

The Acropolis

Philosophy for today

July 2023
Issue 13



Summer Edition - Philosophy - Politics - Society - History and more



What's inside?

What is The Acropolis?

In ancient Athens the Acropolis, literally meaning the High City, was the place which supported the highest ideals of the people.

The founder of New Acropolis International, Professor George Livraga, chose this name to capture the key objective of philosophy; that we as individuals build a new high city within, that we discover the heights of our own potential, so that we may externally build a new high city, a new and better world, together. The Acropolis magazine is motivated by this objective and aims to share inspiring content, combining all the major endeavours of philosophy, art, science, education and culture.

About Us

New Acropolis is an international organisation 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 further details please visit: www.acropolis.ie

Editorial	Reclaiming Courage	4
Politics	Democracy - The Rule of the People	6
History	Portrait of an Idealist - The Journey of Martin Luther King Jr	10
Civilisation	The Incas - A Roman like Civilization in South America	16
Society	Common Ground - Making Space for Inclusivity	18
Civilisation	Islamic Spain - The Seeds of Convivencia	20
Civilisation	Law of the Land - The Brehon Laws of Ancient Ireland	23
Food for Thought	Apple Roses	25

Editorial: Reclaiming Courage

Dear readers,

I have chosen this article from the “The Everyday Hero” written by the Honorary President of New Acropolis International Delia Steinberg Guzman as the editorial for this magazine. As I feel it is essential to reclaim courage as a fundamental quality in a changing, unpredictable, and uncertain world.

Alain Impellizzeri
Director New Acropolis Ireland

Reclaiming Courage

The problem of fear among human beings is not new. For several years now - perhaps more than we dare think - human beings have been losing confidence in themselves, in the destiny that rightfully belongs to them and, as a result, in the destiny of humanity as a whole. History seems totally alien to them and they do not feel like its builders, but its victims. Time is no longer the factor of hope that allows us to move forward with renewed dreams and constant work; now, on the contrary, time is a lethal weapon which destroys human beings and civilisations, which wears everything out beyond any possibility of recovery.

This result was to be expected and we are all suffering it to a greater or lesser extent. The human being has lost the ability to communicate, which is ironic as we are in the age of communication. No one trusts anyone else, no one risks telling the truth about what they feel and think, let alone wants to confess that sometimes they are not very sure of what they think or feel... Today everything exudes the false confidence of people who are lying, people who are pretending in order to disguise their lack of inner and outer faith.

This is why fear has emerged. Fear of truth; fear of commitments; fear of loyalty; fear of the harm that other people may cause us and even fear of our own unknown reactions. Because of fear, sacred words are no longer spoken. Because of fear, healthy friendships no longer arise. Because of fear the best ideals die, because no one wants to stand up for them. Fear puts shifty glances in our eyes, makes our gestures meaningless and indecisive, and our words ambiguous and empty, in order not to commit to anything and to allow us to escape from everything...

To this fear of everyday life is now added the even greater fear of the cycles of history. To grow one year older is almost an unlucky omen; to have begun a new decade must certainly bring new misfortunes and complications; to approach the millennium is a sign of some certain catastrophic end... And all this contributes to making human beings feel even smaller within themselves.

It is time to adopt the opposite attitude. Fear is synonymous with weakness and lack of confidence. It is necessary, then, to reclaim our courage: to know ourselves, to know other human beings; to clarify our understanding and return to God and to the truths that are found in Nature.

We should not be frightened by new years or new decades, and all the conjunctions of the stars together should not move by a single inch the firm will of a human being who feels within himself the fire of infinite life. We are not products of chance floating aimlessly in space. We are the result of a complex chain of causes and effects that ultimately derive from God. Try it out: look at things in this way and you will lose your fear. Adopt this new vision and you will become a new human being.

Summer in the city

Over the course of 2023, The Acropolis Magazine will publish four quarterly editions delving into the four essential archetypes culture as understood in antiquity those of ; Beauty, Justice, Wisdom and the Sacred which can express their form through Art, Politics, Science and Religion.

For this Summer issue, we celebrate the ideal of Justice, a virtue which seeks to find the right balance and harmony in our actions; firstly as individuals, then as citizens within the wider community and finally as people of the collective human race.

All articles in the magazine are contributions by members of New Acropolis. Research and views expressed in each article are those of the individual authors and may not represent the collective views of New Acropolis.

We hope you enjoy!

Editorial Team
Alain Impellizzeri – Director
Pascale Naveau – Editor
Paul Savage – Design
Tim Leahy – Contributor



Democracy - The rule of the people

Two hundred years ago, no-one could claim to be living in a democracy. The world was ruled by autocrats. Today, about one-third of the world's population (2.3 billion people) live in a democratic political system of one form or another. Do those of us who live under such a system take democracy for granted? What is democracy anyway?

Democracy is a form of government in which power is held by the people, either directly or through elected representatives. In a democratic system, citizens have the right to participate in the decision-making process, and the government is held accountable to the people. In fact, the word 'democracy' is derived from the Greek word "Demokratia" which is made up of two words: "Demos" meaning people and "Kratia" meaning

rule - "rule of the people". In the words of Abraham Lincoln democracy is "Government of the people, by the people and for the people".

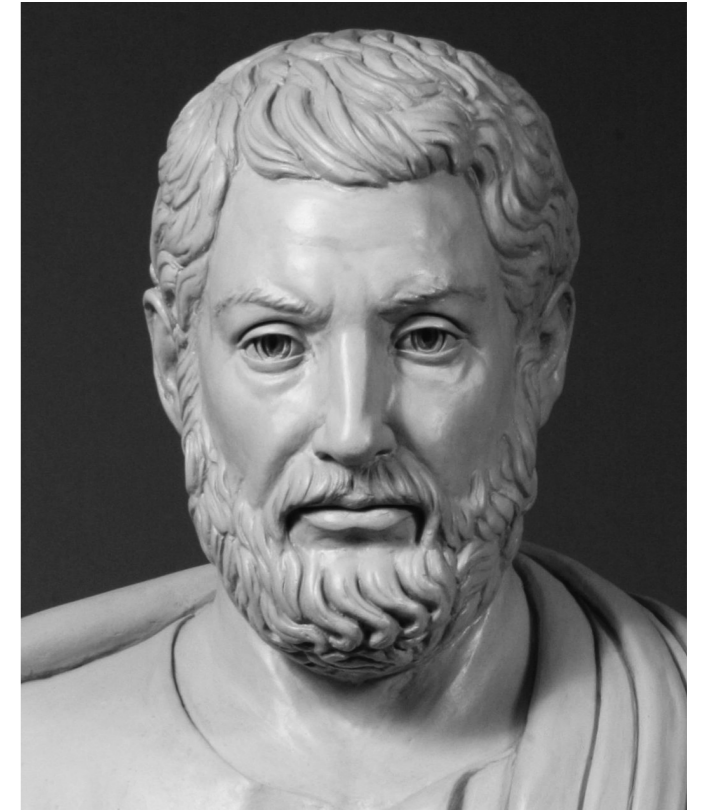
The core principles of democracy include popular sovereignty, civic participation, and accountability. Popular sovereignty means that the ultimate authority in the political system rests with the people, who have the right to choose their leaders and hold them accountable. Civic participation means that citizens have the right to participate in the decision-making process, either through direct participation or through elected representatives. Accountability means that the government is responsible for its actions and must be answerable to the people.

There are many different forms of democracy, ranging from direct democracy, where citizens make decisions directly through a system of voting or consensus-building, to representative democracy, where citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Democracy can also take different forms depending on the level of political and civil liberties that citizens enjoy, and the degree of decentralisation and distribution of power within the political system.

Democracy is regarded by many as the most effective form of government for promoting the well-being and freedom of citizens, as it helps to ensure that the government is responsive to the needs and interests of the people. However, democracy is not without its challenges and limitations, such as the risk of authoritarianism, corruption, and political polarisation. As such, it requires constant vigilance and active participation by citizens to ensure that it remains a vibrant and effective form of government.

Many historians believe that the origins of democracy can be traced back to ancient Greece, to the city-state of Athens in the 5th century BCE. In Athens, democracy emerged as a response to the rule of tribe-based tyrants and aristocrats who had previously held power. In 508 BCE, a lawgiver named Cleisthenes issued constitutional reforms that introduced a form of democracy. Among the changes brought in were voter registration for citizens, and division of Athens into constituencies called "demes". The changes reduced the power of the ruling aristocracy.

The Athenian democracy was a direct democracy in which citizens participated directly in decision-making by voting on laws and policies. All male citizens over the age of 18 were eligible to participate in the Assembly, which was the main legislative body. The Assembly met regularly to debate and vote on laws and policies, and it was also responsible for electing officials to various positions of power. However, it should be noted that Athenian democracy had limitations, as it excluded women, slaves, and non-citizens from participating. Only a small percentage of the population was eligible to participate in the political process, and even among eligible citizens, there were significant disparities in wealth and influence. Despite its limitations, however, the democratic changes that Cleisthenes introduced were a historic step forward. Cleisthenes is often referred to as "the father of Athenian democracy". In the century that followed, democracy was sometimes interrupted by war, coups and revolts.



In 508 BCE, a lawgiver named Cleisthenes issued constitutional reforms that introduced a form of democracy.

For example, in 404 BC Athens was defeated in war with Sparta, which temporarily ended a period of democracy in Athens.

Over time, the concept of democracy spread to other parts of the world, including Rome. Athens may have been the birthplace of democracy, but it was the Romans who developed the concept. Founded in the 8th century BC, the city-state of Rome was, for around 250 years, a monarchy ruled by a succession of kings. The kings wielded absolute power as the monarch. After the seventh king was deposed in 509 BCE, the Roman Republic was founded. The Republic had a form of representative democracy in which citizens elected officials to govern on their behalf. The government was composed of three legally separate branches. The Executive, run by the Consuls; the Legislative - the Assemblies & the Senate, and the Judiciary - the Judges and courts. The separation of powers between these branches of government was designed to prevent the return to a monarchy or other kind of dictatorship. Today, this government structure is the basis of all modern constitutional democracies. The Roman Republic lasted for over 500 years, and effectively ended in 27 BCE, when Caesar Augustus became the first Roman emperor, essentially returning Rome to a monarchy again.

In western Europe, the Middle Ages was a period where monarchies ruled, and the word of the king



“FOR IF LIBERTY AND EQUALITY, AS IS THOUGHT BY SOME, ARE CHIEFLY TO BE FOUND IN DEMOCRACY, THEY WILL BE BEST ATTAINED WHEN ALL PERSONS ALIKE SHARE IN THE GOVERNMENT TO THE UTMOST”

ARISTOTLE, POLITICS BOOK 6

or queen was the law. However, in feudal England in the late Middle Ages a significant step towards justice and democracy took place. In the early 13th century conflict over taxation occurred between King John and his barons (noblemen) and bishops. Fearing civil war, in 1215 the King agreed to seal into law the Magna Carta, or Great Charter. The document set out an agreed set of laws that the king was bound to uphold. In effect, some powers were transferred from the monarch to his citizens, particularly to the barons. The Magna Carta was an important milestone in the development of democracy in Europe, as it established the principle that even the king was subject to the law.

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment period brought a renewed focus on democratic ideals, and many of the founding documents of modern democracies, such as the United States Constitution, were written during this time. The US Constitution, ratified in 1789, established a federal system of government with a separation of powers that included checks and balances, and also a Bill of Rights that protected individual liberties. A constitution is a collection of legal principles by which a state is to be governed. It sets out the main institutions of government, such as the executive, legislature and judiciary, and defines the relationships between them. It documents the rights of citizens, and imposes responsibilities on those in government. A constitution is usually written in a single document, and is supported by a large body of supporting legislation known as statutes. Amendments to a constitution generally require a referendum, where the citizens vote for or against the proposed amendment. For example, the Irish constitution, known as Bunreacht na hÉireann has been amended 32 times since it came into force in 1937.

Effective democracy depends on having a just political system, and a justice system depends on having an effective democracy. The two are interlinked. Democracy provides the framework for establishing justice, while justice ensures that the principles of democracy are upheld.

“DEMOCRACY IS THE WORST FORM OF GOVERNMENT EXCEPT FOR ALL THOSE OTHER FORMS THAT HAVE BEEN TRIED FROM TIME TO TIME.”

WINSTON CHURCHILL, 1947



They are mutually reinforcing, and the effective implementation of one depends on the other. A society that upholds democracy and justice is one where citizens have equal rights, opportunities, and dignity, and where the rule of law is respected.

Democracy has had its critics, including in the time of ancient Athens. Two of the greatest ancient Greek philosophers, Socrates and his student Plato had a profound skepticism towards the democracy that they experienced in 5th century BCE Athens. In his renowned work "The Republic," Plato offered a detailed critique of democracy, highlighting its inherent flaws and presenting an alternative system of governance. Plato's critique stems from his belief that the masses, driven by their desires and passions, are incapable of making sound political decisions. According to him, democracy grants equal power to all citizens, regardless of their wisdom, knowledge, or virtue. This unrestricted power, he argues, leads to a society governed by the whims of the majority rather than the pursuit of justice.

Plato further contends that democracy promotes freedom without discipline, creating an atmosphere of chaos and confusion. He argues that in a democratic society, individual desires and self-interests take precedence over the common good. The pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and power becomes paramount, resulting in a fragmented society devoid of unity and harmony. Moreover, Plato criticised democracy for its susceptibility to populism. He asserts that charismatic leaders, appealing to the emotions and prejudices of the masses, can manipulate public opinion to further their personal agendas. This populist approach undermines the pursuit of truth and rational decision-making, fostering a culture of ignorance and irrationality.

In response to the flaws he identifies in democracy, Plato proposes an alternative system of governance based on the concept of meritocracy. He advocates for the rule of philosopher-kings, individuals who possess exceptional wisdom and virtue, as the ideal rulers. According to Plato, philosophers, trained in dialectic and possessing a comprehensive understanding of the archetypes of the Forms and the Good, are best equipped to make just and informed decisions for the benefit of society as a whole. Plato envisions a hierarchical society structured according to an individual's aptitude and innate abilities. He suggests that citizens should be assigned to occupations based on their natural talents, with the philosopher-kings

at the apex, guiding and governing society. The philosopher-king, motivated solely by the pursuit of wisdom and the common good, would ensure a just and stable society, free from the flaws inherent in democracy. Plato's alternative system also emphasises education as a fundamental pillar of his ideal society. He believes that an enlightened citizenry, educated in philosophy and virtue, would be better equipped to discern truth from falsehood and make informed decisions. Education, in Plato's view, is not just about acquiring knowledge but also cultivating the virtues necessary for good governance.

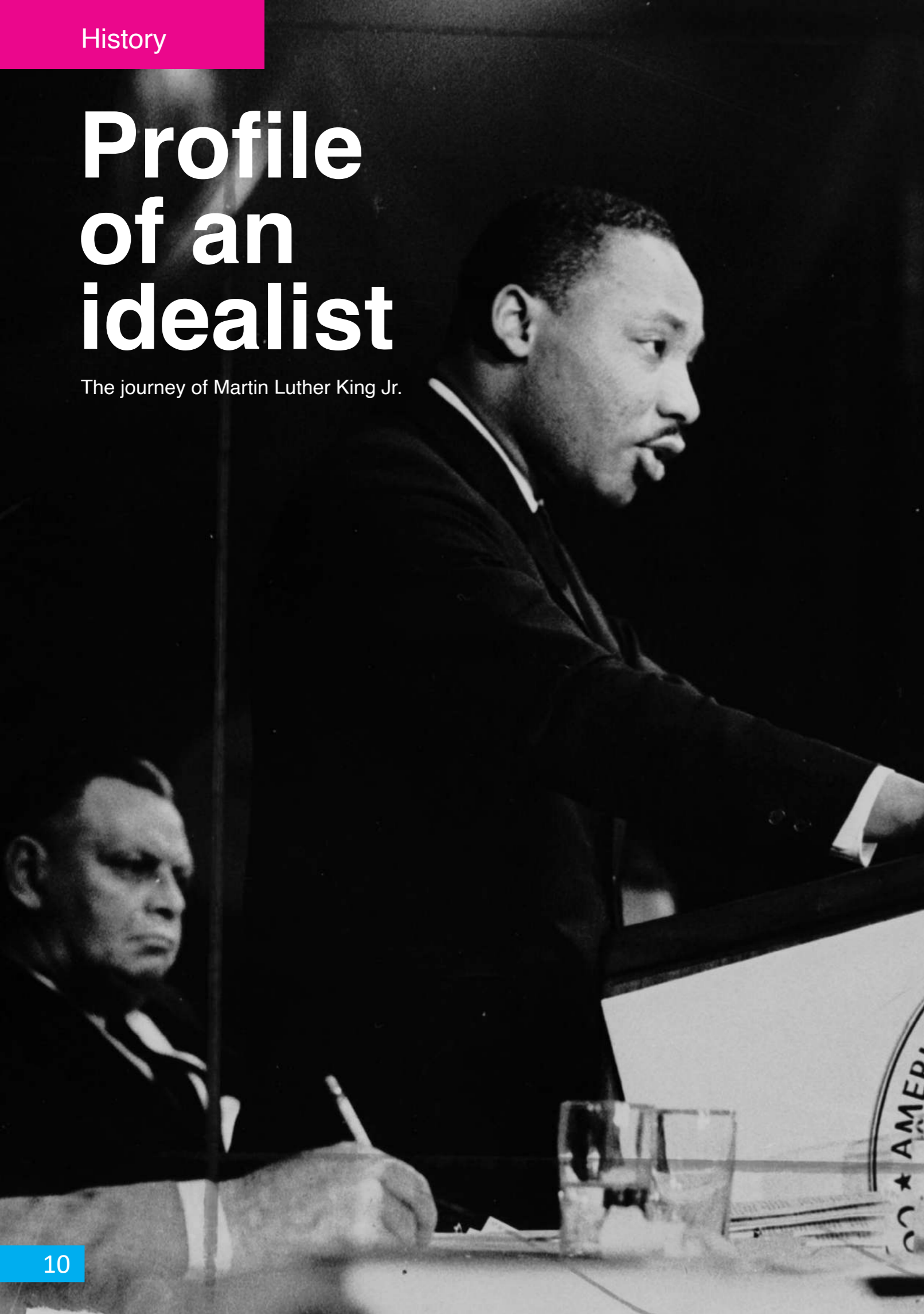
Critics have argued that Plato's vision of a philosopher-king ruling society is elitist and prone to abuses of power. They contend that granting absolute authority to a select few undermines the principles of equality and individual autonomy. Moreover, they question the feasibility of identifying and training philosopher-kings and the potential for corruption within such a system. However, despite the criticisms, Plato's critique of democracy remains relevant in contemporary society. It encourages us to critically examine the flaws and limitations of democratic systems, such as the potential for populism, uninformed decision-making, the influence of unelected, powerful people through lobbying and the neglect of long-term interests. Plato's emphasis on education, rationality, and the pursuit of the common good serves as a reminder of the essential values that should guide any system of governance. Plato's ideas prompt us to reflect on the importance of wisdom, education, and justice in creating a society that transcends the limitations of mere majority rule, and fosters the well-being of all its citizens.

Today, democracy is practiced in many countries around the world, with varying degrees of success and implementation. While democratic ideals are widely embraced, there are ongoing debates and challenges regarding issues such as voter access, political corruption, and the role of money in politics. Nonetheless, democracy remains one of the most important and influential systems of government in the modern world. We should never take it for granted.

Tim Leahy

Profile of an idealist

The journey of Martin Luther King Jr.



In charting a course through the journey of Martin Luther King Jr. from a segregated Atlanta to the center of the world's stage we are presented with the example of a true idealist. Because it's one thing to be an idealist when everyone agrees with you, to be a person of action when everyone wants the same as you, or to be a person of vision when everyone is looking in the same direction as you but the real test of character is the ability to stand true to our principles even when they are no longer popular or part of the consensus.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

He earned the right to say that because he lived it, but it's also clear that he wasn't perfect. He was a man, just another human being like any other, flawed and subject to moments of doubt, weakness and questionable judgement. This raises the challenge we sometimes have with idealism and perfection, the misnomer that someone has to be infallible to be able to make a difference. Perhaps we can redefine the idea of idealism, and Martin Luther King can continue to be an example to us even today.

Early Life

Born Michael King Jnr in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, his father Michael Snr decided to rename them both after a trip to Germany where he was inspired by the church reformer Martin Luther. The expectations for Junior were clearly very high. King grew up in a south still deeply segregated, a world almost difficult to imagine today. One so divided that African Americans, or 'Coloured' people had a very clearly defined and narrow place in American society.

Within these black communities a self-contained hierarchy was established, centered around the Baptist church. King's father was a powerful minister in one such church, a pillar of the community and so, in many ways, he was shielded from the petty indignities of segregation like many middle class African Americans. Martin Luther King Snr believed that children had to be raised tough and smart in a world where they had no rights so King was often beaten by his father.

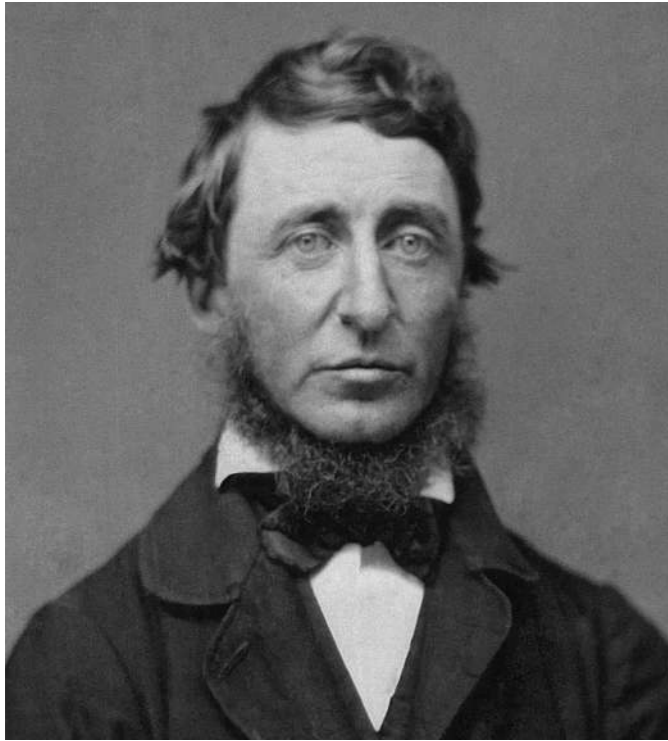
At fifteen he attended Morehouse, the same institution as his father and one of the most highly recognised black colleges in the south. His father

"If we strike back with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth then we will end up with a world that is blind and toothless, we need to find a more excellent way."

wanted to see him graduate as a preacher and come work with him in Ebenezer Church, but his time in Morehouse would spark his first rebellion – against the black church and his own father. King's education led him to discover a world beyond what he knew. He discovered philosophy, the works of Gandhi and of Henry David Thoreau. Against his father's wishes he went to Crozer Liberal Theological college, in the integrated north.

There, he continued to encounter many new ideas, some very challenging for his education; philosophy, politics, sociology. And he experienced the world beyond segregation which made the situation back home all the more real and all the more disturbing. He even took up with a young white girl for six months and fell madly in love with her. Of course an inter-racial union at that time would get them both killed in the south so he ended it.

He would eventually marry Coretta Scott in 1958 and settled in Montgomery, Alabama, as a pastor in Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. King made an immediate impression with his fiery and often impromptu sermons. He would prepare scripts but usually abandoned them at the last minute and instead spoke from the pulpit through his own inspiration which allowed him to garner quite a following.



Henry David Thoreau's philosophy of civil disobedience later influenced the political thoughts and actions of such notable figures as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr.[6] -wikimedia

The Civil Rights Movement

One aspect of segregation at the time was related to public transport and especially the buses. The Jim Crow laws of segregation obliged black people to give up their seats for white passengers should the bus become full. But on December 1st 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man and was arrested. This historic moment was not in itself an isolated incident but came at the right time to spark a reaction leading to the Montgomery Bus Boycotts which would last for just over a year. King became the reluctant leader of the movement. As would become a theme throughout his career, King overcame his self-doubt and embraced the responsibility of leadership. Inspired by his Christian faith and the influence of Gandhi he proposed a campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience.

King possessed a number of key strengths as a leader. He could inspire people with his passionate rhetoric, he frequently matched his words with his actions and he did not fear incarceration in a southern prison. Despite the danger of such an outcome, King was arrested 29 times in 10 years of campaigning. Though he exhibited courage and confidence he was also sharply aware from very early on that his higher-than-average profile made him a target for segregationist whites who threatened him and his family regularly with

violence. One month into the Boycott he was receiving up to 50 letters and calls a day warning him to leave Montgomery or he would be killed. Even when these threats resulted in his house being bombed, and friends and supporters were ready to strike back, he sent them away, paraphrasing Gandhi;

“If we strike back with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth then we will end up with a world that is blind and toothless, we need to find a more excellent way.”

His reputation grew nationwide and his base began to grow as the nascent civil rights movement was developing in the form of the Montgomery Improvement Association, proposing the system of nonviolent solutions and protests. By December 1956 the bus system became fully integrated. This launched King to stardom and he travelled the nation speaking about the success of the boycott. For four years he tried to apply the lessons of the boycott to the rest of the south and found nothing but resistance.

Seeking a greater impact, King turned his attention to Birmingham, Alabama – a bastion of segregation, a city ready to meet his movements’ use of nonviolence with unreserved brute force. The police chief Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor was famous for acts of police brutality and played into King’s hands, demonstrating horrendous acts of violence on peaceful protesters, which via a new era of television, people in America and further afield were now able to witness. By the end of the campaign King was the undisputed national leader of the civil rights movement.

At the March on Washington event, staged to force President John F. Kennedy to act on his promise for a civil rights bill, King delivered his most famous speech, ‘I have a dream’. An historic piece of rhetoric which transformed King into America’s Moral Conscience. It would also be the pinnacle of his popularity. The next year, in 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.

His Final Year

There was something else eating away at King - his own conscience. He had been keeping his position to himself in relation to what was going on in South East Asia, the war in Vietnam. It reached a boiling point within him, he couldn’t contain it any longer and eventually he had to share with the world the concerns of his conscience, for he believed that silence equated to complicity, and he



Parks on one of Montgomery's buses on December 21, 1956, the day they became legally integrated. -wikimedia

would not be complicit in the war any longer.

It was on April 4th 1967 in Riverside Church in New York City, one year to the day before he would be shot and killed in Memphis that Martin Luther King gave his speech ‘Beyond Vietnam’. In this speech he gave a scathing account of the reality of the war, the impact it was having in foreign and domestic terms. Prophetically he spoke about how if they could not find another course they would find themselves not only remaining in Vietnam but that America’s foreign interests would drag them into wars all around the world for generations to come.

Though his speech was met with applause he was not met with adulation in the press nor in general public opinion, which was still largely in support of the war, nor even in his own circles where there were many who felt he was betraying the aim of the civil rights movement.

King found himself heavily criticised from all angles and even his doctrine of nonviolent civil disobedience was being challenged by an increasingly angry and militaristic contingent of black youths for whom change wasn’t coming quick enough. Elements of the leadership wanted to channel this force and found that King’s message was no longer captivating the audiences as it once was. Rioting in the ghettos of Chicago and other major cities was ramping up to a record high and militant wings of the black movement such as the Black Panthers were gaining traction.

For King, rioting was pointless, not only from an

ethical standpoint but from a practical one. He said,

“The limitation of riots, moral questions aside, is that they cannot win and their participants know it. Hence, rioting is not revolutionary but reactionary because it invites defeat. It involves an emotional catharsis, but it must be followed by a sense of futility.”

Yet he understood where it was coming from, referring to rioting as the ‘language of the unheard’. He matched this sense of frustration in his own struggles to have people understand that he was not going off topic in connecting the civil rights movement with the peace movement. It was just that he was linking things people didn’t want to have to think about, challenging America in a way it was not prepared to deal with.

“We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together, you can’t really get rid of one without getting rid of the others.”

Poverty was the core issue and the billions being spent on the war, for King, equated to dropping bombs not only in Vietnam but in the inner city ghettos of America. But out of fear of losing popular support many of the prominent black leaders distanced themselves from King. His attempts to raise funds through benefit concerts which had been successful in the past now barely broke even. Under so much stress King started to come apart at the seams, slipping into depression and really starting to doubt himself. Yet, as he had always done in the past, he found the strength to endure and above all, to not back down. He had even been offered a pastorate at a prestigious progressive church in England, a real option to take himself and his family away from all the struggle and danger he was facing every day. But he knew he could not run away from the struggle, from his people and he turned it down.

Because he wanted to focus not only on the war but on its ramifications for those at home he continued to campaign for the poor, setting up a movement within the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) which continued to garner controversy given King’s now shaky standing within the organisation. Towards the end of March 1968 he went to Memphis to support the sanitation workers who were on strike for better pay and conditions. There he delivered his final speech, which concluded with very prophetic words.



Crowds surrounding the Reflecting Pool, during the 1963 March on Washington.
Photo by Warren K. Leffler, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

**“We must see now
that the evils of
racism, economic
exploitation and
militarism are all
tied together, you
can’t really get
rid of one without
getting rid of the
others.”**

The Committed Idealist

Looking at Doctor King’s legacy from a philosophical perspective we can examine the nature of idealism. Going beyond the perception of idealism as a sort of naïve optimism, a fruitless wishful thinking confined to a period of youth, we can define an idealist as a person of vision. But we have to put that vision into action or else it will remain an idea, a fanciful dream.

If we want our vision of transforming the world into a better place to happen then we have to be practical. King even drew a distinction between what he called ‘magical hope’ and ‘realistic hope’, the first being sheer optimism that somehow things will magically improve and the latter being hope based on a willingness to face the risk of failure and embrace an ‘in spite of’ quality. In spite of the difficulties we face we can overcome them.

As such, King remains a true example of the committed idealist: one who wills their ideals into reality to create a positive impact in the world. Such an example can continue to inspire us, as we seek to make our vision of life a reality, not only for ourselves but for future generations.

Aidan Murphy

“Like anybody I would like to live a long life, longevity has its place but I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain and I’ve looked over and I have seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you but I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I’m happy tonight, I’m not worried about anything, I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”

That was April 3rd 1968. The following day, one year after the ‘Beyond Vietnam’ speech, Martin Luther King Jr was shot in the head by a sniper while standing on his second floor balcony. He was 39 years old. The man who was charged for and pled guilty to the crime, James Earl Ray, maintained he was a patsy and that there had been a conspiracy behind the assassination. Though many theories circulated nothing ever substantiated any of them. In the wake of his death there were riots across America with the SCLC also receiving a huge surge in support. Through King’s martyrdom, previous controversies in his personal and political life were washed away along with many aspects of his challenging ‘truth to power’ message.



One of the last Inca Emperors, Atahualpa - image britannica.com

The Incas: a Roman like civilization in South America

Our society can benefit greatly from the philosophical study of the great civilizations of mankind. This article is an invitation to investigate the socio-political organization of the Incas: an empire that reached an impressive political refinement and parallels that of the Romans.

The Incas first appeared in modern-day Peru sometime during the 12th century, arising from earlier pre-Incan groups in the region. These earlier groups have been credited with creating the ancient Nazca Lines, immense drawings etched into the landscape.

They established their capital at Cuzco in the 12th century, but until the 14th century, there was little to distinguish the Incas from the many other tribes

inhabiting small domains throughout the Andes. It was during the 14th century that they began to expand, yet they did not truly become an expansive power until the eighth emperor, Viracocha Inca, took control in the early 15th century. It was under his reign that they began a program of permanent conquest, by establishing garrisons among the settlements of the peoples whom they had conquered – and within 100 years (by the 16th century) they had gained control of an Andean population of about 12 million people, covering parts of modern Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Colombia.

As every empire, though, at times harsher policies were deployed to manage the vastness of the lands and tribes under their reign. At the height of their expansion,

for instance, a policy (called “mitmaq”) of forced resettlement of large contingents from each conquered people helped ensure political stability by distributing ethnic groups throughout the empire and thus making the organization of revolt very difficult. If they were seen as loyal, they could be transplanted as a garrison colony to help maintain order in a newly conquered province or alternatively, if seen as questionably loyal, settled among more loyal populations to become better integrated into Inca society. On the plus side, this practice enhanced agricultural productivity, as such colonizing groups were at times used to exploit ecozones not seen as efficiently or productively used by native groups.

Local governors were responsible for exacting taxes in kind – e.g. textiles, grain, etc – or labour tax, on which the empire was based. The labour tax included service in the army, public works, or in agricultural work. It was performed by the male heads of households. Periods of service varied; especially intensive service, such as mining, was kept short to avoid exhaustion.

How did the Incas build such a vast empire? Similar to the early Romans, diplomacy was used as the first approach, most of the time. By promising peace and gifts (though often backed by threats), many battles were won. The subjugated peoples were expected to obey the Inca leaders and learn Quechua - the empire’s official language – through a formal education provided in Cuzco to the children of noble families from recently acquired territories. By doing so, not only did they disseminate fluency in Quechua, but also the imperial law, and bureaucratic practices. Families which previously held political positions were integrated into the Incan bureaucracy, and traditional tribal areas of settlement integrated as provinces, their pre-conquest boundaries typically remaining intact. In addition, they were allowed to keep their native language, leaders, and gods. These are but a few of practices of tolerance and eclecticism that are rare in our modern politics.

They constructed a vast network of roads, their architecture was highly developed, and the remains of their irrigation systems, palaces, temples, and fortifications are still in evidence throughout the Andes. Incan society was highly stratified and featured an aristocratic bureaucracy. Their pantheon, worshiped in a highly organized state religion, included a sun god, a creator god, and a rain god. The Incan empire was overthrown in 1532 by the Spanish conquerors, who made great use of the Incan road system during conquests. The Inca’s descendants are the Quechua-



Inca descendants in modern Peru - Elder woman from Cusco, Peru Hand Spinning - Wikimedia

speaking peasants of the Andes. In Peru nearly half the population is of Incan descent. They are primarily farmers and herders living in close-knit communities. The empire covered a varied landscape ranging from deserts to lofty mountain peaks and rain forests. As such, it required a highly organized state machine, in which the state designated a job for absolutely everyone in the public projects. Idleness was not permitted, which might explain why the subjects apparently never witnessed hunger nor high rates of criminality.

Perhaps there are valuable insights that could inspire a reflection on our modern political systems. Despite technological advancements, many countries still struggle to provide basic needs for their citizens. It is said the technologies we developed nowadays already suffice to end the world’s hunger, so why haven’t we achieved that yet? Clearly, due to the lack of a real sense of common good above personal interests. In that sense, the Incas illustrate an example of how humans have naturally cultivated and developed political and social structures that can, through a very mature social ethos, provide for their population. Why not then unite such social ethos with our modern science, taking the best of each society, aiming for a better and more just world? Since we have the benefit of looking at them in hindsight, let’s make the most of our vantage point, seeing how we as a modern day society also operate in similar ways (both positive and negative). It’s a great opportunity to learn from the past in order to better integrate the positive aspects of past civilisations.

Lilian Salaber

Common ground

making space for inclusivity

Maya Angelou, a civil right activist for human rights said: "Inclusivity is not just tolerating differences, but actively embracing and celebrating them." But what is the real role of inclusivity in the modern world? What does it mean, and how does inclusiveness contribute to the creation of a more well-operating society?

The word "Inclusive" comes from the Latin "inclusivus" which means "enclosed" or "To close in", i.e. to belong to the same space. To be inclusive means making sure that all the individuals in these "enclosed spaces" feel welcome and valued, regardless of differences such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or ability. A political structure that does not prioritise this intrinsic value fails to govern as it should, since diversity should be treated as a vital cornerstone throughout community and state. This subject can be highly delicate at times, but approaching it without our usual assumptions and an open mind can help us to open space to develop more acceptance. So how can we expand our views

and reallocate more room to individuals that are still seen to be on the peripherals of society? In the words of Bryan Stevenson "To be inclusive, we must first be willing to examine our own biases and prejudices." Embracing inclusivity demands continuous dedication and to manifest it, one must nurture virtues such as Justice, Acceptance, Humility, and Empathy.

Scientists have also provided insights into this intrinsic nature of human beings through a concept sometimes referred to as "Nurture versus Nature". The studies have shown that diversity does not lie only in genetic influences, but also, is affected by our external experiences. It is a combination of biological and environmental factors; a realm of massive possibilities that hence, shapes human differences. Therefore, we don't have to create space for differences, as it is nature-made, instead, we need to nurture values that welcome those evident distinctions, keeping in mind that life is already diverse in itself.

Guiding us towards a crucial question: What steps can we take to create a society that fosters both opportunity and diversity?

This brings us to question our current approaches to inclusion in society nowadays: Are they the best alternatives to raise people's awareness about the importance of inclusion?

It is known that certain current approaches to inclusivity have the potential to inadvertently misrepresent and perpetuate stereotypes about specific societal groups. In attempts of the practice, society can face unintended consequences. Additionally, we can end up reinforcing generalisations and contributing to the discrimination of certain groups, or even make an impression that certain individuals are being favoured or selected solely based on their identities, which can lead to resentment or further division. At times, inclusivity can be easily linked to political movements. Possibly because of the partisan ways we've been accessing media nowadays. However, despite political movements often embracing inclusivity for their own agendas, it is important not to lose sight of the importance of keeping inclusivity a priority when it comes to our institutions, educational life and other social settings. Looked at as a virtue, inclusivity is something in life that will never be 'perfect' but more so a continuous challenge for society to achieve better examples of that ideal.

Guiding us towards a crucial question: What steps can we take to create a society that fosters both opportunity and diversity? Is there really space for everyone?

The influence we experience through the society we live in or indeed the media we consume can give us very limiting views on the world and in extreme cases, drive us towards views of bigotry and anger towards other sections of society. By learning how to see people once more as fellow human beings and not in terms of class, race, nationality, wealth etc it is possible to live a more harmonious existence.

A lot is discussed about Inclusivity, Diversity, and Opportunity. Terms like "Equity of outcome" and "Equity of opportunity" might mean the very same thing for some people, but for others it can be a completely different thing. Some people may say that "Equity of opportunity" is strongly linked to "Equity of outcome".

For them these terms are synonyms, and they are just two different ways of referring to the same concept. If you had the opportunity to reach a privileged outcome, that means you clearly had privileged opportunities. Hence, for them, if those outcomes become guaranteed in some way, society will inevitably drive towards a more homogenous population. Whereas, for other people, while "Equity of opportunity" is considered one of the main pillars for a just society, they don't advocate for people to reach privileged outcomes based on their characteristics, culture, religion and so on.

The structure, instead, consists of making opportunities more accessible so people with socio-economic disadvantages or that lack access to resources and opportunities can count on political institutions to provide them access to education, access to information and guidance.

Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, discussed the importance of education and inclusion in his works. In his famous dialogue "The Republic," Plato presents his ideal society and explores the role of education within it. Plato believed in the power of education to shape individuals and society. He argued that the purpose of education was not only to transmit knowledge but also to cultivate virtues and develop well-rounded citizens. In his ideal society, education was seen as a means to create a just and harmonious community.

In the final analysis, education is a fundamental tool to develop inclusivity. Inclusion will generate more opportunities. Opportunities open the doors to better outcomes for marginalised communities. These communities can contribute to the improvement of those political institutions by creating more diversity within the system which often, in its privilege, is initially slow to recognise and provide for.

With time, there may come a day when we can fully absorb Mahatma Gandhi's words, as he observed: "Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation"

Maxwell Fabricio

Islamic Spain

The Seeds of Convivencia

Interior of the Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba formerly the Great Mosque of Córdoba - Ronny Siegel - wikimedia

When historians represent the past, they interpret it in many ways based on the evidence collected. In the case of Islamic Spain, the period from eight to the fifteenth century, historians tend to differ on their view. Some see it as an idyllic period lived between the different monotheistic religions while others see it rather as a barbaric period in European history when Islam invaded the Iberian Peninsula (which is today's Spain and Portugal) and cruelly ruled over it. As with most historical interpretations, the truth lies somewhere in between these two extremes. Whichever side one leans, what is clear is that Islamic Spain, also called Moorish Spain, was a culture that shone bright during the Dark Ages of Europe. It was a period where Arab-Islamic civilisation transmitted and developed philosophical, scientific and technological learning but also was an example of the value of tolerance. This was demonstrated in the fact that three different faiths of Islam, Christianity and Judaism were able to live together in relative peace and in some cases went beyond tolerating one another and entered into 'convivencia', a Spanish word that can be translated as harmonious coexistence. It is the human value of being able to find something in common and to live that commonality together, so to nurture and cultivate the best in all. In this culture we can find some lessons to help us face the challenges we have in our society today, that despite our divisions there is something that can transcend them.

The history of Islamic Spain starts in 711 AD when the Islamic warrior Tariq ibn Ziyad gathered his army and crossed the narrow strip separating Africa and the southern coast of Spain, landing at Gibraltar, the rock that would bear his name (Gibraltar, from Jabal Tariq, "Tariq's Mountain"). The Muslim forces fought against the Visigoths and by 716 AD were entering into northern Spain and the central plateau; they expanded their domain further and crossed the Pyrenees where the Franks eventually stopped them. The territory that was conquered they called Al-Andalus.

The culture that eventually emerged in Al-Andalus was Islamic but there was recognition of a special relationship with Judaism and Christianity, called a 'dhimma'. The people of the dhimma were granted religious freedom and were not forced to convert. They could share in Muslim social and economic life but needed to pay a special tax and observe a number of restrictive regulations. How this was implemented depended on the Islamic rulers of the time and as María Rosa Menocal explained in her book 'Ornament of the World': "The Umayyads, whose ethics and aesthetics were the very wellspring of Andalusian culture, had more often than not been extraordinary liberal in their vision of the dhimma."

This culture of openness allowed other religions access to a wealth of knowledge that had been absorbed by Islam. Islam collected knowledge from many different cultures such as China, India, Persia, Byzantium and

others and translated it into Arabic to preserve it and to add to it in many different fields such as philosophy, science, mathematics, medicine and technology. Dr Jim Al-Khalili in his book "The House of Wisdom – How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave Us the Renaissance" gives a history of this enlightened period and poses the question "Why did the Islamic world enter its own dark age after such a dazzling flowering?" This knowledge brought about a material and intellectual wealth to Al-Andalus, exceeding that of the rest of Europe at the time. In the city of Córdoba there were hundreds of libraries that attracted scholars from all around Europe, and even the city streets were paved and lit by lamps which was a development for that time.

Islamic Spain was one example of a culture that could absorb apparent contradictions, accepting there are different ways to think, to feel and to express oneself and that an imposed uniformity stifles individual and collective well-being.

In the court of Abd al-Rahman III, the ruler or caliph of Al-Andalus from 912 to 961 appointed a Jewish vizier, named Hasdai ibn Shaprut. The caliph elevated Hasdai to higher and higher office over his career and he would eventually become the foreign secretary of the caliph. Jews rose to prominent positions in Al-Andalus over its history. Another example was Samuel ibn Naghrila born in Córdoba who went to Granada where he entered the service of the rulers and rose to the position of first minister of the principality. At the tomb of Ferdinand III of Castile, were inscriptions in Arabic, Latin, Hebrew and Castilian. His son Alfonso who was called "the Learned" built this tomb for his father and placed it in the Great Mosque of Seville, which has been re-consecrated as a cathedral of the new Castilian capital.

How did this culture decline and eventually extinguish? It was not only external forces at its borders but more the inner forces of disunity that arose to break the delicate balance, a combination of poor leadership, a loss of solidarity that once united people together and the import of a certain sector of Islamic fundamentalist that was not in tune with the more liberal and



The civilization of the Caliphate of Córdoba in the time of Abd al-Rahman III - Dionisio Baixeras Verdaguer wikimedia

progressive Al-Andalusian culture. Al-Hakam II was the ruler of Córdoba starting in 961 AD and died fifteen years later leaving his son Hisham II to succeed him. However Hisham II was eleven years old and not eligible to rule the kingdom at that time and his chamberlain, infamously known as al-Mansur, took over as regent until Hisham II was old enough. Al-Mansur was morally corrupt and led Al-Andalus into many conflicts, his dictatorship sowed seeds of disunity that would later fracture Al-Andalus into different taifas or small independent Muslim kingdoms due to a civil war that started in 1009 AD. These smaller kingdoms were weaker and divided and were eventually conquered by the forces of Catholic Kingdoms of the north. In 1492 came the fall of the Kingdom of Granada, the last enclave of Islamic Spain. The city was peacefully handed over to Catholic Monarchs, the King and Queen of Castile and Aragon. With this ushered in a period of intolerance, with the expulsion or forced conversions of Spanish people who followed the religion of Judaism and Islam.

Islamic Spain was one example of a culture that could absorb apparent contradictions, accepting there are different ways to think, to feel and to express oneself and that an imposed uniformity stifles individual and collective well-being. Human differences are natural and these differences can help us to see and learn from each other. It does not mean we always have

to agree with the differences, whatever they are, but trying to understand others aids in living together better. In Islamic Spain, the concept of the 'dhimmi' brought tolerance and through time the different faiths started to learn from each other and share a common Al-Andalusian culture that cultivated the best in all. It was not perfect, nothing is, but it is a good chapter in the history of humanity to learn from, as we face the same challenges today in our own individual and collective lives.

Michael Ward



Sunset over the hill of Tara, Co Meath. Photo by Neil Forrester

Law of the land

THE BREHON LAWS OF ANCIENT IRELAND

When you want to learn about the nature and functioning of a civilisation or society, you will get some indication by studying their laws. From these you get a sense of the character and aspiration of the people. In ancient Ireland there was a functioning set of practical, humane, thoughtful and incredibly detailed sets of laws called the 'Feinechus'; better known by the anglicized name 'Brehon' which translates 'to judge'. The term "Brehon" refers to a legal system in ancient Ireland. Brehon law was practiced by the Brehons, who were judges and legal experts, often connected to a clan or Tuatha (territory) and these laws are regarded as some of the oldest sets of laws in northern Europe.

The Brehon laws were mostly recorded orally with many being structured in verse in order to make memorisation easier. This meant the Brehons were not only legal experts but also poets with a deep knowledge of the local history and folklore of the community as well as music, medicine, astrology and philosophy. So much so was their influence in the community that often the punishment people feared the most was to be the subject of a satirical verse written by the brehon that could lead to being publicly ostracised.

The Brehon laws themselves were designed to settle disputes in a fair and balanced manner, in accordance

with developed customs deemed appropriate. The disputes were listened to by the Brehon who would act as an arbiter between the parties involved, and in some cases an unbiased wise neighbor could act as brehon. When judgment was being delivered an offender's state of mind was always taken into consideration prior to judgment being passed, as was his or her status in the hierarchy of society. No one was above the law, not even the king. The higher the person's status in society, the larger the fine (called the honour price) for breaking the law.

Even though the oral tradition was predominantly how the laws were upheld and passed down through generations, an important meeting held every three years on Samhain (Marking the beginning of winter on November 1st) at the Hill of Tara was where the brehons from all over ancient Ireland would meet with the Ard Rí (high king) in order to resolving any regional disputes regarding title to rank, property and privilege. Names and outcomes would be carefully noted and entered into official records in which some fragments have survived to become valuable sources of insight into the Brehon laws.

Restitution was also a primary feature of the laws which for example; if two men got into a fight and one man got



If you were awarded another man's beasts as a fine for something owed, it was your duty to take proper care of the animals while in your possession illustration from the Luttrell Psalter, 14th century. - The British Library

his leg broken and was deemed by the Brehon to be the wronged party, the aggressor would have to work the land of the injured man until he was fit and able to work the land himself. There may also have been a fine to be paid to the injured party, depending if the break was intentional or accidental. If the individual could not afford to pay the fine his family or clan would also be called upon to compensate.

Customs and precedents of the laws evolved over millennia and were constantly amended and updated to suit changing times and fairer methods to apply to the citizens. The laws even extended to animals and trees which had to be cared for and only harmed or felled if deemed necessary. As the Book of Aicill states: "the wounds of beasts are as of the wounds of a human being". Whether the wounds were inflicted intentionally or accidentally were taken into consideration when the brehons were culminating their verdict, with heavier fines for injuries inflicted intentionally. If you were awarded another man's beasts as a fine for something owed, it was your duty to take proper care of the animals while in your possession, by watering, feeding and appropriate bedding daily. When the dispute was settled and the fine paid the animals were returned to the original owner.

Further signs of the nature of the people whom these laws served were seen in the position of 'Brigiú' or 'hospitalier' whose duty it was to provide free room and board to any travelers that required it. The legendary accounts talk of the good kings whose households always had a pot of food on the fire ready to feed any who wanted to eat from it.

Within the Brehon laws we also see remarkable respect and sensitivity with such things as Divorce being permitted and dealt with in mature ways by accommodating division of property and compensation etc. Homosexuality was also accepted and accounted for in the Brehon laws; with laws specifically stating

that same sex partnerships should be tolerated as long as neither was married. Seeing these examples of open minded and progressive thinking highlights how regressive society can become and we should never take for granted that with further years comes progressive progress in such matters as diversity and tolerance.

Of course the Brehon laws and the time in which they existed were not without their failings, for instance it was a social system which relied on slavery. The patron saint of Ireland Saint Patrick arrived in Ireland after having been enslaved from Wales. The Irish would raid parts of England, Scotland, Wales and France and capture people for enslavement. There were also indigenous slaves in Ireland, people who could not pay fines handed down by the brehon or who were in financial difficulties sold themselves into slavery. It was in fact Saint Patrick himself that escaped slavery in Ireland and returned in 420 AD to convert the Irish pagans to Christianity. With this conversion vast amounts of ancient Brehon literature and Irish ogham writings were destroyed in order to erode the influence of the ancient indigenous customs.

Customs and traditions that are deeply rooted in a society over thousands of years, are very hard to eradicate however, and signs of the Brehon laws are still present today in the Irish psyche. We see particularly in the use of Irish phrases such as 'Cead míle fáilte', which means 'a hundred thousand welcomes' and harkens back to the previously mentioned brehon importance of showing good hospitality for travellers. This can be a very important reflection for us, especially in our modern times; that respect for fellow humans, the community and especially those from other lands is a timeless virtue and tradition not to be forgotten.

David Murtagh

Food for thought



Apple Roses - deliciously cute pastries

Ingredients

- 2/3 Red Apples (sweet)
- Puff Pastry (lazy method: buy it ready-made and rolled!)
- Apricot Jam
- The juice of 1 lemon
- Icing Sugar
- Ground cinnamon

Method

- Preheat the oven to 200 degrees and adjust the rack in the middle.
- Wash your apples and then cut them in half, removing the core.
- Slice the apples in half moon slices (3 mm thick).
- Place them in a bowl with lukewarm water and lemon juice to preserve their colour and avoid oxidation.
- Place the bowl with the apples and the lemon water in the microwave for 1 to 2 minutes until the apple slices are soft and easily malleable.
- In the meantime, cut the puff pastry into long strips (6 cm wide).
- Spread a teaspoon of apricot jam on each of the puff pastry strips.
- Once the apples are heated and soft, remove from the microwave.
- Place a strip of puff pastry on the counter or a board length ways from left to right.
- Place slices of apple on the long edge of the puff pastry (starting on the left of the strip) so that the flat part of the apple slice is facing you, with the rounded edges of the apple slices about 2.5cm beyond the edge of the pastry, overlapping the slices slightly.
- Fold the strip in its length so that the base of the apple slices are covered and the rounded edges of the apple slices are exposed (they will be the petals of the apple roses).
- Now you have a narrow (3cm) strip of pastry filled with apple slices.
- You now roll the strip from one end and stand it on its base with the apple petals towards the ceiling. You have a small rose.
- It should maintain its shape. You can place them either in a cupcake tray or on a flat tray.
- Bake the roses for 45 minutes.
- Once the roses have cooled down, cover them in icing sugar and cinnamon and serve them to your guests... yummy!

If you dont try to put the smallest detail of your daily life in harmony with the great ideas that you defend, these ideas have no meanings.

- **Etty Hillesum** (1914 - 1943)
Dutch Jewish author of confessional letters and diaries



NEW ACROPOLIS IRELAND

Philosophy Culture Volunteering



Philosophy

To be a philosopher is a way of life which is committed to the best aspirations of humanity.
Philosophy, when it is practical, is educational.
It helps us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves.

Culture

The practice of human values is the basis for a model of active and participative Culture, which brings out the qualities of each person, broadens the horizons of the mind and opens the human being up to all the expressions of the spirit.



Volunteering

Volunteering is the natural expression of a spirit of union with life and humanity, which manifests in the practice of values such as unselfishness, and a commitment to strive for the common good.
It is by practicing the universal values of philosophy that we can deeply transform ourselves and turn our ideas into action.

The practice of philosophy develops self-confidence, moral strength and resilience to face the difficulties and crises of life. It allows us to become an actor of change in our lives and around us.

Our introductory course in practical philosophy offers a series of theoretical and practical classes to progress in self-knowledge, to practice taking advantage of every circumstance in life without forgetting to develop solidarity with others.

For more on our courses, public talks and activities you can contact us:

Email: info@acropolis.ie

Phone: (01) 496 8310

Web: www.acropolis.ie

Facebook: [NewAcropolisIreland](https://www.facebook.com/NewAcropolisIreland)

