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# NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine

## SOCIETY

Mercantilism

## ESOTERICA

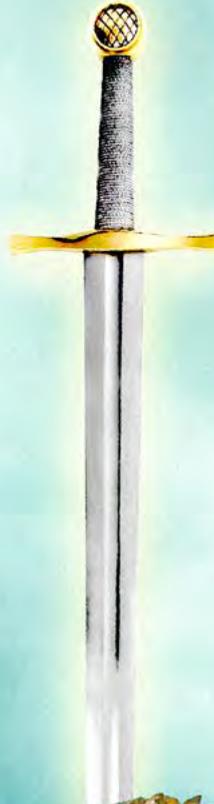
The Esoteric Aspect of Chivalry

## ART

Shakespeare: Heaven and Hell within Us

## PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy for Living





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# Editorial

## Why we need mythology

Myths are often thought of as being untrue and mythology has been considered to be a relic of an irrational and primitive past. However, according to the historian of religious ideas, Mircea Eliade, the sacred (which forms the basis of all mythology) “is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness.” In other words, the awareness of the sacred is an intrinsic part of the human being and therefore needs to be expressed.

Myths and symbols are the language of the sacred and for thousands of years, myths have helped human beings to see the world around them as a ‘thou’ rather than as an ‘it’; they have also addressed the fundamental questions of life in a profound and intuitive way which has complemented the reason and the practical side of life.

One of the by-products of the world view of modern science, despite its many undeniable advantages, was the loss of connection with nature as a living being. Richard Tarnas, cultural historian and author of *Cosmos and Psyche*, coined the apt phrase of the ‘disenchantment of the universe’ to describe this. As a consequence, nature has become objectified.

The word objectification today has become part of our everyday vocabulary, usually in connection with sexual objectification. But we don’t normally realize how much it has permeated our whole thinking and how much we have a tendency to reduce almost everything outside of us to a ‘thing’, whose value depends solely on its usefulness for our own purposes. If we view the external world not as a meaningful and ‘ensouled’ subject (as humanity has done for thousands of years) but as unconscious, lifeless matter that can be used however we wish for our own ends, then we will never be able to feel respect and reverence for

Mother Earth and all her creatures. The result will be exploitation, destruction, pollution some of the hallmarks of our times.

Another consequence of this disenchantment, demythologization (Rudolf Bultmann) or desacralization (Mircea Eliade) is the effect it has on human beings and society.

For some, there is a clear link between gang culture and violence and the lack of myth in modern society. The existential psychologist Rollo May wrote 1991 in his book *The Cry for Myth* that there “is so much violence in American society today because there are no more great myths to help young men and women relate to the world or to understand that world beyond what is seen.”

In the famous TV series *The Power of Myth*, Bill Moyers asked Joseph Campbell: “What happens when a society no longer embraces a powerful mythology?” To which Campbell replied that one just needed to read the news of the day regarding the destructive and violent acts by young people who don’t know how to behave in a civilized society. Moyers then asked where the kids growing up in the city get their myths today? And Campbell answered: “They make them up themselves. This is why we have graffiti all over the city. These kids have their own gangs and their own initiations and their own morality, and they’re doing the best they can. But they’re dangerous because their own laws are not those of the city. They have not been initiated into our society.”

If something is part of our nature, it cannot be ignored. If it is repressed, it will express itself in its ‘shadow form’. It seems that myths, archetypes and symbols still have an important role to play in our contemporary societies.

*Sabine Leitner*

# Philosophy for Living

## **From dreams to actions**

Our ideas are only valid if they are good and just, both for ourselves and for others, and if we can combine them with the best kinds of feelings, so that we can apply them in the most appropriate way. An idea on its own, without feeling and without an ensuing action, is doomed to die.

The experience of everyday life is enough to show us how difficult it is to put our ideas into practice. We often tend to remain on the level of dreams, or rather, of daydreams, which calm our desires and save us having to make the effort to convert an idea into a tangible reality.

## **Learning to act**

We need to really know what we have learned, to extract from the pages of books those ideas which, within our possibilities, we can incorporate into our lives, especially when we accept them as valid and necessary. We need to learn to act, to make mistakes every day and yet be able to start all over again with the joy of someone who is mastering a new path. But above all, whatever our mistakes and disappointments, we need to be able to do something, to move something within ourselves and in the world. Anything else is not philosophy, but merely mental gymnastics. Ask yourself often what



you are learning and what you know: if you evaluate your own actions you will be able to find answers for yourself.

### **From intellectual knowledge to action**

Study and reading are not enough; it is not even enough to reflect on what we have read and studied. We must know how to act in accordance with what we have learned intellectually, because every type of action requires a gradual process of learning before we can reach perfection. We need to have self-confidence and trust in ourselves if we are to become what we want to be; which means not giving in to difficulties and never thinking that we will not be able to achieve what we have set out to do. On the contrary, we should embrace the demands of every new situation with determination and joy and give each of them the important place they deserve; success will come later as a natural consequence.



### **Mental curiosity or the desire to know?**

Mental curiosity is no more than a superficial itch, whereas the desire to know, when combined with an ardent and determined heart, is worth more than thousands of empty words. The desire to

know and a resolute heart find expression in an unmistakable way: by working, by making as many efforts as necessary without ever being discouraged, going back over our mistakes until we have corrected them, repeating our tasks until we have achieved a minimum level of perfection.

### **Ideas and ideologies**

If ideas have no solid foundation, they die quickly. Human beings are born and die, and the same happens to ideas. Ideologies, which are the study of, interest in or development of ideas, die like everything else. But those human beings who live their ideas, who embody them in one way or another, at one moment in history or another, never die.

We should learn to value those ideas that are most solid and lasting, and be attentive to those ideas that die in order to allow others to be born. For these, after all, are the same ideas as those that lived in some other time, clothed in other forms and in other circumstances, like human beings, like life itself.

### **Ideas and their application**

Everything that has been developed on the plane of ideas and images must somehow find expression in concrete actions. Even if the results are not perfect or final, the important thing is to see that we have the power to turn a thought into an effective action.

The distance between dreams and realities is the same as that between ideas and actions. Dreams and realities are the two pans of a pair of scales. We need to keep them in balance in order to progress through life with less pain, fewer failures and, on the other hand, more joys and victories.

### **What is easy and what is difficult**

What is easy is what already belongs to me and what is difficult is what I have yet to conquer.

*Delia Steinberg Guzmán,*  
President of New Acropolis International

# Mercantilism

Few people, apart from economists, have probably heard of this term today, but between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it was the guiding economic theory of the European colonial nations.

The sixteenth century saw the end of the Holy Roman Empire in Europe and the formation of nation-states as the new political form for the countries involved. This new tendency developed alongside the rise of Protestantism, which sought to remain separate from Rome and southern Europe (where Catholicism predominated), and contributed to the development of mercantilism, especially in the northern countries.

The consolidation of these nation-states brought about a shift from the agricultural economy to an

economy based on trade and the production of consumer goods. The monetary system was based on gold and silver as its currency and on engaging with faraway nations, which were generally in a state of dependency on the European nation states. In the case of colonial possessions, for example, they were not allowed to manufacture their own goods in order not to upset the 'balance of trade'.

This new economic system, known as Mercantilism, promoted the domestic production of goods and services, which it would then sell to foreign markets, thus stimulating the national economy. In other words, its aim was the reduction of imports and the growth of national



wealth by expanding exports.

The general concept was that maximizing exports and minimizing imports was the best route to national prosperity. It was a form of nationalism aimed at building a wealthy and powerful state.

The inevitable conflict between rival nation-states led to an increase in trade protectionism and, consequently, the development of trade monopolies.

The nations had to protect their markets and, especially, the sources of their raw materials. It comes as no surprise, then, that this contributed to full-time standing armies and navies.

The mercantile system lasted approximately two centuries and was replaced by capitalism, which coincided with the beginning of the industrial revolution. This required a different approach to the economy, which became an economy based on capital rather than national interests and the focus shifted from commerce to industry. It was no longer seen as necessary for trade to be purely based on exports in order to be beneficial to the nation-state. All trade, whether domestic or international, could bring benefits to the national economy.

Residues of mercantilism lasted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One example was the monopoly on salt production in India under the British empire, against which Gandhi organized his famous 'salt march'.

It might also be interesting to speculate on what economic system may follow capitalism, as it seems that no economic system lasts forever and the ideas and theories that were taken for granted in one age are ridiculed as outdated in the next.

*Alfredo Aguilar*

**The general concept was that maximizing exports and minimizing imports was the best route to national prosperity**



Gandhi picking up grains of salt at the end of his march.

# The Esoteric Aspect of CHIVALRY



The word 'chivalry' comes from the French 'chevalier', which means 'knight' or 'horseman'. Symbolically, the horse represents the body and its associated energies and emotions, while the rider represents the higher self of the human being, the best and noblest part of ourselves. The knight is not perfect, but is on a path towards perfection. Hence the trials that all knights go through. They sometimes fail, especially in the phase of the Quest of the Holy Grail, and sometimes they get another opportunity and then partially or wholly succeed. In the view of esoteric philosophy, the human being is perfectible; indeed, our destiny as human beings is to develop the divine part of ourselves. All this was symbolised in the esoteric art par excellence, namely alchemy:

the transmutation of the man of lead (earthly, heavy and opaque) into the man of gold (shining, incorruptible, pure and endlessly giving like the sun). It is therefore not surprising that we will find many traces of alchemy in the tales of chivalry. As J.E. Cirlot says, "Knighthood should be seen, then, as a superior kind of pedagogy helping to bring about the transmutation of natural man (steedless) into spiritual man."

The hallmark of chivalry is nobility – not of blood, but of character. And what is nobility of character but the mastery of one's lower traits by the higher, not giving in to base impulses, always striving for the good? In this sense, it is not only a product of the European Middle Ages, but a universal ethical vision. However, chivalry is best known as

a medieval phenomenon, with a historical aspect and mythological aspect.

Historically, the ideal of chivalry arose after the fall of the Roman Empire, in response to the increasing barbarism of the Dark Ages. This was the setting for the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, which is widely accepted as having some basis in historical fact. As Ramon Llull writes in his classic *Book of the Order of Chivalry*, "There was once no charity, loyalty, justice or truth in the world. Enmity, disloyalty, injustice and falsehood came into being... [and when this happened] justice sought to recover its honour." Thus, chivalry comes to restore justice, harmony and truth in an unjust and brutal world. The peak moment of the popular revival of chivalry, however, came around the twelfth century. Most scholars agree that it was inspired by the Islamic world, at that time a flourishing civilisation, which the medieval Europeans encountered through the Crusades.

From around this time came a massive revival and popularisation of the "Arthurian cycle" of stories, based on older sources but now put into literary form. The typical knight goes through trials and difficulties, often in the context of magical adventures, where he has to overcome impossible odds.

One example of this is the story of Sir Lancelot and the Dolorous Garde. This is the name of a castle which is under a curse. Many knights have attempted to lift the curse but none has succeeded. The test consists in having to fight his way

through three gates, each of which is defended by ten knights. Lancelot (in this tale known as the White Knight) only succeeds because he has the help of a damsel who has been sent to his aid by the Lady of the Lake. She gives him three shields which will double, triple and quadruple his strength when it is failing.

Usually, in these stories, and in mythology in general, the damsel represents some higher element of the soul, a spiritual element which can help us in our hour of need. It is represented as a damsel, or virgin, to symbolise the purity of the spiritual element.

Then a strange and mysterious figure appears: Brandin, the "Copper Knight", the ruler of the Dolorous Garde. He appears on a wall, disturbed by Lancelot's success and, leaning over too far, falls on top of one of his own knights, killing him. Why copper? Each of the metals has a part to play in the alchemical process and is associated with one of the planets, in this case Venus. The symbolism of alchemy is highly complex and I will not attempt to decipher it here, but this "Copper Knight" is too incongruous to be anything but alchemical.

Finally, Lancelot triumphs and is led to a cemetery where the failed knights are buried. There he is shown a metal slab (metal again!). On lifting it he finds out the name of his true father, i.e. his real identity. In other words, the end of all these trials is to discover who we truly are – a question which I think many of us would love to be able to answer.



Sir Lancelot in one of his trials, the crossing of the sword bridge.

There are many such strange stories in the Arthurian legends. In the story of Parzival, by Wolfram von Eschenbach, at one point the hero finds himself in a room in a castle, when suddenly the floor begins to rotate. It gets faster and faster until he has to cling on for dear life in order to avoid being dashed against the wall. In some accounts of the trials to which candidates for Initiation were subjected, the trial of the rotating floor is not uncommon. In another Lancelot story, he has to cross a “sword-bridge” over an abyss, at the end of which two lions are waiting to devour him. His love for Guinevere (the spiritual soul?) gives him the courage to cross this painful bridge. But when he arrives at the other side, fully expecting to have to fight the lions, he finds that they have vanished; they were only magical illusions needed to try his courage. How many of our fears are illusions, created by our own minds?

There are also many intriguing images associated with chivalry. The one shown opposite, from the Manasseh Codex, shows a female figure with an arrow and a flaming torch above the head of the mounted knight. The figure almost certainly represents Venus (sometimes shown in alchemical texts with the “arrow of the secret fire”), the inspiration for the courage of the knight. Below his horse is a kind of watery (inner/astral?) world in which two demon-like figures – or one demon and one man – are battling each other, the demon pointing the arrow and the man, or other demon, defending himself with his shield. This illustrates the fact that chivalry was not only about external battles and adventures, but also, and perhaps most importantly, about the inner battle between the higher and lower selves of the human being.

Ramon Llull states that the virtues of the knight (his inner conquests) are more important than his physical prowess: “Therefore the knight who practises these things that pertain to the Order of Chivalry with respect to the body but does not practise those virtues that pertain to Chivalry with respect to the soul is not a friend of the Order of Chivalry.”

There is also a rich symbolism of colours, again associated with alchemy. In Mallory’s *Morte d’Arthur*, Sir Tristram fights in a tournament and on different days and times arrives dressed in different colours, particularly green, black and red (generally in that order). Several authors believe

that this is not just “for atmosphere”, but is related to the stages of the alchemical work. These could be: green – the universal solvent, as in the Green Lion; black – the *nigredo* phase associated with “germination in darkness”, and red – the *rubedo* phase, associated with the final stage of the work, or “exaltation”.

And what is the goal of alchemy? The Philosopher’s Stone, which symbolises the achievement of all powers, the mastery over oneself and nature; the power to heal, to make whole and even to prolong life. It is interesting, then, to note that in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival, the Holy Grail is described not as a chalice but as a stone. The Grail, like a cauldron of plenty, has the power to nourish endlessly and, if the right questions are asked, to heal the King (the Self) and the Kingdom (the World).



Thus, to have a vision of the Holy Grail is equivalent to achieving the Philosopher’s Stone. And to get to that goal, the knight must become absolutely pure, like Sir Galahad. In the view of the esoteric philosophy, this is not impossible. It is the fruit of a long labour of purification, symbolised by the trials and adventures of the knight.

*Julian Scott*

# Shakespeare

## HEAVEN AND HELL WITHIN US

**W**hen we speak about Shakespeare we can refer to him as the Philosopher-Artist. An artist who succeeds, in his work, in investigating the depth of human existence and his relationship with the gods and the universe. Shakespeare, a wizard of words, is a symbol of an artist whose work lives forever because it touches the heart of the human experience and asks questions that are and will always be relevant to human beings.

Why Shakespeare? What makes him so special? Why have many of the playwrights of his time disappeared or been forgotten while he remains relevant? There is no rational explanation. During the course of history we see artists who have opened a channel to inspiration, who unveiled the mystery of existence. It is a great gift and a great responsibility.

To understand Shakespeare's greatness we must understand the Elizabethan Theater in which Shakespeare was the brightest star.



Shakespeare's plays are the best example of this theater and are the highest peak of its legacy. We will explore a few elements of Shakespeare's plays and through them reveal his greatness.

**“CHORUS:**

**O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend  
The brightest heaven of invention,  
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act  
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!”  
(Henry V, Act 1, Scene 1.)**

The Elizabethan Theater is a unique theater. A theater that combines the classical studies of the Renaissance era, that explored man, society and their connection to the universe, and the medieval theater that was performed in the town square, outside in daylight. A poor theater without much decoration, but with a lot of creativity and imagination. Shakespeare's theater, as most of its kind in London, contained both worlds. The 'Globe' was an open theater, in the shape of a circle, the roof was open so the performances were in daylight, and the stage was bare. It was a world created by imagination and the power of the spoken word. We can see a good example of the magic of this theater in the beginning of 'Henry V', one of Shakespeare's greatest historical plays, in which the chorus asks the audience:

**“Suppose within the girdle of these walls  
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,  
Whose high upreared and abutting fronts  
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder:  
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;  
Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
And make imaginary puissance;  
Think when we talk of horses, that you see them  
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;  
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our  
kings,  
Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times,  
Turning the accomplishment of many years  
Into an hour-glass: for the which supply,  
Admit me Chorus to this history...”  
(Henry V, Act 1, Scene 1.)**

It's a wonderful thing to create a world through words and imagination. A chair on the stage becomes a palace, a painted tree on a cloth, a forest, and three armed men, a mighty army. This was Shakespeare's theater and the tools to create this imaginary world were the words he wrote that stimulate our imagination until this very day. This is the real magic of theater: not rich scenery and special effects, but the ability of an actor and the spectator to create a world together. In this theater there were no boundaries between the actors and the audience

(no fourth wall). On the contrary, the audience was invited into the world of the play, to be an active part in it. A wonderful example is King Henry's speech to his army, convincing them to charge the enemy.

**“KING HENRY V:**

**“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once  
more;  
Or close the wall up with our English dead.  
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility:  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tiger...”  
(Henry V, Act 3, Scene 1.)**

King Henry's men are not the only actors on stage, but all the spectators who become part of the theatrical world.

The audiences in Shakespeare's theater were not passive spectators, but an active part of the story. This was the magic that brought together the noblemen with the peasants, the rich with the poor. Shakespeare not only gave them a show to look upon, but also a world to live in, even if it was only for a few hours. The audience was a part of Lear's great storm, of Macbeth's hideous crime, and Caesar's cruel murder.

But Shakespeare's words not only created a world outside of man, but also gave an expression to the inner world of the characters. In the renaissance era, the classical studies (philosophy, art, science, medicine, astronomy and many more) returned to the center of life. Human beings were no longer small subjects in the rulings of a furious God that taught them right from wrong. They had to listen to their own conscience and choose their destinies for themselves.

Psychological research had developed and Shakespeare is a wonderful example of the ability of an artist to shed light on the human psychological world. In his soliloquies (monologues in which the audience gets a glimpse of the character's inner world, where they reveal their most intimate thoughts, doubts and desires and turn the audience into their confidante), Shakespeare wonderfully describes the inner battle inside us between good and bad, virtues and desires, inner heaven or inner hell. Shakespeare creates a mirror of the heart and hands it to us through his wonderful plays. What better example to give than Shakespeare's most famous soliloquy from 'Hamlet', where an indecisive prince turns to us for help. What is the right thing to do, he asks. To avenge my father, or die trying? Or to end my life right now?

**“HAMLET:**

**To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause: there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's  
contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action.—Soft you now!  
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins remember'd.”**

**(Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1.)**

All through the play, Hamlet takes us, through his soliloquies, to an inner journey in his soul. This is a journey we take with all of Shakespeare's great characters. We are a part of King Lear's agonizing madness, of Iago's envy of Othello and his plan to destroy him, of Richard the III's viciousness and Richard the II's helplessness and many more...

What is most wonderful in Shakespeare's characters is

that we don't see them as bad, good, weak or mad, but as human beings, capable of the most wonderful and the most horrible things, like all of us. The immense spectrum of emotions that we see in Shakespeare's characters, are the same emotions that we recognize in ourselves. That is what makes Shakespeare great. That is what makes him immortal. In his greatest works, he strikes a chord with the essence of the human existence. Shakespeare causes us to turn our eyes in to our hearts and see there the greatness of man, and the horror that man can inflict upon the world and upon himself. He makes us realize that, like his characters, we have a choice in what kind of person we shall be and that heaven and hell are not foreign concepts in our existence, but they are the consequences of our actions and how we live our lives. Heaven and hell are inside us, and are manifested in us as conscience and virtues, as opposed to lust and lower desires. In Hamlet's 'speech to the players', he gives the actors of a traveling theater that come to Elsinore several 'professional advices'. But the key observation in his speech is not only true for the actors, but for art itself.

**“HAMLET:**

**....the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature,  
scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.”**

**(Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 2.)**

In conclusion, this article is not intended to contain all of the magnitude and depth of Shakespeare's work, and would not claim to do so. It is impossible to capture the artistic wealth of Shakespeare's work in such few words. The purpose of this article is to enlighten us as philosophers to the importance and the benefit we can extract from his work. We learn that art is a bridge between the eternal and the temporary and every great artist reveals in his work a piece of eternity. Through Shakespeare's words, characters and deep understanding of human nature, we can touch the essence of the battle that is raging inside each one of us. Because every one of us is a hero and a coward, a noble-hearted man and a villain, a wise man and a madman. The only question is – which character will we choose to portray in the play that is our life. Shakespeare's words can give us inspiration to march on in this inner quest and constantly ask ourselves that question.

*Zahi Glick*

# The Origins of the Internet

**“We work, entertain, shop and celebrate on it, and it is hard to believe that there was an era before it.”**



One of the greatest phenomena that has changed contemporary society was launched 50 years ago. Some say it is evil itself, others praise it as the most useful invention: the Internet. We cannot imagine our life now without the World Wide Web. We work, entertain, shop and celebrate on it, and it is hard to believe that there was an era before it.

The first steps to develop this global information structure were taken in the 1960s. The basic idea was to create a system which could be used by anyone from anywhere in a democratic way. The tool was developed by scientists who knew and trusted each other and they never imagined the Internet would one day be used for bad purposes. Dr. Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider formulated the earliest ideas of an Intergalactic Computer Network, while he was serving at the U.S. Department of Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). He led a computer research program (ARPANET)

“Scientists were not only discovering the Internet for themselves, but for governments, businesses and the private sector, because it was a great tool for collecting and transferring data.”

named after the institution, and this network was the father of the Internet.

Though the idea was already there, it was technically challenging to make it real. It was Leonard Kleinrock from UCLA and Lawrence G. Roberts from MIT who were using packets rather than circuits and low speed dial-up telephone lines to make communication between computers in California. The key component was the Interface Message Processors (IMP), made by Frank Heart and his team. In 1969, they performed a test, where Kleinrock's computer (first node) at UCLA connected with Doug Engelbart's computer (second node) at Stanford. The message that was to be sent from host to host was LOG, but after two letters, Engelbart's computer crashed, so the first message that was transferred only was LO, which later inspired Werner Herzog's film about the Internet: *Lo and Behold*.

ARPANET was the pioneer network, but the Internet would create multiple independent networks in an open architecture. This idea was developed in 1972 by Bob Kahn, who was working on a packet radio program called “Internetting” in DARPA. The aim was to set up a reliable end to end protocol for a smooth communication between different networks. This later became known as Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). Kahn was working with Vint Cerf, who was a mathematician and had the knowledge about interfacing to existing operating systems. After the protocol was finished, developers were able to make their first applications, like mailing programs.

At that time, in the early 1970s, it was possible to print the names of users of the Internet in one booklet, so everyone had the others' email-addresses. But as the Internet started to flourish in the 80s, thanks to Personal Computers (PCs), Local Area Networks (LANs)

and Ethernet technology, it became more widespread. Because of the emerging demand for hosts, it was necessary to create a hierarchical Domain Name System (DNS). The first web page was made only in the early 1990s, when Tim Berners-Lee published the basics of the Internet. This can be seen here: <http://info.cern.ch/>

Scientists were not only discovering the Internet for themselves, but for governments, businesses and the private sector, because it was a great tool for collecting and transferring data. The wealth and success of today's tech-giants like Google or Facebook were based upon this idea: providing access to information, but collecting data from the users that could be sold to other companies or buyers. This was a model that – as some inventors said – was a distortion of the original idea. Behind the mask of democracy they were exploiting the social environment.

While the Internet ought to be connecting people, it seems the opposite happening. It alienates them. They become isolated, living in a cyber world, a bubble that has been created by companies' algorithms. Unknown people can bully others in anonymous ways that can cause tragedies. This influence is even more dangerous when governments use the tool for their political and military purposes. They can observe people, collecting data about them, even about their private lives, that can be used later. Nowadays, when people's privacy is fading away, fake news is misleading users and information noise is overwhelming the whole Internet, the words of the philosopher and linguist Noam Chomsky are more relevant than ever: “The Internet's corporate owners want it to become a technique of marginalisation and control.”

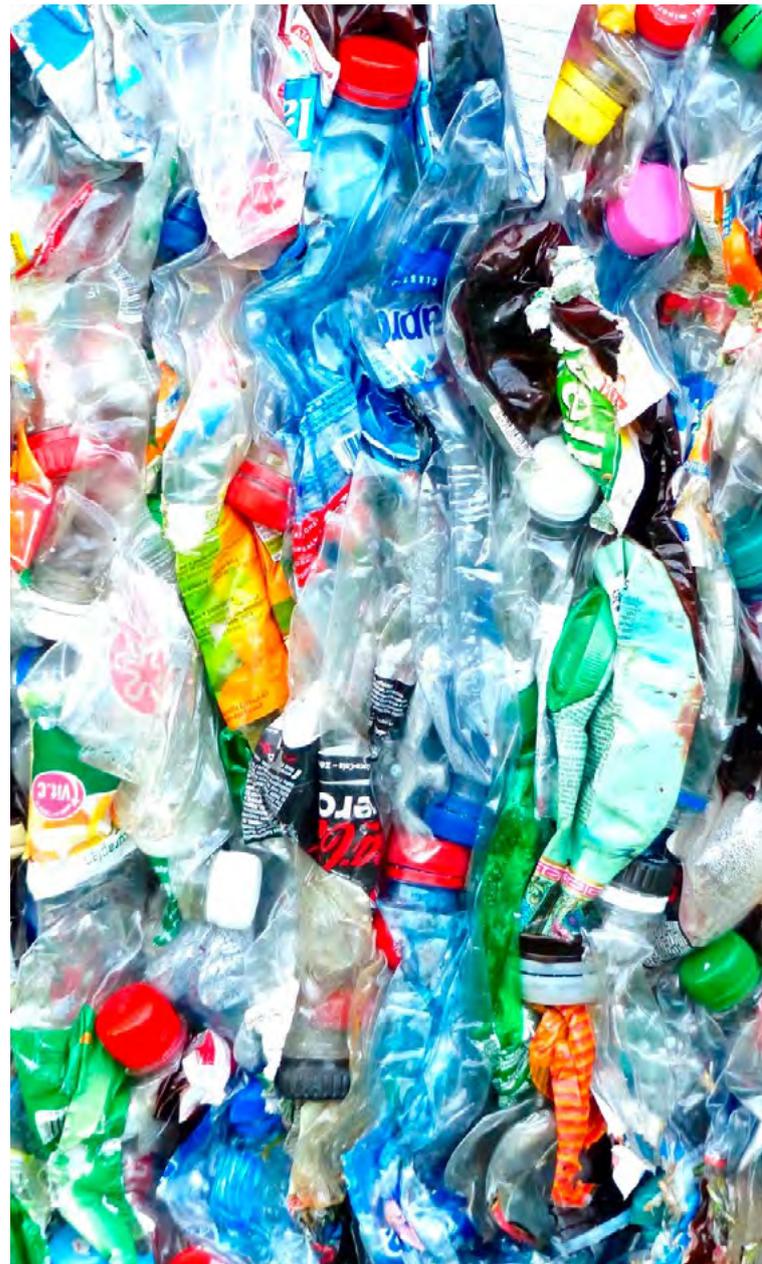
*Istvan Orban*

# PLASTIC

## isn't that fantastic

*“Because its main characteristic is durability, plastic is non-biodegradable by design...”*

**N**owadays and all around the world plastic has become an essential part of our daily life. From clothes, utensils and gadgets to many components used in most of our utilities such as cars, trains and aeroplanes, plastic has become indispensable. Discovered at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, synthesised chains of polymers, commonly known as plastic, have revolutionised the way we package our goods. Because its main characteristic is durability, plastic is non-biodegradable by design - the synthetic kind in



| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PETE  | HDPE  | PVC   | LDPE  | PP  | PS  | OTHER   |
| polyethylene terephthalate  | high-density polyethylene   | polyvinyl chloride  | low-density polyethylene  | polypropylene   | polystyrene   | other plastics, including acrylic, polycarbonate, polyactic fibers, nylon, fiberglass     |
| soft drink bottles, mineral water, fruit juice containers and cooking oil         | milk jugs, cleaning agents, laundry detergents, bleaching agents, shampoo bottles, washing and shower soaps | trays for sweets, fruit, plastic packing (bubble foil) and food foils to wrap the foodstuff | crushed bottles, shopping bags, highly-resistant sacks and most of the wrappings  | furniture, consumers, luggage, toys as well as bumpers, lining and external borders of the cars | toys, hard packing, refrigerator trays, cosmetic bags, costume jewellery, audio cassettes, CD cases, vending cups | an example of one type is a polycarbonate used for CD production and baby feeding bottles |
|  |                            |            |  |               |                                |        |

particular - as it is based on petrochemicals. So the only way we can get rid of plastic is by recycling it. Unfortunately, some kinds are much more difficult to recycle than others.

So what happen when it isn't recycled? The plastic, which is not toxic in itself, breaks down into smaller pieces over time through erosion, until it is small enough to be ingested by animals and sea life in particular. Plastic can also contain certain additives such as adipates and phthalates, which are toxic. In its latest nature documentary "Blue Planet 2" the BBC and Sir David Attenborough warned us of the effects in the short, medium and long term of the great quantities of plastic released into the oceans.

What can we do? The answer is simple: reuse and/or recycle, as nature is not designed to process this man-made material. To help the consumer a table was created to distinguish the different kinds of plastic and how they can be recycled (see image above).

Some plastics like polyethylene, polypropylene and polyvinyl chloride are what we call thermoplastics. They are the most easily and most commonly recycled plastics in the UK and the EU. Regarding the others, they have to be dropped off at proper recycling centres. Of course, nothing prevents us from being creative and reusing any plastic utensils for different purposes in order to avoid throwing them away. Overall, it is preferable to reduce the consumption of plastics by any means, starting by limiting their use as packaging to a minimum.

With all this information in mind, it is our responsibility to manage our non-biodegradable waste and to use our intelligence and creativity to reuse and recycle as much as we can. Because our planet, as vast as it seems, isn't infinite.

*Florimond Krins*

# THE GOLDEN ASS



A portrait of Lucius Apuleius Platonicus, from 'Crabbes Historical Dictionary', published in 1825.

The *Golden Ass* (donkey) is the only Latin novel that has survived from Roman times in its entirety. It was written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD by Lucius Apuleius, a Platonist and priest of Asclepius, and an initiate in several Greco-Roman mysteries, including those of Dionysus. His novel *Metamorphoses*, or *Transformations of Lucius*, is also known as *The Golden Ass*.

It is the tale of Lucius, an intellectual young man, who was visiting the Thessalian town of Hypata while travelling on business. In Hypata he stayed at the house of a friend, Milo, and his wife Pamphile. Upon his arrival he was warned to be careful, as Pamphile was a witch, very fond of young handsome men, whom she used her magic to catch. But this didn't deter Lucius; in fact, magic was an art he was very curious about and he wanted to have a taste of it. He made a cunning plan to seduce the maid Fotis to get closer to Pamphile, which turned out to be very successful. One night, as Pamphile was performing a magical rite, Fotis took Lucius to secretly observe the act. In front of their eyes Pamphile turned herself into an owl and flew off into the night. Lucius was amazed and tried to do the same, by repeating the spells he had heard Pamphile reciting; but due to a technical error he turned himself not into an owl, but into an ass. Fotis knew that the antidote to transform Lucius back into human form was for him to eat roses, but just after this incident happened Lucius (as an ass) was stolen by some robbers who broke into the house. The journey of his hardships now began.

At the lowest point of his sufferings Lucius managed to escape and found himself in a coastal town where he could

find some rest. He woke up at night by the sea, the moon was rising and a vision in form of the goddess Isis came to him. He went into the water to purify himself and prayed to the goddess herself. Isis told him to join the festival the following day celebrating the coming spring, where a priest would give him roses. And this is how it came about that Lucius was transformed back into human form. He became a devotee of Isis and was initiated into her cult, and subsequently also into the mysteries of Osiris.

The story describes the travails of the human soul as it falls into the confusion of matter and pursues foolish

desires that take it away from its true nature. It took quite some time for Lucius to be less of an ass and to become more of who he truly was. Much suffering had to happen before the redeeming roses were found. Lucius was driven at first by his untamed desires and naïve curiosity of mind, which brought him misfortune and misery.

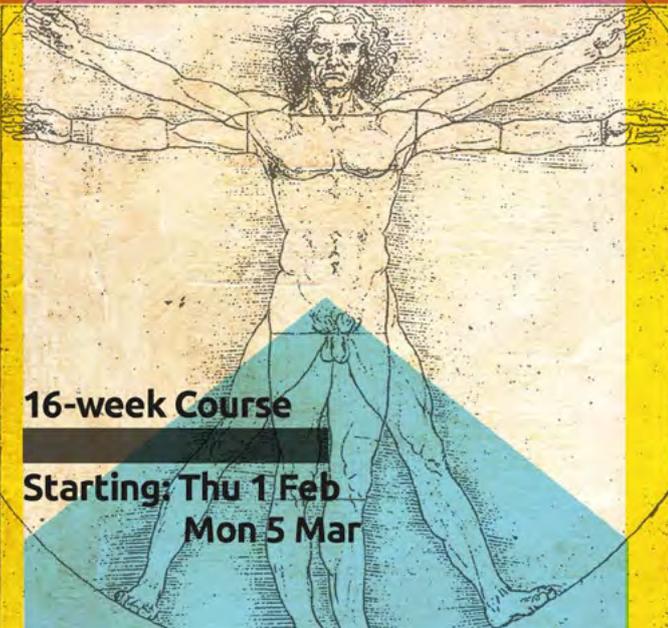
There is no substance or magic, no potion or elixir or magical stone, that can transform us; all this is a metaphor for an internal process, an inner alchemy. Through experience and the pain resulting from our own ignorance, we finally see the better path and choose to follow it.

*Miha Kosir*





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