

Issue No. 23 JUL-AUG 2017

NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine

PHILOSOPHY

Karl Jaspers

SCIENCE

Epigenetics, the Science of Change

ART

Boethius' Music of the Spheres

CULTURE

Aboriginal Culture and its Relationship to the Land



NEW ACROPOLIS

Philosophy and Education for the Future

About Us

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

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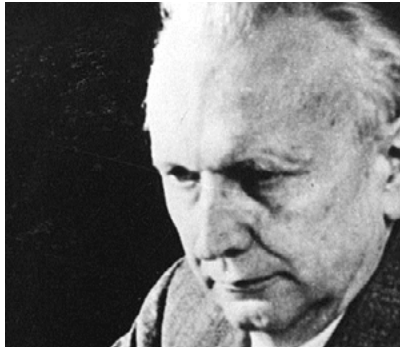
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 **Philosophy
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NEW ACROPOLIS

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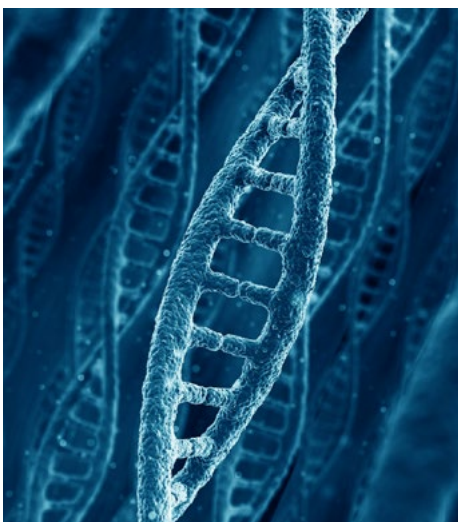


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Editorial

Ethics first!

On Wednesday 14 June, in the early hours of the morning, a fridge freezer exploded in a flat on the fourth floor of the 24-storey Grenfell tower block in London and caused a fire. Although fire crews arrived within 6 minutes of the alarm being raised, the fire had by then spread to the outside and within a short time the whole tower block was engulfed in flames that were racing up the building via the cladding on the external walls. At least 80 people were killed, although the final number is still not known.

Tragedies like this can happen, of course, but what makes the Grenfell Tower tragedy different from a natural disaster is that the scale of it was entirely manmade and could have been prevented. The chain of events that led to it reveals at every step a way of thinking which is symptomatic for our times: profit, cost-cutting, financial savings put before anything else.

However, is anyone of us free from this kind of thinking? Are we not all buying cheap products that we deep down know are unethical, bad for the environment and even unhealthy? Are we not all favouring the lower prices of the biggest companies although we know that they kill off the smaller ones? Are not most of us complaining about having to pay taxes? We are all seduced by the thought of 'getting a bargain' and don't usually think about the wider implications of our transactions. I think it is fair to say that we live in a world where 'economic' thinking generally overrides ethical concerns.

I think that it is also fair to say that this kind of thinking

is the major cause of all the social and environmental problems we face today. If we want to change the outcomes, we need to change the way of thinking that underlies our actions. It is important to understand that every individual can and needs to contribute to this change. There is uplifting evidence that more and more individuals buy with their conscience rather than their wallet. The ethical consumer market has been growing year on year in the UK and in 2015 was valued at £38 billion. This means that these industries are growing and can offer an ever-wider range of alternative products and services that will make a positive difference. More and more of us are not just thinking 'is this the most economical?' but also: 'is this ethical?' Each time we reach into our purse we should be mindful that this act is an expression of our values. And that it will either contribute to positive social, environmental and cultural change or lock us in the status quo.

Disasters like the Grenfell Tower fire are not just a wake-up call for the government and the authorities. They should also cause us to look at our own way of life. The wrong thinking that led to the enormous scale of the fire is systemic but there is no denying that we are all a part of the same system. It's very easy to point fingers and to look for scapegoats but we also have a role to play in this.

The maxims of the great philosophers in history prove yet again timeless and relevant. Confucius already said 2,500 years ago: "A lesser person is only concerned with doing what is profitable. An ethical person (*junzi*) is concerned with doing what is right." May the image of the burnt-out Grenfell Tower remind us all that ethics is more important than economics.

Sabine Leitner



Karl Jaspers

Philosopher of Otherness

The biography of Karl Jaspers gives an indication of the immense scope of his work. He began by studying law, then moved on to medicine, becoming a doctor specialising in psychiatry, and finally ended up as a professor of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg.

One of his first works was entitled *Psychology of World Views* (1919). In it he put forward the theory that all world views contain an element of pathology and that, in order to come closer to truth, the human mind must free itself from the 'objectivized cages' which seek to contain thought within certain safe limits. The mind must therefore go beyond its world view in order to discover truth for itself. This theory developed into his concept of 'limit situations' in which the human reason is confronted with its own inadequacy, leading it to 'transcend its own contents' and make contact with something other than itself, which in philosophy is known as the concept of 'alterity' or 'otherness'. If there is truthful knowledge, he claimed, 'it would be a cognitive experience in which reason is transfigured by its encounter with contents other than its own form' [*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – all further quotes in this article are from this source unless otherwise stated].

One of the ways of attaining this consciousness of otherness is through 'intensely engaged communication with other persons, in which committed communication helps to suspend the prejudices and fixed attitudes of consciousness'. Another means is through what he called 'ciphers'. These are to be found, for example, in the contemplation of nature, art, religious symbolism or metaphysical philosophy. As a result, he criticized Rudolf Bultmann's idea of 'scriptural de-mythologization', which proposed that religion should be stripped of all its mythological and even historical elements to concentrate purely on its ethical teachings. For Jaspers, however, such mythological elements are an important way of approaching transcendent knowledge, as well as a means of discovering similarities in different systems of thought, thereby giving rise to a culture of tolerance.

Although he was sympathetic to religious ideas per se, he argued that any claims to transcendent knowledge could not be absolute and that orthodox religions often defeat the very purpose of religion by interpreting such 'ciphers' as literal truth or by being absolutist and dogmatic. Reason therefore has an important role to play in his idea of '*Philosophical Faith*' (1948), which



would always maintain a communicativeness and openness to dialogue.

Jaspers is considered to be one of the most important figures of German Existentialism, one of the principles of which is to 'focus on man's existence as the centre of all reality' [*Encyclopedia Britannica*]. Jaspers' own form of existentialism held that 'philosophy must be guided by a faith in the originary transcendence of human existence, and that philosophy which negatively excludes or ignores its transcendent origin falls short of the highest tasks of philosophy.' Like Kant, he accepted the limits of human reason, but unlike Kant, he argued for the possibility of obtaining a glimpse of something beyond the reason.

During and after the Second World War, his thought turned increasingly to politics and culture. Jaspers was one of the few German intellectuals who was not tainted by association with Nazism and he played an

important part in the reform of German universities after the war. He believed that acknowledgement of national guilt was a necessary condition for the moral and political rebirth of Germany.

His observations of both Nazism and Communism led him to attack all forms of totalitarianism.

However, he also saw that totalitarian tendency in the Western technocracies which he saw as oppressive of freedom and individuality. Culture, on the other hand, is always an important antidote to totalitarianism. Like Hannah Arendt, his former pupil and later an important influence on his thought, he saw the destruction of culture and the atomisation of society as eroding the

freedom of individuals, making them easy prey for technocratic oppression.

He called instead for a 'World Philosophy' and advocated an international federation of nation states sharing similar constitutions and values.

"Reason is like an open secret that can become known to anyone at any time; it is the quiet space into which everyone can enter through his own thought." K.Jaspers

Julian Scott



Social Business, a New Way to End poverty

Notwithstanding decades of foreign aid, in 2016 1.2 billion persons still suffered from hunger, privation and ignorance. To escape the trap of 'dead aid', Muhammad Yunus (Nobel Peace Prize 2006) and other idealists have created 'social enterprises' to help the poor escape poverty through dignity, social solidarity and fraternity.

Despite the teachings of Plato and Confucius, the mentality of modern man has changed very little. Indeed, technology has been hijacked by Plato's 'Masters of the Cave' by seducing people into a frenetic race for materialism and greed. Hence, even though life expectancy has tripled over the past millennium, has modern society really progressed?

"Capitalism light"

Faced with these challenges, the UN and governments

continue to advocate the 'politically correct' solutions advocated by Plato and Confucius – education and justice. But 'business as usual' in a capitalistic world leads to the same sterile solutions and the same dead-end! To be sure, this strategy relieves governments' consciences and restores their public image. But in truth, what is proposed is to save our 'old corrupt world' by transforming it into 'capitalism light', i.e., something a tad less toxic. However, the public is not stupid – and growing social fractures and rising indignation have become increasingly evident, as seen by mounting disenchantment with traditional political parties and intensifying populism.

Thankfully, indignant idealists who dare to think differently are creating 'hope for change'. A real revolution is underway, based on the pragmatic



redirection of 'market forces' towards social goals inspired by the virtues of generosity, fraternity, solidarity and dignity. A pioneer of this movement is the humanist Muhammad Yunus who founded the innovative system of microcredits. This model of 'social business' has raised millions of people out of poverty in Bangladesh.

Learn to fish

Social business is not charity; to cite Confucius *"when a man is hungry, better to teach him to fish, than to give him a fish"*.

The social business model proposed by Muhammad Yunus is controversial, but its concretisation of Plato's vision is an undeniable success. Today, the Grameen Group has 80 million clients in Bangladesh, almost half its population. The group is incredibly diverse with around fifty companies, including branches in the United States, which include micro-finance companies, savings banks, insurance companies, hospitals, eye care centres, while also providing mobile phones, solar energy, filtered water, enterprises producing high nutrition dairy products, online education facilities, etc.

Mohammad Yunus' example has inspired thousands of other social entrepreneurs and innovative projects.

Social business is based on four principles:

- 1) Adapt solutions to the poor, rejecting bankers' prejudices by lending to the poor;
- 2) Reject charity and create wealth by individual initiative;
- 3) Establish financially profitable, viable and independent enterprises, owned by the poor;
- 4) Network with society's stakeholders (e.g. Danone) to achieve economies of scale and efficiency.

This model is based on mass production and good quality products sold at low prices and small profit margins. There are no subsidies, and a living wage is paid to employees to retain independence.

No dividends are paid and profits are

"when a man is hungry, better to teach him to fish, than to give him a fish."

reinvested to improve quality, to lower prices and expand market access for the poor and the public. Economics and efficiency are 'means' – the 'goals' are social.

In summary, this creative model breaks down the sterile barriers between charities, NGOs and greedy capitalism. While managers focus on the classical goals of profitability and sustainability they also respect their social responsibilities and the goals of their employees (who may also be owners) by permitting human beings to escape poverty through work and dignity. In short, 'Social Business' produces not only goods and services, but also dignity, solidarity, honesty and happiness.

Lessons learned

Muhammad Yunus has succeeded in channelling the energies of capitalism into attaining social and environmental



Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus

goals. He has not declared war on the 'evil capitalists', but found common ground in achieving social objectives, by allowing capitalism to show its social responsibility. This 'win/win' strategy has succeeded in showing that 'homo economicus' has other dimensions than pure Cartesian rationalism, if his consciousness is awakened by contact with notions of the Good, the Beautiful, the True and the Just.

James Chan-Lee

About the author: James Chan-Lee is a former economist at the IMF, OECD and other international organizations and a lecturer at Sciences-Po, Paris.

Alchemical Medicine

Rediscovered

Despite many technological advances, our modern society has so far failed to address the all-important issue of health and harmony, both in the human being and on planet Earth. This situation has led to an increase of interest in the study of holistic medicine and herbal remedies in general. In the meantime, we have also witnessed a genuine interest in rediscovering lost esoteric teachings in various branches of knowledge. Among these esoteric disciplines, one that is going through a major revival is alchemy and its medical applications.

The teaching of alchemy has an age-old tradition that includes a mystical as well as a more practical dimension. Within this practical side we find the study of plant and mineral substances to be used for healing (both physical and psychological) and to increase longevity.

In traditional systems of medicine of both East and West alchemical teachings pervaded their fundamental structures. Thus, whether we study TCM (Traditional Chinese medicine), Ayurveda, homeopathy or spagyric medicine, we encounter many ideas 'borrowed' from alchemical processes and principles. Concepts like: transmutation, regeneration, purification, dissolution, etc., play an important role in the philosophical formulation of these systems of medicine.

In this brief article I am going to focus on the teachings of spagyrics. The term spagyric refers to a branch of plant alchemy which was popularised in medieval Europe by Paracelsus, a Swiss alchemist, physician, astrologer and philosopher.

In his teachings he stated that the true purpose of alchemy was not for the vulgar purpose of making gold, but rather for the production of medicines.

The use of plants for medical and magical purposes is thousands of years old but unfortunately we have nearly lost sight of the metaphysical and sacred



Frontispiece of the alchemical
compendium *Musaeum
Hermeticum*

dimension of plant healing. Spagyric medicines are prepared in a unique way that captures the full therapeutic spectrum of plants, including the cosmic energies they constantly absorb. As plants lie constantly under the sky, this mysterious cosmic connection contributes to their healing qualities.

In a general sense we can say that the nourishment for the growth of plants comes from air, soil and water, but the energy for their growth comes from the sun, moon and stars.

Esoterically there is a very important correspondence between the plant kingdom and the energetic level of being (i.e. prana, chi, vital force, etc.). In fact, most of the systems of internal alchemy found in the East (for instance the Tantric and Taoist traditions) are based on the teachings about a subtle body and its energy network. Through spagyric methods 'plant energy' is enhanced and extracted so that it can be used as medicine. As all chronic and recurring conditions may be traced to an energy deficit it is important to understand the relationship between human health and energetic healing.

The primary spagyric methods consist of separating therapeutic herbs into their constituent virtues: essential oil, alcohol and water-soluble salts (electrolytes).

Paracelsus regarded these three virtues as the three philosophical principles or *tria prima* of sulphur, mercury and salt. These are the soul, spirit (i.e. vital force) and body of the plant. The first principle is active and fiery, the second is receptive and watery and the third is fixed and solid.

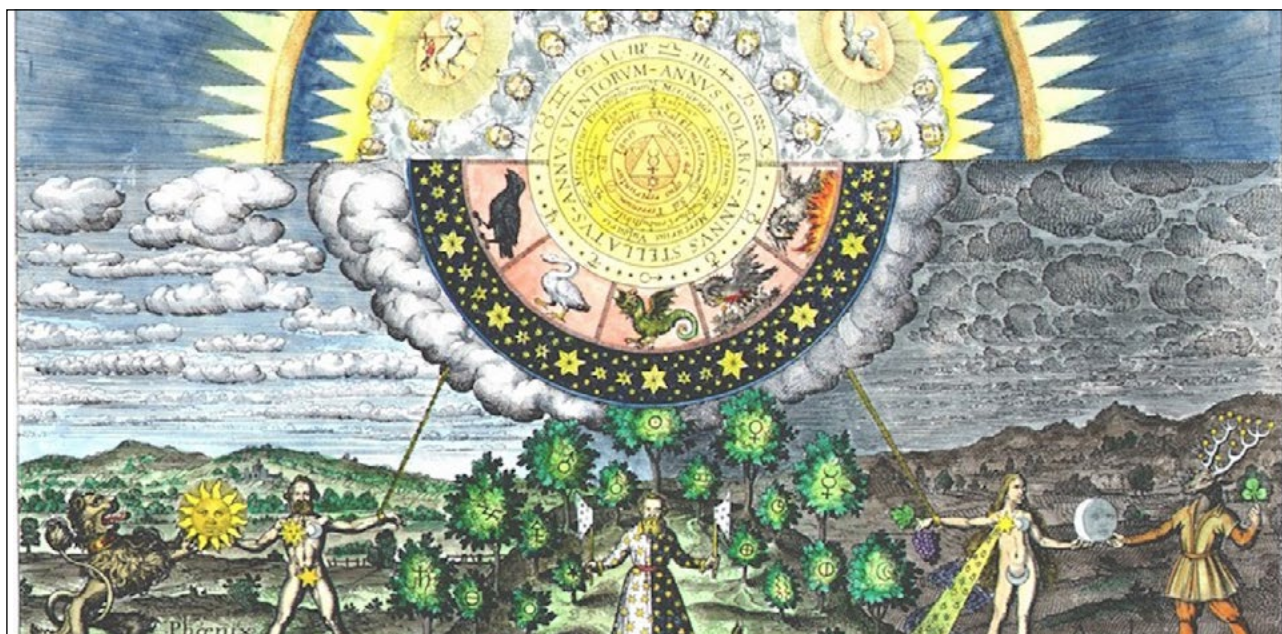
Through distillation the plant releases the essential oils (sulphur), while the alcohol (mercury) is extracted through fermentation. Calcination of the remaining plant, followed by filtration, leaves the specific water-soluble salts.

In accordance with the spagyric motto: *Solve et Coagula, et habebis magisterium* (dissolve and coagulate and you will have the mastery), after separating this *tria prima*, the three principles are recombined to produce a spagyric essence. Through a process of separation and purification (*solve*), the subtle constituents of the plant are potentiated and then recombined (*coagula*) together. This process stresses the importance of purification of both matter and soul in the path of Hermetic ascent from a lower nature to a higher one.

Another important part of the work consists of capturing the cosmic influence mentioned earlier, by starting a particular phase of the work when celestial opportunities are favourable. This stage requires the knowledge of the astrological correspondences and the *doctrine of signatures* or divine seals. In this intricate system of correspondences, planets are identified with metals, days of the week, herbs and parts of the body.

The greatness of alchemy lies in the fact that its doctrines are not the result of dry intellectual knowledge but the product of an applied knowledge capable of bringing tangible results. Reflecting the alchemical motto: pray and work (*Ora et labora*) the alchemist doctor invites us all into the path of practical philosophy or philosophy for living..

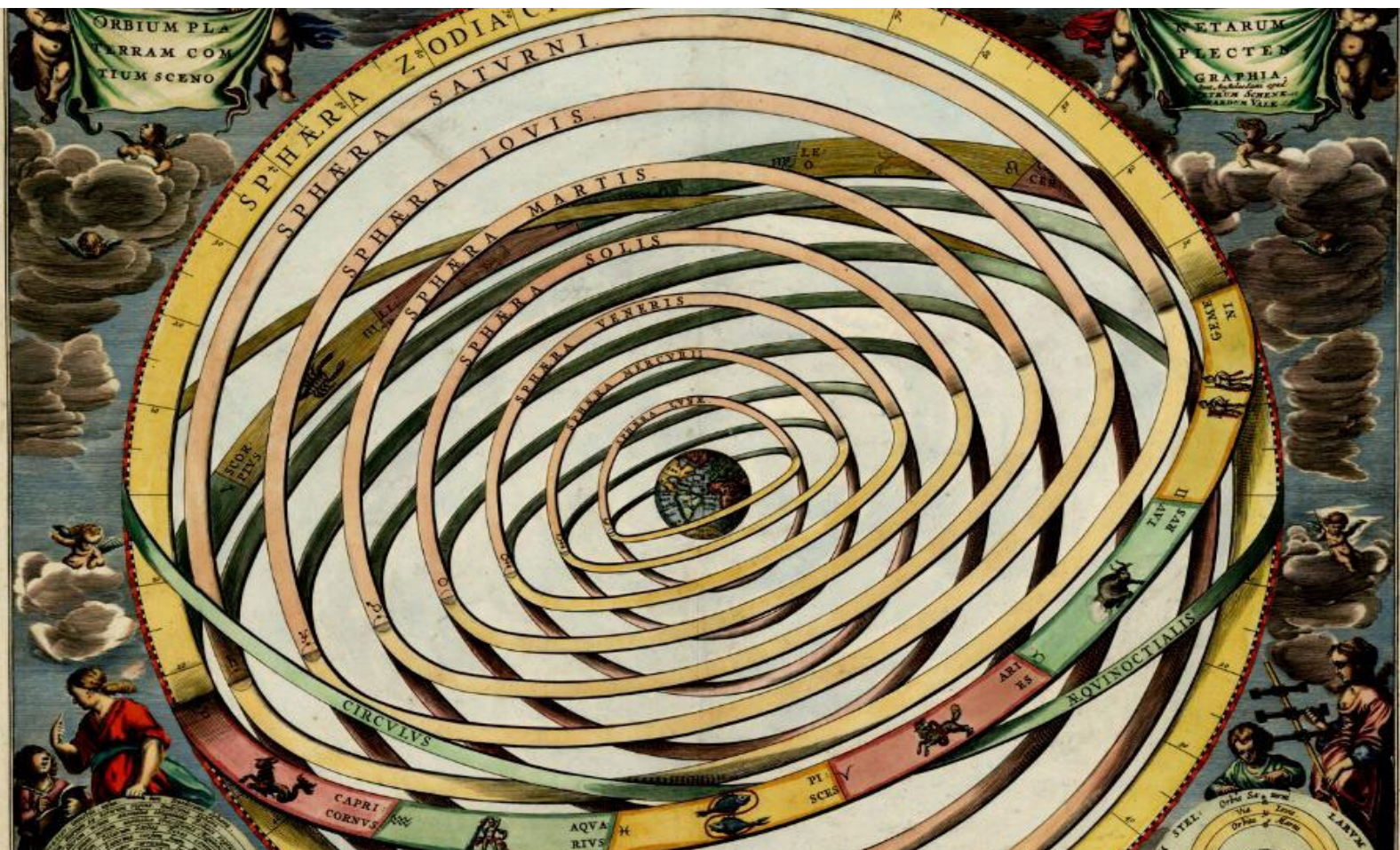
Agostino Dominici



MORE THAN MELODY – BOETHIUS' MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

The Music of the Spheres begins in Ancient Greece with Pythagoras who, upon passing a blacksmiths is said to have heard consonance in the different sounds of the hammer. By this he was inspired to discover the connection between vibration, frequencies and pitch. For Pythagoras the octave ratio of 1:2 is considered a symbol of divine harmony between the lower and higher levels and with the proportions of the fourth & fifth intervals (3:4 & 2:3) the structure of the world can be understood.

Boethius, a Roman Philosopher who lived 480-524 AD at the time of the demise of the Roman Empire structures a cosmo-vision that describes a way of understanding music beginning with the simplest man-made instruments rising towards a conception of order and divine harmony throughout the universe.



Musica Mundana; the unheard Music of the Spheres / Celestial Harmony

Musica Humana; the Music of the Human Body, Soul & Spiritual Harmony

Musica Instrumentalis; the Music of the Instruments

“Music is related not only to speculation but to morality as well, for nothing is more consistent with human nature than to be soothed by sweet modes or disturbed by their opposites. Thus we can begin to understand the apt doctrine of Plato, which holds that the whole Universe is united by musical concord.” - Boethius

As humans have always looked to the heavens, they have understood that life at a fundamental level revolves around the movements of the heavenly spheres. The seasons give harvests, the tides dictate sailing, sunrise and sunset dictate the hours of daily work. These intricate movements of the planets and seasonal rhythms give rise to harmonious diversity. Boethius also thought it impossible that the spheres did not make sound; perhaps this Musica Mundana may be too loud for us to hear or, since it has been in our ears since birth, perhaps we are unable to distinguish it from silence.

Boethius also describes a type of music at the level of the Human Being, Musica Humana relating to the Human, which can be understood as how our different aspects (body, soul & spirit) harmonise with each other. During the Renaissance the great polymath Marsilio Ficino developed a type of musical therapy that worked with human psychological states. Also the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus described a relationship between psyche (human thoughts and emotions) and music, adding that each planetary sphere attunes

“Boethius shows music as an integral expression and means of understanding things unseen “.

to a different aspect of the human psyche.

“Music is part of us and either ennobles or degrades our behaviour”- Boethius

Musica Instrumentalis is the music of the instruments, that with which we are familiar. It represents a reflection, a tangible and audible expression of divine harmony.

“Song is almost nothing else other than spirit” – Boethius

Boethius shows music as an integral expression and means of understanding things unseen. Music connects us to this understanding at a sensory level but it is also within us and its presence indicates latent inner understanding of and unification with divine harmony and universal law.

If mathematics is the language of all



Boethius teaching his students from a manuscript of the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

things, then music may be the voice; at times a beautiful singing voice, at times an inner voice and at times the voice of a higher power.

Siobhan Farrar

Aboriginal

Culture and its Relationship to the Land

Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock, is a large sandstone rock formation in the southern part of the Northern Territory in central Australia.



Aboriginal Australians are the most ancient continuous civilization on Earth. Their ancestors, who first arrived on the continent about 70,000 years ago, were the first humans to cross an ocean. Split into hundreds of social groups each with its own tribal territory and dialect, a cumulative population of 1.6 billion people has been estimated to have lived in Australia supported by the land prior to British colonization.

Aborigine culture developed in the context of a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle. They maintained the tradition of wandering long after most people of the world had settled down to the sedentary life of farm, village or town.

Their wide practical knowledge, accumulated over thousands of years of experiment and observation, enabled them to harvest food without exhausting effort. The frequency with which they moved camp and the exact timing of their movements reflected their understanding of climate, winds, marine life, insect life, the maturing of plants and the habits of wild animals. Their knowledge of the land and all that grew from it was supplemented by a spiritual belief that the earth would not continue to be productive unless they obeyed its rules and its deities. One of the aims of their religious ceremonies and many of their taboos was to maintain the fertility of the land and its creatures.

The Aborigine religio-cultural worldview, relevant to generations both past and present, pivots on the Dreamtime, the ever-present moment of creation. It explains how in the beginning Ancestor Beings travelled through the land shaping the animals, plants, rocks and other forms of the country that we know today. Eventually they settled in a place that was important to them where they still inhabit the land. These are the sacred places of Aborigine culture and have special properties. Because the Ancestors did not disappear at the end of the Dreaming, but remained in these sacred sites, the Dreaming is never-ending, linking the past and the present, the people and the land.

By virtue of birth there is a spiritual link between a person and a specific site or a part of the country. Dreaming stories pass on very important knowledge to later generations. Through ceremonial song, dance, painting, carving and storytelling, Aborigines have maintained a link with the

Dreaming from ancient times to today. Their spiritual and cultural connection to the land obliges Aborigines to look after cultural sites which are living museums of their ancestors and include dreaming sites, archeological sites, water holes and burial grounds.

It has been with difficulty that Western society recognized the kind of abundance and autonomy in which aboriginal Australians had lived prior to British colonization. We often value the material success of ancient empires by their surviving monuments and the remains of their temples and city walls. Accumulation of property is, in our eyes, a sign of success.

Having long lost sight of the unchanging unity of life which underlies the multiplicity of creation, the whole planet is now faced with the effects of the destruction that capitalism and colonialism have caused to our earth: global warming, widespread health problems, education and social issues, ill governance, to name just a few.

Regardless of the oppression of colonialism and attempted genocide of their society, Aborigines have been able to identify with, value and pass on their culture, adapting and persisting through the struggle.

It is time we realized there is much we can learn from a society as successful as the aboriginal Australian if we are to regain the ideal pattern of life we have forgotten. After all, theirs is a knowledge that, through over 70,000 years of compiling and refining, has the greatest potential to sustain human life on this planet.

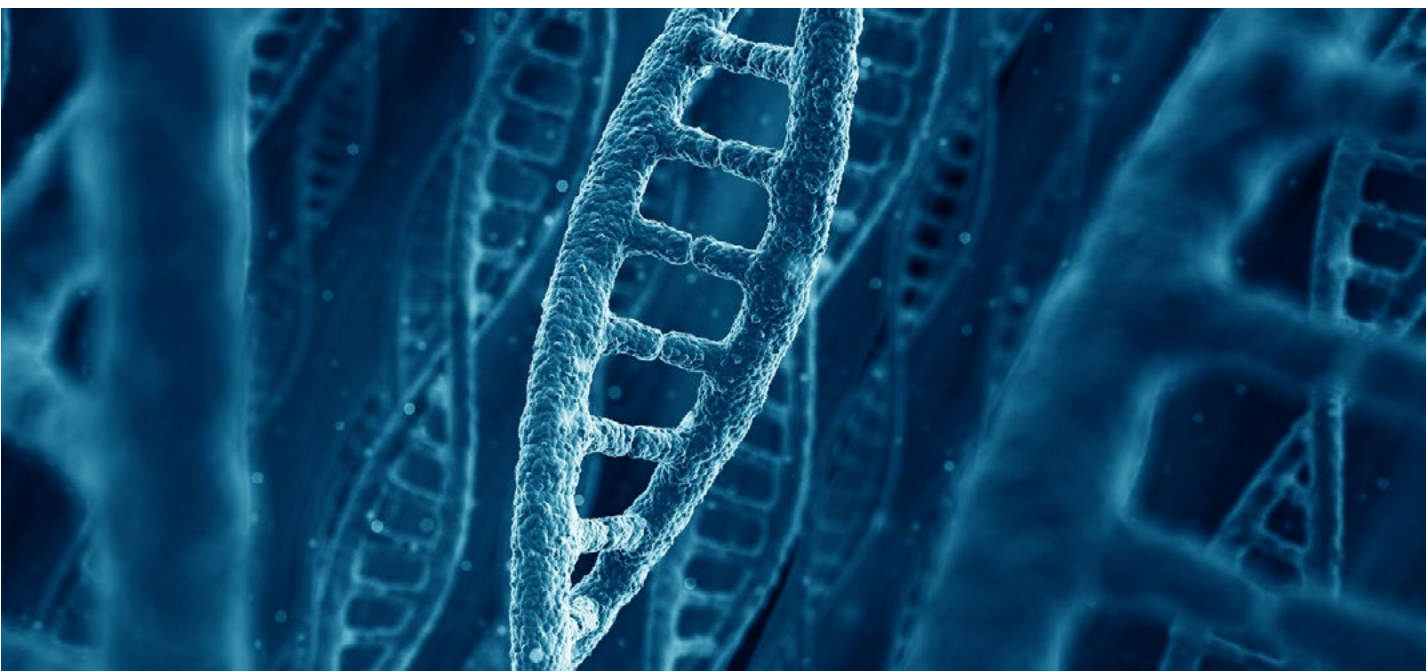
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EPIGENETICS

the Science of Change

Epigenetics is the science that studies the biological mechanisms that switch genes on and off, that make them active or inactive, without involving any changes in the DNA sequence. Having a gene switched on or off will change how the cells read the gene, read the information and how the cells produce proteins. To give you an idea, our DNA possesses over twenty thousand genes. That's a lot of information to read...

Why is Epigenetics important? It concerns the kingdoms of plants, animals and humans and the heritable changes in the expression of their genes. Regarding plants, scientists are saying



Plants pass on their DNA methylomes from one generation to the next.

Epigenetic regulation of stress has been implicated in chicken domestication. Photo credit: Per Jensen.



that further studies could help increase the yields and quality of crops. Plant Epigenetics is actually simpler than the Epigenetics of mammals and allows plants to remember past stresses, such as droughts or threats from other plants or animals, and pass that knowledge on quite effectively to the next generation so they can learn how to deal with them in the future.

As for us, recent studies have shown that the activation or de-activation of certain genes can be a cause of cancer and other diseases such as mental retardation associated disorders, immune disorders, neuropsychiatric disorders and paediatric disorders. You might have seen on the news the discovery of genes responsible for breast cancer, the brca 1 and brca 2 genes. A change in one of those genes can cause cancerous tumours to develop in the breasts and ovaries. Changes in these genes are hereditary and nowadays can be detected quite easily, allowing women to have preventive lifesaving surgery.

What are the root causes of Epigenetics? This is where the difficulty lies, as well as its misinterpretation. Scientists agree on saying that many factors, such as our growth, our environment and our lifestyle can have an effect on the epigenetics of our genes, and

make certain genes activate or de-activate themselves. What has not been identified yet, as it is very complex, is what specific trigger will influence a specific gene change.

Even if we can't pinpoint an exact cause for every gene change it can at least make us more aware and study further the influence of our environment and lifestyle on the diseases, such as cancer, that are rising in our modern societies. The scientific community is warning us about the increased number of pseudo medicines and practices that advertise themselves as linked with epigenetics. And although the scientific community does not reject the possible influence of some so called "new age" practices such as meditation on epigenetics, it is a long way from providing any concrete answers on the subject.

It is therefore our responsibility to observe how our behaviour affects our life and health, as well as that of others. We should review and consider how we deal with the different stresses of life and how we let them change us for the better or for the worse.

Florimond Krins

THE SOLAR HERO

During these days of sunlight's fullness, it is good to remember the symbolism of the sun and its connection to our inner centre, our Higher Self. This connection appears most frequently in the stories of solar heroes.

These myths tell us that a human being has something of the transient and something of the eternal, and that the power of the sun – the courageous and creative force, the source of life – lies within each of us. And the myths tell the story of how to connect with it.

Etymologically the word 'hero' comes from the ancient Greek *hērōs*, which means 'protector' or 'defender'. So, it is about someone who feels and bears a responsibility for others. That ability to protect and care, to bring harmony and peace is not given *a priori*, it arises through the challenges and trials that a hero necessarily encounters on his path.

Solar symbolism is connected to the hero's powers and the cycle he undergoes, like the sun as we perceive it from the Earth: birth, growth and maturity, descent into the underworld, rebirth. The hero's cycle may be divided into different stages, starting with his unrealised potential, going through trials and finally attaining full accomplishment.

In mythology, a solar hero usually connects Earth and Heaven – the ordinary and spiritual dimensions. This is either due to his birth from a mortal man or woman and a god or goddess, as in the case of Heracles, or to his being a divine heir to the earthly realm like Horus, who restored justice and ruled after his father Osiris. This means that from the moment of their birth there is a potential carried within a hero-to-be, which grows into a call for adventures later in life. And the hero's journey starts when he responds to that call.

Then come the trials. First a hero has to conquer himself. All the mythological destructive forces he is overcoming are the personifications of his inner enemies – impurities, weaknesses and vices. This process is well described in the Labours of Heracles, where he meets different creatures like the Nemean Lion or the Hydra of Lerna and undergoes a process of purification – the Augean Stables. Step by step a hero rediscovers his true heavenly and thus spiritual nature. Then comes the last and hardest trial symbolising death in which all the transient perishes leaving only the eternal – and the hero accomplishes his journey: Theseus goes through the underworld (Tartarus) and Heracles fights Cerberus, the many-eyed dog that guards the underworld.

When the journey is completed and all trials overcome, a hero transcends this world. He may acquire immortality like Heracles and join his heavenly father, or he may wait to return from the dead to save the people under his protection, as in the case of King Arthur and other 'sleeping kings'.



UPCOMING EVENTS

TALK: THE COSMOVISION OF SHAMANISM

Mon 17 July, 7 pm

Shamanism is an ancient and almost universal tradition among societies that live close to nature, and many seekers in the Western world feel that there is a lot that can be learnt from this natural form of practical wisdom.

Using Mircea Eliade's seminal work on Shamanism as a starting point, this talk will look at the universal aspects of this inner path, such as the concepts of initiation, death and rebirth, and renewal of the individual and society through deep inner transformation.

Speaker: Istvan Orban

ADMISSION: £5 (£3 concs.)



DEEP PHILOSOPHY, DEEP ECOLOGY 4 PRESENTATIONS WITH Q & A DISCUSSION

Sat 29th July from 10:45am to 2:40pm

Philosophy in the West – especially in its English-speaking part – has been considered an isolated and private venture, with little influence upon the way in which societies conduct themselves: like Earth itself in the Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, its description hovers between “harmless” and “mostly harmless”. But is this really the case? Can we trace today's ecological crisis to the philosophy (or philosophies) adopted consciously or unconsciously in recent centuries? Perhaps the errors embedded within it are now revealed as very far from harmless – in fact a flawed philosophy may be the most toxic thing known to humankind.

Deep ecology – the view that solutions to the ecological crisis are to be found in a radical revision of humankind's understanding of itself, the world in which it lives, and their mutual relation – has much to be commended. Deep ecologists argue that superficial changes in patterns of consumption while we retain an underlying view that we are set apart as the active and rational rulers and consumers of an irrational and passive world of materiality will not solve our ecological crisis.

But if we are to reject an inadequate philosophical worldview how are we to find a better and more truthful one? Can we find a philosophy from which a truly wide-ranging justice can emerge? Perhaps we must wipe the philosophical slate clean and start again from the very beginning, or perhaps we may find in neglected philosophies from our past the key to the righting of relations between ourselves and the rest of reality. This is a challenge we cannot ignore without the gravest consequences to ourselves and our fellow companions on Earth. But although the task is great, the rewards of success are also great: it may be that a philosophy which addresses the needs of deep ecology will also contribute to the solution of other more purely human problems which now press upon us.

Speaker: Tim Addey, Sabine Leitner & others

ADMISSION: £20 (£12 concs.)

