

SHARE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 4

JANUARY 2017

IN PRAISE OF MADNESS

Free with
this issue!
Selected text by
SARTRE
IN MADNESS

€2.99

- Dreaming philosophy
- A life touched by philosophy
- The trick of geopolitics
- Oh those liars!
- The lure of power

... and more

SHARE

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION

ISSUE 4 - January 2017

Once more, this fourth issue of **SHARE** offers a wide variety of themes and subjects. The fun look of the magazine seems to be going down well with our readers, and we are thus pleased to retain it. As from the beginning, the main aim of this magazine is to disseminate articles and information which contribute to philosophical discussion and debate. The magazine adheres to no single creed or ideology. Its policy is to published any type of article as long as it contains philosophical substance. The 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.

Letters to the Editor are very welcome:

PHILOSOPHY SHARING FOUNDATION
SHARE Magazine
129 St Paul's Street
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◀ Front cover: Diogenes by Jules Bastien-Lepage (1873)
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, France.
See related feature article on page 14.

EDITORIAL

The Ludicrous Spectacle

In his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant draws upon only one joke. When accepting that synthetic a priori knowledge exists involving no appeal to self-evidence or anything like a criterion of truth, Kant claims that anyone who searches for one presented 'the ludicrous spectacle of one man milking a billy-goat and the other holding a sieve beneath it'.

The ludicrous spectacle persists in more pseudo academic and scientific pursuits than we care to admit. The tone of certainty among self-confident protagonists using media platforms and the mediocrity of faithful audiences uncritically consuming 'information' continue to disseminate this ludicrous spectacle masquerading as scientific debate. Those that claim to 'know more about less', those that assume to be gifted with an assumed cultural capital and linguistic agility, and many that profess a scientific world-view free from dogmatic contamination remain unaware of the gender of their goats or the reliability of their vessels. Beneath the veneer of noble pursuits and causes, the harassment of billy-goats continues with impunity.

It was thus refreshing that philosophy offered us some respite. Recent events organised by Philosophy Sharing in Malta and Gozo, and other organisations like the University of Malta Philosophy Research team and the Philosophy Students' Society, were extremely informative and provocative. Our magazine **SHARE** continues to be at the forefront of academic welfare, offering philosophy enthusiasts unique critical perspectives. We now hope that our international networking will open up opportunities for further projects.

SHARE would like to look forward to 2017 as an opportunity for further consolidation. The Philosophy Sharing Foundation endeavours to stimulate philosophical debate and ensure that the synergy we have managed to shape will be productive and engaging.

Meinrad

* Musgrave, A. (1993) *Common Sense, Science, and Scepticism: A historical introduction to the theory of knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: pg. 221.

Off your chest

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor, your article on translating Greek to Maltese (issue 3), though interesting, may have been too technical for a reader interested in philosophy. Shouldn't such matters be decided amongst professional translators? Mind you, what was said that no standard procedure seems to exist how Greek names are translated into Maltese strikes me as true.

— Peter Dodds, Sannat, Gozo.

Dear Editor, I write on my behalf and also of other students with whom I spoke with on the general outline of contemporary philosophy which was carried in third issue of your magazine. We found the outline so interesting and, furthermore, very, very useful. It provided a valuable bird's eye view of a period which is very often mind-boggling, especially for first year students. You should consider producing a poster of the chart to hang up for easy reference. Perhaps you could also produce other outlines of ancient, medieval and modern philosophy. They would come immensely handy. Thank you.

— Rose Agius, Attard.

Dear Editor, I happened to notice your magazine on the Gozo ferry and bought one. I was pleasantly surprised how active your foundation is, both in Malta and in Gozo. I was reminded when, back home in Essex, I sometimes attended the Women in Philosophy Group. Keep up the good work!

— Amelie Pashby, Xaghra, Gozo.

Dear Editor, your editorial for issue 3 of the magazine urged 'more revolt, more rebellion, more levelling'. It seemed to condone violence. I'm sure that's not what you had in mind. What I hope is that philosophical thinking will inspire acts of bigheartedness and spiritual growth.

— May Ragonesi, Kalkara

Dear Editor, thanks for all your efforts. The magazine has really become popular and is most enjoyable. I really enjoyed Joe Friggieri's article. Could you please also make the issues available online. Keep up the good work.

— Mario Borg, Naxxar

Dear Editor, I came across your magazine in Bugibba while visiting a friend. I like the set-up, style and the subjects you feature. I hope this will continue to remain interesting and lively. There is nothing better than reading philosophy. Well done guys.

— Damien Grech, Sliema

Dear Editor, your magazine is really cool. The articles are so varied and contemporary. I lived in different countries and cultures and this magazine appears vibrant. Would suggest you remove the joke/quiz section which IMHO sucks.

— Amanda Frendo, Naxxar

Dear Editor, the snippets from history are so interesting. I find that they can be parts of a history of philosophy in the Maltese Islands. A pity such a publication does not seem to exist. Perhaps your foundation can see to it, no?

— Ryan Manduca, Swieqi

**'A happy new year to all
our readers!'**





Can you trust a liar telling the truth? Em, well, yes. Sometimes. Or should it be no? How on earth can one tell!

Indeed, quite tricky. To try to make the matter more intelligible (which they didn't), the ancient Greeks had come out with the brilliant 'liar paradox' (attributed to Epimenides in the 6th-century BCE), which goes something like this: "A Cretan once said, 'All Cretans are liars'." If the sentence is true, then at least one Cretan tells the truth, which makes the sentence true and false at the same time.

The paradox has bogged the minds of master logicians since time immemorial, such like Alfred Tarski, Arthur Prior, Saul Kripke, Kurt Gödel and many, many others.

Nevertheless, apart from its tough logical resolution, the paradox might remind us of the quandary which compulsive liars put us through from time to time. For it is quite possible that they indeed *sometimes* tell the truth. In fact, this is their forte. Because, by mingling their lies and half-truths with truths, they confound their prey, and get away with the lot.

Take the infamous Richard Nixon, the President of the United States between 1969 and 1974. He was a notorious pathological liar, poor thing. As all chronic liars, for him lying seems to have become a way of life. Not necessarily for any manipulative purposes (that would make him *also* a sociopath), but simply out of a deep-rooted habit. He lied unnecessarily. When no lie was called for. Just for the heck of it. It is an addiction more common than one would suppose.

Yet, yes, unbelievable as it might seem, he *did* sometimes tell the truth. A case in point is his amazing statement minutes before trotting out of the White House on that extraordinary 9th August of 1974, when, shamed and discredited by the Watergate scandal, he became the first and only U.S. President to resign the office.

"Always remember," he told his staff that day towards the end of a rambling twenty-minute farewell speech, "others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself."

Coming from him, this was exceptionally rich. For what was happening at that very instant—him in the final act of self-destruction—was living evidence of what he was saying: that of hating others. For he hated others like hell.

At least for once, the shameless, compulsive liar was proffering the most extraordinary tangible proof of the accuracy of what he was saying. It seemed almost surreal. For what the man was saying was truly astounding; a few words which fleetingly lowered his long-standing deceitful mask: the whole Watergate debacle was brought about by *his* hate of others! (Implied: not by the hate of others *for him*, as he had always held). And now he was paying its ultimate price: the crushing ruin of self-destruction. Hating is a sort of prolonged hara-kiri.

Logically, where does this leave us with the liar paradox? Let's suppose that Nixon said: "Anything Nixon says is a lie". After what has been said above, this is evidently a false statement for there is at least one instance in which he



**"Always remember, others may hate you,
but those who hate you don't win
unless you hate them, and then you
destroy yourself."**

RICHARD NIXON

**Concluding his last speech before leaving the White House disgraced
Farewell to the staff — 9 August 1974**

told the truth. It might perhaps be the case that the speaking Nixon (N_1) and the Nixon mentioned in the statement (N_2) are not referring to Nixon in the same manner. Or rather, while N_1 is a specific referent, N_2 is generic which includes N_1 but also other instances of Nixon (N_x). In this way, while being true for N_1 , the statement may be false for N_x .

communication is about impressions, be they true or false. In any process concerning communication, whether it is on a one-to-one level, advertising, news or any other form of message transfer, one must always keep in mind that one is dealing with marks intended to produce an imprint of feelings and reactions. These can be masterly affected.

A LIAR TELLING THE TRUTH

By Rodinné Asciak

Lies can be ruinous. If not for those originating them at least for those at the receiving end. For lies pose as securities for committed action which very often implies some kind of investment. Since lies proffer false indemnities they betray trust and render any kind of security hollow. This is disconcerting.

Trust adds up to a substantial part of all communication processes. Very often it is taken for granted, and here rests the error of our judgment when dishonesty and deceit come into play without piquing our suspicions. Much of

The bottom line of all of this should perhaps be this: Yes, one can trust a liar with telling the truth *if*, and only if, one has evidence of what he or she affirms or denies. Otherwise, it would be wiser (and much safer) never to believe a compulsive liar.



Rodinné Asciak studied philosophy as a subsidiary subject together with communications and art. She continues to follow and study philosophy on a part-time basis.

Richard Nixon by Blaine MacDonald,
Hamilton Spectator (1973)

I can still recall the sensation of utter terror when, as a child in Menahge, Minnesota (USA), back in the fifties my schoolmates and I were made to look at a map hung high on our classroom wall which supposedly showed the spread of Communism. A large, ugly red slick to the right appeared to be growing by the month, seemingly devouring whatever came in its wake, threatening anything held most dear and civilised to us. Oh, with what fervour then came the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag!

This was just one way of using geography to drive home a political point. Political discourse had always been imbued with geographical references of some sort or other, disseminated through newspapers, magazines, books, cartoons, comics, novels, films, radio, television and, now, the Internet. The basic idea had always been that political ideas are not only formed by the state, intellectual elites and politicians, but also, through geographical environments, by popular culture and everyday practices.

Just consider some expressions used by politicians and their acolytes: 'North-South divide', 'globalization', 'East-West axis', 'free West', 'North Atlantic alliance' and many more. All touch upon geographical imageries. Simple lines on otherwise

indifferent maps are actually political expressions of the limits of state jurisdictions. Statecraft, in fact, had always 'spatialized' international politics and represented it as a 'world' characterized by particular varieties of places, peoples and dramas. This association seems to have found first clear expression in the 1897 book *Politische Geographie* of the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904). It was from here that the famous concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) by the Nazis to justify their need for cultural growth through territorial expansion was picked.

The philosophy of **GEO****POLIT**

By Dr Ray Christian



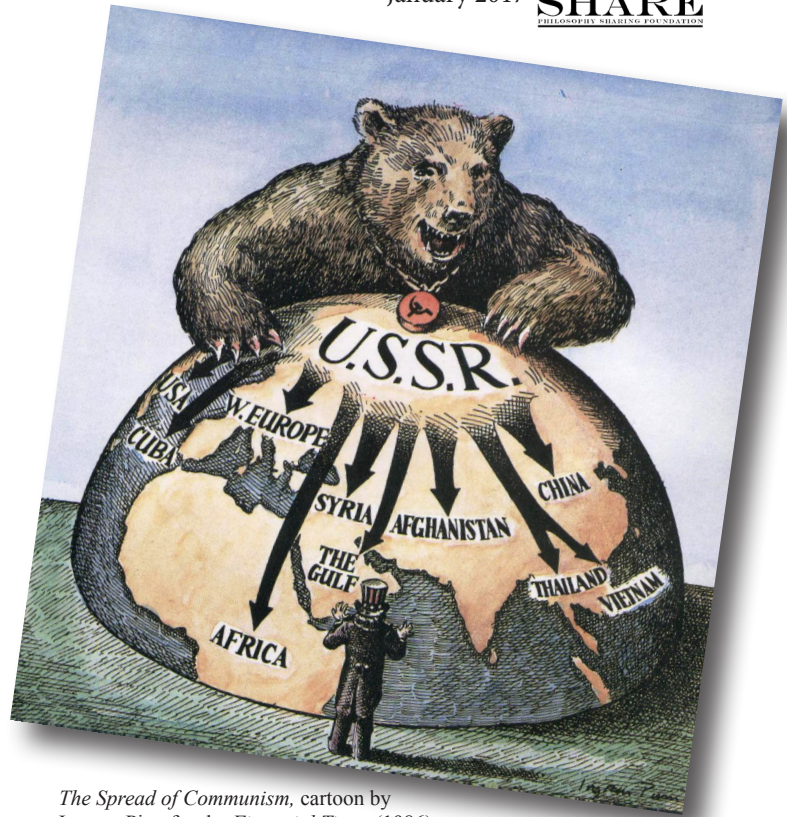
Pledge of Allegiance, Fairmeadow Elementary School, Palo Alto, California (2007). Photo/Paul Sakuma.

However, this was certainly not the only instance when geography was part of political mystique and whoopla. What of Alexander the Great's mantra to 'go East'? Or Caesar's watchword to 'conquer the North'? Or the USSR's jingle to 'stretch West'? Or the American Union's refrain to 'annex the South'? For centuries the British used the 'Channel discourse' to justify their distinctiveness. For decades here in Malta you have heard of 'Mediterranean security'. All have an imagery which push forward political ambitions by geographical orientations.

Inevitably, geography itself lends its valuable hand in any political design. Its mountains, rivers, plains, marshes, plateaus, valleys, ravines, seas, oceans, deserts, meadows, pastures, and the rest, together with its minerals, reserves, raw materials and resources, and also with its peoples and cultures, all pull their weight in the balance of power. Of course, geography is not political. Nonetheless, with its possibilities and limitations it prescribes particular vistas to the ethically-minded, inducing them to spatialize politics and politicize space.*

Though not political, geographical surroundings and environmental settings naturally set the boundaries for particular ethic behaviours and economic organisations both by what they allow and by what they do not. The first major systematic treatment in English of this (1939) was made by Richard Hartshorne (1899–1992). For instance, some dress codes make perfect sense in certain places and environs but positively not in others, and *vice versa*. The same goes for a variety of behavioural patterns, as for forms of religious conduct. Though a great number of examples can be given here, it perhaps suffices to say that a quick glance at religious traditions makes it evident that certain places have a much greater concentration of a particular religion—say, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Xinto, Orthodox, tribal, etc.—than others.

The ethical certainly impinges on the economic. Again, many commercial methods are specific to particular geographical territories. It is for geographical reasons that, say, Malta's economy mostly converged on harbour facilities and tourist services, and not on others. The same would be ludicrous in other countries with different geographical settings. Also, it was for specific geographical reasons that the American southern states relied on slavery while the northern states did not. And the same can be said about the development of industrialisation in the northern parts of Europe rather than in the south. And again about the development of democracies of the Greek city-states. Examples can go on and on.



The Spread of Communism, cartoon by Ingram Pinn for the *Financial Times* (1986).

Social organisation follows suit, with all of its political implications. In all instances geography seems to be a major player when matter imposes its possibilities and limitations on humans and anything they do. So much so that it can be said that geography bestows identity. For the ethical, the economic, the social, the religious, and the political are, as Marx held, all responses to the problems humans try to solve within the space available to them by matter. It is thus not surprising at all—but rather 'natural'—that space is politicized and politics spatialized.

According to Hartshorne (*Perspective on the Nature of Geography*, 1958: 172), geography "provides the scientific description of the earth as the world of man". Equally, geopolitical philosophy provides the scientific description of man as a being of earth. That is, moulded by the earth; given identity by matter. In other words, as Hartshorne succinctly pointed out (*The Nature of Geography*, 1939: Chap. 11): "Man is where he lives".

* One may access the site: stratfor.com/topics/politics/geopolitical-monographs-and-country-profiles for many contemporary examples of geopolitical situations.

We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
And our little life is rounded with a sleep.

William Shakespeare

I love to dream! I like to sit on an easy chair, in a quiet room, “far, far away from the maddening crowds” and dream of a dear face and of persons and things that are no more. I love to close my eyes, even when awake in bed, and dream of what could have been, but is not. Like a child I love to dream, sometimes, of fair ladies and brave knights, and of sweet little nothings, which children call fairies, and which practical grown-ups call “fancy imaginations of a soft brain”.

I love to lie quietly in bed and dream again the *same* dream I had been dreaming, so often, in my youth. I love to dream of persons who are sweet and kind to me ... nay, sometimes, I want to go to sleep and to dream again of those whom I know are harsh and cruel — yes even of those who make me suffer! ...

I love to wander in dreamland, on the wings of angels, where things flow on the waves of sweet clouds, and to go where I can move, forwards and backwards in space and time, and see things that should have happened to me, and past events of which I am not aware; and wonder at a future which perhaps I might never see.

I usually sleep very little, but then I am always dreaming in my sleep. And when my weary, sensitive and fastidious soul refuses the hard facts of life and is lost in the gloomy wastes of despair, a sweet little fairy comes to me, touches me with her magic wand and puts me to sleep. And then I dream — I dream of things that I know shall never come to me in real life, I dream of events that are as terrible as death on the gallows or the loss of an only son ... I dream of life as it should be, as it was when the world was young ... and of what life would be when humanity is no more ...

I love to sit still and dream, even in daylight, when the crowds roar and laugh and when my soul craves and aches for something better than this thing we call existence.

* * *

In an era of robots and supersonic speed, indeed in an age of atomic power when the world seems to be approaching the apocalyptic dreams of John, the beloved of the Lord, this preamble on an essay on the philosophy of a dream, may sound a bit crazy. But in this matter of fact world there are still scientists and philosophers—let alone humble individuals like myself—who care to reflect on dreams and to analyse their etherial textures, which are finer than atoms and may, perhaps, be the ultimate stuff of which this martyred humanity is made of!

The philosophy of a

Thus dreams are the strangest sensations and experiences in the life of man. That is how they appear to me. Environment, with its million and one distractions, diminishes the power of our senses, sometimes our intuition, and other mental powers of which we know so little.

In dreams—on the other hand—we seem to detach ourselves from our earthly ties and are lost in a world where no barriers to the imagination exist, and where we can roam from one universe to another and beyond ... “and sometimes even kiss the sweetest and most perfect of creatures inhabiting the most brilliant rainbow”.

* * *

But apart from their fantastic nature, dreams are also part of our real existence; indeed they are connected with our every day life and they affect us, in certain instances, as much as the rest of our activities when awake. This angle becomes more emphatic when, in a dream, we unexpectedly dip into the future.

This is not a fairy tale at all. There exists remarkable evidence in thousands of registered cases to the effect that in dreams man does not only see the unknown past, but also the immediate or even distant future, sometimes. Thus man, in a dream, may move at will into the three states which surround his life, namely: past, present and future.

This power may not be given indiscriminately to all, though it is said that at one time or another of our lives, we

all dream of future events, but forget our dream until we walk into some future place or state and we are startled by the fact that we have been there *before*, or that the event had happened to us at some past date, but we cannot remember where or when.

This is a sensation which many of us have probably experienced. An ultra-sensitive or nervous person and those who are endowed with what we call intuition sometimes have what we term “prophetic” dreams. A person I know—a very intelligent young man who is now dead—once dreamt of an event which he related to me the next morning. I smiled because this event, besides its apparent incredibility, was of no consequence although it had considerably shocked the person who had dreamt of it. Two days later this dream came true. The event happened exactly as it was narrated to me.

Symbolic dreams have a strange and fascinating shape. Were one to take note of similar dreams and compare them with some future events, one might discover that our mind, in sleep, appears to visualise things symbolically, and that these symbols are the shape of future events which we could not have seen or thought of when “in full possession of our senses”.

President Lincoln’s famous dream, some days before he was murdered, has been often repeated in thousands of books, but it is still one of the most wonderful, and a perfect example on the theory that dreams sometimes do come true. Lincoln saw himself lying in state after his unexpected death; and jestingly he almost repeated to his wife Caesar’s reply to Calpurnia when this Roman lady was oppressed with frightful dreams of a prophetic type prior to the murder of her husband:

Cowards die many times before their death;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I have yet heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

But both Caesar and President Lincoln were murdered *shortly* after the dream that preceded their untimely death.

* * *

Every family has someone who is reputed to have an unusual power, due to his emotional or sensitive complex, to see reflections of future events in his dreams. One need not elaborate on this point. In the mid-Victorian era, at the time



dream

By Gužè Ellul Mercer

▷ of Huxley and Darwin, such statements were considered as old wives' tales. Many modern thinkers and scientists do not waive aside such "states" as purely the consequence of sick brains or unstable emotions. Indeed, many instances have been checked and analysed and the results are as arresting and exciting as any scientific discovery in a modern laboratory.

Early in 1928, J.W. Dunne wrote a book which he called *An Experiment with Time*.

When the book was reviewed by the British press it was hailed as "the most important book of our age". One literary reviewer said that the day may come when this book will revolutionize our attitude towards the world we live in, as much as did Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

Mr. H.G. Wells, the writer, historian and philosopher, said of this book: "It is fantastically interesting. Mr. Dunne does not only give remarkable evidence that dreams do come true, but adduces a scientific theory to explain his experiences, which is very plausible".

This was Wells, "the agnostic".

Although twenty-six years have since passed and Dunne's book has, by no stretch of the imagination, reached the heights of the *Origin of Species*, it contains remarkable facts and data of Dunne's "experiment with time". It is still as fresh and interesting to the reader as on the day it was first published, and those who care to go deep into it and make their own enquiries and experiments, may discover that it is the bible that carries the true belief that in dreams there is much more than the common man or the unbeliever may care to admit.

Dunne was a professional soldier who fought in the Boer War and the Great War of 1914–1918. He designed and flew one of the first heavier-than-air-machines; but subsequently turned his marital and scientific activities towards writing an epoch-making book.

Mr. Dunne's "experiment with time" began in 1898. He dreamt that it was half past four and that his *watch* had stopped. With that he woke and found that his watch *had*

really stopped; and that the hands stood at half past four. He rewound it and got back to bed.

In the morning he compared the time with a clock and found that the hands had only lost tow of three minutes "*about the amount of time which had elapsed between his waking from the dream and rewinding the watch*".

The watch had then stopped at the actual moment of the dream. How had Dunne come to see, in that dream, that the hands had stopped at half past four?

In 1901, when in Italy, he dreamt that the Cape of Cairo expedition had arrived at Khartoum. He read in the *Telegraph* the next morning that this was so; and toyed with the idea that it was the usual "*astral wanderings*" during sleep. He ruled this out when he discovered that *the expedition had arrived several days before the night of his dream*.

In further experiments with similar dreams Dunne found out that these were not prophecies of future events, purely and simply, but that they contained a good deal of past experiences interwoven with them. The majority were the usual commonplace dreams, yielding just as much true and false information regarding the waking experiences, which had given rise to them, as does any ordinary dream — which is very little.

They were the ordinary, expectable dreams, *but they were occurring on the wrong nights* — this is BEFORE the event, and not AFTER.

In other words Dunne had been dreaming, the night before reading or hearing about the event, the dream he would normally have dreamt the night after.

As stated in another review on this book, after the experiments of Mr. Dunne and his friends, the most sceptical had to admit that dreams are a compound of both past and future events. And in this connection Mr. Dunne puts forward a theory wheich may only be easily understood by those readers who have a sound knowledge of higher mathematics and metaphysics.

Experiments with time: John William Dunne in his D.5 biplane at Eastchurch, Kent, England, on 14 June 1910.





I have a dream: Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivering his famous speech photographed by Danny Lyon (28 August 1963)

Dunne's explanation is that we are *serially* conscious. You can imagine a number of people on a staircase, one on each step. Only all the persons are the *same person*. No. 1, on the lowest step, is the observer in three-dimensional space (that is the individual *as we know him*). No. 2, on the step above him, is in the *fourth* dimension, observing No. 1.

Next is No. 3, in the fifth dimension, observing No. 2, and so on to infinity where there is a final observer. (The reference to "final observer in infinity", which may sound

absurd, is Mr. Dunne's explanation and the way he puts it).

When No. 1 is asleep, No. 2—in the fourth dimension—can move in time both backwards and forwards with equal ease and give rise, within the brain mechanism, *to dreams in which the past and the future are intermingled*.

* * *

Forgive me, dear reader, for taking you, with Mr. Dunne and myself on the wings of Einstein's Bluebird into the depths of the four-dimensional space-time-continuum! ... I understand as much of the Relativity Theory, as applied to dreams, as either you or Mr. Everyman, who has to do a day's work to earn a living.

But, apart from whether Dunne's scientific interpretation of dreams is true or not, I still love to dream and to look into the unknown past, and sometimes into the ugly depths of the future, and ponder on the mysteries of Man's Mind—that apparently insignificant little mass—in this vast and imponderable Universe!



A dream come true: President Lincoln lying in state photographed by Jeremiah Gurney Jr. (24 April 1865)

Ġużè Ellul Mercer (1897–1961) was a well known Maltese author and politician. This article was originally published in the monthly literary and political review, *The Knight*, of November 1954 (Vol. IV, No. 11, pp. 7–13) under the editorship of Dom Mintoff. When the article was published Ellul Mercer was a Member of the Legislative Assembly. The article is reproduced unabridged here with the kind permission of the Labour Party (Malta).

In *The Essays*, the famous French philosopher, Montaigne (1533–1592) speaks about himself, and his reflections are universal. I'm not a Michel de Montaigne. However, he made me aware that talking about oneself can help others. For more than thirty years philosophy helped me to think about what is important in my own life.

A recent discussion with some friends involved in the Philosophy Sharing Foundation revealed that we still do not understand why most people are not interested in the thoughts of ancient or contemporary writers. It occurs to me that trying to think as those men can be far more interesting than choosing which colour to paint the bedroom, or the latest results of the local football team.

I discovered philosophy by a mere chance, unfortunately not while at university. It was through reading books written by the French philosopher Jean-François Revel (1924–2006). The themes were very broad. Revel spoke

out against communism, anti-Americanism, totalitarianism (he participated in the French Resistance). His books also included subjective material, such as his autobiography and the book written with one of his sons, the well-known Buddhist monk, Matthieu Ricard, who is the French interpreter for the Dalai Lama and a recipient of the French National Order of Merit for his humanitarian work. Revel's readings showed me that philosophy could be a contemporary affair, dealing with the here and now.

With Albert Camus (1913–1960) I noticed that some of us were asking ourselves about the Absurd. Why are we living? We did not ask to be born; we did not choose our name, our school and, later, our job. We understand that our life can be meaningless, and yet it seems to be of great importance. *The Stranger* is a novel which speaks about how a man who did not express his sadness at his mother's funeral is, because of that, handed a death sentence. The play *Caligula* is a

How
he
to b

By Marc Delannoy



Self-portrait,
Antonio Ligabue (1957),
private collection,
Brescia, Italy.

story of an emperor who thought with an absurd logic, and who did what he wanted, such as making his horse a senator. In the essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* the author undertakes the task of answering an important question: does the realisation of the absurdity of life necessarily lead to suicide? These books are exciting and available in English.

philosophy
helps me
better my life

By far the most important philosopher who has influenced my personal life is Michel Onfray (born in 1959). He was a libertarian teacher of philosophy when, in 2002, he stopped teaching and set up a free grass-root university in Caen, Normandy, which, I would say, its objectives are somewhat similar to the local Philosophy Sharing Foundation. In his last lectures and book he held that his barber or father could be true philosophers. Some Greek personalities of bygone days, such as Democritus, Leucippus, Aristippus, Protagoras and Socrates, and later Epicurus, Lucretius, and Diogenes, lived their lives according to their way of thinking. They spoke to carpenters, to prisoners, to weavers. Philosophy is not reserved for the top-notch researcher. Onfray's philosophy lectures are attended by people who come from different parts of France and from all social levels. His books are now widely read and a big success; they have been translated in several languages.

So, what did I learn from my philosophical itinerary?

I have learnt that life is very short, a lightning between two eternities. The *Homo sapiens sapiens* was born forty thousand years ago and, since then, the brain has not improved. So, our ancestors were able to think like us. Transmission of knowledge was oral. Philosophy could have existed before the appearance of writing. And, of course, it did! Most of the questions we ask ourselves today were probably debated around a fire by the tribes a long time ago: how to educate our children, how to live with our friends, how to improve our life. As yet, nobody has seemed to find the perfect answer. I won't either. So I have made, and I will continue to make, mistakes, just like everybody else.

Each life has the same value. Your life has the same importance as anybody else's, whether you're a king or



homeless. I am thinking about a story about Diogenes of Sinope, the famous ancient Greek philosopher. It so happened that the king of Macedon, Alexander the Great, wished to have him in his team. Diogenes was living as he pleased, poor and free, narrating his ideas to anyone who listened. One day, he was sitting on a stone in the street, enjoying the rays of the morning sun when Alexander arrived. The king, attracted by the man's fame, asked him to join him. Alexander asked Diogenes if there was any favor that he could do for him. Diogenes replied: "Yes, stand out of my sunlight". Diogenes was happy to live his life; he did not crave to be somebody else. He was born, he lived and died. As did Alexander. Everybody knows that being wealthier or even smarter does not make one happier, but, in all honesty, how many of us do not want to have a new car, a new mobile, a new television, a new whatever?

And what comes after life? The Epicurean Lucretius did not dread death. Our material decomposition leads to a reorganization of our molecules. For Cicero, to philosophise was to learn to die. I'm learning languages, I do sports, and I can try, fail, and try again. However, we cannot train to die. For others, it is the price to pay for the eternity of the species. I prefer to agree with the idea that, after my mortal life, it will be like I was before having been born. Not happy, nor sad; it could have been either.

So, I have neither a car nor a television. I have a mobile, indeed, but not the latest model. I met French presidents of the republic, I had discussions with government ministers, actors, singers, sports champions, and I have never wished to be any of them. I'm very happy to speak with my neighbour, a former farmer who has learnt philosophy through the seasons, the sun and the moon.

As a result of reading all the books I mentioned, I came to live in Gozo. I don't know if I'm right but, at this moment in time, taking advantage of the good weather and going walking, swimming and speaking to people from another country apart from my own would be unimaginable without the philosophical awareness I thankfully gained.

Marc Delannoy is from Lille, France, and graduated from the Lycée Frédéric Ozanam. He is a team mate in Philosophy Sharing's activities in Gozo, where he lives.

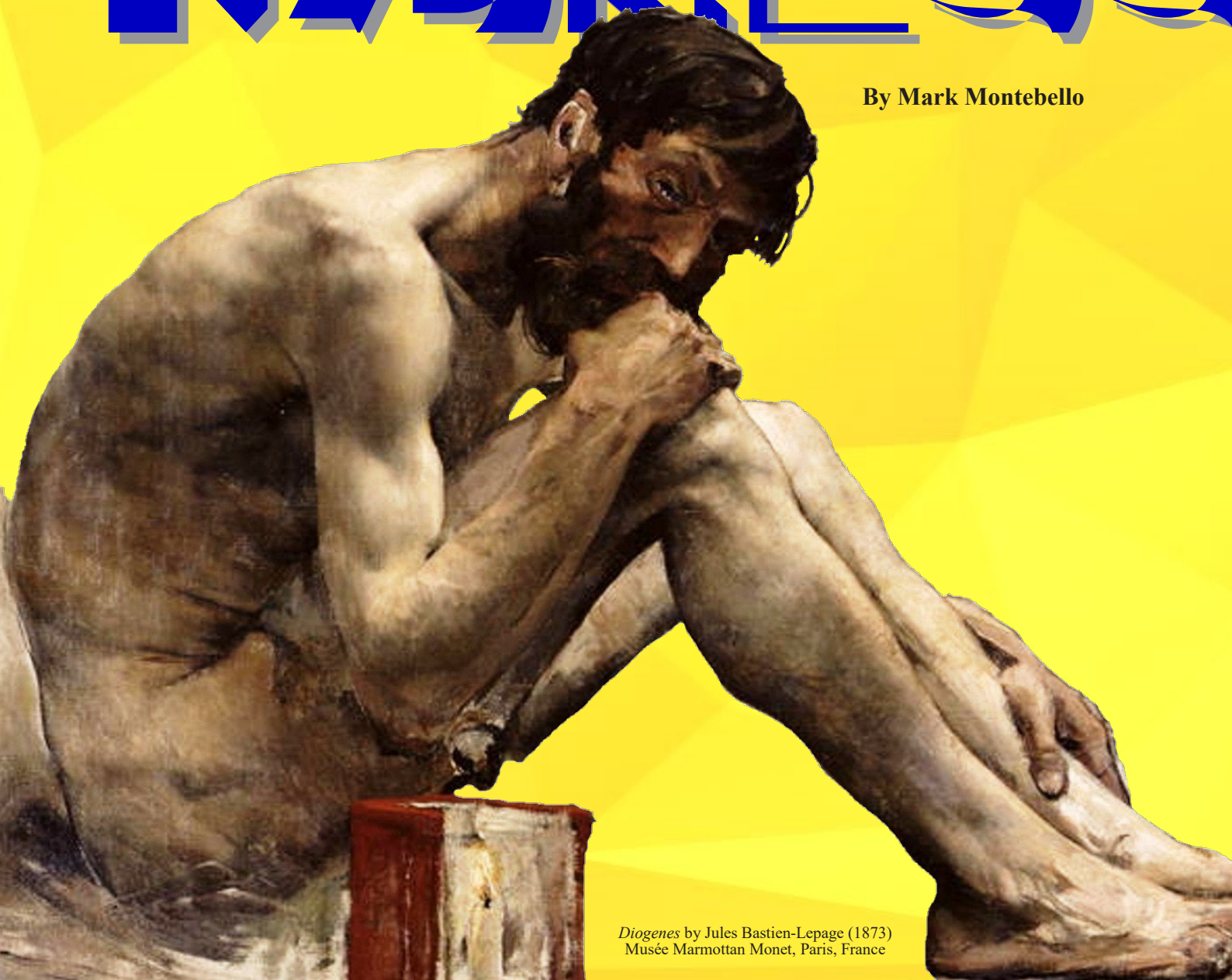
Madness is very often a survival mechanism. Some people go mad due to the overwhelming pressure exerted upon their psyche by their surrounding social environment. Such people are generally too psychologically weak to resist the onslaught. Their physique succumbs to the agonising weight, and a defensive reflex mechanism automatically kicks off. This is madness *properly* so called, generally labelled 'pathological' (from the Greek *pathos*, to undergo or suffer an intense feeling).

Other people are psychologically more resilient. Instead of going completely off their rocker, they mentally detach themselves from conventional thinking patterns and live on a different level of consciousness. Sometimes they also forsake some of the customary behaviour of their peers. This is madness *improperly* so called, sometimes termed 'sympathological' (from the Greek *sym* + *pathos*, to feel with).

Both of these psychological survival techniques are, in different ways, natural and overpowering; *natural* in the sense of being instinctive reactions to sustained intense emotional pressure, and *overpowering* in the sense of being too strong for the will to resist. Furthermore, both are a mental detachment which is necessitated by survival

IN PRAISE OF MADNESS

By Mark Montebello



Diogenes by Jules Bastien-Lepage (1873)
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, France

instincts, and both function as a shelter from an insufferable world. Very often, the techniques overlap.

Conscious of both processes, from time immemorial ancient civilisations attempted to explain the specific ways of operation of each. "Madness is of two types," attests Plato perceptively in his *Phaedrus*, "one [comes about] by bodily disease, the other by a divine release from human convention" (265a). Throughout his entire works Plato never tires of expanding upon the nature and significance of the 'divine release' as much as upon the nature and implications of 'human convention'. One did not exactly tally with the other.

Centuries later, in his 1872 *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche would identify the latter type of madness as 'Dionysian', sharply contrasting it with the 'Apollonian' mentality and attitude. Both sons of Zeus, while Apollo was deemed to be the god of reason and the rational, Dionysus was viewed as the god of the irrational and chaos.

These perhaps point to the extremities of a wide spectrum. Nietzsche himself, as would Plato, admits of a whole range of possibilities in between, often intersecting each other. For rarely would an Apollonian or a Dionysian be entirely so, and would have, to a certain degree, something of the other.

Following Plato, Western civilisation has been gripped by the idea of madness, especially the Dionysian or the sympathological type. In some way, up till the birth of the clinic in the 18th century, as Foucault reminded us, even the pathological brand was somehow considered to be touched by some sort of 'divine release'.

In classical times, perhaps Diogenes the Cynic was the most striking epitome of 'divine madness'. Living stark naked in a tub, accompanied only by a lamp and a dog, Diogenes challenged normative society with its hollowness and illusoriness. As a specific personification, he probably was closer to Nietzsche's model of a person released from human convention than to Plato's. For Plato would never have approved of what Rousseau would romantically call 'the noble savage'.

According to Plato, to be 'released from human convention' does not necessarily imply foresaking civilisation. It is first and foremost a psychological disentanglement from standard and predominant mind-sets wherewith one's discerning thought categories do not follow the logic and judgment of orthodox thinking patterns. It is a sort of intellectual and affective aloofness which retains an objectivity of its own, one which is different from that of one's prevalent culture but not, at the same time, thoroughly disconnected from it.

Plato calls this psychological, intellectual and affective bearing 'mad' only improperly, in the sense that it is not what one might consider to be a normal or normative way of thinking or beholding reality. It is *non*-typical, *non*-routine, *non*-customary. It is, in a way, a manner of retaining one's sanity or clarity of thought and vision within a milieu which is encumbered by the bondage of so much social, political

μανίας δέ γε εἶδη δύο, τὴν μὲν
ὑπὸ νοσημάτων ἀνθρωπίνων,
τὴν δὲ ὑπὸ θείας ἐξαλλαγῆς τῶν
εἰωθότων νομίμων γιγνομένην.

*Of madness there are two types, one by biological disease,
the other by a divine release from human convention.*

PLATO, *Phaedrus* 265a

and, possibly, religious customs, precepts and habits which dominate, control and obfuscate humans' freedom of judgment.

Moreover, Plato would not have approved of anyone living a hermit's life à la Diogenes, let alone a person touched by the gods with a clearer and liberated social and political vision severed from society. This would have conflicted with his, and the Greeks', conception of human beings as 'polis animals' (or social beings). It would also have clashed with Plato's sense of the educational purpose of those who could, with such a vision, contribute towards better social and political living. To Plato's mind, a release from human convention always implies a societal and public duty. Splendid isolation was never in his book.

If in classical times, as in later centuries, it was imperative to retain one's sanity in what was perceived by some as a mad world, how much more is it in today's electronic and virtual world when we are daily bombarded with millions of commercials and bits and pieces of all kinds of information? Mixed messages are the order of the day, all clamouring for our undivided attention, making it increasingly bewildering to differentiate the wheat from the chaff.

Postmodern philosophy has made away with the concept of normality as a fixed category by which to assess being and behaviour. Consequently, normativity has been steadily depleted of its ontological value. Though this may appear to have affected the corresponding notion of 'divine madness', in reality it reinforced it. For, in the absence of any form of standardisation, everything became run-of-the-mill, a criterion unto itself. An escape route out of this maze of ordinariness and universal normalcy became more imperative and increasingly impelling.

Madness, after all, as a mental detachment from conventional thinking patterns and an existence on a different level of consciousness, continues to be, as of always, an expedient mechanism of survival.

Dr Mark Montebello taught philosophy at the University of Malta. He now works mostly on a self-employed basis, delivering lectures to constituted bodies, and doing much research. He published various works on 'philosophical madness'.



You are so proud of yourself, so lost in your illusions and disillusion; never did you inquire the origin and the source not only of your power but of power itself. Close your eyes and see life from above. Tell me what you see? Are you watching a struggle amongst ants? Picture yourself in all of this; tell me where you are? Do you feel that you are just a pawn in this game of life? Do you feel powerless?

What do you understand by the term 'power'? Is it a physical capacity, a mental capacity, or maybe the power of personality? There is a power which is invested and enforced by law, and there is a power generated by wealth or social position. Even knowledge is a source of power. But knowledge is not power; it's just a key which can give access to opportunities which can provide you with a relative advantage, which in turn is power!

Are you aware that life is a game based on power and that we are pawns in the midst of this game? Consciously or not we are using what is available to us as a tool to satisfy our needs and wants. Even a little child plays this game when it cries to get the attention it desires.

The core of our relationship with power is based on fear, need, and the conflicts arising between them. But these are not the source of power; they are only the source on which our relationships are based. It all revolves around personal and group interests and, even though we may be conscious or not of it, we are all playing this power game, not only against each other as individuals but also collectively as humanity against nature itself.

We are only observing and noticing the effect of the waves but we do not know the source that generated them. The effect of power can be felt. It can be measured. But the concept of power is elusive. It is constantly changing its form, and is never static. It seems that power is only the product of that particular moment in time which may end in an instant. It is the perception of power that we taste, and not real power (if it exists).

Power is not an institution. But any institution needs 'power' (or needs to be perceived as powerful) in order to exist, and the image these entities, these institutions, want and need to project is that of power and the connotations associated with it. But the source of their empowerment is

power

A t h o u g h t

provided and sustained by the needs and fear of the stakeholders, whoever they are. Figuratively speaking, in order to maintain their power, institutions build a structure. Like any building, such a structure has a base as its foundation on which everything rests, and level after level it rises up to its pinnacle.

Such a structure is nothing more than a network of interdependency or interdependent entities. It was/is built and sustained with the ultimate aim of preserving and increasing the institutions' power. And this is done when the so-called institutions start to delegate some of their power to lesser entities which, in turn, with the same aim in mind, may delegate some of their power too. It's for this reason that we can say that, at the end of the day, power comes always from below. And that is sustained by innumerable points of fact.

Metaphorically speaking, it looks like we are within an invisible mechanism which we cannot escape. We are surrounded by what we may call power, caught in the midst of its web. But this structure is not the source of power. The source of any power resides in the structure's function and in its action; otherwise these are just (lost) opportunities. What then defines power appears to reside, in most cases, inside the human nature, in one's wants, needs, and fears.

It's not a contradiction to say that we, as players in this game, are powerless but at the same time we exert power. Through our existence we will always be subject to a form of pressure which may come from our needs or from external entities or both. But at the same time, consciously or not, we are fighting back; we are exerting pressure in our turn in order to free ourselves. But power is not pressure.

Every entity held at any given time was subjected to a form of power. This is inevitable. But power is created, generated and dictated during the process of interaction with other entities. It is always based on the needs and fears of the stakeholders. Outside this paradigm *power is no more*.

W E R e x p e r i m e n t

By Alfred Zammit

We may say that we have the power to choose; the so called 'free will' (if one believes in it). However, we cannot say that we have the right *not to choose*; because even this is a choice we are bound to take. Also, we do not have the 'power' to escape from the consequence of any choice made, not only those made by us but also those made by others. It seems that we do not have a choice, and have to face any situation as it arises. So we are forced to choose again and again. It seems that this is an invisible mechanism that generates possibilities *ad infinitum*, and forces us to play a game in which we are playing both the masters and the slaves.

This is a chaotic view of the world where we strive to create a form of order. Nonetheless, it doesn't matter what we do. What we call order is just a mask that we place on the face of chaos. Again, chaos could be a source of purification and of creation much more than a source of destruction. Beneath all this structure lays that invisible mechanism that generates possibilities and opportunities, and anyone skilled enough to harvest these possibilities can use them to exert pressure to one's advantage and to shield oneself against unwanted pressure. We may have used these skills more than once, and most of the time unconsciously, as a surviving and coping skill. As a race we waged war against nature in order to gain the right for a place under the sun. As individuals we wage war against each other to survive. But we are ambitious creatures and we want to go beyond all of this because we taste blood, and its taste erases memories and cautiousness, and so we dare more.

Alfred Zammit is one of this magazine's regular contributors. He is hooked on philosophy, and stimulated by it. He is an avid reader and indefatigable inquirer.

Empowering structures,
The Royal Ontario Museum of art,
world culture and natural history,
Toronto, Canada.
Photo/Elliot Lewis (2016)





*Thank you for hurting me I really needed it (2008),
Melanie Bonajo, selfie photograph.*



ne can never be sure whether Malta seems to be producing more NGO's pro rata than other larger countries. Never does a day go by without some new cause being catered for. Sometimes it is indeed difficult to keep up with groups and events. Some protagonists appear to be so busy promoting just causes and waving banners that one is never sure if we have an inverse economy of scales when it comes to NGO's. Now that Valletta 2018 is approaching it would be quite interesting to see how these 'issues' are reconciled as 'events' when these do-gooders will attempt to promote their causes. Culturally pertinent is perhaps what Valletta 2018 European Capital of Culture says in its mission statement, which reads as follows:

"The Valletta 2018 Foundation aims to stimulate cultural, social and economic regeneration in Valletta and the Maltese Islands through collaboration, exchange and innovative practice. The Valletta 2018 Foundation is responsible for the European Capital of Culture programme in Malta. The programme consists of events and projects developed with various local and international communities. It is being developed organically in preparation for the year 2018."*

Cultural regeneration and innovative practise with local and international communities sounds great. Of course we are not exactly going to 'become' a capital of culture overnight

without some radically iconoclast change of perspectives. A country that takes pride in exhibiting amateur talent like Christmas cribs is hardly going to impress Europe unless it seriously prepares itself.

It would be extremely innovative if more space were granted to our own talented graffiti artists that really ought to be given more opportunities to embellish our islands. Perhaps we could even encourage them to produce some Banksy-inspired radically revolutionary graffiti that could shake our comfort zones. They may not enjoy a limelight of event opportunities or the exposure we grant to, for example, literary produce but our local graffiti artists certainly deserve acknowledgement, space and resources. Banksy could even

small
& vib



*Rage the Flower Thrower (2012)
Banksy, Bethlehem, Palestine.*

be introduced into our 'ethics' curriculum.

We could even involve international talent like Melanie Bonajo to wake us up from our existential slumber. This could include collaborative projects to rid us of our baroque mindset. A stolidly conservative and in many respects insular country like Malta could do with some healthy 'regeneration' of ideas far removed from the sanctimonious and parochial. A reality-check based on creative perspectives like Bonajo's could awaken, polish and sharpen more local talent than any sette cento artist could ever aspire to. We ambitiously



igrant

By Meinrad Calleja

ventured to landmark our capital city with the talented architecture of Piano. Now how about some more innovation to reach out to seriously international cultural perspectives and avail them to all.

Ai Weiwei recently exhibited a collection of photography at Amsterdam's FOAM Museum entitled 'Safe Passage'. Once past the obstacle of anti-Chinese discourse so appealing to Western bourgeoisie audiences, what was interesting about Weiwei's photography was that he captured the spirit of the hardships immigrants endure in detention centres and refugee camps. It was their personal hardships and the injustices they endured as 'people' that was accentuated in this exhibition. One noted an absence of any form of acknowledgment for NGO's, with some graffiti actually stating bluntly that NGO's were not welcome. Again, the disproportional amount of NGO's involved in immigrant/refugee issues in Malta is distressing. Our unending capacity to try to 'save' others verges on the despotism.

This brings us to a major issue this article would like to tackle in conclusion. One augurs that the Valletta 2018 Capital City of Culture events will not be hijacked by our local 'organic' breed of malati di protagonismo (read ego-trips). One also augurs our propensity to 'save' souls will not feature anywhere. We need not confuse religion and tradition with culture, certainly not international culture. We have a small but vibrant talent pool in art, photography, music, literature, drama and graffiti. One hopes this will not be some glorified Notte Bianca, but a truly international event that will be at par with major European capitals and, more importantly, international, innovative, creative and talented cultural mind-sets and perspectives.

* See more at: <http://valletta2018.org>.

Incoming refugee boat
(Lesbos, Greece, 2016)
Ai Weiwei.



Meinrad Calleja studied Islamic history, Arabic, and Islamic philosophy at the University of Malta. In relation to this article he thanks Sophie van der Heijden from FOAM Photography Museum in Amsterdam for her collaboration.

SHARE

book reviews

A word to start with

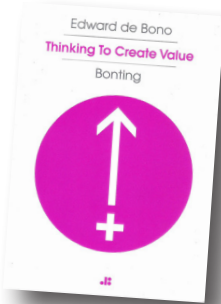
Thinking to Create Values: Bonting

Edward de Bono

Kite Group, Malta; 2015;

125 x 177 mm; 303 pp.

ISBN 978-99957-50-19-0



One of the many intriguing qualities of Edward de Bono is to repeat himself while rarely being boring. This latest little book is no exception. It is interesting and engaging. What's more—as is usual with De Bono—it proposes something new and stimulating.

This time around, it is none less than a new verb: *bonting* (pronounced like wanting). Of course this is not the first time that De Bono adds to our dictionary. Surpetition, for example, was another. And so was ebne. His new verb conjugates like this: I bont, you bont, he/she/it bonts, we bont, you bont, they bont. The adjective: bonitive. The noun: bonition. What does it mean?

De Bono coins the word from the Latin *bonum*, meaning the good. According to his reckoning, it indicates the process of extracting good values from something, be it a situation, an action, a thinking exercise, a relationship, a discussion, and the like.

The main feature of bonting is to create value, and the book is intended to help the reader achieve precisely that. Or rather, it sets out the framework, the tools, the methods, and the habits that can lead to value creation.

Someone familiar with De Bono's writings will find that what he puts forward in this book has been already sufficiently dealt with before. Nevertheless, the book can also stand on its own. Of course, the new word proposed has its usefulness. True to form, De Bono doesn't forget to remind us that the verb he coins recalls his own surname. His very name, he seems to say, can be part of our everyday parlance.

Stars: ★ ★

Understanding the self afresh

Is-Sintezi: Riinvenzjoni tar-Realta

Pierre Attard

BDL Publishing, Malta; February 2016;

147 x 210 mm; 96 pp.

ISBN 978-99957-46-86-5



Throughout Malta and Gozo's philosophical tradition very few philosophical works have been written in Maltese. Philosophers seemed to opt for a purportedly more sophisticated or wider audience by using Latin, English or Italian. This book is a pleasant exception. Its merit, however, lays not only in its use of the Maltese language but—and this is doubly refreshing—in its innovative content.

This last proposition is most certainly not an understatement. The book is basically about perception. However, though dealing with such a subject, one that has been profusely contended with throughout the history of philosophy, especially since Descartes onwards, the book submits insights which are quite original.

Just to pique one's curiosity, one might mention here one of the book's fundamental tenets that reality as we generally perceive it but a mental allucination; that the mind is consistently engaged in deceiving itself by assigning objectivity to things when it is, in fact, only concerned (and it cannot do otherwise) with its own inventions. In this complex process, language and its ability only made things worse. Nevertheless, the mind also created its own home-made remedies.

This is a highly engaging book which cannot be read lightly. It requires full attention and, more importantly, an open mind and heart.

Stars: ★ ★ ★ ★

A turn of the tables

Between Rectitude and Incongruity: The chiasitic structure of the Cantilena

Mark Montebello

The author, Malta; bi-lingual; April 2016;

145 x 260 mm; 44 pp.

ISBN 978-99957-0-924-2

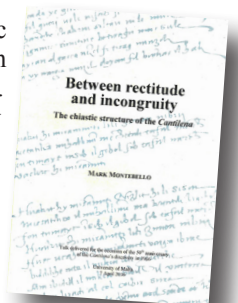
It is amazing how a 550-year old poetic composition of a mere sixteen verses can draw so much fascination and attraction. More remarkable is how ever new appraisals can be made of it. This essay does precisely that. However, this time around the evaluation takes on a novelty all of its own.

The poem in question, known as the *Cantilena*, was composed around 1470 by Peter Caxaro, a notary and judge from Mdina. It was recorded in a manuscript which remained concealed in an archive for five hundred years.

Since then the poem became the most studied and commented upon piece of literature in the whole Maltese literary corpus. The reason being that the *Cantilena* is an extraordinary composition. Not only is it the first known written text in the Maltese language, it is furthermore a poetic masterpiece in its own right.

For the last fifty years the *Cantilena* was studied inside out from every angle, including philosophically. This new study, however, completely turns the tables. The *Cantilena*'s chiasitic structure which it proposes not only puts the poem itself in a completely new interpretative light but also, indirectly, calls for a revision of all the poem's studies made so far.

The present essay concentrates on the structure of the poem's constitutive organisation by putting forth internal



(literary) and external (biographical) evidence for a new evaluation of the composition. It also draws the door wide open for further assessments and insights.

The essay, in English and Maltese (*Bejn ix-Xieraq u l-Għelt: L-istruttura kjastrika tal-Kantilena*) is available online free of charge. It is surely worth a read. Access: <http://www.free-ebooks.net/ebook/The-Chiastic-Structure-of-Peter-Caxaro-s-Cantilena>.

Stars: ★ ★ ★

Philosophy's other face

?aPlatform? (Issue 3)

Michael Grech, Clive Zammit (eds.)
Editors' own publication; July 2016;
257 x 296 mm; 54 pp.
ISBN: none



Sharing seems to be the foremost catchword of our current age. The Internet made this possible, and the potential of more sharing of anything, from the banal to the sublime, is growing by the day. This magazine, which is unavailable on the Internet, seems to be a lovely move in this direction. It is principally based at the University of Malta, and offers students the possibility of seeing a bit of their work in print.

The publication contains poetry, reflections, drawings and a few short essays. Some twenty-six contributors participate in the production of the magazine, and their work is beautifully presented in an artistic creation of much taste.

Apparently, more than anything else the magazine intends to inspire its readers to do their own thinking, perhaps reflected in original works of art. The fact that the editors are both professional philosophers suggests that we are dealing here with a notion of philosophy which breaks away from its traditional meaning; philosophy that somehow approaches the sublime without the accoutrements of pure logic or technical analysis. It is philosophy with a different face.

There is one feature which seems to be common to all of the magazine's contributions: they are short and even, sometimes, snappy. This would be a characteristic of much of the sharing that goes on today: say your say, keep it brief, let's move on.

Though perhaps serious philosophical reflection demands a little more than this, nonetheless one would suppose that putting pen to paper, and the opening up to others, might be a good start.

Stars: ★ ★ ★

Philosophical pooling

Threads: A journal of philosophy (Vol. 4)
Students' Philosophy Society, University of Malta
October 2016; 150 x 210 mm; 120 pp.
ISBN 2518-8445



During these last few years philosophy students at the University of Malta have been organising themselves into something of an establishment. Understandably, this has not been the

first time that such an enterprise has been attempted, and, as always, it depends on the resourcefulness of the current student body. It is hoped that, this time around, a certain degree of continuity is achieved.

The prospect looks somewhat hopeful. At least if gauged by the publication of this latest edition of the journal of the Students' Philosophy Society. The issue contains eight philosophical essays, two interviews, a book review, and some other supplementary material. Most articles, which are by first degree students, are, as expected, academic in nature and style.

Though the journal evidently offers a great opportunity for philosophy students to see some of their research in print, perhaps the real great merit of the journal is the joint effort put into it by the students. The very fact that they together produce such a fetching publication of a high quality in terms of scholarship says a lot about their entrepreneurship and mettle.

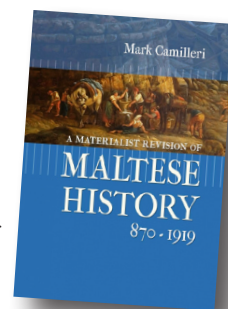
Contentwise, the journal offers some interesting and well-researched articles dealing with a variety of philosophers and subjects. The interviews too are worth a read. The book review, on the other hand, though substantial and useful, could have been of a book written by a Maltese philosopher.

Stars: ★ ★ ★

Shoes for a long run

A Materialist Revision of Maltese History: 892-1919

Mark Camilleri
SKS; 150 x 210 mm; 103 pp.
ISBN 978-99932-17-43-5



Writing historical accounts is never neutral. That's because it is not a description but a narrative. While descriptions are more or less crude portrayals of data, narratives are interpretative accounts of perceivable facts. This is particularly relevant to this book. It is not only a narrative in itself but it also denounces former narratives. The central theme of both is Maltese history.

The author, a historian and philosopher, proposes the reading of Maltese history on the lines of a particular philosophical paradigm, the Hegelian-Marxist one. He perceives this as the most apt tool to discover the Maltese people's self-consciousness along the times.

While drawing swords with a number of historians of Maltese history and a selection of their narratives, the book attempts to initiate such a reading by following the dialectic guidelines proposed by Hegel and Marx. Its objective, therefore, is simultaneously twofold.

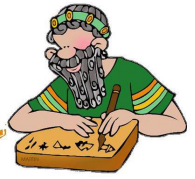
Perhaps when reading this book one must not dwell too much on the final historical interpretation of certain occurrences of the past, such as the 1919 riots, but rather capture the interpretative method the author tries to make use of. The main idea is to catch the people's mood in particular times by way of materialist categories, and match it to (the Hegelian-Marxist) dialectical requisites. In so doing, it is hoped that the 'spirit' of the times, if any, is discovered and exposed.

Though courageous, or perhaps rash, the book provides much thoughtful insight and philosophical adventurousness. It's a challenge for a long run.

Stars: ★ ★ ★

philosophy in Malta

SNIPPETS FROM HISTORY



Trice the trigger

In its 246-year long history, the Seat of Philosophy at the University of Malta was formally suspended three times: in 1773 by Grandmaster Ximenes, in 1798 by Napoleon, and in 1978 by Dom Mintoff. The first suspension lasted five years, the second two years, and the third ten years. Though the suspensions evidently differ in many ways, surprisingly enough the last two were not completely unlike.

The first suspension came when Grandmaster Ximenes starved the Seat of funds. Since he had inherited a monumental national debt from Grandmaster Pinto, his predecessor, Ximenes decided to drastically cut expenses, and one of his victims was the University of Malta. The Faculty only resumed its activities three years after Ximenes' death.

The other two suspensions were due to claims that the Seat of Philosophy was redundant. In both epochs the institution was run by the Catholic Church, and the philosophy taught at the time was considered useless within the context of the educational reforms then undertaken by the powers to be. The Seat itself, together with the Faculty's setup and staff, were judged to be outmoded, clerical-minded and, in addition, inveterate. In a few words, they were believed to be superfluous, and this was not, frankly speaking, an altogether incorrect assessment.

The philosophy taught at the Faculty in 1798 was of the old school of Scholasticism. The few clerical lecturers there tutored their (all male) students in the tradition of the Aristotelico-Thomistic dons which they had inherited from mediaeval times. The professors had neither the inclination nor the requirements necessary to update their teaching to the modern type of philosophy which was more attuned to the new age of science and technology. The Faculty was more or less a mere antechamber to the studies leading to the priesthood, and had no perceptible purpose outside the setup of the *ancien régime*.

Incredible as this might seem, in 1978, almost two centuries later, the situation at the Faculty of Philosophy had not altered very much. Aristotelico-Thomistic Scholasticism was still in vogue. No regard whatsoever had been taken of the enormous changes which had occurred socially and politically, even in Malta, where, after 1971, sweeping reforms were undertaken to modernise the country. The philosophy taught at the Faculty, still mainly imparted by clerics, had not yet taken on board the advances made, not only by the philosophers of modernity, but

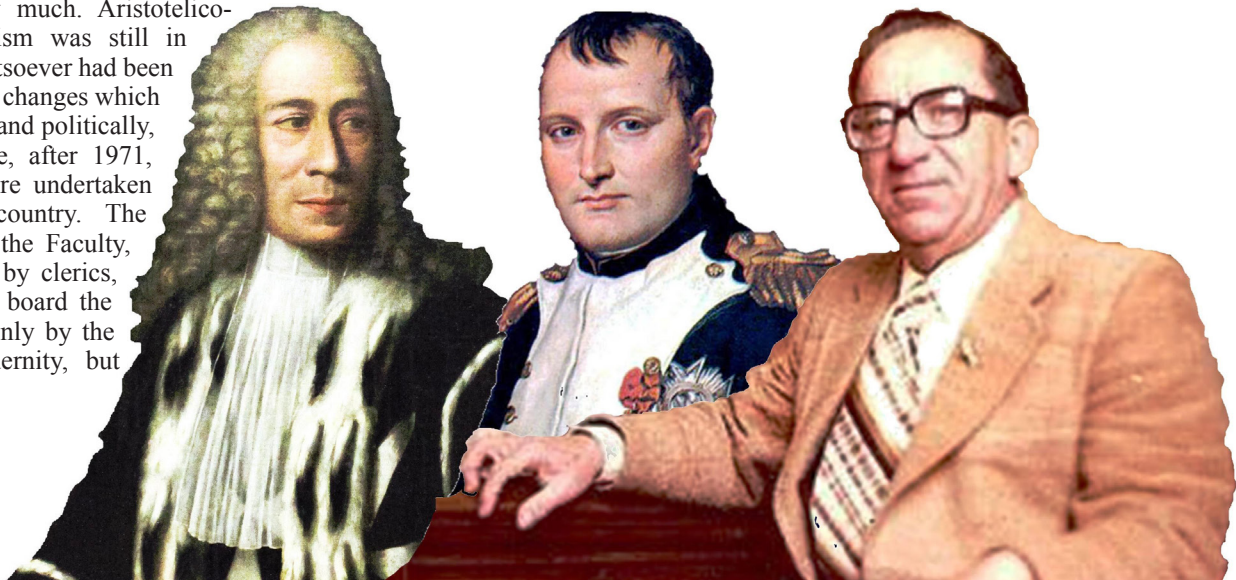
neither by contemporary philosophers. Save for some (rather experimental) extracurricular courses open to the public, including female learners, it may be save to say that the whole institution was anachronistic to the core.

During the first two suspensions of the Seat no alternative philosophy classes were held. In the first case the Faculty, founded in 1771, was only a couple of years old. In the second the political turmoil then in progress made classes unfeasible. Valletta, where the university was situated, had the Napoleonic forces blockaded within it from all sides for the best of two years. The impasse was resolved in 1800, and the Faculty of Philosophy was restored in exactly the same setup, with precisely the same curriculum, as before.

The situation developed differently in 1978. The philosophy classes could go on during this suspension owing to an alternative institution established by the Catholic authorities outside of the university. This institution—called the Institute of Philosophy and Humanities—had an academic prospectus which included philosophy and theology. Understandably, the curriculum was not substantially very different from that which existed before the suspension. Notwithstanding, part of the philosophy programme officially began to take on female students.

When, after much manoeuvring, the situation was finally remedied in 1988, and philosophy returned to the University of Malta, now at Msida, the Faculty of Philosophy was not reinstated. Instead, it was established as a mere department within the Faculty of Arts with an extended and expanded teaching programme.

This time around, the Aristotelico-Thomistic Scholasticism of yesteryear was completely abandoned, both in content and as a pedagogical system. This was due to a larger and more diversified student body, a lack of professors proficient in the required syllabi of the Scholastic tradition, and the broadening of the syllabus, which now, finally, included more of modern and contemporary philosophy.



philosophysharing the gozo experience

The Foundation's activities in Gozo converge mostly around the public talks and discussions offered on a monthly basis. The events are held every first Friday of each month from 7.30 pm till 9.00 pm at the Circolo Gozitano, Victoria (off the main square It-Tokk). The talks are delivered in English.



HAPPINESS = PLEASURE?

– The current round of public philosophy talks and discussions in Gozo kicked off with one which attracted considerable attention. This fascinating talk was delivered by Dr Max Cassar on October 7, 2016. The talk can be followed

on the 'Philosophy Sharing Gozo' YouTube channel. Check it out.

SEX & THE SELF – The rhythm was certainly not lost with the second talk on offer. This was delivered by Meinrad Calleja on November 4, 2016, and had a very encouraging attendance. The discussion which followed the



talk was fascinating. Again, the talk can be followed on the 'Philosophy Sharing Gozo' YouTube channel. It's worth a peep.

SKIN – This was the main theme of the succeeding discussion which was directed by Dr Max Cassar. The open discussion was held on December 2, 2016, and explored how skin varieties (light, dark, melanin, pheomelanin, eumelanin, pierced, tattooed, old, young, blemished, etc.) effect social relationships and affect personalities. Follow the discussion on our YouTube channel if you've missed this.



OTHER TALKS – Be sure not to miss our forthcoming public philosophy talks every first Friday of the month. We'll have Dr Mark Montebello on January 13 delivering a talk on *God is Dead?*

Other scheduled speakers will be Aaron Formosa on February 3, Dr Mario Grech on March 3, Dr Alfred Sant on April 7, and Judge Silvio Meli on May 5. You must agree that we're doing it big. So join the fun!

For more information: xuerebmanuel@gmail.com

Meinrad Calleja delivering his talk on November 4, 2016.



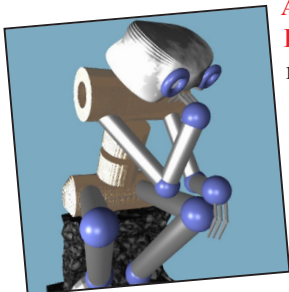
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COURSES FOR LIFE! m a l t a

The courses offered by the Philosophy Sharing Foundation have become well known for being first-class opportunities for a general public which asks for the best in philosophical learning. Our short philosophy courses are delivered only by professionals who lecture on their field of expertise. We insist on excellence and user-friendly classes.

The only requisite for prospective students is a will to learn. You need not have a broad philosophical training to attend these courses, or even any certified high level of education. Our students come from varied backgrounds. We get housewives, manual workers, registered students, teachers, office clerks ... you mention it. Our learners are sensitive to their audience, and offer tailor-made material to meet the needs and wants of our beneficiaries.

All our courses are held on five consecutive Mondays, between 6.30 pm and 8.00 pm, at the Valletta Volunteer Centre of Melita Street (corner with *The Times of Malta* HQ). A nominal monetary contribution is entreated. Members of the Foundation, registered students, and returning attendees enjoy a special reduction. Course notes are free.



AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

– The current round of courses kicked off on August 22, 2016, with an Introduction to Western Philosophy delivered by Dr Mark Montebello. This was a foundational course which provided a broad and long view of the history of philosophy.

If you've missed this, the course

will be available once more at the beginning of the next academic season. Be sure to send us an email to be noticed beforehand.

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

– The Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was the heart and soul of this unique course delivered by Prof. Carmel Borg from November 14 till December 12, 2016. Those fortunate enough to attend were regaled with some quality material which could only come from an international expert in the field. It was an honour for the Foundation to offer this course to the general public.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECTURE

– This is the next course for this 2016/2017 season. You'll find nothing like it on offer in Malta for the general public. The course will be held for five consecutive Mondays from January 9 till February 6, 2017, at the Valletta Volunteer Centre, from 6.30 PM to 8.00 PM. The lecturer, Dr Lino Bianco, is an architect and philosopher, and will be exploring the aesthetic value of architecture, its meanings and its relations with the development of culture.



THE NATURE OF TRUTH

– The subject of this course cannot be more enticing. Mr. Karl Borg, a philosopher and educationalist by profession, is guaranteed to give attendees an enlightening experience which might last for years. The course will be delivered every Monday from February 27 till March 27, 2017, at the Valletta Volunteer Centre, from 6.30 PM to 8.00 PM. Mr. Borg will explore every angle of the concept of truth, and offer feelers for further exploration.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ORIENT

– The current season will come to a galore end with this special course delivered by the Maltese-Palestinian Walid Nabhan, a published author and poet. Every Monday from April 10 till May 15, 2017, from 6.30 PM to 8.00 PM at the Valletta Volunteer Centre, Mr. Nabhan will provide a taste of the philosophy which swept across the Orient, from the Middle East to Persia and further east. The course will bring together thought and experience.



NEOLIBERALISM – This useful course was delivered by Mr. Ivan Attard from October 3 till October 31, 2016. Like most of our courses, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find a similar course offered to the general public in Malta. This was one of those cases. Apart of the practicality of the course's theme, the lectures were also valuable for those wishing to understand our present state of affairs in the world.

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philosophysharing news m a l t a

The months since the last issue of SHARE have been as busy as ever, both in Malta and in Gozo. For the Gozo news go to page 23. Here we'll take a quick look at the Foundation's activities in Malta. Our public talks proceeded with a steady pace, and our philosophy courses went off with a bang. Thanks to all those to lend us their support, and who believe in the Foundation's mission.

IMMIGRATION, WARFARE & RACE – This was the theme of a public talk delivered by Meinrad Calleja on August 3, 2016, concentrating on the biopolitics of integration. It was held at the Valletta Volunteer Centre of Melita Street, Valletta, and had an exceptionally good attendance. Mr. Calleja could have gone for at least another hour without losing any of the attention of those present. The talk and discussion were in English. Visit the 'Philosophy Sharing Foundation' YouTube channel to watch the video of this talk.

CONSTRUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY – The theme of this public talk was dealt with by one of the adherents of the School of Constructive Philosophy, Mr. Vince Riolo, who studied logic with the School's founder himself, Paul Lorenzen (1915–1974). It was a privilege for those in attendance to have a rare glimpse into a first-person account of the School's early history, and the purposefulness of Constructive Philosophy. The talk (in Maltese) was delivered on September 7, 2016, and can be watched on the 'Philosophy Sharing Foundation' YouTube channel.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF IRIS MURDOCH – A young, upcoming philosopher, Mr. Robert Govus, was the main speaker at the meeting of October 5, 2016. His talk in

English, which concentrated mostly on the concept of love in Iris Murdoch's philosophy, and its relation to the good, was delivered with much gusto. You can see this for yourself by following the video on the 'Philosophy Sharing Foundation' YouTube channel. The large audience in attendance for this talk were captured by Mr. Govus' fervour, and enjoyed a lively discussion afterwards.

A DREAM DEFEATED BY ITS OWN SUCCESS – This was a most special talk delivered by one who was part of the radical left movements in Malta during the seventies, Dr Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci. Relying on his own experiences, he recalled the ideology which imbued the dream of the age. His animated talk, delivered in Maltese on November 2, 2016, dared those in attendance to rekindle a dream which seemed to have produced its opposite goals. Follow the video on the 'Philosophy Sharing Foundation' YouTube channel.

MORE PUBLIC TALKS – The Foundation's public talks are presented every first Wednesday of each month between 6.30 PM and 8.00 PM. Through 2017 they will be held at Luciano's Restaurant of Merchants' Street, Valletta (on the left hand side of St. John's Co-Cathedral). If you would like to be notified in advance do not hesitate to send us your email. We'll make sure you're updated regularly.

PHILOSOPHY COURSES – Check out our philosophy courses for this season on page 25. On offer are extremely interesting subjects dealt with by experts. The courses are held on five consecutive Mondays between 6.30 PM and 8.00 PM. We guarantee that our courses are nowhere else offered in Malta for the general public.

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

SHARE

A MOMENT OF FUN

THE MOST INTELLIGENT PRINCE

You are a prince who desperately wants to marry the most beautiful princess in the world. So do two other extremely intelligent young princes. So the king devises a fair test of intelligence and bravery. He gathers all three of you into a room, and seats you facing one another. You are shown two black hats and three white hats. You are all blindfolded and a hat is placed on each of your heads. The two remaining hats are hidden in a different room.

The king tells you that the first prince to deduce the colour of his hat without removing it or looking at it will marry his daughter. A wrong guess will mean certain death. The blindfolds are then removed.

You see two white hats on the other princes' heads. After some time you realize that the other princes are unable to deduce the colour of their hat, or are unwilling to guess. **WHAT COLOR IS YOUR HAT?**

(Before you give up and look at the answer below, think hard! Okay, here's one small hint to help you out: Based on what you know, why are the other princes unable to solve this puzzle?)

THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

One day three Greek philosophers settled under the shade of an olive tree, opened a bottle of Retsina, and began a lengthy discussion of the fundamental ontological question: Why does anything exist?

After a while, they began to ramble. Then, one by one, they fell asleep. While the men slept, three owls, one

above each philosopher, completed their digestive process, dropped a present on each philosopher's forehead, and then flew off with a noisy "hoot." Perhaps the hoot awakened the philosophers. As soon as they looked at each other, all three began, simultaneously, to laugh. Then, one of them abruptly stopped laughing. **WHY?**

(Here's a hint: The one who stopped laughing asked himself what the other philosophers were seeing that made them laugh.)

ANSWER TO THE PRINCE STORY: White. **THE LOGIC:** The king would not select two white hats and one black hat. This would mean two princes would see one black hat and one white hat. You would be at a disadvantage if you were the only prince wearing a black hat. If you were wearing the black hat, it would not take long for one of the other princes to deduce he was wearing a white hat. If an intelligent prince saw a white hat and a black hat, he would eventually realize that the king would never select two black hats and one white hat. Any prince seeing two black hats would instantly know he was wearing a white hat. Therefore if a prince can see one black hat, he can work out he is wearing white. Therefore, the only fair test is for all three princes to be wearing white hats. After waiting some time just to be sure, you can safely assert you are wearing a white hat.

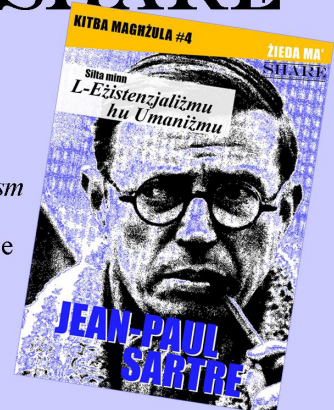
ANSWER TO THE PHILOSOPHERS' STORY: If he (the smartest philosopher) had nothing on his head, then he realized that the second smartest philosopher would have quickly worked out that the third smartest was laughing only at the second smartest philosopher, and thus the second smartest philosopher would have stopped laughing.

FREE WITH THIS ISSUE OF SHARE

This issue of **SHARE** includes another booklet in Maltese with a philosophical supplementary reading. The short text selected is from the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).

The selected text, translated into Maltese from the French original by the professional translator Kevin Saliba, is from a 1946 lecture by Sartre: *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Though perhaps not the most representative of Sartre's writings, and possibly one actually disliked by Sartre himself, this lecture is considered to be an extremely important one for the understanding of Sartre's existentialism.

Translated into Maltese, the excerpt once more offers a sample of how apt the Maltese language is to render philosophical texts. **SHARE** offers these short selections to encourage further work in the development of a philosophical terminology in the Maltese language.





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