

SHARIE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 6

SEPTEMBER 2017

€2.99

altered egos

• Oh that Trump!

• A midnight express treat

• Check out Russell

• Philosophers hitched?

• The point of art

... and more

Free with
this issue!
Selected text by
MACHIAVELLI
in Maltese

SHARE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 6 - September 2017

Wow! We're in our sixth issue and the going seems to be as smooth as oil. Mainly due to the response of interesting articles and proposals that we're receiving. Well done, guys! Keep up the pace!

We've got pressing steam in our engine yet! As the official platform of the Philosophy Sharing Foundation, **SHARE** is proving to be Malta & Gozo's philosophy enthusiasts' pet magazine. As always, 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 published any type of article as long as it contains philosophical substance and argumentation. Philosophy Sharing Foundation may or may not agree with the opinions expressed in the published articles. The responsibility for the published material shall lie solely with its author.

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

Philosophy Sharing Foundation
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◀ Front cover: *Mirror* by Gulja Holland, courtesy of Lilly Agius Art Gallery, Malta
See related feature articles on pages 14 and 15.

EDITORIAL

The zest which marks us out

Malta's presidency of the EU is now over and we have survived an election. Before the summer heat deprives us of what is left of our energy, here we are again with another issue of **SHARE**. This time of year people still prefer to spend their leisure time at the beach or avoiding the summer heat altogether. We do hope our magazine will keep you company.

Philosophy students had been off from their respective academic duties, many eagerly awaiting their exam results, and perhaps keen to begin a new academic year. It ought to be a time when students and enthusiasts can focus on more relaxed and leisurely reading outside the mainstream curriculum. This is actually the time to consolidate one's knowledge with a greater enthusiasm. It is this zest which marks us out.

Philosophy Sharing held its normal philosophy activities with talks through the summer recess period. We do hope that you all had been served well throughout the season, and that you're looking forward to some crisper weather.

Malta will soon be designated as European Cultural centre for 2018. We augur that this will prove to be a productive year for all Maltese artists and cultural manufacturers. Whatever the perspective or trade, may our local talent shine bright. Much of our talent already does, of course. We hope that other aspiring local talent will gain the exposure and networking opportunities they deserve during our designate EU Cultural capital 2018 space.

This issue of **SHARE** takes a look at a talented and established local artist – Gulja Holland. She has deservedly been afforded international recognition and is currently developing her works further. Art is after all an ongoing experience in which the artist evolves and grows. Gulja seems to display talent destined to excel.

In this issue we also display the artistic talents of Tomas Hed, a Swedish resident at Gozo, and we take this opportunity to say hi to all our friends in Malta's sister island.

We look forward to your letters and comments. Please feel free to share them with us. Do enjoy the rest of the summer.

Meinrad

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SHARE
PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION
Issue 6 September 2017

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.

Off your chest

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor, thank you so much for such a cheerful philosophy magazine. My young nephew sends them to London for me to enjoy. I really look forward to all your issues which I share with local philosophy enthusiasts at our club. The standard is high yet accessible, Well done gentlemen.

— Paul Attrova, London.

Dear Editor, may I congratulate you on your last issue of the magazine (no.5, May 2017). I think that it must have been the best yet. The focus on Nietzsche was superb, especially the article by Marta Oliols Fornell. I liked her article very much, and found it heartfelt. Her arguments for nihilism have made me think, and I wonder whether she would be able to contribute more to the magazine with articles on Nietzsche's posthumous fragments since they are not very well known. Thank you.

— Marika Vassallo, Mosta.

Dear Editor, we are a group of eastern European philosophy students currently living in Malta. We love **SHARE** magazine and hold our group discussions about the magazine in the same order they appear in the magazine. We like your Philosophy Sharing discussions and some of us try our best to attend. Is there any chance we could set up a club in Bugibba?

— Tanja Miladonovic, Bugibba.

Dear Editor, the article on Hegel in the latest issue of **SHARE** (no.5, May 2017) has struck a note home. I have modestly delved into Hegel, and frequently found his writings daunting. I am no philosopher, of course, but I enjoy reading

philosophy. And this was one article I liked very much. What I would have liked Mr. Ragonesi to explain further, perhaps in another issue, is what Marx made of Hegel's dialectical binary oppositions, for this, I gather, is a source of confusion too.

— Simon Farrugia, Valletta.

Dear Editor, **SHARE** is a really good magazine that is actually what philosophy should be about. I read several papers and journals every month that I also enjoy. But **SHARE** is really spectacularly interesting and easy. What I would really like to see is more articles and making the magazine a little longer please. Best wishes.

— Desmond Diss, St. Julians.

Dear Editor, thanks so much for the magazine **SHARE**. I really enjoy reading it. As a student of philosophy I would like to see some curriculum based articles. Thanks so much.

— Jonathan Pace, Lija.

Dear Editor, in the last issue of **SHARE** (no. 5, May 2017) a report was published on Prof. John Ryder's talk at the Annual Philosophy Lecture event on March 16 last. I was present for the first class talk, and humbly submit that more justice could have been done to the speaker. He was more political than had been made out. As I understood it, Prof. Ryder's main argument was that the internet has become a tool of neoliberal politics, and is a main contributor to much of today's false consciousness. I may be wrong, but there it is. Thank you.

— Amanda Xerri, Sliema.

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

For more information

www.philosophysharing.org

Donald trump managed to scale to the highest office of the highest land by using a populist platform made of twitter outbursts, divisive speeches and a general tone of confrontation. A narrative by which he exhorted middle America to rise up against the globalized, liberal order of which they were the original founders.

A narrative which abolishes free trade, putting America at the centre and prime promotor for a 21st century mercantilist system, a system of the political economy more fitting the British Empire and her colonies.

The cornerstone of the mercantilist system is the importance of the balance of trade. In this view a country which imports more than they export is automatically said to have a negative balance of trade, and thus losing. The concept is that a country which needs to import more is, automatically, at the mercy of nations who are able to raise the profit higher than it would naturally be. The fact that a country exports less (while importing more) means that the home market produce is not selling on the home market and neither in the foreign; that the imports being consumed in the home market are naturally vacating capital from the home market to the foreign.

This is the story Trump has been selling. He appeals to factory workers by telling them China “cheated” Americans by allowing their lower-priced products into the home market, destroying the American producers of everything from kitchen utensils to cars. Little does Trump mention that these lower-priced items have allowed ordinary Americans to live more comfortably while spending less, this difference in capital being the new wealth which can be used in other pursuits (as each individual sees fit).

In terms of capital, globalization allowed it to flow freely across nations, resulting in entire populations being lifted out of poverty (China, Brazil, India) with billions of people reaching a new ‘middle class’. This flow of capital to nations with cheaper labour has developed their local market for the consumption of more advanced goods and services, giving new opportunities to other nations to compete within these new markets. This scramble of capital, employed in its most natural cause, made global wealth soar to new highs.

The rapid movement of capital has left entire populations in the industrialised West to compete with these new markets. Low skilled jobs and industries whose capital is most penalized in the West (environmental, political, labour cost) disappeared in a short time, leaving large swathes of disgruntled people with legitimate concerns for their future to which the liberal order has provided no answers, a failure which Trump capitalized triumphantly.

The reversal of globalization naturally means that Trump will attempt to re-balance trade into America’s favour (the mercantilist maxim). The tired old tools of protectionism will be applied with the same short

sightedness as ever. With the current conditions of wage growth and stabilisation of the economy, the introduction of tariffs will provide fertile boon for the expansion of the home market.

The increase in the price of foreign goods (with a 45% tariff, as Trump proposes) will allow American industrialists and merchants the monopoly of the home market. Capital will be employed locally as the new ‘high price’ of foreign goods will make investments appealing. More factories will appear and jobs will be back home. The economy will be overheating.

The side effect of these new prices is that the poor become poorer as goods will cost more and capital will be employed into industries to which it would not naturally flow (leading to other problems).

The only way to incur these penalties and increase the revenue of society (albeit at a much slower rate) within the mercantile system is to extend this injustice to other markets.

The political scene Trump paints is interesting and fits within his mercantilist mind-set. “Make America great again” is his tag line, portraying America as a great nation, cheated out of the global order. America must thus leverage her strengths in order to coerce (in undefined ways) other nations to increase her wealth again. Trump proposes a mix of nationalism, an inward-looking view of

A Trumped value

the world (isolationism) and deal making.

The mercantile system survived due to the constant discovery of new markets occasioned by colonial expansion. Consider the British Empire. By allowing the free flow of capitals, Britain occasioned that each market capital flows to particular branches of industry well suited to it, resulting in more efficiency and a greater revenue for every nation, including Britain herself.

With his overtures for Putin, attacks on NATO and the UN, and cheering of free trade, Trump appears intent on destabilizing the world order America itself built after WW2. The abandonment of these international maxims will result in a more unstable world (though more interesting). How will President Trump push down unfavourable trade restrictions? How will he sustain tariffs unless he somehow subjects other nations to unfavourable conditions? Will he act on his alarming militarism? Will he bully nations by force?

The answers will come in the coming months and years, Trump entered office with favourable economic conditions, a supermajority in both houses of parliament, and a mandate to shake things up.

Fingers crossed, guys!

Paul Salnitro, a former product engineer, is a manager at a local telecoms contractor. Nevertheless, he dives into philosophy literature whenever he can. His side appetite for Philosophy is relentless.

e system

By Paul Salnitro

Picture: Donald Trump (2015) by Brian Snyder/Reuters.

Philosophers' wives & kids

Should philosophers ever get hitched?

By Ema Kovačević



Sarcophagus of Abelard and Heloise (part), Pere Lachaise cemetery, Paris / Photo: Alexandre Lenoire.

Peter Abelard, the first major philosopher of the Middle Ages, dedicated a substantial part of his autobiography, *Historia Calamitatum* (Chapter 7), to discuss whether philosophers should ever marry. He wrote his piece years after his famous love affair with his star student Heloise, with whom he produced one offspring, Astrolobe. Though the couple did eventually marry, Peter's view was that philosophers should definitely *never* tie the knot. "What possible concord could there be", he asked, "between scholars and domestics, between authors and cradles, between books and distaffs, between the pen and the spindle?"

His insistence seems almost surreal. Nonetheless, Abelard spoke in all earnestness, giving various reasons for his conclusion. That of *noise* perhaps ranked the highest. "What man," he inquires, "intent on his philosophical meditations, can possibly endure the whining of children, the lullabies of the wife seeking to quiet them, or the noisy confusion of family life? Who can endure the continual untidiness of

children?" As a final affirmation, he added: "It matters little whether one abandons the study of philosophy completely or merely interrupts it, for it can never remain at the point where it was thus interrupted."

Giambattista Vico would have agreed. After having eight children with his wife Teresa Destito he moaned that he had to study and write philosophy "*tra lo strepitio de' miei figlioli*" (amidst the din made by my children).

Nietzsche, who never married, would grin wide at this. In the *Genealogy of Morals* (Essay 3, par. 7), his indictment of married philosophers is quite powerful:

Thus, the philosopher abhors marriage as well as what might persuade him into it—marriage is a barrier and a disaster along his route to the optimal. What great philosopher up to now has been married? Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Schopenhauer—none of these got married. What's more, we cannot even imagine them married. *A*

married philosopher belongs in a comedy, that's my principle [Italics mine]. And Socrates, that exception, the malicious Socrates, it appears, ironically got married specifically to demonstrate this very principle. [...]

The ascetic ideal indicates so many bridges to independence that a philosopher cannot, without an inner rejoicing and applause, listen to the history of all those decisive people who one day said “No” to all lack of freedom and went off to some desert or other, even assuming that such people were merely strong donkeys and entirely opposite to a powerful spirit.

So what, then, does the ascetic ideal mean as far as a philosopher is concerned? My answer is—you will have guessed it long ago—the philosopher smiles when he sees in it an optimal set of conditions for the loftiest and boldest spirituality—in so doing, he does not deny “existence”; rather that's how he affirms his existence and only his existence and does this perhaps to such a degree that he is not far from the wicked desire *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, flam!* [let the world perish, let philosophy exist, let the philosopher exist, let me exist!].

Nietzsche is slightly unfair here. For some of the philosophers he mentions in his list tried—unsuccessfully—to get married, such as Spinoza and Schopenhauer. Furthermore, though not married, Descartes had a stable relationship with a servant girl, Helena Jans van der Strom, from whom he had a daughter.

Nevertheless, the list of philosopher-bachelors may include a few others, such as Bacon, Hume, Rousseau, Locke, Kierkegaard (though deeply in love with Regina Olsen), Bentham and Foucault (a self-proclaimed homosexual).



Saint-Paul de Vence,
France, French actress Arielle
Dombasle and French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lvy at
their marriage in 1993 / Photo: Micheline Pelletier Decaux.

Sartre, though unmarried, was notoriously promiscuous, as was his lover Simone De Beauvoir. Camus, another bachelor, was equally licentious.

To Nietzsche's censure we may add another by Francis Bacon (*Essays, Civil and Moral*, 8), who, unlike Nietzsche, was himself married (to Alice Barnham), though without offspring:

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly, the best works, and of the greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men.

This is carrying things a bit too far. In fact, the larger part of acknowledged great philosophers were indeed (happily) married with children. The list is long: Confucius, Laozi, Aristotle, Boethius, Machiavelli, More, Hegel (one of his three boys was illegitimate), Comte, Brentano, Heidegger (whose second son was not his), Husserl, Lacan (also with a stable mistress and an illegitimate child), Feuerbach, Godwin (married twice), Bakunin, Tolstoy, Schlick, Carnap (married twice), Frege, Whitehead, Russell (married four times!), and many others.

Some philosophers married women who were themselves notable scholars in their own right, such as the philosopher Theano (wife of Pythagoras), the biologist and embryologist Pythias (Aristotle's), the intellectuals Anne Forster (Berkeley's wife), Harriet Taylor (Stuart Mill's) and Marie Dähnhardt (Stirner's second wife), the academic Amélie Oksenberg and the bioethicist Mary Varney (Rorty's first and second wives), the psychoanalyst Marguerite Aucouturier (Derrida's wife), and the philosopher Renata Salecl and the journalist Jela Krečič (Žižek's first and third wives; his second was the supermodel Analia Hounie!).

Most married philosophers had undistinguished children. Though not all. One may mention the poetess Arignote (Pythagoras' second daughter), the philosopher Nicomachus (Aristotle's son), the socialist activists and writers Caroline, Laura and Julia (Marx's daughters), the philosopher John Stuart Mill (John Mill's son), and the poet Nicholas Moore and the composer Timothy Moore (George Moore's sons).

A few philosophers had a tragic end to their marriage. Althusser, for instance, murdered his wife Héléne Rytman. Oh, boy!

Married or unmarried, it seems that a philosopher is always a philosopher. Nevertheless, one thing seems certain: the history of philosophy is no sure guide to whether one should get hitched or not. Perhaps the secret is in just getting laid between one proposition and another. lol

Ema Kovačević is from Karlovac, Croatia, and followed philosophy courses at the University of Rijeka. At the moment she lives in Malta pursuing a working experience, and is much interested in Malta's philosophical activities. She is a specialised agrostologist.



Why are you frozen in front of that mirror? What are you seeing in that reflection that forced you to be silent? Maybe it is the passing of time? Or is it the image of someone you thought you know?

It seems that sometimes mirrors we look into reflect a reality unknown to us, where pain, joy, fear and hope are much more real than life itself. One can feel it under one's skin just by looking in the depth of those eyes. Perhaps one can overhear one's own voice asking 'Who is this person that looks back to me?'

All this may make one doubt the authenticity of the world itself and the life we are living. It is strange to come face to face with someone so near but in reality so far and unknown to us. Yes, under our skin there is someone hiding from the light of the sun because under the sun any image of the world we held becomes dust. What we believe to be permanent collapses under our feet. What we think to be only a product of our imagination takes consistency before our own eyes.

One way or another, as individuals and even as a collectivity we need to come face to face with that reality which we usually tend to ignore, and to confront our deepest fears in order to move forward. We cannot avoid it, hiding away behind a mask. We have to go beyond these restrictions which hold us captive to an imposed reality which we tend to take for granted. We need—no, we must attempt—to understand in order to change, to grow and to become something more than what we are now.

It is simpler sometimes to confront an external entity than to stand-up to a challenge from within. Maybe because



House of mirrors (2016), Hamza Tawfeek.

it is easier to live a life ignoring the existence of that ghost, and walk the face of the earth just lost among the crowd like shadows. The sun will seldom touch one's face, and one will be protected by one's illusions. However, who are we without that mask? How many aspects and potentials are hidden away from the light of the sun?

I suppose that life is full of questions, most of which are never intended to be answered. It is preferable sometimes to walk in that grey area between what we may perceive as crude reality and the delusion which may lead us to despair. Maybe it is for this reason that we roam the world like shadows, wearing that mask, metaphorically speaking, which gave us that sense of protection and security from

MEETING THE SHADOWS

A thought experiment

By Alfred Zammit

the outside world and from any thoughts of anguish while having to face that reality.

For many reasons both men and women mould their reality to fit their needs, which most of the time are intended to protect them from that perceived void and despair. We erect a structure that stretches across time and space to sustain all of this and to help us in our endeavour. We use the structure not only as a tool but also as a vessel to carry us across that ocean. From its vintage point we scrutinize the horizon for that ray of light which has that power to give us the hope and strength which are direly needed in our journey.

Metaphorically speaking we may say that we are reflected in each other and depend on each other to reach our potentials. The individual is strong thanks to that mutual support he finds among the collectivity. At the same time, the strength of that structure depends on the cohesion of its members. It is within a strong structure that the quest for control and power, which seem to be imprinted in most



of us, is kept at bay. As long as there is balance between these forces there is equality and strength. This synergy created within this chamber is the creative force which we are talking about.

Nevertheless, ground rules are unavoidable in order to set our conduct toward each other. However, in time, based on the same ideas, we create a hierarchy within the same structure. From among our ranks we also elect castes of 'high priests'

which, in turn, in order to protect, sustain and satisfy their own needs, gave us gods and dogmas to enlighten us. It is in this way, I submit, that the system had been hijacked by these few who we trust. It is here that our vision had been clouded, entrapped in that cave populated by shadows, becoming blind to the light of the outside world.

The seed of our misery had been probably sown at the same time when we had allowed these institutions take shape and define our hopes and our dreams, when we submissively accepted their dogmas as absolute truth, and sacrificed our individuality and our freedom without realising what we were losing. By doing so, we not only compromised our integrity as free individuals but also the integrity of the collectivity. From a creative

force of evolution we became passive creators manipulated by the hands of the few.

After that, we walked together, and together we stormed the stage of history with our will to survive. With our thirst for more we shaped our world. It has been this synergy which we created amongst us that made all of this possible. This social animal—admittedly a contradiction in itself—is capable to cooperate with other social animals for a common goal and, at the same time, to compete against them, frequently for personal gain, and win battles against odds, and survive and flourish despite its limitations. It is for this reason that we need to jealously protect and promote our mutual interest.

All this should not be perceived as a quest for power but as an attempt to determine if we are just passive passengers in a moving carriage, or its driver. This is a battle of the will without which we are just domesticated animals, indoctrinated by the few to follow without asking questions. It is not about solutions. It is about questions we should ask, and the questions are the answer. It is all about taking control of one's life, and to be in charge, as much as possible, of one's own destiny.

So the question we may ask ourselves when we see our reflection in the mirror—'Who is he?', 'Who is she?'—is also a question we should ask collectively: 'Who are we?'.

The End.

Alfred Zammit, from Paola, a co-founder of the Philosophy Sharing foundation is an avid reader, and delights in the exercise of pure reason. His philosophical mind blends imagination with ingenuity.

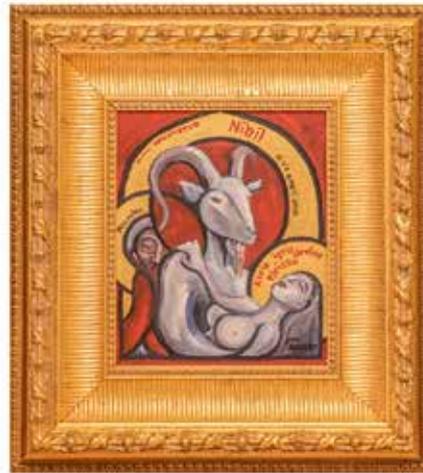
Girl before a mirror (1932),
Picasso, Boisgeloup, Paris.

A few years ago Marta and I finally made a visit to Hypogeum. To walk down the underground labyrinthine, carved out into the rock more than 5000 years ago, was overwhelming. A step into the oracle room, a small chamber with a powerful acoustic resonance

and its roof painted with spots and spirals in red ochre, is a step away from something and towards... something else. If you have been there you know what I mean.

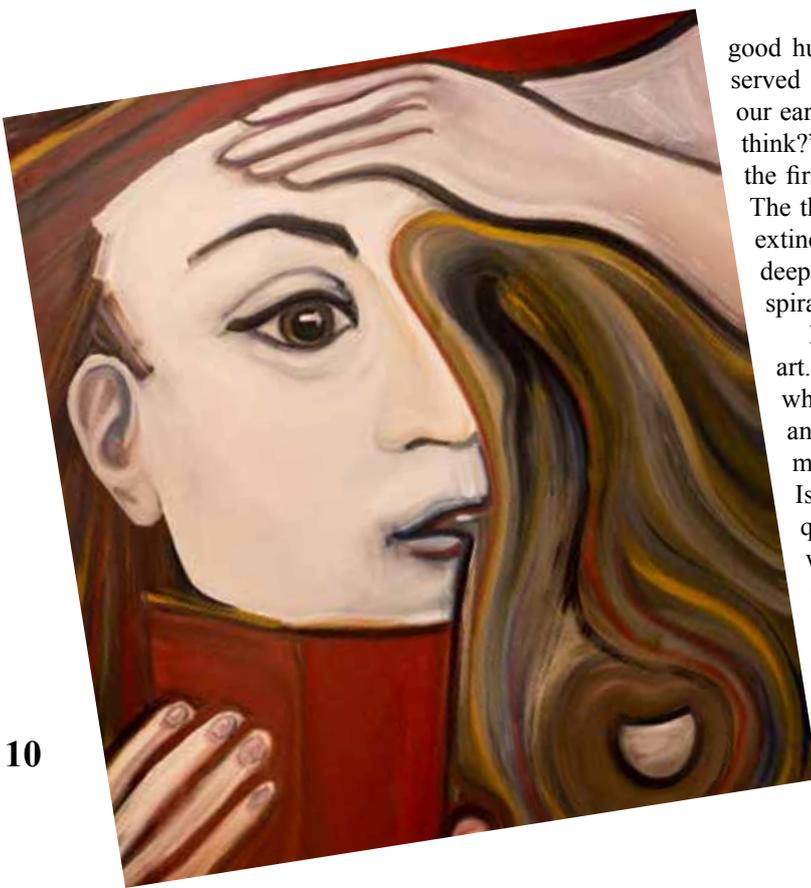
Besides the fascination of being in this hole in time, I was also impressed by the sites audio guide. Usually, such guides tell you how prehistorical people pleased their gods to ensure growth and fertility, that wall paintings was thought to bring

ART



What's the point?

By Tomas Hed



good hunting luck, etc. At Hypogeum we were not being served that kind of interpretations. Instead, the voice in our earphones concluded every station with "What do you think?". Perhaps the repetition became a bit annoying after the first four, five stations, nevertheless it was up-lifting. The thought crossed my mind that a work of art, like an extinct culture, is impossible to fully unravel. I realised deep down I would like my own art to be seen like the spirals at Hypogeum.

In art philosophy, thinkers look for the meaning of art. In what way is art able to influence the world in which we live, they ask. Is art a method to unite people and keep societies together? Does art communicate more directly, through emotions rather than intellect? Is art a medium of truth, or a matter of taste? These questions arise from the insight that art changes the world. Basically, it does so in two ways. The first is *art as a message*. Thus, art is created out of a collective agreement about the world surrounding us – our

Anxious, Tomas Hed.

Tomas Hed at the creative process.



values, moral, ethics, and billions of codes – either to confirm or go against. Placed in the wrong time or space the message cannot be understood and the art loses its meaning.

The second way is *art as a thing*. Simply by being, existing, it changes the material world in which the audience lives – and new conditions change people. However, when people discuss art in a philosophical manner I often find one perspective being left out – mine. I mean the artists view, that of the art-making rather than the result.

Recently we were a little group hiking around in Dwejra. One man, who I didn't know before, suddenly jumped into a ditch full of dumped rubbish. He came back carrying some broken tiles, which he carefully put in his rucksack. I was told he is a mosaic artist.

For me, an artist is an extension of the innocent child. This is the child with crayons, before learning how a drawing makes mum proud and nannu generous with sweets. I am not saying an artist cannot have an agenda, but it is not the agenda that makes the artist. For example, in advertising, artistic features determine the success of an advertisement, that is, anything but the advertising message itself. It is the clever headline, the funny photo and the screaming colour that makes the impact, and there are artists behind it. Putting an ad in a magazine does not make you an artist, though. The artist is an artist with or without an objective. How many artists have not yearned for naivety and a purified mind? As Picasso put it: "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child."

I see the creative process as an extension of nightly dreams. It is a journey with an unknown destination, a reach out for the subconscious and mysterious. It is also a world full of smell and solid materials. It takes away age, makes you young and sometimes very old. Above all, it is a call or a craving out of control, offering suffer and pleasure and occasionally a curious feeling of being reduced to a simple tool for a greater power beyond. Like Buddhist philosophy, the effort points towards nothingness. A ready painting is past. The next is present.

Once I was working on a painting in my studio in Gamla Stan, a medieval part of Stockholm. I had an early appointment at my bank the morning after and intended to finish off my session in time to be at home around six p.m. After a few lines and colour fields, I put down the brush to go to the bathroom. While washing my hands I got a view of myself in the mirror – what a horror! A pale face with frizzy hair and sunken eyes stared wildly back at me. What time was it? It was half past three in the morning. The bank meeting was at

eight.

It is hard work, and everything the process reveals to the artist is far from what art philosophers discuss because it all happens before the art is reborn in the world outside. Inside the studio, the work of art belongs to the artist alone.

When published, the artwork does not belong to the artist anymore. What inspired the creator originally – the idea, purpose, curiosity, or whatever – now lays in the hands of the spectator, who is not only a recipient but an interpreter. This is as it should be. The day comes when it is time to let go, like parents with their child.

Then we have the art connoisseur. This is a third part, a dot placed somewhere in the space between A and B. The art expert is a double-edged sword. Articulating the effects that the work of art induces, pointing out what there is to discover and telling stories about the artist's struggle and intentions, is an attempt to take control of the artwork. You may say a professional interpretation opens up the eyes of the spectators, but may as well argue they get their eyes blinded for good. How do you open-mindedly approach a painting, after being told what to see?

Nevertheless, without art philosophers and interpreters highlighting art and artwork, (often unfolding qualities not even the artist is aware of), the work of art most likely would remain unnoticed by the public, just as the artist would remain unknown.

I imagine Dalí and Caravaggio giggling in their graves, amused that their works are still alive, still changing the world. Whether the artist in the oracle room is laughing too, I do not hear as clear. After all, the spirals in red do not belong to this world and maybe by now have gone back into the hands of their creator.

Tomas Hed is from Stockholm, Sweden, and runs an advertising, PR, and media agency. He is an artist, and one who's fascinated by the philosophical entrails of things. He lives at Gozo, which he loves.

The /Philosophy in Malta/ page of the English version of Wikipedia, together with its Maltese version rendering, is possibly the only comprehensive account of philosophy in Malta on the Internet. Visitors, perhaps mostly students, consult it on a regular basis.

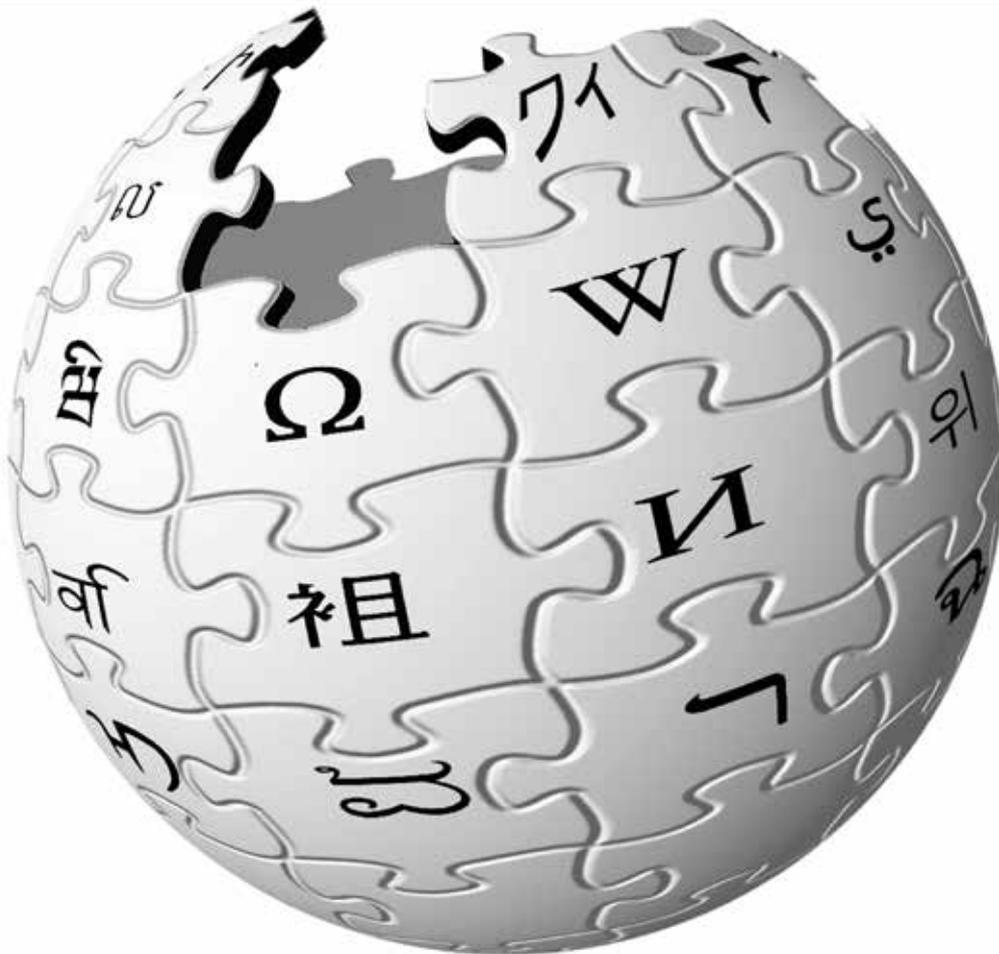
Nevertheless, students are generally not allowed to quote or include in their essays references to Wikipedia. No serious author would ever indicate Wikipedia as one of his or her sources. It would appear that the world-famous free encyclopedia is not to be trusted. At least not completely.

Who says so? Wikipedia itself. On one of its pages, called /Ten things you may not know about Wikipedia/, the sixth item on the list, titled /We do not expect you to trust us/, unambiguously states that “while some articles are of the highest quality of scholarship, others are admittedly complete rubbish”, and goes on to advise, “Please do not use Wikipedia to make critical decisions”.

How’s that for a put-off? Yet Wikipedia remains as popular as ever both as a source of information not otherwise available and possibly as a fund of critical evaluations.

According to its own reports, Wikipedia’s English

The Wikipedia ‘Philosophy i



version alone, which includes some 5.5 million articles, averaging to around 800 new articles per day, generates an average of 16 billion page views per month and sometimes more, up to 25 billion. The entire Wikipedia project, including its sister sites, develop at an average rate of over 10 edits per second, performed by editors from all over the world.

Wikipedia was founded by the American Jimmy Wales (b. 1966), a graduate in finance from the Auburn University and the University of Alabama, both in Alabama, United States. Interestingly enough, his first successful Internet experience came five years before founding Wikipedia when he co-created an adult web portal featuring entertainment and adult content. He is the author or co-author of various books, and the recipient of a host of honours and awards.

The principle upon which Wikipedia is based was not designed by Wales or exclusive to Wikipedia. It is the principle generally attributed to the British

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

statistician Francis Galton (1822–1911) that states that the collective opinion of a group of individuals is less likely to err than that of a single expert. Incredible as this might seem, it has been mathematically proved over and over again.

The first known proponent of this principle was Aristotle in the 3rd century BCE. “The many,” he states in the third book of *Politics*, “who are not as individuals excellent men, nevertheless can, when they have come together, be better than the few best people, not individually but collectively, just as feasts,” he charmingly adds, “to which many contribute are better than feasts provided at one person’s expense” (11, 1281a41–1281b2).

The American social scientist Scott E. Page (b. 1963) contributed to the ‘crowd-wisdom’ (or ‘collective

in Malta’ Page

By Roderick Mangion

intelligence’) hypothesis by introducing the Diversity Prediction Theorem (DPT) which looks something like this:

$$(c - \theta)^2 = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (s_i - \theta)^2 - \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (s_i - c)^2$$

This looks pretty complicated. Translated into simple English it means that the squared error of the collective prediction equals the average squared error minus the predictive diversity. This is based on the following reckoning:

$$\text{Crowd Error} = \text{Average Error} - \text{Diversity}$$

The theorem proves that the larger the diversity in a group, the smaller is the error of the crowd and, consequently, the greater is the accuracy of the collective wisdom. This directly bears on an application such as that implemented by Wikipedia.

The most common arguments for Wikipedia’s purportedly error-prone practice are basically seven, namely that contributors, including editors, might be anonymous, have hidden agendas, create malicious entries, be culturally too homogenous, be relatively few, coalesce into a steady high-level group which makes it harder for casual participants to contribute, and silence as ‘unreliable’ accurate contributors.

Considering what was said above, together with Wikipedia’s own meticulous and rigorous editing regulations, most of these objections melt away. Perhaps the single most reliable rule to follow

when consulting something like Wikipedia is one which should be employed *always* and with any reading, that is, *one must never fully rely on any one source of information.*

According to Wikipedia’s record lab, the /Philosophy in Malta/ page of the English version was created on 27 July, 2011, by an anonymous user with more than 700 contributions or edits. Since then the page has been edited more than 350 times with an input of 25 different editors. It is accessed by an average of five users per day, mostly from desktops, with an average of one per day from the mobile web. The page had more than 11,000 views since its creation six years ago.

The page has seven main titles. It begins with a short history of philosophy in Malta, continues with a partially clickable list of all the professors who held the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Malta (that is, since 1771), presents a short analysis of the growth in philosophical awareness in the Maltese islands, proceeds with a fully clickable chronological list of a number of Maltese philosophers, and concludes with references, main sources, and external links. The page also includes a small number of interesting images of philosophical texts.

What might be mostly relevant to the reliability level is that the page names five main independent funds of information, and cites twenty-eight different source authors.

Whatever the case, with its average five views per day, the possible margin of error of Wikipedia’s /Philosophy in Malta/ page does not seem to inhibit users from accessing it on a regular basis. Of course, it can be improved, and perhaps should. Nevertheless, it may be a good start.

Roderick Mangion studied philosophy as a subsidiary subject while reading a Bachelor’s course in Design and Innovation with the Open University in England. One hobby he loves is fishing out philosophy sites, and assessing their worth. He lives in Xaghra, Gozo.

“ /Philosophy in Malta/ ”

Created:	2011
Page edited:	350+ times
Page editors:	25
User access:	Av. 5 per day
Total views:	11,000+



”



Gulja Holland was born in 1990 and studied art both in Malta and abroad. She has a degree in art from Leeds College of Art. Her works are allegedly influenced by Daniel Betra and Dale Frank. She has had her works exhibited at prestigious galleries in Malta like Lilly Agius Gallery and abroad at the internationally acclaimed Saatchi and Saatchi. So what makes Gulja Holland special?

Her works and style are quite original. Her thematics display a political conscience bound by principals that are aware of contemporary issues and the limitations imposed upon these by what we refer to as 'reality'. What appears to be her art today must also be understood as art at a particular point in time of the artist's life. Like many other artists she still has a long way to go and a lot more to do and develop. Her thinking will change, her perspectives will be transformed, her principals will be developed and her art ought to change accordingly. So when we look at her art today, we ought to be conscious of this embryonic stage of artistic development. Where she is today is possibly not exactly where she will be in a decade or two, or even further away.

Gulja's art displays a colourful imagery bound by tones and shades of her own times in which she displays talent and creativity. I have had the privilege of having seen some of her works at Lilly Agius' Gallery and some on her own website. The arrangement of colours and organisation of shapes seem to capture a conscious and objective creation made according to a very precise plan. Her development of the Gaza victim child, for example, shows gradual changes in composition that confirm her meticulous attention to detail and nuance. Her use of scientific plotting of environmental materials, for example, allow her to use versatile transformations of what would otherwise simply be empirical data to add life to these correspondences, while actually also adding other human dimensions to these. This is Gulja's contribution to ontology. She displays an ability to understand humanity without the liabilities of value and belief systems, as though completely detached. She never seems to impose any order on her artwork other than the technical necessities of art itself, thus exposing a sense of 'being' that is quite unique. This seems to give her art a freedom rarely displayed in contemporary work. This is actually where her talent appears to be at its best.

Imposing our own philosophical reading on Gulja Holland's work would not do justice to the artist or art. However, life is made up of diverse perspectives being drawn upon to read other people's art. As a philosophy magazine we must declare our bias in favour of philosophical readings.

Gulja's art is still at its departure stage; it still has a long way to go. This having been taken into account, her art seems promising and fulfilling. She seems to explore aspects of 'being' in an original manner, focussing on such calamities as environmental contamination. This art displays originality inasmuch as it illustrates a facet of reality many people seem happy to ignore or are indifferent towards. In this respect,

altered egos

By Meinrad Calleja

her art is both assertive and defeatist. Assertive because she tackles a subject objectively yet dispassionately; defeatist as she seems to reduce these environmental issues to crude data devoid of human implication (or at least responsibility to amend).

She goes quite a few steps further and focuses on a Gaza victim as symbolic of a similar typology of indifference many simply dismiss from their own frame of reference. Worse still, an accentuation of the child victim that actually trivialises and distorts the real issues at stake – a repressive regime terrorising its subjects and opponents that this art at once both celebrates and ex/re-presses. Is this simply a bourgeoisie conscience or an objective political articulation

Dukkha, Gulja Holland



of reality (?) is now the question we have before us, a question we cannot yet answer.

Ġulja's colour schemes seem to suggest a demystification of colour codes that look at single colours as expressions of reality rather than colours as symbols of light or value. This style redimensionalises her art and adds depth to her own originality. One can understand her appeal to Saatchi and Saatchi. Her art enjoys a depth of purpose that is displayed coldly and bluntly. Her colour schemes illustrate this quite clearly. Her art appears to be a depiction of reality that depicts it as it is and highlights the arbitrary nature of colour itself as a medium of depiction.

Ġulja Holland manages to present her art in a manner that may appear contradictory to this



Human Shield IV, Ġulja Holland

The crying Indian, Ġulja Holland



reading. She seems to have managed to accrue a degree of political literacy devoid of irrational emotions that see reality as it actually is or she believes is. Her depictions are attractive and reassuring enough to be both liminal and abstract. One need not dwell upon her own reading of ontology as this may actually distract rather than elucidate. However, one may wish to look upon her art as a serious indictment against human greed, passion, malice, and violence, depicted soberly and dispassionately. Her art also displays art as a form of happiness shared by adherents who enjoy art for art's sake.

Meinrad Calleja studied Islamic history, Arabic studies, Islamic philosophy, and sociology at the University of Malta. His published books include *Aspects of Racism in Malta* (1999), *Islam & the Dynamics of Power* (2000), *The Philosophy of Desert Metaphors in Ibrahim al-Koni* (2013), and *The Battle Roar of Silence: Foucault and the carceral system* (2013).

The author would like to thank Lilly Agius Art Gallery, Cathedral Street, Sliema, Malta, for its kind support for this article. Ġulja Holland's website is: www.guljaholland.com

KILLING ME SOFTLY

By Anthony Zarb Dimech

Euthanasia is a hot issue intensely spoken about. After the introduction of IVF legislation in Malta in 2012, euthanasia may be the next controversial piece of legislation to be introduced in Malta.

A parliamentary committee has already been set up composed of experts in the legal and moral fields. Real-life cases of individuals who are considered as possible candidates for euthanasia in Malta are frequently used by lobby groups to put pressure for the introduction of euthanasia.

As I see it, the right to live has assumed a somewhat vague concept today. We seem to live in a culture of extremes and contradictions. Whereas the UN's Charter of Human Rights emphasises the fundamental right to life, we simultaneously find those who advocate the right to die.

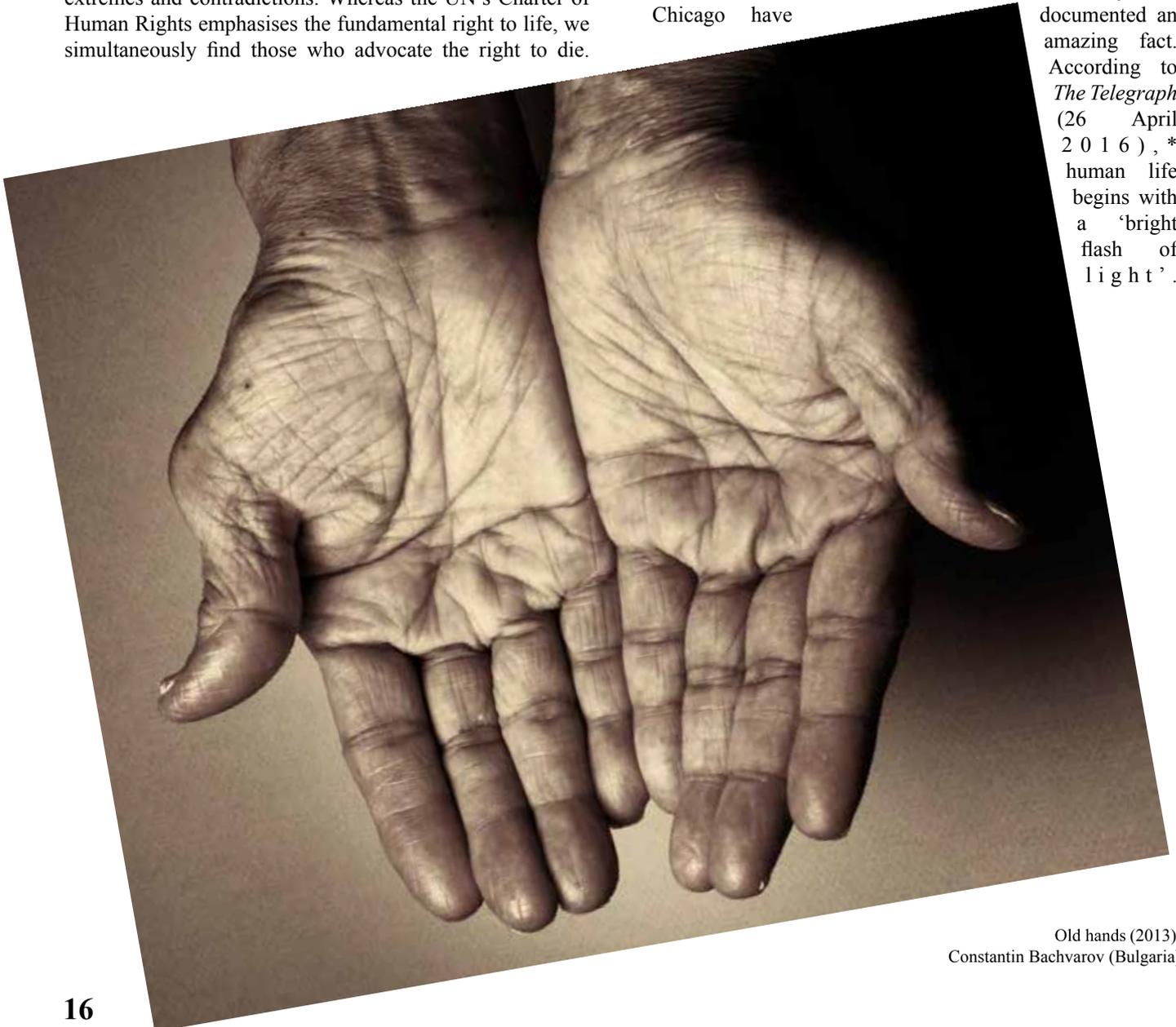
In itself, the term 'euthanasia' is derived from the Greek *εὐθανασία* meaning 'good death', and evokes the idea that causing or contributing to someone's death may bestow on that person a favour or a benefit.

The prevalent argument used in Malta by lobby groups in favour of euthanasia seeks to show respect to the autonomous choices of a person including the choice to end life and to choose how to do it. They use as their premise that these people desire to die with dignity.

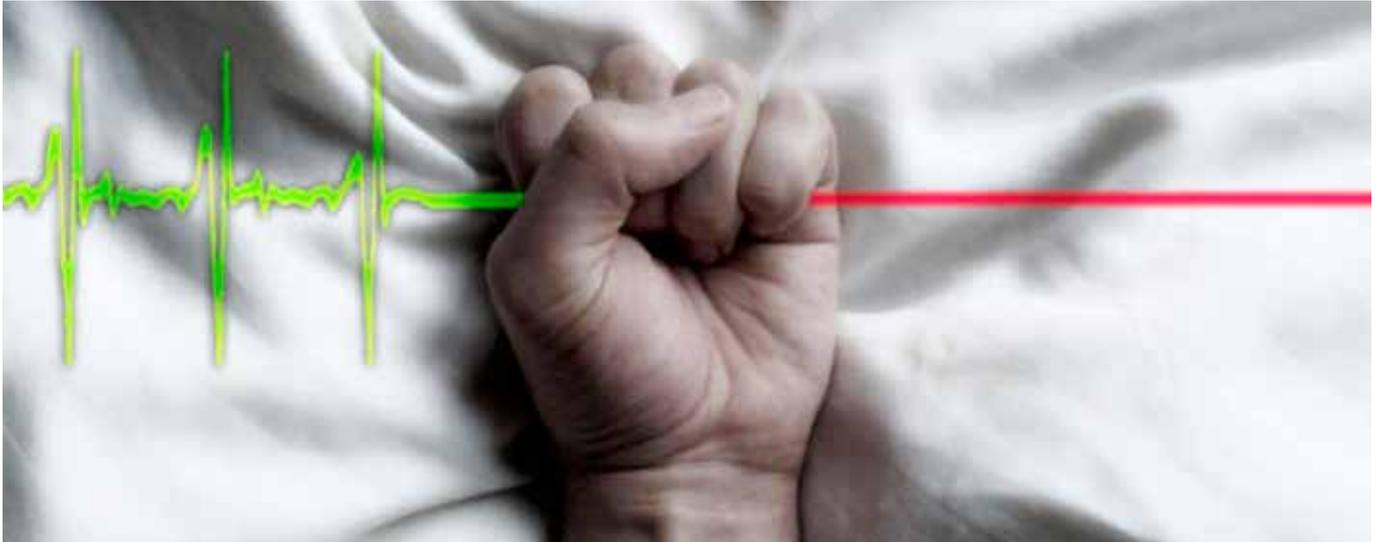
In my view the proponents of euthanasia seem to forget the beauty of conception and personhood, and base their argument on the explicit right to die. They try to formulate a law and control through rules and regulations. Nevertheless, serious problems remain, even if the best law is enacted.

Researchers at Northwestern University in Chicago have

documented an amazing fact. According to *The Telegraph* (26 April 2016), * human life begins with a 'bright flash of light'.



Old hands (2013), Constantin Bachvarov (Bulgaria)



Final exit (2015) / Agenzia Giornalistica Fotografica, Rome.

When a human sperm meets an egg, scientists held, ‘an explosion of tiny sparks erupts from the egg at the exact moment of conception’. According to the report, Northwestern professor Teresa Woodruff called the phenomenon ‘breathtaking’. Some believe that this moment is the start of life and personhood.

Those in favour of euthanasia seem to be existentialist in their approach. They are part of a society that does not want to suffer. It considers pain and suffering as a shameful burden to carry in a macho society which portrays accepting help from someone as being humiliating and disgraceful. There is also this inherent strong appeal to emotions when building a case for euthanasia.

It seems that a more holistic view than this should be considered. Human beings are persons endowed with characteristics that are associated with personhood. We have a mind, a will and emotions. Not just a physical body. We possess beliefs about the world that surrounds us. We differ in our perceptions and worldviews. We possess the capacity to extract and form networks of beliefs about matters of life and death and a host of other social, political, economic and religious issues.

As humans, we are reflective, contemplative and meditative about our experiences, feelings and motives as well as those of others. We can empathise on how others are feeling and we can also understand cognitively. For instance, possessing life helps me to envisage what it means to lose it and, therefore, empathise and see things from the other person’s perspective.

All these innate characteristics make us special and unique individuals with a sense of creativity as we shape ourselves through choices, goals, actions and reactions. We also have the faculty to understand rights in the context of corresponding duties towards others.

Any strong legislation that is enacted to regulate euthanasia must not forget to consider the following points:

- Life should be treated with the utmost protection,

and the preferences of the individual be respected. Preference utilitarians do not shun suffering because life gives them the chance to accomplish certain tasks that fulfill their desires. Even though persons may suffer, they may want to continue to produce artistic works and engage themselves in other pursuits. Therefore individuals are the best judges of their own interests. There is also the danger that euthanasia can become a means of health care cost containment.

- Other possibilities to protect life should be applied, such as the doctrine of Double effect by giving a treatment to relieve pain though this may lead to shortening life.

- Any law on euthanasia should not be too generic and create an across-the-board treatment. Situational ethicists, who view each case for euthanasia on its own merits, believe that no-one can generalise on euthanasia. Certain principles that apply for one case may not apply in the same way for another case.

- Euthanasia legislation should not be a means of abuse and license to kill. The focus of the law should be not to help people die but to offer them the right medical treatment, human compassion and solidarity.

- Euthanasia legislation can convey the wrong message to society since suicide may be seen as the best way to end life’s problems.

Of course, all of these issues are highly debateable and very complex to resolve by a long chalk. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to state that life is to be protected and not lightly done away with. Our policy makers should take into account all possible means to preserve and lengthen life without, however, infringing on everyone’s right to die with dignity.

Anthony Zarb Dimech, from St. Julians, is the author of seven books on the history of Malta. His interests extend to current affairs and, of course, philosophy, which he is currently studying privately under specialised tutorship.

* The newspaper’s report, together with a short film, can be accessed at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/04/26/bright-flash-of-light-marks-incredible-moment-life-begins-when-s/>

People are not machines. Yet sometimes they are treated as such. Machines implement orders delivered by machine-operators. When the machines fail to function according to their executing orders they are considered bad and, very often, consigned to the scrap-yard, where they are left to rot. People, like machines, are sometimes considered expendable, and only good as long as they carry out what is expected of them.

Such a situation might seem shocking. It smacks of totalitarianism and despotism. However, it may also transpire in liberal democracies, as in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, or in certain areas of industry and employment. Certainly, it was the condition of millions upon millions of people in all parts of the world and in every age, and may still persist today. It is a sad one indeed.

A striking glimpse of such a state of affairs appeared in the well known 1977 novel *Midnight Express* by Billy Hayes and William Hoffer. The novel is autobiographical. It depicts Hayes' horrid experience in a Turkish prison during the early 1970s. A year after its appearance, the novel was made into an Columbia movie, screenplayed by Oliver Stone, which

became one of the most famous films shot almost entirely in Malta.

The storyline includes a scene in which a philosopher briefly comes to the fore. He is a Turk by the name of Ahmet. He encounters the main actor, Billy, in an underground chamber reserved for lunatics. The place is lit by two tiny bare light-bulbs which provide a faint, eerie illumination. A pot-bellied stove flickers, etching the shadows of the walkers in a strange orange glow.

Some of the lunatics, not walking, hover around the stove. Others are jammed onto a low L-shaped wooden platform that runs the length of two walls. Most of these men are naked, covered with

open running sores over their knees, elbows and buttocks. They are much quieter than the upstairs crowd. They are the lowest order of madmen. They have no minds left. They are the damned.

Billy walks among them expressionless. A tall, thin cadaverous Turk with a grizzled beard shuffles up alongside Billy, looks at him, and walks with him. He is about fifty, his pyjamas relatively clean, looking saner than the average but

Midnight Express

MEETS PHILOSOPHY

By Joe Pace

Lunatics' chamber (1978), a scene from Midnight Express.



his eyes are bright and scary, and his wet hair is matted down on his head, and big clumps of it have been pulled out. He speaks with a cultured English accent.

“You’re an American?” he asks.

Billy, interrupted, keeps his eyes on the ground. The Turk doesn’t wait for an answer. “Ah yes, America! My name is Ahmet. I studied philosophy at Harvard for many many years. But actually Oxford is my real Alma Mater. I’ve also studied in Vienna. Now I study here.”

Billy doesn’t notice, and shuffles along. Ahmet continues, “They put me here. They say I raped a little boy. I have been here a very long time. They will never let me go.”

Billy pays no attention, and keeps shuffling on. Ahmet

know they’re bad machines, but the people at the factory know. They know one of the machines that doesn’t work ...”

They walk on. Ahmet’s expression changes. Very politely, he tells Billy: “I think we have spoken enough for today. I say good night to you.” With that, he wraps his rags around himself quite carefully and falls out of the circle. He drops to his hands and knees and, with a sense of dignity, crawls into the filthy blackness under the L-shaped wooden platform, disappearing like a cockroach.

The scene is succinct and poignant. Billy misses the unique chance of getting to know the

tormented philosopher.

He is too preoccupied with his own desperate predicament. He

practically dismisses him as irrelevant. On

his part, like a true philosopher, Ahmet is

clearly determined to rationalise his anguish.

His raw philosophy seems to be that the world is

a sort of manufacturing plant in which people are

entrapped, compelled to act like automated machines. In

other words, a dehumanised world set to produce ... what,

exactly? The philosopher does not tell us.

One would hardly expect Ahmet, in his dire straits, to

adopt an optimistic philosophy. Despite his studies at Harvard

and Oxford and in Vienna, his outlook is grim and foreboding.

Of course, it’s easy to be buoyant

when life’s smiling. In atrocious situations, when one is a

victim of uncontrollable circumstances—such as unjust imprisonment, war, dispossession, persecution, and the like—to look at the bright side of things becomes a titanic

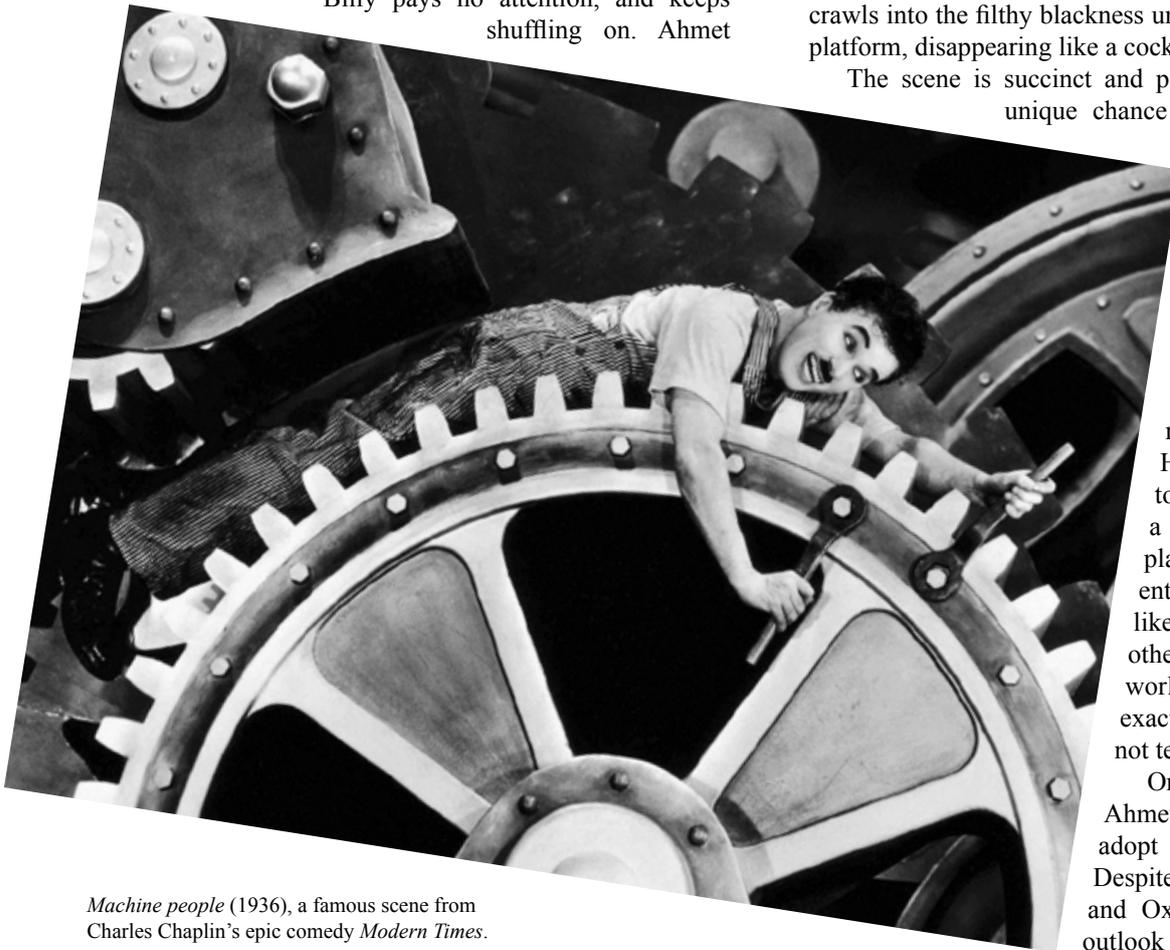
accomplishment. It would take exceptional spirits, like that

of a Boethius, a Dietrich Bonhoeffer or a Alojzije Mišić to ride the crest of the wave. An Edith Stein or a Hannah Arendt

could tell us how difficult it is to vindicate evil.

The forlorn Ahmet almost hints on science without a conscience. He perhaps reminds us of how vicious expediency can become when severed from morals.

Joe Pace, from Senglea, is a motion pictures aficionado very much interested in the philosophical undertones of movies. His main concern is not in extrapolating philosophical reflections from movies but rather in movies which depict philosophical hypotheses.



Machine people (1936), a famous scene from Charles Chaplin’s epic comedy *Modern Times*.

glances at him, and smiles. “They won’t let *you* go either,” he proffers.

The smug certainty of Ahmet’s manner reaches some chord deep inside Billy. He glances briefly at this lunatic who is smiling, than looks back at his feet.

“No, they’ll never let you go,” the philosopher persists, “They tell you they’ll let you go but you stay. You never go from here.”

Billy plods on. Ahmet grins and tries to explain the situation like a father lecturing a child: “You see, we all come from a factory. Sometimes the factory makes bad machines that don’t work. They put them here. The bad machines don’t

If only humanity had the honest courage to step back and adopt an external perspective of their lives they would realise the extent of how their commitments are based on blind responses, habits and rituals of behaviour that are never questioned. But if a person became aware of such commitments as an empty experience what would be the response to such an awareness of a cruel and brutal reality?

There could be two possible dangerous outcomes. One could be to simply give up and despair losing sanity or even, possibly, committing suicide. The other path could be the excessive pursuit of sensual pleasures, such as overindulgence in sex, wealth accumulation, food and alcohol without any consideration of the negative consequences they will bring to themselves in the future.

Between these two extremes, the philosophy of the Greek Epicurus (341–270 BCE) is so sensible when he calls for moderation in all types of behaviour, and argues for peace of mind or tranquillity to be the main goal in life.

Seen in this light, the idea of naturism—the practice of going naked in certain designated areas or communities—blends so perfectly well with Epicurean philosophy.

Unfortunately many people tend to view nakedness as an alternative lifestyle that goes against the established ideals and values of mainstream society. Many people simply find the naked body indecent, immoral, embarrassing and offensive to their values of human dignity.

All these perceptions can, however, be proven to be based on a misguided view. As Philip Carr Gomm argues in *A History of Nakedness* (2010), we need to make a distinction when describing separately the two unclothed states of nakedness and nudity. Nakedness refers to the innocent state of simply being uncovered while nudity refers to the unclothed state that is being knowingly observed.

One has to admit that the words ‘nude’ and ‘naked’ are

The Philosophy of Naturism

by Ian Rizzo

Freedom of being (2017) by Ariel Lustre.

used interchangeably in common parlance, and many people do not feel the need for such a distinction. I tend to disagree because the definition of nudity can help us appreciate why nudity, rather than nakedness, can so easily cross the line into erotica and pornography.

However, the first thing one has to establish in deciding whether one is going to end up naked or nude is the determination of intent. In *Love and Responsibility* (1960), Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, states unequivocally that “there are circumstances in which nakedness is not immodest”. He goes on to add that “nakedness is not to be equated with physical shamelessness. Once we accept that the act of nakedness can be an honest intent detached from



As broad as the sea (2017) by Jason Zook.

sexual thoughts and feelings, three very important concepts emerge from such a reasoning. First that the human body is not seen as something shameful or indecent to be hidden or covered up. Second that the human body is not judged on the basis of shape, age, gender, size, color or disability. Lastly that people are accepted on the basis of who they are, not what they wear”.

The fact that naturism liberates the human body from condemnation, judgement and artificiality is always likely to help people improve their sense of confidence in their bodies and well-being. In this regard naturism offers the potential to foster a higher degree of honesty and trust in the way humans interact with each other while promoting at the same time a sense of tolerance and respect for divergent views.

Clothes are, on the other hand, the antithesis of naturism. Although we do have to allow that clothing is sometimes necessary to protect our bodies and give us comfort from certain adverse climatic conditions, we have to acknowledge that clothing has always been conveniently used as symbols of power, status and celebration for certain events, rituals and ceremonies. However, apart of these issues, clothing is also used to package the human body in a form that fits within the expectation of society for the role or the event that is in question. Adding to all this is the constant bombardment from the media, magazines, celebrities and the fashion industry that cultivates the image of the ideal look and body image.

Naturism also has the potential to offer another valuable benefit to humanity: going back to Nature. Naturism seems to be perfectly compatible with the philosophy of the romantic movement that encouraged the worship of nature as a new religion.

Naturism believes that a person would feel more acutely the relationship with the natural world, be it the sea or the warmth of the sun, when in the nude. One has just to test such an assertion by trying to swim naked and compare it with the present swimwear experience. Alternatively, one has to simply ask why stripping naked to take a private bath is something that comes naturally, while swimming naked in the open sea is not.

Whatever the arguments, most people will still not accept nakedness outdoors because they have been conditioned from an early to age to view the human body with a negative and repugnant attitude. That is why I believe that naturism remains to this very day shunned worldwide by mainstream societies. This is indeed so unfortunate when considering the potential benefits offered by naturism to society and humanity: body confidence, tolerance, environment awareness, simple lifestyle, and sexual maturity. Nonetheless, any evidence to demonstrate that naturism plays any negative role or has any harmful effect has yet to be forthcoming.

As Bertrand Russell maintained in *Marriage and Morals* (1929), the problem of nakedness always remains grounded on the fact that it is simply a taboo. Naturists can overcome this taboo if they demonstrate in deeds and words that they adhere to the philosophy of naturism, a philosophy based on non-sexual nudity, respect for the human body, tolerance of differing views, and the need to feel a sense of oneness with nature.

Ian Rizzo is a naturist and a philosophy enthusiast. Some of his short philosophical articles appeared in *Philosophy Now* (UK). By profession he is an accountant and auditor.



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philosophy in Malta

SNIPPETS FROM HISTORY



When Bertrand Russell chose Malta

It is quite an exceptional phenomenon when a world-famous philosopher chooses Malta as a sort of base for some of his activities. It is so rare as to sound actually odd. Great philosophers roam great places. Malta is small. No, tiny. And yet, back in the sixties, the great Bertrand Russell actually chose Malta to 'put his foot down' right here. Russell was not a man to be trifled with. But nor was the man he chose to pin his hopes on.

This was Dom Mintoff, Malta's then leader of the opposition, who at the time was spearheading a tumultuous battle against the reactionary Catholic Church and British colonialism. The year was 1963, and Russell was 91 years old.

As it happened, Mintoff was so well known in Britain, and the then Prime Minister such a nonentity, at least abroad, that Russell mistakenly thought that Mintoff was the head of government! So on December 9, 1963, the philosopher wrote to "Dear Prime Minister Dom Mintoff" proposing that Malta becomes the home of the international radio of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, which had just been formed that very same year. The radio had also to be the voice of the Atlantic Peace Foundation.

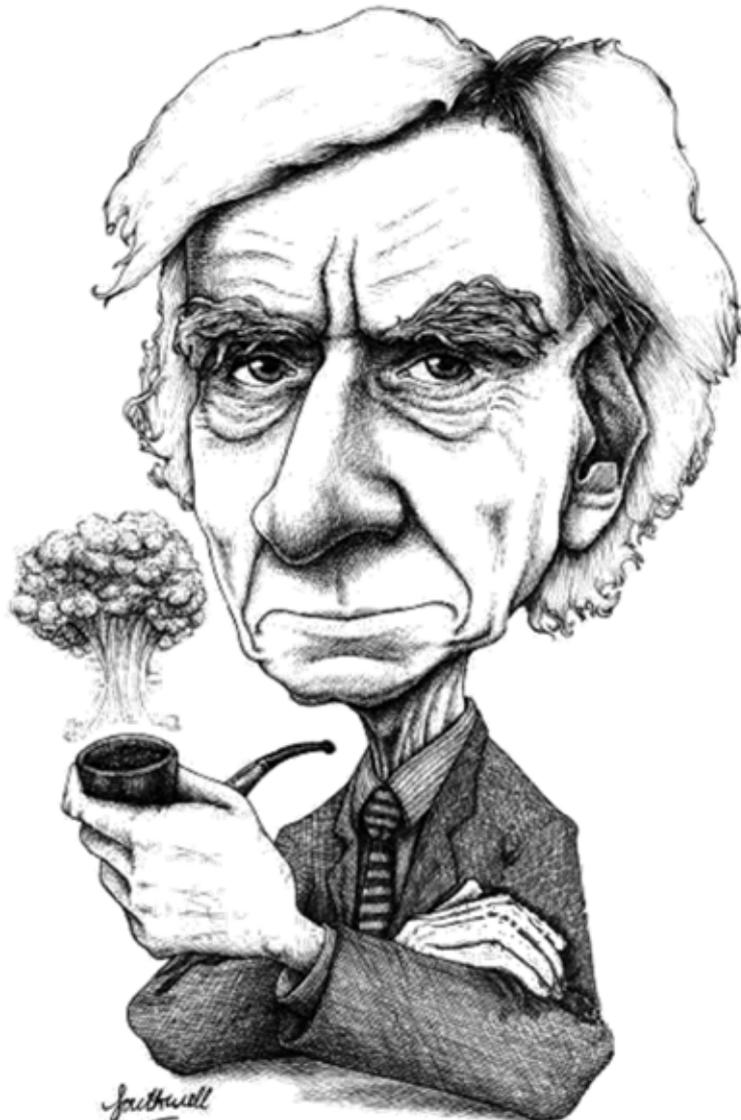
Though at a venerable age, Russell had by then become very active and increasingly vocal in his disapproval of the Vietnam War, and felt that the US government's

policies there were near-genocidal. In the same year that he began his correspondence with Mintoff, Russell became the inaugural recipient of the Jerusalem Prize, an award for writers concerned with the freedom of the individual in society. Mintoff was his man.

However, though Mintoff must have been thrilled to receive letters from the hero of so many of the youthful members of the British 'New Left', of course he could not help Russell out with his radio project. Instead, Mintoff requested that Russell support his political efforts in Malta, and went as far as to invite him to visit the island. Although Russell had to decline the invitation due to health reasons and his tight schedule, he suggested that they meet during Mintoff's next stay in London. Whether they ever met remains a mystery.

That would have been a memorable day had Russell come over. He would have

given the workers' movement much needed comfort and encouragement at such a difficult time, and—who knows?—also a right up boost to philosophy in Malta.





The International connection

Following the recent commencement, from only last March, of its international relationship through the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP), the Philosophy Sharing Foundation is currently in the process of determining the ways and means with which it can make the most of this valuable connexion. The many

years. Next year's congress bears the general title 'Learning to be human'. The complementary aims of the congress include an emphasis on exploring dimensions of the human and inquiring into the challenges facing humanity. You can access the official website of the congress at this address: <http://wcp2018.pku.edu.cn>. We encourage you to do so.

The international desk of Philosophy Sharing has the general objective of establishing steady connections with philosophy societies around the world, and build bonds of collaboration and partnership. The Foundation believes that, as Maltese philosophy enthusiasts, we need to reach out of our secluded

GETTING OUR BEARINGS

possibilities have to be explored and filtered so as to identify what suits the Foundation's needs and potentials best. To this effect an in-depth feasibility study is under way. In the meantime, FISP is busy preparing for its 24th World Congress of Philosophy, to be held in Beijing, China, on August 13–20, 2018. Such congresses are organised every five

and sheltered cultural environment towards other perspectives, assessments and outlooks. Close contact and interaction with similar foreign organisations can be one of the best ways to achieve this.

It is hoped that in the coming months our efforts in this area will bear fruit. We'll keep you informed. For more informa-

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philosophy sharing

the gozo experience

By Marta Obiols Fornell

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Philosophy Sharing Gozo!

It's not already written what we are, but it is quite clear how we like things to be done. How? With enthusiasm, optimism, open mindedness, professionalism and criticism!

Since the beginning of this year 2017, we had had at Circolo Gozitano interesting talks with different personalities of the Maltese Islands, with a good audience and follow up discussions. The last talk, before summer began, was given by the ex-Prime Minister Dr Alfred Sant about the experience of a European identity in a Europe of nations and a world pointing towards globalisation. It woke up troubling questions about our future as a continent and also made us wonder in what sense we define our identity at all.

All these meetings are great opportunities to bring together people with different backgrounds, interested in developing and sharing their knowledge about philosophical questions and, above all, in keeping a critical mind in order to build up themselves or, if you want, society. Let's say that we don't like to take for granted what is given or, in the words of Hans Castorp (from Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*), our leitmotiv is getting used to not getting used.

We are working hard to achieve better results and to reach more people with similar concerns. We would like to be like a forum in this island, where one can express freely one's philosophical opinions and also where one can find a source of knowledge and motivation. For example, we realised that it was very difficult to find books about Philosophy in Gozo. How could we start to solve this? Bringing books to Gozo! With the help of Mark Montebello, now we have a wide selection of philosophical books at the Inspire Charity Shop, located in 1, Triq Fortunato Mizzi, Victoria, Gozo. We en-



Meanwhile, by Tomas Hed.

courage you to go and have a look. All books cost around 1 or 3 euros only, and they are being sold quite fast!

As a very young institution, we are learning by doing. At the moment, we are preparing new editions of future talks and also new spaces for meeting up and discuss Philosophy. We are amazed about the potential of this small island with so huge a variety of people, locals and foreigners prepared to think, to question and to have fun.

We would like to hear from you and see you at our meetings. Remember, after the summer break, in October, we will be back on the first Friday of every month at Circolo Gozitano. First in line is Mr. Ian Rizzo talking about the Philosophy of Naturism. Not to be missed, I promise! Meanwhile you can contact us at philosophysharinggozo@gmail.com.



A busy summer ...

Since our last issue in May, right through spring and summer, the Foundation of course continued with its activities on a regular basis, both in Malta and in Gozo. Here are a few notes about what we've been up to:

- **PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS:** Our meetings were held as usual on every first Friday of each month. The 3 May meeting was led by Dr François Mifsud in English on 'Hospitality : A sanctuary of education'. The 7 June meeting, also in English, was led by Luz Adriana Tamayo Duque on 'Phenomenology and self-affirmation'. The 5 July meeting was led in English by Dr Laner Cassar on 'Jung: Irrationality,

- **NEW RECRUITS:** Some changes have been made in the Foundation's Steering Committee since our last issue. Andrea Axisa, who has been our Malta-Gozo Liaison, had to give up his post due to his impending departure to England for further studies. This responsibility has now gone to Cynthia Amato, a graduate in philosophy from the University of Malta. Also new on the committee is Luke Scicluna, also a graduate of philosophy at the University of Malta, who has been made responsible of the Foundation's monthly public discussions. A very warm welcome to both, and good luck in your new assignments!

- **PLANNING AHEAD:** The Foundation is becoming ambitious more than ever. So, beware! It has now been over

and still not tired yet!

fantasy and level-headed madness'. The 2 August meeting was delivered by Dr Jean-Paul Baldachino on the cultural and political hybridity of the Mediterranean as seen through music. All of these public discussion meetings were held at the Valletta Volunteer Centre in Melita Street since our usual venue, Luciano Restaurant in Merchants Street is currently unavailable due to ongoing renovation works. The next meetings will be held on 6 September, 4 October, 1 November and 6 December. One public discussion meeting was held in Gozo at the Circolo Gozitano, Victoria, on 5 May, by Dr Alfred Sant on 'The experience of a European identity'. The next meeting in Gozo, also at the Circolo, will be on 6 October, and led by Ian Rizzo on 'The philosophy of naturism'. Updates on these and other events will be regularly posted on our website www.philosophysharing.org. All of the talks mentioned above were extremely interesting, and also very well attended. Be sure not to miss out! Videos of talks can be followed on You Tube at the 'Philosophy Sharing Malta' channel.

- **COMMITTEE MEETINGS:** Both administrative committees, that is in Malta and in Gozo, held their monthly meetings at a steady pace. The Malta committee holds such meetings on every second Wednesday of every month. The Gozo committee holds its meetings on every third Saturday. All meetings were also held through the hot summer months.

five years since the establishment of the foundation, during which time it has successfully found its niche in the local cultural and educational scene, and, more importantly, it has kept a regular and constant schedule of public events. None of this was easy. Nevertheless, the future looks bright as ever, and we intend to keep it so. To this effect, at the moment an important internal process has begun to take the Foundation to a new and advanced level. The professionally prepared Strategic Plan that is being drawn up for 2018–20 has a broad base of consultation and access, and will strengthen the Foundation's strengths and make due provision for its inexorable obstacles. The Plan aims high, rest assured. It is to be ready to go full steam by February 2018.



One of the Foundations' latest public discussions in Valletta. The Colombian Luz Adriana Tamayo Duque delivers her talk on 7 June, 2017.



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