

Augustine of Hippo (354 AD – 430 AD) arguing with Donatists

2024

A Search for Good Practices in a Rattling World

Humans are one of only six species to pass the mirror test—which tests whether an animal recognizes its reflection as an image of itself. They are variously said to possess consciousness, self-awareness, and a mind, which correspond roughly to the mental processes of thought. This makes it possible to perceive the relationship between oneself and one's environment.

Which elements to manage?

Our oldest tale in the history is the story of the battle between good and evil, between light and darkness, truth and lies, creation and destruction. The current era of phenomenology and atheistic existentialism originated some nasty extremes that have a major influence in the functioning of society: individualism and egoism are in front, while the numerous teachings (1) to keep communities together, to form meaningful relationships, and to find happiness, for a variety of reasons decrease in importance.

Norms and values are necessary to create order in a society. Socrates would say to us, *'Tell me, what is the right way to live?'* The truly wise man will know what is right, do what is good. But widely spread valuable classical knowledge about ethics and moral virtues got lost somewhere, while the liberal sense of life is in the thinking, in structures, processes and laws, held by interests. This way of life has many advantages such as the freedom to decide for yourself, but ignores the teachings.

Can I be of receive?

Something has to change in the way we live our lives: we have to find answers how to get along with each other and how to provide peaceful relationships, without losing the liberal sense.

We are at crossroads and the following questions arise: What are we heading for? Where do we want to go? What is civilization? What is a good society? What's the right thing to do? And what is actually meant with togetherness? Is it a matter of identity, culture, (absence of) the public sphere?

Discussion of the concept of identity, sameness, and difference were already there in Plato's time and continued through Schopenhauer, George Steiner, Jurgen Habermas, Phillip Blom, Michael Sandel, Swami Parthasarathy and many others.

Becoming human is an art

A lot is equal to those in Plato's Chariot Allegory: how to manage the elements? The art is to find a balance in fitting the teachings into the liberal way of life and to ensure that existing polarization in society and in political belief systems decreases.

Instead of waging wars and spreading lies, we must cultivate ourselves by acquiring wisdom by means of knowledge and science, gathering courage, mastering and applying compassion and creativity, and by displaying love. Much is also in what the Germans call Bildung.

Our moral ideas and actions are a product of our very nature as social creatures. "The Theory of Moral Sentiments" argues that this social psychology is a better guide to moral action than is reason. It identifies the basic rules of prudence and justice that are needed for society to survive, and explains the additional, beneficent, actions that enable it to flourish.

Hope for the future

Not only individuals can cultivate the mind with the help of the teachings, provided by upbringing, education and libraries, also organizations and the world of the arts contribute:

- the new UN agenda for peace as part of the Summit of the Future, which summit breathe new life into the multilateral system so that it can deliver on the promises of the United Nations Charter and the 2030 Agenda and must provide concrete answers about the question how to reinforce the cooperative frameworks that are necessary to move us from the path to destruction to the path to prosperity;
- artists are particularly good at thinking in terms of possibilities and dreaming out loud, creating new images and different perspectives is often their great motivation. Art stimulates, challenges, moves and encourages thinking in new directions by critical looking at our society, point out problem areas, take new directions with their imagination and suggest other ways of looking at things.

(1) E.g. moral virtue from Ancient Greece, the principles of Catholic Social Teachings, the philosophical tradition of Vedanta

*Wonders are many, yet of all
Things is man the most wonderful [...]
And speech he has learned, and thought
So swift, and the temper of mind
To dwell within cities, and not to lie bare
Amid the keen, biting frosts
Or cower beneath pelting rain
Full of resource against all that comes to him
Is man. Against death alone he is left with no defence.
But painful sickness he can cure by his own skill.*

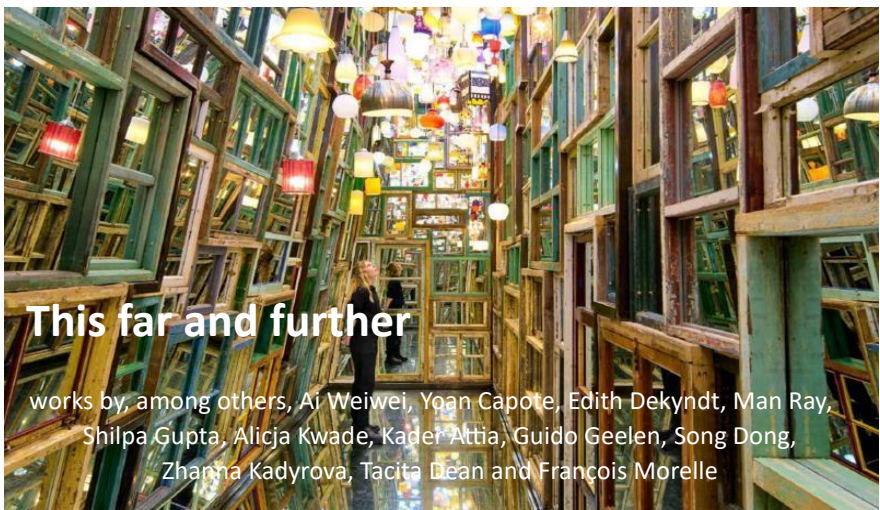
(Antigone, translation H.D.F. Kitto)

--

“Our world is calling on each of us to be vigilant in new ways. The agonies, contradictions and tribulations pressing upon us, our cultures and our Earth summon each of us —every woman, man and child — to care more and together, become active stewards of the common good.”

(opening line of the statement of conclusions: Caux Round Table 2023 Global Dialogue on Moral Responsibility).

- **Moderate virtue** (Aristotle), **“What’s the Right Thing To Do?”** (Michael Sandel) and **“Becoming Human is an Art”** (Rob Riemen);
- **The oldest tale in the history of humankind:** the story of the battle between good and evil, between light and darkness, truth and lies, creation and destruction (Nexus Conference 2018);
- **“Expressing responsibility”** (Statement Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism in conclusion of the Global Dialogue 2023, where questions arose like "where are we at as a global community", "where are we headed" and "where are our leaders"?);
- The **“Summit of the Future”** (United Nations, 22-23 September 2024). This summit will build upon the SDG Summit and breathe new life into the multilateral system so that it can deliver on the promises of the United Nations Charter and the 2030 Agenda;
- **A journey that starts with a rattling world, continues along a tipping point and then leads to new ways of seeing** (Collection exhibition 2023 "This Far and Further", museum Voorlinden):



This far and further

works by, among others, Ai Weiwei, Yoan Capote, Edith Dekyndt, Man Ray, Shilpa Gupta, Alicja Kwade, Kader Attia, Guido Geelen, Song Dong, Zhanna Kadyrova, Tacita Dean and Francois Morelle

“I am still learning” (Michelangelo)

Best regards,

E. (Erik) van der Kooij
Director Feeling Europe Foundation

www.feelingeurope.eu | contribute@feelingeurope.eu

LinkedIn: [feeling-europe-foundation](#) | X: [@feeling_europe](#) and [@C21fellow](#)

[NEXUS Institute](#)

[CEPS](#)

[Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism](#) | [Council for Inclusive Capitalism](#) | [CIFA](#)

[GBBC](#)

[Odyssey](#)

Feeling EUROPE FNDN fosters and guides European values and affairs, aiming to improve living conditions as human condition. The foundation is an outgrowth from the conferences 'Europe: A Beautiful Idea?' (5th) and 'The Sound of Europe'

Established at Wassenaar 5-12-2007, Commercial Register The Hague number 27308610 and 5-09-2022 included in the UBO register