

A Journey to the Still Beating Heart of Western Culture by Hamish Hudson

ecently a group of twenty-five students aged between eleven and thirteen years had the trip of a lifetime. The two Senior Classes at Ficino School spent three weeks visiting Rome, Florence and the UK.

They endured a lengthy flight up through Hong Kong and arrived, slightly shell-shocked, at Fiumicino Airport twenty-four hours later. Their introduction to Rome was a trip by coach to see the various monuments and ruins that are everywhere, sprouting like evocative weeds between the more modern (read Renaissance) buildings of the city. There is something quite thrilling about seeing the remains of a Roman aqueduct or temple through the windows of a bus, and realising that they are there in the flesh, so to speak.

This experience paled when the group stepped inside the Pantheon – the first of the great architectural works they were to see. To give a brief account of its history, as the

name suggests, the temple is dedicated to all the Gods. It was built about two thousand years ago, and is the best preserved of all the buildings of Ancient Rome, particularly the interior.

After a brief walk from the coach, and a gelato – compulsory - they came to the Piazza della Rotunda, where the Pantheon lies. The building, while interesting, is, perhaps, not overly prepossessing from the outside. It is a squat cylinder of brick, surmounted by what amounts to a shallow pudding bowl, with a portico and pediment at the front that looks as if it has been tacked on as an after-thought.

However, walk beneath the portico through the great bronze doors, and these thoughts vanish immediately. The eyes are drawn up to the expanse of the great dome, floating, weightless, giving an impression of endless space and light and silence. It appears much bigger on the inside than the outside. The interior is remarkable, decorated with polychrome marble

walls and floor. (The Romans actually preferred lots of coloured marble in their buildings. White or 'Luna' marble was the cheapest and easiest to source. So Hollywood's vision of a Rome of purist white marble was probably wrong.) The dome is a marvel of engineering, and is made of concrete mixed with a variety of progressively lighter aggregates. It is shaped in a series of coffered concentric circles leading to a central oculus, open to the sky – space, air, water and light. The diameter of the dome is about forty-three metres across and it remains the largest unreinforced continuous concrete arch in the world, even today – an inspiring place to be sure.

The Pantheon, Rome

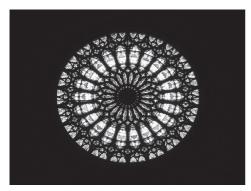
Thus we connected with the vision and genius of Hadrian – counted by some as one of the great Roman Emperors – a scholar, linguist, poet, architect, (he may well have had a hand in the design of this building, and he was certainly responsible for the design of others), philosopher, military strategist and a most able

and indefatigable administrator. We continued this association the following day when we visited his 'Villa' in the hills about an hour out of Rome itself. The Villa is more like a small town, and was the place where Hadrian went sometimes as a retreat from his responsibilities as the most powerful man in the world. We enjoyed roaming amongst the ruins, and imagined ourselves walking in the footsteps of giants. It is also a peaceful place to just sit. We rested in the shade of ancient bay and olive trees, eating slices of prosciutto and bread and cheese with sun-ripened tomatoes and lettuce, and soaking up the heat, watching enamelled lizards scuttle over the baked earth.

There is so much to say about Rome, and we did see many other wonderful things there- such as the Coliseum and the Roman Forum, and the Palatine Hill. We also went to visit the might and glory of St Peter's Basilica and the marvellous collection in the Vatican Museum, the brilliance of Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel - too much to mention here in any detail.

After three days in Rome we boarded a bus for Tuscany, winding our way up through the broad river valleys and rocky outcrops of Umbria. About halfway we stopped in Orvieto, a small, fortified, hilltop town founded by the Etruscans centuries before the birth of Christ. The group gained access to the old town by funicular rail-car up a steep path, much to the delight of the students. The track is surrounded by olive groves and vineyards and commands a marvellous view over the local countryside.

Orvieto is home to a beautiful Cathedral, built in the Italian Gothic style, its façade is made of pink and white marble covered in gleaming mosaic work and extraordinary sculptures. The body of the church is made of banded black and white marble, and the interior is adorned with frescoes and stained glass windows, dim and serene.



The Rose window in Orvieto Cathedral

But, perhaps, this little Cathedral will stay in the mind for other reasons, apart from the art and architecture. Entering through its doors is like stepping into another world the drive to be somewhere or be somewhere else, conscious or unconscious, vanishes. The students were encouraged to take the time to stop and meditate as often as was practical in these places. They found that they dropped into a space of timeless peace and quietude, thick and rich as velvet - perhaps the substance of centuries of spiritual work left there. When they walked out of the Cathedral the group were almost drunk with well-being and bliss, and with the knowledge that it was of their own nature, and something they could return to, if they so desired – a life changing experience for some, perhaps.

Later that afternoon, we arrived at Castello Montegufoni, our place of residence during our stay in Tuscany. The Castle is set in the Colli Fiorentini, a hilly, wooded region to the south-west of Florence – a beautiful area. The Castle is part of a functioning wine estate, and has a large pool – ideal for cooling off after a day walking in the Italian heat. There was also the delight of having some of our evening meals catered for by the Castle's restaurant, where we had the chance to sample the local Italian food, and in the case of the adults, some excellent wines. Our hosts were gracious and accommodating. Every evening, during the meal, the children

were asked to stand up and recount what they found interesting or profound during the day, much to the amusement of our fellow diners. I am pleased to say we received a number of compliments on their ability to speak, and their conduct in general.

The following day we made our way to Siena, where we learnt about the traditions of the city, including details of the ferocious horse race called the Pallio which is held there twice a year in the town square, and in which various factions, or 'Contrada', compete for the honour of carrying off the prize - the winning horse is blessed in Siena's justly famous Cathedral. The students were suitably impressed by the beauty of the unique intarsia marble mosaics in the floor of the nave, which include not only scenes from the Christian tradition, but figures such as the Hermes Trismegistus, Socrates, and the Sibyls of the Ancient World – a curious mix indeed.

The following days were spent in Florence where our party visited a variety of attractions the town has to offer. Florence offers a different focus. Rome, quite naturally, is a place where Roman antiquity is easily accessed. Florence is the place where, arguably, the Italian Renaissance began, and was, in the fifteenth century in particular, the centre of a great surge of study and creativity. Traditionally we start our trips to Florence by visiting San Marco monastery to see the frescoes of Fra Angelico. In the afternoon of that day, we go to the Academia to see the sculptures of Michelangelo - the 'Prigione' or Prisoner, and in particular the 'David'. There are good reasons for this.

The artwork at the monastery embodies the simplicity and purity of the Early Renaissance, and has direct links to the family, which, to all intents and purposes, bankrolled the Italian Renaissance – the Medici. Fra Angelico, (a famous painter of the Florentine school born in Tuscany, 1387) was commissioned by Cosimo de Medici the Elder (also known as Cosimo il Vecchio) to adorn the walls of his

favourite monastery with scenes from the life of Christ. (The Medici Palace is a short walk away from San Marco, and Cosimo had the use of a cell for prayer and meditation – necessary for a man of such energy and responsibility). The paintings were used by the monks as objects of contemplation and meditation, and the monastery is still a place



One of 'The Slaves' by Michelangelo

of stillness and peace even today, despite it no longer being a religious institution.

Again, we felt we were walking in the footsteps of those who had gone before. This was particularly so in the rooms used by Cosimo il

Vecchio, where there is an almost tangible

quality of clarity, substantiality, and stillness. It felt as though the man himself was very immediate, that he had only just left, as it were.

By contrast, the works in the Academia are an expression of the genius of the High and Late Renaissance. So in a day the students had the range of the fruits of the Florentine Renaissance. The David is a work of sublime beauty and magnificence. The pupils were requested to consider the 'Prigione' first, and, if possible, not to look at the David – difficult. The Prisoners are striking, evocative works. They appear unfinished, but Michelangelo believed that as they embodied all that he had to say, or rather understood, that they did not need to be 'finished'. (Michelangelo was not a fan of conventional accuracy or 'realism',

and aimed to embody the 'essence' or 'Idea' behind the physical. They evoke the struggle of the human soul to be free from the 'prison' of the body, and its desire to be one with God – a Neo-Platonic idea that Michelangelo would have been very familiar with as he lived in the Medici household, initially, and could count as one of his teachers Marsilio Ficino himself.

The David is awesome, in the true sense of the word. Standing a full five metres tall, it has real presence. The eye is continually drawn to it. Unlike most other artists, Michelangelo chose to depict the moment before the conflict with Goliath. He is also depicted as a youth of about eighteen, again a departure from the normal iconography of the subject. Students were encouraged to sit and contemplate the sculpture, sketch it if they wished, and write about the qualities they saw there. Here is what came to mind for some of them: noble, limitless, firm, resolute, beautiful, calm, poised, relaxed, Godlike, heavy-yetweightless, powerful, in a moment of thought, outstanding, conscious, straight, concentrated. I believe that they understood, and all were moved by this great work of art, and were able to appreciate its heroic essence.

In the following days we visited the Uffizi and took in the serene and mysterious works of Botticelli. In the church of Santa Maria Novella. we saw the frescoes of Ghirlandaio depicting the lives of St John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary – a work containing portraits of many of the notables of contemporary Florence, including Ficino himself. On our last day, most of us climbed up the inside of the great dome of Florence Cathedral. The group saw at very close quarters the construction techniques used by Brunelleschi, the artist, mathematician, and architect who conceived and designed this brilliant piece of work. Brunelleschi, interesting and cantankerous was a true Renaissance man, and designed and built many of the heavy lifting machines later credited to Leonardo da Vinci. The view from the top of the dome is spectacular and takes in a rather unique view



St Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

of Florence and its environs. In the afternoon of the last day the party were let loose on the markets of San Lorenzo.

We left for the UK from Pisa – without visiting the Leaning Tower, alas. The children dispersed to their billet families for the weekend, and on the Monday spent a day at St James', our brother and sister schools in London. The teachers, and I believe the students, appreciated the opportunity to connect with the wider body of Renaissance Schools

Our next excursion was, for some, the highlight of the trip – a visit to the Globe Theatre, where the children took part in a tour, a workshop with one of the actors from the Globe Education Unit – a very funny Scotsman called Mark, and later watched a performance of Taming of the Shrew. The children and the adults, for that matter, loved the immediacy of this theatre space. It was a brilliant show, performed with great humour, spontaneity and sincerity – moving, and thoroughly hilarious. I personally found it very pleasing that the students had the opportunity to see and hear some really top class drama.

Our stay in London was rounded out by visiting the British Museum. We then spent that afternoon in smaller groups pursuing various activities including a wander along the Jubilee Walk, taking in attractions such as Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. Others couldn't get enough art, and visited either the National

Portrait Gallery or the National Gallery itself. Some, late in the piece, visited the delights of the Natural History Museum.

We left London the following day to visit
Waterperry House in Oxford, where we saw
a modern fresco cycle created by members
of the Art Group of the School of Economic
Science – the UK equivalent of the School
of Philosophy. This tied in nicely with
our studies in Florence and Rome, and
presented the idea to the students that work
such as this was not just a matter of the
past, but something that could be undertaken
now. One student confessed that after looking
at this he has decided he would like to become
an architect, and create similar beautiful

That afternoon, after a scrumptious meal at the Waterperry Gardens' Café, we headed for Bath, where we visited the said Baths, or at least the Roman equivalent. Again, this provided a nice link to our sojourn in Italy, because here we were in what had been a far flung corner of the Empire. We became aware of how sophisticated and large the Roman Empire was in its heyday. The hot water continues to flow unabated today as part of its ten thousand year-long journey from underneath the Mendip Hills – something that perhaps puts recent human history into perspective.

spaces. I hope he realises this resolution.

We spent the night at the Bath YHA located in the hills above this very picturesque town, and feasted on more traditional English fare – ironically spaghetti Bolognese. We sprang out of bed the next morning and high-tailed it down to the Dorset Coast, and indulged in a spot of fossil-hunting at Charmouth Beach, the place where Mary Anning found her prehistoric monsters. Sadly, we did not find any monsters, only various fossilised shells. Nevertheless, it was a nice change to be out-of-doors in amongst the mud, the black, dripping cliffs and the wild sea – bracing. That afternoon, just to remind us we were in England, it poured with rain.

So slightly damp we arrived that evening in Salisbury, and as we arrived slightly early, freshly washed and brushed from our hostel, we had a quick look around the Cathedral before Evensong. Evensong at Salisbury is something that any visitor to the town should not miss — beautiful, sonorous and sweet, it is an auditory echo of the plangent sonorities of the architecture, prompting the mind and heart to look up. A most moving service and something a number of the children really appreciated as some are themselves choristers. Then we headed back to the hostel, where ironically, the meal was yet again, spaghetti Bolognese.

The next day was our last in England, and we started by returning to the Cathedral for a more extended tour under the tutelage of a guide – a lovely, elderly lady who charmed us with her warmth and her extensive knowledge. She showed us how the Cathedral sits on only four feet of foundation, and that the water table is very close to the surface. The children were intrigued to see a flag-stone in the floor lifted and water sitting just below their feet. She assured us that the Cathedral was in little danger of falling down as below us were another twenty-five feet of river shingle – very sturdy. She also showed us how the pillars at the crossing had bent after the addition of the church spire. The Cathedral looked particularly striking that morning. The weather had cleared and the sun streamed in through



the stained-glass windows making the cool Purbeck stone glow with light and colour.

The coach then took us up to Stonehenge via Old Sarum – the remains of an old Iron-Age fort that had become a Roman fort, and later transformed into a Norman garrison town. We had our lunch there on top of the grassy hill near the ramparts and ditch of the old motte bailey castle.

Finally we came to the 'Henge'. At five thousand years, it was the oldest site we visited. Ancient as the pyramids of Egypt, it is an inscrutable ring of stones set in the rolling emptiness of the Salisbury Plains, and though it might not have had the magnificence and glory of some of the sights we saw in our travels, there was something about it that evoked a sense of wonder and awe. So ancient that its purpose is now lost to us, nevertheless it represents a monument to mankind's ingenuity and search for understanding.

All that was left after that was to head off to Heathrow via Windsor and a quick sojourn on the River Thames.

Was our journey really necessary? You might ask why bother to go all that way, and expend so much energy in fund-raising and preparation. In a word – yes, we came home infinitely richer. Here is another word –

immediacy. As someone once said — to read about tiger is one thing, to see a picture of tiger is another, but to meet tiger coming through your living room window is to know the real essence of tiger. I believe that by meeting these great works, which express in so many ways the greatness of the human spirit, we remind these young folk of their own potential. Hopefully by planting a seed of this kind it will find tangible expression somewhere in their lives, both for their delight, and the delight of all those with whom they walk.

The Transit of Venus

been developed. That had to wait for Edmond Halley, (he of comet fame), who put forward a practical method in 1716. However, he determined that the next transit wouldn't be until 1761, well after his death, so he urged all 'curious astronomers' to 'diligently

apply themselves with all their might' to the

come to the south-west Pacific and in turn would not have sailed on to discover New Zealand. In which case you (probably) would not be reading this article in English!

ut for a transit of Venus in 1769,

Captain James Cook would not have

A transit of Venus occurs when the orbits of the Earth and Venus meet so that Venus passes between the Earth and the Sun and can then be seen as a little black dot moving very slowly across the face of the Sun. This may seem like a very mundane event, but because of the characteristics of the two orbits, it is very rare, occurring only every 110 or so years and then there is a pair of transits, eight years apart.

The importance of a transit lies in the fact that it can be used to calculate the distance from the earth to the Sun. In 1769, that was one of the great unknowns of the scientific world, because without that distance, many other fundamentals of the Solar system and the Milky Way could not be determined. This was the Space Race of the 18th century!

The first record of a transit was made in 1639, by an English clergyman, Jeremiah Horrocks. He was able to use the very latest in astronomical instruments, the telescope, invented only thirty years before by Galileo Unfortunately, the mathematics needed to calculate the distance to the sun had not yet

And did they?

observation

Did they ever! A huge international scientific effort was employed against a backdrop of warfare and strife. Expeditions were sent to the ends of the Earth. But the results were disappointing and unsatisfactory, so they all decided to try again in 1769. This is where Cook comes in. He was selected by the British Navy to command a ship, HMS Endeavour, which was to carry observers to the recently discovered Pacific island of Tahiti. Cook was the obvious choice because he was already an accomplished astronomer, surveyor and cartographer as well as an exceptional seaman. An ideal combination of talents for the job. The ship arrived in Tahiti in 1768, where he built not one, but three observatories, in different places, just to make sure that someone got a good look! The main observatory was on Point Venus, in Matavai Bay, where he built a small fort. After the observation, Cook sailed on to discover New Zealand and Australia, just as an extra! He arrived back in England in 1771 to general

acclaim, and since then has rightly been regarded as one of the greatest explorers of all time.

You may ask, OK, so where do you come in?

Well, as a student of the life and work of Iames Cook, I couldn't resist the opportunity to travel to Tahiti in July to watch the last transit for this century. I was able to stand on the exact same beach where Cook erected his main observatory and watch a transit of Venus from the very same place that he did. What a buzz!

The local community had rebuilt the fort complete with walls, 'cannon', tents and a Union Jack flying, and local schools had demonstrations of related astronomical and cultural events. Local dignitaries were on hand to open the event with speeches in French, Tahitian and English followed by

Economics

singing of the anthems of Polynesia, France and the UK.

There was a large marquee (big enough for several hundred people) in which various presentations were staged by children, and where there was a projection of an image of the transit acquired from an 'observatory' at Tahiti airport, so it was an authentic 'Tahiti' image. About half a dozen individuals had set up their telescopes on the beach a few steps away from the tents and they were all very happy for anyone passing by to view the transit directly through their instruments.

The weather was fine and sunny with only a little high cloud, so the images, either on the screen or through the telescopes, were clear, high quality and continuous.

It was a great day and a splendid event. I was very fortunate to be there.

Russell Allen

276 8770

"This sight... is by far the noblest astronomy affords..."

- Edmund Halley

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The Price of Freedom

by Lawrence Ames

o you value your freedom? If so, what price are you prepared to pay for it?

We are fortunate to live in a 'free' society but do we really appreciate the extent of freedom available to us? We may feel that any price for securing our social freedom has already been paid and we can simply enjoy the benefits with no further payment needed. This article offers a practical means for each of us to place far greater value on the social freedoms we enjoy and to consciously refine our view and understanding of freedom to a far wider personal and spiritual dimension. The contention is that the more we realise our own universality the greater our freedom.

During a recent trip to America it was very obvious that the American people are proud of their freedom. In their daily life they seem to recognise that in their history there have been many struggles to establish their freedom. There is awareness that the price of securing and maintaining IT has involved much loss of life; the freedom is therefore highly valued. Flags on most buildings proclaim American national pride. Signs displaying a variety of instructions give effect to this hard won freedom and often include reference to the applicable authority, '...by Federal law' or '...by xxx State law'. As for

most other nations, the freedom of the nation and the people is clearly spelt out in the laws of the land; stay within the law and you are free, stray outside the law and your freedom will be constrained.

A poignant and very moving example of the price of the 'free' society is evident at the Rochester Veterans' Memorial in Minnesota where there is a statue of a young mother with her child at her side. The mother's face reflects anguish and grief and she is looking to the heavens for an answer, having just read the 'killed in action' telegram she is holding. Situated against the backdrop of a wall engraved with thousands of names of the fallen, the statue graphically amplifies the tragic extent of loss and the human cost or price of this freedom gained. The very large memorial depicts in detail the numerous conflicts that America and Americans have found themselves to be a part of. In the course of these conflicts many lives have been lost and families and friends devastated by these losses.

That the sacrifice was not in vain is immediately apparent when just behind the commemorative wall of names children can be seen playing and enjoying their inherited freedom in a large open green field.

The gratitude of the people for the high price paid for their freedom is described on a nearby plaque in honour of 'the soldier'. It reads:

It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

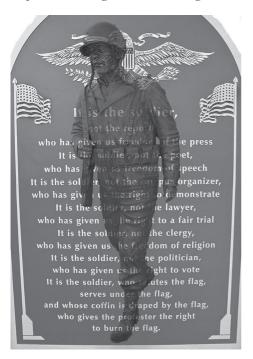
It is the soldier, not the campus organiser, who has given us the right to demonstrate.

It is the soldier, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the soldier, not the clergy, who has given us the freedom of religion.

It is the soldier, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who serves under the flag and whose coffin is draped with the flag, who gives the protester the right to burn the flag.



Such respect and honour can be paid to the soldiers of all nations including New Zealand.

Nothing should be taken from the valour, courage and sacrifice of soldiers who answered the call and fought and died in the name of freedom. But the preferable strategy, when possible, would surely be to firstly employ and then deploy with greater effect the more refined and subtle weaponry of reasonable speech to resolve conflict; thereby to preserve rather than lose life. What more can be done to support and give greater strength to this more subtle and less costly strategy?

A challenging question to ask ourselves is how can we help prevent the psyche of a nation from just accepting the use of military force in the name of freedom? Read again the words in honour of the soldier quoted above but replace the words 'the soldier' with the word 'reason'. Better that the psyche of a nation be ruled by reason in preference to military force.

Freedom as described in the philosophy of Advaita or unity is natural, it is the very nature of our own true self and reason tells us that in unity there is nothing that could possibly confine. The individual limits of our hearts and minds are too easily taken as real and fixed. The option to realise and transcend personal limitations can be overlooked in the desire to secure our own preferences, sometimes at the cost of the freedom of others. A more enlightened view of personal freedom comes from Nelson Mandela; 'to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others'.

Real freedom is created from inside yourself or inside the society or nation. It is ever available to each of us as the natural condition, needing only to be availed. Any failure to avail the freedom is an individual weakness which can become a national weakness when widely and continuously practised. Even in a dictatorship the people of the nation elect their dictator by default. The Arab uprising within the middle east nations over the past several years is an indication that there is increasingly less acceptance of limits to the freedom that is natural. Reasonable speech has been attempted and failed. Many brave souls, now called resistance fighters rather than soldiers, have sacrificed their lives as these nations seek greater freedom through civil conflict, no matter what the price. What more can be done to help avoid this tragic loss?

The key to unlocking the prison door which limits freedom is given to us in the philosophy of Advaita, where we are told by Shri Shankaracharya, 'a wise person, even facing difficulties, chooses to mend the situation through spiritual endeavour ... unless he or she becomes universal, freedom is limited'. The more we realise our own universality the greater our freedom

Read once more the words in honour of the soldier quoted above, but this time replace the words 'the soldier' with the words 'spiritual endeavour'. If the psyche of a nation is strongly influenced by a culture of widespread spiritual endeavour, it gives greater power and strength to reasoned speech and reduces the need for military conflict.

The many memorials to the brave fallen soldiers of any nation can serve as a powerful reminder to us of our present fortunate situation. We can choose to let these memorials remind us of the words of the wise and the need for spiritual endeavour by allowing the phrase 'lest we forget', engraved on so many plaques, to act as a



reminder and instruction to the heart and mind. The applicable authority to quote for this instruction is then not any man-made regulation or law but rather '...by Natural law'.

The proliferation of laws needed to manage the 'freedom' of a society seems to be inversely proportional to the level of spiritual endeavour in the society. Natural law needs no statute or legal framework in which to operate, simply the memory and will to choose to act in accordance with our true nature, as do the wise. Ultimately, freedom is 'only of the Atman', quite beyond action, and priceless; we only have to give up the attachments that veil true knowledge. As a line in a song made famous by Janis Joplin puts it, 'freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose'.

Bookshop News



by Geoff Long

uring the recent residential week students used the "Philosophy of the Panchadasi" by Swami Krishnananda, as a reference to their study of the Panchadasi itself. Available as a free download, this exposition of the basic precepts of advaita in the Panchadasi is so clear and easy to read. All the familiar terms are there, such as Jiva and Isvara with very clear explanations as to what they are and how they relate to each other. Chapters have titles such as "The Nature of Existence", "Light on Meditation", "The Stages of Enlightenment" and "The Nature of the Infinite". An excellent reference work. Copies are available from the bookshop.

Other books new or restocked recently are:

Science of Being and Art of Living - Maharisi Sanskrit Reader Reminders

Being Oneself Introduction to Sanskrit Pt.1

(Sanskrit studies)

Introduction to Sanskrit Pt.2 (Sanskrit studies)

Foundation Sanskrit Life and Philosophy The Mind and its Control

Language and Truth Hitopadesa (Sanskrit

studies)

Language - Bloomfield

Ideology and Status of Sanskrit

Who Am I - Ramana Maharshi - one of the best, and smallest, books I have

come across!

I Am That - Nisargadatta

Sanskrit Review - St. James latest edition (Sanskrit

studies)

Commentary On The Panchadasi - 500 pages –

by preorder only Philosophy of the

Panchadasi - hard copy of

the free e-book

Also there is a wonderful selection of CD's from the Irish school including 14 new ones. There is plenty to choose from for the holidays or for Christmas presents.

Exchange Vouchers are available for all purchases.

Good reading!

A special thanks...

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

Also thank you to the 'Vision' team — Nicolette Farrelly (editor), Selwyn Daniels (proof reader),
Marilyn Marshall (editing) and Andrew Iten (layout).

If you would like to contribute to Vision, contact Nicolette Farrelly Ph: 834-5408; Email: farrelly@orcon.net.nz

Ficino School

by Hamish Hudson

ecently I was asked what it is I enjoy about teaching at Ficino, after all I have been at the school for fourteen years. The following reasons came to mind:

Firstly, one of the basic tenets of the school is that the students be given the best material right from the start. Speaking primarily as a teacher of English and drama, I find it delightful that there is an opportunity to teach children Shakespeare, C S Lewis, Homer and the Bible at all levels right across the curriculum. There is something very rewarding about providing children with material that is fascinating, mentally nourishing and uplifting. It gives them a sense of what is good and beautiful – a standard to assess what comes their way as they grow older.

Secondly, the provision of exercises that increase mindfulness, such as meditation and connecting fully through the senses. These allow the students, and for that matter the teachers, to find stillness and rest during the day. There is a commensurate increase in the students' ability to attend fully to whatever they engage in, which has a knock on effect, as it increases mental clarity, focus, understanding and memory. Teaching a class

that is focussed, attentive and wanting to ask questions is very rewarding.

Thirdly, the school's emphasis on manners and courtesy instils in the children an awareness of others as well as respect and a willingness to look after the needs of those around them. It is, in a sense the first step towards putting into practice Christ's commandment 'to love one another'. This makes for a school environment that is safe, friendly and supportive. It also emphasises the importance of service in the true sense of the word.

Lastly, providing the students with challenges that will help them realise their own strengths and realise their talents and abilities. I believe the depth and richness of the curriculum and the material ensure this. We also have a range of activities which are, I believe, unique to this school, which extend and challenge the students by their very nature. There are various and regular opportunities to take part in dramatic productions, music, camps and a host of other non-classroom based activities, culminating in the biannual Renaissance Trip to Europe.

The Board of Trustees of Ficino School would like to encourage and support members of the School of Philosophy who are degree qualified and interested in becoming teachers. To this end there are a limited number of financial support packages available to assist with the fees for anyone wanting to undertake a Graduate Diploma in Teaching. Please contact the Principal, Mr Peter Crompton, on 623 3385 or email: principal@ficino.school.nz if you are interested.

Constantine's Big Idea by Gordon Howard

t all started with an email and a couple of conversations with cousin Jane.

Until she mentioned their pensione in the hills of Tuscany, in Torsana, and Google Earth provided an astronauts eye view of this clutch of ancient homes, Italy had not come recently to mind as a destination; only as history and long inspiration.

"So when are you coming?"

Her words sparked a fuse, and an enduring question I took to contemplate throughout this Italian sojourn. "Why did Constantine the Great change the religion of Empire in the twentieth year of his illustrious fourth century reign?"

It is always intriguing to speculate on what really happened?

Historians are faced with this dilemma in the telling of history 'as it is', shorts and all; or as a fair instruction to inspire and ennoble. After all, Herodotus remarks that, 'very few things happen at the right time, and the rest do not happen at all. The conscientious historian will correct these defects.'

And then there is the illustrious patron commissioning a panegyric to consider, and his 'empurpled' heirs of uncertain temper and expedient memory. It could all make for a rather sanitized account of Constantine's legacy.

Emirates delivered Italy, with a landing at Milan's Malatesta, and Trenitalia bore this soul slowly to Aulla in Toscana.

I found myself dozing off jet-lag in warm spring sunshine filtered through 2nd Class

windows, and many a stop in a little 'statione', where the 'smokers' routinely disembarked for 'sigaretta'. I joined in conversation with a couple of young Tuscans who were life guards at the beach in Viareggio.

Torsana and the Carrara Madonnas

It took a while to get there. Jane and Eddy met me at the statione and we took the road from Aulla following a fertile valley, punctuated by a couple of ancient villages before the road winds into the wooded hills.



Dawn in Torsana

Torsana is a medieval cluster of farm dwellings, perched in hills as the slope takes up the heady gradient of Appennino. It is set about with woods of horse chestnuts that Romans planted to feed their various cattle and from which they ground flour.

In the high hills, in the very cusp of Spring, the wind has a keen edge beyond light fall, among the shadows.

Most of the walls in this aged hamlet have a common purpose for one family and the immediate neighbours. The cluster of dwellings huddle close like an ancient 3D puzzle, with twists and tunnels, all surrounding a small church on a hilly rise adorned with spring flowers and soft verdant mosses.



A Madonna in Carrara Marble

The stone walls, hard as the mountain, are set firmly with rusting iron cross braces. The ghosts of two millennia haunt an almost deserted present here. The slated roofs are well weighted with flat mountain stones against the high winter winds that course the valley.

Gentle Madonnas with the Infant carved in Carrara marble protect doorways and arches. Yellow spotted lizards catch a Spring tan on the jade green lichen stone window sills. A cow bell punctuates an irregular moment, with a murmuring rush of an ancient stream, eager to find the Ligurian Sea, and over all ...

the gathering hum of myriad bees set to put Spring in motion.

Lucca and Leonardo's 'Ripoff'

In a sense Lucca was really the beginning of the Italian sojourn, as I faced Italy 'solo'.

The 3rd floor kitchen in 'Affitcamera Primavera' overlooked the Guigini Museum where I came upon the first revelation, a Carrara marble 'Annunciation' shared by Citivale and his master. Citivale's portion being the kneeling angel presenting the elegant stem of white lilies, and the master's portion.. the surprised Madonna.

The first thought that came to mind in this encounter, was that the angel was copied from Leonardo's work.... And then after marvelling at the skill and proportion, I checked the date of the marble to find that it predated the Da Vinci Appunciation!

This discovery set in train an explosion of notions concerning genius and mind.

Hitherto 'my' Renaissance had been peopled by a few Everests and the rest played bit parts in the foothills, just to provide some background to the main works.

It cannot have been so!

Genius was the very currency of Renaissance; what I observed thereafter, left no doubt of this.

Leonardo evidently found no reason to improve on perfection.

I wonder whether Constantine woke up one morning, twenty years into his illustrious Reign as Emperor of the Eastern Empire and decided that everyone should go to church on Sunday, rather than be bothered with sacrificing a pure white bull at the temple of Apollo.

It cannot have been an easy decision. Polytheism accepts all gods and Christianity only One.

Even with the most principled commander, such a great change is fraught with hazard.

Pisa: The Triumph of Perception over Reason

In Pisa, I found myself staying two floors above the Corso Italia, in the Gambacorti Palace. The entire wall of the 'dorm' overlooking the main thoroughfare of Pisa, is of stained glass that has filtered the light of five centuries. The escutcheon of Gambacorti, the ruling family, adorns this glass facade.

I wonder and dream of the courtiers, musicians, thinkers who set the course for the ship of state in this very room.



Gambacorti Pallazzo Pisa

Later in my exploration of Pisa, I found myself in the Church of San Matteo on a Sunday morning, sitting quietly at the back as the padre delivered his sermon for Mass.

The frescoed vault of the ceiling is a masterpiece of genius in every respect.

The false architecture of the upper vault is rendered only in illusion as paint and in viewing it a debate occurs between perception and reason in the observer. Not a shadow of painted detail had been omitted to support the visual veracity of an extended vault. The composition of figures and the colour scheme in the virtual heavens beyond presented a wonderfully unified vision in form and colour. Many of the painted vaults I saw are a little too over populated and under-clothed, but here in

San Matteo masters have been at work.

Assissi and the Crying Shadows of Cimabue

There remains only a great fragment of Cimabue's work in the Sacristy of the Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi. However, the emotional power of this I found so potent. A crowd depicted in despair, it has overwhelming force, the speaking shadows of Cimbue call forth strange memories in mind. Just this example shows Cimabue with no peers.

I sensed this, rather than saw it. The forms were strongly executed in space showing gesture and dramatic power. It was somehow beyond mere light waves. It communicated overwhelming grief.



St Francis Chapel Assisi

The Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli at the foot of the hill of Assisi has the original tiny church of St Francis within it. The walls are decorated within and without. This little church, dwarfed by the grand basilica around it, feels a most Holy place.

Had Constantine considered that the ancient Gods of Rome had carried the standards of Empire through seven centuries, and might well be inclined to vengeance and the odd thunderbolt, plague, earthquake or flood to demonstrate their ire?

Then there were all those ancient rites for various deities and feast days, and temple rebuilding programs to consider, along with the redundancies of high priests, acolytes, astrologers and Vestals, as well as a thriving economy from teeming pilgrims with attendant oracles, exotic charms and potions.

Imagine arranging a committee meeting in the old days of polytheism with festivals to Bacchus or Mars

conflicting, along with a procession of lesser deities.

It would become impossible to get anything done; the ship of state had too many rudders, all with independent headings.

Unity of purpose might simplify the vast mechanics of Empire.

Florence and the great Vision of Medici

The Duomo, a short walk from the David Inn where I stayed in Florence, was the fruit of 140 years of sustained will. The great fabric of this church is the exercise of intelligent persistence. It brought to mind whether there still exists in humanity the continuity of purpose to initiate such a task today.

Many of the artworks we see in Florence are already part of our life experience. They are endlessly quoted and published. In many respects a fresh discovery of them is unlikely, they have already become familiars of Mind. It is the unknown and relatively unheralded art, which engages a fresh eye and response.

In the Riccardi Palace, there is a tiny chapel, the size of a modest bathroom, where I discovered the fresco of Benozzo Gozzoli, the pupil of Botticelli. This masterpiece adorns the four walls of the chapel, promoting the progress of the Medici in the train of the Magi and the Heavenly Choirs. The mounted procession winds through a wondrous, vibrant, ordered landscape of olive groves, vineyards and calm flocks of sheep. It is a symbolic array of Giovanni De Medici's Promethean hand in Renaissance.

Fresco is not an easy technique, as the pigments must be laid into wet plaster in one go. Only so much painting may be well accomplished in a day's work.

Some may balk because the Medici are so prominently presented here. However the throng of visitors which course through Florence daily testify to the long vision of their patronage. We could well employ the same today. It is a delight to find that we can identify the characters who played their parts

in directing the drama of collective genius.

In the narrow streets at midday I heard heavenly snatches of arias reverberating off high stone walls close to Piazza della Signoria, and found a young lady singing, assisted by a fellow on a piano accordion.

It was a transcendent moment that stole the heat and restless passage of day and transformed every notion of Opera.

As I passed by I called out "vai a La Scala!", she replied "Domani!"

Coffee and Constantine at the Uffizzi

Whilst enjoying a 'caffe' Americano and a view, Maria Zatti a lady of generous proportion, iron grey hair and swinging an aluminium crutch, came over to me atop the Uffizzi Gallery. We had a wonderful conversation in English before her troupe of student tour guides approached to be peppered vigorously with questions on their Italian history.

I mentioned that the Barbary lion became an endangered species in the reign of Caligula, as a result of a diet too rich in Christians, which she found very amusing.

Then seeing an opportunity and the auspices of occasion, I asked her why Constantine had changed the religion of Empire. Without hesitation she replied 'He needed an army' and then explained that mercenaries were less reliable, only interested in loot and spoils and inclined to go over the hill when the odds looked unfavourable. By this point Maria was surrounded by an enthusiastic group of questioners. 'Tutto in Italiano' and while I could enjoy the spirit of the exchanges, comprehension escaped me!

Still, there was an answer from an historian.

Ravenna: An Orphan of the Circus takes the Sceptre of Empire

My first introduction to Empress Theodora

and Justinian, some twenty years ago, was in the form of a black and white photo of a mosaic from San Vitale in Ravenna. I found it in an abridged and well illustrated 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire', purchased in one of those shops where they sell books by the kilo.

In Ravenna, I finally met the Empress Theodora in the Bassilica di San Vitale; the orphaned daughter to Acacius, Keeper of the Bears for the Green Faction at the Hippodrome in Constantinople. Her progress from common courtesan to Empress of the World might convince us that Olympus had the last laugh.



Empress Theodora and Justinian Ravenna

This beautiful mosaic of San Vitale adorns the cupola in this Byzantine church. The history behind the characters rendered in this stunning mosaic of ceramic chips, describes the last acts of Empire.

The composition of this piece indicates the Theodora's power in no uncertain terms. The drama behind the work has influenced the pattern of world events that were to follow. Justinian left history an ambiguous legacy.

With the revenues gathered from the faithful by his rapacious tax collectors, he built great churches, pacified the rowdy barbarians with gold, and starved his garrisons. The Empire vanished within one hundred years!

Justinian shipped all the philosophers to Persia, where they were welcomed. Apparently these fellows were too fond of asking awkward questions about the nature of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and would embarrass the Holy See, citing tricky theological conundrums, that would have pestered a Pythagoras or two and moved a feckless mob to faction.

Parma: Farnese's Palazzo and an 'A4' Angel

The luminous scaffolding of Leonardo's sketch hangs in a shadowed room alone, magnifying the creation of genius.

It bears the irregular marks of a study for the little angel of 'The Virgin of the Rocks' and is slightly smaller than A4, on a planed quarter inch wooden panel. This exhibits the ripples one sees on the back of a good violin, like tiger stripes. These are most usually the marks where a plane skipped unevenly over the wood surface when smoothing it.

Da Vinci employed these sundry marks to assist and suggest the execution of the work itself. Over the gesso surface he applied a transparent *raw umber imprimatura* to bind the initial drawing. The modelling of the angel's face is gently realized in opaque white applied very sparingly, so that the feeling of space is sustained. There seemed a violet glaze applied over the white, although it was difficult to determine.

In looking closely at this work, Leonardo's notes on 'The Precepts of the Painter', came vividly to mind under his title: "A way to stimulate and arouse the mind to various inventions"

"If you look at any walls spotted with various stains or with a mixture of different kinds of stones, if you are about to invent some scene you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains... also divers combats and figures in quick movement, strange expressions, outlandish costumes, and an infinite number of things"

His notes became a magnifying lens of mind in contemplating the small study for the angel in the 'Virgin of the Rocks'.

The imprimatura of raw umber collects darkly

in every irregularity of the prepared panel, and adds immeasurably to the creation of the space and volume around the angel's head.

Leonardo's finished works leave no traces of his hand, so this work is treasure for the painter. The problem with his paintings is that there is no evidence remaining of the work, as all the scaffolding and brush marks are gone. They leave the student without the mechanics of his process, just the perfection of the result remains to mystify the enquiring mind.

Milan: The Power of Art and Madonna of the Candaletta

The Duomo in Milan is a powerful expression and a stupendous realization of a united will.

The balance of its composition and forms is seen to best effect in raking light which moves and transforms the carved marble contours, as



Duomo Milan

shadows build and fly over its ornamented facade. The design of it appears very modern and the marble saints that grace it are in perfect balance with the work as a whole.

In the cool interior, one particular window of stained glass depicting the battles between the angels and the demons, might easily have informed the artists of modern cinema.

On the last day of the Italian journey, I found my way to the Pinacoteca di Brera and wandered astounded around this great collection. I first walked around quite quickly to get an idea of what was to be seen, and then on the second pass found that the egg tempera 'Madonna della Candeletta' by Carlo Crivelli (1490) stopped me quite a while.

Egg tempera predates oil painting. A mix of one part egg yolk and two parts rain water are ground with the pigments employed. The technique allows for very precise detail and the colours sustain a luminous brilliance that does not darken with age as oils do. It is possible that the lecithin found in egg yolk binds water molecules with the pigmented particles and sustains the brilliance that water brings to colour. However it all happens, the result is breathtaking.

There are two triptychs by Crivelli, originally altarpieces, in a great sky lighted gallery, and they are both large works on wooden panels. Considering the five centuries that separate us from these works, the Madonna was as fresh as Youth. I had not understood the brilliance of tempera until I saw these.

Ever a source of inspiration, great works have one enduring impulse. Endeavour! The mind is captivated and challenged by mastery, the eye and hand keen to take the baton of perfection and discover where it leads.

This journey far exceeded all the best that I might dream. It was inspiring not only in its art, architecture and history, but especially in meeting the Italians with their warmth and generosity. Here we find the roots of civilization and the path of Consciousness.

As to Constantine's Big Idea? Well the evidence appears inconclusive, so I shall just have to return, to continue that interrupted conversation with Maria atop the Uffizzi in Florence.



The Battle of Angels and Demons.

An Interview

with Tom Johnson

Head of Meditation

Introduction by Graham Soughtton.

The Auckland School of Philosophy has been offering and supporting meditation for 50 years. This is a very major achievement, and the idea came that we should write an article featuring this. However such an article would need to present the 'voice' of someone who has been involved for most of that time. And so I interviewed the Head of Meditation in the School of Philosophy, Tom Johnson. The article is not yet written, but in the meantime I thought readers of Vision might like to read a transcript of the interview. The questions are very simple and designed to appeal to, and inform, people who are not yet meditating, but the quality of the answers can be enjoyed by all. It should be noted that Mr Johnson was given no time to prepare answers. The questions were put, and the responses recorded.

- Q. The School of Philosophy teaches practical philosophy, so why does it also offer meditation?
- A. The practical side of the School is very important because it's a philosophy which you use, or can use, for every aspect of your life and it's to be used, as it were, on a daily basis. So it goes into your life in that sense. The meditation adds to the practicality because it connects you with your inner Self, your real Self, your Being, what you really are in truth. So the meditation adds to the whole sense of Being, of living, and allows you to be what you are, rather than what you are not.
- Q. What actually is meditation?
- **A.** That's not an easy question to answer and I don't know that I can because meditation

- at its most profound level is really beyond concept. You cannot really conceptualise what it means. The dictionary gives numerous definitions like, "concentration", "perseverance", "study", all of that type of thing. But, really, meditation is beyond that. It is none of those things. It is really just an inward journey into your inner Being where there is this transcendence and it is a transcendence of the physical and the transcendence of the mental.
- Q. The technique used, the meditation technique, is the transcendental meditation introduced and promoted by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Why was that particular type of meditation chosen, or how did it come about?
- A. Maharishi brought the meditation to the

West, and his aim was to make meditation popular or, at least, a household name. This form of meditation was seen to be the most potent. Transcendental meditation, as the name implies, transcends all the barriers – the physical, mental and spiritual – on the journey, if you like, that one meets. So there is a transcendent quality about it whereby all these impositions, all these hurdles that one might meet in the life are transcended and, in that sense, it is very potent and very powerful – and profound. It is most profound and takes the aspirant, or the meditator, much deeper into their own Being than other forms are capable of. And, as said before, that doesn't mean to say other forms are not useful. They are, and science has proved that there are benefits from all forms of meditation, but science has also shown that mantra-type meditation gives the most profound effects both physical and mental.

Q. Right, so there is a scientific basis for this claim?

A. Absolutely. You only have to look at meditation or the science of meditation on the Net, and then read some of the websites that are there and it is absolutely full of scientific and medical information on the benefits of meditation.

Q. And, in particular, the benefits of mantra-based meditation?

- A. Yes, some of the research has looked at different sorts of meditation and that's where they found that there are some forms which aren't useful. They just create more energy than they need to. So the mantra-based meditations produce a much quieter and more settling, calming sort of effect which is the whole purpose of meditation to instil in the aspirant stillness, quietness and peace really.
- Q. So we can really understand readily, the benefits, the effects, but to actually say

what it is, is a little more difficult. It may even be beyond language?

- A. Yes, beyond language, and really it is beyond experience in a way because for there to be experience, there has to be two and meditation takes you beyond duality. So who is there to experience when there is not duality?
- Q. Let's talk a bit about the School of Philosophy's support for meditation. There is a general interest in meditation in the community. If somebody would join the School of Philosophy, is meditation available as soon as they join?
- A. Generally speaking, it's not. It's recommended that people joining the School do at least a year of the classes that are provided before meditation is given. This is really to just prepare the student and put to right all the erroneous thinking that the mind has accepted because a lot of our education and a lot of our hearsay – the stuff that we believe - is erroneous. And meditation needs a fertile mind and it needs to have the "weeds" removed, as it were, so that it can get a proper and fertile start. So it is necessary that the students be prepared in a way and let the mind be cultivated so that the "seed" of meditation can begin to "germinate".

Q. How long have you been meditating?

A. I've been meditating for at least 40 to 45 years, I've been practising meditation and yes it seems a long time and none of it has been fruitless. It's all been well worthwhile because the practice is one thing, meditation is another. It's a bit like a pianist. He practises but because he practises it doesn't make him a concert pianist. He has to really make the music his own. It is the same with meditation. It takes a while before the meditation actually becomes your own. In other words, it's not different from your own life.

It's not different from your own existence. It's not different from your own Being. It's all part of what you really are and the practise is to bring the meditator to that point where really there is no difference. Now it doesn't mean to say that everybody has to practise for 45 years before that happens. It doesn't have to be like that at all. It depends entirely upon what the student brings to the meditation in the form of dedication and with the dedication and with the belief really that meditation works, then the journey can be quite quick, quite fast.

- Q. Would you say that the School of Philosophy probably has a most consistent and substantial experience in offering meditation, say within New Zealand?
- A. I haven't really looked at what other methods there are but, from what I've heard, the School certainly provides one of the best environments for meditation to thrive.
- Q. If it began in the early 60's, and we are now half a century on, and meditation has been a main offering in the School for all that time, this tends to suggest that there is a credible body of experience in this particular kind of mantra-based meditation?
- A. Yes, I think that's right. I don't know of any other organisation where there has been that continuity of meditation as part of the everyday running or everyday activity of the organisation. So, yes, I think that certainly the School of Philosophy provides that atmosphere and that richness of activity, if you like, so that meditation can thrive
- Q. Can anybody initiate another to this kind of meditation?
- **A.** No, that's not possible. The initiation process, where the student receives the

- mantra, is a very special situation and only specialist people, qualified in the process, can present the meditation.
- Q. The initiation is brought about by some sort of ceremony?
- A. Yes, there is a short ceremony which is traditional and for the meditation to be effective, it is absolutely vital that the student goes through that initiation ceremony. It is a very beautiful ceremony. It's uplifting and, in its own way, quite profound.

Q. Is meditation for everyone?

- A. Everybody who wants or feels as though they would like to meditate can meditate. There are no barriers to this. Just the desire really to meditate, that's all that is required. It is very important that there be that desire. Nobody should be forced into meditation, because it is a completely voluntary practise and exercise.
- Q. In your own life, what difference do you think the meditation has made? If there is one thing that comes out most strongly, what would that thing be?
- A. Well, let me say firstly that meditation has become probably the most important thing in my life in that it affects everything I do, everything I say, everywhere I go and it's there with everyone I meet. It is just so profound really in the way it has affected me. Probably the way it's affected me most is it has given me a much greater understanding of the people I meet. It's removed a lot of the separateness that was formerly there that people feel when amongst others. There isn't any sense of being different or separate or superior or even inferior. It brings about this great sense of equality and it's an amazing place to start from because everybody is treated as not different from yourself and everybody receives the same treatment in that sense. And, to me, that's brought

a great deal of ease and, from that, just simple friendship.

Q. That's a beautiful answer, Tom. Is there anything else you would like to say?

A. Well yes. I think there is a great need in the society that we live in... and the community that we live in... for meditation... It brings about such a change in one's capacity to live a natural life and it connects one with one's own Being, one's real Being, the essence of what one is, which is not different from the essence of other people around us and it brings an ease of life which can help with all sorts of situations that people find themselves in. It makes life just that much more natural. These days a natural life is not readily found because of the pressures

and the requirements that people are placed under. To find a more natural way of living and yet live in the world without, as it were, having to sacrifice anything, but to meet things, deal with things as they are and to have the capacity to just deal with it from one's own inner Self, it's own inner Being, from one's natural way of living, to me is a very important need in the community. It deals with so many issues - physical, mental and spiritual. All these issues are met with the aid of meditation. Sure, there is guidance needed. Of course, that will always be the case but there is plenty of that available, particularly if one works with the School of Philosophy where these things are provided readily and on demand, as it were. All one need do is ask and help is there.

'Know Thyself' - the Great Commandment.

A lecture by Mr. David Horan Open to all members of the School of Philosophy

8pm, Wednesday 16th January 2013 at 268 West Tamaki Road, Glendowie

Entry-\$5.00

David Horan writes: The command to "Know Thyself" was inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi over two and a half thousand years ago and it has affected the western philosophical and spiritual tradition ever since. It is easy to forget that these words, 'Know Thyself', are a command or an injunction and not merely a suggestion or topic for discussion.

This lecture will explore three very simple questions:

- Is Self-Knowledge possible?
- If I wish to take the injunction "Know Thyself" seriously and obey it, what must I do?
 - What support and direction am I offered by Socrates, Plato and Plotinus, the great figures of our early philosophic tradition?

We will use these questions to consider the truth of the extraordinary words of Plotinus. ... "all aim for the one, and are one, and their desire is for this."

For More Information Contact: Tessa Stephens

Phone: 535 9096 • Email: tessas@orcon.net.nz

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Tuesday 12 Feb - 9.30am and 7.45pm Thursday 14 Feb - 7.45pm

North Shore, Massey University Study Centre

Albany Highway. Gate 1 (Opp. Albany Mega Centre) (Take right hand turn down the drive for Study Centre) Thursday 14 Feb - 7.15pm

Hamilton

Parents Centre, Boundary Road, Claudelands Tuesday 12 Feb - 7.15pm

Course fee is \$150 for nine weeks

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