

Vision

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Art of Parenting

For the first time, the School is offering single issue courses to the general public entitled 'The Art of Parenting'. They began in February.

One nine week course covers the formative years 0-10 and another the challenging years 11-21. The aim of the courses is to provide practical guidance based on philosophical principles from western and eastern traditions, with the intention that the full potential and happiness of children, parents and family are realized.

Topics include: the essential nature of the child, learning through love and play, harmonious relationships in the family, encouraging your teens to keep good company and constructive pastimes, and developing character, responsibility and discipline.

Course notes point out that the decisions we make need to be based on what is best for the child in any given situation and not on what is best "for me" or what is most convenient. Feedback from the first public courses shows that putting this into practice leads to positive outcomes for both child and family.

During courses attended by members of the

School and friends last year, the observation was made that the "seminars kept our perspective broad... It [the course] opened my view from 'how do I make my children behave?', to 'how can we guide our children to grow and mature into happy, free and responsible members of our family who will contribute wholeheartedly to society?'"

Another said that "the teenage years discussions were full of laughter and revelation and practical ways of approaching challenging topics like drug abuse, sexuality and promiscuity and encouraging self-discipline."

The next courses will commence on Tuesday, May 9th and Tuesday, October 10th. Although they are stand-alone courses, it is helpful to have attended the 0-10 classes as a grounding for the principles presented in the 11-21 course. The 0-10 content is, however, summarised at the beginning of the 11-21 course.

For a detailed course outline and more information please collect a pamphlet from the School's bookshop or phone 0800 610 539. Students of the School of Philosophy, their families, friends and acquaintances are most welcome to attend.

Kauaueranga 30th Anniversary Camp

by Matthew Roscoe

2005 was the 30th Anniversary of the Kauaueranga Outdoor Education Camp and near enough to the 30th anniversary of Sunday School camps to the Kauaueranga Valley, so in the first weekend of December approximately two dozen cheerful souls returned once more.

With an age range from 5 to 70+ and several generations of both tutors and students of the Auckland School represented, it was a refreshing and different outing. We were able to billet people by family for the first time and no one over the age of 4 1/2 was made to get up for early morning PE!

The weather was good and on the Saturday several assaults were launched on the hills with most coming close to attaining the Pinnacles and back in one day. Had it not been for some DOC workers with some trifling concerns about dynamiting the track, success would have been ours!

Later in the day, the indefatigable amused themselves with the ancient Viking stick-throwing game of Kubb in which Cynthia Koks and Dawn Roscoe showed themselves to be peerless, much to the chagrin of many males.

The evening meal was as sumptuous as we have come to expect, with Mrs Koks in charge, and there were many cheerful during-and-after-dinner toasts and speeches. Later we were treated to a Scottish Jig performed by Catherine Auld.



The next morning many of us experienced a distinct discord between the joy in our hearts and the state of our knees and so the morning was generally spent in a more leisurely fashion, with walks, soccer and Kubb all being engaged in.

After lunch and a smooth and peaceful tidy-up, we departed for the traditional Hoffman's Pool leap where Graham Farrelly and Ian Murphy led the way for height and courage (again), John Ferens for elegance of dive (again) and Matthew Roscoe landed sitting down (again).

The Kauaueranga Valley is a special place. The remoteness, the intimate contact with nature, the rugged beauty and the peacefulness all make it an ideal venue for these outings. Having been a regular participant and, latterly, organiser of these outings; I can say that without doubt this was the best yet. Somehow we did not so much sign off the old Sunday School as witness the start of something new.

Or maybe it was just the joy of being able to meditate in this most conducive of environments without thinking so much as once, "What are the little beggars up to now?"

[Missing from the photo: Kerrin and Simon Waterer, Pascal Tibbits, David Steffensen, and Russell Allen]

January Cultural Weekend

Cultural studies in the School were further enlivened by a residential weekend last January attended by members of the Dance, Art and Choir groups.

Auckland students were joined at the School's Glendowie property by members of the Wellington and Hamilton Schools, and Angela Miller from Sydney who came across for the dance workshops.

The two days of study and practical application were enjoyed by everyone, as were the refreshment breaks in the fine weather, including the option of lunch "al fresco" in the noonday sun.

The dance group pursued quite a different programme this year. Recent choreography offered by Dr Ann David from the London School, based on Botticelli's Three Graces, and performed last year in South Africa, was watched and discussed. The dance group reflected on specially chosen writings and a broader range of music and movement than usual, and composed dances to reflect their inspiration.

For their part, the artists' input into the three-pronged aspect of the weekend, embracing sound, movement and art, began and ended in a very harmonious and rich way, no doubt the fruit of being in the company of people who loved and attended to their chosen expressions of beauty. This approach had the full support of artist and sculptor Nathan David, also from the London School.

The makeup of the Art Group was five from the established Auckland group and three from the Hamilton School.

The choir learned new pieces, including a Sanskrit prayer set to music which was performed with considerable effect at a



The Dance Group

concert to conclude the weekend. Some simple rounds were practised, which were instructive and fun. For this activity, the choir divided into small groups of three or four, who took turns to present a round they had but a short time to learn. This "exposure" gave rise to a lot of amusement, as there was nowhere to hide in such a small group if you lost your place!

What arose during the weekend was the deepening of the understanding of love and the desire for beauty, assisted by Ficino's Commentary on Plato's "Symposium".

Dance and musical items presented during the exceptional Sunday evening concert were a delight and reflected the intensive work of the groups over the previous two days.

May such weekends become an established part of the long summer breaks!

Patience: The Need for this Age

by Dr Gary Grohmann

Without patience, there can be no peace

What's the rush? Why don't we work with nature but at a different speed? We demand instead of following. We expect instead of accepting. We desire instead of giving. Somehow we have lost patience.

Road rage, war, forgetfulness, crime, family disunity, arguments, racism, bigotry, anger, stress and bias result from impatience. We drive before we put on our seat belt, expect the radio and TV to be turned down, want to pay off the mortgage more quickly and demand the computer network to always work perfectly. And so it goes on; the examples are endless. Perhaps patience is the key practice and need for this age.

So, what is patience? Marsilio Ficino, a Platonic philosopher from the Italian Renaissance, wrote: 'The whole virtue of patience consists in this alone. That we fully accept as good whatever takes place under the governance of infinite goodness' and 'that one cannot have patience without religion.' No religion, no patience.

Great teachers (such as Ficino) and parents help form our early education and knowledge on simple philosophies. Father and Mother nurture, love, teach and provide direction, all under the umbrella of

patience. The first time I heard about patience was from my father who said, 'Wait. Be patient. Do everything from stillness; and know that all that befalls you is heading towards the good'. I also remember a music teacher's instructions, 'Patience; slow practice equals fast progress'.

The greater the love, the greater the patience. Patience is not an absence of action, rather its timing. It waits on the right time to act, for the right principles to enact, and in the right way. Patience creates confidence, decisiveness, and a rational outlook, which eventually leads to success.

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness....' (Galatians 5:22).

Isaac Newton said: 'If I have ever made any

valuable discovery, it is owing more to patient attention than to any other talent.' Jesus said, 'In your patience possess ye your soul.'

And what would the life be if you lost your soul?

The Bhagavad Gita says: 'Growth in patience leads to growth in fearlessness, generosity, equanimity to all, forgiveness, purity of heart, uprightness, serenity, gentleness, fortitude, steadfastness, harmlessness, courtesy, modesty, valour'.

'Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.'

- John Quincy Adams
(6th President of the United States)

The ten-fold law for human conduct as set forth in the 'Laws of Manu' (6.92) consists of **Patience**, forgiveness, self-control, not stealing, purification, mastery over the sensory organs, spiritual intellect, spiritual knowledge, truth and lack of anger. Clearly, with patience you remain true to yourself.

Marsilio Ficino wrote, 'You can choose to suffer willingly, or to suffer unwillingly. Patience goes with fate, and conquers the effect of fate. It makes the unavoidable voluntary. It turns the bad into good, and patience involves no activity, but leads to true action. It's not acting, but suffering well. And to suffer well is simply a willingness to suffer what you have to suffer, even if you do not wish to. To act well, you may need intelligence, learning, experience.'

What is impatience?

Impatience makes the good bad, and the bad even worse. It reduces the pleasure of the good and magnifies the pain of the bad. Impatience makes a man stupid. It causes us to want to know before we experience. Therefore we distrust our teachers and parents. We find it hard to take instruction because we want proof in advance that the advice works, which is impossible.

What causes impatience? The sole cause of impatience is desire. As the creation cannot move at the speed demanded by desire, other than by coincidence, there is a virtual constant delay or frustration in the fulfillment of one's desires. This frustration or delay in the fulfillment of 'my desires' manifests as impatience.

Factors that help with the growth of patience

The first thing is the need to eliminate the concept of 'other' from the mind, i.e. the 'other' is always the enemy.

The second thing is to work with nature and not desire. Observe how nature works. When you work with desire you pressurise.

The third factor which helps growth of patience is the development of waiting.

Not waiting for, but simple waiting.

**'To lose patience
is to lose the battle.'**

- Mahatma Gandhi

The fourth factor which helps with the growth of patience is to 'resist not evil'.

Ficino says, 'One cannot have patience without religion', i.e. one cannot perfect patience without religion. Why does he say this?

'Patience is really loving all things. In loving all things we unite with God's will. We are united with the supreme good, whenever we join whole-heartedly with the will of God. And united with God, we shall successfully surmount fortune, nature and fate.'

The fifth factor is 'step by step'. So if you live in the Present moment, you live in Patience. With the perfection of Patience comes the elimination of time and therefore the elimination of impatience.

(The above has been condensed from notes kindly provided by Dr Grohmann, who gave a talk on Patience at the Cultural Day last month)

- On the evening of Saturday, 18 March Dr Grohmann also gave a very interesting presentation titled "Constanze! The Struggle to Preserve Mozart's Legacy" at the Auckland University Music Auditorium.

The da Vinci Machines

by Simon Laurent

**"Leonardo, that great hero of the intellect ...
was the most relentlessly curious man in history."**

- Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation*

The technical brilliance and sublime humanity depicted in paintings such as *The Last Supper*, and for which he is most popular, were but one facet of Leonardo da Vinci's extraordinary genius. His relentless curiosity was seasoned with the invincibility of mind characteristic of the masters of High Renaissance culture, to whom nothing seemed impossible.

The Auckland Museum's recent exhibition, centred on mechanical models of designs found in Leonardo's notebooks, allowed one to participate in the workings of this great mind.

The display featured two types of exhibits. The first could be said to be "thought experiments", in that they demonstrated how problems could be solved by applying the



'Parachute' and 'Vitruvian Man' display

the classically defined "machines" such as the wheel, the inclined plane and the lever, instead of the use of brute force.

This purity of thought made its way into the second group of machines designed to fulfill a particular function, such as the portable military bridge largely constructed of triangles – the geometric form possessing the greatest native strength. They included his scheme for a double-hulled ship which could withstand cannon fire, his famous flying machine, a parachute, and a mobile shielded cannon platform which we would now classify as a tank. Many of the applications on display were military, stemming from

Leonardo's time as painter and engineer for Duke Ludovico Sforza of Milan.

Yet very few of Leonardo's inventions ever saw the light of day. It was a feature of his life that many of the projects he was commissioned to do were never finished. One suggested reason for this is that

**"What a piece of work is man!
How Noble in Reason?
how infinite in faculty?
in form and moving how express and admirable?
in Action, how like an Angel?
in apprehension, how like a God?"**

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II sc. ii

laws of physics – such as how to lift a pillar for a theatrical set using pulleys and levers with minimal human exertion. What most impressed the mind was how the systems that Leonardo devised called into play the pure forms and characteristics of geometry in order to transform nature. Many of the exhibits could be seen as the interaction of

Leonardo was really focused in exploration rather than the satisfaction of his patrons. His notebooks – of which only a portion have been fully examined – were filled with painstaking sketches of anatomical dissections, examinations of the form of rocks and the properties of water, and the flight of insects and birds.



One aspect of his intellectual heroism was that he eschewed the Aristotelian division between scholarly cultivation of the "liberal arts" and the practice of "manual crafts" in the real world. Although he cannot have been a stranger to the current theories of art, science and architecture, he expanded his learning by meticulous, unflinching observation and experiment. Furthermore, it is evident that ideas of limitation did not constrain him when it came to solving the many questions which poured into his mind. It could be said that he sidestepped the question which many of us ask with trepidation, "Can it be done?" and boldly and repeatedly enquired, "How can it be done?"

This above all is why the musings of a man dead for five hundred years are worth our attention now. Leonardo shows us that the ingenuity of man is boundless; that the self-imposed extremities of our ability are illusory and, by the effort of faith and enthusiasm, will be overcome.

The Exhibition...

...was a first in Australasia and planned by the Auckland Museum from the beginning to be set in a broader context of the man Leonardo. The Florentine team who came to install it were most impressed with this approach and left Auckland saying that it was the best installation of their exhibition that they had ever seen.

One of their number, Gabrielle Niccolai, who came from a family of Ficino aficionados, was astonished to find a school in Auckland that carried the name Ficino. He asked if he could visit....which he did, and was met by Oliver Dean from Wellington who can speak Italian.

After the visit Gabrielle commented how it was obvious to him that the school was building character in the children...and how rare but important he thought this was.



"I Dream of Italy"

Also exhibited in conjunction with *The da Vinci Machines* was *I dream of Italy*, painted by Emily Cole when she was a 12-year-old pupil of Ficino School. It won the New Zealand division of a world-wide art competition run by Carpe Diem to foster artistic talent in children. Emily's prize was a round trip for herself and her family to Trieste for the World final. The painting then came back here because the Museum had coordinated the New Zealand competition and the Director had judged it.

The original is currently on display in the foyer of the Ficino classroom block.

Ficino School Fair

The main reason for the warm, happy and inviting atmosphere at Ficino School's inaugural Fair last November was the support and effort that went on behind the scenes.

The primary aim of the Fair was to open Ficino School out to the community and provide an event where children who attend the school could relax and enjoy a fun day while also contributing by giving their time on the stalls. And not only that! With only about five weeks notice, the whole school – Headmaster, teachers and pupils – made a tremendous effort to support the Fair by producing a large selection of original and interesting work to sell.



Items included Christmas cards, wrapping paper, place-mats, whirlygigs, book marks, lavender bags, home-made ginger beer, sherbert and more. Given the tight time-frame, the amount produced was outstanding, and mothers gave generously of their time to work with the children and



Fair-goers at Esplanade Road

teachers in the classrooms producing crafts for sale.

Many parents and relatives helped look after the stalls, which included plants, cakes, books, ice-cream and drinks, the ginger beer (made by Class 2), and bric-a-brac. There were a sausage sizzle, and Devonshire teas; face-painting, a bouncy castle, badge-making and a coconut shy.

A highlight was a fancy dress parade, and a quick-fire raffle ran every half-hour throughout the morning. Some of the more creative and entrepreneurial amongst the children offered their own items, e.g. apple bobbing with a twist (apples dangling from a tree) and stocking faces filled with flour, which were very popular.

Well before the official start time of 10 am dozens of new visitors to the school were making their way into the grounds. By the end of the event, between 150 and 200 people had been made welcome and gained a taste of the school. That was in addition to pupils and their families. Many people commented on the peaceful but vibrant atmosphere and the good quality of stalls and activities.

Although not the primary aim, a profit of over \$5,000 was made for the school.

A Metaphor for Life

Towards the end of last year an invitation was extended to members of the first year groups in the School to a morning of discovery: the practicality of the Teaching in physical work.

Twelve students attended at 27 Esplanade Road and all spoke of the joy of the morning. It was an inaugural event but went so well that it is planned to repeat the exercise this year on a once-a-term basis.

One student spoke of the work of the morning as “poetry in motion”; another said that what was discovered was “a metaphor for life”.

Some student also reported back to their evening group tutors. One observed that the work “reminded me of many years ago bathing my first child. Joy arose out of the activity, delight, a childhood rediscovered. Timeless.”

The Power of the Word

by Rodney Shadbolt

Recently we had difficulty recovering a debt. This had been going on for some time so Rona, my Maori wife, finally said to the debtor that her husband was getting angry! Lo and behold, the debt was immediately settled.

Now this might be a classic case of the myth being mightier than the man! An astute observer who had met Rona might surmise that the poor debtor, having dealt with her, thought “if this is the wife, what must the husband be like?” But nevertheless, its amazing how often the power of the word does work.

On another occasion we were having what I thought was a quiet beer when we came across some dealers who had sold drugs to my wife’s young relatives. She forcefully threatened them with the police if they ever

went near youngsters again. It was a very tense, dramatic exchange, and in a final crescendo, she added, “And this is my Tanie!”

Like most people, I didn’t know that ‘Tanie’ was Maori for ‘her man’, and because she had spoken with such conviction and power I thought there must be a large Maori cousin standing behind me called Tanie. So I leapt to my feet with unwarranted confidence and faced down the drug-dealers.

Were the extra grey hair and ulcers ultimately worth it? The evening proceeded in the way peculiar to the Maori people after this very rough introduction, with everyone singing together as though nothing had happened, but for months afterwards the youngsters involved (who were working for me at the time) couldn’t get drugs anywhere in Auckland.

Such is the power of the word!

Bookshop News

Recent new arrivals in Book Shop include limited numbers of the following titles: “A New Earth” and “Practicing the Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle

“As You think” by James Allen
“From Science to God” by Peter Russell
“The One In The Mirror” by Ramesh S. Balsekar
Also in stock: “The Power of Now”



Philosophy

by Eileen Meghen

Philosophy is a challenge
It's about life's issues and getting a balance
It explores our attitudes and comprehension
And giving tasks our full attention

It also teaches a way to live
How to take and how to give
To be aware and to observe
Practice stillness and to serve

We discuss, we probe and find out how
To stay in the present, live in the now
Yesterday's gone and tomorrow's not yet
Don't deal with a day you haven't yet met

Your true self you have to find
You're not to trust your changing mind
Your body changes as you well know
Your feelings, well, they come and go

When you look in the mirror do not be
concerned
Think philosophy and what you have learned
That aging body should not make you blue
Remember that image is not the true you

There is no future in the past
The eternal now is all thou hast
Fulfil well the needs of each day
And balance your work your rest and your play

Happiness is our natural state
So why is it hidden if it is innate
We are told it has a layer of dust
So a daily shower is a natural must

This will let the light shine through
And feel the happiness that is naturally you
Don't let dust settle, keep it at bay
Don't sell or give your happiness away

Our feelings and us can be separated
Identification with them dissipated
Be aware and when things are amiss
Just stop and say "not this, not this"

Twice a day be still, unwind
And in doing so you may find
An inner peace and an outer strength
To make each day a day well spent

My previous ways have terminated
New attitudes been formulated
The me that was that used to be
No longer exists, just history

As this poem ends it must be said
Philosophy has shown the way ahead
The issues of life will no longer confound us
If we live in harmony with all that surrounds us



(Eileen, who is a member of the Dublin School,
has kindly given permission for her poem to be published in Vision)

“Aarangetram” of **Erika Watson**

Towards the end of last year a member of the Auckland School achieved a significant personal milestone, delighting a large audience of family and friends as she did so.

After years of intensive training in Indian Classical Dance, Erika Watson (21) performed solo for two hours on stage at the Epsom Girls Grammar School Theatre. This was her “Aarangetram” or Graduation in this art form.

The dance items – which required a dazzling display of finely co-ordinated head, eye, hand and foot movements, plus sheer athleticism and stamina – were beautifully executed. First there was a short invocatory piece for doing obeisance to the Gods, and the programme went on to include longer items depicting the life of Krishna from childhood to adulthood and a dance based on the experiences of Rama from the “Mahabharata”.

Other major pieces were “Jataswaram”, a dance of intricate footwork with different poses and movements, and “Varnam”, a central, most elaborate and demanding item which sought to bring out the best in pure dance and expression of emotions.



Erika has been a student of Kanan Deobhakta’s School of Dance from the age of five. During her years with Kanan, Erika has faithfully represented the School of Dance in many workshops and demonstrations and played an active role in the care of the younger dance students. Erika has also given short solo performances during concerts staged at philosophy residential weekends.

Asked what had meant most to her about the years of discipline and training, Erika said that she had enjoyed the challenge of it, and especially that posed by the Graduation performance. To have come so far and not at least attempted this finale would probably have left a lifelong regret.

Erika is now in her third year of nursing training.

Auckland School **Cultural Groups**

Wednesday	Vedic Chants	9.15am	Lilian Beanland	521-5054
	Plato Group	10.15am	“	“
Sunday	Vedic Dance	8.30am	Rosemary Auld	412-8782
	Art Group	1.00pm	Ngaire Bennett	445 3827
	Shakespeare Study Group	6.00pm	Hamish Hudson	638 9667
	Choir	7.30pm	Frances Gore	817 5060

New members to these groups are welcome. For enquiries, please phone the group tutors listed.

Philosophy

An introductory course of twelve weekly lectures

RECOMMENCING IN MAY

The course is offered for the interest and enjoyment of thoughtful men and women who seek an understanding of the nature of human existence and the world in which we live.

The lectures show how great philosophic ideas of past and present, put into practice, lead to clear thought, reduction of stress, and effective action in work, study and every aspect of daily life.

The course, which includes the opportunity for discussion, is given on Tuesday and Thursday (7.45 to 10pm) and Tuesday morning (9.30 to 11.45am) and you may vary your day of attendance.

The fee for this course is \$120 for adults, \$60 for non-earning students. Enrol now by phone, or in person from 30 minutes prior to your first attendance, or visit our website:

www.philosophy.school.nz

Course commences:

Auckland: 16 & 18 May 2006

27 Esplanade Road, Mt Eden

For Enquiries Phone: 09-630-2703

or 09-638-7577 (during week prior to enrolment)

Hamilton:

For Enquiries Phone: 07-856-7174

School of Philosophy (Auckland) Inc

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**The dreamer can know no truth,
not even about his dream, except by awaking out of it.**

- George Santayana (1863 - 1952)
Spanish-American philosopher, poet

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