

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

By Hubertus Fremerey

This issue of Pathways is edited by Hubertus Fremerey from Bonn Germany. For a short bio look up http://philosophos.org/philosophy_lovers/postcard_gallery_24.html

My lifelong interest (I am now 76) was/ is in understanding our time in all its aspects – not only philosophically, but not only technically either. I am currently working on a book that will show the outcome of these efforts.

The title of my essay is a hint at Hegels "Philosophy is its time apprehended in thoughts." The citation is from "Preface to the Philosophy of Right" (see <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>). It reads in full : "To apprehend what is is the task of philosophy, because what is is reason. As for the individual, every one is a son of his time; so *philosophy also is its time apprehended in thoughts*. It is just as foolish to fancy that any philosophy can transcend its present world, as that an individual could leap out of his time If a theory transgresses its time, and builds up a world as it ought to be, it has an existence merely in the unstable element of opinion, which gives room to every wandering fancy." Well, this is "objective idealism" which is Hegel but not me.

Presented here ahead of my own essay and contrasting it are two pieces that too refer to the modern world, but from totally different perspectives. The first, under the title

'Yogananda: A great Educator and his philosophy', by Dr. Bibhas Kanti Mandal, and Dr. Monoranjan Bhowmik,

introduces the reader to the educational philosophy of Bengal guru Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paramahansa_Yogananda) realized in 1917 in his school at Ranchi, Bengal. As the Wiki-article says : // In 1917, Yogananda founded a school for boys in Dihika, West Bengal, that combined modern educational techniques with yoga training and spiritual ideals. A year later, the school relocated to Ranchi. This school would later become the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, the Indian branch of Yogananda's American organization, Self-Realization Fellowship. //

The second essay, under the title

'Industrial transitioning as literary poltergeists: Henry James and the Ghosts of Modernity', by Carolyn Lawrence, Ed.D,

tries to read the famous short-story "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James (1843-1916), published in 1898, as a parable of the problems of the new industrialization in GB in that time. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_James + https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Turn_of_the_Screw

Both essays refer to a time some 100 years back that looks on first sight very strange and alien to our current thinking and experiencing.

I start with what Carolyn Lawrence wrote on "The Turn of the Screw". She approaches the short story from a historical point of view, interpreting the troubles of the governess as symbolizing the troubles of the newly liberated women in Europe in around 1900. She hints at the fact, that Freud's seminal book on "The Interpretation of Dreams" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Interpretation_of_Dreams + https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud), that appeared only one year after the "Turn of the Screw", tries to understand the "hysterical" woman, who is confused and terrified because she lost the guidance of the man and the culture that she had been used to. Thus by this interpretation of Carolyn Lawrence one should see the strange visions of the governess as a form of hysteria in a woman that has "lost her orientation" in the modern world of the Industrial Revolution. Since I am not an expert on Henry James I cannot judge whether this interpretation was on his mind. The reader should have a look at the Wiki-article on the shortstory to become aware of the enormous width of critical debates on this piece.

As a hint at the moral and mental confusion in all of Europa in around 1900 the essay of Carolyn Lawrence seems valuable to me. One has to think not only of the Freudian work, but of the dramatic works of Ibsen, Strindberg, and Schnitzler, of the philosophical work of Nietzsche, of the paintings of Klimt and Kokoschka etc.. This has been "Fin de Siecle" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fin_de_si%C3%A8cle) and a feeling of "the world turned upside down" was widespread among many writers and artists in that time and seemed justified by the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. Today, more than 100 years after that event, we have lost the feeling of imminent horror well know in that era. Thus when put in the context of that time I find the essay of Carolyn Lawrence quite stimulating.

But our current problems are of a very different nature, even while the upcoming intelligent robots seem to indicate a new sort of danger, on which see https://www.google.de/search?q=intelligent+robots&hl=de&gl=de&gws_rd=ssl ! This time it is not the new role of the woman with respect to the role she was used to before 1900, but maybe it is a new role of the human race generally with respect to intelligent creatures of our own making. In this sense Romanticism (around 1800), Fin de Siecle (around 1900), and "The Era of Intelligent Machines" beginning just now could be seen as a sequence of consequential steps into an ever more confusing world of an unknown sort of the future. The century ahead may be one of great surprises and transformations.

Now I turn to the other essay on Swami Yogananda and his pedagogical work. From the Wiki I cite : // In 1917 Paramahansa Yogananda "began his life's work with the founding of a 'how-to-live' school for boys, where modern educational methods were combined with yoga training and instruction in spiritual ideals." // This is what the essay by Drs. B.K. Mandal and M. Bhowmik is about. Once more one should see this endeavour in the context of a much wider interest in "Eastern wisdom" during the "cultural revolution" of the 1960s and beyond mainly in California, but eventually spreading over all of the Western world tired of the notions of "technological progress and achievement" and longing for a new humanity and spirituality and integrity. In this context "guruism" and the cult of Osho (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajneesh>) and Sannyasin and Zen-Masters flourished. It was a time of the Hippies and the Beatles and of the musicals "Hair" and "Rocky Horror Picture Show", of "Alices Restaurant" and "Easy Rider". Part of the "counter culture"

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterculture>) were "anti-paedagogics"
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deschooling_Society +
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Growing_Up_Absurd) and "anti-psychiatry"
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-psychiatry>) – depicted f.i. in the film "One flew over the cuckoo's nest"
([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Flew_Over_the_Cuckoo%27s_Nest_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Flew_Over_the_Cuckoo%27s_Nest_(film))).

This revolt in the West against Western standards of "industrializing humans" owes much to the Eastern concepts of educating a "whole" or "integrated" personality that is what the project of Yogananda wants to achieve, as Drs. B.K. Mandal and M. Bhowmik explain in detail in their essay. But from our current perspective some 50 years after the "cultural revolution" this idea, great as it is from a general humanitarian viewpoint, looks very naive with respect to the many troubles of American primary schools. For an even 'too optimistic' view of the reality in some corners of the USA alone, see the movie "Freedom Writers" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Writers). Or perhaps read the short novel of Aldous Huxley (author of Brave New World) "Island" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_\(Huxley_novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_(Huxley_novel))), whose picture of an idealized ashram somewhere near Sumatra resembles very much the ideal of Yogananda. In a fit of resignation Huxley wrote a pessimistic finale of the book, where the happy island is bombed by a greedy ruler of another island nearby because the island sits on an oil deposit that he wants to exploit. And perhaps compare the ideal community depicted by the behaviourist F.B. Skinner in his novel "Walden Two" (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walden_Two)

Thus while the project of integrating a liberal modern education along the ideas of Rousseau and Montessori with classical Indian Yoga to bring forth a fully integrated liberal and strong personality is great as an idea, it seems too far from the modern reality of the industrial world to be taken seriously as a general model. But at the same time I highly respect the paedagogical model of Yogananda as a counter-model to our modern standard. The conflict between the two models in the Western world goes back to several proposals to reform education in Europe since Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Montessori and others, and i.a. to the debates on "Summerhill" as proposed by A.S. Neill in 1921 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summerhill_School). But Neill was fiercely opposed by practicing teachers on the grounds that he was a dreamer and the modern world requires disciplined and well informed bright achievers like Elon Musk or Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos or the late Steve Jobs and not children playing around. From this point of view, the modern world is not a world of niceties any more than the world of Rockefeller and Ford once was around 1900. You always can opt personally for your ashram or commune or cloister, but you never can opt for such a model of living as a general norm if you want to keep the industrial and postindustrial society running. Modern industrial society is a machine, not a playground.

There is a strange twist to this outlook : If really thinking robots would take over most of our workload, a human society of the future, where the humans would be educated along the lines suggested by Yogananda, should be possible. Thus beyond the highest possible technical standards with truly intelligent robots, the highest possible human standards with fully integral 'spiritual' humans could become a realistic option. Because of this I included the essay on Yogananda and his project into this couple of essays.