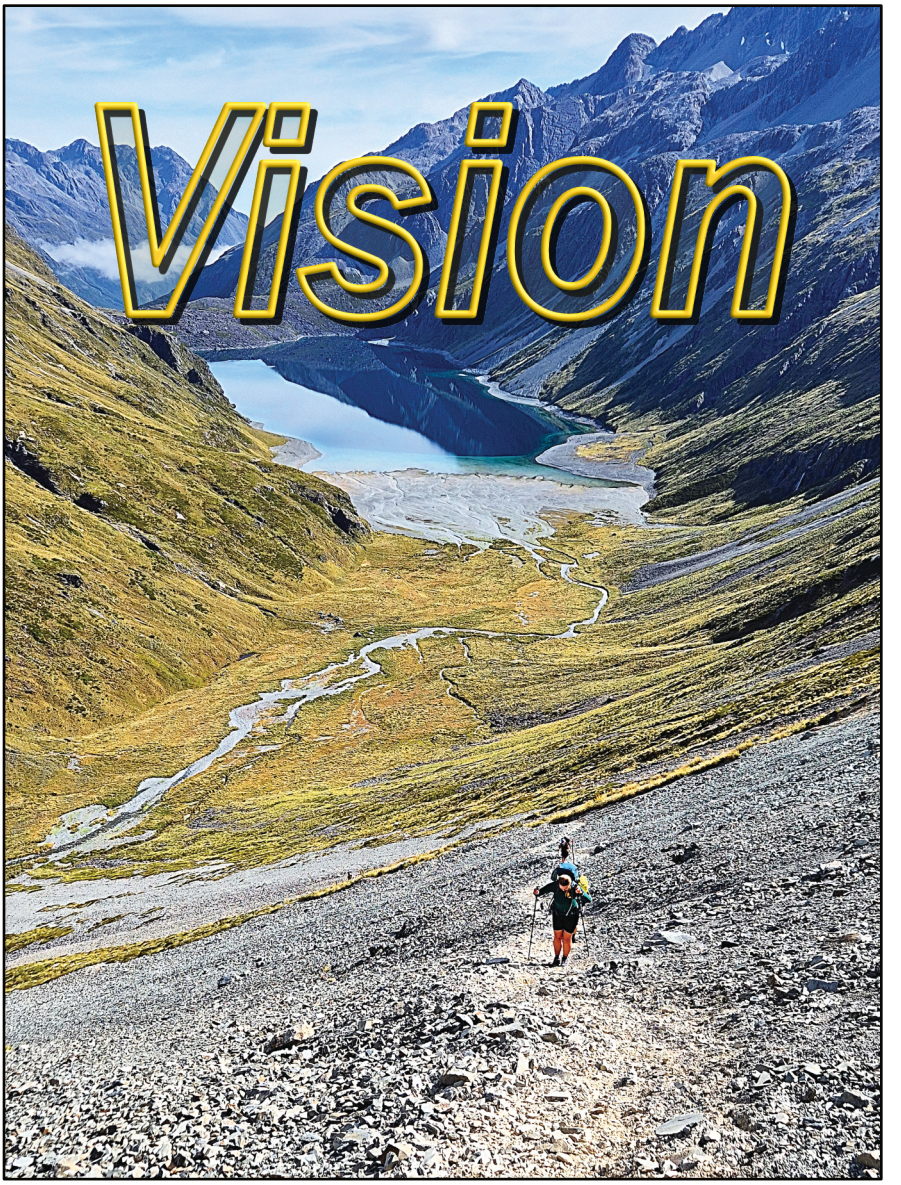
Vision



SCHOOL *of* PHILOSOPHY
SINCE 1960

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The School 'Vision' publication began in November 2000 offering students the opportunity in their writings and contributions to convey a sense of looking beyond the boundaries of the physical world and into the subtle and spiritual realms.

Contributions for the next issue are always welcome.

Cover picture: Nelson Lakes National Park, on the Long Pathway.

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Meditations

Manifestly, no condition of life could be so well adapted for the practice of philosophy as this in which chance finds you today. *p168*

In reading and writing, you cannot lay down rules until you have learnt to obey them. Much more so in life. *p177*

'The robber of your free will,' writes Epictetus, 'does not exist'. *p178*

What is your trade? Goodness. But how are you to make a success of it unless you have a philosopher's insight into the nature of the universe, and into the particular condition of man? *p166*

Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one. *p157*

When beset from without by circumstance, be unperturbed; when prompted from within to action, be just and fair; in fine, let both will and deed issue in behaviour that is social and fulfills the law of your being. *p145*

Marcus Aurelius - 'Meditations' (translated by Maxwell Staniforth)

Service at Waterperry

It took me a 36-hour journey across 18,300 kilometres, about halfway round the world, to arrive at Waterperry House in rural Oxfordshire, the spiritual home of the School of Philosophy in London. Ten days of service lay ahead: 17-hour days, no salary, no payment. Why would anyone do this? The answer soon became clear.

A Place Steeped in Spirit

Built in 1713, Waterperry House and Gardens has long been a centre of learning and spiritual practice. The setting is beautiful and alive with history. During the Leaders' Week retreat, the house, marquee, and outbuildings became the backdrop for practical philosophy in action.



Waterperry House, front elevation, chapel and temporary marquee.

The daily rhythm was steeped in meditation, reflection, group study, and primarily, service. The marquee served as the service team base – cold at 5.30 am when blankets were welcome, hot by noon. My life flowed between accommodation in the Coach House, the kitchen and dining rooms, and the gardens, which provided moments of refreshment and inspiration.

Satsaṅga

I arrived at lunchtime on Friday, 22 August, and was personally greeted by Mr and Mrs Lambie at the front door – an auspicious beginning. Accommodation was simple: a dormitory-style room in the Coach House. As one fellow remarked on arrival, "How am I going to live with these men, for ten days?" By the end, the sentiment had transformed into, "How am I going to live without them?"

The service team of 30–35 came from across the world: London, Ireland, Holland, Australia, New Zealand (myself), Canada, Cyprus, Spain, and South Africa. Our leaders were Mr William Wyatt and his wife Hillary, both tutors and long-standing students of the London School.

The team divided into three work groups: Kitchen, Household, and Laundry. I was grateful to join the Kitchen crew, a lively band of 16, further split into chefs, bakers, assistants, and scullery staff. My role as a kitchen assistant became a daily practice in cooperation, discipline, and unbridled joy.



The Kitchen Crew, Anna, Raj, Vanessa, Katrina, Sophie, Julian, Jaya, Sam, Matt & Dave.

Early in the week, Mr Wyatt introduced us to a guiding principle: to infuse our service with Love, Happiness, and Spirituality. This simple teaching, encouraged by Mrs Lambie, transformed even the most ordinary tasks into expressions of philosophy in action.

The Work of Service

Unlike typical retreats, the service team's role was almost entirely practical. Our schedule was full and purposeful:

05.15 – Prepare and serve tea & coffee	11.00 – Lunch service
06.00 – Meditation	14.30 – "Meet the Leaders" session
06.30 – Breakfast preparation, serving, cleanup	15.15 – Rest period
08.15 – Morning meeting	17.15 – Meditation
10.30 – Morning tea	17.45 – Dinner service
	21.10 – Evening meeting
	21.45 – Retire

Within this rhythm, friendships blossomed. Tasks ranged from serving porridge to managing the chiller, from ringing the dinner gong to "silver service" waiting on School leaders from around the world. Conflicts were rare, quickly resolved by remembering the "golden rules" of service: patience, humility, and cooperation.



The Leaders' Midsummer Alfresco Dinner, Elizabethan Wing courtyard.

Moments of beauty also filled the days: walking the gardens at sunset, sharing my homemade Masala Chai at morning breaktime, pausing in the chapel, visiting the library, or simply sharing laughter in the kitchen.

A Lasting Impression

I left Waterperry with a heart full of gratitude. I had gone with few expectations, yet the satsaṅga, the company of truth-seekers, was the greatest gift. I now carry with me fond memories of new friends, valuable lessons in service, and a deepened appreciation for the union of philosophy and practical action.



Service Team dinner in the Green Room, second sitting.

After ten days of living and working so closely together, I understood my fellow's words. The challenge was no longer how to live with these men – but how to live without them.



Dave Brierley

Te Araroa – The Long Pathway

The Te Araroa Trail opened in 2011 after ten years of work by volunteers, the Department of Conservation and the government. It is a walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff, meandering down the country to take in bush tracks, river routes, mountain passes, beaches and roads. It is 3,035km long, compared with 1,403km as the crow flies and 2,059km via State Highway 1, and usually takes between three and six months to complete.

The trail is growing in popularity, with well over 2,000 registrations in 2025. The Te Araroa has found its place amongst three other internationally recognised long distance through-hikes all in America.

It attracts an even balance of men and women, primarily in the 20s and 30s largely from Europe and North America; although this year, the oldest walker turned 83 on the trail.

> The journey for me personally was nourishing on many levels, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.



The physical challenges were very real and present every day, from deep mud to high mountain passes, long hot stretches of sand to fast flowing rivers, as well as food difficulties and water shortages. Facing these took careful planning, perseverance and a considerable level of resilience.

Living simply over an extended period brings new perspectives on life. There were numerous opportunities to experience the practical reality of the philosophical teachings which I have been immersed in since childhood. Meditation was practised regularly in the mornings and whenever possible in the evenings. Daily reading of a wide range of spiritual books provided further nourishment and opportunity to reflect and practice.







Walking the Te Araroa provided real insight into the country of my birth, primarily its beauty and its people. The South Islanders really do embody the tough New Zealand spirit with many of them living off the land. The support from 'Trail Angels' and other New Zealanders was evident over the full length of the country; offering lifts, providing meals and giving their time selflessly to nomadic travellers.

This warmth of the New Zealand people was regularly confirmed through conversations with fellow walkers visiting from all over the world. The opportunity to travel endlessly with young people was enriching and educational. Their positivity, care for each other and for the environment made for uplifting company. Watching some of them grow, broaden their perspectives and develop courage and resilience was heartening.



Wholesomeness and goodness were evident everywhere.

I was asked several times before, during and after the walk about my goal or purpose. Such questions non-plussed me as they did many others on the walk; my answer was usually that my son asked me to join him, and I said yes. It turned out that having no fixed goal was for the best; it left the learning on the journey open for observation and new discovery. An approach that continues to enhance my everyday existence.

Simply walking day after day for such an extended period, four and a half months in my case, provided a timeless opportunity to observe mental habits and patterns of thinking. Almost daily I experienced potentially injurious slips, which were the culmination of a tired mind sinking into a fug of circular thought. It felt like grace alone kept me from serious harm.

> One statement of wisdom that became a regular companion was 'When a wise man walks, he just walks'. These seemingly simple words transformed the experience into one of exquisite flow – my pace increased with less energy required, the heart opened, the sounds of the bush provided nourishment and exhaustion vanished. Eventually the refrain was no longer necessary, and the true purpose of the walk began to show itself – to begin to discover the proper use of the mind. Or put another way, to realise the importance of being in the present and living every moment as if in response to the question 'what would a wise person do now?'

The Te Araroa Trail has been a wonderful investment for New Zealand. It is bringing tourism and economic benefit to many small communities across the country. This brings the dual advantages of supporting small businesses and enriching the communities themselves. The people walking the trail are generally well-educated, courageous individuals, many of whom will go back to their home countries with very fond memories of their time in New Zealand and of its people.

Peter Crompton



Freedom Philosophy in Prisons

Freedom Philosophy is a charitable society founded by two ex-students of the Wellington School of Philosophy. It provides six six-week courses to prisons around NZ and has been reported on in the London School's newsletter and YouTube channel.

Martin Van zonneveld, Manjit Mann and I have been actively engaged in Freedom Philosophy's ventures in the Auckland prisons for the past 18 months or so. It is a challenging environment at first but you do get used to it and so long as you follow the rules, things are OK. Mostly we get deployed into low-security wings with students who have exhibited an interest in learning something new. But such is the nature of prison life their attendance can be a bit haphazard, generally through no fault of their own.



It feels a long way away from Ficino School and 268 but the following may give a taste of what it is like. It is a tough environment.

The theme at the moment is 'Success' which for some of the students is something of a pipe-dream – or at least that's their preconception. In a recent session, the material provided the analogy of a compass as being something we can use to guide us through life to get to 'success'. The discussion led through some options of where we might want to go to, then provided 'magnets' as a way of describing those things that can disturb our compass and lead us astray from our goals.

The students were canvased for a list of 'magnets' and they gave a variety of responses; money, drugs, family issues – all the usual suspects. Then one said something to the effect of 'trying to do the right thing'. That seemed worth exploring because 'nobody intends bad', a thought which caught their attention.

One student, let's call him Manu (not his real name), gave the example of his most recent transgression. This in itself was highly unusual because the normal protocol is that we don't ask and they don't tell. Its easier to treat each other as equals that way. But Manu was insistent that he wanted to share. The edited version of the story goes something like this:

> He came home late one night to find that the party put on by his son and son's girlfriend had ended in a state where there was still loud music and bright lights in the garage but the party-goers were comatose. Then Manu saw a violent crime, an atrocity, being committed.
>
> Without hesitation Manu stepped in to stop the violence but in doing so committed an equally violent crime himself on the offender. When the police arrived Manu, in his confused and agitated state of mind, further compounded his error by attacking the policeman and was arrested.

So Manu's motivation was entirely good and understandable, downright laudable in fact. He saw an atrocity being committed and intended to stop it. He is proud of that. The execution left something to be desired. Somehow 'bad' got in between the intention and the action.

What Manu is coming to see after a few terms of Freedom Philosophy is that in that split second between intention and action there is always a choice. How we avail ourselves of that choice is largely down to how much control we have over our own minds - hence the mindfulness exercise and all the questions and quotes and things the material presents.

Manu's story prompted a couple of the other students to give their own examples. Just being able to talk in a 'safe' environment is a huge step forward and, frankly, a relief for some of them.

In fact, in writing this I am reminded of an earlier session in a different group where an inmate also raised the question of doing bad things to protect his whanau. That particular group was composed of 'lifers' – men on a life sentence (i.e. convicted of murder or offences of similar severity). The fellow was gently told about the inherently good 'self' within us all and given the story of Vālmīki, the reformed bandit-turned-scholar. I kid you not; this big tough murderer was fighting back the tears as he listened. I got the sense it was the first time anyone, anywhere, ever, had told him he was OK. So is Freedom Philosophy useful, does it work?



Looking at the students we meet; you do get a few who are just there for the certificate and promise of hot chips. There are a few for whom it is just not their thing. As always, there are some where you can see it going in, but there isn't necessarily anything coming back out. Yet.

Then there are the Manus. Manu is a lovely big-hearted Pasifika man with a huge smile. He loves his kids, speaks to his wife every day on the phone, is a leader in his Unit, teaches Te Reo and gym to the other inmates. You could suspect he doesn't even really need us; he is well on the way to rehabilitation already. But in his own words 'I couldn't have talked about this before Freedom Philosophy – but now I just say what would a wise man do, ay?'

This is surely the real proof of practical philosophy, that it can be applied anywhere, anytime with anyone who is willing to engage. From the East, we have the story of Vālmīki and from the West, the exemplar of Socrates who would engage in conversation with absolutely anyone. Social status is no mark of philosophic worth.

I sometimes wonder about the doctrine of saṃskāra; the idea that we have 'earned' this life from our past efforts. This can give rise to a notion that I am somehow better than the prisoners because I was raised right and am not in prison or that they don't deserve philosophy because of their actions or some such thinking. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the context of his world Manu is every bit as good a man as I am in mine, probably better. Definitely braver!

If anything, saṃskāra shows that I have finally got over enough of my own limitations that late in life I am capable (just) of bridging the cultural/social/economic prejudices gulf and engaging in philosophic conversation with just about anyone. And if that were to be the only result of over forty years of philosophic endeavour, then it was worth it.



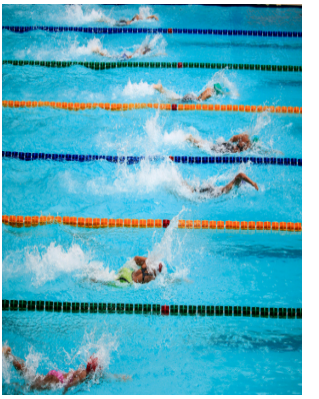
Matthew Roscoe

Let's Play

What follows is a play of words, relying on the words of the Śaṅkarācārya and the scriptures.

It is entirely natural that we seek to enjoy ourselves; in whatever we do enjoyment always adds value to the experience. As young children most of the activity of life was called play, maybe with our toys, or with a friend who may come to your house asking your mother, 'can my friend come out to play?' The innocence of children at play is naturally spiritual, 'Where there is happiness there is bound to be a move towards spirituality.' *(82:3.2)* Play is good.

The Olympic Games event commences with the statement 'Let the Games Begin' and participation is considered the pinnacle of adult competitive games or sports. Games are a learning tool, a means to develop mental discipline and physical skills. 'Role play' scenarios or games are often used as a learning tool. But as adults it seems that life has all too often interrupted our play, our happiness and the 'move towards spirituality'. Play is now referred to as recreation or socialising, possible only when there is time. To paraphrase a NZ Olympic swimming medallist whose change of attitude resulted in unexpected medal prospects, 'it is hard to swim fast when you are not enjoying the swimming.' For too many people life can seem too busy to play, everything can become work, our happiness seems to be compromised.



Scripture describes the creation as līlā, the divine play. Ideally, we should therefore remember and

treat all aspects of life as play, including work, being played not as children but nicely, maturely, inclusive of the associated responsibilities that go with the various adult parts we are now playing.

In the first answer of the first meeting with the School leader, Mahārāja Śrī Śāntānanda Sarasvatī said that we 'need to understand [our] part which has to be played, and played nicely.'*(65:1.1)*. It would not be unreasonable to add, 'and happily.'



One of the stories seeking to explain the beginning of creation says that the Creator sought to enjoy his own company, to enjoy the essential nature of saccidānanda, knowledge, consciousness,and bliss; but that is difficult to achieve when you are one only, when you have no friends or toys to play with. The creative solution? Invent a game by speaking out the entire manifest creation, enliven and inhabit the creation, filled with a multitude of forms, toys, and beings in various types of bodies, and proceed to enjoy oneself in the game called 'life', the divine play of creation. The scriptures do tell us that all this creation is spoken into manifestation.

It seems we have largely, but not completely, forgotten this original motivation to continually delight in one's own playful company, in the evolving magic of creation. The problem began when, 'Somewhere, sometime, someone, wants to secure these things without consideration for others, ….' *(65:4.6)*. That someone is you and I, and the 'things' referred to are the knowledge consciousness and bliss, the saccidānanda that is our universal nature. By claiming a minute portion of this for our assumed individual self the grand divine play of life is renamed to 'my life'.



But all is never lost. We have ample guidance from our Teacher who tells us that '…the construction of a sentence, … is the real cosmos' *(73:9.10)*, so perhaps if we can learn to speak the language of the Creator we will discover how to play the game nicely, rediscover more of that original unselfish creativity. St John tells us that 'in the beginning was the Word….' *(St. John 1.1)* and the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad tells us that the 'The letter Om is all this' *(1.1)*, also referred to as the Praṇava sound, the primeval word. All this is telling us of the language of the Creator, telling us that our speech and language are fundamental to the nature of the creation we live in. If there remains any doubt as to the nature of the creation we are each experiencing, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad states, 'All transformation has

speech as its basis, and is name only.' *(Ch VI. I. 4)*. With our speech, either silently in mind or vocalised, the language and names we use literally dictate the creation we experience mentally and physically. We are judge and jury and sentence ourselves. The question is, do we sentence ourselves to prison or freedom?

How can we learn to speak as the Creator? Mahārāja Śrī Śāntānanda Sarasvatī tells us that 'the Truth was originally declared through the Sanskrit language.'*(74:7.4)* This statement might suggest that we all need to become fluent in Sanskrit. Thankfully not so, but the Teacher does tell us how we may proceed, 'One should study [Sanskrit] systematically….', *(76:10.6)* if for no other reason than the Sanskrit language 'still holds the Truth in its original form'. *(74:7.4)* So to accent our spoken tongue with more of the substance and power of our limitless nature, our truly creative power, we can be encouraged to 'Let Sanskrit be our Guide' which is the motto of the School's Sanskrit Faculty. We can continue to speak the same language we always use, but with a different sound.

The first word, Om, spoken with the absolute creative knowledge, power and law of the Creator, like a seed, sprouts a vocabulary giving rise to the infinite detail of the entire perfect cosmos. However, we are not speaking the language of the Creator. 'The grammatical rules are also the rules of the creation.' *(73:5.5)* These are the rules of the game we are playing, and the game always deteriorates when the rules are broken. Whatever we can do to learn the rules will help.

As young children we loved to follow the rules of the game watching carefully to see if 'you're in' or 'you're out', and happy to declare 'not fair' if someone cheats. More careful use of language, more grammatically correct use, can help us regain the joy of life, to enjoy the game by playing nicely.

In the evolving ever diversifying creation everything gets its own name. What we call a thing, what we name it, really matters. As children setting up our 'make believe' game we might say things like, 'you be the Bus Driver, I'll be the Conductor', or 'you be Mummy, I'll be Daddy' or in hide and seek we say to someone, 'you're it', ie. who we have to find. We wear so many different masks. Names are needed in creation to tell us the part to play, or what to use etc. and the name used conveys some knowledge for us about the thing or person, the part to play. Would that we could remember that all the names we use each day are simply to facilitate the divine game, in truth 'All this is Brahman' (or Om), and further 'This Self [usually identified as Me] is Brahman.' *(Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 1.1&2)*



How can we correct this forgetfulness and simply play our parts nicely? Mahārāja Śrī Śāntānanda Sarasvatī has given very precise guidance. 'Objects of the manifest world need

no change and the actions of the subtle world of mind also need no change. The change takes place in the bhāva, the emotional level. Once understanding is achieved, once knowledge is gained fully, then alone change will follow. *(76:2.3)*

The events and circumstances that life presents to us, our prārabdha, come from the past, but the outcomes do depend on our attitude, speech and actions in each moment. Consciously present responses to the events of life, mindful of the divine game in progress, will always trump mechanical prārabdha, allowing the part to be played more nicely, not mechanically. 'Only if one could change one's centre of understanding that all observed things and the observer are the same, then one could have achieved all changes; for the view of the world, of beauty and the action will all change diametrically.' *(76:2.3)* In seeking to 'change one's centre of understanding' we could seek to have greater awareness of the bhāva, the emotional level, from where our speech arises. This, we are told will allow our view of the world to change. 'In the heart of the individual, all forces of the universe and all knowledge are enshrined. It is there in its full glory. It is only for the picking, but the individual can pick only so much as he has strength for.' *(73:3.9)*

To finish on a playful note, just consider for a moment the children's board game 'Snakes and Ladders' that we have all likely played at some time. In the light of the rope snake analogy, used in the Teaching to illustrate the false naming caused by ignorance, this board game can be interpreted as the challenge to avoid being so taken, so completely captured, by the 'make believe' snake names of the play that we slide further into ignorance - rather than seeking to climb ever higher on the steps of the ladder of true knowledge.



The game of life is not 'Cowboys and Indians' or 'Cops and Robbers' or 'Snakes and Ladders', or any two things, but 'Brahman and Brahman', one, advaita. Not a make believe game, rather one that is pure, perfect, complete and everlasting. And fun. Brahman is the one true name for all the many parts in the game, each with their stage names.

In the 'make believe' games of life the opposing team or the objective of the game is clearly identified or defined. But in the 'hide and seek' game of Self-discovery the real objective, the purpose is easily overlooked, hidden behind the concealing ignorance, we forget who 'It' is, who we have to find; how to play the game nicely. We should adopt the role-play game of Aham Brahmāsmi.

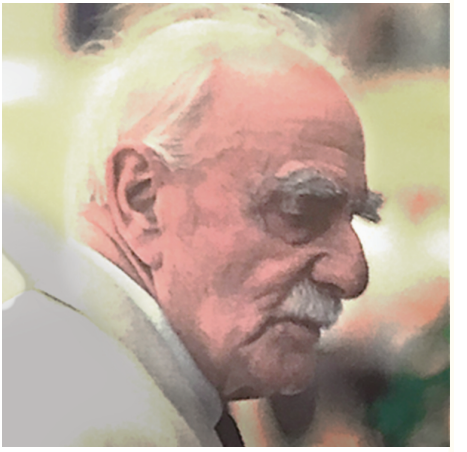
Let's all come out to play for real, rather than for make believe, using whatever stage names we choose. Let the real games begin, you be Brahman and I'll be Brahman.



Lawrence Ames

Dr Roles

We owe enormous gratitude to the people who look beyond the conventional and search the world to understand the source of Consciousness and the One Truth. Both Dr Roles and his teacher, PD Ouspensky, were men of this calibre.



Dr Francis Roles was born in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), in 1901, the son of an English father and an American mother. He studied medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital and then went on to serve as consultant paediatrician at several other hospitals in London.

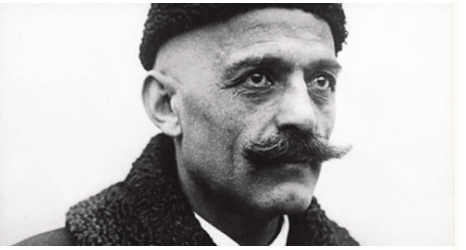
As a medical student at Cambridge, Dr Roles tells of how he had the effrontery to deliver a paper to the Medical Society on Consciousness as if he knew all about it!

However, a more senior colleague at St Bartholomew's suggested he meet PD Ouspensky, a man who had written about the subject and who had started a school to teach his philosophy at Lyne Place in Surrey, where people worked on the estate and gathered for question and answer sessions. Thus started a deep friendship between Dr Roles and Ouspensky.



Born in 1878, PD Ouspensky was a Russian mathematician with a vast intellect that searched every aspect of human endeavour to find the One Truth and the higher level of Consciousness within. Ouspensky had come to realise that to attain his aim he would need to find a School and a Teacher to establish the path to the One Consciousness, and he travelled extensively visiting many sacred places in Egypt, Ceylon and India.

His search was curtailed by the outbreak of World War I, and on his return to Moscow, he discovered fragments of an unknown teaching brought from Central Asia by the Greek-Armenian teacher, George Gurdjieff, to whom Ouspensky afterwards said he owed an enormous debt.



However, in 1918 he said, "I parted with Gurdjieff because something changed. He changed the first principles and demanded that people must believe, and must do what he tells them, even if they don't understand."

Dr Roles soon became a member of Ouspensky's inner circle and a close friend. Also, he was his personal physician. Both men had one goal in common: the desire to understand Consciousness, both as an idea and as a practical experience. Also, both men shared many interests and had the same sense of humour. They enjoyed good food and drink, a love of beauty and the arts, especially painting and poetry, they were intrigued by science and mathematics, and both loved animals. They studied spiritual works, deeply involved in finding the literal meaning of words in sacred writings, making translations of the Gītā and the Upaniṣads, in an effort to bring together the philosophy and religion from East to West.

From their very first meeting, Dr Roles realised that because Ouspensky never put on any sort of act, **'he was the first man I could really trust.'** In addition, Dr Roles' natural simplicity and humility made him the ideal disciple and thus Ouspensky recognised him as the ideal person to continue the search for the Source of the system he taught.

In 1921, Ouspensky had brought The Fourth Way to the west, a system described as "A non-dual teaching for the 21st century". Also, it provided wisdom and enlightenment for 'householders', or ordinary people fully engaged in the hurly-burly of modern life. The system ensures that understanding comes first and then gives rise to action – we must never simply believe what we are told without first

proving the truth of it to ourselves in our own experience. Ideas and theories are demonstrated and confirmed by action, which in turn gives rise to emotional development. The Way is not a single school of thought and practice; rather, it is a constantly self-renewing and shifting source of enlightenment that appears for the guidance of those with 'eyes to see and ears to hear', and who are honest enough to seek the truth about themselves and the world.

Self-realisation is not a liberation of the person but a liberation from the person. This knowledge arises from the source of Consciousness itself, the single Consciousness that produces and sustains the whole of Creation.

The term 'The Fourth Way' came from the ancient temple of Śārada in Kashmir. The temple had four gates, one for Dharma (law), one for Artha (wealth), one for Kāma (desire) and one for Mokṣa (liberation). The first three were open but the fourth was closed and could only be opened by a realised man.

Ouspensky understood that Self-realisation depends on a heightened and purified faculty of emotion as the only means of truly higher knowledge, and that only the development and refinement of this faculty can transcend the limitation of the mind.

Nearing the end of his life and having failed to find a living source of 'higher mind', Ouspensky realised that he needed to raise someone in his group to continue the search. To this end, in the four months before his death he subjected himself and his closest followers to ever greater ordeals of emotional and physical endurance. Dr Roles remembered a conversation they had had previously regarding the precept 'Love your enemies', when he had proposed that everything would be different if we could, in fact, love our enemies. Ouspensky responded by asking if he had any enemies and when Dr Roles replied that people annoyed him from time to time, Ouspensky shouted, "That's it! Such as we are we change too much. We are all the time changing. We cannot even have enemies. One minute we like, next minute we hate."

> Twelve years later, Dr Roles remembered this challenging conversation. He suddenly became calm and recognised a change in himself, realising the love he had would never change. It was not coincidence that ten minutes later Ouspensky began to unfold his plans for the System going forward with the words, 'I had to move you from where you were. Now I can speak.'

When Ouspensky died in 1947, Dr Roles continued the search for spiritual unity, starting The Study Society in Colet House, London, in 1951.

Before his death, Ouspensky urged Dr Roles to continue the search for a simple method of 'Self-remembering', saying, "Something is missing in the System. We are told that everything depends on remembering ourselves and next minute we are told, 'You can't remember yourself'. If man is meant to remember himself there must have been some simple natural method. But it's been lost. I could never find it. Once in India, I heard an echo of such a method. You must find this method by which you can remember yourself at will."



The breakthrough came in 1960. A member of the Study Society came across a new method of mantra meditation (the transcendental meditation, TM) that was being introduced to the West by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The Maharishi and Śrī Śāntānanda Sarasvatī had both been students under Guru Dev, the then Śaṅkarācārya of the North, and the former had been charged with taking Mantra Meditation to the west. The source of this meditation came from the tradition of Advaita thousands of years previously, and Guru Dev had devised this simplified version of the meditation in the 1940's. By 1967 the Maharishi had become a celebrity, with the Beatles taking up meditation and TM becoming viral.

Back in 1961, Dr Roles and a group from Colet House travelled to Rishikesh in India with the Maharishi to help the latter set up a centre for meditation and to learn from him. By then His Holiness Mahārāja Śrī Śāntānanda Sarasvatī had succeeded Guru Dev as the Śaṅkarācārya of the North, and the Maharishi invited His Holiness to stay with them. The whole place was decorated from top to bottom, and His Holiness's arrival was accompanied by many drums and conches and bells, with chants from the Ayur Veda that stirred Dr Roles deeply. He said the Śaṅkarācārya appeared withdrawn and answered questions immediately, without having to think at all – very precisely.

Dr Roles said, 'I shall never forget the warmth of his smile and the radiance that came from him.' When he asked the Śaṅkarācārya if he could come and see him, he received the reply, 'I have been waiting for you.'

Dr Roles had his first audience with His Holiness in 1962, when he said, 'When I first saw your Holiness arrive at the gates of Ram Nagar I recognised that here at last is the embodiment of Self-Remembering. So, I watched to see how a Realised man speaks and acts.' Now Dr Roles had found both the method and the source of the Tradition and had fulfilled Ouspensky's last request.

Later, when asked by Dr Roles if the practice in the Advaita Vedanta tradition was the same as the Fourth Way, His Holiness replied, 'Yes, there couldn't possibly be any difference. In Ouspensky's system they take from all the three sources. In the Way of Action, they purify the heart so as to perform any action and yet be detached from it. The emotional way is the Way of Devotion and Service – when an atmosphere within is created so as to serve the Absolute and receive His Grace. The third, Intellectual Way, is to make reason work and clarify all the questions met with on the Way, and then if everything is brought together, we hope we are on the Way of Understanding, or the Fourth Way.'

Dr Roles continued to lead The Study Society for the next twenty years. He demonstrated consistently a unique way of uniting people, of arousing affection, of dissipating worries and divisions and of inspiring loyalty to an ideal. In June 1982, after a long and happy day spent with friends and family in his home, he said, 'Everything I have had to do has now been done. The need is for simplicity. We have been habitually complicating everything. It is only necessary to be quiet and to keep things simple. There is only one Consciousness. The levels are levels of impediment to that. Everything is that Consciousness. That is what we have to feel and know.' Hours later he died from a cerebral haemorrhage.

Dr Roles' son-in-law found the perfect obituary on his life from the book 'I am That' by Śrī Nisargadatta Maharaj: -

> 'He becomes non-existent in the same sense as a river is non-existent when it merges into the sea. Its name and form are lost but the water remains and is one with the sea. His goodness, wisdom, vitality, become the heritage of mankind, and help development of everyone and everything. His immortal thoughts, his spirit of service and sacrifice, his selfless dedication, his acute sensitiveness for the welfare of others have become our heritage: vital, vibrant and shining, like a kindly light in the surrounding darkness.'

Sue Andreassen



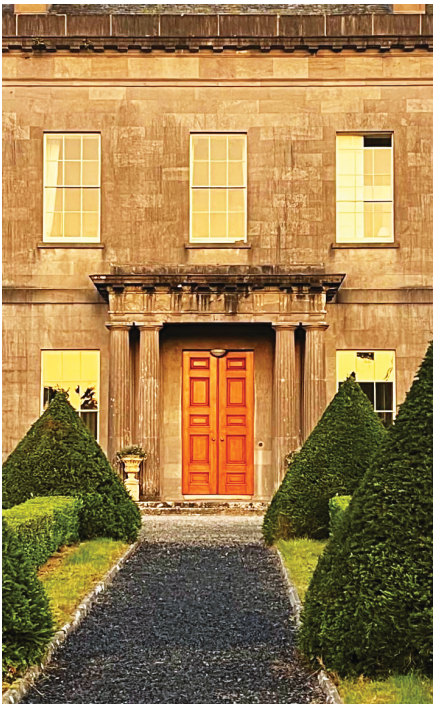
Plato and the Modern World

The Power of Socrates - Townley Hall, Ireland – August 2025

or why spend thousands of dollars to go to the far side of the world and catch cold for a course that I could have done on zoom from the comfort of my couch.

Firstly the Main Course:

The Gorgias - Callicles section. The Gorgias is one of Plato's best known dialogues and in it Socrates meets and dispenses with, in short order, the very famous and successful rhetorician, Gorgias, and his considerably (and deservedly) less-renowned offsider, Polus. He is then taken to task by the very annoyed host, Callicles. Callicles is a favourite of mine, he has the temperament of Donald Duck and he wears his irascibility on his sleeve. At least that's how I've always viewed the piece. The overall theme was "care for the soul". The exploration of this was revelationary, multi-threaded and very difficult to explain. To start, the Callicles section seems to be focused on Callicles and Socrates very patient efforts to get him to admit the errors in his thinking. But there is a subtext: Socrates really, really wants, perhaps even needs Callicles' directness. The earlier sophisticated but insincere talk of Gorgias is of no use to him, in fact it seems (to me now) almost poisonous. For Socrates, this is the benchmark in his care for the soul: he would rather talk and listen to people who are uncompromisingly frank, than those that are not.



Plato then raises the intensity further by having Socrates recite a myth of divine judgement (the three judges) in which the souls to be judged and the souls of the divine judges are stripped naked of all name, clothing and attributes so they may meet soul-to-soul, as they really are, without any impediment.

We have a maxim in school: "Speak the truth pleasantly, do not speak pleasant untruth" and this seems reasonable enough but Socrates is essentially raising the bar and saying "Just tell me the unvarnished truth lest my soul be weakened by any trace of insincerity or falsity". This sort of care for the soul is not merely nurturing and protecting, it is strengthening by testing and challenging. I have a lot of work to do.





Another thread was Power, having the power to do whatever you want. We all want to have power one way or another and it was a very open enquiry with no clear conclusion.

Another thread was sophrosune or self-mastery. "Are you ruled or do you rule yourself?" was the question.

And finally, fascinatingly and quite unexpectedly: Russia. This has become a personal interest for Dr Horan. He feels that most of the commentary on current world-affairs is too superficial and emotive to be worthwhile so he has turned to the turbulent Russian history for a model that is one step removed as it were. It was a really interesting exploration and over a couple of days, sort of culminated in a working hypothesis that you could, maybe, understand the soul of a nation via its religion and music. To that end, he played us the first movement of Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony. This work was composed in Leningrad, during the Nazi siege of Leningrad and performed by musicians who were so starved they were fainting in their seats (I think it might have been the music, but this is the story we were given). It was definitely Russian and even a philistine such as myself could hear traces of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Prokofiev and even Borodin. So maybe there is something in this.

Other points of note:
The hospitality of the Irish is legendary and with good cause. From my first visit I have always been among friends. The catering is generous and varied (they have bikkies at morning coffee and dessert at dinner AND lunch!!!)

The Townley Hall property is a large Georgian house and grounds, The house is maybe three times the size of 268 with large meeting rooms and a permanently set up dining hall that could comfortably accommodate around 100 people. Much has been made of the architecture and it is very nice on the inside but to my eye



the outside is rather uninspiring. The dining hall is on the basement level at the rear of the complex, my bed was in the servants quarters (fourth story, front of the building) so there was no chance of gaining weight especially when the second and third stories are extra high. The style of the building includes an unbroken parapet around the perimeter so having made the ascent to the 4th floor, one is rewarded with a view from one's window of… the back of the parapet.

Afternoon Events:

Plotinus 3 days: I was delighted to be asked to present again on Plotinus and finally learned why they always put me at the front of the schedule. It is simply because I am always the first to say "yes"… Leaving that aside, if you are to care for the soul then it would be useful to know what the soul actually is. So we spent three sessions with Plotinus's tractate "What is Soul and What is the Living Being" basically asking the questions: what is soul, what is body and how do they interact? I think I can safely say that everyone knew less at the end than they did at the beginning so we got rid of some pre-existing conceptions. Mission accomplished.



Kevin McArevey: This Belfast headmaster was the subject of the Netflix* documentary "Young Plato" which chronicles his initiative to introduce Greek philosophy into a Catholic boys junior school in a very tough neighbourhood due a chance comment made by his predecessor as he left the building "Give them philosophy". The man is incredible and his story is inspirational as an exemplar of someone who is really really "doing" philosophy. Not only that, it works. His school is now outperforming every other school in the area and is above average on the national indexes. The presentation is available** and I wholeheartedly recommend the documentary as well. I have adopted a personal discipline to regularly compare my efforts in "doing" philosophy against this guy – again I've got a lot of catching up to do.

Evening Events:

On the Soul: Carolyn Saunders. An interesting discourse which sort of highlighted the fact that a lot has been said about soul and most of it conflicts with itself so it is no wonder that the topic is confusing.

The Pre-Socratics: Dr Horan gave us a brief tour through the fairly scant records of philosophers from Thales, Pythagoras down to Anaximander and Anaxagoras, who were more or less contemporaries of Socrates. Curiously Dr Horan brushed over the godfather of Platonism, Parmenides, possibly because he felt too strong a temptation since Parmenides is a favourite of his and could have easily overtaken the rest of the presentation.

The Problem of Modernity: Dr. Brendan O'Bryne. Dr O'Bryne is an incredibly intelligent man and it is always a delight to be in his erudite if somewhat ethereal presence. This time he gave us a concise explanation of how the ills of the modern western world and its obsession with technology can be traced back via Thomas Hobbes and Francis Bacon (16th Century Hedonists) to a basic schism in philosophy between traditional Platonic Realists (things like justice are real) and modern (relatively speaking) Nominalists (things like justice are just words) which arose from a basic disagreement on what the Nicean Creed at the heart of Christianity means when it describes the omnipotence of God. Heady stuff but it seemed cogent and coherent. As part of his whirlwind tour through history he provided a particularly obscure quote from a really obscure philosopher, Porphyry. It was with some personal amusement that I had to acknowledge to myself that I not only know who Porphyry was, but I recognised the quote – what a geek!

Kevin McArevey: After dinner, this amazing man gave us a few more comments then took questions. One of his childhood memories is of his home being raided



in the middle of the night by the British army and the soldiers laughing as they assaulted his mother while she tried to protect her five children. That he never joined the IRA, he attributes solely to his mother's grace and the upbringing he received.

The book launch: Finally, after several years, the hardback version of Dr Horan's translation is in print and we had a small ceremony to celebrate that. Most people bought a copy to take home.

Prof. John Dillon: Prof. Dillon is one of the grand old men of Platonism (and is also an expert on Plotinus). He has been a mentor and friend to Dr Horan for many years. His persona is of a popping, squeaking, puffing Oxford Don and the advancing years have done nothing to reduce that but if you read his introduction to Dr Horan's translation, it is clear that his acuity is as sharp as ever and quite exceptional for an 86 year old. He is very loveable. In conversation with Dr Horan he talked about the historical Gorgias, a novel of the life of Plotinus and his own memoirs.

Music Recital: A local musician returned for his customary piano recital, this time accompanied by a young tenor. The selection this year included pieces from Bach, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Chopin, a modern Irish composer and an arrangement of a traditional Irish folk song.

'On Thinking I Know When I Do Not Know': Lilly Corbett. Lilly is one of Dr Horan's assistants a dedicated Platonist and a scholar in her own right. She finished the event for us with a tracing through Plato's works of this seminal concept.

Overall it was an intense, challenging and unexpectedly useful (in a personal sense) event and well worth the extra effort and cost.



Matthew Roscoe

*****_The Young Plato documentary seems to be off Netflix at the moment but is available on YouTube (uploaded by Al Jazeera)._

****** _https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/1u2tot2il5fauehtvyyea/AI3aWYM3kDkLnkbGakmAOts?rlkey=bfpyssj3ty80xgx4nnaelex03&e=1&st=hqakrg2i&dl=0_

Share Your Insights

Reflecting upon and writing about your philosophic insights can be therapeutic.
This simple peaceful exercise can help clear false views and ideas from the heart and mind.

Contributions for further issues of Vision are most welcome.
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