



Philosophy in Nature space,  
“Trees” in Boca Raton, FL.



Participant writing her  
question for our inquiry,  
focusing on trees. February  
2024.

“Now, thanks to Wisdom's  
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– Bob, 94 years old.

## Being together with philosophy

We underestimate the loss of togetherness we experienced during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, parents had a challenging time connecting with their children while some electronic device is vying for attention – for the parent or the child. Yet the pandemic necessitated the use of electronic devices so that we can still be together virtually. We are now used to being on the computer and less comfortable being with others in person. Everywhere I go, whether it is at a family gathering or a public event, I hear people talk about empty playgrounds and quiet streets where children used to play. Children prefer the safety and convenience of playing with children online than be outdoors for free play. It is also messy to play outside – at the beach, sand gets stuck between the toes, children might fall from trees and get hurt, bug bites sting. The computer seems like the ideal stand-in for child care when one parent needs to leave the house for a quick errand or an online meeting in an office with the door closed as the computer is totally absorbing the attention of our young ones. The cell phone or tablet completely absorbs our attention whenever we need it but also when we need to be present for our loved ones. It is hard to pull away.

The patience required to enter shared conversational spaces seems to be waning with every advancement in technology. This is why Dr. J at p4cHawai'i reminds us again and again that “we are not in a rush”. Exploring wonder, taking turns in asking questions and attempting to answer them – is a slow and messy process. Committing to read a difficult text that one does not yet have the tools to fully understand takes time and patience with oneself – and a bit of self-forgiveness, too. Yet to exercise the mind is a practice and a commitment not just for self-improvement, it is also necessary for our democracy. We need to learn again how to be with one another in person.

We need to create intellectually safe public spaces, where we can explore virtually any question and share our views – so long as we do it respectfully with whom we converse. Wisdom's Edge cultivates the space for these shared activities seeking logic, truth and meaning for participants aged 5 to 95.

You're invited to learn here about our programs and impact. You'll read testimonies from our participants and see pictures that represent our being together with philosophy. – *Sophia Stone*, President, W.E. Foundation.

*“If you talk to the animals, they will talk with you, and you will know each other. If you do not talk to them, you will not know them and what you do not know, you will fear. What one fears, one destroys.”*

– Chief Dan George

**Group photos from our Philosophy in Nature series:**



*“The mark of a moderate man is freedom from his own ideas. Tolerant like the sky, all-pervading like sunlight, firm like a mountain, supple like a tree in the wind, he has no destination in view and makes use of anything life happens to bring his way. Nothing is impossible for him. Because he has let go, he can care for the people’s welfare as a mother cares for her child.”*

– Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, #59, Mitchell translation

## Philosophy in Nature

We gather twice a year in South Florida for three sessions focusing either on trees, stillness in water at a lake, or water in motion at the ocean. After reading wisdom from the world’s sages about these natural objects and discussing the passages using the [Good Thinker’s Toolkit](#) and [Plain Vanilla Inquiry](#), we paint, draw, or write in our water color journals. This year, our youngest participant was twelve, our oldest was ninety-four. It is a wholesome activity that connects people to nature and to one another. With the generous support by a grant from the City of Boca Raton, Wisdom’s Edge was glad to sponsor two retired veterans and to subsidize eight Lynn University students from the Watson Institute.

For our first session on trees, I reached out to Tribal Elder Betty Osceola of the Miccosukee and invited her to share some wisdom about trees from her community. Her passage was about considering trees as part of a community, and in what ways we are connected to them. There were other passages about trees offered from Rashi and Lao Tzu.

Using plain vanilla, the group chose the question offered by our youngest participant who asked: “Why do we take trees for granted?”

One of the participants in our discussion mentioned the author/forest researcher and caretaker Peter Wohlleben. I am reading his early work, *The Hidden Life of Trees*, after learning of him. With Wohlleben’s text and the conversations we’ve had about trees from our session, I no longer think of trees as individuals but always as members of a community, helping one another, communicating, caring for each other. I have also been observing my house plants, making sure they are bundled in communities, not a single plant being alone. My house plants are doing much better in their communal spaces! Co-leading the Philosophy in Nature series with my collaborator Melissa Landis has changed the way that I think about nature and my connection to it. I also made some new friends. Perhaps you’ll join us next time? – Sophia Stone

## Help Fund Wisdom’s Edge!

We have a new [donations page](#), with three levels of donors: craftsman (\$18), guardian (\$180) and philosopher king (\$1800). Our fundraising goal for 2023 is to have 100 craftsmen, 10 guardians, and 1 philosopher king. Funds will support participation at the [Summer Symposium](#) at the [Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education](#). The symposium runs for a three-week series of weekly sessions with training in pedagogy and methods for teaching philosophy to diverse communities, focusing on the most vulnerable and yet most flexible thinkers – children. The intended outcome for Wisdom’s Edge Dialogue Facilitator participation is for methodological and curriculum development used for programming in future collaborations with pre-K and K-5 public and private institutions. Our goal is to have all of our Dialogue Facilitators participate in this training and to bring the p4c method back to the communities we serve.

## Testimonials from Philosophy in Nature:

*“But nothing sweeter is than this: to dwell in quiet halls and lofty sanctuaries well-fortified by doctrines of the wise, and look thence down on others wandering and seeking all astray the path of life—the clash of intellects, the fight for honors, the lust for wealth, the efforts night and day with toil and sweat to scale the heights of power. O wretched minds of men! O hearts so blind! How dark the life, how great the perils are in which whatever time is given is passed! Do you not see that Nature cries for this, and only this, that pain from out the body shall be removed away, and mind enjoy sweet sense of pleasure, freed from care and fear?”*

– Lucretius, Book II, *On the Nature of the Universe*, Melville translation

*“The same thing happens in all directions. Wherever an empty space is made, the adjacent atoms whether they are at the side or are above at once are driven into the vacuum. For they are struck by blows from other quarters and cannot rise into the air of their own accord.”*

– Lucretius, Book VI, *On the Nature of the Universe*, Melville translation

*“This year I came with no expectations, a sense of wonder, yes, I am usually willing to try something new that’s out of my wheelhouse. My philosophy is that sometimes we may be fortunate enough to meet someone who truly makes a difference in our lives. They may inspire us to do things that we thought we couldn’t, possibly help to guide us on our path in some way and they might aid us to view things differently or with another perspective. Different perspectives do sometimes tend to find different answers... Being old...I enjoyed the age diversity of the groups. How that the others made me explore about how others see or think about the conversations at hand to what I see or think about them.”*

– Walter, retired veteran and nature photographer

*“My time spent in nature with Dr. Sophia Stone, discussing philosophy and painting our surroundings was nothing short of magical! Taking the time to sit, learn, discuss and reflect was a respite that I strongly recommend for anyone who feels over programmed or overwhelmed. Gift yourself by participating in a Philosophy in Nature circle.”*

– Rabbi Amy Pessah



Philosophy in Nature participant painting in the lake

*“What plant can grow if you keep lifting it from the soil?  
Let your roots expand unchecked into a vista,  
A forest, a river, a song, or some verse you can hold tenderly.  
You need to become quiet for this, as roots work in silence beneath  
the earth’s silhouettes.”*

– Hafiz, “The Earth’s Silhouettes” in *A Year with Hafiz* by Daniel Ladinsky.

## New Mathematics & Philosophy reading circle!

Nature journal paintings from our  
Philosophy in Nature sessions:



Come read mathematical and geometrical inspired texts by the world's thinkers. Our Sessions meet Thursdays, 8 to 9 pm, EDT, for one hour where we read Euclid, the Zhou Bi, Samkhya Kārikā of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa, Avicenna's Psychology, Spinoza's Ethics, ending with Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Originally I was just thinking about Euclid, Spinoza and Wittgenstein but thought to invite our Text Advisory Board to recommend texts that were not from the Western Canon. Our participants are mostly scholars from various disciplines, mathematics, philosophy, languages and literature, and professionals in STEM fields. It is never too late to join our reading circle. Please email Dr. Stone at [wisdomsedgefoundation@gmail.com](mailto:wisdomsedgefoundation@gmail.com) to register. All are welcome. No fee to participate.

## Online summer reading group: Eric Weiner's Socrates Express

Join professor John Houston for four online gatherings, June 6, 13, 20, and 27 from 7:00-8:30, discussing Eric Weiner's *Socrates Express*. Professor Houston will supplement the chapters with original texts from philosophers as well as review and teach the arguments and philosophy as they relate to the chapters. Here is the session breakdown:

### The Philosophy Express: Life Lessons from Dead Philosophers, Part I

Focused on practical wisdom for living well. Learn how to get out of bed like Marcus Aurelius; wonder like Socrates; walk like Rousseau; and see like Thoreau.

### The Philosophy Express: Life Lessons from Dead Philosophers, Part II

Focused on practical wisdom for living well. Learn how to enjoy like Epicurus; pay attention like Simone Weil; fight like Gandhi; and be kind like Confucius.

### The Philosophy Express: Life Lessons from Dead Philosophers, Part III

Focused on practical wisdom for living well. Learn how to have no regrets like Nietzsche; cope like Epictetus; grow old like Beauvoir; and die like Montaigne.

Small registration fee. For registration, please reach out to Professor John Houston at [professorhoustonwe@gmail.com](mailto:professorhoustonwe@gmail.com).

**Special acknowledgement and thanks to the Freedom Fund for compassionate financing:** Mindfulness Teacher Pablo del Real's Freedom Fund is part of [Soil & Soul](http://soiland soul.org)'s non-profit organization that helps people in need achieve their goals by lending money or sponsoring a class. We are very grateful to the Freedom Fund for sponsoring a student to attend Professor John Houston's course on the Philosophy of the Weird and the Bizarre. To donate or for more information on Compassionate Financing, please email: [info@soilandsoul.org](mailto:info@soilandsoul.org).



At the beach with Wisdom's Edge...



## Self-Healing Circle reading Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, "On the nature of the Universe."

Lucretius's poetics on atomism proposes to address the ills of religious belief and fear of death. It is a delightful work that takes one's mind out of the mundane and the stress of life to focus on what matters: the enjoyment of good friends, discussing the nature of reality and eliminating one's irrational fears. Though it was written two thousand years ago, the text reads like a modern work about science. It has helped me in practical things such as unclogging a toilet. How? The method I was using to unclog the toilet wasn't working. Even the heavy-duty plunger made no difference. I imagined that the atoms needed energy to move and that the way to do this was by agitating them. Rather than muscle the plunger with a long and slow force which seemed not to make any difference, I shortened my movements and made them much faster with great success.



While there is much in the book to disagree with, such as Lucretius's claim that the moon is exactly the size it appears to be, there are other practical claims that make complete sense and can help one solve problems that arise due to our natural condition. In Book VI, Lucretius discusses the great plague of Athens in 430 BCE, which parallels our experience of the pandemic. If death is inevitable, isn't it better to die nobly, helping others, rather than die alone, cowering in fear?

## Testimonials from our winter Self-Healing Circle:

*"As one gets older, it's tempting to take familiar roads to predictable places. There's comfort in avoiding events and ideas that make an older person feel irrelevant. It becomes easy to confide, "Oh, I no longer get into discussions that might embarrass me." Many friends in their sixties and older tell me they are eager to find a setting in which they can discuss ideas that stimulated them when they were younger. But, they want those settings to be safe, places where they won't feel the sting of ageism.*

*I've had the good fortune of finding such a place, Wisdom's Edge. Learning about Lucretius has brought a richness to discussions with my grandchildren. They and I now debate atoms instead of their lecturing me on technology or my advising them on finances, we are equals in our search for knowledge.*

*I'm of the generations that went from war to a university classroom thanks to the G.I. Bill. Instead of obeying orders, I found myself in rooms where doors were flung open onto places I didn't know existed. Now, thanks to Wisdom's Edge, I'm not in a dull place deemed appropriate for the elderly. I'm in classrooms where the doors have opened onto a world I had forgotten was out there."*

– Bob, 94 years old.

### Did you know?

You can choose Wisdom's Edge to be your birthday charity on Facebook? Two friends of Wisdom's Edge have chosen us for their birthday celebration, raising hundreds of dollars to supplement our programs. Every dollar counts; every dollar will go directly to funding our programs so that we can continue to offer free or at reduced cost philosophy programs to communities that are on limited or no income.



*“The meditation [using Lucretius] made me think about how sometimes the worries in our life engulf our consciousness so fully that the highlights of our day, the little moments and memories of joy in our lives, become invisible to us. We may then need to consciously make an effort to bring these lighter moments into awareness so that both the difficult and the joyous can coexist. We do not need to rush to banish the disquiet from our lives—we can learn to sit with it, balancing it with that which we are grateful for, so that we do not get sucked into the tunnel of anguish and unrest. We do not need to chase away sadness just as we do not need to chase happiness. And then, maybe someday, even without us noticing, pain may pack its bags at midnight and leave.”*

– online participant from India

## Dear Friends,

### Light Lures Me

By Walter 2E Smith

Light thru the trees lures me,  
It invites me to come and join them,  
To visit with the standing ones,  
Hugging them closely to my heart,  
Communing with them,  
Climbing high into their branches,  
Looking down at the smallness of the world,  
Leaning back upon them,  
Absorbing their powerful energy,  
Sitting there upon earth mother,  
Inhaling her healing scent,  
Putting down my own roots,  
Expanding my humanness,  
Onto our earth mother,  
Becoming a part of her.

Wisdom’s Edge is asking for volunteers. We are at that juncture where we can expand our programming, apply for more grants, and get additional funding from donors, however, we need volunteers to help us with social media marketing and simple administrative tasks such as filling out forms needed to keep our organization running. Currently we have a presence in Minnesota and in South Florida, offering on the ground and online programming. Yet the paperwork to sustain our activities, including reporting and public filings, needs to be done in a timely manner.

I’m inviting you to consider a commitment, perhaps two to three hours monthly to assist in forms and filings and other simple administrative tasks. We are also in search of a Treasurer for our Board as the two Treasurers stepped down for family reasons, we have an interim Treasurer who graciously has stepped in until we find a replacement. If you are looking for some volunteer work where you can really make a difference and would like to join as an officer on our Board or as a volunteer administrative assistant, please email me at [wisdomsedgefoundation@gmail.com](mailto:wisdomsedgefoundation@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
Sophia Stone  
President & Founder  
Wisdom’s Edge Foundation, Inc.

*Our mission is to bring philosophy and philosophical discussions to communities that don’t normally have access to the university, communities transitioning from homelessness or incarceration, communities caring for others, communities too young for the university or communities on limited time or income. Our mission also supports philosophers by funding their projects so that they may provide free or at reduced rates quality philosophy courses to the public.*



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