

Philosophy Works for Cultural Diversity, Dialogue and Peace

by Pierre Lemasson

Have you ever wondered about the philosophy courses and original cultural event announcements posted around Ottawa? Every month, for ten years, the International Cultural Association New Acropolis has offered citizens of Ottawa courses, workshops, theatre, ecological actions and lecture series celebrating the cultural diversity and creativity of our world.

New Acropolis Cultural Association was created 49 years ago by the late Argentine philosopher Jorge Angel Livraga Rizzi. It now boasts more than 12,000 active members in more than 50 countries. In Canada, the New Acropolis is a registered non-profit association with centers in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

New Acropolis Ottawa is located at 596 MacLaren Street, near Bay Street. International Director of New Acropolis, Delia Steinberg Guzman states: "New Acropolis approach to culture does not consist of a simple walk through human cultural expressions, it invites you to actively participate in what culture represents.

Culture represents the fruit of a mature conscience. It is rooted in history and it is a bridge to the future. It expresses our thoughts and

feelings in diverse forms reflected in arts, science, social commitment and sacred experience."

On May 18 2006, New Acropolis Ottawa held a forum "Humanity and its Thousand Faces", as a contribution to UNESCO's world day on cultural diversity for dialogue and development. The guest speaker, Denis Bricnet, New Acropolis Canada's director invited us to reconsider our assumptions about the kinds of knowledge we seek to define our origins and identity in order to acknowledge the shared intuition that Humanity must be one family. What makes us human beings? What is the purpose to be human? What motivates human beings to learn, create and to evolve? What qualities must we cultivate to make our diversity a source of creativity rather than endless conflicts?

Culture represents the fruit of a mature conscience. It is rooted in history and it is a bridge to the future...

As human beings we need to cultivate knowledge about our own nature, about the ladder of values that enables us to meaningfully express and improve our relationships amongst each other and nature. This knowledge does not come from

material genetic maps, nor from absolute spiritual principles. Human knowledge is about individual identity of the self, community relationships and organization, about how we attain unity and union, within ourselves and amongst ourselves; as well as the natural cycles of learning and the processes of transformation. This knowledge is provided by philosophy, with its three main disciplines well known and developed in great civilizations: ethics, socio-politics and philosophy of history. When lived and transmitted from generations to generations, civilizations arise from this practical philosophy.

Beatriz Diez Canseco, today's New Acropolis International Vice-president says: "We are educating not only the minds, but also the hearts and the hands of future generations, so they can be wise, generous and hard working."

Members of the local New Acropolis Ottawa association take part in the philosophy school program that provides an ideal environment for self-transformation founded on time tested philosophical values and sources. In the 14-week introductory philosophy course you will encounter a diversity of cultural perspectives that carry the same message and ideal

for human progress that is fulfilling individually and collectively.

The sources range from Plato to Confucius, the Hindu Bhagavad-Gita to Egyptian ancient ecological wisdom, from Roman stoicism to Buddha's noble truths and Tibetan discipline. This approach allows us to express culture with philosophy that is to love knowledge discovering the foot prints of those who have left behind the most profound elements of their being. We call this approach to learning: "Philosophy in the classical tradition".

Although we can all understand intuitively that humanity is one family, we wish there would be more dialogue and peace. Once we realize that each of us is the problem and the solution, we quickly become a truly optimist agent of transformation. "An individual who improves himself improves society." Jorge Angel Livraga, founder of New Acropolis International Organization (1931-1991)

Pierre Lemasson is director of public relations for New Acropolis Canada www.newacropolis.ca
For Philosophy of East and West introductory course starting dates please visit the Web site: www.newacropolis.ca or call (613) 565-3769.