

ACROPOLIS

Vol 3, Issue 7 - April 2020

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'We are all connected'

In this edition:
Against Separation we need Trust
The art of Friendship
Keeping the Centre



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On the cover: We are all connected

These are unusual times we are living in. Each one of us is confined to the spaces of our homes, finding new ways to stay connected and productive. And yet, this is also a time of great learning: about ourselves, about what connects us, what we need to change and what we are truly capable of. This patchwork of houses on a fabric (*shared by AnnaER via Pixabay*) beautifully represents what this time in history could look like if we zoom out: within each home, stories of hope and hard work. Connectedness within isolation.

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Dear Reader,

The times we are living through are in many ways unprecedented. Across the globe, individuals, communities and nations are grappling with the quickly-evolving circumstances. Old forms and things we used to take for granted have ceased to be plausible to lean on, and we have had to find solutions quickly.

It brings to mind the opening lines of a classic of English literature, written at a different time and alluding to different circumstances, yet not irrelevant to today:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

— Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

While we will all agree quickly that this is certainly not remotely the best of times, the scale and pace of the changing circumstances has meant that a wide range of human experiences and emotions have converged at the same time - uncertainty, confusion to varying degrees, difficulty at the physical and psychological levels, incredulity, a sense of urgency to act or paralysis due to a sense of helplessness, anxiety and hope.

Regardless of where we are, or our backgrounds until now, one thing the times are calling for from each of us is for **a Response**. Philosophically speaking, regardless of the exact nature of circumstances, the best response, individually and collectively, is to **Build Strength**. To strengthen ourselves in the best of times and in the worst of times. And as difficult as the current times are, strength is forged through the tests of time and circumstances. May we all find the strength to find the right response!

We have brought out this special single-month edition (April 2020) of ACROPOLIS magazine with the goal that its contents will inspire and strengthen you with philosophical tools and perspectives. May the keys of *authentic human connection, trust, keeping the centre and connection to nature* contained in the different sections of this edition help you build the strength to face these times and emerge victorious, together.

Wishing you Strength and Good Health,

Anand Baskaran

Editor - ACROPOLIS

Against Separation, We Need Trust



Delia Steinberg Guzmán

Editorial note: The reality of our past few weeks has been one of staying separated from others – we have all been in our own homes, greatly cutting down on the in-person interactions with others. In this time of Separateness, may we be inspired and reminded of the need for Unity and Trust.



The word “unify” comes from the Latin *unus* and *facere*, “to make one”, that is, to bring together various different parts that are coherent with another, and combine them in such a way that we can achieve a harmonious and homogeneous unity. It is an act of coming closer together, of connection, which, if it did not exist, would mean that each of the parts or beings would follow different paths –something which is not wrong in itself– but it would cause them be divided, disunited and opposed to one another. Without that gesture of unification, we would have to live in a perpetual chaos, in which it would be very difficult to find meaning in existence and its changing circumstances.

Indeed, the sickness which is oppressing our present historical time and which we have been incubating for a long time is separatism, division, the open struggle between increasingly smaller factions, ending up in individual confrontation. This sickness can be seen in different arenas: political, cultural, religious, artistic, social, as well as in families. It



can be experienced on the streets of the big cities and it is already making itself felt in the smaller towns. Distrust is lord and master of people's minds and this results in discourtesy, rudeness, irritation, unscrupulousness, insincerity, selfishness...



There is no possible coexistence when the generosity of love is not present and when what prevails is the self-absorbed feeling that one is the only person in the world. To

coexist we have to widen our consciousness and allow space for all living beings. We have to understand life in all things and conceive the infinity of the universe. We have to know and value everything that is... and be brave enough to share what we are with everybody else.

No one can reach their own self-fulfillment if they have no respect for the self-fulfillment of others. A good dose of unification is what we all need in general and each of us in particular. We need to experience once again the reality of that great family which is Humanity, the happiness of friendship, of mutual trust, of the desire to support and help, to look each other in the eyes again and find luminous truths instead of frightening shadows.

To coexist we have to widen our consciousness and allow space for all living beings. We have to understand life in all things and conceive the infinity of the universe.

The Art of Friendship

Suchita Tirkey



Editorial note: Perhaps the biggest source of strength we can all rely upon during trying times is each other - to connect, to cherish our close bonds with our dear ones. And in times when the challenges we are facing are all-encompassing, crossing all borders, our strength must cross all barriers of separation to. We can counter separation by building our ability to reach out and strengthen our bonds of humanity.



Image courtesy: Pikrepo | CC0-PD

If we were to ask someone the seemingly simple question “What is friendship?” most often we will hear responses that relate to the special bond or connection between two or more people that is based on mutual likes, dislikes, interests, opinion and views. Our connecting point in friendship is thus arising from our Psyche (psychological world, that includes the emotional and mental). It is often a response to the instinctive need of being able to express ourselves and find our own fulfilment in the company of others who we can trust, rely on and share experiences with.

Our own affections and aversions arouse inner emotional processes that largely affect relationships we seek and forge, realizing little that no matter how intense our emotions are, they are but a passing reaction to our self-serving need at a given point in time.

Similarly, we may often build friendships based on common interests, similar intellectual thoughts and opinions that are formed at the level of the subjective mental. To justify it as real connections, we call it as having the ‘same wavelength ‘.



Across ancient cultures, including the wisdom of Ancient India, Tibet, Greece and Egypt, there is the concept of two parts of the human being: one part is the transient one, that which we experience in our concrete reality – this is what is referred to in this article as the Personality, and it includes the physical, energetic, emotional and mental levels. The other part is what is referred to as the Higher self, which is related to universal human values or virtues, and this part is said to be non-transient, or our Eternal self.

It is the friendship of the souls that while acknowledging the differences in personal characteristics, reaches out to the inherent eternal within each other.

Through philosophical understanding and an inner investigation of the self, one learns that the psyche by its very nature is fluctuating. Emotions pass through the tube of our personality to exit when the moment passes, just as our opinions change with situations and experiences we accumulate. Even the values of love, care and compassion we feel most often run through the filter of our emotional and mental world to find their expression.

The very transient nature of the personal emotional and mental experiences invariably put at risk the relationships we build on these foundations, making them fragile and unstable.

What then is the foundation of a true friendship that can withstand the transient nature of our personality, and bring lasting value to our lives?

To answer this, we can find the key in Aristotle's work *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he describes three types of friendships. The first two, he calls the *Friendship of Utility* and the *Friendship of Pleasure*, which are self-explanatory.

The third, he calls the *Friendship of Virtues* or the *Friendship of the Good*. As virtues are eternal, above the din of the cries of the personality and as such friendships that originate at this realm of virtues can survive the pitfalls of the personality.

As philosophers, who understand this realm well and strive to walk the path of virtues, it is an opportunity to approach our relationships with the power of philosophy and all that it encompasses. An opportunity to build what we call Philosophical Friendships. The Philosophical friendship is the one that transcends beyond personal differences to connect through our eternal higher self to the eternal higher self of the other.



It calls for us to open our hearts with sincerity to recognize the beauty of the human soul of the other hiding behind the facade of the personality, and reach out in friendship. It is the friendship of the souls that while acknowledging the differences in personal characteristics, reaches out to the inherent eternal within each other. Aristotle describes true friends as 'one soul living in two bodies'. The key to enable philosophical friendship thus lies in the spirit of generosity and service, enabled with the tools of patience, persistence and genuine love for others- even when we may not share a personal relationship.

In the book Discourses, Stoic philosopher Epictetus essentially says that 'only wise men can be true friends'. As controversial as this may sound, the word Epictetus uses for the term 'wise' is the Greek word '*Phronimos*' which translates into 'practical wisdom'. The wisdom spoken of here is the wisdom of the soul that recognizes itself beyond the transient characteristics of the personality, and brings forth one's "true self" into his one's relationships with utmost sincerity. Wisdom is thus the seed that sprouts transformation within the human heart to recognize this fundamental essence of a true friendship.

The work with wisdom is not against the personality and its likes and dislikes, but to remember that the personality is only the vehicle. It is a question of identity - Who am I? Am I the Higher Self, or am I the Personality? When we establish the identity with our soul, it opens a door to freedom from our own limitations and judgments of the personality. It is significant thus to first establish the philosophical relationship with ourselves, and from that depth we reach out to build philosophical friendships with the other. This expression of philosophical friendship gives birth to the sentiment of Harmonious Co-existence emerging from the conscious practice of human values, above any seeds of physical or psychological separation.

The art of true friendship recognizes the immortality of our true nature and works with it to strengthen each other on the philosophical path towards the common goal of enabling collective transformation. Based on sincerity of our hearts and faith in each other, It forms a bond on the path that each of us walk individually yet together, united around the philosophical ideal as its axis.



Photoblog – Keeping the Centre

Pierre Poulain



Keeping the centre means not letting ourselves be influenced by external and internal circumstances. It means not allowing our emotions and our opinions – both always subjective – to take control of us. Intelligence and Imagination should prevail. Intelligence is not opinions, it is discernment.

It is the power to see the reality for what it really is, beyond the many veils and layers. And Imagination is not fantasy. Imagination is the power to trace a clear path between the present and the future, between what is and what could be. Both, Intelligence and Imagination belong to every human being, but not everyone cultivates them.

To do so, one has to be in his centre and fight to keep the centre, not to move away from it, even if everything inside us and around us tends to initiate a movement. Like the rock in this photograph. It will not move... even against all odds.



Pierre Poulain is a philosopher and a renowned international photographer. In 1986, he founded the New Acropolis School of Philosophy in Israel. Pierre Poulain's latest exhibition titled 'Photosophy' will be presented in Bangalore in 2020.

For more information on the artist and his work, please visit www.photos-art.org/

The Power of Life

Natalya Petlevych



Editorial note: The end of March and the month of April mark the time of Spring. At a time when there is much pause, slowing down or a halt in the usual activities we would partake, it is pertinent to note that Nature does not stop, regardless the circumstances. This article highlights the power of life to go on, through the lens of ancient Egyptian Symbolism.



Spring gives us a unique opportunity to witness the immense power of life. Everything in nature awakens, opens up to the warmth of the sun and actively grows unfolding its potential. Observing nature, I remembered the ancient Egyptian concept of “*sekhem*”, usually translated as “power”. It has several aspects of meaning, indicating power in action. On the one hand, it is the vital force of a human being, which also accompanies him in eternity. It indicates not only a given energy, but also actions that restore universal order, and as such it means mastered power in service of the good. Another meaning is the power of a deity. And lastly, *sekhem* was magical power in mortuary rituals that enabled the deceased to overcome obstacles in the world beyond.

Sekhem is found in the name of a goddess – Sekhmet or Sekhet, She who is Powerful. She is a consort of the demiurge Ptah, and part of the main triad revered in the ancient religious centre of Memphis. Their child is Nefertum, a beautiful lotus flower that had arisen from the primal waters at the creation of the world. Sekhmet and Ptah are said to be parents of the sage Imhotep, whose wise words still inspire.

Other Egyptian myths tell the story of the first Seven Wise Beings who planned the world. The master architect and workman Ptah carried out the design of the Seven Wise Ones.

Spring gives us a unique opportunity to witness the immense power of life. Everything in nature awakens, opens up to the warmth of the sun.



In nature, the power of life manifests by itself. In human beings we discover it by making choices, by becoming truer to our higher self.

He and Sekhmet partook in the characteristics of the Seven. Sekhmet was revered throughout the history of Egypt, from the time of the Pyramid Texts onwards. She was both a fierce warrior and a magician healer. She was believed to bring about the conception of the pharaoh. Sekhmet was protector of the armies and destroyer of the enemies of the land. She punished those who were doing evil and healed the righteous. She appears to be a personification of an active power that establishes divine order, purifies any distortion and restores Life.

If you see a beautiful and mighty statue of a woman with the head of a lioness crowned by a solar disk and the *uraeus* serpent on top of it, it is Sekhmet. She was also depicted as a lioness. Among her other names were the “(One) Before Whom Evil Trembles”, “Mighty Lady, Lady of Flame”, “Greatly Beloved One of Ptah, Lady of Heaven”. She has many names connected with different places and her breath is said to have formed the desert.

In nature, the power of life manifests by itself. In human beings we discover it by making choices, by becoming truer to our higher self. The Mighty Lady greets every victory in the inner battle.





New Acropolis is an international non-profit volunteer-run organization, having a philosophical, cultural and social approach. It was founded in 1957 as a school of Practical Philosophy in the Classical Style, to promote the ideal of timeless values towards human development.

In over 60 countries where New Acropolis is present, this vision is implemented through an eclectic range of teachings, practices and activities, inspired by Classics of both Western and Eastern global cultures and ancient civilizations. Our programs, based on philosophy that is practical and active, combine theoretical and practical education with expressions in the fields of Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering. With over 20,000 volunteers of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and social levels, New Acropolis emphasizes principles of Coexistence, Fraternity and mutual collaboration beyond cultural, sexual, or religious differences.

We at New Acropolis all over the world are greatly inspired also by the timeless principles of the Ancient Classical Indian Culture, Arts and Philosophies. New Acropolis in India, same as in all our centres worldwide, seeks to take inspiration, knowledge and best practices from the rich artistic, Spiritual and cultural human heritage in order to enhance both individual and collective human development.

In the following pages, we present a few glimpses of activities that took place between January and the beginning of March 2020, at New Acropolis in South India (Bangalore) and at some of our centres globally.



Philosophy, when it is practical, is educational. It helps us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves. To be a philosopher is a way of life committed to the best aspirations of humanity.

NEW ACROPOLIS (INDIA) - BANGALORE



The indomitable spirit of Taekwondo

The trinity of Taekwondo consists of the body, mind and spirit, which need to be in alignment.

Members of New Acropolis (India) - Bangalore passed their yellow belt exam by demonstrating to the instructor and examiners the stances, kicks, blocks, and the patterns, which are known as *pumsae*.

Building together: Woodworking workshop

Members of New Acropolis (India) – Bangalore came together to work with the element of wood and create meditation benches called *KindSeat*.

Emphasis in the workshop was on the art of building together, working with hands and learning carpentry skills in a practical way.



NEW ACROPOLIS AROUND THE GLOBE



“The ABC of philosophy: Aristotle, Buddha and Confucius” on radio and TV *Barcelona, Spain*

On the occasion of World Philosophy Day which this time had the central theme “Philosophy and Progress”, this interview, telecast on Radio and TV, discussed the legacy of three great philosophers in relation to their ideas about progress of the human being in knowing and improving themselves.



The practice of human values is the basis for a model of active and participative culture, which brings out each one's qualities and opens the human being up to all expressions of the spirit.

NEW ACROPOLIS (INDIA) - BANGALORE



Connecting to each other through our roots
Members of the Jayanagar branch of New Acropolis (India) had a cultural evening titled *Mile Sur Mera Tumhara*, involving ethnic wear, potluck and round of sharing about each one's roots with the goal of getting to know each other. The evening also included a beautiful sitar performance by one of the members.

Anniversary celebration in Alice's Wonderland
New Acropolis (India) - Bangalore celebrated its 11th Anniversary with the theme of the Mad Hatter's Tea party in Alice's wonderland. It was celebrated with family and friends and was full of colour, games, performances, the wise fortune teller's corner, and delicious potluck. An experience that was right out of the world!



NEW ACROPOLIS AROUND THE GLOBE



Tour of North Carolina Museum of Art *Raleigh, USA*

The members of New Acropolis Raleigh enjoyed a tour to the North Carolina Museum of Art, as part of the studies of culture and philosophy.



Volunteering is the natural expression of a spirit of union with life and humanity, which manifests in the practice of values such as unselfishness, commitment and generosity.

NEW ACROPOLIS (INDIA) - BANGALORE



Beautifying the living space of a Home for children

Members of New Acropolis (India) - Bangalore took up a project to beautify the living and study space of children from disadvantaged backgrounds at the centre run by NGO *Vidyaranya*. Volunteers cleaned and painted the walls, while the children were guided in conceptualising and stencil-painting invigorating designs onto the walls.

Activities to discover the inner Warrior

Volunteers conducted a meaningful session of activities, exercises and games for the young girls at the centre run by NGO *Vidyaranya*, oriented towards helping the girls discover their strengths and find expression, creativity and inner freedom.



NEW ACROPOLIS AROUND THE GLOBE



Choral works in a retirement home

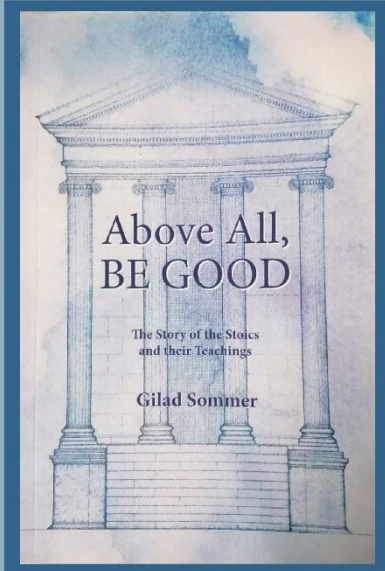
Budapest, Hungary

Volunteers from New Acropolis performed a selection of choral works for the residents of the Szivárvány Retirement Home. Almost a dozen members of the Phoenix Choir sang A cappella as well as with musical accompaniment. Everyone shared an intimate evening with the residents of the retirement home, who sang several of the songs along with the choir.

Upcoming Event



While we have suspended all activities requiring physical presence at the New Acropolis (India) centres, we look forward to you joining us remotely this month! [Click to register](#).



Talk and Conversation
with the Speaker

Stoic Wisdom for Today's Times



“We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.”

- Epictetus

In these challenging times, we at New Acropolis (India) recognise that philosophy can offer valuable practical tools and perspectives. We continue to engage with you, and invite you to our first on-line event! Mark your calendars and join us for more Stoic wisdom.

While the wisdom of the Stoics is from centuries ago, it is extremely relevant and empowering even today. This event is based on a fascinating book published by New Acropolis (India), *Above All, Be Good: The story of the Stoics and their Teachings*. The talk brings ideas from Stoic Philosophy and offer insights on managing change, dealing with difficulty and answers to the questions of living right and ways to happiness.

This online event includes a talk followed by an interview with the speaker, who is a teacher at New Acropolis (India) - Bangalore.

Date : 18th April, Saturday

Time : 5:30 to 7:00 PM

Venue / Forum : Online Webinar ([Click here to register](#))



Practical Philosophy Course

Discover Awaken Transform

JAYANAGAR CENTRE
April 2020 batch
(Tuesdays)

Course starts: Apr 28
Duration: 16 weeks
1 class per week
(7:30 to 9:30 PM)

Free introductory sessions:
Apr 14 and Apr 21,
7:30 to 8:30 PM

INDIRANAGAR CENTRE
May 2020 batch
(Mondays)

Course starts: May 18
Duration: 16 weeks | 1 class
per week (7:30 to 9:30 PM)

Free introductory sessions:
May 4 and May 11,
7:30 to 8:30 PM

A 16-week foundation course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient Eastern and Western philosophies to inspire us to lead more harmonious lives in today's times. When Philosophy is practical, it is educational, helping us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves.

The course touches different practical, universal and timeless concepts of life from the wisdom of civilizations of the ancient world, with the perspective of how these can become practical tools to make a profound, lasting difference in our lives.

www.acropolis.org.in | info@newacropolis.in | +91 96638 04871

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

Discover, Awaken, Transform.

Living Philosophy is a 16-week course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient eastern and western philosophies to inspire us and help us lead more harmonious lives in today's times. Through these 16 sessions (1 session of 2 hours per week), the course touches different practical, universal and timeless concepts of life from the wisdom of cultures and civilizations of the ancient world, with the perspective of how these can become practical tools to make a profound, lasting difference in our lives today.

The syllabus follows:

PART 1: ETHICS (Man & the Self)



Know Thyself

- Living an ethical life – a key to happiness
- The Ancient Greek and Ancient Indian understanding of the Human being
- Identifying the transient and the eternal within us
- Living Philosophy – need for Inner Change



The Inner Voice & the Mysteries of Ancient Tibet

- Wisdom from the Vajrayana tradition (Tibetan Buddhism)
- Recognising the illusory nature of the material world
- The importance of choice and inner identity
- H.P. Blavatsky and themes from the Voice of the Silence



The Peaceful Warrior

- The ancient Indian concept of Swadharma and its importance in human life
- The inner battle of Kurukshetra
- Karma Yoga and the right Action – tools of the Peaceful warrior
- Themes from the Bhagavad Gita and their relevance in today's world



The awakening of consciousness – tools from ancient Greco-Roman philosophy

- The need and the means to elevation of consciousness
- True freedom and principles of Stoic Philosophy from Ancient Rome
- 3 paths to Unity – teachings of Plotinus
- The path to Happiness through virtues – teachings of Aristotle



Liberation - Inspiration from the Buddha

- Lessons from the life of the Buddha
- The overcoming of suffering and the process of Self-transformation
- The middle path and the 4 Noble Truths
- Key teachings from the Dhammapada



Destiny and Inner order – Wisdom from Egypt and China

- Justice, Order and Virtue as important everyday tools
- Concept of Justice - ancient Egypt
- The connection between individual ethics and a harmonious society
- Harmony and human relationships - the wisdom of Confucius

PART 2: SOCIO-POLITICS (Man & Society)



Ethical Leadership

- The connection between individual development and social order
- The art of living together in harmony
- Plato's allegory of the cave
- The Philosopher and the Leader
- Ethical leadership and the concept of Justice



From Philosophy to Mystery

- Roles in ancient society: Childhood, Adolescence, Elders
- The role of education in human evolution; education in traditional societies
- The mysteries of nature; Tribal and Alchemical initiation
- Philosophy as a bridge to higher consciousness and to the Mysteries



The Essence of Ethical Politics & Governance

- The 4 archetypes of man
- Various models of governance; the nature and challenges of Democracy
- The school of Pythagoras in ancient Greece
- The Philosophical and Political ideal
- Principles of New Acropolis



Know Thyself: Practical Seminar

- Philosophy in action – an experiential session of practical psychological exercises, combined with Social-Ecological and Artistic activities, that strengthen the learning process of Know Thyself and Sociopolitics.

PART 3: THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY (Man & the World)



Myth & History

- Myths: Truths hidden in mythology
- Chronological time, Sacred time and Mythical time
- How Myth drives History



The Wheel of Life

- Cycles of Time : ancient Indian idea of Yugas
- The ancient Greek concept of “great year” by Plato
- The Kaliyug and the Age of Aquarius – challenges and opportunities of our times



The Divine Spark in Man- Evolution & Destiny of Humanity

- What does it mean to be the human being of today?
- The 7 Kingdoms of Life according to esoteric philosophy
- The evolution of human consciousness; Where do we go from here?
- The ancient Greek myth of Prometheus



Summary

- A synthesis of the key teachings of the course, and a glimpse into the path ahead of advanced practical philosophy courses at New Acropolis

The Sessions of the course include lectures and active practical exercises to enable introspection and reflection, making the teachings practical and applicable to contemporary living. The course also includes an experiential seminar and a leadership workshop.

COURSE DATES

JAYANAGAR – APRIL 2020 BATCH (TUESDAYS)

Course starts: April 28, Tuesday

Duration: 16 weeks | 1 class per week
(7:30 to 9:30 PM every Tuesday)

Free introductory sessions:

April 14 and April 21, 7:30 to 8:30 PM

[Click here to register for introductory session](#)

INDIRANAGAR – MAY 2020 BATCH (MONDAYS)

Course starts: May 18, Monday

Duration: 16 weeks | 1 class per week
(7:30 to 9:30 PM every Monday)

Free introductory sessions:

May 4 and May 11, 7:30 to 8:30 PM

[Click here to register for introductory session](#)

Note:

Due to the current situation, the upcoming batch(es) will be started with introductory sessions and initial classes being conducted online. Please note that when there is confirmation of resumption of in-person events and activities, the classes will be conducted in-person at the Jayanagar branch (Apr 2020 batch) and Indiranagar main centre (May 2020 batch) of New Acropolis (India). The online sessions are only until the feasibility of in-person sessions, and will not continue post that.