

SHARE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 2

APRIL 2016

Beyond the laws of art

- **Happy birthday, Aristotle!**
- **Gozo, here we come!**
- **Who made God?**
- **The will to move forward**
- **Money walks and talks**

... and more

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this issue!
Selected text by
BATAILLE
in Maltese

SHARE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 2 - APRIL 2016

We are pleased to present the second issue of **SHARE**, the official platform of Philosophy Sharing Foundation. Following the amazing success we had with the launching of the magazine last December, we were greatly encouraged to march on. As always, the main aim of this magazine is to disseminate articles and information which contribute to philosophical discussion and debate. The magazine adheres to no single creed and ideology, and thus its policy is to published any type of article as long as it contains philosophical substance and argumentation. Philosophy Sharing Foundation may or may not agree with the opinions expressed in the published articles. The responsibility for the published material shall lie solely with its author.

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Anyone may submit an article for **SHARE**. However, it shall be the sole prerogative and responsibility of the Editor to determine which contributions to include or exclude from the magazine. Articles shall be in English, and more or less around 1,000 words. Any subject matter may be dealt with (no censorship shall be applied). However, articles must be of a philosophical nature (with theses supported by logical proof). Critiques, commentaries, expositions or analyses (of a mere informative kind) would not be considered favourably. Thought-provoking, audacious and stimulating contributions are preferred. Technical jargon is to be avoided. References, if any, are to be placed within the text. The articles should not have been published elsewhere.

Letters to the Editor are very welcome:

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◀ Front cover: Painting by Krista Sullivan

A WORD FROM THE MANAGER

DR MARK MONTEBELLO

'Pub philosophy'

The terms 'pub philosophy' shall immediately raise some people's eyebrows. They are terms that, taken together, sound too vulgar to be taken seriously. Philosophy, some would strongly contend, is by definition a disciplined activity and should be reserved solely for experts. In the hands of the unprofessional it becomes shoddy and sloppy. Amateurs doing philosophy, they would assert, are only pointy-heads.


They might be right. Like every other scientific activity, philosophy has its rules of procedure, a technical terminology with defined meanings or understanding, a meticulous methodology, and a theoretical framework. Carelessness and lavity are the undoing of every intellectual or practical discipline worth its salt. Philosophy is no exception.

Nevertheless, what terms like 'pub philosophy' or other similar terms tend to express is that the professional and amateur domains can be somehow bridged. Philosophy need not necessarily be exclusively owned by the pros. There can indeed be a wider participatory pool for it. The specialist of course has his or her undoubted place in the scheme of things, and that is perhaps how it should be. Nonetheless, just the same, for philosophy enthusiasts to partake and contribute in their own way to philosophical discussion should—perhaps *must*—not be ruled out.

Our Foundation surely does not. On the contrary, it was mainly for this reason that it was established four years ago. Like other similar societies—such as, to mention a few, London's *Big Ideas* and *Kant's Cave*, Wales' *Living Philosophy*, Madrid's *PhiloMadrid*, Rome's *Nuova Opinione Italiana*, and hundreds of others around Europe and the world—the Philosophy Sharing Foundation believes that philosophical activity should be a real possibility even for people who did not have the pleasure of studying philosophy academically or did not have the good fortune of studying anything professionally at all.

One thing should be clear for all: Philosophy is a monopoly of none.

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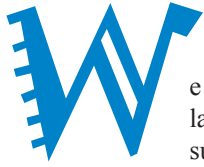


SHARE
PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION
Issue 2 - April 2016

THE MISSION OF **SHARE** IS TO SERVE AS THE OFFICIAL PLATFORM OF THE PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION AND TO DISSEMINATE ARTICLES AND INFORMATION WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION AND DEBATE.

EDITORIAL

THE INFESTATION OF OUR MEDIA



We were pleased that the well-attended launching of our debut magazine was a success. As the Hon. Minister Helena Dalli said, in the current age of highly subjective opinions proliferating in various social media, philosophy as a search for objectivity and rational deliberation becomes an urgent enterprise. Sifting through the torturous volumes of sheer nonsense scattered through various social media and blogs illustrates that in the age of accelerated technological apparent progress one cannot help notice the conspicuous absence of informed objective appraisals. Plato's "divided line" seems to have experienced a sharp shift towards an unprecedented vulgar 'doxa' at the expense of 'episteme'.

Our media are infested with seemingly self-confident and authoritative personnel who disseminate at the very best mediocre opinions masquerading as factual information. The danger lays more in the perception of 'specialists' that these media protagonists and their productions enjoy, than in the populist views they espouse. Choreography, marketing, and technology have taken stealth to new dimensions. Formerly elegantly delivered convincing logical fallacies have given way to easily ascertainable simplistic and reductive reasoning, illustrating a general lowering of standards all round. Perhaps more alarmingly, as Chomsky would say, this also implies a more gullible, naive, indifferent, or complicit public breed of consumers of media discourse.

Many media presenters are sadly unaware of their own shortcomings, convincing themselves that popularity is an indicator of success, while ignoring to their benefit their own prejudices, deception and agenda. The lowering

of media standards and content attributed to the mediocre and shallow media protagonists, allows for an overall depreciation of analysis of contemporary themes affecting Malta. Little wonder that the reigning prejudices include insular and parochial ethnocentricity, racism, intolerance, injustice, fanaticism, fundamentalism and dogmatism. This shapes a decline in overall standards of administration of space and fundamental human rights, as well as an obvious lack of reasoning and analysis based on objectivity, creating obstacles to progress.

Philosophy, including among other disciplines the study of political science, logic, ethics and morality, can indeed sharpen one's perspective, raise consciousness, and provide for analytical skills in the pursuit of truth and the unveiling of reality, and its constituent myths and falsehoods. In a microscopic insular island infected with prejudices of the most dogmatic shades, Malta needs to separate the wheat of reason and truth, from the chaff of myths and beliefs. Philosophy can contribute to this intellectual winnowing process, even if cautiously and gradually. It would indeed be

encouraging to see philosophy enthusiasts contribute within the local domain upon our very own idiosyncratic and quintessentially Maltese context. **SHARE** magazine offers this platform free of the sterile academic formalities. Rather than confine contributions to the laws and forms of archaic academic protocol, **SHARE** seeks to democratically grant space and open up the debate.

Our debut magazine was well received. The articles enticed other potential contributors to conquer their inhibitions and fashion out their own philosophical reflections. We hope that many philosophy enthusiasts will find our magazine a useful platform from which to launch their own ideas.



Meinrad

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Aristotle is 2,400 years old! Born in 384 BCE at Stagira, Greece, he made it through thick and thin to survive the centuries, seemingly as youthful as ever. Though the place where Aristotle's cradle rocked back and forth now rests in ruins, the modern Stagira never tires of singing the praises of its most illustrious son (it has none other). To his honour, at the *Parko Aristoteli*, proud on a plinth looking across the valley towards the Aegean Sea, there stands a modern white-marble statue of the man himself. It is almost the only thing that recalls his existence there.

Nevertheless, Aristotle is certainly not forgotten by the rest of the world. His name has resounded throughout the centuries as one of the greatest philosophers and scientists ever to have existed. Thomas Aquinas referred to him simply as 'the philosopher'. That was enough.

Son of a medical doctor, Aristotle lost his father at a very young age. He was eighteen when he moved south from Stagira to join Plato, the philosopher *par excellence*, at the Academy in Athens. The journey today takes less than six hours by car, however, Aristotle had to saunter a full 450 kilometres, which would have taken him more than a week on foot. Once there, he lodged at the Academy for twenty whole years, tutored daily by the great philosopher. It was surely worth the hike.

Aristotle left the Academy upon Plato's death, dissatisfied (and perhaps a little jealous) with the master's successor. However, what also contributed to his break with the Academy were his personal intellectual inclinations (which were somewhat in contrast with Plato's). The great Athenian surely provided the Stagirite with philosophical principles which stayed with him for the rest of his life. But his method of philosophical procedure was markedly different. So much so that Aristotle eventually devised an alternative route to Plato's (more or less similar) conclusions.

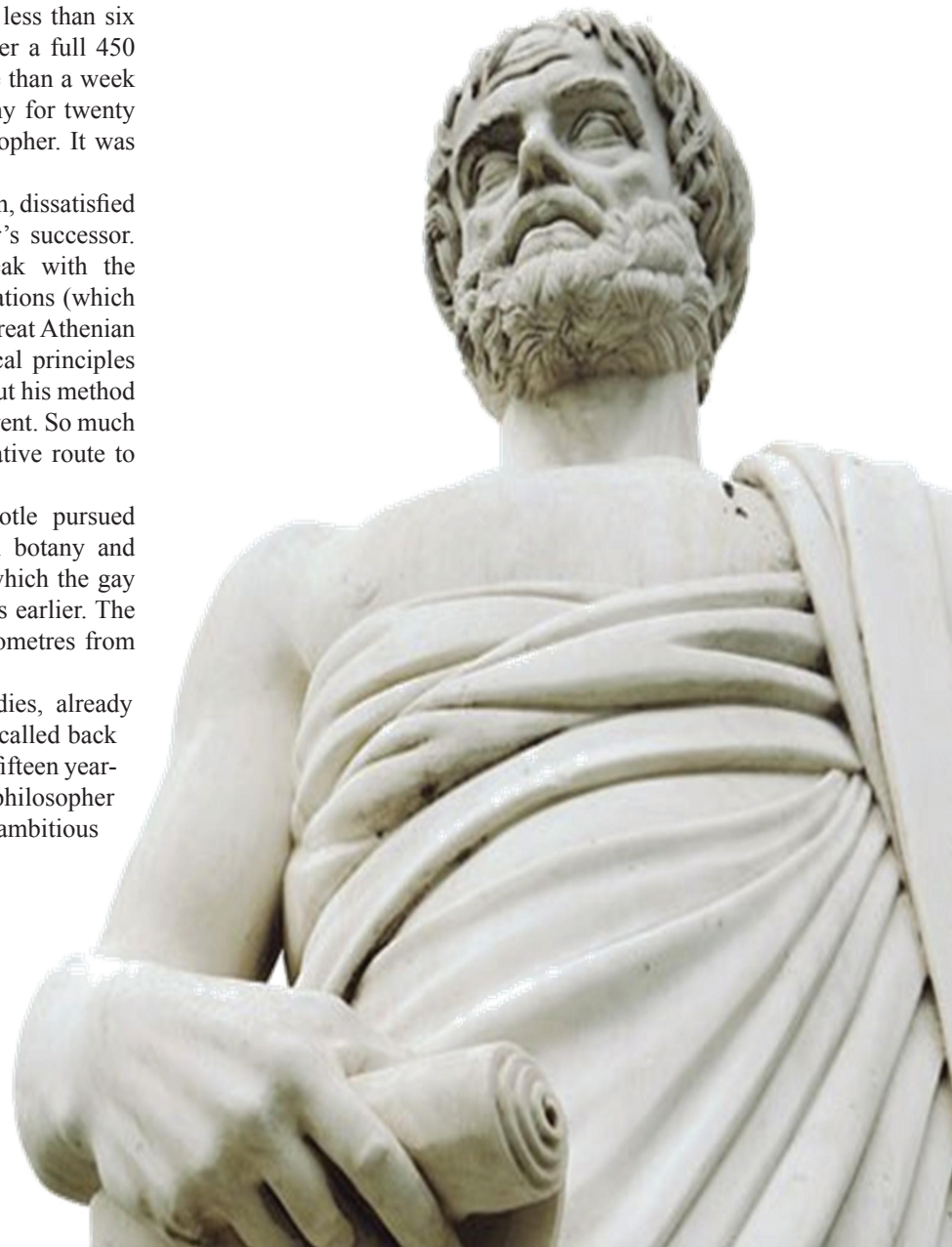
Once out of the Academy's door, Aristotle pursued scientific studies on his own, particularly in botany and zoology, on Lesbos, the famous island from which the gay poetess Sappho hailed more than two centuries earlier. The fair island of Lesbos is located about 300 kilometres from the Greek capital across the Aegean Sea.

Just five years into his experimental studies, already beginning to be quite famous, Aristotle was recalled back home by King Philip of Macedonia to tutor his fifteen year-old son, the future *Megas Alexandros*. Off the philosopher went, and he made the effort to coach the ambitious

and tormented youngster for around eight years. He then moved back to Athens, founding the famous Lyceum there, teaching, writing and keeping in touch with all the crowned heads in existence.

This lasted for around twelve years, until Alexander's death, when the Athenians grabbed the opportunity to rebel against Macedonian rule, and Aristotle had to run for his life. This time he went to Euboea, Greece's second largest island after Crete, just a day's walk (and a few minutes by sea

Aristot at



The modern white-marble statue of Aristotle at
Parko Aristoteli in Stagira, his birth-place.

Aristotle's fragmentary fourth roll containing the *Constitution of the Athenians*. Papyrus 131, f 5v. Egypt (near Hermopolis), c. 100.



file 2,400

By a special correspondent

ferry) away from Athens. Just over a year later, in 322 BCE, Aristotle unfortunately contracted a disease of the digestive organs and he succumbed to his fate. He was only sixty-two years old.

Of course Aristotle's legacy never died. Throughout the centuries, especially from the 12th century onwards (more or less starting with Peter Lombard, ca. 1096–1160), Aristotle's doctrines were commented upon, amplified, modified and even abused. His basic system of syllogism logic survives almost intact until this very day.

Unfortunately, none of Aristotle's works survived in their original form. It is known, for example, that he wrote dialogues in the style of Plato. However, what came to be known as the '*Corpus Aristotelicum*' is composed of writings edited by his students. Some of them, such as the *Metaphysics*, are a combination of more than one version.

Despite all this, Aristotle's teachings, and especially his inductive system of learning (from specific to general knowledge), started to have a wide impact on the world at large when, around the 6th century AD, his works were copied by Byzantine scholars. With the spread of Islam in the 8th century, Aristotle began to be translated from Greek into Arabic. These texts inspired philosophers

such as Avempace (Ibn Bājja, ca. 1085–1138) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198).

Though some of these Arabic texts were later translated into Latin, another great break came with the Latin texts which were directly translated from Greek in the 13th century. These were available to intellectual giants including Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266–1308), who made extensive use of Aristotle's teachings and philosophical system.

Throughout this great expansion, however, Aristotle's works were somewhat adulterated. His commentators were mostly interested in his 'theology'. They therefore gave almost absolute pre-eminence to his *Metaphysics*, and that is how Aristotle came to be known from the Middle Ages until around a century ago.

In the beginning of the 20th century, a new movement at Oxford began to read Aristotle anew in his original tongue, discovering in the process that what was central to the *Corpus Aristotelicum* was not the *Metaphysics*, but rather the *Historia Animalium* (History of Animals). It was noticed that what Aristotle was mostly interested in was not God at all (as the Medievalists chose to believe), but human beings and how they were positioned within the structure of all being. This was indeed a revolutionary breakthrough which affected many branches of Philosophy. This is how Aristotle is read today outside religious circles.

Though the precise day of Aristotle's birth is unknown, his birth year is being celebrated throughout 2016. Two world conferences will be held, one at Thessaloniki (a mere 100 kms from Stagira) in May, and another at Moscow in October. Other smaller conferences are being held throughout the year in Athens (Greece), Heidelberg (Germany), Padua (Italy), Paris (France), Helsinki (Sweden), Lisbon (Portugal), Notre Dame (USA), Cordoba (Spain) and Leuven (Belgium).

What a party!

A friend of mine, who has been following the progress of the writing of my book *Dear God, who made you?* asked me whether I could pick just one sentence, above all others, that I would like my readers to remember most. I suggested that I tried to be as concise as possible in my writing and that I would like my readers to reflect on every chapter as a component of a system of thought processes. As he continued to insist, I searched for a sentence which encapsulates my underlying philosophy and my motivation. I actually selected two sentences which I will reproduce together with a few comments. The first one is taken from Chapter 2:

religion that turns them into fanatics, particularly those systems of eternal rewards and punishments that are part and parcel of so many religions.

The second sentence that I would like readers to remember and to reflect upon comes from Chapter 6:

All the volumes of text that have been written and all the oceans of words that have been spoken about God have been written and spoken by men like you and me.

This undeniable truth should be enough to make every shy skeptic come out of his closet. When one criticizes orthodoxy one is not finding fault with God the Creator. One is simply questioning the written and spoken outpourings of those men—and it was mostly men—who took it upon themselves to broadcast their thoughts about God as the truth. In the majority of cases, these men suffered from huge doses of ignorance. Take St. Augustine as one example. This most

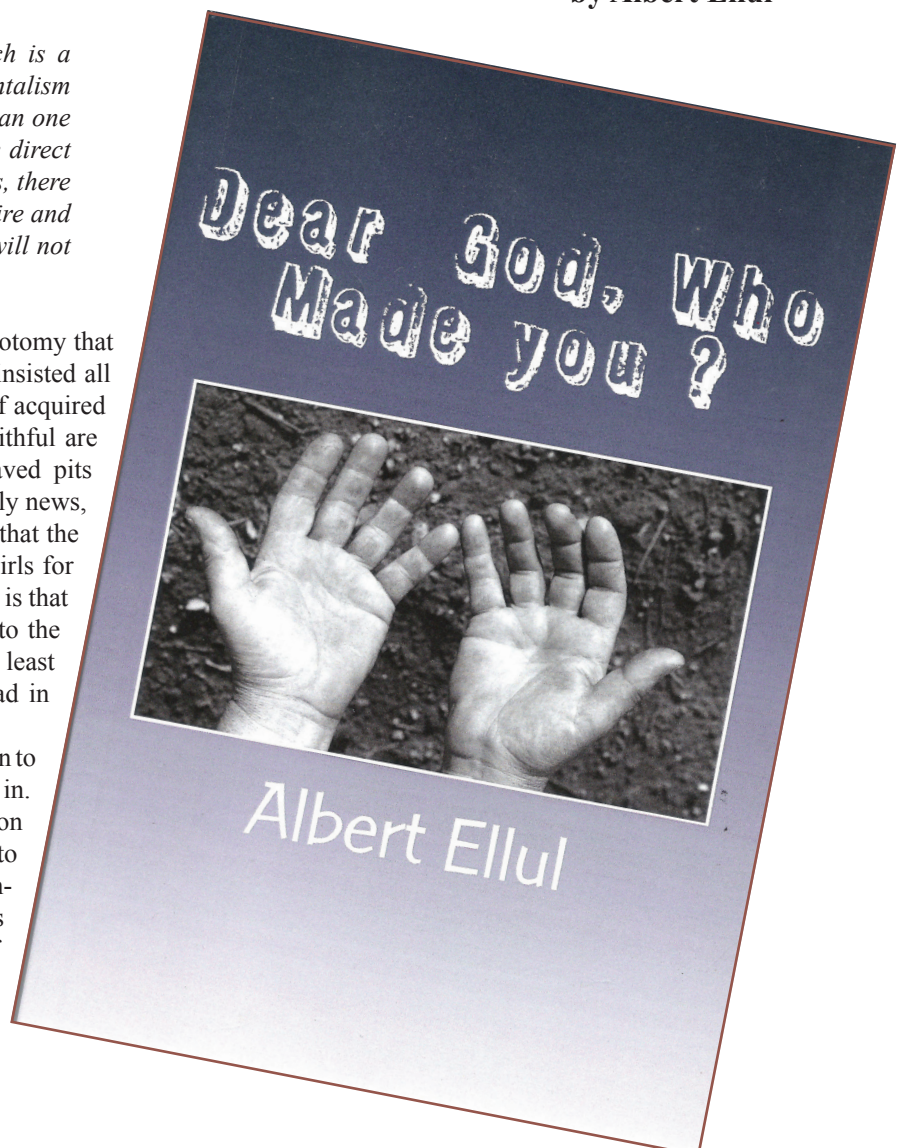
The wish for a better world

by Albert Ellul

It may be argued that at present the Church is a reasonable institution but, if a new fundamentalism takes root, the old ways may return sooner than one may think for, once you are convinced of the direct influence of the supernatural in human affairs, there is no saintly height to which you may not aspire and no bottom of any depraved pit to which you will not descend.

This sentence expresses in a nutshell the dichotomy that is present in most religions. In this book I have insisted all along that religions have a lot to offer in terms of acquired wisdom and humanity, and that is why many faithful are reluctant to give them up. However, the depraved pits into which many Muslims are falling are now daily news, only to-day I heard (on the BBC World Service) that the Taliban in Pakistan even employ nine year old girls for suicide bombing missions. The truth of the matter is that all that which is good about religion appertains to the humanity, which we all share, and humanism, at least since the 16th century, has always taken the lead in bringing about a more civilized society.

This means that the world does not need religion to become a more safe and comfortable place to live in. On the other hand, that which is bad about religion belongs to religion. I am referring, in particular, to the tendency of all religions to thrive on the them-and-us mentality. It is no use arguing that religions are not responsible for the misdeeds of some of their members because, misguided though those members may be, it is the various beliefs in the supernatural that they imbibe through their





revered philosopher and theologian, the most famous of the so-called Fathers of the Church, believed that the world was flat, that the sun moved round the earth and that the world was only 6,000 years old. He further believed that the Greek gods were real but that they were wicked gods. He was even mentally tortured throughout a large part of his life because of the sins that he committed when he was six months old. The hearsay upon hearsay upon hearsay that we are asked to believe comes from men who knew little about the cosmos, less about human psychology and biology and nothing about evolution. They never heard of dinosaurs, even less of genes or DNA, or of a multitude of scientific discoveries that are now familiar to all. They may have been good men, they may have been super intelligent, as in the case of St. Augustine, but of necessity they were ignorant and this renders their outpourings null and void. No one should feel ashamed to challenge those beliefs that have come down to us from a remote, superstitious and obscurantist past. No one, that is, except those who have a vested interest in a continuance of the belief in improbable fables.

Finally, a sobering thought. Albert Einstein is reputed to have said that the fourth world war will be fought with bows and arrows, implying, of course, that the third world war would obliterate civilization as we know it. Now, if you were to ask any number of seasoned political observers of the world scene where they think that the third world would start, the majority of them would undoubtedly point to the

Middle East. This is the place where, for an untold number of centuries, fundamentalist exponents of the three faiths have engaged in unspeakable acts of violence, inflicting a countless number of fatalities and injuries on each other. This is the area where various religious fanatics lay claim to large tracts of land on the basis of the contents of some holy book, claiming that the limited god granted them this land and hence no compromise is possible here. Belief in the supernatural in the Middle East has the potential to cause Armageddon. Think about all this if you are inclined towards the opinion that the contents of this book are of trivial importance.

Good atheists, good agnostics, good skeptics and good believers in the various religions all have one thing in common. They all wish for a better world. This is the spirit in which this book has been written. The religious answers to the ills of the human condition have been tried and they have failed. It is time that we tried something else, and to those who harbor many doubts about their particular belief systems I can only leave them with the words of Polonius to his son Laertes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true and it follows, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man".

This is an extract from Albert Ellul's book Dear God, who made you? (published in Malta in 2011). It is intended to offer a very small glimpse of a very interesting book which is solely available from amazon.com (ISBN-13: 978-1466356450). Albert Ellul, a retired teacher, taught maths and computer science in England and in Malta.

As far as we know, DNA may be considered to be the building blocks of life. They have a function to perform, which implies they have a reason to exist. Conversely though, what are the building blocks that build our human society? From a biological point of view, one has to ask, what is the reason of life? From this point of view there is no “reason”, and life can simply be viewed as an accident. A conscious mind, becoming aware of this has to face two choices; either to end one’s own life or to go on living with the acceptance of this reality.

One who decides to end his own life does so as life is seen as pointless and without reason. It’s full of pain and suffering; it’s so void, it’s absurd. Why should one keep on living and struggling, if one cannot escape from this prison? One therefore freely arrives at the conclusion that living such a life is not worthwhile, neither is enduring all the suffering life brings with it, and thus, he or she decides to end it.

On the other hand, those who choose to go on living have only one choice open to them, and that is to move forward. Following this line of thought, each individual has to choose, in fact, everyone is required to make his or her own decisions. But it is relevant to note that any movement forward was (and is) done collectively as a race, as a species. And this is unavoidable.

Every conscious movement we have ever made, and will make, is an act of will. Here, life in-itself therefore becomes an act of will. The will of an individual who freely chooses to go on living. A choice he or she is bound to take thereafter ‘every moment of his/her life’.

In this setting, men are not passive viewers, but active players in the game of will that is life. One is constantly challenged to think and to act, one is asked to choose a path, to evolve, to change, to grow and to become something more than one is. And this refers not only to the singular individual but also to the plural community, such that we are not referring to individual growth, but to the evolution of an entire race.

Each individual is bounded with/to the existence of others, and one’s conditions are not determined only by his/her own actions, but by the actions of society, to which one abides, as a whole. We are connected not only in space, but also across time, and the condition of the individual and of society itself are determined and created by the interaction between these elements. Moreover, the perception of all this

The struc a



will influence the future, both on an individual level and as a society in its wholeness. Therefore this wholeness can be seen as a living structure.

In order to move forward men came together, first as a family (extended family), and then as a community, as a tribe, now with the advance of technology we are becoming more and more a global village. We start to build a structure, a web across time and space, of relations, norms and myths, and somewhere in this evolution of maze, we create gods and God to seal everything in with the divine. All this was done in order to provide meaning, stability and some form of security to our lives in order to survive.

For individuals, parts of this structure, this inevitable forward movement creates pressure between us, in us, among us, and with the rest of creation. We are in constant conflict with these forces. We are subject to that pressure but, at the



ture: thought experiment

By Alfred Zammit

same time, we are exerting pressure. We are pressing and at the same time pushing others, while others are, in turn, being pressed and push themselves. The synergy created in this process is the same synergy behind human evolution.

The same rules apply for this organism, this living structure, which is the expression of the wholeness of humanity. Like humanity, it fights and is still fighting for its survival against forces outside and within its borders. We, as a society and as individuals, are all this and much more.

We are the creators of what we call heaven and the architects of hell and of all that pain and joy associated to them. What we call reality is just a mask created by men interaction, who build generation after generation, which masks and hides the facts of related existence. We are our own creators. We are the creators of our reality, a structure which is in constant change, always in conflict with other forces. Our personal reality forms part of this mechanism, it is woven in the structure within which individuals, this time have no control.

Why should a man live in this structure if they have to surrender part of their freedom and have limited control over their own life? The reason is that there is darkness and coldness outside this reality. There, men are not a man, but only living creatures among others. Inside this structure, men can find the meaning and reason they need to keep them alive. The structure provides shelter, a nursery and parameters

for human freedom. This structure defines mankind and connects us with the past and present, while at the same time providing the foundation for the next generation.

Since the beginning of time, in order to survive, men were 'forced' to become hunters, warriors, predators, and since 'we as a species', survived up until now, it seems we are good at our trade. To assume that we are the elected, the masters of nature, the future rulers of the universe, and that we cannot be replaced because we have a divine right, is a serious flaw in our reasoning. We are just one among others, who in the past replaced the dominant species, and possibly or eventually, if the circumstance arises, we will be replaced by another species.

Events in human life are not purely independent. The echo of the past shapes the present. What 'we' as humanity have sown back then is harvested today, as today's sowing will be harvested tomorrow. From their perspective, individuals may feel that they are the masters of their own destiny, but our destiny is linked with that of the structure. This organism is the reflection of collectivity. The will of free individuals to move forward is the will and the strength for this living entity to move forward.

Alfred Zammit is a quality assistant, an avid reader and a perennial student of philosophy.



The virtuality of electronic currencies, also known as “crypto-currencies” (e.g., the bitcoin) is undisputed, but not original. Even the most ancient money contained elements of virtuality, which, in the pre-digital age was perceived as ideality. The historian of economic doctrines, Luca Fantacci, even claimed that the so-called ideal money was the first to appear, functioning as a measure of value. Real money came after the end of the era of barter trade, when the ability of money to measure value,

versa. The former of these dependencies, where exchange dictates the measure of value, is, however, much more common and it is recognised as such. States, central banks and other monopolistic institutions use it by changing the quality of the metal coins or the rate of gold coverage of paper money, if there is such in place, or most commonly manipulate the amount of cash flow in the economy.² The inverse relationship - when the measure of the value determines the exchange function - is considerably rarer and is seen as exclusively dictated by special circumstances, such as devaluation, wherein introducing a new rate of a currency, i.e. a new measure of value, in a natural and direct

By Alexander L. Gungov

An overview of the ideal dimension of money



and the ability of money to serve as medium of exchange was added.¹

Based on the distinction between ideal and real money, the concept of two types of economy emerged. In the economy of the first type, functions of real and ideal money are clearly distinguished. Changes in real money, i.e., in the medium of exchange, do not affect the ideal money as a measure of value. Regardless of the quantity of real money, and the quality of the metal in the coins circulating in the market, ideal money measures value in a stable and fixed manner. After the state monopolizing of money issuance, the function of exchange merged with the function as a measure of value. Coins for exchange started independently and fully to represent the measure of value too, without taking into account any ideal (from the present point of view we call it “virtual”) rate, ideal and real money attaining dialectical unity. The inseparability of the real and the ideal in the monopolized issuance of money leads to direct dependence of the measure of value on the medium of exchange and vice

way affects the amount of real money used for exchange.

The virtual nature of money is present in Karl Marx’s concept of commodities, value and money. It is well known that Marx sees value in a threefold sense: the most obvious - consumer value and exchange value of a commodity is only a secondary manifestation of the invisible, yet primary value that is nothing but labour in its abstract form, that is inputted into the commodity, allowing the comparison of different types of labour. Geert Reuten says that value in Marx appears in two ways: as introverted substance or value as such, arising from abstract labour, and an extroverted measure of value, i.e., exchange value which is only possible in money.³ The three forms of value are not separable from each other. It is easy to see that, apart from ideality/virtuality of money which was mentioned above, we find in Marx at least another dimension of virtuality, this is the value of the commodity as the socially necessary abstract labour for its

production or, simply and categorically speaking, this is a fundamentally social relation, capable of giving value to the commodity. This ideal essence, however, is not transcendent, it penetrates the material world of capitalist society and has its own specific, real and tangible incarnation in money (which has its own ideal aspect). Money makes possible the homogenization of products and it is an ideal measure of value on the basis of a specific monetary standard.⁴

The immanent/introvert ideal substance of value and the displayed/extroverted form of value, i.e., its exchange value, are not only dialectically merged, they are, for Marx, in a relation of original to derivative. The derivative depends on the original, there is no being without the original. However, the derivative leads a relatively autonomous existence by pretending to be the only reality, by the fact of its own apparentness articulately denying the possibility of any other reality. This operation is called conversion (Verwandlung), which is not simply transformation but a radical change comparable to the

conversion of surplus labour and surplus value into profit, and of surplus labour into interest. Here the derivative ideal/virtual, which for Marx is also imaginary, enchants participants in the monetary commodity market relationship, making them oblivious to the primary ideal nature of socially necessary labour as a value producing and determining condition. Actors in the enchanted world manage practical solutions and effective actions, but the reasons behind what they actually do remain

hidden to the actors on the commodity-monetary scene, and therefore become disembodied shadows of someone else's will.



transubstantiation of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ. This allows the thinker to describe the transformation of value as permeated by fetishism; here the terminology from Christianity crosses over to Paganism and the product itself begins to be perceived as a fetish, as the object of worship, holding a dual sensory-supersensory being. The first and fundamental conversion is the passage of the immanent substance of value onto externalised exchange value, measurable in money. Two other significant “transubstantiations” are the

Marx consistently reveals the ideal-real nature of money following the principle of movement from abstract to concrete. In Ch. 3 of the first volume of *The Capital* he examines the first function of money as a measure of value, then as a medium of exchange, but this is not yet actual money. Actual money corresponding to the concept of money (as required by the Hegelian definition of truth) occurs only when goods used as currency have no value other than their exchange value, unlike all other commodities, retaining their user value. Following this approach, the third sub-section of this chapter of *The Capital* is entitled “Money”, only after it has been examined as a measure of value and medium of exchange.⁵

Money offered on the stock exchange not only consolidates and intensifies the ideal/virtual nature inherent to a large extent in ordinary money, but in it the ideal acquires increasingly important and remarkable features. It is no secret that derivatives are financial instruments which bear the idea of derivation. For example, if a bank delivers on the stock exchange part of their mortgage loans and the forecast profit from these loans for a period of time, the bank



will have created a derivative. If the derivative is purchased by an insurance company and resold to a pension fund, which in turn releases it for sale to another financial market, two more derivatives are created. The essential difference between the first derivative, the one dependent on future profits on any mortgages on the one hand, and the second and third derivatives on the other, is that the former follows and relies on the fate of a simple financial instrument, while the latter two depend on a derivative instrument, i.e., on a derivative and are therefore derivatives of a derivative. The second derivative sold by the insurance company may be provisionally called “second order derivative” and the one offered by the pension fund a “third order derivative”. Theoretically, the process of creating derivatives of a higher “order” should not be limited, and in practice, derivatives of a fifth order are known.

If we adopt the labour concept of value as the basis for our study of virtual properties of derivatives, then payments on the principal repayment of the said mortgage, converted into a derivative, will be part of the labour cost of the borrowers who took the mortgage loan and are repaying it. These payments will come to the bank, for example, as a deduction from the wages of debtors. Salary is a converted/transubstantiated fetish form of labour cost. On the other hand, the interest on that mortgage for the most part is profit for the bank. Profit from interest plays the role of surplus value paid by the borrower. It is not a mysterious property of the money given as a loan, but the result of the surplus labour of the lucky borrower. On repayment of a mortgage loan, two types of virtuality intertwine unnoticeably: standard virtuality of money as a measure of value, usually seen as the ideal aspect of money, and virtuality of labour hidden behind the amount paid, including surplus labour. What stands out on the surface is the amount of the obligation, but also the cost of the credit, i.e., the size of the interest rate. The interest

rate is a converted form of surplus labour. Surplus labour is present incognito, but it renders interest possible and repays it. If at this point we compare the two types of virtuality - that of money as value measure and that of surplus labour, we should notice that they differ in a significant way: in the interaction between virtual and real in money, neither of the two main manifestations of money – neither as a measure of value nor as a medium of exchange – purport to usurp the place of the other and send it into oblivion. In the transubstantiation of surplus labour into interest rate, labour becomes invisible; its virtuality becomes tantamount to absence, non-existence of such a reality. Interest rate does not enter in dialectical interaction with surplus labour. The interest rate abruptly replaces surplus labour; and not just replaces, but by taking its place, sends surplus labour into obscurity, as if dooming it to eternal oblivion, as if labour, to which the very possibility of interest is owed and which turns this opportunity into reality by interest repayment, never existed. Interest receives its independent being in the world of financial relations, and surplus labour is off the stage forever, even as if it never was. The case with derivatives is even more blurred as its basis is the mortgage profit. Not to mention the presence or, more accurately, the absence of surplus labour in the derivative of a derivative where conversion has undergone several incarnations.

The relationship between the primordial reality, bearing sense, and its converted form, acquires a paradoxical nature. What Marx called imaginary or, more expressively, a “phantasmagorical form” is now perceived as real. What is even stranger, this phantasmagoria becomes flesh and blood quite expansively, so expansively that only the exceptional circumstances of the disintegration of routine order may reveal it. Primordial reality acquired not only the status of virtuality or ideality, it is doomed to disappear in the transcendent realm, but there it continues to bear life with its

transubstantiated incarnation.

Now we can compare the philosophical speculation and the financial speculation. For Hegel, speculative reasoning is the highest form of rationality, overcoming the limitations of intellectual formalism. It is thinking about the unconditional, based on the concrete identity with an element of difference and it does not accept rational abstract identity, or the gap separating truth from untruth. The engine of speculative reasoning is the so-called speculative sentence. Unlike a reflective sentence, where the subject is attributed certain predicates and the role of the subject and predicate are clearly outlined. The subject in reflective reasoning is what is at the centre of reflection and predicates are the various features which the subject possesses that are revealed by the predicate/predicates.

In speculative reasoning, subject and predicate

adequately with the statement “Money is power.” The characteristics of power clarify the nature of money, and the peculiarities of money contribute to an understanding of what is power. Money and power, of course, do not always interact like this and can be regarded as relatively independent.

The financial meaning of speculation is usually confined to the understanding of a very risky investment. This is undoubtedly true, but such a belief omits something very significant, which is of particular importance for our discussion. As demonstrated by the notes on derivatives, they are increasingly cut off from the life-bearing source - surplus labour - and lead an increasingly independent and self-sufficient being in an unconditional way. Derivatives define themselves, absorbing and unfolding the entire substance of the stock exchange. They are not obliged to refer to a reality outside themselves, and de facto they do not. They produce their own reality and are similar in that respect to the code of Baudrillard simulacra. It can reasonably be argued that financial speculation produces a hyper reality, where real and virtual are inseparable.

Separateness of money and the value of goods can be found in classical capitalism, and possibly earlier. The value cannot be expressed otherwise than in monetary terms, but money is not always attached to the goods. It can buy realities without a value such as conscience, honest word, payment for betrayal, etc.⁶ These worthless realities can even perform partial functions of money. As noted by André Comte-Sponville, following Marx, but without fully agreeing with him, personal dignity becomes a bargaining chip that circulates in the bosom of market freedom, the only remaining type of freedom after all others have been cancelled.⁷

are not fixed, as in the case of reflective reasoning. In speculative reasoning subject and predicate are in interaction, in which not only the predicate defines the subject, but vice versa too, i.e., they freely swap roles. Between them there is unfolding tension as in a hermeneutical circle.

As an example of a rational fixed and strictly delineated statement we could take the definition “money is a measure of the value of goods, it is a medium of exchange, the standard of value and resource to maintain the value.” In this case, the subject and its predicates are clearly and unambiguously identified. However, to reach the complete truth, it is necessary to move to speculative reasoning. To some extent it can be demonstrated with the idea that the measure of value is also a medium of exchange. Obviously, the measure of value is a medium of exchange, i.e., subject and predicate can easily and freely swap roles. The medium of exchange determines the measure of value by the amount of money and, eventually, by the quality of the metal coins, while the measure of value can also determine the medium of exchange. Speculative reasoning can be illustrated more

¹ Dr Nikolay Nenovski, “On Money as Institution”, pp.2-3, http://bmabg.s801.sureserver.com/assets/var/docs/money-as-institution_LF_8.pdf, last accessed on 23.10.2014.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ Geert Reuten, “Money as Ideal Measure of Value Methodological Comments on Marx’s Theory and on Marxian Interpretations,” paper for the extended ISMT-13 conference on Marx’s Theory of Money, Mount Holyoke College, 3-8 August 2003, 3, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/fmoseley/conference/reuten.pdf>, last accessed on 25.10.2014.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷ André Comte-Sponville, *Is Capitalism Moral?* (Sofia: Colibri, 2011), 138.

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All conceptual thought expressed as dominant paradigms adhere to implicit and explicit ‘rules’ governing their production, and bounded by their own apparent finitude. They seek to transcend this finitude scientifically by exploring new conceptual limits, while accepting boundaries that are socially, culturally, and politically circumscribed. Their production capacity is also aligned to ‘demand’ for, and ‘consumption’ of, these cultural, social, and political artefacts that embellish these boundaries by looking out beyond the immediate horizon.

Sometimes this process of human intercourse may privilege rationality, technology, or science; sometimes it may privilege myths, magic, or irrationality. Sometimes these artefacts express complacency, indifference, complicity, apathy; sometimes they express hope, faith, or possibilities. Sometimes their conceptual framework is anachronistic, backward-looking, traditional, closed, and time-warped; sometimes it may be futuristic, dynamic, open, creative, innovative, and progressive.

This is relatively obvious, for example, in arts, music, and literature. Consumers are initiated into the logic and rules governing these products. The ‘rules’ determine all production possibilities. One, however, can transgress, alter, innovate, or ignore these rules. This can be done through various mediums; often, it is claimed, symbolically through art. Art appreciation, for example, is an autonomous and arbitrary sphere that allows the reader/interpreter to form personal ‘impressions’. However, the artist’s intended ‘expression’ is unique. The two need not harmonise or share any congruency or confluence. This is my declaration of bias; my reading of Krista Sullivan’s art is my own personal experiential testimony.

Some artistic expressions veer more towards a ‘literal’ reading while others are more ‘metaphorical’, others even ‘polysemic’. New and apparently original artefacts that seemingly break with traditional expressions are believed to be creatively produced to express new modes of thought, new possibilities, new rules, new spirits, new poetics, new laws, perhaps even new ‘rights’. These apparent transgressions form a new stock of concepts and a new language. These are made possible because of new ‘criteria’ and ‘judgement’.

Beyond the

By Sophie Manduca

Some former ‘forms’ or ‘laws’ may be altered, others may be discarded altogether. It was thus a refreshing treat to view Krista Sullivan’s art. In sharp contrast with the usual flow of portraits and landscapes struggling to wrench themselves free from the spectre of Baroque or idiosyncratic Maltese colour schemes or thematics, Krista Sullivan’s art is art for art’s sake – original, supra national, and attractive.

If we take a painting, the most ‘literal’ form of painting would undoubtedly be a depiction of a real-life scene depicted as faithfully as possible to resemble reality, for example, a landscape, still-life, or a portrait, similar to those painted by Rubens, Vermeer, or Gainsborough. One may have variations that deviate from the original form and vary only in expressing a particular mood or poetics by employing a more flexible style, like for example, an ‘impressionist’ or ‘surreal’ artist like Van Gogh, Matisse, Monet, or Picasso painting a similar theme with a different style, that we may term ‘metaphorical’, perhaps employing an ‘oxymoron’ or ‘metonymy’ to stress a point. One may paint an entirely abstract scene with no apparent relation whatsoever to reality, thus not observing any easily ascertainable laws or forms, as in some specific cases of artists like Kandinsky or Piet



All paintings by Krista Sullivan



and *Fascism*, 1998) that some artistic expressions like, for example, 'minimalism', actually reveal a lack of artistic acumen and an incapacity to develop aesthetic themes, transferred to a celebration of emptiness, shallowness, and nothingness. Art also has an ideological role, perhaps related to 'ressentiment'. 'Art may promote the alienation, the total estrangement of man from his world. And this alienation may provide the artificial basis for the remembrance of freedom in the totality of oppression.' Krista Sullivan's art actually seems to develop aesthetic themes to celebrate accomplishment, fulfilment and totality, uniting mankind with our world, and accentuating freedom and the ontological primacy of humanity.

and laws of art

Mondrian, that we may term 'polysemic'. Krista Sullivan's art falls into the category of the polysemic, free from all boundaries and rules. She displays talent in ensuring each of her individual paintings is actually an individual artefact with its own splendour and allure.

On a CD sleeve, Bill Evans talks of a 'Japanese visual art in which the artist is forced to be spontaneous. He must paint on a thin stretched parchment with a special brush and black water paint in such a way that an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break the parchment. Erasures or changes are impossible. These artists must practice a particular discipline, that allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a way that deliberation cannot interfere. [...] This will result in something captured that escapes explanation.' Krista Sullivan's art is spontaneous in this sense.

Post-modernism attempts to desacralize all laws and all forms, only to create new alternative laws and forms that require one adhering to an absence of forms or laws, that are actually still present, even if more subtle, as latent rules. This was one of the major flaws post-modernism was feeble on. Marcuse has even cynically observed (*Technology, War,*



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A. Theory

Critical theory is the theory that suggests how humans ought to do philosophy and how to think about theories. Theory is the abstract way to think of reality, must have a coherence relation between facts; and is supposed to be objective, not biased. Horkheimer argues that “theory always remains a hypothesis”; since theories are in constant competition and contradiction with each other, over time.

So firstly, the problematic part of theory is that the scholar developing a theory on society is also part of society. Horkheimer argues that theorists are never independent; because the theorists and the facts are both part of the system that is being analyzed. All humans are a “product of history”. The researchers are subjective: through psychological, material, socioeconomic dependency. Thus, humans can never be totally objective when postulating theories.

Secondly, facts are part of nature out there, humans then draw conclusions on them. The idea that facts are independent from us is wrong. This nature is man-made. Horkheimer argues that the facts are always related to a larger reality. Therefore researchers have to look at everything as one system since the facts are not totally objective.

Thirdly, both facts and theory are subject to one another. The facts contain socio-historical interests of specific groups and classes. This is why the traditional theory become popular depending on its “useful”.

The goal is recognizing what is given and what ought to be when analyzing a theory, through critical theory. Humans need to understand that theories are blind and have not really discovered anything.

Citations from: “Theory” according to: Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory”.

B. Philosophy


Adorno argues that philosophy cannot grasp the reality of the world. Since to understand totality is a deceiving illusion. Philosophy that represents reality, only veils reality, and eternalizes its present condition. Both Hegel and Heidegger argue that human beings through experience have access to being, in general abstract level. However Adorno criticizes this, claiming that humans cannot prove that these facts are objective. Since humans have to use their senses to describe it, as coming from reality but not as reality. Therefore reality is a product of our actions which are not totally objective.

Philosophy aims to create the idealist, a promise which is an illusion. Many schools of philosophy do not answer practical questions, but are lost in abstract matters. Adorno wants philosophy to benefit us practically, and tell us about the world.

Another problem of philosophy is that it does not give an account of the metaphysical experience. Philosophy should make “religious experience logically possible”. For Adorno this can be achieved through language, which has a philosophical force and metaphysical truth. Philosophy must overcome the illusion that reason grasps everything.

By Manuel Xuereb

Philosophy



For Adorno philosophy should be like trying to interpret riddles and puzzles. Through philosophy, humans ought to put things together and see the full picture by riddle-solving. Humans cannot grasp reality in its totality, but only grasp fragments of reality. By solving the problems humans need to construct figures and images out of reality. The moment humans get the answer for the riddle – the problem itself disappears.

Citations from: “Philosophy” according to: Adorno, “The Actuality of Philosophy”.

C. History

The puppet that won at chess had a little man inside the table. Benjamin uses this metaphor to describe history as hiding from us, and controlling us without knowing. Benjamin disagrees that historical materialism has a predetermined factor, by comparing history to messianism. When the messiah is always expected but never arrives, aiming at something which humans cannot grasp. Benjamin wants to destroy this constant waiting, by explaining to us how to understand history.

History is to be understood through the intrinsic value of the past, which cannot be understood by humans when they are part of the present. It can only be understood with the experience of the past as if with the secret key, to open the secret index. Benjamin argues that “nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost to history”. History cannot be distinguished between major and minor events. Only by looking back at the past can humans grasp the value of events and rate them as they are valued.

Also history is depicted as moments of danger, emergencies, and the need for security. Benjamin wants to add that to write history, to forget the present, the current state of mind, and jump in the past, is problematic and an illusion. Moreover history is written by the victor that decides what to

Why Reflections

show us from the past. Despite the fact that history is represented by the “geniuses”, the victors still choose what to include as history. Therefore “the task [is] to brush history against the grain”, and read history upside down. Since so much is left out, such as the suffering and exploitation of minorities, etc.

Citations from: “History” according to: Benjamin, “On the Concept of History”.

D. Enlightenment

Enlightenment is the goal to explain nature with reason, detect the “fear of the demons”, and overcome magic, superstition and rituals. “Inventions” are made by chance, not because of systematic enquiry of nature. Technology is also created through our rational calculations which only cause further exploitation. Enlightenment created a reason that is instrumental reason – this is the problem outlined by Adorno and Max. Enlightenment has

become “totalitarian” because it uses “corrosive rationality”.

Mythology is just the early version of enlightenment; it does the same process, it tries to explain the world to us. However Adorno and Max both agree that the more enlightenment excludes mythology, the more it gets “deeply” entangled itself in mythology. Enlightenment itself, its use of reason turns to out to be irrational. As a consequence, enlightenment “amputates the incommensurable”; it removes and cuts out what is not rational.

Enlightenment wants to explain the world to us, create a system that fits everything, and gives it the whole picture. Through this system, “human beings are forced into real conformity” of such a system. Enlightenment does the same, what does not fit in, it leaves outside the system. Everyone who is different is left out. Everything that does not belong to the system, either has to conform, or is amputated/exterminated.

“Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized”, since it is trying to escape mythology, this is the mistake. Enlightenment should be a continuum of mythology. Magic is still a rational attempt to cope with nature. At some stage, enlightenment falls back to mythology, it becomes irrational. Instrumental reason is not about to understand nature as it is, but to understand nature for us, what it can do for us, not for what it is which is wrong.

Citations from: “Enlightenment” according to: Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Concept of Enlightenment” from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Manuel Xuereb is a Gozitan student doing a Masters in European Law, Politics and Economics at the University of Malta.



philosophy sharing the gozo experience

It's happening! It's really happening! The Philosophy Sharing Foundation is spreading its young wings over Gozo. This comes after four years of hard work done by the Foundation in Malta since its establishment. The valuable experience gained will now be put to good use in the sister island. There is a great deal of hope that the Foundation will prove to be as successful in Gozo as it has been in Malta.

The idea of setting up the Foundation in Gozo has been part of the organisation's long-term plan since the beginning. It was simply a question of time until the right conditions and the appropriate personnel were identified, as they would contribute through their knowledge and contacts to start off this experience.

The Foundation has always believed that Gozitans and Gozo residents should not be excluded from its mission and objectives. The organisation has been very conscious of the fact that people who are based in Gozo often find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to participate in activities held in Malta. It had always been the Foundation's intention that this should not be prolonged more than was absolutely necessary.

It was the Foundation's intention not to establish merely a Gozo 'branch', as this would simply appear as a mere extension to Malta's main body, as a sort of side-thought or subsidiary office. The Gozo section is designed to be an

autonomous part of the organisation as it is self-directed and self-sufficient. It will plan and do things its own way, tailor-made for the needs and requests of Gozitans and Gozo residents.

The first meeting for Gozitan philosophy enthusiasts was held on 9 January 2016, at the Circolo Gozitano in Victoria, Gozo. The Circolo, with its long and wide experience, has been generous and kind enough to lend a hand in establishing the Foundation's Gozo enterprise. Other Gozitan institutions are also supporting the Foundation with this venture.

When planning and organising its activities, the Gozo section will keep in mind both Gozitans citizens and foreigners residents in Gozo. The section's events will be open to all, and all proceedings will be conducted in English. A three-month pilot run, starting in April 2016, has been fixed in order to test the waters and to subsequently draw up a road map for the future.

The first strategic meeting of the Foundation's Gozo section was followed by others. From the word go, the Gozitans took a leading role in setting up the section. This should guarantee its success. Certainly, there seems to be no lack of enthusiasm and initiative.

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philosophy in Malta

SNIPPETS FROM HISTORY



A 16th century dissident group



Imagine a time with no freedom of speech. More. A time with no freedom of thought (if that could be). Certainly a time with no freedom to even read. A time with no freedom of association. Indeed, if you lived in the early 16th century you would not have had any need to imagine such things. For that was the order of the day.

This was just about the time of the Knights Hospitallers' advent to Malta. The 1530s. A time when the great religious reformer, Martin Luther, was still alive (he died in 1546). A time when the Catholic Church had not begun to

organise its counter-reform to his wide-spread reformation (the Council of Trent was still a decade away). At precisely that time a group of men, both clerical and lay, came together to form what they called *La Confraternita dei Buoni Cristiani* (the Society of True Christians).

The organisers of the group were François Gesualdo, a French priest, and Andrew Axac, a Maltese priest from Rabat. They formed the Society together with adult students who attended their classes. They met at Mdina. The aim of their group was to study and discuss philosophy and theology.

Apart of Gesualdo and Axac, the Society included Matthew Falzun (the well known *Sahhar Falzun*; the warlock Falzun), his son Matthew Falzun (the younger), Lawrence Falzun (a relation of theirs), a certain Petit, Peter Stunica, Peter Cumbo and Brandan Caxaro (the well-known transcriber of the *Cantilena*).

The Society met regularly to read works very recently published by Luther and other Protestant writers, such as Erasmus (1466–1536) and Melancthon (1497–1560). What impressed them most, it seems, was the authors' '*Philosophia Christi*' (a new way of understanding religion), the dire criticism of Scholasticism, and the liberation of theology from the clutches of ecclesiastical control and sheer clerical interpretation.

Undoubtedly, they were a brave and daring group of people who challenged the *status quo* and risked great danger. In fact, in 1545, the Inquisition caught up with them and dealt with them very harshly. While all the members of the group, including Axac, received severe warnings and 'spiritual' punishments, Gesualdo and Petit were not so fortunate. They were burned at the stake in the main Birgu square on November 5, 1545.

Fortunately, this was the only time that anyone in Malta suffered such a fate.

The philosophical torch after Napoleon

In June 1798, on his way to Egypt, Napoleon ousted the Knights of St. John and assumed power over the Maltese Islands. A few days after Napoleon left the island following his brief stay, the French closed down the University of Malta with the intention of establishing a *Polytechnique* which had to offer courses related to solely scientific subjects.

The Chair of Philosophy was eliminated too. At the time it was headed by Michael Xerri, who was later shot for conspiring against the French. The Chair had been instituted in 1771 at the founding of the university by Grand Master Pinto. The French intended to abolish it forever.

However, when, after only two years, the French were forced to leave, the British Civil Commander, Alexander Ball, reinstituted the university, including the Chair of Philosophy. The man chosen to head the Chair and guide it through its first years was Saviour Montebello.

Montebello (1762–1809) was a diocesan priest and a Doctor of Theology from Żejtun. In the years preceding his university appointment he had taken an active part in the resistance of the Maltese against the French around his home-town at Żejtun. He was mainly assigned with logistical assignments under the general command of Saverio Caruana, a Monsignor who had studied philosophy under Michael Xerri, and was Professor of Philosophy and Mathematics at the bishop's seminary at Mdina (and later appointed Bishop of Malta).

Saviour Montebello held the Chair of Philosophy for almost four years, during which time all the philosophy courses which existed before the interruption brought about by Napoleon were resumed and all students returned to continue their studies as before. The salaries of the lecturers were also improved. Apart from his administrative duties, during his tenure Montebello gave regular classes on logic and metaphysics.

Montebello relinquished the Chair when he was appointed parish priest of Bormla (the last to hold the office under this title because subsequently the parish was promoted to a Collegiate led by Archpriests). He held the office of parish priest for only five years due to his premature death at the age of forty-six.





philosophy sharing news m a l t a

■ **PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS** – The next public discussion held by the Foundation shall be on Wednesday, April 6, 2016. A talk in Maltese by Joseph Ellul on *L-Islam jaċċetta l-istudju tal-filosofija?* (Does Islam accept the study of philosophy?) shall be followed by an open discussion. All members of the public are invited and encouraged to attend for this interesting and provocative address. The meeting shall be held at Luciano Restaurant, Merchants Street, Valletta. It shall start at 7.00 pm and end at 8.30 pm. Joseph Ellul is an expert in Islamic studies. He teaches Islamic philosophy at the University of Malta and at the Angelicum University in Rome.

The last public discussion talks held by the Foundation were presented by Norman Lowell on January 6, 2015 (who discussed Nietzsche's philosophy); by Dr Mark Montebello on February 3, 2016 (who discussed whether philosophic progress exists); and by Prof. Oliver Friggier on March 2, 2016 (who discussed his literary itinerary in relation to French existentialism). All were very well attended, and the discussions extremely stimulating. Joseph Ellul's discussion promises to be as much. It shall be a pity to miss it!

■ **PHILOSOPHY COURSES** – There is still just one further course to go in this current season (2015/16). It shall be presented by Dr Joseph Gravina who shall be lecturing about the Italian Marxist theoretician and politician, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). This shall be held between April 4 and May 2, 2016. That is, five consecutive Mondays from 6.30 pm till 8.00 pm. The venue shall be the Valletta Voluntary Centre in Melita Street (corner with The Times of Malta). Dr Gravina is an expert on Gramsci, and the Foundation is really pleased and honoured to have him provide its beneficiaries with his services. A course may be attended against a nominal contribution of €30 (€15 for Foundation members and registered students). Dr Gravina is a lecturer at the Junior College on Systems of Knowledge. An official Certificate of Attendance shall be awarded to participants.

The last philosophy courses offered by the Foundation were presented by Dr Mark Montebello, between November 16 and December 14, 2015, on the Philosophy

of Anarchism; by Aleks Farrugia, between January 11 and February 8, 2016, on the sources of existential questions; and by Dr Mark Montebello again, between February 22 and March 21, 2016, on the Philosophy of Manuel Dimech. Pleased to say, all three courses had record attendance, and the classes were engaged in much animated discussions. Gramsci's course by Dr Joseph Gravina is certainly a treat which should not be skipped.

■ **AGM** – The Foundation's 2016 Annual General Meeting was held on February 3, 2016, at the Valletta Voluntary Centre. As at every AGM, the Secretary's report for the year 2015/16 provided details of all the Foundation's activities for that period. Together with this, the Treasurer's report and financial accounts were reviewed, audited and approved. At the meeting a fresh formation of the Steering Committee was ushered in. Sadly, the new formation is absent of worthy former members Prof. Sandra Dingli, Vikki Sammut and Godwin Darmanin, and, happily, welcomes into its fold new members Andrea Axisa and Josephine Gatt Ciancio. Closing the meeting, the Director of the Foundation, Dr Max Cassar, expressed satisfaction at the steady work being done by the Foundation, and its advancement. He thanked all those present and all others who support the Foundation and show confidence in it. The Foundation, he stated, is always open to new suggestions and proposals to better fulfill its responsibilities and mission.

The Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, the Hon. Helena Dalli, and the Director of the Philosophy Sharing Foundation, Dr Max Cassar, during the launching of the first issue of SHARE, on December 5, 2016.



SHARE

A MOMENT OF FUN

philosophical

A Universal Philosophical Refutation

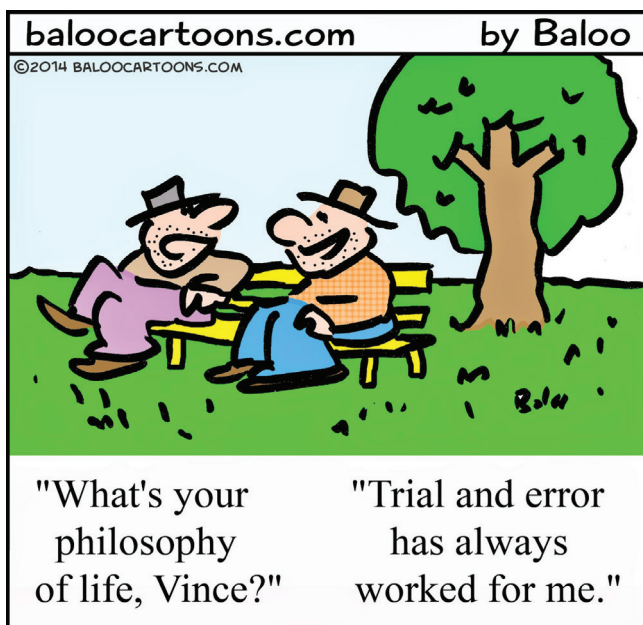
A philosopher once had the following dream. First Aristotle appeared, and the philosopher said to him, "Could you give me a fifteen-minute capsule sketch of your entire philosophy?" To the philosopher's surprise, Aristotle gave him an excellent exposition in which he compressed an enormous amount of material into a mere fifteen minutes. But then the philosopher raised a certain objection which Aristotle couldn't answer. Confounded, Aristotle disappeared.

Then Plato appeared. The same thing happened again, and the philosophers' objection to Plato was the same as his objection to Aristotle. Plato also couldn't answer it and disappeared.

Then all the famous philosophers of history appeared one-by-one and our philosopher refuted every one with the same objection.

After the last philosopher vanished, our philosopher said to himself, "I know I'm asleep and dreaming all this. Yet I've found a universal refutation for all philosophical systems! Tomorrow when I wake up, I will probably have forgotten it, and the world will really miss something!" With an iron effort, the philosopher forced himself to wake up, rush over to his desk, and write down his universal refutation. Then he jumped back into bed with a sigh of relief.

The next morning when he awoke, he went over to the desk to see what he had written. It was, "That's what you say."



A Riddle

RIDDLE: There is just one thing which cannot ever be doubted. What is it?

(Think hard before turning to the answer on the next page)

Say it in ... Latin

Memento mori

Remember that you will die

Errare humanum est

To err is human

Nosce te ipsum

Know thyself

Aut viam inveniam aut faciam

I will either find a way or make one

Beneficium accipere libertatem est vendere

To accept a favour is to sell one's freedom.

Adde parvum parvo magnus acervus erit

Add a little to a little and there will be a great heap

Castigat ridendo mores

One corrects customs by laughing at them

De gustibus non est disputandum

In matters of taste there is no argument

Legum servi sumus ut liberi esse possimus

We are slaves of the law in order that we may be able to be free

Non omnis moriar

Not all of me shall die

Parturient montes nascetur ridiculus mus

Mountains will be in labour and a ridiculous mouse will be born

(A lot of work with nothing to show for it)

Crede quod habes et habes

Believe that you have it and you do

Absentem laedit cum ebrio qui litigat

To quarrel with a drunk is to wrong a man who is not even there

Dulce bellum inexpertis

War is sweet to those who have never fought

Answers to last issue's SHARE crossword:

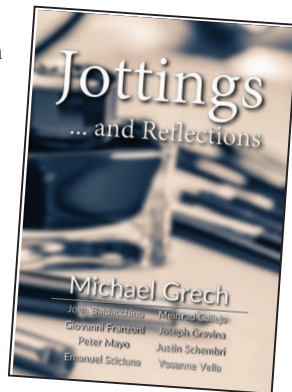
ACROSS: 5. Altruism; 8. Machiavelli; 10. Communication; 13. Caxaro; 16. Aesthetics; 17. Ontology; 18. Six. 19. Zammit. DOWN: 1. Peripatetic; 2. Aquinas. 3. Valletta; 4. Friggieri; 6. Rationalist; 7. Empiricist; 9. Paradigm; 11. Morals; 12. Causality; 14. Kant; 15. Hedonism.

SHARE book reviews

Jottings ... and Reflections

Michael Grech et. al., Faraxa Publications, 232 pp, 2015.
ISBN: 978-99957-48-30-2

Our everyday lives are replete with illogical assertions coming our way from every quarter. One just has to watch discussions on TV or on the radio, follow messages on Facebook, listen to people talk, read newspapers or follow parliamentary debates. If one is attentive enough, one would detect an innumerable amount of incongruous assertions and invalid inferences. It would not be infrequent to notice how similar situations are gauged by different measures, and thereby (contradictory) conclusions derived.



Regrettably, most of the illogical discourse which is nattered around left, right and centre is just never challenged. Particularly by something called Logic. Rudolf Carnap once said that the “extraction [of logic] leaves behind only a confusion of non-scientific, pseudo problems” (*The Unity of Science*, 1934). This may indeed be so. However, it seems that what reigns high and supreme in every day’s experience is precisely the confusion. What’s worse, it is a confusion which poses as rational, reasonable, sound, common-sense wisdom.

Logic is without pretence, to be sure, as Donald Davidson once stated (*Essays on Actions and Events*, 1980). However, he also said that it “plainer [and] duller” than language, and also “without wit”. This may not be so. Especially when it takes the form of what Michael Grech presents us with in *Jottings ... and Reflections*. Grech certainly makes use of some sound logic to castigate many an unsound and fallacious argument which is thrown in our face and to our ears, especially by the media. He also does this with frank talk and thought-provoking arguments of his own. His writing is positively not without wit.

Jottings ... and Reflections is a collection of twenty-seven short writings published by Grech over the past couple of years. The writings are grouped in seven sections, each of which is followed by a short essay related to the section’s general theme penned by different scholars. The sections deal with politics, history, racism, religion, peace, common sense, and ‘the spiritually and traditionally hyper-real’. The essays are by Prof. John Baldacchino, Meinrad Calleja, Giovanni Franzoni, Dr Joseph Gravina, Prof. Peter Mayo, Justin Schembri, Emanuel Scicluna, and Prof. Yosanne Vella.

Though the book is an interesting idea since it brings together a number of thinkers, most of the essays do not engage with Grech’s contributions, and some of them might have been left out altogether.

Anyway, Grech’s writings are stimulating enough on their own. Though they might not be philosophical as such, they illustrate much philosophical skill. If Philosophy, as Christopher Hookway held (*Quine: Language, Experience and Reality*, 1988), “is a clarification of the concepts we use when participating in [a wide range of] activities”, including talking, then Grech’s ‘jottings’ are certainly worth a serious shot.

Pietru Caxaru u l-Kantilena Tieghu

(Peter Caxaro and his ‘Cantilena’)

Mark Montebello, 2nd ed., Faraxa Publications, 132 pp, 2015.
ISBN: 978-99957-48-31-9

In *Ars Poetica* (1926), the American poet, writer and librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, says that “it would seem that no two creatures could be more dissimilar than the poet and the philosopher”. He may be right. At least at first glance. For the product of the poet and the philosopher seems to differ in almost everything ... except perhaps for the thought and reasoning that lays beneath the surface.

If not, then why did many an ancient Greek philosopher write in poetic form if it was believed that the style and technique was unsuitable for the task? In fact, some of the most treasured poems happen to have a distinctly philosophical character, such as Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*, Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, Goethe’s *Faust*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Nietzsche himself wrote poetry. So did Kierkegaard, Santayana, Georges Bataille and many other philosophers. Not to forget mentioning Peter Serracino Inglott, Joe Friggieri, John Baldacchino, Kenneth Wain, Mario Vella and others.

Philosophers can certainly be poets. But can poets be philosophers? Some of them might. Of course, not any poem can qualify as philosophical. However, it can be held with some degree of certainty that poetry and philosophy are not, definitely not, mutually exclusive.

The fifteenth-century Peter Caxaro might be just a point in case. His contemporaries seem to have considered him to be some kind of philosopher. Which kind is difficult to say. For what appears to have survived from his hand is possibly just one beautiful gem of a poem, called the Kantilena, a sixteen-verse reflection on life’s vicissitudes.

In *Pietru Caxaru u l-Kantilena Tieghu* (Peter Caxaro and his ‘Cantilena’), Dr Mark Montebello explores the many facets, not only philosophical, of the Cantilena. Most of the book would not interest a reader of philosophy if not as general knowledge. However, the book also includes a long essay by Montebello on ‘The humanist philosophy in Peter Caxaro’s Cantilena: A study of a representative of humanism in Maltese philosophy’.

Incidentally, the value of the Cantilena goes well beyond its possible philosophical content. Written some time during the latter part of the fifteenth century, it is the first known documentary evidence of the Maltese language. Its author, Peter Caxaro, was a notary from Mdina.

This book (which is unfortunately only available in Maltese) is the only existing introduction to the subject. It includes biographies of the people who brought the poem to light, a thorough background of the times when it was written, suggestions for reading the poem’s mediaeval script and style, a complete list of the studies published about the Cantilena during the last sixty years, and much more.

One may not be interested in poetry as such. Nevertheless, Peter Caxaro’s poem certainly merits a close look. It might bear an interesting surprise.



Answer to the riddle on page 21: *That I’m doubting.*

Annual Philosophy Lecture

Interpreting a broken world

The IIIrd edition of the Annual Philosophy Lecture organised by the Philosophy Sharing Foundation shall be held on Friday, 3 June, 2016, at St James Cavalier, Valletta. This is an occasion which no philosophy enthusiast should miss.

This year's lecture shall be delivered by Mr. Karl Borg, a University of Malta philosophy graduate. Mr. Borg has been teaching philosophy for the last thirty-five years. He worked close to Matthew Lipman, and studied under John Dewey. He specialised in the pathology of language in England and the United States, and is the founder of the educational Institute of St. Thomas. He also co-founded the Malta Institute of Philosophy for Children and the Young.

The lecture shall be in Maltese. Its title is: *Il-Kurċifissjoni, Hampti Dampti u l-baži tal-filosofija u l-gharfien uman* (The Crucifixion, Hampti Dumpty and the basis of philosophy and human knowledge). Mr. Borg shall be exploring the basis of philosophy and knowledge in the context of human's greatest challenge: the mystery of existence and of the human condition.

The main thrust of the lecture shall concern the hermeneutical issues surrounding the theory and

philosophy of human logosynthesis. Hermeneutics, the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, involves processes of a religious, political, artistic, scientific, logical, ontological and epistemological nature.

Through the centuries the eternal struggle between what is true and what is false has led to many an unsettling question related to our human condition. Consciously or subconsciously, they are questions which keep us suspended between assertion and denial, between ignorance and knowledge, between light and darkness.

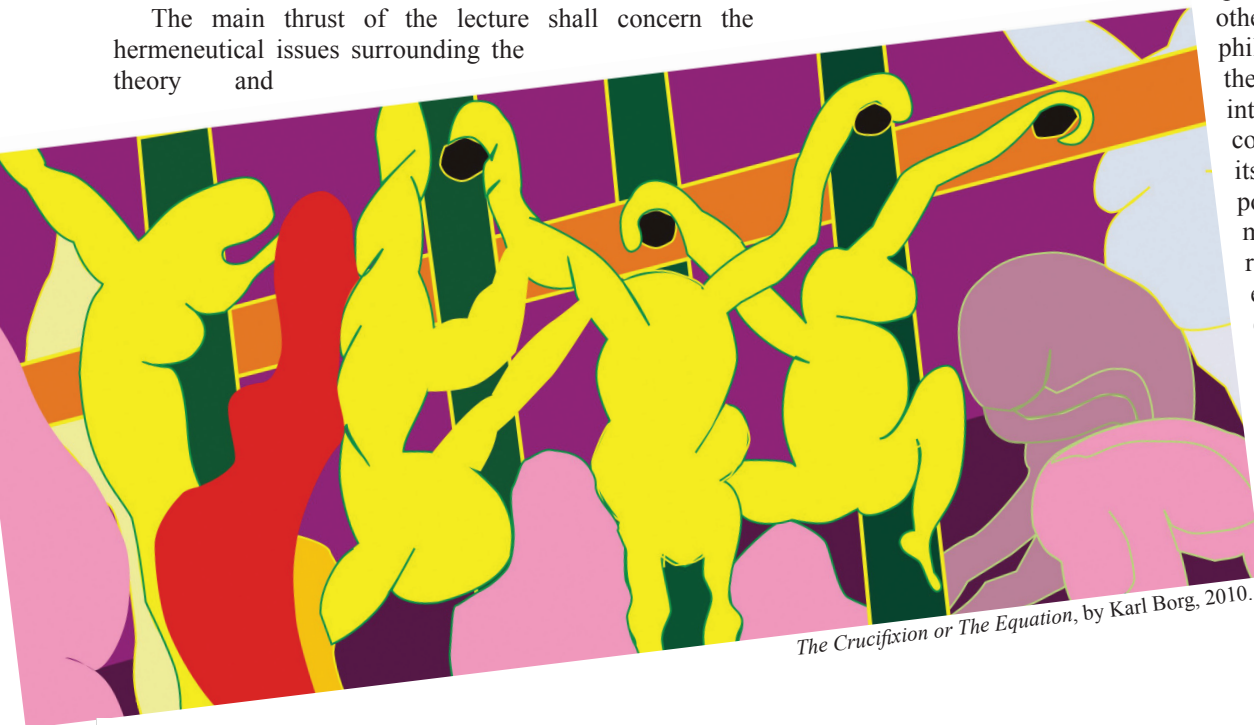
Very often, we experience ourselves as *broken*. Not only during our everyday lives but also when dealing with the various formal modes of knowledge, that is ontologically and epistemologically. We perpetually seem to be a Humpty Dumpty who, as the nursery rhyme goes, 'set on a wall and had a great fall'.

Considering this suspension and sense of fragmentation, in some manner we seem to be all permanently 'crucified' like a Christ on a cross. In its various forms, art has expressed this consciousness most admirably throughout the ages.

Philosophy might give us some respite. It opens up new horizons

upon newer ones and other newer still. For philosophy might be the art of interpreting interpretations. Its core may lay in its hermeneutical possibilities which might unlock the riddle of human existence and experience.

This and more shall be discussed at the 2016 Annual Philosophy Lecture. You might not want to miss this.



The Crucifixion or The Equation, by Karl Borg, 2010.

Friday, June 3, 2016 - 7.30 pm
St James Cavalier, Valletta

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The **PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION** is a non-profit, non-government organisation founded in 2012. Its **mission** is to bring together philosophy enthusiasts; to inspire, strengthen and promote philosophical activity in the Maltese Islands; and to contribute towards society through Philosophy. The Foundation does not adhere or profess to any single creed or ideology. The **objectives** of the Foundation include bringing together Maltese philosophers, facilitating discussion of their ideas, and encouraging their work; promoting philosophical investigation; sharing philosophical ideas with the Maltese public; assisting the documentation, compilation, safe-keeping, and accessibility of the works of Maltese philosophers; disseminating information on Maltese philosophers, their work and their ideas; fostering the participation of Maltese philosophers in public debates; and furthering philosophical understanding and knowledge in general. The **activities** of the Foundation include organising encounters for Maltese philosophers; encouraging and facilitating the writing, publication and distribution of works by Maltese philosophers; furthering research on past and present Maltese philosophers; establishing a central archive with the works of Maltese philosophers; coordinating courses, meetings, seminars, conferences and such like gatherings; and collaborating with entities which can aid the Foundation in its objectives and activities.

For more information
www.philosophysharing.org