

The Parliamentary Review

EDUCATION SERVICES

2019

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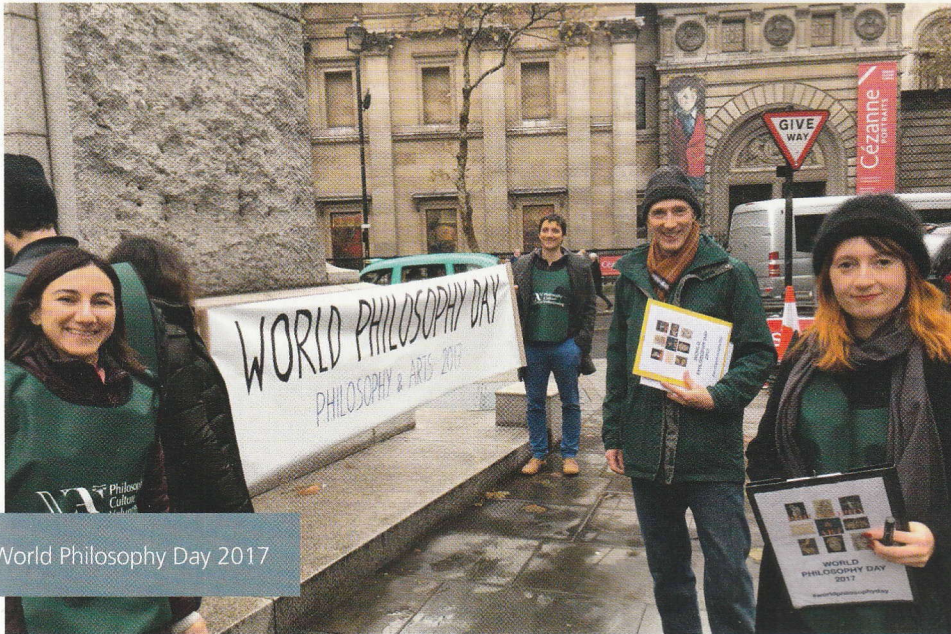
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New Acropolis



World Philosophy Day 2017



Chair Sabine Leitner

New Acropolis are an educational charity with the aim of promoting the renewal of philosophy in the “classical tradition” and a rediscovery of the timeless values that have guided humanity throughout history. They work in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering to provide – what they call – an “education for head, heart and hands”. Chairing this organisation is Sabine Leitner, who tells *The Parliamentary Review* more about the value of New Acropolis.

Why philosophy?

Many of the problems facing humanity today – social, environmental, moral and spiritual – will not be solved long term with more technology or money alone. They are problems created by ourselves and a way of life that is the product of our thinking, that is, our “philosophy”. In order to create a future that resolves these problems, the solutions must include or, indeed, be rooted in an inner development of our thinking and collective values – that is, a change in our philosophy. How can this be achieved? This question has inspired us and guided our activities for more than 20 years.

What is philosophy in the classical tradition?

At New Acropolis, we understand philosophy in its classical sense as *philo-sophia*, meaning “love of wisdom”: the discovery of wisdom through a practical and active

FACTS ABOUT NEW ACROPOLIS

- » Chair: Sabine Leitner
- » Founded in 1996
- » Located in Highbury and Islington
- » No. of trustees: 9
- » No. of students: 50, from all walks of life, aged between 18 and 70
- » 600 participants in our courses, talks and events every year
- » www.newacropolisuk.org

“Wisdom is knowing how to act, knowing what is ‘good’ and knowing which ends are worth striving for”

attitude to life rather than something purely intellectual or contemplative. Wisdom is knowing how to act, knowing what is ‘good’ and knowing which ends are worth striving for.

What do we do?

We work in three areas: philosophy, culture and volunteering. Our approach pursues two goals: the development of the latent potential within the human being through education (from the Latin *educare*, to train, and *educere*, to draw out, to bring forth) and the renewal of culture, the soil in which human beings develop.

Our philosophical activities are centred around ongoing weekly evening classes for adults (around 600 hours of teaching a year). Our syllabus is based on the comparative study of the major systems of thought of Eastern and Western traditions. The purpose is to make the vast heritage of human wisdom accessible to all and to draw inspiration for our own actions from the universal ideas that have stood the test of time.

We organise about 20 public events a year, such as talks, courses and

workshops, where we invite guest speakers from a wide range of fields, including philosophy, psychology, medicine, economics, science and ecology.

We also stage public “happenings” to promote broader philosophical conversation. Last year we organised an event in front of the National Gallery on the theme of Philosophy and Art to celebrate UNESCO’s World Philosophy Day. We find at these events that many people really appreciate the opportunity for philosophical conversation and the chance to explore their values and ideas. We always encounter surprising insights and heartfelt human exchanges. Since 2013, we have been publishing a digital bimonthly magazine on a range of relevant topics covering philosophy and culture.

Why culture?

We understand culture as the ‘soil’ in which individuals can find all the nutrients they need to flourish. Culture is education in the widest sense of the word because it transmits values and provides us with forms through which we can express these values. We transmit to our students the value of culture and encourage them to think what kind of culture we need to create in order to bring out the best in the human being. To support this, we organise visits to museums and trips to sites of cultural and historical interest in Britain and abroad. We revive traditions and celebrations to enable us to reconnect with nature and human history in a profound way.

Why volunteering?

Our programme of studies is designed to provide an education that develops not only our mind but also other human faculties such as love, compassion, imagination,

Public talk at the New Acropolis centre, Islington – “Immanuel Kant: Certainty in an Uncertain World”



perseverance, willpower and creativity. Volunteering helps to develop these key faculties and forms part of our philosophical training, and we encourage our students to become active and involved in community projects.

Our own volunteering projects include helping with the planting and maintenance of the public garden in front of our school. For the last nine years we have been helping to organise a garden volunteering day every month, which also brings together neighbours and other Londoners. This has created a much stronger community within our neighbourhood and a good co-operation with Islington Council.

We also transformed a derelict space at the back of our premises into a garden and created a bee sanctuary, as bee populations are under serious threat in the UK and elsewhere. Currently we have two beehives, which are managed in a bee-centred way, with the idea of providing a home for bees rather than obtaining honey. Every year we open our bee sanctuary to the public under the auspices of "Open Garden Squares Weekend", attracting hundreds of visitors who are attended to by our volunteers and receive talks about the bees.

For several years, we supported a local homeless project run by the Union Chapel Margins charity, and this year we have started to put our gardening skills to use with another local charity which works with isolated elderly people in Islington. Our school of philosophy itself offers many volunteering opportunities as it is run entirely by volunteers.

Philosophy is the foundation of the future

How can we measure the success of our work? We think the success of our



Volunteering day at Compton Terrace Gardens, Islington

work is visible in the changes within the people who attend our classes. We further believe that our kind of holistic and practical philosophical education awakens a clearer sense of purpose and a greater sense of responsibility, initiative, respect, courtesy, generosity and tolerance of differences. It can produce a profound transformation within the individual, which in turn can lead to new ideas and transformation in society.

All our activities were achieved with an annual budget of around £30,000 and no salaried roles. Our work demonstrates that a shared vision, an attitude of co-operation and good will can achieve as much as, or more than, material resources. Our belief is that we need to cultivate human potential and non-material resources in our society so that we can resolve the problems we are currently facing and prepare a better society for the next generation.

"Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly."

– Václav Havel

“We understand culture as the ‘soil’ in which individuals can find all the nutrients they need to flourish”