

## Philosophy Group @ Ipswich Institute

### *Simone Weil*



**This is a five-week autumn course that will be held at the Institute.** The course is a reading group.

**The author.** Weil was born in Paris in 1909 and died 1943, arguably by suicide. She seems to have been many things, some of them seemingly inconsistent with each other: mystic and philosopher; anarchist, Marxist and theologian; Jew and Christian; teacher and factory worker; pacifist and soldier; practically inclined but clumsy, short-sighted and somewhat neurotic. Weil stands outside any philosophical mainstream. Yet, her influence is considerable. That influence extends to T. S. Eliot, Seamus Heaney, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Iris Murdoch and Susan Sontag; and Weil's ideas have been compared to those of Wittgenstein. Hannah Arendt praised Weil for having given perhaps the only honest account of labour. Camus declared her 'the only great mind of our time'. André Gide called Weil 'the patron saint of all outsiders'.

**The book and its editions.** The book is *Simone Weil: An Anthology*. This anthology ranges across Weil's works and across topics including the self, the sacred, society, oppression, work, rights and obligations and love. I recommend the 2005 edition by Penguin. An earlier edition appeared with Virago in 1986. The Penguin edition is fairly inexpensive and contains introductory material (at least some of which is absent from the earlier edition).

**Procedure.** Each week we will treat some twenty to thirty pages. The idea is that participants read the relevant pages before the session; in the session we will discuss those pages. We will manage to discuss approximately half of the pieces in the book.

**In our first week** I will introduce Weil and we will discuss the essay 'Human Personality'.

TUTOR	Dr Nicholas Joll
DATES	<i>November 4<sup>th</sup> – December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.</i> (Five sessions.)
DAY & TIME	<i>Thursdays, 2 – 4pm</i> (with a break in the middle of each session)
VENUE	Ipswich Institute
COST	<i>[To be determined]</i>