

Sanskrit: The Philosophy.

Prof. Michael Zammit,

Department of Philosophy, University of Malta.

Philosophy is unfortunately too often associated with the formation of a critical and independent attitude, with a method of disciplined thought, rigorous and reflective, rooted in wonder, enquiry and indeed astonishment. Certainly such efforts *do* constitute an arsenal of worthy endeavours, activities surely indispensable to the formation of the good citizens and necessary for their active participation in the civic life sporting a free and autonomous spirit; but alas in the final analysis they are merely the means to an end, tools, and instruments. What is the end then?

The human being all too keenly aware of its seeming ultimate limitation (call it death: *mrityum*) lives in (the combatant) Arjuna's stance in the *Bhagawad Gita* just before getting involved in the terrible events of the great war of the Sanskrit 100,000 verse epic poem, the *Mahabharata*. He knows he is destined to die here in the field (*Kurukshetra*) of battle. He knows that his near ones, those he loves so dearly, will also die.

In the midst of life, death manifests as all that which will not return. It belongs to the perfect tense, the time past, over and done with. Finally then, fear is fear of the irreversible. Such is the fear the paralysis in body, mind and spirit that impedes the availability of freedom (*moksha*) and locks being in that so specific a form that is the human nature.

How Sanskrit, the wrought (not natural) language of humanity's most ancient culture, addresses the dismantling of such impediments as these is the urgent reason for examining its structures philosophically rather than merely philologically.

The role of slaves in Roman land surveying.

Prof. Levente Taka'cs,
University of Debrecen, Hungary.

The Roman land surveyors discuss several aspects of their profession in their works, but fail to mention two important details. They do not speak about the tools and devices they might have used, although there were very developed ones available, such as *dioptra*. A land surveyor's work needed some personnel to help the surveyor in assigning and distributing land. There are no hints in surveyors' manuals at using human work force, but we have some information about using slaves in land surveying. By collecting relevant data, this study aims at showing how important slaves' role was in Roman land surveying.

Themistocles as a trickster in Herodotus.

Prof. Nijole Juchneviciene,

Head of the Department of Classics, University of Vilnius, Lithuania.

Herodotus' *History* is a series of political biographies and his interest is focused on historical personalities, their role in the historical events and the motivation of their actions. Herodotus' main source of information is oral tradition. One of the most mysterious characters among the politicians of the Greco-Persian wars is Themistocles. Greek tradition of him is very ambiguous: he is regarded both as a hero and a liberator of Greece and, at the same time, as a selfish renegade. The legend was built up around Themistocles quite early, as it is evident already in Herodotus' and Thucydides' texts. Thucydides' *History* relates the events that took place after Xerxes' campaign; Herodotus has passed them over in silence. This notwithstanding, Thucydidean characterization of Themistocles tallies with his portrait as depicted by Herodotus: Themistocles is presented as a political genius and the most efficient politician of his time. Thucydides' story exculpates him from the treachery charges and indicates that he fled to Persia for the reason of Sparta's plotting against him. Herodotus, on the other hand, never mentions the fact of treachery and Themistocles' exile. He just drops a hint that Themistocles foresaw that the attitude towards him may change in the future, and concludes by saying that it later actually happened. Themistocles emerges into Herodotean narrative as a *homo novus* in politics. This is an obvious contradiction to historical reality. Both the introduction to the narrative and the whole Herodotean *logos* about Themistocles, in which the main focus is made on his deceits and tricks, albeit for good purpose, gave rise to the belief that Herodotean account of Themistocles is written in a hostile vein. The present paper demonstrates that a different approach to the Herodotean Themistocles is possible. The style of the Themistoclean *logos* in Herodotus is similar to the style of the traditional trickster-tales. Herodotus admired artful deception that not only inveigle others into complying, but also promote self-preservation. Trickster, when a human being, is lowly and unimportant, but he gains victory over socially superior and moral antagonists. Therefore, Herodotus makes Themistocles to step into history as *homo novus* and decreases the military merits of Aristides, whom Herodotus admires as the most just and the best of all the Athenians; at the same time, he is, according to Herodotus, the arch-enemy of Themistocles. Themistocles, as like as the protagonist of the trickster-tales, breaks the boundaries and gets away with it. He achieves salvation both for Greece and for himself through deception. Just for the sake of a good story, there is no need for the narrator to mention what actually happened later on.

Drawing Distinctions in the *Laches* and *Charmides*: Socratic Elenchus as Search.

Dr Jurgen Gatt,

Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Malta.

The Socratic Method is a dialectical method, conducted in a question-and-answer format, by which one of the dialectical partners, usually the interlocutor, is led to a realization of a moral or intellectual failure or both. This model of the elenchus focuses on Socrates' role as questioner. One recent trend in scholarship, however, focuses on the role of the interlocutor in the dialectical partnership. The following paper falls within this tradition of scholarship, focusing on the role of 'drawing distinctions' in the progress and overall goal of the elenchus in two particular 'Socratic' dialogues, the *Laches* and *Charmides*.

These two works, less studied than the other early dialogues of Plato, share a number of dramatic and philosophical similarities. One such similarity is the prominence of the interlocutor's role in the discussion by drawing distinctions to disarm Socrates' refutations. Such dialectical skill is to be found pre-eminently in Nicias, the pupil of Damon and frequent associate of Socrates and Critias the 'sophist'. The usual interpretation given to these 'episodes' of drawing distinctions is well characterized by Laches' own reaction to Nicias' dialectical 'tricks'. Nicias is 'shuffling' in order to avoid a deserving refutation and disguising his ignorance with empty words. This interpretation is also naturally implied by an overall negative function of elenchus conceived solely in terms of refutation.

The aim of this paper is to challenge this interpretation. An examination of the relationship of these distinctions to the circumstances in which they arise and to the overall progression of the elenchus makes room for a different reading. It is argued that the drawing of distinctions in an elenchus allows for more than the mere testing of an interlocutor's *doxastic* coherence. Distinctions serve a positive dimension, achieving results by which Socrates and his partner can strengthen or amend their moral beliefs.

The Medea Myth in the Literature of the 20th century,

Prof. Ojārs Lāms,
University of Latvia.

In this paper, the research is based on two case studies – the evaluation of a novel *Raudupiete* by Latvian writer Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1863), and a play of the same name by Latvian playwright Anna Brigadere (1961) and the evaluation of a play *The Hungry Women* by American writer Cherrie L. Moraga (1952).

In the case of Latvian literature, we are faced with the interaction of realism and modernism, and their indirect references to the Ancient Greek myth give the work an archetypal dimension.

The juxtaposition of works distant both in space and time, but which are still contained within one century, allows for a deeper and more thorough understanding of the myth's creative potential even for the recent times.

Both Latvian writers analyze with different generic methods the meandering fortunes of Latvian women in the countryside and add to their realistic portrayal of the surroundings the allusive presence of the myth, while Moraga uses her creative works to restate and re-interpret myths both of the Ancient Greeks and the Mayans, and of the Chicana as well.

On the one hand, Moraga is an explicit post-modern playwright, and her poetics is based on intertextuality, fragmentation, absurdity etc.

On the other hand, she is a passionate feminist and Chicana activist, and the generally characteristic distrust in theories and ideologies in post-modern times is not an issue in Moraga's works.

Using both European, and Anglo- and Mexican-American heritage, Moraga's writing focuses on post-colonial reflection on Chicana situation and especially her experiences as a woman of colour and Chicana Lesbian.

This paper examines how, by the use of various poetical and ideological strategies in the production of modern, peculiarly original and different works, a common vector is obtained thanks to the presence of the ancient myth.

Aristotle on Historiography.

Prof. Vita Papparinska,
University of Latvia.

Aristotle's *Poetics*, a major work of ancient literary criticism, as it is well known, focuses on the discussion of tragedy. Other literary genres, if mentioned at all, remain on the periphery of his field of vision. Thus historiography receives but some *obiter dicta* remarks.

Aristotle seems to view historiography as a kind of chronicle dealing with actual events of the past, emphasizing the particular as opposed to the general, narrating all the happenings and events of a given period, although they have no interconnection whatsoever (*Poetics*, 1451a-b, 1459a). Although these remarks hardly can be used to extract any Aristotelian theory of historiography, they merit consideration and provoke the question of the specific historians / texts Aristotle may have had in mind.

The paper evaluates the applicability of Aristotle's statements to the major Greek historians of the 5th century B.C., Herodotus and Thucydides and the continuators of their tradition in the 4th century B.C.

Beyond Novelistic Heroism. The untold story of the ancient novel.

Prof. Koen De Temmerman,
Ghent University, Belgium.

This paper presents and illustrates with a few examples the broad lines of a large-scale, E.R.C.-funded research project which is now in its early stages at Ghent University (Belgium) and bears at its core concepts central to the history of this wonderful place that hosts us today: intercultural exchange, cross-fertilization between East and West, and creative, literary reception. The project aims to enhance our understanding of the history of the ancient (Latin and Greek) novel by studying its persistence into Greek, Latin and Syriac hagiography of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, and by exploring the impact of this persistence on Western medieval romances, Byzantine novels and Persian epic romances in the 11th and 12th centuries.

“*Mutatas formas*’: the human, the arboreal, and the *Animalesque* in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.”

Professor Gloria Lauri-Lucente,

Heae of the Department of Italian, University of Malta.

It has been stated that the concept of metamorphosis as it operates in Ovid’s poem has never been satisfactorily understood, nor has its significance been fully appreciated. In short, to define metamorphosis as it functions in Ovid’s ancient cosmos of ‘*mutatas formas*,’ or ‘changed forms,’ has often been considered as an exercise in defining the undefinable. In yet another attempt to define the ever-shifting configurations of the Ovidian universe, Philip Hardie has described the *Metamorphoses* as “a gigantic repertory of aetiologies for phenomena in the natural world, a world that is at once an image of the one in which we live, and also a pointedly artificial and fictive remaking and doubling of that world.” While I am essentially in accord with this broad interpretation of metamorphosis, in my paper I would like to argue that the theoretical constructs of the recent spate of critical works on post-humanism can shed light on how to re-examine the “pointedly artificial and fictive remaking and doubling” of the natural world portrayed in the single most celebrated *oeuvre* from classical antiquity on migrating forms. In the process, the paper will strive to show how post-humanist studies may also suggest new readings on the separation of mind from body, or, as Hermann Fränkel aptly put it as early as 1945, the alienation of “a self divided in itself or spilling over into another self.” Post-humanist perspectives on issues like artificial intelligence, disembodiment, transferred consciousness, metamorphosis, and the phenomenology of new, altered, or “re-engineered” subjectivities, might thus create space for a rethinking of post-humanism itself while potentially paving the way for a new *aetas Ovidiana*.

The Migration of Religions from East to West in the Roman Era.

Prof. Danny Praet,

Ghent University, Belgium.

The *Acts of the Apostles* (27-28) tell us that Malta was a way station for the spread of Christianity. This lecture will discuss the spread of a different type of religions which became popular during the same time as Christianity spread from Palestine to Rome. The concept of "Oriental Religions" was popularized by a Belgian historian, Franz Cumont (1868-1947), who published *Les Religions Orientales dans le paganisme romain* in 1906. This book was translated into English, German and Italian, and re-edited four times (until 1929). These Oriental Religions were pagan cults - Cumont did not discuss Judaism or Christianity - which he saw as mystery religions and presented as national traditions from Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria and Persia. He studied the spread to the West of such cults as Attis and Cybele, Isis and Osiris, the Syrian Baals and Persian Mithras. We shall discuss the way Cumont discussed the main characteristics of these religions: how he was influenced by a Judeo-Christian concept of religion and by the most important theories in the emerging field of comparative religion studies, and also by a Hegelian-style evolutionism. We shall contrast this with the way contemporary scholarship now views these Oriental Religions. We shall also analyze his thoughts on the way they spread from the East to the West and the reasons he presented for their success. Here again, a different theoretical framework has changed our understanding of the spread and the success of these cults.

The Appropriation of the Classical Pastoral Elegy in Milton's 'Lycidas'.

Prof. Peter Vassallo,

Department of English, University of Malta, formerly Head of Department.

"Lycidas" was Milton's contribution to a collection of occasional poems by Cambridge scholars entitled *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago* to commemorate the untimely death at sea of Edward King, a Fellow of Christ's College. King was a promising and exceptional scholar and poet who was about to become an Anglican pastor. This paper will focus on Milton's indebtedness to the Classical pastoral poets, in particular to Theocritus's first *Idyl* and to Virgil's *Tenth Eclogue*, and on his stylized expression of grief. It will also focus on the notion of innovation and originality in the context of the appropriation of a time-honoured classical bucolic tradition.

Ferrying Nothingness: The Charon Motif in Murnau's *Nosferatu* and Dreyer's *Vampyr*.

Prof. Saviour Catania,

Department of Media and Communications, University of Malta.

Inspired by Robin Wood's claim that Murnau's *Nosferatu* revisions what he terms the "Descent myth" in classical literature, this paper contends that this revisioning inverts the traditional Charon trajectory in such weird ways that Dreyer's *Vampyr* appropriates them for its own weirder ends. As in Stoker's *Dracula*, in fact, which Murnau's film hauntingly reinvents, not only does Charon transmute into a vampiric denizen of Vergil's Homeric "vacuous realms, and regions void", but he radically reverses navigational direction by supernaturally steering his ghostly galleon to Bremen whose inhabitants have consequently to contend with this swelling insubstantiality of his menacing silhouette. Paradoxically, however, this darkling nothingness manifests from a landscape which Murnau bleaches by filtering it through negative images whose spectral paleness resurges in Dreyer's *Vampyr*'s anaemic texture, suggestive of a vampiric Absent Presence that hollows out Courtempierre into a pale realm that is not there. But if Courtempierre is Vergil's Hades of the "crescent pale", what Dreyer's Charon accomplishes is uncannily the crossing of no crossing. Significantly, what astonishes David Gray is his realization that, by ferrying the Scytheman into two diametrically-opposed directions simultaneously, Courtempierre's Charon is fated to keep rowing in stasis. Plying spaceless spaces, Dreyer's Charon cannot but plunge into the Stygian whiteness of his Murnau counterpart.

Byzantine Greek on Maltese soil: the evidence of *Tristia ex Melitogauda*.

Prof. Jerker Blomqvist,

University of Lund, Sweden, formerly Head of Department of Greek.

Greek is one of the languages used in Malta during long periods of its history. One piece of evidence for Greek on Maltese soil is the 12th-century poem edited by Prof. Vella and other Maltese scholars under the title *Tristia ex Melitogauda*. This investigation aims at identifying different linguistic and stylistic elements that make up the language of that poem, i.e., Classical Greek inherited from antiquity, Byzantine literary language and contemporary Greek vernacular. The poem illustrates one stage of the development of a language, the history of which can be followed from the Bronze Age up to the present day.

Ovid on Gozo? *Metamorphoses* as a source for the *Tristia ex Melitogauda*.

Prof. Steve J.Harrison,

Fellow and Tutor in Classics, Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

This paper argues that the so-called *Tristia ex Melitogauda*, a Greek poem of more than four thousand Byzantine-style twelve-syllable iambic lines written by a Greek-Sicilian scholar of the twelfth century in exile on Gozo (J.Busuttill, H.C.R.Vella and S.Fiorini (eds) *Tristia ex Melitogauda: Lament in Greek Verse of a XIth-century Exile on Gozo*, Malta, 2010), alludes directly and verbally to the text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This would have significant consequences for the Greek medieval reception of Ovid's poem, which is generally thought to have emerged in Greek texts only with Maximus Planudes' Greek translation in c. 1300.

***Tristia* in retrospect: The Arabs in Malta, 870-1150.**

Prof. Stanley Fiorini,

Department of Mathematics, formerly Head of Department, and

Prof. Martin R. Zammit, Head of the Department of Oriental Studies,
both from University of Malta.

'The godless sons of Hagar' is the description of the anonymous poet of *Tristia* of his unneighbourly Moslem neighbours on *Melitogaudos*, his island of exile. In this presentation, it is proposed to take a closer look at this community, addressing questions and suggesting solutions to problems like 'Who exactly were these Moslems?', 'Where did they come from?', 'When and under what conditions were they occupying the Maltese Islands?'

Through western eyes: Greek and Latin sources for Byzantine-Iranian relations.

Prof. David Frendo,

Formerly Head of the Department of Ancient Classics, University College, Cork, and formerly external examiner.

The emergence in the third decade of the third century A.D. of the new, aggressive and expansionist power of Sasanian Iran, as well as the greatly enhanced potential for future conflict, afforded one hundred years later by the transfer from Pagan Rome to Christian Constantinople of the political and military nerve centre of the old Empire, created additional problems for *Pars Orientalis* of a distracted and dangerously extended Roman Empire. But, despite this, a sort of uneasy co-existence, punctuated though not seriously threatened by frequent but limited warfare, had prevailed for about three hundred and fifty years. During that period, two rival empires, two potentially hostile and basically incompatible political and religious entities, had continued to go their separate ways, to develop and to evolve in ever-closer geographical proximity but, for the most part, in carefully guarded and rigorously enforced isolation.

By a strange quirk of fate, however, after eleven wars fought between Byzantium and Iran in the space of less than two hundred and forty years (338 – 572), it was the twelfth, the only one in which Byzantium figured as the principal aggressor, that was to set in motion a series of events destined to destroy the precarious balance of prudent diplomacy and military force upon which the survival of both states depended. Accordingly, the present paper seeks to assess the importance for the understanding of Byzantine-Iranian relations of such material as has been preserved in our extant Greek and Latin sources. It is chiefly thanks to these sources that we are in apposition to construct a chronological framework for the period from the rise of the Sasanians in the third decade of the third century A.D. to the Arab Conquests in the seventh. Furthermore, it is possible, with the help of these same sources, to reconstruct a relatively detailed and objective narrative of the principle events, their interrelationship, wider implications, causes and results.

The Cult of Hercules in Roman Malta: a discussion of the evidence.

Prof. Anthony Bonanno,

Department of Classics and Archaeology, Formerly Head of Department and Dean of the Faculty of Arts,
University of Malta.

The evidence for the cult of Hercules in Roman Malta provided by the textual and archaeological sources is very limited. Only one literary source (datable to the 2nd century A.D.) provides information of the existence of an extra-urban sanctuary of Hercules. A pair of identical inscriptions, both in Punic and Greek, provides evidence for a syncretism of a pre-Roman divinity (namely, his Punic equivalent, Melqart) with Hercules. The archaeological evidence so far available consists of a marble head, now identifiable as representing Hercules, found in Rabat, Malta, and two other marble heads of the same god without an ascertainable Maltese provenance, as well as a headless terracotta figurine from Ras ir-Raġeb. This paper will discuss this evidence and assess previous attempts to locate his documented place of worship.

Magnis nata triumphis insula: Malta in the Liladamus of Jacques Mayre (1685).

Prof. Heinz Hofmann,

University of Tübingen, Germany, formerly external examiner.

The Neo-Latin epic poem *Liladamus* by the French Jesuit Jacques Mayre (1627-1694) was published for the first time in Paris in 1685 and, in a second and revised version, in Avignon in 1686. In its 25 books which cover a total of ca. 21.000 Latin hexameters, Mayre narrates the history of the Order of the Knights of St John from their departure from Rhodes, after that island had been besieged and conquered by the Turks under Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent in 1522, to the foundation of the new headquarters of the Order on the island of Malta in 1530, that was bequeathed to the Knights by the emperor Charles V in that same year after they, under the leadership of their Grand Master Liladamus, had reconquered it from the Turks. The title of the poem – *Liladamus* – is the latinized form of the name of Philippe de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (1464-1534) who was Grand Master of the Order from 1521 until his death in 1534. He is the epic hero who conducts the withdrawal of the Knights from Rhodes and leads them, after many adventures and battles, to their new destination in Malta.

The poem is a gigantic refashioning of the basic structures and many single episodes of the *Aeneid*: its plot and action are centred around the Mediterranean, but lead the hero Liladamus also to other countries north of the Alps. In this huge texture of various narrative strings, different localities and numerous characters, the island of Malta itself figures mainly in books I, XX, XXII and XXV.

In the following paper, I shall try to give a brief overall impression of the poem and shall discuss a few passages dealing with Malta, assessing, as it were, the narrative structures and some of the classical models of Mayre's poem and its importance as a literary monument for the history of Malta, the Order of the Knights of Malta and its Grand Master Philippe de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam.

Classical Theatre in Malta in the late 1940s.

Carmel Serracino,

Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Malta.

The aim of this paper is to record and appraise the theatrical output and influence of the ephemeral but important Vergil Society in Malta, which in the late 1940s presented on the local stage, among other works, what was claimed to be the first-ever performance of a Greek tragedy in the island. These productions contributed significantly to the cultural development of post-war Malta by raising a new awareness in classical culture and sparking an interest in the performative potential of ancient theatre.