

The Acropolis

Philosophy for today

Epigenetics - A new science of health
Synchronicity
Art, Poetry, Education and more!

No. 3 Sept 2020



Cover Image inspired by the workshop
Philosophy, A Way of Living



What is The Acropolis?

In ancient Athens the Acropolis, literally meaning the High City, was the place which supported the highest ideals of the people. The founder of New Acropolis International, Professor George Livraga, chose this name to capture the key objective of philosophy; that we as individuals build a new high city within, that we discover the heights of our own potential, so that we may externally build a new high city, a new and better world, together. The Acropolis magazine is motivated by this objective and aims to share inspiring content, combining all the major endeavours of philosophy, art, science, education and culture.

About Us

New Acropolis is an international organisation working in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering. Our aim is to revive philosophy as a means of renewal and transformation and to offer a holistic education that can develop both our human potential as well as the practical skills needed in order to meet the challenges of today and to create a better society.

For further details please visit: www.acropolis.ie



What's inside

4	Editorial	Alain Impellizzeri
6	Science Epigenetics	Michael Ward
8	Psychology Synchronicity	Aidan Murphy
10	Art Improvisation in Art and Life	Natalia Lema
12	Health Nothing to Cry Over: The Marvel of Garlic	Adrian Kennedy
13	Health Smashed Twice-Cooked Potatoes with Leeks and Green Garlic	Alison Roman
14	Poetry review: A Psalm of Life	Ivona Ward
16	History Portrait of a Lady	Monika Edin
18	Education Secondary Education	Martin McGranaghan
20	Parting Thoughts	

What we lack is an ideal, an ideal of a philosophical way of life.

Any new beginning carries uncertainties. But for a very long time we haven't had many. The caution of the Greek sages is appropriate: do not give in to extremes and think before acting.

Our values are being called into question around the world, where a level of violence is taking hold, as we have seen through the summer. Whether it is because a club didn't win their dream cup, or because a bus driver asks a passenger to put on his mask, or because others refuse the guidelines to contain the pandemic. It is as if good citizenship and good manners, elementary principles of order, have become foreign to part of the population, affecting all ages and social conditions.

Despite the reminders, by all the means of communication, of the values to be shared, it appears that wills are weakening, and the COVID-19 coronavirus is amplifying uncontrolled irritability.

What we are probably lacking is an ideal of life. Some people think that an ideal and values belong to the same family, because both are related to 'what to do'. But there is a difference between them, not of degree, but of nature. For example, considering solidarity as one of these values, it is different from embracing solidarity in our ideal of life.

The individual who considers solidarity a value will rank it among others and apply it according to circumstances, especially if they think that the circumstances are favourable, according to them, to its application, without putting themselves too much in danger. The one who carries solidarity in their ideal, will integrate it as the very axis of their existence and will constantly mobilise themselves to practice it, despite the circumstances.

Values and an ideal can also be distinguished because values are of the order of plurality while the ideal is always of the order of unity. A unity that connects us to those who share the same ideal on a daily basis.

It is obvious that one should not idealise an ideal and act as a censor with a total refusal of reality. An idealist is not a deluded dreamer. An idealist fights to improve the here and now in the name of their ideal. An idealist is a responsible individual who thinks ideally and acts modestly. And it is in this that an idealist takes up the ideal of the Greek philosophers, that of everyday wisdom which they called prudence, knowing how to do good in the day-to-day.

Having an ideal is a positive response to suffering or evil. Great idealists, like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, for example, reacted to racial discrimination and assumed non-violence to change the living conditions of their fellow citizens.

The ideal of self-control advocated by the Stoics was understood as a positive reaction to the powerful and growing disorders of the Roman Empire. In the absence of an external order, Stoic philosophy proposed the ideal in the name of an internal order.

It is time for us to recover and not simply wait for material measures of a slow order. It is necessary to reorient ourselves internally, to recreate an external peace and to recover a good life together. It is the ideal of a philosophical way of life that we feel the urgency to promote this autumn.

Alain Impellizzeri
Director New Acropolis Ireland

September's Issue

September for many means 'Back to School', so for this issue The Acropolis explores the theme of Education.

But Education as they say is not simply for school goers and should never stop, so for all ages we have some new insights on everything from the science of Epigenetics to wonderful recipes for garlic. A varied and tasty curriculum!

Also with every issue, spreading the philosophical way of life is at the forefront of the magazine's external ethos, but this is also actualised internally within the New Acropolis school through the spirit of collaboration.

For each issue, we invite members to contribute written articles, poems or any visual content which may fit the current theme. This is a great way for people to challenge themselves to write, research or simply have fun trying something new like drawing, painting or graphic design.

So, the bell has rung, let's begin class and enjoy the magazine.



Picture by: Zuzana Majerčíková

*"The true teacher is within us.
A good teacher is someone who can help you to go back
and touch the true teacher within, because
you already have the insight within you."* - **Bell Hook**



EPIGENETICS

A new science of health

“The greatest mistake in the treatment of diseases is that there are physicians for the body and physicians for the soul, although the two cannot be separated.”

-- Plato

With the discovery of DNA in the second half of the nineteenth century, scientists became convinced that human beings were the product of their biological code, that who we are and what we do is already predetermined in our genes. This idea of genetic disposition moved from the scientific world to popular culture with such phrases like “good genes” or “the selfish gene” to describe our behaviour, as documented in the book *Born That Way* which gives a detailed history of the rise of the idea that genes contain the codes that control life. However, during the last twenty years scientists have discovered that we are not only biological robots but that through our conscious choices we can construct our physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. This new field is called Epigenetics.

The word Epigenetics literally means ‘control above the genes’. Dr Bruce Lipton defines Epigenetics as ‘the science of how environmental signals select, modify, and regulate gene activity. This new awareness reveals that our genes are constantly being remodelled in response to life experiences. Which again emphasises that our perceptions of life shape our biology’. These new discoveries change what is called the Central Dogma of Molecular Biology, which states that the flow of information is only in one direction, from DNA to RNA and then to proteins, which are the molecular building blocks that provide for the cell’s structure and behaviour. The information is now in two directions, one from DNA and another from the environment.

The environment has two facets, one internal and the other external. The inner environment is how we think, feel, and act. It is well known how the mind

can affect the body as described in many Eastern and Western philosophies. How the mind affects the body in a positive way is known in the medical community as the placebo effect. The placebo effect is a phenomenon in which the body starts to heal itself even if it only thinks it is receiving medicine. Dawson Church described how our mental state can influence our genes, how being optimistic, regular acts of altruism, and meditation have positive effects on us. Conversely, a mind that is engaged in a negative state, such as anger, hopelessness, blame, or stress can lead to an unhealthy inner state and a detrimental impact on the body. This is referred to as the nocebo effect. The external environment includes our social networks and ecological systems in which we live. Diet, toxins, pollution, and our relationships are examples of external environments that have an impact on gene expression.

The epigraph above from Plato explains that to reach a state of health requires not only physical health but an overall health within the human being, at the mental, emotional, energetic, and physical levels. All these dimensions within the human being are connected and need to be in harmony to reach a state of overall health. Psychosomatic illnesses reflect this idea, if the body is in pain or tired it can affect our mood and thoughts. Likewise a mind that has mental clarity and a heart that is open, has a regenerating impact on the physical body.

In conclusion, the Epigenetics view of life is one where our genes no longer predetermine our destiny, that we blindly follow the “programming” of our genes, but whereby our thoughts, feelings, and actions also have a say in our overall health. Epigenetics verifies what many ancient teachings explain, that health is a natural state of harmony at the different planes of our being and disease is when that harmony is lost. Health for the mind is clarity, for the emotions it is the expression of higher sentiments, for our energies it means to have a sustained rhythm, and for the body it is to avoid excess. These are all activities of conscious development that have very little to do with our genes, rather, the ways in which we choose to transform ourselves and lead a more fulfilling life.

Michael Ward



SYNCRONICITY

CARL JUNG HELPS US JOIN THE DOTS...

Over dinner one evening, Albert Einstein shared his theory of relativity with a young Carl Gustav Jung and planted in his fertile imagination the concept of laws governing space. Dr Jung wondered if similar principles could be at work in the relative dimension of time, and over many years of practicing clinical psychology, along with his own deep inner reflection and introspection, he observed a phenomena of meaningful coincidences which he would eventually define as an acausal connecting principle, or, synchronicity.

The basis of his theory suggests that while causality explains how things are clearly and visibly linked by cause and effect, that there must be another law of life that is at play when two events occur, seemingly unrelated but linked by meaning. Those moments when we think of someone and then they appear or call us out of the blue. When we are struck by a sudden sense of concern for someone, only to later find out that they had an accident. When something is brought to our attention and then that word or idea starts popping up everywhere.

These are basic examples which Jung explained as being curious in isolation but when such occurrences start stacking up, beyond the statistical probability of chance, their significance suggests more than mere coincidence. We enter into the realm of synchronicity and the events, while not linked by direct causation, are linked by meaning. Jung wrote that synchronicity does not explain these phenomena but does help us to understand them. Of the scientifically-inexplicable, so-called parapsychological phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, or déjà vu, Jung wrote 'They are not scientific concepts which could be taken as statements of principle, for no one has yet succeeded in constructing a causal bridge between the elements making up a meaningful coincidence'.

If they are not scientific concepts, what is their worth? Jung saw them as observable insights into the workings of nature, ways to derive meaning from the apparently chaotic, to bypass the limits of reason and connect with an intuition of something greater than





the perspective of our ego. This theory was not openly accepted in its time, as anything that deviated from recognised science was considered pseudo-scientific quackery. Yet Jung was tenacious in his research of the area, conducting experiments in astrology, divination, and other occult traditions to build a compelling body of work in support of his theory. Today the theory is much more widely recognised as valid, though the same challenges could be discussed around the resistance that materialistic science has in understanding the immaterial or metaphysical dimension of life. Outside of psychology, quantum physics is beginning to close the gap between the hyper-empirical science of the nineteenth century and the esoteric traditional sciences of antiquity.

As for CG Jung, a pioneer of the soul, he faced much derision from his peers with admirable courage and strength of character, his interest being in connecting with living principles, not the recognition of his contemporaries. The journey of individuation is often a solitary one but it is a path filled with

meaning. Synchronicity helps us to connect the dots: even if understanding eludes us, we develop a vision of a great network of interconnectivity – that all of life, the whole universe, and even we minor threads in its vast tapestry, are woven together by a force of intelligence that directs us towards purpose.

Aidan Murphy



Improvisation in Art and Life

According to Stephen Nachmanovitch, an American improvisational violinist, improvisation can be used as a tool to aid creativity, which will lead us into a joyful journey. Bach and Mozart were great examples of this approach and were highly imaginative improvisers.

The word 'improvisation' implies, on the one hand, an absence of preparation. But it also means spontaneity. Although to be spontaneous and natural is usually easier said than done, it is only in this way that one can unblock barriers and enter the 'flow'. But maybe we have memories of those poems we were asked to write at school when we felt no inspiration; those paintings we attempted to make long ago but which were not well received by others; those instruments we have explored but didn't manage to master their technique... the list could be endless.

Nachmanovitch reminds us how we can open a door of exploration by the use of improvisation, where there is not just one 'perfect' way but a variety of ways according to each of us. He describes it in the following words: 'The heart of improvisation is the free play of consciousness as it draws, writes, paints, and plays with raw material emerging from the unconscious'. It is a question of activating elements such as playfulness, love, risk, courage, concentration' and more, which are all necessary if we want to realize our inner resources. The inspiration that is needed to channel a higher archetype of beauty is not only about how well we have mastered a technique but also about

discovering our true voice and bringing it to the surface. Sometimes, breakthrough experiences, when we overcome fear, become a source for spontaneous creation and allow us to connect with boundless creative energies that enable us to express what is within us.

An interesting way of looking at improvisation is to realise that when we use words to communicate with others we are improvising, because we don't (generally) rehearse them earlier. The situation becomes more complex when we refer to artistic expressions such as poetry, music, painting, or dance, where the artist has to find the right means to channel the subtle notions of truth or beauty he or she discovers. But although there are different levels of artistic skill and inspiration, we can all become more open to life as a creative experience that involves venturing into new territories and not staying in our comfort zone. Although there has been only one Michelangelo in history, his theory of sculpting can be made accessible to all by making us aware of the sort of eyes and contemplative attitude one needs to develop in order to see what has to be removed from the stone to make a sculpture. Many well-known artists have managed to unlock their potential. Let us not forget that this potential lies dormant within all of us and we can use improvisation to awaken our creativity.

Natalia Lema



Nothing to cry over

The Marvel of Garlic

The history of garlic has provided many recommendations for its use, anywhere from a natural antibiotic all the way to warding off evil spirits. For example, it became custom for Greek midwives to hang garlic cloves in birthing rooms to keep the evil spirits away. As the centuries passed, this ancient custom became commonplace in most European homes. European folklore gives garlic the ability to ward off the 'evil eye'. Central European folk beliefs considered garlic a powerful ward against devils, werewolves, and vampires. At the very least, the Greeks saw the benefit of garlic used in action as Greek athletes would take copious amounts of garlic before competition, and Greek soldiers would consume garlic before going into battle.



Picture by: Conor McMahon

The ancient Greek name for garlic was scorodon. According to Fulder and Blackwood, French physician Henri Leclerc derived this from skaion rodon which he translated as rose puante, or 'stinking rose'.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) has been used for thousands of years for medicinal purposes. Sanskrit records show its medicinal use about 5,000 years ago, and it has been used for at least 3,000 years in Chinese medicine. The Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans used garlic for healing purposes. In 1858, Pasteur noted garlic's antibacterial activity.

Historically, garlic has been used around the world to treat many conditions, including hypertension, infections, and snakebites. Currently, garlic is used for reducing cholesterol levels and cardiovascular risk, as well as for its antineoplastic and antimicrobial properties.

In a study conducted in Russia in 1955, garlic extract used therapeutically was found to bind with heavy metals in the body, aiding their elimination. Workers suffering from chronic lead poisoning while working in industrial plants were given daily doses of garlic extract and saw a decrease in their symptoms. Other experiments that took place in Japan using mercury and cadmium also found that garlic bonded with the heavy metals.

While related to the onion, garlic is nothing to cry over. Here's a delicious recipe to load up with some garlic as we enter into the autumn and cold, long nights are fast approaching. Just be mindful of whom you breathe on after!

Adrian Kennedy



Smashed Twice-Cooked Potatoes with Leeks and Green Garlic

Recipe by Alison Roman

Ingredients

- 2½ pounds medium Yukon Gold potatoes
- ⅓ cup olive oil, plus more for serving
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 leeks, dark-green parts discarded, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 green garlic bulbs, white and pale-green parts only, or 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Recipe Preparation

1. Steam potatoes in a steamer basket in a covered pot filled with 2" water until tender, 15–20 minutes. Transfer potatoes to a plate; let cool. Press with your hand to flatten until skins split and some flesh is exposed (a few may fall apart).
2. Heat half of ⅓ cup oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add half of potatoes; season with salt and pepper. Cook, tossing occasionally, until potatoes start to brown, 8–10 minutes. Add half of leeks and garlic; cook, tossing, until potatoes are brown and crisp and leeks are golden and soft, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Repeat with remaining oil, potatoes, leeks, and garlic.
3. Add lemon zest and juice to potatoes and toss well; season with salt and pepper. Serve drizzled with more oil.

A Psalm of Life

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Do you know this wonderful poem 'A Psalm Of Life' written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow? Words are a powerful tool of expression - they can uplift our soul - when they express generous and noble impulses in us - or bring us down to the ground if they reflect our darker thoughts and feelings.

Beyond just being beautiful, these words from Longfellow transmit a search for courage and legacy of our actions, remembering that we all partake in what is to become. We can inspire or bring things down to the ground... nobody can take away this choice from us.

- Ivona Ward



What the Heart of the
Young Man Said to the Psalmist

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
"Life is but an empty dream!"
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Finds us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing
Learn to labor and to wait.



Portrait of a LADY

An historical profile of Lady Augusta Gregory is a written account of Irish mythology, the Abbey theatre and the Irish literary and cultural revival of the early 20th century. The legacy of this remarkable woman is reflected in many of the great and well known Irish plays - Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, and Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

One of the reasons for dedicating so many years of her life to writing, supporting writers and story-tellers, and collating Ireland's mythological past, seems to have been connecting and preserving the past and the present so that we can better understand our roots and identity, and to create a stronger link between the past and the future. She believed in the power and importance of words to change lives and make history.

She was born Isabella Augusta Persse on March 15th, 1852, in Roxborough, County Galway, Ireland; one of thirteen children. Early on, she was interested in literature but had very limited access to it. At first it seemed like she may stay and look after her family all her life, and she did indeed help manage the estate when her father died. But her path changed when she met and married Sir William Gregory in 1880, when she was 28 years old.

When Sir Gregory met Augusta he had turned a page after an earlier, turbulent, political career. He had become a Member of Parliament for Galway in 1847, was re-elected twice, became a member of the Irish privy council, and was governor of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) for several years. He was also deeply involved in the development of the British Museum and National Gallery. His administration was described as being 'cultured and humane'. Aside from his travels to Ceylon he spent most of his time at his family home in Coole House, near Gort in county Galway. He acted as an intellectual and artistic mentor for Augusta and introduced her to metropolitan literary and social circles. These would later serve as her inspiration for her many plays. They had one son, Robert.

In the 1880s she moved to London, carried out social work, and continued writing, occasionally as a journalist. Back in Ireland she also carried out charitable work in the local workhouse, which she continued until the very last years of her life and which gave her much inspiration for many of the plays she wrote or ideas that she gave to other writers. She encouraged her husband, Sir Gregory, to write his autobiography and she was his editor. She supported and encouraged him to write so that their son, Robert, would be able to understand his father better.

When her husband died, the widowed Lady Gregory refused to re-marry, and it has been noted that her decision prevented her from having to submit to the authority of a second

husband: indeed, her widowhood marked the beginning of her artistic and political reinvention.

During this period she started learning Irish, visited the Aran islands, and began collecting Irish folklore. She gathered all the myths and legends in their original language, almost by going door to door, collecting, archiving and recording Ireland's mythological past. She also offered Coole house as a residence for many artists. This and her immersion in Irish mythology led to her deep friendship with the poet and dramatist, William Butler Yeats. She was his closest friend and confidant for almost 20 years, collaborating with him on his work. Coole house was a base for the restless poet, and a place where she also looked after his physical well being.

One fateful dinner party in 1897 led to another of her remarkable accomplishments: the formation of the project for an Irish national theatre, later the Abbey theatre which she founded with Yeats and Edward Martyn. She acted as the secretary of the organising committee and her social position allowed her to persuade many prominent public figures to act as guarantors for the first performances in 1899. She co-directed the theatre with Yeats and it was again her financial acumen and deep interest in her people that kept the national theatre operating. It is said that he saved every penny she could, only ever travelling third class, stealing sugar sachets from restaurants to give to the actors and writers, and making huge barmbracks each morning for the rehearsals and performances because she was all too aware of the financial conditions of artists.

Lady Gregory; writer, folklorist, and patron of the arts; fiercely interested in people, stories, and history; a very independent and proud, yet caring and empathetic woman, without whom the literary landscape of Ireland might look very different.

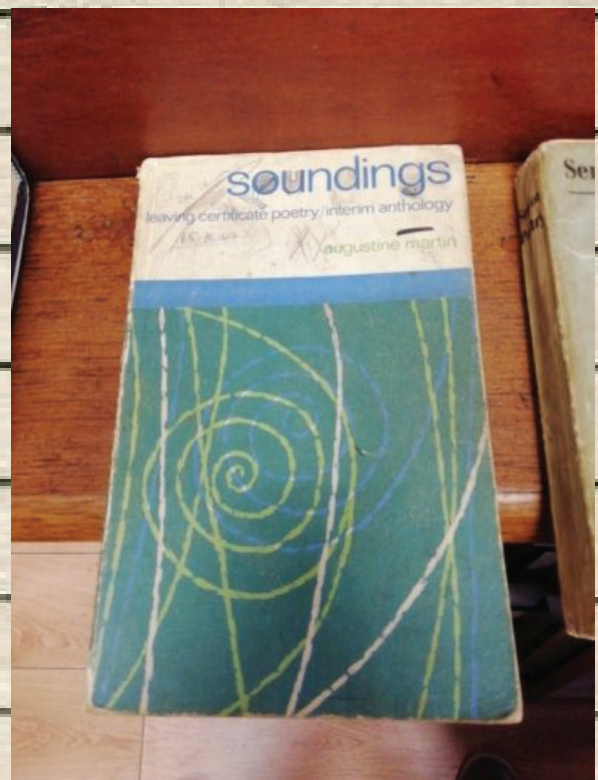
Monika Edin

Secondary Education

Anyone who studied for their Leaving Certificate examination between 1970 and 2000 will doubtless remember Soundings, the poetry book for English which was a compulsory subject. It was published in 1969 as an interim text but endured until the turn of the century. Curiously, ten years after it was withdrawn, the book was back in print as Soundings: poems we did for our leaving cert. The reprint was not destined for school bags, it was not back on the English syllabus, it was, in fact, reprinted due to the popular demand of erstwhile students. With the tedium and drudgery of study and exams far behind them, adults across the country were drawn back to this collection of poems, connecting with something deeper than a mere school textbook.

The original Soundings was compiled and edited by Augustine 'Gus' Martin, a name that probably never registered with the hundreds of thousands of students who studied the anthology that he hoped would 'appeal to every teacher's core and every student's potential', espousing the idea often attributed to William Butler Yeats, who featured so prominently in the book, that education 'is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire'. The poems Gus chose, fuelled by his knowledge, experience, and passion, were destined to transmit much more than mere rhyme to several generations of school-goers.

So it is that we will not remember the names of all our teachers. In many cases we may not even know our teachers, or those who influenced or inspired us. We might look back on our school days and wonder what, beyond the 'three Rs' of reading, writing and arithmetic, did we learn? In doing so,

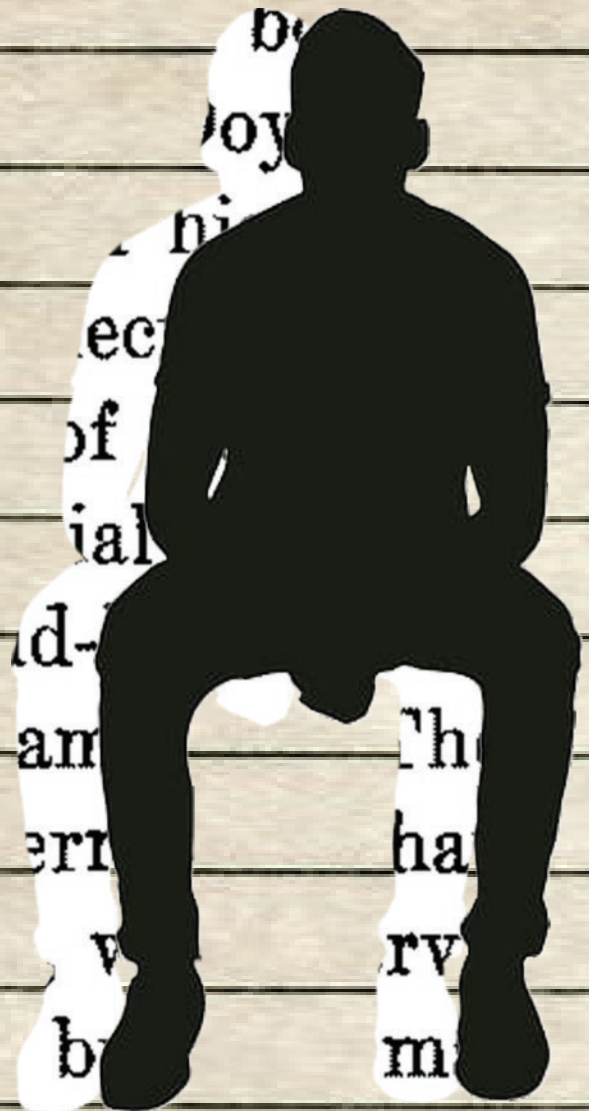


Reprinted due to the popular demand
Soundings: poems we did for our leaving cert,
is back in print.

Education 'is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire'.

however, we make the mistake of being too utilitarian in our analysis, placing our focus on that which can be measured, and overlooking that which was never examined. School is a melting pot of experiences, and often the most meaningful lessons only become apparent many years later, and our abiding memories rarely stem from any schoolbook. Education changes us, and in all our studies, that which remains with us longest and touches us most deeply is often a secondary learning. It may be cliché to draw a distinction between the destination and the journey, but in an age that focuses on exam results and academic achievement we can easily lose the love for learning, and in doing so cut ourselves off from the secondary learnings that help form who we are as individuals and as a society. Plato believed education to be a life-long process for everyone, not just for children or young adults, and that education is not limited only to the mind, but must also include the soul, to encompass art, music, and sport, with an emphasis on beauty. We would all do well to continue our education, broadening our knowledge and experience beyond 'valuable qualifications' and 'marketable skills', to nurture a love for learning, and to find the beauty within.

Martin McGranaghan



PARTING THOUGHTS

The class of Life: 551 BC to present



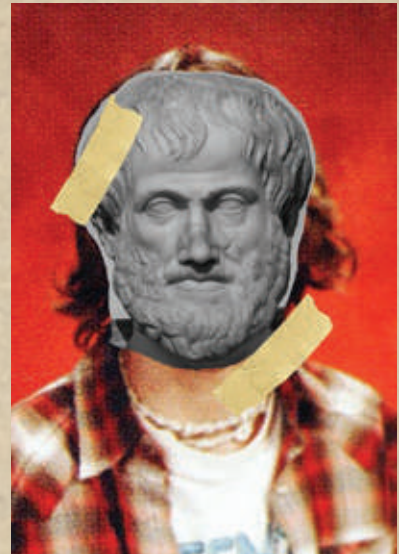
I hear and I forget. I see
and I remember. I do
and I understand

- **Confucius**



The capacity to learn is
a gift, the ability to learn
is a skill, the willingness
to learn is a choice

- **Brian Herbert**



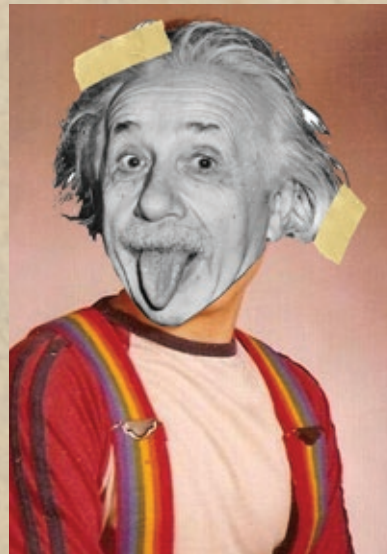
For the things we have
to learn before we can
do them, we learn by
doing them

-**Aristotle**



If you get, give.
If you learn teach.

-**Maya Angelou**



Everyone is a genius.
But if you judge a fish
by its ability to climb a
tree, it will live its whole
life believing it is stupid.

- **Albert Einstein**



[Learn
More](#)

Philosophy for Living

Our Courses & Activities

The great philosophical teachings of East & West explain that we can't change the world if we don't change ourselves. It is through the practice of universal values that we can profoundly transform ourselves by putting our ideas into action.

Times Change, Ideas Remain

Practical philosophy helps develop self-confidence, moral strength and resilience, to face the difficulties and crises of everyday life. It allows us to become protagonists of change in our lives and in our environment. This course is a series of theoretical and practical classes to get to know yourself and learn to face many different circumstances in life without forgetting the art of living with others. Accessible to everyone, we learn how to practice the teachings of the great philosophers of East and West in our daily lives.

