

PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTORY COURSE - WISDOM

Session One

The Wisdom Within

The Course

1. **The Wisdom Within:** *What is Wisdom? Why study philosophy?*
2. **Know Thyself:** *Self-discovery. Self-knowledge. Who or what am I? What is my potential in living? What is my nature? These questions are as old as mankind itself.*
3. **Being Awake:** *Being Awake. Different levels of awareness. What is our usual state of awareness? Are there greater levels of awareness? If so, how may we gain access to them? In the last few years Mindfulness has become increasingly well-known. We will consider aspects of this on both weeks 3 and 4.*
4. **The Present Moment:** *What is the potential of the present moment? We will consider the power of attention to connect with the present moment.*
5. **Living Justly:** *Living Justly. What is justice and injustice? What does it mean to live justly? In particular we will look at what Plato has to say on this subject.*
6. **The Three-fold Energy:** *How to understand and use energy well. Can we increase the energy available to us?*
7. **The Light of Reason:** *We will consider the purpose of reason and how it may be strengthened.*
8. **The Power of Beauty:** *What is beauty? What is its purpose? Can we experience beauty more widely and deeply?*
9. **Unity in Diversity:** *How to see unity in diversity, the common thread of life?*
10. **The Desire for Truth:** *How does the desire for truth show itself. How may it be satisfied?*

Why Study Philosophy?

Just a few reasons

1. Philosophy gives us the opportunity to think more deeply about the subjects that really matter to us, e.g. What is truth? Who am I? What is this universe? What is my part in it? What is freedom? How can I find meaning and satisfaction in life?
2. Philosophy deals with the big ideas which govern human life. It affects all of our lives much more than may be obvious. For example, Plato lived over 2000 years ago and what he said about subjects such as truth, beauty and justice have influenced the western world to this day. During this course we will be considering some of these ideas. The world in which we live is shaped by philosophy, whether we know it or not.
3. When other areas of life fall into a state of uncertainty or doubt, philosophy can provide direction, and a sense of certainty.
4. Philosophy can give us a greater sense of perspective on life.
5. Philosophy can simplify, clarify and enrich our lives.
6. Philosophy can raise awareness, to enable us to see things as they are and bring us closer to our true selves. It is the supreme means of self-discovery.

Summary of Session One

1. The course as a whole
2. Why study philosophy?
3. Philosophy and Wisdom
4. Being and awareness; the awareness exercise.

Practice for the Week

1. Practise the awareness exercise at least twice per day.
2. Ask the question at any time **“What would a wise man or woman do here?”**

Quotations

Socrates

Plato, Apology 38

The unexamined life is not worth living.

Plato

The Republic, Book VI:488

The sailors are quarrelling with one another about the steering – everyone is of the opinion that he has the right to steer, though he has not learned the art of navigation. They throng about the captain, imploring him to give them the helm. If at any time they do not prevail, but others are preferred to them, they kill the others or throw them overboard. Then having chained up the captain they mutiny and take possession of the ship and make free with the stores.

Plato

The Republic, Book VI, 488

...the true pilot must pay attention to the year and seasons, the sky, stars and winds, and whatever else belongs to the art of navigation...

Pierre Hadot

Philosophy as a Way of Life, Ch 11

Philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practised at each instant, and the

goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life ... Philosophy was a way of life, both in its exercise and effort to achieve wisdom, and in its goal, wisdom itself. For real wisdom does not merely cause us to know: it makes us “be” in a different way ... Such is the lesson of ancient philosophy: an invitation to each human being to transform himself. Philosophy is a conversion, a transformation of one's way of being and living, and a quest for wisdom.

Marcel Proust

Remembrance of Things Past, 5/2

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

Albert Einstein (*attributed to him in 1950*)

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.

Epicurus

Letter to Menoeceus

Let no one be slow to seek wisdom when he is young, nor weary in the search of it when he has grown old. For no age is too early or too late for the benefits of philosophy.

Diagram

