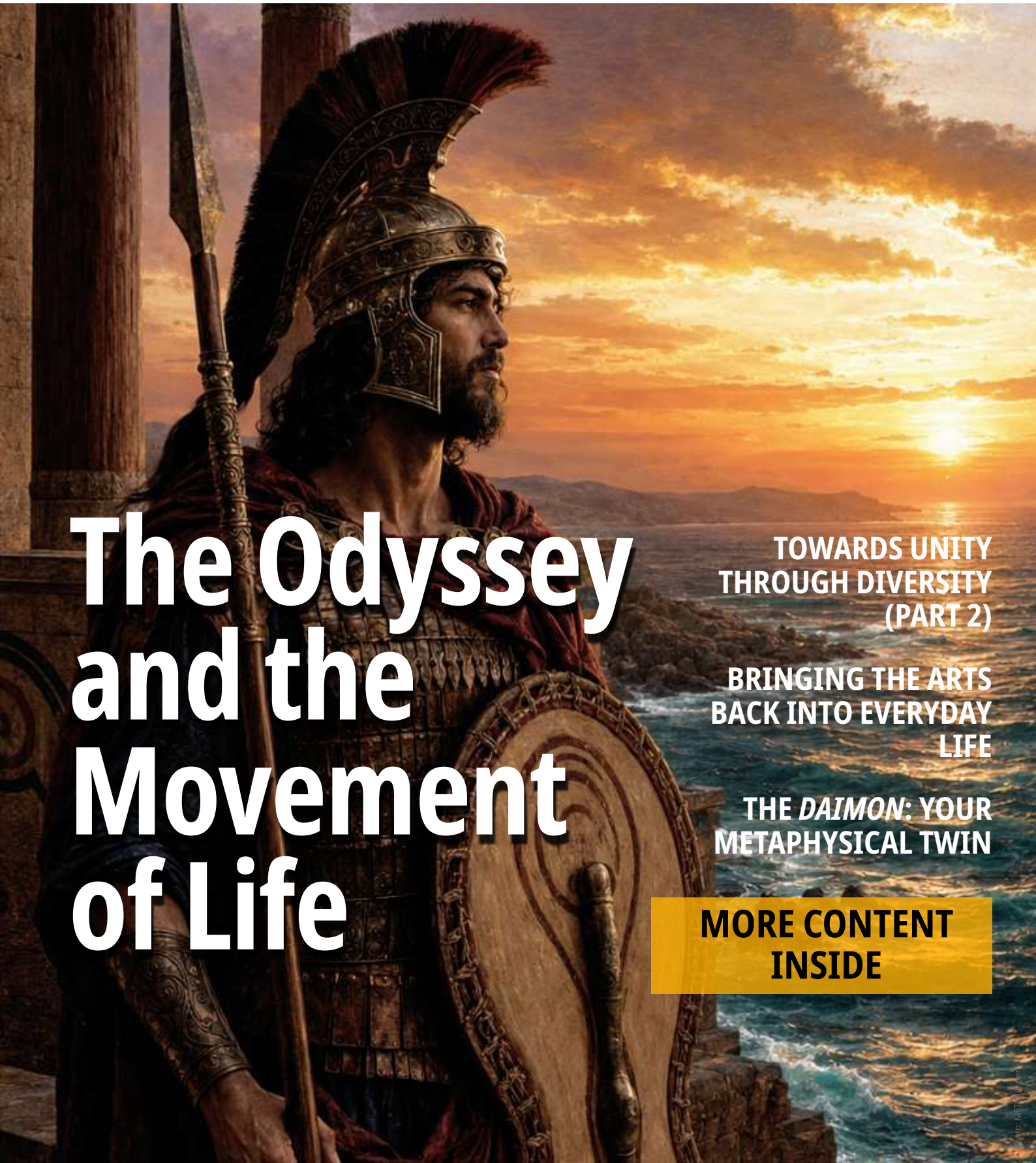
NEW ACROPOLIS

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MAGAZINE



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NEW ACROPOLIS



PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

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EDITORIAL

BY
SABINE LEITNER



The Fast and Slow Wheels of History

Is history only shaped by the quick succession of crises, wars, catastrophes and disruptions that we see every day in our headlines? Or are there also other, much slower, less visible and less noticeable currents that have a huge impact?

According to Fernand Braudel, a French historian, history moves with different rhythms. He divided historical time into three levels: the short-term history of rapid political events, which he compared to mere 'foam on the waves'; the medium-term cycles of economies and societies; and the slow, cumulative, and almost imperceptible changes which he called the *longue durée* where the most profound shifts in human history happen.

These incremental changes are often invisible until they become reality and part of history. An example of this is how the average global life expectancy at birth has increased from 32 years in 1900 to over 71 years today. The accumulating effects of basic sanitation, hygiene, improved agricultural yields and refrigeration never caused headlines, and yet, across the generations, they achieved an incredible result.

Rebecca Solnit's excellent book *The Beginning Comes After the End: Notes on a World of Change* describes several social, political, scientific, and cultural transformations that have changed the world over the past six decades. Whilst we all might feel a sense of general collapse when witnessing the death of old structures, she gives examples of some of the positive movements that are quietly giving birth to a new world.

For instance, it is only seventy years ago that racial segregation was normal in the United States. Today this has become unthinkable and incomprehensible. But in 1960, almost all Black students in the South attended entirely separate, underfunded all-Black schools and many Black Americans were effectively denied the right to vote because of literacy tests.

The change happened because of the slow accumulation of individual activism. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in 1955, she was not the first person to do so. But her action occurred at a specific moment, when enough momentum had accumulated, that it became the spark that activated a nationwide mass protest which helped ignite the American civil rights movement. Rosa Parks and other prominent civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King did make it into the headlines, but many other people contributed to the change quietly in the background. One such person is Septima Poinsette Clark (1898-1987) who recognised that the literacy tests systemically disenfranchised Black voters and, instead of fighting the laws directly, she created informal literacy workshops that were held in the backs of beauty parlours and dry cleaners. By teaching thousands of adults to read and write, she quietly added new voters to the voting rolls, dismantling slowly the obstacles for voting.

This proves that decades of activism by countless, today unknown individuals can bring about changes that were as unimaginable at the start, as the initial situation is unimaginable to us today. The abolition of slavery, the rise of workers' rights, and environmental protections didn't come about through top-down legislation but through ordinary individuals who acted in favour of a future that was then but a dream, until institutions were forced to adapt.

Another example of slow change is the concept of interdependence and systems thinking that is gradually entering wider aspects of human culture and steadily creating change by moving away from viewing the world as a collection of isolated parts towards recognizing interconnected networks and dynamic interactions in nature and culture. As this new paradigm spreads, it will fundamentally change how we think and act over the coming centuries.

A positive outcome of this emergent thinking (and also of accumulative campaigning) is that over one million acres of land were returned to Native Americans across the United States in recent years. Environmental organizations and government departments who managed the land before began to recognize that Indigenous stewardship was among the best ways to restore and protect the land. Decades of campaigning by local tribes and the growing systemic understanding also achieved, in October 2024, that four dams along the Klamath River in California were dismantled. Almost immediately after the coming down of the dams, the Chinook salmon surged upstream once again, after having been prevented from doing so for more than a century.

If we apply systemic thinking to history, then it becomes apparent that we all shape history. In a dynamic complex system, we are not passive bystanders and we can't claim powerlessness anymore. Every choice, every action and even every thought and opinion impact on the whole system and can potentially have far-reaching consequences. This gives all of us a moral responsibility. We all have the power to act like the change we want to see in the world, and every choice will contribute to the long, quiet currents that will define our future.

Sabine Leitner is the Director of New Acropolis UK.

BRINGING THE ARTS BACK INTO EVERYDAY LIFE

“Art was also cultivated in the countryside: after the manual work was done, people would sit together and sing, make music or tell fairy tales.“

ART & PHILOSOPHY

BY
SABINE LEITNER



Image from www.pexels.com

A strange phenomenon has occurred in the field of the arts: we have separated art from everyday living and imprisoned it in galleries and museums. We leave it to the experts, the stars. And the constant availability of music and videos means that we can access practically any art form at any time via the internet on our phones and other devices.

Until the early 20th century in Europe, however, it was common practice for people to be artistically active themselves. In the cities, where people generally had a higher level of education, there were ‘salons’. From the 18th to the 20th centuries, musical and literary salons were found throughout Europe, Russia and the USA. People would meet at the home of a lady, the ‘salonnière’, and not only come to listen but also to offer musical or literary contributions themselves. Then, in many families, ‘house music’ was played in small ensembles, hence the term ‘chamber music’. It was usual for daughters from upper-class families to receive piano and singing lessons.

But art was also cultivated in the countryside: after the manual work was done, people would sit together and sing, make music or tell fairy tales or other stories. At all the religious and rural festivals, people would dance and sing together. Art was then a natural part of life.

Today, most people spend their evenings in front of the television or computer. They let themselves be entertained or move about in virtual worlds. ‘Cultural’ life is limited to listening to music or going to the cinema, concerts or the theatre.

There are several reasons for this development. One is the invention of the gramophone and other sound recording devices, so that now we don’t have to make music ourselves if we want to listen to music; we can reproduce it anytime and anywhere. Another reason is the emergence of virtuosity: great artists are celebrated like stars. The musical amateur leaves the practice of art to the geniuses, admires and applauds them, and is now a passive consumer of art.

Today, someone is considered ‘cultured’ if they go to the theatre, the opera or museums and allows art to work its magic on them. Our utilitarian and industrial civilization has taken the arts out of everyday life. Art has become a luxury. Painting, drawing, dancing, singing and acting are not something most of us do as part of everyday life. They



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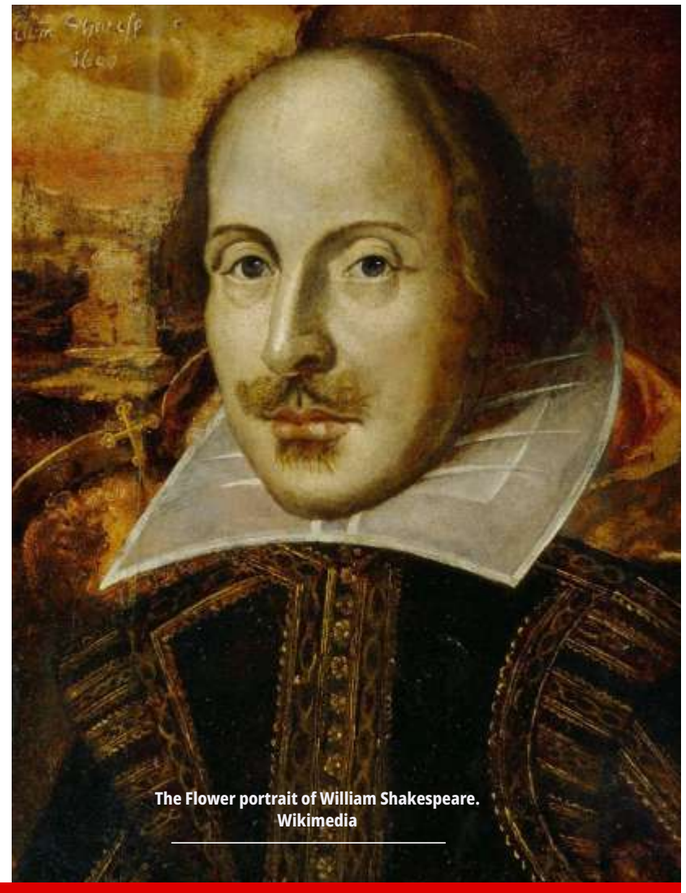
have become the profession of a privileged few. The divorce of art from life began when artists started to claim a higher status.
In the modern world, the artist has become more important than the art of making. In antiquity, the artist was not so important, the great works of art still survive in our museums, but we often don't know who made them. In the Middle Ages, art was created for 'God's sake'. Later, art came to be practised for 'man's sake', for the patrons who could pay for the works of art. The modern age promoted the idea of art for 'art's sake', and in post-modern times, when conceptual art rules, art is for the 'artist's sake'.
Art grew apart, to be practised only by those with 'special' talents, and to be purchased only by those with great wealth. Thus art became one more item of consumption, a commodity to be bought and sold, an object for investment, and no longer a way of life practised by everyone as an everyday activity.
One of the causes of the anxiety, meaninglessness and depression from which a large number of people suffer today is a lack of creativity. Modern industrial civilization is the enemy of the imagination. It is the destroyer of arts, crafts, culture and creativity for the majority of people.

The minority which perseveres in practising the arts and crafts struggle to survive or are forced to commercialize their art and seek celebrity status.
In our present system in the West, the economy rules, not the imagination and creativity. The economy requires us to be consumers of mass-produced goods in order to accelerate economic growth.
So, it is so important that we revive art as a part of life again. We need to revive art in everything we do.
The word 'art' originally meant to 'produce', to 'fit together', from the Proto-Indo-European root **ar-*. In Latin, the word *Ars* meant skill, craft, method or technique. And in Old French and Middle English, the word *Art* initially described 'skill as a result of learning or practice'.
So, art originally meant to 'make things', to 'fit them together'. And the things we make, also make us. Giving form to something, forms us.
Art is a state of mind, not the special activity of certain people. We all become artists, whether we know it or not, when we perform our tasks with love, imagination and increasing skill. When we are not distracted by fame, fortune or power, then our work becomes a work of art.
Just as we are all born philosophers, asking questions and trying to understand the 'why' of things, so we are also all artists, we are creating something every day. We are creating the way our day unfolds, because we have made choices, imposed our priorities, etc. We might cook every day, clean and tidy every day, arrange flowers in a vase, plant plants in a garden, knit a jumper, write a letter, an email or an article, possibly play an instrument, paint a picture, write a poem, give a class or a speech. Running an organization or organizing an activity can also be a form of art. The examples are endless.
Art has transformative power. Artists are alchemists. They transform base material into objects of beauty, utility and delight. The materials used by the vast number of potters, painters, sculptors and basket makers are often inexpensive, natural and locally available. It is the power of patience and practice, the power of imagination and endurance, the power of hands, feet and voice, and ultimately the power of the human spirit, which transform willow wands into baskets, stone into statues, wood into wardrobes, sound into songs and words into poems. The joy of it is that we are all potential alchemists. We are all capable of becoming artists and artisans.
As the maker transforms clay into a pot, the clay transforms the maker into a potter. And when we speak about art in this way, we are speaking above all about artisans. And we transcend the division between high art and folk art, between artist and artisan.
We have looked at the idea that we are becoming increasingly passive in matters of art; at the same time, if we are actively creative, we increasingly see art as an expression of our personality rather than our soul. But in order to create we need to be able to connect with an idea, an archetype, an Ideal.
The founder of New Acropolis, Jorge A. Livraga, once said: "Art is not contact with what lies below, but with what lies above." And in a similar vein, the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus wrote: "Soul creates by looking upward, not by looking downward."
In order to revive art, we need to make contact with the metaphysical dimension again, to embrace the idea that there is not only the objective, manifested world, but that there is also the world of archetypes, of Ideas, where the Ideals live. Without this other dimension, there can be no archetype of the Beautiful. And then beauty no longer has a timeless point of reference. Art goes down a

In Latin, the word *Ars* meant skill, craft, method or technique.

" In order to revive art, we need to make contact with the metaphysical dimension again. "

level and becomes an opinion. If someone says that something is art, then it is art. And I have even read the sentence: 'If it sells, it's art.'
We also need an education to appreciate what is 'higher'. Without some points of access, many thousands of people in the world would not be interested in Plato, the Bhagavad Gita, Confucius or Aristotle. But through a school of philosophy in the classical tradition or another form of education, they can start to see the value of these 'old' texts and how relevant they are for us, for our lives now.
In the same way, we need an education to appreciate classical music and the works of great writers like Dante, Shakespeare or Cervantes.
How, then, can we revive the arts today? How can we restore art as something that elevates, that supports the development of humanity, that purifies, inspires and unites?
I believe that we need to become less consumers of art and more active makers of art. We need to value artisans and craftsmen and see the possibility of practising art in every single action of our lives. Even writing a birthday message to someone can become a work of art – without of course making it something pretentious, but doing it with love and trying to make it the best we can for the benefit of the person who will read it.
We need to be very conscious about the importance of the metaphysical dimension for art and that art can never be separated from philosophy.
We also need to bring more and more people into contact with the great works of art, because they still have the power to elevate, transform and move us deeply. But we need an education for this. In the same way as we needed someone to explain Plato to us before we were able to read Plato ourselves.
In New Acropolis we don't teach the great philosophies of humanity just so that people can repeat what they have heard. No, we teach people to think, to reflect, to draw conclusions, so that they can live these teachings every single day of their life.
In the same way, we don't want to listen to great music only in a passive way. We want to start using our own creativity, develop our own inner aesthetic compass, produce music, sing, dance, make theatre, make crafts and bring art to every action in life.
We need to build a bridge between the metaphysical archetypes and our ordinary world. Otherwise, art can become something exclusive for a few 'connoisseurs'.
Sometimes we have to go back to the roots. Even in a European country, with a traditional education in classical music, I have seen many musicians who performed outwardly, hit the right notes, played technically well, but there was no contact with their soul. At least, I couldn't feel it. And in these cases, we also have to go back to the roots.
We need to build a bridge between humanity and the great archetypes, a bridge that begins above and reaches below, that connects artists and artisans, highly educated people and less educated people. And the best way to do this is by living the great ideas in everyday life.



The Flower portrait of William Shakespeare. Wikimedia

We need to build a bridge between the metaphysical archetypes and our ordinary world.



Image from www.pexels.com



Winged Genius. Source Wikimedia

THE *DAIMON*: YOUR METAPHYSICAL TWIN

ESOTERICA

BY
AGOSTINO DOMINICI

Few concepts in ancient philosophy are as fascinating as the *Daimon*. Long before becoming the malevolent 'demon' of Christian tradition, it was understood as a luminous and complex intermediary, acting as a 'bridge' between the human and the divine. I am sure that this concept can be found in Eastern traditions as well, but in this article I will discuss it exclusively within the Western esoteric tradition.

Let us begin with a brief historical excursus.

For Heraclitus (540–480 BCE) the *Daimon* is a person's inner nature, their deepest character and way of being: the numinous force that accompanies them. For the Ionian philosopher, what a person is at their deepest level possesses a *daimonic* power, and it is this power that shapes the course of their life. If a person has a noble character (*ethos* in Greek), their *Daimon* will be good, and their life will flourish. In reality here, *ethos* means more than 'character'. Character is not simply what you are, but where you habitually dwell. It could be understood as the inner 'place' in which your soul finds itself at home. For the spiritual practitioner, this can become a kind of spiritual space: a place within oneself to which one repeatedly returns, or in which one seeks refuge.

Socrates (469–399 BCE) describes the *Daimon* (or *Daimonion*) as something he had experienced since he was a boy – not a new adult development, but a lifelong companion. He describes it as manifesting as a kind of inner voice. This divine presence never told him what to do, but intervened only to forbid wrong or dangerous actions. It was a kind of semi-divine moral conscience that warned him whenever he was about to stray from truth or justice. There is even an anecdote in which the *Daimon* once warned Socrates not to walk down a particular street, intervening therefore even in mundane, everyday decisions. Some scholars have argued that, during Socrates's trial, the very absence of his inner voice was itself a sign of the Daimon indicating that death was not something to be feared or avoided.

" This divine presence never told him what to do, but intervened only to forbid wrong or dangerous actions."

An interesting thing to keep in mind is that for Socrates, spiritual practice was based on three principles: *Examination* (turning one's attention inward), *Coherence* (bringing one's beliefs, words and actions into alignment), and *Vigilance* (maintaining a constant state of attention and inner presence). These are certainly practices that would strengthen and help establishing contact with one's *Daimon*.

Plato's understanding of the Daimon is both profound and markedly different from what we have seen so far. In the *Symposium* he defines the *Daimon* as an intermediate being who "translates and transmits to the gods the things that come from men, and to men the things that come from the gods."[1] And interestingly, he also refers to it as the highest part of the soul, therefore not as a separate entity at all. Adding that this divine principle (i.e.

1. Plato's *Symposium*, 202e.



Socrates and two floating Daimones. Wikimedia

comparable to the *Nous*) lifts us above our earthly nature and toward our heavenly origin.[2]

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) takes the *Daimon* in an ethical direction, identifying the highest human life with the cultivation and activity of the *Nous*, our 'intellectual' and divine principle. For him, happiness consists in living according to this highest principle. In other words, it is the highest part of the soul, the *Nous*, that must be cultivated if we are to attain *eudaimonia* (true happiness or human flourishing).

Later on, Plutarch (46–c. 120 CE) in his essay *On the E at Delphi* states that both the *Nous* and the *Daimon* "remain even without a body... and the *Nous* survives death... they hover over and shadow the outer part of man's head." He therefore distinguishes the two concepts and also treats the *Daimon* as a divine intermediary and guide occupying the same ontological level as the *Nous*. Plutarch also gives us a hint of a possible visible manifestation of these metaphysical principles above the heads of human beings. His remark brings to mind the halos depicted around spiritual figures in both Western and Eastern sacred art.

2. See *Timaeus*, 90a–90c.

Finally in Hermeticism, the *Daimon* takes on a distinctly cosmological and astrological dimension. The human soul is understood as descending into incarnation through the planetary spheres, coming under the influence of the celestial powers and their respective *spirits* (*daimones*). The *Corpus Hermeticum* describes these *daimones* as ministers of the stars (i.e. planets) who, at the moment of birth, take hold of the newly embodied human being and become agents of Fate (*Heimarmenē*), shaping the lower and more earthly aspects of the soul. Yet above these influences stands the *Nous*, the divine principle we have already encountered. This principle remains beyond planetary influences and provides the possibility of liberation from Fate.

From the various accounts and from my own understanding, this mysterious *entity* has its own independence. It is a kind of intelligent force, which, so to speak, knows all the 'information' concerning a particular incarnation and the soul destiny of each individual. This 'force' accompanies the individual throughout their life, regardless of whether or not they will ever manage to contact it. In this sense, it can be understood as a spiritual or stellar twin with which the individual on a spiritual journey must seek to establish contact. Here, the symbolism of the Dioscuri and its associated myths comes to mind. Interestingly, one might argue that a civilization begins to decline when human beings are no longer capable of establishing contact with their individual *Daimon*.

As I understand it, this metaphysical entity has primarily an anagogical function: to raise the consciousness of the human being.



Roman statues of the Dioscuri. Wikimedia

There are scattered hints as to how an individual might strengthen or establish a relationship with their *Daimon*, and these may include religious or ritual-magical approaches. In contemporary spiritual circles, I often hear that, in order to follow a path of spiritual realization, one only needs to follow the *Daimon*, understood as one's inner guide or teacher. But this idea, if it has any validity, is only true when, in the absence of an actual teacher (that is, one in the flesh!), the practitioner has managed, through intense work of purification, refinement, sublimation and raising of consciousness, to establish a lasting contact with this hidden 'teacher'.

As I understand it, this metaphysical entity has primarily an *anagogical* function: to raise the consciousness of the human being who comes into contact with it. Importantly, the *Daimon* does not take part in, or concern itself with, the personal sphere connected with worldly desires, expectations, and personal dreams. Rather, every communication with a particular individual concerns exclusively the fulfilment of that individual's 'spiritual plan'.

It is probable that, in the course of spiritual growth, at a certain point the *Daimon* tends to take the place of the figure who, up to that moment, has acted as a teacher or mentor, somewhat as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Once he reaches a certain stage of the journey, Dante will, in fact, part from Virgil in order to be guided by another figure – one might say, a metaphysical entity: Beatrice. Let us therefore think of Beatrice as our own *Daimon*, one that we need to find and fall in love with.



Photo by Prabir Kashyap on Unsplash

SCIENCE

BY
Adhiyan Jeevathol

THE BEAUTY AND STRANGENESS OF ANT SOCIETIES

Ants may seem like simple creatures, yet they share many similarities with us that other animals don't. These insects dominate the terrestrial world and have formed their own societies, each with their own peculiarities – some engage in periodic mass raids predating on other insects, others use their bodies to create a chain to help construct their nests and there are even those who engage in a form of agriculture. However, all ant societies are united in that they are run through altruistic co-operation, making them one of the most advanced social groups on our planet.

Ants live in colonies made up of one or several queens and her workers. The workers are the queen's daughters who forego their own reproduction to help her produce more offspring. Those offspring that are male or a queen will leave the nest, in what is called the nuptial flight, to find a mate. Once mated, the males die whereas the inseminated queen will go on to found her own colony. Depending on the species, this can number from a few dozen to millions of workers.

Though the above may seem inane to the lay person, the kind of social life described above is special as it is a rarity in nature. It represents a zenith in social evolution, which is why scientists have termed these societies as eusocial ('truly social').

The workers are the queen's daughters who forego their own reproduction to help her produce more offspring.



Photo by Azzam Qourti on Unsplash

The evolution of ant eusociality

Eusocial societies consist of individuals from multiple generations who are grouped through altruistic division of labour.

Altruism, here defined as an act which harms the actor but benefits the recipient, presented a conundrum for the great Charles Darwin. Evolutionary theory states that the primary aim for the individual is to propagate its own genes. Therefore, in theory altruistic behaviour – such as that shown in worker ants who sacrifice their own reproduction to help the queen – ought to have been eliminated by natural selection.

To solve this, scientists in the 1950s and 60s began to look at natural selection acting on the level of genes rather than individuals. This culminated in the theory of kin selection which, in simple terms, postulates that organisms are more likely to be altruistic the more related they are. For example, ants have a unique sex determining system. This results in a curious condition where sisters are more closely related to each other than they are to their mothers (I detail the science behind this in my article *On Altruism in Nature* in Issue 71



Photo by Jorge Coromina on Unsplash

of this magazine), meaning that workers can actually best propagate more of their genes by helping their queen create more sisters than by reproducing themselves.
However, though rare, other organisms, such as the naked mole rat, termites and humans, also show eusociality but do not have the same sex-determining system as ants. Studies have also shown that ant colonies actually gain an advantage in being diverse, as being more genetically varied increases the colony's resistance to diseases. There is also the curious case of the wood ant colonies of the Jura mountains in Switzerland. On one side of the mountains are wood ants whose colonies are made up of the queen and her workers. Here, when members of different colonies come into contact, war erupts leading to thousands of casualties. So far this is in line with what we would expect from kin selection. Yet, on the other side of the mountain multiple different colonies have come together to create a super colony where individuals are not related to each other. Here interactions between different colony members are usually peaceable and co-operative, allowing members to have a much greater access to resources than their kind on the other side of the mountains.

As a result, some scientists think that selection acts on multiple levels simultaneously. On one level it acts on groups; here altruistic co-operation is favoured as it enables colonies to survive. On the other hand, selection also acts on individuals, where behaviours that allow individuals to maximize their own reproduction, such as exploiting or cheating altruistic actors, are favoured. This necessarily creates a tension in such societies, so how do ants maintain their cohesiveness?

Communication in ants

To form a greater whole, such as a colony or super colony, from smaller parts, the sharing of information is crucial. Ants do this through pheromones produced by their numerous glands. As we humans mix up words to form sentences, ants mix different pheromones at different concentrations to convey meaning depending on the context. For example, alarm signals can be used to warn of an intruder or to free trapped nestmates. This chemical monitoring also allows members to identify and punish any workers in their colony trying to cheat by reproducing

" A further long-lasting homing trail is laid by foragers to help them return to the nest."



themselves instead of helping the queen. Another example of ant pheromonal communication is that of the *Onychomyrmex* ants of Northern Australia who initiate relentless raids in the forest floor to ruthlessly predate on larger organisms. A particularly volatile pheromone, that disappears after a short time, is used to create a trail for other foragers to march towards their prey. A further long-lasting homing trail is laid by foragers to help them return to the nest.

Division of labour

As well as having effective communication systems, ant societies divide their labour. In many species, colonies can develop specialized castes for a particular role. The soldier castes in army ants have huge mandibles which they use, along with their aggressive disposition, to defend their nests. The caste to which the ants belong vary depending on morphology, dominance relations or age differences among nest-mates. Generally, the most subordinate workers are more likely to be foragers whereas high-ranking workers are more likely to remain in the brood zone. However, these roles are not rigid, so workers may shift their tasks, from foraging to brood care for example, depending on what is needed for the whole.
The result is that ants have been able to harmonize two opposite organizational principles, structure and flexibility, with the aid of an efficient communication system, to create resilient societies.

Agriculture in ant societies

The invention of agriculture was a key moment in the evolution of human societies.

Photo by Egor Kamelev, www.pexels.com

What is less known is that a similar moment, long before humans were around, occurred with ants. A special group of ants called the Attines invented the culturing of fungi. It is thought that, as was the case in humans, this revolution helped evolve ant society into much greater size and complexity. Let us take a close look at one example.

The Attine leaf-cutter ants have gigantic colonies. They usually contain one queen and her offspring forming a caste, with hundreds of thousands to millions of sterile workers of different sizes and shapes, leading to nests of exquisite complexity. One Atta nest more than 6 years old contained 1,920 chambers, with 238 of them occupied by fungus gardens and ants. The loose soil these ants would have had to move to make their nest is estimated to have weighed approximately 40 tonnes.

An Attine colony is founded by an inseminated queen who, using a pack of symbiotic fungus taken from her original colony, starts a new garden in her newly found nest. She excretes a nutritious faecal liquid to help the garden grow and then lays her first eggs (over her life a queen may lay up to 150 million – 200 million eggs). The first generation of workers hatch and begin feeding on the fungus and also take over the culturing of the garden. After a week, the nest is opened up and then an assembly line of work begins. It starts from the foragers, who normally have large heads to cut the leaves, bringing the vegetation they find back to the nest. From here the material is passed from one specialized caste to the next, along the way crushing and moulding the fragments into moist pellets, until it is added to the garden to help the fungi grow. There is quality control too. Workers monitor whether certain kinds of vegetation harm the fungus so that it is not brought to the nest again.

“Workers monitor whether certain kinds of vegetation harm the fungus so that it is not brought to the nest again.“

These colonies also have a procedure for waste management and making sure the nest is well air-conditioned for the fungi to grow. This efficient social organization, together with the elaborate caste system and elegant culturing of the fungi by millions of members make the leaf-cutter ants one of the most remarkable societies on earth.



Photo by Dmytro Koplyk , www.pexel.com.

Conclusion

Through their altruistic co-operation, these industrious little creatures have come to dominate the terrestrial world. Perhaps, therefore, they can be seen as Nature’s way of extolling the virtue of altruistic co-operation. Yet, the rarity of eusociality in the animal kingdom shows that these societies are not easy for Nature to bring into being. Multi-level selection shows there is always a tension in Nature between looking for the good of the whole and looking for the good of oneself. This too could explain the paradoxical nature of the human being – at the same time selfless and selfish. To make sure we benefit from the fruits of co-operation we must fight against these opposing forces to altruism. To do so is certainly difficult but, as Spinoza once wrote, “All things excellent are difficult as they are rare.”

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TOWARDS UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY (PART 2)



Photo by Gustavo Fring by www.pexels.com

SOCIETY

BY
Fernand Schwarz

Three principles for achieving unity through diversity

Ever since its foundation, all the actions of New Acropolis have been based on its three founding principles:

- **Fraternity:** To promote an ideal of fraternity based on respect for human dignity, beyond any differences of gender, culture, religion, social class, etc...

- **Eclectic Knowledge:** To encourage the love of wisdom through the comparative study of philosophies, religions, sciences and arts, in order to achieve a knowledge of the human being, nature and the universe.

- **Laws of Nature and the Inner Development of the Human Being:** To develop the best part of the human being by promoting each person's fulfilment as an individual and as an active member of society. To act in harmony with Nature in order to improve the world.

Our philosophical proposal, based on each of our three founding principles, combines unity and diversity in a wide-ranging synthesis.

“ But we must recognize that the area where we have made most progress is on the material level... “

Fraternity

In the 20th century, science proved the biological unity of the human race and demonstrated that humanity is one and diverse the same time on the physical level. This discovery, however, which has been intuited by philosophers and anthropologists since ancient times, has not yet been transformed into a general awareness that would enable us to live together in harmony on a planetary level. Nevertheless, I do believe that humanity has developed an idea of certain common interests and some tools that would enable this concept to work in practice. In the last few decades of the 20th century, this became crystallized in the word ‘globalization’, suggesting the image of a global world that shares similar problems and perhaps similar remedies. But we must recognize that the area where we have made most progress is on the material level, but not so much in the world of ideas or values.
As H.P. Blasvatsky pointed out, “Humanity is a great Brotherhood by virtue of the



Portrait of Pico della Mirandola. Wikimedia

sameness of the material from which it is formed physically and morally. Unless, however, it becomes a Brotherhood also intellectually, it is no better than a superior genus of animals."[1]

The apparent differences of a cultural, psychological or ethnical type have continued to encourage a separation between human beings, who are always looking for relationships of subordination and the marginalization of some by others.

For New Acropolis, this is the challenge of the 21st century: to become conscious of and to live the reality of a humanity which is one and diverse at the same time, where peaceful coexistence is possible.

Unity, based on biological constants, made it possible to prove that the outer human being, that is to say our appearance, our form, derives from a common background.

But we must not forget that, in order to achieve a truly fraternal union that respects human diversity, we must become aware of the existence of the inner human being, which is the real factor that gives unity to human diversity. This refers to the ability that each human being has to be moved by Beauty, to search for what is Just, to express Goodness in the face of difficulties and to aspire to the authenticity of the True.

Human dignity takes its strength from and is rooted in the inner human being, as Pico della Mirandola demonstrated. Inner life allows us to bear differences and understand that behind those differences lies a unity, and it is that which makes us dignified, capable of finding and expressing our true identity, which is not simply material.

The modern way of living pushes us to be constantly attentive to the demands of the outer world. People are not taught the inner discipline of discerning between the vanities and illusions that are presented to us and that which is essential and renewing.

One of the keys for reaching the centre of ourselves, understanding our own identity and developing a fully conscious life, is the practice of dignity. It is not about wanting our merits to be recognized, but is a matter of respecting our own essence and being committed to acting in accordance with it.

"Nourished by the sentiment of unity, we will be able to digest the differences", said the Indian philosopher N. Sri Ram.

On the other hand, it is appropriate to remember that our first principle coincides with the opening words of the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..."; and we stress the word dignity, because unfortunately there are too few examples of dignity in the social movements of today, which instead of teaching us to live with dignity, set us against one another in a constant struggle of all against all.

"We long for a human dignity that has a deep foundation, which urges us to search within ourselves."[2]

A world of human beings who are free to express the best part of themselves and respect the beliefs of others can only arise if we educate people to live a more dignified and conscious way of life. That has been our institutional mission for more than 60 years.

New Acropolis International has always endeavoured to teach and educate people about human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration. But we also consider it essential to reinforce the sense of human duties and personal dignity, as this will ensure the



Image from www.pexels.com

New Acropolis International has always endeavoured to teach and educate people about human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration.

1. Blavatsky, H.P. *Theosophical Glossary*, p.146. The Theosophical Company, USA (1973).

2. Delia Steinberg Guzmán, President of New Acropolis International from 1991 to 2020, in *The Foundation of Dignity*.



Image from www.pexels.com

sustainable and genuine application of those rights.

Philosophical eclecticism

Eclecticism – a word of Greek origin that means to select, to choose – is a philosophical attitude that consists in selecting elements from different philosophies that can contribute to forming a complete system of one's own.
This philosophical attitude goes back to the philosophers of Alexandria, such as Ammonius Saccas, who chose, out of all the different philosophical and spiritual currents, those that they considered to be the wisest, which could therefore contribute to improving the human being.
Diderot, co-founder of the French Encyclopaedia, defended the eclectic method of philosophy, and opposed it to dogmatism, that is, to philosophical sectarianism and syncretism, which seek to superimpose contradictory systems.
Eclecticism is a way of seeking unity in diversity. Philosophical eclecticism, which is taught and practised in our school of philosophy in the classical tradition, is the firm and solid ground on which our network of some 500 centres around the world is built, a meeting point for all human diversities.
Furthermore, our efforts to understand the different cultures and civilizations that have existed throughout history, using the method of comparative study, allows us to discover the different approaches and methods of those who have given names to realities and ideas throughout time.
As M. Maruyama[3] explains, "The recognition of other cultures does not mean, and should not imply, idealizing them. Cultures must be respected, but we must also be aware of their imperfections and how in other cultures, as in our own, there are also superstitions, fictions, accumulated and non-criticized knowledge, power structures, abusive and oppressive customs. Respect for other cultures should not be blind, but should be a critical respect."[4] This will allow us to take the best from each culture.
"The Western-centric vision that considers human beings from archaic and traditional societies as backward and sees in them only ignorance, false ideas, primitivist ways of life and superstitions, must be superseded and replaced by a more open perception, capable of discovering the wisdom, ethical values and skills that really exist in those cultures."[5]

3. See «*Dysfunctional, misfunctional and toxifunctional aspects of cultures*», Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 1992, No. 42: 301-307.

4. Translator's note: as I do not have access to this journal, this version is a translation from the Spanish.

Laws of Nature and the inner forces of the human being

Nature is the Ruler of Life. It expresses itself through the life cycle that causes what is virtual or potential to develop, reach its peak and decline. Nature's way of being is not based on its forms, which are its effects; rather, its essence is the energy of becoming, of movement. In the philosophy of Schelling, matter is sleeping spirit, while spirit is matter in the process of becoming.
We understand Nature philosophically from the same perspective as the ancestral peoples, the Chinese, Hindu or Greek philosophers, or the Southern African philosophy of *Ubuntu*.
From the Renaissance onwards, an original philosophical line of thought was born in Europe, known as *Naturphilosophie* ('Philosophy of Nature'). Its major figures included Jacob Boehme, and the German philosophers Schelling, Fichte and Carl August von Eschenmayer.
This tendency remains relevant today because of its focus on restoring the dignity of the human being, based on the principle of reconciliation.
The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, together with other researchers, such as the astrophysicist Trinh Xuan Thuan and the philosopher Michel Serres, revived the idea that Nature constitutes the totality of the essence which then enters into existence.
In Nature nothing is static, everything is in vibration and motion, in unstable equilibrium through a harmony of opposites. If we attempt to keep it fixed, we destroy it and ourselves.
Human beings are part of Nature and, by virtue of their condition, are capable of actualizing their potential of higher, sometimes unimaginable qualities, especially in the face of the trials of life, and can improve. To do this, we must embrace the inner and outer conflict of adverse forces and unite them in harmony through opposition. In this way, we combine non-being with being: blossoming with fading; day with night, war with peace, scarcity with abundance, emptiness with the fulness of energy. This is how we express unity and diversity.
Referring to crisis, the following reflection has been attributed to the physicist Albert Einstein: "Let us not pretend that things will

5. Morin, Edgar and Kern, A.B. *Tierra-Patria*. Barcelona, Kairos (1993: 36).



Image from www.pexel.com

change if we keep doing the same. Crisis is the greatest blessing for people and nations, because crisis brings progress. Creativity is born from anguish, as the day is born from the dark night. It is in crisis that invention, discovery and great strategies are born."

To act in accordance with our human nature implies behaving according to excellence, which is the virtue of the ancients and consists in not allowing oneself to be carried away by extremes and finding the harmony of the middle way. Intellectual life is insufficient to enable us to evolve and to prevent us from falling into subjectivity and egocentrism. Moral life implies to practise each of the ideas we accept as ethical. To develop this, we need moral strength; that is, an effort to overcome the obstacles that prevent us from acting in the way we think we should live.

For the Greek philosophers everything is part of Nature, which they called *physis*. Not only physical things, but also ideas. Ideas can arise unexpectedly, develop, become transformed into works, objects and actions, and then withdraw, later to return. Because nothing is fixed.

Nature therefore includes the aspects of substance and thought. Based on their intelligence, human beings can connect dimensions, enabling them to reach higher states of consciousness that can help them to perceive unity in diversity and transform themselves, by developing their own potential.

To sum up, our experience has shown us that our three founding principles are inspired by the concept of human dignity and encourage each individual to develop it in themselves, fostering a society in which people can experience the citizenship of dignity, combining unity and diversity.

I would like to conclude with these words of Jorge Angel Livraga: "If we could somehow conceive of a culture that does not separate us intellectually, morally, emotionally, or on a higher level, spiritually; a culture that does not form tribes, a culture that does not separate one human being from another... this would lead us to a new knowledge of the world and a new knowledge of life."[6]



Image from www.unsplash.com

Fernando Schwarz is Regional Coordinator of New Acropolis in North West Europe and International Director of the Hermes Centre for the Study of Human Sciences. He is also the author of numerous books, including *The Wisdom of Socrates: Philosophy of Happiness.* His book *Egypt: Mirror of Heaven* was published by Eclectic Books early in 2026.

6. Lecture: I, *You and the Other: How Can we Be Ourselves?* In *Magic, Religion and Science for the Third Millennium*. Volume II, Ed. NA (1995)

THE ODYSSEY AND THE MOVEMENT OF LIFE



MYTHOLOGY

BY
SIOBHAN FARRAR

Homer's *Odyssey* (screen adapted to popular acclaim in 2026 by Christopher Nolan) tells the story of Odysseus: soldier, leader, husband, father, lover, adversary and hero of the Trojan war. At the heart of the story, a traveller, the archetype of the pilgrim on his way home: Great Odysseus! Human being in movement through time and space, encountering love, death, consequence and divinity, what do you speak of today?

Taken as a unified whole, *The Odyssey* is perhaps mostly an invitation to look at the meaning and purpose of 'a journey'; journey as a principle and journey as an experience; an odyssey. A day is a journey, a relationship, a lifetime; and what of great cosmic journeys? Does the Sun experience an *odyssey* or Venus or a comet? The scenes within *The Odyssey* are archetypal and in the deepest sense so are the events of our own lives and perhaps of Nature as a whole. Like Odysseus, each one of us will experience loss, desire, illusion, selfishness and greed. Like him too, each one of us will be obliged to develop virtues in order to keep advancing: intelligence, humility, morality and conviction... Our problems are unique in their details but they tend to universality in their essence.

To interpret a myth is to interpret life and, according to professor of comparative mythology Joseph Campbell, "myths are clues to our spiritual nature." They provide a field of reference for forces that cannot ordinarily be named, our potentialities, our inner dimension and positions, the co-ordinates for what cannot be seen by the senses. Through images, myths give cohesion and orientation about 'where we are' in relation to our circumstances and also where we might get to. Are we somehow stuck – trapped on Calypso's island? Are we facing a decisive moment – navigating between Scylla and Charybdis? Are we attempting to move past a great temptation – the Sirens' Song?

Where are we and how are we in the movement of our life? What is propelling us on

our journey and what guides? What is necessary and what can be left behind?

In one of his writings, the philosopher Jorge Angel Livraga suggests an interesting perspective on 'the journey' with an image painted in questions: What if the human being doesn't travel along paths of time and space at all? What if in reality (in the deepest sense that we can conceive of it) the essential human being remains where he is? What if time actually travels under his feet and this movement gives rise to a succession of events? Events which provide the opportunities to transform his consciousness?

Perhaps it is this internal transformation of consciousness which is the real meaning of *The Odyssey* and purpose of a journey. To externally travel in time and space (ten years across the Mediterranean from Troy back to Ithaca) but to internally transform (from conceited soldier and nominal King into Just and worthy King), hero of a true homeland.

This perspective implies that life has the possibility to transform us (and that this may chiefly be the point) to not only gather experiences and grow older but to transform our state of consciousness and develop our spiritual nature. We cannot know at point A what we will know having reached point B because the distance we need to travel between the two represents a threshold (where some supernatural being may be waiting to test us) before we can arrive at the new horizon.

It can be uncomfortable to walk towards a new horizon because we can never really know the terrain or what (exactly) is happening nor how it will change us. We all resist 'entering darkness' or the unknown but we also realize it is necessary, so the question is, what guides? Throughout the *The Odyssey*, in addition to the continuity of his destination is the continuity of a divine presence. Like a lamp, a warm fire and a bright star, Odysseus is repeatedly visited by Athena: goddess of truth, wisdom and justice. As he goes deeper into his journey he also unlocks the advice of seers such as Circe and Tiresias and he learns to follow the invisible laws of life. However, as he does so, he has to lose what is no longer necessary. To interpret a myth is to interpret life and not only do we meet ourselves in the figure of Odysseus but in all of the characters of *The Odyssey* too. In the men that didn't listen and betrayed the laws, in those that were lost to Scylla, old identities and habits that cannot continue to the next stage of the journey... We will all have to lose something in order to become something.

There is a further paradox at the heart of the story in that Odysseus is free to himself in so far as he obeys. He walks towards an unknown horizon because he is convinced of his destination and follows what guides. If Odysseus didn't have a destination, he would travel from port to port but he wouldn't 'go anywhere' in the sense of a transformation of his consciousness. If he didn't follow Athena, he would have no inner reason to act and if he didn't listen to Circe and Tiresias, 'the way' and the 'know how' would be lost to him.

We can live this myth of *The Odyssey* by beginning to act more consciously. As human beings and groups of human beings, we are capable of progressing towards unknown horizons by establishing for ourselves a clear destination. The chosen destination is recognized through its coherence with what is divine (Truth, Beauty, Goodness and Justice) and these divine principles are also the motors that propel us towards them. As we make steps we can learn to understand the invisible powers and forces at work within ourselves, and in life we also gain the 'know how'. To live fully is our human right and dignity, a movement of life and a transformative journey of consciousness. The experience of living an *Odyssey* can marry pleasure and pain, freedom and destiny, heavenly and earthly.

"Goddess of song, teach me the story of a hero."

Homer, *The Odyssey*.

FRANCIS BACON: LEGAL LOGIC AND SCIENCE

PHILOSOPHY AND LAW

BY
Lisardo García Rodulfo

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was not merely a philosopher with an interest in science, nor a lawyer who rose to power. He was the architect of one of the most radical intellectual transformations in the development of humanity: the transposition of the procedural logic of law into the realm of natural knowledge. At a time when science was still shackled to Aristotelian syllogism and the authority of ancient texts, Bacon introduced an inquisitive and evidential



Francis Bacon portrait. Wikimedia

mindset that changed the course of history.

His life was a precarious balance between political glory and an obsession with knowledge. Alongside his life of service to the British Crown, Bacon's pursuit of knowledge led him to the conclusion that truth is not to be found in the clouds of theoretical reasoning, but must be extracted – sometimes by force – through systematic experience.

Bacon did not approach science as an amateur, but as an expert in the structure of evidence. His training at Gray's Inn[1] taught him not only the law, but a specific way of thinking. In English common law, truth is constructed from particular facts to establish precedents – a structure that foreshadowed his future inductive method.

As Lord Chancellor of England, Bacon presided over the Court of Chancery, where 'equity' was intended to temper the rigidity of written law. This ability to analyze unique cases and derive fair solutions from them was the seed of his rejection of abstract deduction. For Bacon, the university system of his time, based on scholasticism[2], was like a court of law that handed down a judgment without hearing the witnesses. He proposed the opposite: a science in which Nature is the witness and the experiment is the cross-examination.

1. Gray's Inn is one of the Inns of Court – the historic societies that educate and train barristers in England and Wales.

2. Scholasticism was a movement in the Middle Ages that attempted to reconcile works of classical philosophy with Christian Theology and was used as a method of learning and philosophy in universities for many centuries.



Royal Courts of Justice, London. Wikimedia



The frontispiece of Novum Organum.

In 1620, Bacon published his magnum opus, *Novum Organum*, so named to directly challenge Aristotle's *Organon* (his treatise on logic). In this text, Bacon argues that the human intellect is riddled with systematic errors which he termed 'Idols' (*Idola*), prejudices that act as 'false witnesses' in our minds:

- *Idola Tribus* (Idols of the Tribe): Natural human tendencies to distort reality (seeing patterns where there are none).
- *Idola Specus* (Idols of the Cave): Individual prejudices stemming from upbringing and character.
- *Idola Fori* (Idols of the Forum): Errors caused by the misuse of language and ambiguous words.
- *Idola Theatri* (Idols of the Theatre): False dogmas of ancient philosophical systems that create fictional worlds.

To combat these idols, Bacon devised his famous "Tables of Discovery", which function in exactly the same way as a court case:

- Table of Presence: Lists cases where the phenomenon occurs.
- Table of Absence: Lists similar cases where the phenomenon does not occur.
- Table of Degrees: Observes how the phenomenon varies in intensity.

This process of elimination is, in essence, like the stage in proceedings when the judge decides which evidence to admit or exclude. The scientist does not seek to 'confirm' his theory (which would be a bias), but rather to 'cross-examine' Nature until only one explanation remains possible.

"The scientist does not seek to 'confirm' his theory, but rather to 'cross-examine' Nature until only one explanation remains possible."

The deepest link between Bacon's career and his philosophy is the metaphor of the

'trial'. In his view, Nature is evasive and tends to conceal its secrets. Therefore, the scientist must act as a prosecutor.

In the 17th century, judicial interrogation sometimes involved coercion. Bacon used the metaphor that the investigator must 'put Nature on the rack' through controlled experiments so that it will 'confess' its laws.

Just as a judge cannot accept hearsay as evidence, Bacon ruled that science cannot accept the word of Aristotle or the Bible as physical evidence. Only verifiable facts can be 'heard' in the court of science.

Bacon's career ended in a scandal that seems straight out of a Shakespearean tragedy. In 1621, he was accused of accepting bribes. Although it was common practice at the time to disguise payments as 'gifts', his political enemies, led by Edward Coke (the champion of common law against the royal prerogative), seized the opportunity to destroy him.

His downfall was complete: an astronomical fine, a brief spell in the Tower of London and civil death.[3] However, this ostracism proved to be the salvation of his intellectual legacy. Freed from the tedious meetings of the Privy Council and the sessions of Parliament, Bacon devoted the last five years of his life to expanding his project, *Instauratio Magna* (The Great Restoration of Knowledge). It was during this period of 'dishonour' that his thinking became more radical and visionary.

Published posthumously in 1627, *The New Atlantis* is perhaps the first work of technical science fiction. In it, he describes the fictional island of Bensalem and its central institution, the House of Solomon, which formed the heart of the island – an institution that we would today consider the first 'R&D (Research and Development) Centre' or research university. There, scientists conduct climate experiments and investigate ways to improve health and create new technologies.

This work represents the culmination of his legal and social thought. Bacon believed that knowledge should not be an individual pursuit, but rather a state and collective endeavour. The House of Solomon is not merely a laboratory; it is a hierarchical structure of researchers with specific roles, including:

- The 'Depredators': who glean information about experiments from books.
- The 'Mystery-men': who track down trade secrets and techniques.
- The 'Pioneers or Miners': who explore new avenues by designing novel experiments.
- The 'Interpreters of Nature': who connect the findings and elevate them to general laws (the culmination of the inductive method).

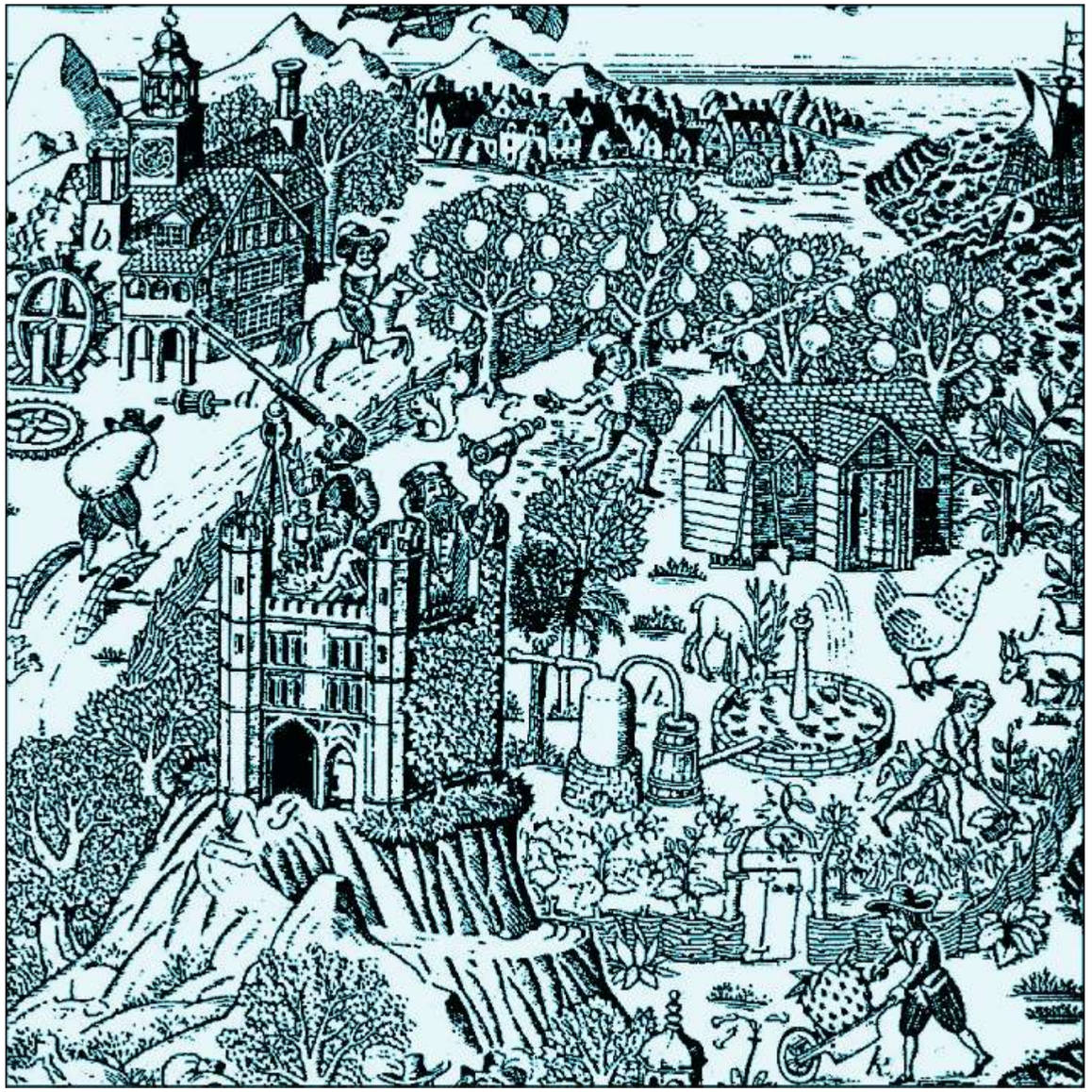
Bacon predicted innovations that would take centuries to become reality: submarines, genetic improvement of plants, resonating chambers to amplify sound, and refrigeration systems. For him, science was the highest expression of Christian charity: the alleviation of suffering in the human condition.

Bacon died in April 1626, a victim of his own curiosity. Whilst travelling through Highgate during a bitterly cold winter, he decided to test whether the cold could preserve meat in the same way as salt. He bought a chicken, slaughtered it and stuffed it with snow with his own hands. The experiment worked (the meat was preserved), but the philosopher contracted pneumonia, from which he died.

His legacy is not merely a set of physical laws, but a mental framework. Francis Bacon taught the world that science requires the rigour of a lawyer, the impartiality of a judge and the boldness of an explorer. By combining the rule of law with observation, he wrested knowledge from the clutches of superstition and placed it in the hands of evidence, laying the foundations for the technological world in which we live today.

The House of Solomon is not merely a laboratory; it is a hierarchical structure of researchers with specific roles.

Building the New Atlantis. Wikimedia



About the author: Lisardo García Rodulfo is Director of the Maat International Centre of Legal Studies and a practising lawyer in Spain.

3. 'Civil death' is the legal status of a living person who is stripped of all or most of their civil rights because of a serious conviction, so that they are treated in a legal context as if they were dead.

SPORT & PHILOSOPHY

BY
JIM PANG

THE WORLD CUP

WHY FOOTBALL COMMANDS A BILLION SOULS

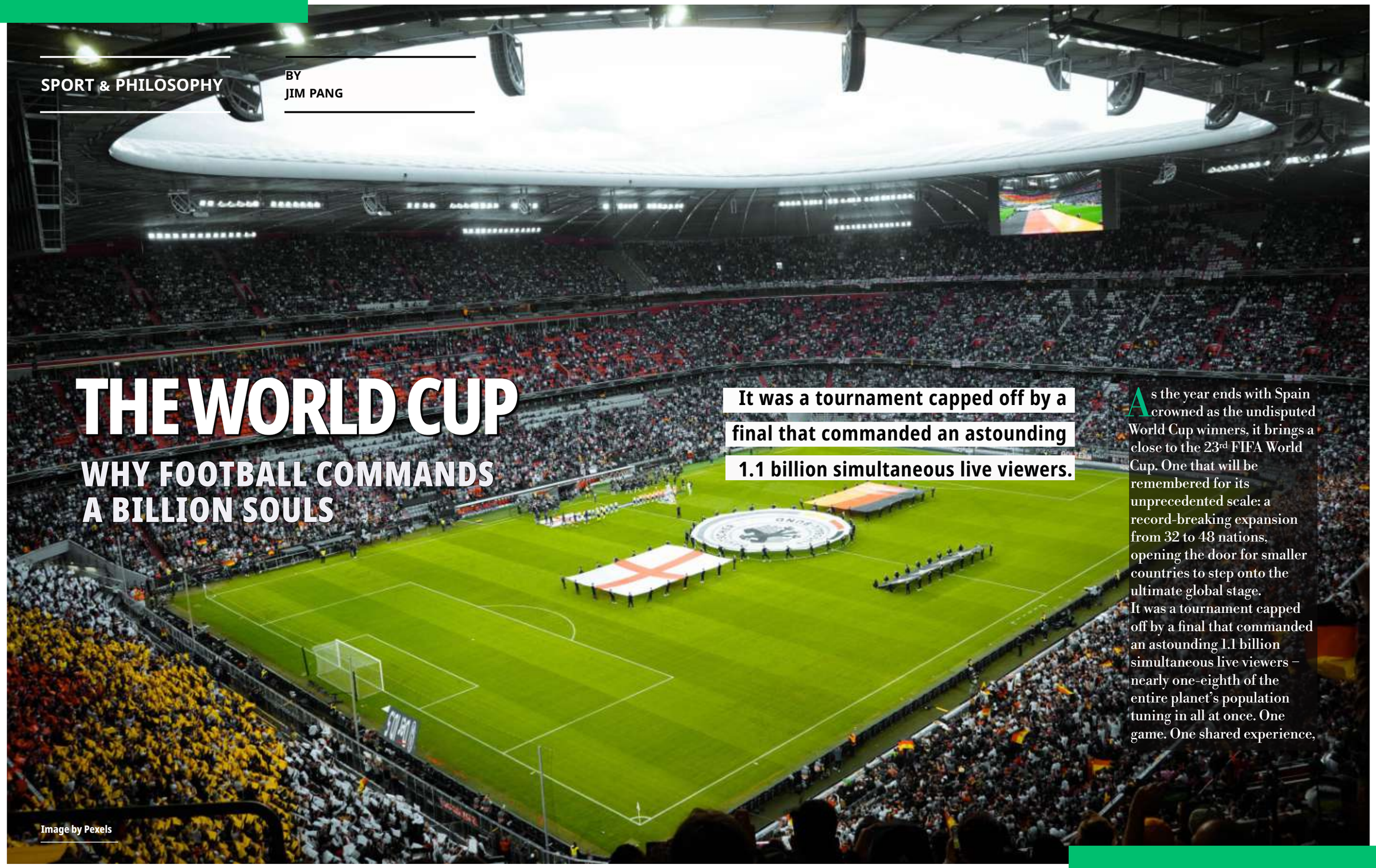


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It was a tournament capped off by a final that commanded an astounding 1.1 billion simultaneous live viewers.

As the year ends with Spain crowned as the undisputed World Cup winners, it brings a close to the 23rd FIFA World Cup. One that will be remembered for its unprecedented scale: a record-breaking expansion from 32 to 48 nations, opening the door for smaller countries to step onto the ultimate global stage.

It was a tournament capped off by a final that commanded an astounding 1.1 billion simultaneous live viewers – nearly one-eighth of the entire planet's population tuning in all at once. One game. One shared experience,

witnessed by over a billion people.

One of the questions that I asked myself was, *"What could possibly compel a billion people to willingly participate in this single event?"*

While there are many practical reasons why an individual might tune in, I want to explore this phenomenon from a specific angle: football is, without a doubt, the *greatest* tribal tournament on Earth.

It is a time when people who aren't normally interested in football suddenly show an interest. From the workplace – staff rooms, corporate offices, management teams placing sweepstakes – to our private lives among siblings, families and best friends.

When a national team plays, it represents its people. Millions across the globe feel instantly connected through the avatar of a screen, watching players don jerseys adorned in the colours of their flag. Even before the ball is kicked, the ceremonial ritual begins with the national anthems – sung with pride and joy, fans puffing out their chests and beating them in unison (with the unique exception of Spain, whose anthem carries no official lyrics [1]). The final notes are met with rapturous applause from players and crowds alike.

In this space, domestic rivalries are set aside ahead of the national interest. Bitter club grudges vanish. It



Image by Pexels

" It is a time when people who aren't normally interested in football suddenly show an interest."



Image by Pexels

is no longer, *"He plays for the rival team, so he is my enemy."* Now, it is, *"He is on the field representing my country, representing me, and representing our identity."* A person might know nothing about football, but from the moment the national anthem plays, it becomes *their* team.

Football transcends simple fandom – it becomes the universal sport of humanity. Underlying all sport is an intrinsic foundation of competition, but I would liken the World Cup experience to something deeper: conflict. Modern sociologists and social psychologists describe competition as a regulated form of conflict – creating a safe space for human rivalry [2][3]. It allows two opposing sides to compete within boundaries, expressing their physical and tactical prowess strictly within the rules.

Competition and conflict are things that all men and women face in our daily lives. Through our interactions – whether at home, at school or in the workplace – conflict is real, ever-present and something we must constantly strive to resolve. In life, we navigate relentless highs and lows: duelling in conflict with colleagues, friends or family. Sometimes we feel like we are on top of the world; at other times, we feel completely overwhelmed. Nevertheless, life goes on. It is a reality we all recognize.

When two teams face each other on the pitch, each side meets an opponent equally as invested, equally committed to winning, striving for pride and fighting to progress to the next round. Both teams express themselves within this arena.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the philosophical centrepiece of the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, the hero Arjuna engages in a monumental war against his own compatriots and family on the sacred battlefield of Kurukshetra – a conflict where both sides feel entirely deserving of a victorious outcome. In my previous article on football, I spoke of the concept of 'sacred space'. The football pitch serves as that exact sacred space where this battle must take place. Outside the lines of the pitch, the battle is meaningless. The

touchlines represent a clean separation from one conflict to another, much like how we must separate our daily workplace conflicts from our personal internal self. Furthermore, it is not physical conflict that we engage with when watching football – it is mental and empathetic. When we see two players duel, we feel as though we are in the duel ourselves. When we see a player win a tough challenge, we see ourselves overcoming our own obstacles. When a player scores and erupts in celebration, we experience that exact surge of joy. Scientifically, this phenomenon is driven by *mirror neurons*, where the brain of the observer fires in the exact same pattern as the athlete executing the action. First discovered by Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team in 1992 [4], this neural mirroring is why – whether sitting in the stadium, at the pub or on the couch – we feel completely immersed in the game.

Conclusion

Unlike other sports, football requires almost nothing. One simple ball gives immediate access to 22 players on a professional pitch, while offering countless children around the world the means to engage in friendly competition. It is a supreme equalizer, distinguished only by ability rather than expensive equipment or high-tech gear. It relies entirely on collaboration; no individual achievement can bypass the collective demands of the game. Perhaps that is the true magic of the World Cup. It provides a safe arena for our shared human need to belong – channelling our tribal instincts, mirror neurons and daily struggles into 90 minutes of pure, collective passion and consciousness. Into this beautiful game we call Football.

References & Notes

[1] Marcha Real (Spain's Lyricless Anthem): Spain's national anthem, *La Marcha Real*, is one of the few national anthems in the world without official lyrics, making its pre-match ritual uniquely instrumental for players and supporters.

[2] Competition as Regulated Conflict (Sociology): *Beyond Intractability: Competitive vs. Cooperative Frames*. Rooted in early sociological theory (such as the works of Robert E. Park and Lewis Coser), structured competition channels raw social antagonism through institutional rules to prevent destructive open violence.

[3] Differentiating Conflict and Competition (Social Psychology): *Psychology Town: Differentiating Conflict and Competition.*Explores how competitive frameworks act as a behavioural sublimation mechanism, creating safe spaces for innate aggressive drives within a bounded social contract.

[4] Mirror Neurons in Sport (Neuroscience): *Grantland: This Is Your Brain on Sports*
Refers to the discovery by Giacomo Rizzolatti (1992) regarding mirror neurons, explaining how viewers experience empathetic and motor response activation when watching athletic performance.



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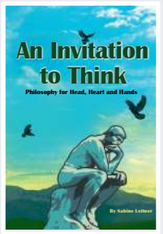
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