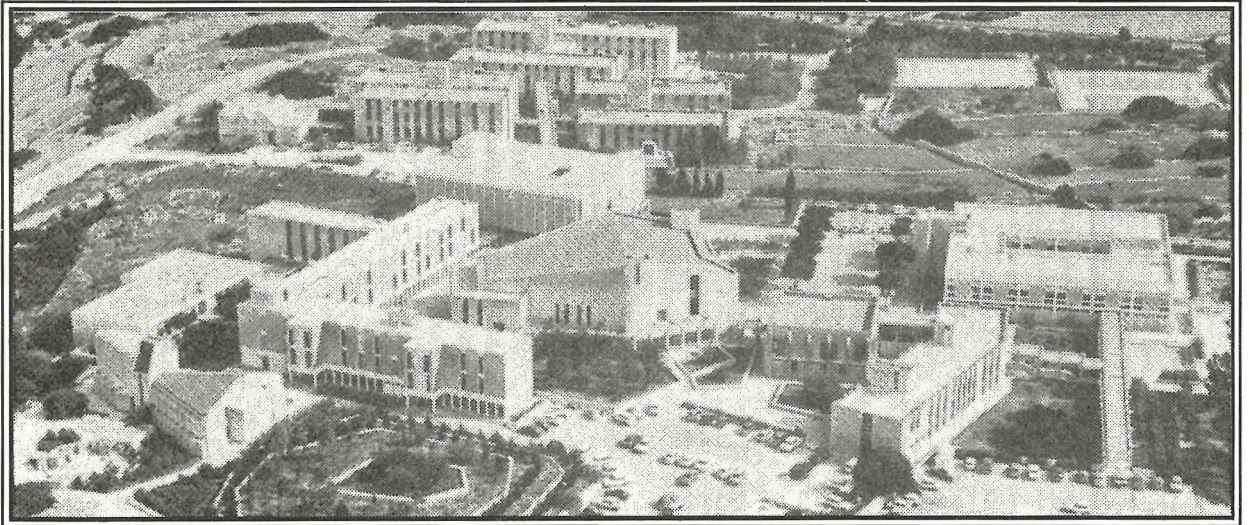


University of Malta

Gazette

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Contents

- | | |
|----|--|
| 41 | Opening Day Ceremony |
| 41 | Foundation Day and Convocation for the Conferment of Degrees |
| 43 | Private Graduation Ceremony |
| 43 | Evening Diploma Course by Faculty of Education |
| 43 | First Maltese Medical School Conference |
| 43 | Seminars Organized by the Department of Philosophy |
| 43 | Visit by Professor Andreas Faludi |
| 44 | Public Lectures |
| 44 | General |
| | Supplement – Oration by Professor Peter Vassallo |



After the Convocation, graduates were entertained at a Reception held in the Main Hall of the Museum of Archaeology, Valletta. Professor J.J. Fenech and medical graduates in a happy mood after long years of study.

OPENING DAY CEREMONY

The Opening Day Ceremony of the academic year 1989/90 was held at the Humanities Forecourt on Monday, 2nd October, 1989.

The celebration of Holy Mass by the Chaplain, Rev. Mario Jaccarini S.J. was followed by an address of welcome by the Rector, Professor E.J. Borg Costanzi. Mr. Stephen Attard, President of the *Kunsill Studenti Universitarji*, also addressed the students.

On this day, more than 750 students attended at the University for the first time, and a congregation of 1500 shared the joy of the event.

FOUNDATION DAY AND CONVOCATION FOR THE CONFERMENT OF DEGREES

A Ceremony commemorating Foundation Day was held at the Church of the University, Valletta, on Wednesday, 22nd November, 1989. The Ceremony was followed by a Convocation for the conferment of degrees.

His Grace the Metropolitan Archbishop, Mgr. J. Mercieca, celebrated Holy Mass, and intoned the "Te Deum".

Professor Peter Vassallo delivered an Oration on "Signs of the Times: Semiotics of the Oration", while an address was made by Mr. Anthony Vella, a representative of the graduands.

During the Graduation Ceremony, the Rector, Professor Edwin J. Borg Costanzi conferred ninety-one degrees and awarded thirty-five diplomas. The Ceremony was presided by the Chancellor of the University, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran. The Hon. Acting Prime Minister Professor Guido DeMarco and the Minister of Education, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici assisted at the Ceremony.

The following Degrees were conferred:

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Sponsor: Mr. E. Scerri

Michael Walter CAMILLERI
David CARUANA
Joseph GALEA
Paul Anthony GALEA

Ian FELLS
Bartholomeo MICALLEF
Elizabeth Ann MICALLEF
Mark Anthony PIZZUTO

Anthony PSAILA
Anthony VASSALLO
Godwin M. ZAMMIT

BACHELOR OF ARTS

Sponsor: Professor G. Wettinger

Paul P. AGIUS
Mario ATTARD
Nikki BONELLO
Isabelle CALLEJA*
Emmanuel CAMILLERI
Maurice CARUANA
Stephanie CACHIA
Anna Maria CASHA

Marie CHARLES
David CILIA
Joanna DARMANIN
Loranne ELLUL
Monica ELLUL
Raymond GATT
Christine GAUCI
Connie GAUCI DEBRINCAT

Colette GUILLAUMIER
Claude MANGION
Fabian MANGION
Paul MIFSUD
Marie Therese PORTANIER
Etienne SCIBERRAS
Marilyn VELLA

BACHELOR OF DENTAL SURGERY (Hons.)

Sponsor: Professor G.E. Camilleri

Angelica ABDILLA
Susan AGIUS CESAREO
Maria BORDA
Maureen CARUANA MONTALDO
Marilou CIANTAR

Simon FARRUGIA
Stephen FARRUGIA
Noel FENECH
Maria FORMOSA

Joseph M. MALLIA
Mark Anthony PADOVANI
Alexander SCHEMBRI
Maria A. VASSALLO

* *In Absentia*

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY

Sponsor: Professor F.F. Fenech

Rachel ABELA	Paul John CASSAR	Mark MUSCAT
Grace AGIUS BONELLO	Lorraine DE GRAY	Tonio PISCOPO
Naila AREBI	Dennis FALZON	Michael Joseph REFALO
Mariella ATTARD	Frank FENECH	Diana SACCASAN
Christine BARTOLO	Ronald FIORENTINO	Alexander SAMMUT
Francis J. BORG	Ian GALEA	Christopher SCIBERRAS
Godfrey J. BORG	Charlot GRECH	Robert SCIBERRAS
John BORG	Alexandra GRECH-MARGUERAT	Hermoine SCICLUNA
George BUGEJA	Stephanie Anne LATEO*	Mario STELLINI
Michael CAMILLERI	Denis MALLIA	John Gerard TORPIANO
Carmen CARUANA	Victoria Ann MIFSUD	Mariella ZAMMIT
Aaron CASHA		

BACHELOR OF ARTS (Religious Studies)

Sponsor: Rev Mgr Prof V. Borg

Kevin AQUILINA	Mariella EBEJER	Giorgia GAUCI
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BACHELOR OF SACRED THEOLOGY

Sponsor: Rev Mgr Professor V. Borg

Saviour BEZZINA	Martin MAMO	Raymond TOLEDO
Franco GRECH*	Mark MONTEBELLO*	

LICENTIATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY

Sponsor: Rev Mgr Professor V. Borg

Anthony CASSAR	Philip CHIRCOP
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The following Diplomas were awarded:

DIPLOMA IN APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES (Social Work)

Connie AZZOPARDI	Marianne CHETCUTI GANADO	Carmen MANGION
Victor BUGEJA	Maria CORDINA	Marianne MANGION
Carmen BUTTIGIEG	Alfred DEBATTISTA	Bernardette RAPA
Gemma CASSAR	Catherine FLERI SOLER*	Mario SALERNO
Sandra CASSAR	Eugene GALEA*	Mary Rose SCHEMBRI WISMAYER

DIPLOMA IN PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Mark DEMANUELE	Hermann DUNCAN
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DIPLOMA IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Brigid D'AMATO

HIGHER DIPLOMA MATHEMATICS

Kevin ASCIAK	Henry MIFSUD
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DIPLOMA OF NOTARY PUBLIC

Anthony A. ABELA	Lorraine CONTI	Simone MICALLEF
Stephen ATTARD	Mary DEBONO	Jesmond SCHEMBRI
Elizabeth CAMILLERI	Michael FALZON	Sandro SCHEMBRI ADAMI
Tanya CAMILLERI	Charles GAFA	Simone SCICLUNA
Doreen CLARKE	Carmel GRIMA	Anthony J. VELLA

PRIVATE GRADUATION CEREMONY

The Pro-Rector, Rev. Professor Peter Serracino Inglott conferred the Degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) on Joseph Sammut, at a private Graduation Ceremony held on Thursday, 28th December, 1989. Professor Joseph M. Ganado acted as sponsor.

EVENING DIPLOMA COURSE

The Faculty of Education is organizing an Evening Course leading to the Diploma in the Education of Children with Special Needs. The duration of the course is of two years, spread over four consecutive semesters.

FIRST MALTESE MEDICAL SCHOOL CONFERENCE

The Postgraduate Committee set up by the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery organized the first Maltese Medical School Conference on the 15th and 16th December, 1989.

The Conference served as a forum for discussion and evaluation of advances in Medicine, and assisted the local practitioners in their day to day practice and kept them abreast of modern developments.

More than three hundred doctors from eight countries, including the U.K., Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Germany and the Netherlands attended the Conference. This meeting enabled eminent Maltese graduates holding high academic and professional positions in overseas countries to participate at a reunion of the medical profession. These included Professor A. Cuschieri, Professor of Surgery in Dundee, Professor A. Busuttill, Professor of Forensic Pathology in Edinburgh, Professor G. Zarb, Professor of Dentistry in Toronto, and Professor H. Gilles, Visiting Professor of Community Medicine at the University of Malta.

Distinguished participants from overseas included Professor John Richmond, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, representing the three Royal Colleges of Physicians, Mr. R. Kirk, of the Royal College of Surgeons of the U.K., Mr. John Lawson, of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Professor John Anderson of the General Medical Council of the U.K., and Professor Jack Howell, President of the British Medical Association.

SEMINARS ORGANIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Department of Philosophy is organizing a series of seminars aimed at bringing together teachers of the subject and other interested persons.

On Thursday, 28th September, 1989, a seminar on Paul Ricoeur's "Fallible Man" was held at the Conference Room of the University. A short presentation on the book by Rev. Professor P. Serracino Inglott was followed by a discussion.

During the second meeting held on 12th December, 1989, Professor Joe Friggieri read a paper on "Intention and Deliberation in Austin and Aristotle". This was followed by a discussion.

VISIT BY PROFESSOR ANDREAS FALUDI

Professor Andreas Faludi of the Institute of Planning and Demography at the University of Amsterdam delivered a series of lectures to the students of the Urban Planning and Design Stream at the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

Professor Faludi has published several books and papers on planning and planning methodology and is considered to be one of the leading thinkers in the field. A number of his lectures and seminars dealt with the ideas put forward in his publications particularly his recent book "A Decision Centred View of Environmental Planning".

On Friday, 20th October, 1989, Professor Faludi delivered a public lecture on "Dutch Planning - An Appraisal".

PUBLIC LECTURES

On Tuesday, 10th October, 1989, Rev. Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, Pro-Rector, delivered a lecture on "*Itetek bil-Għasluġ*": *Filosofija u Xbihat f'Dun Karm*" at the Arts Lecture Theatre.

The Trusteeship of the Karmen Mikallef Buħaġar Fund was established for the purpose of inviting specialized scholars to deliver every two years a lecture on Dun Karm, the Maltese National Poet.

The lecture is sponsored by the Karmen Mikallef Buħaġar Foundation in collaboration with the University.

On Wednesday, 25th October, 1989, Dr. George Tullo Pollock, District Medical Officer/Director of Public Health of the Coventry Area Health Authority, U.K., and Senior Clinical Lecturer in Community Medicine at the University of Warwick delivered a public lecture on "Forty Years of the National Service in the U.K. — What has evolved and where are we going now?"

On Tuesday, 31st October, 1989, Dr. E.W. Anderson, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Geography, University of Durham, and Director of the Coastal Zone Survey of the Maltese Islands, 1989, delivered a public lecture on "The Maltese Coast: Going, going, gone . . . ?" at the Arts Lecture Theatre.

GENERAL

Department of Architecture and Urban Design

The Department of Architecture and Urban Design is at present offering a two-year option in planning to its students within the framework of the over-all five-year course curriculum leading to the degree of Bachelor in Engineering and Architecture.

This Department has recently been accepted as a full member of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP).

UNIVERSITY GAZETTE

*All matters for publication in the next issue of the Gazette
should be sent to the Registrar not later than
the 21st February, 1990*

At the Foundation Day and Convocation for the Conferment of Degrees Ceremony, Professor Peter Vassallo delivered the following oration:

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: THE SEMIOTICS OF THE 'ORATION'

Allow me to preface this oration by referring to a satirical film about Hollywood entitled *The Party* in which a bungling Indian actor from New Delhi, brilliantly played by Peter Sellers, destroys a very expensive Hollywood set and is consequently blacklisted by the enraged director. Owing to a secretarial blunder, his name is added to a party guest list and he therefore attends as the guest of the Director himself. Desperately trying to make contact with some of the unknown guests he interrupts a conversation between Hollywood magnates and he is told off by one of them with the words "Who do you think you are?" to which Sellers retorts solemnly "In India where I come from we do not think who we are, we know who we are". This part of the script might well have been taken from Forster's *A Passage to India* where the discourse would signify the echoing linguistic barrier which stems from the non-native speaker's inability to distinguish between literal and figurative meaning. The deeper irony is that, if the Indian had the self-knowledge he claims to have, he would know that a Hollywood director would not normally be so indulgent as to invite to a special party the very person who has ruined his million dollar set. The barrier is both linguistic and cultural. A semiotician would ascribe this not only to the subject's inability to shift from denotation to connotation but also to his total unawareness of cross-cultural signs.

By a rather circuitous route I have come to the theme I should like to dwell on this morning: the importance of knowing oneself or self-awareness in relation to semiotics, and what this science or pseudo-science can teach us about the changing signs of the times. In the short time at my disposal I should like to comment on the semiotics of the "oration" in relation to an awareness of changing attitudes over the past twenty years or so.

In our University, which, like most Universities, is mainly concerned with the acquisition of knowledge in the pursuit of the Truth, it is sometimes disconcerting to realize that little attention is given to the study of the processes of self-awareness in relation to the cultural signs around us. The search for the Truth is often thwarted by two mischievous demons who waylay the unsuspecting 'quester' and play havoc with his judgement. I refer to the demon of parochialism and the demon of dilettantism who inhabit this island and who occasionally visit the heights of Tal-Qroqq. They represent, in fact, subconscious attitudes which are assumed because they are deeply ingrained in the very ethos of the island. For identification purposes, I shall give an instance of the first: the assumption, or indeed belief, that the Truth lives somewhere in Malta and that all one has to do, in order to seek him out, is to know the right people or to have friends in high places. The other demon, more difficult to exorcise, is that arrogant spirit which urges us to exalt the mediocre over the excellent until the distinction between the two is blurred. Like his crony, the giant Procrustes, he takes fiendish delight in stretching everything on the bed of mediocrity. I have in mind the student or researcher who rehashes the work of experts in the field and passes it off as his own original thinking on the subject. The influence of this demon is deleterious, for instead of ascending 'the hill where Truth dwells' the quester is enticed into the mire of complacency. It is also insidious because it acts like a drug which actually disguises the very symptoms of the disease without eradicating the disease itself – a condition analogous to sympathomimetic therapy in medicine. The ultimate danger here would be that of isolating oneself from the recognized standards of reputable institutions of higher learning by cocooning oneself in methodological procedures which are often a substitute for thought itself.

While on the subject of self-knowledge ('knowing who we are'), I should like to say a few words concerning the recognition of cultural shifts which may sometimes help us redefine ourselves in our circumstances. Literature has often been illuminating on this particular aspect since it has recorded shifts

in values and mores over the ages. It was Juvenal in Roman times who diagnosed the moral degradation of his countrymen, that lack of moral fibre which was to bring about the fall of the Roman Empire. It was Ariosto and Cervantes who humorously showed how absurd chivalric ideals really were in an age of hardboiled materialism. Voltaire, in his day, observed how, the more depraved the French had become, the more refined was the language of society, as if they could recover by language what they had lost in virtue. Fielding in eighteenth-century England deemed it necessary to redefine key-words in terms of their connotations. In *A Modern Glossary*, under A for Angel he wrote, "The name of a woman, commonly of a very bad woman" and under D for Dress he wrote "The principal accomplishment of men and women". And to take a very recent example, Milan Kundera demonstrates how "Kitsch" conditions ideology on both sides of the Iron Curtain. However, contemporary attitudes and cultural shifts are no longer the exclusive domain of authors, but they have been almost taken over by the semioticians. Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco in Europe, and Daniel Boorstin, Christopher Lasch and Jonathan Culler in the States, have brilliantly analysed the changing signs of the times from such topics as; wrestling matches, the Eiffel Tower, Cult movies, the face of Garbo, wax-museums, and striptease. On a lesser note, I would like to dwell on the semiotics of the oration itself. Time was when the orator declaimed before his congregation in the finest Ciceronian manner, in flowing *sententiae* that swirled around the *ecclesia* in a miasmal mist which slowly descended upon the enthralled congregation, producing an intoxicating effect and lulling those present into a state of sublime stupefaction.

The ceremony at every stage expressed its own 'signification' by evoking the ritual in Roman times which celebrated the victory of a Roman General. Hence the toga, laurea, sigilla and all the paraphernalia relating to the glorification of the hero. Graduation from the Latin '*gradus*, a step, implies the ascent of the victor to the temple of fame (*ad quem quidem dignitatis gradum*) according to the inscription on parchment. But ritual often tends to obfuscate its own meaning and few people nowadays realize that the academic body actually assembles, in its somewhat anachronistic robes, to pay homage to its graduands. The oration, which evolved from the prayer of thanksgiving, was usually of two kinds; *oratio recta* or *oratio obliqua*, if you allow the pun. The direct oration was that in which the orator became a *Cicero pro domo sua*, adumbrating the development of a new Department or Faculty and expatiating on the need for new staff and more funds. The *oratio obliqua* was a rare occurrence in which the orator delighted in mystifying his audience. One such oration was delivered by the late Professor Beck (whose memory is dear to most of us): In *Balin and Balan* he ingeniously and obliquely linked the tale two Arthurian Knights who were brothers, and who ended by killing each other unwittingly, with the Maltese scene. In very recent times orations assumed the nature of an ordeal with the orator in the role of a master mariner doggedly determined to set sail and brave the unruly elements. In this context the word audience undergoes an interesting semantic shift – from an audience predisposed to listen (Latin, *audire*) to its exact opposite, an audience inclined to lend its voice rather than its ears! The sustained, rhetorical declamation in which the orator cajoled and sometimes harangued, the congregation has now come to signify a short, desultory talk (a fifth of its original length) in which the speaker, somewhat facetiously, seeks to entertain a restive audience. It has, in fact, become a sop to keep the many-headed monster from growling obstreperously in a place:

*where oratory itself is drowned
in roaring waves of senseless sound.*

verses which refer to Milton's Pandemonium, but which could aptly describe Foundation Day at Tal-Qroqq last year. One last point, Medieval orations usually ended on a note of exhortation and, in deference to tradition, I shall follow the pattern. It is a day of glory for those graduands who have been weighed on the scales and have been found meritorious, to their own deep satisfaction and to the obvious pride of their parents. Here on the crossroads of life they will seek the path of Truth and of self-knowledge and the wisdom which will hopefully enable them to reconcile theory with practice, to their own advancement and to the glory of God – in the words 'ut fructificemus deo' inscribed on the open book on the arms of the University. I shall now end on one word which in Roman times meant 'to be of health or profit', but which we Maltese have appropriated in the specific sense of 'congratulations' and to all those worthy of their laurels today, I should like to extend a heartfelt 'prosit'.