

Antiquity Comes Full Circle - Part VII

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF ASIA?



As India was striving to reclaim its independence, China was also undergoing enormous tension and shifts of its own. Both Confucius and Mencius had a strong sense of mission to rescue China from falling apart, yet neither succeeded: in truth they did not have the opportunities to create such an outcome. However, both attained immortality as great sages and thinkers. On the other hand, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) has succeeded as a political reformer and a revolutionary, yet his contribution to world philosophy has been

overshadowed by his celebrated career as a political leader. He was Confucius in action, the founder of new China. His practical principles significantly altered the course of China's history.

Sun was educated first in China then Honolulu in Hawaii, after which he went to Hong Kong in 1884 where he graduated from the Government Central School. From there he then went on to graduate in medicine in 1872, but seeing China's decline and the corruption under the Ch'ing dynasty, he decided to give up medicine in the name of China's reform. He first founded the Society for the Revival of China and travelled extensively in China and abroad to raise funds and recruit members for the Society. In 1905 he became the Head of the Revolutionary Alliance (which later became the Kuomintang or National People's Party). It was here he developed the 'the Principles of the People' (nationalism, democracy and 'livelihood' or economics). These principles served as the philosophical foundation for his vision of new China. Sun, together with his supporters in the Revolutionary Alliance, planned many uprisings against the Manchu government in different provinces across China. On October 10th 1911 they finally succeeded. Sun was elected provisional president of the Republic of China but he resigned in favour of Yuan Shikai who was the builder of the Northern Army. This gesture, Sun believed, was in the best interests of China but this proved not to be the case. Yuan was not satisfied with the title of President and declared himself Emperor. After a failed revolt against Yuan, Sun left China and did not return until 1916.

On his return he spent the last 9 years of his life in continuous revolutions in an attempt to remove Yuan and the residual forces of Imperial China. In 1923 he founded a separate government in Canton. He cooperated with the communists with the aim to defeat the Japanese (who had become China's most recent invaders) and unify China, in order to prepare it for the modern world. Sadly, before his vision could be fulfilled he succumbed to poor health and died in Beijing on March 12, 1925. On April 1st 1940, he was given the title 'Father of the New China' by the Nationalist government. His legacy was substantial, and you can judge for yourself if his vision was achieved. The essence of his ambition was to mobilise China towards democracy, to encourage her citizens to take responsibility by participating in China's destiny. He believed a 'natural inequality' existed, as all humans were not equal in their talents and abilities but he abhorred the idea of what he described as 'artificial inequality'. He saw that as inequality created by kings and lords leading to social injustice and in the end fostering rebellion. So to avoid unrest or revolution, this 'artificial inequality' should be abolished and democracy put in its place. For Sun, true equality meant 'equal opportunity' for all people – in order that they may maximise their potential without the hinderances imposed by an unjust society.

He saw education as the vehicle for such equal opportunity. To see the differences between Sun's idea of democracy and that of the west, those who are interested could take a look at his 'Five Power Democratic System', which goes some way to demonstrate his political originality. Sun Yat-sen managed in the end to win the respect of all sides in the revolutionary process, which helped transform Chinese society.

Shortly after Sun's passing, during the 1930s, the rise of Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976) was to reshape the face of China once more. Mao was well versed in Chinese history and literature and in his early years he was exposed to western ideas too. During the 1930s, aided by translations of Russian Marxism, he became a Chinese Marxist but he was always more Chinese than Marxist in his views. Although not revered as an original philosopher, he was undoubtedly a profound thinker. This is reflected in his reign as the leader of both the Chinese Communist Party and of the People's Republic of China, which lasted four decades.



His impact also reverberated around the world. Mao's philosophical influences came from many sources such as: Hegel, Lenin, Marx, Stalin, and Engels - all from the west. He was also influenced by Daoism and the Confucian tradition. His contribution to Chinese thought in the 20th century includes: "The world is full of contradiction" and dialectics (the art of investigating the 'truth' of opinions by discussion) as the method to handle such contradictions. He also insisted that literature and art were part of the revolutionary machine. Artists and writers should become the 'people's tongue and voice'. Their work should serve the masses. To do this they needed to study Marxism and learn from ordinary people in order to share their feelings and use their language. He also championed the ideology of 'practice'. This is probably best exhibited in the marriage he orchestrated between Marxism and Chinese traditional philosophy. He wrote a famous piece on the subject called "On Practice" in 1937, in which he explores the relationship between knowledge and practice. He believed this was the formula to unveil truth. He believed through experience a person gains perceptual knowledge and so there is a 'deepening of cognition'. We will come back to this dynamic as it is also central to our work and clinical and personal experience. Mao's other significant contribution is to what he called a "new democracy", although there are many who would take issue as to whether this is democracy at all? Mao kept a Confucian view running through his social and ethical theory, namely that social interests should take priority over individual interests. But he went further; unlike most Confucians he believed in sexual equality - men and women are equal in a socialist society. Therefore equality in all aspects was an imperative.

Undoubtedly, Mao was one of the most influential thinkers in China during the 20th century but he was also the most controversial. Even his own followers are widely divided on whether he was right or wrong and how much he was responsible for China's successes and failures during his fifty year domination. The jury is still deliberating his tenure. What is clear is that he brought many useful concepts to the table of discussion and the one "on practice" we think is of great importance for those seeking positive change. It dares to propose that there is a body of knowledge that is only ever really accessed through experience. No matter how much knowledge one consumes, one is only consuming information. Information provides the 'opportunity' for change but it is application that brings that knowledge (information) to life (experience). And it's the experience that is generated out of that knowledge which enables you to 'see' (know) what comes next in the sequence of understanding.... Back to our friend "insight" (to see clearly within).

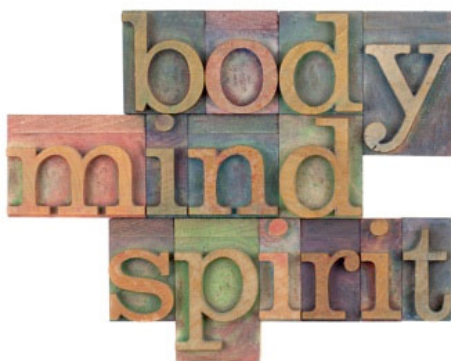
Many others right across Asia were substantial contributors trying to manage the consequences of modernity arriving in the East during the 20th century such as: Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962), Uehra Sengoku (1899-1975), Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990), Han Yongun (1879-1944), Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i (1903-1981). It's important to underline they all, albeit in different ways, encourage spirituality, living more ethically in the world; something that appears to be rapidly slipping away from humankind. They all spoke with respect and reverence for antiquity, suggesting that just as the branches of a tree must never neglect its roots or it will wither and die, we too as a race must not lose sight of our origins (roots) or we are in danger of stifling or preventing our own growth. "Real" progress cannot be simply measured in objects, inventions, science and technology. It must include the values, virtues, ethics and morality that are crucial to our emotional and psychological wellbeing....

"A scientific worldview which does not profoundly come to terms with the problem of conscious minds can have no serious pretensions of completeness. Consciousness is part of our universe, so any physical theory which makes no proper place for it falls fundamentally short of providing a genuine description of the world"

Sir Roger Penrose (1931- present), *Shadows of the mind.* (1994)

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

We've tried to present what we believe is an invaluable message that has continued to echo throughout history and yet seems to have largely been ignored. It is a true story about the 'voice of the spirit' continuing to speak in spite of the other noises and sounds (war, migration, injustice and religious conflict) trying to shout more loudly and offering their messages through force. The East has been steeped in just as much injustice, hypocrisy and violence as the West. And yet, a different sub-text has continued to persist throughout eastern history. So much so that the notion of 'spirit reigning supreme' still resonates today across most of Asia. It's as if no matter what else has been the subject of re-modeling and change, the principles of spirituality have remained largely non-negotiable. Yes, there has been debate, challenge, questioning and amendments to the plethora of philosophies and ideologies but the core concepts of divine consciousness, and of the existence of a supreme spirit have remained largely constant.



We've seen various interpretations as well as subtle and substantial differences and yet what binds the East is far more than that which divides it. On closer inspection what we discover is that in fact so much conflict has taken place over so little difference! Our egos have seduced us in such a way that we've regularly chosen division over collaboration and arrogance over humility. Look where this position has brought us to as a race....to the brink of our own destruction and what have we really gained?.... Progress?....Has it been worth it? Have our scientific and technological advancements given us greater happiness and peace? Are we any closer to the truth? It seems to us that in our

desperation to progress we've sacrificed so much of what is really important, such as: empathy, care and compassion for each other, patience and tolerance. We've traded in our values and principles, becoming arguably more knowledgeable and clearly less wise. Integrity is now a rare commodity in our "me!me!" society, individualism towers over social conscience, which appears to be rapidly evaporating. The East, however, holds on to more of the things that offer us a way out if we have

the courage to let go of the illusions of progress and embrace the ‘certainty’ of many of the past principles. Let us be clear here, we are referring to the ‘certainty’ of past principles because we believe so much of what we’ve thrown away does come with certain guarantees and our experience has and continues to endorse that position. We believe your experience will also do the same. However, don’t take our word for it. Test it in the laboratory of your life and see what your own experiments with these past principles throw up. So what are those past principles we should be embracing? If you’ve read this synopsis thoroughly you will have collected many along the way but let us remind ourselves of some that stand out:

1) PRACTICE – having identified what is needed to improve the self, those that apply the right ‘antidote’ again and again and again...do eventually find relief. Positive change inevitably follows. Practice generates personal power, self mastery and confidence.

2) DISCIPLINE – “Practice does indeed make perfect’ but without self discipline the wheels on the wagon of practice become dislodged and fall away. Discipline does not restrain or limit the self, as is often thought to be the case, it sets the heart and mind free. Those who establish positive routines quickly discover they are carried to their destinations by the momentum that such discipline generates.

3) FOCUS – The mind that is clear and knows where it is going will almost certainly reach its destination. It is a lack of clarity and focus that denies us many of the fruits of success. Developing the art of ‘mindfulness’ (through practice) opens doors in the heart, the mind and in your life. You’ll find these doors cannot be opened with any other key. Focus is about single-pointed awareness, which means focusing on the objective with such intensity that it becomes a ‘positive obsession’. Such single-mindedness is irresistible and always wins the day.

4) RESPECT AND REVERENCE – Whether we are thinking about God, a Deity or Nature, the East has a well established tradition of respecting ‘that which is greater than oneself’. It remains clear across the diverse cultures of the East that there is ‘something’ that is Supreme and Divine to which we owe thanks. In fact, in most cases, it’s considered that it is due to our lack of reverence and respect for the divine force that we (through our actions) generate the negative consequences that reverberate through our lives (the law of karma). For many in the West, the concept of karma remains a contentious issue. But isn’t there some validity in the notion that as we sow, so shall we reap? Surely our thoughts, words and actions cannot leave us immune to consequences?... Look at our planet; is it not mirroring back our mistakes? It seems obvious that we’ve lost respect and take things too much for granted.

5) THE ART OF APPRECIATION – An attitude of gratitude is medicine in itself. There is a well developed reluctance to complain in the East that would serve the western culture well. Somehow built into cultures of the East is the realisation that complaints corrupt one’s vision, spoil one’s mind and weaken the spirit. Whereas, appreciation uplifts and heals the mind, body and spirit with its tender caress. We’ve found the Power of Thank You is second to none when seeking to rebuild or positively sustain one’s life.

6) NON-VIOLENCE – From before Buddha, to the Jains, then the Sufis and more latterly Gandhi, the immense power and value of non-violence has continued to be revered; in spite of the innumerable conflicts, or maybe because of them (?). This virtue has rarely faded from the spiritual horizon. It is clear to us, that non-violent communication and interaction is the most powerful instrument for positive change we have. Once we understand that it empowers all parties and removes the ego from the debate, we can then scrap the myth that this is a position of weakness and recognise this truly is a place of strength. If only we were prepared to develop the self control and skills to resolve our differences this way..... Are you?

7) INTUITION (INNER KNOWING) - The scientific worldview largely scoffs at the idea that intuition is a legitimate form of knowing, as it stands outside of logic and sensory perception, therefore does not meet the conventional criteria for ‘evidence’. Is that sufficient reason to dismiss the gift of insight? As you’ve seen in the East, throughout the ages, many great minds have argued for this form of knowing to be respected as an instrument for probing and delving into the ‘abyss of the unknown’, so that we may make ‘conscious’ contact with the truth. Our experience is clear, both personal and professional: when one dares to listen and trust their ‘inner knowing’ an understanding that does not come from any other source is unveiled. There is a perspective different from logic and from the information gained from the five senses that is invaluable for making sense of the self and of the world. Learn to trust it and watch how quickly it develops.

8) KARMA AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY - Whether one accepts the far-reaching implications of karma or not (i.e. reincarnation and past life consequences etc.), the primary principle of personal responsibility is hard to dispute. The law of karma makes each person responsible for his actions. It invites us to look for change from ourselves first before we look anywhere else. It rejects the game of blame and asks us to create the life we ache for by changing ourselves (thoughts, words and actions) in line with our aspirations; for only then can our lives truly honour us. So one can avoid the complexities of karma while embracing its simple truth: that is change begins with you!

9) CONTEMPLATION, REFLECTION AND MEDITATION – These three activities are all synonymous with eastern cultures and traditions. In fact, for many they are the ‘life-blood’ of spirituality. Without them one can only pay lip service to personal growth and sustained development. Ironically, scientific evidence continues to mount, clearly demonstrating that the mind works best when repeatedly exposed to positive silence. That is, ‘conscious contact’ with the self, the universe or God. It is in the act of quiet, focused attention that one is able to transcend the limitations of everyday life and find deeper purpose and meaning.



10) METAPHYSICS – This is an enormous subject that is yet to be given the respect we believe it deserves, even though there are innumerable great thinkers and philosophers either side of the east/west divide who have argued for its validity and inclusion in the human debate. Although they didn’t agree on the details, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle formulated clear ideas on this subject and so did Lao Tzu, Confucius and Buddha, -some of which we’ve documented here. In summary, for us, metaphysics encourages one to engage with the invisible forces as well as the visible ones. It’s about developing and respecting our relationship with the unseen and not propelling ourselves beyond the natural laws. There is a rhyme and rhythm to life and once we stay still long enough to see and respect it, it has so many lessons to teach us! The question you need to ask yourself is are you really paying attention? Because if not you will miss the unseen forces at work....

This list is in no way definitive, as we could easily have tripled it and still not have exhausted these past principles. Their ‘guarantee’ of growth is not through hocus pocus or magic spells and potions but simply through the promise that you in the end will always get out what you put in! Consistency generates more consistency; compassion generates care and offers more of the same; being thankful

breeds more things to be thankful for. And so although many of these attributes, virtues and values can be charted back to the beginning of recorded history, they remain no less true and relevant today in the 21st century.

ANTIQUITY HAS INDEED COME FULL CIRCLE....

We have covered so much on our journey and yet we are aware there is so much more we had to leave out. As our focus has been much more on the spiritual there is a whole list of 'firsts' and achievements we've not addressed. Below are just a few to illustrate that Asia's contribution to the world is more amazing than most of us would realise. This is largely due to our re-telling of history with a Eurocentric slant. Let us incorporate some 'forgotten' facts that have helped humankind to this point:



1. PARTICLE PHYSICS – is one of the most advanced and complicated branches of modern physics. The earliest atomic theories are at least 2,500 years old. In India, almost every rational school of philosophy (whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jain) had something to say on the nature of elementary particles with various schools of thought promoting the idea that matter was composed of atoms that were indivisible and indestructible. So the earliest atomic/molecular theories began to be formulated in India.

2. THE FIRST MECHANICAL CLOCK – was invented by Su Sung (1020-1101 AD). He was a mathematician, astronomer and for many quite simply a genius. It's amazing to consider and almost certainly true that had the Chinese not turned inwards, away from the world, then they, along with the Indians, would have led the scientific and technological revolution. When the Jesuit priests brought to China the clocks the Europeans had invented (in the 14th century) little did they realise it was the Chinese who had first invented the clock!

3. PAPER – In the 2nd century BC the Chinese invented paper, using bamboo. During the Sung dynasty (1000AD) they came up with the printed word, which revolutionised the intellectual world and began the information age. This is some five centuries before the West. In the West we are led to believe that the first printed book, which was produced in the 15th century, can be seen in the Gutenberg Museum. The Chinese had begun their journey towards the printed word in the eighth century! They were also the first to come up with printed (paper) money in 812 AD. The first in Europe was Sweden in 1661 and it was 1690 before America followed suit.

4. DIGIT ZERO - As previously stated India is the Mother of mathematics. Were it not for zero, the world would be a very different place. Algebra, calculus and trigonometry also originated in India. The decimal system on which the modern world operates was born there too, a hundred years before Christ.

5. PI THEOREM - In the 6th century, a brilliant mathematician and astronomer, Budhayana, was the first to calculate Pi accurately and explain the concept of the Pythagorean theorem.

6. ASTRONOMIC CALCULATIONS – Also in the 6th century the earliest precise calculations in astronomy were produced by James Q Jacobs Aryabhata (c 500 A.D.). He accurately calculated a number of celestial constants such as the earth's rotation per solar orbit, days per lunar orbit and

days per solar orbit. Aryabhata was also an amazing mathematician and many of his calculations stood unchallenged for over 1,000 years.

7. INSTRUMENTS OF WAR – (Whether it is a matter of pride to be first in this field is another debate). However, the real point is to understand the East has contributed more to this domain than the modern world has given it credit for. It's a bit like building the foundation for a house, then creating a stunning house and forgetting that without the foundation the house simply wouldn't exist. By the 3rd century the Chinese had created cross-bows – long before they existed in Europe. These were well-guarded secrets that would not be surpassed until the age of the firearm. It's ironic that the Chinese were the first to invent fireworks (first recorded 512 A.D) as it was a similar science that would become the template for the firearm, which would see them toppled from pole position.

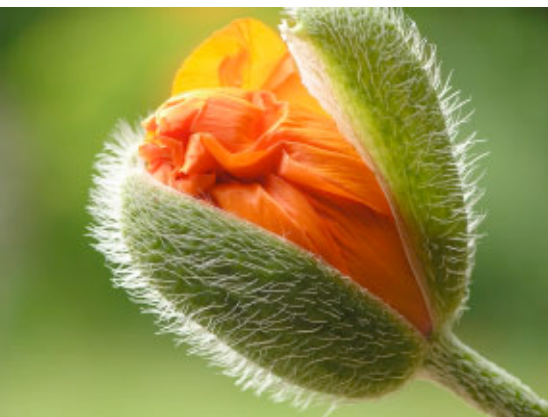
8. PORCELAIN, IRON AND STEEL – China invented porcelain 1700 years before the rest of the world. They also, having mastered the secret of heat and the use of furnaces, turned common iron into cast iron and then into steel: another first.

9. MEDICINE - The earliest school of medicine is Ayurveda. Charaka is often described as 'The Father of Indian medicine' but there's a legitimate debate to be had as to whether he is simply the founder of medicine, given his phenomenal contribution to the field. It was he who consolidated the principles of Ayurveda 2,500 years ago. His work showed detailed knowledge of anatomy including: digestion, metabolism, immunity, genetics and embryology, to name a few. This quite extraordinary body of work (when you consider the time period) is well documented in various Indian texts, should you wish to explore his work further.

10. SURGERY - Interestingly the father of surgery is also from the East (India). His name was Sushruta. 2,600 years ago he and his team performed a staggering array of complicated surgeries with as far as we know a high degree of success. Amongst the operations performed were: caesarians, cataracts, brain surgeries, fracture reductions, the creation of artificial limbs and much more.

11. THE COMPASS AND NAVIGATION – The Chinese were the first to invent the compass. These were first only used on land before becoming an essential instrument for sea voyages. In fact almost all maritime inventions came from China, led on by their invention of the kite, from which they learnt about wind technology and developed sails – they had done most of this by the 2nd century AD! (It would be 1300 years before the West caught up with them). The Chinese began

using compasses for sea expeditions in the 11th and 12th centuries, substituting this to navigation by the stars. But by the mid 14th century these external explorations ceased as the Chinese began to see such expeditions as a drain on their imperial resources and turned inwards. Only merchants and traders continued to roam the seas. It should be said at this point for balance and accuracy, that the art of navigation is said to have begun with the Hindus (crossing the river Sindh), 6000 years ago. In fact the word navigation comes from Sanskrit (considered the mother of all higher languages) – “navagatih”, and the word navy is also derived from the Sanskrit word “nav”.



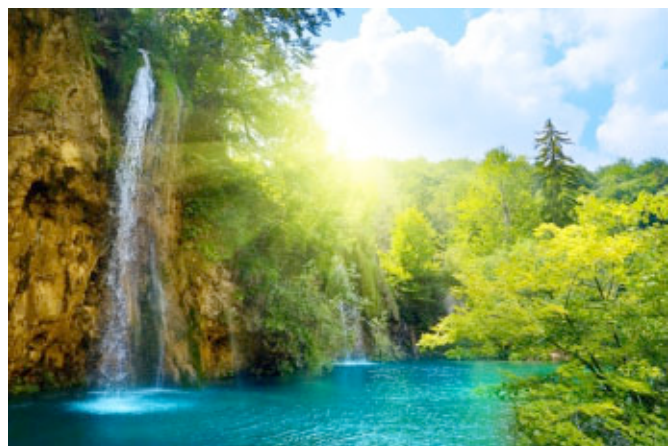
12. TAI CHI – The art of exercise and movement. For the Chinese one should only be afraid of standing still! Chi (the life force) keeps the body in balance through exercise. By the 1st century BC they had worked out many of the principles that along with the Ayurvedic tradition would become the foundation of modern medicine. Tai Chi continues to thrive as a exercise system for balance, health and healing.

We've merely itemized a dozen of the significant contributions of the East (primarily from India and China) and we could have so easily listed dozens more! However, our point is not to boast about the East but to offer proper respect to the enormous contribution the East has made to the world, both spiritually and scientifically. So much of what the West now holds dear started in the East and yet is there any proper acknowledgement and recognition of that?.... We don't think there is and we believe in part this is why we've lost our way. When we forget where we've come from, proper care of our heritage flounders and falls away as it gets taken for granted. If the branches, leaves and blossom of a tree forget their debt to its roots, bark and trunk, the tree will eventually fade and die. So we cannot afford to overlook and neglect the 'root system' (the East) that has supported the tree of life to this point, otherwise we, the branches, leaves and blossom will lose the opportunity to express our vitality and promise in the world. We then stop acting for the good of the whole and we only see the narrowed and limiting view of the 'I' not the 'we'.

WHERE TO NOW?

The modern expression of the eastern story continues to unfold but post Gandhi, Sayyid Muhammad Husain Tabataba'i, Kitaro, Han Yongun, Radhakrishnan and many of the great thinkers and contributors of the 20th century, the East, in places, is now showing signs of losing sight of its rich heritage as it battles for its place on the world stage. Often described as the third world or the developing world, its desire to be equal in this age of modernity is there for all to see. China especially is marching to the tune of technology and progresses at a staggering pace and many already see her as the next super power. India is also hankering after that time when she also led the world in intellect and innovation and as a result there is creeping evidence of progress leading to an erosion of the values and principles she has for so long held so dear.

So where to now? We believe our point has been well made and further reference to history is not necessary. Our purpose in looking back has only been to inform our way forward. If we compare the place where we stand right now (this age) to what has gone before, what are the lessons to be drawn? We believe there are so many illustrated here, however we will leave you to make your own mind up about the lessons which stand out for you. Our openly declared purpose is to invite you,-the reader- to question the premises on which your understanding and assumptions of



life are built. We seek to challenge the 'truth' that informs your outlook, perceptions, values, beliefs and choices and hope to elevate you out of denial, pretence, fear and limited thinking. We hope, once you have reflected on the content of this document that your understanding of the world and of yourself will not remain the same. However, as we said in "Science... The New God?" we don't expect or want you to simply accept what is documented here. We are hoping it will catapult you further down the path of self-discovery and spiritual enquiry. You can then for yourself dismiss or accept what fits into your own examination of the facts. Hopefully you'll trust your own experience too! As has been illustrated here, 'knowing' exceeds the boundaries and limitations of logic and

sensory perception. There also exists the kind of ‘knowing’ that comes from insight and stillness that we also need to use as a reference to increase our understanding of the bigger picture. Inner knowing offers us so many gifts. Sadly for the most part we’ve simply ignored them. It seems clear to us that until we find time for stillness and appreciative enquiry, we will continue stepping over the countless treasures that lie scattered on the floor of the mind.

We hope this thesis will also offer a greater understanding for those unsure of the ‘thinking’ behind the Reach Approach. We describe our model as a place where “antiquity meets modernity”. Hopefully, this exploration of history goes some way to explaining our reverence for ancient principles. We think many of them are needed more than ever before,- hence their influence in our work. Ask yourself, in the light of what you’ve learnt here, is there more you could be doing to enhance your personality, character and nature? ...Could you in some way improve your contribution to the world? ... Is there more you could be doing to enrich the lives of those around you? ... If the answer is yes, then we would like to suggest some of the answers to help inspire and improve your life have already been offered to you. Look back again at this document, re-read certain parts: there is so much you’ll have missed the first time around.

We wish you all that you need as you move forward in your life...But please do something for positive change. Don’t sit waiting for a miracle: create miracles of your own!

“An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.”

Friedrich Engels (1820 – 1895)