Why Nietzsche?

Free with this issue!
Selected text by Camus
in Maltese

- Echoes of Eco
- A political heaven
- A black & white world
- Christian nihilism
- Negating Hegel
... and more

€2.99
We’re in our fifth issue of SHARE and, once again, the magazine is proud to offer a wide variety of themes and subjects. We thank the many supporters who encourage us in this exciting venture. 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.

Editor: Meinrad Calleja
meinradcalleja55@yahoo.com

EDITORIAL BOARD:
Printer: Max Cassar (Foundation President)
Manager: Mark Montebello
Designer: George Busuttil
Administrator: Mario Sciberras
Selected Texts: Kevin Saliba
Supplier: Miller Distributors Ltd.

© SHARE 2017

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

Philosophy Sharing Foundation
SHARE Magazine
129 St Paul’s Street
Valletta vlt 1216

Front cover: Friedrich Nietzsche by Emilee (United States), graphite, 2014.
See related feature articles on pages 8 and 14.
Dear Editor, I’ve stumbled on a reference to your magazine in the Lifestyle & Culture page of The Malta Independent on Sunday of 12 February 2017, and sought you out. I have seen the magazine itself (L’Homme Complet) and liked its presentation, style and content. Prior to all of this, I was not aware of the work you do, and I think it is wonderful. I like reading light works of philosophy (the ones I can follow, that is), and the idea of your foundation encouraging people like me in this healthy occupation is, I think, to be congratulated. So, thank you. I look forward to the next issues of the magazine.

— MARIA ZERAFA, Qrendi.

Dear Editor, thank you for the magazine. I would like to see more Maltese participate in this magazine with more Maltese philosophy. How about Maltese students of philosophy showing some interest. I also like the YouTube Philosophy Sharing talks that you have put up. Could we please have more publicity and maybe create a forum for discussion in which participants could chat openly about philosophy.

— MICHAEL PACE, St. Julians.

Dear Editor, I came across the magazine at the airport and have since managed to get hold of all the back issues. I should like to wish this effort well and congratulate you all on this worthy initiative.

— DAVID GRAY, Mellieha.

Dear Editor, an advert caught my attention on my mobile news feeds for your magazine and I got curious. However, when I tried to buy the magazine at bookshops in Tower Road and Għar id-Dud, Sliema, the kind salespersons directed me to St. Julians! I found that very strange and frustrating. To be fair, they offered to bring me a copy over, and that was very considerate of them. However, I can’t understand why the same retail firm would not sell a magazine at all its outlets—MICHAEL PACE, St. Julians.

Dear Editor, the lovely SHARE magazine is cool and fun to read. I really like the inserts you put in which are really a big read. I also like the articles very much. You keep Malta’s flag flying high.

— JANE FARRUGIA, Siġġiewi.

Dear Editor, permit me to extract a quote from the article ‘Power. A thought experiment’ by Alfred Zammit (issue 4, 16-17): “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”. Of course, this reminds us of Hobbes’ Homo homini lupus, which, I take it, Mr. Zammit would endorse, as also did Freud and countless others. Nonetheless, one should perhaps point out that this is just one view of life and the world, and a rather cynical one at that. I myself had held to it for a long time until I read Kropotkin’s wonderful book Mutual Aid, originally published in 1904. While highly recommending this work for an alternative view to the concept of an all-invasive power struggle, I tender a short quote from it: “Sociability and need of mutual aid and support are such inherent parts of human nature that at no time of history can we discover men living in small isolated families, fighting each other for the means of subsistence” (italics mine). Thank you.

— MIKELA CHETCUTI, Bahar iċ-Ċagħak.

Dear Editor, may I suggest that you print the ‘General outline of Contemporary Philosophy’ (issue 3, 14-15) on a large separate sheet as an insert for easy reference. I dare say that I photocopied it various times for students to have since I guessed, correctly it turned out, that they would appreciate its simple perspicuity.

— JOE MICALLEF, Sannat, Gozo.

Dear Editor, I write to you to say how much I like this magazine SHARE. As an artist living in Malta I find the articles about art interesting and rewarding. I would like to see more Maltese artists contributing to the magazine. I enjoyed seeing Krista Sullivan’s art feature on the front page of your magazine (issue 2). Her art deserves so much more. Could you kindly develop the art articles more. As I am sure many artists enjoy the philosophy of art so much.

— VESNA MICALEOVICH, Buġibba.
Destroy the mystery of life and you would have obliterated all of its charm. Vanity and pride. These are the slayers of life’s mystery. They presume to know. They vaunt their skill in resolving, eventually, all of life’s secrets. No ambiguity is big enough for them. No ineradicability concealed. No obscurity thick enough to yield to their probe. Man is the discoverer of all things, they state. With science at hand there can be no door barred to his understanding, control … and manipulation. Nature is no match to the genius of the human mind.

With the passing away of Umberto Eco in February 2016 perhaps the world has seen the last mediaevalist go to his rest. The brand is not in production any more. Encyclopaedists and all-round knowledgeables run counter to the modern standards of specialisation, in-depth expertise and expert savoir-faire. The Roman militaristic ‘divide and rule’ technique, applied to the conquests made by knowledge of nature’s secrets, holds water. Science divides, sub-divides and sub-sub-divides ad infinitum, going deeper and minuter in its specialised objects of study so as to gain finer insights of impressive detail and precision. Wide angles are anathema. Across-the-board sweeps are abomination.

This is what is said to separate the Middle Ages from the Age of Science. It may perhaps be one of the main reasons why scientists frequently miss the plot. Why they take the tree for the forest. Why they ended up, as we so often painfully see nowadays, snuffing out the mystic of life in all its forms. Life itself, in all its mystery, majesty and dignity seems to be just another wretched rat anatomised and dichotomised on a clinical laboratory table.

A mediaevalist though he may have been, Eco was no pedantic philistine living with book moths and flickering beewax tapers. He was an esteemed scientist of language who specialised in semiotics, aesthetics and anthropology. Nonetheless, he seemed to have succeeded in retaining that sense of wonderment and that delight in the indefinite which
the mediaeval dons, and especially the Renaissance artists, embraced.

The so-called Scientific Age, perhaps starting with the 18th-century French ‘philosophers of reason’, put an end to this. There is no mystery whatsoever in nature if only the human mind is left unshackled from the clutches of superstition, ignorance and religion. All shall be revealed. All shall be known. All shall be grasped. All shall be conquered. It is only a matter of time.

Need science and knowledge be so presumptuous? Take Eco’s The Name of the Rose, the novel that brought him fame and fortune, which he published in 1980 and was made into an epic blockbuster movie in 1986. The story is a brilliant and exciting exposition of the clash between knowledge/science and ignorance/superstition. It brings together the depth and width of mediaeval scholarship (tinged with a bit of modern forensic dexterity) and the foulness and obnoxiousness of injustice, fanaticism, envy and greed.

It is perhaps Eco at his best. His succeeding novels, such as Foucault’s Pendulum (1988), The Island of the Day Before (1995) and others, never really gained that worldwide appeal which his first novel acquired. Out of his some fifty publications throughout his 84-year lifetime, Eco’s name will probably be forever mostly associated with, and remembered for, The Name of the Rose. It is in this work, more than any other, that he celebrated the wondrous mystery of life, its survival through the most antagonistic adversaries and, ultimately, its victory over all kinds of apparently exhaustible ‘scientific’ explanations of its mystic.

On the surface the book is about an investigation into the death of a number of people. On a deeper level it investigates the tenacity of life, and its knockback whenever an attempt is made to stifle it or bring it down to heels. What, in every epoch, stood for ‘science’ (even if not specifically so called) always seemed to threaten life with rationalisations which presume to explain away life’s open questions. Though the so-called scientific method is a relatively modern product for going about amassing and analysing data, every epoch had its own ‘scientific’ way of dealing with the unknown. Life’s indefiniteness, while fascinating man, always thrusts him to give answers. Sometimes the proposed clarifications were more presumptuous than at other times. However, until this very day perhaps none have ever been sufficiently deferential towards the object of their study, namely Life itself.

Most philosophers might think that, while recognising and revering the beauty of life’s paradoxes and riddles, they do not commit to the arrogance of many scientists. Nevertheless, some of them do. They believe that they can have all the answers or, at least, they might have.

Some questions will always remain unanswered. Eco, for one, seems to have known this.

Stephen Pillow studied philosophy as a subsidiary subject at the University of Malta, permanently acquiring an appetite for it without being able to pursue it professionally. He never abandoned it, though. He continues to read philosophy avidly. Stephen is from Swieqi but lives in Naxxar.
Binary oppositions can be supposedly spotted everywhere: black–white, right–left, up–down, soft–hard, cold–hot, sad–happy, West–East, asset–liability, night–day, in–out, employer–employee, good–evil, subject–object, master–slave, and so on. Some would hazard to imagine some of these in some kind of antagonist relationship with each other. They may also call them ‘dialectical’, borrowing a term out of Hegel’s mouth without the precise philosophical meaning it was intended to have (and which it still has). For, indeed, ‘dialectical’ has come to be used very often in reference to any binary opposition whatsoever.

They are like rivers which broke their shores and thoroughly lost the semblance of what they originally looked like.

Hegel’s dialectic is not pertinent to any binary opposition. Though his dialectic triad is well known—thesis/antithesis/synthesis—what is, however, very often overlooked is the kind of relationship between the three. The antithesis is not merely in opposition to the thesis but a negation of it. Similarly, the synthesis is a negation of the antithesis; a negation of a negation.

By Samuel Ragonesi

The labour of the negative

Such use of the term is quite loose (and inaccurate). It is more of an abuse, really, since its precise philosophical meaning seems to have succumbed, sometimes even in the hands of professional academics, to some kind of deflated populist lingo, like ‘ideology’ (Marx), ‘hegemony’ (Gramsci) or ‘evolution’ (Darwin). Such terms are frequently used sloppily to refer to things they do not denote.

One must bear this well in mind lest the whole point of Hegel’s dialectic—as, alas, is repeatedly the case—be lost or misconstrued. Worse still, it will include processes which are positively foreign to it, such as, to mention just two most common ones, gradualism and voluntarism. These belie what Hegel called “the labour of the negative”.

Gradualism has many faces and wears many hats. It is sometimes called progress, at other times development, sometimes advancement, occasionally alteration, from time to time improvement, and many more. The common theme amongst these many guises is that the dialectical process is imagined to involve a slow and steady mutation, either of the thesis into its antithesis or of the antithesis into a synthesis, in which one is imperceptibly transformed, or transmuted, into the other. The implied basic idea here, based on the universal law of physical self-adjustment, is generally that an extreme state of affairs (the thesis) stirs up the rise of an opposite, equally extreme, reaction (the antithesis) which then settles...
down into a moderate middle state (the synthesis). This may bring to mind a dangling pendulum which comes to rest after a series of opposed actions and reactions.

Hegel’s dialectic has nothing of this. Evidently, as gradualism would have it, the ‘antithesis’ does not negate the ‘thesis’, neither does the ‘synthesis’ negate the ‘antithesis’. Moreover, what are called thesis, antithesis and synthesis are, properly speaking, a misnomer. For in the Hegelian dialectic these are not merely reactionary forces; they are the mature state of the preceding process. The thesis ripens and reaches a saturation point which is its antithesis. It devours itself, so to speak, or implodes. The same is the case with the synthesis. Furthermore, the synthesis is not a type of moderate state of affairs between the thesis and the antithesis; a sort of midpoint between the two. Moderation and medians don’t come into Hegel’s dialectic at all.

Voluntarism, on the other hand, which is less comprehensive than gradualism, for it confines itself to decision-makers only, also lacks the essential dialectical elements. With voluntarism the passages from thesis to antithesis to synthesis are imagined to be generated by free-will. People living in a (particularly insufferable) state of affairs (the thesis) decide to opt for its opposite (the antithesis), only later opting for a more restrained form of existence (the synthesis). Here again, the observations made above with regard to gradualism fully apply. Suffice to add that free-will has nothing to do with the processes of Hegel’s dialectical explanation.

What kind of binary oppositions, than, does Hegel’s dialectic assume? Perhaps the first feature one should be aware of is that, though appearing to be binary—that is, twofold or dual—the oppositions in both instances (thesis/antithesis; antithesis/synthesis) each form a single unity which is simultaneously both negative and a positive, or, rather, a negative which is an originator of a positive. It’s a bit like, say, swallowing a bitter medicine (negative) which is at the same time a cure (positive). Even in this simple example there is no gradualism or free-will involved. Also, if one is to take the same example as an illustration of Hegel’s dialectic, one might have the medicine stand for the thesis, the cure for the antithesis, and health (which is brought about by both) for the synthesis.

Each new phase destroys the preceding one while being its positive outcome in a process, first, of a negation and, then, of a negation of the negation. Each phase is not an evil but the potential of a new step towards what Marx called ‘potentiation’, that is, an upsurge towards a higher power or state of affairs.

Valid or not, Hegel’s dialectic must not be confused with any matching of binary opposites that come to mind. This would not only be naïve but a misrepresentation of his dialectical method, whether it be used to explain processes in history, art, philosophy, economy, politics or any other aspect of life.

For Hegel’s dialectic to be fully appreciated, his ‘labour of the negative’ must be acknowledged to the full.
It is a well known fact that in ancient Greece, amongst the Sophists, there appeared a number of nihilistic views. Gorgias, for example, was one of them. He held that: “Nothing really exists. If something did exist, we cannot know it. Even in the case of knowing something, we would not be able to express it.”

It was in direct confrontation with this gulf of uncertainty and ontological scepticism that Platonism emerged metaphysically. It intended to give value to moral judgments, provide a theory of riable knowledge, and, in the last instance, resolve the issue related to sensory experience and knowledge.

Platonism’s two-world vision, and the supremacy of the supersensible world, very much appealed to Christianity, which made of it a sort of ‘Platonism for the people’. Clinging to the Platonic concept of the ideal forms as imperishable and permanent, what is moral passed from having a relative status to a dogmatic one, with God acting as guarantor. We may safely add that Platonic metaphysics, with its resentment towards life and the sensible world, was taken up by Christianity lock, stock and barrel. This is how the history of metaphysics in the western hemisphere began, and, if truth be told, also its decline.

Taking Nietzsche’s posthumous fragments as a point of reference,* it is possible to perceive the metaphysical aspect of Christianity as the originator of what we came to understand nihilism to be. Or, which is exactly the same, that nihilism is a necessary consequence of Christianity.

“Nihilism is at the door,” Nietzsche states around 1885, and asks: “From where does this most disturbing of guests proceed?” For two thousand years, Christian morality has been nourishing within the European human spirit a ‘sense of truthfulness’, helping men and women not to despair of themselves or of life or of knowledge. Christianity has tried really hard, according to Nietzsche, to, first, give an absolute value to men and women, as opposed to their perceived smallness and contingency in the process of becoming and perishing; secondly, serve the intermediaries of God, giving the world the character of perfection, since evil appeared full of meaning; and, finally, instill in men and women a knowledge of absolute values, thus giving them adequate knowledge for the most important things.

As it happened, though morality turned out to be a ‘means of conservation and an antidote against practical and theoretical nihilism’, it also contained within itself its own venom: veracity. This moral refinement, the sense of truth, turned against morality itself, since it sniffed its own deception and its entwined view of life, thus causing its own decline. Truthfulness stuck its own sting. It is not that nihilism came to our doors because of the ‘hardships of the soul’ which we experience, and neither due to the ‘social misery’ in which we live. No, nihilism was the consequence of the Christian-moral interpretation of the world. Nihilism was, in the first instance, nausea at the falsity of the Christian world view, for, without an afterlife, everything becomes false.

In this sense, nihilism is a psychological state which responds to the disappointment of an alleged purpose in the future (finality). It is also a state which reacts to the absence of a totality that embraces and gives meaning and value to experience and to humankind (unity). Furthermore, it is a state which counters the frustrated attempt to invent an afterlife, a properly ‘true’ world (truth).

These three categories no longer serve to interpret the world, even though, nevertheless, there are still some islands clinging to them.

Why is Christianity a falsehood? Because it has been glorifying the contrary concept of life, using a god to validated moral judgments. Having lost faith in God, men and women lose every claim to continue to believe in moral value judgments. Now we must clear ourselves of that or, as Nietzsche’s famous turn of phrase has it, we must place ourselves beyond good and evil. The God who had once been created ex nihilo returns to nothingness. The Christian God is dead.

Orphans of a ‘true’ world, of a God, all held-for-true entities become false. Values are degraded and lose their power, because they discover the teleology hidden in their foundations. How to endure life now? Everything appears to be in vain. The interpretation has fallen, and we lack purpose and meaning.

‘Nihilism’ has meant, up to now, the Being of the history of the West, a Being that gradually is discovered, over two thousand years, thanks to its internal dialectics. However, Nietzsche give a twist to this: “Let us think of this thought in its most terrible form: existence, as it is, meaningless and aimless, but inevitably returning, without a climax in nothingness: the eternal return. This is the most extreme form of nihilism: nothing [read: meaninglessness] eternally!”

This is terrible. We might even hear the cries of the last
men and women who are about to succumb, and we ourselves also fading away, trapped between what we can no longer believe and what we still can not create.

‘Nihilism’ is now an ‘intermediate state’ of humanity (Zwischenzustand, Nietzsche calls it), which must be overcome by incorporating the concepts or experiences of the superman/superwomen and eternal return. It takes a will to power to assert itself in a ‘yes, a thousand times yes’ to this world of becoming. New values have to be created, from strength and acceptance, from passion, and not from resentment to life.

Men and women who can think the eternal return are, according to Nietzsche, the strongest precisely because they are the most measured, the ones who do not need to resort to extreme beliefs or hypotheses. These, Nietzsche goes on to say, are the men and women who not only admit, but love, a good share of risk, of drivel, without becoming small and weak. These are the healthy men and women, people without resentment, who are equal to their misfortunes and who, for that reason, do not fear them. Amor fati.

This surely does not seem an easy option. Nonetheless, what alternative do we have?

---

*The posthumous fragments of Nietzsche are taken from the Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke (Critical Edition of Works), edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 1967, particularly 2 [127] (1885-86), and 5 [71] (1886-87).

Marta Obiols Fornell is from Barcelona, Spain, and graduated in Philosophy and Religious Sciences. She lives in Gozo, and is head of Gozo’s Philosophy Sharing section there.

Shin KwangHo, web13 (2013)

It has often been said that philosophy began in wonderment. However, it seems to me that that doesn’t seem to be so. As all peoples around the globe, known and unknown, the Greeks too were puzzled with death. It was death, and an itch to understand it rationally, with reason alone, that gave rise to philosophy. After all these centuries, it is still death which plays the main role in all of the intellectual endeavours of the human race.

What concerns us here, rather than death itself, or what we identify as ‘death’, is principally movement or change. Things change. They pass from one moment of rest to another. They cease to be in one locus and move, or are generated, onto another. They die and are reborn incessantly. In other words, they move; they change. Death is never total. It is not annihilation. It is continually an end and a beginning at the same time.

It was this that attracted the mind of the 6th-century Eleatics, and which they sought to explain ‘scientifically’. Religious discourse alone, partly mythic and partly poetic, failed to satisfy their curiosity. They sought a materialistic answer to their questions about the possible conditions and prerequisites of change and movement. This was their big break from accounts of death put forward not only by the former poets and mystics of Hellas but also by those of all other civilisations.

In one of his most important essays, published in 1936, ‘Erzählen oder Beschreiben?’ (Narrate or Describe?), Georg Lukács makes an important distinction (for purposes other than the present one) between narrating and describing. It seems that, before the appearance of philosophy, thinkers (or whatever one may want to call them) sought to describe death, and were unaware that their description was, in fact, a narrative which presumed to be otherwise. Lukács, for one, reminded us that historical processes, such as death is, and all other kinds of movement and change, cannot be described; they can only be narrated. In other words, they can only be interpreted or, rather, construed from the perspective of an outsider or onlooker.

Describing death is impossible. This is because, by definition, change is never static; movement is never still. No historical process is. One cannot possibly describe what’s altering, shifting and fluctuating. One can only narrate, to continue with Lukács’ terminology, an impression of it or the consciousness of its happening.

Mythic and poetic discourse before the advent of philosophy sought to describe death, and that’s where they failed to satisfy the inquisitive mind; the minds, that is, of those who pursued a narration of the historical process. That’s precisely what the Eleatics did. First they beheld death, with all its subtexts, as a historical process, and then they dealt with it in narrative form, abandoning the futile effort of describing it (let alone in mythic or poetical discourse).

Since death was perceived as change or movement from one state of rest S1 to another state of rest S2, the Eleatics
reasoned out that both states must have some common quality which is preserved from S1 to S2. Otherwise change would not be possible, for it would not be part of a continuum but only an annihilation of S1 and a creation ex nihilo (from nothing) of S2, which was evidently not the case. Hence some imagined a narrative which posited the common factor as vapour or water (Thales), others as the undefined infinite or apeiron (Anaximander), others as space or air (Anaximenes), and still others as energy or fire (Heraclitus).

Whatever the case (the content details do not interest us directly here), philosophy was born as a narrative of historical processes. That was its major break with the past, and its novelty as far as culture, science and civilization is concerned. Its birth was closely related to death.

After so many centuries it seems that this relationship persists to be the demarcation line between philosophy and any other discourse, including pseudo-philosophy. Not only does philosophy continue to deal with death (movement and change) but also with narrative. It does not simply begin with wonderment, as often held, but, first and foremost, with a curiosity about the mutability of matter and, secondly, with an analysis of the intellectual, social, political and economic responses to material volatility.

So death, in all its multifarious guises, continues to take central stage, and continues to baffle us with its resistance to being pinned down. However, it is precisely this immobilisation which makes it more interesting and the more inscrutable. One can surmise that all philosophical attempts throughout the centuries up till this day in order to come to grips with death have more than proved how change, in all its forms, continues to fascinate us and to provoke our want of coming up with ever better narratives to explain it.

Deep down we do not understand death. It keeps eluding us. It is the first process we were ever conscious of as human beings—but also the same applies on an individual level—and yet it is the last thing we’ll ever grasp. For we are part of it. We are ourselves a historical process. This might explain why philosophy gave up, wisely enough, any attempt to produce a grand narrative of change. Grand narratives are futile as much as descriptions of historical processes are.

We live death by the moment for it is the constituent of life. Life is death. Death is life. Never shall they part with each other. Never shall death part with us.

Madge Cassar, from Zejtun, is an avid reader with a side-interest in philosophy. Philosophy interests her as a life instruction. She keeps abreast by attending courses related to philosophy whenever her family life allows her.
Manichaeism is an easy trap, and a very common and widespread one. Perhaps its success, from ancient times till today, is principally due to its raw simplicity. It offers so unsophisticated a view of people and the world that it is easy to understand and effortless to follow.

That view is clear-cut; just a question of simple either/or. For instance, it claims that people are either good or bad, that a situation is either beneficial or detrimental, that politics is either effective or unsuitable, that a feeling is either nice or unpleasant, and such like. Manichaeism does not accept middle terms. No grey areas exist. Something is either this or that. You’re either here or there. Nothing in between. At the end of the day, everything is considered up-front, fashionable movies or TV serials, to notice that the ‘good guys’ and the ‘bad guys’ are presented in a very clear-cut way which is not difficult to keep track of. (For effect, such fiction usually includes un-Manichaean finales since the good guys are invariably made to triumph over the bad guys at the end. People love good endings.) This has been a constant trend since mass distribution made it possible for thousands and, later, millions to have access to such forms of art. Though it is perhaps mainly done for technical reasons—since the plot is always essentially simple and easy to follow—it discloses the Manichaean tendency to see people, relationships and historical processes in a black and white kaleidoscope.

Here is the crunch. For people are never entirely good or entirely evil. They are always a mixture of both. Relationships are never either completely excellent or completely awful. They are always a combination of both. Historical processes are never either wholly agreeable or wholly obnoxious. They always include an assortment of both. Our common-day experience is enough to convince us that the Manichaean life- and worldview is naïve, one-dimensional and superficial. The world is much, much more complicated than any Manichaean either/or guideline would want us to believe. All things considered, Manichaeism is not simple; it is simplistic.

Even philosophically, Manichaeism does not hold water. The greater part of all contemporary philosophers—
starting with Kant, and continuing especially with those of the Continental tradition (including Nietzsche, Husserl, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre, Derrida, etc.)—repeatedly expressed that reality, any aspect of it, including consciousness and language, is never a mere clear-cut phenomenon. Such philosophers have taken great pains to show (convincingly) that things and facts, whatever they are or are deemed to be, are never only this or not that. Not even the categorisation of being, of whatever form, is never a simple issue of either/or. Whatever we take existence to be, it always involves admixtures, combinations, substitutions, exchanges, and the like. No either/or anthropology can coherently exist. No such historical theory is possible. No ontology of exclusive dyads can feasibly exist.

The Manichaean approach, in effect, is a travesty, and can be a dangerous and calamitous one when applied to social and political relationships. Imagining, for example, that a person is pure evil, devoid of any good whatsoever, places him or her beyond redemption and empowerment. The opposite is also potentially perilous, for envisaging a person as pure good (possessing some kind of aura of sanctity) certainly makes for abuse. Similarly, portraying a political regime or leadership as thoroughly evil, having not a shred of good, exposes it to a pernicious demonisation which may carry grave consequences for itself as for the people it rules upon. Its opposite is as hazardous, for envisioning a regime or leadership to be utterly good, virtually without the possibility of any misconduct of any kind, is practically a blank-cheque for all kinds of offensive exploitation. No examples would be needed here since such attitudes, both in local and international relations, are probably well-known anyway.

Though it may be that theologically Manichaeism has lost its currency, its philosophy still lingers on in the ‘us–them’ dichotomy which typifies so much of our everyday social and political characterisations, a dichotomy which, alas, exonerates some and demonises others.

Manichaeism is an attitude which revels in extremes. Its problem appears to be an overzealous temperament which, however well-intended, seems to have lost the plot.

Peter Tóth is from Szolnok, Hungary. He studied political science and philosophy at the University of Pécs, Hungary, and followed philosophy courses in Malta while working here. Though he now lives in Peszprém, Hungary, he still dreams of returning permanently to Malta.
Ethan: Tell me, Lucienne, why do you insist that until I read Neitzsche I won’t be shaken out of my stupor. What stupor do you mean?

Lucienne: Meaning that, while most other philosophers are interesting enough, very interesting, even, you won’t be really dared to defy your own certainties. You’ll be perhaps somewhat impressed, to be sure—as you told me about Brentano—but still dawdle in your own piss, excuse the expression.

Eth: Yes, that was the expression then and now. Excused. Nevertheless, I still may have not captured whatever it is you want to say, it seems.

Luc: Jee, Ethan, why do I bother with you at all! You’re so slow!

Eth: Okay, okay, save your usual blows below the belt and get on with what you want to say ... once more. Please.

Luc: It’s not that you’re slow, actually. You weren’t listening. You were so intent on what you planned to do, reading so many philosophers’ works, that you just ignored me.

Eth: I might we wiser now that I’ve gone into most of that stuff.

Luc: Yes, you might be, indeed. For, tell me, where has all that reading left you? Really. I’m sure all of it was very interesting and, as you said, captivating. Nonetheless, has any of it really shaken your intellectual foundations or juddered your very being? I mean, has it touched you personally to the core? — How can I put this? — Has all of it made you wonder, not what you know or do not yet know, but what you think of already knowing? How has it left your assumptions, or, rather, your worldview assumptions? This, I think, is the crux of what I want to say.

Eth: I think that, in truth, they seem to have confirmed much of what I already must have known. For, if you ask me, I was not really shaken—or unnerved, disturbed, distressed, upset, or whatever you’d like to call it—by what I read. I found it all so fascinating. But I had no sleepless nights, to say it melodramatically.

Luc: Precisely. Call me partisan, if you like. However, in my view Nietzsche won’t be like that at all. He’s indeed heavy, as you’d say, and not easy to read. But, then, he strikes where it hurts ... and, what is more, where it needs to hurt. He takes anyone’s worldview suppositions and conjectures and turns them on their head. He breaks through all the shams and charades, be they intellectual, moral, political, religious, philosophical, you mention it.

Eth: This smacks of reductionism to me, Lucienne, with all due respect, and hardly worthy of you. I’ve got an idea of Nietzsche, if you please, and it seems to me that you’re biting off too much. Why do you say all of this, anyway? I mean, what makes you say it?

Luc: Okay, you’re right. Allow me to explain myself. I’ve done a lot of philosophy reading myself, Ethan, if you’ll allow me to say. It has really been a bit of everything all across the board. Like yourself, I find it mostly interesting, sometimes fascinating, every now and then captivating. However, I find my mind being drawn back again and again with impelling force towards Nietzsche. To his earnestness. To his rude candour, if you like. Take his Birth of Tragedy, for instance. Or his Human, All Too Human. Or, better still, his Beyond Good and Evil and his Genealogy of Morals and his Ecce Homo. They don’t only move you, as any remarkable piece of philosophy would, but they stir something so deep within your being as if they’re shifting the very ground you walk upon. Later, after studying Nietzsche and moving on, you’ll realise that he’s haunting you. That the encounter did not cease. What’s more, that the contention, or whatever you want to call it, became ever more poignant, like a scald on one’s psyche which refuses to go away. You look around and you seem to sense echoes of his voice reverberate in your mind. Once you study Nietzsche, Ethan, he’ll never leave you.

Eth: Wow, Lucienne, you’re really hooked on the man, I see. And I’m not so sure I want to be scalded by this imp! I have read bits and pieces of him, to tell you the truth, but I don’t think the impression he left on me, though enthralling, to be sure, came close to what you’re saying.
Luc: I'm sure of that, my friend. Skimming paragraphs out of context from Nietzsche's works, or, worse still, reading his innumerable one-liners which go around like T-shirt slogans, won't get to anywhere at all, be sure of that. This I tell you, Ethan: you must not simply read Nietzsche. He is no beach novel. No snack al fresco. You need to go into his works. Seriously, I mean. He is not light. Unless you want to make light of him. Only then will you see his cutting light. You'll have to be very patient with Nietzsche's writings. You have to read him very slowly. Slowly, attentively, determinedly.

Eth: Sounds gruelling to me.

Luc: It might be, until one gets in his stride. Nietzsche has a style, and perhaps more than one, which you must get used to, like learning a new videogame. However—and this, mind, is only my humble opinion—once you get used to him you'll begin to enjoy his amazing sway upon words, and his vigour and his far-reaching intensity. You'll never want to put him down, I tell you. Believe me, Ethan, take it from me, you'll never make a good philosopher if you don't bite deep into Nietzsche. Never. Not anyone. His piercing sight is unparalleled.

By Nadia Lautier

Nadia Lautier is from Attard, Malta. She studied philosophy on her own as a hobby. Reading extensively, her interest has always been to explore the world of knowledge, particularly through the aid of the great works of philosophy.
Sometimes my imagination escapes far far away from this reality that I feel, no, I think it was imposed on me. By so doing my mind reaches that border between fantasy and illusion, where time and space meet and become one. There on that cliff, where the wind blows from all directions, whispering so much thoughts and dreams which have been conceived through time, I stood. Then a piece of paper I saw, flying towards me. It falls into my hands and I start to read:

The following are extracts from the constitution of Atlantis, a utopia still under construction, which was conceived by dreamers along the centuries known to the world as philosophers.

Atlantis is an independent state built on a Nation. By these words we understand:
• There is a distinction between the state and the Nation.
• The state is built on the Nation within a delineate territory.
• The Nation, free from the constraints of the state, is composed of individuals who share common beliefs and history and perceive themselves to be part of that particular and unique paradigm – we may call-it social imaginary.

The state:
• The state and its institutions are the mechanisms created by the collectivity to regulate, promote and secure its interest both internally and with external entities.
• The legitimacy and authority of the state and its institutions rest on the approval of the Nation.
• The duty of the state is not only with the present but also to future generations.

The state has three major obligations through the collectivity:

1) Future generations: Continuity is the main aim of the state, and this is symbolically represented by the use of the terms ‘future generations’. To achieve this the state has to:
• Anticipate and satisfy any possible needs in order to achieve the goal.
  ◦ By ‘needs’ we also understand ‘tools’.
• Create possibilities.

2) Past generations: We view the past as the present glue that holds the structure together, and the greatest asset the collectivity can have. It’s the collective memory, a collection of experience, facts and myths, hopes and dreams, which have been accumulated on its walk through time. It’s on the contribution of past generations that the present is built, and it needs to be cherished and elevated as a symbol through which people can identify themselves as a nation.

3) The present generation: The present is the now, and it’s on the now that the future is to be built. Even if the future is still in construction, it’s the duty of the present institutions to:
• visualize and think about any possible variations or developments, and
• incorporate them in their planning.

A dive into the imaginarey, and I wonder

A thought experiment

Alfred Zammit is a regular contributor to the magazine. A self-taught person, he reads incessantly, and takes pleasure in exploring philosophical concepts to their limit.
Metaphorically speaking the present is:

• The guardian of the structure and its coalesce through time and space.
• The pinnacle of the collective effort of the Nation.

The platform on which the future is built is the present, and the roots of the present are our past. We are one, not only in space but also in time. One of the functions entrusted to the state is to be the link between the past and the future. So it’s working station is the present, but with the ultimate vision locked in the future.

This means:

• The cohesion of the structure is imperative.
• It’s the function of state to promote, protect and reinforce the so-called structure.
• The strength of the structure is based on free individuals.
  - By ‘individual’ we are understanding:
    ▪ An independent and autonomous unit from the human race.
    ▪ The individual is conscious of his own individuality, his freedom, his obligations and duties.
    ▪ Because he is a member (by his choice) of the collectivity, the individual’s obligations and duties are dictated by the needs of the structure.
  - We are not understand or use the term ‘dictated’ in its negative sense.

Another main function of the state is to provide protection to the collectivity from external entities, against internal enemies and to protect people from themselves.

Definitions of external entities; internal enemies; protection of people from themselves:

- **External entities**: Entities foreign to the collectivity which may pose a threat to the integrity, security and the interest of the Nation.
- **Internal enemies**: All those who are considered to be members of the collectivity intentionally working for personal gain but consciously ignoring and disregarding the integrity and the security of the Nation (state).
- **Protection of people from themselves**: Protecting the collectivity from itself, from any possible irrational and egoistic actions which can compromise the integrity, stability and security of the structure.

- **Definition of Structure**:
  - It’s a web/s of relations and arrangements rooted in the being of the collectivity and woven along the centuries.
  - It’s the roots and the platform over which the present is build and over which the future will be secured.
  - It’s within the structure that the individual defines his identity, and finds stability and security.
  - The structure’s security and stability (even if relative) are imperative. Anything that compromises its integrity should be eliminated or expelled from the collectivity.

We must avoid any temptation to dominate other entities (nations, states) by force or by impositions. But both possibilities cannot be excluded as a means to be used in order to protect the integrity and security of the state.

The state should never place itself nor the Nation in a position of dependence and vulnerability in which it has to conform to outside forces and, by so doing, compromising the integrity of the structure.

The hijacking of the Nation by elements within the state is a possibility that cannot be ignored. The best protection to avoid and deflect such an attempt is the integrity of free individuals within the collectivity. They are the guardians of the structure. For this reason, it’s in the interest of the collectivity to rise and educate these individuals. Only the collectivity can prevent its own destruction.

Change is a constant element in life and shouldn’t be ignored nor avoided, but embraced without compromising the integrity and security of the structure. Any change should be guided and understood through reason with the ultimate aim stated in this constitution.

Adaptation and endurance to keep once identity is what we understood to be the heart of evolution and existence, and this is the ultimate aim of Atlantis.

THE END

By Alfred Zammit

The imaginary, and I wonder

A thought experiment
Since its establishment in May 2012, a central objective of Philosophy Sharing Foundation (PSF) has been to extend its activities to the island of Gozo once it has consolidated itself in Malta. The formation of an official committee of the Gozitan Section of Philosophy Sharing on 18 February 2017, following a year of activities on an experimental basis, represents a definite step to the fulfillment of that objective.

Due to the sociological differences between Malta and Gozo, Philosophy Sharing had to adapt its practices in order to anchor itself effectively in Gozo. The choice of English, for example, as the main language of the Gozitan Section has borne fruit. Indeed, the new committee consists of a vibrant and dynamic mix of locals and foreigners hailing from several European and Mediterranean countries. This does not simply present an opportunity for the Foundation to make inroads into the burgeoning community of foreigners in Gozo, but more importantly permits foreigners to participate in a tangible and constructive manner within Gozitan society.

In this respect, through its dialectical engagement, Philosophy Sharing is going beyond social boundaries and opening possibilities. Crucially, as a result of its challenging public activities that broach all kinds of philosophical problématiques relevant to the human condition, Philosophy Sharing is contributing to the enlargement of Gozo’s public sphere to include critical and philosophical attitudes within public discourse. Lastly, the Gozitan Section intends to enrich the island’s array of cultural and social activities. The consequences that will result from these processes could be immeasurable.

The main activity that PSF Gozo is currently offering to the public is that of talks and discussions, which take place...
Once every month. These consist of a concise talk given by a speaker on a predetermined topic, which is subsequently followed by a short open discussion. As in Malta, PSF Gozo is committed to bringing forth the most challenging and interesting of subjects in order to ensure the well attendance of these talks and effective participation and engagement. In fact, the most recent public talk, which was given by Bishop Mario Grech on the subject of the Philosophical Perspectives of Forgiveness, was very well attended and offered an interesting topic of discussion.

Our next public talk, to take place on the 31st of March at the Circolo Gozitano, promises to be equally engaging. In his talk, the Hon. Mr Justice Silvio Meli will expound on the subject of Justice and the Muses from a Maltese perspective. It will be a unique experience in the Maltese islands, and an appointment which is not to be missed.

PSF Gozo is not a static organisation. By contributing to the organisation, you are contributing to society. Should you be interested in our aims and activities, you are welcome to contact us on philosophysharinggozo@gmail.com, or better, attend one of our public talks and get to know us better there. We will not disappoint.
United we stand
Consciousness: The concept of mind and the transcendence of conventional thought
Anton Sammut
The author, Malta; December 2016; 456 x 210 mm; ISBN 978-99957-1-033-0

The Maltese original of this book, Il-Filosofija tal-Mohh (The Philosophy of Mind), was published by the author in 2015. The title of this translated version might be more apt than that of the Maltese version since the book is not exactly a work on the philosophy of mind. It is, rather, about consciousness and, to be more precise, about what is called Cosmic Consciousness.

The author puts forward a theory with which he proposes that all existence is interconnected by some kind of force or energy that even permeates every cell of our brain. “What happens in the infinite cosmos (macrocosmic),” he states, “is also happening in the smallest nucleus that exists in every human being (microcosmic) and thus ensues the realisation that everything is One or else as Above so Below and vice versa (Cosmic Consciousness).”

Though not exactly a book of philosophy, for its sources are very often other than reason alone, including Oriental Brahmiic teachings and the Kabbalah, the study impinges upon various aspects of what philosophy usually deals with, including metaphysics, ethics and more.

The book is quite ambitious in the sheer width of its scope and in its bold attempt to provide a comprehensive rationalisation of all reality. Whether this is always rational must be left to the reader.

PhilStars: *

An encouraging human condition
Grasshopper
Aleks Farrugia
Merlin Publishers, Malta; November 2016; 130 x 200 mm; 200 pp. ISBN 978-99909-1-633-1

What some call Philosophical Novels sounds quite heavy. You’d half expect to be immersed in a torrent of brainy words which plunge you deeper into an abyss whirling with sentience.

Philosophical novels nowadays, in a post-modern, post-truth era, do not tend to be like that at all.

That is not to say that yesteryear’s classics have lost their appeal, novels like, just to mention a few, Hesse’s Steppenwolf, Musil’s Man Without Qualities, Camus’ Stranger, Goethe’s Faust, Rilke’s Malte, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Sartre’s Nausea, Kazantzakis’ Zorba, and, of course, Dostoyevsky’s Brothers Karamazov.

Nevertheless, such works seem to have won the designation of Philosophical Fiction because of their upfront prose which deals directly with questions usually tackled by discursive philosophy. It is not the inclination of contemporary philosophical novels to do so. They perhaps discuss as much without saying it straightforwardly, without being so overt about it.

In this sense, Farrugia’s Grasshopper is a novel of its time. It communicates through its narrative, which, though broadly incorporating existentialist features, also proffers indications of a therapy which may lead to self-actualisation. The story, in fact, does not end in hopelessness or, in the style of most post-modern novels, without a closure. It ends with a sort of redemption.

The novel may thus be taken as an experimental exercise in existential humanism in which people
reinventing themselves, struggle to understand themselves anew, and slowly assume self-responsibility.

**PhilStars:** ***

## Snapshots of experience

*Nismagħhom Jghidu*

Joe Friggieri
Kite Group, Malta;
February 2017; 130 x 200 mm; 262 pp.

This is a collection of twenty short stories in Maltese, the title of which can be roughly translated *I Recall them Saying*. Though written by a well-established philosopher, none of the stories are philosophical in nature, at least not in the strict sense of the word.

This might have been intentional, for they seem to capture an intention which goes beyond intentionality. In the sense that the author appears to withhold any sign of intent in each of the narrations. He presents stories but not for an intended purpose, or rather not with any objective of directing the reader towards any determined or preferred conclusion.

The stories read like snapshots. They appear to be instances, or captured moments, which seem to be taken from larger accounts which are left to the imagination of the reader. They may have a moral if one cares to see one in them but which is not essential to the narratives themselves.

This may be considered to be philosophical in itself. For the stories narrated by Friggieri in this book, very different from others published in his Ronnie books (1992, 2007) or his *Tales for Our Times* (1996, 2015), are not missionary. That is, they express a philosophy which is left open to speculation. Not only one which does not conclude anything definitive but, further, one which does away with the very necessity of a conclusion.

**PhilStars:** **

## Paternalism be damned

*Min Jghidu n-Nies li Jien? Il-faqar tal-paternaliżmu*

Mark Montebello
SKS, Malta; March 2017; 110 x 180 mm; iv + 222 pp.

Most contemporary philosophical contributions to the issue of paternalism deal with the legal aspect of it. In so doing, their main focus is not whether paternalism is philosophically justified or not but rather how much of it is acceptable and why. Nowadays few en bloc refutations of paternalism are encountered, and philosophers rarely discuss any more whether or not it can be philosophically vindicated at all. They all seem to take it for granted that some paternalism, especially by the political State and its laws, is warranted.

In this sense, this book is an exception. Its title, *Who Do People Say I Am? The poverty of paternalism*, already indicates in what direction its flag is blowing. The content does not disappoint. One finds that the whole treatise, for a treatise it is, is a powerful philosophical denunciation of paternalism in all its forms, not only interpersonal and institutional but also that which is enshrined in the law.

The author does not mince words when he comes to criticise relevant philosophical positions, including that held, and widely accepted, by Thaler and Sunstein of ‘nudge’ theory fame. Also Feinberg, Dworkin u Rawls, and quite some others. His unequivocal adherence is to Kant and Stuart Mill.

The book is intended for a wide public. Philosophical terminology, when used, is explained, and the many elaborate philosophical arguments which it presents are rendered in simple terms.

**PhilStars:** ***

### CALL FOR ARTICLES

Submit your article for the next issue of SHARE until 15 July 2017. Anyone may submit an article, subject to the discretion of the Editor. Articles are to be in English, not longer than a 1,000 words, and never published elsewhere. Send your article to meinradaffleja55@yahoo.com.

*Share your philosophy. Thank you.*
The Annual Philosophy Lecture is a special yearly event organised by the Philosophy Sharing Foundation during springtime. The event is held close to the anniversary of the passing away of the Maltese philosopher Peter Serracino Inglott, which sadly occurred on March 16, 2012. Serracino Inglott had been somewhat instrumental in establishing the Philosophy Sharing Foundation five years ago.

Each year the event gives a chosen philosopher the opportunity to engage Malta and Gozo’s philosophical community in discussing interesting and enterprising ideas. The event is held on a grand scale worthy of the occasion.

This year’s Annual Philosophy Lecture was delivered by Prof. John Ryder, the Provost of the American University of Malta. Born in New York City in 1951, Prof. Ryder is the organiser of the American University of Malta. He is a specialist in American philosophy, especially American philosophical naturalism and pragmatism, its historical development, contemporary applicability, and its reception outside the US. His many published works tend to focus on issues in systematic ontology and epistemology, and on social and political philosophy. He became a Ph.D. in 1982.

Malta’s 2017 Annual Philosophy Lecture was held at the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana, on March 8. It had a full house with no space to spare.

Introducing the event, Dr Max Cassar, Director of the Philosophy Sharing Foundation, expressed the gratitude of the foundation for the generous support it is getting while accomplishing its responsibilities. Dr Cassar also officially announced the formal establishment of the Gozo branch of the foundation, and its first administrative team, made up of Gozitans and foreign Gozo residents.

Dr Ryder talked about the role of digital technology in political communication, specifically in relation to the importance of the pursuit of common interests in political activity. If we want to improve our political environment and accomplish significant political ends, he said, we need to stop attacking one another on Twitter and on-line, and converse with one another face-to-face.

Technology, Dr Ryder held, is currently a probable obstacle in political communication. He proposed that the strongest ground for political activity, especially democratic political activity, is the identification and pursuit of common interests within one’s community and across borders.

There is no reason to think, Dr Ryder said, that digital technology is necessarily detrimental to useful political engagement and communication with one another. That we often use it detrimentally contributes to misunderstanding and social divisions. More genuine communication in the sense of engagement through shared meanings is critical, Dr Ryder concluded, and, it turns out, a necessary condition.
of experience and growth, both individual and social. Such communication, digital or otherwise, is enhanced through the pursuit of common interests.

During the discussion period following Dr Ryder’s talk, members of the audience highlighted various themes suggested by the excellent lecture. Amongst these, particular mention was made to the use of technology and Internet by political fanatics, the difference between common interest and common good and common interest, the medium and the message, education and online courses, social communication as a possible human right, online exchange of ideas, and virtual governments and parliaments.

The Annual Philosophy Lecture can be followed on the Philosophy Sharing Foundation’s YouTube channel at this address: https://youtu.be/hFEcMkxBSm4.

*Above right: Prof. Ryder. Below: The audience.*
The Philosophy Sharing Foundation is very pleased to announce that, as from 16 March 2017, it has been accepted to form part of the prestigious Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie (International Federation of Philosophical Societies).

The Federation, established in 1948, is the highest non-governmental world organisation for philosophy. Its members are not individual philosophers, but philosophical societies and other similar philosophical institutions at national, regional and international levels.

The main objectives of the Federation are to contribute directly to the development of professional relations between philosophers of all countries, freely and with mutual respect; to foster contacts between institutions, societies and periodical publications dedicated to philosophy; to collect documentation useful for the development of philosophical studies; to sponsor every five years a World Congress, the first one of which met in 1900; to promote philosophical education, to prepare publications of global interest; and to contribute to the impact of philosophical knowledge on global problems.

Adhering to these objectives, the Philosophy Sharing Foundation submitted its application to the Federation’s Steering Committee, currently led by Prof. Dermot Moran, in January 2017. Among the Federation’s approximately one hundred members, three-quarters are national and one-quarter international societies. The Federation is a member of the Conseil International de Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines. This Council, also a non-governmental organisation, consists of thirteen world federations, and constitutes the link between these federations and UNESCO.

At present the Federation and the Philosophy Sharing Foundation are conducting a joint exploratory exercise to discern the best ways of participation and collaboration.

Since the last issue of the magazine last January the members of the Philosophy Sharing Foundation had a great time with interesting discussions, fascinating courses, growing support and new experiences. Why not join the fun?

To keep you abreast with the latest developments, here’s a few of the things the Foundation has been doing during the last four months. Remember, you can check us out on our website at www.philosophysharing.org or drop us a note on philosophysharingmalta@gmail.com. We’re ready to have you on board.

PUBLIC TALKS: Let’s start with the public discussions which the Foundation organises every first Wednesday of each month. These are held on the first floor of Luciano Restaurant of Merchants Street at Valletta from 6.30 PM till 8.00 PM. The new year’s meetings started off in February with a talk delivered by Dr Mark Montebello on the theme *Is God Dead?* This was on February 1. The second one was on March 8 delivered by Dr John Ryder (on this go to page 22). The third discussion was held on April 5 with a talk delivered by Ian Rizzo on *The Philosophy of Naturism*. In May the talk was given by François Mifsud on *Hospitality*. All of these events were a treat, and the audience engaging. Send us your email if you want to keep posted on the Foundation’s future public discussions.

COURSES: Wow! The courses of the 2016/17 season have now almost come to an end. The next season’s are being prepared, and we’ve got a few top-notch choices which you’ll like. Make sure you’re in the loop. So, our first course this year was on *The Philosophy of Architecture* delivered by Prof. Lino Bianco. This was from January 9 till February 6. The second one, delivered by Karl Borg, dealt with *The Nature of Truth*. It was held from March 6 till April 3 (photo below). The last course of the season was between April 10 and May 15 on *The Philosophy of the Orient*. This was delivered by Walid Nabhan. The courses are usually given in Maltese, though exceptions can be made to accommodate foreign participants.

GOZO: Oh yes, this is an item which makes our pulse race. After a year of experimental activity, the Gozo branch of the Foundation has been formally established. The branch had begun its work on January 9, 2016. It was official set up on February 18, 2017. The seven-strong management team is headed by the Catalanian (Spain) Marta Oblios Fornell. Read more about this fascinating experience on page 18.

AGM: The Foundation’s 2017 Annual General Meeting was held on February 1 at Luciano Restaurant, Merchants Street, Valletta. More or less, this was a formal meeting required by law. Those present were handed out the secretary’s annual report and the financial accounts for reviewing, and elected the Foundation’s 2017-2020 Steering Committee. Dr Max Cassar, the Director of the Foundation, gave a short speech in which he stressed the importance of the Foundation in the context of Malta and Gozo’s philosophical scene, and pointed out the areas of development which the Foundation is experiencing. In conclusion, he said that the Foundation has had a very promising five years existence, and this encourages further enterprise.

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTION: Here’s something completely new. The Foundation has been honoured with membership to the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP). This is a federation established in 1948. It includes some hundred members, most of which are national, and others are international, societies. The FISP is the highest non-governmental world organisation for philosophy. You’ll find more about this item on page 24.

ANNUAL LECTURE: This year’s Annual Philosophy Lecture was a huge success. The guest speaker was Prof. John Ryder, the Provost at the American University of Malta, who spoke on the theme *Politics by Twitter. Has social communication become a problem?* The event was held at the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana, on March 8, and had a full house. Read more about this special event on page 22.

2017-20 COMMITTEE: The formation of the Foundation’s 2017-20 Steering Committee was elected on February 1 at the Annual General Meeting. It is made up of the following: Dr Max Cassar (Chairperson), Dr Mark Montebello (Secretary), Ivan Attard (Treasurer), Andrea Axisa (Gozo Liaison), Kevin Saliba (International Relations), Mario Sciberras (Publications), Ian Rizzo (Memberships) and Henry-Franz Caucci (Courses).
PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERSIONS are not as rare as one might think. To give a few well-known examples, one may mention Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s sudden realization that arts and sciences corrupt morals, or Immanuel Kant’s ‘penny drop’ arousal from his ‘dogmatic slumber’, or even Ludwig Wittgenstein’s amusing stories of toy cars in a French courtroom and the one about the rude gesture.

Some philosophical conversions are even more dramatic, like Bernard Stiegler’s jailhouse experience, Johann Hamann’s abrupt change in a London garret, Blaise Pascal’s unexpected illumination when he almost died after his coach nearly drove off a cliff, Johann Fichte’s unforeseen discovery of ‘the primacy of the practical’, and Karl Reinhold’s astonishing turnabout which Fichte prompted in him.

Such rational conversions, presented almost as something verging on the miraculous, were all probably the end result of a long travail of intellectual agonies. Nevertheless, they attest to a radical change of intellectual vision, a paradigm shift, if you like, with which a whole new world is opened up to the eye of the mind, drastically different, almost in opposition, to the one before.

Nicholas Zammit, a Maltese philosopher from Siggiewi (1815–1899), experienced such a right-about turn very late in his life. He was sixty years old when Zammit, who was a medical doctor by profession, and also a structural engineer and designer, abandoned his prolific liberal viewpoint and converted to conservatism.

Anyone remotely familiar with Zammit’s most well-known philosophical writing, Thoughts of a Retrograde, published in Italian in 1888, wouldn’t suspect any of this. The voluminous book presents a sort of comprehensive philosophy of the author’s entire thought structure and perspective after his conversion. Nothing of his former positions are mentioned or referred to. The reader who is unfamiliar with Zammit’s earlier phase is left with the wrong impression that the author had been conservative all his life.

Zammit was a brilliant thinker and man of applied science. His architectural engineering for churches, government projects, including one of a drainage system for the whole of Malta, and structural blueprints for many artistic creations give witness enough to his outstanding prowess.

Since he mostly wrote in very classical Italian, and none of his writings have been translated into a modern language, Zammit is not well-known or studied. This is truly a pity. For he is worth knowing. He was a very colourful sort of person with many professional and scientific interests, a philosopher very sure of himself and his vision of the world.

A life-size monument of Zammit is situated at Siggiewi.
Solve these easy quandaries without looking at the answers below. You’ll only need a bit of ingenuity to crack them. They’re fun. Go on, let go!

WHY LIE?
Jack tells Jill, “This isn’t the $5 bill you left on the table. I found it between pages 15 and 16 of Harry Potter.”

Jill retorts, “You’re lying and I can prove it.” How did Jill know?

WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

SAFE CROSSING
A boy is stuck on a deserted island. There is a bridge to connect the island to the mainland. Halfway across the bridge there is a guard. The guard will not let anyone from the mainland to the island, or anyone from the island to the mainland. If the guard catches someone, he sends him or her back. The guard sleeps for 30 seconds and then is awake for 5 minutes. The island is surrounded by man-eating sharks, and the boy does not have anything with him except for his own shirt and his pants. It takes the boy 1 minute to cross the bridge. How does he cross the bridge without getting caught?

RIGHT NAME
Henry walked down the street and bumped into his old friend from the philosophy degree course.

“I haven’t seen you for ages! I’ve married someone you wouldn’t know,” said the young friend. “This is our daughter!”

“And what’s your name, girl?” Henry asked the little girl who was holding his friend’s hand.

“It’s the same as my mummy!” said the girl.

“Oh, so it’s Teagan, is it?” Henry asked.

He was right! How did he know the girl’s name?

WHY LIE? answer:
Harry Potter, like all other books, has odd-numbered pages on the right. Therefore, pages 15 and 16 are the front and back of a single page, and nothing could have been found between them.

WHAT DOES THIS SAY? answer:
Two degrees below zero.

SAFE CROSSING answer:
The boy runs halfway across the bridge and turns around. The boy looks like he is running to the island and is sent to the mainland.

RIGHT NAME answer:
The old friend of Henry’s was the mother of the little girl. Because Henry was a man, so Teagan just said the name of the friend.

Find us online
Follow the regular postings of the Philosophy Sharing Foundation by subscribing to the Foundation’s pages. Keep up to date on all activities and events. Search ‘Philosophy Sharing’ in each site and subscribe. You don’t want to miss out!