

Vision

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Residential Week

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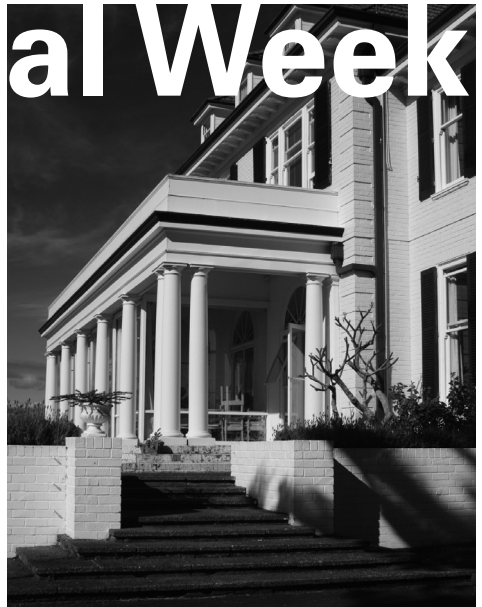
In July the Auckland School hosted a Residential Week that many felt was one of the best ever.

It was memorable not only for depth and variety of content, but also the experience of increasing freedom, ease and naturalness.

The week was held from 14-22 July at the School's property in West Tamaki Road. Again it was conducted by international School Leader Mr Donald Lambie as part of his annual tour of Schools around the world. Somehow, 120 people were accommodated, including Leaders, visiting tutors, and Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington students, either at the property or in a motel and in students' homes nearby.

On the spiritual "menu" were morning sessions with Mr Lambie, devoted to questions and observations based on passages from the 1991 Conversations between Leon MacLaren and His Holiness Shri Shantananda Saraswati, and generous evening meetings with plenty of opportunity for wide-ranging discussions.

Each afternoon there were group workshops on the art of dialectic, based on the Socratic method. These sessions shone the light on



268 West Tamaki Road

habitual ways of thinking and speaking and the need to go beyond these to enquire into various issues put before us. Prior to this, many of us had not been aware of the difference between dialectic and rhetoric and discovered that a lot of speech fell into the latter category, where the aim is to convince listeners of the speaker's viewpoint, rather than the discovery of Truth. The dialectic method seems to provide an appropriate tool for the proper analysis of the knowledge of Advaita received for so long from His Holiness.

Evenings were varied, and on one of them

Mr Shane Mulhall, Leader of the Dublin School, took a meeting, employing vigorous dialectic to make sure we didn't settle into a "comfort zone". Another night Mrs Lambie gave an enthusiastic presentation of new ventures on the School of Economic Science website, focussing on the Plato Forum, which had started just 10 days earlier, and a world meditation day on 28 November. The inspiration for this arose in a London student and quickly gathered momentum. It is now supported by a number of other organisations. The web address is: <http://www.justthisday.org/>.

Richard Elias, senior member of the London School, gave us a humorous talk on Andrew MacLaren, father of Leon MacLaren. Mr Elias



has been described as "an extraordinary moment in U.S. political history". Kennedy's words were inspired, and emphasised the need for tolerance and forgiveness.

"Then dialectic, and dialectic alone goes directly to first principle and is the only science, which does away with hypothesis in order to make her ground secure: the eye of the soul which is literally buried in an outlandish mire, is by her gentle aid lifted upwards."

had known him personally, and so was able to speak of his character first-hand and the impact of some of his speeches. As a further illustration of the power of oratory, we listened to a speech given by Robert Kennedy, younger brother of slain President John F. Kennedy, as he broke the news of the death of Martin Luther King to a crowd of African Americans in Indianapolis on 4 April 1968. This speech

Dinner one evening was enlivened by the celebration of Samuel Ames' 21st birthday with speeches and a toast. It was a very moving event for Samuel, who coped extremely well with his speech of thanks. Samuel has been attending the School virtually since birth!

The last evening was particularly significant. It began with Mr Lambie reading His

Holiness' instruction to Leon MacLaren in 1993 relating to the passing of responsibility from one School Leader to another. Mr Lambie went on to pay generous tribute to the years of dedicated work done by everyone present, concluding with a tribute to the "good, steady, reasonable Leadership" we have enjoyed for over 40 years from Mr John Russell. This met with a standing ovation.



After yet another delicious meal (Lorna Travis did a magnificent job looking after the catering for the week) there was a concert of music, poetry, Shakespeare and dance. Musical items included solo performances and two pieces beautifully sung by the small “Satsanga Choir” formed for the purpose during the week. An unexpected offering came from Peter Ashton, who entertained us with the Paul McCartney song “Blackbird”.

A recital by Malcolm Wolfram of T.S. Eliot’s “Journey of the Magi” was quite a revelation. It was as though Eliot himself were standing there. Malcolm later said, “...It is a poem that particularly moved me when I first read it and still has the ability to dig deep into the emotional regions.” Hamish Hudson recited a poem called “The Chisel” that he composed during the week, prompted by his experiences during work sessions.

The evening concluded with a presentation by the Wellington School of a magnificent oriental carpet to express appreciation of Auckland’s hosting of the week.

We went home on Sunday morning feeling very privileged to have attended this Week.

“Search for Truth is the paramount activity during Satsanga (Good company). Everything else is peripheral.”

- Shri Shantananda Saraswati



A Musical Book

by Jackie Bedford

When she was 9 years old, Cathy Dean's parents bought her a tennis racquet and she "went around the house strumming it like a guitar and singing." As Cathy notes, this was an early indication that she was not headed for Wimbledon.

Instead, she has pursued a life-long interest in music and recently this has culminated in an exciting publishing project.

Cathy is a senior student at the Wellington School of Philosophy and wife of the School Leader, Bruce Dean. She currently teaches piano and sings in a madrigal choir, and within the School leads singing. As a fine soprano, she has entertained at School events.

In October she will unveil a book of songs she has composed, with each piece accompanied by an original illustration, and tucked in the back a CD of the music being performed. The title, *In the Sanctuary of my Soul*, hints at the contemplative nature of the pieces. "The idea is that one can read the text and look at the painting or drawing while listening to the music," she explains.

Cathy started writing music early. "Much of my teenage angst was dispelled by writing bad poetry and equally bad music! Then nothing more until after a visit to Chartres Cathedral in France in 1999, when the piece "Sancta Maria" swam into my mind and composing reappeared on the horizon.

"I had several conversations with David Ward, composer, pianist and senior member of the London School, about things musical and he worked on the Shakespeare sonnet with me and talked me through some of the things the

composers' group in London had considered.

"The one principle I have really stayed with is Mr MacLaren's one of allowing the words to come first. A few weeks ago I went to a concert of Monteverdi's music called "Prima la parole, poi que la musica": first the word, then the music. And I suspect the principle was known even further back!"

The idea of producing a book developed during a conversation with long-time Wellington student, Fiona Pitt (who passed away in 2006), who was a keen watercolour artist. "We discussed 'painting' and putting the same text to music." Cathy didn't have to go far in her search for collaborators – the 14 artists are all students of Schools of Philosophy in New Zealand and overseas.

"It's been a whole new experience but all along the way the necessary people and experience seemed to turn up, and everyone's response has been very positive. That's right from the initial requests to the artists; the publisher, Ron Proft of Delphian Books in Australia, who approached me and said if I ever needed anything published to please contact him; and the producer, Christine Argyle, whom I approached. After I explained the project to her, and showed her some of the artwork and music, she was also very willing. Then of course there are the musicians (all Wellingtonians). And in the early stages a number of my musical friends helped to put the first "takes" on tape, and these were sent to the various artists."

The book will be launched with an event at the School of Philosophy in Wellington on Sunday 27 October.

A Day in the Life of a Ficino Teacher

by Margaret Brickland

It was the last day of a “full-on” first week of the new term.

Our theme from the Headmaster had been seeking the Truth and the responses from children during Assembly revealed that this was not just some ‘theoretical’ premise, rather a discovery that, for example, ‘you don’t feel down once you’ve spoken the truth’, and ‘it makes you and everyone else happy’.

Lunch was special. New parents plus parents of Classes Two and Three were treated to a good mix and mingle, a wonderful speech from the Headmaster about the essence of Ficino School and some yummy food as well.

The end of junior lunch coincided with parents arriving, coming early especially to catch a glimpse of their littlies sitting eating at the long tables happily enjoying each other’s company. The event was marked with first a table, and then bench collapsing – old worn notches in steel legs! No injuries, just a broken yoghurt bowl ... but my new boy was so thrilled to announce to his arriving dad, “Hey dad! The table just collapsed!” This was fantastic fun for him.

Parents love coming in to Ficino. So do visitors to the classrooms. The effect of a whole class of youngsters standing to greet you as you enter the room is powerfully uplifting,

Some Class Two mothers stayed after lunch to help with preparations for the Annual Ball and the inevitable happened: their toddlers found their way into my classroom. A popular colouring was started by one – just a

few faint lines – and then left. His older brother wanted to take it home for him to finish but I stated that I wanted the colouring kept for someone else as it was virtually untouched. Later, just before home-time, the mother re-entered the classroom and my boy raced up to her with the colouring. This would appear to have been a direct counter to my request, but not so.

Outside, during dismissal, I was talking with another parent when the young chap appeared at my side with the colouring to give back to me. I was so touched with his action that I accepted it and praised him. He was completely open to receive the fullness of love in the message. The parent standing next to me said, “that is what I love about what you teach the children here” and she recounted how her son had bumped into and completely destroyed a display in a grocery shop. She had told him he needed to apologise to the shopkeeper. What filled her heart with joy was the manner in which the apology was given. An upright, wide-eyed little boy, looking directly at the shopkeeper, sincerely apologising for his action.

These are the gems of being in the company of the children at Ficino: their open-heartedness and ability to act upon the words that they hear. This is real to them. They experience joy and freedom through honesty and their company reminds us about the simple yet essential qualities in life.

This is the work going out into the community. This is my vision for the children – that they be beacons of light in society.

Justices ^{of} _{the} Peace

by Elizabeth Wal

I have been prompted to write this article by the number of people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds who have come to see me in my capacity as a Justice of the Peace for the past nine years and who almost always ask the same question – “How do you become a Justice of the Peace?”. In endeavouring to answer that question it is also helpful to know the history of the position and its function in the community.

A Brief History

Conservators, Wardens, or Keepers of the Peace have existed in England since ancient times, but it was not until 1361, when a statute in the reign of Edward III gave them the power of trying felonies, that they acquired the more honourable appellation of “Justices”. An earlier statute in 1327 had taken the election of Conservators of the Peace from the people and had given it to the King.

The Act of 1361 provided, amongst other things, “That in every county of England shall be assigned for the keeping of the peace, one lord and with him three or four of the most worthy of the county, with some learned in the law, and they shall have the power to restrain the Offenders, Rioters, and all other Barators, and to pursue, arrest, take and chastise them according to their Trespass or Offence”.

To this day, Justices are lay people who are assisted in England by Justices’ Clerks and in New Zealand by court officials.

The duties of early Justices were many and onerous, and included supervising the accuracy of weights and measures, the seizing of wine sold for excessive prices, and assisting those whose homes were burned. Justices had

great authority over the lives and liberties of those brought before them.

In New Zealand

The first appointment of a Justice in New Zealand was in 1814 when Governor Macquarie of New South Wales appointed the missionary Thomas Kendall as a Justice “in the Bay of Islands in New Zealand and throughout the islands of New Zealand and those immediately contiguous thereto”.

In 1840, after New Zealand had become a British colony, the first regular appointments of Justices were made. The Royal Charter of 1840, which constituted New Zealand a separate colony, required the Government to include in the Legislative Council three senior Justices of the Peace.

The functions of modern Justices in New Zealand are now more limited than in former times.

Notwithstanding their more restricted powers, it remains true that Justices of the Peace are citizens given special duties and powers.

Although there is a certain status, which is in itself honourable, the position is not an “honour” but one involving serious duties and responsibilities and may affect the fundamental freedoms and rights of a citizen. Justices have the important responsibility of assisting in preserving the rule of law in this country and should seek to uphold the law not only in the office of Justice of the Peace, but also in their private and working lives.

How does one become a Justice of the Peace?

Nominations are accepted only from the Member of Parliament for the electorate where



King Edward III (1312-1377)

(Illus. Cassell's History of England, 1902)

the nominee resides. (NB These are not political appointments). Nominees must have an adequate standard of education and a genuine desire to serve the community, they should be of good standing and should be respected as persons of good sense, character and integrity.

After nomination the procedure briefly is:

- Confidential check by N.Z. Police
- Interview by a District Court Registrar who then reports to the Minister of Justice
- Minister of Justice makes a decision and if approved the nomination is then referred to the Governor-General
- Nominee can only act as a Justice after the Oath of Allegiance and the judicial oath is taken as required by the Oaths and Declarations Act 1957.

Restricted Eligibility

For many years it has been the policy of successive Ministers of Justice to decline to recommend for appointment as Justices the members of certain professions or callings because of their special duties and responsibilities. These include Members of Parliament, barristers and solicitors, practising medical practitioners and persons working in various aspects of law enforcement. There has also been a general policy not to appoint members of the clergy and people in religious orders.

**“True peace is not merely
the absence of tension:
it is the presence of justice.”**

- Martin Luther King

Tenure of Office

A Justice holds appointment for life or until he or she resigns in writing to the Secretary of Justice or is removed by the Governor-General. Ex Officio Justices: Mayors and Chairpersons of a territorial authority or regional council are JPs for the period that they hold office.

Functions and Powers

In New Zealand Justices of the Peace have no inherent jurisdiction, and may exercise only those powers expressly given to them by statute. As at February 2006 there were approximately 75 Statutes (Acts) which affect Justices. Broadly speaking, however, those functions and powers have over the years been classified under two headings – Judicial Duties and Ministerial Duties.

Judicial Duties involve presiding in a District Court – with access at any time when needed to counsel from a District Court Judge, and Ministerial Duties which comprise, principally, witnessing of documents, taking declarations, affidavits or affirmations, receiving of Informations and complaints, issue of search warrants, and issue of summons.

Justices are volunteers and do not, and may not, receive any form of gratuity for their services.

Information for this article has been taken from the Manual for New Zealand Justices of the Peace 2002 – Ministerial Duties.

A Philosophical **Goldmine**

A website well worth a visit is Internet Sacred Text Archive at www.sacred-texts.com It gives access to 1200 philosophical, spiritual, ancient and classic texts, all of

which can be downloaded free, or you can help keep the site going by purchasing the disc. The texts range from the Dialogues of Plato and the 12-volume Mahabharata to myths and folklore from around the world.

Philosophy and Photography - "Digital Philography"

(Condensed from a talk given by Lawrence Ames at the 2007 Cultural Day)

Practical philosophy encourages us to apply the teaching in all areas of our lives. This presentation is a reflection on the parallels that have been discovered between philosophy and photography, so much so that the new art form of "philography" is suggested as a way to capture the marriage of the two subjects.

Observation

We are told in the scriptures that the Self is the eternal, ever-present witness of all. Photography also starts with observation, seeing the subject. Marcel Proust, a French novelist, said that "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes".

Ansel Adams was a famous American photographer most renowned for spectacular and dramatic black and white landscape photographs. He said "When I'm ready to make a photograph, I think I quite obviously see in my mind's eye something that is not literally there in the true meaning of the word. I'm interested in something which is built up from within, rather than just extracted from without".

A wise man who gave immeasurable guidance to the School over many years, Shri Shantananda Saraswati, said "creative paintings are the result of regulated use of vision and a bonus from the divine forces", and it is hopefully not taking too much licence to say that this applies equally to creative photographs. What is needed for creative photographs is regulated use of vision by the photographer and then may follow a bonus from the divine forces. He further said that "the only condition to acquire their [the

divine forces] favour is to work through the natural laws". A still mind helps the philosopher discover natural law, just as the photographer needs to keep the mind and the camera still to take creative photographs.

Light

Photography means 'writing or drawing with light'. A photograph taken with the lens cap firmly in place on the camera will record no image and shows itself as total blackness. The Bible says that in the beginning there was darkness and God said "Let there be Light" and there was light. So let there be light: take the lens cap off. Philosophy is defined as 'love of wisdom' and wisdom can be defined as sensible action taken under the light of true knowledge. Both philosophy and photography need light, both physical and subtle.

When we look at a photograph the eye goes firstly to where the brightest light is, then looks into the various shades through to complete blackness. This movement of the attention and the eye happens very rapidly but it pays to remember that the photograph is firstly defined by the light. A good photograph will record the full range of gradations from black to white and allow the viewer to find some restful satisfaction in the image, that is, not too bright or dull and with good contrast between the colours, not washed out.

Likewise, philosophically it pays to remember that the darkness, whether experienced as ignorance of the mind or in the world of apparently dense physical forms, is defined by the available light. We should remember to focus on the light and not be so concerned to try and remedy the darkness with more darkness.

There are various ways in which scientists attempt to explain light, one of which is to describe it as a stream of photons, or particles of light. These countless billions of photons stream towards us from the sun and subsequently from the various artificial sources of light. They are refracted and reflected throughout creation.

A most important and sometimes surprising aspect of light, however, is that it is invisible, just like God or the Self or consciousness. You cannot see yourself or God except as reflected in the forms of creation. Likewise, we cannot see light except it is refracted or reflected in creation. This clearly gives scope to the photographer to seek the highest expression of God or Self in a photograph.

Some light is absorbed by creation and those visible components that are not absorbed are reflected. Thus the green grass absorbs all but the green component of the light, which is reflected, and we see green grass. Likewise a red ball absorbs all the colours of the spectrum except the red component which is reflected to reveal a red ball. Considering that we only see the light that is reflected from the various objects, it could be argued that we don't actually see the objects at all, we only see what the object doesn't hold on to. In fact what really are we photographing?

The Geeta, which forms part of the Indian epic "The Mahabharata", describes creation as the product of the interplay of three essential qualities known in the Sanskrit language as Sattva, which conducts consciousness, Rajas, which reflects consciousness and accounts for all movement, and Tamas, which absorbs consciousness. The physical light of creation that photographers work with may be considered in this context. Sattva appears as invisible light; Rajas as colours; Tamas as black.



Luminosity behind the colours

The invisible light is represented by the colour white. Just as a good balance between the three natural qualities gives rise to harmonious situations in life, so the photographer needs to ensure good colour balance in a well proportioned photograph.

Playing with Pixels

Digital photography uses the term pixels, or picture elements, to describe the way a camera records colour and brightness. The more pixels or picture elements recorded per inch in the image sensor of the camera, the more detail that the camera can record. Thus we hear digital cameras being described in terms of how many millions of pixels they can record. The more pixels recorded, the more fine detail that can be displayed. There is a clear parallel in the way digital image technology has evolved and this allows digital photography huge creative license.

Philosophy tells us that the creation is not as real as it seems, and in the age of digital photography the old adage that 'the camera does not lie' is definitely a fib! With 'third eye' sports cameras and in forensic photography, where proof and physical evidence are needed, it is useful to have an accurate record of events. However, even this technical accuracy is subjected to varying levels of biased interpretation. Witness the many times that the Black Caps bowlers have not been awarded obvious LBW decisions. Who says what is real?

With digital photography electronic tools can be employed, just as with the artist's brush, to create whatever picture is desired. The digital camera merely provides an image made up of millions of pixels, points of brightness and colour. The photographer's darkroom has become computer imaging software and a computer by which pixels can be selected, altered in an infinitely varied number of ways, re-located, or simply removed.

As philosophers we may come to appreciate that creation has no independent existence and is subject to change. In the hands of the digital photographer the images of creation recorded by the camera are completely subject to modification and may be altered to give effect to the image in the photographer's mind rather than what was in front of the camera when the shutter was released.

Henri Cartier-Bresson was a French photographer considered to be the father of modern photojournalism and he expressed the emotion of photography this way:

"To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event, as well as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression."

Exposure

Central to photography is the need to record the right amount of light onto the light sensitive surface. This is known as exposure and is a product of the aperture or diameter

of the lens and the time for which the lens remains open, allowing light to pass onto the sensor. When the lens is wide open and clearly focused, only a very brief glimpse is needed to record all the detail. Likewise, when the eye of the mind is open and attention is clearly focused on the task at hand, all that needs to be known is known in the moment. Time is so brief as to almost stand still.

When the lens aperture is closed down ("stopped" in photographic jargon) then a much longer time is needed to admit sufficient light to record all the detail of the image. This requires that the camera be kept physically still, maybe using a tripod. Likewise, when we squint through sleepy eyes and mind, the view may be blurred and unclear; we only 'see through a glass darkly', and confusion reigns. Oh for a tripod, or a four poster bed!

Depth of Field

A fascinating dimension of achieving correct focus and exposure in a photograph is the subject of 'depth of field'. A photograph with a wide depth of field has everything clear and in focus from the near foreground to the distant horizon. Similarly there can be times when we are wakeful, the mind is still, attention is precisely focused and the awareness is alert to a wide range of incoming sensory perceptions. We experience a wide depth of field.

A photograph with a narrow depth of focus has only one narrow section in focus, with everything else blurred or out of focus. Likewise, there are times when the attention may be very precisely focused and while we may have awareness of various thoughts and feelings, the attention is not distracted from its specific area of focus, and on occasions there can seem to be no passage of time. Importantly, whatever depth of field the photographer seeks to achieve, stillness is needed of the camera and the photographer.

Practical philosophy encourages inner stillness and peace as often as possible for as long as

possible, whether the attention is wide open or focussed. The camera, however, is limited to recording just one moment. It is mechanical and needs the photographer to help keep it still. The photographer is Absolute, and may experience stillness all the time, even in the midst of activity. Henri Cartier-Bresson the French photographer said, "In a portrait, I'm looking for the silence in somebody."

In the Mahabharata, which is bedtime reading for philosophers, there is the story of Arjuna learning the skill of archery. The instructor told the students to take aim on the eye of a bird and get ready to shoot. He then asked them what they saw. One said 'I see the branch, and the face of the bird, feathers, mouth, eyes, everything'. He was dismissed by the teacher, likewise several other students gave similar answers and were each in turn dismissed. Then Arjuna answered and said, 'I see only the eye'. 'Do you see anything else?' he was asked. He answered 'nothing at all'. He was then told to shoot. In photographic terms, Arjuna experienced a very narrow depth of field.

Photographers can use this concept of depth of field to deliberately draw the attention of the observer to the specific subject area of the photograph. Conversely, if a photograph contains distracting elements the depth of field can be artificially manipulated to give a more focused impact to the image.

Luminosity and Form

Digital camera sensors record three primary colours: red, green and blue, in order to display almost all colours visible to the human eye. As we have heard, the camera stores this information in pixels, which includes a record of the amount of brightness or lightness, sometimes referred to as luminosity, as well as the colours. The luminosity component is a reminder that although the coloured light is visible, the invisible pure light remains present, just as the Self is always present. Imaging software is able to separate the luminosity component from the colours in each pixel and each of

these four components, the three colours and the luminosity, can then be separately manipulated. But in order to 'see' the luminosity component, the software has to provide an artificial screen to project the light onto, otherwise it would be invisible.

Black and white photography simply ignores the reflected colours and records shades of grey from black to white on the sensor, and subsequently on the photographic paper. This is often used to impart a more dramatic quality to the image, devoid of the sometimes distracting colours. Digital photography allows the colours to be removed and only the ever-present luminosity to be represented as a black and white photograph.

One final comparison. The memory cells used in the computers that are essential to the digital photographer are made up of binary digits or 'bits', and the bits are simple sequences of two numbers 1 and 0. In terms of the teaching, the number 1 stands for the Absolute, creation takes place up to number 9, and the manifest creation concludes in 0. This massive memory scope places no philosophical limits on the photographer, who may seek to create the perfect photograph, ten out of ten.

Conclusion

As photographers or philosophers, with or without a camera in hand, we should seek to always be observant, awake and ready to appreciate the unity of the moment. This was well expressed by Ansel Adams who said, "Sometimes I do get to places just when God is ready to have somebody click the shutter".

**"A photograph is not only an image
... it is also a trace,
something directly stencilled off
the real, like a footprint ..."**

- Susan Sontag, On Photography

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"All the wonders you seek are within yourself"

- Thomas Browne

A Special thanks...

... to those who gave generously to assist in the preparation of this issue, particularly with photographs.

If you would like to contribute to Vision, contact **Marilyn Marshall**
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