

The word *philosopher* derives from a root that means *a person who loves wisdom*. Looked at a bit deeply, it refers to *someone who loves Learning — someone not overly wedded to certainty*.

The philosopher is, as S. Radhakrishnan writes (in the introduction to his translation of **“The Principal Upanishads”**), in the deepest sense, a Learner. She / he knows that *“Certainty is the source of inertia in thought, while doubt makes for progress.”* This is a person who, with humility and respect, knows that *“Truth is greater than its greatest Teachers”*. This is a person who knows that *“if an organism loses the strength to excrete its own waste, it perishes.”* The Philosopher, quite simply, is a genuine Learner

On 14th March 2016, Madeline Albright (the former Secretary of State, the USA) spoke about this (truth, and the quest of Learning) to the graduating Class at Scripps College.

It is possible to be completely convinced that something is true and at the same time, completely wrong. There are people in our world today who are ready to die or kill for alleged truths that are grounded less on the validity of their insights than on the false certainty generated by their resentments and fears. We have also learned through history that supposedly eternal truths can, in fact, go out of fashion. The Earth is flat; the Sun is a golden chariot; there are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; Pluto is a planet; and women are the weaker sex. So truth is a complex topic....

The person who seeks to learn (the Philosopher), she went on, is on a *“mission”* that *“begins with an important premise that we do not already know everything there is to know”* — something *“That can be hard for many of us to admit.”*

Madeline then observed that *“learning, by definition, means exploring areas of existence and opinion with which you are not already familiar.”*



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Learning demands, Madeline said, that *“Instead of choosing to read or to listen only to the people whose views make you the most comfortable”, we “choose....to study those who make you the most upset.”* It demands that *“Instead of repeating over and over again the opinions” we “have expressed in the past”,* each of us asks *“why” we “believe as” we “do, and submit” our “own conceptions of truth to the rigorous standards of critical thinking.”*

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saint, though God-intoxicated most of his life, yet tells us (**“Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna”**): *“As long as I live, so long do I learn.”*

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