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the Impact on the Maltese**
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CONTENTS

Page

The Fortification of Malta, 1530-1798, the impact on the Maltese Alison Hoppen	103
Karl Marx on Human Nature Anthony Cuschieri	115
More about Inorganic Complexes Alfred Vella	123
The Motif of Daughters in <i>The Power and the Glory</i>	130
L-Element Romantiku f' <i>Il-Jien u lilhinn Minnu</i> Joseph Vella	136
<i>Il Gattopardo</i> L. Burgess	142

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THE FORTIFICATION OF MALTA, 1530 – 1798: THE IMPACT ON THE MALTESE

Alison Hoppen

In the course of the two hundred and fifty years following their arrival from Rhodes in 1530 the knights of St John transformed Malta from a poorly fortified outpost of the Sicilian kingdom into a showpiece of military engineering. The scale of the building programme was such that, to a greater or lesser extent, it touched the lives of all the inhabitants of the islands, native as well as members of the Order.¹ The Order in general held itself aloof from the Maltese and would not normally admit the local nobility to its higher ranks. In practice there was little social contact between the members of the Order and the native aristocracy, the latter withdrawing to their palaces in Mdina (at that time commonly called Notabile) well away from Valletta the administrative centre of the knights. But whereas in Rhodes the knights had lived in an inner citadel or *collachio*, segregated from the native population, in Malta, despite attempts to establish *collachios* both in Birgu (the first headquarters of the Order) and later in Valletta, the knights and the Maltese dwelt side by side.

When Charles V transferred Malta and Gozo to the Order its head, the grand master, assumed the former role of the Aragonese crown, as sovereign of the Maltese. Although the islanders had been assured that they would retain all their rights and privileges under the new ruler, very soon they discovered that any truly independent action on the part of the *Universit s*, the traditional governing bodies of the islands, was incompatible with the islands' new position as headquarters of an international aristocratic military Order. The knights governed Malta in the interests of the Order, but although not concerned with the ancient liberties of the inhabitants, did not altogether neglect their well-being, so that there can be little doubt that over the years the Maltese became more secure from the marauding attacks of corsairs and from the threat of invasion. It was however a privilege for which they paid heavily, for the contribution made in labour and taxes by the islanders was essential to the scheme of fortification, and, at times, appears to have been out of all proportion to their numbers and wealth.

1. For a detailed account of the building of these fortifications see: A. Hoppen, *The fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John, 1530-1798* (Edinburgh, 1979).

Before the Order's arrival the Universitàs of Notabile (or Mdina) and Gozo had borne certain defence obligations. In the fifteenth century the upkeep of the walls of Notabile was a major preoccupation but the Universitàs were also responsible for the construction and maintenance of coastal towers and for the provision of militia, comprising both coastal lookouts and mounted guards.² The finance came from locally raised taxation, either direct or indirect, and from the proceeds of judicial fines. Although the Universitàs retained certain rights, powers and duties after 1530, the overall responsibility for the islands' defence was assumed by the congregation of fortification and war, a subcommittee of the Order's ruling body the council. Defence was too important a matter to be left to bodies over which the Order did not have direct control so that, although in practice the Universitàs maintained the walls of Notabile and of the Castello in Gozo and some coastal towers, even in these areas the Order would intervene if it considered the overall defence of the islands was involved.³

In the sixteenth century one of the major problems facing the military engineer in Malta was the provision of an adequate labour force. Because of the way in which the Order financed its fortification schemes money was normally forthcoming only in an emergency.⁴ As a result, engineers were often under pressure to complete works in as short a time as possible, and practically the only way in which the rate of building could be increased was by enlarging the workforce. In Malta itself there was a limited amount of labour available, but with a growing population the pool of possible workers increased. It appears that the acute labour shortage experienced in the sixteenth century had passed by the middle of the next century, for during this time the population had grown from 20,000 in 1530 to about 50,000 in 1650.⁵

The scarcity of labour was such that when in 1552 an attempt was made to overcome the inadequacies of the existing fortifications by the construction of forts St. Elmo and St. Michael, workmen had to be imported from Sicily.⁶ The need to use foreign labour on this occasion may be explained in part by the death of many Maltese in the famine which followed the bad harvest of 1550.⁷ The siege in 1565 accounted for another fall in

2. A Mifsud, 'La milizia e le torri antiche di Malta', *Archivum melitense*, IV (1920), 55-100.

3. Hoppen, *Fortification*, pp. 103, 108 and 134.

4. For details of the finances of the Order see: A. Hoppen 'The finances of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *European studies review*, III (1973), 103-19 and Hoppen, *Fortification*, pp. 142-55.

5. For estimates of the population see: B.W. Blouet. *The story of Malta* (London, 1967), pp. 89-92.

6. G. Bosio, *Istoria della Sacra Religione Militare di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1594-1620), III, 323.

7. Blouet, *Malta*, p. 90.

population, both through death and emigration to Sicily, at the very time when an ambitious building programme was being undertaken. Indeed there was such a dearth of workmen in the autumn of 1565 that the clearing of the debris of fort St. E'mo (almost totally destroyed in the siege) could proceed only slowly, although the Order's claim that there were only 1000 fit men on the island was probably an exaggeration made in the hope of raising more aid from abroad.⁸ Attempts were made to hire Sicilians but, not surprisingly, these were unwilling to cross to Malta where the defences were in ruins and the Turkish armada was expected to renew its attack.⁹ Even threats and promises backed by the authority of the Sicilian viceroy did not persuade a single workman to come to Malta until several months after the siege.¹⁰ Sicilians were further discouraged by the fact that of the many Maltese who had fled to Sicily few, if any, had chosen to return to their own island.¹¹ This lack of labour was one of the reasons given for the delay in starting work on the new city (later to be known as Valletta) which late in 1565, the knights decided to build on strategically well-situated Sciberras peninsula. Once fortified, a city on this elevated site between the Marsamxett and Grand Harbour could be more effectively defended than the older defences of fort St. Angelo and Birgu which could readily be bombarded from neighbouring heights. The military engineer Francesco Laparelli in his report of 13 January 1566 explained that the building of this new city to serve as the Order's headquarters had not commenced because there were no workmen or tools.¹² This was also the excuse offered to Pope Pius V when he expressed surprise that work on this project had not begun immediately after the siege.¹³

Eventually it was decided to begin with those labourers who were available. Gradually more workmen began to arrive in the islands during the summer of 1566, especially after the harvest was in and as the Turkish threat grew more remote. Moreover, the word soon spread that the workers were paid and fed well and regularly.¹⁴ The Maltese were particularly encouraged to return from Sicily because their knowledge of local building materials and methods was invaluable.¹⁵ Despite this influx, Laparelli in supervising the building of Valletta was faced with a constant labour short-

8. Archives of the Order of Malta, housed in the National Library of Malta (hereafter referred to as A.O.M.), vol. 430, f. 267 and 268v; Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 710.

9. Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 715.

10. A.O.M. 430, f. 268v; Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 716.

11. A.O.M. 430, f. 267.

12. Codex Laparelli (in the possession of the Countess Laparelli Pitti of Cortona and hereafter referred to as Cod. Lap.), f. 9.

13. A.O.M. 430, f. 272, (1 February 1566); Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 736.

14. Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 741, 750, 771, 78.

15. Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 778.

age, so that in August 1566 he even undertook to hire 500 workmen himself.¹⁶ In a further attempt to alleviate the shortage the Order obtained a papal brief permitting work on the fortifications to take place on feast days and as late as 1575 members of the Order were not allowed to employ a building worker without a licence from the commissioner of works.¹⁷

The workmen employed in building Valletta received wages and rations. Normally they were paid each Sunday according to how much work they had done, but, in order to entice men from abroad, Laparelli contracted to pay the men whom he engaged a basic monthly salary in addition to a payment for each day they actually worked.¹⁸ Although many of the Maltese did receive wages, the pre-1530 obligation to perform labour service in the fortifications survived. This however amounted to only four days a year — clearly insufficient for the Order's purpose. It would appear, therefore, that if the Order was exacting such unpaid labour from the Maltese, it was also employing further forced labour for which it may actually have been paying, and local inhabitants were used in this way in 1552, 1645, 1651 and 1715.¹⁹ In 1645 the Maltese were ordered to give service far in excess of what was customary, and to work in the fortifications for one day a week, for which they would be rewarded with two loaves a day.²⁰ It would seem however that this amount of compulsory service was exceptional as its enforcement necessitated the enactment of a council decree.

Apart from the building of Valletta, when, if the historian Giacomo Bosio is to be believed, everybody toiled willingly, such forced labour was highly unpopular. The workers at Fort Chambray in Gozo in 1754 were so disobedient that a troop of soldiers (a sergeant, two corporals and twelve men) had to be sent to keep order.²¹ In addition, workmen absent without permission were threatened with six months labour in the public works if they did not perform their obligatory service.²² One could however escape the customary service of four days a year by payment of a tax, the *neuba*, and it was probably also possible for the well-to-do to pay a substitute to perform other forced labour. But the mass of the Maltese had no option but to set to work in the fortifications when required by the Order. On the other hand, it seems that the knights were prepared to initiate

16. Cod. Lap. f. 42.

17. A.O.M. 431, f. 279 (19 August 1566) and A.O.M. 94, f. 70v. (23 September 1575).

18. Cod. Lap. f. 42.

19. A.O.M. 88, f. 107v. and Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 323 (1552);

A.O.M. 257, f. 197 (1645); A.O.M. 258, f. 237 (1651);

A.O.M. 266, f. 129v. (1715).

20. A.O.M. 257, f. 197 and A.O.M. 258, f. 7 (1645);

A.O.M. 116, f. 6v. (1647).

21. A.O.M. 1012, f. 15.

22. A.O.M. 1012, f. 102 (1754-5).

building projects which would provide employment and relief for needy islanders. In 1742, for instance, Gozitans who had suffered from two bad harvests, were employed in the building of a mole at Marsalforn.²³

The slaves of the islands were another group of labourers on whom the Order could call if the need arose. The Order's galleys required between two and three hundred rowers each and the majority of these would have been slaves. If the work was sufficiently urgent the Order was prepared to put the galley crews to work in the fortifications even in the summer months when this would result in a restriction on naval activities.²⁴ In 1632 1284 slaves were employed in the six galleys,²⁵ but besides the galley slaves the Order had other slaves owned by the common treasury who were regularly employed in public works including the fortifications.²⁶ In exceptional circumstances the personal and house slaves of the knights and Maltese were also ordered to labour in the fortifications.²⁷ Beggars, vagrants and convicts could likewise be pressed into service in the various building schemes.²⁸

In the years after 1600 the Order seems to have been able to muster a sufficient workforce on the islands themselves and there was no further need to import men. It is not possible, however, to calculate with any accuracy the actual numbers of men employed on the fortifications. It is generally accepted that the large labour force at work on Valletta enabled the defences to be built in a relatively short time. Bosio claims that 8000 persons, skilled and unskilled, were normally working on the new city, but this is double the number which the engineer Laparelli assumed to be at his disposal, and indeed the only occasion on which Laparelli mentioned the figure of 8000 was when he dismissed a particular scheme because such numbers were not available.²⁹ Further evidence that contemporaries believed 4000 to be the maximum number of persons employed on Valletta is found in a brief of 1587 granting the secretary of the building works his salary

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23. MS.O 1, entitled 'Notes on the fortifications of Malta' in the Library of the Order of St. John, Clerkenwell, London (hereafter referred to as Clerkenwell, MS. O 1), item 21.
 24. A.O.M. 423, ff. 208 (December 1551), 216v. and 217v. (April 1552); A.O.M. 88, f. 121 (January 1552); A.O.M. 431, f. 266 (January 1567); A.O.M. 432, f. 231 (April 1568); A.O.M. 99, f. 120v. (December 1596); A.O.M. 431, f. 266 (January 1567); 1568); A.O.M. 99, f. 120v. (December 1596); A.O.M. 258, ff. 7 and 24v. (May and June 1645) and 237 (February 1651); A.O.M. 266, f. 207 (March 1716).
 25. P. Earle, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London, 1970,) p. 169.
 26. A.O.M. 288, f. 29 (1555).
 27. A.O.M. 115, ff. 7v.-8 (January 1645); A.O.M. 258, f. 7 (May 1645); A.O.M. 266, f. 143v. (February 1715); Clerkenwell, MS. O 1, item 8 (1722).
 28. A.O.M. 105, f. 42 (1614); A.O.M. 468, f. 154v. (1636); A.O.M. 738, f. 17v. (1646).
 29. Bosio, *Istoria*, III, 781; Col. Lap. ff. 14 (30 January 1566), 47 (1567) and 49.

for life, which makes it clear that during his twenty-four years as secretary there had, on occasion, been as many as 4000 men working on the new city.³⁰ This was probably the largest number ever engaged on a single project. For instance, Pietro Paolo Fioriani, the designer of Floriana, envisaged that 2000, or at most 3000, men might be employed to execute his proposals made in November 1635.³¹ With the smaller total the front of Floriana could be in a state of defence by the following May or June; with 3000 the front and flanks would be ready. Judging however from the progress of Floriana, Fioriani grossly overestimated either the amount of work each man could do, or, more likely, the number of men the Order was prepared, or able, to make available.

There is no evidence that skilled craftsmen were expected to give their services free. They worked on a contractual basis, each master undertaking to complete a specified section at an agreed price. Payment depended on the satisfactory completion of work and each week careful measurements were taken by the Order's supervisors in order to calculate the amount of money due. The Order exercised strict control over the quality of workmanship and masters could even be expected to provide a ten-year guarantee against faulty work.³² The forced labour, Maltese and slave, was used to do the heavy unskilled work — to dig ditches, level terrapleins and clear the glacis (the open country in front of the ramparts). Although unskilled, they were essential members of the workforce, for the craftsmen found that they were unable to fulfil their contracts if too few labourers were at their disposal, and the Order bore the responsibility of supplying the gangs of workers. The Order's slaves could be assigned to work under a particular contractor, and in these circumstances the Order, to which a slave was a capital asset, had to ensure that the slaves were not overworked or ill-treated in the contractor's desire to make a profit.³³

As well as assisting in the construction of the fortifications, the Maltese were also expected to help to man the finished works. The Order enforced the ancient obligation, never popular among the Maltese, to perform militia service. Peasants were assigned to keep guard in lookout posts around the coast but in the seventeenth century these duties were taken over by professional soldiers and an attempt was made to raise a 4000 man strong militia regiment. It was claimed that these men, accustomed as they were to the local weather, would be worth 8000 foreign troops.³⁴ However the militia never achieved the high military standard that had been hoped for.

30. A.O.M. 443, f. 98 (1587).

31. A.O.M. 6554, f. 25.

32. Clerkenwell, MS. O 1, items 15 and 21.

33. Clerkenwell, MS. O 1, item 15 (January 1728).

34. A.O.M. 260, f. 31v. (1658) and A.O.M. 120, f. 213v. (1659).

Despite the growing population the Order had to rely on foreign troops to help to garrison the defences. To man the fortifications at their widest extent in the eighteenth century some 20,000 infantry with an appropriate complement of artillery men were required.³⁵ Even employing foreign mercenaries and militiamen the fortifications were chronically undermanned because the knights were unwilling, and indeed unable, to pay for sufficient troops.

Not only were the Maltese compelled to give labour and military service, they were also required to contribute to the construction of the fortifications through taxation. As with the forced labour, which the wealthy could avoid, the taxation fell particularly heavily on the peasants and labourers. It was not they, however, who initiated the protests against unfair taxation, but the parish clergy led by the cathedral chapter and the bishop. In May 1636 the clergy objected to paying a levy of 5000 scudi on their revenues, which, with 50,000 scudi to be raised from the laity, was to be used in the Floriana fortifications. But the memorandum which the clergy sent to Rome setting out their grievances was undoubtedly in the nature of a national protest rather than an attempt merely to protect the revenues of churchmen.³⁶ The clergy claimed that the fortifications were not essential to the defence of the island, that the Order itself was divided as to their worth, and that the knights themselves owned sufficient property and had already imposed sufficient taxes on the Maltese to be able to finance the fortifications. Moreover the Order with an annual income of some 2,000,000 scudi had decided to spend only 36,000 scudi on the fortifications, whereas the islanders whose annual income was barely 160,000 scudi were being asked to pay 55,000 scudi.³⁷ To make matters even worse the Order had excluded its own property in Malta and that of its members from the proposed tax. Finally the document declared that unless costs were shared in a more equitable manner, the Maltese would not contribute a single scudo towards the new fortification. The protest met with little sympathy in Rome. The pope, Urban VIII, supported the Order's project, having lent his own engineer Pietro Paolo Floriani to draw up the plans. Furthermore the papal representative in Malta, the Inquisitor Fabio Chigi, also supported the scheme. Chigi acted as mediator when Grand Master Lascaris, who had delayed the collection of the tax, perhaps anticipating trouble, finally decided to implement the papal briefs authorising the tax

35. A. Hoppen, 'The Knights Hospitallers and the defence of Malta', *Annales de l'Ordre Souverain Militaire de Malte*, XXV (1977), p. 35.

36. For details of the uprising see: V. Borg, *Fabio Chigi, apostolic delegate in Malta (1634-1639)*, *Studi e testi*, no 249, Vatican City, 1967), pp. 51-4.

37. 'The Maltese used the Sicilian scudo as a unit of account. The problems encountered in trying to estimate the Order's income are outlined in Hoppen, 'Finances of the Order', pp. 106-112.

in 1637. The tax collectors met with opposition and it began to look as if all the villages would rise in revolt.

The uprising began in September 1637 in Zejtun, the first village where collection was attempted. The leaders hoped to assemble the people of Malta at Marsa and to march on Valletta with a crucifix or statue of a saint at their head. There were even suggestions that they might be armed. Despite the initial lead given by the clergy in opposing the tax, the parish priest of Zejtun was naturally alarmed at these warlike preparations and informed the bishop who sent him to Chigi who, in turn, ordered him to go to the grand master. Eventually the grand master imprisoned the lay leaders of the revolt, and, although he suspected that some local priests were behind the uprising, acting on Chigi's advice, he never denounced them as agitators.³⁸ Resistance to the tax however remained fierce and although some money was collected, it was far short of the 50,000 scudi anticipated. Since Chigi regarded the 5000 scudi from the clergy as a subsidy tied to the amount forthcoming from the laity, he made no attempt to force payment from the clergy. The immediate object of the revolt had been secured: in effect this particular tax was not collected and the brief authorising it was later exchanged for one sanctioning an imposition of 50,000 scudi on eatables. Apart from the specific grievance of the new tax there is evidence that the villages were also objecting to the oppressive and autocratic rule of the Order in general.

A later attempt to impose a tax on non-movable goods in 1671 to help finance the Cottonera fortifications was similarly resisted. On this occasion too the clergy appealed to Rome in the hope that the papacy might protect their privileges, but their appeal met with no more success than that of 1636.³⁹ Official preparations for the implementation of the levy went ahead with the compilation of registers of property. These revealed that the value of non-movable property was too low to raise the 100,000 scudi required, so that another papal brief was procured authorising instead a customs levy, known as the *nuovo imposto*. It is not possible to say whether the opposition to the original tax played any part in its abandonment, for the decision to change to an import and export tax may have been made on purely financial grounds once a survey of property had shown the tax on non-movables to be impracticable.

Although the original intention had been that the *nuovo imposto* was to be levied only until 100,000 scudi had been raised, it soon became a permanent tax, so that by the early eighteenth century the Maltese were again

38. Borg, *Chigi*, p. 304.

39. A. Mifsud, 'Papi, fortificazioni e tasse nel passato di Malta' in *Archivum melitense*, III (1919), 399-430 at p. 425; National Library of Malta manuscript collection, vol 438, memorandum of Canon Ristri to Clement X (1672) on this subject.

protesting against heavy taxation, in particular the *nuovo imposto*, through their usual mouthpiece, the clergy.⁴⁰ In July 1715 the bishop was pleading that they should be relieved of some of the burden, and the clergy once more appealed to Rome, but again the pope acceded to the request of the grand master who was allowed to levy another 100,000 scudi through customs dues. The pope also forbade the calling of a general chapter of the clergy which was the normal forum for discussion of their grievances. The pope, by this action, stifled the protests of the clergy, and through them the protests of the people. The appeals to Rome had been fruitless and the papacy seemed no longer able to act independently of the grand master in the interests of the Maltese. The eighteenth century saw the growing autocratic power of the grand masters at the very time when the influence of the papacy in the church as a whole was declining. The Maltese no longer had a protector outside the island to whom they could turn. As a result they showed signs of restlessness, such as the priests' revolt in 1775.⁴¹ But these were symptoms of increasing resentment of the Order's rule as a whole, and not specifically connected with the burdens placed on the population by the Order's military activities.

The building of the fortifications always involved a certain amount of disturbance for some of the population. People had to be moved from their homes and land to make way for new works. They received compensation either in land or money but at first the Order compensated only for loss of land, refusing to pay for buildings from which it derived no benefit. By the eighteenth century, however, this policy had been relaxed. Property was carefully surveyed down to the last cupboard to ensure that a fair payment was made.⁴² Probably inevitably, disputes arose over the amount and payment of compensation and many cases came to court for settlement. People also had to be removed from the area surrounding the fortifications so that the defenders would have a clear line of fire and the attackers would find no shelter. There were regulations to control the erection of buildings near the fortifications, but these tended to be relaxed in time of peace.⁴³ The Maltese would move into the fortifications, and (often with the permission of the congregation of fortification) would set up house in the archways and other convenient corners. This was especially true in Valletta where housing space was in short supply and the inhabitants gradually extended their dwelling up to the walls.⁴⁴ Such encroachment could harm the fortifications in several ways. Apart from damage caused by illegal use of the fortifications as a convenient quarry for building stone, the limestone which was the principal building material was decomposed

40. Mifsud, 'Papi', p. 427.

41. See. R. Cavaliero, *The last of the Crusaders* (London, 1960), p. 153.

42. Hoppen, *Fortification*, p. 152; Clerkenwell, MS O 1, item 24 (1757).

43. Petitions asking for permission to build can be found in volumes A.O.M. 1016-1025.

44. Blouet, *Malta*, p. 108.

by the heat of the fires which the Maltese were in the habit of lighting on the ramparts, while their other habits of keeping goats and dumping rubbish on the parapets caused further damage.⁴⁵ Because of the inconvenience brought about by closing the gates at night, the inhabitants made secret openings by which they could enter and leave at will, and in consequence the Order was for ever walling up such entrances in the interest of security.

What benefit, if any, did the Maltese derive from the fortifications which demanded their labour and their money, and which could cause considerable disruption in their way of life? It cannot be denied that they profited from the primary purpose of the defences: they were better protected than they had been in the past. Indeed the desire to be able to shelter the islanders was an important consideration in adopting the schemes of Pietro Paolo Floriani and Antonio Maurizio Valperga. The Order felt obliged to protect the Maltese (even those of no military use) and their animals and so constructed the defences of Floriana and later Cotonera. Gozo offers an excellent example of this concern. The island endured repeated raids by corsairs and the knights were anxious to protect the inhabitants without resorting to such a drastic measure as evacuation to Malta. Although the Castello was strategically placed in the centre of the island, it was far too small to shelter all the islanders, and the only effective way in which it could be enlarged was by enclosing the whole of its suburb, Rabat. An alternative solution was to build a new fort which could accommodate everyone and dismantle the Castello. The first decision, taken in 1643, was to build such a fort at Marsalforn, but this was resisted by the Gozitans who would have had to bear the cost, and also because of the inconvenience of the move. The tower which was eventually built at Marsalforn was not a refuge but merely a watch tower,⁴⁶ and the Gizitans had to wait until the next century before a fortified enclosure was built overlooking the port of Mgarr.⁴⁷ This fort, Chambray, did not attract dwellers away from Rabat and the site never developed into a fortified town. Probably by the mid-eighteenth century security had become a less pressing problem and in no way compensated for the inconvenience of such a transfer. Proposals to evacuate Notabile which, like the Castello, occupied a site which did not lend itself to modern designs of fortification, were similarly abandoned after resistance by the inhabitants.⁴⁸ Although neither the Castello nor Notabile could be satisfactorily fortified according to contemporary standards, the Order responded to popular pressure and, far from demolishing their walls, from time to time attempted improvements even

45. A.O.M. 1054, f. 5.

46. A.O.M. 257, ff. 143v. (21 June 1643) and 165 (7 May 1644); A.O.M. 259, f. 172 (9 June 1656).

47. A.O.M. 270, f. 202 (23 June 1752); Hoppen, *Fortification*, pp. 120-22.

48. A.O.M. 257, f.209v. (March 1645); Hoppen, *Fortification*, p. 101.

though it was realised that these offered no real solution to the basic defects of the forts.

Undoubtedly, as a result of the Order's activity the Maltese were, in theory at least, better protected than before. By the eighteenth century there were areas, such as Cotonera and Floriana, into which the people of the countryside could retire when an attack was threatened. But the benefits from the increase in fortified area were to some extent offset by the growth in population; in 1760 it is estimated that there were probably 100,000 in the three inhabited islands.⁴⁹ Despite the continual additions and improvements which the Order made to the defensive system, the remoter parts never became completely secure. The danger of a corsair attack persisted into the eighteenth century; people remained reluctant to settle in the northern part of Malta or around the coasts, and instead the large villages such as Qormi, Birkirkara, Zebbug and Zejtun grew up at the expense of smaller settlements. Above all, new towns grew up around the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett, close to, if not within, the encircling fortifications.⁵⁰ In Gozo, which suffered even more than Malta from raids, the development of rural settlements was delayed until the eighteenth century by which time the dangers of corsair attack had become less.⁵¹ Although the Order's strategy in the eighteenth century stressed the importance of defending the coasts and preventing a landing, it is unlikely that this changed strategy was of any direct benefit to the villagers. The increasing security of the country dwellers was the result of a general decrease in corsair activity rather than the fruits of the deterrent value of the entrenchments, batteries and redoubts built to repulse a landing force.

An immediately direct benefit derived by the islanders from the defence expenditure of the Order did exist in the money which it channelled into the local economy. Much of the income which reached Malta from the Order's estates in Europe was spent in the islands and provided the capital on which was based the economic development of Malta during the rule of the knights.⁵² The building programme not only attracted extraordinary revenue to the islands because of the way in which it was financed, but was also a home-based industry with much of the expenditure concentrated in the islands. Builders enjoyed one great advantage denied to all other war industries: their basic raw material, stone, was found locally, whereas the armaments industry and the trades which grew up to support the navy relied heavily on imported supplies. The Order employed local craftsmen to build and maintain the fortifications, and the arrival of the knights led to a rapidly expanding construction industry, in answer to both

49. Blouet, *Malta*, p. 92.

50. Blouet, *Malta*, pp.93-7.

51. Blouet, *Malta*, pp. 97-9.

52. Blouet, *Malta*, pp. 122-49.

civil and military needs. Because of their skill in working the local stone, islanders were employed whenever possible. Although, with the exceptions of Girolamo Cassar and Vittorio Cassar, the resident engineers were foreigners, the men directly under them — the foremen overseeing the workers — were Maltese. Many local architects better known for their civil and ecclesiastical projects, such as Lorenzo Gafà (1630-1704), Giovanni Barbara (1670-1730), Domenico Cachia (1710-90), Francesco Zerafa (active in the eighteenth century) and Giuseppe Bonici (1710-79), all enjoyed regular employment on the fortifications. Some Maltese, therefore, profited considerably from the many building contracts which the Order issued, and these building craftsmen were but one example of the growing numbers of Maltese who, under the rule of the knights, became engaged in non-agricultural trades and pursuits.

The schemes for fortification impressed themselves on the Maltese through two principal demands — for their money and their labour. The islanders did not submit without protest, but at times their resistance to the burdens imposed by the fortifications seems to have been symptomatic of a general resentment of what they considered the Order's high-handed methods of government. Without outside support this resistance failed and the Maltese were forced to rely on the paternalistic benevolence of the Order. The knights, however, were concerned primarily with the well-being of their own Order, and, while they did not exploit the Maltese ruthlessly, the needs of the islanders inevitably took second place.

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KARL MARX ON HUMAN NATURE

Anthony Cuschieri

Marx had very little sympathy with Utilitarianism.¹ One of the reasons for his disapproval was that this "doctrine of utility" thrives on a form of intellectual bankruptcy. Utilitarians, faithful to the empiricist tradition and its distaste for abstract reasoning, first profess, implicitly or explicitly, their skepticism towards any knowledge regarding the nature of man and then go on to dictate what is wholesome and useful to man. This, Marx suggests, is insane. In *Capital*, while criticising Jeremy Bentham, that "genius in the way of bourgeois stupidity",² Marx makes a very intriguing remark: "To know what is useful for a dog", he writes, "one must study dog-nature. This nature itself is not to be deduced from the principle of utility." Marx's point is clear. It is irrational to dogmatise on what is useful to anything without first understanding correctly what you are talking about. Insight into, and a critical analysis of, the "nature" of something should anticipate any attempt to decide what is useful or harmful to it. This applies in a special manner in the case of human nature. Marx argues:

He that would criticise all human acts, movements, relations etc., by the principle of utility, must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch.³

Marx's position is strikingly similar to the one manned by the Scholastics. It is a position initiated by the ancient Greek thinkers, in particular Aristotle with his emphasis on knowledge by the ultimate causes.⁴ The problem is, however, that Marx, though definitely committed to a position

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1. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels write: "The apparent stupidity of merging all the manifold relationships of people in the *one* relation of usefulness, this apparently metaphysical abstraction arises from the fact that, in modern bourgeois society, all relations are subordinated in practice to the one abstract monetary-commercial relation." Cf. *The German Ideology*, Part One with selections from Parts Two and Three. Ed. by C.J. Arthur. Lawrence and Wishart, Lond 1970, p.109. All quotations from this work are taken from this edition which will henceforth be referred to as G.Id.
 2. K. Marx: *Capital*, Vol. I, S. Moore & Ed. Aveling translation, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970, p.610. Henceforth referred to as C.I.
 3. *ibid.*, p.609, n.2.
 4. In Bk 2, ch.2 of the *Physics* Aristotle writes: "Men do not think they know a thing till they have grasped the "why" of it (which is to grasp its primary cause)."

more traditional than some of his commentators are willing to admit,⁵ hasn't been very explicit with his own views on human nature. Perhaps it was due to the fact that he was more interested and involved in practical rather than academic problems. Whatever the reason, the metaphysical presuppositions and ramifications of his whole doctrine on man have to be painfully extracted, by implication, from the whole corpus of his writings. Among these the "early" works are more amenable to philosophical analysis than the "later" ones.⁶ The aim of this paper is to expound and discuss briefly Marx's conception of "human nature in general".

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx gives two definitions of man, namely, 1) as a "being for himself" and 2) as a "species-being". These two conceptions, though complementary, deserve separate treatment.

1. A "being for himself"

In order to appreciate this conception it is vital to bear in mind that Marx draws a crucial distinction between "so-called nature" and "humanity's own nature".⁷ This distinction is different from the one found within traditional dualism with its polarity between matter and mind, body and spirit. Nevertheless, Marx's distinction does imply a type of duality. One finds within his conceptual frame-work an expanded view of "Nature" which encompasses both human and non-human matter and a dialectical relationship between the two. For Marx, man is matter which thinks. "*Man*", he says, "is directly a *natural being*. ... As a natural, corporal, sensuous, objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants." However, Marx adds, "man is not only a natural being; he is a *human natural being*; i.e. he is a being for himself..."⁸ The contrast between a "being for himself" and, what one can term, "a being for external nature", that is, a "mere natural being", is worth noting. As a

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5. The French commentator L. Althusser, for instance, argues that "in 1845 Marx broke radically with every theory that based history and politics on an essence of man." He contends further that Marx rejected "the essence of man as his theoretical basis." Cf. *For Marx* Pantheon Books, New York, 1969, p.227-228. There is little, if any doctrinal basis for Althusser's opinion.
 6. There is widespread disagreement on the problem of the continuity in the evolution of Marx's thought process. My own personal research and studies convince me that there is a basic doctrinal continuity between the early and the later works. Althusser's alleged "epistemological break" is for me totally unacceptable. Though in his later works Marx concentrated on more empirical generalisations, he never abandoned the metaphysical frame-work implied in his early works and underlying his whole systems.
 7. K. Marx: *Grundrisse*, Trans, by M. Nicolous. Pelican Marx Library, 1973, p.488. Henceforth referred to as *Grundrisse*.
 8. K. Marx: *Early Writings*, The Pelican Marx Library, 1975, p.389 — 391. Henceforth referred to as E.W.

“natural being” man needs and depends on “external nature” for his very existence; as a “being for himself”, this dependence is qualified by man’s own *human* nature. Marx’s argument is that of all the existing creatures the human being alone enjoys a degree of freedom from the “physis”, that is, from the immediacy and rigidity of physical laws.⁹ Marx’s conception is clarified somewhat when he contrasts human with animal activity. He writes:

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity.¹⁰

According to Marx, therefore, the human being is different from the animal in so far as the former is able to keep a certain “distance” from his natural environment and physical activity because he is able to “stand out” in his subjectively conscious existence. In his relationship to “external nature” man remains the point of departure and the point of return. The human being is, therefore, “auto-telic” — he is the aim of his own existence and this is precisely the meaning of the expression “a being for himself”. The animal, by contrast, is in immediate contact with physical nature; it is ruled despotically by natural laws and its behaviour dictated by its instincts. This idea is further confirmed when Marx says:

It is true that animals also produce. They build nests and dwellings, like the bee, the beaver, the ant, etc. But they produce only their immediate needs of those of their young; they produce one-sidedly, while man produces universally; they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need; they produce only themselves, while man reproduces the whole of nature; their products belong immediately to their physical bodies, while man freely confronts his own product.¹¹

It is this element of “freedom” from the immediacy of the “physis” that enables man to “interfere” with the laws of nature and manipulate the natural environment, for better or for worse. In the *Grundrisse* Marx draws our attention to the fact that human productive activity entails the imposition of the “human will over nature”.¹² This vital idea is reiterated in *Capital*:

A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the constructions of her cells. But what distinguishes the

9. This is confirmed by Marx’s negative attitude towards Positivism.

10. E.W. p.328.

11. *ibid.* p.329.

12. *Grundrisse* p.706.

worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi*, and to which he must subordinate his will.¹³

What deserves special attention here is Marx's view that man "also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi* and to which he must subordinate his will." Herein lies the germinal idea, running throughout Marx's whole system, that man is determined by his own "logos" developed by means of his own practical and conscious activity. This forcefully brings out the role of the intellect and of "theoria" within Marx's system. He explicitly makes the *will* subordinate to the *intellect* — a major postulate within the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. It is in the perspective of this conception that we can fully appreciate the vitality and significance of Marx's contention that "men (are) both the authors and actors of their own drama."¹⁴

In summary then, one could say that by defining man as a "being for himself" Marx acknowledges in man an element of transcendence from physical necessity.¹⁵ He therefore rejects psychologism, economism, technologism and any other form of narrow determinism.

2. A "species-being"

Although Marx uses the expression "species-being" extensively, he never fully explains, in clear and unambiguous terms, what he meant by it. This is unfortunate because the "species-being" conception is of great strategic importance within his system. Accordingly, a misconception on this matter inevitably leads to a host of problems and to subsequent distortion of Marx's doctrine. The dialectic of negativity, causality and finality in Marx's system, alienation, exploitation and class-struggles, as well as his envisaged millennium, to mention a few of the major ideas, cannot be understood and appreciated correctly without a thorough grasp of what Marx understood by "species-being".¹⁶

To comprehend fully Marx's conception we have to keep in mind what we discussed earlier. We saw that man enjoys a measure of freedom from

13. C.I. p.178.

14. K. Marx: *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Inter. Pub New York, 1971, p.115.

15. Marx's position on this matter is reminiscent of a basic tenet within the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

16. We are not interested in the origin and historical background of this expression. Our interest lies in its conception and role in Marx's system.

the "physis" in the sense that man's "life-activity" is not a "determination with which he directly merges." This "freedom" is to be interpreted neither as a state of self-sufficiency and self-identity in the Fichtian sense of "I am I",¹⁷ nor as an endorsement of the Cartesian position. For Marx, the freedom from the "physis" which man enjoys necessarily expresses and realises itself in a *social and formal milieu*. *Man's life is thus a mediated one*. This is clearly implied when Marx writes:

As soon as the first animal state is left behind man's property in nature is mediated by his existence as a member of a communal body, family, tribe, etc... by his relation to other men, which determines his relationship to nature.¹⁸

To reiterate, the freedom from the *immediacy* of the "physis" is simultaneously a life *mediated* by a social and formal phenomenon. The emphasis Marx makes on "mediation" is obvious to anyone acquainted with his works. This "mediation" expresses itself according to the syllogistic formula, P-U-I. The example Marx himself gives of the negro slave illustrates this point. "A negro", Marx says, "is a negro. In certain circumstances he becomes a slave."¹⁹ The three terms of the syllogism are clear. We have the "negro" as a real *individual* of the black races enjoying his nature as a human being; the "slave" which we can regard as his particular "formality" and the "certain circumstances" as the *middle* term or universal in and through which the identification between the "negro" and the "slave" obtains. The case of the negro slave, found originally in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* reappears in a more elaborate form in the *Grundrisse*:

Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand. As if someone were to say: Seen from the perspective of society, there are no slaves and no citizens: both are human beings.

Rather they are that outside society. To be a slave, to be a citizen, are social characteristics, relations between human being A and B. Human being A, as such, is not a slave. He is a slave in and through society.²⁰

For Marx, accordingly, man is a type of being that "formalises" or idealises his physical existence in a social context and remains bound by his "formalisations". Man is not only a thinking-animal but an animal that is ruled, to some extent, by his thoughts. The implication of this is that what keeps people in communion and relationship with each other, whether in peace or in war, is not instinct or any other physical or mere psychological factor but a complex net-work of social or formal relations based on

17. Cf. Marx's remark on this matter in *Capital*, Vol. I, p.52, n.1.

18. K. Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value*, part III, Trans. by J Cohen and S.W. Ryazan-skaya. Progress Pub. Moscow, 1971, p.378.

19. C.I. p.766, n.3.

20. *Grundrisse*, p. 265.

the prevailing physical conditions of existence. The "formalisation process" — a process by which people give an "ideal" or formal dimension to their empirical existence — goes on unconsciously and the end result ossifies into an ideological superstructure: "theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc."²¹ This process is possible because, as seen earlier, man has subjective consciousness. To quote Marx again on this important point:

Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species — both his own and those of other things — his object, but — and this is simply another way of saying the same thing — because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a *universal* and therefore free being.²²

Man's consciousness, therefore, is not an epiphenomenon, a mere shadow or reflex of matter in motion. The thought-process is *distinct* though not separate from the brain-process. Marx's doctrine, therefore, rejects the reductionism of the Identity theory without accepting ontological dualism. Admittedly, Marx's position is difficult and elusive but not irrational.

By characterising man as a "species-being" Marx wants to emphasise the *social* basis and character of the "formalisation" that goes on throughout human existence without sacrificing its *subjectivity* in relation to the individuals concerned. This subjectivity is what distinguishes "species-consciousness" — an exclusively human prerogative — from the herd-consciousness found among gregarious animals. In *The German Ideology* it is argued that initially, that is, when man first appears on the world scene, the beginning of consciousness is "as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one."²³

The implications of the above are far reaching. If the end result of human consciousness, namely, the various "formalisations", both infra- and super-structural, which mediate human existence and behaviour, (including man's productive activity), are of an *epistemological* rather than a *psychological* nature, they have to be acknowledged *intellectually*, even if uncritically, by the individuals concerned before they can be influenced by them. For example, it is only because and to the extent that one acknowledges the formal relationship of dependence between "master and servant" that one considers oneself and behaves as "master" or "servant" respectively. This formal relationship, Marx points out, cannot obtain in the case of animals.

21. G.Id. p.52.

22. E.W. p.327.

23. G.Id. p.51.

Basically the appropriation of animals, land etc, cannot take place in a master-servant relation, although the animal provides service. The presupposition of the master-servant relation is the appropriation of an *alien will*. Whatever has no will, e.g. the animal may well provide a service, but does not thereby make its owner into a master. 24

A careful study of Marx's system shows that, in his conceptual framework, the "formalisation-process" within human existence is *inevitable*. To be human is synonymous with leading a "formal" existence concomitantly with a physical existence. The "species" notation precisely refers to this formal and social dimension. Though inevitable, the *character* of this formal dimension and the subsequent identification of the individual subjectively with the totality of prevailing "formalities" account for the state and degree of his human fulfilment or estrangement. Throughout history, there have been, Marx claims, various *types* of formal or social totalities mediating, in their respective way, human existence:

The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and specifically, a society at a definite stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar distinctive character. Ancient society, feudal society, bourgeois society are such totalities of production relations, each of which at the same time denotes a special stage of development in the history of mankind. 25

If man's life is a mediated one a lot depends on the character of the *medium*. If the *State* is regarded as essential to human existence, as happened in ancient Greece and Rome, then one's *political* status as "citizen", "freeman" or "slave" becomes the deciding factor in an individual's existence. If one's *birth* in a particular estate or caste. (as was the case in the feudal system and Asiatic societies), is formalised officially, then one's *sociological* status as noble, clergy, craftsman, serf or peasant etc. becomes dominant. Likewise, if *wealth* in the form of capital is formalised and turned into a social idol, a golden calf to which human existence and the natural environment are sacrificed in idolatrous worship then one's *economic* status as "proprietor" or "worker" obtains an essential dimension and individuals are assessed and treated accordingly: "You are worth as much as the money you possess." For Marx this last situation represents the era of capitalism which celebrates the rule of money over man and the environment.

Marx's conception of man as a "species-being" is the perspective for a correct interpretation of his doctrine on alienation. Alienation is a state of existence of the human race not yet fully developed. Alienation is not a phenomenon that appears only within the capitalist era. There is wide-

24. *Grundrisse*, p. 500-501.

25. K. Marx: *Wage Labour and Capital*, Progress Pub. Moscow, 1970, p.28.

spread confusion on this matter within Marxist scholarship. For Marx, the human species was "born" in alienation, is moving away from alienation, but this state of estrangement will persist until man's formal existence, the social milieu with which he identifies, in and through which he fulfils and realises himself becomes adequate; until, that is, man will formalise himself, his *humanity* instead of his political status, his sociological status or his economic status. When man outgrows the domination of these fetishes over his life, a phenomenon which becomes possible only by changing and developing his productive and economic activity, i.e., through material progress, he will discover himself and his dignity *directly* and not *by proxy* as happened throughout history.

MORE ABOUT INORGANIC COMPLEXES

Alfred Vella

This article is a sequel to the one which appeared earlier in this Journal ("Inorganic Complexes: An Introduction" *Hyphen* Vol. I, Number 3, Spring 1978, pp. 31 — 39) and which dealt with certain aspects of the chemistry of complexes, notably: their definition, stereochemistry, nomenclature and some of their chemical properties. In this article we shall examine the stability of complexes and review some of the applications of coordination compounds in chemistry.

The Stability of Complexes

If a few crystals of copper (II) sulphate are dissolved in water, a sky-blue solution is obtained. On adding drops of concentrated hydrochloric acid to the solution, its colour changes to lime-green. If this green solution is diluted with water, its colour goes back to sky-blue; and this changes to indigo if excess aqueous ammonia is added. This indigo colour is not destroyed when the solution is diluted but if a few millilitres of a solution of sodium salicylate are added, then, the indigo colour is promptly replaced by a pale green one. Finally if this green solution is treated with a few drops of sodium ethylenediaminetetraacetate (EDTA), a blue colour is obtained which is not noticeably affected by the addition of reasonable amounts of water, hydrochloric acid, ammonia or salicylate ion.

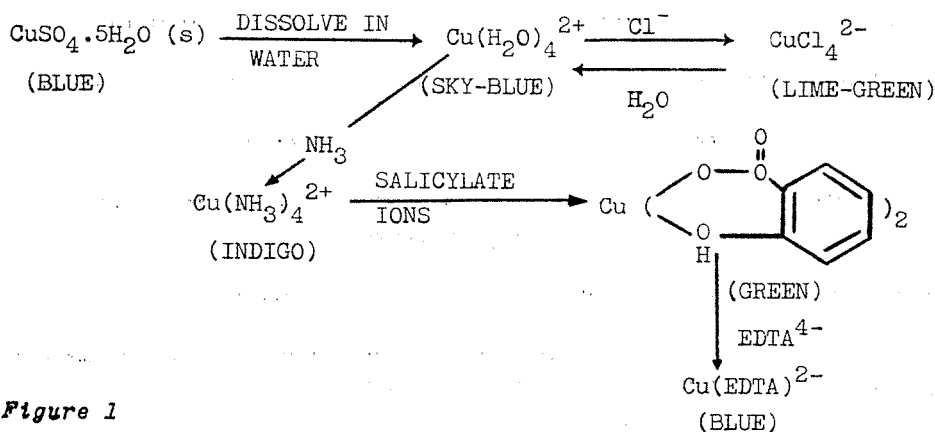


Figure 1

The colour changes occur as various copper complex ions get made and are destroyed giving rise to others in the process. The scheme above explains all.

From the above we can conclude that the chlorocuprate (II) ion is not particularly stable with respect to the aquo copper complex, the tetraamminecopper (II) is fairly stable but not with respect to replacement by the bidentate salicylate ion. And the stablest system is obtained when we use the sexidentate ethylenediaminetetraacetate ion, EDTA 4.-

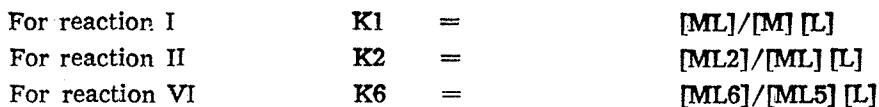
If we consider reactions occurring in aqueous solution, the prospective ligand species (e.g. ammonia, chloride, cyanide etc) is involved in a competition with the water molecules for the metal ion. The formation of a complex ion ML_6 from the hexaquo complex can be represented by equations of the type



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where we have ignored the charges on the metal ion and the ligands L. If, again for convenience, we also omit the water ligands, we can write expressions for the equilibrium constants for the above equations, termed *stepwise stability constants*, thus



If we combine the above steps into one *formal* overall reaction we get



and for this hypothetical reaction, the equilibrium constant, K_f, is given by

$$K_f = [ML_6]/[M] [L]^6$$

K_f is called the *overall stability constant* of the complex ion.

It is not difficult to show that the overall stability constant is related to the stepwise stability constants by the equation

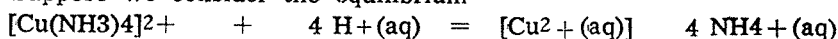
$$K_f = K_1 K_2 K_3 K_4 K_5 K_6$$

K_f is a measure of the energetic stability of the complex ion. Values for the stepwise stability constants of a few systems are given in the table below.

STABILITY CONSTANTS OF METAL COMPLEXES AT 25°C

Metal Ion	Ligand	Log K ₁	Log K ₂	log K ₃	log K ₄	log K ₅	log K ₆
Co ²⁺	NH ₃	2.11	1.63	1.05	0.76	0.18	-0.62
Ni ²⁺	NH ₃	2.67	2.12	1.61	1.07	0.62	-0.09
Cu ²⁺	NH ₃	3.99	3.94	2.73	1.97	—	—
Cu ²⁺	Cl ⁻	0.00	-0.7	-1.5	-2.3	—	—
Fe ³⁺	F ⁻	5.21	3.95	2.70	—	—	—
Hg ₂ ⁺	I ⁻	12.87	10.95	3.78	2.23	—	—
Cd ²⁺	CN ⁻	5.18	4.42	4.32	3.19	—	—
Cu ²⁺	EDTA ⁴⁻	18.8	—	—	—	—	—
Fe ³⁺	EDTA ⁴⁻	25.1	—	—	—	—	—
Hg ₂ ⁺	EDTA ⁴⁻	21.8	—	—	—	—	—

Suppose we consider the equilibrium



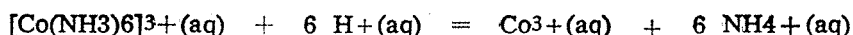
The equilibrium constant is given by

$$K_c = [\text{Cu}^{2+}] [\text{NH}_4^+]^4 / [\text{Cu}(\text{NH}_3)_4^{2+}] [\text{H}^+]^4$$

Furthermore, one can easily show that

$$K_c = K_b^4 / K_f K_w^4$$

where K_b is the base dissociation constant of ammonia, K_w is the ionic product of water and K_f is the overall stability constant of tetraamminocopper (II). Substitution of the values of the various constants in the last equation gives a numerical value for K_c of about 10^{24} . Thus, the reaction is energetically favoured. In fact, on adding acid to tetraamminocopper (II) ions, the amino complex is rapidly destroyed and replaced by the aquocopper (II) ion. A similar analysis of the reaction



shows that its K_c value is also very large, but, in fact, the cobalt complex remains unaffected by the addition of acid. This situation is analogous with that of a mixture of carbon and oxygen which should be expected to react spontaneously at about room temperature since K_c for the conversion $\text{C} + \text{O}_2 = \text{CO}_2$ is very large at this temperature. The cobalt complex, like the carbon/oxygen mixture represents a kinetically stable system, the dissociation of the complex being prevented by the high activation energy of the reaction. We say that the tetraamminocopper (II) complex is *labile* whereas that of cobalt is not. Unless complexes are labile, any predictions made on the

basis of K_f values are, in fact, not realised in practise. This, of course, is a problem which bedevils any thermodynamic argument. concerning change in any chemical system.

Finally, it can be seen, on inspection of the Table above, that the values for K_f for the EDTA complexes are exceptionally high. This is true for all polydentate chelating complexes, which are known to form very stable complexes.

Complexes at Large

Coordination chemistry has many applications. The following examples serve to illustrate some of the more important of these applications.

(a) Qualitative Analysis

The colour of complexes is often used as a confirmatory test for the presence of a number of metals. Thus, copper (II) in solution is readily identified by the characteristic indigo colour of its amminocomplex, iron (III) is detected by the blood red colour formed with thiocyanate ions (SCN^-). Very small concentrations of metals are detected by the formation of colours in the so-called "spot tests" of analytical chemistry. Thus using the complexing agent ferroin, iron (II) ions show up by the red colour of the complex, $[\text{Fe}(\text{ferroin})_2]^{2+}$ and the detection limit for iron by this method is very low indeed. Also certain mixtures of ions can be readily separated by employing complexation reactions. Thus when a solution containing zinc and aluminium ions is treated with ammonia, both ions are initially precipitated as the hydroxides, but on adding excess ammonia, the zinc hydroxide redissolves forming $[\text{Zn}(\text{NH}_3)_4]^{2+}$.

(b) Gravimetric Analysis

Certain ligands produce complexes with very low solubility. The formation of such complexes is used in determining the concentration of metal ions by precipitation techniques. Often the pH can be adjusted in such a way that if the metal ion is present in a mixture with other metals, it alone precipitates out when treated with the ligand. Thus at a pH of about 8, nickel (II) readily forms the insoluble complex $[\text{Ni}(\text{DMG})_2]^{2+}$ where DMG stands for dimethylglyoxime, $\text{CH}_3.\text{C}(\text{NOH}).\text{C}(\text{NOH}).\text{CH}_3$; many other metals could be present in the same solution but all form very soluble complexes with DMG and hence their presence does not interfere with the nickel precipitate.

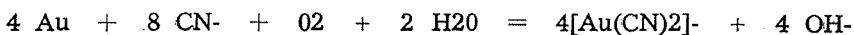
(c) Colorimetric Analysis

Many complex ions can interact strongly with electromagnetic radiation occurring in the ultraviolet and visible part of the spectrum. Since the absorption of radiation depends on the concentration of the absorber (complex) and on its electronic structure, the concentration of a particular metal in a solution can be found. The presence of other metals in the same solution will,

generally, not interfere with this colormetric analysis. Moreover, since such analysis are fairly accurate and (most importantly) rapidly carried out, given the instrumentation, they are very popular with chemists working in industry.

(d) *The Extraction and Purification of Metals*

Gold occurs free in silica deposits and its separation from the earthy impurities depends on its ability to form a complex ion with cyanide. The ore is crushed and the powder is agitated with a solution of potassium cyanide. In the presence of air, and cyanide ions, the usually noble and unreactive gold is slowly oxidised to dicyanoaurate (1), which pass in solution,



The gold is then recovered by reduction with zinc dust; any excess of zinc is removed by dissolution in acid.

The purification of several metals is achieved by electrodeposition. In such processes, the metal ions are often in complex form, e.g. silver as $[\text{Ag}(\text{CN})_2]^-$; this technique gives better deposits of the pure metal than those obtained from the electrolysis of the simple aquo ions.

(e) *Dyes and Pigments*

The intense colours and insoluble nature of certain metal complexes (notably of iron, copper, cobalt and chromium) makes them very suitable as dyes and pigments in paints, printing inks and even plastics. An important class of such complexes are the metallo-organic pigments known as the phthalocyanines, one of the best known being Monastral Fast Blue B.S. This is copper (II) phthalocyanine (Figure 2), a bright blue pigment employed chiefly for colouring leather, printing inks and paints.

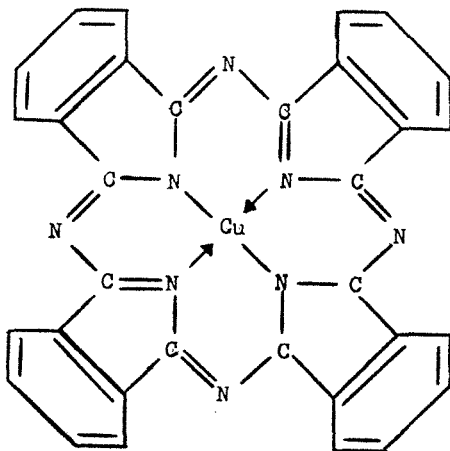
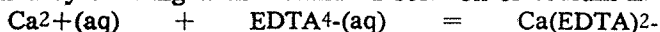


Figure 2

It can be prepared by heating phthalonitrile with copper or copper (II) salts; similar methods are employed in the preparation of other phthalocyanines, the colours obtained depending on the metals used. For example, lead phthalocyanine is a green pigment.

(f) *Complexometric Analysis*

The amount of calcium (and other polyvalent cations) in hard water can be determined by titrating with a standard solution of sodium EDTA,



Since EDTA is colourless, a dye is added (e.g. Eriochrome Black) which changes colour when a slight excess of EDTA is present — this marks the endpoint of the titration. Actually the indicator dye is itself a ligand and forms a coloured complex with the metal ion which is less stable than the metal-EDTA complex. At the endpoint all the dye molecules are expelled from their coordination with the metal ions and a colour change occurs.

(g) *Biochemical Applications*

Two key substances in biochemical systems are, indeed, complex compounds. These are haemoglobin and chlorophyll.

Haemoglobin consists of a protein, globin, with four haeme units attached to it. Haeme is a complex of iron (II) with protoporphyrin IX, which has the basic structure shown below. (Figure 3a). This iron porphyrin is then attached to the globin via three imidazole rings attached to the protein and acting as nitrogen donor ligands with the iron (Figure 3b).

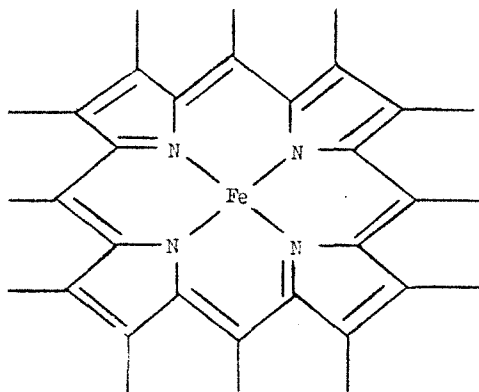


Figure 3a

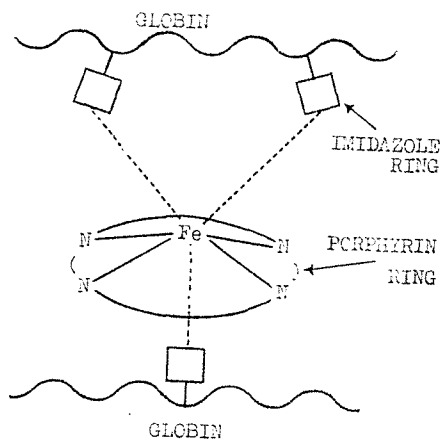


Figure 3b

The iron (II) is therefore seven-coordinate. In biological processes one iron-imidazole link is broken and an oxygen molecule gets bonded to the iron (II) instead. This oxyhaemoglobin then releases the trapped oxygen into the blood and the Fe-N link is re-established. The process is repeated, allowing the organism to extract vital oxygen from respired air. Other ligands, such as, carbon monoxide, or cyanide ions can combine with the iron in haeme to form very stable, non-labile complexes. These species destroy the function of the haemoglobin as an oxygen carrier and thus cause the eventual death of the organism.

Chlorophyll is a magnesium chelate. The structure of the porphyrin ring in chlorophyll is similar to that of the iron haeme except for variations in the side chains and groups attached to the pyrrole rings.

During the last decade, other "biological" iron complexes *not* containing haeme were discovered. These proteins contain iron linked to sulphur ligands and they have been implicated in a number of biological reactions in which they act as electron transfer agents.

Recently, certain platinum complexes have been investigated for their possible use as anti-cancer agents, so that in the future, complex compounds could also become useful in chemotherapy.

THE MOTIF OF DAUGHTERS IN "THE POWER AND THE GLORY"

Roman Azzopardi

The greatness of *The Power and the Glory* derives in no small way from the superb portrayal of the central character in the book, the unnamed whisky-priest. He is an ambiguous being with conflicting elements of strength and weakness that, by all ordinary standards, is the least qualified to lead men into holiness through Holy Sacraments and yet capable of fulfilling his spiritual mission to the end of his life.

A prey to a double hunt, pursued by the Police and by God, the *whisky*-priest, whom we were so ready to accept with contempt for his feeble nature, turns out to be the priest-hero that invests a whole province with spiritual promise by suffering martyrdom. The puzzle of the priest-hero's personality is undoubtedly an engrossing feature of the book.

But the priest is not the only character that claims the reader's sympathies. The Police Lieutenant (also unnamed) is treated by Graham Greene with such dignity and understanding that it is only natural for the reader to set up the police officer as the deserving rival to the representative of God. Although he is the traditional enemy of God, with nothing to offer but "a vacant uni-

verse and a cooling world," the Lieutenant is far from being a lost soul, considering that he is closer to the God whom he reckons is fiction than so many others who simply ignore Him.

The Priest and the Lieutenant, on their own, and in contrast with each other, raise significant questions on the nature of courage, sanctity and love. But the interpretation of the novel's meaning and the proper judgement of the human and divine values involved require us to examine the lesser characters with the same attention as we do the main ones. We have Mr and Mrs Fellows, the English couple who own a banana plantation; Coral Fellows, their daughter; Mr Tench, the English dentist; the half-caste who betrays the priest; Padre José, the married priest; and James Calver, the American gunman wanted for murder.

The Priest's meetings with each of these characters (together with the more dominant encounter with the Police Lieutenant) help to convey Graham Greene's view of human experience as being that of a wandering soul battling to embrace faith and regain grace in a world that is either hostile or indifferent. Of spe-

cial mention in this respect is the unfolding of a tender compassionate theme conveyed by the young-old child characters in the book.

As early as Part One, chapter two, we are introduced to the Mexican family of three children: two girls, aged six and ten respectively, and Luis, a boy of fourteen. The conduct of the two daughters during the customary bedtime reading of the life of Juan, the young martyr, "with their beady intense eyes, drinking in sweet piety", puts the mother's mind at rest. She confides to her husband that they are "two little saints already". It is the boy whom the mother worries about. Soon weary of the family reading (though not averse to hear the reading of the last chapter where the young Juan is shot against a wall shouting: Viva el Christo Rey), Luis even dares ask awkward questions about the whisky-priest. Things come to a head when at a later date Luis scandalously exclaims, "I don't believe a word of it." The daughters of course will have nothing of this. They sit "motionless, their eyes large and brown and pious".

Indeed, Luis's sisters are mere "Bystanders" (the end-chapter of Part One being so entitled). They hardly motivate the plot or have any bearing on the character of the whisky-priest. The scenes in which the Mexican sisters appear may be considered as an integral part of the novel's structure in juxtaposing the actual hunt of the renegade priest with the pious literary account of a perfect martyr. But the contrast between the child world and the whis-

ky-priest's existence is more effectively seen when Coral Fellows appears in the book. Coral, the daughter of the English banana planter, Captain Fellows, actively seeks to help the hunted priest escape capture and gives him shelter in their barns. She is only thirteen, "with a neat accurately moulded face and two pinched pigtailed", and she is not frightened. Only the night before she handled the Lieutenant with such ease, allowing him to sleep on the verandah before continuing the search for the priest.

What is the effect of Coral on her parents and, more particularly, on her father? With some surprise we read that Mr and Mrs Fellows feel her as a stranger in the house, an outsider who makes people wary of entrusting themselves to her. And yet she inspires "an inordinate love" in her father, a love touched with fear because he knows he cannot determine the future of his daughter. At that moment, the compromises, anxieties and shame lay outside the gate. But one day the future will be allowed in. It is like watching the one you love "driving recklessly towards the broken bridge, the torn-up track, the horror of seventy years ahead".

Coral, however, is far from being vulnerable. Precisely because life has not yet got at her, she wore a false air of impregnability. The future has yet to claim her. Her father may not be prepared for the eventuality of 'what is to happen?'. He flinches away from problems which he has never dared to confront. But Coral, ever so ready to accept responsibili-

ties, seems ably given to preparing herself. She is in fact educating herself all the time. When she is not studying European history she is inspecting alligator skins tacked on the wall or else giving orders to the Indians to get the cargo ready for loading. The weightiest responsibility (and the most adventurous for a thirteen-year old) is giving refuge to a Catholic priest without arousing the suspicion of the police or else unduly scaring her parents who do not want trouble with the authorities.

What is the bond between the daughter of the English planter and the Priest? In small but significant ways, Graham Greene establishes the unalterable priestly nature of the man of God. Coral, in her desire to help, suggests escape. But the Priest says that there is always somebody needing him, and he would rather foil police efforts to catch him by waiting for the rains that will make pursuit impossible in the marshy regions. The girl proposes that he should give himself up. But the Priest plainly says that it is his duty not to be caught as he is the sole representative of God in the province. Coral will still try to help. He can always renounce his Faith and save himself the pain and the fear of being on the run. The Priest emphatically answers that this is impossible because it is out of his power. Coral finally understands: "Like a birthmark" is how she defines the sacramental sign of the pastoral priesthood.

The encounter of the Priest and the English girl sheds light upon the

personality of the priest-hero by showing how the dignity of the man is inextricably linked to his office as priest. He himself never doubts his priestly function, indelibly stamped on his character on the day he was ordained. And because he is a priest he is potentially capable of the ultimate heroism — martyrdom.

Coral Fellows remains part of the Priest's consciousness till the end. In truth the next time he remembers her she is no longer at the banana station, having either fled with her family or been killed. At the spectacle of a deserted human settlement, while rummaging among the papers that must have belonged to the girl, the Priest remembers the readiness of Coral Fellows to swear enmity against anyone who hurt him; at the same time, he is reminded of the other girl, his daughter, who has, conversely, bared her hatred of him in a most wicked manner before his departure from the village.

The encounter of the Priest with his daughter occurs after he has received sanctuary from the English girl. The bonds of love and compassion he has come to acknowledge as being present between him and Coral need to be re-experienced, now that he is visiting his home after an absence of six years, in a meeting with his own flesh and blood. Entering the village, his heart beating with "a secret and appalling love" in expectation of seeing his daughter again, the Priest is greeted by a group of young children, too young to remember the old days when priests dressed in black and wore Roman collars and had soft patronis-

ing hands. The surprising thing is that he fails to recognise his own daughter in the group. It is only a little later that he realises that the young-old girl who had stared at him with a devilry and malice beyond her age is his own daughter. The lack of immediate recognition has a definite effect on the Priest. It accentuates "the shock of human love". The begetting of this child, in an atmosphere of fear, despair, loneliness and a half bottle of brandy, paradoxically leads to a "sacred shamed-faced overpowering love". Forbidden to procreate by the rules of his holy office, the Priest does not only sire a daughter on a poor village woman but he commits the horrifying act without love. Yet now because he is burdened with parental responsibility he is overcome by love.

The situation is familiar. The reader has already witnessed the parent-child relationship between Captain Fellows and his daughter. Both the Captain and the Priest are aware of their responsibilities and the resulting helplessness of trying to fit the girls into the future world. But while Captain Fellows flinches away from the problems which he dare not confront, the Priest receives an insight into human nature such that his awareness of human and divine love is appreciably widened. Care of souls is a grave priestly responsibility. But compared to what parents have to shoulder it is a lighter thing. God can be trusted to make allowances for the sinful misfortunes that we all are guilty of. However, when you have a daughter to bring up, can you trust smallpox,

starvation and men?

In undergoing this fatherly solicitude the whisky-priest is no doubt responding to his particularly unedifying situation. He is living in mortal sin and every act of his spells damnation. He is far from being contrite. This is not simply the foregoing of his days of abstinence or the relinquishing of the altar stone. Ecclesiastical penalties are the more appropriate for those omissions. Here, on top of his "rubble of failures" is the damning weight of carnal sin. How can he stay among his people if his presence is a corrupting example? Seeing his daughter staring back at him — as if a grown woman was there before her time — he feels like his own mortal sin was looking back at him, without contrition. He puts out his hand to drag Brigitta near him and away from something. "But he was powerless; the man or the woman waiting to complete her corruption might not yet have been born: how could he guard her against the non-existent?"

The same cry echoes in the chambers of innumerable paternal hearts. And it is not simply the need to protect and secure from abuse. Brigitta and countless other children in the world have a soul to save or lose. The priest is a man whose special purpose is precisely the salvation of souls. Once the task looked simple enough. But now with "The whole vile world coming round to ruin her" the Priest knows his desperate inadequacy. Just as when parting with Coral Fellows the Priest had offered to pray for the girl so does he now on leaving his own

daughter: "O God, give me any kind of death — without contrition, in a state of sin — only save this child".

The reader of *The Power and the Glory* is rewarded by looking closely into the personalities of the two girls. Coral (a modern name) is a thirteen-year old; Brigitta (a more Christian name) is merely seven. The English girl is the innocent that the Priest's daughter can never hope to be. But nevertheless Coral has her weaknesses. With all her goodwill and efficiency, Coral can hardly claim to understand the pity and the wickedness of the world. She has not even had the companionship of other children, having known only swamps and vultures. She may be grown-up — "an awful pain took her suddenly in the stomach... it was a new pain (not worms this time)" — but she hardly knows what tenderness is. Pretending and the games of childhood had never appealed to her. Always brisk, always alert and competent, Coral has been for long a mature young woman. No less mature is Brigitta. But in her case it is an appalling reality. Her very smile is enticing and "whipped-up". "The world was in her heart already, like the small spot of decay in a fruit". Born in sin and deprived of God's grace, she seems doomed to eternal damnation. The Priest is "shaken by the conviction of loss". There is very little if anything which she does not know. Yet how far does she understand? Her mind has been rushed through a whirlwind of adult passions. She is already singled out in the village because she is the Priest's daughter, and

priests do not work in the fields and, anyway, (according to the ten-year old Pedro in Brigitta's village) priests are not any good for women.

The parting conversation with Brigitta by the rubbish heap near the river leaves the Priest wretchedly aware of the evils that life brings and of the power of sin. But there is no dark despair. Strengthened by his faith and his priestly mission, the Priest concludes: "One mustn't have human affections — or rather one must love every soul as if it were one's own child. The passion to protect must extend itself over a world..." To some of us this may appear a mark of presumption on the part of the Priest. The pitying and shielding concern for the spiritual and material welfare of one's daughter is best left to God because revelation teaches us that our whole life is in the hands of an eternal love. Yet, we feel that the promptings of *divine* concern that well up in the human heart of the whisky-priest are far from upsetting our religious values since the parental role of the Priest as the actual father of Brigitta is sufficiently harmonised with his priestly vocation as the spiritual father of us all.

The moments spent with his own daughter and with Coral Fellows serve to underline the humanness of the Priest while at the same time marking him (notwithstanding his moral bankruptcy) as a man who walks with God. The Catholic priest becomes the parent. To know that the Priest feels the heavy responsibility of parenthood is to convey to

ordinary readers the sense of God taking care of everything. The vision of the whisky-priest, in so far as his daughter is concerned, would have been incomplete had he not extended it to include the world.

Parents long for the respect of their children and seek to love them. They strive to provide them with a bright future and warn them about the dangers that await them. The office of fatherhood on its own is encompassed by care, pain and responsibility. The Priest in *The Power and the Glory* helps us to understand that a child is not simply entrusted to parents who may choose to leave unfinished or exposed to ruin that

which they themselves gave birth to. The child has to be given back to God.

Brigitta and Coral, in their different ways, suggest that they are self-sufficient in the matter of natural needs and everyday life. But the young-old girls are unprotected. Disease, hunger and lust, not to mention compromise and shame, will assail the frail humanity of the girls. The Priest will offer to pray for Coral; for Brigitta he will give his life. But the desperate inadequacy remains. To care for the girls and yet to be powerless to control the evil that will charter their fall.

L-ELEMENT ROMANTIKU F' "IL-JIEN U LILHINN MINNU"

Joseph Vella

II-Problema tal-Poeżija

Il-Jien u Lilhinn Minnu hi poeżija u mhux trattat filosofiku, jew ġustifikazzjoni teoloġika ta' l-eżistenza t'Alla. Lanqas ma hi twegħiba razzjonalment riġida għall-problema ta' l-eżistenza umana. Ma' dan kollu Dun Karm stess iġhidilna f'"Erba' Kelmiet Qabel" li meta kitibha kien imqanqal mir-razzjonalizmu ta' René Descartes u l-emozzjonalizmu ta' Blaise Pascal. Għalih la l-wiehed u lanqas l-iehor — maqtughin minn xulxin — ma jistghu jsolvu l-problemi ta' Lilhinn Minnu.

"Il-bniedem għandu Mohh u għandu Qalb. Bil-mohh jifhem u jirraġuna; bil-qalb iħobb u jixtieq. Dawn iż-żewġ fakultajiet fil-bniedem huma bħaż-żewġ kefef flimkien; jekk ma jkunux mghabbirin, ma jgħidulek qatt is-sewwa. Raġuni bla mhabba aktarx hi kiesha, egoista, kburiġa; imhabba bla raġuni aktarx issibha mhegħa żzejjed, għaġġilja, ħalja."

Ir-Razzjonalizmu ta' René Descartes jixbah ħafna lil ta' l-ewwel; l-Emozzjonilizmu ta' Blaise Pascal jixbah ħafna lil tat-tieni.

"Bħal żewġ roti ta' karettun, dawn iż-żewġ qawwiet jehtigilhom iduru ndaqs, jimxu flimkien; jekk le, tigrif, ksur u mewt ikun it-tmien tagħhom."

(Erba' Kelmiet Qabel)

Jew kif Dun Karm iġhid fil-poeżija tiegħu:

"Jista' qatt il-mizien jiddaqqas f'sikkto jekk keffa tkun mimlija u l-oħra fiergħa?"

Flimkien mar-razzjonalizmu Cartesjan hawn Dun Karm jidher li qed jirrifjuta wkoll l-*intelligo ut credam* ta' Abelard, jiġifieri ma jaqbilx li l-bniedem bir-raġuni biss jaasal biex jagħraf 'l Alla. Dun Karm iġhid li l-Jien tar-raġuni irid ikun meġġun mill-"*Emmna, il-Credo ut intelligam* ta' Santu Wistin". Hekk ukoll iġhid fil-poeżija:

"Nemmen. Kelma qalila imma sabiha:
Caħda tal-Jien u l-akbar wetqa tiegħu."

Il-Fidi, irid ighid Dun Karm, tidher li tiċhad ir-Raġuni, iżda fil-fatt mhux biss ma tiċhadhiex imma twettaqha, jew aħjar “twiežen lir-Raġuni”. Għalhekk Dun Karm jidher li qed ihaddan il-*Credo et intelligo* ta' San Tumas.

Ir-Razzjonalizmu ta' René Descartes (1596 — 1650)

Filosfu u matematku kbir, René Descartes halla l-filosofija skolastika biex jibni ohra ġdida fuq metodu aktar preċiż u rigoruż bħal dak tal-matematika. Għalhekk qieghed kollox — anke l-eżistenza t'Alla u dik personali — fid-dubju metodiku. Fl-1619 skopra l-eżistenza tiegħu nnifsu bl-affirmazzjoni “*je pense donc je suis*”. La qed nahseb u niddubita, allura neżisti. B'hekk il-primat Descartes jagħtih lir-raġuni umana, biex imbagħad jitlaq minnha u jiskopri l-eżistenza t'Alla u dik empirika. F'moħhu nduna li għandu l-kuncett ta' perfezzjoni. Dan il-kuncett, din l-idea, ma tistax teżisti f'moħhi, qal Descartes, li kieku ma jeżistix *Esseri Perfett* barra minni li jiġġustifika din l-idea. U dan l-esseri perfett hu Alla. Fil-fatt dan hu parti mill-Argument Ontoloġiku ta' Sant Anselmu. B'hekk Descartes deherlu li sab l-eżistenza t'Alla bir-raġuni umana biss. Din l-insistenza fuq ir-raġuni holqot ir-Razzjonalizmu Cartesjan li sar popolari hafna fl-Ewropa. Serva wkoll biex jinbena l-ideal ta' Klassiċizmu, jiġifieri li r-Raġuni hi l-fakulta' infallibli li twassalna għall-Gmiel, hekk kif fil-filosofija twassalna għall-Verità. Hemm xebh kbir bejn Descartes u Boileau.

L-Intuwizzjonizmu ta' Blaise Pascal (1623 — 1662)

Bħal René Descartes, Blaise Pascal minn ċkunitu kellu giġda kbira għall-Matematika. Iżda f'haġtu hadha hafna kontra r-Razzjonalizmu ta' Descartes. Dahal f'Port Royal, il-kunvent ta' Pariġi li kien magħruf għall-Gansenizmu fis-seklu sbatax, biex jagħti haġtu lil Alla. Mis-sena 1656 sakemm miet halla l-ġlied teoloġiku, sar bniedem mistiku, u miet kattoliku. Fl-1670 ippubblikaw il-hafna noti li halla taht l-isem ta' *Pensées sur la Religion* fejn jiddistingwi bejn l-ispirtu razzjonali mill-ispirtu ta' l-intuwizzjoni. L-intuwizzjonizmu ta' Pascal kien rejazzjoni kontra r-Razzjonalizmu ta' Descartes li, bħalma għedt, kien popolari hafna fi Franza. Pascal isostni li bir-Raġuni l-bniedem jista' jasal fl-eżistenza t'Alla, iżda ma jsirx jaf min hu Alla. Hekk ighid Pascal: “Ainsi on peut bien connaître qu'il y a un Dieu sans savoir ce qu'il est.” Alla tagħna, ikompli Pascal, mhux Alla tal-filosfi, iżda Alla ta' Abraham, Alla ta' Izakk, Alla ta' Gakobb, Alla ta' Gesù Kristu; Alla li juri ruhu lill-qalb tal-bniedem li jfittxu — il-grazzja t'Alla mogħtija lill-bniedem permezz ta' Kristu, il-Medjatur bejn Alla u l-Bniedem.

Pascal ighid ukoll li l-qalb għandha r-raġunijiet tagħha li l-moħh ma jifhimx. Jew aħjar, il-moħh jifhem ix-xjenza empirika iżda ma jista' qatt jifhem min hu Alla. Għalhekk il-veritajiet reliġjużi, Pascal ma jippruvahomx bir-raġuni iżda bil-qalb, bl-intuwizzjoni, b'din il-fakultà li tagħraf mingħajr rikors għar-raġuni silloġistika. Għal Pascal iċ-ċertezza ta' l-intuwizzjoni hi superjuri għaċ-ċertezza razzjonali, geometrika, xjentifika — ċertezza li ma tikkonvin-

ciex il-mohħ iżda tqanqal il-qalb. Jigifieri r-Raġuni tilhaq il-quċcata tagħha meta tittraxxendi lilha nfisha bil-Fidi. Għalhekk l-intuwizzjoni Pascaljana hi aktar axxeżi milli dimostrazzjoni.

Il-Jien

Hassejt din il-htieġa li nagħti tagħrif fuq Descartes u Pascal għax mingħajru ma tistax tifhem il-problema ta' *Il-Jien u Lilhinn Minnu*. Infatti, Dun Karm jiftah il-Poezija tiegħu b'affirmazzjoni li l-Mohħ (il-Jien, ir-Razzjonalizmu Carteżjan) wahdu ma jasal qatt biex jifhem il-misteri umani, bhat-tbatija u l-mewt, u hwejjeg oħra lilhinn minn dan l-univers, bhalma hi l-eżistenza t'Alla.

'Hsiebi (ir-Raġuni) bhal aghma: biex isib it-trejqa itektek bil-ghasluġ kull pass li jagħti; jimxi qajl qajl u qatt ma jaf fejn wasal; dalma kbira tostorlu l-Kif u l-Għala.'

Il-versi ta' wara juru li l-gmiel ta' l-Univers ma jagħtih "*ebda twegiba*". Dun Karm iħoss bhal konflitt intellettuali ġo fih, għax jara li mohħu jista' jifhem hafna hwejjeg fl-Univers iżda mhux kollox. Jista' jifhem biss il-*phenomena* iżda mhux in-*Noumena*, u għalhekk "jilbet", bhal jiddispra. Dun Karm ighid:

'Mela ma tiswa xejn il-Fehma.'

għax ir-Raġuni umana hi biss "dahk u frugħa". Veru dan? Jidhirli li meta Dun Karm qabad il-problema tat-tbatija u l-mewt kien jaf li din kienet sa twasslu f'*Cul-de-Sac* intellettuali għax it-tbatija u l-mewt fihom infushom huma assurdi. iżda dan ma jfissirx li r-Raġuni Umana ma tistax tasal għand Alla. Toroq, bhall-*Quinque Viae* ta' San Tumas u oħrajn, jistgħu jwassluna fl-affermazzjoni ta' l-eżistenza t'Alla bhala Esseri Etern li jista' kollox u jaf kollox, il-bidu u t-tmiem ta' kulma jeżisti, il-kawża-mhux-kawzata tal-Big Bang li minnha hareġ l-Univers kontingenti u ahna miegħu. Bhala wiehed li studja l-filosofija skolastika dan Dun Karm sata' għamlu, iżda m'għamlux. Baqa' mwahħal mal-problema tat-tbatija u l-mewt umana li, bhalma għedt, ma tifhimhomx bir-raġuni biss. Hawn ir-Razzjonalizmu ta' Descartes ma jwasslekx. Għalih trid il-Fidi, jew ahjar l-intuwizzjoni ta' Pascal.

Dun Karm dahħal dan l-element Pascaljan fil-poezija tiegħu permezz ta' "*Lehen mohbi*" li qed iċanfru u jdawlu fl-istess hin. Ifakkrek fil-*Lehen Irqiq* li sama' Izaija wara t-tempesta. Dan il-lehen tal-intuwizzjoni jiehu dimensjoni tant kbira fil-qalb ta' Dun Karm li ċ-ċertezza tiegħu tissupera d-dubbi razzjonali. Sewwa qal Pascal li l-intuwizzjoni ma tikkonvincix il-mohħ iżda tqanqal il-qalb. Infatti hekk gara f'Dun Karm; il-Fidi għagliu jifhem li l-oghla raġuni umana hi dik li tagħraf il-limitazzjoni tagħha vis-à-vis l-Infinit. Ir-Razzjonalizmu wassal lil Dun Karm għal din l-affirmazzjoni:—

"Mhux bin il-għaqal
tibni biex thott, tpingi s-sabih u thassru."

Izda l-Intuwizzjoni tal-qalb wasslitu għal

"Mhux għaqli
tibki lill-qamha u ma tifrahx bis-sbula."

Għal wiehed li jemmen, il-mewt mhix iżjed assurda, bħalma hi għal Jean-Paul Sartre, iżda għandha tifsira kbira bħalma jgħid Kierkegaard. It-tbatija umana tifhimha biss f'għaqda ma' dik ta' Kristu.

"Kulhadd imsallab, għaliex Kristu msallab."

Anke fl-attitudni tiegħu lejn Kristu bħala "Il-Medjatur", Dun Karm jiehu hafna, forsi minghajr ma jaf, minn Pascal, li jgħid li kull deiżmu li jwarrab lil Kristu jixbah lill-ateiżmu.

Il-hin kollu tidher čara fil-poeżija l-għlieda spiritwali tal-protagonista, u naraw żvilupp psikoloġiku kontinwu li jibda bid-dubji kbar li jgħiblu r-Razzjo-naliżmu. Izda Dun Karm ma jaččettahx mill-ewwel id-dawl tal-Fidi. Ihossu għadu f'salib it-toroq.

"fejn tinferaq fi, tnejn it-triq tal-Hajja,
it-triq tal-Jien u t-triq ta' Lilhinn Minnu."

u č-čpar jikber u harstu tiddennes u taghma għal kollox.

Il-limitazzjoni intellettuali għagh'u jagħraf ič-čokon tiegħu — "hassejtni čkej-ken... quddiem Kobor bla xtut." Jixtieq ičlebbet fuq "iž-žiemel tad-dehen" tiegħu biex jinfed il-"hitan tal-bronz" li qed jostrulu l-kobor tal-Univers. U jerga' jaqa' fid-dubji u jsejjah "holma qarrieqa" dak il-ferh artistiku li kien wiegħdu l-Gmiel poetiku.

"Oh frugħa fiergħa
ta' ġid, ta' għerf, ta' kobor, u ta'.....*Mħabba*."

Tweġiba Romantika

Kellu jkun l-element romantiku tal-*Imħabba* lejn ommu li ressqu definiti-
tivament lejn Alla.

"U jien habbejtha
lil din ix-xwejha fl-hena ta' tfuitti,
fil-milja tar-rgulija u għadni *nħobbha*
bil-qawwa kollha."

Hawn Dun Karm jiskopri li "*l-imħabba ma tmutx*" u jekk Alla li ħalaqha f'qalb il-bniedem jičhdilha l-milja tagħha, "jīčhad lilu nnifsu, u mhux ħabib tas-

Sewwa." Dun Karm jara tifsira eterna f'din il-parabola tal-evoluzzjoni tal-Imhabba li titla' mill-elementi minghajr hajja (il-bahar ibus ix-xtajta), u tibqa' tielgħa 'l fuq fis-siġar u l-ward, l-annimali u l-bniedem. Izda *l-Fantasija* tiegħu ma tiqafx hemm. Hi tara traġettorja hierġa minn din "l-imhabba li thaddan lin-Natura" biex tingħaqad ma' *l-Imhabba Perfetta* li hi Alla, il-Milja tal-imhabba umana. Tixbah hafna din it-tifsira li jagħti Dun Karm tal-imhabba lit-tifsira li jagħti Teilhard de Chardin lit-traġettorja tal-parabola tal-Evoluzzjoni li għalih issib il-milja tagħha f'**Omega Point** li hu Alla.

Il-kelma *Fantasija* fil-vers

"u tahkem aktar minnha l-Fantasija"

u li twassal lil Dun Karm għand Alla, għandha hafna *tifsira romantika*:— ghax din il-Fantasija mhix xi holma mhux fundata, mhix xi invenzjoni, izda vera *Immaginazzjoni* fis-sens ta' Coleridge, Keats, u Conrad, jiġifieri mibnija fuq ir-realtà umana. Li jrid ighid Dun Karm hu dan: jista' qatt ikun li l-imhabba umana li gie li tasal fil-perfezzjoni tagħha, bħal fil-każ ta' Patri Kolbe li ta hajtu għal haddiehor, tispicča fil-qabar? Jista' jkun li l-imhabba hi illużjoni biss għalkemm forsi għal xi whud hi illużjoni neċessarja? Jew l-imhabba umana għad tingħaqad ma' *Mhabba* akbar minnha li hi Alla nnifsu? Nara wkoll f'dil-Fantasija Dun Karmiana tal-imhabba bħal solidarjetà romantika — kważi fis-sens ta' Novalis u Schlermacher — li tgħaqad l-imhabba tan-Natura ma' dik umana, ma' dik Divina — l-idea ta' l-imhabba t'Alla f'kolloxx.

Fis-sens filosofiku Dun Karm għandu raġun. Dawk il-fatti realistiċi umani, bħall-Gmiel, l-Ordni, il-Gustizzja, il-Moralità, il-Verità, l-Imhabba, li x-xjenza ma tistax tispjega iżda li jeżistu, jitolbu spjegazzjoni. u għal min jaf jara-hom *sub specie aeternitatis*, għandhom tmiem etern, bħal ma sew ighid Keats:—

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

Il-Konverżjoni tal-Protagonista

Il-konverżjoni tal-protagonista mqanqla mid-dehra kbira tal-Imhabba tnis-sel fih umiltà li biha jagħraf l-iżball tas-suppervja tal-Jien bhala "Għadu tas-Sema" u jitlob mahfra. Din il-konverżjoni spiritwali ggħib fih bidla psikoloġika wkoll

"Qomt mill-art mibdul fi bniedem ieħor."

F'dan iż-żmien ta' Katharsis, ta' tisfija tar-ruħ, Dun Karm jibda jara ċar u jifhem:

"Issa qed nara u nifhem

nifhem kif il-werqa

għandha tidbiel, tisfar u fl-aħħar taqa'

biex tibqa' hajja s-siġra."

Jara li kollox qiegħed f'postu u jieqaf jistaqsi għax jifhem li

"Int biss il-Bidu,

Int biss it-Temma.....

 fik biss il-Kif u l-Għala

ta' kulma sar, ta' kulma jsir go fija,

ta' li jigrì madwari."

Din hi konklużjoni spiritwalment legittima għax il-mistiċi, wara li jin-qatghu mill-art permezz tal-axxeżi tal-intuwizzjoni jew kif isejhilha San Gwann tas-Salib "il-lejl iswed tar-ruh", jifhemu wisq aktar lil Alla mir-raġunar sillogistiku. Alla tagħhom mhux l-alla tal-filosfi, iżda *Persuna*, Imħabba, Qdusija, Rikkezza, Alpha u Omega ta' kollox. Hu jenfagħhom f'rivelazzjoni u mħabba divina. Il-hajja mistika hi *Esperjenza* ta' għaqda m'Alla. Fl-ittra tiegħu lill-Efesin, San Pawl jitlob "biex Alla ta' Ġesù Kristu jagħtikom l-għerf u r-rivelazzjoni biex issiru tafuh." (x.1,17)

B'din l-affirmazzjoni tal-Fidi, tal-Imħabba tal-qalb, tal-Emozzjoni, tal-Fantasija, tat-Twemmin f'Ommu vera u simbolika tal-Knisja Kattolika, flimkien mar-rifjut totali tar-Razzjonalizmu pur, inhoss li Dun Karm qed jagħti *risposta romantika* għall-problema tal-Jien u Lilhinn Minnu. Hawn Dun Karm ighaddi min-Neo-Klassiċizmu tal-bidu tal-karriera poetika tiegħu għar-Romantiċizmu ta' wara. Il-bniedem ma jgħix bil-moħħ biss iżda bil-qalb ukoll. Anzi narah li għalkemm Dun Karm fil-bidu jafferma bilanċ bejn it-tnejn, il-konklużjoni hi aktar romantika u Pascaliana milli Tomista.

Bħal Pascal donnu aktar iħossu milqut mill-*Credo ut intelligam* ta' Santu Wistin. Infatti jasal li jgħid f'għeluq il-poeżija li l-Jien hu Għajb.

"Issa mexxini Int, għax fik biss naghraf

il-għajb tal-Jien u l-Gmiel ta' Lilhinn Minnu."

“IL GATTOPARDO”

L. Burgess

“Principe dell’isola di Lampedusa, duca di Palma, barone di Montechiaro, signore e padrone della Torretta... etc... signore delli feudi di Montecuccio, Bellolampo... etc... delli territori di Donna Ventura... etc etc.” Gli etcetera come nel primo capitolo dei *Promessi Sposi* danno un’impressione di grandezza indefinita, proprio mentre tentiamo di abbreviarla. E va sottolineata questa grandezza nella Repubblica Italiana che ha abolito i titoli nobiliari e soppresso la Consulta Araldica quando Tomasi scrive *Il Gattopardo*.

Il romanzo venne pubblicato (Feltrinelli 1958) in un momento di stanchezza della storia, quando si erano andati logorando “non solo i sinceri entusiasmi e le grandi speranze post-resistenziali, ma anche una certa larga retorica che ne era nata”¹. Certamente, oltre ai suoi grandi meriti letterari di “romanzo storico ambientato in Sicilia, all’epoca dello sbarco di Garibaldi a Marsala”² l’opera deve il suo trionfo al modo di sentire del clima degli anni cinquanta. Dalla parte ufficiale e conservatrice c’è stata un’offensiva contro le forze del ‘45; dall’altra parte non mancano ragioni di crisi inte-

riori, la consapevolezza di errori letterari commessi e la ricerca di un linguaggio che sostituisse quello neorealista.

Quando uscì il romanzo la destra si compiaceva della sua tesi conservatrice. La sinistra prese atto del modo di leggere la storia proposto dal Tomasi e anche se non lo condivideva trovò lo spunto per aprire un dialogo, per discutere gli “errori” di giudizio storico del romanzo sul Risorgimento siciliano e italiano.

La tesi di Tomasi esprime il punto di vista sulla spedizione di Garibaldi, sull’unificazione del Paese, sull’aristocrazia siciliana da una parte sentimentalmente legata al passato, dall’altra pronta ad aprire finestre sugli orizzonti futuri proprio per conservare delle vecchie tradizioni. Tancredi, nepote del Principe di Salina, a proposito di questo argomento dice a suo zio, “Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi”, mostrando coscienza che andava oltre la mentalità di un nobile siciliano perché anticipa l’associazione imminente di interessi borghesi del nord ed agrari del sud come veramente capita dopo il Risorgimento.

1. Vid. Giuliano Manacorda — storia della letteratura Italiana Contemporanea (1940-1965) P.305 Editori Riuniti.

2. Vid. Introduzione al romanzo *Il Gattopardo* di Giorgio Bassani

E' questa la concezione del passato e dell'avvenire dell'isola che Don Fabrizio cerca di spiegare nel colloquio con il piemontese Chevalley: "Il sonno, caro Chevalley, il sonno è ciò che i siciliani vogliono, ed essi odieranno sempre chi li vorrà svegliare... Ho detto i siciliani, avrei dovuto aggiungere la Sicilia, l'ambiente, il clima, il paesaggio. Queste sono le forze che insieme e forse più che le dominazioni estranee e gli incongrui stupri hanno formato l'animo..."

Gli errori del Tomasi erano abbastanza evidenti nel modo di proporre e di svolgere la sua tesi per non venir rilevati³ Resta sempre la plausibilità della tesi generale, prospettata entro certi limiti di statica enunciazione che non trova svolgimento nel romanzo e della consapevolezza fin troppo sottile di come sarebbero andate le cose nell'animo dei protagonisti di quei tempi. La sua visione del Risorgimento è interessata a sostenere l'inesistenza di forze che non fossero quelle regie, per giustificare la staticità inevitabile nel futuro della Sicilia, della Italia e anche di tutta la storia, og-

getto in blocco del ripudio dell'aristocrazia. Queste sono le visioni che corrispondono a certe idee politiche conservatrici che il Tomasi ha saputo rinnovare in un momento che sembrava che andassero fuori moda mentre in realtà stavano nella mente della opinione pubblica e solo attendevano qualcuno qualificato che le propagasse.

E significativo il nome Donnafugata che Tomasi sostituisce per Palma di Montechiaro forse per suggestione di quella terra di Donna Ventura una volta tra i possessi della sua famiglia il luogo in cui si amalgamano realtà e fantasia per rappresentare l'ultima feudalità siciliana. Secondo Leonardo Sciascia⁴ noi possiamo andare al di là delle concezioni che letteralmente il nome contiene — e cioè una donna in fuga, ed arriviamo ad una simbolizzazione del possesso (la terra come donna) ormai perduto della proprietà come in fuga. Dalla Donna Ventura, simbolo dell'avvenire e futuro insieme, arriviamo alla donna-fugata, al passato, alla sfortuna e alla sconfitta.

3 Vid. M. Alicata, "Il principe di Lampedusa e il Risorgimento Siciliano." in *Il Contemporaneo* — Aprile 1959.

4. Vid. Leonardo Sciascia "Scopriamo il mondo di Tomasi di Lampedusa" in *I viaggi immaginari d'Epoca*.

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