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NewAcropolis

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EDITORIAL

Since there is a British theme to this issue of our magazine, I will use this opportunity to write about the very British phrase: 'to agree to disagree'. I still remember my surprise and my delight when I heard it for the first time, many years ago. What a civilised way to end an argument! It implies tolerance of the opposing position without having to accept it. It also allows the underlying relationship to continue amicably without any harm.

The phrase goes back to two 18th-century Methodist preachers, George Whitefield and John Wesley, who differed on several important doctrinal points but managed to be reconciled as friends and co-workers.

'Agree to disagree' is in some ways related to 'live and let live', which also acknowledges our differences and that we all have the right to live in the way we see fit. In World War I this idiom famously gave rise to spontaneous and unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front around Christmas 1914.

There is no doubt that we all need a good dose of this attitude if we want to achieve a harmonious co-existence with the other 7.39 billion people on this planet. It is definitely a much better approach than the recent trend of trying to ban all things we don't agree with (e.g. Germaine Greer, Donald Trump, Kanye West, etc.). The latest incarnation of this trend is the debate about whether we should remove all monuments to figures who are now controversial (e.g. the Cecil Rhodes statue at Oriel College in Oxford, the commemoration of Edward Colston in Bristol).

The problem is that probably almost every person of another era held opinions that were common at their time but are offensive to our current sensibilities (from Plato to Marx, from kings and queens to Thomas Jefferson, from Mozart to any artist you care to think of). If we take this stance to its extreme, then every church and most of our historic buildings would also have to be demolished because they represent views and values that most contemporary people no longer hold.

Let's not follow in the direction of the Taliban who dynamited the Buddhas of Bamiyan because they saw them as idols, the Daesh militants who are currently in the process of completely destroying Palmyra or the medieval Christians who melted down equestrian bronze statues of pagan Roman emperors.

Rather let's start a civilised debate about the values we truly hold, let's accept that no one's perfect and let's maintain a sense of proportion regarding our history. And one thing is certain: one day our current era will be scrutinized by the critical eyes of future generations and I don't think that what we have done to the planet and to humanity will be a glowing example to follow.

Sabine Leitner

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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The logo for New Acropolis Philosophy Culture Volunteering features a stylized 'NA' monogram in blue and purple. To the right of the monogram, the words 'Philosophy', 'Culture', and 'Volunteering' are stacked vertically in blue, orange, and red respectively. Below the monogram, the words 'NEW ACROPOLIS' are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font.

John Locke, founder of a modern worldview

John Locke (1632-1704) has been variously described as “the father of empiricism” and the British philosopher “whose work made possible the revolutions in America and France”. His influence is probably most strongly felt today in our current sociopolitical worldview, with its emphasis on the freedom of the individual, as well as in the scientific method, which he was instrumental in shaping.

Like all philosophers, his thought was substantially affected by the events of his time. He lived through the English Civil War, the execution of Charles I (1649), the “protectorate” of Oliver Cromwell, the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, the brief reign of James II and finally the “Glorious Revolution” of William of Orange (1688), to whom he was a valued adviser. It was under the influence of these tumultuous political circumstances that he wrote in favour of a constitutional monarchy as the best way of preserving a harmonious relationship between government and citizens.

Locke’s central political idea, enshrined in his *Two Treatises on Government* is that the human being has certain innate, natural rights, which today we probably all take for granted: the rights to life, liberty and property. He asserted the individual’s right to be free from the arbitrary authority and interference of the State and declared that the essential purpose of government is to protect those natural rights: “The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom”- it sounds like a manifesto for the modern world.

He also asserted that governments hold their authority on trust from the people. However, if the government fails to fulfil its trust, then the people are reasonably entitled to withdraw their consent to be governed, in other words to overthrow the government of the day. It is the idea of the “sovereign will of the people” as opposed to the “arbitrary will of the sovereign”. These ideas can be seen as being at the root of the doctrine of human rights.

In 1689, Locke saw his ideal of constitutional monarchy enshrined in English law, with the Bill of Rights, which prohibited the King from acting outside the law. It is a living example of how philosophy has influenced the course of history.

In the same year, his “letter concerning toleration” was published. In it he criticizes the religious wars and persecutions that had been a recurring feature of European life over many centuries, including the recent Thirty Years’

War. Regarding the habit of torturing people in order to convert them, he asks: why, then, do these people not torture and maim themselves whenever they commit a sin, since to sin is far more hateful in the eyes of God than to disagree on a point of doctrine?

Locke’s epistemology is the most complex part of his philosophy and revolves around discovering what a



human being is and what we are capable of knowing. He distinguished between the outer world which we perceive through our senses, and the inner world where we interpret our perceptions using our mind. Neither the reality perceived by the senses, nor the judgements of our mind are absolutely certain, but the information provided by the senses is generally more reliable than that which is filtered through our mind. However, we can increase the probability of reaching the truth by using our reason in the most objective and mathematical possible way – hence his influence on the development of the scientific method: Locke was an early member of the Royal Society, a friend and colleague of Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton.

His ideas in the political and scientific fields have helped to shape the modern world. But in the same way that Newton’s ideas about the universe have been modified by those of Einstein, we could perhaps speculate that Locke’s rationalistic philosophy, which has served us well in developing ideas of freedom, human rights and the scientific method, could also be enhanced by new ways of perceiving the human being, nature and the world.

Julian Scott

Immigration in Great Britain

Immigrants have been coming to the British Isles since the earliest times, but due to the lack of written records, there is little information about it. Celtic tribes formed communities until the Romans' arrival in the 1st century B.C., led by Julius Caesar. There were black legionaries, sent by Rome, who stood guard on Hadrian's Wall. In the 5th century, after the fall of the Empire, Anglo-Saxon troops invaded the land and began to become British; then in the 8th century, Vikings migrated from Scandinavia, along with German and Danish settlers. The last big invasion happened in 1066, when the Normans took control of England and French people moved to the newly formed country. However, in those centuries immigration was on a comparatively small scale, and we cannot speak of mass migration as in the modern age.

Until the 19th century, there were no major changes in the population, and only sporadic groups of migrants arrived, like gypsies in the 16th century or Huguenots in the 17th. However, after the conquest of the New World, slavery began to appear, and wealthy English households bought and employed people from North Africa. At the end of the 18th century around 14,000 black people lived in England, but they were not free citizens. In that century, due to the activity of the East India Company, mostly Hindu and Bengali seamen, sailors and cooks got jobs in Britain. One of these, Sheikh Din Muhammad, who was a surgeon and entrepreneur, became famous, as he founded London's first Indian restaurant and introduced the "shampooing bath" into Europe. At this point the population of Great Britain was 7,754,875.

The 19th century saw a turning point: the industrial revolution pushed up the demand for workers and many people arrived from the colonies. Many of these were from India and

Africa, but between 1830 and 1850 tens of thousands of Irish people arrived in Britain, fleeing poverty at home. There were approximately 30,000 Germans, who arrived around 1860 (they were at that time the largest immigrant community in London), and more than a hundred thousand Russian Jews fled to Britain from the persecutions in Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first immigration restriction Act was then introduced, in 1905. The first Census in 1801 showed that 10.5 million people were living in Britain; a hundred years later, in 1901, the Census revealed that the country had 38 million inhabitants (not including the colonies). At the same time Ireland suffered a great decrease in population, with the number of inhabitants falling from 8 million to 4 million due to the Great Famine.

The population was reduced in the first half of the 20th century by the two great wars, but because of the constant immigration the loss was easily replaced. After the Second World War, there was a shortage of workers, so the government welcomed migrants. First, more than 150,000 Poles came, then Italians and many men from the West Indies. This mass migration resulted in racial violence and prejudice against the newcomers, especially because the white people were afraid of the black immigrants. The government allowed people from the Empire and Commonwealth to enter and settle in Britain, because they carried British passports; however, since 1972 there have been more and more restrictions to stop mass immigration. Between 1968 and 1975 more than 83,000 migrants came through work permits or to join their families. New communities formed, such as the Turkish-Cypriots.

Immigration accelerated from the beginning of the 1980s. Civil wars in other parts of the world led people to come to Britain, such as Somalis,

who were granted asylum. As the UK is a member state of the European Union, the right of free movement is applicable. After the expansion of the European Union in 2004, many people from East European states (from the former Communist Block) applied for jobs in Britain and some of them decided to stay and settle. In just over five years, until 2009, around 1.5 million migrants came from these States. Now every year over 600,000 people in total come to Britain from all over the world, which means 300,000 new inhabitants net (because of emigration). Today more than 13% of the total population was born abroad. It creates tensions in the society, but also offers the challenge of uniting these people from various backgrounds, finding ways in which people with different cultural outlooks can live together in mutual respect and harmony.

Istvan Orban



Sir Isaac Newton, Alchemist

Newton has been rightly acknowledged as one of the heralds of the modern scientific era. But although history has made him one of the fathers of the mechanistic paradigm in the age of reason, Newton's legacy is not reductionist by any means and in fact remains very rich, profound and full of mysteries. It has taken almost 300 years and a certain openness of mind to accept the fact that Newton's life was a relentless search for the unity of Truth and its Divine source. This inner search took him further afield than rational reasoning and mathematics could do and brought him closer to what he considered "a very ancient source of wisdom". This source was the 'hermetic science' of alchemy, which promised to bring him spiritual insights into the workings of nature. As the following remarks suggest, Newton had great reverence for alchemy. He wrote: "...[Alchemy] has been given to humanity through supernatural agents..." and "...there are other things besides the [physical] transmutations of metals which none but they [the hermetic teachers] understand." We know of his extensive alchemical writings (over a million words!), his many sleepless nights spent in front of furnaces and crucibles and his fears of being persecuted. Unsurprisingly, various scholars think that the main goal of his alchemy was the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone and the transmutation of base metals into gold, but I think Newton's interests went further than that.

What I find insightful in his 'alchemical' thinking is his organic and 'vitalistic' approach. He spoke of a vegetative principle operating in the natural world. This 'living' principle, like a messenger of God, was a permeating and animating spirit, which 'secretly' and constantly transformed and resurrected life from one state to another. This ensouling principle operated in all things, animal, vegetable and metallic. It was an

active, divine principle; in other words, it was an agent for God's action in the world. Contrary to what Descartes argued, the universe was not a sort of closed mechanical system, but had a living and dynamic principle, which Newton identified as 'alchemical'.

As his ancient predecessors had done, Newton in his laboratory sought to discover and witness the workings of consciousness and life within matter. He saw the process

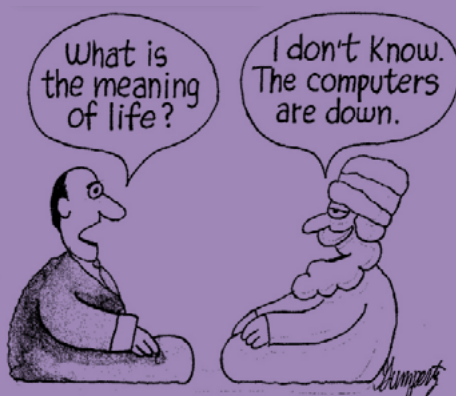


An 1874 engraving showing an apocryphal account of Newton's lab fire

of evolution unfolding everywhere and divine intelligence permeating everything. Through his dedication to Alchemy he felt himself to be a kind of divine 'helper' and intermediary who could assist 'nature' (i.e. the mineral kingdom) in its evolutionary journey towards perfection (the state of 'gold').

Agostino Dominici

PHILOSOPHICAL HUMOR



Some inspiring quotes

"He is a fool who thinks anything ridiculous except that which is evil"
Plato

"It is the heart that ennobles the man"
Mozart

"It is well to think well; it is divine to act well!"
Horace Mann

Life is Short, Art is Long

This year will mark 200 years since the death of the English Painter Francis Towne (1739 – 1816). Towne was trained in London, but soon moved to Exeter, where he became an established drawing master and local landscape painter.

In 1781 Towne travelled to Italy as part of the so-called Grand Tour, which was seen as a necessary part of a person's education in art and culture. According to the understanding of the day, the Grand Tour would further develop the intellectual, social, ethical and political awareness of a student. Influenced by the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke, who claimed that the human being is born as a blank slate and that knowledge comes mainly from the external senses, travelling would be a necessary means for developing the mind and expanding the knowledge of the world. In the context of social class, foreign travel completed the education of the English gentleman. The Grand Tour was very much a quest for the classical spirit.

While in Rome Towne painted a series of watercolours depicting ancient Roman ruins. Back in England those paintings served as a reminder of the decline of a once great civilization. The downfall of Rome began with a moral decline, and England, especially London, also had its vices. In this way, his art served for some people as a warning of the great dangers society was facing.

It took a long time for people to recognize the art of Towne, but he is now considered to be one of Britain's greatest watercolour artists – a fitting illustration of Hippocrates' phrase 'Life is Short, Art is Long'. You can see an exhibition at the British Museum entitled *Light, Time, Legacy: Francis Towne's Watercolours of Rome*, until August 2016.



Miha Kosir

Francis Towne, *A Sepulchre by the road between Rome and the Ponte Nomentana*, 1780, Watercolour.

The UK Energy Crisis

Since the early 2000s, the UK government has decided to reduce its CO2 emissions by closing its ageing coal power plants. The idea was to replace them with natural gas power plants, which are more efficient and greener in terms of CO2 emissions. Unfortunately the transition has not been smooth, as they had to close some ageing nuclear power plants as well, and the production of electricity is struggling to keep up with demand, with a 4% decrease in electricity production since 2005.

When dealing with a national size grid, it is vital to leave a surplus of power in case of emergency such as a peak of consumption, or the breakdown of a powerline. At the moment the UK's power grid is evolving to what we call a smart grid, which will be more able to deal with power cuts. But this has a cost of about 30

billion pounds. And in the meantime we can expect blackouts at peak times in the remotest regions of the UK, especially if the weather is damaging the lines.

While the production of energy is switching from coal to natural gas, imports of natural resources have increased by 400% in the past 10 years, making the UK more dependent on its energy suppliers (mostly Norway and Qatar). Individuals can make a difference, as the residential sector uses a third of the electricity produced (with one third being used by industry and the remaining third by agriculture, transport and public sectors). Industry, agriculture and the other sectors also need to play their part in achieving the targets set by the recent UN climate meeting.

Florimond Kris

Britannia

This powerful and graceful figure is known to many. The legend says that Britannia has been guarding our beautiful land and inspiring its people from the dawn of history. From mysterious beginnings more than 2,000 years ago, she has become a personification of Britain and its values.

The name Pretania or Brertania as a geographical region was recorded by the ancient Greek historians. From these words the Romans derived Britannia.

The first known image of Britannia as a personification of the land dates back to Roman times. She was depicted on coins issued in the 2nd century A.D. Thus, some say that the goddess Britannia is of Greco-Roman origin, especially given the widespread tradition of tutelary deities in those cultures. Her image (with a helmet, spear and shield) relates her to the Roman Minerva, goddess of wisdom, medicine, war and crafts. The other version tells that she evolved from the Celtic Brigid, goddess of fire, healing, crafts, and poetry.

From the Roman era Britannia became widely known as the spirit of the land. She gained a new symbolic meaning with the rise of British influence, especially during the constitutional unification of England, Scotland and Ireland. In 1672 she was reintroduced on coins and remained there until 2008. In 2015 she is returning again, this time on the two pound coin. During the Victorian age her image was changed slightly: her spear was replaced with a trident (maritime power), her shield bore the Union Jack, and a lion lay at her feet. She became the personification of the nation's greatness and its glorious spirit.

Nataliya Petlevych



Climate Change: a problem to solve

Last month the streets of Central London witnessed a turnout of 70,000 people who joined the march to make their voices heard, carrying messages of protest urging politicians to take into account the consequences of climate change. It was the largest of many demonstrations that took place around the globe. There are currently major concerns about fracking in Lancashire, pollution, melting of glaciers, global warming and many other environmental issues which were addressed at a UN conference in Paris. There is a big question mark about the planet's climate and the stability that is needed to cope with 9 billion people by 2050. Laws and awareness have become essential, and there are problems that need to be dealt with at an international level: CO2 emissions and an ecological way of doing business.

Britain has also reported in the last few years a rise in surface temperatures, increasing sea levels and

flood damage. In recent weeks we have witnessed the great damage produced by flooding, affecting thousands of people who have lost their homes. According to a risk assessment document published in 2012, some key climate threats to the UK include water resources, threats to biodiversity and natural habitats, and even heat waves. Unfortunately, more of this is expected in the years to come.

Climate change and its impact on the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants has been a hot topic in the news, but it is important to acknowledge the efforts that have been made to deal with the issue. In 2000, the UK introduced a climate change programme addressing many of the problems. How much of that has been done and how much awareness people have developed is hard to gauge. However, it is a shared responsibility to look after the planet and make a wiser use of its resources, by thinking more about future generations and the long-lasting effects of our present actions.

Natalia Lema

The Celts: our mysterious, silent ancestors

Celtic culture will be familiar to many of us; we may even identify strongly with a sense of what it means to be Celtic or to have a Celtic heritage. Others will be at least familiar with the imagery and symbolism that have endured throughout the millennia. A lot of what we understand to define the Celts today arose from the Celtic revival when the term ‘Celt’ was rediscovered in the 15th century. This revival culminated during the 19th and 20th centuries when renewed fascination surrounded all things Celtic. Great poets and artists of the time were responsible for the trend. What was it that caught their interest and fuelled their imaginations? Why do we still see Celtic symbolism and imagery in modern culture today?

In fact, most Celtic peoples would not have been familiar with the term ‘Celt’ and would not have called themselves by this name. The word was a later development, which gained in significance when it became helpful to clearly distinguish oneself from the English or the French. However, despite being a hugely diverse population of people spanning more than one continent, the ancient Celtic peoples did share many things in common, which is why it is still correct to talk about a Celtic culture. They all followed an oral tradition and didn’t write down any teachings, religious or cultural beliefs. We need to look at their objects, art and impact in history to understand more about our mysterious, silent ancestors.

One of the earliest European Celtic cultures that we know of is the Hallstatt, which emerged in central Europe around 800 BC. The name Halen or Halle indicates a settlement built around salt mining. Salt was a great source of wealth, used for trade across Europe. The Hallstatt salt trade routes went from central Europe south over the Alps to Italy, north towards the Balkans and east to the Baltic sea. It seems clear that early Celtic peoples lived in complex social structures that were sufficiently developed to support trade, navigation and engineering. This image is far from the picture of a primitive Iron Age man; in fact the Celts traded across the ancient world many centuries before the rise of Rome.

This is important because we learn that the Celts were not the savage barbarians often portrayed. Some historians also believe that the Celts built the straight roads across Europe and the Romans simply copied them and placed stone on top. Walter Benjamin famously said “History is written by the victors” and it is certainly likely that the Romans would have had no interest in crediting the Celts with such feats of engineering.

Domestically, the Celts lived largely as separate tribal groups, preferring to inhabit small independent rural settlements as opposed to the cities of the Greco–Roman cultures. This offers one possible reason as to why they never formed an empire. Large-scale city living didn’t occur to them and any separation from a life lived in nature wouldn’t have been favoured. Rural,

independent living is an approach to life that would appeal to many ‘Celtic’ descendants today.

The artistic styles of Celtic artefacts – and more importantly the symbolism and beliefs that underpinned them – appear to emanate from a shared source or perspective. From the tip of Scotland down to Portugal and deep into Eastern Europe, different Celts produced curiously similar artefacts, albeit with tribal variations. We can only speculate but it seems logical to suggest that there must have been a strong common understanding of a meaning in life that united these vastly dispersed peoples.

For example, most (if not all) Celtic tribes had a version of the torc, a metal ring that sat around the neck of the wearer most probably permanently. Could this be just a fashion coincidence consistent across time and landmass? It seems unlikely. Many of the patterns found on Celtic artefacts look, at first glance, like pretty decoration, however out of the corner of an eye, one may see a face or an unusual creature. It is suggested that the



artists encrypted some sort of religious or symbolic information in their designs. One theory is that there was a priestly class in Celtic cultures for which these encryptions would have been clear, and that their ambiguity protected the knowledge from outsiders or those who could not understand. How many of us have caught ourselves seeing something familiar, in the unfamiliar or abstract, faces in clouds, fairies at the bottom of the garden?

With their preference for living in nature and their intricate shared artistic styles, we can see the outline of a mysterious but deeply connected culture which once reigned over Europe, now silenced by the rewriting of history, but still resounding in our intuition.

Siobhan Farrar

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Right Speech – the power of language to harm and heal

by Michael Lassman

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” was a little ditty often chanted in the school playgrounds of the 1960s as a retort from one child to another after being teased or taunted. In truth, it should have been “...but words will really hurt me” – why? Because they can and they do!

Used well, words and right speech can heal, offer gentle care, understanding, show empathy and awareness, pacify a crying child and even bring peace. Conversely, language can also damage, cause pain and suffering, humiliate, foster hatred, incite violence and be a driver towards war.

So much harm is done in our local and global community because of the misuse of words. Whilst each person has the ability to be positive in their speech, too often they use their vocal power to take control, give commands, demand attention or perhaps seek supremacy over others. Surely, it is therefore incumbent upon us all



to think carefully about the words we use and how we use them. Part of this is to ensure we are honest and unambiguous and the more we know about the listener, the more able we are to take into account their sensitivities and feelings. Knowing that each of us is different and a unique individual makes this task all the harder and even more important that we build quality relationships with those we communicate with. .

Read more in our next issue...

Upcoming Events

See our website for more details.
www.newacropolisuk.org

Wed 27th January at 7:30pm

Talk: Astrology, Karma & Reincarnation

Speaker: Israel Ajose - **ADMISSION £5 (£3 concs.)**

For more details, please visit our website - www.newacropolisuk.org

Mon 01 Feb, Fri 8 Feb, Fri 15 Feb, 7.00 – 9.30 pm

Mind – Best Friend or Worst Enemy?

This short course (3 Monday evenings) will explore the mind and mind-related topics such as consciousness, imagination, creativity and meditation.

For more details, please visit our website - www.newacropolisuk.org

Mon 22 Feb and Wed 2 March, 7.00 - 9:30pm

16-Week Philosophy Course

First Evening Free

For more details, please visit our website - www.newacropolisuk.org

Sat 27th February at 10:45am to 5:30pm

Workshop - The Palinode of Socrates

A one-day workshop on the central speech of Socrates in the Phaedrus

Speaker: Tim Addey - **ADMISSION £45 (£25 concessions)**

For more details, please visit our website - www.newacropolisuk.org

ASTROLOGY KARMA & REINCARNATION



TALK : 27 JANUARY AT 7.30 PM - Admission £ 5 (conc. £ 3)

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