

SHARE

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Kenneth Wain on Lifelong Learning

Joe Friggieri on Interpretations

Does Life have an Objective Value?
(Competition Winner)

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Who was René Descartes?

Kierkegaard's Modes of Existence

Is Materialism reaching its End?



ISSUE 11 - MAY 2019

In this eleventh edition of Philosophy Share, the editorial team would like to thank Mr. George Busuttil for his contribution to all the past issues of this magazine as a graphic designer. Mr. Busuttil, who has resigned from the editorial team after the previous issue, has always given an impeccable service and was a reliable resource for the whole team. Thank you George and good luck for the future!

As the magazine evolves, we are still experimenting with a few ideas as we prune off some elements and formats here and add some new ones there. More importantly, suggestions or ideas by our readers would be most welcome and if you have something that you would like to see, or see more of, in the magazine please get in touch with us by sending us an email on philosophysharingmalta@gmail.com

In this issue we have a very interesting and in-depth interview with Professor Kenneth Wain about Life Long learning and his views on education, in Malta and elsewhere.

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Cover Image:

DOES LIFE HAVE AN OBJECTIVE VALUE?

Editor's Note: This article by Simon Oosterman, is this edition's winning entry for the article writing competition. The question that was given in the last issue was 'Does Life have an Objective Value?'. Mr. Oosterman, also kept the question as the title of his article. Well done and congratulations Simon!!

Does life have an objective value? The short answer is: no, it does not. The reason is that all value judgments are subjective. In the case of beauty – another value judgment - we all accept without question the truth of the expression: “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. In the case of value, although there is no saying, the same holds true. Similarly, progress and regress are in the eye of the beholder, as are good and bad, and the value of anything and everything.

Political economists have been trying to establish the ‘real’ value or cost of goods in order to determine if the profit made in trade was reasonable and/or if the producer was paid a reasonable price for his efforts. All their efforts came to naught. It is impossible to determine the ‘objective’ value or cost of goods.

Quite often price is thought to be an indication of value but it really is not, as is indicated by the expression: “He knows the price of everything but the value of nothing”.

The determination of the (subjective) value of life is an interesting case because we (society) have refused to even begin to attempt it. This is most likely because it suits us to be able to change the value of life depending on the circumstances. For instance, when seat belts were made compulsory to save lives the implicit value of a life saved was very high but when airbags were made compulsory, it soared to unimaginable levels. On the other hand, the cost of safety measures at many construction sites implicitly does not value life very highly.

Another, related point is that we refuse to make a difference in the value of life of different people.

This point was illustrated by the discussion about self-driving cars. If a collision is unavoidable should the algorithm choose to kill the elderly woman or the young man?

On a personal level also there are considerable differences in the value we attach to the lives of others as well as to our own. Many are in favor of the death penalty, attaching no value to the life of miscreants. Others want to stop rescue operations to save migrants in the Mediterranean, valuing the lives of ‘others’ well below those of ‘ours’.

As far as the value of our own lives is concerned there are also considerable differences of opinion.

People that want to commit suicide implicitly give a negative value to their lives. As do those that are asking for euthanasia. Others are willing to sell their souls to extend their lives by a few years.

I have been struck by the fact that, when talking about life, we almost always restrict ourselves to the quantity and neglect the quality, whereas in our personal lives quality seems to be very important and well worth a trade off with quantity.

How often do we do, or partake of, things that are not really healthy but are pleasurable? Still, when we talk about the importance of saving a life or the effort to be expended in doing so, the quality of the life to be saved never enters into the equation.

But I digress. Back to the basics: Life, like everything else, has no objective value.

Send us your entry for the next article writing competition!!

A 900-1000 word article with the title "Are Perceptions Real?"

Your article submission is to be sent to philosophysharingmalta@gmail.com and the best written article will be published in the next issue together with the winning price which is a book on Philosophy and a free Philosophy course.



HOW TO BE HAPPY

THE ARISTOTELIAN TEACHING OF HAPPINESS

By Olivier F. Perater

What do we mean with happiness? When can one say 'I am happy'? Some people view happiness to involve sensual pleasures that heavily revolve around eating, drinking, sex and all the pleasures of the flesh. However, these are activities that we share with all other animals. If this is our happiness, then how do we differ from brutes? Happiness, in Aristotelian sense, is far greater than that of brutes' pleasures. It is something we do not share with all other earthly creatures. And what makes human unique is its rationality. Happiness is first and foremost rational, it involves a rational choice. The difference between a happy and miserable lives are the rational choices they made.

Happiness is viewed by Aristotle as the highest good which is the most final because it is the end which is

not pursued for the sake of something else. (NE: Bk 1, 25-35) Every instance of our lives we choose, in fact not choosing is also a choice, and every choice is aimed towards an end or purpose and that purpose is always something we thought to be good, at least apparently.

There are two general types of ends/purposes - the ultimate or final end and the non-final end. For instance, a student who studies well to get a good grade. The good grade might have just been pursued to graduate with honor and graduating with honor is also pursued to get a good job and a good job is again pursued for good salary and money is aimed to buy somethings and so on and so forth. All of these ends or purposes are only pursued for the sake of

something else. Aristotle teaches that there is only one end or purpose that we aim which is not pursued for the sake of something else, it is 'eudaimonia', the Greek word for happiness, living well or doing well. We do not pursue happiness in order to buy a house or get a beautiful wife and the likes because happiness is the highest good, it is self-sufficient (NE: Bk 1, 1097b, 7) and it makes life desirable and deficient in nothing (NE: Bk 1, 1097b, 15).

Happiness is something we pursue and we cannot get it if we do nothing, in fact Aristotle views Happiness as an activity of the soul. Many people do not like doing things. At home who would do the cooking, the washing of dishes, the cleaning of the toilet could be an issue. It seems that for some people doing nothing (with servants to do everything for them) would make them happy. However, in Aristotelian sense, happiness is something that we have to take by active participation. Happiness is something we acquire by participating and we cannot be passive to wait for somebody to offer us happiness. Happy are those who pick the apple rather than those who only wait for an apple to fall on the ground. As Aristotle says, the crown is given not to the most intelligent and most beautiful, primarily it is given to those who participate. However, I would like to make it clear that happiness is not a bodily activity, though it may contribute, but it is an activity of the rational soul. One has to do action and actions could be classified as good or bad, moral or immoral. Happiness is not only a rational choice but also virtuous one. Aristotle claims it is an activity of the soul in conformity with excellence or virtue. (NE: Bk 1, 1098a, 16) This means that a mean or bad person can never be happy. Happiness is a character as much as virtue is a habit. Happiness is not episodic, it is holistic. If one claims, I am happy yesterday now I'm sad and I hope to be happy tomorrow. This is not the happiness we are talking about. Because happiness is a complete lifetime. We all experience joy and sadness, victory and defeat, acceptance and rejection, some have a drunkard father and a gambling mother, some may only eat ones a day due to poverty but before your last breath you may ask yourself 'Am I a happy in this life?'.

If you would be given another chance to live again, would you still choose the same life you have now? If you do, then you indeed are a happy person. It is wrong to think of happiness as an absence of sorrow and pain, happiness is more than that. You are a happy person if despite of your experiences, no matter how good or bad, you still manage to be good or virtuous. Happiness requires not only rationality but also virtue. Christianity adopted this tenet, for Christian happiness is in heaven with God and in order to be in heaven one has to be good or virtuous. A Roman Catholic Saint, before being canonized had been declared blessed, from Latin 'beatus' which also means happy. Happiness, in fact, is our purpose. You might have already asked the question 'What is the purpose of human life?' Aristotle claims that the purpose of a thing lies in its proper function. A baseball bat could have a lot of functions such as a weapon or an instrument for initiation rites for a fraternity membership but to hit a baseball during baseball game is its proper function. Hence, it is its purpose. The same thing with a human being. One could function as a doctor, comedian, army, artist, a mother, a son and the likes but a human being has only one proper function, and for Aristotle, it is happiness. Your ultimate purpose is to be happy. Thus, if you die unhappy, you never serve your purpose for you may not really live as a human being but as brute, that is, living the life of sensual pleasures, a life full of regrets. If you want to be happy, then live well or do your stuff well.

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WHO WAS RENÉ DESCARTES?

By Natale Letizia

French philosopher, was born at La Haye in France, and dies in Stockholm in the year 1650.

He was born in the year 1596 from Joachim Descartes and Jeanne Brochard. As the siblings Pierre and Jeanne, he was living together his grandmother. He passed the childhood a little bit in Bretagne, and a little bit in Tours at La Haye. The family in which he was born was part of the noblesse de robe.

In the year 1606 Descartes was admitted into the school of La Flèche, founded from Henry the IV. The Jesuites of La Flèche initiated Descartes to the traditional courses: classic readings of the old literatures, the syllogistic logic, ethics, physics of Aristotelic type, metaphysic discussions over the soul. One day Descartes will rebel over this hierarchy of values over the world of knowledge, and he will search to build physics and metaphysics based on mathematics.

He had to leave school in the year 1614; in the year 1616 he graduated in Law at Poitiers. He joined the army in Netherland. Descartes undertook a Summary of Music, a brief treaty of scientific acoustics.

He left Netherland to pass in Germany, where there was the Thirty years war. Descartes had a complex and revealing dream, which established a new path in his life and his studies.

Descartes saw with clarity the need to find a unitary solution for all the single problems of physics and mathematics, the need to formulate the problems of physics in a rigorous mathematical language.

In the year 1625 he moved to Paris, and there he appeared in the educated society of the city; he established important new friendships for the rest of his life, with father Mersenne, with Gibieuf, with the cardinal Berulle.

In these years he composed the *Studium bonae mentis*, in which he attempted to explore the rational world in its totality.

In Paris he had the chance to meet the young Pascal, Roberval, Hobbes, Gassendi.

Christine of Sweden became his friend and she invited him to meet him in Stockholm.

Descartes accepted her invitation. He is attracted from the thought of becoming the tutor of a queen, the project to give an efficient praxis to philosophy.

He died in the year 1650 in Stockholm where he died of pneumonia one year after he arrived in Sweden.

Mathematics is for Descartes a discipline which help to distinguish truth from falsity. Mathematics has been used as tool of practical arts to save human work. Instead, it has to be used to build true knowledge.

The unity of the disciplines of mathematics consisted in the particular relationship between algebra and geometry. Algebra taught to ignore the absolute value of magnitudes, to take instead into consideration the relationship between magnitudes. The structure of this relationship will be expressed through equations. The different classes of geometric figures will be expressed through equations which will store the same form for similar figures, even then symbols which appear on them can show different value based on the dimensions of the shape. The advantage of the new method is that it can give certainty of truth.

Mathematics has been used as tool of practical arts to save human work. Instead, it has to be used to build true knowledge.

The second attempt of Descartes to implement a program of universal knowledge takes the steps from physics. In the year 1630 he will work in a treaty called *Le monde*, where he explains in an hypothetical way the formation and the order of the universe, starting from the assumptions of the Copernican world. The main discussion of the treaty is the light. In the year 1633 Descartes got to know that Galileo was condemned from the Church of Rome, therefore he decided not to have published the work *Le monde*.

In the year 1649 he will write *Les passions de l'ame*, in which through an analysis of the function of the soul in the life of the man, he will explain his morality, which had to be essayistic, last part of his philosophy. Emotions are acts which the soul happen to feel through the body. Before his death, Descartes showed morality so that the man was available to thought and science. It is clearly depicted as the faculty to distinguish truth from falsity.

Born in Italy, Natale Letizia spent a period of his life at Gothenburg University, Sweden, as Erasmus student.

His interests span in narratives, rethorics and philosophy. He used to live in Malta, but due to health reasons had to leave the country.

Are we Approaching the End of the Materialist Paradigm?

By Gilbert Ross

Materialism is out of fashion

The 21st century has thrown us into an exponential curve of disruptive technological change with greater adoption of cutting-edge stuff such as Artificial Intelligence, blockchain networks, big data and the like. Yet despite all the technological breakthroughs and accelerating change, we are still pretty much under the grips of 19th and 20th century materialist thinking.

The root of this dissonance is not that we are collectively reluctant to embrace the future, or at least the pulse of the moment. It's just that historically there has always been some latency to change between one worldview to another even when everything around the old paradigm had already changed. More significantly, after many years in the making, some major theoretical paradigms tend to spill their influence over into other domains of cultural discourse such as everyday laymen thinking and these deep cultural programs take a long arch of time before they update themselves with newly emerging trends. In short, we are collectively a little bit out of pace with the times.

This is perfectly the case with the materialist worldview. There are still many who think or believe that materialist philosophy is a product of our modern times or, even worse, is the way

forward, and that more of it is a sign of intellectual advancement. The crude fact is that our most recent and best fitting Scientific theoretical models of the Universe have long slipped out of the strict materialist view of the world.

Old dog not learning new tricks

Not surprisingly, in philosophy, we can find roots to the materialist standpoint stretching back as far as Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Democritus, who advocated that the fundamental stuff of the Cosmos are indivisible particles or atoms. French philosopher Rene Descartes, although best known for propounding a metaphysical dualism between mind and matter, had a strictly materialist view of the physical world that influenced 18th century thinkers thereafter.

The materialist theoretical paradigm had then reached its full influential power within the western academia in the earlier half of the twentieth century with intellectual movements such as the Vienna Circle and Logical Positivism. This had dominated both the philosophical and scientific mainstream thought at the time despite the fact that quantum physics was already in full swing.

Various philosophical ramifications of the materialist view sprouted out, but the general idea is that every phenomenon we observe around us can be ultimately explained in terms of purely material processes.

Everything is matter or comes out of matter. Mind and consciousness, according to this view, are also nothing more than physical processes.

Undeniably, the Newtonian-Cartesian model of the Universe has served us well in practice for many years. Despite its undeniable practical contribution, however, the materialist view is no longer an adequate model of reality both in Science or anywhere else.

It doesn't Matter - Can't you see it?

I believe that one of the biggest blind spots in materialist philosophical thought is the general naive understanding of what matter is. Through our hard-wired sense-apparatus, we perceive the world to be made of solid stuff in a fixed physical location and which seems to remain there next time we look at it.

The change is slow but it will necessarily happen.

A century of Quantum Mechanics has still not managed to bring home the idea that despite the obvious appearances, material reality is totally different than what we perceive and conceptualise. What Quantum theory in fact points at, is that ultimately there is no matter as naively understood - just energy and information. More importantly it dismisses the basic pillars of the naive view of matter - solidity, locality and persistence.

At the Quantum level, particles seem to be just patterns of energy and information weirdly popping in and out of existence into a so-called 'quantum field'. They have no fixed physical address but seem to behave probabilistically as being either in one place or another at any given time. This idea of non-locality, for instance, can be clearly seen in a

phenomenon called Quantum Entanglement, where two particles affect each other in real time even a galaxy away. Yet what seems to be mostly at odds with the naive view of matter, is the idea that subjective observation affects the behaviour of particles, something that has been proved over again in a classical experiment called the 'double split experiment' and its countless variations.

The post-materialist way forward

Hence it turns out that what some materialist philosophers refer to when talking about matter is an outdated textbook concept at best, or simply on how we think it is, based on our sensory-based interface with the world.

At the end of the small scale, it seems, matter is no longer solid or fixed and it is all connected together by an all-encompassing field of information, that includes our consciousness, and all consciousness. It might well be the case, after all, that consciousness is 'matter', but possibly for the reason that at the fundamental level of so-called matter, consciousness, energy and information is all there is.

The paradigm is slowly shifting to a post-materialist phase as more scientist and philosophers join the bandwagon. When a theoretical paradigm such as materialism overstates, it does a disservice to Science, as it limits the open-mindedness, dogma-free, objective thinking that is supposedly the true spirit of Scientific enquiry, even though, as historian of Science Thomas Kuhn had rightly pointed out, Science is not that dogma-free as we ought to believe. There is a strong resistance to new theories as Scientists tend to stick to explaining stuff according to the old theoretical paradigm even when it clearly fails to do so as in the case of the materialist one. I also feel that materialism is a deeply unconscious resistance, or irrational fear, to accept that there is more to reality than is obvious to the limited senses in the here and now, but is disguised as a fervently rational exercise and a philosophical standpoint by the conscious mind. At the end, it doesn't really matter. The change is slow but it will necessarily happen and it has been set in motion a long time ago already.

INTERPRETATIONS

By Joe Friggieri

1. When we say, in ordinary conversation, that something calls for or requires interpretation, we assume that there is something about it which makes it unclear, puzzling or, at any rate, difficult to understand, something that needs unpacking or sorting out. Among the things that we normally think of as requiring interpretation are codes, riddles, myths, parables and works of art, but also those utterances, gestures and actions which we find baffling, peculiar, odd, unusual or in some way in need of explanation or elucidation.

We hire an interpreter when we are in a foreign country, trying to converse or communicate with people whose language we do not understand.

Psychoanalysts, prophets and soothsayers interpret dreams, exegetes interpret holy texts, theatre-directors and actors interpret plays, conductors and performers interpret musical scores, judges interpret the law, critics interpret literary works. Apart from being right or wrong, interpretations may also be illuminating, exciting, detailed, adequate, striking, convincing, partial, far-fetched, strained, etc.

2. That an interpretation may be right or wrong, good or bad, is shown by the way we talk. 'No,' we say, 'that's not the right interpretation. That's not what she meant,' or 'That's not the way it should be played. It says *adagio*. You're going too fast,' or 'I wouldn't call it sad. You're not paying enough attention to the irony (humour, wit, etc.) of the text.'

One way of rejecting an interpretation is by denying that we ever said or wrote the things an interlocutor attributes to us. 'That's not what I said. You weren't listening,' we say; or 'Go back and read my letter.' But we may also complain that, while somebody understood the meaning of the words, he or she did not pay enough attention to the context, placed too much emphasis on just a part of our speech, ignoring the rest, and, in so doing, misrepresented our views, gave a distorted picture of what we were trying to convey, etc. And they may have done this deliberately, maliciously or just carelessly, with no desire to be unfair, through haste, and so forth.

3. To interpret an utterance correctly we must grasp both the meaning of what the sentence says and the intention or aim with which it is uttered. But it would be wrong to think that these two things are unrelated. If I say 'you're standing on my foot', my hope that you interpret the utterance as a request that you step off my foot clearly presupposes your understanding, your grasping the meaning of what I have said.

In a host of cases it seems just impossible to explain what it is for a speaker to mean something by using the words he uses without explaining what it is for the words to mean what they mean.

This is a general point about the relation between intention and what it issues in (speech, action, text, work of art) which, though obviously not meant to solve all the problems that arise or have arisen in connection with this contentious matter, can perhaps still be used to dispel at least one source of confusion. The general point is this: intentions are embodied in what people say or do, they are essentially world-involving. Stuart Hampshire once wrote: 'Intentions are something that may be concealed and disguised; but they can be concealed and disguised only because they naturally express themselves immediately either in words or in actions.'

4. The interpretation of a text from a past culture presents special difficulties. Ricoeur makes this point dramatically as follows:

The cultural distance between the author's time and the age the interpreter lives in, the intentionally disguised or unintentionally distorted nature of the fundamental meaning, and the author's foreignness simply because he is another person... are reasons why interpretations must necessarily have an element of surmise and conjecture (divination), offset, though only partly, by methodical testing.'



Our interpretation of texts from past or alien cultures involves what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons', an interplay of elements from the 'world' in which the text was produced and our present condition. For our interpretations to be authentic we must take into account the nature of the text, the context in which it was produced, its intended audience, and the aim for which it was written. At the same time we cannot fail to bring our own beliefs, attributes, aspirations, hopes, desires and interests – our 'prejudices', as Gadamer calls them – to bear on the situation that is being described, on the story that is being told, on the text with which we are confronted. It is in this way that our 'horizon' and that of the text partially overlap. 'The best definition for hermeneutics,' Gadamer says, 'is: to let what is alienated by the character of being distanced by cultural or historical distances speak again. This is hermeneutics: to let what seems to be far and alienated speak again.'

Notes

1. Schleiermacher calls these two aspects of interpretation the 'grammatical' and the 'psychological' (or 'technical'). 'Any utterance, spoken or written, must form part of a linguistic system and it could not be understood unless one had knowledge of the structure of that system. But such an utterance was also a human product and had to be understood in relation to the life of the person uttering it.' (K.M. Newton, *Interpreting the Text*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990, p.41).
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3. Paul Ricoeur, *Main Trends in Philosophy*, New York, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979, p.266.
4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Practical Philosophy as a Model of the Human Sciences', *Research in Phenomenology*, 9, 1980, p.83.

Joe Friggieri is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Malta. He holds Doctorates in Philosophy from Milan and Oxford. He is a poet, playwright and theatre-director, and a regular contributor to cultural programmes on radio and television. In addition to his literary output, Joe Friggieri has also written works on the Philosophy of Mind, History of Philosophy and Aesthetics. His short stories, originally published in Maltese, have been translated into English, French and German, and extensively reviewed in the London Times Literary Supplement.

KIERKEGAARD'S MODES OF EXISTENCE

By Timofei Gerber

How should we relate to the world? If we try the almost impossible task of pinning down Kierkegaard's thought, it might be this question that it all boils down to. The philosophers among us might return the favour by asking three more questions in return: Who are "we"? What does "relate" mean? What is the "world"? Considering that the answer to the first question is simply "everyone," it would be wrong to quit the field and let the philosophers handle it. Even more so, the normative aspect of this fundamental question implies that there is a certain demand of how one is supposed to relate to the world, a demand that pertains to each one of us. It is in that sense that we might say that Kierkegaard is the true father of Existentialism.

If we follow the normative thread, the question of a 'right' relation to the world, we can see that it also implies that there are several options that we can choose from. In the end it's quite clear that we can't not relate to the world, an insight that Heidegger would later salvage in his concept of being-in-the-world. But in contrast to Heidegger's transfigured Dasein, there is no primordial entity for Kierkegaard that would ground the relation to the world in authenticity.

He is too Hegelian for that. Yet, we can see that choosing a relation to the world is something very different from something like, say, choosing a career or a favourite type of ice cream. It is, again, an existential choice, as it is the question of one's way (or mode) of existence.

We might not feel like asking this question at all, live a reckless and carefree life. But again, we can't not relate to the world, so we have already made a choice for a mode of existence that Kierkegaard calls, following Hegel, immediacy. There is surely a certain cosiness in this idea of perpetuated pleasure; but this desire is necessarily halted by this unpleasant thing called death. Even in its immediacy, an individual will constantly feel this looming danger (anxiety), a danger that taints those pleasures that demand eternity. The possibly unconscious response to this premonition is to either delve completely in actuality and become a pedantic individual that only values what's "real," or in possibility, thus becoming a dreamer who lives purely in a fantasy world. Immediacy, ignoring the question of how we are to relate to the world, will thus give us two modes of existence: the philistine and the dreamer. We can by the way see that Kierkegaard is not in search of authenticity, because these two figures, unable to handle the ideas of their own death, are in despair and will only seemingly lead a happy life.

To break out of immediacy, we have to grasp our lives as a totality, to see the 'big picture'. For that we use what Kierkegaard calls reflexion – which is not the same as intelligence, because for him, as he stresses many times, simply everyone is capable of it.

It is rather the ability to relate to one's own life, it is a self-relation. Grasping one's life as a totality means reflecting upon the fact that it is limited, that there comes a point where one's earthly life will end.

This does not mean that we'll automatically renounce our worldly pleasures; *carpe diem* is driven by *memento mori*. We thus arrive at the aesthetic mode of existence, the first of three stages, as these modes are understood as a development. One example for the aesthetic stage is the ironic way of life, where an individual relishes sensual things not naively, but with an indifferent attitude, showing that it is aware that all pleasure is vain. Here, death becomes part of the picture, the horizon where everything perishes into indifference. And yet, the ironist says, this is our best option, because what is there apart from the sensual? We can see, once again, a certain despair underlying this attitude; just like with the prisoner trying to cherish the last moments before his execution, it won't really matter in the end if the ironist has savoured more or fewer pleasant things. Death will be the great leveller.

Happily, we are not merely made of flesh, we also have a soul – and of course, Kierkegaard's Christianity will come into play here. But we're not that far yet, because not everything that is not sensual is automatically spiritual. Ethics comes to mind, the second Kierkegaardian stage.

While the immediate individual only perceives itself as a present being, and the aesthetic individual as a singular totality, the ethical individual goes further in reflexion and reaches universality: I am not only an individual, I am also a human being. I don't stand alone before my own death; I am part of a community that demands certain responsibilities.

I don't stand alone before my own death; I am part of a community that demands certain responsibilities.

The ethical individual submits to these demands and, simply speaking, sacrifices itself for the greater good. It gives itself up to overstep the boundaries of its own existence, thereby once again changing the face of death; after all, sacrificial death is the greatest honour of the hero. But the problem here is that the individual gets lost, as it is understood as being completely commensurable (subsumable) by the universal. Society demands complete submission, but there is something in each one of us that is not generalisable – our very existence. There is, therefore, another step to make – the third stage, the religious one. It is the most difficult to understand. While the ethical individual completely renounces the sensible world to serve the universal, and while the aesthetic individual immerses itself in the sensual, the religious individual grasps onto both. This is the mystery of Abraham: He was willing to sacrifice his son, and yet he knew that he'd get him back. The religious individual knows that its worldly existence will end, but it still holds on to it – through faith. Surely, a very difficult thought.

Timofei Gerber has an MA in philosophy from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and an MA in film studies at the University of Zurich. He is also a co-editor of Epoché (ἑποχή) magazine.

INTERVIEW: KENNETH WAIN ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

How and where did your journey into philosophy start?

I entered into philosophy through literature. My first love/interest was literature. In my younger days, in the 1960s I wrote and published poems in anthologies, published Tall Buildings, a slim book of short stories, and wrote an unpublished novel. It was my interest in Existentialist literature, which blurs the borders between philosophy and literature, with writers like Sartre and Camus particularly, who were also philosophers besides writers of fiction, that got me into philosophy. I first started to engage with philosophy to write better literature. For this purpose I did a four year Hons. degree as an external student with London University entirely on my own and unaided, obtaining a second class. Last year I collected my poems and put them in quite a considerable volume which I named Who Looks at the Sun ... anymore? (2017, Horizons)

Throughout your academic career and published works, you focused a lot on philosophy of education and lifelong learning. What spurred the passion for this subject area?

It wasn't so much 'passion' as doing my job as a teacher and academic. When I finished my first degree in philosophy with the University of London I was teaching English and History in a secondary school in Malta, and asked Peter Serracino Inglott for his advice about doing a Masters' degree at the University of Malta.

At that time the department of philosophy was on its death bed because the philosophy department was being wound down with the introduction of the worker-student scheme which abolished the faculty of arts. Because I was a teacher, he suggested I do a thesis on education, which was a relatively new area of philosophy at the time, and I took his advice and registered for it before the Masters degree was closed down. Theories of Knowledge and Education was the title of thesis I presented in May 1979. When I'd finished, an academic job came my way in the newly created faculty of education at the New University, as MCAST was re-named at that time. I applied and found myself teaching philosophy of education with the faculty and becoming involved in teacher education. I was asked to teach a course in the B.Ed. (Hons.) on lifelong education, a concept that was sponsored by UNESCO at that time. I designed the course entirely myself and later discovered from the director of the Lifelong Education Division at UNESCO, Ettore Gelpi, who was one of its pioneers, and who became a friend, that mine was the only course of its kind he knew of, and he was much travelled. When I was looking for a subject for my Ph.D dissertation in philosophy of education with London University I decided to work on the concept and philosophy of lifelong education with John White – a work that was totally original.

After I defended my dissertation successfully and without revisions in 1984, I was approached by Peter Jarvis the series editor for the Lifelong Education series for the publishers Croom Helm (London) and asked to re-write it as a book, which I did, and which appeared with the title *Philosophy of Lifelong Education* (1987). I think it's fair to say that the book established an international reputation for me, though the articles that followed were important in this respect too. Recently, in 2017 it was republished by Routledge in a special limited series of classics in philosophy of education.

What is Philosophy of Education in a nutshell and what are its main goals?

Philosophy of education is a sub-discipline of philosophy just like philosophy of science, art, religion, literature, political philosophy, and so on. It was established and recognized as such in the Anglo-Saxon world in the 1950s, particularly at the time in the USA and the UK. Today, it has grown tremendously and is internationally diffused, as you soon discover when you attend a conference or access its several journals. Of course, the direct and indirect interest of philosophers in education goes right back to Plato and includes virtually all the major philosophers in Western philosophy since, like Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Nietzsche, Russell, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Rorty, and so on. All addressed different aspects of the subject in different ways according with their interests in politics, ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and so on. Philosophy of education, as a philosophical sub-discipline, was set up as part of a general overhaul of educational theory after World War 2 as one of the 'foundational disciplines', the others being educational psychology, sociology of education, and history of education. The purpose was to prepare better educated teachers for a new world, and to enlighten the practice of teaching and schooling in general – so its intention was practical.

The dominant philosophical school at the time in the USA and the UK much influenced by neo-positivism and the work of Wittgenstein, was analytic philosophy, which limited philosophy to the analysis of concepts and the conceptual structure of 'languages' like politics, religion, education, ethics, and so on. The purpose was to aid clearer thinking and understanding in the theory and practice of education. The justification for philosophy of education as a philosophical sub-discipline was the case made for representing education as a distinct 'language' with its own concepts (teaching, learning, indoctrinating, schooling, curriculum, assessment, and so on). Since those early days things have changed a great deal, philosophy of education has largely disappeared from teacher education in many countries, but has gathered strength as an academic subject in its own right and with a broader remit and interest. My 2011 monograph *On Rousseau: An Introduction to his Radical Thinking on Education and Politics* (Sense Publishers, Rotterdam), which is entirely theoretical, is an example of this broader remit.

Are there any areas of Philosophy of Education that are of particular importance and relevance to today's rapidly changing culture?

The phenomenon of rapid change was what originally activated the interest in lifelong education, more popularly known now as lifelong learning. The argument for reconceiving education as a lifelong process was, even back in the 1960s, that in a rapidly changing world education could no longer be equated with schooling and teaching, a preparation for life. It had to be thought of as a lifelong process; i.e. as part of life itself. The difference between the two terms lifelong education and lifelong learning, is not casual or simply a matter of fashion.

On the contrary it is politically very significant, as I argued in a paper some time back in a chapter I wrote titled ‘Lifelong Learning: small adjustment or paradigm shift?’ for the International Handbook of Lifelong Learning (2001, Kluwer, Holland). The first term, lifelong education has fallen into disuse in policy papers and popular usage, my paper addresses the question ‘why?’ and has become an important one in the literature. The general answer is that while lifelong education was a philosophy of education driven by a political agenda and promoted by a movement of educators and thinkers (which I described in Philosophy of Lifelong Education), which leaned to the Left and had humanist values, was inspired by the UNESCO report/manifesto Learning to be... (1971), and incorporated the vision of democratic, participatory learning societies, that of lifelong was driven entirely by an agenda tied with economic competitiveness, driven by a performativist ethos (in Lyotard’s sense of the word where the prime values are effectiveness and efficiency of outcome), and a managerialist jargon sponsored and promoted by industrialists and business lobbies – and this was the version that influenced and was taken up by the European Union in the 1990s.

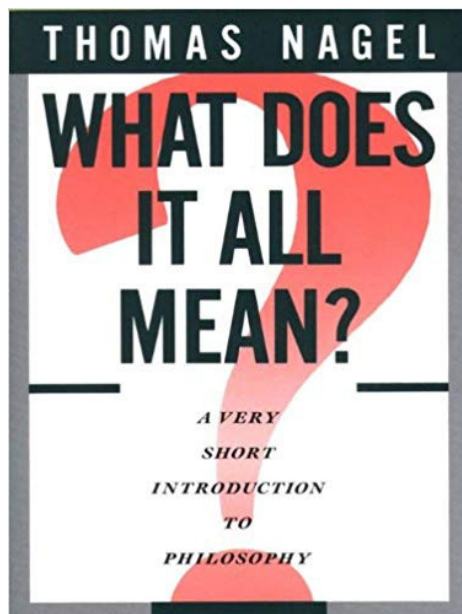
Do you think that the schooling model has failed us or is outdated?

There isn’t one schooling model, there are several though these all respond to the same needs and conditions that induced the countries of Europe to introduce mass, compulsory, schooling, in modern times, including Malta eventually, first till age 14, then 16. Today, the general thinking is that a minimal education is post-secondary. These were: the economic need to respond to an industrialised work-force who needed at least a basic literacy to work efficiently, and the political need responding, on the one hand, to the conservative concern to address the growing political consciousness of the working class.

and movements, put succinctly, the need to socialise the working class into conformity or ‘gentle the masses’, on the other the demand of liberal reformists who saw schooling as the tool to emancipate the industrial classes from ignorance and want. I think that schools today are still required for more or less the same purposes; to service the economy with human resources, and to respond to the political challenge of socialising the new generations into the truths of their society (its beliefs, values, traditions, and so on) and, concurrently (where liberal values are recognised at least), to educate them, in other words encourage them to think freely and critically about those truths. The argument for lifelong learning is that schooling does not suffice for the needs of a competitive knowledge, or technology-driven, economy today, and that the work-force requires continuing learning to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. There are no signs that schooling has failed as an institution in any radical way, or that there are more effective alternative solutions to it on the horizon – alternatives like home schooling exist but are hardly the norm so far. The signs are that it is far from enough. In the 1970s, a deschooling movement, of which the most famous proponent was Ivan Illich, proposed abolishing schools outright on moral and political grounds, and replacing them with networks of computer hubs, edu-credit cards for all, and so on, but theirs remained an anarchist utopian vision, theoretically interesting, but no more than that – though it has become more realisable with today’s technology than it was in the 1970s.

Prof. Kenneth Wain is a philosopher and educator. His specialisation in philosophy include education, ethics, and political philosophy. He has written several books on the Philosophy of Education & much of his published work focus on the topic of lifelong learning. He was an important stakeholder in the setting up of the national curriculum and in Malta’s national education policy development.

EDITOR'S PICK: BEST 5 INTRODUCTORY BOOKS TO PHILOSOPHY

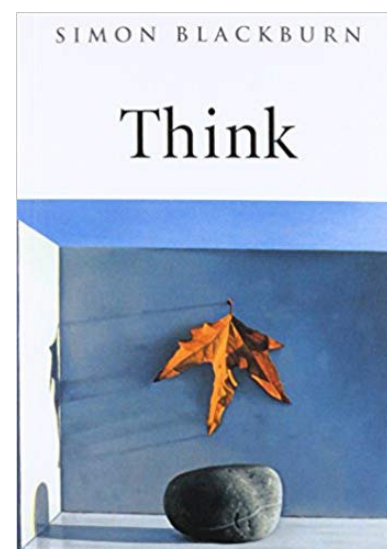


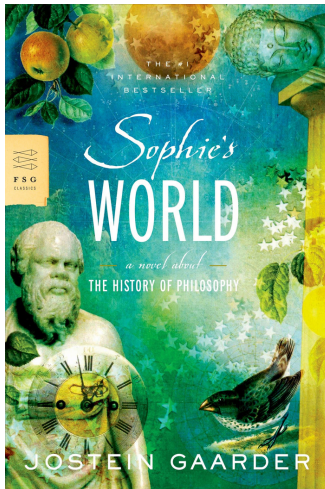
#1 What Does it All Mean: A very short introduction to Philosophy by Thomas Nagel

It is as the book really says on the cover - a succinct but brilliant introduction to Philosophy by presenting the novice the core problems of philosophical inquiry. Thomas Nagel, author of *Mortal Questions* and *The View From Nowhere*, argues that the best way to learn Philosophy is to think about its central questions. Nagel gives possible solutions to nine problems which include knowledge of the world beyond our minds, knowledge of other minds, the mind-body problem, and free will among others.

#2 Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy by Simon Blackburn

Simon Blackburn, author of the best-selling *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, begins by making a convincing case for the relevance of philosophy and goes on to give the reader a sense of how the great historical figures such as Plato, Hume, Kant, Descartes, and others have approached its central themes. It's a very accessible and animated guide to Philosophy that will leave the reader wanting to delve deeper into the subject after finishing the last page.



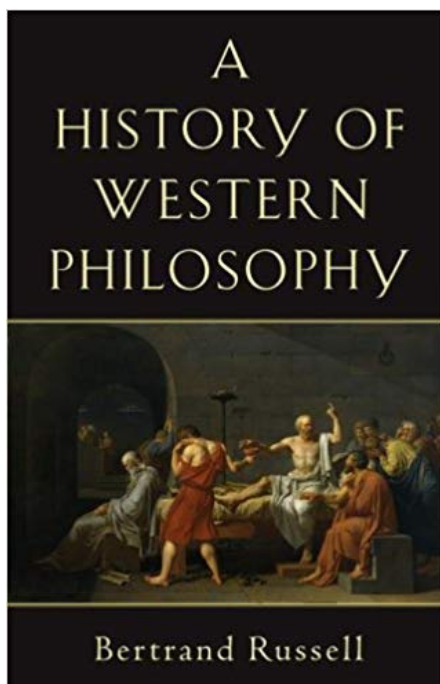
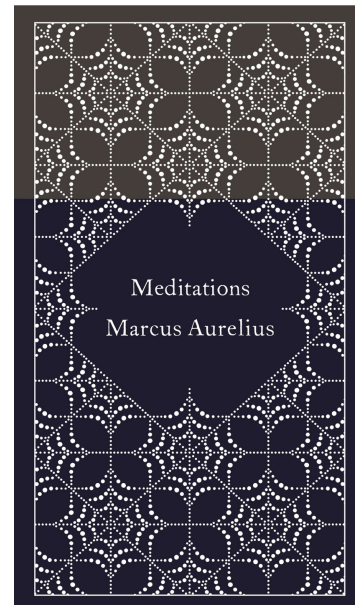


#3 Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy by Jostein Gaarder

A rather intriguing and unusual novel-based introduction to Philosophy through the power of storytelling. It's a story of how a teen called Sophie dives into the world of Philosophy after finding in her mailbox two notes with one question on each: "Who are you?" and "Where does the world come from?"

#4 Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

A book written by the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the most powerful man in the world of his time, about his reflections while administrating the Roman Empire and his experiences as a warrior. It's a must read especially if you would like to get into Stoicism which has made a huge revival recently especially in the entrepreneurial circles.



#5 A History of Western Philosophy by Bertrand Russell

Definitely a classic when it comes to an introduction to Philosophy and it's revered by most to be one of the most important philosophical works of all time. It's a unique exploration of the ideologies of significant philosophers throughout the ages - from Plato and Aristotle through to Spinoza, Kant and the twentieth century.

Is there a link between truth, goodness, and beauty?

By Nikola Stojkoski

The reason is the capacity for logical thinking, moral judgment, and aesthetic judgment. We may say that these are general areas of an appearance of reason. Disciplines that study these capacities are logic, ethics, and aesthetics, respectively. Central categories in these disciplines are the truth, goodness, and beauty, respectively. Within these three general areas reason appears in many specific forms. These forms are "perfectly" known in philosophy, yet an unknown pattern has been noticed which shows us that they are all a variation of the same theme. It has been noticed that, in their essence, all of these forms are kinds of identity relations:

1. Truth

Truth is a relation of identity between thought and reality. This is the main thesis of the identity theory of truth, advocated by Bertrand Russell and George Moore in one period. Another theory of truth is the correspondence theory. This is the dominant theory since the beginning of the 20 century onward. Its main thesis is that truth is a correspondence between thought and reality. However, according to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy "Correspondence holds between a proposition and a fact when the proposition and fact have the same structure, and the same constituents at each structural position", or essentially – correspondence is a relation of identity according to the structure. Therefore, in its essence, the truth remains a relation of identity.

2. Beauty

Rhyme is a relation of identity between one of two or more words or phrases according to the final sounds;

Rhythm is a relation of identity, according to the time interval between the beats;

The golden ratio is a relation of identity between the ratio of the whole to the larger part and the ratio of the larger part to the smaller;

Symmetry is an identity relation between two sides or halves;

Anaphora is a relation of identity, according to the initial phrase or word in consecutive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses. (e.g., "It rained on his lousy tombstone, and it rained on the grass on his stomach. It rained all over the place");

Parallelism is a relation of identity according to the syntactic forms of two or more clauses sentences, or verse lines. (e.g., "The bigger they are, the harder they fall");

Assonance is a relation of identity, according to the vowels between neighboring or words in close proximity to one another. (e.g., "sweet dreams", "hit or miss");

Anadiplosis is a relation of identity between the last and the first word of two neighbouring phrases or sentences. (e.g., “rely on his honour—honour such as his?”);

Epanalepsis is a relation of identity between a phrase or a word used at the beginning and the end of a sentence. (e.g., “Only the poor really know what it is to suffer; only the poor” or “The king is dead, long live the king”);

Meter (in literature) is (1) relation of identity between feet, according to their structure; and (2) relation of identity between verses according to the number of feet (and syllables at the same time) they have;

This led us to an assumption that beauty in its essence is a relation of identity and the beauty of an object consist of the totality of identity relations it contains. English poet Coleridge in his "On Poesy or Art" essay writes: “...pleasure consists in the identity of two opposite elements, that is to say sameness and variety. ...This unity in multitude I have elsewhere stated as the principle of beauty”.

3. Goodness

Justice is a relation of identity between the value of the given and the value of the deserved;

Distributive justice is essentially a relation of identity between the values of privileges, duties, and goods the individual receives on the one hand, and the value of the merits of the individual on the other hand;

Retributive justice is essentially a relation of identity between the severity of the crime and the severity of punishment (‘An eye for an eye’);

Restorative justice is a relation of identity between the extent of damage and the extent of reparation;

The golden rule is an identity between the treatment we want to receive and the treatment others receive from us;

Solidarity is a relation of identity in interests, objectives, and standards among members of a group or a class;

Empathy is identification with the other according to the feelings or experiences;

Each social group, category, or any other form of unity of reason in individuals, is formed on the foundation of some type of identity between individuals that constitute it;

This led us to an assumption that goodness in its essence is a relation of identity. However, the fundamental thesis of the so-called moral egalitarianism, which dominates the social, political, and moral philosophy since the end of the 20 century onward, is that equality is the essence of morality. On the other hand, every equality can be easily reduced to pure identity. These four sub-theses in their generality encompass almost the complete activity of the reason. Now the question arises, are these analyses sufficient to make a bold general conclusion that reason functions on the principle of identity and difference? Their perfect compatibility gives one another mutual confirmation.

Nikola Stojkoski studied philosophy at the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia. His recent book on Philosophy is entitled "Essay on Human Reason: On the Principle of Identity and Difference" (Vernon Press, 2018)



Public talks organised by the foundation will continue to be held at the Valletta Voluntary Centre from this month throughout summer 2019 until a new event calendar for winter will be presented in the issue following this one.

Here are the upcoming public talks for Spring/Summer 2019:

DATE: 8TH OF MAY 2019

VENUE: VVC

SPEAKER: PROF. LINO DELIA

TITLE: INCOME GENERATION

AND DISTRIBUTION: SOME

ISSUES IN PUBLIC POLICY

FORMULATION AND

IMPLEMENTATION

DATE: 5TH OF JUNE 2019

VENUE: VVC

SPEAKER: MR. JORGE GIRO

TITLE: SELF AND TIME THROUGH

THE LENS OF BUDDHISM AND

MODERN NEUROSCIENCE

DATE: 3RD OF JULY 2019

VENUE: VVC

SPEAKER: PROF. JOE FRIGGIERI

TITLE: WHAT IS ART?

DATE: 7TH OF AUGUST 2019

VENUE: VVC

SPEAKER: MR. GILBERT ROSS

TITLE: ARE WE LIVING IN A

SIMULATED REALITY?

DATE: 4TH OF SEPTEMBER 2019

VENUE: VVC

SPEAKER: HON. EVARIST BARTOLO

TITLE: GRAMSCI & MARXISM

DATE: 2ND OF OCTOBER 2019

VENUE: VVC

SPEAKER: MR. VALDELI PEREIRA

TITLE: LIBERATION THEOLOGY

philosophysharing news m a l t a



Dr. Stephen Law addressing the audience attending the annual conference at the Excelsior Hotel

Well over a hundred people attended the Philosophy Sharing Foundation's Annual Conference last March. It was a pleasant turn out and, above other things, it clearly shows that there is quite some interest for such events and talks by a good number of people from different social circles.

We wanted to gain more insights about the demographic profile of the audience, but more importantly, understand people's preferences & attitudes so as to better match future topics with expectations. And so we did this through an online survey deployed soon after the event.

Most of the people that attended the talk (74%) by Dr. Stephen Law entitled 'Can Physicalism be True?', have tertiary education and, more pertinently, more than half the audience (51.6%) have some qualifications in Philosophy.

The rest are enthusiasts and generally interested in Philosophical topics.

Another thing that I believe is interesting to share, aside from the above statistic, is the philosophical areas of interest pointed out by the questionnaire respondents. Although a variety of topics were suggested, there is a strong convergence towards topics that cover philosophy of mind, A.I and consciousness. Now of course there is a bias in this as the talk by Dr. Law was related to Philosophy of Mind but nonetheless, following how strong the attendance was, it is safe to suppose that these are topics that are gaining more and more interest within the general public, especially considering that we are approaching to witnessing some advanced and ubiquitous A.I technology within our lifetime.

philosophysharing **the gozo experience**

WALKING THE TALK

The activity continues in Gozo, experimenting with new possibilities and formats. Last original outing was a walk during a night of December to read ghosts stories and play music, improvising, in a little cave near Mgarr Ix-Xini. Philosophy opens new ways for us and makes us reconsider all the establishment and the traditional values.



Another new format was a Reading of “The baron in the trees” of Italo Calvino by Heiko Jörges.

In January, Dr. Mark Harwood touched a very “hot potato”, the Brexit. We met up at Circolo Gozitano to discuss about Europe, its future, the growth of nationalism and separatism, and also the actual lack of unification of structures within Europe. There’s still a lot of job to do to achieve the concept of Europe.



This time the activity was in a new gallery for Modern Art in Victoria, Arthall. With candle lights we let our imagination jump on top of the trees and see life from a new perspective. We also continue with “The pizza meetings”, discussing in an informal way different philosophic texts.

For more information contact us at:
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