

**U3A**

**Dunedin Charitable Trust**

A LEARNING OPTION FOR THE RETIRED

**in association with**



**Series 3 2012**

**LANGUAGE AND REALITY or  
WORDS AND THINGS**

**Dates: Monday, 3 September to Monday, 8 October 2012**

**Time: 2.15 pm – 4.15 pm**

**Venue: Salmond College, Knox Street, North East Valley**

**Enrolments for this course will be limited to 50**

**Course Fee: \$40.00**

**Tea and Coffee provided**

**Course Organiser: Brian Robinson (464 0377)**

**Course Assistant: Graham Batts (477 4880)**

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You may apply to enrol in more than one course. If you wish to do so, you must indicate your choice preferences on the application form, and include payment of the appropriate fee(s).

All applications must be received by noon on **Wednesday, 15 August 2012**, and you may expect to receive a response to your application on or about 24 August.

Any questions about these courses after 24 August should be referred to Judith Gray, telephone 471 9913 or on email at <graysinn@clear.net.nz>

***Please keep this brochure as a reminder of venue, dates, and times for the courses for which you apply.***

# LANGUAGE AND REALITY or WORDS AND THINGS

Realism is the belief in a mind-independent reality. Commonsense realists say reality contains everyday observable things. Scientific realists say reality also contains some of the unobservable things science postulates. Platonic realists say reality also contains abstract things that are not located in space or time and are a-causal. Opposed to realism are various forms of antirealism or philosophical idealism. One problem is how to defend realism against idealism. Another problem is whether one can defend commonsense and scientific realism without also becoming a Platonist.

The course will be presented by Professor Alan Musgrave, of the Department of Philosophy, University of Otago.

## The Programme

- 3 September** Most philosophers are anti-realists or 'conceptual idealists' because of what David Stove identified as the "worst argument in the world" and christened 'The Gem'.
- 10 September** Metaphysical Realism versus Word Magic. Word-Magic is making things with words. How logicians led us into Word Magic – and then showed us the way out of it.
- 17 September** Despite this, most philosophers continue to believe in Word-Magic and hence are idealists of one kind or another. Metaphysical realism opposes Word-Magic and the idealist views spawned by it.
- 24 September** It is very easy to be tricked by language into the Platonic belief in abstract objects. Long-winded (or pleonastic) ways of talking, taken at face-value, yield abstract entities of one kind or another. The solution is not to take long-winded ways of talking at face-value.
- 1 October** Platonist theory of knowledge – Euclidean geometry and the Euclidean programme. The invention of non-Euclidean geometry and its philosophical importance.
- 8 October** The logicist programme of reducing mathematics to logic supported Platonism regarding mathematical objects. But the original logicist programme failed. And the new-style logicism that replaced it – also called 'Postulationism' or 'If-thenism' – offers us a non-Platonist theory of mathematics.