EDITORIAL

LET’S KEEP ON ASKING

If there is one thing about Philosophy that the average
person knows is that it asks some really big questions. It is in
its spirit and its ethos to not only ponder on the deeper edge
of things but, more pertinently, to question the established
wisdom and institutionalised knowledge of its time and
culture.

We are still by and large in what can be broadly framed
as the materialist age, even as we slip some 200 years
away from the industrial revolution and move swiftly
into and beyond the so-called digital and knowledge
economy. Science and Philosophy are still to some extent
under the grip of this materialist paradigm. Stripped down
to its barest, what this means is that we view the Universe
and ourselves to be ultimately made of, and explained in
terms of, matter, which is objectively out there and which
can be observed and measured. This Newtonian-Cartesian
paradigm that has influenced both Scientific and laymen
thought for the last few centuries, sees consciousness and
matter to be in two irreconcilably separate domains. Matter,
time and space are fundamental, quantifiable, objective
and predictable following certain governing laws of the
Universe. Consciousness, on the other hand, because one
cannot explain certain subjective, qualitative, phenomena
in terms of purely material processes (the hard problem of
consciousness), is cast away to be somehow explained at a
later stage in terms of physical and chemical interactions.

Another Scientific outlook that has kept its hold over
modern thought is the Darwinian model of evolution,
which has spilled its influence outside of evolutionary
biology into economics, the social sciences in general,
and mainstream thought. The gist of the Darwinian model
is that fitter biological forms, and smarter mechanisms,
blindly evolve from redundant ones, through a brutal
process of trial and error. The general spin on this, from a
materialist and reductionist perspective, is that the Universe
came out by chance from nowhere, where life was born at
some point as an unintended effect to this, and then started
evolving blindly through random mutations until somehow
intelligence emerged, reaching its evolutionary apex through
the neo-cortex of the human brain that enables us to make
abstractions, critical thinking and sound Scientific reasoning.

So here is where more Philosophers have to task
themselves with questioning the assumptions of their current
cultural paradigm, as many have done so already. Does this
paradigm still fit with our more recent Scientific theories and
discoveries, our ancient wisdom and our deeper intuition
about the Universe and ourselves? What is the price we are
paying for holding on to this paradigm and, finally, is there
a change in sight?

At the heart of the materialist paradigm, and the classical
view of Science, is the idea of explaining phenomena by
analytically breaking them down to their ‘parts’, separately
and in isolation. This has somehow unwittingly spurred
a tendency to unconsciously and collectively flatten our view of the world and skew our value system even outside of Scientific discourse. For instance, as Daniel Schmachtenberger, founder of the futurist think tank ‘Emergence Project’ highlights, when we take a tree in a forest, our consumerist model values it in terms of number of planks of wood down a supply chain. There is little to no value given to its nexus of connections in a wider ecological setting such as for example, the cycling of oxygen and carbon dioxide, sheltering of birds and other pollinators, protecting the topsoil, forming symbiotic relationships with fungi under the soil and so on.

There are of course other philosophical standpoints, increasingly backed up by scientific theory and data, which break free from the materialist mindset. There is a slow but steady trend towards more interdisciplinary, integrative and holistic models of understanding the deep and intricate connection between everything, including matter and consciousness. The holographic model of the Universe and the brain, as exposed by theoretical physicist David Bohm and neuroscientist Karl Pribram respectively, the longstanding view in Quantum Physics that consciousness affects matter, research on how every cell and organ in our body exchange information at a quantum level through coherence, are some of the many theoretical vantage points that offer us an alternative view from the strict reductionist and materialist narrative.

Philosophy needs to keep pace with this changing landscape and get more people involved in asking what is being taken for granted. In other words it needs to be ground-breaking, shattering our reality models and squeezing us out of our intellectual comfort zones.

Fortuitously, in this issue we have some good articles that address some of the mainstream thoughts and assumptions of our times such as the seemingly irreconcilable drift between Science and Faith, the post-modernist paradigm shift, a look at the concept of Crypto-currencies, and the Christian crisis in modern times, among others. I wish all of you some pleasant reading.
Bom in 1944, Gilles Lipovetsky is considered by many to be a key exponent of postmodernist philosophy in the Francophone world and beyond. Postmodern thinkers defend the idea that we are living a new paradigm, breaking away from the modern ages, in the same fashion as modernism broke away from the classic and medieval way of thinking. On the other hand, advocates of the modern traditionally play down such a rupture and see the entire postmodern tendency either as a passing phase or a natural growth of modern theory.

After a period of neo-Marxism, Lipovetsky started his postmodern phase, which was well elaborated and explained in three books:

- L’ère du vide: Essais sur l’individualisme contemporain, Gallimard, 1983
- L’Empire de l’éphémère: la mode et son destin dans les sociétés modernes, Gallimard, 1987
- Le Crépuscule du devoir, Gallimard, 1992

As there are no English translations of these books yet, I am freely translating the titles as The Era of Emptiness, The Empire of the Ephemeral, and The Crepusule of Duty.

In the book *The Era of Emptiness*, Lipovetsky defends a rupture with modernism saying that "without a doubt we are living a period where the rigid antitheses are losing their strength and the boundaries are becoming blurred" (Lipovetsky, 1983). Lipovetsky underlines there is a slow and complex passage to a new type of society and culture. The change is based on the deposition of modern logic, which is being replaced by open and flexible systems. In this new era, theses and antitheses live side by side - not necessarily in conflict with each other, but mostly in perfect indifference.

Prometheus is the icon of the modern era - he defied the gods by stealing fire and by giving it to humanity, an act that enabled progress and civilization. The modern era is marked by the faith in progress, in civilisation, and in the power of reason to lead us to a better life. There is a forward movement and a sense of urgency and rebellion. The icon of the postmodern era, according to Lipovetsky, is Narcissus. Enchanted by his own beauty, Narcissus drowned in a lake, contemplating his own image. Narcissus floats in the strategy of emptiness, where the individual is a hedonist ego who gave his back to revolution and rebellion, to live for the moment. He is a member of a society of apathy, indifference, and the status quo, where seduction replaces conviction. Progress is a myth: we are going nowhere, so let us enjoy our staying here till it lasts.

The concept of Seduction is also central to understanding The Era of Emptiness.

Seduction does not have to do with false representation or with the alienation of conscience, these being categories used by the Marxist and neo-Marxist schools. Seduction relates to a more refined process of personalisation and multiplication of choices, increased to such a proportion that nullifies the freedom of choice. When your television had ten to fifteen channels to choose from, you could make a selection. Now that your television package comes with hundred plus channels it is hard even to know all the options available. The Seduction of the era of emptiness works exactly by this bombardment of options, of the volume of information to such an extent that the excess of choices nullifies the power of freedom.

Seduction determines the concept of truth of postmodern societies, a life without categorical imperative, free to float and to adjust to the individual choices.

In the book *The Empire of Ephemeral*, Lipovetsky analyses the recent transformation of fashion and its influence in the cultural world. According to Lipovetsky, during the modern times there was a hierarchical structure of the fashion produced in Paris, and then distributed to the rest of the world. During the modern period, we experienced a division between the mass production fashion for the lower
class and the high-fashion only available to the elite in a very clear and distinctive way.

Postmodern age is characterised by a “democratisation” of fashion. In the post-war period, fashion is now created not only in Paris but also in New York, London and Milan, and lately also in Tokio, New Delhi, and Rio de Janeiro. There is no longer a unique and central conception of what is fashion, but an explosion of different and contradictory tendencies. At this moment there is an eclipse of the imperative of expensive clothes. All the forms, all the styles and raw materials gain legitimacy and equality of status.

Fashion is incorporated in different lifestyles and lead by new emerging stars from the sports and entertainment worlds. It is important to understand that the “democratisation” of fashion does not mean the overcoming of contradictions in Society. They are still there, floating side by side, not generating conflict or revolution, but only inert coexistence.

In *The Crepuscule of Duty*, Lipovetsky exposes this theory that we are now living in a moral of post-duty. This is in contrast with the morality of the modern age, based on the categorical imperative of Kant or the principles derived from a religious, or rather, a revolutionary ethos. Postmodernity is marked by a light ethic and painless morality. We work, not in name of honour, but to be efficient. We may even stop smoking, but to improve our health and not in the name of a principle. Martyrdom and sacrifice are out of fashion. We still do a lot of effort, but guided by seduction and the desire of self-perfection.

Lipovetsky points charity as the most illustrative characteristic of this moral post-duty. Telethons of charities of various colours and tendencies all over the globe keep breaking records year after year. Never was so much donated to charity like in our times, but it is not a reflection of a great concern for people in need. Mostly, it is the expression of a light morality that embraces causes that give more benefit to the donator than to the receiver.

The debate about modernism or postmodernism will still continue for a long time. No doubt, the contribution of Lipovetsky to this dialogue is an important one. We can disagree with his views of society and argue the limitations of his approach, but his points of view may contribute to a wider and better understanding of our age together with the transformations taking place in this new millennium.

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In this issue we talked with Stephen Law, former lecturer at Heythrop College, University of London, who will be the keynote speaker at the Philosophy Sharing Annual conference next March (see back cover), and presented an informal round of questions that might serve as discussion points and engender further interest into the related areas for our readers.

1. You mentioned that you were expelled from College and worked as a postman for several years until you discovered philosophy. Were you a rebel against the academic establishment or a school dropout until the love of philosophy gave direction to your life?

I wasn’t a rebel against academic establishment particularly. I was very disengaged. I did not enjoy my experience of studying for A Level at all. It wasn’t until I discovered philosophy - as a result of reading books - that I developed any sort of passion for an academic subject. At that point, there was no holding me back.

2. Some people maintain that Philosophy is an academic discipline. Others hold that it should be a practical subject to follow, a way of life. Where do you lean?

Well it’s a bit of both of course. A little exposure to philosophy can certainly be good for you. It turns out, for example, that what marked out those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust was that they tended to have been brought up in a liberal way that encouraged them to think and question and not just passively accept. That’s not to say they were taught philosophy as an academic subject, of course - but they were encouraged to think philosophically: to be autonomous critical thinkers.

There’s also good evidence that schools that have philosophy programmes that encourage children to debate ethical, philosophical and other issues and apply their thinking skills produce not only measurably more intelligent pupils compared to control group (6 percentage points after 1 year of modest exposure) but also children that are less prone to bullying, have a better work ethos, and so on. I don’t believe philosophy is there to ‘give us the answers’ but exposure to this sort of philosophy can help make us better people by making us more reflective, more morally responsible, and so on.

3. Philosophy, as you are aware is a very vast subject. What in your view are the basic areas that every person should have a good understanding of?

A little basic theory of knowledge and the ability to spot fallacies such as ad hominem, slippery slope, post hoc, etc. is quite helpful, particularly if you want electorates to have at least some immunity to political snake oil. One thing that especially irritates me is when debates regarding what can be reasonably believed get reduced to whether something can be ‘proved’ or ‘disproved’. ‘Proved’ has many meanings. There’s little if anything that can be proved beyond all possible doubt. If we set the bar for reasonable belief as that sort of proof, then the theory that the Earth goes round the sun and is spherical not flat comes out as not reasonable - which is absurd.

An Interview with Stephen Law

Discussion Point
4. Do you agree that Philosophy should be a compulsory subject in the secondary education of every country? What would be the benefits?

I’d certainly recommend all schools have a philosophy programme of the P4C or Philosophy for Children type (I suspect an hour on Kant would put most pupils off for life). That is not lessons on philosophy, but roundtable critical discussions in which pupils debate important topics.

5. In your book, 'Humanism a Very Short Introduction', Oxford series, you make a very strong and eloquent case for humanism. Does it worry you that the rise of populism in the West is turning a cold shoulder to immigration, denying scientific evidence of climate change and becoming increasingly intolerant on other issues?

I am not sure what ‘populism’ is but certainly I worry about people believing dangerous bullshit - including prejudice and pseudoscience. I wrote a book - Believing Bullshit: How Not To Fall Into An Intellectual Black Hole - on that topic. I do think that in the UK and US, many ordinary working people are increasingly poorly paid, sliding into debt, seeing their children's futures look increasingly bleak, while watching a few at the top cash in. I do fear that the resulting frustration and resentment - while it might lead to political progress - might just as easily be used to lead people down some very dark paths, such as towards fascism.

6. What are your thoughts on Brexit? Do you agree that the present confusion stemmed from a lack of critical thinking on the issue?

Yes, partly. I think most of us didn't really understand the issues. Me included. It is extraordinarily complex.

7. If you had to meet a contemporary philosopher in a café for an exchange of views, who would you meet?

Perhaps Saul Kripke.

8. In your upcoming talk in Malta on 'Philosophy of Mind – Can Physicalism be true?' What would you like the audience to think about after your talk?

I am very interested in the question of what philosophy is, what makes a question philosophical and what philosophy can achieve. I'd quite like people to think about that question afterwards. Is the 'mind-body' problem as scientific problem, a philosophical problem, or both? How does the philosophical question differ, if it does, and how can philosophers answer it?

9. One of your favourite topics in philosophy is the Evil God Challenge and you lean toward support of the atheistic movement. Don’t certain observations of nature, certain mathematical descriptions of reality, the moral law within as described by Kant point to some greater intelligence above us?

Even if there were, on balance, good evidence for some sort of cosmic intelligence - which I don't think there is - it's a huge leap to the conclusion that this intelligence is omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Indeed, there seems to me to be very good evidence that even if the world was designed, it was not designed by a supremely benevolent, worship- and gratitude-worthy God.
Religious faith and the scientific attitude seem to be diametrically opposed, to the extent that they are sometimes described as ‘non-overlapping magisteria,’ each requiring a different ‘hat.’ That is, scientists can be people of faith and vice-versa, as long as the two domains are kept separate. This approach enforces dualistic thinking, and as is usually the case, one side of the duality is usually preferred, at the expense of the other. Richard Dawkins, for instance, downgrades religious faith, which he equates with ‘belief without evidence,’ while those who take any Holy Book literally, often ignore scientific evidence.

This problem emerges, partly at least, because on a common understanding, to have faith is to believe in the truth of a number of propositions. The clearest example of this is, perhaps, the Nicene Creed, which outlines the tenets of the Christian faith. A scientific finding that challenges the truth of a creed necessarily becomes a threat to that faith.

Some religious traditions, however, emphasize other aspects of faith than belief. Assent to a creed is merely the ‘cognitive’ part of faith, and what it leaves out are the ‘conative’ and ‘affective.’ In brief, the conative aspect of faith is that part which motivates our actions. To bring out the distinction from cognitive faith, we can think of our own actions in times of trouble. People of deep religious faith turn to prayer or priests; others turn to friends and family, they try to solve the problem with money, or perhaps turn to alcohol or drugs. Conative faith determines what we devote ourselves to, or where we look for refuge, while cognitive faith is what we say we believe.

The affective aspect of faith also emerges in devotion. Let’s say I believe in God’s existence - I have cognitive faith - and this motivates many of my actions – I go to Church, pray, donate to charities, and volunteer my time. That is, I have conative faith too. The effect which accompanies all this, the way I feel about God and the actions I perform, could vary significantly. I might act out of fear of punishment and feel resentment, or else I might follow my calling with joyous love. Various religious traditions emphasize fear and love in different proportions.

Scientific discoveries can only challenge the cognitive aspect of faith. For example, the discovery of the age of planet earth and of the evolution of life can only directly affect our beliefs in creation, and poses no...
threat to our devotion. However, on one understanding of faith, the conative and affective aspects depend on the truth of cognitive beliefs. Most obviously, we seem to need to believe that God exists before we can have devotion for Him. The cognitive part of faith demands assent before conative and affective faith can follow.

In some Buddhist scriptures, cognitive faith is significantly downplayed, to the extent that the Buddha warns us to avoid dogmatic philosophies and speculation. He describes all possible beliefs about the existence of God, the creation of the universe, and the immortality of the soul as a ‘fetter of views.’ Instead, his followers are to examine all views critically until they know the truth for themselves.

In fact, Buddha warns his listeners not to believe his teachings merely out of respect or devotion for him. And yet, those same scriptures contain many positive accounts of the loving devotion and service rendered to the Buddha, most prominently by his cousin Ananda, who spent most of his life as the Buddha’s attendant, and is also said to have memorized all of his sermons.

That Ananda’s devotion is valued for its conative and affective aspects is brought out in the many times he is rebuked by the Buddha for having accepted the teachings out of faith, rather than examining them critically, and seeing their truth. In the Maha-Parinibbana Sutta, however, a key text for all traditions, Ananda is praised by the Buddha for his devotion and service, which he performed “with loving-kindness in deed, word, and thought, graciously, pleasantly, with a whole heart and beyond measure.” “Great good have you gathered, Ananda!” the Buddha goes on. “Now you should put forth energy, and soon you too will be free from the taints.”

In Europe, conative and affective faith seem to have been overshadowed by an emphasis on cognitive assent to a creed. The story about Thomas, who would not believe until he saw the resurrected Christ, seems to confirm the true Christian faith as ‘belief without evidence.’ However, there are manifold examples in the Gospels too, where affective and conative faith are emphasized, such as Jesus’s praise for childlike qualities, and his rebuke to the Apostles for falling asleep during his Agony in Gethsemane.

As I argued elsewhere, if, as both Buddhist and Christian traditions maintain, having faith brings about measurable benefits, then it falls within the domain of science, as a testable hypothesis. Faith on this account can be understood as currency in a moral market, and thus is the subject of a new kind of economics. Indeed, on some understandings, faith is perfectly amenable to scientific study. The Dalai Lama, for instance, has written that if science proved any Buddhist claim false, that claim would have to be given up by Buddhists.

Therefore faith and science might only seem opposed when we consider faith as ‘belief without evidence’ and that is not a full account of what religious faith is. The reconciliation of science and faith is aided by a survey of the histories of science and of religion. It requires a broader understanding of faith than belief in a particular creed, and perhaps it requires a multicultural understanding too, in that an understanding of Buddhist philosophy might show a way of developing a faith which does not depend on the truth of any creed that one cannot verify for oneself.
A
s of September 2018, to buy one Bitcoin – the much-lauded cryptocurrency – one needs to fork out around €5,500 of his hard-earned cash. However, by the time this article is published, its value will probably be very different. In fact, at the end of 2017, Bitcoin was valued at around €17,000 and although in 9 months its price decreased by almost €12,000, several pundits claim that by the end of the year the price will rise again. Whilst others claim, that Bitcoin is a bubble which will sooner or later see its value decline to such an extent that it will ultimately burst. Needless to say, proponents from both camps have their vested interest to protect, with the former looking to make a quick buck from the comfort of their armchair, and with the latter very much scared of seeing their profits drop within the context of traditional investment markets.

Both sides, are usually very good at coming up with catchy arguments to support their claims. However, the short history of cryptocurrencies has so far taught us one important thing: the only certainty that we have in respect to their value is that it fluctuates considerably over short periods of time. Nevertheless, such certainty fails to provide any factual explanation about the way the virtual currency is valued and why its price changes so frequently and so much.

Indeed, anyone who hears about Bitcoin for the first time is usually shocked to learn that something so hyperreal, can turn on its head. It must be stressed that not all cryptocurrencies are as exorbitantly high as Bitcoin. Nevertheless, the value of some of the most popular cryptocurrencies credibly confirms that the above assertion still applies to the advanced capitalism of the 21st century. In fact, Bitcoin has certainly got great value in exchange since at the time of writing, one can exchange one Bitcoin with thousands of Euros. But at the same time, it has scarce value in actual use since only a few merchants presently accept cryptocurrencies as a form of payment.

Indeed, since Bitcoin is seldom used as a form of payment, it is mostly being considered as a commodity. Undeniably, Bitcoin exhibits many of the common elements of traditional commodities such as that of gold. For instance, it is both scarce and has a finite supply (a maximum of 21 million). In this regard, David Ricardo, one of the most influential of the classical economists, had advanced a theory to explain how the value of a commodity is determined. In his ‘Principles of Political Economy and Taxation’ (Chapter 1), he had asserted that:

The value of a commodity, or the quantity of any other commodity for which it will exchange, depends on the relative quantity of labour which is necessary for its production, and not on the greater or less compensation which is paid for that labour.

In practice, cryptocurrencies seem to defy the above theory since although a process called ‘mining’ takes place (not for all, cryptocurrencies though), this digital mining is accomplished by computers, not through human labour. Thus, the value of Bitcoin does not depend on the quantity of labour that is needed for its production.

The ideas put forward by Smith and Ricardo are at the basis of what is termed as the ‘Labour Theory of Value’. Another, theory of value, is the one identified as the ‘Subjective Theory of Value’. Carl Menger, one of the architects of this theory, in ‘Principles of Economics’ (Chapter 3) stated that:

The measure of value is entirely subjective in nature, and for this reason a good can have great value to one economizing individual, little value to another, and no value at all to a third, depending upon the differences in their requirements and available amounts ... There is no necessary and direct connection between the value of a good and whether, or in what quantities, labour and other goods of higher order were applied to its production.

From the above we can observe that the ‘Subjective Theory of Value’ is more suitable than the ‘Labour Theory of Value’ in understanding how the value of Bitcoin is determined. Essentially, each mined Bitcoin has a cost-price, with the latter dependent on the computer power required, the time taken to mine it and the cost of electricity. However, its value is entirely subjective from one individual to another. At one extreme, we find those who make a mockery of the possibility that cryptocurrencies can have any value, while at the other extreme, we find others who devotedly believe that they are the future. Somewhere in the middle we find those who do not perceive cryptocurrencies

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as currently having any intrinsic value but nevertheless buy them when their price is low and sell them at a profit when their price increases. Such trading affects the value. Value, is also affected by external factors such as news on social media, funneled in by those who have vested interests in seeing the same value to either increase or decrease. As we know many are indeed subjectable to the influence of social media. Nonetheless, that could well be the subject matter of an entirely different article.

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As a Psychologist, but a lover of philosophy, I have always felt that questions of philosophy are often answered too quickly using theories and arguments of science. Scientists have tried for years to measure love with science. They have tried to find a way to get many things into a test tube that simply won’t fit. However, I feel that philosophical questions should be answered in the same context that they were asked.

For this reason, I believe it fair to argue that animals are capable of loving, not by using scientific studies, such as Dr Paul Zak’s study of pet hormones. Although his study showed that dogs release the ‘love hormone’ oxytocin when around their owners. But I would rather argue my theses from a different angle - one of observation and social proof. We know that humans are capable of love and we know that humans can show it in many ways. Although, many times in my life, I have heard people use phrases such as ‘prove it’ and ‘show me’. People know that they are loved, but simply saying it no longer proves anything. For this reason, when Dr Jane Goodall was told by one of her apes that they loved her in sign language, I feel that this is inadequate proof. Affection is the key!

When telling someone that you love them, they can feel amazing and become overwhelmed. But this can wear off; they want to feel loved. They want to see it, not just hear it. My dog does this facial expression that animal behaviour experts call a ‘kitty kiss’. You’ll recognise it if you see it again. Cats do it more often than dogs, hence the name. It’s like a little wink they do, it’s very soft. My wife in fact does the same back to my dog; this seems to be mutual. Also, many pets like to bring gifts to their owners. Here in England, there have been a lot of incidents of mice in people’s homes, when seemingly previous, they had no mouse problem at all. It tends to be that their cats will hunt down a mouse outside and then bring it into the house as a kind of offering. Now, a cat willingly giving up a mouse, this has to be true love.

Another example would be trust. Trust and love are very closely bound together. When your pet lets you touch it in intimate places (intimate to them that is), they are allowing you into their own private space. If the exact antitheses to my argument is that animals are incapable of loving and therefore incapable of trusting too, then surely such an invasion of their space, for any and all animals, would be met with a wrath of...
some kind. My dog loves her space, but she won’t defend it from me in the same way that a strange animal would. This is because she trusts me in some way. There is little space for a common argument that is used against this claim. And that is the following; Some may claim that when you give shelter, food, treats to an animal, they will act subordinate and seem loving. But a lot of pets will act ‘lovingly’ without any of these things. Some pets will act needy, as if they just need you, wanting to spend time with you, smelling you and being around you. May I pose a question to the reader: Can you say that apart from your family, do you have people in your life, who act like this but don’t love you?

Actions have always spoken louder than words. Telling someone that you love them, without any action to show it, may not be a very successful way of keeping a relationship going. So, it seems to me, to be the same with animals. I have seen animals care and show love each other, not just for humans. There are many examples to be seen on the internet of animals caring for each other. Let us not limit ourselves to a single species either. With a short search online, we can find evidence of goats rearing horses, cats rearing fawns, dogs rearing kittens and even a leopard caring for a baby baboon! It may not be instant love, but from these small acts of mercy and compassion, love can build up.

Only a few weeks ago, I witnessed a service dog grieving for his owner who had passed away. The dog was literally crying and I could tell that this was heart-felt. The dog refused to leave the grave of the owner. That is completely acceptable behaviour of a human after a loss of someone close. Therefore, it should be accepted that if an animal can show the very same behaviour, without it being taught in any way, this must be yet another sign that animals are truly capable of loving.

To conclude, I would like to cement my claim that animals are capable of loving. Not just capable of loving internally, in their minds, in their hearts, but externally also. It is clear to me, that they are more capable than some people at showing love. The fact that love exists in someone, is a lovely thing, but the evidence, the acts, the showing of the love itself, this is what really counts to most people and I assume to many animals too. To show affection and have it reciprocated, is what really counts to many of us. It doesn’t seem at all unfair to claim the same for animals too.
According to Prof Susan Greenfield, you are your brain. Your thoughts and feelings, sensation, memories, and so on are all located in that walnut-shaped grey organ between your ears. Science will one day which brain states and processes our mental states and processes are, in much the same way that science has revealed that lightning is an electric discharge, that the evening star is the morning star, that a glass of water is a vast collection of H2O molecules, and that aspirin is C9H7O4.

On the other hand, many deny that science could ever establish such a thing. Indeed, many have a very strong intuition that our minds and what goes on in them could not possibly be something physical.

So, who is correct?

Of course, almost everyone acknowledges that thoughts and brain processes happen at the same time and are causally connected. Science reveals that when I experience the taste and smell this cup of coffee for example, something happens in my brain. Various neurons fire. But it’s surely a mistake to just assume that because two things happen at the same time, and indeed are causally connected, that therefore they are one and the same thing. Smoke and fire usually happen at the same time, and are causally connected. Still, smoke and fire are not the same thing. Perhaps your thoughts and feeling, while causally related to what goes on in your brain, are something that exist over and above what goes on in your brain.

Still, perhaps there’s a good case to be made for saying minds are brains. After all, we know that everything that happens physically (setting aside perhaps a few quantum exceptions) has a physical cause. The movement of my arm, for example, is caused my muscular movements, which is in turn caused by nerve stimulation, in turn caused by neural activity, which in turn has a physical cause, and so on. But then, if every...
physical event in the universe has a physical cause, my mind can only make my arm move if it is itself physical. If my mind were not part of the physical story that explains why my arm moves, then it would be causally locked out.

So, there's a seemingly strong argument for saying minds must be physical - if they weren't then they couldn't have physical effects. So why do many suppose that, contrary to Susan Greenfield, minds cannot possibly be physical? One source of this intuition seems to be rooted in what we can and cannot conceive.

Sometimes we can figure out, from the comfort of our armchairs - just by engaging in a little conceptual reflection - that two things are not one and the same thing. Here's an example: if I know that Ted is currently married, and that Bert is currently a bachelor, then I can figure out that Ted and Bert are not one and the same person. Given these facts about Fred and Bert, there's a conceptual obstacle to Fred and Bert turning out to be one and the same. For it's a conceptual truth that if someone is a bachelor then they are not married.

Could there similarly be some sort of conceptual obstacle to our thoughts and feelings turning out to be brain states and processes? Could we, just by engaging in a little armchair reflection, establish that our minds cannot possibly be our brains? Perhaps. Certainly, that's what some philosophers have argued.

Here's a simple argument along these lines. The concept of a mind is, some (such as Descartes) suppose, the concept of something that necessarily lacks spatial location - your mind isn't, and couldn't be, anywhere. The concept of a physical object, on the other hand, requires that physical objects be spatially located. Therefore, a mind can't be a physical object, such as a brain. It seems we can establish, just by reflecting on the concepts of mind and brain, that minds can't be brains.

The trouble with the above argument, however, is that it appears question-begging: is it a conceptual truth that minds aren't spatially located? True, minds don't seem spatially located. But perhaps they are. Appearances can be deceptive. After all, a glass of water doesn't seem like a vast collection of H2O molecules, but that's just what it is.

Sometimes it can seem like there's a conceptual obstacle to something being true, when a further conceptual reflection reveals that there isn't. Consider this puzzle: At a family get-together the following relations held directly between those present: Son, Daughter, Mother, Father, Aunt, Uncle, Niece, Nephew, and Cousin. Could there have been only four people present at that gathering?

Now, at first glance, there might seem to be a conceptual obstacle to there being just four people present - surely, more people are required for all those familial relations to hold between them? But in fact that appearance is deceptive. There could indeed be just four people present. To see that there being just four people present is not conceptually ruled out, we have to unpack, and explore the connections between, the various concepts involved. That is something that can be done from the comfort of your armchair.

So, is there a conceptual obstacle to minds being brains? Is the impossibility of the mind-brain identity theory being true something that we can establish from the comfort of our armchairs? This is a highly contentious question - and will be the subject of my talk in March.

But notice at least this much. If the objection to minds being brains is essentially an armchair, conceptual objection, then no amount of empirical, scientific research will explain how minds can, after all, be brains. If the apparent obstacle to the mind being brain is a conceptual obstacle, it will take armchair, conceptual work to reveal why that obstacle is illusory - the same kind of work it took to show there could be only four people at that family gathering. The problem of explaining how minds could be brains is not a scientific problem, it's a philosophical, conceptual problem - and so requires different methods to solve. Or so I will argue.

Stephen is an author and former lecturer in philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London, having just retired recently. He is at present Honorary Research Fellow in Philosophy at Roehampton. Stephen is also the editor of the Royal Institute of Philosophy's Journal Think which is sponsored by the Royal Institute of Philosophy and published by the Cambridge University Press.
At a time when the strength of the Prussian empire was at its peak both politically and economically, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) emerged as one of the leading philosophers of his time. Often associated with his paradoxical, ambivalent and ambiguous way of doing philosophy, his writings still carry some weight in our contemporary society.

The most popular quote from his work, ‘God is dead’, remains immortalised in Philosophy’s hall of fame, if there ever was one, that is. The son and grandson of established Lutheran ministers (pastors), he broke away from his strict Christian education and eventually undertook a campaign against Christian morality.

It seems that Nietzsche’s philosophy centers around the individual’s grip on power, as of prime importance, more than anything else in life. This meant that obtaining power and freeing oneself of any constrictions. He put forward a model superhuman (ubermensch) who possessed a master morality versus a slave morality. A person who does not follow the traditional mainstream Christian values and morals, which he considered as subduing life’s vigour.

He was prompt to assert that Christianity is full of religious hypocrisy and false humility that brings down the very essence of authenticity, leading to botched and bungled lives.

Nietzsche pointed out how Christianity has failed and that the breakdown of its values and morals will eventually lead to nihilism. His predictions and prophecies proved correct as after his death the world, by and large, did away with the principles and tenets of Christian Democracy as it sank towards Fascism and Nazism. The world truly experienced nihilism as two world wars took place in the 20th Century.

Nietzsche’s philosophy and prophecy may still hold true to our present post-modern time and age and his philosophy can still prove prescriptive to some extent. Christianity might heed from his assertions and potentially stir away from the possibility of a Third World War. The world continues to fall deeply into the trappings of individualism, relativism, utilitarianism and existentialism, not holding on to any universal principles and values.

Traditional Christian morals are crumbling and the Roman Church is being rocked and placed under heavy public scrutiny, particularly with regards to the child-abuse cases that have continuously been exposed throughout the years.

Nietzsche’s ethic is the will to power and the superman type of being which has always been in the forefront of every historical era, he stressed.

by Anthony Darmanin

God is dead
F. Nietzsche
Anthony Darmanin studied philosophy A Level at Lifelong Learning under the tutorship of Mr. Edward Wright. He also possesses an MSc. in Public Sector Management and a Diploma in Bible Studies.

This prophetic statement rings a bell as the world gradually moves into a new world order dictated by Globalism. Globalism by way of economic, social and political means can lead to a one man ruler typical of the character and power of an Anti-Christ in the mould and spirit of past Fascist, Imperialist, Communist and Nazi leaders.

Nietzsche’s philosophy, in my opinion, is a lesson one can draw upon and consider. Christianity (with particular reference to the Roman Church) should heed to the warnings of this German philosopher and draft a serious plan to counter the Anti-Christian movement, which even exists within its ranks. Nietzsche questioned our habitual ways of doing things and valuing. For him this meant transcending reality as we typically construe it in terms of a culture’s dominant values. Nietzsche called this a revaluation of all values or a ‘transvaluation’. Some of the most dominant values are sometimes some of the least questioned values.

Taking the cue from Nietzsche, the Roman church seriously needs a revaluation its way of doing things. A simple illustration is Celibacy, a value that the Roman Church embraces and which goes against what the Bible states. Scripture clearly reveals that deacons and bishops can marry.

What is taken for granted by millions of Roman Catholics worldwide reveals that celibacy is against the Bible or Word of God!

1 Timothy 3:2-12 - King James Version (KJV)

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Indeed, at a time when A.I, genetic engineering, frozen embryos, robotic technology, wholesale euthanasia and abortion and the gradual loss of the human touch (due to virtual and hyper reality) are becoming the norm, a revaluation Christian values and principles may become more than handy and sacred to prevent yet another attempt at the ‘killing of God and the human person’.

Anthony Darmanin studied philosophy A Level at Lifelong Learning under the tutorship of Mr. Edward Wright. He also possesses an MSc. in Public Sector Management and a Diploma in Bible Studies.
In general, that which can be understood as the current overarching modus operandi of the world - driven by the macroeconomic forces of globalization - foresees a great deal of control over various variables and phenomena around us. And the mind & action-sets that derive from this viewpoint end up defining much of the conscious (and unconscious) human experience at this time. However, it is no exaggeration to argue that this seemingly reality is much closer to a staged scene, especially in contexts characterized by high complexity. For example, little is seen of this yearning for control in what we usually call “the natural world,” of which we are all part of. What one sees, in fact, are diverse flows that give rise to situations of dynamic equilibrium, in the scales of organisms and collectives of organisms (ecosystems) alike.

From this perspective, it is possible to speculate about a moment of split between the human consciousness and its own Nature, a phenomenon evidenced in the attempts of control and command of the latter by the former. In other words, that which does not self-recognize in its full form, tries to control and command the dimension of itself that are not understood as its own. That is, the parts of the self that expand beyond a well defined body - in this case its environment.

In this process, the commanders blindfold themselves to what they comfortably call externalities (or outside ‘reality’) and start to operate from a controlling mindset, making dancing and playful experiences with their outer dimensions less likely to happen. This is utterly tragic, given that such dances are essential lessons for how to build a relationship with Uncertainty, so abundant in Nature, thus ourselves.

So the lack of experiences teaching us how to relate to uncertainty brings the fear of it, which generates the yearning for control, and which in turn makes the experiences that teach dancing with Uncertainty improbable, and so on in a vicious cycle.

The repetition of this pattern by several agents in long periods of time reinforces the collective staging of a controllable reality and the tendency to linearize complex situations. But as we increase the degree of connectivity between us and consequently the complexity of our existence, linearization as a method becomes dangerous, and the systems attempting to control that which is complex begin to show signs of their own inadequacy. In the midst of this, what remains is the movement of change which in all its fluidity, asks for passage.

Times are adept at bringing us discomfort and great uncertainty when they change and switch phases. But they too, the uncertainties, give us clues so that we can continue to discover, from within ourselves, new paths or opportunities to become hikers anew. In this way, we are doing ourselves in the ways of nature, weaving vital bonds, discovering talents and weaknesses. And as it is with intimate relationships, in which one can not know where trust in a partner will lead, the uncertainty inherent to times of change brings with it a certain degree of hope and leaves room for the construction of a common imaginary; a cocoon for the abundance of inputs and connections that can give birth to the beautiful.

Considering this as background, what is it that exists in a future scenario resulting from the sowing of a new consciousness precisely in the present moment? Perhaps we will adapt to the fluidity of inconstancy, so that the unforeseen gains space in the plans, in an individual and collective state of full confidence in the dance between chaos and order.
Simply paradoxical, the poetry of duality. We will no longer be so surprised, the development of equanimity suggests that mankind will become accustomed to the flow of surprises.

As Buckminster Fuller puts it: “In its complexities of design integrity, the Universe is technology. The technology evolved by man is thus far amateurish compared to the elegance of nonhumanly contrived regeneration. Man does not spontaneously recognize technology other than his own, so he speaks of the rest as something he ignorantly calls nature.”

This perspective contemplates a wide range of meanings and makes necessary the conception of consonant paradigms that make it possible to fully congregate the many types of knowledge, values and ways of knowing offered by the human and non-human adventures throughout time and space, such as the most different artistic, technological, cultural, philosophical, and spiritual manifestations. Perhaps these paradigms will be able to make us more equipped to dance with the dynamic complexity that generates and feeds on the various flows inherent to Life and Uncertainty, perhaps even immunizing us against the sensations of anguish that accompany several of the situations that we can not control.

In another speculative exercise, one can infer that the modi operandi coming from such paradigms, in accommodating for the Nature of our own nature, can help us to cultivate complex dynamics and rhythms to be transcribed into organic patterns that can mitigate the chances of injustice and damage arising from what is intentionally designed as uncertain and ambiguous given certain agenda, such as certain norms, laws and social agreements.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day, there is no way of knowing whether the speculations presented here actually point to some truth, or if their foundations are solid. Mostly because these deliberations seem to obey ontological and epistemological logical thinking that does not have well defined forms, but is rather fluid in itself. That is, they exist to the extent that people conceptualize and live them, exchanging information and validation only sparingly. So, to put it succinctly, this entire text is uncertain by its own supposition.

This text was written collaboratively by several people connected to the clusters of study, interaction and web-weaving ‘Emergir’ and E2GLATS and its branch clusters.
We met Alain Salvary on different occasions when taking pictures for “Gozonews”. To be honest, we were always a bit curious about him. What was this French man doing in Gozo? Has he been all his live a photographer? What history does he have behind his friendly smile and deep blue eyes? We were lucky because he accepted to have dinner with us in Ghajnsjelem and share with us some of his story.

Share Magazine: Alain! What brought you to Gozo and what are you doing here?
Alain: I am retired and settled in Gozo a few years ago, where I became a freelance photographer for "gozonews".

SM: And how and what was your life before you moved to Gozo?
Alain: Well, my life, so far, has seen many changes and I don't follow a straight line.

I left secondary school when I was 13 and immediately started to work.

I worked as an accountant and, at the same time, as a semi-professional middlefield football player in the 3rd French division and later on also as a football trainer.

My life as a footballer was quite comfortable, easy going and full of joy … I lived in luxurious hotels next to night clubs in the French Riviera. Literally it was like a playboy's life. Almost every day we were having parties, drinking champagne in silver glasses, etc. In my twenties did not care much about my future and just enjoyed myself living a superficial life.

SM: And how did it follow after that?
Alain: I worked for a retailer, called Auchan at Cergy-Pontoise where I became part of the team management. But an incident made me reconsider my life.

SM: What happened to you?
Alain: I broke my legs, which forced me to interrupt my football career and to reflect.

I realized that I did not have any social security and in fact I lived at the fringe of society.

SM: Would you consider your attitude at the time as rather egocentric?
Alain: Maybe yes.

SM: And what happened next?
Alain: I answered a job advertisement of the Red Cross. The International Red Cross engaged me and I left my job in France and went to Niger in 1985 to work in the financial administration for the Red Cross. This was during a period of serious droughts in Africa. Lots of people left the countryside and went to Niamé, where I worked.

I worked for the Red Cross Federation, which deals with regions affected by natural disasters, like earthquakes, etc.

SM: What was your first impression and how did you feel when you faced the situation in Niger?
Alain: As I worked in an office in Niamé, I did not face very difficult situations. Actually my life in Niger was not bad. Now, that you mention it, I remember a woman who was affected with lepra and children with balloon-like bellies.

SM: How did your work with the Red Cross go on?
Alain: As my contract with the Internationa Red Cross expired I left Africa and returned to Europe.

Later on I went to Russia (Siberia), Ukraine and Central Asia with the French Red Cross.

I was in charge for international emergencies in different countries, travelling throughout the world ...Africa, South America, Europe. Nevertheless during all that time I was...
based in Paris.

I have to explain, that the Red Cross consists in two organisations. A federation, caring for natural disasters and a committee, caring for regions affected by conflicts, e.g. civil wars.

All in all, I can say, that I realized and understood that the world as such is not in a good shape.

**SM: And when did you start being a photographer?**

**Alain:** Photography has been a hobby to me for many years. Here in Gozo taking pictures allows me to meet lots of different people, visit many interesting places and events. My interest in photography dates back to the time, when I visited orphanages in Romania for the Red Cross after the fall of Ceausescu’s regime. The first time, when I saw this orphans I just had to step outside the room, because I could not take it. It was horrible to watch the misery of these children. I think that even today’s Romania is still heavily affected by the times of Ceausescu. I will never forget the smell inside the buildings where these poor children were kept.

**SM: And did you have similiar experiences in Africa?**

**Alain:** In 1994 I went to Burundi where I worked in refugee camps in the aftermath of the massacres in neighbouring Rwanda. During the massacres there where only 8 expats in place. The UN help came after the massacre in Rwanda. A Swiss national, which was one of the 8 expats, later on became my wife. In Rwanda dead bodies were piled on pick ups over people alive to protect them from being killed.

In Burundi, Bujumbura, I saw somebody putting fire to a person locked in a pile of tires. I was in my car at a distance of about 50 meters when I saw that. I still have these pictures in my mind. Impossible to remove them; they come back to me here and there.

There was a program, called PAM, initiated by the WHO of the UN, which is based in Italy. At the end of the period in Burundi PAM stopped to provide food for refugees from Rwanda and the people did not know where to go and I realized the complex reality of an international NGO. Nobody knows how these refugees ended up. I was just an employee of this NGO, I could not help more… and I realized that, at the end, all is about politics.

**SM: And what did you do when you came back to Europe?**

**Alain:** My wife and I adopted a child from Vietnam and it became a kind of new job for me. At that time I lived close to Geneva in Switzerland together with my wife and my son. This year he will become 19 years old.

**SM: And Gozo … ?**

**Alain:** In 2011 I arrived in Gozo. In the meantime I had worked in Haiti. When I was in Haiti I choose Malta to get some relief and through Malta I knew about Gozo. I discovered that Gozo is the most relaxed place within the EU. Life in Gozo is also very safe. In Malta and Gozo I discovered a great freedom for developing as a photographer.

**SM: And after all that you have experienced - do you still trust humans?**

**Alain:** Yes, especially Gozo is a very human place. I have not lost trust in humanity, all over you can find good and bad.

**SM: What are your future plans?**

**Alain:** Well, in 1985 I went the first time to Africa and when I returned in 2017, has not changed much. I think of going to Cambodia, to Angkor and maybe return to France afterwards.
First things first. Philosophy Sharing Foundation would like to thank Henry-Franz Gauci for his dedication, professionalism and his energy to move forward the Foundation and to improve the quality of our activities. He has been a key member in the development of the courses. Thank you Henry and see you around!

The Article Writing Competition
In the last issue we launched our first reader competition for the best article around a suggested title. The competition title, won by British citizen Dan Smith, and published in this issue, was ‘Are Animals Capable of Loving’.

In this issue we would like to invite you to participate in the second article writing competition, this time with the suggested title ‘Does life have an objective value?’. In order to enter the competition, send the 900-1000 article to the editor at philosophysharingmalta@gmail.com.

The winner will be rewarded with a free Philosophy Course delivered in Malta or Gozo during 2018/2019 and a voucher from Agenda bookshop to redeem with the purchase of a Philosophy book of your choice. Good luck and may the best words win!

16 Days of Activism
To mark this year’s 16 days of activism, the Malta Philosophy Sharing screened the film: The Stoning of Soraya.

Every year, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign either introduces a new theme, or continues an old theme. The theme focuses on one particular area of gender inequality and works to bring attention to these issues and make changes that will have an impact. The Center for Women’s Global Leadership sends out a "Take Action Kit" every year, detailing how participants can get involved and campaign in order to make a change.
Things have been busy at our Gozo branch of Philosophy Sharing. We’re spicing things up a bit at our Pizza meetings (held every third Friday of the month). We’ve been choosing shorter texts to discuss or just discussing a statement we’ve circulated beforehand - just to give everyone enough time to read but more importantly ponder and reflect before the actual Pizza meeting.

In our September meeting had a few new faces and some older ones too as we sat to discuss Susan Sontag’s text “Against Interpretation” and sample pizza from the small snack bar/shack on the picturesque Xwejni bay.

In October talk, it was truly a privilege to have with us Dr Lyubov Bugaeva from the University of St Petersburg who delivered a talk on “Philosophy and Cinema: Interactivity, Enactivity and Virtual Reality”. She dealt with the philosophical implications of new cinematic experiences and the historical development of these three cinematic deliveries in recent years. Lyubov had prepared a very interesting presentation complete with examples of each of these cinematic experiences.

I left the talk thinking about how powerful these new immersive cinematic experiences could be in helping us empathise with the downtrodden in life and spurring us to social action. Equally however, if we could weave our own narrative into cinema (choosing what we want to see rather than what is presented to us) there is the scary thought that we could choose what we want to hear. Effectively that would mean setting our own agenda rather than allowing the storyteller to tell his or her story, potentially depriving ourselves of an education. Lyubov is clearly an expert in the subject matter and the way she charted the developments in this area was both informative and thought provoking. I highly recommend hearing on of her talks or lectures on the subject matter.

Lars Lundgren’s talk on war in November was a different experience. The talk, “Reflections on war: A talk and philosophical discussion on war” was first conceived at some late evening drinking session during which Lars agreed to deliver a talk on a subject that would be particularly topical in November. This year we commemorate the Great World War which ended a century ago, a War which claimed millions of lives that could have arguably been spared. Lars, a Swedish musician, won’t claim to be a public speaker nor indeed a philosopher (though I’d argue he could well be both). He researched the subject and put together a presentation with a number of questions for discussion. The talk started off with a video of Lars’ group “Clown Room” delivering a rock song called “Wasteland” with lyrics taken from the poem written by Wilfred Owen entitled “Dulce et Decorum Est”, believed to have been written towards the end of the war (check it out on YouTube, search for Wasteland by Clown Room). Lars delivered an impassioned debate on the morality of war. None of those present witnessed a world war in their lifetime, but one of those attending did have direct experience of the wars in the Balkans (as an active combatant) and another of the Falklands war - so their input into the discussion gave it a certain gravitas. The audience was a diverse one with a few new faces and some we had not seen for a while.

Our Gozo events are regularly advertised on the Foundation’s Facebook page and website, but if you would like more information feel free to send an email to philosophysharinggozo@gmail.com. All our events are open to everyone and start at 1930 to ensure you can either get an early dinner in Victoria or have time to eat afterwards. Talks are held at the Circolo Gozitano, which has a restaurant on top and we finish early enough for drinks (or food) in Pjazza San Gorg.
Annual Conference 2019

Philosophy of Mind
Can Physicalism be True?

Dr. Stephen Law

Friday 1st March, 2019 | 6pm
Excelsior Hotel Floriana

Free registration: send e-mail to philosophysharingmalta@gmail.com