

# ACROPOLIS

Vol 4, Issue 4 | Spring 2021 edition



**On the cover:**

'All in good time'  
(see inside for description)

**In this edition:**

The Spring Equinox  
Human connection  
The Proof is in the Pudding  
All the Time in the World



## On the Cover:

### All in good time

When we sow a seed, for the first few days the excitement is at its peak. We keep checking in every few hours to see if a sprout is visible. As days turn to weeks, our excitement dims and we get lost in the humdrum of routine. If, however, we have been continuing to nourish it regularly, one day suddenly the first pop of green appears and brings such joy! It's the same with our inner self. The results do not show right away and it takes a lot of enthusiasm (like a child or a kitten) to not be demotivated! All we can do is keep giving our best each day and when the time is right, the sapling will shoot through the soil of our lives!

## Acropolis

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### ACROPOLIS

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## Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

I am glad to bring to you the Spring 2021 edition of Acropolis, a quarterly magazine published by volunteers of New Acropolis, South India.

Spring is a season we associate with life, colour and vibes - which also symbolize a renewed enthusiasm and vigour for a practicing philosopher.

Significantly, its a renewal of sorts for the New Acropolis centres in Bangalore as we are now back to conducting our practical philosophy course (Living Philosophy) at the physical centres of Indiranagar and Jayanagar!

I hope to see you in person at one of our centres soon!

Happy reading!

**Ankit Jain**

Editor - Acropolis

# The Spring Equinox

Nataliya Petlevych



Image Credits: By Wikimedia Commons | CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO

We all are cheered by days full of the renewing energy of spring – a beautiful time when nature awakens, the days become longer and everything living rejoices.

There is a special time in the year when the Sun is exactly above the equator, hence the Earth's axis neither points toward nor away from the Sun and day and night are approximately 12 hours long everywhere on Earth. This is known as the equinox, which comes from the Latin "aequus" – "equal" and "nox" – "night".

There are two equinoxes: spring (between 19 and 21 of March) and autumn (between 21 and 23 of September). Astronomically, in the northern hemisphere, spring starts from the moment of the spring equinox, after which the Earth's axis tilts toward the Sun and the days start to get longer than the nights.

The spring equinox is also a special festivity connected to the yearly cycle of the Sun and the renewal of nature, as well as to spiritual resurrection.

Traditionally, the equinox and spring mark the renewal of the world and of life. It is the time when a hero or a god overcomes the darkness of the underworld or death and comes out into the light of life.



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Thus, the Persian New Year festival of Nowruz falls exactly on the Spring Equinox. It is an old festivity with Zoroastrian roots. At the New Year, the world that was created in mythological time is reborn. It transforms from an aged, worn out world into a new one and reclaims its characteristics of life, light, health and fertility, as well as its order in accordance with the principles of a Cosmic Order.

In ancient Rome, before the times of Julius Caesar, the new year started in March and, during the spring equinox, the ancient Romans celebrated the Quinquatria – old Etruscan festivities honouring the goddess of wisdom Minerva. The Roman poet Ovid tells us that it was a celebration of Minerva's birthday. Other authors mention that on that day in ancient times Minerva's temple on one of the sacred hills of Rome was consecrated.

In ancient Greece and Rome, there was another celebration connected precisely with the spring equinox – although it originally came from Phrygia – the mysteries of the Great Mother Cybele and her son Attis. The celebration lasted a whole week and it was on the spring equinox, Hilaria – the day of joy – that Attis was resurrected after his death.

According to Jewish tradition, God made the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day of creation. The Talmud explains that the Sun was created in its spring equinox position and returns to it every 28 years. There is a blessing that is recited every 28 years to express gratitude to the Creator for the Sun.

In Japan, at the time of both the spring and autumn equinoxes, Buddhist followers celebrate O-Higan. Etymologically, it means “the other shore” and is a reminder of the impermanence of everything in this manifested world, and the need to cross the river of existence and reach the Pure Land of Bliss. In this way, it is connected with the spiritual move from the world of suffering to the world of enlightenment.

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There are many more festivities in spring, calculated on the basis of the spring equinox and the lunar calendar. Among others, we can mention the Celtic Beltane, the Babylonian New Year, Passover, Easter, the Tamil New Year, and the Latvian Lieldienas.

All the above-mentioned celebrations and many more connected with spring include different beautiful rituals, especially of purification, that help to manifest the sacred time of the festivity and enable us to reconnect with the meaning of that celebration.

As living parts of nature ourselves, let open our hearts to the spiritual sun and grow and blossom together with the spring.



*All the above-mentioned celebrations and many more connected with spring include different beautiful rituals, especially of purification, that help to manifest the sacred time of the festivity and enable us to reconnect with the meaning of that celebration.*



# The Proof is in the Pudding

Conor McMahon



Image Credits: By Lukas | Pexels | CC BY PD

We all know the phrase, “the proof is in the pudding.” You don’t want a chef to tell you how great his food is. He has to make it to prove himself. The same should be applied to philosophy. What’s the point of a degree in philosophy if you’re not living it? Epictetus supported this belief saying, ‘A builder does not say, “Listen to me talking about the Art of Building”’. In this way our knowledge shines through in the things we do. And if pudding is the proof of a chef, what is the pudding of a philosopher and how do we make it?

For the Stoics, philosophy was primarily about the Art of Living. But this is not so easy as Seneca observed, ‘Just as some dyes are readily absorbed by the wool, others only after repeated soaking. It must soak in, not just giving a tinge of colour but a real deep dye, or it cannot deliver on any of its promises’.

In both Buddhism and Stoicism there is a real emphasis on living the practices and making them part of your daily life. Like paying attention to tying your shoelace. It’s funny to look back and see that the mind’s initial reaction to laughing at this was a mask of fear at the prospect of breaking the endless stream of thinking. This is what’s meant by the phrase, ‘when you’re washing your hands, wash your hands’.

Be at one with the task and stop thinking about what you're going to have for dinner or what you're going to watch next on TV.

Most of the time as we move through the world we are responding to an unconscious belief system that's causing emotions to arise and for us to act in different ways. We're buying food in the supermarket and we look at the floor instead of chatting with the cashier. We might tell ourselves we don't want to bother them, or if we talk to them today, then we'll be compelled to talk to them tomorrow. All these thoughts are flashing through our minds often without us even being aware of them, telling us that danger is lurking in the tall grass. And often these thoughts are misleading or blown out of proportion.

So how do we become aware of these unconscious systems? We need to take conscious action and move towards the uncomfortable feelings instead of away from them. We need to step out of our comfort zone and engage in the battlefield of life. Through action, we can see reality more clearly and begin to dissolve the fantasies created by our mind. Soon those uncomfortable feelings become a guiding force, and we can use them as opportunities to learn and not to run for cover.

Part of this is also accepting that things can and will get worse. There's no use being calm only when surrounded by candles in the comfort of your own home. As Seneca said, 'The sea is calm now but do not trust it. Pleasure boats that were out all morning are sunk before the day is over'.

As humans, we have the ability to change by looking at our first response. First, we monitor, then we make changes. For example, the next time you're driving and someone cuts in front of you, observe the instinctive reaction to lash out and shout back at them. Create some space between you and the reaction. When you do this you'll find yourself suddenly in control, and realizing that you don't have to get angry. It's not a given. Even better, once you use this as a practice you can welcome the bad driving of others with humor as they are helping you on the spiritual path. As the Dalai Lama said, 'Without an enemy's action, there is no possibility for patience or tolerance to arise'.



*Through action we can see reality more clearly and begin to dissolve the fantasies created by our mind.*





# All the Time in the World

Sivan Barzilay

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Image by silviarita from Pixabay

For many of us who live in big cities, Time is something we always lack. We find ourselves struggling to reach places on time, to submit our work on time, to wake up on time, and the list can go on and on... If only someone could give us a little more time to complete everything we want to. If only someone could teach us how to stop time from always moving forward, as if it is falling through our fingers.

Then came COVID-19, and among many other things, it had some impact on the way we work with time, the way we experience the present moment, and the way we imagine the future.

Being at home during the months of the lockdown, the question of how much more time is needed before we can return to our familiar lives, has come up in many of our conversations. The same Time that was moving so fast just a few months ago, seemed to move slower...

I heard friends complain about how COVID put us 'on hold' and made us waste precious time in which we could have travelled to one more exotic place, met new people, and done more fun activities. A precious year has gone for a toss...



*We give thanks for pain and mistakes, because pain and mistakes, if we have overcome them, or are trying to overcome them, have placed us directly on the path of experience*



But while I write this article, when external movement seems to be on the rise again, it catches us almost by surprise; time again seems to be running away fast.

So let's talk a little about Time, its movement and its use. It is a most basic concept of the day-to-day, which almost all our daily actions refer to, and at the same time it is the most fluid, abstract concept we might come across.

"What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know." – Saint Augustine (1)

As mentioned in the above quote, we are all familiar with it, but unable to explain what it is. While we do have ways to measure time, the experience of its movement can be different for different people. What is considered a lot of time for one, might be too short for another... The same 10 minutes can feel like a lot on one occasion, and like almost nothing on another occasion. In some incidents time is an ally, while in others, it is like a vicious enemy we fight with.

So not only do we find it difficult to explain, but it seems that we experience its movement in different ways, based on what we do, how we do it, and when we do it.

Two Greek Philosophers from the pre-Socratic era, whose ideas I encountered as part of my Philosophy studies at New Acropolis might help us shed more light on the topic.

Heraclitus of Ephesus, around 500 BCE, is credited with the phrase *Panta Rhei*, meaning 'everything flows'. He uses a very particular expression: the constant flux. He claimed that there is no beginning and no end to things. In the world of concrete things, everything flows, everything runs.

He famously said, "No man ever steps into the same river twice," meaning that everything is in motion and nothing remains still. There is no form which is the same forever, everything changes with time.



# Human connection

Shashwati Balasubramanian

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As a school of practical philosophy, our approach at New Acropolis is to connect philosophy with life, i.e. to make the effort to constantly relate what we study in our classes to what we experience. This is so that our wisdom as philosophers may slowly ripen and deepen in the waters of our life, just like a lotus blooms slowly in muddy waters

In truth, the journey a philosopher is embarking on is the adventure to come closer to one's own true self. To learn about oneself and to build a more objective view of the world. To learn to keep steady feet in the middle of a reality that today looks more and more turbulent.

Friendship and authentic human connection are essential elements of this journey.

The ongoing global health crisis has brought very specific challenges in connection to human relationships – Last year, the whole world went into lockdown and all of us had to retreat into our homes and live in constant fear of our health and the health of our dear ones.

Today, we have begun to learn to live with this new reality. We now venture out, are back at work in our offices, and meet our friends and family again, but still with masks on. Masks that are very necessary, but masks that also form a wall between us and our neighbour. How difficult it is to connect when you can't see the other person's face, their expressions and their smile fully!



## *The journey the philosopher is embarking on is the adventure to come closer to one's own true self*



The real essence of the experiences of the past year in relation to human connection is that it has made us *afraid* to be together – *afraid* to be close to each other. What kind of psychological impact will all this have on us? Only time will really tell.

The current dilemma we are in is that on one hand, the precautions are still very necessary since the crisis is still not behind us. It would be foolish to throw all caution to the winds and want to pretend that everything is back to what it was before. It is not.

On the other hand we are tired of the isolation and lack of human contact. We yearn to put it all behind us and go back to the old and familiar ways of connecting with our friends and loved ones.

To find a resolution to this dilemma we must bring consciousness to this situation, understand what it demands clearly and to make the decision to fight the separation that 'social-distancing' brings in its wake.



The human will is an amazing tool. It is what enables us to shape our reality in the direction of our choice. So, to be able to nourish authentic human connection in our lives in today's times, we need to decide and make more conscious efforts to connect.





*The way for us to fight the distance that the current external reality brings between us as human beings, is by opening our hearts and practicing genuine, warm human connection.*



We know that the way to fight darkness is to bring light. The way to work with our anger is to cultivate the habit of patience. The way to work with fear is to bring courage. Therefore, the way for us to fight the distance that the current external reality brings between us as human beings is by opening our hearts and practicing a genuine, warm human connection.

Today, at New Acropolis, this is something we are practicing very consciously - to balance the need for strong precautions with the need to enable the community to really be able to come closer together.

All our classes are currently conducted outdoors, with very stringent precautions of social distancing, compulsory use of masks, temperature checks, and regular sanitization of all surfaces. On the other hand, we have made sure to introduce exercises, events, and volunteering initiatives that enable us to come closer as a philosophical community.

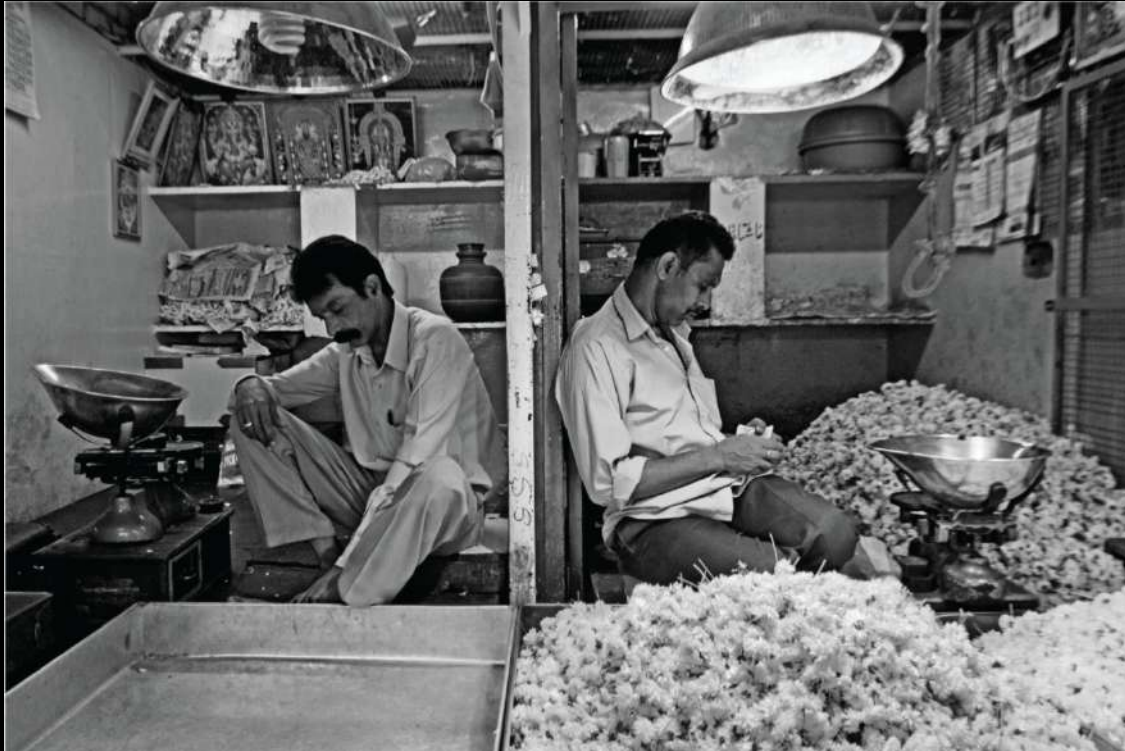
The photographs you see here are from a recent 'Venus Touch' event we had at the Jayanagar center of New Acropolis, giving a glimpse into life at our centers. Venus is the ancient goddess of Beauty in Greek mythology. The 'Venus Touch' events are activities that are directed towards bringing a touch of magic and aesthetics to our space. In the event, students came together to beautify and build their open-air classroom with the creation of a vertical garden as well as a 'memory corner' to display photographs. Working as a group is always very fulfilling, and the laughter, and memories it creates remain long after to remind us of the joy of building something meaningful together.

Thus by being attentive and working intelligently with the specific nature of our current situation we can continue to keep our hearts open and grow our relationships in depth in spite of all challenges.

# To Have or not to Have?

**Pierre Poulain**

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When I was visiting Bangalore in February 2014, I shot a photo of two vendors in the flower market. One had nothing to sell, while the other one's shop was full of flowers. One had nothing and the other had a lot. But I cannot avoid thinking: what if I had to visit the market again the next day? Would I have seen the same scene? or maybe the situation would have been the complete opposite. I will never know for sure, but what is certain is that our possessions are always in a state of movement. Sometimes we have, and sometimes we don't have. We buy and we sell. We receive and we give.

We definitely cannot, then, rely on what we have.

Can we rely then on what we are? "To be" is also related to a certain movement, but an internal movement: the movement of our own consciousness. To be is not only to know oneself but also to know who we are. It is knowing our potential, our qualities, but also our inner shadows, our weaknesses. Being conscious allows us to avoid the shadows and awaken our potential. This movement depends only on us. On our own will, on our own choice.



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*To be* is the path towards freedom. To chain ourselves to a movement we cannot control is to enslave ourselves to external circumstances.

Today it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to renounce "having", but we can reach an equilibrium, and try to have just what we need, not less not more. Just what is necessary. To be free. To be ourselves.



Pierre Poulain is a philosopher and a renowned international photographer. In 1986, he founded the New Acropolis School of Philosophy in Israel.

For more information on the artist and his work, please visit [www.photos-art.org/](http://www.photos-art.org/)

# Upcoming course - March

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## Living Philosophy - Intro session and Trial Class

**Date and Time for intro session:** 15th March, Monday, 7:30 pm to 9:00 PM

**Date and Time for Trial session:** 22nd March, Monday, 7:30 pm to 9:30 PM

**Venue:** New Acropolis, Indiranagar

Living Philosophy is a 19-week foundation course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient Eastern and Western philosophies to inspire us to lead more harmonious lives in today's times.

Join us in the first session of the 19-week practical philosophy course, as a free trial.

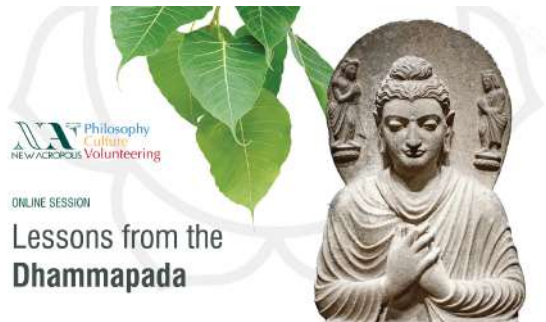
To register for the session, scan the QR. code or go to [acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/](http://acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/)

*No. of participants limited on first come first serve basis*

For more information, reach out to us at [info@newacropolis.in](mailto:info@newacropolis.in) | 9663804871



# Upcoming talks in April and May



## Lessons from the Dhammapada (Online)

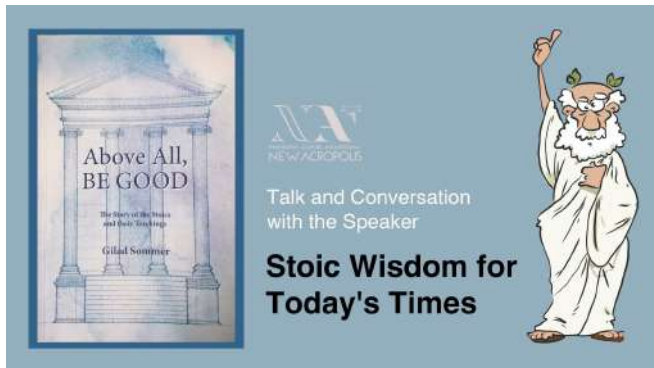
**Date and Time:** 17th April, 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Register for free at [acropolis.org.in/events](https://acropolis.org.in/events) or scan the QR code



A prince walked the streets sharing his wisdom, wanting everyone to find happiness. We delve deep into the Dhammapada – one of the most well-known Buddhist scriptures - and share its simple and practical truths. Let us explore the stories and verses that come from the wise one.

**Venue: Online session (Zoom)**



## Building Clarity: The Stoic way

**Date and Time:** 22nd May, 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Register for free at [acropolis.org.in/events](https://acropolis.org.in/events) or scan the QR code



"We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them."

- Epictetus

While the wisdom of the Stoics is from centuries ago, it is extremely relevant and empowering even today. This event is based on a fascinating book published by New Acropolis (India), Above All, Be Good: The story of the Stoics and their Teachings. The talk brings ideas from Stoic Philosophy and offers insights on managing change, dealing with difficulty, and answers to the questions of living right and ways to happiness.

**Venue: New Acropolis. Indiranagar center**

**New Acropolis implements all Covid-19 safety protocols to ensure the space is safe.**

**For more information, reach out to us at [info@newacropolis.in](mailto:info@newacropolis.in) | 9663804871**





## SYLLABUS

Living Philosophy is a 19-week foundation course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient Eastern and Western philosophies to inspire us to lead more harmonious lives in today's times.

When Philosophy is practical, it is educational, helping us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves.

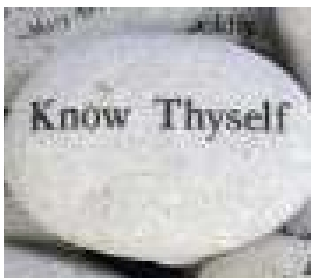
Through these 19 sessions (1 session of 2 hours per week), the Living Philosophy course touches different practical, universal and timeless concepts of life from the wisdom of cultures and civilizations of the ancient world, with the perspective of how these can become practical tools to make a profound, lasting difference in our lives today.

The classes comprise lectures and practical guided exercises. The course also includes a fully experiential seminar and one-on-one meetings with the teachers.

**Sign up for an upcoming session at [acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/](https://acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/)**

The course syllabus follows.

### **PART 1: ETHICS (Man & the Self)**



#### **Know Thyself**

- Living an ethical life – a key to happiness
- The Ancient Greek and Ancient Indian understanding of the Human being
- Identifying the transient and the eternal within us
- Living Philosophy – need for Inner Change



### The Peaceful Warrior

- The ancient Indian concept of Swadharma and its importance in human life
- The inner battle of Kurukshetra
- Karma Yoga and the right Action – tools of the Peaceful warrior
- Themes from the Bhagavad Gita and their relevance in today's world



### Liberation - Inspiration from the Buddha

- Lessons from the life of the Buddha
- The overcoming of suffering and the process of self transformation
- The middle path and the 4 Noble Truths
- Key teachings from the Dhammapada



### The Inner Voice & the Mysteries of Ancient Tibet

- Wisdom from the Vajrayana tradition (Tibetan Buddhism)
- Recognising the illusory nature of the material world
- The importance of choice and inner identity
- H.P. Blavatsky and themes from the Voice of the Silence



### The search for Beauty and Happiness: Greco-Roman Philosophy

- The need and the means to elevation of consciousness
- Beauty and the Beautiful – teachings of Plotinus
- The path to Happiness through virtues – teachings of Aristotle



### The awakening of consciousness – Wisdom of the Stoics

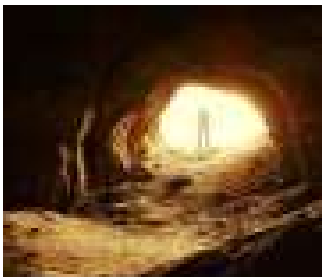
- Neoplatonism and the Philosophy of Ancient Rome
- True freedom and principles of Stoic Philosophy
- 3 paths to Unity



### Destiny and Inner order – Wisdom from Egypt and China

- Justice, Order and Virtue as important everyday tools
- Concept of Justice in ancient Egypt
- The connection between individual ethics and a harmonious society
- Harmony and human relationships - the wisdom of Confucius

## PART 2: SOCIO-POLITICS (Man & Society)



### Ethical Leadership

- The connection between individual development and social order
- The art of living together in harmony
- Plato's allegory of the cave
- The Philosopher and the Leader
- Ethical leadership and the concept of Justice



### The Essence of Ethical Politics

- The 4 archetypes of man
- The school of Pythagoras in ancient Greece
- The Philosophical and Political ideal



### Forms of Governance

- Various models of governance in society
- The nature and challenges of Democracy
- Principles of New Acropolis





### From Philosophy to Mystery

- Roles in ancient society: Childhood, Adolescence, Elders
- The role of education in human evolution; education in traditional societies
- The mysteries of nature
- Philosophy as a bridge to higher consciousness and to the Mysteries



### Peaceful Warrior Experiential Seminar

- Philosophy in action – an experiential session of individual and group exercises, combined with Artistic activities, that strengthen the learning process of Know Thyself and Sociopolitics.

## PART 3: THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY (Man & the World)



### Myth & History

- Myths: Truths hidden in mythology
- Chronological time, Sacred time and Mythical time
- How Myth drives History



### The Cycles of Time

- Cycles in Nature: Connecting to a more natural way of life
- Cycles of Time: The ancient Greek concept of “great year” by Plato
- The Age of Aquarius – characteristics of our current times



### The Wheel of Life

- Cycles of Time according to ancient Eastern Philosophy
- The ancient Indian concept of Yugas
- The Kaliyuga - characteristics and opportunities of the current times



### The Divine Spark in Man- Evolution & Destiny of Humanity

- What does it mean to be the human being of today?
- The evolution of human consciousness; Where do we go from here?
- The ancient Greek myth of Prometheus



### Summary

- A synthesis of the key teachings of the course, and a glimpse into the path ahead of advanced practical philosophy courses at New Acropolis

Sign up for an upcoming intro at  
[acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/](https://acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/)



# About New Acropolis

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New Acropolis is an international non-profit volunteer-run organization, having a philosophical, cultural and social approach. It was founded in 1957 as a school of Practical Philosophy in the Classical Style, to promote the ideal of timeless values towards human development.

In over 60 countries where New Acropolis is present, this vision is implemented through an eclectic range of teachings, practices and activities, inspired by Classics of both Western and Eastern global cultures and ancient civilizations. Our programs, based on philosophy that is practical and active, combine theoretical and practical education with expressions in the fields of Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering. With over 20,000 volunteers of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and social levels, New Acropolis emphasizes principles of Coexistence, Fraternity and mutual collaboration beyond cultural, sexual, or religious differences.

We at New Acropolis all over the World are greatly inspired also by the timeless principles of the Ancient Classical Indian Culture, Arts and Philosophies. New Acropolis in India, same as in all our centres worldwide, seeks to take inspiration, knowledge and best practices from the rich artistic, spiritual and cultural human heritage in order to enhance both individual and collective human development.

Visit our website at [www.acropolis.org.in](http://www.acropolis.org.in)







LIVING  
PHILOSOPHY

# Practical Philosophy Course

Discover Awaken Transform

A 19-week foundation course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient Eastern and Western philosophies to inspire us to lead more harmonious lives in today's times. When Philosophy is practical, it is educational, helping us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves.

The course touches different practical, universal and timeless concepts of life from the wisdom of civilizations of the ancient world, with the perspective of how these can become practical tools to make a profound, lasting difference in our lives.



**Duration: 19 weeks | 1 class per week (7:30 to 9:30 PM )**

More details on upcoming batches at [www.acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/](http://www.acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/)