



News and views from the School

Twice termly: Issue no 19



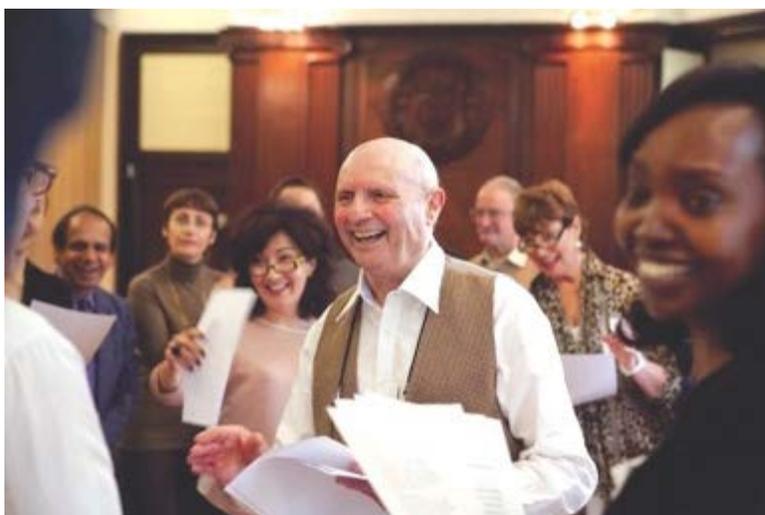
Welcome to Issue no. 19

Spare a thought for our Venezuelan friends. Demonstrations and riots make it difficult and unsafe to leave home in Merida, the university city high up in the Andes. Particularly in the evenings there are barricades, so classes are presently held early on Saturday mornings, whenever possible. Around 35 brave Venezuelan philosophy students attend; the School started in Merida in 1992.

After sending out issues of Insight, they are translated into Spanish and sent to hundreds of readers all over Spain, as well as Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico and Chile – there are lots of Spanish-speakers in the world.

Visit the Insight website for back issues, sign-up and other material. Go to Schoolinsight.

Very best wishes, con amor
Christine Lambie, editor



Neville Wortman, student in London since the 1950's, has developed a unique and popular course in speaking in public, which he offers on Saturday mornings at Mandeville Place. He also coaches St James' girls in speech medals, and gives individual coaching.

Finding My Voice Neville Wortman, London

While I was producing films for major corporate companies, I found many CEOs who could not sit before a camera and speak coherently or succinctly about the business they knew so well. This led me to a line in coaching ambassadors, executives, actors and graduates, assisting with speeches and training in communication for professionals.

Words are diamonds

I began as a performer and presenter in broadcasting some 60 years ago. On a 3-month intensive course, 15 of us from drama and entertainment were taught by some of the great BBC practitioners of the day including David Attenborough. We learned that words are diamonds and that we are only ever speaking to one person, even if it's an average audience of 3 million homes.

Eventually I became what I had always aspired to be, a producer/director with BBC TV. Producing 'Juke Box Jury', 'Top of the Pops' and later, a first ITV network talk show meant working with some of the most famous names of the 60's and 70's – The Beatles, Noel Coward, Cliff Richard, Peter Sellers, Dudley Moore, Kenneth Williams, Muhammad Ali – and meeting many more. It was their presence, and their speech, particularly their vulnerability, which had the most disarming appeal to audiences.

For me, joining the School was when real education began. I had loved theatre and Shakespeare, yet knew very little. I had always felt so uncertain of myself, unsure and doubtful. Slowly the sound of truth took over, drew me to the wonder of language, giving me a voice which I realised everyone has – their own unique sound. And I realized that Shakespeare holds a deeper understanding, a magical 'sound behind the word.'

The Confident Voice

In 2008 the School in London was offering a variety of Saturday morning courses. The 'speech' course landed on my desk along with a wealth of brilliant rhetoric material compiled by Sheila Rosenberg. I had no idea how to proceed at first, yet knew I had to meet that small group where they were, and engage with them directly.

To my surprise the whole venture took off. Today, The Confident Voice is fully subscribed with 25-30 people attending. It attracts all sorts from many nationalities: professionals, students and graduates, from the general public together with philosophy and economics students.

There are some for whom English is their second language and here the School's philosophy of unity comes into play; we always begin with 'tongue twisters', nonsensical yet fast sounds which break the barriers and concentrate on articulation and clear enunciation. Shakespeare is also used; words of great writers and poets increase vocabulary and open up new ideas. It's amazing how we break through the 'foreign sound' barrier, often to an individual's incredulity.

Tears and fears

The purpose is to 'discover my real voice'. It's not so much learning as uncovering the layers imposed over speech. There are tears and fears. Most people find it okay talking one to one socially, but faced with larger formal groups, power point presentations etc, comes the fear and vulnerability.

Listening to the sound of my own voice is the benchmark. It's not a question of speaking 'posh' - dialects are wonderful, but any speech needs pure open vowels and shining consonants. Much of the School's practices in sounding Sanskrit inform our English practice.

On this course people are brought to their feet and made to come into a space (told this is MY SPACE) in front of the group of some 20-30 strangers they have never seen before, out of their 'comfort zone'. They are shaking within and without, yet realize that no one is actually seeing this. An audience sees a brave person actually finding words and movement.

People are taught how to choreograph their gesture and movement naturally. Most of us are confined and restricted in our bodily movements and gesture, the latter being a most expressive natural means of communication. We can discover a great energy and power from this practice. Of course it's a situation of trust and friendliness, realizing that everyone is in fact your friend, and courage comes.

Shakespeare

I soon realised that Shakespeare was at the heart of the course. This is not an academic course yet we search for the meaning in the sound of his words using glossaries and direction from great directors and actors. People quickly hear and discover the magic behind the words and we are asked at the end to speak about that effect, the feeling and emotion it leaves with us afterwards.

It's not all Shakespeare; sometimes we use popular song lyrics with surprising philosophical meanings, words that have uplifted, inspired and reached the hearts of people in time of need during two world wars.

Amazingly there is always something new at hand, poetry and dialogue to learn by heart, to intrigue and mystify. We follow the same principle of being aware, using the whole body from head to toe. People are asked to come with a piece of their own or a valued object in their life, always to speak from the heart, never to 'act'.

An 86 year-old youngster in the group, a retired headmaster, announced 'I now feel I could happily speak to an audience of 5,000.' One primary school therapist practised the principle of 'just listening to my own voice' for a whole year, and returned to tell us that she now finds her voice has an 'instant healing effect on seriously disturbed children in her care.'

Satisfaction

Sitting in a darkened television control room directing cameras for a live programme with orchestra, singers and dancers – where nothing happens until you count down and call the shots brought the greatest buzz, excitement and satisfaction – so I believed. Now working with people on voice, seeing someone come alive to himself or herself brings a happiness and fulfillment which leaves a far deeper joy and satisfaction all round.

Read more about Neville at [NWortman](#)



download.

Now Read More

Sometimes Insight receives items that don't quite fit the format here – maybe they are too long for small screen-reading. Here is a preview of a longer article for further reading.

The Philosophy of Science: Dennis Blejer has been a member of the School in Boston for 40 years, is currently the branch leader, and is an engineering physicist by profession. To read his witty and engaging article, A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Science, go to [DBlejer](#) and click on the pdf file to

Read this report on the week held in Sydney in January 2014, written by two enthusiastic young participants. Feel the radiance of the Australian summer. In the photo is Gauri.

Youth & Young Professionals Week

Gauri Donald and Kirstin Proft, Sydney

See your world through different eyes

For the 5th year in a row, youth and young professionals



from around the world gathered for self-discovery, from 11-18th January at 'Mahratta', a beautiful heritage-listed property in Sydney's north. The participants ranged from 16-44 years of age, many glad still to be considered youthful! Participants and tutors came from all over Australia and New Zealand. Some had attended previously and returned for 'the awesome company and

beautiful surroundings of Mahratta'. Whether they had attended before or not, all participants came for a common purpose: to reconnect with their own presence and to see our world through different eyes.

'I'm still sorting out a lot of my big-picture philosophical beliefs, but the YYP week helped me enormously by exposing me to new and practical experiences. It has brought me closer to understanding who I am, and what, exactly, is going on.' Veevek.

Programme contents

The week began with a presentation by Dr Craig Hassed, a world-renowned expert on the medical effects of mindfulness practice. He spoke on mindfulness and the benefits of its practice on stress reduction and overall health. Convinced by this presentation, we diligently began applying mindfulness by 'keeping the mind anchored with the body'. For some the benefit was rather more than just dealing with stress.

'Mindfulness is being aware of my thoughts and sensations, which is the same thing as being aware of my own consciousness. It's quite a revelatory experience. It feels like I've resurfaced after being underwater.' Veevek.

We would start each day led by Demetrius Condos in Tai Chi, to get our inner chi (energy) flowing for the day. Group meditation, practised twice a day, allowed deeper stillness to be experienced through the week by both novice and experienced meditators. For many the enthusiasm and love for meditation was invigorated through the group practice.

We all took part in two electives over the course of the week. On offer were: Discovering Your Gifts, Leadership, Mindfulness, and Creativity. Discovering Your Gifts and Leadership engaged us in dialectic conversation to uncover a deeper understanding of oneself. Mindfulness and Creativity allowed participants to connect with the stillness in the presence of nature.

Using different reflection activities, we came to a greater understanding of ourselves and our false limitations. An experience of joy and freedom was experienced and spoken about by many of us on the week.

'During one particular reflection session, we were asked to take a silent walk, reflecting on the inner repetition of 'Aham' (I am). Perhaps it was the build-up of several days' practice, but it was a 'breakthrough' moment for me. I remember standing on the lawn, overlooking the rose garden, and just feeling complete unity with everything. Every. Thing. Including myself. All of the self-definitions that are usually imposed on me just fell away. My reaction was complete joy. In fact, I had to suppress an instinctive urge to spontaneously dance in the sun! The memory of that will stay with me for a while, I think, and act as a

reminder of what is possible, with practice.’ Carla.

Participants bonded during free time over ultimate frisbee and yoga. The love and radiance of the group was striking to passers-by on the beaches of Sydney during our mid-week outing. During the evenings participants shared their inspirations through talks and talents for light entertainment.

We were kept well-nourished with delicious food organised by Heather Cregan, who has given her precious time for the 3rd year in a row. Heather and all the tutors make the week possible by generously giving their time and coming with open minds and hearts.

‘Though there is a seriousness with practices taught through the school; there is a balance of lightness that goes with it, and a recognition that life is to be enjoyed.’ Perry.

What’s next?

This is only the beginning. The organisers of the weeks would like YYP to reach out to young people right around the world. The weeks have grown and developed, based on participant feedback, and get better each year. We hope the offering continues, so that we can keep connected with each other and ourselves. *‘An amazing kick start to the year, catching up with friends, and making new ones. More than anything, was the amount of FUN had at all times, even while enduring ultimate frisbee injuries!!!!!!’ Perry.*

For more information go to [YYPretreat](#).

Youth and Young Professionals



Group meeting



Tai chi in the garden

Lily is the labrador puppy who lives with Donald Lambie, the leader of the School and his wife, the editor. Lily got so many replies again, with photos from friends all around the globe (and even a present from one male dog admirer) – we’re even thinking of giving her an e mail address.

Letter from Lily

If we dogs could talk, we’d be saying, ‘Wow today is a GREAT day’ every single morning. No matter if it’s rain (we had a lot of that here: great – mud) or shine. It’s another tail-wagging day. That’s a photo of my morning jump for joy - slightly fuzzy, I know, but hey, you’ve got to live in the present moment. And that’s hard to catch on camera.

I’m quite good at meditation now. I know exactly how long half an hour is. Mainly because what comes next in the morning is 1) Walk then 2) Breakfast. That’s a pretty good start to the day. Here’s a tip:



owners have to be walked, at least twice a day. It makes them so much happier. Then they can settle down to their own devices, iPads and stuff, which keep them quiet for hours on end. Have a GREAT day. Dog bless,
Love from Lily.



Philosophy in the Pub

Michael Reid, student in London, hosts philosophy evenings in the Palmerston Arms in Peterborough.

We meet once a month, on a Tuesday evening in a beautiful 18th century sandstone English pub. The subjects arise out of previous meetings - sometimes woven into an intriguing title to attract curiosity. For example, our last topic was 'The Birdcage of Unreason'. It tends to be a general conversation, with a crowd of completely diverse ages, genders and backgrounds but all sharing a keen curiosity about life.

Depending on the attractiveness of the subject, 25 -35 people attend these free discussions. Some enjoy a coffee or tea, as we have a short break in the middle of the 2-hour discussion; others sample from the range of real ales and ciders.

We distribute a handout during the evening so that everyone can see the quotes and read further if they wish. It is more interactive than a conventional class, and from my point of view, mostly informed by the words of Shri Shantananda Saraswati, Plato, the Dalai Lama, Eckhart Tolle, etc. Most of our current first year students in Peterborough branch started off in the pub or the teashop in the park with these discussions. Some people who are reluctant to commit to a 10-week course, are delighted to accept an invitation for a drink in the pub. And then they find they are philosophers after all.

One participant wrote: *It is engaging, it is illuminating. What I most liked from my corner was seeing people who I had initially thought to be people in the pub turn into philosophers.*

This initiative started off with Philosophy in the Park. To see more go to [PhilPub](#).



Reader Feedback

Another wonderful and informative edition - I would particularly like to comment on Deborah Sigrist's supportive and enlightening article on Facing Death. I am currently caring for "childless" neighbours in their 90s, who have had to be put in a nursing home. Very frail but compos mentis, and having a real struggle facing the inevitable. Our understandings gained over many years make this so much easier for us to deal with, and offer them support. I was also delighted to read about Dhruv Saxena's success. Lily is extraordinarily articulate for a dog, but has obviously earned a birth in such propitious circumstances.
Sydney

Lots of interesting things. But I bet you'll have the most responses for Lily. Loved the article from Deborah Sigrist from upstate New York - makes you want to go there to die! And what a sensational result from the NY School - must have tested their organisational abilities. **Kent, UK**

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. 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

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