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# NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future Bi-monthly

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### Editorial

In this issue you will find several articles about various aspects of London. These summarise a few of the talks given in our special summer event 'London Week'. The idea behind this event was to increase the idea of citizenship and the feeling of belonging to a city.

London is one of the world's most ethnically diverse cities: over 300 different languages are spoken and 50 non-indigenous groups have populations over 10,000. Its 8.2 million inhabitants live together in peace in a relatively safe and green city. No doubt, an amazing achievement.

But does everyone who lives in London or any other city think of themselves as a citizen, in other words, as someone who is part of a city? And what would it mean?

Apart from its legal connotation, citizenship has a psychological dimension. It can be seen as a state of mind, as a sense of belonging, an inner awareness and identity that would change the way we think, feel and act. To explain it with an analogy: there is a subtle and yet profound change of identity when we grow from a teenager into an adult, when we get married and suddenly think of ourselves as husband or wife, or when we become a parent and consider ourselves to be a mother or a father. Each time our identification changes and our sense of responsibility grows.

For the ancient philosophers, the next logical step towards fuller maturity would be to become a citizen. In other words: to think of yourself as part of a community, to have a sense of belonging and to act with a sense of responsibility for the common good.

The funny thing is that we actually all are citizens, whether we want it or not. But as Woodrow Wilson pointed out so poignantly: "We are all citizens of the world. The tragedy of our times is that we do not know this."

*Sabine Leitner*



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How the City of London came  
to be what it is today  
Nataliya Petlevych

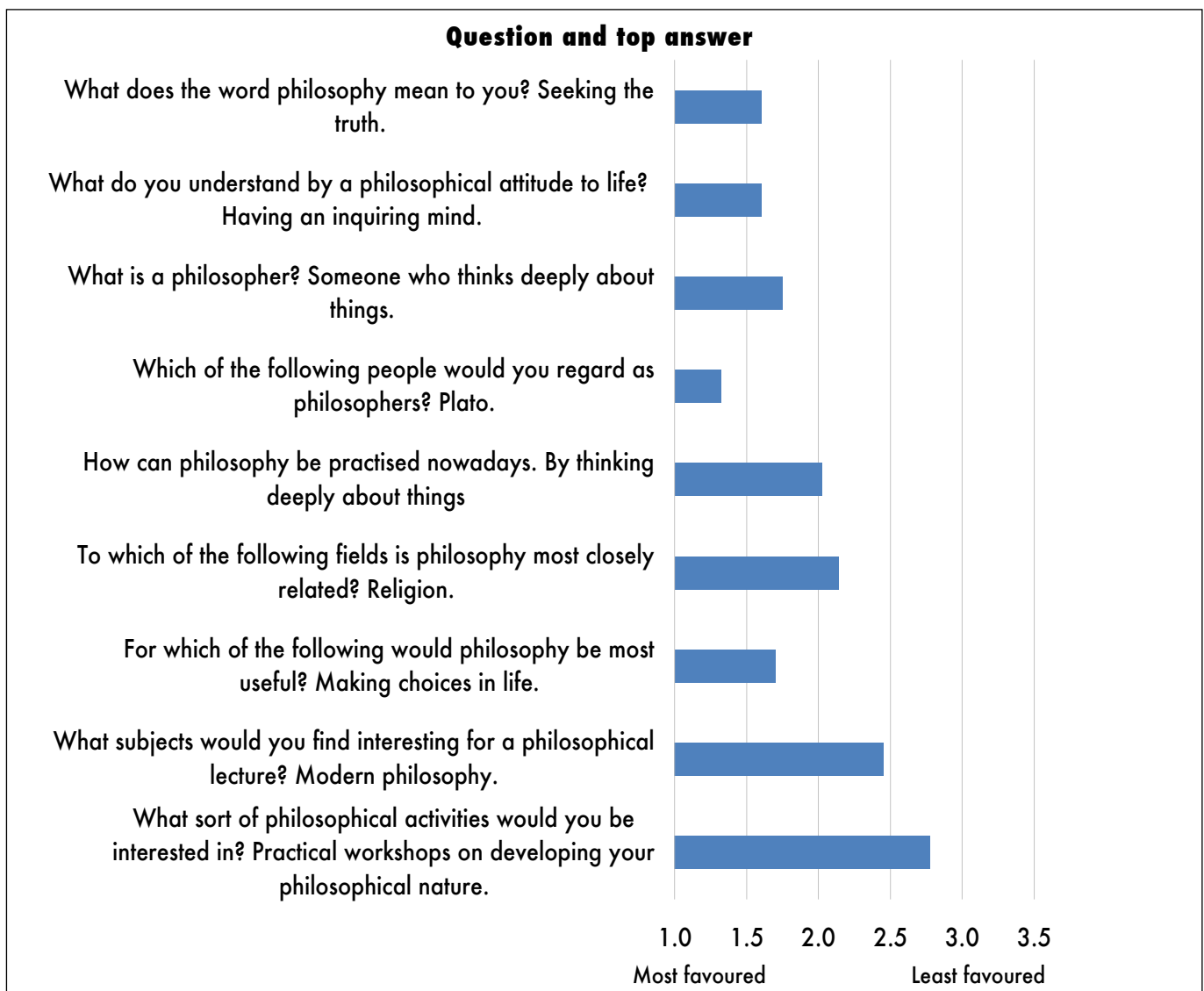
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## “Attitudes to Philosophy in Islington” – Results of our randomized survey

Over the summer, volunteer researchers from New Acropolis School of Philosophy conducted a survey of 100 respondents to find out what people in Islington think about philosophy: whether they have a generally positive or negative view of it, what they find it useful for and what type of philosophy and philosophical activities they are interested in, as well as favourite philosophers and words they associate with the terms ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosopher’. The survey was carried out on ‘random subjects’, for which the main method used was approaching people in Islington’s parks and asking them if they would like to fill out the survey. People’s response was generally very open and many respondents enjoyed the experience of thinking about these topics. So a big thank you to all who took part!

Below is a table highlighting the main results. As the number 1 represented the top score in the questionnaire, the way to read the table is by looking for the lowest number, which will represent the most popular option.



Interpreting the data, it seems that people in Islington have a generally positive view of philosophy, defining it as ‘seeking the truth’, relating it with ‘having an inquiring mind’ and ‘thinking deeply about things’.

The words most commonly associated with the terms ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosopher’ also reflect this. Respondents also listed as their top choice of philosophical activity ‘practical workshops on developing your philosophical nature’, which implies that people see a philosophical nature as something positive.

The fact that people responded to the question ‘how can philosophy be practised nowadays?’ with the response ‘by thinking deeply about things’ in the first place, whereas ‘by doing something to make the world a better place’ and ‘by becoming a better person’ were bottom of the list, implies that philosophy is seen more as a theoretical activity rather than an active approach, although it might be argued that the ‘deep thinking’ could then lead to ethical or social action. On the other hand, the question about the usefulness of philosophy, which drew the response that it is useful primarily for making choices in life and in second place for being happy, does suggest that people view philosophy as being of some practical value.

It was interesting that most people considered philosophy to be most related to religion. I would suggest that this is because religion deals with the deeper aspects of life and, as philosophy is primarily associated in the survey with seeking the truth and thinking deeply about things, that would give it a strong link

Question	Answer	%
Who are your favourite philosophers?	Plato	33%
	Socrates	18%
	Aristotle	14%
	Immanuel Kant	11%
	Descartes	11%
Write down 5 words you associate with the word ‘philosophy’	(Critical/deep) thinking	71%
	Wisdom	21%
	Knowledge	15%
	Understanding	14%
	Asking Questions/ Enquiring	12%
Write down 5 words you associate with the word ‘philosopher’	(Critical) Thinker/thoughtful	58%
	Academic	22%
	Wise	18%
	Clever/Smart/intelligent	15%
	Open-minded	14%

Some more results

with religion. However it is also to be noted that science comes a fairly close second and actually had the highest number of ‘1’ scores; this also makes sense, because science (when correctly practised) is also about seeking the truth and understanding the world.

The interest in modern philosophy which the survey highlights perhaps indicates a concern that philosophy should be relevant to the modern world. However, it is worth pointing out that there are certain values and principles in all philosophies, ancient and modern, which transcend time and are universally applicable. It is these that, through courses and lectures, our school of philosophy seeks to discover and promote in the modern world.

Julian Scott

## About Us

NEW ACROPOLIS is an international organization working in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering. Our aim is to revive philosophy as a means of renewal and transformation and to offer a holistic education that can develop both our human potential as well as the practical skills needed in order to meet the challenges of today and to create a better society for the next generation.

For further details please visit : [WWW.NEWACROPOLISUK.ORG](http://WWW.NEWACROPOLISUK.ORG)

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## How the City of London came to be what it is today

The City of London (as opposed to London the city) is a state within a state with only 8,000 residents. It is the only place in the UK where businesses have a vote in local elections, and where the Queen can only visit upon getting a ceremonial permission to enter. It has its own police force and is a powerful financial centre. How did the City become what it is today?

From the very beginning it was the heart of the future London. Many ancient artefacts from the Iron Age were found in the River Thames in the City area or nearby. After the Roman conquest in 43 AD, a thriving town called Londinium was built with almost the same boundaries as the City has now. Soon it developed into a splendid and prosperous place, one of the nine colonies that soon replaced Camulodunum (Colchester) as the capital of Roman Britain.

After the Romans entirely withdrew from Britain in 410, the town went into decline. But it was revived by Alfred the Great, who ordered a restoration of the old Roman city in 886. It became Lundenburch and soon regained its leading position as a rich trade centre among other English cities.

Alfred the Great appointed a Governor and established two Burhs to defend the bridge across the Thames. From this moment, the city of London began to develop its own unique local government. In the 10th century London was so rich and economically vibrant that there were eight mints (bodies permitted to manufacture the coins of the kingdom) in the city, while the capital Winchester had only six.

During the Norman conquest London was not devastated. In 1075 William the Conqueror granted a charter confirming the burghers of London in the rights enjoyed by them since the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). Thus, partial self-governance of the city and its independent spirit were sustained.

After the charter by William the Conqueror other royal charters followed. London was expressly mentioned in the Magna Carta (1215) and its 'ancient liberties by land and by water' were assured.

It was an ancient tradition of Folkmoot (an open air gathering of people to discuss local matters of an administrative and judicial character) that brought about the notion of a commune and later corporation of London. The commune of the city was an active entity from Anglo-Saxon times and its rights were recognised in royal charters. There is no record of an act first establishing the corporation as a legal body, but it is regarded as incorporated by prescription (a legal term meaning the establishment of a claim founded on the basis of long usage or custom).

It was between the 12th and 14th centuries that the main governing institutions of the City were established: the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, the Common Council. It must be said that they had evolved gradually on the basis of existing customs and concessions from the Crown to elect governing officials, who had formerly been appointed. The City became the centre of commerce, distinguished by self-government and the freedoms enjoyed by its citizens.

In 1411 works to erect a building symbolising the power of the city began - by 1425 a Guildhall was in operation.

By Tudor times the City of London had established itself as a leading international trade centre. The Royal Exchange, founded in 1570, consolidated this status. Over the next couple of centuries other pillars that make up the modern city followed: the Bank of England (1694), the Stock Exchange (1773 - the year when it moved from a coffee house into its own premises), insurance and all other types of businesses that the City is famous for now. It was at

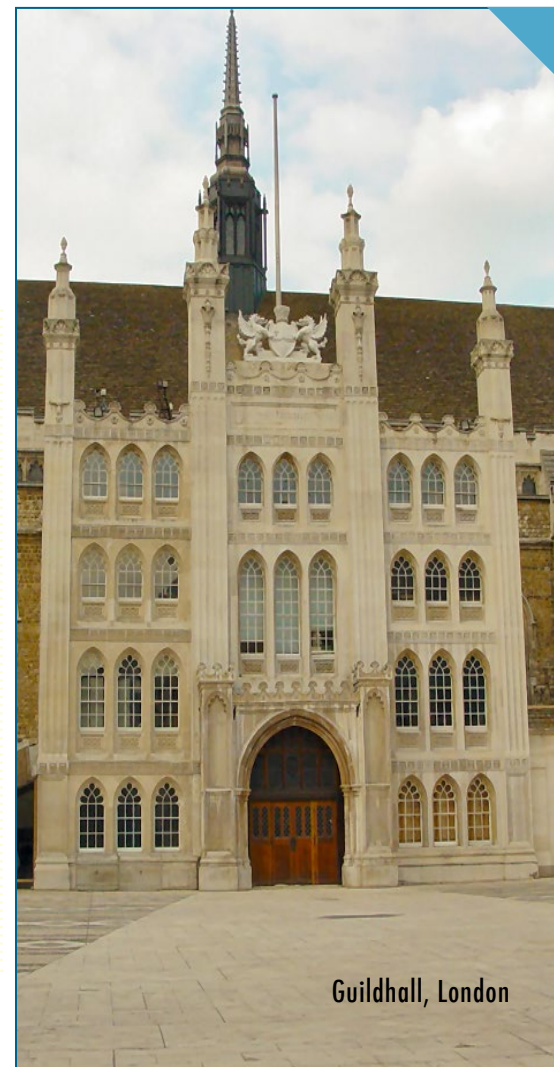
the end of the 18th century that foreign stock was marketed in London for the first time.

From the beginning of the 19th century the power of the City reached such a level that criticism and talk of reforms began to arise. Some reforms were made, such as allowing businesses to participate in the Common Council elections, but the position of the City as a whole remains the same.

By the beginning of the 20th century the population of the City had rapidly declined due to people moving to more pleasant areas, so that it became mostly a business centre and place of work.

Throughout its history the City was made by its people, their independent spirit, their skills and their desire for self-governance.

*Nataliya Petlevych*



Guildhall, London

## Occult London

In a general sense, the word 'occult' simply refers to the unseen, hidden or underlying aspects of reality. Throughout history, in various parts of the world and at various times, there have been individuals who have tried to bring more hidden layers of truth and knowledge to established conventional and often limited notions of reality.

London has a very ancient and diverse history and like many major world cities, it has a rich occult tradition. The work left by many contributors to this tradition serves as a reminder of this ongoing quest to reveal to the casual city dweller glimpses of hidden and occult teachings. Let us now have a glance at 'occult' London, some of its colourful actors and their mysterious footprints.

In ancient times, the River Thames - symbol of London's heart and soul - the giver of life to the city, was one of the places where occult practices were conducted. Shamanic objects, sacrificial effigies and Bronze Age swords have been found in the Thames and most recently a unique Viking helmet which seems to have been used for special 'occult' ceremonies.

From the remains of the Mithras temple in the City of London we can revisit the ancient and mysterious rituals of Mithraism, a cult dear to the Roman soldiers. The Knights Templar also left a very rich legacy of occult lore, first through the Order of the Hospital of St. John, and then with the construction of the Temple Church near Fleet Street. Elizabethan London saw a proliferation 'wise men', 'witches', 'charmners', 'astrologers', etc., all providing access to various forms of Christian and pagan 'magic'. We need just to remember Queen Elizabeth's adviser, Dr. John Dee, a distinguished occultist and scientist versed in the Hermetic arts.

For London, the 17th and 18th centuries were times of reconstruction and expansion, and some of the most well known contributors to this period were steeped in the occult tradition of the Kabbalah, sacred architecture, numerology and occult astronomy. St. Paul's Cathedral, The Monument,

Nelson's Column and Hawksmoor's Christ Church, are all instances of revived occult symbolism. Around this time we also find the mystical and enigmatic works of Emanuel Swedenborg and William Blake.

As we move into the Victorian Age and in the midst of scientific materialism, the fever for the supernatural and the pseudo-occult reaches its peak. Mesmerism, clairvoyance, thought reading, crystal-gazing and spiritualism became popular 'entertainment' for the rich and famous as well as the common man. While H.P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society brought occult knowledge from the East, the



A portrait of John Dee

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn gave us a taste of natural and ceremonial magic in the Western Tradition.

As for today, London's occult roots remain deep and far-reaching and the many scattered seeds are just waiting for the right time to sprout.

*Agostino Dominici*

## PHILOSOPHICAL HUMOUR



## Some inspiring quotes

"Do not be afraid of your difficulties. Do not wish you could be in other circumstances than you are. For when you have made the best of an adversity, it becomes the stepping stone to a splendid opportunity." - Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

"A person is not likely to be a good economist who is nothing else." - John Stuart Mill

"The world is a looking glass and gives back to man the reflection of his own face." - William Thackeray

## Sacred Architecture

In London and all around the British Isles we can see many different architectural styles and buildings. So what differentiates a sacred building from one that is secular or 'profane'?

First of all, the location is paramount. It needs to be in a "special" place. Usually along and/or above a river, and sometimes at the top of a hill/mountain. The first criterion symbolises the forces of Nature, bringing the life and energy that the river carries. The second, by its elevated position, symbolises the higher aspects of life, as in the case of the Acropolis in Athens.

The proportions in which temples are built are also of the greatest importance, as they use fundamental numbers and ratios such as Pi ( $\pi$ ), the golden proportion ( $\Phi$ ) and natural number ratios (1:2, 2:3, 3:4, 4:5, etc.) which are also used in music. Those numbers are "magical", as they will give the temple harmonious and natural proportions. Classical examples of this can be found in the Parthenon at Athens ( $\Phi$ ), the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe ( $\Phi$  and natural ratios) and the Great Pyramid in Egypt, in which we can find  $\Phi$ ,  $\pi$  and natural ratios.

What adds to the sacred quality of such structures are the mysterious and complex methods used to build them - methods that the most brilliant architects and engineers have not yet understood. All of these elements make the Temple a place for the Soul and the Mind, a place of purification, regeneration and transmutation.

*Florimond Krins*

Westminster Abbey London



## The London Underground

More than 150 years ago, it took visionary politicians and entrepreneurs and talented engineers to build what is now one of the most used public transport systems in the world. Every day 4 million Londoners use what is also called the Tube, a name that comes from the first time a tubular tunnel was used in 1870.

The ideas for an underground railway came in the middle of the 19th century when the streets of London were becoming crowded with horses and carriages and the manure that comes with it... At that time the overground

railway powered by steam was blooming and the choice of using the same system beneath street level was easy to make but much harder to apply. However, in 1863 the first Metropolitan underground railway opened. Other lines opened soon after, such as part of the Circle, Hammersmith and District lines, most of which were overground. The techniques used to build the parts that were under-ground were difficult, partly because of London's soft soil (clay and sand) and partly because of the extra congestion the work created during construction, as

the lines followed the routes of the road network.

It was only in 1890 that the underground revolution happened, when a new tubular tunnelling technique combined with electrically powered trains allowed the Underground to use deeper and narrower tunnels to finally link the North (Bank) with the South (Waterloo and London Bridge) underneath the Thames. From then on everything was set for the "Tube" to blossom and spread all over London. And by 1933 most of the Underground we know today had been built (except for the Victoria and Jubilee lines).

*Florimond Krins*

## The Mythical Origins of London

London is an ancient city. Historically, the Romans established a settlement in this area called Londinium around 50 AD, but there are some legends that talk of a much older settlement.

One of these legends begins right after Troy had been conquered and sacked by the Greeks (around the 12th century BC). The Trojan prince Aeneas fled the city with his son Ascanius and migrated to Italy. Ascanius married and had a grandson called Brutus, who accidentally slew his father while out hunting and was exiled to Greece. There, other Trojans gathered around him knowing that he was the great-grandson of Aeneas and, with the help of an army, Brutus defeated the Greek forces and demanded two things: to marry the king's daughter and to be given a fleet of well equipped ships to seek a new homeland.

After two days they found a deserted Island called Leogicia where there was a ruined city and a temple of Diana. Brutus made sacrifices to the Goddess and at night he dreamed of her saying that he should seek a land beyond Gaul in the country of the setting sun.

After that, they travelled for a long time, fought the Gauls on their way and in the end stopped at an island called Albion, which was ruled by giants. After defeating the giants, Brutus and the Trojans founded cities across the country including Troia Nova (Latin for New Troy), which was then corrupted to Trinovantum, where London now stands.

*Lucas Penna*



A portrait of King Brutus



Coin of the Trinovantes

## Green City – Healthy City

We know many interesting facts about London, but let's not miss one very important one, and that is that we are living in the greenest capital in Europe. London contains 141,640 hectares or 1,416 square kilometres of public parks, woodlands and gardens, which means that 40% of its surface area is made up of publicly accessible green space. In comparison, Berlin, the next major city green space provider in Europe, has just 14.4% of green surface area.

This doesn't only mean that London makes a great place for wildlife, but also that people here have more possibilities of coping and living more happily in such a busy and stressful city. Using data from over 1,000 participants, a research team at the University of Exeter Medical School focused on two

groups of people: those who moved to greener urban areas, and those who relocated to less green urban areas. Analysing data that followed people over a five-year period has shown that moving to a greener area not only improves people's mental health, but that the effect continues long after they have moved.

The research has thoroughly examined all the different conditions, but we don't really need more information to believe in its conclusions, as we can verify them for ourselves by just going into nature and discovering how it helps us to feel more balanced. In nature we can recognise beauty, simplicity and complexity that have been built up over millions of years, and this helps us to understand how beautiful, simple and complex we are ourselves.

*Miha Kosir*

## London People: 1850 – Present

It was in 1850 CE that London began its transformation into the city that we recognise today. A city that now has over 8.1 million people who collectively speak over 300 languages. Where did they come from? Why are they here? Good questions that some may feel slightly uncomfortable about asking.

In 1851 London was a city of about 2 million people who were significantly divided between the rich and the poor. Despite this, the city hosted the Great Exhibition that showcased the cultural and material diversity of the British Empire in a palace of glass known as Crystal Palace. The Empire had been made possible by maritime trade, and Indian and Chinese sailors came to London on merchant ships and set up small communities while they waited to fund the return trip home.

Industrialisation in London attracted workers from all over. Projects such as the sewer system became necessary to deal with the growing population and prevent diseases from spreading. It was around this time that iconic structures that give London its character were built, including Tower Bridge, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Houses of Parliament (rebuilt). All of this industrial and economic activity increased the London population to approximately 7 million before World War I and about 8.5 million before World War II.

Then the population declined. Not because many had died, but because the British government created new towns and cities in Britain and expanded existing ones. It was not until the 1990s, when Margaret Thatcher rejuvenated London into a financial centre, that the attraction to London rekindled and people once again flocked to live there.

The demographics of present-day London are very varied and insightful. 42% of the 8 million people are White British, the remainder are from all over the world. Many come from the former colonies like India (262,247), Pakistan (112,457), Nigeria (114,718) and Ireland (129,807). Others have come from countries in Europe such as Poland (158,300), Germany (55,476) and Romania (44,848). Many are from elsewhere: USA (63,920), Turkey (59,596) and Australia (53,959)

There are also significant ethnic groups that have settled into communities in specific areas of London.

Asians tend to be concentrated in the boroughs of Newham and Redbridge in the East and in Brent, Barnet, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing in the West. People from Black African/Caribbean communities have settled predominately in south London within the boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, while the City of London has the highest Chinese population in the capital.

London also has the largest populations of religious groups outside of their native countries. In addition to the 48.4% of Christians, 20% having no religious affiliation and 8% who decided not to tell anyone what they believed, 12% follow Islam, 5% Hinduism, 1.8% Judaism, with Sikhs making up 1.5% and Buddhists 1%. London also has Europe's largest Mosque (Baitul Futuh, in Morden) and the spectacular Hindu Temple at Neasden.



The people of London have developed into an open-minded bunch. It all started with the trade and commerce of the British Empire that attracted people from many different parts of the world with a variety of ethnicities. People's religious views have come to be tolerated and respected in the capital with very little friction between groups. Who would have ever thought that one day London would be home to 21,337 Jedi Knights?!

Gurpreet Virdee



## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

### FARMAGEDDON

by Julian Scott

Apologists of industrial farming often claim that this soulless and inhumane way of producing food for human consumption is the only viable way of feeding the world in these times of overpopulation.

However, although the deceptively named 'green revolution' (the conversion to industrial farming after the second world war based on pesticides, artificial fertilizers and mass production methods) got off to a hopeful start and initially boosted production levels, its success was short-lived. Soon farmers were going out of business and formerly fertile lands became transformed into dustbowls.

The more natural system of farming which existed previously was based on the mixed farm where different crops were rotated and the manure from farm animals was used to fertilize the soil. Insects and birds contributed to the pollination effort and the whole was relatively self-sustaining.

The temptation of the industrial farming concept was based on the fact that nature is unpredictable, so



harvests may fail. By making agriculture less dependent on nature, so the argument went, agriculture could run as efficiently as a factory.

What was not taken into account, however, was the enormous pollution produced by the intensive farming of animals, the destruction of pollinating insects by pesticides, the soil-depleting effects of monoculture, and the cruelty to the factory-farmed animals themselves.

**Read the full article in our next issue...**

# Upcoming Events

See our website for  
more details.

[www.newacropolisuk.org](http://www.newacropolisuk.org)

Starting Dates for our 16-week Philosophy Course:

*Get Inspired – Discover Philosophy*

**Wed 24 Sept, 7 pm**

**Thurs 9 Oct, 7 pm**

**Tues 21 Oct, 7 pm**

First evening free - Please see website for details

**Wed 17 Sept, 7.30 pm**

Talk: *The First World War: Heroism or Folly?*

**Thurs 2 Oct, 7.30 pm**

Talk: *Heroes within - Discover the archetypes that guide our journey through life*

**Fri 17 Oct, 7.30 pm**

Talk: *Altruism as a factor of economic development*

Guest Speaker: Harry Costin PhD, Economic strategy, Boston University

**Mon 27 Oct, 7 pm**

4-week course *"The Power of Myth"*

Please see website for details

16-week Philosophy Course:

***Get Inspired - Discover Philosophy***

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