SHARE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 1 – NOVEMBER 2015

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• The evilness of God

• Marriage most foul

• Saving the environment

• Information war attack!

... and more

Žižek: an Intellectual Charlatan?

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SHARE
PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 1 - NOVEMBER 2015

Welcome to the first issue of SHARE, the official platform of Philosophy Sharing Foundation. This is the first ever Philosophy magazine issued in the Maltese Islands. The main aim of the 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 publish 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.

A word of Welcome
by the Director of philosophysharing
Dr Maxim Cassar

Welcome aboard !

It is with great pleasure that I present to you, dear readers, the first issue of SHARE, Malta's first ever Philosophy magazine. The idea of publishing a philosophical periodical/journal mainly by Maltese contributors had long been brewing among the Committee members of the Philosophy Sharing Foundation (PSF). Today we are witnessing the actualisation of this dream. The magazine intends to serve as the official platform of the PSF. Professional philosophers, students and anyone interested in philosophical matters and issues alike now have the opportunity and the possibility to share their ideas and thoughts with others so as to create a forum where a healthy and fruitful philosophical discussion can take place.

The variety of articles which appear in this first issue (from Žižek to marriage, from the environment to information warfare, from God and evil to Derrida and Butler) augur well for the future of this publication. Every issue of the magazine will be accompanied by a booklet in Maltese which presents a philosophical text (or part of) from well-known (and not so well-known) philosophers, both from the past and from the contemporary periods. The idea is to build a collection of philosophical texts in Maltese, thus contributing to the creation of a philosophical jargon in our native language whose absence has been sorely felt.

I sincerely hope that this new magazine will fill a long-neglected lacuna in our cultural tradition. I wish all readers good and enjoyable reading.

Max

◀FRONT COVER: Official poster for Slavoj Žižek's movie *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012).

EDITORIAL

An ancient Chinese adage augurs 'may you live in interesting times'; our contemporary scientific world is indeed living in interesting times. Quantum theory renders many former verities redundant, while opening up great opportunities for rapid technological change in communication industries and space research. Formerly unimaginable scientific possibilities are born from Biological Sciences, Biochemistry, Genetics, Molecular Biology, Environmental Science, Immunology and Microbiology, Neuroscience, Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth and Planetary Science, Energy, Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy, Engineering, Material Science, Pharmacology and Toxicology, and Pharmaceutical Science. Political and economic change have given rise to a proliferation of discourse facilitating a singular-government, and have paved the way for a web of supra-national institutions, that seem to endorse notions of bio-power, eugenics, and social engineering, and the ethics and morality to sustain them. Can the 'philosophy' keep up with these changes?

In our contemporary academic milieu, philosophy faces challenges that require radical re-formulations of conceptual categories and frameworks, diversely elastic academic catalogues and protocols,(if not their abandonment!) as well as hybrid interdisciplinary approaches and innovative thematic confluence. This urgent enterprise ought to be undertaken at an accelerated pace conquering all inhibitions, re-evaluating all credentialist dogma, to create not only a new lexicon, but also a new syntax. Such undertakings have not always characterised recent philosophical investigation.

As 'editor' of this debut philosophy magazine I made it a point to ignore the semanticity that the lexeme 'edit' denotes, while safe in the knowledge that legal responsibilities of its connotation were actually quite securely assured. However, any debut magazine faces the challenge of enticing contribution against a lack of credentials. At some points our programmed deadline induced a sensation of facing the risk to 'publish in haste', hopefully without the consequence of 'repent at leisure'.

The selection of contributions represents a variety of perspectives that each in their own sovereignty and autonomy provide original insights. SHARE provides a space and platform for philosophy enthusiasts to have their texts published and reviewed. We augur that this publication

Meinrad

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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.

ne thing is for sure: Slavoj Žižek talks a lot. *Môj Bože*, does he talk! He talks, and writes, and prints, and publishes like a sausage machine. And there's no subject under the sun which he doesn't have an opinion about. No, not an opinion: a pronouncement. For, mind, Žižek does not expresses opinions. He opines. He asserts. He declares. Endlessly. He orates, and harangues, and sermonises more than Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Perhaps that's why academics (who have to justify their salaries) love him so very much. He's good fodder for their elaborate excuses.

Now let me get one thing straight. Not that Žižek doesn't say anything worth noting. On the contrary. On the contrary indeed. His ideas are as effervescent as a clear day after a storm. Moreover, he's provocative, and challenging, and

Žižek
An intellectual charlatan?

By Roberta Pace

head-on; giving it depth and more depth; increasing the stakes by conveying contemporaneousness to (sometimes ago-old) theories; exploring all corollaries; advancing his arguments gradually; weighing objections; sustaining his case bravely; drawing conclusions with a boom. He surely does philosophy. And with zest.

On face value, Žižek appears coherent. That's how he immediately comes through. As someone actually *sane*. One is inundated by his loquaciousness, and simply yields to his barrage. His contentions stick into one's head like pins, and very often cannot help ruminating about them afterwards with a persistence that's almost magical. But on second thoughts one might begin to see the cracks. Here and there. Some illogicality. A bit of over-stretching. Dashs of outlandishness. Mix-ups.

His sidekick excursions are perhaps the most revealing. And amusing. Žižek consistently draws examples from (sometimes minor) works of literature; refers to (mostly Hollywood) movies; provides illustrations from mundane

stimulating. Further, he's forceful, and aggressive, and dynamic. More than anything, he's persuasive. That much one must—*must*, absolutely—concede.

When reading or listening (on the Internet) to Žižek, one cannot help being blown away by his sheer braininess. He is smart, to say the least. Attacking his chosen subject

life. Giving all of them philosophical twists which normally seem to escape the average reader or viewer; making them sound as if they were a Delphi oracle and he the inspired Pythia. His 'theory of urinals' comes directly to mind. His digging into the Peter Pan story. His exploring of a long-forgotten scene in a Hitchcock oldie. And, no, 'examples' is
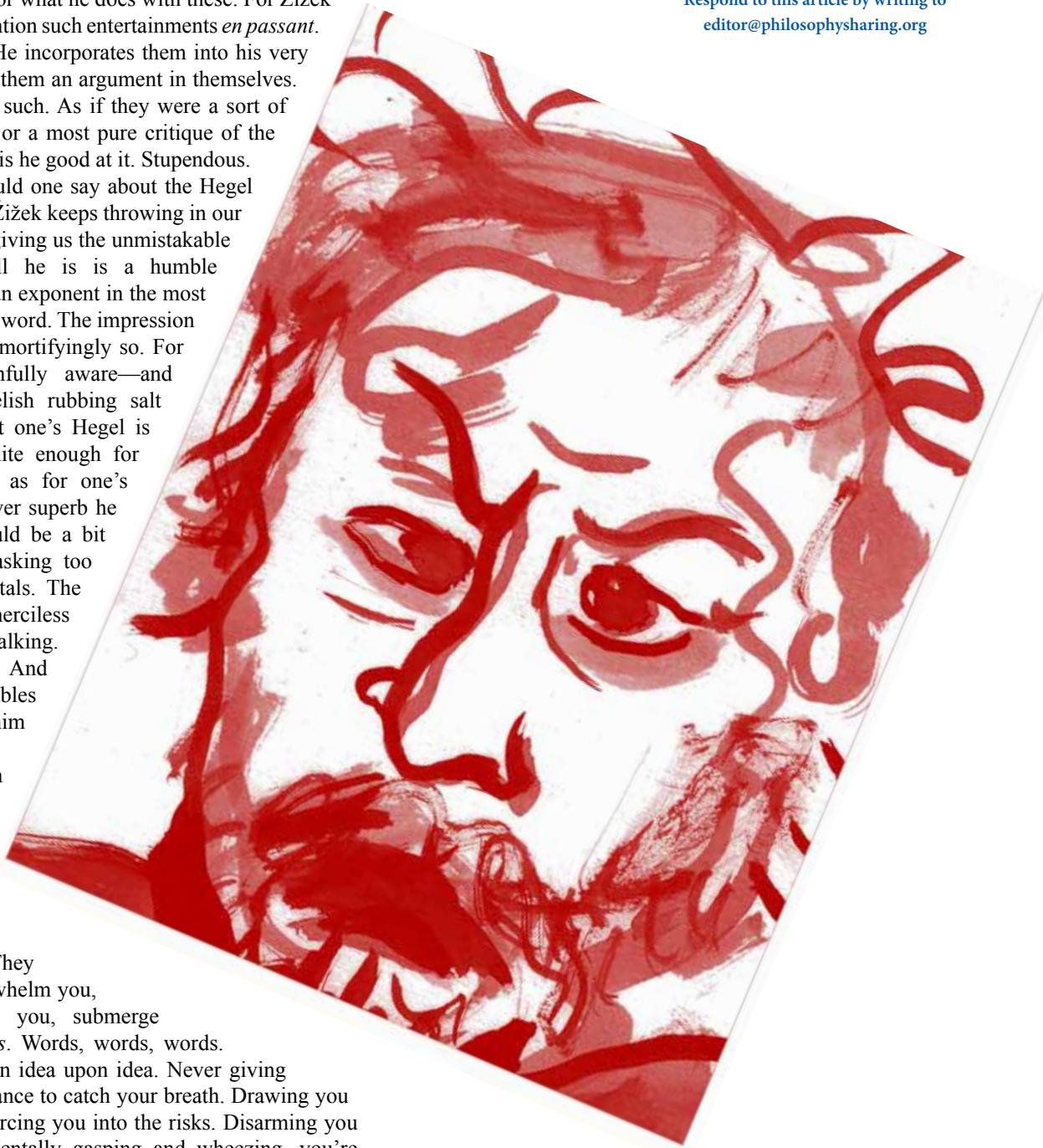
not the right word for what he does with these. For Žižek does not simply mention such entertainments *en passant*. Oh no, not Žižek. He incorporates them into his very text, making out of them an argument in themselves. And treats them as such. As if they were a sort of Platonic brainchild or a most pure critique of the purest reason. Boy, is he good at it. Stupendous.

Then, what should one say about the Hegel and the Lacan that Žižek keeps throwing in our face at every turn, giving us the unmistakable impression that all he is is a humble portrayer of them; an exponent in the most modest sense of the word. The impression is chastening. And mortifyingly so. For one becomes painfully aware—and Žižek seems to relish rubbing salt in the wound—that one's Hegel is not brushed up quite enough for the occasion. And as for one's Lacan. Well, however superb he might be, that would be a bit beyond the pale; asking too much of poor mortals. The truth is, Žižek is merciless when he gets talking. And unforgiving. And ruthless. He humbles you. (I can see him grinning.)

Again, an inundation comes to mind. A verbal inundation. A brainstorm. For isn't that precisely what coaxers do? They inundate you, overwhelm you, flood you, deluge you, submerge you, … with *words*. Words, words, words. Idea upon idea upon idea upon idea. Never giving you a moment's chance to catch your breath. Drawing you into the gamble. Forcing you into the risks. Disarming you of all defences. Mentally gasping and wheezing, you're intellectually knocked off your feet and, psychologically dazed and numb, before you know it you're lugged behind his wagon like a sack of potatoes, helpless and dependent.

Žižek can have that effect. He usually does. For the average reader he's mystifying. For the unprepared, disturbing. For the philosophically unequipped, devastating. He comes upon you with such force of acumen and argument that one simply gives up and throws in the towel. He impresses, that's for sure. And he's got what it takes to show it.

The crunch is: Has Žižek got substance? Charlatans usually don't. Yet, if he is indeed one, Žižek is not your average charlatan. That's for sure. When all's said and done, one cannot fairly dismiss him as yet another swindler. Certainly not. Certainly *not*. Indeed, one must perhaps feel the impelling need to clear his verbosity from much background noise and reduce the high hiss. Maybe one must also check out really well his weird reading of classical texts which he calls to his support and sustenance. (Meister Eckhart, for instance, comes to mind here.) But, at the end of the day, in the long run, Žižek, I think, stands. Yes, he stands. Philosophically, I mean. And one should not use this word lightly. Yes, Žižek stands as a first-rate philosopher.

Urinals or no urinals, Žižek is *not* a cup of cold piss (as the Germans would say). There, I'm relieved.

Roberta Pace studied Philosophy at the Tel Aviv University, Israel.

Must marriage be

There are many good reasons for marrying as there are for not marrying. That is not exactly the point I would like to make, however. One may, after all, do whatever one pleases. Marry or not marry. Or remain single and free, for that matter. My point is: Why does everyone seem to take marriage as something ethically good in itself once chosen as an option?

To be precise, what I'm concerned with here is not whether the contracting parties enter marriage for intentional good effects. Or whether marriage can have good effects on the contracting parties. Or whether the contracting parties have entered marriage willingly and freely. Nor whether marriage is socially good. (Much less whether it is morally good.) What I'm concerned with here is the *intrinsic value* of marriage; whether, in other words, the marriage contractual *fact* is, in itself, good.

Let us say that A and B are two persons (of whatever sex) who marry each other (in whatever manner). What implications does the *nature* of that fact have on their relationship to one another? How does it change it? And further, what alterations does the fact cause to A's and B's quality as individuals?

To start with, I would like to disassociate what I have to say from various other serious criticisms of marriage. Not that I necessarily disagree with some of their arguments. But, for the time being, here I'm not interested in their point of view. For instance, those (starting with Plato and ending with Naomi Gerstel and Natalia Sarkisian) who see marriage as a pernicious competitor of society; those, perhaps feminists (from Sarah Fielding to Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft), who see marriage as a form of legal prostitution; others (like Clare Chambers, Shela Cronan, Kate Milett, Germaine Greer and Marilyn French) who see marriage as a symbol of male supremacy; others (mostly many mainstream Catholic writers), who see marriage as a means of keeping concubinage, cohabitation and promiscuity at bay; and yet others who see marriage as unsuitable for temporary, same-sex, inter-faith and inter-race arrangements.

Many of these put forth very interesting (and often valid) arguments. However, as I said, they are not our main concern here. What *is* our concern here is the very nature of the marriage contract and what it legally claims to uphold.

One important point we have to make here is that marriage is not *any* type of contract. In this sense marriage is an anomalous one. Put in simple terms, in common law legal systems a contract is an agreement between two or more parties who voluntarily intend to create one or more legal obligations between them. Usually (but not only), contacts are made for commercial purposes in matters of

construction, for example, purchases, licenses, employment, insurance policies, transfer of ownership, professional services, merchandise supply, etc.

None of these, in all their variety, contain the essential element of the marriage contract. And I'm not refering here to the romantic aspect of marriage. Certainly, most commercial contracts mercifully do not include any issue of love, not even fondness, between the parties. However, neither does marriage (*qua* contract) have to, and some marriage contracts definitely won't. (In some cultures this is not even considered as a requisite.)

What is fundamentally different between all of the

right?

By Dr Mark Montebello

aforementioned types of contracts in all common law legal systems and the marriage contract in whatever statutory setting it is engaged is that marriage confers legal rights to one party over *the person* of the other. No other contract, of whatever type, does this, since the person of any of the parties remains untouched by the legal prerogatives. But not in marriage. This specific atypical contract grants certain privileges and entitlements to parties wherewith the *person* of one party becomes the legal *possession* of the other. Even if expressed nonchalantly, the 'my' in expressions like '*my* wife', '*my* husband', '*my* (wedded) partner', is not merely figurative or symbolic; it is literally a statement of ownership, as if to say 'this is my legal possession; I own her/him', very much as we would say 'this is my car' or 'this is my house'.

Now, in ethical terms, the main question we'll have to ask is: Is this good? Is possessing, owning, a person right?

For an instant, before we proceed, let us consider briefly the enormous psychological effect such a sense of ownership induces in a contracting individual. Though this is, properly speaking, beside the point, it is worth persuing cursorily. The

relationship scenario between A and B (as we called the parties above) changes completely and dramatically the moment the marital vows are exchanged between them. If before that point (which is not always the case), they based their

affiliation with each other on grounds of mutual respect, love and perhaps admiration, all of this becomes *surplus* once the entitlement of ownership is established. Psychologically they very often find themselves crossing the thin line from possession to possessiveness without even noticing it. Their legal right induces them to do so from its very nature. It altogether changes how they view their wedded partner. In the process, it changes the very *quality* of their individuality from one bearing rights and privileges vis-à-vis oneself to one assuming rights and privileges as an other-person-owner.

Back to our key ethical question, whether the *intrinsic value* of marriage (as a bestower and guarantor of ownership over another individual's person) is good, we must consider the more basic question of whether is it right to have person A legally owning person B, and vice versa. Strange as this might seem (for it smacks of some kind of slavery), in bioethics some scholars (like Jessica Berg) argue that the recognition of property interests does not preclude the recognition of personhood interests. In this sense, for example, the Property Theory (with all its accumulated scholarship) can justifiably be applied to the legal status of embryos, foetuses and children, who can be considered to be both persons *and* property. The theory can certainly be also applied to the legal status of partners within a marriage (with the added proviso that such partners become someone else's property by their own legal consent). But is all this ethical? Can persons be property? Advocates of extensive procreative choice during pregnancy, for instance, would answer yes, and accept it as ethical. Though their opponents would predictably answer no, and consider it unethical, they almost certainly would accede that it *is* ethical in the case of marriage, at least within the boundaries of propriety.

The whole question hinges on whether personhood and 'propertyhood' are compatible. If they are, than marriage is, in itself (*qua* ownership), good, especially when considering that 'propertyhood' has been legally consented to freely and willingly. If they are not, than it is ethically wrong, even if legally consented to freely and willingly.

Ultimately, does personhood remain *legally* intact when 'propertyhood' enters the scene? It seems that, in non-legal aspects, it might. But not otherwise, for legally either an individual is a person or else (*aut aut*) a property of someone else. In other words, an individual is either legally free (and thus a person) or legally unfree (and the property of someone else; an 'unperson'). Then, if this line of reasoning is accepted, marriage, it seems, is wrong and unethical.
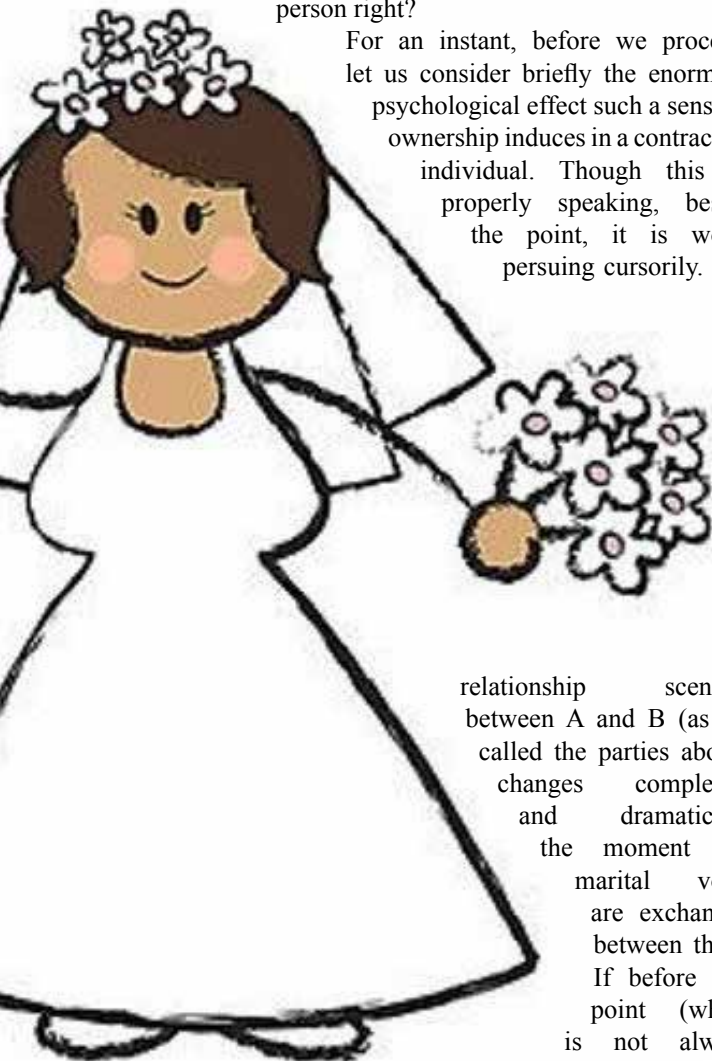
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The mobilization against the building of a new university at Zonqor is fundamentally encouraging. Apart from the justified plea against further destruction of the countryside, any protest which reminds the Muscat government that not everyone is awestruck by its illusions of omnipotence cannot but be positively assessed. Obviously, attempts to hijack the initiative by the PN, the presence of certain Labour MPs who are motivated by the front bench they lost rather than anything else and the participation of members of a religious order which has suddenly become very vocal and concrete on local issues which it previously ignored or addressed only by vague platitudes, managed to somehow spoil the atmosphere. Yet, the a-priori refusal by the administration to consider any site apart from Zonqor as well as the dubious labeling of the project as a 'University for the South' (I never thought of Tal-Qroqq as a University for the North) needed to be resisted. And thankfully it was.

Still, as with most environment-related initiatives, the campaign is by and large dominated by a bourgeois ethos which ultimately buttresses the very establishment that created the problem. Attempts were made to involve local farmers. Still, the impression I have is that many who took part in the initiatives were middle-class. Regarding people in the lower echelons of society, excluding those who parrot their party line, the impression I have is that they are by and large uninterested even if they and their children will suffer mostly from further depletion of the countryside. The fault regarding such lack of response may not be entirely theirs. Many who have the environment at heart come from the middle classes, retain the ethos and outlook

(as well as the self-righteousness and protagonism) of this class, and, despite some wannabe hippies, manage to appeal and are able to dialogue and communicate primarily with people from their own socio-cultural background. The most militant about them might splutter rhetoric about fighting the establishment and even emancipation of the wretched of the earth. Yet, the poor and proletariat most seem comfortable with are the romantic ones found in literature. Real working class people with their prejudices and limits tend to put off most militants.

The enviro
.... a clas

No wonder then, that environment-related issues are formulated in abstract and non-concrete terms. Take the basic orientation of the construction debate. This is primarily presented by most (exceptions obviously exist) in terms of a fundamentally moralistic duality: to build – bad; not to build - good. This is taken as a kind of axiom from which sterile injunctions and mantras (*l-Ambjent tagħna* lkoll and that kind of stuff) follow. Very few attempt to locate the debate within a wider context where, if one looks at our history, land and construction have been viewed by many (particularly in the lowest echelons of society) as the only investment that will not lose value and that is likely to yield

substantial returns at some time in the future. Moreover, since the 90's, with the gradual ebbing of manufacturing (which had come into being in the late fifties and following independence, and reached its zenith in the 70's and early 80's) construction has become the labour-intensive

By Michael Grech

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ss act is urgently required

industry *par excellence*. Rightly or wrongly, the belief is widespread amongst all sectors of society, including the poorest ones, that real estate generates wealth and prosperity, and hence the more we build, the more prosperity and wealth will be generated. Few in the environment lobby are willing to take the time and trouble to establish communication lines with those who take this for granted and have little time or leisure to buy tree-hugging rhetoric.,

Were a serious attempt to be made at concretely debunking the myth that construction generates wealth and everyone benefits from this, a good exercise would be pointing to the contradictions that riddle the dominant discourse in relation to construction and the benefits it supposedly accrues. Take a case in point related to construction in general rather than the Zonqor sage. It was recently (1/6/2015) announced that the price of property, particularly apartments went drastically up (more than 10%). I expected environmentalists to fall over each other in highlighting the glaring contradiction between an ever increasing supply of dwellings, a constant demand,

and the increase in the price of property; a situation that had the fables we hear about the virtues of free market any semblance to reality, should have entailed the opposite. Yet, few seemed to notice this. Nor do many environmentalists consider that, despite the increase in the number of dwellings, the size and quality of houses that working people afford is constantly deteriorating. This is coupled to the other absurd fact that many will become owners of their house when they will have to start seriously thinking about moving to another sort of home. Pointing to these and other aspects would show that for the majority the construction industry is a Leviathan that exists for the sake of the few rather than a benign cow which everyone can milk.

If the environmental lobby manages to successfully communicate to those who are the ultimate victims of the whole set-up that the rampant construction going on is generating exploitation and dependence rather than well-being, getting across the moral mantras will become easier and more politically fertile.

Respond to this article by writing to editor@philosophysharing.org

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I remember once watching an episode of the sci-fi American series *Star Trek*, with the title 'A Taste of Armageddon' (Season 1, Episode 23). This episode was originally aired on the 2nd of August 1969, a time when the USA was (together with Japan) already an Information Society (Karvalics, *The Birth of the Information Society in the United States*, 2007).

In this episode of *Star Trek*, the crew of the USS Enterprise was involved in a diplomatic mission on a remote planet. After Captain Kirk and Spock beamed down to the planet, they discovered that its inhabitants had been at war for over 500 years with a neighbouring planet. After learning this, they were astonished to find no evidence of infrastructural damage

and so on further investigation they discovered that the 'war' was a computer simulation, albeit with real deadly effects. In fact, a specialised computer utilised vast demographical and geographical information from both planets to calculate the effects of simulated attacks on both planets. At the end of each simulated attack, the computer used to generate a report listing the names of all (real) citizens which were 'hit' during the simulated attack. Once these lists were generated, the role of the governing bodies on each planet was that of informing the victims, who in turn had to enter death chambers in order to be annihilated. Apparently, the main reason behind this arrangement was that of conducting a hyper-real war without damaging the physical infrastructure.

At the time of watching this episode (sometime during the early 1990s) I was just a small child who was mostly interested in science fiction, rather than the philosophical connotations of such stories. As a matter of fact, at that time I had thought that the idea behind this computerised warfare was utterly stupid. Nevertheless, once I started to indulge in my philosophical musings (while keeping a keen interest in science fiction and technology) I immediately realised that the script authors of *Star Trek*, had already in the late 1960s foreseen the artefacts of an advanced futuristic society which could utilise technology in combination with information in an effective manner.

Of course the plot of the *Star Trek* episode just depicted remains just that, a plot for a sci-fi television series (even though our advanced information societies have the technological prowess to put into practice that kind of plot)! What is nowadays indeed being put into practice is what is known as Information Warfare which is defined by Mariarosaria Taddeo as follows:

> "Information Warfare is the use of ICTs within an offensive or defensive military strategy endorsed by a state and aiming at the immediate disruption or control of the enemy's resources, and which is waged within the informational environment, with agents and targets ranging both on the physical and non-physical domains and whose level of violence may vary upon circumstances." (Taddeo, *Information Warfare*, 2011)

The above definition can be illustrated through a number of real world examples, but without any doubt the most infamous one for 2015 has so far been the case of the hack on the Sony Pictures servers. This particular hack is particularly interesting for our analysis since it involves a stark example of information warfare which involved two governments (USA and North Korea) and also a multinational corporation (Sony). In this article, I will not be delving into the details of the hack (the interested reader just needs to go online and search for 'Sony Pictures Entertainment hack' in order to get in-depth information) but nevertheless it is important that one is aware that through this hack, tons of information pertaining to Sony Pictures, its employees (and their families) and the company's business (including copies of unreleased films) was stolen by a group calling itself the 'Guardians of Peace'. Now it must be noted that since the dawn of the cyber era, a lot of hacking groups have become prominent for one reason or another. As a matter of fact we can definitely attest that these groups have created a sort of online subculture which has mostly attracted computer gurus whose intention is mostly restricted to showing their technical capabilities. Nonetheless, since these groups are almost always operated in an anonymous way (their members hide behind pseudonyms), it is relatively easy for others with more dangerous intentions to create 'hacking groups' and hide behind them. In the case of the Sony Pictures hack, the United States government has immediately alleged that the real personas behind this cyber attack were no one else other than state officials of one of their arch-enemies: North Korea. North Korea has through the whole saga always denied any involvement but the fact that the perpetrators had demanded the cancellation of the release of 'The Interview' (a comedy making fun of the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un) certainly did not support the
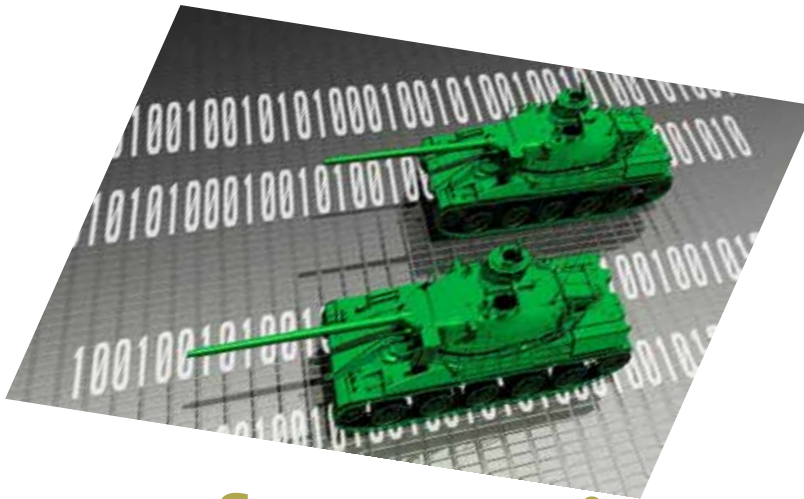
Information warfare in the information society

By Godwin Darmanin

supposed innocence of the North Korean government.

As previously stated, this case of information warfare did not just involve Sony Pictures and North Korea, but also the United States. As a matter of fact, it was President Obama himself who very quickly and decisively accused North Korea and nobody else. However, what Obama failed to mention was that according to *The New York Times* (Sanger and Fackler, 'N.S.A. Breached North Korean Networks Before Sony Attack', 2015) the N.S.A. (the government owned National Security Agency) had also previously hacked into North Korean servers way back in 2010, by making use of Chinese networks! This alleged attack was done because the US had received reports from its South Korean allies, that the North Korean government was growing its cyber intelligence unit and also in order to pilfer government information which could be used to attack other nations.

Of course, no one should be really surprised to learn about the above news. After all, the practice of obtaining information through some sort of spying (in the past done through more traditional techniques) has always been a common practice between nations with different political ideologies. What is indeed surprising is the fact that it was also established (and this was recently acknowledged by President

Obama) that the USA also spies on its allies (such as France and Germany). The *Wall Street Journal* states that the United States spies on its allies mostly to gather economic/business information (Robbins and Cooper, 'Why Is the U.S. Spying on Its Allies?', 1997). Nonetheless, both the French and the Germans expressed their dismay when this news was released in the public domain. One must also not forget that the US government had already been embarrassed by the revelations of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden (a former CIA employee who is now operating from Russia after first receiving temporary asylum and then receiving a three-year residency permit through which in the future he will be able to obtain Russian citizenship).

I think that at this stage we have reached the point where we can attempt to briefly analyse Information Warfare through the philosophy of the Information Society. In this regard, Arquilla and Borer state the following:

> "Information warfare is one of the most compelling examples of the effects of the information revolution on current society. The design of data banks and software, the ability to blindside an opponent's informational infrastructures, and ensure the superiority of informational infrastructures of a state, are as important as the superiority of weaponry and military force. This is the reason why, in the last two decades, several states have devoted huge effort and resources in order to improve their informational infrastructures and to educate experts in the relevant fields. ICTs prove to be effective and advantageous war technologies, as they are efficient and relatively cheap compared to the general costs of traditional warfare." (Arquilla & Borer, *Information strategy and Warfare*, 2007)

Hence, from the above we can infer a number of salient points. First and foremost is the fact that information warfare, despite not having the devastating effects on the physical infrastructure of any country (as it is the case with traditional forms of warfare), is indeed very effective mainly to gather intelligence and to embarrass governments and private companies in the international arena. Information Warfare is also an effective way for the perpetrator to demonstrate to everyone that he has both the technological means and knowhow to attack powerful nations and corporations and possibly bring them on their knees (imagine if for instance someone manages to permanently delete all accounts held at commercial banks or disrupts the transfer of commercial information). Moreover, information warfare is relatively cheaper (at least when compared to building weapons and missiles) and finally we also deduce that behind the nice talk of various governments that formal education in ICT leads to highly paid jobs and a better economy, other more sinister motives do also exist!

I will conclude by affirming that even though governments are not indulging in simulated wars (perhaps Jean Baudrillard would have disagreed on this) like it was portrayed in the 1969 episode of *Star Trek*, it is certainly the case that the (governments) of the advanced information societies, are utilising information warfare to achieve tangible results in their quest to supersede their opponents. Likewise, information warfare is also being used by the so called rogue states and also by groups of individuals to attain their various goals, and as technology continues to improve and the world becomes more interconnected, both possibilities and also the effects will in the coming years be reaching higher levels.

Godwin Darmanin is a Philosophy graduate of the Sofia University St Kliment Ohridsky, Bulgaria.

IF GOD EXISTS, HE IS:

OMNIPOTENT — AND CAN STOP ALL EVIL

OMNISCIENT — AND KNOWS HOW TO DO IT

MORALLY PERFECT — AND DESIRES TO END EVIL

BUT EVIL EXISTS, SO EITHER GOD DOESN'T EXIST, OR HE IS NOT ALL THREE OF THESE.

The incompatible God & evil

By Malcolm Genovese

The argument expressed in the cartoon shown here is a very common one, and age-old. It must have existed since reason (logic), the concept of a god (omnipotent, omniscient, good, etc.), and the experience and observation of evil and suffering came together to lock horns. The bottom line is always similar: the existence of God and the existence of evil are incompatible, if there is a God there should be no evil in the world, evil is proof of the non-existence of God, and the like.
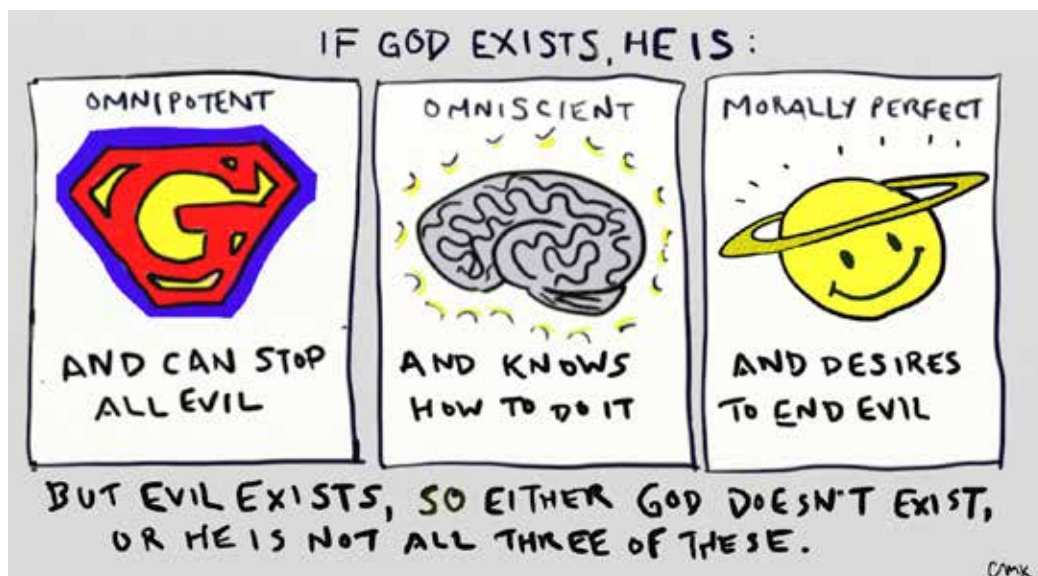
But are such arguments logical? Are the conclusions reasonable? Do they hold water?

Since Epicurus in the second century A.D. (who seems to have been the first to formulate the argument), countless philosophers have systematically grappled with the same issue apparently without, however, calming the waters. Of course, all religious denominations have proffered their own tailor-made solutions to the fix. Nevertheless, the all too popular (and also not so popular — *vide* Hume and Voltaire) quandary persists with the whole authoritative weight of ostensible reasonability and consistency.

Evil in this context is almost invariably identified to inexplicable suffering. Why doesn't this all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God bring a stop to it? He must be either unable or unwilling to do so. Or cruel. Or has enough (sound) reasons of his own (long-term motives, respect for human free will, etc.) to be frankly dismissed as stark mad. *Or …* there exists no God at all.

These are some of the most notable answers to this issue. Notwithstanding, I would like to propose two more. First that most suffering is directly or indirectly human-made. Second that much suffering is presumed. Both have nothing to do with the existence of God.

The first claim. Most suffering is human-made because humans have, since the dawn of agriculture and settlement some 12,000 years ago, so drastically altered the world that they have created more problems for themselves than they could ever solve. Much, much more problems. To mention a flagrant few: degradation of air, water, land and all life forms; pollution; inferior diet and radical diminishment of food variation; over population and species extinction; climate change and global warming; economic exploitation; unpredictable and destructive weather; economic, financial and social extremism; obesity, drug abuse, madness, disease epidemics and induced physical and psychological afflictions; fragmented, trivialised and stressed societies. The list can go on.

All of these generate a chain reaction of much and much atrocious sufferings to millions upon millions of people around the globe on a daily basis. Assuming there is a God, does it make sense to argue that God *should* have prevented them? Or that the fact that they exist imply anything concerning God's omnipotence, omniscience or goodness? Or that God does not exist at all? Not in the least. Perhaps the argument
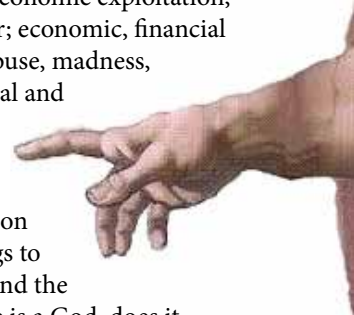
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for human free-will is particularly relevant here. Simply put, we are free to cause suffering to ourselves, and we do. We can't expect to have the cake and eat it. Sartre was right to uphold our grave responsibility in the matter. But Leibniz was wrong to claim that *this* is the best of all possible worlds that God could have created, for *this* is not the world God created (and Voltaire was thus right). It is *now* the world we brought about after 12,000 years of thoughtless meddling. Assuming there is a God, this human-made suffering does not demonstrate that God is not omnipotent, omniscient or good but that we human beings are weak, ignorant and dreadful … *plus* shameless.

My second claim, that much of our suffering is presumed, concerns our concept of evil. Very often we consider something to be evil because it somehow causes us to suffer. Anything that impinges upon our needs, in whatever way possible, is considered to be bad and evil. However, the greater part of our needs are in fact artificial. And thus so is the evil that ensues from their frustration. God, certainly, is altogether unrelated to the (very often capricious) fabrication of our artificial needs. Such suffering, then, again, says nothing at all about God's omnipotence, omniscience or goodness. Or, to boot, about God's existence.

Back to the cartoon, the whole point we may make here is that the fact that evil exists *does not* imply that either God doesn't exist or that God is not all three of the its descriptions. As much as it is widespread and well-liked, the argument is logically erroneous and utterly misleading.

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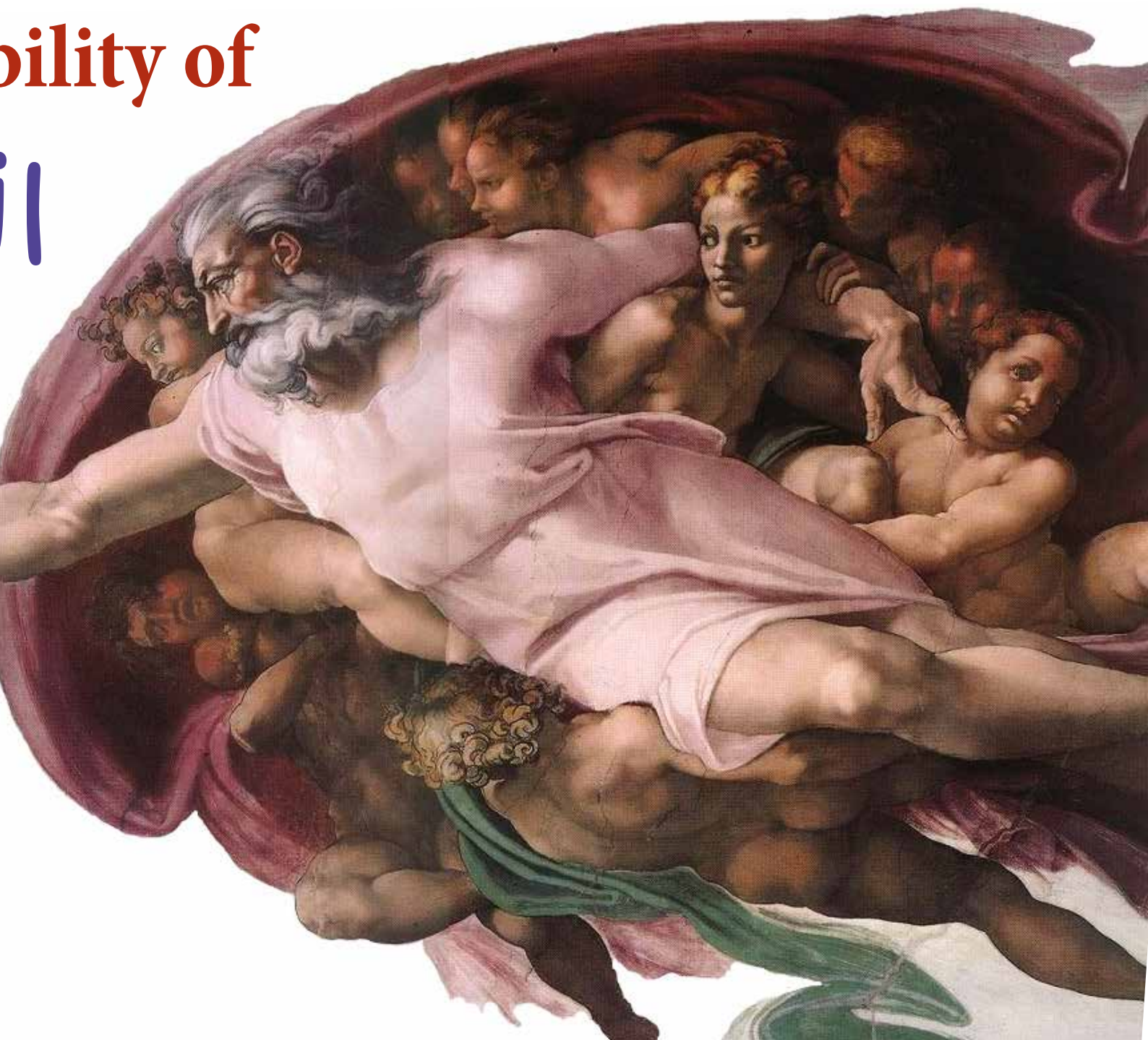
The Risks of Parody

Playing Politics with Derrida and Butler

By Kurt Borg

What do we mean by 'deconstruction'? The word itself may seem to imply something negative, something pessimistic, something that undoes something precious. When dealing with politics – an activity which is deemed serious and urgent – it seems that there is no room for hesitance, uncertainty and inconsistencies. Jacques Derrida's work has often been criticised along these lines; his work, it is claimed, mocks, makes fun of things, playfully transforms and transgresses traditional frameworks of thought and action for the sake of instability. The argument goes that Derrida's work does not instil an attitude of seriousness and in no way helps us to identify ways of improving ourselves and the world. As Richard Bernstein put it, "There are those who think that he is a clever intellectual fraud, a 'prophet' of nihilism, a whimsical destroyer of any 'canons' of rationality, a self-indulgent scribbler who delights in irresponsible word play, punning, parody, and even self-parody" ('Serious Play: The Ethical-Political Horizon of Jacques Derrida,' *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 1987, 93).

Contrary to this characterisation, I will argue that Derrida's philosophical approach entails a sensibility that can inform and enrich politics. This sensibility is inherited by Judith Butler, who relies upon, while extending, Derrida's approach in her work on gender and beyond. Although in this paper I will focus on the political aspects, I would not hesitate to characterise the sensibility that governs this political approach as an ethical one. Both Derrida and Butler agree that the relation between ethics and politics is an intricate one. The focus on the relation between the self and others highlights how ethics cannot but overflow into a politics, and that the political – insofar as its effects concern individuals or spaces where

individuals come to be – implies an ethical bearing, even if neglected. Butler articulates this point succinctly when she writes that "the ethical demand gives rise to the political account, and that ethics undermines its own credibility when it does not become critique" (*Giving an Account of Oneself*, 2005, 124).

As I will try to show, the ethical and political dimensions of Derrida's and Butler's works are essential. It is not only the case that they have ideas about ethics and politics. Such an approach continues to fuel claims that there was an ethical and political 'turn' in deconstruction, or a 'turn to ethics' in Butler, as if ethics came as an afterthought in their works. Both Derrida and Butler reject such 'turnings'. Derrida writes that, contrary to what is often claimed, there is no political turn in deconstruction in the 1980s or 1990s because "the thinking of the political has always been a thinking of *différance* and the thinking of *différance* always a thinking of the political" (*Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, 2005, 39). It is claimed that Butler's so-called 'turn to ethics' occurred post-9/11, when her work began focusing more on the precariousness and vulnerability of life. However, in a contribution to a 2000 volume entitled *The Turn to Ethics* – a book which sought to analyse this alleged turn to ethics in literary studies, philosophy, and political theory – Butler writes: "I do not have much to say about why there is a return to ethics, if there is one, in recent years, except to say that I have for the most part resisted this return [...]. I've worried that the return to ethics has constituted an escape from politics, and I've also worried that it has meant a certain heightening of moralism" ('Ethical Ambivalence,' in M. Garber, B. Hanssen and R. L. Walkowitz, eds., The Turn to Ethics, 15)

Instead of a specific turn to ethics or politics, I think that it is more useful to conceive of their approach itself as embodying an ethics and a politics. In other words, regarding Derrida, it makes sense to follow his claim that the political was a concern of deconstruction from the very start; as Bernstein puts it, "there is a way of reading Derrida's texts so that we can see his ethical-political horizon pervading and influencing virtually everything he has written" (Bernstein, 94). This is echoed in Simon Critchley's important book, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992), where he argues that "an ethical moment is essential to deconstructive reading and that ethics is the goal, or horizon, towards which Derrida's work tends" (1999, 1-2). Similar analyses are emerging that read the ethical impulse beneath Butler's whole corpus, not just her writings in the last ten years or so.

An Anxiety: Decentring a Structure

To begin unpacking Derrida's deconstructive approach to philosophy, I would like to explore a discomforting feeling of anxiety that haunts his writings and those who read them. Bernstein writes that "[a]t the very least Derrida (or his texts) is a gadfly who annoys, stings, and provokes" (Bernstein, 93). His writings are powerful and disconcerting because of

his "uncanny (*unheimlich*) ability to *show* us that at the heart of what we take to be familiar, native, at home – where we think we can find our center – lurks […] what is unfamiliar, strange, and uncanny." (Bernstein, 95) A central (!) theme in Derrida's writings is that of decentring – of gnawing into aspects of thought that pose as stable and fixed foundations offering grounding and certainty to a body of knowledge which stands fast above it. Through deconstruction, one critically questions the familiar in an attempt to highlight that which goes by unnoticed, or that which is willingly repressed and excluded. Moreover, deconstruction appeals to the reliance on exclusionary mechanisms that uphold and maintain the comfort of the familiar. Bernstein argues that through deconstruction "Derrida seeks to show us that we never quite are or can be at home in the world. We are always threatened by the uncanniness of what is canny; we are always in exile – even from ourselves. We may long and dream of being at home in our world, to find a 'proper' center, but we never achieve this form of presence or self-presence" (Bernstein, 100). Bernstein picks up on Derrida's choice of metaphors and points out that the metaphor of 'exile' is frequently found across Derrida's writings. This, he says, is not accidental, and uses this to sustain his argument about the ethical-political horizon in Derrida's corpus. There is also, Bernstein wonders, a biographical motivation behind Derrida's use of the metaphor of exile, given his experience as an Algerian Jew living in France and working on and at the margins of philosophy.

To explore further the notion of decentring in Derrida's works, I will consider 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (in *Writing and Difference*, 1967, 2005). In this early essay Derrida writes that "structure [...] has always been neutralized [...] by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance and organize the structure [...] but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure" ('Structure, Sign, and Play', 351-352). For Derrida, the history of metaphysics consists in a series of substitutions of what is to be considered as a center, presented in such a way as to hide the appearance of the structurality of structure (i.e., that it is in fact a structure) and to conceive of structure as full presence beyond play: "*eidos*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth" ('Structure, Sign, and Play', 353) He also refers to attempts at exposing the structurality of the structure, such as Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, Freud's critique of self-presence and Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics ('Structure, Sign, and Play', 354), but claims that these attempts still remain trapped within and reliant upon the framework of metaphysics of presence. A motivating factor of deconstruction is to target conceptual oppositions in the history of philosophy which enable the metaphysics of presence (inside/outside, same/other, identity/difference) in order to highlight the violence and subordination that sustain these hierarchies. Once identified, the 'privileged' term is shown to presuppose traits of the subordinate term. One of the most popular examples of this gesture is Derrida's critique of

The metaphor of 'exile' is frequently found across Derrida's writings.

language, where the privileged speech (associated with spontaneity) is shown to share aspects of the subordinated writing (associated with repeatability), dissolving the initial familiar distinction between speech and writing by showing that the possibility of repetition – iterability – is a condition of possibility for all language.

Butler Echoing Derrida: Drag Troubling Gender

Butler applies these Derridean reflections to her analysis of gender. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) she critically examines the concept of gender that relies upon an internal essence that constitutes gender and that determines what counts as an intelligible sex. Butler argues that this approach sets the boundaries around the conceptualisations of identities that can count and be valued. Echoing Foucault, she maintains that such an approach establishes disciplinary and normalising strategies that clearly delineate, regulate and police the acceptable from the prohibited, the normal from the pathological. Against this conception of gender identity, Butler puts forward the idea of gender performativity. In her words: "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (*Gender Trouble*, 191) Thus, the spatial metaphor of gender identity as being a sort of *grounding* is replaced by an emphasis on the temporal dimension which creates the appearance of a seamless identity while hiding the contingent groundlessness of gender. This contingency opens up gender to transformation, if not dissolution. As she writes: "The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction" (*Gender Trouble*, 192).

Butler here echoes Derrida's account of iterability, whereby although repeatability is key to every sign, repetitions do not merely create more of the same. Rather, each repetition can be seen as introducing something different to the equation, creating new possibilities for transformation. Here lies the productive dimension of performativity. Butler follows Derrida's critique of Austin and maintains that the

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performative produces that which it names, that is, the subject is not an autonomous agent who authors actions intentionally. The subject, however, is not unilaterally determined through a single act of constitution, but is brought into being through re-citation and repetition.

This has given rise to two remarkably opposite interpretations of Butler. Some commentators have read this to imply a subjectivity that is completely determined through discourses and power relations which allows no possibility for resistance (an old Foucaultian story). Others, however, have read Butler's analysis as implying a voluntarism of sorts, that is, that everyone is free to choose and change one's gender as s/he pleases. Against the first interpretation, I would argue that no matter how far or deep determination and construction go, there evidently always is *surplus*. No matter how clearly demarcated and policed the boundaries of gender are, these categories are not enough to comfortably capture the plurality of possibilities beneath stable gender identities or compulsory heterosexuality. Regarding the second point – that Butler is seen as proposing the idea that one can choose and change one's gender freely – it is useful to dwell further on what fuels such an interpretation and what makes this interpretation a problematic one. This interpretation is fuelled by Butler's claim that "[*i*]*n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*" (*Gender Trouble*, 187) She refers to practices such as drag and cross-dressing, and argues that such practices have a critical and subversive role since they show how gender at large is a practice, an imitation, a performance; that, therefore, there is no such thing as an original gender which is imitated or copied in, say, drag or gay subjects. Through her theorising of drag as potentially subversive, Butler is shedding light on the power (sometimes violent) of norms and discourses to establish what counts as true and real: "As a young person, I suffered for a long time, and I suspect many people have, from being told, explicitly or implicitly, that what I 'am' is a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real. Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic; the norm that determines the real implies that 'being' lesbian is always a kind of miming" ('Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in H. Abelove *et al.*, eds., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, 1993, 307-20, 312).

Through this analysis, Butler contests the metaphysics of substance which stimulates a conception of male and female gender identity as the original, the proper and the real. The performative account of gender identity denaturalises gender, highlighting the unnecessary policing of gender and sexuality. As speech act theory shows us, a speech act or a performative can be successful or not. Gender performance too is measured by degrees of success. Its failure, however, has great stakes: social or actual death. Some examples (all discussed by Butler): Consider *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), a film depicting the real-life story of Brandon Teena, a trans man (assigned female sex at birth but whose gender identity was that of a man) who is beaten, raped and murdered by his male acquaintances after they discover he is transgender. Consider Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth century French hermaphrodite (intersex) whose memoirs Foucault published in 1978. Herculine was assigned the sex of female at birth but in her early twenties, after a series of 'revelations', was legally compelled to change her sex to

male, resulting in complications and imposed expectations on her social life, love life and self-understanding. In 1868, Herculine – now Abel – was found dead in his home with his memoirs at his bedside, after committing suicide by inhaling gas from his stove. Foucault considered Herculine as the victim of a new passion for the truth of sexual identity, highlighting the violence and exclusion inherent in the will to knowledge which poses as innocent and neutral. Consider Charles Howard's story, as narrated by Butler:

> I tell this story, when I'm trying to explain gender violence to people, about a guy in Maine who, I guess he was around eighteen years old [Charlie Howard was twenty-three years old when he was killed], and he walked with a very distinct swish, hips going one way or another, a very feminine walk [...] And he was teased by his classmates on the way to school and he got used to it and he just walked, and I think he even walked a little more outrageously the more he was teased. But one day he was walking to school and he was attacked by three of his classmates and [despite his pleas that he could not swim] he was thrown over a bridge and he was killed. And the question that community had to deal with [...] was how could it have been that somebody's gait, that somebody's way of walking, could engender the desire to kill that person? [...] And I think, if that young man could show that gender was that variable, it really raised the question for everybody else – and especially for those that attacked him – of whether their own genders were also perhaps not quite as stable or quite as fixed as they thought. [...] I mean, a walk can be a dangerous thing. If you go for a walk, you're also vulnerable socially. [...] You assert your rights of mobility and you take a certain *risk* in public space. (*Examined Life: Excursions with Contemporary Thinkers*, 204-205, emphasis added)

Parody and Subversion: Worth the risk?

Parody and subversion, therefore, are risky affairs. I think that the notion of risk guides Butler's politics and is also implied in Derrida's. Amongst others, Butler writes about the risk of becoming undone, the risk of not being secured within the current regimes of truth and order, the risk of being dehumanised, the risk of becoming socially unintelligible, the risk of being injured and harmed. There is also, however, the risk of something being denaturalised or subject to critique, when something can no longer be taken for granted. For Butler, this latter risk is what makes the practice of drag politically subversive, at least potentially. Critics have misconstrued Butler's point as implying a simplistic approach promoting parody and drag as the key to changing the world for the better. As she says, "There are those who think that the text has belittled politics and reduced politics to parody; some claim that drag becomes a model for resistance or for political intervention and participation more generally" (*Undoing Gender*, 2004, 213). Butler argues that drag can be subversive in so far as it shows gender to be imitative, thereby revealing the hegemony that gender produces and challenges the claim of naturalness, reality and originality of heterosexuality.

But, importantly, Butler argues that not all drag is necessarily subversive and has positive political implications. There is a risk that it may not be so. Clarifying possible misinterpretations of her argument in Gender Trouble, Butler analyses Paris is Burning, a 1990 documentary on the ball culture and vogue dancing in New York and the African-American and Latino gay and transgender communities in the 1980s who organised contests where they dress up, act

and walk (as in a catwalk) in order to be judged on the criteria of how well they can perform their role and how 'real' their drag is. Butler argues that this documentary highlights how "drag is not unproblematically subversive" (*Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, 1993, 176) It can be subversive insofar as it exposes the necessary performance implied in genders. However, as can also be seen in the documentary, drag also tends to augment and re-idealise heterosexual norms without critically questioning them. Moreover, although such contestations can open gender to further fluidity and flexibility, they are not free from violent and hateful responses. For instance, consider the case of Venus Xtravaganza, a trans woman performer, sex worker and aspiring model. In Paris is Burning, one can follow her case, her desire to save money for sex reassignment surgery and to 'pass' as a woman. However, the failure to pass completely made her susceptible to violence from her clients who discovered what she called "her little secret". This sometimes led her to having to run away through windows to avoid customers who felt betrayed and enraged for having been seduced by what they perceived to be a man. She did not manage to run away on 21 December 1988, though, when she was killed by strangling – presumably by a client, who has never been found – and her body was found by a stranger under a bed in a New York hotel room four days after her death, that is, on Christmas day.

Conclusion: Radical Resignification, or Critical Subversion

The trajectory of this essay is to argue that the works of Derrida and Butler contain and imply an unpredictability and lack of fixity which become apparent not only in their analysis of the realm of signification but also in the analysis of political theory and practice. The two inseparable realms can be integrated in what can be called a politics of radical resignification, a politics which works on the limits of what bodies, subjects and lives may mean. Such a politics must proceed with caution due to the risk inherent in such a practice, that is, the risk of not necessarily subverting but of reifying and repeating the same hegemonic structure. As Foucault showed, the feeling of liberation and emancipation can, in fact, be nothing more than the ruse of the same power one seeks to oppose. As Butler writes, "How will we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose? Is it, one might rejoin, a matter of 'knowing'? For one is, as it were, in power even as one opposes it, formed by it as one reworks it, and it is this simultaneity that is at once the condition of our partiality, the measure of our

political unknowingness, and also the condition of action itself. The incalculable effects of action are as much a part of their subversive promise as those that we plan in advance" (*Bodies that Matter*, 185). In this way, politics remains – must remain – open. Political decisions and resistance cannot rest on the luxury of certainty. We cannot have a guarantee that the intended outcomes of our decisions are reached. Politics thus necessitates an attitude of courage that seeks to unsettle convictions and to allow basic certitudes to become items of thought and possibly thinkable. One unsettles while becoming unsettled. What unsettles us? Perhaps the appearance, if recognisable, of dehumanised lives; the inherent violence that excludes certain identities in order to uphold current norms and practices; the inherent incompleteness and lack of self-transparency that disable us from giving a coherent account of ourselves; the challenge of having to give up one's comfort in order to open oneself to other possible forms of identity and life; the prospect of never possibly settling in a good conscience that enables one to be sure of one's commitments. Finally, one returns to another position of anxiety with which I characterised Derrida's attitude earlier. Is it possible to sustain such an approach, and is it ultimately worth it? I will end with a reflection by Butler that highlights the urgency that the thinking of the possible has within political theorising:

> One can object and say, ah, but you are trying only to make gender complexity possible. But that does not tell us which forms are good or bad; it does not supply the measure, the gauge, the norm. But there is a normative aspiration here, and it has to do with the ability to live and breathe and move and would no doubt belong somewhere in what is called a philosophy of freedom. The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity. (*Undoing Gender*, 219)

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SHARE book reviews

In-Nisġa tal-Ħsieb **(The Interweave of Thoughts; Vol. III) - Joe Friggieri, 2015, Malta University Books, Malta, 292 pp, ISBN 978-99909-44-64-8.**

Accumulating a body of philosophy books in the Maltese language has been a long-standing desideratum as much as difficult to accomplish. One major reason had been that a Maltese philosophical terminology was lacking. When it came to translations from foreign languages, than, not only is such work time consuming and strenuous, but most Maltese can read other languages. So why bother?

Fortunately, not all subscribe to this viewpoint. Joe Friggieri for one, though perhaps not consistently so. Back in the early seventies, Friggieri, together with Peter Serracino Inglott (apparently egged on by Herbert McCabe), began translating John Langshaw Austin's *Ifs and Cans* for the use at some university seminars. McCabe, then frequently invited to lecture in Malta, held that the Maltese would be more adroit in articulating their philosophical views if expressed in their native tongue. Accordingly, he encouraged the study and writing of philosophy in Maltese, and the fostering of a Maltese philosophical terminology.

This was not the first attempt at such an exploit. Around 1845 Fortunato Panzavecchia (†1850; photo on the right) composed short Latin-Maltese dictionaries related to rhetoric, logic, metaphysics, and physics. In 2001 Mark Montebello also tried his hand in his book *Il-Ktieb tal-Filosofija f'Malta* (*The Sourcebook of Philosophy in Malta*). Both were perhaps brave efforts, even if mostly unappreciated and abortive.

After quite a lapse from his first go at the breach, in 2000

Friggieri came out with the first volume of *In-Nisġa tal-Hsieb*, the first ever history of (Western) Philosophy in Maltese. The second and third volumes followed in 2007 and 2015 respectively. The last volume covers from Germany Idealism after Kant till today. The text of these books are an adaptation of what had originally been a script for programmes on the University of Malta radio in 1995/96.

Of course there are various ways of writing histories of philosophy. Understandably, Friggieri makes his choice. He unadventurously chooses to present one philosopher after another with little or no obvious connection to how and why they were made at all possible by material conditions. Reading such histories, one may take the impression that philosophers are causes rather than effects of their times. Perhaps the greatest merit of Friggieri's work is the language in which it is written. **- C.T.E.**

The Creative Use of Noise **- Peter Serracino Inglott and Charles Camilleri, 2015, Philosophy Sharing Foundation, Malta, 120 pp., ISBN: 978-99957-0-795-8.**

Henry Longfellow's famous statement that "music is the universal language of mankind" (*Outre-Mer*, 1835) is very often cited as testimony to the special relationship between music and language. Some, however, like Igor Stravinsky (*Chronicle of My Life*, 1936), v e h e m e n t l y deny that music expresses *anything* at all, let alone being a language unto itself.

On the contrary, others, like Aaron Copland (*What to Listen for in Music*, 1957), consider music to be even *more* than a language—a sort of meta-language—for, unlike verbal language, music is capable of expressing *both* ideas and sentiments. So much so that musicologists such as Deryck Cooke (*The Language of Music*, 1959) call music "the language of emotions".

Whatever the case, most music theoreticians at least agree that music produces in us emotions. But this, of course, is hardly an indication that music is a language. Neither does
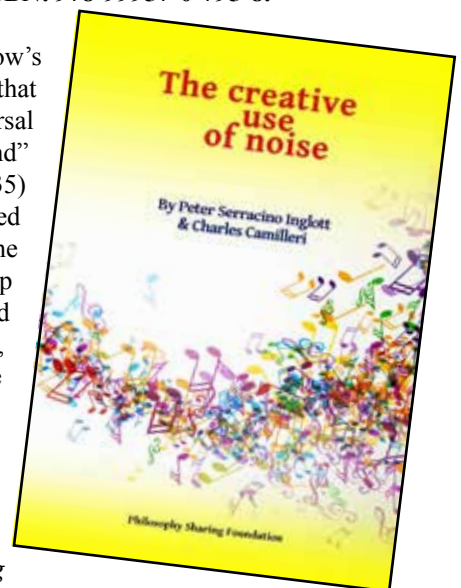
it differentiate it from mere noise. For even noise generates emotions in us, and also, like music, gives us information and stimulus. In *The Creative Use of Noise* it is this latter question—the elements distinguishing music from noise—which concern philosopher Peter Serracino Inglott and composer Charles Camilleri. However, their main emphasis is, more specifically, on what makes noise in any way meaningful. In this sense they explore what stands as music, what common factors exist between music and language, and, finally, how noise becomes, like language, meaningful, and, particularly, musically evocative.

It has long been acknowledged that the entire main philosophical corpus of Peter Serracino Inglott was made up of two publications, namely *Beginning Philosophy* (1987) and *Peopled Silence* (1995). Well, here, at least, is another to be added to this short list, the first of his posthumous publications so far. Clearly enough, though the book is co-authored, Camilleri appears as a 'supporting actor'. For the text is from beginning to end, both in form and content, thoroughly Serracino Inglott at his best. It is certainly worth a read.

Presumably, by time other first-rate unpublished writings by Serracino Inglott shall be revealed. **- M.F.M.**

Between Truth and Freedom - **Kenneth Wain, 2014, Routledge, UK, 188 pp., ISBN: 041-57043-75.**

One might expect a book about Rousseau's educational ideas to focus primarily on Emile. Kenneth Wain's Between Truth and Freedom – Rousseau and our contemporary political and educational culture however, aptly considers the entire corpus of the Genevan's works. Education is not understood by Rousseau as involving merely pedagogic principles and practices, but is considered to involve an engagement with nature, the formation of one's character as well as how one relates to others in the family and in socio-political spheres. Wain's discussion highlights the tensions in Rousseau's thought between educational and political thoughts that on the one hand champion freedom, authenticity and the primacy of the voice of conscience, while on the other requiring the manipulation, paternalism, the subjection of one's will to that of others and the curtailment of freedom.

Wain however, does not limit himself to a critical discussion of Rousseau's work, but draws insights from his work that are pertinent to contemporary issues and realities. He also comparatively engages with a number of later and contemporary philosophers. These aspects of Wain's book constitute both an added value and, at times, a draw-back. Regarding the former, Wain illustrates clearly how tensions between the spirit and some aspects of the content of Rousseau's work on the one hand, and mainstream Enlightenment thought and culture, predate and shed light on tensions and challenges that would be felt later on a larger scale, when some aspects of the Enlightenment were to become hegemonic in various parts of the world. Regarding the weaknesses, at certain points in the book (especially in Chapter One) Wain appears excessively triumphalistic about contemporary liberal-democratic and capitalist set-ups. Moreover, his references to Marx (unlike those to Neitzsche, Rorty and Foucault with whom he is evidently more familiar) are caricatural, seemingly drawn either from secondary sources or from propagandistic works by Marx (The Manifesto?) instead of major works like Capital or Grundrisse. **- M.G.**

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philosophy in Malta

SNIPPETS FROM HISTORY

Founder of the Kabbalah in Malta

It is not a very well known fact that, back in the later 13th century, the founder of the famous 'Prophetic Kabbalah' had settled in the Maltese Islands. On Comino to be precise, the smallest of the three inhabited islands that make up the Maltese archipelago. His name was Abraham ben Sawuel Abulafia (picture below). He was born in Zaragoza, Spain, in 1240, and is assumed to have died sometime after 1291 following a stay on the small, windswept island of Comino.

Why Abulafia settled here was because of circumstances rather then choice. The story goes something like this. After a life of travelling and teaching around Palestine, Spain and Rome, Abulafia remained active in Messina, Sicily, for a decade (1281–91), presenting himself as a 'prophet' and 'messiah'. He had several students there as well as some in Palermo. The local Jewish congregation in Palermo, however, energetically condemned his conduct, and around 1285 they addressed the issue to R. Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret of Barcelona, who devoted much of his career to calming the various messianic hysteriae of the day. Solomon ben Adret subsequently wrote a letter against Abulafia. This controversy was one of the principal reasons for the exclusion of Abulafia's Kabbalah from the Spanish schools. It was under these distressing conditions that he settled on the little island of Comino.

The Kabbalah (Hebrew literally meaning 'receiving/ tradition') which Abulafia founded and taught is an esoteric method, discipline, and school of thought still active today. A traditional Kabbalist in Judaism is called a *Mekubbal*.

On Comino in peace and solitude (and maybe a swim every now and then in the crystalline waters), between 1285 and 1288 Abulafia compiled his *Sefer ha-Ot* (*Book of the Sign*). In 1291 he wrote his last, and perhaps his most intelligible, work: the meditation manual *Imre Shefer* (*Words of Beauty*). After this all trace of him is lost.

Today no sign of Abulafia or his sojourn there remains, and his memory, at least in the Maltese Islands, is unfortunately not honoured or celebrated at all.

Visit by a medieval giant

Most of us will certainly know the story of Martin Luther and the 15th-century reformation. It is often said that all that Luther desired, at least at the beginning of his dissent with Rome, was to have a public disputation at which his famous ninety-five theses would be openly discussed. This never happened because Rome would not allow it. Nevertheless, the closest that Luther came to his aspiration was face to face private meetings with Rome's most talented and celebrated champion of the time, Thomas de Vio Cajetan (1469–1534).

These meetings took place in Augsburg, Germany, between the 12 and 18 of October, 1518 (picture above). Thomas was then the Master General of the Order of Preachers, and shortly afterwards was created Cardinal. Though today he is mostly remembered for his meetings with Luther, in other circles he is held to have been one of the best commentators of Thomas Aquinas, and a key player in the revival of Scholasticism in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Anyway, the meetings of Cajetan with Luther had, quite predicably, a forlorn conclusion: the latter's condemnation. Eventually, Cajetan helped in drawing up the bill of excommunication against Luther, and later was also one of the nineteen Cardinals who refused King Henry VIII of England an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, causing the king to break with the Roman Catholic Church and establish the Church of England.

In 1530 all of this was history. What is of special interest to us is that during that year, around the arrival of the Knights of St John in the Maltese Islands, Cajetan was in Malta to give a hand in the establishment of the Inquisition. His sojourn is not believed to have been very long. Nonetheless, to have such an intellectual giant around must have abetted the few centres of theological and philosophical learning which already existed in Malta. They must have been quite elated and honoured by his presence.

Cajetan died in Rome in 1534, just a few years after leaving Malta.

*philosophy*sharing
news
malta

SHARE – The Foundation is proud to publish this first edition of its magazine. The Foundation always had the intention to publish its own magazine since its establishment in 2012, and this is the first ever Philosophy magazine to be published in the Maltese Islands. This intention was expressly stated in the Foundation's Statute as one of the long-term objectives. And here it is! In embarking on this new venture, the Foundation would like to ensure that it is not simply a one-off but that it is sustainable and long-lived. For the time being, the magazine will be issued three times a year. It is hoped that the number of annual editions will be increased as **SHARE** increases its circulation over time. The Foundation sincerely hopes that the magazine will be welcomed by the Philosophy community in Malta and Gozo and that it will achieve excellence and success in this field.

PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS – The Foundation organises public philosophical discussions led by professional speakers every first Wednesday of each month throughout the whole year. The discussions are generally held at the Volunteer Centre in Melita Street, Valletta (corner with St Paul's Street). During winter time the public discussions commence at 6.30 PM (and they generally end at around 8.00 PM); during the summer months the sessions commence at 7.00 PM (and generally end at around 8.30 PM). The talks and discussions are held in Maltese, but some exceptions are made where the English language is used. The language used for each session is announced on the event poster and website. Attendance is free of charge. Videos of the talks are posted on the Foundation's YOUTUBE station. Check out the forthcoming meetings on the Foundation's website.

PHILOSOPHY COURSES – The Foundation offers specialised philosophical courses for the general public during each academic year, generally between October and May. The courses are held on Monday for five consecutive weeks between 6.30 PM and 8.00 PM. The venue for the courses is the Volunteer Centre in Melita Street, Valletta. Though most of the courses are delivered in Maltese, some are in English (as indicated on the posters and on the Foundation website). Scholars specialised in each particular course-subject are invited to offer their services. A nominal fee is charged for attendance. Participants who successfully attend at least three of the five course sessions receive a Certificate of Attendance issued by the Foundation. The next courses offered are the following (check the Foundation website for more details):

• **'The Philosophy of Anarchism'** by Dr Mark Montebello (in English): 16 November – 14 December 2015.
• **'Il-Mistoqsijiet Eżistenzjali. Minfejn ġejjin?'** by Aleks Farrugia: 11 January - 8 February 2016.
• **'Il-Ġisem Sagru fl-Arti'** by Dr Immanuel Mifsud: 22 February - 21 March 2016.
• **'Gramsci'** by Dr Joseph Gravina: 4 April – 2 May 2016.

WEBSITE – The Foundation's website contains information on all its past and forthcoming activities. The website is regularly updated. Moreover, it contains a list of philosophical publications authored by Maltese Philosophers (in various languages) since 2011, and brief biographies of some key Maltese philosophers. Visit the Foundation website www.philosophysharing.org. For information purposes the Foundation also distributes an e-newsletter in Maltese, *Il-Miżwed* (*The Peapod*), every three months.

PUBLICATION – The Foundation issued its first publication: *The Creative Use of Noise*, co-authored by Peter Serracino Inglott and Charles Camilleri, in 2015. This comprises an interesting study in music theory and it raises a number of intriguing questions. The book is available from all AGENDA bookstores in Malta (including the Airport and the Gozo ferry outlets) against a donation of €4.99.

ANNUAL LECTURES – The Foundation organises an Annual Philosophy Lecture delivered by an established philosopher around mid-March. Attendance is free of charge. The speaker for the 2015 Annual Lecture, held on March 14, was Dr Jean-Paul De Lucca, who discussed the risk of banality. The talk was in Maltese, and a video is available on the Foundation's YOUTUBE channel.

MEMBERSHIP – The Foundation maintains a steady membership which provides it with support. Members are regularly kept informed about the Foundation's activities and updates. They enjoy special registration fees for services which are offered against donations, particularly in the case of courses and publications. A 12-month subscription costs €10. Those who wish to become members may access the appropriate form on the Foundation's website.

STEERING COMMITTEE – The Foundation is governed by a nine-member team which has been democratically elected during the last AGM in February. Members are generally elected for three years. However, should they be re-elected, each successive term is for one year. The committee members take care of all the aspects of the Foundation's life, activities, and responsibilities, and ensure that the development of services is carried out to the satisfaction of members and other participants. All the committee members dedicate their time to the Foundation on a voluntary basis.

GOZO BRANCH – The Foundation is in the process of establishing a branch in Gozo. Gozitans who are unable to attend the Foundation's activities in Malta will have the opportunity to participate in philosophical discussions and courses in Gozo. The initiative has been part of the Foundation's long-term objective since it was set up. The Gozo Branch is expected to commence activities soon, thanks to the support received from some institutions and individuals in Gozo. The Foundation sincerely hopes that this venture will be successful.

PHILOSOPHY BOOKS
by Maltese authors in circulation
(Since 2011 in descending order)

Montebello, Mark (2014), **THE AMAZING STORY OF MANUEL DIMECH**, Dom Communications Ltd., 144 pp, ISBN: 978-99957-49-40-8.

Cefai, Emmanuel George (2014), **THE SPIRIT OF METAPHYSICS**, Malta, 52 pp, ISBN: 9-789995-751074.

Wain, Kenneth (2014), **DOES IT MATTER WHO SPEAKS?: Postmodern papers on politics, ethics and education**, Malta University Press, 342 pp, ISBN: 978-99909-45-76-8.

Palma, Alfred, trans. (2014), **VOLTIARE: CANDIDE JEW L-OTTIMIŻMU**, Dom Communications Ltd., 154 pp, ISBN: 978-99957-47-05-3.

Massa, Daniel, (2013), **PSI KINGMAKER: Life, thought and adventures of Peter Serracino Ingott**, Malta, 908 pp, ISBN Hard cover: 978-99909-3-179-2, ISBN Soft cover: 978-99909-3-180-8.

Baldacchino, John, and Wain, Kenneth (2013), **DEMOCRACY WITHOUT CONFESSION: Philosophical Conversations on the Maltese Political Imaginary**, Progress Print, Malta, 320 pp, ISBN: 978-99909-3-176-1.

Montebello, Mark (2013), **DIMECH**, First volume: 1860-1902, Miller Distributors, Malta, 416 pp, ISBN 978-99957-37-047.

Buttigieg, Jean, De Lucca, Jean-Paul, and Mangion, Claude, eds. (2013), **A PHILOSOPHER AT LARGE: Essays commemorating Peter Serracino Inglott**, 236 pp, ISBN 978-99957-33-95-7.

Montebello, Mark, ed. (2013), **MANWEL DIMECH: ilbieraħ – illum – għada**, Sensiela Kotba Soċjalisti SKS, 140, Malta, 200 pp, ISBN 978-99932-17-23-7.

Gatt Ciancio, Josephine (2013), **PRISONS NO MORE and other stories**, Malta, 93 pp, ISBN 978-99957-0-4.

Camilleri, Charló, and Cortis, Toni (2013), **ANASTASJU CUSCHIERI: Kitbiet miġbura**, Vol. I – Poeżiji, Carmelite Province, Malta, 257 pp, ISBN 978-99957-0-329-5.

Montebello, Mark (2013), **IL-KOMPLIĊITÀ TA' NIES BLA SETGĦA**, Malta, 64 pp, ISBN none.

Calleja, Meinrad (2012), **THE BATTLE ROAR OF SILENCE: Foucault and the Carceral System**, Faraxa Publications, Malta, 451 pp, ISBN 978-99957-0-3660.

Montebello, Mark, and Galea, Francis (2012), **APHORISMS: Wisdom of a philosopher in exile**, Sensiela Kotba Soċjalisti SKS, 136, Malta, 418 pp, ISBN 978-99932-17-22-0.

Dingli, Sandra, and Goodman, Malcolm (2012), **CREATIVITY AND STRATEGIC INNOVATION MANAGEMENT**, Routledge, UK, ISBN 978-0415663557.

Montebello, Mark (2012), **FOUR HAVENS OF INTIMACY**, E-book release, 111 pages, ISBN 978-99957-0-321-9.

Calleja, Meinrad (2012), **THE PHILOSOPHY OF DESERT METAPHORS in Ibrahim Al-Koni**, Faraxa Publications, Malta, 245 pp, ISBN 978-99957-0-2724.

Serracino, Karmenu (2012), **DWAR L-ARTI TAL-POEŻIJA**, Book Distributors Ltd., 145 pp, ISBN 978-99957-334-8-3.

Montebello, Mark (2011), **MALTA'S PHILOSOPHY & PHILOSOPHERS**, Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza PIN, Malta, 231 pp, ISBN 978-00032-91-46-6.

Wain, Kenneth (2011), **ON ROUSSEAU: An introduction to his radical thinking on education and politics**, Sense Publications, Netherlands, 67 pp, ISBN 978-94-6091-383-9.

Mangion, Claude (2011), **PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATION**, Intellect Publication, Bristol, UK/ Chicago, USA, 330 pp, ISBN 978-1-84150-429-2.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Eligibility: Anyone may submit an article for SHARE as long as the following conditions are observed. It shall be the sole prerogative and responsibility of the Editor to determine which contributions to include or exclude from the magazine.

Contributions: Articles shall be in English, and more or less around one thousand (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 most welcome. Technical jargon should be avoided. References, if any, shall be placed within the text.

Submission: Send your contribution in Word format to editor@philosophysharing.org.

SHARE A MOMENT OF philosophical FUN

Across

5. - Unselfishness
8. - The philosopher prince
10. - Claude Mangion's philosophical approaches towards what?
13. - Malta's known first philosophy writing
16. - Philosophy of beauty
17. - Branch of metaphysics
18. - De Bono's hats
19. - A Maltese Nicholas 'retrograde'

Down

1. - One of Aristotle's nicknames
2. - The Middle Ages' most famous Thomas
3. - Birth place of Peter Serracino Inglott
4. - Author of *In-Nisga tal-Hsieb*
6. - Believer that reason is the way to gain knowledge
7. - One who claims that knowledge is gained through the senses
9. - A model through which other ideas are seen
11. - Socially accepted behaviour
12. - Philosophy of cause and effect
14. - Fond of critiques
15. - Pleasure is the highest good
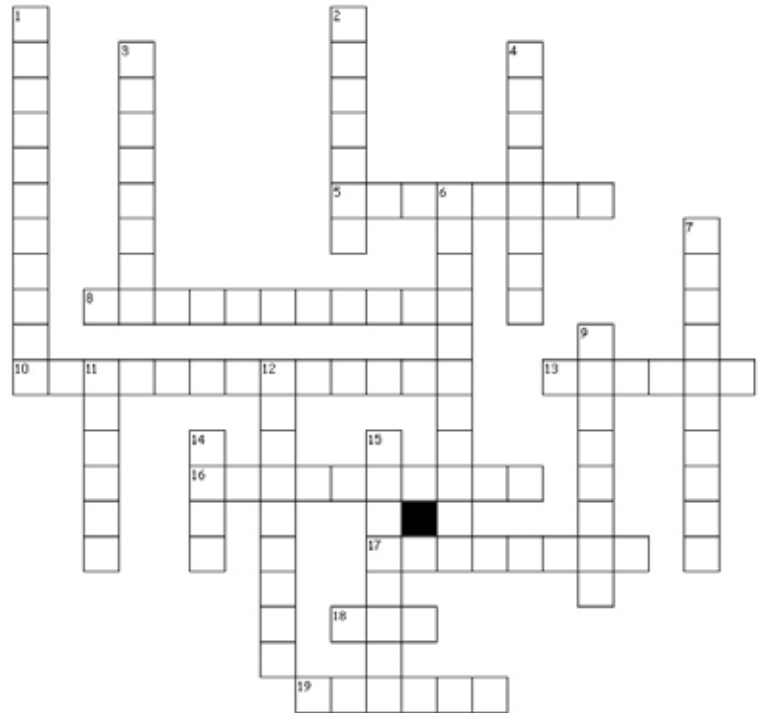
Philosophical date: A boy is about to go on his first date, and is nervous about what to talk about. He asks his father for advice. The father replies: "My son, there are three subjects that always work. These are food, family, and philosophy."

The boy picks up his date and they go to a soda fountain. Ice cream sodas in front of them, they stare at each other for a long time, as the boy's nervousness builds. He remembers his father's advice, and chooses the first topic. He asks the girl: "Do you like potato pancakes?" She says "No," and the silence returns.

After a few more uncomfortable minutes, the boy thinks of his father's suggestion and turns to the second item on the list. He asks, "Do you have a brother?" Again, the girl says "No" and there is silence once again.

The boy then plays his last card. He thinks of his father's advice and asks the girl the following question: "If you had a brother, would he like potato pancakes?"

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE HEREAFTER?

I'M NOT SURE – WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Say it in ... Latin

Minima maxima sunt
The smallest things are most important

Bonitas non est pessimis esse meliorem
It is not goodness to be better than the worst.

Omnia mutantur
All things change

Fabas indulcet fames
Hunger sweetens the beans

Sic transit gloria mundi
So passes away earthly glory

Facta non verba
Deeds, not words

philosophysharing **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.

www.philosophysharing.org

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