

Vision

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.*

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Editorial

In preparing for this issue of Vision, consideration of the nature and quality of Friendship arose from my reading, and reflection.

Have we not all at some time been buoyed from the pit of despair by the unrelenting kindness of a friend, or shared our joys with a loving friend? C.S. Lewis believed that *“friendship like philosophy, like art, ... has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival”* but friendship seems even more. In his essay *“Of Friendship,”* the philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626) considered friendship one of the greatest gifts of human existence:

“A principal fruit of friendship, is the ease and discharge of the fulness and swellings of the heart, which passions of all kinds do cause and induce.....”, a suggestion echoed by Henry David Thoreau’s (1817-1862) comment that *“Friendship was one of life’s greatest rewards.”*

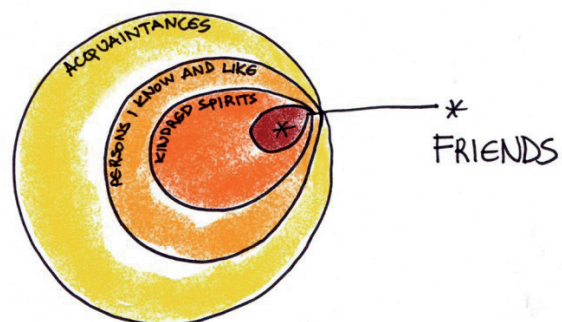
In today’s cultural landscape of relationships scattered across various platforms for connecting, it seems that the meaning of the word ‘friend’ has been corroded by overuse, compressing into an imperceptible difference the vast expanse between mere acquaintanceship and true friendship. If, as Philosophers and cognitive scientists agree, friendship is an essential ingredient of human happiness I thought it might be useful to consider what friendship actually *is*.

One of the simplest definitions to be found is given by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) in one of his Essays¹ in which he considers the intricate dynamics of friendship. He considered the two pillars of friendship to be Truth and tenderness. The essence of the nature of true friendship is conveyed in his statement

“A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere

The diagram on the right² appears a useful model for differentiation and discrimination among those we might name as friends.

Inside the large outermost circle of *acquaintances*, are the class of people we most commonly call ‘friends’ – *those we know and like*. Even closer are *kindred spirits* to whom we are bound by common values, mutual goodwill, sympathy and respect. Some kindred spirits become friends in the fullest sense – people with whom we are willing to share, not without embarrassment but without fear of judgment, our gravest imperfections and most anguishing instances of falling short of our own ideals and values. A true friend holds us lovingly accountable to our own ideals, but is also able to forgive, over and over, the ways in which we fall short of them and can assure us that we are more than our stumbles, that we are shaped by them, but not defined by them, that we will survive them with our personhood and the friendship intact.



¹ Emerson, R.W. Essays and Lectures

² Popova, Maria. <https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/08/16/friendship/>

From earliest times the nature of true friendship has been examined.

Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE) recognised three types of love: eros, philia and agape. The concept of philia, includes the English concept of friendship. For Aristotle, friends hold up a mirror to each other; through that mirror they can see each other in ways that would not otherwise be accessible to them. Friends were not only instrumentally good because they enriched our lives, but they were an integral part of what it meant to live the good life.

In 1998, after the death of a dear friend, Andrew Sullivan³ examined the nature of friendship itself. He suggested that lovers and spouses may talk frequently about their “relationship,” but friends tend to let their regard for one another speak for itself or let others point it out. He suggested that a friendship is often only given its due when it is over, especially if its end is sudden or caused by death. It is as if death and friendship enjoy a particularly close relationship, and it is only when pressed to the extreme of experience that this least extreme of relationships finds its voice, or when we are forced to consider what really matters, that we begin to consider what friendship is.

We said farewell this year to four friends whose long and dedicated commitment to their search for Truth within the School of Philosophy were role models for the meaning of service – Each of them epitomised Ghandi’s statement “*the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.*”

As we honour Harry, Selwyn, Gordon and June, let us be reminded of the words of Kahlil Gibran:

*When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence,
as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.*

*And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also.
For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?
Seek him always with hours to live.
For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.
And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter and sharing of pleasures.
For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.*



**“‘We’ll be friends forever, won’t we Pooh?’
asked Piglet.
‘Even longer,’ Pooh answered.”**

As always, we are indebted to the contributors to this magazine. It is a privilege when students of the school open their hearts and share aspects of their spiritual journey – a special thank you to Joan Joass and Brett Neilsen for their contributions, and also to Geoff Taylor and Bruce Gatward-Cooke whose contributions remind us of the value of mindfulness whether it be in the martial arts or walking a mountain trail.

Liz Godfrey

³ <https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/04/23/love-undetectable-andrew-sullivan-friendship/>

The Lord's Prayer

I have long felt a deep attraction to the Lord's Prayer, an inner pull to unravel at least some of the true meanings of these famous words, gifted to mankind during the life of Christ 2000 years ago. They were in fact spoken to the disciples, men of already highly developed consciousness, and not the general population as is often supposed, in answer to the question 'How shall we pray?'

Little by little, as I contemplate these words and find references to them from inspired teachers, it becomes clear that they contain a template or blueprint for all human life.

I was first introduced to this prayer as a child in Sunday school, at a time when rote learning was still considered important. I am most grateful as these words of spiritual significance remain engraved in my heart and blossom as my understanding through life grows.

In those days, and for some years after, the Lord's Prayer was still in common usage in society and frequently spoken at events such as meetings, weddings and funerals as well as in church. Sadly it seems to be fast slipping from the world of mind; I have been fortunate enough to work at a school where this prayer is given its due importance and recited almost daily. All the children learn the words by heart.

I would like to share briefly some of my thoughts on the words of the Lord's Prayer and acknowledge how they have helped me on my path.

Our Father.....

The prayer is addressed to *our Father* which immediately informs us of the lawful relationship between human beings (and the Lord). We are brother and sister and the prayer is for the good of all. Note it does not begin *my* Father.

...which art in Heaven...

We are addressing our *common heavenly Father*, not our individual earthly fathers. Would not the heavenly father manifest all the fine and noble attributes of 'father' e.g protection, wisdom, love?

Hallowed be thy name...

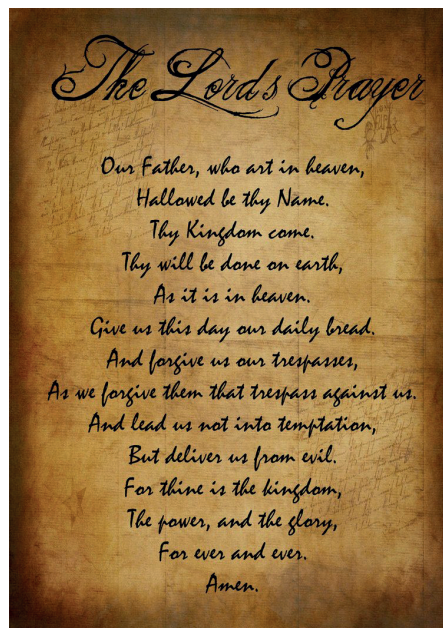
It is interesting to note that the prayer does not begin with 'Please give *me*....' as the first direction, but starts with praise and reverence to the name of the Lord. Hallowed means holy, sacred, to be lauded, respected, loved. And what is the name of the Lord? The Hindu tradition refers to the 'thousand names of God', so it would appear there's quite some scope. Immediately and practically comes to mind our Mantra, a true philosopher's stone. Coupled with faith and simply heard it has the power to turn lead into gold. Just because it isn't physical doesn't mean it isn't real!

And then there's 'Aham', **I AM**, common to all beings, indeed pure being, nothing added and found when mind is still. Remember the bible story of Moses and the burning bush when he asks God 'Who Are You?' The reply: 'I am that I am'.

It is a state where one can hear the quiet voice of conscience, the ability to discriminate, (buddhi in Sanskrit) giving intelligent instruction and knowledge of right action.

Both these words bring to mind the 'Magic Wand' of my childhood story books.

Thy Kingdom come.....



This rather begs the question 'Where is the kingdom of Heaven?' The New Testament book of Matthew tells us that 'the Kingdom of Heaven is spread upon the face of the Earth' and also that 'the Kingdom of Heaven' is within.

There are indeed many references to the Kingdom of Heaven in the book of Matthew, all in the form of parables e.g the treasure hidden in the field, the mustard seed, the sower, the merchant seeking pearls, the fishing net.....

All these are qualified with the words "Those who have ears, let them hear."

P.D Ouspensky (Christianity and the New Testament) suggests that, while the Kingdom of Heaven is commonly thought of as a *future life* after death, Christ is in fact referring to the inner circle of mankind, those enlightened beings who have realised the truth and, while still embodied, are serving mankind.

Stillness and presence of mind are necessary

Thy will be done....

If only!!! So often it is *my* will. It is of some comfort to note that many great disciples, poets and followers of the teaching have grappled with the same problem:

In the book of Romans 7:15-25 St Paul wrote:

I cannot even understand my own actions. I do not do what I want to do but what I hate....I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; the desire to do good is there but not the power. What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend.....

My inner being agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind (nous in Greek, buddhi in Sanskrit); this makes me the prisoner of the law of sin in my members....With my mind I serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.

It is interesting to note here that if we look at the original Greek in the New Testament, the word commonly translated as 'sin' is amartia. This literally means 'to miss the mark' which allows a somewhat wider interpretation.

And a quote from Rabindranath Tagore, in Gitanjali:

*I came out alone on my way to my tryst. But who is this who follows me in the silent dark?
I move aside to escape his presence
But I escape him not.
He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger;
He adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.
He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no shame; but I am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.*

Sometimes I find it enough to simply ask: "How may I be of service now?"

Stillness and presence of mind are needed.

On Earth as it is in Heaven.....

Some translations give **In Earth**. Perhaps this relates to St Paul's difficulty and a supplication for Grace is made for strength to overcome the demands of the physical body, the restless mind, and see the Creation in its true perspective.

Give us this day our daily bread.....

The original Greek uses the word 'supersubstantialis,' meaning super-existing or super-substantial. Translations and interpretations over the years have led to the modern version of 'bread'. 'Food for life', especially in the mental and spiritual realm, may be a wider interpretation.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.....

A most interesting direction, usually understood as advice to people to forgive those who sin *against them*. Consider the verses that follow the Lord's Prayer in the book of Matthew:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

What is simply said is "forgive people their sins." Sin: amartia, to miss the mark. Don't we all?

It brings to mind an injunction from the early days of School: "don't criticize, not even silently in your head".

Marcus Aurelius, in expressing his gratitude to people for life lessons said:

"My mother set me an example of piety and generosity, avoidance of all uncharitableness-not in actions only but in thought as well....."

What a beautiful if difficult practice; much strength of will is needed.

And lead us not into temptation.....

A rather strange instruction. Why would Christ lead us into temptation? Isn't that the Devil's way? There is some connection here with the famous words of Christ during his temptation in the wilderness, rendered in recent times as 'Get thee hence Satan!' An earlier translation gives the words as 'Follow me' again a rather puzzling statement. Why would Christ want Satan to follow him? However, if we take Satan as the *Tempter*, representing the physical world (the deceptive, illusory world of Maya and all the attractions to the senses therein), it makes more sense. It is a plea for detachment (vairagya in Sanskrit). Christ is saying 'let the physical world and all its sensory attractions come *after or behind me NOT in front.*'

In the Gospel of Mary Magdalene it says:

Attachment to matter, gives rise to passion against nature.

Thus trouble arises in the whole body: this is why I tell you:

Be in harmony.....

If you are out of balance, take inspiration from manifestations of your true nature...

.....Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

The Geeta too has its famous reference to the sequence of mental states that follow attachment (Ch 2, pp 62, 63):

When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them arises. From attachment arises desire; from desire arises anger. From anger arises delusion; from delusion failure of memory; from failure of memory, loss of conscience; from loss of conscience he is utterly ruined.

But deliver us from evil.....

The 'but' seems rather odd here, almost as if some part has been removed or is missing?

We have a myriad of connotations of evil. Evil and devil are very similar words and original Greek and Hebrew versions of these bible references offer a translation of devil as slanderer *and divider - taking one away from the unity, the oneness of all.*

Can it be that this is referring to our personalities, the ego (ahankara in Sanskrit). I find an ease of understanding by substituting *ego* and *attachment* for the word evil.

(Interestingly, Ouspensky suggests that the very concept of 'devil' is the result of the influence of mediaeval demonology. While the New Testament does contain *allegorical* references to the idea of evil, temptation, unclean spirits and demons, *it contains no general idea of the devil*).

In the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, in answer to the question 'What is the sin of the world?' we hear:

There is no sin.

It is you who make sin exist,

When you act according to the habits of your corrupted nature;

This is where sin lies.

Encouragingly it continues:

This is why the Good has come into your midst. It acts together with the elements of your nature so as to reunite it with its roots.

Stillness and presence of mind are needed.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever.....

Nothing need be added to this **Amen**

Joan Joass

Joan has been attending the School of Philosophy for over 40 years. Currently the Art teacher at Ficino School, Joan is just about to retire after working in many roles including form teacher since 1997. Keen on cats and tramping in the outdoors!



Some enlightened words on the nature and power of prayer.

Kahlil Gibran (The Prophet):

You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in the days of your abundance.....

When you pray you rise to meet those in the air who are praying at that very hour, and whom save in prayer you may not meet.....

We cannot ask thee for naught, for thou knowest our needs before they are born in us.....

Thou art our need.....

Mahatma Gandhi:

It is a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without God's support. No effort is complete without a prayer, without a definite recognition that the best of human endeavours have no effect if it has not God's blessing behind it. Prayer is a call to humility. It is a call to self-purification, to inward search

Studying Philosophy and the Martial Arts

I joined the School of Philosophy and the martial art called Shorinji Kempo at virtually the same age, 16. What attracted me to both was their very practical nature. I was brought up in the Anglican church as the son of a vicar – but the School offered more real, applicable knowledge about the meaning of our existence.

Similarly, Shorinji Kempo offered me practical self-defence skills embodied in beautiful movements. Shorinji Kempo also has a Buddhist philosophy behind it which focuses on enabling individuals to have a real sense of justice and compassion – as well as the ability to stand up for themselves and others. The Kempo philosophy is embodied in two main Japanese phrases – Ken Zen Ichinyo – to develop the mind and body simultaneously – and Riki ai funi – Love and Strength working in tandem. The concept behind the latter being that Strength without Love is brutality, and Love without Strength is powerless.



Bruce Gatward-Cooke

Having lived in three different countries and different cities over the course of my career and life, I have come and gone from both disciplines a number of times and have always been grateful that - like the parable of the Prodigal Son – I have always been welcomed back!

What always draws one back?

Once the heart and mind are opened to experiencing the Truth, there is no settling for anything else. With Shorinji Kempo, it is a path of action as a means of experiencing oneself. “To see

action in inaction, and inaction in action” as the Lord Shri Krishna tells Arjuna in the Geeta.

I am particularly fortunate that the School enabled me to carry on reading the Material in correspondence fashion with Mrs Kearney as my tutor. As much as life, work and family obligations make it possible, I respond to the material weekly by email – to which Mrs Elaine Kearney gives me feedback. I am constantly impressed by Mrs. Kearney’s patience and consideration!

It isn’t easy carrying on the School practices of meditation and reading the material in isolation. Fortunately, both Shorinji Kempo and the School foster discipline within an individual – and add in a Love of the material and the martial art movement – both are now just such cornerstones of this life. That’s not to say there aren’t challenges! For the School it is arranging the calendar to attend as many weekends as possible throughout the year. The power and impetus of Good Company is very evident when on the weekends and they are an experience I relish.

For Shorinji Kempo, it has been a long journey between gradings. The last was the 3rd Dan grading seven years ago in 2011 in Japan. I flew in on the day of the great earthquake and tsunami that caused so much devastation and loss of life. In fact it happened one hour out from landing in Tokyo. I was originally destined for Osaka but Air New Zealand had re-routed me through Tokyo only a week before I left. And so it transpired we couldn’t land in Tokyo and were diverted to Osaka! I was probably the only person on the plane heading directly who already had a hotel booked. For the other thousands upon thousands of

passengers on all the planes diverted there – it was total chaos. Getting through a jam packed airport and subway and to my hotel when it seemed all signs were in Japanese after 15 hours in the air was a feat of supreme focus and endurance! At least I had a hotel to go to.

I made it to Osaka and on to the island of Shikoku when the grading was being held to pass that grading. Seven years later, and it looked like Japan was going to test me with a supreme weather event all over again as Category 5 Typhoon Trami bore down on Shikoku on the day of my grading for 4th Dan!

Shorinji Kempo initially cancelled the grading due to the Typhoon – which was incredible news to accept after seven years dedication to get to this point. My fellow Shorinji Kempo companions from New Zealand initially voted for staying in Tokyo and flying back to New Zealand. I was determined to stay in Japan to undertake that grading so I wasn't leaving.



Bruce (left) training with Tim Coleman of the New Plymouth branch (photo courtesy of Brianna McIlraith on Stuff.co.nz)

How the universe works! The next day the Shorinji Kempo organisation made contact to say they would arrange a special grading a day early so we could miss the typhoon. Onto the bullet train we jumped to arrive in Shikoku in time. Once there, I found that I was the only one grading in their massive dojo (training hall). Just myself, two examiners, an interpreter, and a Japanese partner from the local dojo in the middle of this huge room.

What followed was three hours of character interviews, Buddhist philosophy essay writing, and a physical examination of a wide range of techniques. It was gruelling. As much as possible I would practice what the current material was asking me – come into the presence of the Self, watch the movements of the mind – do and say nothing unnecessary! All very applicable when the heart is pounding and the mind is racing!

Exhausted and bathed in sweat, it was finally over. I had really had no idea what the outcome would be. The Japanese are very good at poker faces – especially examiners!

After about 30 minutes one of the interpreters came in to check in on me and my companions – and gave me a wink and a nod – with a quiet –“you’ve passed by the way and we would like you to attend a little certificate ceremony”. We dutifully filed into the Shorinji Kempo board room. There was nothing “little” about it.

We were met by some 20 to 30 people from the World Shorinji Kempo Organisation office, clapping and congratulating me. Bowing and speeches, certificate presentation and official photographs followed. It was so moving that the young lady in our group from New Zealand was in tears!



Once again – to be able to come into the presence of the Self, watch the movements of the mind – do and say nothing unnecessary, was very applicable!

The whole experience was very humbling and I was impressed by the profound etiquette of respect embedded in the Japanese culture. These were men and women of good company – very good company.

Bruce Gatward-Cooke

Upcoming Events

Plato and Plotinus Summer School Auckland 4th – 12th January 2019

During this residential week the group will study Plato's work 'The Theaetetus' and Plotinus "On What are and When come Evils – Ennead 1.8'. Some spaces are available for this stimulating and thought provoking week in good company and a quiet and beautiful location. Please contact russellallen8484@gmail.com before 31st December for further details.

Evening Presentation – A Taste of Greece Wednesday 9th January 2019

Join the Summer School participants for an evening of Greek themed music and entertainment, led by Lauren White and Calvin Baker (following their acclaimed fundraiser performance "A Taste of Italy" for the Ficino School). Cost \$20 (start 8.30pm) or \$40 incl. meal (7.30pm, bookings essential). Open to all students, friends and family.

International Conference on Mindfulness 9 – 13 February 2019

The keynote speaker for this international conference, being hosted next year by the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is Associate Professor Craig Hassed. Dr Hassed is a long time member of the Melbourne School of Philosophy. His research at the Monash Medical School, books and writings have become internationally regarded. A very interesting lineup of speakers is listed at this conference. Further details at: <https://www.icm2019.org/>

The New Zealand Routeburn

The day had finally come.. at last
Despite the unseen...polar blast
Struggle we did ... to put on our gear
With slight anticipation and a little fear

At the Divide...we began to climb
Trudging... one step at a time
Rocks and Rocks ...were out track
Clicking sticks... and our weighted backpacks

The distant craggy rocks
Like massive stumbling blocks
Step by step...on we walked
Awestruck... the topic of our talk

At last we reached the lake for lunch
With no idea... not even a hunch
Of what lay ahead
Except what the guides had said

Mountains had murmured as though they talked
Up we went... and on we walked
Relentless wind and drifting snow
Kept us moving and on the go

Such alluring views everywhere
With a chance to stop and stare
Little plants covered with flakes of snow
Jagged cliffs and zig zag paths...what a show

Oh the mighty precipice at last
Fanned by winters forceful blast
The edge so near... a test of faith
Clinging steadily to the frozen rock face

Icicles hung like chandeliers
Exquisite and regal...did they appear
Hand rails ...covered in ice
Made one think...once or twice

As the light closed the day
The hut a welcome sight...one could say
To wash and eat and have a rest
And know that one had passed the test.

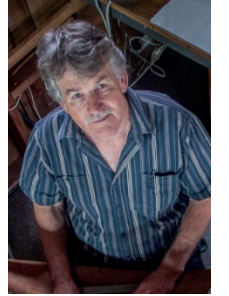


A glass of superb New Zealand wine
With good company...to share and dine
All was well... when we had our say
About the happenings of the day

Awakening to the mighty freeze
Its bounty scatgtered...amongst the trees.
Such glory ...did behold us all
As we made our way down to the fall

Down we went with time to talk
As we headed to the fork
Deep caverns and piled logs
Displayed their beauty amongst the fog

A singular vision in our sight
Trekking three days ... and two nights
And what a joy to sit and eat
Upon the last and final seat.



Geoff Taylor

A three day mountain trek on the Routeburn Track in the South Island, earlier this year by Geoff Taylor and Conny Scholten was not directly associated with study in philosophy but mindfulness was the essence from which the inspiration came for this poem.

With the temperature -15 degrees at times, on the last trip on the track before winter, and often a frightening experience with the ice and snow, the utmost mindful attention was essential.

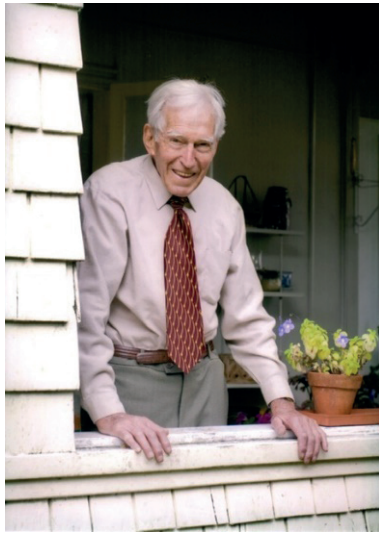
For Geoff, the Sanskrit saying “Padam, padam... seemed particularly appropriate.

पदं पदं प्रतिपदं अर्हति इति प्रातिपदिकम् ॥

Padam padam pratipadam arhati iti prātipadikam.

Step by step, at every step there stands waiting – quite still – that which is appropriate to each step.

Harry Carter



Early this year we farewelled a good friend and fellow student Harry Carter. Harry passed away peacefully in the company of his children on February 10th, at the age of ninety five.

Harry has left us with rich memories of a man who cared generously for every one with whom he came in contact, anywhere. Fully attentive to his students, he was a discrete presence, always available but never imposing his company. Ever encouraging, Harry inspired confidence in the many students whom he introduced to the practice of 'Working with Attention'.

This practice was a revelation to many of us as we learned to restore the darkened wood of newly acquired School houses into warmly glowing bannisters and panelling, silky smooth and irresistible to be touched. First at Upland Road, Grafton and later in the historic villa at

Esplanade Road in Mount Eden.

Harry was a school teacher by profession. He loved young people and he loved history, the great writings of the ancients as well as the classics of English literature, jewels of which enriched his tutoring and conversation.

A practical and efficient man Harry contributed to the organisation of the School in it's early years. He was secretary to the initial Committee and also served for some years as Treasurer.

In the Advaita Vedanta Teaching into which the School of Philosophy developed and grew Harry found a spiritual satisfaction for which he had searched since early manhood.

An experience in World War II, during which he served in the Airforce , took him to the edge of life as he crashed his fighter plane on a night reconnaissance mission.

As the machine slammed into the ground and flipped over, Harry found himself upside down hanging in his harness, screaming with all his might... Then complete calm. A sort of amused acceptance, a sense of cooperation, immediately followed by the efficient extraction of his body from the wreck. Then the flames licking around the engine were doused with clods of soil. "I was the observer of it all"

Speaking about it, Harry believed that his whole experience of war was for that one moment.

For many years he looked for a context for this experience and in his later years found it in the practice of 'Being', of pure awareness in the present, of resting in the awareness of one's Self.'

He often reminded us to just 'Be' and it was his parting instruction at the end of every visit I paid him in hospital.

Harry van der Vossen and Selwyn Daniels

Selwyn Daniels

Selwyn Daniels (18 October 1926 - 14 July 2018)

On first meeting Selwyn presented as a quiet, self contained man with a steady, open gaze and a warm, soft voice. He was respected and listened to by fellow students. His words were often deliberate and measured.



Selwyn had joined the School soon after it became established in Auckland. When groups were introduced to study of the Sanskrit language in the late sixties, Selwyn developed a keen interest in these new sounds and grammar. Language became magic and he worked to further develop his knowledge of English Grammar, elocution and voice production in addition to those of Sanskrit.

His English studies were to benefit a number of adults in the community with their reading and writing challenges after Selwyn had joined an adult education support group. An avid student himself, Selwyn was very generous with whatever knowledge he acquired. If you found a common interest in a subject he would share what he knew complete with copies of relevant material.

Selwyn worked as a radio and audio technician. One of his social interests was the local choir in which he sang for a number of years. The other was sailing. In his earlier years he crewed on yachts exploring the Australian coast and Pacific Islands.

In the eighties a couple of lady students (sisters) opened a small restaurant in Lower Queen Street, called 'The Belly Button'. Selwyn and friends became regular patrons and occasionally kitchen hands, this led to Selwyn marrying Joy, (one of the sisters). Joy passed away only a few years later.

More recently Selwyn was enticed to join a local writers group where in time he was challenged to try his hand at poetry. He accepted the challenge and in a short span of time he wrote a series of nine poems. They beautifully express his love of the Teaching, of life, and of people. These poems have since been published in a small volume, a few copies of which may still be available from the bookshop. From his poem Love:

*Love is always present,
Cannot be seen.
Is everywhere,
Nowhere has not been.
Love opens the heart,
This is the place to start.*

Mrs. Ngaire Bennett (the other sister) last saw Selwyn on the day he passed away: 'I recall vividly his beautiful smile as he waved farewell, standing in his doorway'.

Harry van der Vossen

Gordon Russell



On July 22 we said farewell to a special friend, fellow student Gordon Russell. Just the thought of Gordon will bring a smile to the face of those who knew this warm hearted, kind, ninety-four year old.

Gordon enjoyed life to the full, not that it always seemed to be kind to him but because his generous sense of humour and his deep sense of gratefulness for all that life had on offer. He taught all who would listen, the vital importance of saying 'Thank You' for all that came their way. Gordon was steady, caring and resourceful ready to help wherever he saw a need, he would meet it wholeheartedly.

He was no saint and would grumble, complain and despair at times about the ignorance around him, only to acknowledge later that he was part of 'Them' also.

He joined the School in its early days in Auckland and shared many stories about early practices, weekends with Mr MacLaren at Whangaparoa with wholesome meaty meals and the newly found good company of fellow students. Students' efforts to refine their diet led to sourcing fresh un-processed milk direct from the farm. This involved several weekly pre-dawn trips into the country side. Gordon was one of the chief milkmen collecting and distributing the precious stuff to the School and student families. The 'milk run' went on for many years.

Gordon was a printer by profession. During the Second World War he served in the NZ Airforce as an airframe maintenance engineer in the Pacific theatre.

Practical and efficient with many tools and processes it made him the perfect custodian of the School's workshops. He gained a reputation as a sharpener of anything with a cutting edge from axes, chisels and spades to the nibs of delicate calligraphy pens.

Gordon loved life and all that lives. He lived all of his life in the house that he was born in. When his father passed on he continued to stay there with his mother and after she passed he shared the home with friends and cats and chickens. Everyone was always welcome. Right up to his last stay in hospital he actively participated in a weekly fitness class and social lunch where for recent years he was the much loved sole surviving male.

Gordon leaves many friends behind and also many people touched by this kind and warm being, a gentleman whose name they never knew.

Harry Van der Vossen

June Wells

June joined the School in Auckland during the early 1980s and was a willing helper in many activities including the Sunday School which ran at that time. In the late 80s the School called on her accounting skills and she accepted the role of looking after the school's day to day financial affairs.

Her generous and voluntary involvement from that time encompassed periods of great change particularly with the sale and purchase of the premises at 27 Esplanade Road and 268 west Tamaki Road. The Esplanade Road property became the home to the Ficino Day School. June managed all the Dayschool accounting requirements until 2007, and continued to undertake all the accounting functions of the School of Philosophy as it expanded its activities to include various study groups, cultural events, residential weekends and week.

Throughout her 30 years accounting tenure, June was a model of integrity, discretion, patience and willingness to meet the needs of each particular time or event. Her services to the School in particular and her many clients will be greatly missed by all who had the good fortune to know her, to work with her and share the goodness she manifested.

June's tutor and friend, Mrs Elaine Kearney has this to say of her:

“‘Junie Moon’ was a term of endearment that sometimes arose when addressing June. Why? What did it mean?

Like the Moon that reflects the Sun, June was a reflector. Qualities like honesty, transparency, integrity were there for all to see.

Her studies in the School went beyond the teaching itself, and she participated for many years in the Art Group, the Plato Group, and Sanskrit study. Her faithfulness to Sanskrit Study was ever there in spite of doubt and the odd explosion!

Recently the Spiritual Path seemed to open up for her and no longer was she in need of direction. She spoke of a timelessness, space and wholehearted gratitude for the ‘Teaching’ in its many facets; the School, art, poetry, music, Plato, Sanskrit and the unchanging words of Wisdom.

Fare Well ‘Junie Moon’”

This bronze bas-relief sculpture, on display at 27 Esplanade Rd, is an example of June's artistic talent. This work was inspired by these words in Plato's Phaidros...



“Of the Nature of the soul, ... let me speak briefly, in a figure ... I divided each soul into three – two horses and a charioteer, and one of the horses was good and the other bad; ... the right hand horse is upright and cleanly made:... he is a lover of honour, modesty, temperance, and the follower of true glory: he needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only. The other is a crooked lumbering animal, put together anyhow; ... the mate of insolence and pride, shaggeared and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and spur”.

Last year CRL invited year 6 children in the Auckland region to produce some artwork to help decorate the new underground rail system which is currently under construction downtown. The theme was to be “Where Trains Go” and was to be presented in the form of 24 square pieces of art which would be digitally translated to ceramic tiles 12cm square. The finished work could be individual drawings or in the form of a mural and would make a 60cm square with the middle tile featuring the school’s name (to be designed by CRL graphic designer).

Here is the effort of the Year 6 class from Ficino School. All the children in the class have contributed, some with drawing, some painting, some pencil colouring and some with design.

Our efforts have been highly lauded by the CRL graphics team but unfortunately, we have run into some issues with copyright. We did realize this was a possibility and attempted to gain permission. We have indeed been successful with our wonderful N.Z artists Dame Lynley Dodds (Hairy McLarey) and Robyn Belton (Greedy Cat illustrator) who have kindly allowed their famous cats to appear on our mural. We are still attempting (with the help of CRL) to obtain right to the use of some of the American cats and have some months to do this.



In the event that we are unable to obtain copyright permission plan two is to substitute some other less famous (but possibly more friendly) mogs, perhaps some of our own. CRL will be able to photoshop these in.



Meanwhile, enjoy the original from our very talented year 6 of 2018.

The Train station tiles are currently due to be in place about 2024.

YOU – the big ‘S’

After the business fails, there’s still YOU.

After she leaves, there’s still YOU.

And after the death, there’s still YOU.

After the children have left, when I’ve been caught out, and when all the money has gone, there’s still YOU.

When I failed, when I spoke out of turn, when I embarrassed myself, there’s still YOU.

And even when all my dreams came true, still there’s YOU.

YOU are the one that’s constant, the one I can never fool, the one I’m ultimately responsible to, the one I can’t escape and the one who will never leave.

Yet YOU are the one I treat with indifference, the one I lie to and the one I sometimes pretend doesn’t exist.

It is YOU that thaws my heart, that is my pillow, my enfolding arms.

It is YOU that raises me up again and it is YOU that watches and waits, and waits, and waits.

Before and after everything there is YOU, and even when you believe you are what you are not, still there is YOU.

So awake, and just BE YOU.

Brett Neilsen

ISOLATED

Is one of the defining characteristics of the age we live in that we exist in a state of mental isolation?

Isolated on an individual level and on a social and global level. Each and everyone of us experiences this state though we may not be consciously aware of it. It is the intense and completely dominating sense of ‘me’ of which I speak – ‘me’ as distinctly separate from every other living being.

On a purely physical level, we cannot escape this reality and why would we want to.

This sense of ‘me’ is an essential part of our survival mechanism. Without it our individual physical sustainability and that of the race would be at risk. It is hard wired and acts automatically but seemingly spontaneously. It can however be both limiting and exceedingly dangerous.

Let me explain.

On an individual level an extreme example of thinking and acting in isolation could be road rage; a lesser, red light running (our personal agenda being at that moment more important than the safety of others); and on a lower scale still, simply being offended by another’s words, feeling devalued and unloved. It can

also be as simple as demanding the market rate for whatever it is we are selling even though we understand the rate may be artificially and unfairly inflated.

Socially our 'sense of self' becomes extended to encompass national pride (sporting successes) and can include racial divides, religious separations and our due's and rights.

At a global level many of those with the most wealth and power seem intent on keeping it from those who have the least, and where possible increasing the divide.

All of the above can mean, 'I' feel isolated from 'you', and 'us' from 'them'.

We seem to have forgotten our capacity to know our relationship with existence 'holistically' (spiritually) and instead experience much, if not all, in isolation – perhaps with the exception of love, and then only if it is heart felt.

Of course, what you think about all this will be dependent upon your state of conscious awareness at the time.

So, it would seem that in order to remember that which we have forgotten, we first need to forget that which we think we know – who we are.

C.S. Lewis said *"Give up yourself, and you will find your real self." Lose your life and you will save it"*

It is of course our choice how we wish to live and I know many who 'seem' perfectly happy without bothering their heads 'with all this nonsense'.

I have a particular friend who appears contented and well balanced (although Krishnamurti said "it is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society") but who never the less says things (that although mildly amusing) are evidence of an isolated mind. Some such are;

"If I had time to meditate I wouldn't be so stressed and so wouldn't need to meditate"

"It's only when you feel aggrieved or aggravated that you're motivated to do anything. The idea of staying calm just infuriates me" and

"If we want to stand out and be better than the rest, then separation (isolation) is our best tool"

His words inspired me to write the following;

"Betwixt a world of form and essence, in moments of forgetfulness, I envy those who, feet firm on the ground, have the surety of knowing who they think they are".

Now there may arise for some of us the question why any of this has any importance whatsoever. Others may see some value in not being so 'self isolated' but at the same time don't want to forgo all of the many varied and wonderful pleasures that our physical existence has on offer. However, a consequence of leaving behind the old life of isolation is that miraculously, many of the 'earthly delights' lose their shine. I once loved mowing my lawns – now I don't. A younger man now mows them for me and it is my sincere hope for him that he too 'grows his awareness'.

Leaving behind the old life can be viewed as God renewing us - being born again, and this may be so.

However, the concept of a renewal fits equally well with a growth in non-critical awareness, which if rigorously practiced, brings about a life experience quite unlike that previously known in a life both unexamined and lived largely unconsciously.

The result is at least similar, regardless of the path walked. In both, the larger relegates the smaller.

Malcom Muggeridge has this to say; *“In the end, coming to faith remains for all a sense of homecoming, of picking up the threads of a lost life, of responding to a bell that had long been ringing, of taking a place at a table that had long been set.”*

and from Hajjar Gibran; *“In your undoing lies your unfolding.”*

The sages believe that in giving up that which we are not, (that which we have known as ‘me’), we become cognizant of an expanded, a greater ‘me’; a ‘me’ in which the world is experienced in a revitalized manner. Problems cease to have the weight of importance they formerly had and are seen within the wider context of life and not as isolated events generally with MY name on them. Even in the hardships that inevitably occur in our journey on this planet, there is not the desperation that often accompanies them. The new ‘me’ comes with a gentle acceptance of all that occurs and with a sustaining knowledge that whatever the outcome, there will always be a reservoir of peace in the heart.

In this way, life becomes ‘value added’ and the joy we experience lightens not just ourselves but those around us. We truly can change the world.

We have in every moment an opportunity to awake to a kinder more encompassing experience.

Is not the ability to know consciously what we are thinking, saying, hearing and doing, a birth right, perhaps even a duty?

The fact that many of us have forgotten how to remember that which we have forgotten is unfortunate but understandable. But those who have had the grace to be gifted the key to remembering, are entrusted with a responsibility to unlock their own conscious awareness and in doing so, enlighten the world.

We cannot be conscious of being unconscious but we can be conscious of not being unconscious. We can be ‘not conscious’ of being conscious of not being unconscious and we can be conscious of being ‘not conscious’ of being conscious of not being unconscious.

It is our duty and joy to heal others simply by our own endeavours to bring ourselves to Fullness of Being.

Brett Neilsen



Brett describes himself as “old (in years!) I have been attending the School for perhaps 20 years – not continuously – having started when the School was at 128 Grafton Road. Miraculously, Julie has endured marriage to me for 45 years and we have two grown children and a grandson, Leo, at the Ficino School.

What a wonderful and varied journey life has offered me”.

From the Editor:

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue of Vision. Contributions and suggestions for articles of interest for the next issue of Vision are most welcome.

It should be noted that the views expressed in this document are not necessarily those of the School of Philosophy Auckland.