Do not be alarmed by the cartoon. We are not analytic philosophers!! I like to think we are genuine philosophers. We are pursuing the noble aim of Know Thyself first embarked on by the Greek philosophers. We aim at self-discovery, particularly of the power of the human mind to ask questions, to understand, to distinguish true and false, and to ask the fundamental questions about human life and death.

In modern times the focus of philosophy has been on the possibility and limits of human knowing. That too is our focus as it seems to be the starting point of any philosophy. I take the position that we learn about “knowing” in the same way that we learn about frogs, or about asteroids, or about medicines, namely, by asking questions about what we experience in order to understand correctly. We will explore the differences between science and philosophy and how they complement one another, rather than being in conflict.

I use a method of self-discovery. You have already learned so much of mathematics, languages, history, science, common sense; you have attained knowledge in various areas. How did you do it? You have not yet studied logic, or pedagogy, or philosophy, or psychology. Yet you know how to know because that is what humans spontaneously do in all cultures and every age. Our method is to make this process explicit, in its potential and in its limitations.

Our teaching will be by way of projects, puzzles, exercises, discussion, and dialogue. Luckily we have an excellent text-book to guide us on the way, namely, Brian Cronin, Foundations of Philosophy, Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 1999 (available on Amazon). This will be required reading and we will follow it chapter by chapter.

Once we have the structure of human knowing under our belt, we ask the further question about, what is real? Does our knowing attain what is real and how can we be sure of that. Many modern philosophers are convinced that we cannot know what is real, for various reasons; some hold that it is all an illusion; some hold that we know what appears but not what is real. The course will conclude with a presentation of critical realism – the real is the totality of what can be affirmed in a series of correct judgments.