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NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future Newsletter

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The 'boiling frog' metaphor

You have probably heard this anecdote before: if you place a frog in hot water it will try and jump out. However, if you place it into cold water and very gradually heat the water up, it will not realize the danger and eventually boil to death¹.

This story can be used to highlight the dangers of many changes which happen so slowly that we have time to get used to them and adjust to them. In this way, we have all got used to the noise and pollution in our modern world, the lack of taste of our fruits and vegetables, the hectic pace of our lives, the erosion of values, the stupefying entertainment of our media, over-sexualization, the idea that profit justifies absolutely everything, loss of connectedness, etc., etc.

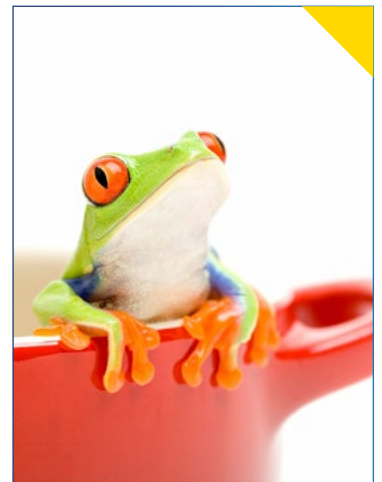
Of course, we adjust and get on with our lives, trying to see the positive side of everything ("Isn't the warm water nice?") and practising 'living in the now'.

But when is it not right any more to adjust?

Krishnamurti said: "It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."

And Martin Luther King famously said in 1967: "[...] there are some things in our society and some things in our world to which I am proud to be maladjusted and I call upon all men of good will to be maladjusted to these things until the good society is realized."

Let's not suppress our feelings of discomfort when we realize that what is happening is out of sync with our core values. A common reaction to feelings of disturbance is often to alter the information: "Oh, it's not really so bad". But only if we acknowledge these feelings of discrepancy will we have the motivation to change. The temperature keeps rising – it is right to be bothered.



Sabine Leitner

¹ This is said to have been tested in some 19th century experiments.

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A Philosopher from Anatolia, Nasreddin Hoca

Nasreddin Hoca was a wise man who was famous for his funny and insightful stories. He is considered as a philosopher as he transmits his wisdom through his stories and exhibits a different way of thinking from his fellows. He could also be considered as a mirror in which he shows people their own defects and their own narrow mindedness with humour.

He lived in the 13th century in Anatolia, Turkey, where there was a lot of conflict at the time. The Seljuks were in their declining period, the Mongols had conquered Anatolia, riots were everywhere and the rulers were corrupt and thinking about their wealth instead of the public. In society, there was no unity; instead poverty and crime were increasing rapidly.

As we can see in other times of history, out of darkness the wise man appears in many ways to show the light. Nasreddin Hoca (Hoca means teacher in Turkish) has been a great teacher, not only in his own time, but his stories have also been told in many Middle Eastern and even Western countries.

A story from Nasreddin Hoca

The criticism of men

Once Hoca and his son went on a journey. Hoca preferred that his son ride the donkey and that he himself go on foot. On the way they met some people who said:

“Look at that healthy young boy! That’s today’s youth for you. They have no respect for their elders. He rides on the donkey and makes his poor father walk!”

When they had passed by these people the boy felt very ashamed and insisted that he walk and his father ride the donkey. So Hoca mounted the donkey and the boy walked at his side. A little later they met some other people who said:

“Well, look at that! That poor little boy has to walk while his father rides the donkey.”

After they had passed by these people, Hoca told his son:

“The best thing to do is for both of us to walk. Then no one can complain.”

So they continued on their journey, both of them walking.



A 17th century miniature of Nasreddin Hoca

A little way down the road they met some other people who said:

“Just take a look at those fools. Both of them are walking under this hot sun and neither of them are riding the donkey!”

Hoca turned to his son and said: “That just goes to show how hard it is to escape the opinions of men.”.

Pinar Akhan

About Us

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

For further details please visit : WWW.NEWACROPOLISUK.ORG

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 Philosophy
Culture
NEW ACROPOLIS Volunteering

Britain under water

In the first month of this year, more rain fell over Britain than normally does in three months. The earth couldn't absorb such a huge amount of water; rivers burst their banks and changed courses. Although the floods came quickly, they didn't threaten human life, and the damage was "limited" to houses and other constructions. On the coasts, however, stormy weather caused huge waves which destroyed rail lines and killed people as well.

Until recently, floods were not a common phenomenon in the UK, but since 2012, serious weather events have started to affect the island for the first time after a long, silent period, and floods have become more frequent. The main cause of this is likely to be global climate change, linked to the greenhouse effect and the melting of polar ice, induced by the pollution of our cities and industrial zones. The consequences are obvious: rising sea levels, extreme temperatures and the constant imbalance of the weather.

The floods caused disruption to everyday life through delays on the roads and railways, and through disrupted supply chains. The rebuilding and repair of damaged buildings have also resulted in significant costs, and will continue to do so for a while. Nonetheless, there may be some advantages behind this situation, despite the suffering it may have caused to the British people.

Hungary, where I come from, has been much affected by flooding in recent years and I had already had some experience with flood rescue operations, so when I heard about the floods happening in Britain, and the need for volunteers, I applied to help. I was asked to go to Chertsey, southwest of London, an area that had been affected by the flooding of the Thames. I was able to experience at first hand the power of a community

to bring people together, irrespective of age, gender or status, to fight for a common aim, which was to tackle the disaster. I saw people with cars helping with the transport of goods and sandbags, youngsters building walls out of sandbags around private houses, and other volunteers who just offered food and blankets for those left temporarily homeless. It was a beautiful display of human solidarity.

But before thinking that everybody rushed to help as one man, the truth was that the majority of the town didn't seem to care about what was happening in the neighbourhood. They went shopping and carried on with their daily business as usual, maybe just complaining a little bit about the delays and diversions. It seems that only a disaster directly affecting them personally might wake them up or stir them inside.

According to the teachings of Eastern wisdom, the human being's worst enemy is himself; but, by the same token, the human being can be his own best friend as well if he succeeds in conquering selfishness. In this sense, natural disasters could be a good way of showing us whether we can step outside our small lives and take responsibility, or whether we still think that our own happiness and convenience are the utmost consideration. We do not need to wait for the next flood to practise this skill. It is possible, for instance, to start on a smaller scale, let's say in a communal garden or a charity. And then we will be able to do it anytime. What are the benefits of this behaviour? We will free ourselves from our problems for a while and can reflect upon them later, from a different perspective. To help other people makes us feel better and gives us an inner satisfaction; we can expand our capacities, improve our skills and, last but not least, we can make new friendships.

Istvan Orban

Until recently, floods were not a common phenomenon in the UK, but since 2012, serious weather events have started to affect the island for the first time after a long, silent period, and floods have become more frequent.



The Imaginary World of Robert Fludd

Robert Fludd was an English medical doctor and alchemist who practised in London in the 17th century. He developed a complex system of imagery, based on Hermetic philosophy, Hebrew Kabbalah, Neoplatonism and Occult Christianity, which was designed to explain the nature of reality and to teach seekers of truth to travel between the “three worlds”. I will endeavour to give a simplified explanation of his system below.

In all occult and esoteric systems, imagination plays a pivotal role. The 16th century Italian philosopher, Giordano Bruno, said that imagination is a vital bridge that enables us to access the world of spirit.

By ‘imaginary’ I do not mean fictitious or unreal, but simply ‘consisting of images’. Nowadays we are increasingly aware of the value of imagination in positive thinking; but these old philosophers show us another aspect: the use of images for linking us to the very highest parts of ourselves and the universe.

At the beginning of Fludd’s system is God as an absolute and mysterious being. From this emanates the Word or Manifested God, who creates all the worlds in a series of further emanations.

Fludd explains the creation of the universe as the result of a ray of God’s active light, sent out into the void and diminishing gradually as it goes farther from him. Around it the darkness coalesced in the form of matter (see image opposite).

He speaks of three realms:

1) The Empyrean Heaven - the world of spiritual forms, like Plato’s archetypes; it is a spiritual, immaterial world, inhabited by angels.

2) The Ethereal Heaven: this is the base, or vehicle, of form, and corresponds to what in many traditions is called the World Soul; it is populated by stars, planets and demons (celestial spirits). It is an intermediate world, partly material, partly spiritual.

3) Finally we have the Elemental Realm of the four elements: by the combination of the elements the created world of matter comes into being.

In the human being, these three realms correspond to Spirit (or Higher Mind), Soul (the psychological



dimension) and Body.

By developing our imagination (amongst other faculties) we can learn to ascend and descend through the three worlds..

Julian Scott

PHILOSOPHICAL HUMOR



Some inspiring quotes

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." - Albert Einstein

"Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it." - George Bernard Shaw

"All things are difficult before they are easy."
- Dr. Thomas Fuller

The Swirl of Change

It's as if nothing could stop the buzz of the last few centuries. After the age of keeping the liberal arts under the rule of unquestioned beliefs, the Old World went to the other extreme in its desire to break down all boundaries.

Artists began experimenting with theories and techniques, reflecting the wide-ranging changes that engulfed the turbulent 20th century. In a very short time we witnessed a plenitude of different styles like Divisionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, Suprematism, Bauhaus, Dadaism, De Stijl, Social Realism, Fluxus, Art Deco, Pop Art, Photorealism, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Appropriation Art, Installation Art and Op Art. Art took the form of a movement, a social struggle to find balance. "For us, art is not an end in itself... but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in", said Dadaist Hugo Ball.

Art showed how radically we moved away from tradition in our need for change, while sometimes throwing out the baby with the bath water. When philosophy in search of truth based itself on reality experienced only through the senses it undermined itself. It lost its metaphysics and its more profound ground. Likewise, when art broke away from tradition it lost its connection with more universal values and archetypal structures, which now leaves it at the mercy of perpetual change, making it just like anything else in this world.

Miha Kosir

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917 (Top)

William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Nymphs and Satyr*, 1873



The Danger of Electromagnetic Fields

Since the industrial use of electricity began, the density and range of electromagnetic waves have increased exponentially. In the last 50 years this electromagnetic "noise" has been multiplied by a factor of a hundred million. This is mostly due to its direct use for communication purposes (mobile phones, WIFI, Bluetooth, radio waves, military and GPS) and its indirect effect from power supply lines (low voltage cables and high voltage lines).

The only biological effect of electromagnetic fields known to science is that of

microwaves (heat). Molecules and ions which are polarised (electrically charged) will vibrate at the frequency of the wave, "rubbing" against each other and creating heat. The most efficient frequency at which the microwave works is 2.4 GHz (2.4 billion cycles per second) which happens to be the frequency of our home Wi-Fi. Of course the power transmitted by the Wi-Fi is a thousand times less than that of a microwave oven, but still... Mobiles phones (1.8 GHz or 2.7 GHz with 3G) are close to that frequency, meaning that they still have the "microwave effect", but weaker.

Unfortunately the long-term effects are not yet known, as no official studies have been carried out, mainly due to strong lobbying from the mobile phones companies. But what you can do is keep a certain distance from any source of electromagnetic field (mobile phones and their relays, Bluetooth hands-free kits, Wi-Fi stations and power lines) and use microwaves as little as possible. In this way you can diminish the risk of potential side effects (mostly cancer) of long-term exposure (more than 10 years) to electromagnetic fields.

Florimond Krins

Heracles and the Milky Way

Heracles, the most famous illegitimate son of Zeus, is also one of the most important figures in Greek mythology. He was born to be the strongest and most courageous of all mortals, but destiny reserved for him a life full of dangers and trials, which enabled him to conquer himself and claim divinity.

A long time before he was born, it was decreed that no son of Zeus could ever claim divine honours unless he had drunk the milk of Hera. Heracles' mother, Alcmene, fearing the wrath of Hera, decided to abandon the child in a grove just after he was born. Knowing this, Hermes took the child from the grove and placed him at the breast of the Goddess while she was resting, without her noticing. When she became aware of the trick which Hermes had played she pulled herself free abruptly and her milk spilled on to the heavens. That, they say, was how the Milky Way was formed.

Lucas Penna



The Origin of the Milky Way, Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1637

NATURE AND US

Revival of the Wolf

Wolves are probably the most misunderstood of all wild animals. In spite of their friendly, intelligent and social traits, stories of cold-bloodedness abound. But for a very long time the wolf was a companion of man. The wolf is one of the main predators of the Western world - its range extends throughout the northern hemisphere from America, Europe and North Africa to the Middle East and Asia - and wolves play a key role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Protecting wolves is a way of protecting the balance in nature as a whole. The wolf is a symbol of brotherhood, loyalty, family bonds and friendship, a fierce warrior with deep faith and profound understanding. It is also a symbol of intuition and freedom. Throughout human history the wolf has played a special, symbolic role. Native Americans, Celts and Egyptians regarded wolves as great teachers,

protectors and pathfinders. They saw the wolf as a way of finding the deepest levels of the self, of inner knowing and intuition.

In Asia, the wolf guards the doors that allow entry to heavenly, celestial realms. In Japan, grain farmers once worshipped wolves at shrines. It is only recently in human history that the wolf began to be treated as evil, a rival in hunting and an economic threat. Due to their bad reputation, which was mainly imposed by the western European culture in the Middle Ages, wolves were almost wiped off the face of the planet.

The revival of the wolf has an important, dual role to play in the awakening of the human being: environmental and spiritual. Calling the wolf is an act of reconciliation with nature, but also with our own wildness, our elemental inner power.

Joanna Milewska

To see how wolves can have a positive effect on the environment, watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q>

The Vedic Genius

We could visit India time and time again and never remain untouched by its richness. We could forever wonder at the diversity of its cultural heritage, its colourful people, its spiritual and religious appeal and never exhaust the treasures of its history, its past dawns and forgotten truths.

Human history moves inexorably towards its next phase and as we often get caught in its web, we tend to lose track of its hidden treasures, its greatest actors, its timeless revelations. Throughout the ages, many civilizations have risen and fallen and each of them has contributed something to the ongoing evolution of the human species. With the Romans, for instance, we find organization and management, with the Greeks beauty of ideas and forms. What about India, what can we learn from the ancient land of the Rishis?

The history of India, its antiquity and origins, may still remain a mystery, but the picture that scholars and sages have so far presented to us is already an exceptional one. The root of India, its heart and soul, can be found in the Vedic scriptures, those revealed teachings (Sruti in Sanskrit) attributed to divine origins. In the Vedas, as well as in the Upanishads, the most metaphysical and philosophical questions were dealt with. The eagerness to discover the underlying principles of nature and to enquire into the greatest truths of human existence has been at the basis of the Indian genius. It is said, for instance, that in the root sounds of the Sanskrit language itself we find an expression of those spiritual realizations. Thus, the basis of Indian linguistics was the natural articulation of those inner truths into sounds and eventually into more complex structures of syntax.

The approach used by the Indian mind was to look inward into the core of oneself and, by so doing, to be able to peel away the layers of reality and finally bathe in the ultimate source of all. Infinity and eternity were native to the Indian mind. The Indian sages were also intuitively aware that everything is endowed with consciousness and is connected to everything else.

Those spiritual intuitions enabled them to create a holistic science of life and health (Ayurveda) in which the biological level (food) becomes the foundation for wholesome psychological and mental

living. Only recently, with the breakthroughs taking place in interdisciplinary fields of study, have we begun to realize that dissecting and reducing knowledge into particular fields can have catastrophic results.

The ancient Indians display three main characteristics:

1) A brilliant intellect, which never stopped at superficial appearances but penetrated into the core of life's issues. 2) A tremendous vitality and courage to explore every field of human endeavour. 3) A very practical sense through which the aforementioned knowledge and realizations could be brought down into the applied level in the form of Shastra. The Shastra were treatises of applied "sciences", practical manuals of articulations of those fundamental truths



The mysterious rust-resistant Iron Pillar of Delhi

expressed in the Vedas. There were basically Shastra for everything: physics (Bhautika Shastra), chemistry (Rasayana), architecture (Vastu), astronomy (Jyotish), etc. Focusing on ancient Shastra, recent studies in the field of chemistry, metallurgy and the science of meta-materials have brought back the question of advanced knowledge in antiquity. As we stumble into new scientific enigmas, the Vedic genius remains alive.

(This article was inspired by the works of Sri Aurobindo)

Agostino Dominici

Why do Bees Swarm?

by Sabine Leitner

In 2012, we created a 'bee sanctuary' in the back garden of our Philosophy School in London. Sadly, like many other beekeepers, we lost our first bees due to exceptionally bad weather. But a few days ago a long-awaited call came and we managed to catch our first bee swarm. Now, our garden is once again humming with the wonderful sound of bees.

When I mentioned this in an e-mail to a friend he replied: "What does it mean to catch a bee swarm?" This made me realize that most people in the 21st century know very little about bees, so I decided to write this article to explain the process.

Bees swarm in order to create a new colony and spread to a new area. This is the way they have been reproducing themselves for the last 50 million years (until human beings started interfering with the process over the last 100



years or so). When a beehive feels strong and the weather is set fair, the old queen will move out with about half the hive (between 10,000 and 20,000 bees) in search of a new home, leaving the remaining bees to continue in the old hive with a new queen.

Read more in our next issue...

Upcoming Events

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

Sat 10 May, 10 am - 1 pm
Volunteering Day in Compton Terrace Gardens

Fri 9 May at 7 pm
Talk & discussion: Fundamentals of Platonic Philosophy

The First Alcibiades: Know Thyself

Fri 16 May at 7 pm
Talk & discussion: Fundamentals of Platonic Philosophy

The Phaedo: The Mysteries of the Philosophic Death and the Philosophic Life

Sun 18 May, 10 am - 5 pm
Workshop: The Voice and You
Practical voice training with professional voice coach Louise Collins

Sat/Sun 14/15 June, 10 am - 5pm
Open Garden Squares Weekend - enjoy tea and cakes in our Melissa Bee Garden!

Fri 20 June, 18.30 pm - 21.30 pm
Workshop: Where There's a Will There's a Way
How to understand and develop the potential of your will



Talk: Fri 9th May, 7pm
The First Alcibiades: Know Thyself