

Vision

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The Virtue of Silence

Silence is potentially available to anyone, anywhere. It is a universal resource.

These words, written by Rita Weathersby in a chapter she submitted for an American publication on spiritual resources for the workplace, are attractive because they make it clear how close to hand this universal resource really is. It can be tapped at any time. All that is needed is the will to be inwardly quiet, which comes from the realisation of its immense value, and the knowledge of how to "go within".

This "going within" is frequently spoken of, not only in reference to Meditation, which is offered in the School, but in all the great religions. It is the centrepiece of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition, and of monastic discipline in Christian and other cultures through the ages to the present day.

As the year draws to its close and the commonly acknowledged "pre-Christmas rush" begins, having recourse to the peace of the Self within becomes vitally important. It is our true home.

As the Rule of St Benedict says, we need to "listen with the ear of our heart", making sure there is time in the day for quiet reflection. Another useful tool is the practice of meeting people as if for the first time, without

preconceived ideas. In this connection, Buddhist Scripture contains the injunction: "My brothers, when you accost each other, two things alone are fitting: instructive words or a grave silence."

Silence can be of several kinds: peaceful, comforting, prayerful, disturbing, frustrating, etc. Most of us have experienced all five, but we would acknowledge that the true inner silence produces peace in the being, not agitation.

Thomas Merton, 20th century Trappist Monk and author of several books, sees silence as "the mother of truth" and as a divine milieu.

For centuries people have used the practice of silence as a way to periodically withdraw from the world or the attractions of the senses. From stillness within it is possible to more clearly "see what is in one's sight" and be less involved with the ceaseless round of thoughts in the mind or activity for activity's sake. From Philosophy Part 1 onwards we are encouraged to watch the movements of the mind because too much mental activity prevents us from appreciating things as they really are.

If you have ever practised the discipline of spending a whole day without uttering one

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The Ox-Bow Incident

by David Gibb

Cowboy movies are not usually known for any content of a philosophical nature. Yet the 1943 film "The Ox-Bow Incident" has a touch of just that.

In the film, based on the novel of the same name by Walter van Tilburg Clark, a prominent rancher is reported to have been murdered. A posse is formed, which rides out of town to hunt down the killer. Its members are full of sound and fury. They come across three homesteaders at a campfire in the Ox-Bow Valley and on purely circumstantial evidence decide that they are the culprits, despite pleas of innocence. Seven of the party, including one named Davies, vote that the homesteaders should be given a trial, but they are in the minority. A decision is taken to hang the three at dawn.

One of the condemned, a young farmer new to the area, writes a letter to his wife and entrusts it to Mr Davies to pass on. The three are duly hanged but it is found a short time later that the rancher reported murdered had only been injured and was being treated by a doctor.

The film concludes with a very sombre scene in which Carter, a member of the posse who did not support the hanging, reads out the

letter:

"My Dear Wife,

Mr Davies will tell you what is happening here tonight. He is a good man and has done everything he can for me. I suppose there are some other good men here too, only they don't seem to realise what they are doing. They're the ones I feel sorry for, because it will be over for me in a little while, but they will have to go on remembering for the rest of their lives. Man just naturally can't take the law into his own hands and hang people without hurting everybody in the world, because then he is just not breaking one law, but all laws. Law is a lot more than words you put in a book or judges, lawyers, sheriffs you hire to carry it out. It's everything people have found out about Justice and what's right and wrong. It is the very conscience of humanity. There can't be any such thing as civilisation, unless people have a conscience, because if people touch God anywhere, where is it except through their conscience? And what is anybody's conscience except a little piece of the conscience of all men that ever lived?

I guess that's all I've got to say except kiss the babies for me and God bless you.

Your Husband, Donald."

'Silence' continued

unnecessary word, you will have wondered how you have managed to live without the deep inner silence and peace this can engender. Long ago, Thomas a' Kempis wrote: "How can he be long in peace who troubles himself with foreign cares, who seeks to diffuse himself into the outward and withdraws little or rarely into himself?"

These words find their echo in the following

from Thomas Carlyle:

"When one considers the clamorous emptiness of the world, words of so little sense, actions of so little merit, one loves to reflect on the great reign of silence. The noble silent men scattered here and there, each in his province silently thinking and silently acting of whom no morning paper makes mention, these are the salt of the earth."

Music for Delight

by Beverley Wilson

This year the annual Residential Week conducted by Mr Lambie was hosted by the Auckland School from 13 to 21 July.

Among the visiting tutors accompanying him was, once again, Mr David Ward, pianist and fortepianist, conductor, lecturer, and head of music in the London School.

During the Residential Week, attended by over 100 students and tutors, he led singing sessions and music was often heard during the day as individual singers or instrumentalists practised with him. We were also treated to his own daily practice without accompaniment on the resident Grand piano at West Tamaki Road.

A concert held on the final evening delighted all present with fine music and drama presented by soloists and Youth Group members. We were able to see for ourselves the high standard of talent which has developed in the School.

The concert also provided an opportunity for adult students to put together the parts they had been practising from Haydn's "The heavens are telling..." based on Psalm 19.

During his visit David Ward spent several days with the Ficino School, sharing his love of music in singing and instrumental activities. He also organised a concert so that the children could hear him play, as well as violin and singing items by some of the teaching staff. The School of Philosophy choir appreciated his spending an evening with them and were greatly inspired and encouraged by his direction. Mr Ward genuinely enjoyed the encounter also!

A highlight of his visit here was the public recital which he gave to a full house in the



David Ward in concert

music auditorium of the College of Education, the theme being "An Evening with Mozart and his contemporaries". Using a fortepiano, kindly loaned for the occasion by Paul Downie, David Ward played music by Clementi, Haydn and Mozart. Each item was introduced with background notes, entertaining anecdotes and extracts from Mozart's letters which he quoted from memory. His love of the music was obvious.

Note: The Philosophy Choir is now being conducted by Derek Saunders, previously Head of Music at St. James' Junior School in London. He is here for a year on a teaching exchange programme and is working in Ficino School. The Philosophy choir, which has recently increased in numbers (but more members are always welcome) is very grateful to have the benefit of his expertise.

*"There are no partitions
between ourselves and the Infinite."*

Emerson

Sanskrit Week at Waterperry

by Wolfgang Marshall

The traditional Sanskrit Summer School was held at Waterperry near Oxford from 10 to 18 August. Three students from Auckland and one from Wellington were fortunate to be able to represent the New Zealand Schools.



Waterperry House

Waterperry is the country estate and frequent conference venue of the School of Economic Science (SES), our parent School in London. In glorious summer weather 200 students from all over the globe assembled for the purpose of studying various aspects of Sanskrit. Participants were organised into 14 classes, catering for beginners as well as the very advanced. The writer's class had students from Australia, Trinidad, Netherlands, Spain, England, and New Zealand.

Most days followed a similar pattern, which included sounding and chanting, grammar lessons, spoken Sanskrit, and translation. This year the text for translation was a poem by Adi Shankaracarya (8th Century AD), whom most of us recognise as a great philosopher and founder of the four seats of spiritual knowledge in India, but he was also quite a poet. By the end of the week the poem's refrain was reverberating throughout the estate.

After five years of teaching Sanskrit without the direct input of a tutor, the writer would not have been surprised if certain aspects of pronunciation or grammar required correction. This was not found to be the case – Panini must have done a good job!

Each evening all participants gathered in a huge marquee for a meeting with Mr Richard Elias, the principal tutor of the event. These meetings provided an opportunity to link the discoveries of the day with Philosophy on a larger scale. At one of these meetings, Mr Jaiswal, translator of the many conversations between Leon MacLaren and His Holiness Shri Shantananda Sarasvati, conducted a question and answer session. His somewhat unconventional style endeared him to most present.

On another occasion students were treated to glorious music at Magdalen College Chapel in Oxford, performed by the SES choir, accompanied by a professional orchestra and organist.

In the midst of all of these activities there was still ample time for discussions and exchange of information with other Heads of Sanskrit studies from around the world, and this helped to give confidence that we in Auckland are on the right track.

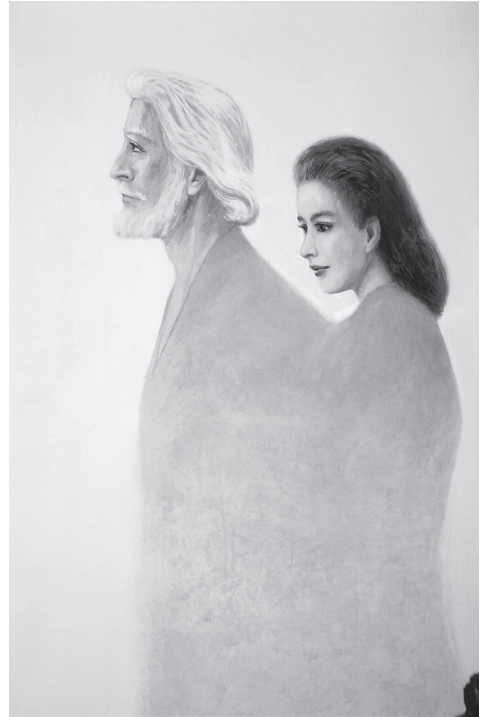
Full credit must go to the organisers, and tutors of the Sanskrit Department of SES for staging such an instructive and enjoyable week.

Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi

The photograph accompanying this article is one of many frescoes decorating the 'New Hall' at Waterperry House. It depicts the sage Yajnavalkya, departing to the forests for a life of contemplation, followed by one of his two wives, Maitreyi.

The story of Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi is told in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Maitreyi was a niece of the great woman sage Gargi, and, as a girl, had been present during the debates of the wise at king Janaka's court. She aspired to become enlightened like her aunt. In those days women were primarily concerned with the household, family wealth, and children, and it was very unusual for a young woman to seek wisdom from a teacher such as Yajnavalkya. She must have been a very enterprising spirit. In order to become his disciple she became his second wife at the age of 18, as it would not have been proper for her to be seen in his company otherwise.

When Yajnavalkya decided to give up life as a householder, renounce the world, and go to the forest in pursuit of a spiritual life, he offered his wealth to be divided between his two wives. Maitreyi wanted to know if this



Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi

would make her immortal, and when told that there would be no certainty of immortality through wealth, she asked to be instructed about the path to immortality. There follows the famous discourse, which you may read in Chapter II Section iv of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

"This Self is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else, and is innermost. Should a person (holding the Self as dear) say to one calling anything else dearer than the Self, '(What you hold) dear will die' – he is certainly competent (to say so) – it will indeed come true.

One should meditate upon the Self alone as dear. Of him who meditates upon the Self alone as dear, the dear ones are not mortal."

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The School in Wellington

Many of you may not be aware that there has been a School of Philosophy in Wellington for nearly 50 years. The purpose of the following article is to fill that gap and to bring us all up to date with what is happening there.

One of the intriguing aspects of the Wellington School is that it was the first School to be established outside the United Kingdom. Records show that the first introductory course was advertised in the Wellington "Evening Post" on Saturday, 8 September 1956, and commenced on Wednesday, 19 September. The course ran for 12 weeks at a charge of one guinea and covered –

- Discovery, creative arts & skill
- Intellect, emotion and instinct
- Natural Law in the man-made world
- Levels of consciousness
- Psychological functions
- Thinking, feeling and sensation
- Concepts of God
- Religion

The School has a number of senior members who have been working within it for close to or over 40 years. One of the early Wellington students was Mr John Russell, who later of course moved to Auckland to lead the School here.

At the present time there are about 170 students attending classes each week. In addition, a small singing group meets each Sunday evening, and other activities include a philosophy group for young children on Saturday afternoons, a small instrumental string ensemble, as well as an enthusiastic group of Sanskrit scholars. For some years also, light and nourishing meals have been provided in the Philosophy House supper

room for junior students who come to classes straight from work. These meals, provided by students volunteering their cooking, have become quite a social occasion. There is also a small "in-house" Book Shop offering helpful reading matter.

Highlights of each term's programme include residential weekends held at Philosophy House. This is also the venue every second year for a combined Auckland-Wellington residential week for senior students.

Masterton Branch

There is a branch of the School in Masterton, a small provincial centre of around 25,000 people in the heart of the Wairarapa. This branch was established eight years ago at the request of several students who had been travelling to classes in Wellington. Local advertising produced more than 20 enrolments for Part One and so the classes began. Since then, Wellington has sent a regular stream of tutors (up to five per week at one stage) to an eager group of students.

These days the senior students in Masterton tutor the junior groups, including Part One, and two tutors go across the Rimutakas each week from Wellington to take senior groups. Total student numbers in Masterton are around 50.

Cultural Days

An innovation in Wellington last year was a Cultural Day based on a model developed in the Melbourne School. Senior students were invited to present a workshop on a subject they loved. The theme of the day was "refinement". The Oxford Dictionary defines "cultural" as relating to civilisation, and refers to culture as the development and refinement of mind and taste, including

intellectual and artistic development. Taste was further defined as what we value, what we choose.

The day was structured around three workshop sessions and at each session a choice of four workshops/presentations was on offer. The Cultural Day also included lunch and was rounded off with a general discussion session and a short musical presentation. Eighty students attended, with a further twenty-five as presenters and helpers. Overall it was most enjoyable and uplifting, and in response to the question "should we repeat the occasion?" the answer was a resounding 'YES'.

So a second Cultural Day was held on the 10th of November, following the same format of three workshop sessions. This



Philosophy House, Aro Street, Wellington

year students were offered a choice of five workshops at each session – a total of 15 presentations on a variety of subjects.

The Wellington School has seen various changes in its leadership and composition over the past 46 years but throughout that time its strong link with the Spirit of Philosophy and family of Schools around the world has been kept intact by the devoted work of its senior members.

Philosophy House

Philosophy House was originally the William Booth Memorial Home, built by the Salvation Army in 1913 in a Neo-Georgian style by Wellington architects Stanley Fearn & Austin Quick. The School was able to purchase this property from the Salvation Army 20 years ago.

Students have worked progressively to renovate and refurbish the building. Today most rooms have been upgraded significantly and the main hall has been refurbished in the style of the Italian Renaissance, with several large prints of Botticelli paintings on the walls.

The most recent challenge has been the consideration of earthquake risk, although Philosophy House was originally built to the highest standards of the time. Currently all regulations are met, but possible changes to earthquake risk regulations have been mooted. The School has taken professional engineering advice, and, after full consideration, decided at its Annual General Meeting earlier this year to retain the building. Having accepted this responsibility, planning is now under way to establish a comprehensive work programme to address identified areas of potential deficiency.

Philosophy and Youth

Youth Groups have been a part of the School for many years but sometimes questions arise as what their function is and what is offered in these groups. This short article attempts to clarify some of these questions.

The young have a natural idealism and energy, which need a specific response and encouragement if these qualities are not to be overwhelmed by the increasing complexity and social pressures of the world. The various Youth Groups in the School endeavour to provide a respite from all this, albeit far too brief, together with a positive reinforcement of principles on which useful direction in life can be maintained.

The youth, ranging in age from 13 to approximately 21 years, meet in three groups on Tuesday evenings at Esplanade Road. Associated with these groups are the Secondary Boys (ex-Ficino pupils) aged 14-15 years who have a philosophy class on Friday evenings.

Group Meetings

There is some philosophy material specifically written for the 13 to 15 year age group which always presents a challenge to the tutors! One approach that also works well, however, is to take a current situation – either political or personal – and identify and apply philosophical principles to it. In this way, interest in the study of philosophy is kept alive.

The students are encouraged to practice stillness and have recourse to remembering the content of their group evening during the rest of the week. They find that the good company of each other is invaluable and results in friendships based on what is good.

In the older Youth there is more focus on reason and developing the faculty of discrimination. Young people in the present

age are bombarded with what is on offer in the world and are challenged to choose the best of it.

Material written for these groups includes content on other traditions, teachings and practices, which are offered for discussion. Students are encouraged to speak of their own experiences – good, bad, large, small – so that they can see how philosophical principles can be applied in daily life.

To assist in the development of their lively and energetic reasoning, material from current newspaper articles is also provided. They are asked to consider these different offerings in the light of what is given through the material and this helps strengthen discrimination.

Weekends

All the Youth Groups come together twice a term for a residential weekend at the School's property in West Tamaki Road. One of these weekends is shared with an adult group. Though their programmes are run separately (e.g. the adults don't go on the 5.30 am run!), everyone comes together for meals. Both youth and adults find that the opportunity to talk and eat together helps to dissolve the all-too-common separation between them.

Like the adults, the youth meditate, study and work during these weekends. Often there is also a concert on the Saturday evening, where musically talented students perform for each other.

With the intelligent use of love and reason arising from work in these groups, an environment which cultivates the many talents of the youth is provided. This gives them an opportunity to make a choice in the direction of their lives.

School

From Digby Crompton, Principal of the School

What is a school? It is firstly a sound, a word with a meaning, but what does it mean? Everyone understands that a school is for teaching and there are teachers and therefore pupils or students. There are many types of schools, teaching many subjects, but how do we discover the very "subject" I, the true and real Self of everyone?

It could only be through a universal teaching, which means potentially it is available for everyone. It is there for all who want it. This universal teaching was formulated by great Teachers and kept alive for the benefit of all on the voyage of Self-discovery.

What, therefore, is the essence of this universal teaching? A simple explanation given is: we can learn "to come out of what we are not and begin to be what we are". This is the real I, the real subject, knowledge itself, which knows no second or separation. Students approaching both Teaching and Teacher would understandably do so with some respect.

Within the notion of a School comes the idea of groups or classes. It has been said that the smallest unit of a School is a group, but of course the smallest unit of a group is an individual. The group is a natural "in-between" and a unity in itself. Its strength helps us to remember the truth about ourselves and others.

There is a tradition of Schools in which the teaching is given orally. These have appeared throughout the history of mankind: for example, the Platonic and other Greek Schools, those associated with Christian and Eastern teachings, the School which flowered during the Renaissance, and Schools of the present day. All arise to meet the need of the

time.

Traditionally, three ways are open at all times and in all places to mankind in his search: the Way of Action or service, the Way of Devotion or love and the Way of Reason or knowledge. There is also a fourth way which encompasses all three, and this has been described as the Way of the Householder.

All true Schools are based in the system of learn and teach – the ancient tradition which keeps the Way open.

A School provides good company in the form of a group, and good company, along with enquiry into Truth, are two of the gatekeepers on the path toward liberation.

Many of us find we get caught with the particular and miss the whole. For those in School for a while, a reminder is useful; for those beginning the enquiry into Philosophy, be confident in what you have found; and, for those interested in attending – the door is always open.

*"A philosopher is one
who desires to discern the truth."*

Plato: 'The Republic', c.370 BC

*"Philosophy is the art of arts
and science of sciences"*

John of Damascus, c.730

*"There was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently."*

Shakespeare:

'Much Ado About Nothing'. c.1599

Window on Ficino School

by Harry van der Vossen

Most School of Philosophy students are aware that the 27 Esplanade Road villa is also the home of Ficino School during the day in school time. You may be familiar with the teachers, the helpers and a number of the children, but may also be wondering what goes on in this school that makes it different and induces parents without any School of Philosophy association to bring their children to it? What brings them is the practical manifestation of the same Philosophy which attracts us to the evening classes.

Comments are often made by visitors to the school about the happiness of the children as they work, play and interact amongst themselves and with visitors. There is an order, a rest and a naturalness, notwithstanding the noise and activity which may prevail. It is an atmosphere of love, confidence and trust; one in which a child can be itself and feel safe.

Some parents wonder where this atmosphere comes from, and not having heard about the "pause", they are surprised when first they encounter its effect. This "pause", a simple coming to rest of mind and body, is practised before and after every lesson and activity. Its effect is the same as it is for Philosophy students, bringing them into the moment, no matter how briefly, and putting a brake on the mind's habitual activity. It helps the boys and girls to attend.

This quietening and focusing of the mind manifests itself in a high standard of work, which is noticed by visitors. The confidence and self-assurance with which the children address adults is another feature of the school. This has been particularly the observation of professionals like health workers dealing with children on their own.



Ficino pupils at play

Teaching materials used, like Shakespeare and the Scriptures, help the children to understand their heritage, enriches their vocabulary and gives them a taste of perennial virtues. There is also an appreciation of 'good company'. This includes parents, children, teachers, the kitchen team and all the volunteers who help around the school. Visitors soon realise that it includes them too.

So is this school a new Utopia? No, it is a primary school for children and it has its weaknesses and shortcomings, but consider: its current 120 pupils are the focus of the dedication, love and commitment of at least 30 members of the School of Philosophy, five days a week, forty weeks a year.

It is easy to think therefore that no further input from you will be needed. Not true! The Ficino School still needs more teachers and helpers who can see the vital importance of raising educational standards and are willing to assist.

The success of the Ficino and Renaissance Schools around the world is based on a philosophy for education which is ancient, well proven and which still meets all the needs of today.

Gardening for Rest and Recreation

by Tom Johnson

Life began in a garden, at least according to the Hebrew poet who wrote the Book of Genesis in the Bible.

The Garden of Eden is described as provided with every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Apple trees were in abundance and were to prove the downfall of man, but that, however, is another story.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, gardening has been the most popular pastime for man in his pursuit of happiness, and an essential part of his provision of food for family and the society in which he lives.

The grave of a Neanderthal man dating back sixty thousand years has revealed bouquets of cornflowers, yarrow, grape hyacinths and other flowers, showing an aesthetic and ritual role for flowers and, perhaps, gardening for pleasure. Agricultural gardening dates back only ten thousand years.

Gardening provides much-needed rest and recreation for those who pursue it in an ordered and measured manner. For many it is a lifelong interest and a satisfying hobby, increasing the well-being of themselves, the family, and the community. Everyone appreciates a well kept garden and the garden is indeed the first impression you receive when entering a family property.

The history of gardening is very long and very diverse and many cultures have had an effect on modern garden design. Most influential were the gardens of the 18th century. The most famous garden designer in Europe at the time was Lancelot Brown (1716-83), who became known as "Capability Brown" because of his habit of saying, when asked to advise on the development of a property, that the estate had capabilities which he could bring out if given the commission.

Brown's influence on modern landscape design has been enormous, using the natural qualities and developing the natural look when transforming an area of land. This influence is seen in many larger gardens.

The Renaissance gardens of the 15th century were perhaps the most beautiful ever conceived, with their architecture and design mirroring the times and uplifting the spirit of man to high levels. These gardens reminded man of his true beginnings and restored the visitor to the peace and tranquillity of his inner being. They were of large size and developed on geometric principles, reflecting the natural order of man and the creation. Such a garden was created by Cosimo d'Medici and his architect Michelozzo at the Medici Villa in Careggi (near Florence) where artists and philosophers met and gave birth to much of the new thinking of the Renaissance period.

Gardening brings in many elements: form, colour, scent, structure, and, of course, plants. There is also the so-called "hard landscape", being the paths, the walls and the architecture of the garden, also using the aforementioned elements. These are very diverse and the skill of a good landscaper or gardener is to bring all these elements together in a pleasing form. This "creation" requires skill and knowledge if the objective is to be achieved.

When these elements come together successfully, the heart is lifted, a sense of satisfaction found and a garden is created which brings peace and harmony to the mind.

(Tom is in charge of the grounds at the School properties)

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Thank you to all who provided articles for this end of year newsletter.

Contributions to future issues are welcome.

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Term Dates for 2003

	Commences	Finishes
Term 1	Monday 27 January	Sunday 20 April
Term 2	Monday 19 May	Sunday 10 August
Term 3	Monday 8 September	Sunday 30 November