

PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTORY COURSE – WISDOM

Session Seven

The Light of Reason

Summary

1. What is Reason?
2. Developing Reason in Speech and Discussion.
3. Reason and Decision-making and Action.
4. Obstacles to Reason.

Practice

1. Practise the Awareness Exercise twice a day.
2. Use the question: 'What would a wise person do here?'
3. Try to put into practice the four aspects of Socratic dialogue.
4. Try using the phrase 'Not this, not this', in relation to any passing thoughts, feelings or sensations.

Quotations

Skeats

Etymological Dictionary

Reason: That faculty of mind by which one draws conclusions as to right and truth, motive, cause, justice.

Attributed to Hypatia of Alexandria

Reserve the right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all.

Plato

Gorgias 458a

I am one of those who are very willing to be refuted if I say anything which is not true, and very willing to refute any one else who says what is not true, and quite as ready to be refuted as to refute . . .

Albert Einstein

Quoted in New York Times, 29 March 1972

A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our

personal closeness and affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.3.6

Not this, not this.

Shakespeare

Hamlet Act III, Sc 1, Line 158

. . . that noble and most sovereign reason. . .

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Essay on History

There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent.

Diagram 7 (a)

- 1. Truth is the goal**
- 2. Be willing to be refuted**
- 3. Listen**
- 4. Question**

Diagram 7 (b)

Circles of Reason

