



## Welcome to Issue no. 4

### A few new developments:

**There is now an Insight website**, just published, which shows some additional material. Readers may like to view photos from the Festival of Spirit held in London last year, read more articles as well as commenting on the blog. **Go to [Insightweb](#)**.

This newsletter will soon be sent out in Spanish for the first time. If you know any Spanish-speakers who would be interested, please let me know and I can subscribe them to the Spanish version.

With very best wishes, Christine Lambie



## Plato Studies

### David Horan, Dublin

#### ***When did you first become interested in Plato?***

I had heard of Plato before I joined the philosophy school at the age of 20 but I had never read any of his works. My background of study was the natural sciences and this predisposed me to overvalue the recent and undervalue the ancient sources.

On joining the school, Plato appeared on the suggested reading list so I bought the Republic and began to read it. It is not a short work but I read through with great ease and interest as if it were a novel, driven by sheer curiosity as to what would happen next. Every aspect of the work attracted

me and awoke something within me which has never really been extinguished since.

In the early eighties I was asked by the leader of the Dublin School to run a Plato event of some sort at Townley Hall. For immediate and direct appeal to those who were new to Plato we performed dramatisations of the dialogues. The combination of the stage performances with reading of selected passages has been the tried and tested and very successful format for the Dublin School's 'Day with Plato' event for the past 24 years – 2012 will be our 25<sup>th</sup> year.

Because of the Day with Plato we began the study of Plato with some earnestness and this brought a responsibility to guide this study in order to ensure that we were properly prepared for our public events, which came to include a public lecture series and residential weeks. Through the needs of these events, and the study which they required, my own interest grew and refined.

***Why do you think Plato is so important? And what effect does studying Plato have on people?***

As the study and work on Plato proceeds, I am more and more satisfied that the statement by Mr MacLaren, 'Plato is pure reason' is the true key to the power and transformative effect of his works. The experience of all of those who are benefited by the study is that it works, just like light, by banishing darkness, revealing and illuminating. Many people come to the study events and the courses but the real importance of the work lies in the fact that it delivers reason and light.

***Can you tell something about how you came to be translating the dialogues?***

In 2006 a senior student of the Dublin school was attending the Day with Plato, and was very struck by the fact that a particular word in the translation we were using could be translated in a different way. The alternative translation of the word changed the whole import of the sentence and the student asked me, why could we not have a completely fresh translation of Plato's entire works.

I estimated that this would be a ten-year full time project for myself, advised him of this and thought that would be the end of the matter. However, in 2007 he contacted me again and said that he would provide financial support so that I could leave my employment and devote myself to Plato translation.

On March 1, 2008 I began the full-time project, which also had to include much improvement of my quite slender knowledge of Greek. The project is now in its fourth year and the following general guidelines have evolved:

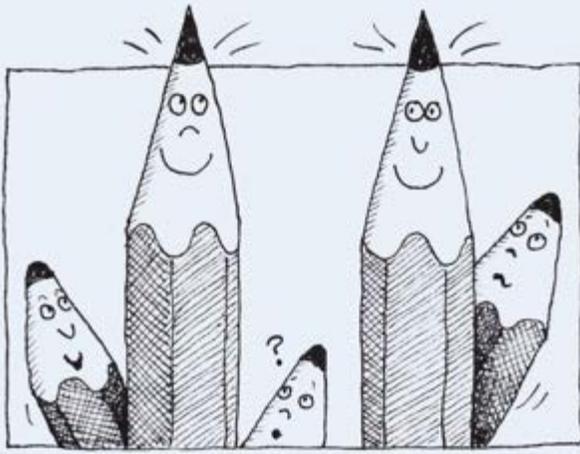
- It's not just a matter of translating Greek; we are translating philosophy.
- Reading groups and study gatherings are essential to the development of the project, the refinement of the translation and the understanding of the dialogues.
- The translation style is well established now and is based upon:
  - Clarity of expression of the philosophic point being made
  - Fidelity to the original Greek text
  - Fidelity to the literary art and genius of Plato
  - Ease of readability and comprehension by the reader
  - Minimisation of personal interpretation or overlay

Overall the rate of progress has been very satisfactory. 20% of the dialogues has now been translated to varying degrees of revision. The revision process for all dialogues will be ongoing throughout the project's entire ten year duration and publication will only be considered when the entire corpus has been translated and reviewed for consistency and coherence of approach and style.

In 2006 the Melbourne School took the brave step of inviting my wife and me to lead a Plato Week in Australia and they have renewed that invitation every year since then. This had led to other events in Perth, Sydney and Brisbane, as well as Wellington and Auckland, New Zealand where they have also held a Plato Week in 2011 which will be repeated in 2012. The Dutch School has been inviting us to run weekends for the past few years and they have asked us to conduct a Plato week in 2012, and so too has the Johannesburg School, South Africa. Next year will also see the first Plato Week at Waterperry which we are very honoured to be asked to lead.

***Where do you see Plato studies going in future?***

I have always been very struck by Shri Shantananda Saraswati's statement that "The work simply goes on, and it is always complete" and on this basis I never waver in my confidence that the works of Plato will continue to serve humanity's need for the light of truth, as they have done for thousands of years. It is a privilege to be of service in putting the dialogues of Plato to work, presenting them to others and seeing the illumination and consciousness which they deliver.



**1. Just This Day** will be on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> this year. Elizabeth Edmunds writes: Our world is busy and in the turmoil we forget we all share the same space. Go beyond nationality, religious belief or difference and remember the still, silent present where everything is united. Go to [JustThisDay](#).

**Stumbling on Happiness** by Dan Gilbert on TED, challenges the idea that we'll be miserable if we

don't get what we want. Our "psychological immune system" lets us feel truly happy even when things don't go as planned. See [TEDGilbert](#)

**3. Land Value Taxation** – is it coming back onto the public agenda? See this article in the Financial Times which cites New South Wales as a working example. Go to [FT](#).

**4. Sanskrit website:** Helen Harper (London) manages the website to provide communication with Sanskrit teachers and students. Here are past papers, exam syllabi, study support materials and candidate information for exams. You can also apply here for your copy of Sanskrit Review. Go to [SanskritExams](#)

**5. Steve Jobs** addressed Stanford in 2005, drawing on some of the most pivotal moments in his life. He talked about calligraphy, lessons from love and loss, and death. Go to [SteveJobs](#)



## Cultural Day

### Chris Ford, Melbourne

"Now let us begin the day with a short period of peace and stillness. . ."

So will begin the 28<sup>th</sup> Cultural Day at the Melbourne School of Philosophy to about 150 new students and guests on November 6, 2011.

The day starts relatively early at 8.30 am on a Sunday morning which is quite an effort considering the event is competing with the pleasure of reading a Sunday paper or sharing a

cappuccino with friends.

There is an opening address and then students attend three workshops during the day, and finally come together late in the afternoon to a concert that can include aspects of music, drama, sacred art, and philosophical discussion. To keep all elements of the being in balance, the day is punctuated with a morning and afternoon refreshment break and a vegetarian lunch, described as a veritable feast for the eyes and palate.

The number of introductory students participating in the day can range from 100 to 200 students, and to ensure there is a diverse and rich selection of topics, the day requires between 20 to 25 presentations.

Essentially the presentations offered come from a core group of interests such as:

- Plato, singing, Sanskrit, art, and Shakespeare,

But these are always sprinkled with topics that tantalise and puzzle the mind in a way that causes the student to question their long held beliefs. Some more exotic or esoteric topics presented include:

- 'Marvellous Mystics or Magnificent Misfits', 'Silent Seeing' and 'Keeping your head'.

As with the previous Cultural Days, they all connect back to 1997 where a call was made to meet a current need of providing something more to the students of the introductory courses.

Since its humble beginnings the Cultural Day is now firmly established in the School's yearly calendar with Cultural Days held twice a year. Despite the passage of 14 years from the inaugural Cultural Day, the format and structure of the day remains relatively unchanged with students from all levels coming together to play their part in bringing about a day full of bliss, knowledge, and truth.

Including presenters, up to 100 senior students are in attendance; it is a great opportunity for everyone to put into practice the philosophical principles they have learnt. To foster unity, a particular theme is provided for the helpers. Last term it was from Thomas A Kempis: "Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds. . ."

The effect of the presentations can be very special, and one student expressed this:

*"I like most the learning and the self discovery. The challenge of old belief systems and the awakening of new possibilities."*

The Cultural Day now is open to all students from parts 1-9, and also welcomes guests of participating students. A small number of guests have decided to enroll in philosophy as result of experiencing a Cultural Day. However the main aim of the Cultural Day is to nourish and awaken introductory students to the unity and harmony of the world through the good material and good company of the more senior students in the School.

For more information see the cultural day page at [MelbourneSchool](#)



## Book Review

### The Shakespearean Ethic, by John Vyvyan

This is a re-publication of the first of a trio of books by John Vyvyan on Shakespeare originally published 50 years ago. It provides an insight into Shakespeare's philosophy concerning self-knowledge and self-sovereignty. Excellent. Available on Amazon and at the London School bookshop.

***The School in Wellington, NZ, started the Christchurch branch five years ago.***



# Earthquake

Paulette Harraway, Christchurch, New Zealand

As I write this we have just experienced quake no. 7430 at magnitude 3.8 at a depth of 8.13km expending around 7000 tonnes of energy, situated about Bridle Path Road in Heathcote Valley - we all now talk like armchair-expert-seismologists.

I am working at the hospital on a night shift and the earthquakes still make me hold my breath - the building shakes vigorously. I am frightened and wondering if it will stop... this too has become a regular feature of our lives.

In September it was one year since the first earthquake literally threw us out of our beds at 4 am in the morning. It was terrifying, and our home was sloshing around in the ground like a washing

machine on spin cycle.

I couldn't stand and clung to the door frame, my sons were trying to get upstairs to me by crawling on all fours, paintings were flying off the walls and heavy furniture jumped across the floor, the sound was like a freight train speeding past - we were shouting to each other and could barely hear.

We could hear the house creaking and groaning and as I watched the walls and roof crack in front of my eyes... I genuinely didn't know what to do, whether to stay put or rush outside. But panic took hold and the next thing I remember we were standing outside on the road, the shaking had stopped for an instant but outside was devastating ... houses were ripped apart and great cracks had opened in the road, the ground was sunk in places and risen in others. There was water flooding out of the ground and we were knee-deep in mud and water. Curious volcano-like eruptions of sand had appeared everywhere, the air was unnaturally warm with a smell of sulphur.

Our neighbours shared similar experiences and we huddled together on the road not knowing what to do as tremor after tremor hit. There were 38 aftershocks in the next twelve hours.

I was at work in February when the earthquake that claimed 181 lives hit; I work as a nurse at Christchurch Hospital and was in the caesarean section post anaesthetic care unit, when the room was violently shaken. My immediate response was to cover the patient and her baby with my body.

I now know the initial shock was 40 seconds and in that time the room rocked and swayed more than I imagined possible. Beds and trolleys leapt off the ground, equipment fell off benches, ceiling panels and lights began to fall. We nervously laughed and commented on what a big aftershock that was. But then the hospital alarm bells rang and a voice over the intercom advised us we were in a state of emergency and to prepare for mass casualties. The loss of those precious lives that day confused and disorientated me and many others. We had all survived a much larger earthquake of 7.1 - how could this happen again and how could it be worse?

I have witnessed horrifying acts of nature or man-made disasters in other parts of the world but this was my town, my home, my people and that makes understanding this so difficult. Each day as I travel to work I am still taken aback by all the rubble and upheaval of the ground and the many vacant sections. There are suburbs that will no longer exist as they are unsafe to rebuild on and there is a hesitancy to recommence development as the land still trembles.

We are a community of 386,100 souls in a country of 4,412,432, small by world standards but the response from around the world has been overwhelming. Community spirit has shone throughout this long hard year not only locally but on a national level. We have witnessed courage, creativity and compassion with a major focus on family and neighbourly support.

Once the initial requirements of safety, shelter, health and well-being were taken care of, there was recognition that the community needed cultural and spiritual support. What arose from this were gatherings that included music, art and communion; projects swiftly arose through social networking for people to gather and regroup. This has enabled businesses to continue with a shift to less-affected suburbs and even to rise up again on the peripheries of the defunct city centre.

The Christchurch branch of the School of Philosophy has continued; we have been able to hold meetings as usual. For me they were grounding and supportive. We were able to discuss events and our experiences in a calm environment and to reflect on the situation once removed from the emotion and fear swirling about in our community.

There have been many aspects of the philosophy teachings that I have found useful, falling still and focussing on beauty, which still surrounds me. Paying attention to my words and actions provides me with choice on how I respond to the challenges in front of me.

It is difficult to imagine the future as I had done before. For me and many others the situation is too big to deal with; I can only manage a tiny chunk at a time. Initially my thoughts turned to leaving Christchurch and taking my family as far away as possible.

What would a wise woman or man do? That statement popped in my head many times. What makes me laugh is that I answered it a few times but that wouldn't be printable... what has been interesting is that I have been required to live in the moment in the truest sense. I believed I had been successfully practising staying in the present moment on a day to day basis, but there is nothing like living in a disaster on a day to day basis to reaffirm where the present moment truly is.

## Thanks for reading

Subscribe Free – click on the link below to sign up.

Please keep that feedback coming. I need all your suggestions of personal stories, insights, links, articles, cartoons, video clips – anything that will be of interest to our philosophy community. Do you know someone in the School who has an interesting story to tell? E-mail me at: [editor@seslondon.org](mailto:editor@seslondon.org). Thanks again for reading, CL

The views in expressed in this document are not necessarily those of the Fellowship of the School of Economic Science

School of Economic Science, 11 Mandeville Place, London W1U 3AJ  
Charity No. 313115 and SC039950

[schooleconomicsscience.org](http://schooleconomicsscience.org)