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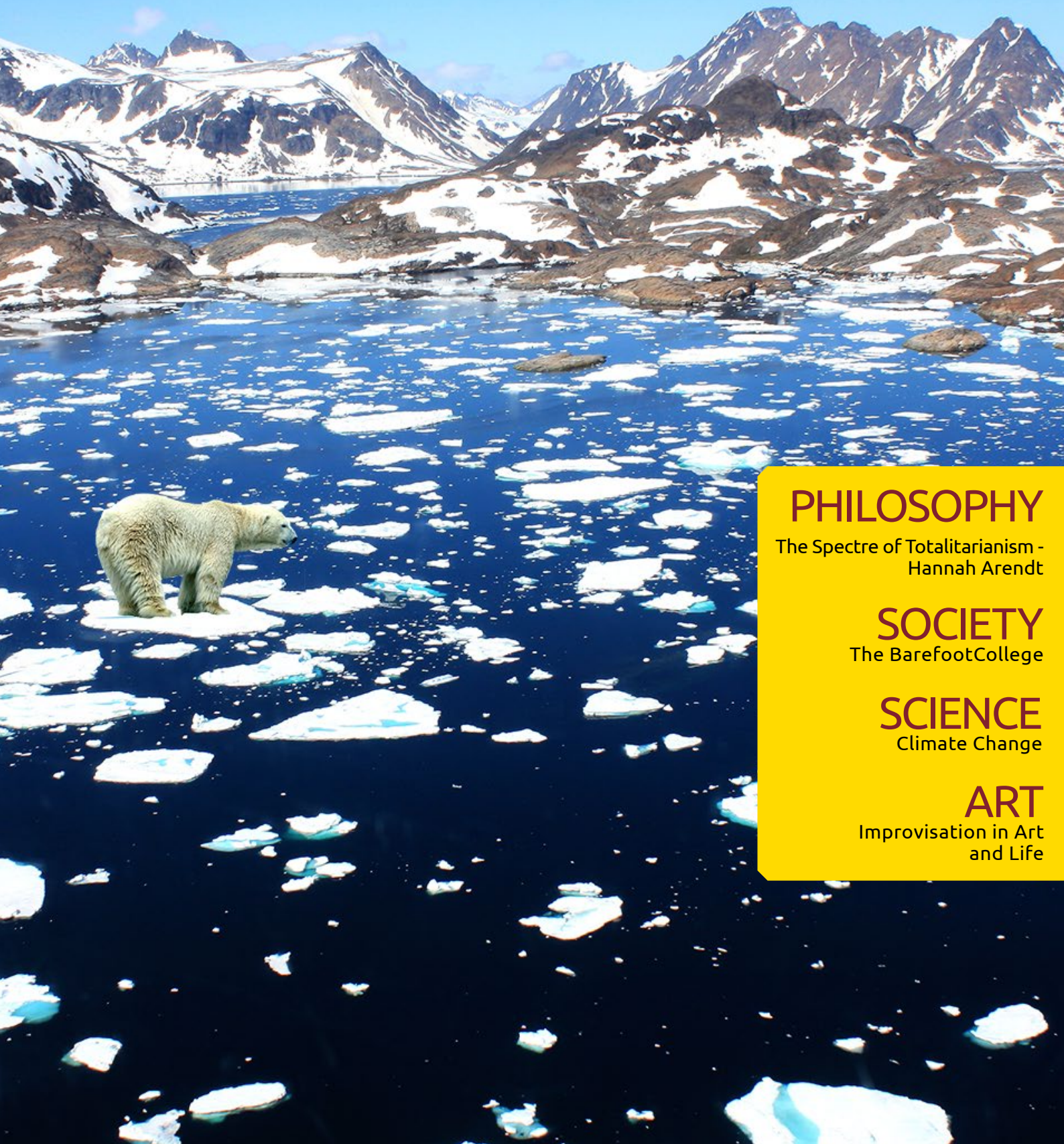
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2018

# NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine



## PHILOSOPHY

The Spectre of Totalitarianism -  
Hannah Arendt

## SOCIETY

The BarefootCollege

## SCIENCE

Climate Change

## ART

Improvisation in Art  
and Life



# NEW ACROPOLIS

Philosophy and Education for the Future

## About Us

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

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 **Philosophy  
Culture  
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NEW ACROPOLIS

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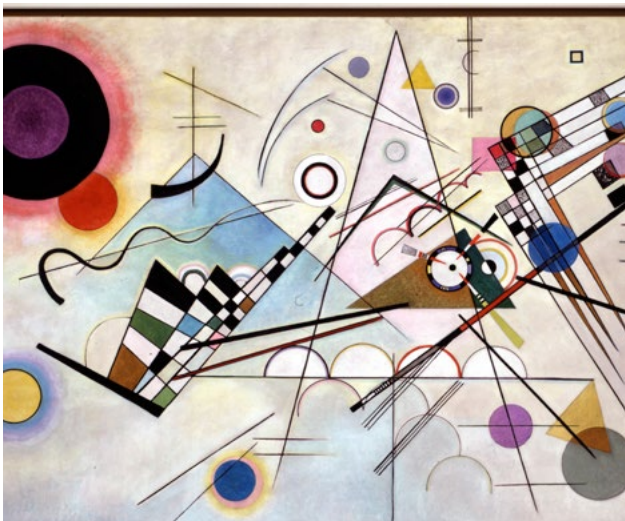
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# Editorial

## **A climate change we do urgently need!**

Imagine what it must be like to go to work and to meet with constant abuse. To be surrounded by groups of 6 or 12 people as soon as you leave your home, who would scream at you, physically intimidate you and spit at you. To be called a “Jewish pig” or a “nigger” to your face, to be targeted for your sexuality, religious beliefs or social background. To receive death threats, rape threats, acid attack threats and anonymous people launching a social media campaign of invented stories against you which make you lose your job. To have your windows smashed, your car scratched and swastikas painted on your office. To have your children targeted by schoolmates or worse, that a teacher of your child tells the other classmates not to talk to your child because of what you do.

Well, this is what happened to politicians of all parties in 2017 in Britain, a country that has often been admired for its democratic institutions, tolerance and fair play. According to one MP, there had been “less intimidation” during the presidential election in Rwanda than had occurred in the UK. Of course, these kinds of attacks are not new. But according to some MPs, the 2017 election had been the “most brutal” to date. An enquiry recorded 188,000 abusive tweets in just 3 months. And even politician’s lives are not safe. Last year, a popular and dedicated MP was murdered in her office for her views, one week before the Brexit Referendum.

Where does this shocking scale of abuse suddenly come from? How come our current political and social ‘climate’ seems to have become so much more vitriolic and violent in recent years? It is scary to see that some of this is masterminded by highly educated people in positions of responsibility. An academic at one of Britain’s best universities was recorded at a party conference of one of Britain’s main parties<sup>1</sup>. The question being discussed was

what their party could do during the campaign for the last general election. The professor and author of several books said: “My answer is hate... Make the [left/right] hate again... I’m full of hate these days.” And a fellow speaker, who is a senior editor at a media organisation that says on its website that it reaches an audience of millions through its hundreds of podcasts, videos and articles, added: “I’m on Team Hate.”

When questioned later about his statement, the university professor said: “My point was that hate is a political emotion that has always been around and does not equate to violence.” Wow! Yes, he is technically right: hate does not equate to violence. But isn’t hate at the root of most violence? How can anyone in their right mind want to spread hate? We must all stand up to this and not allow hate to be promoted and fomented! As Martin Luther King said in 1954: “It’s wrong to hate. It always has been wrong and it always will be wrong. It’s wrong in America, it’s wrong in Germany, it’s wrong in Russia, it’s wrong in China. It was wrong in 2000 B.C., and it’s wrong in 1954 A.D.!”

Another problem is that some activists (political and otherwise) seem to think that the end justifies the means. They think that their cause is so important that any method, even spreading lies through social media, physical threats and all sorts of abuse, may be used to achieve it. Think again. Can a better and fairer world really be built on lies, violence and injustice? For Mahatma Gandhi, means and ends were one: “Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.”

Let us all stand up in 2018 to change this growing climate of hate. And let us remember that a noble end must be achieved with noble means.

*Sabine Leitner*

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(1) Personal and political details are purposely left out in this article because groups on either side of the political spectrum are guilty of the same malpractice.

# The Spectre of Totalitarianism

## Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)

You may have noticed this year that a number of journalists have been making references to the 20<sup>th</sup> century political theorist Hannah Arendt, widely regarded as one of the most important political philosophers of the last century. Her first major work, entitled *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, is more than 500 pages long and not an easy read by any means. But since the election of Donald Trump, sales have suddenly shot up and people have been associating Trump with some of the characteristics of totalitarianism that Arendt analyses in her book.

We are, however – at least apparently – living in very different times. Arendt’s book was published in 1951 and arose out of her experiences of Nazism before, during and after the Second World War. She



was Jewish, born in Germany in 1906. From 1932, she was prevented from working in Germany and briefly imprisoned by the Gestapo for researching Antisemitism. She moved to Paris, where, when the Germans invaded in 1940, she was interned as an ‘enemy alien’, but managed to escape. Helped by the American diplomat Hiram Bingham (son of the explorer of the same name who first discovered the ruins of Macchu Picchu in Peru), she was able to get to Portugal with her husband and mother and take a ship to the United States. Later on she covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann (one of the major organizers of the Holocaust) in Jerusalem for *The New Yorker* magazine.

However, her analysis of totalitarianism put Stalinism in the same basket as National Socialism, asserting that they were both driven by the same forces and used the same methods of terror, which she regarded as being the essence of totalitarian systems, not even a means but an end in itself.

Consequently, many writers have criticized attempts to portray the Trump movement as a new totalitarianism, because there is as yet no hint of the terror that characterizes true totalitarianism. What does raise alarm bells is Arendt’s assertion that one of the core elements of totalitarianism are mass movements made up of the “neutral, politically indifferent people who never join a party and hardly ever go to the polls.” Such mass movements are not confined to ‘Trumpism’, but are growing all around the world, including in Britain. It is this that should perhaps concern us, and Arendt analyses why people tend to join such movements. Contrary to the views of many anti-Trumpists and Remainers,

mass movements are not followed only by stupid people. A classic example is Martin Heidegger, “one of the most original and important philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy] who became a member of the Nazi Party in 1933.

Arendt proposed the theory that the root cause of people’s attraction to totalitarian mass movements is loneliness, which she said “has become an everyday experience of the evergrowing masses of our century”, made up of “atomized, isolated individuals”. We may think that loneliness is confined to old or marginalised people, but it is actually extremely common in our societies. Quoting from an essay by Roger Berkowitz, founder of the Hannah Arendt Center, “The basic experience underlying totalitarianism... is loneliness, an alienation from political, social and cultural life. As a modern phenomenon, loneliness is visible in what Robert Putnam calls the loss of social capital. Americans of all classes and all political persuasions report having fewer close friends than ever before; many say they have no one they can confide in or count upon in an emergency.”

According to another great female philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Simone Weil, “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul” and it is the rootless nature of modern society that contributes to the widespread sense of loneliness and alienation. To quote from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Modernity [for Arendt] is the age of mass society, of the rise of the social out of a previous distinction between the public and the private, and of the victory of *animal laborans* over *homo faber* and the classical conception of man as *zoon politikon*. Modernity is the age of bureaucratic administration and anonymous labor, rather than politics and action, of elite domination and the manipulation of public opinion. It is the age when totalitarian forms of government, such as Nazism and Stalinism, have emerged as a result of the institutionalization of terror and violence... where homogeneity and conformity have replaced plurality and freedom, and where isolation and loneliness have eroded

human solidarity and all spontaneous forms of living together.” Arendt did not believe that we can recover the past with its stability, but we can, she said, rescue its “forgotten treasure”. She also proposed the *Vita Activa*, i.e. fully taking part in the life of society, rather than merely following an aspiration towards personal well-being.

Other factors that Arendt highlights as the root causes of totalitarianism were the increasing power of international capital and its influence in the political sphere (since the 19<sup>th</sup> century), and the fact that society has become “wholly permeated by the ideological outlook and standards of the bourgeoisie” [Berkowitz]. This system, increasingly driven by money and therefore essentially amoral (but pretending not to be), further alienates people from politics as they become aware of the all-pervading corruption and hypocrisy. Arendt refers to this as the rise of the social, i.e. “the expansion of the market economy from the early modern period and the ever increasing accumulation of capital and social wealth. With the rise of the social everything has become an object of production and consumption, of acquisition and exchange...” [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy].

Should we be afraid that the spectre of totalitarianism may be rising again? Arendt believed that fear in this sense is good: “Only the fearful imagination... thinking about the horrors” may alert us and allow us to prevent future repetitions of the totalitarian nightmare. They say that history repeats itself, but it never does so exactly. The new threats of artificial intelligence, Alexa taking pictures of you in your living room, eugenics and so many others, could combine in a lethal cocktail if mixed with mass movements that help power-hungry politicians and shadowy corporations to exert ever greater control over our lives, seeking at all times to create “a world of conditioned reflexes, of marionettes without the slightest trace of spontaneity” [*The Origins of Totalitarianism*]. We should be afraid, be very afraid, but only if it helps us to react by seeking true freedom and individuality in the philosophical sense (which doesn’t consist of buying a ready-made brand or becoming part of a tribe).

*Julian Scott*

# The Barefoot College Conquerors of Poverty and Illiteracy

In 2016, a billion people were living in extreme poverty worldwide. In India in particular, water shortages make life precarious, and expensive western technology is ineffective. In response to this and inspired by Gandhi, Sanjit “Bunker” Roy founded the “Barefoot College” to give rural people access to clean water and electricity. His means of dealing with this challenge was the “empowerment” of illiterate grandmothers! Today, his transformation of a poor village into a model of sustainable development is followed in 77 countries.

“Bunker”, the son of a rich Bengali family, visited a disaster-stricken village in Bihar in 1966. The granaries were empty and foreign aid barely ensured survival. Nothing in his golden life had prepared him to see death and starvation. He was 19 and decided to work

in a village as an unskilled labourer and then spent five years in a village of elderly people and children. The young had all left to find menial urban jobs.

### *Barefoot College’s origins*

“Bunker” dug, cleaned and built wells and, like Socrates, discovered that rural people had extraordinary practical knowledge that universities could not teach. Hence, his challenge was to give them hope and self-confidence in their skills. In 1971, Bunker visited an abandoned sanatorium in Tilonia (Rajasthan) and acquired it from the local government for 1 rupee. It became the “Barefoot College”, built by the poor, for the poor, to free millions from poverty.

The project was launched in 1972 with a team of



urban experts, but was a flop. A “top down” approach did not work! Worse, the government asked him to vacate the premises. But, the goddess Lakshmi unpredictably sent him the President of the World Bank who lived like Gandhi (sleeping and eating on the ground, with a kerosene lamp). The local government was horrified, but the VIP was delighted!

The eviction was cancelled and a radical “bottom up” approach was launched, giving responsibility to the community to apply and adapt the technology it chose. Total control was given to Barefoot professionals (without degrees, paid \$100 a month) including educators, health workers, and water and solar engineers. The results were amazing. A decentralized, effective, sustainable development model emerged, based on the faith and skills of ordinary people and the marriage between traditional and modern technology. The project was appropriated by all.

In fact, the real challenge was to un-learn modernity’s prejudices. Bunker understood that without awakening the soul and respect for one’s roots, any self-development initiative would be ephemeral.

### *Training grandmothers*

Clean water is essential for life and health. In isolated villages, women spend hours each day carrying heavy, polluted, jars of water. So Bunker initiated a project to harvest rainwater using ancestral know-how. The urban “experts” ridiculed the idea. But the pilot project, created by illiterate architects, was a huge success! All the roofs of the College harvested rainwater in a cistern - equivalent to 4 years of consumption. Water harvesting was unknown by professional architects in 1989, but was quickly adopted in the Third World.

Access to electricity is another big obstacle to development. In 2003, despite criticism, 100 illiterate grandmothers were trained to build solar panels; and

this complex system was installed by a priest with only a primary education! Miraculously, the College became the only Indian village 100% electrified by solar energy. Today, 100 illiterate grandmothers are trained every year, along with others from 64 different countries!

Access to electricity has had a major impact. Night schools now exist in India to provide practical knowledge from Barefoot teachers for rural children who tend animals during the day. Moreover, there are childrens’ elections to elect a parliament, prime minister and a cabinet to oversee 150 night schools. Finally, 300 village women meet weekly to manage living conditions, maintenance and management of water, education and health systems. Collective decision-making has built everyday social justice.



Bunker Roy of Barefoot College together with a rural woman.

In summary, 20 Barefoot Colleges have demonstrated that the poor are capable of managing their own lives. The remarkable aspect of this civilization project is that it is the villagers who have the ideas – and who have financed and implemented them – defying the stereotyped prejudices that the Third World cannot overcome poverty, technological backwardness and corruption on its own.

*J. H. Lee*



# Nature Spirits

We live in a time when life on Earth seems to have been explored to the fullest degree. Vast amounts of information can be found on most questions that spring to mind. We explore the solar system, discovering more and more about our neighbouring planets, study comets and gaze into the depths of the universe.

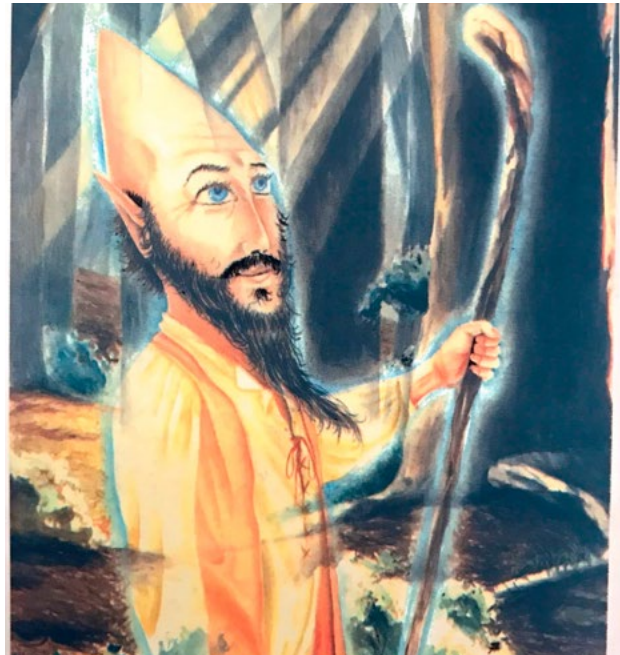
In spite of all the scientific explanations, the mystery of life remains. The ancient texts and symbols refer to more forms of life than our modern science envisages. The esoteric tradition describes the visible world as a kind of outer plane of life perceptible to our physical senses and teaches that the whole universe is a living being that exists on many planes.

The old legends and myths are full of stories about the nature spirits or, as the esoteric tradition would call them, forms of life within the elements of Earth, Water, Air and Fire. We have all heard about them in the folklore of different nations – gnomes, fairies, sirens, nymphs, elves, salamanders... They are often depicted in Renaissance art and described in the literature of the Renaissance and the Romantic era. Paracelsus wrote a detailed treatise on the nature spirits in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Generally they are understood as embodiments of the forces of nature (Paracelsus calls them ‘Elementals’) and are categorized into different types:

**Earth Elementals:** they include gnomes and fairies, amongst others. They are said to love moonlight and know the secrets of the earth. The stories tell that before work had become automatized, when people put real interest into their work, earth spirits were invisible companions and helpers in the workshops.

**Water Elementals:** sirens, nereids, undines, nymphs, tritons. They are said to inhabit sea-breezes, sea-foam, rivers, underwater grottoes, springs and fountains. There are plenty of stories about their enchanting powers. Tritons are said to have taught ancient travellers about the hidden treasures and lost knowledge of sunken lands.

**Air Elementals:** sylphs, elves. They are said to live in



the air and to be in constant motion. Cloud formations are their work. Legends say that in every flower lives a little elf that produces its perfume.

**Fire Elementals:** salamanders. They are said to be seen in hearth-fires and have the appearance of black serpents, moving and twisting. Salamanders are reputed to be very powerful.

The nature spirits are said to take care of every form of nature from the smallest to the largest – planets and stars. In times when there was a greater connection with the intangible world, people could learn many things from them.

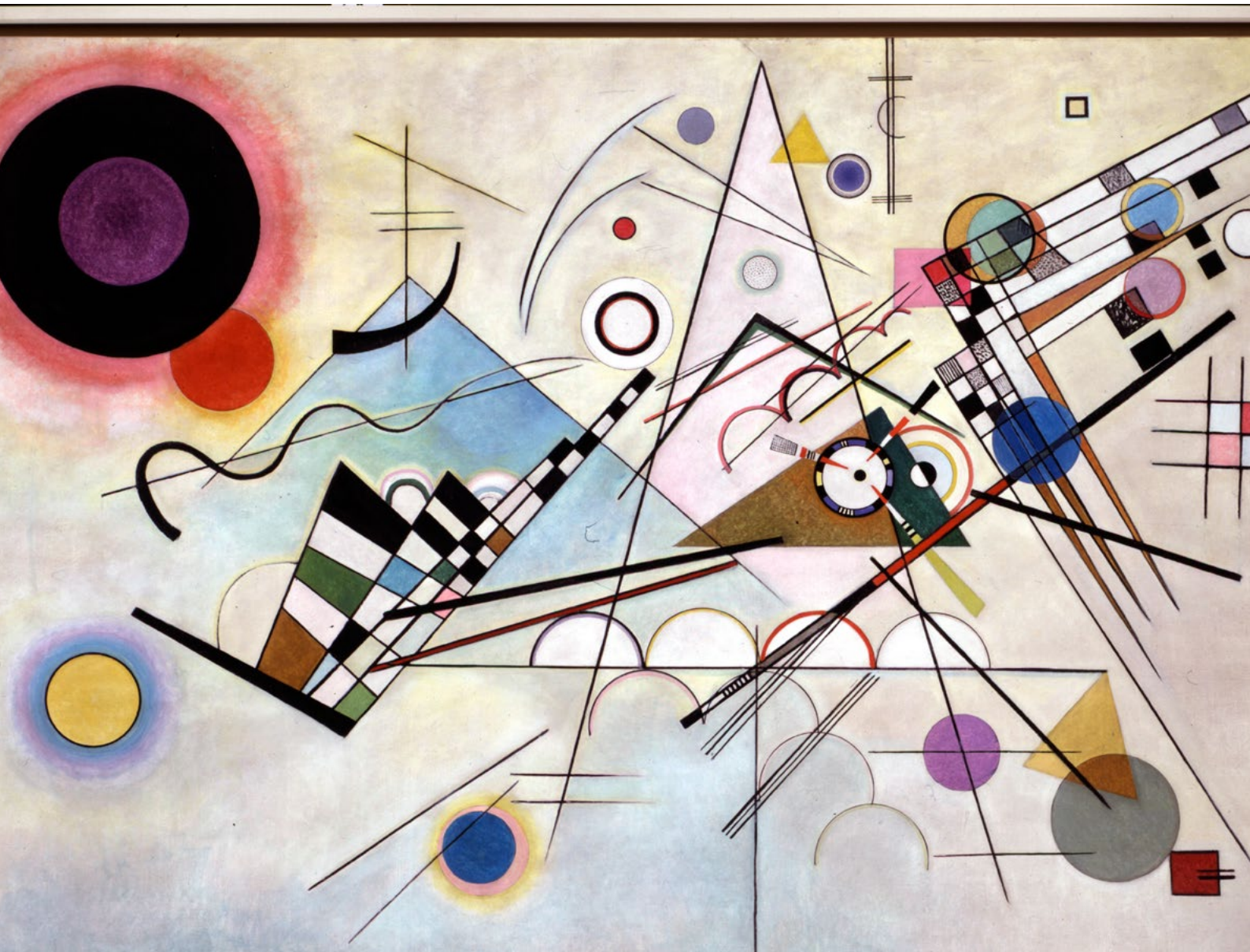
Whether we believe it or not, let's not forget that the Earth is alive and, whether out of duty or because of a need to live together in harmony with our fellow creatures, we should take better care of it. And maybe if we become true lovers and students of nature, she might share with us her secrets and we would understand more about the beings that live in her world.

*Nataliya Petlevych*

# *Improvisation*

## *IN ART AND LIFE*

According to Stephen Nachmanovitch, an American improvisational violinist, improvisation can be used as a tool to aid creativity, which will lead us into a joyful journey. Bach and Mozart were great examples of this approach and were highly imaginative improvisers.



The word ‘improvisation’ implies, on the one hand, an absence of preparation. But it also means spontaneity. Although to be spontaneous and natural is usually easier said than done, it is only in this way that one can unblock barriers and enter the “flow”. But maybe we have memories of those poems we were asked to write at school when we felt no inspiration; those paintings we attempted to make long ago but which were not well received by others; those instruments we have explored but didn’t manage to master their technique... the list could be endless. Nachmanovitch reminds us how we can open a door of exploration by the use of improvisation, where there is not just one ‘perfect’ way but a variety of ways according to each of us. He describes it in the following words: “The heart of improvisation is the free play of consciousness as it draws, writes, paints, and plays with raw material emerging from the unconscious.”

It is a question of activating elements such as playfulness, love, risk, courage, concentration and more, which are all necessary if we want to realize our inner resources. The inspiration that is needed to channel a higher archetype of beauty is not only about how well we have mastered a technique but also about discovering our true voice and bringing it to the surface. Sometimes, breakthrough experiences, when we overcome fear, become a source for spontaneous creation and allow us to connect with boundless creative energies that enable us to express what is within us.

An interesting way of looking at improvisation is to realise that when we use words to communicate with others we are improvising, because we don’t (generally) rehearse them earlier. The situation becomes more complex when we refer to artistic expressions such as poetry, music, painting or dance, where the artist has to find the right means to channel the subtle notions of truth or beauty he or she discovers. But although there are different levels of artistic skill

“The heart of improvisation is the free play of consciousness as it draws, writes, paints, and plays with raw material emerging from the unconscious.”

and inspiration, we can all become more open to life as a creative experience that involves venturing into new territories and not staying in our comfort zone. Although there has been only one Michelangelo in history, his theory of sculpting can be made accessible to all by making us aware of the sort of eyes and contemplative attitude one needs to develop in order to see what has to be removed from the stone to make a sculpture. Many well-known artists have managed to unlock their potential. Let us not forget that this potential lies dormant within all of us and we can use improvisation to awaken our creativity.

Recently we organized an event for World Philosophy Day outside the National Gallery. One of the questions we asked during our ‘happening’ on the theme of Philosophy and Art was ‘Can



Members of New Acropolis UK, celebrating World Philosophy Day.

anyone be an artist?’ And an interesting reply we received (from a cabinetmaker and furniture designer) was, “Of course! Because everyone has within them the two hemispheres of the brain – the logical (related with technique) and the intuitive (related with inspiration).”

*Natalia Lema*

# Lame Deer

the Lakota Shaman

**“Indians are hunting for visions, white men are hunting for dollars.”**



“We Sioux spend a lot of time thinking about everyday things, which in our mind are mixed up with the spiritual. We see in the world around us many symbols that teach us the meaning of life.” – So claimed Lame Deer, who was known as John Fire and lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in 1903 as the son of Sally Red Blanket and Let-Them-Have-Enough in an American Indian family, and became a shaman when he was 16.

But his life as a young man wasn't a success. He had to attend a state school that aimed to assimilate young Indians. He didn't like the school at all, because the teachers tried to convert their pupils to Christianity and forced new, modern customs on the indigenous

“Every person has an everyday name, and another sacred name which is given to him by a shaman at birth. It is forbidden to utter this sacred name in everyday situations.”

people. After leaving school he chose to be a vagabond, a hippy. He was a good rider and travelled throughout the States working as a rodeo clown. According to his personal account, he drank a lot, gambled, womanized and was even involved in theft. He married a Christian woman, but divorced 3 years later. He was constantly searching for who he actually was and tried everything. He experimented with peyote and he became an addict for six years, but then he realized that real visions are different from those produced by hallucinogens. He saw how fake the world of modern man is. When Americans exploit and destroy lands and animals, they don't become happier, just lonely and fat. He said that while “Indians are hunting for visions, white men are hunting for dollars.”

At the age of 39, he decided to become a full-time Indian. He decided to get back to his roots and continue the traditions of his ancestors. He often participated in different American Indian Movement events, including sit-ins at the Black Hills. This territory was owned by Indians until gold was discovered on its fields, and then the government seized it. Lame Deer became an activist supporting Indians' rights to their land, their traditional lifestyle and Lakota ceremonies.

His life and thoughts were described in a book edited by Richard Erdoes. In it, he spoke of the importance of the symbols that are common to all mankind. Those who could read the signs could understand the messages of Nature, because stones, leaves, numbers and many other things leave messages. For the Indians the number four is the most sacred number. It stands

for the four elements, the four cardinal points, but as well, the four virtues: bravery, generosity, perseverance and wisdom. Words are also symbols, as well as names. They give power and they tell a story about the users. Every person has an everyday name, and another sacred name which is given to him by a shaman at birth. It is forbidden to utter this sacred name in everyday situations.

Lame Deer emphasized the importance of the connection with Nature and claimed that the modern lifestyle and cities were making it impossible to keep that link, they are creating a man-made world, a prison. There are no tastes, no smells in this artificial life, it is sterile, and everything has lost its sacred side. But by cutting themselves off from nature, people have become lonely and afraid of death. When somebody dies, the American Indians believe that his or her spirit travels from north to south along the Milky Way, until reaching the Empire of the Spirits. In the well-known Sun Dance, which is a sacred offering to the Great Spirit, the tree stands for the Milky Way.

For the Lakota Indians, the world is sacred and man is an organic part of it. In one of his last teachings, Lame Deer said that modern people should be saved from themselves before they destroy everything. And this would happen only if everyone changes the way they think and realizes that we all depend on the Earth on which we live. If we hurt any part of it, that means we hurt ourselves. The biggest enemy is within, he said, but it can be defeated.

*Istvan Orban*

# CLIMATE CHANGE

Truth, Facts and Plenty of Opinions

*“Everybody knows about the ice ages that have occurred throughout the history of planet Earth and that we “recently” came out of a 100,000-year ice age about 12,000 years ago.”*

Climate change has been a hot topic for a long time, with some saying it is pure fiction, whilst others have pointed out the many signs of change and their likely future consequences. It is now well understood by the scientific community that climate change is and always has been a natural phenomenon, but many studies have also shown that human activity could be a significant factor in its development.

Everybody knows about the ice ages that have occurred throughout the history of planet Earth and that we “recently”



Polar bear floating on melting sea ice.



Air pollution from a coking oven.



came out of a 100,000-year ice age about 12,000 years ago. It means that ice ages evolve slowly and it would take a cataclysm to change our climate in just a few decades or even centuries. So it would not be impossible that our ever-increasing presence and our activities might have an influence over our planet's climate.

Some of the detractors of climate change who see it as a fiction mostly look at the weather in isolated cases to "prove" that there is no such thing as global warming. However, the climate of a region is defined as an average over a significant period of years or decades. What scientists and meteorologists have actually measured and studied is a climate evolving towards a state of global warming. In order to be relevant, these measurements have been carried out in the oceans and at the poles, where the temperature would normally take centuries to evolve.

Other detractors of global warming say that if there were changes in the climate similar to those of past ice ages, they would be purely natural and man could not in any way be a contributor to this effect. Except in the case of cataclysms such as gigantic volcanic

eruptions or large meteor impacts, the Earth's climate has taken centuries and millennia to change. However, scientific measurements have shown a sudden and significant increase of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane in our atmosphere. These gases must have come from somewhere and the most likely source is human industrial activity. Which makes it more suspicious that the most active detractors are, for the most part, linked with the fossil fuel industry...

In any case we can use the wise words of Socrates, who said "I know that I know nothing." In other words, we could say that "I can say for certain that I cannot say anything for certain," meaning that belief is necessary but not enough to get to the truth. As philosophers, whether scientists or not, it is our responsibility to investigate, to gather the facts and draw reasonable conclusions in order to get ever closer to, yet never fully reaching the truth.

*Florimond Krins*

# THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH



The Epic of Gilgamesh from ancient Mesopotamia is often considered to be the oldest written story in the world. There are many studies about this story which look at it from an archaeological, literary and historical point of view. However, the aim of this article is to give a philosophical perspective on the story while trying to explore the symbolism behind it.

Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, is the oldest known hero. Like Herakles in ancient Greece (or Hercules, as the Romans called him), Gilgamesh is also a hero who fights against the forces of darkness.

Gilgamesh was the son of Enlil, who was the God of Wisdom in ancient Mesopotamia. The people of Uruk were complaining about Gilgamesh, because he was oppressing them. They prayed to the gods to create a man who could challenge him. In response, the gods sent Enkidu, a hybrid man-animal who ate and drank like an animal and lived with the wild beasts. After a long battle, Gilgamesh and Enkidu became inseparable friends. Together they went on various journeys and passed difficult trials. Their first journey began in the Cedar Forest, where they had to overcome an attack by Huwawa, the guardian of the forest. "Life in the forest" represents our personality which changes depending on our desires. And the guardian of this forest represents our pride which we carry throughout our lives. The first task for Gilgamesh and Enkidu was to overcome pride.

They then continued their journey across rivers, mountains and fields, encountering wild animals, fire and bulls, and overcoming the trials set before them.



At the end of their journey together, Gilgamesh had to face the trial of losing his friend Enkidu. He mourned the death of his friend for seven days and seven nights. When Gilgamesh finally accepted the death of Enkidu, he started to question the meaning of life. "Shall I not die like Enkidu?" He sees that the only way to escape from death is to gain immortality. So he goes in search of the survivor of the Great Flood, Utnapishtim. The rest of the myth tells the story of the flood and the journey of

Gilgamesh in his search for immortality.

Gilgamesh is not only a hero from the myths of Mesopotamia but, as in many myths, his existence has a correspondence in each of us. His trials are also similar to our difficulties in life. He tries to teach Enkidu to be civilized; as our wild, animal nature needs to be educated. Finally, his questions about life when he meets the trial of death are questions that belong to any human being who is seeking a life beyond the purely material level.

*Pinar Akhan*





# PHILOSOPHIES OF EAST AND WEST



16-week Course  
Starting: Thu 1 Feb  
Mon 5 Mar

## Philosophies of East and West 16-week course

Philosophy means love of wisdom (philo-sophia) and is an active attitude of awareness towards life. In this sense, we are all born philosophers, with an innate need to ask questions and with the intuition that there are answers to be found. And yet, most of us have little knowledge of philosophy. We have never had the chance to learn about the vast heritage of ideas that have sustained, inspired and guided humanity throughout history.

This 16-week course will introduce you to the major systems of thought of East and West. They are arranged under three subject headings: Ethics, Sociopolitics and Philosophy of History.

### COURSE CONTENT

#### - Understanding yourself

Introduction to Ethics  
Major concepts of the philosophies of India, Tibet, Ancient Egypt and Neoplatonism

#### - Living together in harmony with others

Introduction to Sociopolitics  
Major concepts of the philosophies of Confucius, Plato and the Stoics

#### - Being part of something greater

Introduction to Philosophy of History  
Microcosm and Macrocosm. The cosmivision of traditional societies

### COURSE STARTING DATES

Thu 1 February  
Mon 5 March  
(all at 7 pm)

Course Fee: £140 (£105 concessions)  
Please, visit our website for more details

## Other Events

**Thurs 11, 18 and 25 Jan (all at 7 pm)**

### **The Language of Symbols: 3-week course**

Symbols are a language we can all recognise but few of us can read. Over thousands of years, symbols have been used to express the ineffable and to create a bridge between the invisible and visible dimension. Learning to understand them better will help to develop our imagination, which is one of our most important and powerful faculties. Symbols have the power to re-connect us with a world full of meaning.

This 3-week course (1 evening per week) will introduce you to symbology - the study of symbols. The course will explore some of the most important symbols of different cultures and reveal deeper layers of meaning in art and architecture.

#### **Topics of the 3 evenings**

1. Introduction to symbology and the universal symbols of numbers, geometrical shapes and nature.
2. Sacred Art and Symbols of India (Buddhism, Hinduism).
3. The symbolic dimension in Sacred Architecture.

**Admission fee: per event £15 (£ 12 concs)**

**Admission fee: entire event £40 (£ 30 concs)**



**Mon 5, 12, 19 and 26 Feb (all at 7 pm)**

### **The Power of Myth: 4-week course**

Over thousands of years, myths have helped human beings to understand aspects of life that the rational mind finds difficult to grasp (love, death, mystery...). Great philosophers like Plato have used myths and fables to explain their key concepts. Still today, we find the archetypal patterns of myth in books like Lord of the Rings or films like Star Wars.

This 4-week course (4 evenings over a month) will introduce you to the archetypal structure of mythology and its important role in promoting our spiritual and psychological well-being.

#### **- Topics of the 4 evenings**

1. Myths, Symbols and Rituals as means of access to the Sacred and as tools for understanding and facing the trials of life.
2. The Myth of Cupid and Psyche: a key to understanding the mysteries of love and the soul.
3. The Oedipus Myth: Can free will and predestination co-exist? What is the nature of the human being?
4. Fairy Tales and Modern Mythology: Archetypal themes and their interpretation in fairy tales, literature and film

**Admission fee: per event £15 (£ 12 concs)**

**Admission fee: entire event £50 (£ 40 concs)**



