

# HYPHEN

A journal of Melitensia and the Humanities

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The Quality of Life in Malta and Gozo –  
*Douglas G. Lockhart*

The Originality of Roman Sculpture –  
*Anthony Bonanno*

Broca's Brain – *Carl Sagan*

Arabic Civilization – *Louis J. Scerri*

Psycholinguistic Aspects of Language –  
*Charles Briffa*

'Ghodod tal-Biedja' u 'Lukarda u l-Ghadd tan-  
Nies ta' l-1931' ta' Temi Zammit – *Tarcisio Zarb*

The 'Good' and the 'Bad' in Art – *E. V. Borg*

# Hyphen

A Journal of Melitensia and the Humanities

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Cover picture: Bronze head of 'Brutus' (see article by A. Bonanno, pp. 8-22).

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# THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN MALTA AND GOZO

*Douglas G. Lockhart*

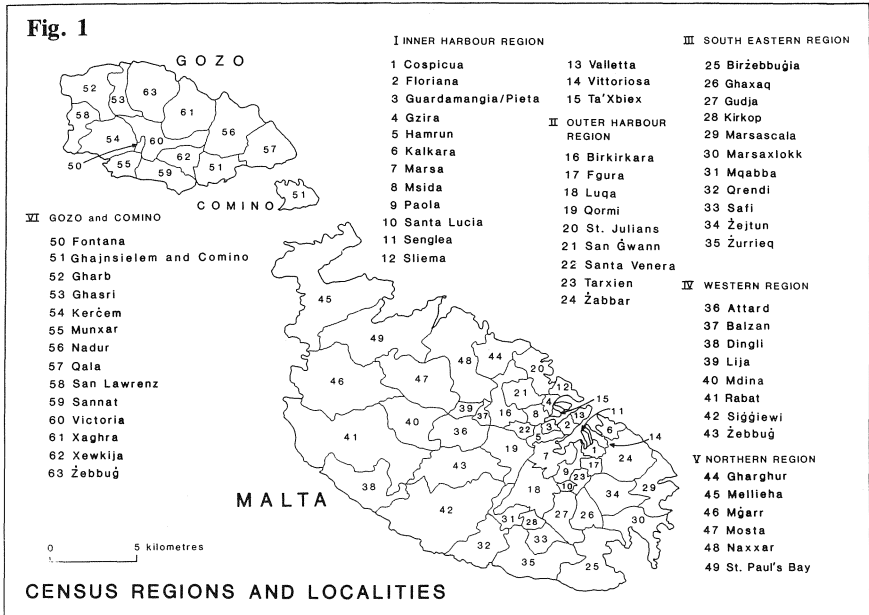
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VARIATIONS in well-being have attracted a great deal of research during the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup> The use of indicators of prosperity, employment structure, and the demographic and social conditions of populations has resulted in a greater awareness of regional and local variations in the quality of life. Most research has focused on the United States, Britain, and other European countries and occasionally, the results have generated much public interest, such as a recent study of the quality of life in British cities by members of the Geography Department at Glasgow University.<sup>2</sup>

In Malta, many of the elements which make up a satisfactory quality of life: opportunities for school leavers, employment, access to services such as health care and adequate transportation and protection of the environment are frequently discussed. Certainly, editorials and letters in the daily and weekly press regularly feature these and other socially relevant issues. While problems like the frequency and reliability of bus services and environmental conflicts concern particular localities, others such as unemployment are usually discussed in national terms. A further difficulty for the researcher has been a lack of appropriate statistics. Although Malta has an efficient statistical service with many annual publications, most data are at the national rather than locality level, making comparison between different communities virtually impossible.

Fortunately, however, the Census of Population and Housing taken in November 1985 produced a major source of demographic, socio-economic, and housing data which was classified into 51 localities in Malta and a further 13 in Gozo (*Fig. 1*). The present author was privileged to co-operate with staff of the Central Office of Statistics in the computer-mapping of data which resulted in the publication of a Census Atlas in February 1987.<sup>3</sup> A brief glance at the spatial pattern in the

1. For example P. L. Knox, *Social well-being: A spatial perspective* (London 1975); M. B. Cottam, P. L. Knox, and P. H. Hirsch, *The Highlands in transition: Current aspects of social geography in a peripheral area*, North Sea Oil Panel Occasional Paper No. 6, Social Science Research Council (London 1981).
2. R. J. Rogerson, A. M. Findlay, and A. S. Morris, 'The geography of quality of life', *Occasional Paper 22*, Department of Geography, University of Glasgow, 1987.
3. Department of Geography, University of Keele, and Central Office of Statistics, *Census '85: Vol. III - A computer-drawn demographic atlas of Malta and Gozo* (Malta 1987). Census data were collected separately for Guardamangia and Pietà and were subsequently amalgamated before the results were published. The two localities have been treated as separate units in this article.



maps reveals that many of the distributions overlap with one another. For example, higher rates of illiteracy, lower levels of educational attainment, and relatively high proportions of pensioners are characteristic of Gozo while high income, levels correlating with above-average employment in the professions, and a high level of residential mobility typify Attard and St Julians. It was felt therefore that an aggregate measure that incorporated a wide range of diagnostic variables would provide a useful picture of the quality of life in each community.

### Levels of living index

Thirty-four variables were chosen (*Table 1*) and the index was calculated by summing the ranked scores on the variables. For each variable, rank 1 was given to the best locality, rank 2 to the second best, and so on.

The index was derived using the formula:

$$I = 100. \sum \left( \frac{R}{N.C} \right)$$

where I is the index value

R is the individual rank-score

N is the number of diagnostic variables

and C is the number of cases.



**Table 1 The indicants of level of living for localities in Malta and Gozo***Housing*

- (1) Shared dwellings
- (2) Vacant dwellings
- (3) One person households
- (4) Five and more person households
- (5) Owner-occupied dwellings
- (6) Rental value Lm 0–50
- (7) Rental value Lm 150 and over
- (8) Occupied dwellings without a bathroom
- (9) Plots issued under the Government home ownership schemes and building development areas, 1976–1985<sup>(a)</sup>
- (10) Detached/semi-detached housing

*Education*

- (11) Adults who have never attended school
- (12) Adults with primary school education only
- (13) University graduates or equivalent
- (14) Illiterate persons aged 10–49
- (15) Illiterate persons aged 50 and over

*Employment*

- (16) Professional and managerial workers
- (17) Unskilled workers
- (18) Persons receiving social assistance
- (19) Gainfully employed population
- (20) Female activity rate
- (21) Persons receiving a pension

*Affluence*

- (22) Low incomes (Lm 31–45)
- (23) High incomes (Lm 60 and over)
- (24) Telephone ownership
- (25) Households with cooker, refrigerator, washing machine, television set, and car

*Social stability*

- (26) Divorced/separated population

*Demographic structure*

- (27) Age group 0–14
- (28) Age group 60 and over
- (29) Population change 1967–1985
- (30) Emigration 1976–1985
- (30) Emigration 1976–1985<sup>(b)</sup>
- (31) Households with no change of residence during the last ten years
- (32) Single persons
- (33) Widowed persons

*Urbanism*

- (34) Persons per square kilometre

Source: Unless otherwise indicated, Central Office of Statistics, *Census '85 Vols. I–III* (Malta 1986–7).

(a) Housing Authority, *Annual Reports 1979–1986*, Malta.

(b) Central Office of Statistics, *Demographic Reviews*, (Malta 1976–85).

Table 2 Levels of living in the Census regions and localities

	Index Value	Rank		Index Value	Rank
<b>INNER HARBOUR</b>					
Cospicua	67.0	55	Dingli	42.0	21
Floriana	65.3	51	Lija	30.7	11
Guardamangia	39.6	19	Mdina	52.6	38
Gzira	48.3	30	Rabat	53.8	40
Hamrun	62.4	47	Siggiewi	42.7	23
Kalkara	51.5	37	Żebbuġ	42.6	22
Marsa	69.3	58			
Msida	43.0	24	<b>NORTHERN</b>		
Paola	54.4	42	Gharghur	39.3	18
Pietà	44.6	25	Mellieħa	44.7	26
Santa Lucia	19.0	1	Mġarr	50.5	34
Senglea	74.2	63	Mosta	30.3	10
Sliema	51.2	35	Naxxar	26.9	6
Valetta	72.6	61	St Paul's Bay	38.6	17
Vittoriosa	60.7	46			
Ta' Xbiex	24.2	5	<b>GOZO</b>		
			Fontana	62.8	49
<b>OUTER HARBOUR</b>					
Birkirkara	38.5	16	Għajnsielem <sup>(b)</sup>	63.1	50
Fgura	23.7	4	Għarb	69.0	57
Luqa <sup>(a)</sup>	58.1	44	Għasri	66.9	54
Qormi	48.0	29	Kerċem	66.0	52
San Ġwann	20.7	2	Munxar	69.7	59
St Julians	28.4	8	Nadur	70.1	60
Santa Venera	33.1	12	Qala	74.6	64
Tarxien	34.9	13	San Lawrenz	60.1	45
Żabbar	47.6	28	Sannat	56.7	43
			Victoria	51.3	36
			Xagħra	68.7	56
<b>SOUTH EASTERN</b>					
Birzebbuga	49.7	33	Xewkija	73.0	62
Għaxaq	48.7	32	Żebbuġ	66.0	52
Gudja	41.2	20			
Kirkop	48.4	31			
Marsascala	28.6	9			
Marsaxlokk	37.9	15	<i>Sources:</i> Central Office of Statistics, <i>Census</i>		
Mqabba	53.8	40	<i>'85, Vols. I-III (Malta</i>		
Qrendi	62.6	48	<i>1986-87); Idem., Demographic</i>		
Safi	36.4	14	<i>Reviews (Malta, 1976-85);</i>		
Żejtun	53.4	39	<i>Housing Authority, Annual Reports</i>		
Żurrieq	45.1	27	<i>(Malta 1979-86).</i>		
			<i>Notes (a)</i> The Has-Serħ home for the elderly		
<b>WESTERN</b>					
Attard	23.0	3	is located in Luqa. This has		
Balzan	27.5	7	depressed the locality's ranking		
			considerably.		
			(b) includes Comino.		

Individual ranks were summed so that low index values are indicative of a high level of living. The index values reflect a surprisingly wide range, from a value of 19.0 for Santa Lucia (the best) to 74.6 for Qala (the worst). Moreover, the variation within each of the regions of Malta is considerable while values for Gozo, though more uniform, tend towards the poor end of the scale (*Table 2*).

In general the spatial pattern of values confirms many of the well-known features of Malta's social geography (*Fig. 2*). The oldest urban areas, which have very high population densities, have some of the worst living standards. Valletta, The Three Cities (Cospicua, Senglea, Vittoriosa), and adjacent working-class residential areas such as Marsa are all close to being least well-off. Paradoxically, the quality of life of those who live in the capital fails to match the availability of shops, cafes, and restaurants, its museums, administrative offices, and historic buildings which make Valletta such an attractive place during working hours. Overall levels of living gradually improve away from the commercial and industrial areas and conditions are markedly better in Msida and Guardamangia, for example.

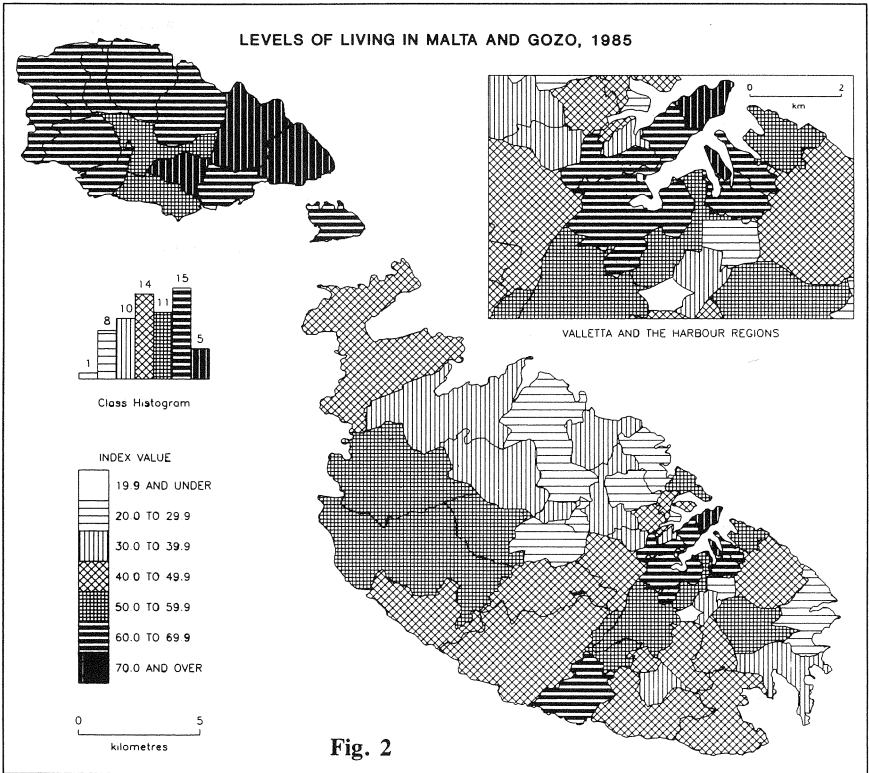


Fig. 2

However, the best values correlate with new private sector and government housing areas such as Fgura and the new towns of San Gwann and Santa Lucia. Such communities are characterized by younger, better-educated populations with high rates of economic activity spread over a wide range of occupations. In addition, these localities scored well on housing quality and domestic amenities.

Beyond the Harbour Regions, variations in levels of living are less extreme. The best localities lie on the fringe of the built-up area. Attard and Balzan have always been prestigious neighbourhoods combining convenience for commuting and an attractive position near the Presidential Palace and the road to Mdina–Rabat. Development in these areas has largely reflected the efforts of private builders. On the other hand, Naxxar, and more particularly Mosta, have witnessed massive government housing schemes which have transformed these once separate communities into extensions of suburbia. Most of the localities which are less well-off tend to be found in the South-East which, apart from the fast growing coastal settlements of Marsascala and Marsaxlokk, have sizeable commuter populations working in the industrial zone and proportionately greater numbers of labourers, such as the quarry workers of Mqabba and Qrendi.

Finally, the index shows that Gozo has proportionately more deprived localities than any other region. Here, higher unemployment rates, a more limited range of employment opportunities, an ageing population and a tradition of emigration all contribute to poorer scores. The index suggests that the residents of Nadur, Xewkija, and Qala, though small in number, are just as deprived as much larger urban communities like Valletta and Senglea.

On a regional basis, Table 3 provides a summary of the results. This confirms

**Table 3 Levels of living in the Census regions**

	Average Index Value	Average Rank
Inner Harbour	52.9	37.4
Outer Harbour	37.0	17.3
South Eastern	46.0	28.0
Western	39.4	20.6
Northern	38.4	18.5
Gozo and Comino	65.6	52.8
Malta	44.6	26.8
Malta, Gozo, and Comino	49.2	32.5

*Sources:* Central Office of Statistics, *Census '85 Vols I–III* (Malta 1986–7); *Ibid.*, *Demographic Reviews* (Malta 1976–85); Housing Authority, *Annual Reports* (Malta 1979–85).

that the problem localities occur mainly in the Inner Harbour and Gozo Regions with South-Eastern Malta being about average. Better than average conditions characterize the Outer Harbour, western, and northern divisions of Malta. Such basic inequalities have long historical and economic roots and it is difficult to see how public policy in the short-term can fundamentally change the general pattern of well-being. Recent announcements to extend the industrial estate at Xewkija, to provide home ownership scheme plots at Qala, and maintain better communications between Gozo and Malta, though welcome, will not by themselves radically alter the position of these communities. By the same token, urban residential renewal in Valletta, together with the facelift planned for the capital, are unlikely to satisfy the aspirations of inner-city populations for more attractive and less cramped living conditions. It seems likely that Inner Harbour areas and Gozo will continue to be depopulated and the fringe of the built-up area will house the more affluent sections of the population.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Mr R. Camilleri and the staff of the Central Office of Statistics for their help and advice during the Census Atlas project from November 1985 to March 1987. The interpretation of the data in this paper is entirely the author's responsibility. Mr K. Mason of the Department of Geography, University of Keele, was responsible for producing Figure 2. The map of Regions and Localities (Figure 1) is reproduced with kind permission from the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Finally, I would like to thank the Royal Society and the Nuffield Foundation for grants towards the cost of fieldwork.

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# THE ORIGINALITY OF ROMAN SCULPTURE\*

*Anthony Bonanno*

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**O**RIGINALITY in itself is an absolute quality; it is either there or not there. It can be present in some aspect, or aspects, and not in others. But its presence or absence can be determined only by relating the artifact which is supposed to contain it (be it a poem, a work of figurative art, a patented idea, or even a philosophical thought) with others preceding it in time.

An industrial design presented for patent registration has to be original, otherwise it does not qualify as a new device, a new contribution to science or technology; it is worthless because it is only a repetition of something else that was created before it. So, even here, originality is judged by comparison with what precedes it. But it is rarely or never the case that the entire design, or designed object, is entirely new. Originality generally resides only in a part of the whole, but that partial novelty is conventionally accepted as constituting a new design, a new device.

Apart from the common place and far from poetical analogy, I believe that more or less the same thread of thought can be applied to the task of establishing whether Roman art is an original art, and thus qualifying it as something distinctly Roman, or whether it is merely an extension of another art. And to establish one or the other, the comparison has to be made with the art that precedes it in time.

The prehistoric cave art of the Franco-Cantabrian region with which we are all familiar has no predecessor, at least according to the present state of our knowledge of Palaeolithic man and his art; therefore, it stands to reason that this art could not be other than original. There is nothing before it to compare it with. It is not so in the case of Roman art. Beside the art of the different prehistoric cultures, which it probably ignored, Roman art could benefit from the various artistic experiences of the pioneering civilizations of the Near East, most of all the Egyptian one, and to a much greater extent (because of its much closer contact with it, both in time and in space) from Greek art. So it is with the latter that the comparison has to be made to decide where, if anywhere, Roman art can lay a valid claim for originality.

We would probably have taken it for granted that the art of the Romans could

\* Public lecture given at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, on 30 November 1987.

not be anything but Roman, were it not that claims to the opposite effect have been made in the past. The seeds for such a contention were perhaps sown already by Johan Joachim Winckelmann, the father of the history of ancient art, at the very birth of this young discipline. Winckelmann introduced a view of a Greek art that is born, grows up to reach the apogée of its development in the works of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, after which it declines in accordance with a rigid biological cycle. Roman art was to find itself at the wrong end of this life cycle. Following Winckelmann there have been several attempts by various art historians to relegate Roman art to a secondary role, an appendix to Greek art, and a decadent one at that. It is possible that this view was rendered more plausible by the repeated re-emergence of the Greek Classical ideal in Roman sculpture, and the adoption of the Greek architectural orders as an external veneer by Roman architecture, even though the latter had created for itself new structural problems and solved them by different structural and aesthetic solutions.

In reaction to this view, on the other hand, there have been efforts, with varying degrees of success, to vindicate the primary role of Roman art by identifying those elements in it that constitute definitive, undeniable innovations.

Limiting myself to the field of sculpture, I intend to discuss two areas of Roman art for one of which a strong claim for originality has been made, and for the other of which, in my view, a much stronger case can be made.

### *Realistic Portraiture*

When I first embarked on the study of Roman art at the University of Palermo in the late sixties, I was faced by an overwhelming series of Alinari large format plates of realistic Republican portraits and by an equally overwhelming literature that appeared to suggest that realistic (or better, veristic) portraiture was one of the major, if not the only trademark of Roman sculpture. I was greatly disillusioned, soon after, to learn that, barring one or two exceptions, all these portraits, including the numerous funerary ones, were datable to the late-Republican period, namely, the first century BC, that is, at the very end of that process of Hellenization which, from the third century BC onwards, had accompanied the process of political expansion of Rome from a Latin state to an uncontested Mediterranean power. As a result of some archaeological freak, beside the bronze head of 'Brutus' of the *Museo Capitolino* and the bronze statue of Avle Metle in Florence (better known as the *Arringatore*), we do not know of any Roman portraits that are datable to the second century BC or earlier, even though there is plenty of historical evidence of the existence of honorary portrait statues in several public places in Rome at the time.

A further disillusion that the overenthusiastic fan of Roman art is bound to encounter is when he directs his attention to Greek Hellenistic portraiture and

Fig. 1 finds that the latter produced a fair number of realistic portraits as well as a couple of others that would even qualify as 'veristic', for example, the one of Eumenes II of Bactria. Thus Roman art cannot really claim absolute originality for the creation of this sculptural type, but it certainly contributed in making it a standard feature and diffusing it throughout the Roman empire to the exclusion, perhaps, of some pockets of resistance here and there.

Moreover, it should be kept in mind that Roman realistic portraiture did not derive its inspiration solely, not even mainly, from this Hellenistic source; there were, in fact, several sources of influence and factors that brought about this popular artistic genre among the Romans. I am overlooking here the possibility, or perhaps probability, of Egyptian influence, about which Gisela Richter produced an interesting and eye-opening study; I do so because I believe that any influence coming from that direction would have reached Roman art indirectly via Hellenistic art.

Fig. 3 It is true that many honorific portraits of Roman dignitaries in our possession, mostly political figures of the late Republican period, like Sulla, Cicero, Antony, and some of Caesar's images, derive their inspiration directly from the heroized images of Hellenistic princes and monarchs which seemed somehow to fit in their ideological aspirations and personal ambitions. But the overwhelming majority of Roman portraits of this period, which belong to members of the upper layers of Roman society, is characterized by an exaggerated realism, by an unbridled search and merciless reproduction of the true features of the sitter, warts and all (I would say, warts and wrinkles and skin folds above all). The origin of this verism can be traced in a typically Roman tradition which had its roots in the Roman social structure. I am referring to the death mask tradition, or the *ius imaginum*. The *ius imaginum* was the prerogative of the patrician families who had the right to keep in a special cupboard in the *tablinum* faithful reproductions of the faces of several generations of ancestors which had been reproduced by the application of wax masks on their faces at the point of death. These *imagines maiorum* were removed from their places only to be carried by younger members of the family on the occasion of the funeral of the head of the house. Vivid accounts of this custom are given us by Polybius and later by Pliny the Elder.

Another source of inspiration for the late Republican portrait is the funerary sculptural tradition of the peoples of central Italy (Etruscans, Samnites, Latins, and others) of which the Romans themselves were a tiny minority which, however, by dint of sheer military acumen and cumulative expansionistic experience, managed to dominate not only its neighbouring peoples but also powerful empires beyond. This central Italian component in Roman art has been identified already in 1948 by Bernard Schweitzer in his masterly work *Die Bildkunst der Römischen Republik* but has been further developed in the last few decades, mostly by the



*Fig. 1* Naples, Museo Nazionale. Roman copy in bronze of a Hellenistic portrait. Usually called 'Pseudo-Seneca'. The likeliest identification is with the Greek poet Hesiod. Late II century BC. Another copy, in marble, is preserved in a private collection in Malta.



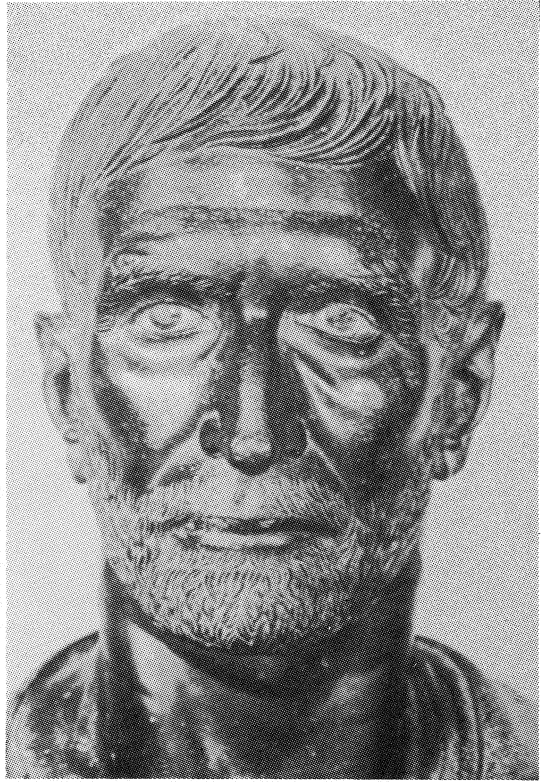
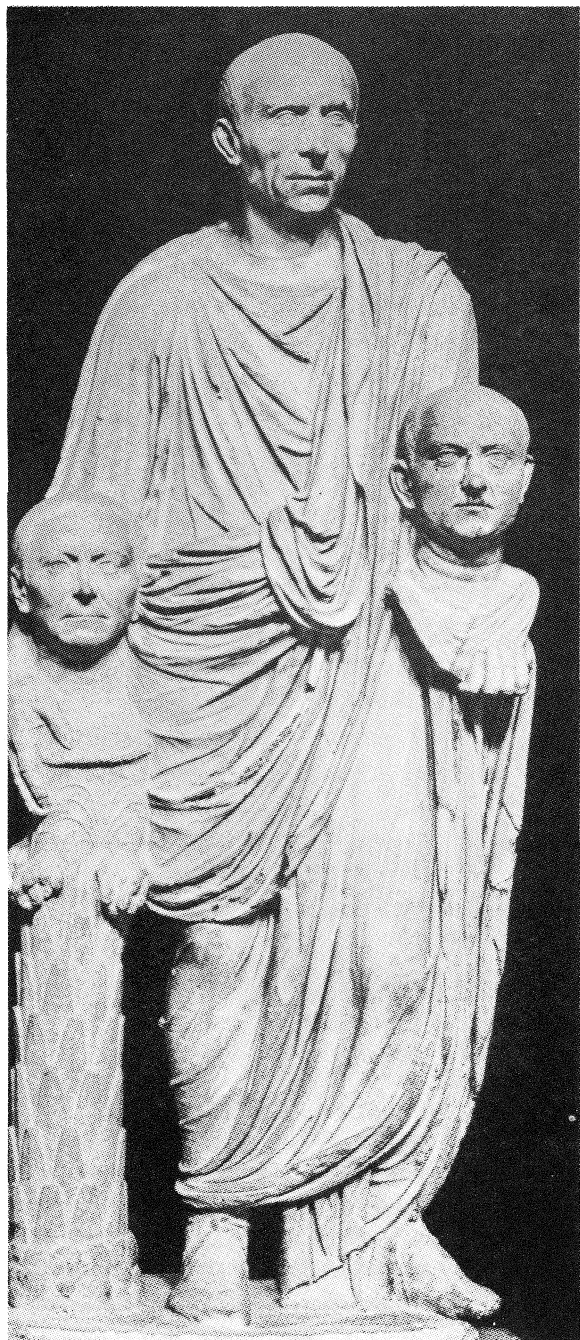


Fig. 2 Rome, Capitoline Museum. Bronze head of 'Brutus'. Variously attributed to the third, second, and first centuries BC.

Italian art historian Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and his school. Its main characteristic feature is expressiveness, often coupled with impressionistic treatment of the hair.

It should be remarked that these indigenous artistic tendencies of the peoples of central Italy would probably have produced only abstract or primitive works of sculpture, like the *Warrior* from Capecetrano and the attempts at portraiture on the lids of the Etruscan canopic vases, had they not succumbed to the naturalistic influence of Greek art. Of these peoples the one that embraced most wholeheartedly the ideals of Greek classical art was the Etruscan one. This it did in practically all the artistic media: sculpture, painting, terracotta modelling. The Etruscans were to exert an enormous and deep influence on the development of Roman civilization and art, first as a dominating power and later as a subordinated people under its sway.



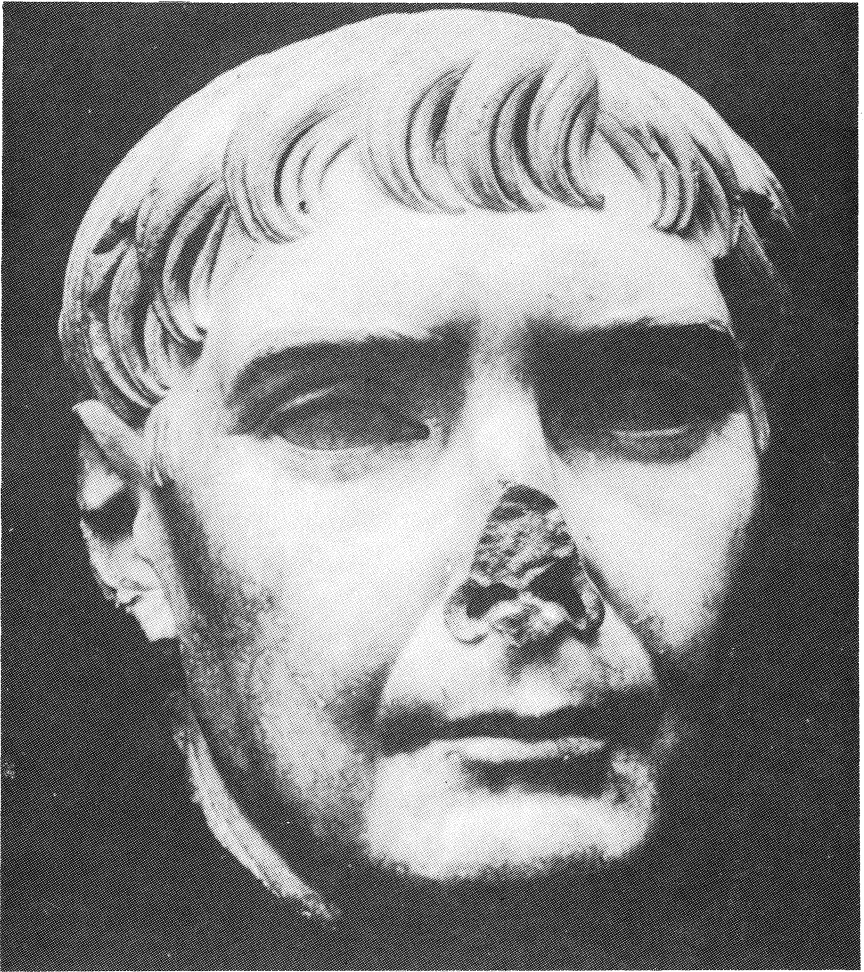
*Fig. 3* Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Statue of a Roman holding busts of two ancestors. The head is ancient but not the original one.



*Fig. 4* Munich, Glyptothek. Marble bust of Augustus. c. 20 BC. An example of Neo-Attic sculpture.

Thus, these three components, the Greek idealizing naturalism, the Roman predilection for exaggerated realism, and the central Italian expressionism were destined to combine together to produce a new type of portrait, the Roman one.

The same components, in particular the antithetical ones (idealization and realism) continued to vie with each other to prevail over each other so that throughout the history of Roman portraiture there is a continued alternation of one tendency dominating the other. In late Republican times it was obviously the realistic tendency which had the upper hand. With Augustus and the Julio-Claudians the Neo-Attic movement marks a return to the classical ideals of the fifth and fourth centuries BC not only in the imperial court art but also in private portraiture. Claudius' heads re-introduce the colour, warmth, and plasticism of



*Fig. 5* Ostia Museum. Larger-than-lifefize marble head of Trajan. c. AD 120.

the Hellenistic taste which became even more pronounced in a section of the portraiture of the Flavians, the successive dynasty. In some of the latter portraits, however, the Republican dry treatment of the facial surfaces reasserts itself. Vespasian's portraits, for example, are known in two versions: one in which Hellenistic colour and plasticism predominates, the other harks back to late Republican tastes.

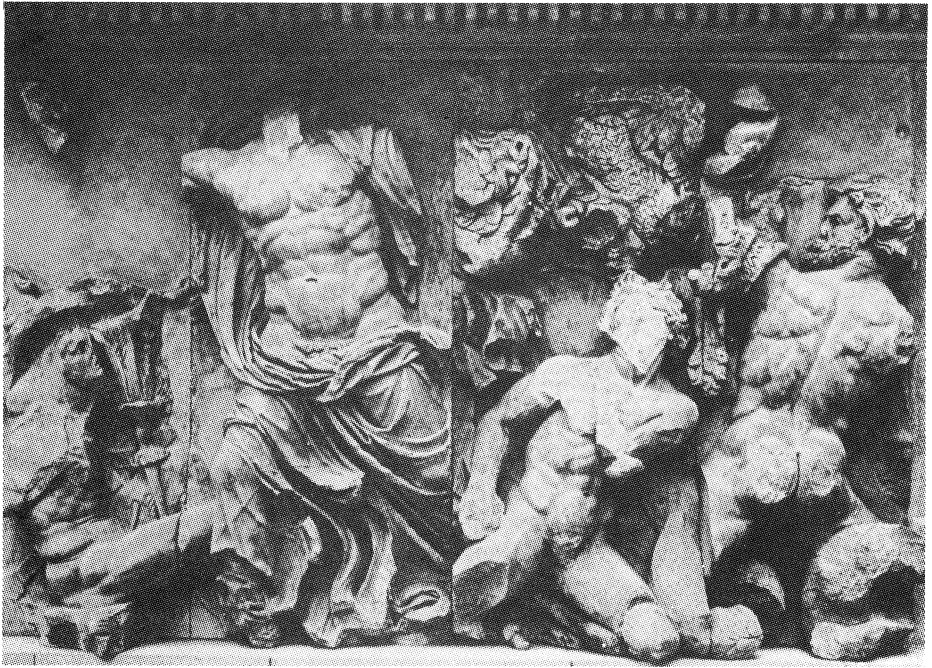




fig. 6 Cairo. Porphyry bust of Emperor Calerius (or Maximinus Daza). Early fourth century AD.

Fig. 5 It is with the Emperor Trajan that Roman portraiture reaches the climax of artistic achievement and its pure Roman character. The three stylistic trends are so well fused together that it is almost impossible to distinguish one from the other.

After a Greek revival introduced by the Graecophile emperor Hadrian, the Antonine portraiture starts off on a path that was to lead it to the Baroque masterpiece of Commodus as Hercules in the *Conservatori*. Antonine portraiture is characterized by a marked contrast between highly polished, porcelain-like,



*Fig. 7* Berlin, Staatliche Museen. Large frieze from the Altar of Zeus at Pergamon. Zeus fighting Giants. 182–165 BC.

fleshy surfaces and heavily undercut, thick and curly hair with a strong colourful light-and-shade effect. A reaction to the latter is found in the portraits of the third century with their emphasis on close-clipped hair and beard and a return to late Fig. 6 Republican realism. Mild attempts at classical revivals under Gallienus and Constantine do not succeed in arresting the inevitable spiritualization of the human form. The head loses its organic structure and assumes stereometric forms. The eyes become exaggeratedly large. The way to the transcendental ideals of Byzantine art and the gradual breakup of the human organic form of early Medieval art in Western Europe is inexorable.

In view of the above, if portraiture cannot be said to be an original creation of Roman art, nor can its realistic content be considered an unprecedented quality, there is no doubt that Roman portraiture as a whole, as well as its development, have all the pre-requisites of originality and cannot in all fairness be counted as a continuation of a branch of some other art.

### *Historical Relief*

To my mind the most important genre of Roman art which had no forerunner in Greek art is the historical relief, the factual representation of a historical event in three-dimensional relief. Real events from contemporary, or near-contemporary, history had, as a matter of fact, suggested the subject-matter of several Classical



*Fig. 8* Rome, Villa Albani. Section of a painting from the 'François Tomb' at Vulci. Third century BC.



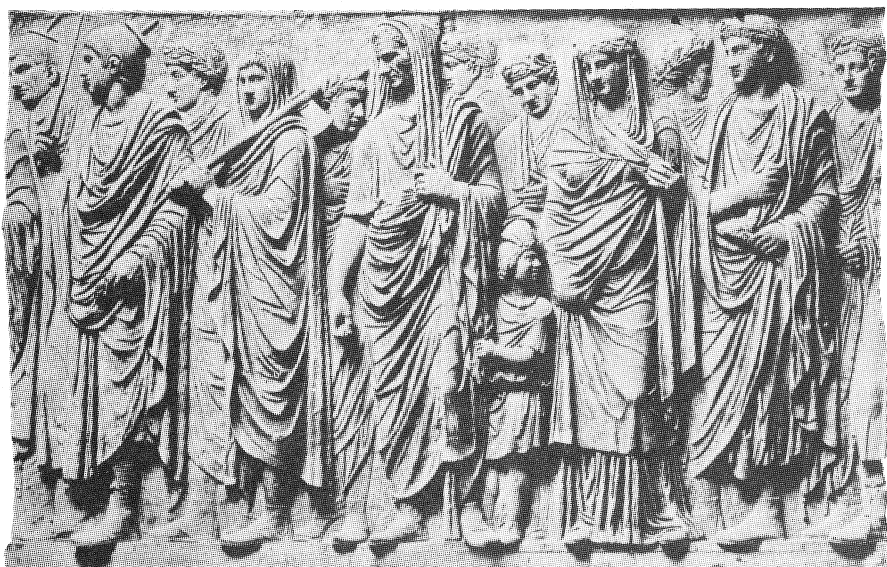


Fig. 9 Rome. *Ara Pacis Augustae*. Procession of the Imperial family. 13–9 BC.

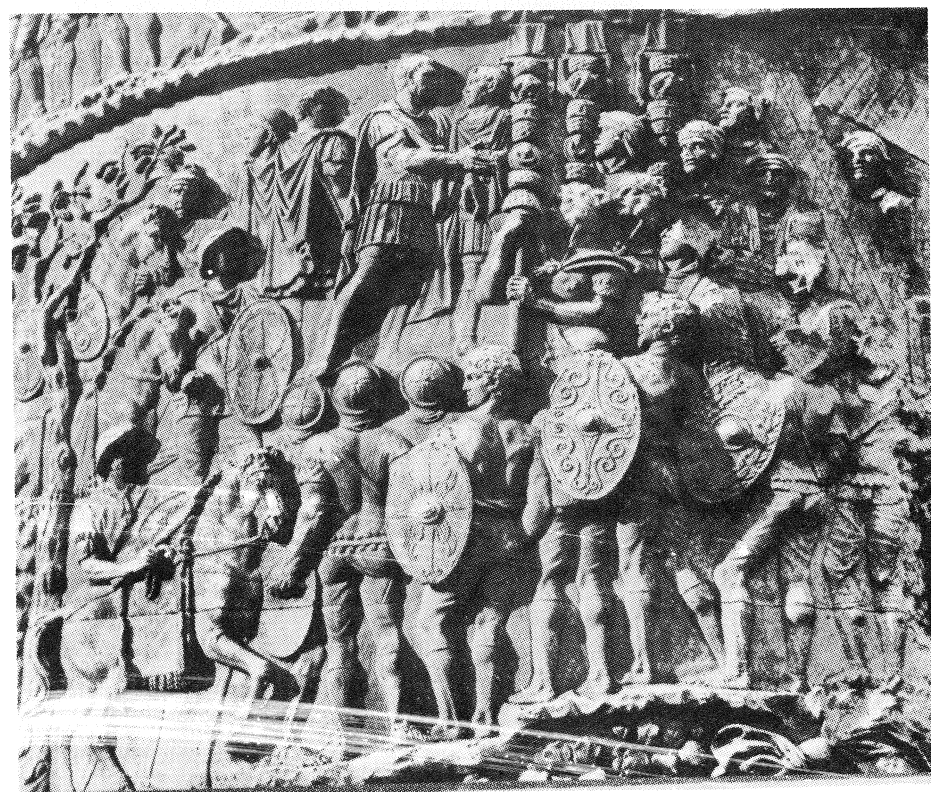
and Hellenistic reliefs, but both Greek artists and patrons preferred to hide the commemoration of events of this kind behind the veil of myth or allegory. To celebrate the victory of the Greeks over the Persians in the fifth century traditional mythological and legendary themes were chosen; battles between Greeks and Amazons, between Lapiths and Centaurs, Gods and Giants. All of them stood for the struggle and final victory of civilization over barbarism, of West over East. Even in the second century BC the struggle between Gods and Giants on Fig. 7 the great altar of Pergamon is a clear allusion to the Attalid dynasty's victories over the invading Galatians.

The closest the Greeks came to celebrating a historical event by the representation of real human figures, and not allegorical ones, is when they set up the group of two statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton in 514 BC. Of course the various extant copies of the group are replicas not of the original versions which were carried away by the Persians but of their replacements made by the Athenians soon after 480 BC.

A similar instance is the commemoration of the wars and victories over the Galatians by the Attalids who set up two groups of warriors, sculptured also in the round, one placed on the Acropolis of Athens, the other in that of Pergamon. Here, however, one cannot identify any attempts at representation of recognizable



*Figs. 10 and 11* Rome, Column of Trajan. Scenes from the war campaigns of Trajan against the Dacians. AD 110.



historical personalities.

I studied for several years in London and I must have visited the British Museum numerous times and inspected the monument of the Nereids from Xanthos equally often. But I must admit that it was in the few hours in between flights on my way to Harare that I noticed for the first time that its reliefs illustrate what appear to be a number of episodes from the life of a Lycian chieftain to whom it was dedicated. They include the siege of a city and a scene in which the chieftain himself appears in consultation with the elders of the city prior to its capitulation. These reliefs, belonging to the beginning of the fourth century BC are, in my view, the nearest to the concept of the historical relief the Hellenized East managed to arrive; but, although the artists that carved the reliefs might well have been Greek, even here they were operating for non-Greek, Lycian, patrons.

On the other hand, battle episodes from the history of central Italy, sometimes involving Etruscans and Romans, are found in Etruscan art, in particular the François Tomb at Vulci, but these are on paintings and not on sculptural reliefs. An episode from a war is also represented in the well-known mosaic from Pompeii with the battle of Alexander and Darius.

From the third century BC onwards there is evidence also in Rome of paintings illustrating episodes from war campaigns being displayed in triumphal processions and exhibited in public places, the so-called 'triumphal paintings'. Such paintings depicting the campaigns against the Carthaginians and the Syracusans were exhibited by Valerius Messalla in 263 BC on the walls of the *Curia*. In 201 BC, P. Scipio Africanus held an exhibition of triumphal paintings and in 188 BC L. Scipio showed pictures on the Capitol of his exploits in Asia. It is generally thought that the work of a modest painter in a tomb on the Esquiline, of which only a tiny fragment survives, was probably inspired from such paintings, none of which has actually survived. Whether the 'triumphal paintings' gave rise to, or somehow influenced the origin of, Roman commemorative relief cannot be ascertained. What is certain, however, is that they were the product of the same sense of history and deep-rooted passion of the Roman mind for factual representation which brought about the creation of historical relief. It is, perhaps, not co-incidental that the earliest known Roman historical relief, the frieze on the monument of Aemilius Paulus in Delphi, illustrates a similar war episode (the battle of Pydna in 168 BC) and that it was commissioned by L. Aemilius Paulus, the same man who asked the Athenians for a painter to commemorate his victories against the Macedonian king, Perseus.

### *Portraiture on Historical Relief*

That the Roman realistic, or veristic, portrait had its roots in Hellenistic sculpture as well as in Etruscan and central Italian art is today widely accepted. It is still

too early for me to exclude the possibility that the representations of the Lycian chieftain on the Xanthos funerary monuments depict his real individual features, in which case I might have to modify my position slightly. Otherwise, I will continue to uphold the view that the fusion of portraiture and commemorative relief is a purely Roman contribution. Greek funerary reliefs of the fourth century BC and later, besides being a different branch of sculpture altogether, never seem to have represented the true likeness of the dead person as happens in Roman funerary sculpture. The only two other Greek monuments I know of, where portraits appear in relief, are the 'Alexander sarcophagus' and the relief of Archelaus with the *Apotheosis of Homer* in the British Museum: the purpose of the first is evidently funerary and the scenes depicted are symbolic rather than historical in character; the second is a votive relief and Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III are shown as Chronos and Oecumene deifying Homer in an equally symbolic composition.

It is, therefore, in Roman relief sculpture that true portraits appear for the first time in the representation of real episodes from contemporary history. This combination of portrait and narrative relief is again the offspring of that sense of history and factualism which was rooted in the Roman character which demanded a real, immediately recognizable, likeness of a historical figure to be inserted in the figurative representation of the achievements of the Roman people. For a Roman the relief is not a historical record unless the real people involved in that particular event are present. It is to my mind precisely the combination of these two realities in one single art form that constitutes one of the greatest achievements and most significant revolutions of Roman art with respect to Greek art. Without its portraits the *Ara Pacis* would have been only a second class imitation of the Panathenaic procession of the Parthenon. Without its portraits Trajan's Column would have remained a simple narration of the struggle between the Roman army and the Dacians, between civilization and barbarism, and would have lacked that experienced reality which is infused into it by the likenesses of people the Romans knew so well and with whom they identified themselves.

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

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# BROCA'S BRAIN\*

Carl Sagan

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'They were apes only yesterday. Give them time.'

'Once an ape — always an ape.' . . .

'No, it will be different. . . . Come back here in an age  
or so and you shall see. . . .'

The gods, discussing the Earth, in the motion picture version of H. G. Wells,  
*The Man Who Could Work Miracles* (1936)

**I**T was a museum, in a way like any other, this Musée de l'Homme, Museum of Man, situated on a pleasant eminence with, from the restaurant plaza in back, a splendid view of the Eiffel Tower. We were there to talk with Yves Coppens, the able associate director of the museum and a distinguished paleoanthropologist. Coppens had studied the ancestors of mankind, their fossils being found in Olduvai Gorge and Lake Turkana, in Kenya and Tanzania and Ethiopia. Two million years ago there were four-foot-high creatures, whom we call *Homo habilis*, living in East Africa, shearing and chipping and flaking stone tools, perhaps building simple dwellings, their brains in the course of a spectacular enlargement that would lead one day — to us.

Institutions of this sort have a public and a private side. The public side includes the exhibits in ethnography, say, or cultural anthropology: the costumes of the Mongols, or bark cloths painted by Native Americans, some perhaps prepared especially for sale to *voyageurs* and enterprising French anthropologists. But in the innards of the place there are other things: people engaged in the construction of exhibits; vast storerooms of items inappropriate, because of subject matter or space, for general exhibition; and areas for research. We were led through a warren of dark, musty rooms, ranging from cubicles to rotundas. Research materials overflowed into the corridors: a reconstruction of a Paleolithic cave floor, showing where the antelope bones had been thrown after eating. Priapic wooden statuary from Melanesia. Delicately painted eating utensils. Grotesque ceremonial masks. Assagai-like throwing spears from Oceania. A tattered poster of a steatopygous woman from Africa. A dank and gloomy storeroom filled to the rafters with gourd woodwinds, skin drums, reed panpipes and innumerable other reminders of the indomitable human urge to make music.

Here and there could be found a few people actually engaged in research, their sallow and deferential demeanours contrasting starkly with the hearty bilingual

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competence of Coppens. Most of the rooms were evidently used for storage of anthropological items, collected from decades to more than a century ago. You had the sense of a museum of the second order, in which were stored not so much materials that might be of interest as materials that had once been of interest. You could feel the presence of nineteenth-century museum directors engaged, in their frock coats, in *gonio-métrie* and *craniologie*, busily collecting and measuring everything, in the pious hope that mere quantification would lead to understanding.

But there was another area of the museum still more remote, a strange mix of active research and virtually abandoned cabinets and shelves. A reconstructed and articulating skeleton of an orangutan. A vast table covered with human skulls, each neatly indexed. A drawer full of femurs, piled in disarray, like the erasers in some school janitor's supply closet. A province dedicated to Neanderthal remains, including the first Neanderthal skull, reconstructed by Marcellin Boule, which I held cautiously in my hands. It felt light-weight and delicate, the sutures starkly visible, perhaps the first compelling piece of evidence that there once were creatures rather like us who became extinct, a disquieting hint that our species likewise might not survive forever. A tray filled with the teeth of many hominids, including the great nutcracker molars of *Australopithecus robustus*, a contemporary of *Homo habilis*. A collection of Cro-Magnon skull cases, stacked like cordwood, scrubbed white and in order. These items were reasonable and in a way expected, the necessary shards of evidence for reconstructing something of the history of our ancestors and collateral relatives.

Deeper in the room were more macabre and more disturbing collections. Two shrunken heads reposing on a cabinet, sneering and grimacing, their leathery lips curled back to reveal rows of sharp, tiny teeth. Jar upon jar of human embryos and foetuses, pale white, bathed in a murky greenish fluid, each jar competently labelled. Most specimens were normal, but occasionally an anomaly could be glimpsed, a disconcerting teratology – Siamese twins joined at the sternum, say, or a foetus with two heads, the four eyes tightly shut.

There was more. An array of large cylindrical bottles containing, to my astonishment, perfectly preserved human heads. A red-mustachioed man, perhaps in his early twenties; originating, so the label said, from Nouvelle Calédonie. Perhaps he was a sailor who had jumped ship in the tropics only to be captured and executed, his head involuntarily drafted in the cause of science. Except he was not being studied; he was only being neglected, among the other severed heads. A sweet-faced and delicate little girl of perhaps four years, her pink coral earrings and necklace still perfectly preserved. Three infant heads, sharing the same bottle, perhaps as an economy measure. Men and women and children of both sexes and many races, decapitated, their heads shipped to France only to

moulder – perhaps after some brief initial study – in the Musée de l'Homme. What, I wondered, must the loading of the crates of bottled heads have been like? Did the ship's officers speculate over coffee about what was down in the hold? Were the sailors heedless because the heads were, by and large, not those of white Europeans like themselves? Did they joke about their cargo to demonstrate some emotional distance from the little twinge of horror they privately permitted themselves to feel? When the collections arrived in Paris, were the scientists brisk and businesslike, giving orders to the draymen on the disposition of several heads? Were they impatient to unseal the bottles and embrace the contents with calipers? Did the man responsible for this collection, whoever he might be, view it with unalloyed pride and zest?

And then in a still more remote corner of this wing of the museum was revealed a collection of grey, convoluted objects, stored in formalin to retard spoilage – shelf upon shelf of human brains. There must have been someone whose job it was to perform routine craniotomies on the cadavers of notables and extract their brains for the benefit of science. Here was the cerebrum of a European intellectual who had achieved momentary renown before fading into the obscurity of this dusty shelf. Here a brain of a convicted murderer. Doubtless the servants of earlier days had hoped there might be some anomaly, some telltale sign in the brain anatomy or cranial configuration of murderers. Perhaps they had hoped that murder was a matter of heredity and not society. Phrenology was a graceless nineteenth-century aberration. I could hear my friend Ann Druyan saying, 'The people we starve and torture have an unsociable tendency to steal and murder. We think it's because their brows overhang.' But the brains of murderers and savants – the remains of Albert Einstein's brain are floating wanly in a bottle in Wichita – are indistinguishable. It is, very probably, society and not heredity that makes criminals.

While scanning the collection amid such ruminations, my eye was caught by a label on one of the many low cylindrical bottles. I took the container from the shelf and examined it more closely. The label read *P. Broca*. In my hands was Broca's brain.

PAUL BROCA was a surgeon, a neurologist and an anthropologist, a major figure in the development of both medicine and anthropology in the mid-nineteenth century. He performed distinguished work on cancer pathology and the treatment of aneurisms, and made a landmark contribution to understanding the origins of aphasia – an impairment of the ability to articulate ideas. Broca was a brilliant and compassionate man. He was concerned with medical care for the poor. Under cover of darkness, at the risk of his own life, he successfully smuggled out of Paris in a horse-drawn cart 73 million francs, stuffed into carpetbags and hidden

under potatoes, the treasury of the Assistance Publique which – he believed, at any rate – he was saying from pillage. He was the founder of modern brain surgery. He studied infant mortality. Towards the end of his career he was created a senator.

He loved, as one biographer said, mainly serenity and tolerance. In 1848 he founded a society of 'freethinkers'. Almost alone among French savants of the time, he was sympathetic to Charles Darwin's idea of evolution by natural selection. T. H. Huxley, 'Darwin's Bulldog', remarked that the mere mention of Broca's name filled him with a sense of gratitude, and Broca was quoted as saying, 'I would rather be a transformed ape than a degenerate son of Adam.' For these and other views he was publicly denounced for 'materialism' and, like Socrates, for corrupting the young. But he was made a senator nevertheless.

Earlier, Broca had encountered great difficulty in establishing a society of anthropology in France. The Minister of Public Instruction and the Prefect of Police believed that anthropology must, as the free pursuit of knowledge about human beings, be innately subversive to the state. When permission was at last and reluctantly granted for Broca to talk about science with eighteen colleagues, the Prefect of Police held Broca responsible personally for all that might be said in such meetings 'against society, religion, or the government'. Even so, the study of human beings was considered so dangerous that a police spy in plain clothes was assigned to attend all meetings, with the understanding that authorization to meet would be withdrawn immediately if the spy was offended by anything that was said. In these circumstances the Society of Anthropology of Paris gathered for the first time on May 19, 1859, the year of the publication of *The Origin of Species*. In subsequent meetings an enormous range of subjects was discussed – archaeology, mythology, physiology, anatomy, medicine, psychology, linguistics, and history – and it is easy to imagine the police spy nodding off in the corner on many an occasion. Once, Broca related, the spy wished to take a small unauthorized walk and asked if he might leave without anything threatening to the state being said in his absence. 'No, no, my friend,' Broca responded. 'You must not go for a walk: sit down and earn your pay.' Not only the police but also the clergy opposed the development of anthropology in France, and in 1876 the Roman Catholic political party organized a major campaign against the teaching of the subject in the Anthropological Institute of Paris founded by Broca.

Paul Broca died in 1880, perhaps of the very sort of aneurism that he had studied so brilliantly. At the moment of his death he was working on a comprehensive study of brain anatomy. He had established the first professional societies, schools of research, and scientific journals of modern anthropology in France. His laboratory specimens became incorporated into what for many years was called the Musée, Broca. Later it merged to become a part of the Musée de l'Homme.



It was Broca himself, whose brain I was cradling, who had established the macabre collection I had been contemplating. He had studied embryos and apes, and people of all races, measuring like mad in an effort to understand the nature of a human being. And despite the present appearance of the collection and my suspicions, he was not, at least by the standards of his time, more of a jingoist or a racist than most, and certainly not that standby of fiction and, more rarely, of fact: the cold, uncaring, dispassionate scientist, heedless of the human consequences of what he does. Broca very much cared.

In the *Revue d'Anthropologie* of 1880 there is a complete bibliography of Broca's writings. From the titles I could later glimpse something of the origins of the collection I had viewed: 'On the Cranium and Brain of the Assassin Lemaire', 'Presentation of the Brain of a Male Adult Gorilla', 'On the Brain of the Assassin Prévost', 'On the Supposed Heredity of Accidental Characteristics', 'The Intelligence of Animals and the Rule of Humans', 'The Order of the Primates: Anatomical Parallels between Men and Apes', 'The Origin of the Art of Making Fire', 'On Double Monsters', 'Discussion on Microcephalics', 'Prehistoric Trepanning', 'On Two Cases of a Supernumerary Digit Developing at an Adult Age', 'The Heads of Two New Caledonians' and 'On the Skull of Dante Alighieri'. I did not know the present resting place of the cranium of the author of *The Divine Comedy*, but the collection of brains and skulls and heads that surrounded me clearly began in the work of Paul Broca.

BROCA was a superb brain anatomist and made important investigations of the limbic region, earlier called the rhinencephalon (the 'smell brain'), which we now know to be profoundly involved in human emotion. But Broca is today perhaps best known for his discovery of a small region in the third convolution of the left frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex, a region now known as Broca's area. Articulate speech, it turns out, as Broca inferred on only fragmentary evidence, is to an important extent localized in and controlled by Broca's area. It was one of the first discoveries of a separation of function between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. But most important, it was one of the first indications that specific brain functions exist in particular locales in the brain, that there is a connection between the anatomy of the brain and what the brain does, an activity sometimes described as 'mind'.

Ralph Holloway is a physical anthropologist at Columbia University whose laboratory I imagine must bear some resemblance to Broca's. Holloway makes rubber-latex casts of the insides of skulls of human and related beings, past and present, to attempt a reconstruction, from slight impressions on the interior of the cranium, of what the brain must have been like. Holloway believes that he can tell from a creature's cranium whether Broca's area is present, and he has

found evidence of an emerging Broca's area in the brain of *Homo habilis* some two million years ago — just the time of the first constructions and the first tools. To this limited extent there is something to the phrenological vision. It is very plausible that human thought and industry went hand in hand with the development of articulate speech, and Broca's area may in a very real sense be one of the seats of our humanity, as well as a means for tracing our relationships with our ancestors on their way towards humanity.

And here was Broca's brain floating, in formalin and in fragments, before me. I could make out the limbic region which Broca had studied in others. I could see the convolutions on the neocortex. I could even make out the grey-white left frontal lobe in which Broca's own Broca's area resided, decaying and unnoticed, in a musty corner of a collection that Broca had himself begun.

It was difficult to hold Broca's brain without wondering whether in some sense Broca was still *in* there — his wit, his sceptical mien, his abrupt gesticulations when he talked, his quiet and sentimental moments. Might there be preserved in the configuration of neurons before me a recollection of the triumphant moment when he argued before the combined medical faculties (and his father, overflowing with pride) on the origins of aphasia? A dinner with his friend Victor Hugo? A stroll on a moonlit autumn evening, his wife holding a pretty parasol, along the Quai Voltaire and the Pont Royal? Where do we go when we die? Is Paul Broca still there in his formalin-filled bottle? Perhaps the memory traces have decayed, although there is good evidence from modern brain investigations that a given memory is redundantly stored in many different places in the brain. Might it be possible at some future time, when neurophysiology has advanced substantially, to reconstruct the memories or insights of someone long dead? And would that be a good thing? It would be the ultimate breach of privacy. But it would also be a kind of practical immortality, because, especially for a man like Broca, our minds are clearly a major aspect of who we are.

From the character of this neglected storeroom in the Musée de l'Homme I had been ready to attribute to those who had assembled the collection — I had not known it was Broca at the time — a palpable sexism and racism and jingoism, a profound resistance to the idea of the relatedness of human beings and the other primates. And in part it was true. Broca was a humanist of the nineteenth century, but unable to shake the consuming prejudices, the human social diseases, of his time. He thought men superior to women, and whites superior to blacks. Even his conclusion that German brains were not significantly different from French ones was in rebuttal to a Teutonic claim of Gallic inferiority. But he concluded that there were deep connections in brain physiology between gorillas and men. Broca, the founder of a society of freethinkers in his youth, believed in the importance of untrammelled inquiry and had lived his life in pursuit of that aim.

His falling short of these ideals shows that someone as unstinting in the free pursuit of knowledge as Broca could still be deflected by endemic and respectable bigotry. Society corrupts the best of us. It is a little unfair, I think, to criticize a person for not sharing the enlightenment of a later epoch, but it is also profoundly saddening that such prejudices were so extremely pervasive. The question raises nagging uncertainties about which of the conventional truths of our own age will be considered unforgivable bigotry by the next. One way to repay Paul Broca for this lesson which he has inadvertently provided us is to challenge, deeply and seriously, our own most strongly held beliefs.

These forgotten jars and their grisly contents had been collected, at least partly, in a humanistic spirit; and perhaps, in some era of future advance in brain studies, they would prove useful once again. I would be interested in knowing a little more about the red-mustachioed man who had been, in part, returned to France from New Caledonia.

But the surroundings, the sense of a chamber of horrors, evoked unbidden other unsettling thoughts. At the very least, we feel in such a place a pang of sympathy for those — especially those who died young or in pain — who are in so unseemly a way thus memorialized. Cannibals in northwestern New Guinea employ stacked skulls for doorposts, and sometimes for lintels. Perhaps these are the most convenient building materials available, but the architects cannot be entirely unaware of the terror that their constructions evoke in unsuspecting passers-by. Skulls have been used by Hitler's SS, Hell's Angels, shamans, pirates, and even those who label bottles of iodine, in a conscious effort to elicit terror. And it makes perfectly good sense. If I find myself in a room filled with skulls, it is likely that there is someone nearby, perhaps a pack of hyenas, perhaps some gaunt and dedicated decapitator, whose occupation or hobby it is to collect skulls. Such fellows are almost certainly to be avoided, or, if possible, killed. The prickle of the hairs on the back of my neck, the increased heartbeat and pulse rate, that strange, clammy feeling are designed by evolution to make me fight or flee. Those who avoid decapitation leave more offspring. Experiencing such fears bestows an evolutionary advantage. Finding yourself in a room full of brains is still more horrifying, as if some unspeakable moral monster, armed with ghastly blades and scooping tools, were shuffling and drooling somewhere in the attics of the Musée de l'Homme.

But all depends, I think, on the purpose of the collection. If its objective is to find out, if it has acquired human parts *post mortem* — especially with the prior consent of those to whom the parts once belonged — then little harm has been done, and perhaps in the long run some significant human good. But I am not sure the scientists are entirely free of the motives of those New Guinea cannibals; are they not at least saying, 'I live with these heads every day. They

don't bother me. Why should *you* be so squeamish?'

LEONARDO AND VESALIUS were reduced to bribery and stealth in order to perform the first systematic dissections of human beings in Europe, although there had been a flourishing and competent school of anatomy in ancient Greece. The first person to locate, on the basis of neuroanatomy, human intelligence in the head was Herophilus of Chalcedon, who flourished around 300 B.C. He was also the first to distinguish the motor from the sensory nerves, and performed the most thorough study of brain anatomy attempted until the Renaissance. Undoubtedly there were those who objected to his gruesome experimental predilections. There is a lurking fear, made explicit in the Faust legend, that some things are not 'meant' to be known, that some inquiries are too dangerous for human beings to make. And in our own age, the development of nuclear weapons may, if we are unlucky or unwise, turn out to be a case of precisely this sort. But in the case of experiments on the brain, our fears are less intellectual. They run deeper into our evolutionary past. They call up images of the wild boars and highwaymen who would terrorize travellers and rural populations in ancient Greece, by Procrustean mutilation or other savagery, until some hero — Theseus or Hercules — would effortlessly dispatch them. These fears have served an adaptive and useful function in the past. But I believe they are mostly emotional baggage in the present. I was interested, as a scientist who has written about the brain, to find such revulsions hiding in me, to be revealed for my inspection in Broca's collection. These fears are worth fighting.

All inquiries carry with them some element of risk. There is no guarantee that the universe will conform to our predispositions. But I do not see how we can deal with the universe — both the outside and the inside universe — without studying it. The best way to avoid abuses is for the populace in general to be scientifically literate, to understand the implications of such investigations. In exchange for freedom of inquiry, scientists are obliged to explain their work. If science is considered a closed priesthood, too difficult and arcane for the average person to understand, the dangers of abuse are greater. But if science is a topic of general interest and concern — if both its delights and its social consequences are discussed regularly and competently in the schools, the press, and at the dinner table — we have greatly improved our prospects for learning how the world really is and for improving both it and us. That is an idea, I sometimes fancy, that may be sitting there still, sluggish with formalin, in Broca's brain.

# SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE

## TEST PAPERS

### SCIENTIFIC METHODS AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

1. The *Commentariolus* (1530) by Nicholas Copernicus opens thus:

‘Our ancestors assumed a large number of celestial spheres for a special reason: to explain the apparent motion of the planets by the principle of regularity. For they thought it altogether absurd that a heavenly body should not always move with uniform velocity in a perfect circle.’

Comment on how ideas about the Universe changed over the years.

2. ‘It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one starts to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.’ (Sherlock Holmes). Discuss and comment.
3. ‘Science is characterized by the continuous process of change.’ Illustrate and discuss.
4. ‘Science is part of the process going on in the History of Man.’ Illustrate and discuss.
5. ‘The theory of evolution by natural selection was certainly the most important single scientific innovation in the nineteenth century.’ (Bronowski). Comment.

### MAN AND HISTORY

1. How much did geographical isolation and nearness to the sea determine the political and economic development of the Greek *polis*?
2. What factors contributed to the ‘Decline and Fall’ of the Roman Empire? How valid do you consider the various explanations?
3. What impact did the Muslims have on the Mediterranean world?
4. The Christian monastic orders played a crucial role – including economic and educational – in European life. Discuss.
5. What led to the decline of the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century?

### ARTISTIC AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. What kind of reality is Art about? Illustrate your answer with examples.

2. Is Art a necessity or a luxury? Discuss, quoting examples to support your argument.
3. Is Art a means of communication? Discuss with reference to the examples you have studied.
4. Describe and discuss ONE of the following topics:
  - i) From the Eternal Art of Egypt to the Eternal Art of Byzantium
  - ii) The Renaissance
  - iii) Modern Art.
5. Throughout the ages, artists have modified the forms they have seen around them when expressing them in their works. Discuss and illustrate your answer with relevant examples.

## TEXTS

1. What relation does the idea of purification have to the concept of 'Man under Judgement'?
2. What are the essential differences between retributive and reformatory punishment? Relate your answer to as many of the four texts as possible?
3. 'The concept of Judgement presupposes the existence of Free Will.' Discuss this statement with reference to at least two of the writers you have studied.
4. 'What man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead him to.' Discuss this statement with reference to any TWO of the authors you have studied.
5. 'Intelligence by itself is the root of all evil and ultimately of despair.' Discuss this view with reference to *Crime and Punishment* and one other text you have studied.



# SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE

## TEST PAPERS

### SCIENTIFIC METHODS AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

1. Changes in society and science affect each other. Illustrate and discuss.
2. Illustrate how the concept (meaning) of Science changed from Ancient Greek and Roman times to the age of Johannes Kepler (1571 – 1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564 – 1642).
3. 'Those species that prolong their existence can only be the most perfect in health and vigour; . . . the weakest and least perfectly organized must always succumb.' Discuss this statement by Alfred Russel Wallace (1823 – 1913) in the light of the Theory of Evolution as conceived by Darwin and Wallace.
4. Outline the main ideas introduced by Wegener regarding the movements taking place on the face of the Earth, or what is known today as Plate Tectonics.
5. Discuss the importance of Nicholas Copernicus on later astronomers with regards to his sun-centred universe.

### MAN AND HISTORY

1. The Crusades were a temporary phenomenon. What brought them about and what upheavals developed as a result?
2. The Renaissance brought about a completely different conception of man and man's role in society. Discuss.
3. The balance of power has always been a determining factor in Mediterranean and world peace. Discuss.
4. Discuss the importance of the principles of 1789. How relevant have they been since then?
5. Nationalism has made and unmade states. Is this true of certain Mediterranean countries?

### ARTISTIC AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. In the history of Art we find artists who *drew what they knew*, others who *drew what they saw* whilst others *drew what they felt*. Giving examples, comment on this statement.
2. Kenneth Clark describes the *Kritio's Boy* as: 'the first beautiful nude

- in art.' Do you consider this statement valid when one compares this work with previous and later sculptures?
3. Choose *ONE* of the following and answer with examples:
    - (a) Elaborate on the main characteristics of the following:
      - i) a Christian Basilica
      - ii) a Byzantine Church
      - iii) a Romanesque Church
      - iv) a Gothic Cathedral.
    - (b) Write a short account on the artistic personality of GIOTTO and his place in the development of 14th century art.
  4. Explain what you mean by these terms:
    - i) Impressionism
    - ii) Expressionism
    - iii) Classic and Romantic
    - iv) Mannerism.
  5. 'It is not by chance that the greatest periods of art have usually occurred when the artist was most firmly harnessed to a master or to a cause.' (Eric Newton).  
Discuss this statement, giving examples.

## TEXTS

1. Man must ultimately face a judgement to answer for his deeds. Discuss this statement with reference to at least TWO of the books you have studied.
2. 'The will follows only those judgements which affirm that things are good.' Discuss this statement in the light of the texts you have studied.
3. Discuss how a purely intellectual concept of existence can help or hinder one's life on earth by referring to at least TWO of the set texts.
4. 'Salvation and damnation may be states of mind, but no less real for that.' Discuss with reference to Dante and Dostoevsky.
5. Compare and contrast the idea of an afterlife in Plato and Dante.



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# ARABIC CIVILIZATION

*Louis J. Scerri*

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**T**HE brilliant civilization that blossomed in the wake of the all-conquering Arab armies left an indelible mark on countries stretching from Spain to India. Through the medium of the Arabic language, Muslim, Jew, and Christian were united in a common culture, which appears all the more remarkable when it is compared to the general darkness that had eclipsed most of Europe following the division of the Roman Empire.

The rapid Muslim advance all along the southern shores of the Mediterranean and up into Spain and southern France shattered that unity that had been the mark of the Middle Sea under the Romans. From being the centre of the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean, with its trade shrunken beyond recognition, would find itself relegated to the fringe of what was essentially a land-based Empire. The Mediterranean would remain a divided sea for the rest of its history!

It is indeed no easy matter even to give this outstanding civilization a suitable descriptive name. Calling it an *Arab* civilization would ignore the fact that it was people of other races who were responsible in a large part for its development and achievements. Similarly, describing it as *Muslim* or *Islamic* would imply a narrow religious definition, once again glossing over the far from negligible contribution that Christians, Jews, and members of other religions gave to its fulfilment. Perhaps the best definition is to call it *Arabic* as this would acknowledge that the characteristic unity of this civilization derived from the common use of the Arabic language.

For the Muslim, Arabic was 'the language of God' – the language in which the Koran had been dictated and from which it should never be translated for the true believer. Conquered peoples soon realized the value of learning this new language which became the *lingua franca* of all the lands won over by the Muslim armies. Arabic would make possible and facilitate that exchange of ideas which is the hallmark of a progressing civilization.

The most remarkable fact about Arabic civilization is that its origin can be traced to a single man who changed the whole course of a people and history itself. It was Muhammad who woke the Arabs from their centuries-old slumber on the fringe of great empires.

Born in about AD 570 into the powerful tribe of the Qurayshi and orphaned at a young age, Muhammad was forced to earn his living in the camel caravans, until he became a wealthy merchant himself following his wedding to a rich widow.

About the age of forty, Muhammad started having visions in which the angel Gabriel taught him the ways of God, teachings which he was enjoined to pass

on to his fellow man. Posthumously written down, Muhammad's teachings formed the Koran, one of mankind's great formative works. The Koran was the fundamental book of the new religion which became known as Islam (submission), and which demanded exclusive service to the one true God. For the Muslim, therefore, the Koran contains both a body of doctrine and a code of law at one and the same time.

Unlike the Jewish and the Christian God, Allah makes no demand for sacrificial offerings or the atonement of sins; neither does he have a role for any formal intermediary, such as rabbi or priest, between him and man.

Islam is essentially a simple religion that requires no abstruse philosophical reasoning or theological niceties to accept. The five duties, or Pillars, of Islam are:

- a) the *shahada*, the declaration that there is no God but Allah, of whom Muhammad is the last prophet,
- b) the *salat*, the regular prayers a true Muslim is expected to turn to Allah five times a day,
- c) the *zakat*, the donation of alms to the poor,
- d) the *sawm*, the fasting during the month of Ramadan, and
- e) the *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Muhammad's revolutionary doctrine, inspired in good part by his encounters with Jews and Nestorian Christians, were not well-received by the idol-worshipping elders of his native Mecca. In AD 622 Muhammad fled to Medina, an event which Muslims refer to as the *Hegira*, and which marks the beginning of the Muslim era.

By the time of his death in AD 632, Muhammad had managed to overcome all opposition by argument or by the sword in almost all of Arabia. But, Islam being meant for all of mankind, the Arabs were set to start on a tremendous surge of conquests that, within a hundred years of the death of the Prophet, would give them an 'empire' one-and-a-half times the size of the Roman Empire.

The Arab invasions were followed by a noteworthy rise of the culture of the countries involved. The reasons for this are many.

By sweeping away a number of political frontiers, the 'Arab' armies created one of the first requirements of civilization: an extensive political unity. Early in their advance, the Arabs were fortunate to acquire, mostly with little bloodshed and negligible destruction, the river valleys of the Euphrates – Tigris and the Nile both of which had supported millenniums-old urban civilizations. In Syria they found a favourable native population which had drunk deep of Greek science and philosophy; the conquerors were most favourably impressed and the reaction resulted in the actual birth of Arabic civilization.

Following their military successes, there was no significant external threat to

Arabic civilization until the Turkish invasions of the eleventh century and the Mongol waves of the thirteenth. This stability fostered and encouraged the development of civilization.

The abolition of political frontiers resulted in the creation of an economic unit of vast territorial expanse that reached up to Northern Europe, the African lands south of the Sahara, and the faraway empire of China. Commerce brought about the expansion of cities and towns, the creation of fortunes, and a sophisticated society ready to extend its patronage to artists, philosophers, scholars, teachers, physicians, and artisans.

The spread of Arabic culture was not only hastened by the common Arabic language but it was greatly assisted by the new availability of paper made from hemp, rags, and tree bark, instead of the more costly parchment or vellum. Moreover Arabic numerals and the adoption of the symbol for nought would tremendously simplify calculation – a great boon to an empire founded on commerce. Certainly the considerable wealth of scientific literature that marks Arabic civilization would have been different without either.

The Arab advances were greatly facilitated by religious schisms that had alienated Syria and Egypt from their religious overlords in Constantinople. Muslim tolerance often made persecuted heretical Christians look upon the invading armies as liberators who were only really resisted by small garrisons. Ironically the Muslim advance would militate in favour of the emergence of Rome as the primary Christian power. With the Muslims taking over three of the original patriarchates of the Christian Church (Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem) and with the Patriarch of Constantinople becoming a mere functionary of the Byzantine emperor, the way was left open for Rome to claim pre-eminence over the whole Church.

Though Muhammad's new religion provided the initial zeal, it is a complete misconception to equate Arabic civilization with Islam. Islam would only provide Arabic grammar, law, and theology, but Arabic civilization would draw heavily on non-Muslim sources for the rest of its necessities.

Arabic civilization was to a large extent shaped by Greek science and philosophy, even though they were obtained indirectly through the Byzantine Greeks and their pupils in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. For some two centuries, from AD 800 onwards, a notable activity of translating Greek works from Syriac into Arabic took place that was to have significant effects on the future development of Arabic knowledge. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, contacts between Muslims and Christians in Spain would lead to a wave of translations from Arabic to Latin that would serve to re-introduce the words of the Greek philosophers to the Christian West.

In addition to its Greek sources, Arabic civilization also greatly benefited from Sanskrit lore which was obtained through the Persians at roughly the same time.

Greece and India were to provide a simultaneous stimulus: Greece with its science and philosophy, India with its Sanskrit medical lore and Hindu mathematical achievement.

For a long time Baghdad was the centre of Arabic intellectual activity – a capital of a world civilization with an amazing mixture of beliefs and languages all in one province. At Basra and Kafa, the study of Arabic philology and Islamic law were born. Baghdad became the home of Arabic scholarship until its calamitous destruction by the Mongol hordes in 1258.

It was the Persians, however, who were to contribute most to Arabic civilization. A non-Semitic people, had a civilization going back a thousand years before the birth of Islam, which lapped up its enormous cultural wealth. The Persian scholars, scientists, and poets who contributed to the greatness of Arabic civilization included the physicians Rhazes (Razi) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina), the historians Tabari and Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah, the mathematician and poet Omar Khayyam, and the astronomer Nasir al-Din al-Tusi.

Still the most notable feature of Arabic civilization in its prime was its multi-racial nature. In addition to Arabs and Persians, Syrians, Turks, Egyptians, Spaniards, and Berbers all contributed significantly to it. Its philosophers include al-Kindi, an Arab; al-Farabi, a Turk from Transoxiana; Avicenna (Ibn Sina) a Persian; and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) a Spanish Moor from Cordoba. Indeed much of Arabic philosophical literature was written by Jews who made full use of the tolerance of the Muslims who did not persecute them.

The most original contribution of Arabic civilization was in medicine. In Islamic society the doctor was held in high respect, unlike Greece and Rome where the medical profession was the province of freed slaves. Important discoveries were made in opthalmology, a direct result of the common occurrence of eye-diseases in the desert. The study of medicine served to introduce the study of natural sciences among the Arabs who, in the long run, were to add substantially to Greek and Indian medical knowledge.

Like all civilizations, Arabic civilization was selective in what it borrowed. So, from Greece it borrowed logic and metaphysics that served to give a sounder and rational form to their desert doctrine to make it more acceptable to a sophisticated society. Islam, however, was not really interested in and therefore ignored the enormous Greek contribution in drama, poetry, art, and historiography. Hindu philosophy was on the other hand disregarded but Hindu medicine and mathematics played a determining role. Byzantine and Persian architecture proved most worthy sources of inspiration. Drawing from and building upon what it borrowed from other civilizations, Islam was able to mark new heights of human achievement. Until the thirteenth century, when it began to fade, Islam led the world in the sciences until the nations of western Europe emerged from

their obscurity.

Arabian civilization started to decline following the end of that period of peace that had made possible its flowering. The nomadic invasions on its North African and western Asian borders were followed by the devastating Mongol waves in the thirteenth century, culminating in the fall of Baghdad that prefigured the epoch-making fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Turks. Indeed with the fierce Turks becoming the leading exponents of Islam there would not be much striving for artistic excellence. Fired with the typical fanaticism of recent converts, the Turks would find the scimitar a more congenial weapon.

This period of general unsettlement brought about the decline of city life and economic prosperity – a particularly catastrophic future considering that Arabic civilization was essentially urban and commercial in nature. The attacks on the caravan routes diminished and curtailed that exchange of goods which is the basis of commercial wealth – a lacuna that could not be filled with technological substitutes for which there was no great need owing to the plentiful supply of slaves.

The growth of self-governing institutions, or at least the banding together of the cities for the purpose of defence, developments that could have served to delay the inevitable, failed to take place because citizens often felt that their primary loyalty lay to their respective religions. Ironically Muslim tolerance allowed the Jewish and Christian communities to retain their separate identities with negative results on the general unity. The declining city meant a decline in intellectual output.

The fragmentation of the 'empire' entailed the loss of that linguistic and cultural unity that made possible the wide cross-fertilization of ideas. Persian revived and experienced a literary renaissance, while Arabic was retained mostly for works of theology and law. It was Persian culture the Turks first encountered on their migration westwards and it was Persian culture they carried with them to the doors of Europe. Their language, Turkish, eclipsed Arabic in importance; the Muslim world was split along linguistic lines as Medieval Europe would lose its linguistic unity owing to the development of vernacular languages.

But what contributed in an outstanding manner to the decline of Arabic civilization was that it was so heavily influenced by the religious nature of Islam. Before Muhammad there lay no secular tradition that could be 're-discovered': there could never be an Arabic renaissance, for example, as happened in the Christian West and that was based on the re-discovery of Greek science and rationalism.

The search for knowledge in Islam was inextricably tied up with the search for a better understanding of God – indeed secular learning for its own sake was frowned upon. Implicit in Islam from its earliest times, this anti-secularist

attitude became even stronger later under the Seljuk Turks, mainly as a means of protecting orthodoxy in the face of a possible infiltration of Greek philosophic ideas. *Madrasas* were founded where the *only* intensive study was restricted to religious instruction. With the *Sharia* (Islamic law) dominating Muslim life, no borrowings from outside were possible. In Spain, Averroes was exposed to the change of propagating Atheism for defending the teaching of secular science.

The zenith, or the nadir, was reached with the great Arab thinker Ibn Khaldun dismissing as useless all secular knowledge for truth, he said, only came from divine revelation. Secular sciences, the basis of that urge to find out more, were shunned and put aside, creating the right conditions for that cultural stagnation that invariably precedes decline.

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# PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE

*Charles Briffa*

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**A**S a system of human knowledge language can be studied from overt behaviour which is the result of underlying knowledge and abilities man has in order to use language effectively.<sup>1</sup> Psycholinguistics is interested in these underlying knowledge and abilities, and makes use of psychology and linguistics in order *to study the mental processes underlying the acquisition and use of language*. Linguistics is concerned with the formal description of the structure of language (an essential segment of human knowledge that includes sounds and meanings, and the relevant grammar that relates sounds and meanings). Psychology is then concerned with how such systems are acquired in childhood (language acquisition) and how these acquired systems function in daily communication (language use that involves production and understanding of sentences). The psycholinguist, therefore, tries to go beyond mere description of language behaviour: he tries to formulate underlying structures and processes that account for the order found in observed behaviour. These formulations are called linguistic postulates.<sup>2</sup>

These postulates can help us understand some of the functions of the human mind.<sup>3</sup> For instance, grammatical strings of words are much more liable to be memorized than ungrammatical ones. Look at the following three strings of words:

- (1)\* libsa żghir storja aħdar qara tifla
- (2)\* il-libsa ż-żghira ta' l-istorja l-hadra kienet qieghda taqra t-tifla
- (3) it-tifla ż-żghira tal-libsa l-hadra kienet qieghda taqra l-istorja

Speakers of Maltese will immediately realize that (1) is not a sentence because it has no grammar. It is only a collection of words. In (2) there is enough grammar to make it a sentence which still looks irregular on the literal level because:

- a. *storja* cannot have a *libsa żghira* (except metaphorically);
- b. *storja* cannot be *hadra* (except metaphorically);
- c. *libsa* (an inanimate object) cannot read, *taqra* (a verb requiring a human subject – except metaphorically);

1. David Crystal, *Linguistics*, 2nd Edition (Harmondsworth, 1987), 119.  
2. Dan I. Slobin, *Psycholinguistics* (Illinois, 1971): 'Introduction'. The use of the asterisk in this paper indicates inacceptability.  
3. Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York, 1968), 84: 'I have tried to suggest that the study of language may very well, as was traditionally supposed, provide a remarkably favourable perspective for the study of human mental processes.'

d. *tifla* cannot be read (except metaphorically).

Still, (2) is easier to remember than (1), and (3) is the easiest of all because there are no irregularities involved. Grammar, therefore, helps us to remember better and to give meaning to strings of words.<sup>4</sup> This meaning in Maltese depends upon the order that grammar imposes upon the structure.<sup>5</sup> Order gives more coherence to the sequence and provides additional information like: the subject-object relationship (*tifla – taqra – storja*); through markers (function words, *ta'*, *l-*, and affixes, *-a*, *-et*) classes are identified (*l-* shows a nominal element), relations are specified (*ta'* relates *libsa* with *tifla*), and meanings are revealed (*-et* gives the idea of pastness).

All this is what makes grammar, which is *the knowledge that helps people speak and understand language*. This leads us to some basic language abilities of speakers. Consider the following sentence:

(4) *it-tifla l-kbira tad-direttur li qiegħda tghid li saret tqila għaliex xammet is-saġhtar ta' Kemmuna meta marret harġa ma' ta' l-iskola fil-Milied li għadda fethet kawża l-qorti kontra l-headmistress*

Now try to answer these questions:

- a. Did you understand the sentence? (yes)
- b. Did you ever hear it before? (no)
- c. Could you think of a sentence which in all probability no one (including yourself) had ever experienced before but which others could understand? (yes)
- d. Is the sentence well-formed (i.e. grammatically well structured)? (yes)
- e. If we deleted *tghid*, would the sentence be well-formed? (no)
- f. If we deleted *l-kbira*, would the sentence be well-formed? (yes)
- g. The sentence contains at least 28 words. Could you make it even longer and still keep it well-formed? (yes)
- h. Is there a limit beyond which you could not keep it well-formed? (no)
- i. Were there any relevant hints in the environment that helped you understand it better (e.g. *riħa tas-saġhtar*)? (no)

The answers to these questions serve to illustrate some basic facts about speakers.<sup>6</sup>

4. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Massachusetts, 1965), 14–15, 196–197. Here Chomsky discusses the finiteness and organization of memory. See also P. N. Johnson-Laird, 'The Perception and Memory of Sentences', in John Lyons ed., *New Horizons in Linguistics* (Harmondsworth, 1971).

5. Dwardu Fenech, *Lingwistika Ġenerali* (Malta, 1980), 26–27.

6. The approach here is derived from Danny D. Steinberg, *Psycholinguistics: Language, Mind and World* (London, 1982), Ch. 1.



- i. Speakers can produce new sentences.
- ii. They can understand new sentences.
- iii. New sentences which are long can still be grammatically structured.
- iv. Understanding of new sentences does not depend on the environment.
- v. Speakers can make sentences longer.
- vi. Speakers can produce and understand an infinite number of sentences.

An important aspect from all this is productivity. In our language we have a finite vocabulary – the number of words in Maltese is limited. But we make use of those words to generate new sentences. We rarely invent new words, but we are continuously creating new sentences. It is a case of finite means providing for infinite ends – just like numbers: there is potentially speaking always a number greater than any number we might think of.<sup>7</sup> As human beings, the Maltese have a potential of generating an infinite number of sentences which are generally novel events. It is the psycholinguist's task to try to discover how new sentences can be understood. We can learn all the Maltese words by heart, but we cannot learn all the sentences by heart. The psycholinguist talks about a *psychological system of rules* that extends a limited amount of experience to an ability of producing and understanding an unlimited number of sentences.<sup>8</sup>

So far we have already established that as human beings we have:

- # knowledge to produce an infinite number of sentences;
- # knowledge to understand an infinite number of sentences;
- # knowledge of making sentences longer.

But what is the nature and development of this ability? To provide a partial answer to this question, we must examine further some of the universal aspects of linguistic competence.

Man has certain linguistic intuitions that help him to generate and comprehend an infinite number of sentences.<sup>9</sup> These intuitions depend on various abilities<sup>10</sup>

7. *Ibid.*, 3.

8. Slobin, 3.

9. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague, 1957; reprinted 1971), 15: 'Any grammar of a language will project the finite and somewhat accidental corpus of observed utterances to a set (presumably infinite) of grammatical utterances. In this respect, a grammar mirrors the behaviour of the speaker who, on the basis of a finite and accidental experience with language, can produce or understand an indefinite number of new sentences.'

10. Roderick A. Jacobs, Peter S. Rosenbaum, *English Transformational Grammar* (London, 1968), Ch. 1; Slobin, Ch. 1; Steinberg, Ch. 1. Apart from the Chomsky books, these three sources have been consulted for the four abilities discussed here. The application of the abilities to Maltese speakers is the author's.

some of which are:

- I. the ability to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences;
- II. the ability to analyse grammatical relations;
- III. the ability to perceive synonymy among sentences;
- IV. the ability to recognize ambiguity in sentences.

### GRAMMATICALITY

We have already seen that we have the ability to distinguish between grammatical, (2) and (3), and ungrammatical sentences (1). We can also differentiate between what is acceptable (3) and what is unacceptable, (2) and (1). Therefore, our ability for grammaticality includes also the capacity for acceptability. For instance, we feel that (5) and (6) are grammatical and acceptable but (7) is unacceptable:

- (5) I-istorja ta' *San Ġwann* ġrat fi żmien il-Kavallieri  
 (6) I-istorja li kiteb *Ġużè Galea* ġrat fi żmien il-Kavallieri  
 (7)\* I-istorja ta' *San Ġwann* u li kiteb *Ġużè Galea* ġrat fi żmien il-Kavallieri

It is unacceptable because it is ungrammatical through the use of the conjunction *u* which gives the stretch two subjects, implying that they are different things. The verb *ġrat* demands a singular feminine subject. This shows another property of grammaticality, namely the capability of joining sentences into longer ones. We know that (7) is anomalous, but we are capable of joining (5) and (6) in several correct ways, like:

- (8) I-istorja ta' *San Ġwann* li kiteb *Ġużè Galea* ġrat fi żmien il-Kavallieri

This leads us to another aspect of grammaticality: the knowledge of degree of deviation in Maltese sentences. If we look at the following:

- (9) ir-rumanz jidher interessanti (the most grammatical)  
 (10)\* ir-rumanz jidher inkwetat (the next most grammatical)  
 (11)\* ir-rumanz jidher landa (the least grammatical)

we would probably scale them in terms of the degree of deviation as suggested because of the following:

- i. (9) is grammatical – *jidher* is intransitive (i.e. used without a direct object) and the predicative (i.e. that part of the sentence which follows the verb and provides information about the subject of the sentence) is normally an adjective or an adjectival phrase: *interessanti* is an adjective that may be applied to human and non-human nouns alike. Since no rules have been broken it is not a deviant sentence and it goes on top of our scaling system.
- ii. (10) is anomalous – *jidher* is followed by the wrong type of predicative

since it is an adjective that normally accompanies a human subject. The sentence is deviant because of the wrong choice of predicative.

- iii. (11) is ungrammatical – the rules for intransitivity are broken because *landa* functions as a direct object here. So it is the most deviant because it has the least acceptable properties comparable with the normal sentence.

To understand better the concept of the degree of deviation we can explain it in terms of acceptable properties of each sentence.

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| (9) – It is a sentence.                      | (acceptable)                |
| It has a subject, a verb, and a predicative. | (acceptable)                |
| Subject and verb agree.                      | (acceptable)                |
| Verb and predicative agree.                  | (acceptable)                |
| Subject and predicative agree.               | (acceptable)                |
|  | NORMAL (NON-DEVIANT)        |
| (10) – It is a sentence.                     | (acceptable)                |
| It has a subject, a verb, and a predicative. | (acceptable)                |
| Subject and verb agree.                      | (acceptable)                |
| Verb and predicative agree.                  | (acceptable)                |
| Subject and predicative disagree.            | (unacceptable)              |
|  | LESS NORMAL (DEVIANT)       |
| (11) – It is a sentence.                     | (acceptable)                |
| It has a subject, a verb, and an object.     | (acceptable)                |
| Subject and verb agree.                      | (acceptable)                |
| Verb and object disagree.                    | (unacceptable)              |
| Subject and object disagree.                 | (unacceptable)              |
|  | LEAST NORMAL (MORE DEVIANT) |

The amount of deviancy rests on the number of unacceptable properties an utterance contains.

The subject of deviancy brings us to another function of the ability for grammaticality. It helps us to interpret deviant sentences. Much of our understanding of metaphorical language in poetry, for instance, is largely the result of this faculty of interpreting grammatically unusual structures.

So the ability for grammaticality has at least these properties:

- # knowledge to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences;
- # knowledge of joining sentences together;
- # knowledge of the degree of deviation;
- # knowledge to interpret deviancy.

## GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

As speakers of Maltese we are capable of determining the function of words in a sentence. If we look at a simple sentence like

(12) *il-kelb gidem lit-tifel*

it is easy for us to determine that *kelb* is the subject and *tifel* is the object. This ability helps us to analyse grammatical relations even when we have apparent nonsense like

(13) *it-triku kien qieghed jibxen fil-masfa*

To parse (13) we have to rely heavily on our ability to recognize grammatical relations (through the use of function words and affixes) and to predict structure (from these markers). The initial use of *it-* demands a nominal element that will complete the noun phrase. The noun phrase requires a verb phrase to complete the sentence. In (13) we can recognize the subject (*triku*), the main verb (*jibxen*) with the form of the imperfect and the place (*masfa*) where the action was taking place.

Our ability for grammatical relations includes knowledge of the properties of lexical words. Consider the sentences

(14) *Kevin wieghed lir-raġel li jitkellem*

(15) *Kevin ikkonvinča lir-raġel li jitkellem*

As native speakers we know that the subject of *jitkellem* in (14) is *Kevin*, but *ir-raġel* in (15). Our knowledge springs from the meaning of *wieghed* and *ikkonvinča*. The interpretation of (14) and (15) shows another point: that the ability of perceiving grammatical relationships is evident even when we have apparently similar sentences. Both (14) and (15) seem to have similar structures on the surface (SURFACE STRUCTURE), but we feel that at some deeper level (DEEP STRUCTURE) they have different meanings. This is fundamental in *transformational grammar* but it reveals another aspect of our linguistic intuition, namely that we can penetrate the surface structures of sentences to transform them into deeper structures that will show the underlying meanings.

This ability to analyse grammatical relations help us to see relations between sentences also, and it is particularly significant in performing transformations.

(16) *mort id-disko l-bierah* (declarative)

(17) *mort id-disko l-bierah* (interrogative)

(18) *ma mortx id-disko l-bierah* (negative)

There are three main concepts in all of these: an action (*mort*) done by a second person singular, a place (*disko*), and time (*il-bierah*). On the surface these

utterances are similar. In fact, (16) and (17) are the same (punctuation does not count here) and (18) differs only in the use of *ma* + *-x*. However, despite their similarity these three utterances do not have the same deep structure – i.e. they have a different underlying meaning as indicated next to the sentences.

Therefore, the ability for grammatical relations includes at least these properties:

- # knowledge to recognize the function of words in sentences;
- # knowledge to parse sentences;
- # knowledge of the properties of lexical words;
- # knowledge of transforming sentences from the surface structure to the deep structure for an underlying meaning.

### SYNONYMY

Our knowledge of the transformation of sentences to discover underlying structures is partly responsible for our ability to recognize synonymous sentences – we can usually tell when two utterances have the same meaning, like:

- (19) Ġużè Galea kiteb *San Ġwann*  
 (20) *San Ġwann* inkiteb minn Ġużè Galea.

The logical propositions underlying both sentences are identical. The difference in the surface structure is due to the passivization of (20). In this case synonymy is the result of the way utterances are structured: (19) and (20) demonstrate the active-passive relation of sentences. Sometimes word order in Maltese does not produce any difference in meaning:

- (21) mort it-tokis il-bierah filghodu  
 (22) it-tokis mort il-bierah filghodu  
 (23) il-bierah filghodu mort it-tokis  
 (24) filghodu, it-tokis mort il-bierah

These utterances are synonymous despite the difference in word order. Similarly, the following are immediately recognized as having the same meaning:

- (25) hamsa minn seba' tobba jaqblu li min ipejjep jista' jaqbdum kanser  
 (26) li min ipejjep jista' jaqbdum kanser jaqblu fuqu hamsa minn seba' tobba  
 (27) hemm qbil minn hamsa minn seba' tobba li min ipejjep jista' jaqbdum kanser

These sentences might never have been heard before, but there is no need for any conscious thought to realize that they all have a common meaning which is distinct from that of

- (28) hamsa minn seba' li jpejpu jaqblu li t-tobba jista' jaqbadhom kanser

A general conclusion from all this is that sentences with different surface structures may have the same deep structure. Conversely, utterances with similar surface structures may have different deep structures.

Word synonymy is the simplest type of synonymy that can occur. Despite the fact that alternatives often carry different connotations, different words may have the same meaning. Word synonymy is responsible for the synonymy in the following:

(29) iż-żgħażaġħ iridu x-xoġħol

(30) iż-żgħażaġħ iridu impieg

(31) iż-żgħażaġħ iridu jaħdmu

Speakers of Maltese understand that the meanings of *xoġħol*, *impieg*, and *jaħdmu* are the same, and these render the utterances synonymous.

The ability to detect synonymity includes:

- # knowledge of sentence relations;
- # knowledge of performing transformations;
- # knowledge of recognizing word similarities.

#### AMBIGUITY

A native Maltese speaker will understand ambiguity in a sentence i.e. that a sentence has more than one meaning. Sometimes only one word is ambiguous as *naqra* in

(32) qgħadt naqra fuq is-sodda

We can extract two different interpretations that would correspond to the following:

- a. I lay down for a while on the bed (qgħadt f'it fuq is-sodda);
- b. I did some reading on the bed (qgħadt naqra ktieb fuq is-sodda).

Sometimes ambiguity is related to the grammatical (including morphological) structure of the utterance.

(33) l-istudenti qalulhom biex jistudjaw kollox fil-klassi

At least four different possible interpretations can be recognized:

- a. Huma qalu lill-istudenti biex jistudjaw kollox meta l-istudenti jkunu fil-klassi.
- b. L-istudenti qalu lilhom biex jistudjaw kollox meta huma jkunu fil-klassi.
- c. Huma kienu fil-klassi u qalu lill-istudenti biex jistudjaw kollox.
- d. L-istudenti kienu fil-klassi u qalu lilhom biex jistudjaw kollox.

We can disambiguate utterance (33) by relating it to any of its possible

interpretations (a–d) which serve to explain the ambiguity.

So the ability to recognize ambiguity involves:

- # knowledge of extracting different interpretations;
- # knowledge of relating ambiguity to grammatical structure;
- # knowledge to disambiguate.

### *Conclusion*

When we use the skills described above<sup>11</sup> we are making use of our knowledge of the grammar of our language that is largely based on linguistic intuitions. It provides us with the information needed to understand and generate new sentences in Maltese.<sup>12</sup> These four abilities of linguistic intuition are our vehicle on the journey to understand each other because language as an infinite set of sentences is a characteristic specifically for humans.<sup>13</sup> In producing and receiving language the various abilities involved reflect aspects of intellectual competence which we possess simply because we are human beings. And in trying to explain these abilities we are really trying to explain an aspect of our humanity.

11. These abilities are to be found in Crystal as follows:

- grammaticality = pages 217–221
- grammatical relations = pages 196–234
- synonymity = pages 238–239
- ambiguity = pages 207–298.

12. This is part of the creativity of language. This is well explained in the introductory chapter 'Basic Principles' in J. P. B. Allen, Paul Van Buren (ed.) *Chomsky: Selected Readings* (London, 1971), 8–9. See also Paul M. Postal, 'Epilogue' in Jacobs & Rosenbaum, 267–289.

13. Descartes in *Discourse on Method* (Part V) states: 'It is a very remarkable fact that there are none so depraved and stupid, without even excepting idiots, that they cannot arrange different words together forming of them a statement by which they make known their thoughts; while, on the other hand, there is no other animal, however perfect and fortunately circumstanced it may be, which can do the same.' This is quoted in Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics* (New York, 1966), 4.

## ERNLE BRADFORD'S **MEDITERRANEAN:** **PORTRAIT OF A SEA**

**E**rnle Bradford's masterpiece *Mediterranean: Portrait of a Sea*, first published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1971, is once again available in an excellent reprinting by Tutor Publications.

Bradford's easy yet deep style is what makes *Mediterranean* so eminently readable. While the layman will find it a fascinating interpretation of the saga of the Middle Sea, the historian will appreciate Bradford's sound research, his clear exposition of facts and his wise conclusions – a combination of qualities in which Bradford's personal experiences sailing the seas has certainly had a great bearing.

Bradford guides the reader around the sea that gave birth to Western culture and civilization – introducing the traders, the sailors, and the fighters who have all left their mark on its history and our civilization, itself the

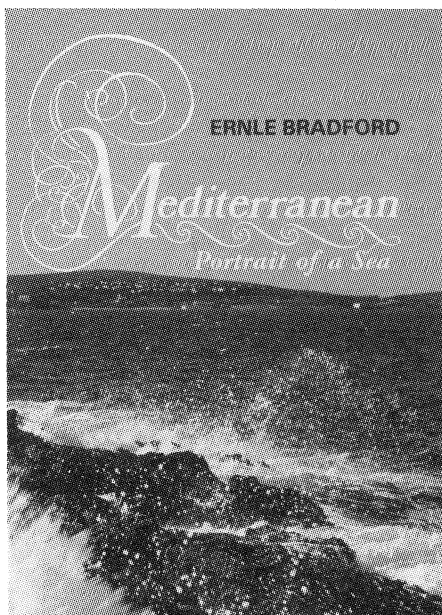
result of the continual interplay between East and West.

The author skilfully presents the history of the Mediterranean with one eye on its geography and another on the succession of historical events.

Indeed the story of this sea is impossible to understand if one ignores the geographical environment of the various regions that form part of it. The Mediterranean

emerges as one whole, almost as a distinct personality whose portrait Bradford will so lovingly and so convincingly present to us.

For the variety of peoples and races that have been so inexorably attracted to its shores, the Mediterranean has been a link rather than a barrier, giving rise to, but finally overcoming, a diversity of cultures and beliefs.





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# ‘Għodod tal-Biedja’ u ‘Lukarda u l-Għadd tan-Nies ta’ l-1931’ ta’ Temi Zammit

*Tarcisio Zarb*

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**I**SEM Temi Zammit huwa sinonimu man-novella u l-iskeċċ Malti. Huwa kien il-kittieb li ta l-karatteristika bażika lill-iskeċċ u lin-novella Maltija – influenza li għadha tinhass sa fi żmienna f’haġna xoghlijiet letterarji Maltin. Il-kitbiet tiegħu jtkellmu dwar il-bniedem komuni, haġna drabi rahli jew inkella li jgħix fil-bassifondi tas-soċjetà. Bħala professjonista u akkademiku Sir Temi kellu l-karatteristiċi bażiċi ewlenin li servewh biex janalizza u jissintetizza d-dinja ta’ madwaru b’naturalezza hełwa u ‘psikoloġika’.

Temi Zammit kien bniedem li kellu interessi varji fis-soċjetà ta’ madwaru. Il-kitbiet tiegħu jtkellmu dwar storja ta’ Malta, arkeoloġija Maltija u medicina. Ismu kiseb statura internazzjonali minħabba l-kixfiet li għamel dwar il-marda tad-deni rqiġ u t-tuberkulożi.

F’‘Għodod tal-Biedja’ nassistu għal ‘intervista’ ta’ l-awtur ma’ bidwi analfabeta li min-naħa tiegħu wkoll kellu xi taġhrif x’jaġhti dwar il-mestier tiegħu. Għalhekk l-intervista tittratta dwar terminoloġija ta’ għodod tal-biedja. Dana kollu l-awtur jaġhtihulna bi stil ‘purament’ Malti, b’dik l-idjosinkrasija li tikkaratterizza t-tahdit Malti tal-‘klassi’ tal-bdiewa lura fis-snin tal-bidu tas-seklu li qegħdin fih. Irridu nżommu f’moħħna li Temi Zammit għex bejn l-1864 u l-1935. B’dan il-mod din il-kitba ssir dokument ieħor soċjali, folkloristiku u lingwistiku ta’ żmienu. Din il-kitba għalhekk tifthilna tieqa fuq daww iz-żminijiet ta’ illitteriżmu fil-ħajja Maltija. Fil-fatt, harsa mill-qrib lejn il-biċċa l-kbira ta’ dawn il-kitbiet ta’ Zammit ma turiniex haġ’oħra hlief dinja ta’ illitteriżmu. Kien żmien meta l-‘iskola’ kienet il-prerogattiva tal-ftit. U hawnhekk jidher li jinsab il-qofol tal-kitba ta’ Zammit. Hekk ngħidu aħna f’‘Għodod tal-Biedja’, Zammit huwa konxju tal-fatt li l-bidwi li miegħu kien qiegħed jtkellem kien ‘illitterat’. L-istess kienet Lukarda, fil-kitba ‘Lukarda u l-Għadd tan-Nies’. Jinhass li l-massa tal-poplu kienet tgħix aljenata fis-sotto kultura tagħha, filwaqt li ftit li xejn kienet midħla tas-sistema burokratika ta’ żmienha. Għalhekk is-soċjetà kellha qasma dimarkattiva ċara bejn il-bniedem ta’ skola u l-bniedem li ma kienx ta’ skola.

Kull ktieb ta’ l-istorja ta’ Malta jtkellem dwar l-illitteriżmu tal-Maltin fil-bidu tas-seklu li qegħdin fih. Il-gvernijiet kolonjali qatt ma kellhom għal qalbhom l-edukazzjoni tal-mases. Dan minħabba l-fatt li l-edukazzjoni kienet tfsisser imħuh aktar miftuħa, u għalhekk l-iggranfar tal-poter tagħhom aktarx ikun fil-periklu.

Sir Temi Zammit bhala bniedem kolt għall-aħħar, li madanakollu ma kienx iġhix f'xi torri ta' l-avorju, iżda li kellu saqajh fl-art qalb il-mogħoż u d-deni rqiq, kellu sensitività qawwiya għal dan l-istat. Minkejja dan kollu, f'Zammit ma jidherx il-kittieb li fil-kitba tiegħu ried imur aktar lil hinn mis-sempliċi fatt ta' kollettur jew pittur tal-karattri 'helwin' Maltin. Fid-deskrizzjonijiet u l-qagħdiet li l-karattri ta' Zammit isibu ruħhom fihom aħna ma nithassruhomx. Anqas ma nħossu demmna jxehibna għax naraw li dawn il-karattri qegħdin jiġu sfruttati mis-sistema, li ma tghallimhomx u ma tagħthomx id-drittijiet li llum il-ġurnata nsibuhom imnizzla fil-kostituzzjoni. Fil-laqtiet li jagħtina Zammit ma jinhassx il-politikant li jrid jara lill-klassi tal-haddiema teħles mill-injuranza tagħha.

Aħna nassistu għal xi incident, għajja jew sitwazzjoni fejn il-karattri jiehdu sehem f'azzjoni, jew isibu ruħhom f'xi qagħda fejn ninnutaw il-fragilità tagħhom, jew aħjar, dawk il-karatteristiċi kollha li jgħorġu meta bniedem isib ruħu f'qagħda li hija għal kollox kuntrarja għal dik li huwa mġorri għaliha. Dawn l-iskeċċijiet għalhekk jgħorġu l-karatteristiċi tal-bniedem prodott ta' kultura Maltija, li meta jiffaċċja s-sistema burokratika jħossu barra minn postu. Għalhekk hafna drabi jgħorġ il-kumpless ta' l-inferjorità, *l-apologia pro ignorantia sua*, l-inċertezza f'sitwazzjoni għal kollox ġdida, l-infiħ ta' *l-ego* meta l-intervistat isir il-protagonista u jidher bhala l-bniedem li huwa superjuri għal haddiehor f'dak li huwa tagħrif.

Għalkemm Temi Zammit dan kollu, ma jippronunzjahx direttament f'kitbietu, jidher li ntuwixxieh u ntuwixxieh tajjeb hafna, għaliex il-karattri li jpingilna, ipingihomlna veristikament. U f'sitwazzjonijiet imbarazzanti ta' dan it-tip hafna drabi r-rizultat ikun tad-daħk. Mhux id-daħk ta' min irid iċekken lil dak li jkun, imma d-daħk ta' min irid jiggosta lill-bniedem li fil-*milieu* li miegħu huwa familjari jgħorġ *'ta' raġel li hu'* jew *'ta' mara li hi'*, imma maħruġ jew maħruġa 'l barra minn dak il-*milieu* jinhass bhala *'huta barra mill-ilma'*. Dan kollu jwassal għad-daħka u t-tbissima – daħk u tbissim – madanakollu li ma juriniex hliet in-naħa ta' fuq tal-problema – problema li tkun qiegħda ssib fejn tinheba minhabba l-mekkanizmu tad-difiża, li fil-każ tagħna huwa d-daħk, jew l-inkomprensibbli jew id-devjazzjoni mill-fil veru u proprju tad-diskors, jew il-biża' li wiehed jinkixef u jidher kif inhu tassew.

U b'dan l-istil ta' daħka u oħra naraw *l-ego* tal-protagonista tagħna jikber u jintefah billi jgħaddi biex jikellem dwar dawk il-hwejjeġ li huwa laħaq iffamiljarizza ruħu magħhom u saru jagħmlu parti mill-identikit tiegħu. Fil-każ ta' Ġanni, f'Għodod tal-Biedja', l-identikit huwa l-imgħażqa, il-lexxuna, il-krexxun, il-fiesa, il-fies, iz-zappun, iz-zappun taż-żrar, il-moxt, ir-rixtellu, l-egħlejjel, l-għarbiel tal-karfa jew taż-żwiġ, il-luħ, il-pala, l-għarbiel taż-żrar, l-għarbiel tan-naqal, l-għarbiel tat-trab. Mistoqsi dwar dawn l-għodod Ġanni jħossu f'postu u fid-dinja familjari tiegħu, b'mod speċjali wara li jiskolpa ruħu mill-fatt li ma kienx tghallem skola billi jgħaddi biex juża l-proverbju: *Tagħlim fil-kbir*

*qris fil-ħmir*. (Il-proverbju hawnhekk iġin lil Ġanni biex jilhaq dak il-bilanċ psikoloġiku li kellu bżonn biex imbagħad iġhaddi biex ‘juri kemm jaf’.) Fit-tagħrif li jaġhtina Ġanni ninnutaw l-eżattezza idjomatika u perifrazika li biha jitkellem.

Waqt li Ġanni qieghed iġhaddi t-tagħrif tiegħu dwar l-ġhodod ningħataw ħjiel, direttament jew indirettament, dwar il-karattru ta’ l-istess Ġanni, għax kif nafu – kliemna jirrifletti l-personalità tagħna. U b’dan il-mod nindunaw kemm Ġanni kien konservattiv. Dan jidher mhux biss mir-riferenzi kontinwi għall-proverbji, li saru l-qofol tat-tiswir ta’ imġibtu imma direttament minn proverbji bħal ‘*Min jagħmel xogħlu b’idu jirqu u jżidu*’. Dan il-proverbju wassal lil Ġanni biex jibqa’ juża l-bhejjem minflok il-magni. Minkejja li xi ftit tal-verità f’dan il-proverbju ma tonqosx, min-naħa l-oħra, nafu li l-biża’ mill-bidla kienet il-qofol tal-filosofija ta’ ħajjet Ġanni.

M’għandniex xi nġhidu hawnhekk għandna attentat iehor bikri biex jiġu salvati min-nisi drawwiet qodma folkloristiċi li minħabba l-mixja tal-progress kien hemm iċ-ċans li dawn jinqerdu darba għal dejjem. Fil-fatt il-lum il-ġurnata dawn l-ġhodod ‘primittivi’ saru jagħmlu parti wisq aktar mill-Mużew tal-folklor, jew minn xi hanut ‘kummerċjali’ ta’ l-antikità, jew xi dar jew xi lukanda jew restaurant milli mill-ħajja funzjonali tal-biedja. Hawnhekk l-awtur ried jagħmel użu minn dawn it-termini lingwiċi qodma biex l-istess kif kien miġbud lejn l-istorja u l-arkeoloġija ta’ qabel żmien, iżomm min-nisi din in-naħa l-oħra ta’ l-arkeoloġija folkloristika Maltija. Ovvjament dan kien aspett iehor mill-viżjoni romantika li ħakmet għal żmien twil il-letteratura Maltija, viżjoni li kien hemm bżonnha u li għadha tinħass sewwa fil-letteratura tagħna.

F’‘Lukarda u l-Għadd tan-Nies’ . . . aħna mistennija li ‘niggustaw’ l-‘injananza’ ta’ Lukarda, li la darba wahda ssib ruhha ffaċċjata minn rappreżentant tas-‘sistema’ ma tafx tagħmel haġa oħra ħlief li tipprova tasserixxi l-*ego* tagħha billi tagħti kisja umoristika lill-‘injananza’ tagħha. Għalhekk Lukarda f’dak il-jum ta’ l-1931 meta kien qieghed isir iċ-ċensiment dwar l-għadd tan-nies ma kinitx ħlief ras mitlufa. Ovvjament għandna nifhemu li ftit li xejn kienet konxja li f’dik is-sena kienet saret Kummissjoni Rjali biex teżamina l-problemi kostituzzjonali ta’ Malta. U inqas u inqas kienet taf li għalkemm ħafna mir-rakkomandazzjonijiet ta’ din il-kummissjoni ma kinux milqugħa, madanakollu aktar tard kienu hargu ‘*letters patent*’ li fuq għadd ta’ snin kellhom jimmodifikaw il-kostituzzjoni ta’ l-1921. Forsi kienet saret taf li f’dik is-sena l-ilsien Malta kellu jsir l-ilsien uffičjali tal-qrati. Fi ftit kliem, ftit kienet konxja tat-tibdil li kien qieghed isir fl-amministrazzjoni, tal-ġustizzja, tal-liġi u ta’ l-ordni. Forsi Lukarda, min-naħa tagħha, indunat li f’dik is-sena Sir John du Cane kien irriżenja minn Gvernatur. Indunat jew ma ndunatx Lukarda, jibqa’ l-fatt li f’dawk iż-żminijiet kien hemm ħafna problemi politiċi, tant li l-istess Sir John, minkejja li ried jiżviluppa l-ortikultura u t-turiżmu, anqas kien biss irnexxielu jibni lukanda minħabba

l-inkwiet politiku. Sir David G. M. Campbell (1931–6) min-naħa l-oħra hekk kif sab ruħ fil-poter mill-ewwel induna bil-problemi ekonomiċi u l-klima politika xejn sabiħa li kienet qiegħda tirrenja fuq il-gżira. Fil-fatt insubuh javża lil Londra li hafna mill-kundizzjonijiet ta' l-irvellijiet ta' l-1919 kienu qegħdin jiġu replikati. Huwa kien talab lill-awtoritajiet imperjali biex ma jnaqqas ix-xogħol fit-tarzna navali u f'facilitajiet militari oħra.

Lukarda, bħala wiċċ anonomu iehor fil-massa kollettiva, minkejja li kienet tmekkek ġmielha 'l hawn u 'l hinn, għandna nifhmu li kienet 'mohħ' iehor aljenat fil-mentalità sefturali tagħha, mentalità sefturali, li biha tidher li kienet 'kuntenta'. Anzi jidher u jinħass li għal Lukarda dan ix-xogħol kien xogħol li juri li hija kienet f'data min-nies:

– aħjar. U għid li naqdi l-aħjar nies u jafdawni b'għajnejhom magħluqa, għax mara tar-ruħ. Tridx insemmliek in-nies li jdahluni f'darhom?

– La naqdi, nahdem fejn jibagħtuni. Il-bieraħ mort il-Birgu u nżilt sal-Kalkara, il-bieraħ tura wasalt sa Hal Qormi.

F'dan iż-żmien ukoll kien hemm shuna u taħraq il-kwistjoni tal-lingwa. F'soċjetà bi-lingwali jew aħjar multi-lingwali, il-bniedem li ma jkunx jaf jikkellem hliet bl-ilsien nattiv tiegħu (u anki hawnhekk fil-kodiċi ristretta tiegħu) kliem ta' lingwa li magħha jkunu assoċjati prestiġju u klassi jinstema' kbir u kbir fil-widna. Mhux ta' b'xejn għalhekk li Lukarda dak in-nhar ta' l-1931 fethitlu kemm kienet taf bl-'Ingliz' u bit-'Taljan'. Ovvjament hija kienet konxja kemm kien fqir l-Ingliz u t-Taljan tagħha.

– Lukarda kumpramu favetta oggi? "Kumpramu". "Lukarda kjama lu skaparu". "Kjusu sinjura" . . . Bl-Ingliz?

Anqas irrid niftakar. Mal-kapural kont sejra harir. "Mi plenti lavju," "good najt Gak", u fiehemna dejjem.

U filwaqt li l-maġġoranza tal-Maltin kien għadhom ferhanin 'għax injuranti' fil-makkinarju politiku konna nsibu hafna manuvrar dwar lingwa, kostituzzjonijiet, jeddijiet eċċ. Għalhekk fl-1932 kellna naraw il-kostituzzjoni mill-ġdid u l-Partit Nazzjonalista jirbaħ l-elezzjoni ta' wara b'maġġoranza kbira. In-Nazzjonalisti immedjatament bdew jaħdmu kontra l-politika tal-lingwa kif adottata bħala riżultat tar-rakkomandazzjoni tal-Kummissjoni Rjali. Fil-fatt, u b'mod ġenerali nistgħu nqas li ġew adottati 'policies' li l-Gvernatur kien jahseb li kienu 'pro-Italian if not actually anti-British'. (Brian Blouet, *The Story of Malta*, 1984, p. 187). L-idea tan-Nazzjonalisti kienet li l-partit kien sempliċiment qiegħed iżomm 'Italian culture and language which for centuries have characterized these islands.' F'dawn iż-żminijiet għalhekk it-Taljan kien il-lingwa tan-negozju u tal-professjonijiet tal-gruppi dominanti fil-ġerarkija soċjali. "In important respects Italian was

*predominantly used by privileged groups and its use created subtle, but influential, distinctions in society.*'' (Ibid.)

Minn dawn il-kummenti dwar żewġ xogħlijiet ta' Sir Temi Zammit nistgħu ninnutaw kemm dan il-kittieb kien kittieb li jpingi dak li jara. B'dan il-mod Zammit ma tefax l-istejjer tiegħu fl-imghoddi, imma minghajr it-ton tal-polimikuż, pinga d-dinja tal-klassi li nistgħu nqisuha bħala li qieghda isfel nett fis-sellum soċjali. Dan, hafna drabi għamlu billi libes il-libsa ta' l-intervistatur biex b'hekk jidhol 'il ġewwa fil-'mohħ trasparenti' tal-karattri tiegħu. Xogħol estensiv tal-kitbiet ta' Temi Zammit ikompli jurina kemm Zammit kien konxju tar-realtà soċjali ta' żmienu.

Stilistikament dawn il-kitbiet saru jagħmlu parti mill-idjoma narrativa Maltija, b'tali mod u manjiera li nistgħu ngħidu li saru parti mill-folklor narrativ Malti. L-unika differenza bejn il-folklor 'awtentiku' u dawn ir-rakkonti hija li f'ta' l-ewwel, wahda mill-karatteristiċi hija l-anonimità, filwaqt li hawnhekk l-awtur huwa magħruf. F'dawn il-kitbiet insibu minjiera ta' arkajżmi, espressionijiet stilizzati, fossili lingwistiċi kif ukoll l-arkivji tal-kultura u l-psikoloġija popolari.

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# THE 'GOOD' AND THE 'BAD' IN ART

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*E. V. Borg*

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**D**IDN'T we say that a good man who loses his son, or anything else dear to him, will bear the misfortune more equably than other people?'<sup>1</sup> In this question Plato uses 'good' as synonymous with rational. He continues to draw a distinction between the use of reason and the irrational in man and arrives at the conclusion that in the human mind there is a rational and an irrational part. The former is 'good', the latter 'bad'. 'So the part of the mind which contradicts the measurements cannot be the same as the part which agrees with them . . . But the part that relies on measurement and calculation must be the best part of us, and the part which contradicts them an inferior one.'<sup>2</sup>

When man is confronted with the complexities of nature and life around him he usually tries to use reason, his intellect, or logic to break it down into human dimensions, to analyse, enumerate, categorize, generalize, and simplify to understand better, to create a certain order in this 'chaos'. What man does not realize, is his inability to understand life completely and that this apparent chaos is governed by an absolute or perfect balance hardly tangible for us mortals. Often enough this search for an understanding of this perfect balance, which he consciously feels, results in over-simplification with attendant bewilderment, utter confusion, and total incomprehension.

This is better understood if one takes into consideration Crossman's and Popper's views whose apparently contradictory opinions on Plato's Republic are a fairly good example of life's variety and inexplicability.<sup>3</sup> I used the word 'apparent' since their opinions are poles apart — yet the truth must lie somewhere in between.

So man, unable to find this perfect balance around him, tries to create or invent one. He aches for a divine good, for an ideal and absolute truth outside himself. Usually his religious sentiments impel him to associate this ideal with the supernatural. But, since man can only do this with the help of his imagination and fantasy, his interpretation of divine good or truth — the ideal or the dream — is always expressed on the human level.

What was, however, the Classical ideal? By a rational process of selection and combination of nature's most 'perfect' parts, the Classical Greeks achieved an ideal realism. Cicero writes how Zeuxis painted Helen by integrating the best

1. Plato, *The Republic*, translated and introduced by H. D. Lee (Harmondsworth, 1965). Bk. 10/603, 381.

2. *Ibid.*, Bk. 10/603, 380.

3. *Ibid.*, Introduction, 46.



Giorgione: 'The Tempest', Accademia Museum, Venice. This enigmatic painting probably painted in the first decade of the 16th century (1500–09) depicts a flash of lightning in the background and warm languorous afternoon sunlight in the foreground. This Renaissance work is imbued with classical balance and proportion but is not devoid of Giorgione's romantic fervour as a poet and a philosopher. Giorgione was a pioneer in painting profane easel paintings with a sensual atmosphere for private patrons as a departure from religious paintings for the Church.



features out of five different models. Raphael, himself following on the Classical notion of truth, beauty, perfection, or the 'good' in art, is known to have kept several models to execute his Galatea fresco for the Farnesina – Chigi's summer residence. There is also the golden section or the golden mean – a set of canonical, mathematical, and geometric theories to attain unity, balance, and harmony based on Vitruvian, Platonic, and Pythagorean principles adopted by Renaissance artists in Tuscany and Italy. This 'ideal realism' was neither realistic nor ideal. The subjective interpretation of what are the 'perfect' parts allows no possibility for any scientific objectivity.

A direct result of this measuring and calculating to arrive at acceptable 'parts' had rather an obvious weakness: underlying this art there was a common possibility or denominator – a cold and lifeless feeling. Whether this was produced by the law of ratios and averages or by an attempt to transform men into gods or vice-versa is hard to determine. What is quite true is the fact that man in order to arrive at this 'ideal perfection' used both his reason and imagination. Could, therefore, Plato's theory that the rational and the irrational in man are distinct parts be accepted? Or has Plato himself succumbed to enumeration and analysis for his and our better understanding of the complex natural entity which is man? Personally I doubt whether one could distinctly separate man into body and soul, mind and senses, reason and emotion, good and bad.

This tendency to analyse is as old as man. At times we speak of the iron laws of this or that society, of canons or precepts, but we also know through history that these laws, whether of beauty or truth, change with the time, from period to period, with each generation. Hardly can we speak of a law or rule which has no exceptions. E. H. Carr in his book *What is History?* observes that 'The so-called laws of sciences which affect our ordinary life are in fact statements of tendency, statements of what will happen other things being equal or in laboratory conditions. . . The law of gravity does not prove that that particular apple will fall to the ground: somebody may catch it in a basket.'<sup>4</sup> This observation shows how futile it is, even in the most 'objective' of studies, to reduce nature to rules, to airtight compartments, to a rational order. This underlines life's complexity and hence our reaction to attain simplicity.

Plato himself wished to simplify matters and to bring up his ideal politician only on good art. 'We shall thus prevent our guardians being brought up among representations of what is evil, and so, day by day, little by little, by feeding as if it were in an unhealthy pasture, insensibly doing themselves grave

4. E. H. Carr, *What Is History* (Harmondsworth, 1968), 68 '. . . no lessons, it is said, can be learned from history, because history, unlike science cannot predict the future.'

psychological damage.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, on the other hand, accepts the portrayal of 'badness' or 'ugliness' in art as he argues that the imitation of ugly things is capable of possessing beauty. It is also true that in chapter 4 of his treatise, *On the Art of Poetry*, he speaks pejoratively of those poets who wrote invectives – while the more trivial wrote about the meaner sort of people.<sup>6</sup> Yet in chapter 5, 'The Rise of Comedy', he maintains that 'comedy represents the worst types of men; worse, however, not in the sense that it embraces any and every kind of badness, but in the sense that the ridiculous is a species of ugliness or badness.' He also mentions the comic mask which although so 'distorted and ugly' that is grotesque yet it 'causes no pain.'<sup>7</sup>

Therefore man has a tendency to avoid what is bad and ugly in art to create an ideal beauty or perfection while, on the other hand, he has a style that accepts life in its entirety – the good and the bad, in all its complexity. A good example is Roman portrait sculpture which for its realism or verismo has no equal: Man was portrayed with all his defects and virtues, physical and spiritual. We have also the Romantic which embraces both Expressionism and the Baroque which imbued with the ideas of Aristotle and the Counter-Reformation appeal to the emotions. A good example is Grunewald's *Crucifixion* or the *Flayed Carcass of an Ox* by Rembrandt. Extreme cases such as those mentioned by Horace which overflow the boundaries of reality and enter the realm of dreams are paintings by Piero di Cosimo (a Florentine artist contemporary to Lorenzo il Magnifico), Hieronymus Bosch, or Salvador Dali. 'Yet another, wishing to vary the monotony of his subject with something out of the ordinary, introduces a dolphin into his woods, or puts a bone among the waves. If art is lacking, a petty fault may lead to a serious imperfection.'<sup>8</sup>

The acceptance of life in its entirety, a realistic truth to life and nature, is further underlined by Horace: 'I would lay down that the experienced poet, as an imitative artist, should look to human life and character for his models, and from them derive a language that is true to life.'<sup>9</sup> This naturalistic or realistic truth is not always preferred by society.

Man is basically superficial and frivolous in his tastes. This is quite natural in his earnestness to escape the hard, cruel, and often torturing everyday realities.

5. Plato, Bk. 3/401, 142.

6. Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, *Classical Literary Criticism*, translated and introduced by T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth, 1970), Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, Ch. 4, 35.

7. Ibid., Aristotle, Ch. 5, 37.

8. Ibid., Horace, *On the Art of Poetry*, 80.

9. Ibid., 90.

Usually man finds himself unstable, insecure, haunted by an inexplicable fear of self, of others, and of the unknown. This fear and insecurity coerces man into seeking their opposite: security, peace, and rest. Therefore, when he turns to 'light' and often 'cheap' entertainment to relax and amuse himself, he is being sensible and practical for a tired mind is hardly able to concentrate, think, ponder, or reflect on serious and deep study. He naturally wants to evade problems or any allusion to them in literature, music, and the arts in general.

This sense of escapism is so great as to make man associate with what is natural (and not 'bad') such as night, old age, stormy weather, and death, unfavourable connotations that bring sensations of fear, corruption, and ugliness.

In the visual arts man had to wait for Giorgione (1475–1510) to depict the first storm; nature in an angry mood in *The Tempest*. He had to wait for Caravaggio (1569–1609) to depict night and its sombre connotations. In fact Caravaggio's followers were labelled *tenebristi* with all the nuances of meaning this word suggests. Should we assume that man preferred light to shade, fine weather to bad, sensual colours (all decoration, especially Venetian) to sombre? Or that he was found ripe in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries to find the 'bad' in art acceptable? Another possibility could be a reaction that set in man during the Medieval period after being exposed to such violent and fearful visual and mental images, that is he took hundreds of years to recover from this hell on earth. Had Horace these inhibitions that enslave man in mind when he wrote, 'It is not enough that poems should have beauty, if they are to carry the audience with them, they must have charm as well?'<sup>10</sup> Was this escapism in man that made 'Poets aim at giving either profit or delight, or at combining the giving of pleasure with some useful precepts for life?'<sup>11</sup>

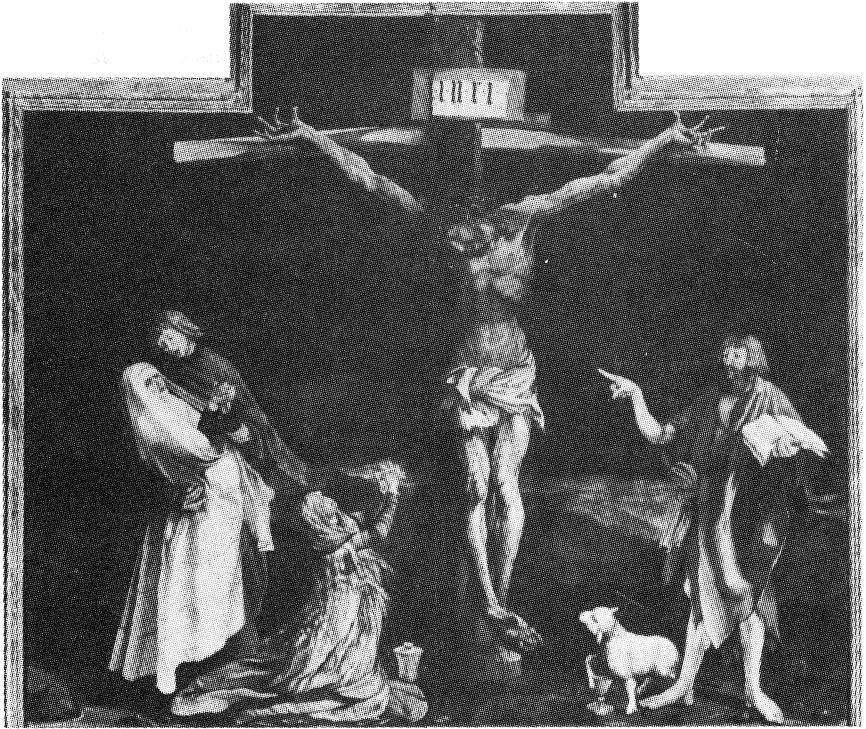
This apparent dichotomy in life of good and bad, movement/repose, life/death, day/night, love/hate is reflected in the parallel paradox in works of art which Richard Wollheim prefers to call physical objects. 'It can be argued that the work of art has properties which are incompatible with certain properties that the physical object has. . . .' and Wollheim continues to quote Vasari on the *St George* by Donatello, 'We say of the *St George* that it moves with life. Yet the block of marble is inanimate.'<sup>12</sup> This brings us to the question: Is there one absolute truth in life? Are we real? Because, if we are not and life is an illusion, than our disillusion stems from it.

On Ensor, a Belgian painter, I ended a lecture I gave at the British Council,

10. *Ibid.*, 82.

11. *Ibid.*, 90.

12. Richard Wollheim, *Art and its Objects* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 27.



Grunwald: 'The Crucifixion' from the Isenheim Altar, Unterlinden Museum, Colmar, c. 1512–15. A mystic and a visionary, Grunwald in his expressionism achieves a harsh dramatic tension inspired by religion. His 'disconsolate realism and sublime transcendentalism' is the result of a form of 'badness' or 'ugliness' in art.

Valletta, by asking two questions: Does Ensor consider reality a threat? Or does he accept reality and waits patiently for death in his loneliness?<sup>13</sup> But, if one argues that death is not in itself bad, if death like the night is natural, and it is only our association of death with fear of the unknown that troubles us, then death has its positive facet just like night. During the night we sleep and rest our eyes, our mind, our being. It soothes our nerves and it is lack of light. Without night we cannot comprehend or realize day and light. Without death, there will be no life. Without the 'bad' there will be no realization of the 'good' in art.

Wölfflin realized that in Michelangelo violent movement and intense drama on one hand, contemplative stillness and deep melancholy on the other as expressed in different works, are brought together in unison in the *Madonna and Child* at the Medici Chapel in Florence. Complete variety is combined with a prevalent appearance of unity.<sup>14</sup> It seems that underlying this physical consideration – movement in repose, as in Donatello's *St George* – was the intellectual and more elevating ideal namely that the force of Man's permanent struggle for peace and rest, for stability and security is temporarily achieved in momentary glimpses of that perfect balance that exists in nature.

It seems that Plato himself decided at the end of his life to become a man of action.<sup>15</sup> He stopped living a contemplative life and by his life and actions, started giving the good example by actually living his search for truth. And maybe this is the balance in man of good and bad, of action and repose. It is useless merely to act, to live impatiently rushing through life's span, always escaping hurriedly the 'problem'. It is also as useless only to contemplate the 'problem'. One has to live life fully; searching for the truth as one goes along, stopping to take breath, to reflect, and to consolidate what one has learnt from past mistakes, from life's experience, because one's education only ends with death.

Man is the sum total of his experiences. His education begins at birth, and his efforts are naturally aimed at comprehending himself, understanding others and his environment. (The instinct for imitation is inherent in man from his earliest

13. E. V. Borg, 'Illustrated Lecture on Flemish Artist James Sidney Ensor (1860–1949) – Vision '74', *Sunday Times of Malta*, 19.01.75.

14. H. Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1968), 193–4.

15. C. M. Bowra, *Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1967), 92 '... The account of the philosophic life in the Theaetetus irrelevant as it is, is a moving account of the motives and emotions which stirred Plato to foresake contemplation for action.'

days.<sup>16</sup> Such an understanding will enable him to appreciate his own faults and those of others, he will learn to feel, to accept, have compassion, sympathy, and respect for himself, for others and for his environment. In the process he has to consider 'badness' – for this is part of life's problem. One cannot ache for perfection if one does not realize imperfection!

All this and more is the basis of Horace's advice to artists. 'The foundation and fountain-head of good composition is a sound understanding. . . The man who has learnt his duty towards his country and his friends, the kind of love he should feel for a parent, a brother, and a guest, the obligations of a senator and of a judge, and the qualities required in a general sent out to lead his armies in the field, such a man will certainly know the qualities that are appropriate to any of his characters.'<sup>17</sup> Seen in this light art could be synonymous to a philosophy of living.

'This is the sort of man who is not conspicuous for virtue and justice, and whose fall into misery is not due to vice and depravity but rather to some error.'<sup>18</sup> In this vein Aristotle established the choice of a character suitable for tragic action. King Lear can serve as the archetype of this example: his error was the pride that overcomes a man in his dotage. An error is a form of 'badness'. Yet Shakespeare uses the wheel of fortune to cleanse Lear. Cordelia is the embodiment of infinite goodness.

The wheel has come full circle. The argument is qualified. This polarity in life with its tension of attraction and repulsion, its sympathy and antipathy as reflected in good and bad, in right and wrong, in solitude and loneliness, in the rational and irrational in man and nature is unified in its totality. This polarity or divine struggle is only apparent. There is an absolute or perfect balance in this chaos and beneath this paradox we catch a glimpse of the stupendous miracle which is life, a perfect harmony of balanced forces, simple in its complexity, complex in its simplicity – the life-giving force that bubbles like an eternal spring, a murmur of running water that is music to our ear.

Man aches to unravel this mystery of creation using his related perceptual and conceptual faculties, gropes in the dark to catch a glimpse of this invisible beauty, this blinding light of the elusive and inaccessible virtues of justice, liberty, truth,

16. Aristotle; Ch. 4, 35. Aristotle continues 'he differs from other animals in that he is the most imitative of creatures, and he learns his earliest lessons by imitation. Also inborn in all of us is the instinct to enjoy works of imitation.'

17. Horace, 90. The artists Horace is advising are dramatists.

18. Aristotle; Ch. 13, 47–48.

and love. This perpetual search for ultimate perfection brings momentary insights of such glorious splendours that we speak of a vision or dream. Perhaps Paul Klee (1879–1940) is right when he says: ‘Art does not reproduce what can be seen: it makes things visible’.<sup>19</sup>

19. H. L. C. Jaffé, *The Contact History of Art, Twentieth-Century Painting*, translated by Margaret Shenfield, edited by André Held and D. W. Bloemena (London, 1963), Vol. XII, 4.

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