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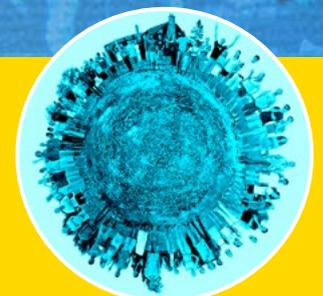
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EDITORIAL

No offence, please, but we need more integrity

I assume that most people don't want to offend anyone. Most people also prefer to avoid conflict. But is it actually possible never to offend anyone? And would it be a good thing?

Here a quote from the American TV series *Ladies Man*: "Now, political correctness is the idea that assumes that the worst thing we can do is offend somebody. Well, a lot of people were offended when Galileo suggested that the earth was revolving around the sun. A lot of people were offended by Picasso because in his portraits the eyes weren't where they were supposed to be. A lot of people were offended by Rosa Parks when she wouldn't sit in the back of an Alabama bus just because of the colour of her skin. You see, everybody's offended by something."

As we can see, sometimes there are very good reasons for taking the risk to offend: Truth, justice or simply the danger of betraying ourselves. Ask yourself the following questions: Do you refrain from giving your honest opinion because you fear it might offend? Do you avoid telling someone that you don't share their opinion because you don't want to enter into a conflict with them or fear their reactions? Do you tend to tell people only what they want to hear and cut out the things you fear might make you unpopular with them?

If your answer is 'yes' then you are in danger of losing your integrity. The dictionary defines 'integrity' as 'the state of being whole and undivided'. If we think differently to what we say and do, we are no longer 'whole'; we are split inside and this is a harmful state for ourselves and for our relationships with others. We

bottle up our inner frustrations, become yes-sayers and our words lose their meaning. It is probably time to shift our emphasis from the fear of offending someone towards the importance of cultivating integrity. Without losing our concern for others, let us speak our truth and behave in harmony with our values, even if this might create tension or conflict. If our motives are pure and our thoughts considered, and if we are willing to have a dialogue with those we disagree with, we would all become stronger and more authentic.



Sabine Leitner

About Us

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

For further details please visit : WWW.NEWACROPOLISUK.ORG

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The Heroic Spirit

Many of us associate the term 'hero' with a brave character mostly from stories, myths and historical events: a very special person who is able to overcome weaknesses and fears, displaying great courage and other virtues such as sacrifice and strength. We might even think about a sort of warrior who is victorious, saves others and fights bravely against fiery creatures. Adding to this idea, a hero prototype has been built such as Heracles from Greek mythology who was known as the strongest of all mortals; Joan of Arc as a classical one, whose youth didn't prevent her from helping the French to victory in the 15th century, and more contemporary ones like soldiers or cartoon heroes. The latter are strongly advertised by the media and promoted in children who usually identify with their powers and strengths. Movies such as Star Wars, Matrix and Lord of the Rings show characters playing that role which has been analysed as a hero type. Also many fairy tales include a character who is challenged until the resolution of the story occurs in which an achievement is accomplished.

Joseph Campbell, an American writer on mythology, approaches this topic by identifying 3 stages: departure, initiation and return. According to him, a hero goes through these progressive stages in order to reach what is understood as apotheosis, the achievement of a realisation. First there is a call to an adventure and an initial struggle to accept it, because making a choice brings its consequences. Once the adventure is accepted, the hero takes a step into the unknown, a new territory that makes demands on him and tests his skills and knowledge. On that journey, he is likely to encounter supernatural aid, talismans and even helpers, so the hero isn't necessary alone. Finally, a reward or victory represents the accomplishment of his quest. Returning home appears to symbolise the closure of the adventure but also the start of a future one. Think about the characters mentioned before and how movies or books have made use of this concept to produce their work.

Amongst the variety of heroes we know, there is a special element that characterises them and one that we can admire and be inspired by today: the heroic spirit. This is an inner attitude and disposition towards facing an adventure and crossing the threshold to reach the unknown, no matter how dark or dangerous this new place is or the possibility of meeting a beast. When trials are given to him to test his ability, his character and his

mental qualities, his fighting isn't only happening on a physical level but also a battle is taking place in his mind. It is similar to Arjuna in the Indian text of the Bhagavad Gita, when overcoming his struggle of indecision before the moment of battle. A heroic spirit is present when one is encouraged to accept the call and dive into the uncertainty of a new adventure and by doing this, one



is given the opportunities to obtain inner growth. This realisation is often held by a mentor who gives the advice and training needed for embracing the journey, as Krishna did to Arjuna.

Nowadays, a new hero is needed and that heroic spirit can be reborn in the individuals who nurture the potential of discovering a quest and strive for it. The archetype described by Joseph Campbell and also shared by Carl Jung is a hero who is ready to go out, do good deeds and overcome the fear of changes while reaching within himself a source of courage and wisdom. Although we don't have labyrinths to be conquered, princesses to be rescued, or villages to be saved from an ogre, the adventures and circumstances we witness in the world do require a heroic spirit to make a change. And that change is possible when one awakens and realises the power of choice. Only then is the dream of freedom and the symbolical rebirth experienced.

Natalia Lema

Globalization or Glocalization?

The following is an interview with Juan Manuel de Faramiñán, co-founder of the Globalization Observatory at the University of Jaen (Spain) and General Secretary of New Acropolis International. Juan Manuel is a professor of law at Jaen University, Spain, specialising in the fields of space law, maritime law and human rights. 10 years ago he co-founded the Globalization Observatory at the University of Jaen in order to study the phenomenon of globalization from a scientific and humanistic point of view.

JS: What is the idea of a “Globalization Observatory”?

JMF: The idea was to bring together people from different fields – diplomats, representatives of different religious denominations, sociologists, political scientists and jurists, to hear their opinions about the very complex phenomenon of globalization. We organise lectures and presentations by major figures from these fields. The Observatory is very much inspired by the thought of Ulrich Beck, who coined the slogan “Think globally, act locally”. He called this approach “Glocalization”.

JS: Many people have a negative perception of globalization, because they see it primarily as economic and exploitative. For example, Michel Chossudovsky, in his book *The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order*, claims that globalization has become a tool for multinational companies and banks to exploit the poor.

JMF: To a large extent that is true. But it also has to be

recognized that globalization has enabled small and medium-sized businesses – via the internet – to find niche markets they didn’t have access to before. So we always have to bear in mind that globalization is a many-sided phenomenon, and it is best to avoid taking a simplistic approach – which is true of life in general. When you simplify, you are generating a poverty of thought.

The problem is not really globalization itself, but the markets, especially the financial markets. Money is constantly flowing from one market to another, but it is not filtering down into production, it is just going into the pockets of the rich. The money is reinvested into the financial markets but it is not used to create more businesses, it doesn’t result in greater production. There is an interesting Egyptian economist called Samir Amin who has pointed out that it is these uncontrolled markets that end up generating the global economic crises, such as the Asian crisis, the crisis in Argentina, the “Tequila crisis” in Mexico and more recently the crisis caused by subprime mortgages.

JS: The globalization debate often seems to be very polarised, between anti-corporationists and free-marketeters.

JMF: But one has to look for a middle way, because extremes are always bad. I think that part of the problem is that in the Anglo-Saxon world globalization is seen only in its economic aspect. This is not the case in France, where they have a much wider concept of globalization. They even have a different word for it:

“*mondialisation*”. Globalization is a political, economic, social and ecological process on a planetary level.

The author Jacques Hallak said that there are three types of people involved in the globalization process: the globalizers, the globalized and those who are outside the globalization process. The latter are in the worst position because they are left without anything.

JS: But there are cases where it looks as though some people can be better off outside globalization. I watched a video about babies growing up in four different parts of the world, some in primitive conditions, others in developed Western countries. And the ones who looked happiest to me were living in an isolated village in Namibia.

JMF: But the fact that you saw that video shows that they are not outside globalization.

JS: That’s true.

JMF: They are also selling their product, which is a natural product. So this is a form of ecological globalization.

JS: And it’s also a globalization of thought, because the Westerners who see that video might think “what a nice life they have in Namibia”, and it makes us think how we could improve our own Western lifestyle to become more natural and happy.

JMF: Jacques Hallak speaks about this as the “social factor”. He speaks about two globalization scenarios. One is confrontation and the other is complementarity. Confrontation displays the

negative aspects of globalization because it sees the human being as an economic resource, “homo economicus”, a cog in a machine. Whereas complementarity sees the human being as a social factor. The approach of complementarity is about appreciating that there can be equally valid ways of life other than our own and that maybe we can learn from them and they from us.

Complementarity is a wonderful concept which can solve many problems of coexistence. For example, politics is often divided into two opposing groups of left-wing and right-wing people. But if, instead of thinking in those confrontational terms, we realise that there are some people who are more progressively minded and others who are more conservative, we can then see that both can have their place. The progressives bring about the necessary change and the conservatives contribute the element of stability. They can co-exist.

There was a French thinker of the 20th century called Emmanuel Levinas, who said “I am not the other, but I cannot be without the other.”

JS: A very intelligent statement.

JMF: That is complementarity. There can also be a mutual exchange between more and less developed peoples, technologically speaking. For example, in Europe, if a machine breaks down, it is usually more expensive to repair it than to buy a new one. In most countries in Latin America, people will mend things. This is surely a better way, a more sustainable way to live.

So there are positive aspects about the globalization of thought, such as the globalization of concepts such as human dignity

and human rights. But there are also negative aspects, such as the spread of religious extremism or the concept of “single thinking”. Single thinking is when everyone thinks alike, which is bad because it prevents human beings from having their own distinctive characteristics. Globalization is a good way of combating single thinking because if you think globally but act locally, you adapt your thinking to the regional realities.

But the defence of the regional, the local and the particular against the global can give rise to a different problem, which Ulrich Beck called “introverted nationalisms”, and these are not good either. It’s like in the Tao, where everything has a light aspect and a dark aspect, a good aspect and a bad aspect. On the one hand the defence of the local is good, but without exaggerating. Because when you exaggerate you fall into what he called “introverted nationalisms” and this generates political separatism.

JS: Do you think that the current movements in Britain to get out of the European Union are a form of “introverted nationalism”?

JMF: The phenomenon of the European Union has to be seen in a global context, in which there is a general tendency to form regional unions. There is NAFTA in the United States, Mexico and Canada; Mercosur in Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, and so on all over the world. So any country that stays out of a union is likely to lose out, it will be outside globalization. The European Union, like the others, is necessary in order to remain competitive in the global world.

However, it is interesting to note that the pioneer of European

integration, the Count of Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972), was of the opinion that Britain would have been better off forming a union with its own Commonwealth, guided by its system of Common Law, just as the European Union is guided by its own system of European Law. Whether or not this would still be valid today is another question, but it would be another way of



Richard Nicolaus Graf Coudenhove-Kalergi

addressing the issue of British hostility to the EU, without going to the extreme of being left alone.

JS: Or forming a union with the US?

JMF: That’s another possibility, but the UK would be dependent on the US. It would be eaten up by the US. It would become a cog in their machine. So if I were an adviser to the government I would opt for developing the Commonwealth as an economic union. If Mr Cameron would like to contact me, I am available for a consultancy...

Julian Scott

The Tao of Daily Life

The Tao is a Chinese term meaning ‘the path’, or ‘the way’. This article is an invitation to you to begin a journey on the Tao. As Laozi said “The thousand mile journey begins with a single step”. The mysteries of the Tao will be presented in the most accessible way - via stories.

What is this Thing called Tao? - Fish in the Ocean

*Once upon a time, a young fish asked an old fish:
“Everyone talks about this thing called ‘ocean’.
What exactly is it?”*

*The older and wiser fish answered: “The ocean is that
which surrounds you on all sides”.*

*The younger fish didn’t understand. “What do you
mean? There is nothing around me! If the ocean
surrounds me on all sides, why can I not see it?”*

*“Of course you cannot,” the old fish said patiently. “The
ocean is both inside and outside of you.*

*When you move, it moves with you; when you stop, it
stops as well. You were born in the ocean and
you will die in it. It wraps around you, just as your own
skin does.”*

“But how can I tell it exists, if I cannot see it?”

*“You must use more than your eyes. We may not be
able to see the ocean, but we can definitely feel
it. Trust your feelings - they are the key.”*

Confucius once said: “Fish forget they live in water; people forget they live in the Tao.” The Tao is the invisible ocean that surrounds us on all sides. It permeates everything at every level of existence, so it is both inside and outside of us. It enfolds us like our

own skins, and yet we cannot perceive it with our physical senses.

Sages of the past have sought to explain the Tao: “Whatever the ultimate principle is that underlies reality, we call it the Tao.” “Whatever the one truth is as the center of all spiritual truths, that is the Tao.”



The only way we can approach the Tao is to step back from the death grip of logic and engage the far more powerful tool of intuition. When the rationality of the brain fails to grasp the Tao, the heart will step in to embrace it with a way of knowing through intuition.

(Extracts from Tao of Daily Life by Derek Lin)

Jim Pang

PHILOSOPHICAL HUMOR



Some inspiring quotes

*“Wisdom is revealed through action, not words”
Jorge Angel Livraga*

*“In order to carry a positive action we must develop here
a positive vision.”
Dalai Lama*

*“What we plant in the soil of contemplation, we shall reap in the
harvest of action.” - Meister Eckhart*

The Mask – a sacro-magical art form

The making and use of masks dates back several millennia. It is one of the most ancient and widespread art forms - one which has captured the imagination of countless people around the world. On a recent visit to Portobello Market in London, I found myself confronted by a remarkable display of antique Balinese masks. I felt that these fascinating and mysterious artefacts had so much to reveal to the passers-by.

The mask seen as an ancient mode of sacred art brings us closer to the world of the 'Gods', of mythology, of religious ceremonies, of initiatory and secret rites. Although the general trend, when looking at an artefact, is to engage with it only through the "aesthetical eye", when we deal with sacro-magical art, there is more than meets the eye. Many of the objects used in magical ceremonies, like masks and costumes, are not meant to be 'beautiful' according to aesthetic standards. In fact their purpose is often very 'functional', a very profound type of functionality.

Masks may serve to better mediate with 'spirits' and the elemental powers of nature (as used in shamanic rites) or to induce cathartic states of being (as used in the Greek mystery plays) or to conjure up ancestral influences (as used in ancient funerary rites).

In all these instances, the art form has a very practical purpose, that of acting as a focussing lens, for the release or transformation of 'magical power'. The wearer of the mask, by identifying and ultimately merging himself with the power represented by the mask, loses his individuality, to become an instrument of collective (i.e. tribal-ancestral) or divine 'presence'.

The sacred mask often symbolizes and expresses a 'type'- a cosmic type that corresponds to a divine function. This is why it is regarded as a real being, it is treated as if it is alive and it is handled only after certain purification practices have been performed.

I hope to find myself browsing again soon among the market stalls of London.

Agostino Dominici



Lost civilisation - myth or reality?

It is a fact that mankind has lost and rediscovered knowledge in its short known history. Especially after the fall of a great civilisation such as the Egyptian ancient dynasties or the Roman Empire, we notice a decrease in the quality of life which is partly a result of the loss of a previously known technology. Mankind then undergoes a "Middle Ages" until it rediscovers what it has lost previously or at least partially.

Even nowadays there are only a few written traces and archaeological findings to help us reconstruct our past history. So would it be so

unconceivable that a great civilisation existed before the last ice age and disappeared beneath the sea somewhere or was destroyed by another cataclysm?

Plato, in western Europe, and the Mayans, in central America, both mention the existence of a great civilisation that flourished in the middle of the Atlantic ocean on a very large island more than 10,000 years ago. And this civilisation disappeared with its island when it collapsed, probably due to a huge cataclysm. Only some of its colonies survived in America (Mayans, Toltecs, etc.)

and Europe (Egyptians, Crete and pre-Celtic civilisation).

There are still many archaeological finds that don't make sense even if we convince ourselves that we know everything there is to know. But such finds (Easter Island, the Great Pyramid of Giza, etc.) would make more sense if they were the remains of a very old and lost civilisation.

It is one of humanity's biggest flaws to take what we have for granted and to think that we know better than before, forgetting on the way the lessons of history.

Florimond Krins

Inanna, the Queen of Heaven in ancient Mesopotamia

The principle of the life force on which everything depends, along with fertility, love and procreation were just a few of the principles that Inanna, one of the oldest Sumerian Goddesses, represents.

Her name means Lady of Heaven and she was associated with the planet Venus, the morning and evening star. The rising and setting of Venus correspond with the movements of Inanna, especially in the myth of Inanna's descent to the underworld. According to the myth, Inanna passes through 7 gates in her descent, removing at each one a piece of clothing or jewellery she had been wearing. By the end of her journey, when she meets her sister, Erishkigal, Goddess of the Underworld, she is naked. She takes her sister's place on the throne but shortly after she is turned into a corpse. Ninshubar (Inanna's servant) asks for help from the Gods to save Inanna. Erishkigal agrees to give back her corpse in exchange for a replacement. The replacement was Dumuzi, Inanna's husband.

This simplified version of the myth has many symbolic meanings. Inanna's journey to the underworld and her passing through 7 gates can be seen as a journey of transformation or initiation. Leaving a piece of clothing at each gate could be interpreted as giving up her attachments, one by one. When she arrives at the throne, she has nothing but her authentic self.

Inanna appears in many roles: as a seeker, a wife, a decision maker, and in her myths we see the conflict within ourselves, the transformation, the path of discovering and facing ourselves, as well as the concept of life and death. This ancient Goddess is so powerful that the hymns and myths about her have a wisdom which is still relevant in today's world.

Pinar Akhan



The Genius of Nature

“Nature does nothing in vain.” Aristotle

Human beings have always observed, learned from and imitated nature. If we look at any process in nature we can see an engineering which has been developing for millions or billions of years. The more we understand its complexity the more we find an immense intelligence at work. One of the aspects we can observe when learning from nature is its efficiency. Nature leaves behind no waste. Waste is a sign of inefficiency. Every outcome and part of the system has a meaningful role to play.

There is a movement of a new science defined and popularized by Janine Benyus in her 1997 book *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*. The word Biomimicry comes from the Ancient Greek, *bios*, life, and *mimesis*, imitation.

Part of the movement is biomimetic architecture, which is a contemporary philosophy of architecture “that seeks solutions for sustainability in nature,

not by replicating the natural forms, but by understanding the rules governing those forms.”

There are three levels of biomimetic architecture: the first is when buildings mimic an organism, the second is to understand and mimic the behaviour of an organism, to know how it integrates with the environment; and the third involves the larger context when the building mimics the natural process and its cycles.

A good example in practice is the Indian city of Lavasa designed by American architects to mitigate monsoon flooding. The roofs of the buildings mimic a banyan fig leaf to discharge rain water. The surface water has been channelled through the system observed within anthills, whereby the ants divert water away from their nests.

Hopefully it seems that in the future there will be a stronger reference to follow the wisdom of nature and less division between built and natural environment.

Miha Kosir

The World of the Aztecs

The Aztecs - or rather the "people from Aztlan", a translation from the Nahuatl word 'aztecatl' - are largely still a mystery for us. Their strong and determined character, their practical sense and the value they ascribed to the strength of will enabled this people to develop a highly advanced culture and conquer vast parts of Central America.

The Aztec Empire began to rise in the 13th century and centred around Tenochtitlan (today Mexico City). At the time, Tenochtitlan was the biggest and most important city in the world with around 500,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants - comparatively much bigger than Paris at the same time, with its 70,000 inhabitants. It was said to be a green oasis, a city full of gardens and flowers, floating on a big lake. The sacred was a very important aspect for the Aztecs, which was mirrored in the geography of their cities: temples were to be found everywhere as they wanted to accommodate the gods as guests on Earth.

The myth goes that before settling down, the Aztec people had wandered for 157 years in search of the right place to build this city. It was not until they detected the sign they had been searching for (an eagle picking up a snake from a cactus) that they decided to come to rest. This symbol can still be found in the national flag of Mexico today.

Every civilisation adopts part of its knowledge and traditions from the previous civilisation in the same place. This was also the case for the Aztecs, who got parts of their knowledge from the Toltecs - about whom we know even less.

Huitzilopochtli, the god of warfare, was their principle deity, which was reflected in their character. However, war has to be understood in a twofold sense: on the one hand it is about the external war we know, conquering peoples and territory. On the other hand, and just as - if not more - important, the internal war, which refers to the conquering of oneself, the triumph of the soul over matter. For an Aztec, to be a warrior was an attitude and a mindset, a posture vis-à-vis life rather than a mere act of death and destruction. The warrior is an enemy of comfort and slowness, of those vices that keep us from developing and moving forward. And at the

same time he is a friend of courage, endurance and drive, pushing to develop the values of the soul.

The Aztecs had a strong belief in the immortality of the soul, which explains why minimal value was given to material life. The sacred and the invisible were always more important. This also demonstrates how they integrated Huitzilopochtli as their principle deity into their everyday life. The other two most important gods were Tetzcatlipoca (the god of the smoking mirror) and Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent).

Nature, signs in nature and dreams played an important role in the way the Aztecs decided to lead their lives. They drew much of their knowledge from nature itself, thus developing a highly elaborate calendar system which was split into a solar calendar



Jaguar warrior, from the Codex Magliabechiano

of 360 + 5 days and a ritual calendar of 260 days. Within this, they had a clear vision of the task human beings have to fulfil on earth.

The Aztecs have left us with a fascinating heritage and knowing how little we have really discovered and understood about it leaves us wondering how much more there is to explore...

Elena Löber

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The New Middle Ages

by Istvan Orban

Many people sense that the world we are living in is becoming increasingly chaotic. And it's no accident. There is a great change underway, where the old forms of societies and religions have lost their power, but the new forms are in the process of being born and are still barely visible. In this interregnum, where things become uncertain and uncrystallized, we can discover many patterns from the past that are happening again: local wars, thousands of refugees, lack of solidarity, disappearance of universal knowledge, the return of fortunetellers, the revaluing of manual trades and practical skills. Does it sound familiar? Welcome back to the Middle Ages! The new ones.

Middle or medieval ages are a normal, natural phenomenon. In Ancient Egypt, there were three intermediate periods we know about from history, lasting from 50 to 400 years each. When a civilization decays, this intermediate time comes, and the order and quality of life disappear on several levels. If we look back at the last medieval period of history - the European Middle Ages - which lasted approximately 1,000 years, we can see this clearly. For example,



during the Roman Empire more than 50,000 miles of stone roads were built in a precise way and maintained and monitored frequently, so that travelling was quite easy and safe and was vital for the communication and expansion of the empire; while later, during the Middle Ages, nobody cared about the roads, which became dangerous because of bandits and thieves. So before somebody went on a longer journey, he made his last will.

Read more in our next issue...

Upcoming Events

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

Tues 29 Sept / Thurs 8 Oct / Wed 14 Oct at 7.00 pm

16-week course "Get Inspired - Discover Philosophy"

For more details see our website - www.newacropolisuk.org

Thursday 24th September at 7.30 pm

Talk: Religion, philosophy and spirituality

The Victorians found sexuality hugely embarrassing. Are we now similarly embarrassed about our spiritual needs and our search for meaning? This talk will present a philosophical and psychological view of the "repression of the sublime" and the importance of understanding spirituality as an integral part of our human nature.

Speaker: Sabine Leitner - ADMISSION £5 (£3 concs.)



SELF-REFLECTION AND THINKING MUST LEAD TO

ACTION

● DISCOVER PHILOSOPHY ●
16-week course