The Inaugural Conference between *Maynooth University Philosophy Society* and *The Philosophical Society: Oxford*

Part of *The Philosophical Society: Oxford's* International Weekend 2026

Topic: 'What is the Value of Philosophy?'

Maynooth University, Kildare, Ireland

20th–21st November, 2026

Keynote Speaker:

Our keynote speaker is one whom both societies have much to thank for. Without his involvement this event would not have made it past the stage of an idea. In his position as both the Secretary of *The Philosophical Society: Oxford* and as a PhD candidate at Maynooth University, Ireland, we are delighted to have him as the bridge between both contexts.

Dr Alan Xuereb holds a Doctorate in Law (1996) from the University of Malta and an M.Phil. in Philosophy of Law (2004) from the same institution. He is currently employed as a lawyer-linguist at the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg. While his principal academic field is the philosophy of law, Alan has long maintained a strong interest in political philosophy, particularly in questions concerning the common good, as well as in the philosophy of physics, with a special focus on the nature of time. He has recently completed a second doctorate (PhD in Philosophy) at Maynooth University, in which he has explored the relationship between aesthetic experience, in its various forms, and the common good. This research project includes a deeper investigation into Christian Norberg-Schulz's interpretation of Martin Heidegger's phenomenological approach to architecture. He is the current Secretary of *The Philosophical Society: Oxford*.

Proposed Conference Format:

	Day 1: Friday, 20th November	
Time	**Topic**	**Speaker(s)**
13:00–13:10	Introduction to Day 1	**Sheilagh Noonan** President of the *Maynooth University Philosophy Society*

		Oisín A. Raymond Secretary of the *Maynooth University Philosophy Society* and Co-Editor in Chief of *Maynooth Philosophy Supplement*
13:10–13:55	Keynote Speaker	**Dr Alan Xuereb** Secretary of *The Philosophical Society: Oxford*
13:55–14:10	Q&A	
14:10–14:55	Defunding the Human: The Humanities as the last Fortress of Life and Care	**Dr Marie Lépinoux**
14:55–15:10	Q&A	
15:10–15:55	Why Science needs Philosophy	**Dr Kanan Purkayastha**
15:55–16:10	Q&A	
	End of Day 1	

	Day 2: Saturday, 21st November	
Time	**Topic**	**Speaker(s)**
09:00–09:10	Introduction to Day 2	**Kathy Postelle Rixon** Chairperson of *The Philosophical Society: Oxford* **Aleksi Ivanov Gramatikov** Previous Vice-President of the *Maynooth University Philosophy Society*

		Founder and Co-Editor in Chief of *Maynooth Philosophy Supplement*
09:10–09:55	The Value of Philosophy: Eastern Approach to Value Creation	**Safwan Zabalawi**
09:55–10:10	Q&A	
10:10–10:55	Thinking after the 'death of man': the Value of Philosophy in a Posthuman Age	**Dr Charles Piecyk**
10:55–11:10	Q&A	
11:10–11:55	What is the point of it all?: The Value of Philosophy *To be or not to be*	**Alice Bouilliez**
11:55–12:10	Q&A	
12:10–13:10	Lunch Break	
13:10–13:55	A case for adding philosophy to Ireland's Leaving Certificate	**Robert Finan**
13:55–14:10	Q&A	
14:10–14:55	Post Neo-Platonic View on the Value of Metaphysics	**Paul Savoie**
14:55–15:10	Q&A	
15:10–15:55	The Value of Philosophy in Rethinking Musical Categories	**Olga Krashenko**
15:55–16:10	Q&A	

	End of Conference	

About the Presenters:

Alice Bouilliez has lived in France since 1984 as a wife and a mother to three lovely children and grandmother of four. She farms a smallholding and during COVID completed a Cert HE from OUDCE. Falling deeply in love with philosophy. Having lived in several parts of the world and was schooled as a child during the troubles, in Ireland, she could see that Philosophy was the best way forward. She is currently president of EUbritizens, a French association that tries its best to mitigate the worst fallout from Brexit.

Robert Finan graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 2026 with a First-Class Honours Philosophy degree. His research lies in the analytic tradition, spanning philosophy of mathematics, logic, language, and metaphilosophy, with particular interest in infinity, conceptual idealism, and existential import. A Global Winner at the 2026 Global Undergraduate Awards, he is leading a campaign to introduce Philosophy to Ireland's Leaving Certificate curriculum (philosophyforleavingcertificate.com), which is the subject of his talk. He is a copyeditor for *MetaScientia*, works as a judge and coach for the Modus Ponens Institute, and will present at LMU Munich and Prishtina later this year.

Olga Krashenko is a composer, performer, and PhD researcher in Music Composition at Maynooth University, Ireland. Her practice-based research develops an improvisatory approach to composition through the interaction of synaesthetic perception and *Musical Holes*, her artistic-philosophical framework exploring absence, gaps, and ambiguity in musical thinking. Her works have been performed internationally, and her opera *Macondo* was released by ACEL (France) in 2021. She is the author of *Research on Musical Holes* (2024), *Unexisting Music* (2015), and *River of Thoughts – To Think is Already to Sound* (2013).

Dr Marie Lépinoux (Universidad de Murcia) is a French Venezuelan researcher specialising in political philosophy, biopolitics, and care ethics. Her work focuses on the genealogy of care, the immunitary paradigm, and the intersection of feminist theory with contemporary democratic crises. She has published in *Pensamiento al margen*, *Sociología histórica*, and the *Maynooth Philosophy Supplement* (forthcoming 2026). She is editor of *Democratic Mutations: Between Power Mechanism and Forms of Political Care* (forthcoming, Vernon Press, 2027).

Dr Charles Piecyk is a recent PhD graduate from the department of philosophy at Maynooth University, Ireland, with a thesis entitled 'From the Human to the Posthuman: A Foucauldian archaeological Investigation of the Discourses regarding the Human and its Overcoming From Greco-Roman Antiquity to Transhumanism and Posthumanism', under the supervision of Prof. Michael Dunne (formerly Prof. Philipp Rosemann) and Prof. Orazio Irrera (Université Paris VIII). Before that, he completed a bachelor's degree in sociology at Université Lumière Lyon

II in France (2014-2017) and a taught master's degree in philosophy at Maynooth University (2018-2019).

Dr Kanan Purkayastha holds a doctoral degree from the University of Bristol. He is a Chartered Scientist from the Science Council, UK and a Fellow of various Professional Bodies, who spent the last four decades in academia, industry and government departments. A former Executive Committee Member of *The Philosophical Society: Oxford* and the *Royal Institute of Philosophy*, he regularly writes columns for various newspapers and magazines, including *Philosophy Now*, has published books and book chapters, and delivers lectures in UK Universities and overseas.

Paul Savoie is a Chartered Surveyor and Building Engineer, still working, mainly in the residential market. Alas his academic philosophical qualifications are de minimus, only having an A level in Philosophy. His learning is derived largely from Oxford extra-mural courses (gaining some CATS points) and regular attending of GXPG and other meetings. Of course, much learning is auto-didactic by reading, where possible, original texts (in translation if necessary). His philosophical investigations probably begun at an early age, before he had ever heard of Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant et al. He has never lost this child-like curiosity (surely a quality all philosophers should possess). His main interests in philosophy are very much the fundamental elements namely Metaphysics, Ontology, Epistemology and Logic (including maths) from which all other sub-divisions (ethics, science, politics religion etc) must be derived (albeit the issues considered may arise from these e.g. "What is Justice"). His philosophical knowledge often informs his thinking and work (particularly expert witness). Heaven forfend he should ever become an "armchair" philosopher!

Safwan Zabalawi studied Electronics at Politechnika Gdanska, Poland, and graduated at a time (1973) when the digital revolution in communication was yet an imaginary dream. During a further technical update-course in Japan (1982) an encounter with Eastern Philosophy unintentionally opened a gate of interest and exploration. The impact of Eastern philosophy's views greatly challenged the Middle Eastern mindset the author inherited at birth in Damascus, 1947. Most recent activities relate to sharing in Rome International Weekend with a presentation on the subject of "The Concept of the Truth in Eastern Philosophy" and "Predicting the Future, Reason's Ultimate Purpose" (2025), also publishing on Academia.com "New Humanism, The Philosophy of the Future" 2026.