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NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Bi-Monthly Magazine

SOCIETY

Infinite Vision for
the Poor!

ESOTERICA

Rome and its Esoteric
Origins

ART

The Power of the
Photograph

PHILOSOPHY

Does Free Will Exist?





About Us

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

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Culture
Volunteering
NEW ACROPOLIS

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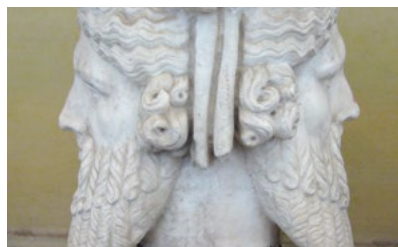
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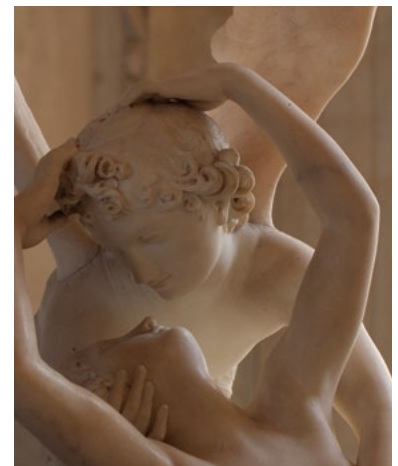
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Editorial

The importance of culture and why 'no' is the new 'yes'

The health and quality of a seed is not enough to ensure its flourishing. It also needs the right environment to do so: good soil, enough water and the right amount of light and warmth according to the needs of its nature. Using this image as an analogy, we could say that for human beings it is culture which is like the soil that provides us with the right conditions to flourish. Different cultures - whether family culture, society, global culture, the education we receive, etc - would bring out different things in us, in the same way as different types of soil and location would affect the growth and characteristics of the plant.

It is an interesting question to ask what impact our current culture has on us. Do we live in a culture that brings out the best in the human being? Do we receive the right 'nutrients' to help us develop those human qualities like compassion, discernment, wisdom, free will, altruism, fairness, resilience, etc. that have been valued and highly regarded throughout history? Or do we live in societies that bring out our most selfish aspects, foster insatiable appetites, feed our egos, dumb us down, make us addicted, physically unhealthy, psychologically weak, mentally distracted, spiritually empty? I would like to leave the answer to each reader, but I remember a comment by one of my psychology teachers at university who told us that modern civilisation was regressing human beings because it took us thousands of years to learn to control our impulses and to delay instant gratification in the pursuit of achieving wiser long-term goals. This ability is now intentionally eroded by our modern consumerist societies that (mis)use the latest psychological understanding in order to make us want to have more and to want it instantly.

A lot of studies and books seem to endorse this view and to reiterate the message of how important it is to learn to say 'no' to our impulses. According to the psychiatrist Steve Peters, author of *The Chimp Paradox: The Mind Management Programme to Help You Achieve Success, Confidence And Happiness*, we

all have an 'inner chimp' (our limbic system) and an inner human (our prefrontal cortex). Our whole consumerist society is designed to activate our 'inner chimp', which is mostly interested in food, sex, survival and the shortest way to pleasure of any kind. Nevertheless, it is the prefrontal cortex that makes us really human. Our human nature seeks truth and meaning, is inspired by intelligible ideas, can commit to long-term goals, is able to create justice and beauty and has the power to choose.

However, currently we human beings seem to live in an environment that tries to disable exactly this power to choose by constantly encouraging our hard-wired tendency to snap react to strong stimuli (the speeding up of our life through modern technologies, the fast pace of social media, the 24/7 bombardment of advertising and news). Powerful and constantly fine-tuned algorithms turn our world into something similar to an addictive online game. "We are like rats in an experiment designed to get us to say yes."¹ 'Yes' to all the temptations, in a world without any consideration as to whether they are actually good for our physical, psychological or financial health. In order to choose, we would need to say 'no' to our immediate impulses and stop and think about the long-term consequence of our decision.

Which is more powerful: our inner chimp or our inner human? Steve Peters says that our inner chimp is much more powerful because every piece of information that reaches our brain gets to the limbic system first. Ancient civilisations seemed to have a more positive view of our human nature. The ancient metaphors of the 'inner chimp' were the dragon that was slain by St Michael, St George or Siegfried, or the bull that was killed by Mithras, or the Minotaur that was overcome by Theseus. The message of these myths is clear: the inner human is able to overcome the inner animal.

So, what kind of education and culture do we need to bring out the inner human? Our future may depend on the answer to this question and our ability to implement it.

(1) William Leith in an article in the Observer

Does Free Will Exist?

The question of free will is one of the oldest and most enduring questions facing humanity. The ancient Greeks considered it in their tragedies, such as *Oedipus Rex*, where it seemed as though the hero's fate was predetermined in spite of any actions he might take to prevent or alter it. The Greeks and their cultural successors, the Romans, had an image of three Fates, who wove and spun the destinies of men, and cut the thread of their lives at a pre-ordained moment.

In the East, the doctrines of Dharma, Karma and Reincarnation helped to explain the question more clearly. Dharma is the law by which every being has a destiny arising from its own nature. The oak seed will become an oak tree and the human being will develop into its fullest expression, with time... a lot of time (hence the

doctrine of reincarnation). Karma is the law of action and reaction whereby every action we take, on any plane (including invisible planes such as the mind or emotions), will have a reaction, depending on whether our action is in harmony with the natural laws of life, or not. In this way, we build up a 'karma' - 'good' or 'bad' - which will bring us the bitter or sweet fruits of our past actions. The purpose of this process is (a) to help us learn about the laws of life, (b) to provide justice and (c) to ensure the safety of the whole system, since unlimited freedom of action without consequences would lead to a breakdown of the universal order.

This approach implicitly contains both the notion of a guiding intelligence and an element of free will in the actors on the stage of the



The three Moirai (or Fates). Relief, grave of Alexander von der Mark by Johann Gottfried Schadow.

theatre of life. The Eastern philosophers would say that Oedipus arrived at his tragedy through the accumulation of past karma, or perhaps the karma of his family or culture, of which he was a part. But what lies within the scope of his free will would be how he reacted to the tragedy of his fate: whether with dignity and nobility, or with resentment, anger, bitterness and hatred.

The Stoic philosophers of ancient Rome, such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, took a very similar approach. They held that many of life's outer circumstances lie beyond our control, for example the family or country into which we are born, our health, reputation, wealth and so on. Some of these factors can be modified by our own action to some extent, but others can't – for example if you were born a serf on a feudal estate in the Middle Ages, your chances of escaping that life would be minimal. Or if you were unjustly imprisoned in a police state, there is little you could do about it. So, our free will is limited in these outer aspects, but, according to the Stoics, it



is unlimited in terms of our inner life and our own actions. No one can force us to think in a certain way, or even to act in a certain way; we always have the freedom to say 'yes' or 'no' (or even 'maybe') to the choices life offers us (accepting the consequences of our decisions),

and therein lies our free will.

For some thinkers, however, our free will is not only limited, but non-existent. In medieval Christian and Islamic philosophy there was a big discussion about whether or not man has free will, and there were even some daring thinkers who questioned whether God, the source of all things, can be said to have free will.

On the one hand, there were those who argued that we are totally dependent on God, the omnipotent creator, upon whom everything that happens depends. On the other hand, there were those who held that God had given the freedom to man to choose whether to follow the path of good or evil and that, if he did not have that choice, life would be meaningless.

In the Renaissance the idea of free will definitely had the upper hand. A feeling of self-confidence and optimism pervaded the human spirit and it was believed that man was master of his own destiny and could achieve anything – all of which is reflected in the wonderful art and culture of that period.

A few centuries later, a more pessimistic philosophy took hold. David Hume (1711-1776) believed that human beings, despite their reasoning faculty, are completely subject to their passions and not as free as they would like to think. We find the same idea in Freud's view of the human being – dominated by instinctive drives which can be controlled by social restrictions but are always on the point of erupting to the surface if they are not kept in check. This view seemed to have been proved correct by the carnage of the First World War and reconfirmed by the horrors of the Second. What cruelties was supposedly civilised man not capable of, once the superficial veneer of civilisation had been removed?

So what is the reality of our free will? Today there are scientific experiments that claim to prove that free will does not exist. But we have to bear in mind that science has made many claims in the past which were later proved to be incorrect. So I think we are on safer ground if we look at the matter from a philosophical point of view. Is it possible to answer the question

definitively? The scientific argument could be seen as just a new manifestation of the old position of determinism. The fact is that both positions (determinism and free will) are partly valid, as the teaching of dharma and karma indicates. There is the determinism of karma, or chance (whichever term we prefer), but there is also the free will to decide and to act within the present circumstances.

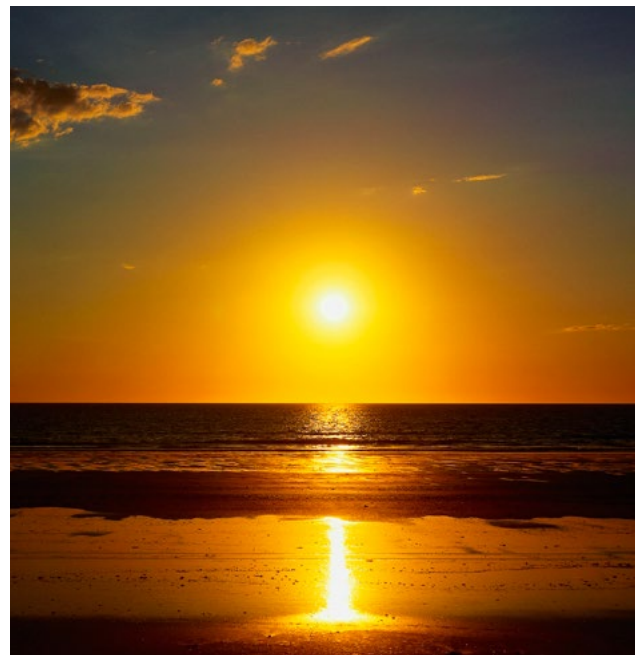
The Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (204-270 AD) said that the reason why we are preoccupied by the question of free will is that “we are beset by compulsions, violent assaults of passion crushing the soul, feeling ourselves mastered by these experiences, going where they lead, being like slaves to them... So we doubt whether we are anything at all and have power over anything.” “Aye, there’s the rub,” as Hamlet said. Are we anything at all? Are we real, or are we, as in *The Matrix*, products of some fiendish computer simulation engineered by a heartless intelligence? Plotinus says that, in order to answer this question, we must go back to the very source of all things, which he says must logically be some single first principle, a causeless cause. Did this principle, which the philosophers of India called simply ‘That’, neither being nor non-being, have free will, or was the entire universe generated automatically, either by chance, or by the first principle being ‘forced’ by necessity to produce the whole universe because it could not help but act in accordance with its own nature?

In the first case, Plotinus shows that ‘chance’ cannot precede the first principle, but must necessarily proceed from it, like everything else. And in the second case, a first principle cannot be subject to necessity, because all laws, including necessity, must also proceed from it and it would be absurd to think that something which is the supreme good to which everything aspires could be subject to anything at all. In a short article such as this I cannot attempt to describe Plotinus’ arguments in any detail, but for those who are interested I refer you to the chapter in his magnum opus *The Enneads* entitled ‘On Free Will and the One’.

In Plotinus’ philosophy the world is produced

by emanation: from the One is produced, “by sheer wealth”, a second principle or being, called ‘Intellectual-Principle’, and this in turn produces ‘Soul’. Soul shares the characteristics of the Intellectual-Principle and ultimately of the First Principle. Therefore we, as participants in Soul, must also share in real being, in other words, in answer to Plotinus’ earlier question, we are real, or at least there is a part of us which is real.

If this is the case, then we do have free will,



because by virtue of what is real in us we can act independently of all circumstances. In practical terms, this means that if we wake up in the morning in a bad mood, due to a bad dream, bad digestion, a row with our partner or a business disaster, we can exercise our will, the highest manifestation of our being, and decide not to succumb to that bad mood; and in general not to succumb to tiredness or to anything that would cause us to lose our dignity as human beings.

The belief in free will does not negate the existence of chance or determinism in certain areas of life; the two factors can coexist if we know how to act with wisdom.

Julian Scott

Infinite Vision for the Poor!

*I bind by thy heart's passion
thy heart to mine and lay my
splendid yoke upon thy soul. Now
will I do in Thee my marvelous
works. 'Savitri', Sri Aurobindo.*

Blindness and deafness are sentences to poverty in poor countries. However, Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy (Dr. V.) and David Green have freed thousands of India's poor from this "social prison" through a "compassionate capitalism"-based healthcare system. These "new heroes" used imagination and

courage to create an efficient and profitable social business based on their faith in justice and humanity.

Sri Aurobindo inspired Aravind Hospitals

Dr. V. understood at an early age that life needs not only intelligence and professional acumen, but also the joys of "beauty and compassion". Hence, he retired at 58 and created *Aravind Hospitals* ("white lotus" in Sanskrit) for low-cost cataract surgery for the poor. Unsurprisingly, the banks refused him financing, so he pawned the family's jewellery and mortgaged his brother's and sister's houses – and started his first hospital with zero equity and no development plan!

This astonishing hospital was inspired by Sri Aurobindo's teachings of the transcendence of divine power to act in the world. The first *Aravinda* self-financed hospital opened in 1976, with 11 beds in his brother's house in Madurai. Six beds were for those who could not pay; five were for paying patients. All received the same high-quality surgery and post-operation treatment (paying patients have larger, more comfortable rooms). In its first year, Dr. V performed 5,000 operations!



Marrying mysticism with capitalism

Notwithstanding Dr. V's humanism, the \$150 cost of replacement lenses (50% of per capita income!) severely limited their accessibility. Luckily, the social entrepreneur David Green, inspired by the goddess Lakshmi, had other goals than obtaining wealth – notably to serve humanity. Hence, using his creative imagination, David Green reduced production costs to \$10 a pair and convinced Dr. V to open the “*Aurolab*” lens manufacturing plant.

Unlike liberal-capitalism, which seeks maximum profit margins, *Aurolab* follows Muhammad Yunus’ “Grameen philosophy”. It thus has small profit margins on high sales volumes – using McDonald’s management techniques thereby becoming the McDonald’s of health care! The *Aravind-Aurolab* model destroys old prejudices, by demonstrating that high-quality, essential goods and services for the poor, at low prices, are possible. Hence, a sustainable and equitable economic model was born through the eclectic marriage between Eastern mysticism and Yankee capitalism!

In 2016, 4.7 million outpatients were treated and over 400,000 operations were carried out in India. *Aravind* has also built primary care or vision centres to serve the rural poor, while the ophthalmic needs of semi-urban areas are met through community eye care clinics. *Aravind*’s impact is above all qualitative. The commitment of its devoted staff of doctors, nurses and paramedics to a labour of love is the real story. They reach out with an invitation to all to come to be healed – an example of love for all of us.

Today, *Aravind Eye Hospitals* are world-wide, including in the USA. All use *Aurolab* products, such as intraocular lenses, eyeglass lenses, optical lenses, suture needles, cataract kits and hearing aids. *Aurolab*’s products are

impeccable and are used in institutes and by ophthalmologists in more than 120 countries. Its production represents 10% of world optical lens supply at \$5 a pair and a 40% return on investment. All profits are reinvested in new ophthalmological hospitals to treat millions of patients, at modest costs, of which two-thirds are free – thereby breaking down the barriers of distance, poverty and ignorance.

Aravind is recognized by the WHO as an intelligent combination of capitalism with social goals. Today, more than 300 hospitals



use this model to treat AIDS, provide maternity care, hearing aids, etc. in Nepal, Bangladesh (Grameen Business) and the SEVA Foundation (Berkeley). *Aravind* has become the subject of numerous academic studies, and an inspiration for budding social entrepreneurs and idealists everywhere. Finally, it is an example that the Third World can solve its own problems – by channelling capitalism into social goals. But above all, *Aravind* is an inspiration for all who dare to act with imagination, courage and determination, based on “infinite vision” and faith in humanity.

J. H. Chan-Lee

ROME

and its Esoteric Origins – Part I

Many historians have highlighted the immense legacy that the Romans left to 'modern' man. With a bit of exaggeration, we could even say that mentally, politically, administratively, legally and artistically we Westerners are all pretty much Romans. This legacy, contrary to the still current 'theories', which portray the ancient Romans as a rough, warmongering people, ignorant of philosophy and concerned only with pragmatism, needs to be based on some different foundations. In this and the following article, I would like to give a brief overview of some aspects of Roman culture that form part of those *other* foundations, foundations that have a meta-historical (i.e. mythic), symbolic and sacred character.

The kind of legacy that the Romans left to us, the way they rose to become one of the greatest empires known to history, cannot be a matter of profane living. In the heart of the greatness that was Rome, we shall seek and find a spiritual dimension, with its metaphysical symbols and an esoteric tradition. Studying this tradition we will also find traces of the *Ars Regia* (Royal Art), the true hermetic science of *Alchemy*.

The God Janus

From the earliest times of Roman sacred history, not a 'foreign' (i.e. Greek, Persian etc.) but an *Italic* God - Janus, was the god of initiation into the mysteries (known as the *God of Beginnings*, from the Latin *initia* - to begin), he who opened and closed the *Janua* (door) of the initiation temple and guarded the *heavenly gates*. Janus was simultaneously the god of initiation into the



mysteries and the *Patron* of the artisans' guilds (*collegia fabrorum*), especially the masons' and bricklayers' guilds.

Related to masonry, we find the denomination of *Pontifex Maximus*, which originally designated the highest priest (i.e. hierophant of the mysteries). The *Ponti-fex* symbolized the one who not only built bridges (*pons facere*) across rivers but also traced out the road or path (in Latin, *pons* also

means *via* or way). By using a bridge, the waters, symbol of man's passional and transient nature, can be crossed. The apparently profane activity of building *Roman* roads refers to an esoteric teaching in which the initiate (the Pontifex) opens the way to the *secret heart* of Rome. Hence the saying, 'all roads lead to Rome'.

The God Saturn

Like the Greeks, the Latins spoke of the *Four Ages* (or *Races*) of *Man*: Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron. This tradition identifies the period of the *Golden Age* with the *Saturnia Regna* (the reign of Saturn). In the legend, Saturn, after being dethroned



by Jupiter and driven away from Heaven (i.e. Olympus), took refuge in the Italian region of Lazio. Once there, 'King' Janus, received him and together they ruled the country. To the inhabitants of Lazio, Saturn taught agriculture and navigation (water symbolism again!). Legends also speak of a very ancient people who inhabited the Roman regions and who were the last descendants of 'King' Saturn and the *Primordial Tradition*.

Virgil calls Saturn's fields the *Saturnia arva* where *ar-vum* is the arable land.

To plough (*arare*) means to create furrows in the soil and expose it to the solar action (here the Sun is the symbol of the spirit). It is therefore

necessary to 'cultivate' man's inner potentials (the soil) in order to obtain spiritual fruits. The art of cultivation (*peritia ruris*) of Saturn's Field is the cultivation of man's spiritual field.

Considering the occult and initiatic character of Saturn in astrology, we should not ignore the little known esoteric dimension of the *Saturnalia* (the ancient Roman festival of Saturn in December). Macrobius states that "it is not permitted to unveil the side of the Saturnalia which teaches about the arcane nature of the godhead but only what is disguised in fables and told to the common people... That is because not even in those initiatic ceremonies is it allowed to narrate the occult reasons emanating from the source of pure truth..." Through Saturn, says Macrobius, "from an uncultivated and dark life, we are released into the light."

The symbolism of Saturn clearly points to the idea that the sapiential tradition derived from the Golden Age found refuge in the region of Lazio, where it remained hidden, to be later revived by Rome. We could say that in the midst of a rampant *Kali Yuga* (or Iron Age), where the forces of materialism took the upper hand and Greece was about to 'lose' her soul, Rome brought the vision of a 'new' Golden (solar) Age back to the West. Proofs of this are also the various etymologies related to the name *Saturn*. Saturn is connected with the Etruscan God *Satre*, which is also similar to the Anglo-Saxon divinity *Saeter*. In the old German language *Satejar* is the planet Saturn. Interestingly enough, the Sanskrit name for the Golden Age is *Sat-ya Yuga*. In Sanskrit, the Golden Age is also called *Krta Yuga* and the Greek name *Chronos* derives from the same Sanskrit root *Kra*. In summary, the Latin *sate-urnus*, the German *saeter*, and the Etruscan *satre*, all refer to the 'true' (*Sat* in Sanskrit) and 'unchangeable' (*Sat* again) doctrine as derived from the Golden or Primordial Age.

I leave you now to meditate on what has been covered so far and see you in the next issue, where I will say more about the occult origins of Rome and its secret name.

Agostino Dominici

THE POWER OF THE Photograph

Photography is a process of image-making that is less than 200 years old, yet at the time of its invention, no one could have imagined the impact it would have on the global population, becoming a form of communication that could rival the English Language for its universality.

What is it that obsesses us about recording a version of what we have seen, and showing

it to someone else? And what compels us to appreciate these images in a completely different way to how we would appreciate the subject of the image if we were seeing it in person (and not taking a photograph of it ourselves)? There is a transformation that occurs when something becomes something photographed which can tell a powerful story in a universal language.



Luc Delahaye - Kosevo Hospital, Sarajevo 1993

How does this happen?

The first subtle yet important aspect of this transformation is that there is a before and an after to every image, and there is also always a photographer who was responsible for choosing exactly which point along the timeline we are seeing. Not only this, the photographer is also responsible for what we see and what we don't see. Everything the camera wasn't pointed at was also present at that point in time. So, interestingly, the Unseen is as important as the Seen.



William W. Dyviniak -
Automobile Accident
1945.

Another part of the transformation is that a photograph can be aesthetically evaluated. We like some photographs more than others. Content is one thing but we all have an idea of what makes a photograph Beautiful or what makes one photograph more Beautiful than another. We like pleasing composition and although most people would find it difficult to explain what good composition is and what bad composition is, there is generally a consensus on what is good and bad. It is as though a Harmonic Proportion exists within all of us by which we evaluate images.

We also like light. Light, of course, is how photographs are made and how we see. But we would not see light were it not for shadows, reflection and refraction. Pure light will blind us. Thankfully, our atmosphere reflects, refracts and ultimately reduces the power of the sun to a level by which we can see. Shadows allow us to see details, the relationship between light areas and dark areas, the density and substance of surfaces. We can only see with both light and shadow and photography is an expression and a reminder of this universal principle.

Photographic images can be said to stimulate our ideas of some Archetypes. Harmony and Proportion can be appreciated in composition. Beauty and Art can be appreciated in contemplating the choices made by the photographer in taking the picture. We are also able to view our world in an elevated state of detachment when viewing it through a photograph. We can see more and be in more places as it transports us around the world, in and out of other people's lives and situations. This is the essential transformation of photography – that it has the ability to transform us.

Tom Moran

Pilgrimage to Canterbury

“People have travelled to places of spiritual significance from the dawn of history.”



There is a certain magic in a journey, especially when one does it with an awareness of the world around and within. It gives an opportunity to get out of the ordinary rhythm of life and open up to new experiences. If a journey has a spiritual meaning, it adds a whole new level of depth to the experiences and provides an opportunity for renewal and rediscovery of oneself.

People have travelled to places of spiritual significance from the dawn of history.

The records of pilgrimages discovered by archaeologists date back as far as 6000 years.

The UK has many pilgrim routes and sites from different periods of history that keep the memory of the past and their sacred meaning.

“In spite of the main relic being destroyed, Canterbury retained its special place in England’s religious life.”

One of the most significant places is Canterbury.

Even before becoming a centre of pilgrimage, Canterbury was on some of the main routes for travellers. In pre-Roman times a settlement now known as Canterbury was located in the area of ancient trackways along the edge of the North Downs towards the major sacred centres of Stonehenge and Avebury. The trackways later became the Pilgrims’ Way from Winchester to Canterbury.

When the Romans came, Canterbury (then – Durovernum Cantiacorum) was their second significant stop. It was rebuilt and included in Watling Street – a paved route from the Roman ports in Kent crossing the Thames bridge in London to the north. This route became another part of the Pilgrims’ Way from London to Canterbury.

In 597 St Augustine of Canterbury arrived with an official mission from Rome to establish Christianity in Kent. Before his arrival, Canterbury already had a Christian church of St. Martin dating back to Roman times. It became St Augustine’s first headquarters. Later the missionary founded the abbey of St Peter and Paul, and the cathedral of Jesus Christ the Saviour. All three are now UNESCO world heritage sites.

After the death of St. Augustine, the abbey was renamed in his honour and with time became “the mother school, the mother university of England”. It also attracted many pilgrims.

The grand building of Canterbury cathedral that we see now was started by Lanfranc of Canterbury and St. Anselm in the 1070s. The magnificence of its architecture and internal design reflects Canterbury’s historic and religious importance. In 697 Canterbury became the centre for the entire English Church and, with time, a prominent religious and

educational centre for the whole of Northern Europe.

Canterbury was once a starting point for the Via Francigena to Rome and Way of Santiago de Compostela. It also became the main English pilgrimage destination for Europe after the tragic death of the archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170. The murdered archbishop was canonised shortly after his death and his shrine attracted pilgrims for around 400 years until it was destroyed by Henry VIII.

One of the first prominent pilgrims to Canterbury was King Henry II. The king made a long journey barefoot to atone for his inadvertent hand in the death of his former friend and adviser, who became a pious and devoted archbishop. Veneration of St Thomas the martyr spread throughout Europe, with chapels and churches dedicated to him opening in Scotland, Spain, France, Sicily and Hungary. Many Europeans journeyed to Canterbury, including Louis VII of France and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

In spite of the main relic being destroyed, Canterbury retained its special place in England’s religious life. The interest in the Pilgrims’ Way was renewed in the 19th century.

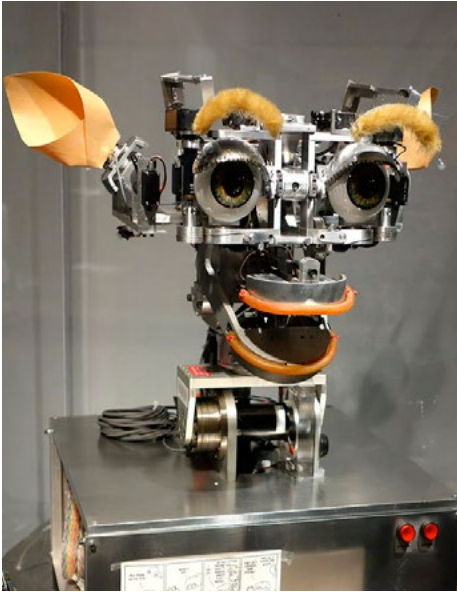
Nowadays pilgrimage is undergoing a revival. Through it people reconnect with the community, history, values and ideas symbolised by the pilgrimage sites. Although being a pilgrim is a state of mind rather than a formal name of a person travelling to a sacred place, such a place, whether natural or built, helps to focus the mind on something transcendent; and the route towards it, as well as the effort connected with it, makes the process of transformation possible. Have a good journey!.

Nataliya Petlevych

The Rise of the MACHINES ?

The principle of the programmable modern computer was proposed by Alan Turing in a paper in 1936, in which he proved that a “Universal Computing Machine” could be capable of computing anything that is computable by executing instructions using a program stored on tape. Since then, the astonishing development of computing hardware has allowed us to transition from tape to transistors, of which there are literally billions being carried around in our pockets. This development of hardware has made it possible to store significantly more complex programs, which can execute thousands of trillions of calculations per second. The programs have now reached the point that they can understand and perceive their environment and take actions to ensure that they reach their goals. This is known as Artificial Intelligence or AI.





Kismet, one of the first robots that can recognize and simulate



Hollywood has for some time played with the idea of an AI which destroys or enslaves humanity in a dramatic fashion. However, the reality of that happening is much smaller than Hollywood directors and script writers would like us to believe. That is not to say that we shouldn't proceed with caution when developing and using AI. The use of AI is going to be widespread, with it being applied to cars, trucks, manufacturing machines, and inside computers, smartphones and potentially military technology. It is perhaps in these areas where we have a more immediate need to be cautious.

AI will provide safer trucks and cars, which can reach their destinations faster; something which is naturally beneficial to society, but there will be an impact on those industries in terms of jobs, which could constitute a threat to human dignity. Furthermore, it could replace nurses, soldiers and police officers, roles which require empathy, and without it the consequences could be quite significant. Furthermore, the amount of information an AI can learn about us could give too much power to corporations and governments.

Military technology is the most dangerous area which can be influenced by AI. Very recently, the Korea Institute of Science and Technology

(KAIST) celebrated its new research centre for the Convergence of National Defence and Artificial Intelligence. 57 scientists subsequently called for a boycott of the centre, due to the fear it will be used to create autonomous weapon systems.

However, there is a certain level of inevitability about the development of artificial intelligence. It is now perhaps a case of ensuring that those with the ability to develop and fund research into AI do this with something we should all be striving for in ourselves: wisdom. Ensuring that the machines we create have the correct fail-safe mechanisms to ensure our own protection is important, and the initial designers should have the correct motivation when designing the AI.

Many modern philosophers and scientists, including the late Prof. Hawking, have considered the prospect of our own self-destruction through the creation of an AI. However, this far-off doomsday scenario should not distract from the immediate social and ethical issues of AI. Despite the dangers of AI, it should also be considered for its potential to assist humanity with many of the issues we face, such as disease and poverty.

Peter Fox

CUPID AND PSYCHE



Psyche and Amor,
also known as *Psyche*
Receiving Cupid's First
Kiss (1798), by François
Gérard.

So much has been written about love that another article would seem to be almost unnecessary. But then again, do we really know what love is? Where does it come from, is it external or internal, do we need to awaken it or do we earn it? It has such tremendous powers that we can all feel it and as such it will always inspire us. It can lead to madness or to the highest state of bliss. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato wrote a whole dialogue concerning love or Eros. The dialogue is called *The Symposium* and it goes deeply into the mystery of love and into the Mysteries themselves.

There is another story that takes us into the depths of love, called the myth of Cupid and Psyche, which is part of the book *Metamorphoses*, also known as *The Golden Ass*. The story was written in the 2nd century AD by a Platonist philosopher, Lucius Apuleius.

Once upon a time, so the story goes, there was a king with three daughters. Psyche was the youngest and unparalleled in her beauty. People compared her even to Venus, the goddess of beauty herself. They abandoned temples and shrines dedicated to Venus and praised Psyche instead. This didn't please Venus and as a punishment she sent her mischievous boy Cupid, in ancient Greece known as Eros, to shoot Psyche with his poisonous arrow at the exact moment when she was looking at the most miserable and vilest of men, so that she would fall in love with him. But when Cupid found Psyche he was so taken by her beauty that, in his confusion, he wounded himself with his arrow.

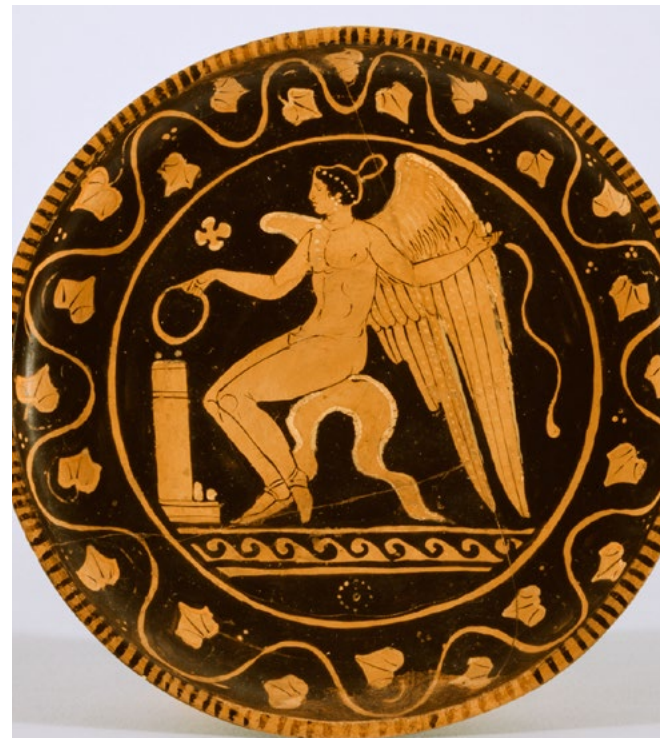
As Psyche was still single her worried father consulted the Oracles of Delphi. They declared that she had to marry a monster. The family was overwhelmed by grief, but Psyche accepted her fate and went to the prescribed place of her wedding. That was the edge of a cliff, from where the wind took her into the valley below. She appeared in front of the

most beautiful palace full of riches and invisible servants fulfilling every wish. At night a voice came to her explaining that he is her husband who loves her dearly, but that she should not try to see him under any circumstances, otherwise he would be lost for her forever. Those were the conditions in which they lived together; joined at night, but separated at the break of dawn.

After some time Psyche started to miss her family and asked her husband to order the wind to bring her two sisters for a visit. When the sisters arrived and saw Psyche's rich palace they got very jealous and devised a cunning plan to destroy Psyche's marriage. They told her that her husband was a poisonous snake waiting for her baby to grow in her belly and then devour them both. Naïve Psyche took her sisters' ill advice to cut the throat of her husband. During one night she took the lamp and the knife, prepared to kill her monstrous husband, but as soon as she saw him lying in the bed, she recognized that her husband was Cupid, the most handsome being she had ever seen. At that moment she mistakenly wounded herself with his arrow. Cupid woke up and, disappointed at her breaking their agreement, flew away. Psyche left the palace in search of her husband. Finally she met Venus who gave her some impossible tasks. She completed them all with the help of Nature. Her final trial was to go to the underworld and bring back a box with a portion of the beauty of Persephone, queen of the underworld. On the way out, at the very end she couldn't resist opening the box and, as soon she opened it, cold eternal sleep enveloped her body and she fell to the ground. But Cupid found her and with his kiss brought her back to life. He then went to Olympus to see his father Zeus and arrange for his marriage. Psyche was brought to heaven

and made equal to the gods. They lived happily ever after and from their union a child called Joy was born.

Learning from the story it seems that what awakens love is beauty. Beauty is the spark that ignites the power of love, the spark of the transformative process. This is also why the arts in the classical world had such an important place within society; they help us to transcend the mundane through their connection with beauty. Not everything is clear to us at first; we don't recognize that invisible visiting voice at night, but slowly, like Psyche, we can awaken our



consciousness, or our soul, which is what Psyche really represents. Philosophically Cupid (love) has a mission within the soul. Without Cupid the soul cannot grow and cannot be resurrected. It is not a coincidence that the word philosophy carries love in its name. That is why it is philosophy in its essence that carries that transformative power.

Miba Kosir

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