) and their 'inhabitants'. It is meant to function as a 'guide' for the human soul (the Egyptian *Ba*) who journeys on these planes. It also provides an account of the various stages of its transformation and validation, during the process of *initiation*.

The central character of this journey is the scribe Ani (both a symbol of the human soul and the candidate to initiation). This journey can only begin after the mummification (i.e. a ritual death) has taken place. Only those who are ready to die to their present condition, to abandon the sphere of the mundane and all the attachments that it entails, can embark upon this initiatic journey. An important part of this journey is described in the scene of the *weighing of the heart* (see image on the previous page). This process of 'evaluation', which seems to take place after death, in reality should be seen as something which already started during life. This refers to the long probationary period of testing and evaluating which the neophyte goes through during his life. The testing takes place both on the outer and inner plane. His purity of heart, inner motives and moral standards are judged against the balance of Maat (symbol of Justice).

The main part of the text describes the journeying of the *Ba* through the netherworld (*Duat*), a place

inhabited by 'creatures' of all kinds. These can be seen as the personification of psychic forces both hostile and friendly. The *Duat* (like Dante's *Purgatory*) is the place where various types of purification take place. Through various encounters and actions, the soul of the initiate will undergo its inner transformations and reach a state of inner stability. The topography of the *Duat* is very complex. It includes lakes, deserts, islands and corridors with connecting gates. The *Ba* of the initiate will use various boats as his main vehicles in his attempt to cross the various underworld realms (symbolised by water, fire and ether).

The completion of the journey brings a real resurrection and regeneration followed by the ascent of the soul to higher spiritual planes (represented by agricultural fields). The final stages are depicted with scenes in which Ani finds himself inside a temple interacting with various gods and joining in their company. The initiate will eventually reach the symbolic state of illumination and transmutation, take part in the *Osirian revelation* and rejoice in the divine presence (as symbolised by the god Osiris).

Ani has now become one with the gods, he is the spiritual victor, the conqueror of immortality, the sacrificer and the sacrificed. His work as a spiritual leader and teacher in the world can now begin.

Agostino Dominici

Plato and Music

In ancient Greece, music was seen as a gift of the gods. The invention of musical instruments was attributed to deities: for instance, the lyre to Hermes, the flute to Athena and the panpipes to Pan. It was included in the educational curriculum and served a religious and entertaining role as it would often accompany religious events, rituals, festivals and drinking parties. Music was a fundamental part of ancient Greek life.

Plato was born in Athens in 428-427 BCE to a noble family and died in 348-347 BCE. He lived primarily in Athens, growing up during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. His philosophical writings were for the most part in dialogue form and depicted his teacher, Socrates, as the interlocutor on many subjects including music. Following Pythagoras, Plato (no doubt influenced by Socrates' teachings) and latterly his



student, Aristotle analysed the purpose of music and its effect on a person's soul and character. As Aristotle says, "it is not easy to determine the nature of music or why anyone should have a knowledge of it."

Plato advocated that, in their early years, children should receive two kinds of education for each of the essential parts of the human being: body and soul. One was gymnastics to develop the body, the second was music to form, enrich and strengthen the soul or self. Plato believed that choric training was particularly effective in achieving both these aims. Order in movement is achieved through rhythm and order in articulation is attained through singing in pitch. Thus, choric training will help establish and maintain order in man's nature.



Lofty art of every description including music should then be taught to growing children, since an appreciation of beauty would lead to the highest development of a person's conduct and character. Plato believed that the learning of music would ensure that citizens were better suited to live a life of peace, which is a nobler occupation than the pursuit of war. The connection between aesthetic taste and morality is so close that whatever tends to ennoble our aesthetic taste directly elevates our character. Whatever tends to promote a taste for

the debased in art tends equally to deprave a man's moral being.

Music, Plato said, initially touches the senses and then penetrates the soul deeply, moving the listener's emotions and giving them shape. Even though the music stops, it leaves its mark on the listener. Plato believed that music moulded the soul for the following reasons.

Music 'imitates' or 'reproduces' types of emotions and moods such as happiness, melancholy, courage and sobriety. The listener is moved by the emotion contained in the music, and by repetition this same emotion is reproduced in the listener. Listening to the 'right' kind of music will enable the listener to feel a good or well-ordered emotion or emotions and so lead them to goodness or virtue. Conversely, listening to music which contains disorderly and/or improper emotions will cause the listener to respond excessively or insufficiently, thereby leading their soul towards wickedness or vice.

Music should therefore be simple and conform to fixed types. Even in amusement, innovation is dangerous since it may lead to innovations in what is meant to be earnest and may be a risk to the health of society. Music 'imitates' or 'reproduces' types of moods and characters and as Plato wished for the national character to be constant in his ideal State, the 'imitation' or 'reproduction' must be kept constant too.

Plato forbade the use of certain modes (musical scales) because they excessively stir up or calm down the listener; they obstruct rather than encourage virtue in the listener. Plato considered that the choice of music played depends on the nature of those performing or benefitting from it. He spoke of different songs being suited to men and women.

Music can shape a person's soul because it gives pleasure to the listener. Plato states that it is natural for human beings to "perceive and enjoy rhythm and melody." Perceiving and enjoying ordered movements and harmony is common to all; consider the power of lullabies to calm a baby's distress and put it to sleep.

If a child has become accustomed to listening to the 'right' kind of music, they will have become familiar with experiencing well-ordered and measured emotion and will find such emotion pleasing. Thus, music is an instrument of moral formation.

Every human being will find special pleasure in a certain type of music, or rhythm and harmony, which is suited to that individual. However, we should not simply listen to music that we find pleasing, as when we frequently listen to a piece of music, we become like the music, be it good or bad. Not everyone's taste in music is equally good. Plato believed that if the best-educated and supremely virtuous person enjoys listening to a piece of music, then that music must be adjudged to be the best music to which a person should listen.

Plato gave great importance to the development of good taste in music, since when such a habit is developed, this will transfer into other areas of a person's life. A sound musical education will provide a child with a natural affinity with 'good' rather than 'bad' music and this taste will affect other areas of their life. When older, they will be able to understand why they consider music 'good' or 'bad', using reason as their tool. However, pleasure found in music is always at the service of virtue. Reason must be used when the child is older to determine what music will bring harmony to the emotions, otherwise they may become prey to music which gives them irrational pleasure and so leads them to vice.

Plato attributes to music the power to prepare people's intellect for learning. It disposes them towards moral virtue and so indirectly predisposes them to learning. Plato urges children to study music so that they "become more balanced, more capable in whatever they say or do, for rhythms and harmonious adjustment are essential to the whole of human life." The acquisition of moral virtue is a prerequisite for the acquisition of intellectual virtue.

A musical education does not train a child to be a skilful musician or teach him or her a science. What music, together with the other arts, does is provide a cultural framework which, whilst

sharpening a person's perceptions, awakens and feeds their interest in the acquisition of knowledge.

Plato opined that music provides a plane where the psychic (soul) and the physical (body) can meet and attempts to cure the disorders caused to the embodied soul because of its connection with the material world through the body.



Plato said that music can bypass reason and penetrate the very core of the self, causing great impact on the character: "...because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way into the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it." "Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything." I, for one, second Plato's sentiments.

Jean Grunfeld

The Mevlevi Path

Sufism is one of the spiritual paths which emphasises the mystical side of Islamic teachings. The term Sufism derives from the Arabic term for a mystic, *sufi*, which is in turn derived from *suf*, "wool," probably in reference to the woollen garments worn by early Islamic ascetics. Sufism may also be related to the word *Saf* which means purity. This purity is attained by purifying the soul from all alien attributes, so that one can reach its real nature.

As in many other traditions, Sufism also contains various orders which offer different ways of understanding oneself through different practices.

The Mevlevi, or Mevleviye, is one of the most well-known of the Sufi orders, which was founded in 1273 by Rumi's followers after his death (Rumi is known in the East as Hz. Mevlana). The Order was started by his son, Sultan Veled Celebi in Konya, Turkey, from where it gradually spread throughout the Ottoman Empire. Today, there are Mevlevi Orders in many cities in Turkey; the most famous and active ones are in Konya, where Mevlana's tomb is, and in Istanbul. During the Ottoman period, the Mevlevi order spread into the Balkans, Syria and Egypt.



The Mevlevi Order

The Mevlevi life is based on “*adab* and *erkan*” (discipline and rules of conduct). In their conduct, they are very kind, graceful, and discreet and they never go to extremes in behaviour or in speech. As a greeting, they place their right hand on their heart and incline their head slightly, implying “you are in my heart”. Even their handshake is peculiar to their discipline. They seize and kiss the back of each other’s hands, indicating mutual respect and equality. This is a greeting from “soul to soul” and denotes equality of existence. Every part of the Mevlevi system of behaviour bears a symbolical



meaning, such as taking soft steps or showing respect to their daily utensils, and these attitudes can be observed in the ‘Sema’ rituals performed by the whirling dervishes, which are considered an extension of their daily lives.

The Sema Ceremony

Man is the possessor of a mind and intelligence which distinguishes him from other beings. Thus, the ritual of the “whirling dervish”, or *Semazen*, causes the mind to participate in the shared

similarity and revolution of all other beings. The Sema ceremony represents the mystical journey of man's spiritual ascent through mind and love to the “Perfect.” Turning towards the truth, he grows through love, abandons his ego, finds the truth and arrives at the “Perfect,” then he returns from this spiritual journey as a man who has reached maturity and a greater perfection, so as to love and to be of service to the whole of creation, to all creatures without discrimination of beliefs, races, classes and nations.

The Sema came to symbolize the Mevlevi Order, as it is the oldest ritual of the Order. Accompanied by music and systematized by certain rules, the “whirling” act has, in time, become ever more impressive and appealing. Pir Adil Chalabi (died 1490), one of Rumi’s great-grandchildren, more or less finalized the form of “Sema”, as it is performed today. In time it was transformed into a ‘ritual’ by the Mevlevis.

Conclusion

Today, there are Mevlevi Orders all around the world and schools studying Rumi’s teachings. Perhaps, his universal ideas and his call to love are the main reasons why they attract many seekers. According to William Chittick, Rumi's greatness has to do with the fact that he brings out what he calls ‘the roots of the roots of the roots of religion’.

Finally, I would like to invite you to remember once more Rumi’s call to unity, as expressed in one of his verses:

“Come, come, whoever you are.

Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving - it doesn't matter,

Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Come, even if you have broken your vow a hundred times,

Come, come again, come.”

Pinar Akhan

SPACE - WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

Looking at the latest events in the new space race, where billionaires are comparing their rockets when the Earth is literally on fire, one might wonder if sending a few human beings into space, whether it be to Mars, the Moon or Earth's orbit, is still a good thing. Was Jeff Bezos's recent exploit of spending over a 100 million dollars and releasing around 50 tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere so that he could spend just 10 minutes in Earth's upper atmosphere really worth it?

When scientists speak of space exploration, they are mostly talking about expanding our knowledge of

the universe, rather than planting flags on pieces of rock, however large they may be. Unfortunately, politics have a major role to play, as the amounts required to fund any kind of space venture are not easy to obtain. For example, the Apollo program cost 28 billion dollars between 1960 and 1973, which is roughly 280 billion dollars adjusted for inflation.

Sending probes to other planets, asteroids, comets or just to the outer boundaries of our solar system is necessary to help us understand how life came into existence and can help us learn how we can



protect it. It's true to say that the many of the things we've learned about life and the universe in the past 200 years probably won't help the man on the street earn a living. But it might help us realise where we stand and give us a different, more wholesome perspective on life.

One of the most powerful pictures taken from the Apollo missions was probably the one of our planet, seen almost in its entirety for the first time. Travelling into space has given humanity another perspective on our planet. Astronauts talk about seeing the world from afar without borders, just one beautiful planet.

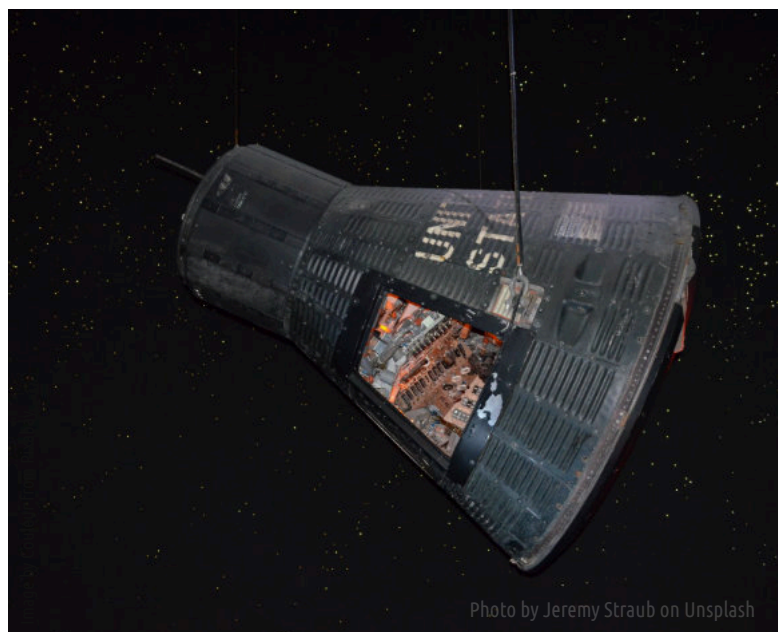
"We came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth." - William Anders, Apollo Astronaut.

Space exploration has its merits if it is reflected into making life better and enabling all species to thrive and not just our own. In the current perspective of perpetual growth to keep our economies going, businessmen like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk have been looking at space as potential for expansion and also as somewhere to move some or most of our waste and pollution to. Whether it is safe, let alone realistic, is a very complex question.

The SpaceX and Starlink projects to drastically increase the number of satellites in order to provide faster and broader ways of communications could bring Earth's orbital space quickly to saturation. This would strongly impede our space and star gazing capabilities from Earth and would increase the risk of collisions in orbit that could permanently disrupt satellite communications and further space exploration.

If we look at mining other planets or asteroids for precious metals, it sounds far fetched. For example, the Apollo missions brought back around 400 kg of lunar rocks. That makes it about 700 million dollars per kilograms of raw material, or 700,000 dollars per gram.

Building and maintaining the international space station has so far cost well over 100 billion euros. The station can host up to 6 astronauts, which makes the cost of property around 15 billion per head. And that includes only living space, some food and breathable air. There are no plants, no forests, no animals, no life and only the extreme conditions of space outside this tiny vessel.



These examples only serve to show the pricelessness of our planet and what it would take to try and make a base on another planet or even terraform it. On the bright side, some of the many satellites looking back at us are helping survey the evolution of the environment: predicting the weather, observing the growth and destruction of forests; observing the movements and migrations of various birds and animals, etc. These are incredible tools that would give us a fighting chance in our struggle to preserve our planet.

With the recent release of the latest IPCC report on global warming and the future of our climate, space exploration could bring a sense of unity rather than escapism, as we need to come together and work as one to face the grave situation which is unfolding.

Florimond Krins

The Mysteries of the Labyrinth



The Minotaur

Many ages ago there was a powerful maritime kingdom governed by the wise and fair son of the Father of the Gods, Minos. It was Zeus himself who taught Minos the laws of life so that he could implement them on Earth. However, Minos (or some say his descendant with the same name) made a mistake just after becoming a ruler. To prove that his claim to the throne had divine support, he prayed to the Lord of the Sea, Poseidon, to send a magnificent bull which he promised to sacrifice. The bull appeared; Minos became king. But his admiration for the bull made him forget his vow, and he kept the creature for himself. Poseidon took his revenge through Minos' wife. She developed a passion for the bull and out of their union, possible with the help of the ingenious

mind of Daedalus, was born the Minotaur (*Minotaurus* – “bull of Minos”) – a beast with the body of a man and the head and tail of a bull. The creature grew and fed exclusively on human flesh. Daedalus, an architect and inventor of the saw and the axe, helped again and, on the orders of the king, built a large and sophisticated palace to enclose the Minotaur. The Athenians, who had been guilty of killing Minos's human son, were forced to pay an annual tribute of seven youths and seven maidens to feed the monster. Thus, a marvellous palace of a prosperous kingdom became a place of doom in which a beast devoured young people and all hope. The palace was called the Labyrinth.

Humanity has been accompanied by the symbol of the labyrinth throughout its history.

The circular or elliptical pattern of the labyrinth comes from prehistoric times and can be understood as a symbol of the creation and structure of the universe. It reproduces the cosmic pattern and alludes to the idea of the fall of spirit into matter in the process of creation, while moving through the labyrinth back to the centre signifies regaining the spirit. To go through a labyrinth in a way means to learn to move through matter without being trapped by it, to learn to live, to move through the veils of mysteries to the sacred source of all.



Depiction of a labyrinth on a coin from Knossos

Ancient civilizations built labyrinthine architectonic structures of complex patterns sometimes combined with natural networks of passageways. The most famous ones in Antiquity were the Egyptian, Cretan, Lemnian and Etruscan. They were sacred places for an initiatory journey to the centre –

“an initiation into sanctity, immortality and absolute reality”¹. In the Middle Ages, the labyrinth was widely represented in the gothic cathedrals and signified a journey to the Holy Land – a journey of overcoming lower forces that disintegrate the human being, resulting in the triumph of the spiritual.

A special courage and strength of character is required to dare to go through a labyrinth and overcome its challenges. The myth of the Minotaur tells of such a hero – Theseus, son of both Poseidon and the king of Athens, and thus a destined saviour with a divine spark. When he had grown up he could lift a large rock to take out a sword left for him by his father and embark on his journey of becoming. After many trials and victories over evil, he faced the hardest challenge – the Minotaur.

When Theseus arrived in Crete, the beautiful daughter of Minos, Ariadne, fell in love with him and helped him to find his way in the labyrinth. She sought advice from Daedalus and gave the hero a ball of thread to keep the memory of the route. Another version of the myth tells that it was the shining crown of Dionysus that helped Theseus to navigate through the labyrinth.

But to find one's way is only one part of the challenge, which is impossible without the help of Ariadne – symbol of our soul that has all the memory: where we come from and where we are



Theseus and the Minotaur

destined to go. The hero also has to face the monster, the animal self ruling over the human self, to subjugate the chthonic, chaotic, destructive forces ruling over our humanity. His will, courage and determination to save the others helped Theseus to conquer the Minotaur, to liberate himself and the world.

The labyrinth itself reminds us of life with all its trials. If we choose to wander aimlessly, we might get lost. If we remember about our centre and channel our will of becoming, we will be victorious.

Nataliya Petlevych

1. J.E. Cirlot. A Dictionary of Symbols. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001. - p.175.



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