

ISSUE No. 16

MAY - JUN

2016

NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine



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EDITORIAL

Imagine that some of your physical powers would increase exponentially almost overnight: suddenly you have become so strong that you need to be really careful with how you touch things because you could easily crush everything; your voice has become deafeningly loud, your walk has speeded up so much that you have to concentrate to avoid collisions, you are so tall and big that each of your movements endangers the things and beings around you. Although there will be some great advantages in your increased powers, it is very clear that you would need to be much more careful, responsible and aware of others if you don't want to cause any harm.

In some ways, this is what technology has done for us: machines enable one person to do the work of many; the internet enables our voices to be heard by thousands and more; our means of transport have continuously speeded up and the implications of many of our actions are now so powerful that they impact on everything else. What we eat, where we shop, which petitions we support on the internet, what we put on the internet, what means of transport we use, how we spend our leisure time – any individual will have a much bigger impact today than ever before, especially since there are more than 6 billion of us on this planet which itself has not grown in size or resources.

Sadly, although technology has evolved beyond our wildest dreams, we human beings have not evolved in equal measure. We are psychologically, spiritually and morally still the same, and on top of this, we have been brought up with the idea that it is completely right to put ourselves first at all times. Post-modern ethics has become confused with the concept of personal fulfilment: everything is reduced to the individual self, good is what is good for me individually.

It is not difficult to see that having increased means to pursue more and more selfish aims can have very dangerous implications. In his book "Our Final Century: Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-first Century?" (2003), the Astronomer Royal Sir Martin Rees argues that the Earth and humanity are in far greater danger from the potential effects of modern technology than is commonly realised. He controversially estimates that humanity has only a fifty-fifty chance of surviving the 21st century.

Independently of whether he is right or not, it is high time we find a way out of our narcissistic trap and start thinking once again of the whole that we have always been part of. And this is not only important on the individual level, but also collectively. We cannot continue to choose merely according to what is best for our own particular group or country. We have to choose according to what is best for humanity, what is best for our planet, what is best in the long term. In order to be able to do this we need to develop our inner human potential. There is a fundamental and essential connection between our inner development and the global challenges we face. We can only solve them by growing up, by assuming our responsibilities and by developing the necessary wisdom to make the right choices. Maybe the crisis is exactly what we need.

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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 Philosophy
Culture
NEW ACROPOLIS Volunteering

At the service of philosophy - Manly P. Hall's life and teachings

A few years ago, while browsing on YouTube, I happened to stumble across some old recordings of lectures covering an array of metaphysical and mystical topics. I was quickly taken by the depth and breadth with which the speaker, effortlessly, delivered his talks. Soon I learned that the person behind those words was a very special man indeed. Manly P. Hall, though unknown to the academic world, remains one of those few early twentieth century scholars whose popularity seems to be increasing with time.

He was born in Canada in 1901. At an early age he was separated from both his parents and brought up by his grandmother. At the age of 16, when his grandma died, he ended up in the care of a Rosicrucian community. He had little formal education but he had a natural talent for public speaking, as well as a remarkable memory. A few years later, at the age of 19, we find him in Los Angeles, leading as a minister of the Church of the People. Almost overnight, the news of this wonder boy, who could master the most abstruse metaphysical topics, spread around. This early success earned him some generous donations, which enabled him to travel the world in search of hidden wisdom.

Returning to America, after extensive travelling, Hall immersed himself in the works of the greatest teachers of antiquity and at the age of 28, his *Magnum Opus* was born. The *Secret Teachings of All Ages* remains a unique and remarkable compendium of arcane lore, with topics ranging from Pythagorean mathematics to the Mayan mysteries. The book whose original text consisted of an estimated half a million words, pre-sold subscriptions for 1000 copies. It ends with what became his lifelong philosophical message: "The great institution of materiality has failed. The false civilization built by man [...] is destroying its creator. Religion wanders aimlessly in the maze of theological speculation. Science batters itself impotently against the barriers of the unknown. Only transcendental philosophy knows the path [...] Only philosophy can teach man to be born well, to live well, to die well, and in perfect measure be born again. Into this band of the elect – those who have chosen the life of knowledge, of virtue, and of utility – the philosophers of the ages invite YOU."

After publishing *The Secret Teachings*, Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, where he spent the next 55 years teaching philosophy. In his life, Hall delivered a staggering 8000 lectures and authored 150 books. We may ask: what was the source and motivation of Hall's intellectual achievements?

Hall firmly believed that the legacy of wisdom left by the ancients can help modern man navigate through the rough waters of a materialistic age. For him, man's mental attitude is the key to his code of action and civilization is fundamentally a code of action. "My purpose has been," he said, "to focus the light of the ageless wisdom upon the problems of today; to discover, from those who have



lived well the secret of living; from those who have acted nobly the secret of noble action; from those who have thought well the secret of right thinking". In his teachings, he tried to bring an organized picture of what he called 'philosophical living'; "where man can again look upon philosophy, not as an abstract and difficult word, suggesting arduous labor, but as a friendly term, standing for all that is good and all that is real knowledge." For him philosophy was the practical application of knowledge in everyday conduct, where moderation and the understanding of the 'goodness' within man are the first steps that will lead to real wisdom. He once remarked: "As the world in which we live today is ruled by fear – fear of life and fear of death, wisdom alone can overcome fear."

These, in brief, are some of the teachings of a true servant of wisdom, who wanted to make philosophy the greatest building power in society. "I want you to make philosophy the great work of your life," he concluded, "where the mastery of philosophy is the supreme achievement of which man is capable and the living of philosophy is the most noble of all arts."

Agostino Dominici

Habits and Automatism

Amongst the many human conditions that characterise us, there is one that in a subtle way permeates who we are and what we do, not only on a physical level but also in terms of emotional and mental traits: habits or repetitive behaviour. The very lack of awareness and the fact that we fall easily into an automatic way of acting makes it even harder to identify that acquired way of being or acting that has settled within us and then naturally reproduces itself.

To help us understand what habits are we can think about a machine that has been activated long ago and has never stopped. The quality of what the machine produces can be both positive and negative, but we often react with surprise when we find that we have become an automatic entity that no longer thinks or reflects on the choices available. Initially, when we came into existence, there was a great need to develop mechanisms to survive and interact with an unfamiliar environment. But as we grow and receive the influence of family, education, religion, peers and even of the media, we are coloured and modified without even noticing. So who we are today is a result of many influences and the way we have managed to deal with them within our own individual process of growth. It is often said that habits are both hard to break and hard to establish, because those processes require a large amount of effort, determination and will. But it isn't impossible, as we can tap into a world of virtues and potentials and with the right tools we can take back some control.

People often struggle to identify their habits and even more to

have the perseverance to develop themselves as beings who are free and creative rather than automatic. Some habits, such as those we manifest through our actions, can be quite obvious to the eyes of those with whom we share our lives. So they can tell us about particular ways we have of moving, saying things, doing things and even laughing or crying, all of which is done in a particular way of which we are hardly aware.

The roots of these expressions are often to be found in culture and are inherited unconsciously. Some can be healthy and we might feel comfortable with them, but others can be meaningless and even destructive. Life takes us on a journey of discovery triggered by circumstances and it is then that we begin to notice the patterns we reproduce.

There is no doubt that possessing habits can sometimes be helpful in that they can save us having to go through a constant learning curve in the many things we do and are skilful at. However, we absorb a vast amount of messages through the media, and the targeted advertising we experience today plays a challenging role. So suddenly we find ourselves following a trend, buying gadgets that promise us pleasure and thinking superficially about life as many people do in order to avoid the inner confrontation that arises when one is no longer satisfied with the conventional.

Recently I heard a speaker encouraging the audience to have enough curiosity in their own process to try out new things, explore and reflect on the outcome of those explorations. Perhaps

curiosity can be a means to identify the many habits we have right now and make a step into a more conscious life. Habits we have welcomed individually also have repercussions on the collective, as we are clearly social beings. Just as selfishness and indifference can spread like a habit, in the same way generosity, love and a deeper sense of life can become more familiar to those around us if we become agents of transformation. The next time you find yourself craving for a new item, making a judgement or believing arrogantly that you are right, stop and think where the roots of those ideas are. Because what really matters is not how many people agree with something or do the same thing, but the values that lie behind the choices we are constantly exposed to. If we can make a good use of habits and enhance our will power, we can nurture the human condition of becoming and discovering who we truly are.

Natalia Lema



Mozart and Freemasonry

Though some people are aware that Mozart was a Freemason and many know that his opera *The Magic Flute* is a Masonic allegory, it is less well known what Freemasonry is and how central it was to Mozart's life and work. According to the great Mozartean scholar Alfred Einstein, however, "the consciousness of his membership of the Order permeates his entire work." Freemasonry at the time of Mozart was an idealistic movement that aimed at transforming society by bringing about a profound change in the human being. It was based on the mystery traditions of antiquity such as the cult of Isis and Osiris in ancient Egypt and the Eleusinian mysteries of ancient Greece. Both of these traditions centred around the theme of death and resurrection and the discovery of the immortality of the soul, a theme which is also central to Freemasonic ritual. In the latter, the candidate for initiation passes through trials and undergoes a ritual death and rebirth.

Mozart was introduced to Freemasonry in 1784, at the age of 28, and became a member of the Viennese lodge 'Beneficence'. Shortly afterwards he introduced his father, Leopold and his fellow composer Josef Haydn to the Order and both became Freemasons. Most of his friends, patrons and mentors were also members. They all shared an ideal of a more egalitarian society in which the inherited privileges of a rich minority would be consigned to the past, religion would be freed from the shackles of superstition and science would serve humanity in a world guided by wisdom.

In *The Magic Flute* this ideal society is represented by Sarastro and his fraternity of initiates which the Queen of the Night (she of the famous aria) seeks to destroy. The story describes how the hero Pamina passes through ordeals to gain admittance to the brotherhood and everything is transformed by love and forgiveness.

It was not only in *The Magic Flute*, however, that Mozart expressed his Masonic ideas and sentiments. There are several other overtly Masonic works: *Masonic Funeral Music*, a cantata (K.623) designed for the inauguration of a Lodge, another entitled *The Mason's Joy* and several others. The music played

in Masonic rituals (mostly using wind instruments) was typified by a noble simplicity. According to the Freemason L.F. Lenz, "the purpose of music in the ceremonies is to spread good thoughts and unity among the members... [and] to inculcate feelings of humanity, wisdom and patience, virtue and honesty, loyalty to friends, and finally an understanding of freedom." This style of music can be clearly heard in the 'March of the Priests' and Sarastro's second aria in *The Magic Flute*.



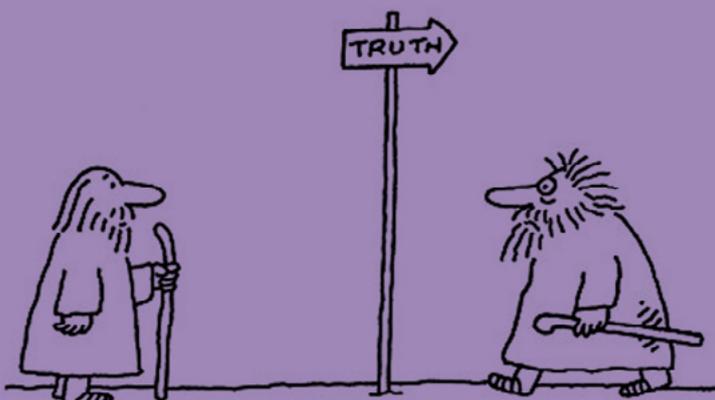
There are many other works by Mozart which display Masonic characteristics. According to Katharine Thomson, J. and B. Massin, and other Mozartean scholars, there are certain musical symbols that indicate the presence of Masonic themes: the key of E flat, which was typically used in Masonic rituals as it is the easiest key for wind instruments; parallel thirds and sixths, slurred notes (indicating *legato* playing or singing) and dotted rhythms (often used to simulate the knocking of the candidate at the door of the temple).

Examples of such works (so that you can listen to them for yourself to feel the effects of 'Masonic' music) are the piano concertos in E flat (K.482), A major (K.488), C minor (K.491) and C major (K.503); the piano trio for piano, clarinet and viola (K.498), the *Prague symphony* (K.504) and the symphony in E flat (K.543).

Once one begins to see Mozart as the idealist and Freemason that he was, his music begins to take on a new power and depth. In all of the above pieces we can hear Mozart's own avowed desire "to change men's hearts through his music, to win them for an understanding of the ideas of the Enlightenment" (K. Thomson). These Masonic sentiments are clearly expressed in the words of the three boys in *The Magic Flute*, like a chant of longing that still resonates today: "Come down, O Peace, return into men's hearts. Then earth will be a paradise again, and mortals will be like gods."

Julian Scott

PHILOSOPHICAL HUMOR



Dance and Sacred Stillness

After a long dark night and a very deep sleep a sound like a ray of light ignited a dense inertia. The movement started and there was time and the beginning of the universe. And so the cosmic dance started, moving galaxies, stars, planets and our souls. Shiva Nataraja. Shiva's dance is life and death, cycles within cycles, and cycles upon cycles. Every movement as such is an expression of that primordial Will stepping forth. The ancient Greek writer Lucian from the 2nd century AD wrote: "It would seem that dancing came into being at the beginning of all things, and was brought to light together with Eros, that ancient one, for we see this primeval dancing clearly set forth in the choral dance of the constellations, and in the planets and fixed stars, their interweaving and interchange and orderly harmony."

Space and time are not homogeneous. Not every mountain is considered to be a sacred mountain and not every dance is a sacred dance; but it can become so. Beyond the threshold, where the sacred resides, there is no time and no movement, but this is where the movement originates. In our sacred anatomy we can find this stillness in our heart. We dance without thought having any control and we spin in the arena of life like a channel. We come to the threshold and we find the sense of our wholeness. From that centre we find a rebirth, that unconditioned mode of being, the spring of life.

This is how we dance through our lives.

Miha Kosir



Gobekli Tepe – A new look at ancient civilisation

A German archaeologist called Klaus Schmidt found the ancient site of Gobekli Tepe in Turkey in the early 1990s. It took Schmidt almost two decades of digging to unravel only a small part of the site, which is huge (around 30 times larger than Stonehenge). It is composed of large circles of T-shaped columns, most of which weigh between 15 and 20 tons, and some up to 60 tons.

But what make this site particularly unique and amazing is that it was deliberately buried more than 10,000 years ago. And some of its stone circles date as far back as 11,600 years ago (9,600 BC). The fact that the site was deliberately buried is strange, but it allowed the carbon dating to be accurate – and troubling – mainly because it pre-dates any other megalithic sites in the world by around 6,000 years.

It is even more troubling when you think that the end of the last ice age was in 9,600 BC.

Gobekli Tepe acts as a time capsule, allowing us to see that humanity was more advanced than we thought. As a mainstream archaeologist, Klaus Schmidt was forced to accept that this makes the builders of Gobekli Tepe the first in many categories, such as stone carving, stone construction and agriculture. In just a few decades after the end of the last ice age, when most people were supposedly just hunter gatherers living in caves or primitive houses, Gobekli Tepe emerges and astounds us all. It is also a reminder that the last period of the ice age (known as the Younger Dryas) ended brutally and probably in a dramatic and cataclysmic fashion. After just 20 years of excavation and research we have yet to understand why Gobekli Tepe was built and by whom.

Florimond Krins

Prometheus the Awakener

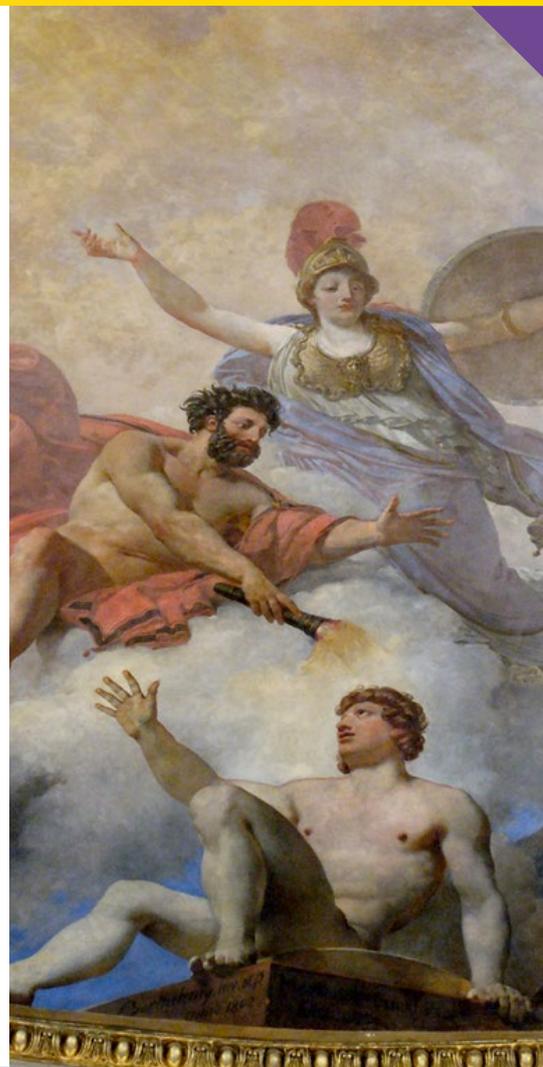
Busy as we are, it's not easy to stop to admire the awakening of life in nature, but the growing light seems to be rekindling us as well. Ancient myths tell us a story of another awakening that took place a very long time ago – the awakening of the human mind.

One courageous, quick-witted and compassionate Titan dared to challenge the all-powerful ruler of the cosmos, Zeus. Out of love and care for the humans whom he had created on the instructions of Zeus, Prometheus stole fire from Olympus, the home of the gods. Thanks to this fire of creative power the whole of human civilization has developed. But the story tells that with fire, the time when humans had lived happily without any toil, illness, war or death, came to an end – they became separated from the gods.

Prometheus' previous service to Zeus (he had assisted Zeus in his war against the Titans and had helped Zeus' beloved daughter Athena to be born) did not save him from the god's wrath – the mighty Titan was chained to a mountain in the Caucasus and every day an eagle devoured his liver, which then grew back again during the night. This punishment lasted for many ages until Heracles, the symbol of a new and better man, came to liberate the benefactor of humanity.

His name, "Prometheus", means "forethought". In the myths he is contrasted with his brother Epimetheus ("afterthought"), who acts first and only thinks afterwards. This means that Prometheus was very well aware of his actions and their possible consequences. But he could not allow humans to live in the darkness of ignorance with their minds deeply asleep. Let us cherish his divine gift of mind.

Nataliya Petlevych



NATURE AND US

Could geodesic domes be the homes of the future?

They look weird, but cool. Even film-makers are inspired by them: in the famous James Bond movie *You only live twice* the world leaders gather in a building that has a geodesic dome shape. But what are they like? According to mathematicians, the geodesic dome is a triangulation of a polyhedron to form a close approximation to a sphere or hemisphere. Geodesic domes can be found in nature, for example in crystal structures and viruses. The herpes virus, for instance, has the nice shape of a regular icosahedron (a 20-sided polyhedron).

The first time geodesic domes turned up in architecture was in 1922, when the chief engineer of the Carl Zeiss Company designed a dome as a projection surface for the planetarium projector. 20 years later the idea of using geodesic domes to tackle the post-war housing crisis occurred

to Buckminster Fuller, a mathematician, philosopher, engineer and poet. He believed that natural structures are better than conventional constructions, because they are more adaptable to climatic and other challenges. He was right that these domes are energy efficient buildings, which provide the largest living area with the least surface and need less material to build them. Surprisingly, these structures are five times stronger than a rectangular-shaped house. For this reason, they are disaster-proof, because the triangle is the strongest shape, so a geodesic house can even survive earthquakes and tornadoes.

Are there any cons? There are some: like the higher construction costs, due to their irregular shape, or the moisture condensation, which is quite common, or the lack of privacy, because it is difficult to create rooms and divisions within such buildings. But in spite of these (eradicable) disadvantages, geodesic domes are becoming popular around the world.

Istvan Orban

Maypole Dancing

This May, there will be celebrations across small villages in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Worcestershire and many other places around England, with folk dances, local food, communities coming together, marking the time of spring being established and moving into summer. Most of the May Day celebrations in England have their roots in Celtic traditions. Maypole dancing is one of the May Day celebrations which is still performed not only in England but also in Germany, Austria, Spain, Scandinavian countries, the United States and perhaps in other places that we may not know of. These celebrations are usually performed in the spring, but might also be performed at other times with some modifications.

Traditionally, the preparations start with finding a tall wooden pole which is erected as a maypole. In some cases the maypole is a permanent feature that is only utilised during the festival, in other cases it is erected specifically for the purpose before being taken down again. Then the pole is decorated with garlands of flowers and leaves. These are known as ribbon-less maypoles and dancers simply circle the maypole in time with the music which is often provided by pipe and tabor, fiddle and any other instruments that can be found. Later, ribbons are attached to the top of the maypole and dancers wind in different directions around the maypole, each holding a ribbon to create a complex pattern of colours. These dances were said to be performed to ensure fertility as part of the spring rituals. They are also part of the celebration of the fact that the darkness of the winter is gone and the warm, strong light of the Sun is back, so the fertility of the land can continue. On a non-material level it is a celebration of rebirth. The colourful ribbons represent the higher spirit, the dance that takes place to create the complex pattern of colours. Retracing the steps back to unravel the ribbons is considered to be the journey of life.

In some traditions the top of the maypole might be decorated with a red cloth, an egg or could take a form of a cross. Dancers run and climb up to the top to get the treasure. This climbing

is also seen in shamanism in Slavonic countries, representing an ascent to heaven or to reach the end of the spiritual path.

Another meaning of the maypole is the term used to refer to the centre, the pillar of the world: *Axis Mundi*, the world axis. *Axis Mundi* is considered as a bridge between heaven, sky or the celestial planes and the earth. It has been used by many traditions and sometimes took the form of a mountain, a plant or a human figure. The maypole mostly took the form of a Tree of Life which connects heaven and earth and brings life on earth. According to Mircea Eliade "every Microcosm, every inhabited region, has a Centre; that is to say, a place that



is sacred above all." *Axis Mundi* is the spot one occupies that stands at "the centre of the world". Whether it is the celebration of the spring, fertility, vegetation, rebirth or a ritual of one's spiritual journey, a connection between heaven and earth, traditions can give us a hint to help us understand life better, whether on an individual or a cosmic level.

Pinar Akhan

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

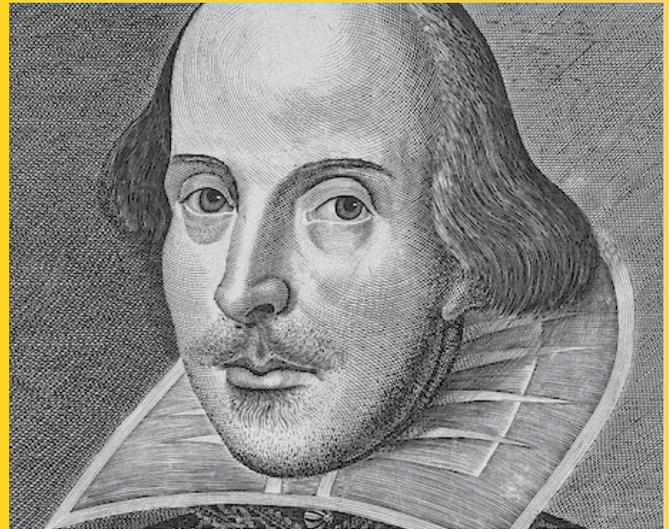
The Brilliance of the Bard!

by Siobhan Farrar

It is quite remarkable to consider how many words and phrases in regular use today were first penned by William Shakespeare. The literary critic Bernard Levin picked out a few of them:

“If you have ever been *tongue-tied*, a *tower of strength*, *hoodwinked* or in a *pickle*, if you have *knitted your brows*, *made a virtue of necessity*, *insisted on fair play*, *slept not one wink*, *stood on ceremony*, *danced attendance*, *laughed yourself into stiches*, *had short shrift*, *cold comfort*, or *too much of a good thing*... you are quoting Shakespeare.”

At the time of Shakespeare, Elizabethan England was vibrant with influences from around the world. It was a time of famous explorers and pirates, of new lands and legends of the high seas. Adventurers: Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake. Scientists and philosophers: Sir Francis Bacon and John Dee. The Elizabethan era was a transition between the middle ages and the modern world, an English Renaissance. It was a melting pot of ideas and influences, from Greek literature and philosophy to Roman thinking and the principles that make for a civilised man and society.



Everything was up for discussion and interpretation at the time that Shakespeare was writing.

Despite the multitude of foreign influences and advancements in science and philosophy, the language of Medieval and Renaissance England was still comparatively under-developed. The concepts they were encountering in other languages led to a huge appropriation of foreign words into English, many of which are credited to William Shakespeare.

How much did these Shakespearean appropriations influence us today and to what lengths can we really know? **Read more in our next issue...**

Upcoming Events

See our website for more details.

www.newacropolisuk.org

Thu 19th May at 7:30 pm

Talk: Concentration & Inner Awakening according to Tibetan Buddhism

Speaker: Natalia Lema - **ADMISSION £5 (£3 concs.)**

Sat 21st May from 3pm to 8pm

Mindful Kitchen: a vegan cooking and eating workshop with Calu Lema - **ADMISSION £25 (£16 concs.)**

Wed 8th June at 7:30 pm

Talk: Philosophy in Ancient Egypt

Speaker: Julian Scott - **ADMISSION £5 (£3 concs.)**

Thu 16th June from 7pm to 9.30pm

Mini-Workshop: Body Percussion

Facilitator: Sebastian Perez - **ADMISSION £5 (£3 concs.)**

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

