

# *Vision*



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What a year this has been, empty streets and teddy bears in windows. In the past war and other crises have ravaged lives and economies but the phrase “we are all in this together” has never seemed more appropriate than in the present times. The invisible enemy, the novel coronavirus Covid19 has provided a salutary and ongoing lesson to us all of our common humanity and vulnerability.

To counter the effects of coronavirus Mahārāja Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī suggests the sounding of the following verses.

The first verse is in praise of Durgā and is given for the eradication of the epidemic:

जयन्ती मङ्गला काली भद्रकाली कपालिनी ।

*jayantī maṅgalā kālī bhadrakālī kapālinī*

दुर्गा क्षमा शिवा धात्री स्वाहा स्वधा नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

*durgā kṣamā śivā dhātrī svāhā svadhā namo'stu te*

'You are that Divinity which is victorious, which bestows happiness and controls time, which is gracious and overcomes ignorance. You are She who is difficult to realise, who is patience, who blesses and protects sacrifice and in whom all find rest and support. A bow to You!'

The next verse is given for the attainment of good health and good fortune:

देहि सौभाग्यमारोग्यं देहि मे परमं सुखम् ।

*dehi saubhāgyamārogyaṃ dehi me paramaṃ sukham*

रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि ॥

*rūpaṃ dehi jayaṃ dehi yaśo dehi dviṣo jahi*

'Grant good fortune, grant good health, grant me supreme bliss. Grant beauty, victory and glory, and vanquish hatred.'

Śrī Durgā Saptaśatī Siddha Sampuṭa Mantra verses 12 and 13

## The Goddess Durgā देवी दुर्गा

In the Hindu tradition, the Goddess Durgā, (also known as Śaktī or Devī) is the protective Mother of the Universe. One of the meanings of दुर्गा is ‘one who is difficult to approach or difficult to know’. She is sometimes known as ‘Durgātināśinī’, which translates as, ‘the one who eliminates sufferings’.

Whether sitting astride a lion, standing on a lotus, or on a buffalo’s head, Durgā battles the forces of evil in the world. She is depicted as having between eight to eighteen arms and holds a symbolic object in each hand. Some of the symbols are interpreted as follows: A conch shell may symbolise Om which indicates power in the form of sound. A bow and arrow stands for energy while a thunderbolt is firmness of conviction. The lotus represents detachment, a sword is discrimination and the trident stands for the three gunas. A spinning discus signifies that the world is subservient to the will of Durgā and is at her command.

Often referred to as Tryambake, the three-eyed Goddess, Durgā’s left eye represents desire, symbolised by the moon; her right eye is action, symbolised by the sun, and her third eye stands for knowledge symbolised by fire.



She is also the power of sleep. She is praised as responsible for the creation, sustenance and withdrawal of the universe and is the personification of knowledge, wisdom and memory. She is pleasant and beautiful, but at the same time, she is also terrible.

Durgā is usually shown wearing a red sari. The colour red denotes action and the red clothes show that She is destroying evil and protecting mankind from pain and suffering.

Thus, the Goddess Durgā symbolizes the Divine forces that are used against the negative forces of evil and wickedness. She is the embodiment of feminine and creative energy and represents pure (positive) energy, known as divine light or jyoti.



## **The Virtues of the Virus ‘Lockdown’**

Over these past few months the world has been afflicted with a new virulent disease, the Covid-19 virus pandemic, and the international response has been varied. One extreme was the response in Sweden being mostly one of ‘do nothing’, just let the disease run its course hoping that ‘herd immunity’ will gradually evolve. The other extreme was the response in NZ being an early and complete ‘lockdown’ of society.

A good question to consider is, which of these two extremes of political response will ultimately deliver the most beneficial outcome for the nation? The balance in question is between the longer-term protection of economic health by relying on an evolving herd immunity with greater risk to public health, and the immediate protection of public health at the cost of collapsing the economy. Politically the answer is still to be determined, but philosophically there is much virtue in the lockdown approach.

During the experience in NZ of moving up and down the various ‘Alert’ levels we have been subjected to a variety of constraints designed to limit the transmission of this invisible virus. At the extreme the economic engine of the country was brought almost to a complete standstill beyond the activity of ‘essential’ workers, mostly in the health, security and food supply industries. Lifestyles were changed overnight. We were all compelled to go ‘on-line’, meet in the ‘cloud’, stay local and practise ‘social distancing’ (a new expression for the dictionary). We collectively became fearful of this invisible virus and its subtle means of incubation, transmission, infection, and potentially deadly effects. Some of us were considered more vulnerable than others. A sneeze or cough in society made you most unwelcome. The constraints imposed prevented even funeral directors doing their job fully, some families being deprived of the simple grace of being bedside with their dying relative. Travel constraints separated families, stranded immigrants and travellers and caused great personal anguish. Business failures and unemployment are rife and increasing daily. The demand for assistance from social services is overwhelming, and the ongoing silent mental anguish and strained relationships suffered by many is under-reported.

The impact of the lockdown on society is without precedent in NZ. What virtue can there be in such a drastic, extreme, and costly strategy?

Aside from actually achieving the primary objective of protecting public health there are other positive outcomes, most noticeably, the general sense of a collective and united approach by society to overcoming this invisible, common enemy. In large measure we have enjoyed each other's company, at a distance. Unable to go to work or school so many more families have been collectively enjoying exercise, cycling, walking, engaging in respectful happy conversations with passers-by, while maintaining social distancing. We discovered that far less 'retail therapy' was needed, we could economise and find new ways of doing things. Creativity surged, home cooking and baking were rediscovered. Some people continue to work from home, reducing the need for commercial office space. The environment cleared itself of much pollution because humans were absent.

In summary, compared to many other countries on a per capita basis we have had a minimal number of Covid-19 related infections or deaths. However, the economic fall-out, has been immense and continues to grow. The cost will remain for some time. Against the confidence of future economic prosperity the government has 'borrowed' many billions of dollars to support families and businesses devastated by the shutdown of the economic engine. The national economy is definitely not in good health.

But is there not much more to this, a hidden message? *'If something happens in samaṣṭi, it cannot be totally unrelated to vyaṣṭi (Conversations 1985: 1.1)*. Why are we so concerned, so fearful? What is so unique about this particular virus? Why such an extraordinary international response? Perhaps this is an elaborate conspiracy theory or a cover story.

In fact are we not all already afflicted with a serious, highly contagious, viral infection that has an almost 0% survival rate and 100% death rate? Not Covid-19 but Avidyā. It came upon us at birth and we are so accustomed to being diseased that we mostly mistake our diseased condition as normal. We are far more fearful of a new virus that may result in a 2% or 3% death rate of those few people that it infects, than we are of a largely undiagnosed condition that will almost certainly kill us all. Our fear of physical demise at the hands of a virus would better be replaced with a 'fear of God'. *'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction' (Proverbs 1.7)*.

The Advaita Teaching describes the condition of perfect health, beyond any disease. To the extent that we become dissatisfied with the ill-health of our 'normal' life the Teaching and the School is available as a vaccine to nurse us back to the condition of perfect health. Distinct from Covid-19 the Avidyā virus mutates prolifically requiring continual adjustments to the nature of the curative vaccine. Rather than a single jab in the arm the Teaching cures us gradually with multiple doses of truth serum over some time, gradually overcoming the infinitely varied strains of ignorance as they are progressively exposed.

As with all medicines belief pays a major part in the restoration of health. When the time comes that the function of worldly life is realised and there is the conviction that in truth I never was unwell, '*... the true Self, which is already there as pure, conscious and free, shines through ...*' (*Conversations 87:4.1*), then health is immediately and fully restored. '*There's no more dying then*' (*Shakespeare Sonnet 146*). There is an argument that a virus is not really alive until it infects a living host cell. Likewise, ignorance is not real, it needs the substratum of Brahman, consciousness, upon which to exist. In the well-known analogy, the function of the snake does not even appear in mind without the actual presence of the rope, its host. It is far better that we believe and experience each day the substratum of perfect health, pure consciousness, than the inert lifeless fictional disease of avidyā.

There is more to learn from the lockdown. The practice of social distancing is highly effective in reducing the risk of transferring the virus to others. Avidyā, however, is a more subtle virus than Covid-19 and so our social distancing needs to be more subtle. Vairagya is our spiritual distancing tool. We should keep our distance from the ignorance of creation, remaining ever watchful, attentive and alert but not touching. Repeatedly we have been recommended to this approach by our Teachers without whole-heartedly adopting the practice. If we were as fearful, respectful, of the Avidyā virus as we are fearful, afraid, of the Covid-19 virus, if we had immediately adopted this subtle form of social distancing at the first realisation of possible infection, our economic lives may be very different, but so many lives may have been saved toward immortality rather than certain death. The advice to consider ourselves as already infected and then behave in a way that minimises the possibility of accidentally transmitting the infection to others works equally for Covid-19 and for Avidyā.

But wait there's more....! Money is considered in economic terms as a claim on wealth and a debt is a promise to pay in the future. So the vast debt incurred by the nation in combating the worldly virus will require future generations to provide the wealth. Wealth is only created by human endeavour on the land, so future action is necessary. And what is a commitment to future action other than saṅskāra. The nation's saṅskāra is passed to the shoulders of future generations, an unwelcome inheritance.

Through our individual personal spiritual efforts today perhaps we can relieve some of this future mechanical burden from society. By seeking Self-knowledge not only can we rid ourselves of the avidyā virus through abhyāsa (constant discipline) and vairagya (spiritual distancing) but we may also help to clear the saṅskāric debt, *'The fire of knowledge kindled by discrimination [between Self and non-Self], burns up the effects of ignorance together with their root' (Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 47)*. Our worldly economic lives that we value so highly may need to adjust over time but we will live in more perfect health, immune from the ravages of ignorance and open to the grace of true knowledge that banishes all debt.

Allowing some poetic licence we should be true to our nature, saḥcīdānanda, by following the guidance given by the Prime Minister, *'Stay home, stay calm, be kind; we can break the chain [of ignorance]'*.

'Stay home' -sat: existence, home

'Stay calm' -cit: consciousness, perfect peace

'Be kind' -ānanda: bliss, happiness

The best remedy to viral ignorance is full spiritual lockdown.



Lawrence Ames



## Who am I?

Self-enquiry by means of self-examination leads to the master question, who am I? The usual answers describing a combination of name, form, function and characteristics are seen to be unsatisfactory or incomplete and the question remains unanswered. In fact all answers to this question, when recognised as objects of knowledge in mind, can be eliminated by the knower or subject as false. The real value of these answers is in revealing the presence of the subject, which is who I am.

The awareness of this pervasive impersonal subject is in fact an everyday experience usually concealed by the glamour and clamour of the engaging creation, the attractive playground of names, forms and functions. Continued self-examination gradually reveals the many enduring indications of who I am.

I am –

- the presence of attention in the midst of distraction
- the balance of stability in activity
- the grace of memory in forgetfulness
- the joy of harmony in discord
- the constancy of love in adversity
- the vitality of life in living
- the peace of freedom in satisfaction
- the sound of silence in heart and mind

Self-examination employs the magical capacity of the human mind to engage in reflection, silently and patiently to access intuitive knowledge quite beyond the mind; a fine knowledge that is direct experience, neither subject nor object. In quiet contemplation the many indications of who I am lose their separate meanings or understanding and become synonymous with one common meaning or experience, the experience of Myself.

Who am I? Not the answer to any question, rather the eternal unknown, inclusive of all answers, Aham Brahmāsmi.

## Ficino Preschool Philosophical Curriculum Journey

The Ficino Preschool which opened in September 2016 was the vision of the Ficino School Board of Trustees. The aim was to provide a pathway for three and four year old preschoolers to prepare for their entry into the school and begin their philosophically inspired educational journey.

Many elements have been brought together to create our educational philosophy; observing philosophical practices in our school community; the School Values, guidance from school personnel, any one of whom is always available to support and share, and School of Philosophy teachings. The early childhood education sector has numerous pedagogies that have spiritual elements in them but primarily, we follow our NZ early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki. We brought these elements together to provide a practical philosophical early childhood curriculum framework to practise real experiences within their daily lives.

**The Ficino School Values** are Speak the truth, Obey lawful direction, Respect all, Learn to be responsible and be responsible to learn, and Practise what is good with resilience and courage. These became the foundations from which we grew. We developed a Value Card to promote the school values. We felt that such young children needed something more tangible than just verbal acknowledgement or a handshake.

When teachers see good practice enacted by one of these very young children, we acknowledge this with a value card. It would say what the value is and what they had done. These are given to the child at our gathering at the end of the day and read out to the other children, taking advantage of the opportunity to promote the good value but also to acknowledge the child who is a role model for the others. Thus, a tradition was born. It is one of many.



Examples of values recognized in this way have been:

- showing compassion; comforting a child who was upset.
- orderliness; tidying the environment of her own volition when things were out of order.
- helpfulness; assisting a younger child to put her smock on for lunch.
- Consistently looking after another child without being asked
- looking after another child who was feeling unwell without being asked.
- 



**The karakia** before meals is another tradition. Initially, the teacher would say the karakia/prayer/grace before meals and the children would repeat it. One day a child asked “can I say it” and she stood as a perfect role model with her hands together, with clear diction and a projected voice and said the karakia, a line at a time, waiting for the children to respond – which they did.



All the children now say the karakia on a rotational basis. We have a leader at each table for a week and each day the leaders take turns to say the karakia which is three times a day; morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. The leaders also serve the other children their food, as service is part of leadership. Some children are too shy when they first join the preschool but without exception, these children will

all be saying the karakia by the time they go to school, as perfectly as the child who started this tradition.

Not only was another tradition born, but the children were taking the lead – showing leadership skills, taking ownership of their environment, empowering the child (one of our ece principles). They were teaching us to let them have the lead and this was the beginning of many roles of leadership within the preschool.

**Monitors** is another tradition created by the children – we, the teachers, just gave it a name. It follows on from the leadership demonstrated above, giving others the opportunity to show leadership skills in their chosen area. If a child has an interest in art and therefore spends a lot of time with art resources, we encourage them to look after the tools they are using and put them away in the right place, for example. when they leave the area, it is left clean and tidy for the next person.

There is a future step when the child is given responsibility for ensuring it is left ready for use at the end of the session. They might need some helpers to do this as some are not so tidy. We say they are still learning and they need the natural leaders to show them the way. This happens in numerous play areas. They see this as a privilege.

**The singing bowl** was introduced to the children as a way of bringing them to a gathering and to be quiet on arrival. This worked perfectly, bringing not just quietness to the group but a sense of calmness and peace. The children sit cross legged on the floor with their hands on their knees, with a straight back and head forward. They concentrate on their regular breathing and are taken through a simple Mindfulness exercise. They enjoy this.

These are the words that came with the singing bowl.

Alter consciousness into a peaceful and meditative state, achieve relaxation faster and deeper before meditation, creates sacred space to enhance healing, balance energy and chakras, can be played on the body to transmit healing vibrations, sound waves harmonise the brain and stimulate the body to rediscover its own frequency, tool for space clearing homes.

Mindfulness is practiced two or three times a day. Some have even recited it to their parents at home. We also use the Pause a lot in the same way the school does, when we change activities, particularly the older ones who do Transition to School sessions. These older children are introduced to the Dedication and both see and hear the Sanskrit words before they go to school.

**Other peaceful rituals** we use are music, massage, yoga, meditation through stories.

Massages; with soft gentle music playing, rubbing each side of the hand, massaging the palm, then down each finger with oil. This is part of ensuring there is a calm environment in the preschool.

### **Handshakes:**

In this act of touching an astonishing amount takes place; teacher and student become one; there is a warmth of contact; the child is welcomed into the school; the eyes meet; the teacher is still, alert and meets each child; there is a natural flow of love, trust and respect; the teacher can observe how the child looks, sounds and responds; the child feels wanted; there is an appropriate formality; if all children are met this provides knowledge of the individual and a sense of the whole group.



**Respect** is a key word; Respect for themselves, looking after their own needs and belongings; Respect for each other, their peers and the teachers, using their manners; Respect for their environment, such as the monitors; Respect for Nature, learning to observe with the power of attention and attention to detail; Respect for difference, celebrating different cultures for example, and learning that there is strength in diversity and that this should be, and is, celebrated.

### **Transition to School Group**

The children collected these native leaves from Edenvale Park. They are paying attention to the detail of the leaf and comparing different types of leaves. This demonstrates the Power of Observation – being mindful and focused. The individuals present their own work to each other which leads on to a group discussion.

**These are the descriptions they came up with about their leaves:**

What shape is this leaf?   **“Oval”**  
What can you smell?       **“I can smell leaves.”**  
What can you hear?       **(I’m rustling the leaves)**  
What does it feel like?   **Soft, smooth, bumpy**  
Put it on your cheek.      **Cold**

**Look carefully at your leaf.    Tell me something about your leaf.**

**“It looks like an umbrella.”**  
**“It’s got holes in it.”**  
**“Look at the bumps on the stalk.”**  
**“I’ve got an eye in my leaf.”**  
**“It’s red.”**  
**“Mine’s brown and yellow.”**  
**“It has a face on it.”**  
**“It’s got a stick.” (stalk)**



**Parent Feedback has been very positive.**

**What is the value of Ficino Preschool education?**

Respect. Stage not age. Self confidence, unique imagination. A great philosophy.

**What will you remember?**

Caring, responsible, loving teachers; the helpfulness and guidance of the teachers; a calm environment, nutritional meals, a variety of school activities and out of school trips.

**Highlights?**

The teachers consistently show kindness, respect and interest in the children and all their activities. Positive attitudes.

**Strengths?**

Respect for each child's needs, we are all like one family! Work to children's strengths. The teachers, activities and opportunities. Good organization and schedule for the day.

**Skills developed in your child?**

Self-confidence, social, sharing, communication, articulation, numerical, shapes, writing skills.

**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.

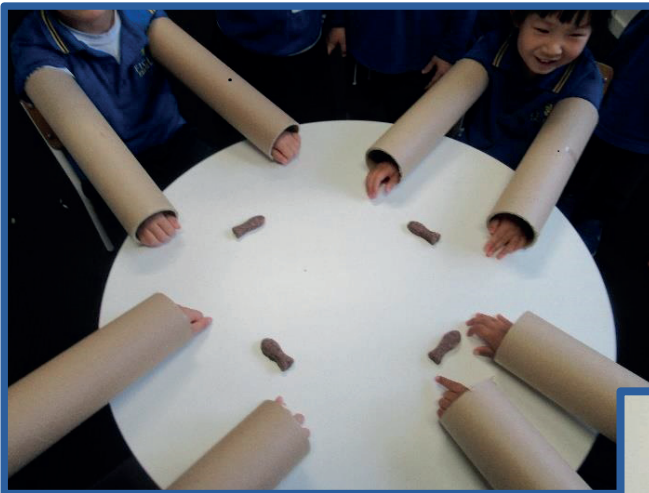
## Philosophical Experiment:

by Ficino Preschool children

The concept of service is exemplified in this little experiment which is recognisable from a story told by HH Maharaji Sri Santananda Saraswati.

**How do you feed yourself when you can't bend your arms?**

Here are some innovative approaches that show lateral thinking!



*One of the children worked it out:*

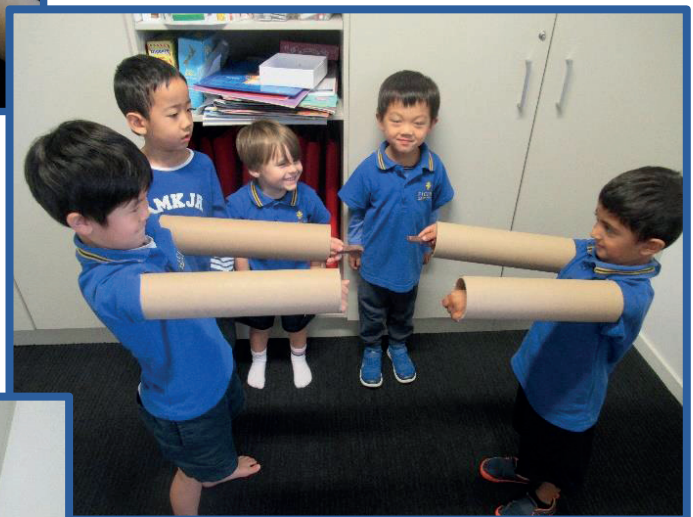
*"Each has to feed the other"*

*"Throw it in my mouth."*

*"You put it in my foot and then I can eat it."*

*"Put your mouth to the table."*

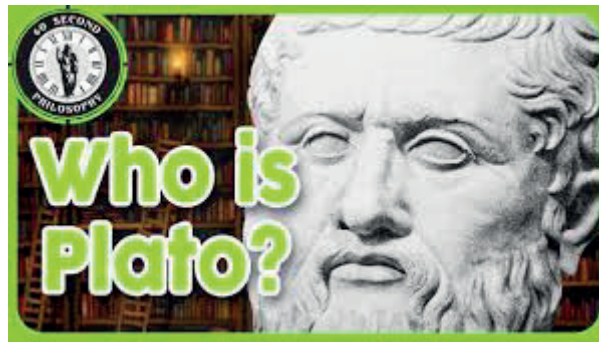
*"Pull it through the hole"*



**The hidden meaning behind this exercise was the need to serve each other.**

Irene Callen

## “Plato And The Modern World” - study week August 2020.



### **Is Plato relevant in 2020?**

Plato’s work is highly relevant to the critical issues facing the modern world. Should we be satisfied with our leaders in New Zealand, the US, Lebanon etc? What objectives and ideas should we expect our leaders to be pursuing? How should we, and our leaders, actually be behaving and living our lives?

These questions about how we are to live our lives were answered during the week because Plato’s work is to be lived. Its use is in guiding our behaviour. Its objective is maximum happiness. Plato’s work is more than just knowing quotes that rattle around in our heads. It is of least benefit if used as an academic exercise. The true meaning of Plato’s work can only be understood through action.

Plato is a constant steady reference point for the modern world – a world which is always changing.

### **My experience & the focus of the week**

I was fortunate to attend this Plato study week led by Dr David Horan of the Dublin School of Philosophy. The focus was on how Plato’s Laws; books 3, 4, and 5 could be useful in our lives. The purpose of the week was to:

- Equip ourselves with the tools to live our lives. It was not a “study bubble”.
- Establish the truth of Plato’s words.

The study week is normally held in either in Greece or in Dublin. Due to Covid, it was an online program which meant that I was able to attend in residence at the School’s West Tamaki Road Auckland premises along with 7 others. We were joined (online) by fellow New Zealanders in Auckland and Wellington for group work. We had 2 zoom meetings per day with Dr Horan which included Australian, English and Americans with up to 300 people online.

The 7 days were intense. We started with meditation at 6am, followed by our group work and zoom meetings finishing between 9pm and midnight each day. The 4 hour break in the middle of the day meant I was able to get some exercise,



and a nap. Zoom was one of the critical enablers. It meant we were part of a world-wide conference. I often feel “zoom fatigue”, but the cost of zoom fatigue was far outweighed by the benefits.

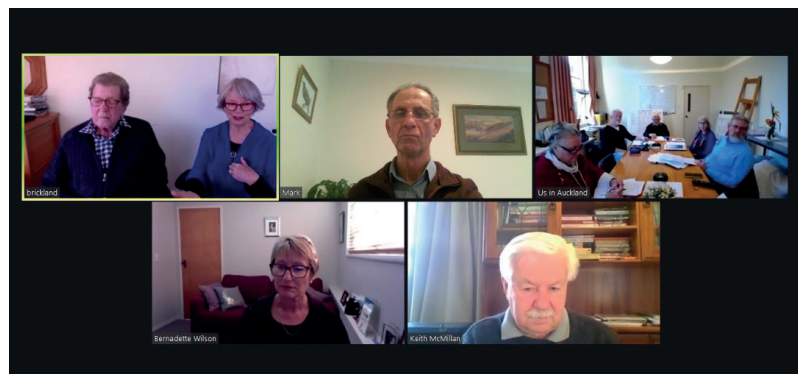
### Our New Zealand Group

Allen Russell, Matthew Roscoe, Rosemary Innes-Jones, Rosemary Auld, Mark Rassie, Bernadette Wilson, Keith McMillan, Paul and Margaret Brickland, Andrew Holdcroft.



*Rosemary Innes-Jones, Matthew Roscoe, Andrew Holdcroft, Rosemary Auld and Russell Allen in residence for the Plato Week*

A snapshot from a Zoom session of NZers taking part in the Plato online Study week.



### **The messages that stay with me are:**

1. From Dr Horan (paraphrased) Use wisdom to look for the truth not to suspect falsehood. Using our wisdom to suspect falsehood carries a price. The price is that truth will never be found when seeking or suspecting falsehoods. Wisdom begins in wonder, not in cynicism.
2. “...So much use is made of the word these days, but nothing seems to mean anything. The meaning is in the action...” Sri Santananda Saraswati
3. From Plotinus.... “...Blessed things are still. They require no movement because they are complete and perfect....”
4. From Plato:

Plato, *Laws*, Book V, 732a-b. Paraphrase

**To stop thinking that our own Ignorance is wisdom...  
flee from our intense self-love...  
always keep with someone better than ourselves,  
without feeling any shame in doing so.**

### **My expectations & experience (continued)**

My expectations for the week were that I would get an understanding of what this Plato stuff was all about – although I did not know how, or even if, that understanding would be of any use to me. I was amazed at both how much I learned and also at how useful it could be in my life. The words that I heard, read and (especially) discussed resonated deeply within myself. It felt like the words were being absorbed within me and became part of me. Hopefully my comments below will show some of the ideas that we were immersed in for up to 18 hours a day. Being in residence with no work or other outside distractions meant that, for me, there was a constant moving forward of deep understanding.

### **Dr David Horan**

It was amazing to be present during his sessions. Dr David Horan is not only an internationally respected Plato scholar but also an amazing listener. Most of his sessions were Q & A. Sometimes a participant presented a rambling monologue, a stream of unrelated and disjointed thoughts. He would listen to the end. He would not interject. I was often left confused and wondering how he would answer. He would simply pause. Then he would respond. His response demonstrated that he fully understood the person's issue. His response crystallised the person's issue, for them, and for us, and he provided useful, insightful answers that were applicable not only to the participant but also useful to our own lives.

### **Guest lecturers**

There were also many powerful guest lecturers who had an amazing ability to show the link between Plato and our modern times. The speakers and their topics included:

- A guest lecture from the Head of the school in London, Donald Lambie
- Mother nature (the environment.)
- Education.
- Divine law and reason.
- The understanding of the Laws of nature through Ayurveda and the Adventure of COVID-19.
- Ficino.
- Plato's last word – reverence.
- The adventures of Plato's 3 journeys to Syracuse (Plato's seventh epistle).

The presenters are just students, as I am, but with a lot more experience and it was great to experience and benefit from their love and desire to serve through their presentations.

### **How to use the messages – bringing meaning into our every day activities, behaviours and attitudes**

I learned:

How to listen (and that I don't currently listen very much). For the week, we were asked to set aside our considerations, views, opinions and take a journey of the heart with Plato...on the soul. If we allowed the veil of our perception and prejudices to remain in front of us we would be prevented from hearing the meaning of Plato.

How to deal with conflict to achieve concord, truth and unity, and to avoid division and factionalism.

How to find truth through seeking truth instead of suspecting falsehoods.

To keep it simple. We need to hear things in simple and obvious ways. Get the core words and meaning. Don't change Plato's words and don't get hung up on definitions of words. It is about the dawning of understanding which is non-verbal and the meaning is in the action. For me God used to mean a remote separated thing, but over time God has come to mean everything; God is, and is in, everything. This has created a greater connection to God and people around me. My behaviour has become slightly less destructive and more constructive to people around me because I do not want to destroy what is part of me. This showed me that the greatest difficulties of the world come about from having fixed meanings of the word.

Service. Serve the laws. People should compete – not for wealth – but for service to the laws.

Plato provides food for reflection, in silence, and it will produce a reverence. It is least beneficial if limited to being food for discursive thought.

### **The purpose of the lawgiver**

The purpose of the lawgiver is to educate the population to become excellent.

Societies laws should have as their objective the achievement of freedom, wisdom and friendship to ourselves.

The achievement of freedom, wisdom and friendship to ourselves also applies to the laws that we use as individuals to govern ourselves.

An educator will melt the heart of the person intent on unjust acts with the result being that there is less need for restrictive laws. Persuasion is better at achieving concord than enactment of a law.

A lawgiver should avoid where possible laws that limit, control and punish.

### **Freedom, Wisdom, Friendship**

Donald Lambie gave a one hour zoom lecture and discussed wisdom and freedom. He discussed the law of habeus corpus -freedom from arbitrary arrest

-as an example of a good law. Freedom of speech is another example of a good law. Laws that create victims are not good laws.

Donald Lambie also discussed wisdom as a delicate force that needs support from institutions and people. It will not stand up for itself.

True friends have all things in common, even the way they see and hear things. Eyes ears and hands seem to see hear and act in common. How big is our circle of friends that have things in common? The refusal to share keeps our circle of true friends small and suspicion grows.

### **Concord and Unity overcoming Faction and Division**

Plato describes conflicts that will exist when trying to make a society that is free, wise and a friend to itself. We can resolve conflict without creating enmity within if we have the following attitudes:

- Recognising that the real problems are divisions and factions which are evil and destructive. Accept that differences of opinion exist and look to have the best of each opinion rather than destroying bits of each other.
- “Knowing” is a fixed position. Stop thinking that you know when you don’t. Listen to the other person. “Could the other person be right?” as a question is the death sentence for “knowing”. Reason with people and they will see reason.
- “Digest slander without a murmur – as if you heard nothing.

### **Plato’s last word: Reverence**

Reverence (having a deep respect and honour) for parents, teachers and gods will result in people living and behaving justly. Do not bequeath gold to your children, but a sense of reverence.

### **Conclusion**

Overall the week far surpassed any expectations I could have had. I will definitely attend next year and I would highly recommend the week to anyone interested in exploring how to become, or to be, a happier, better, or realised person.

Andrew Holdcroft

Andrew Holdcroft is a business interruption consultant, husband, father, skier and student of the school since 2019. Andrew was born in Adelaide, Australia and his journey has taken him to live in remote South Australia and Europe. He now lives in Auckland with his family.

