

**Lino Bianco, *The Ring Metaphor and the Spirit of Sofia and Other Essays*, with a foreword by HM King Simeon II, Malta, Kite Group, 2022, 196 p.:**

Forwarded by His Majesty King Simeon II, the book of essays signed by Professor Lino Bianco from Malta comes to bring a new light on the scholarship dedicated to these marvellous lands but also to other important cities from all around the world and to invite the reader to discover amazing things. Firstly published in „Melita Theologica”, the theological academic journal published since 1947 by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta, as the author confesses it in his foreword (p. XI), the essays anthologized there contain „reflections on several themes mainly relating to architecture” and speak about topics like three European capital cities, namely Sofia, Valletta and London.



As His Majesty King Simeon II underlines in the foreword of the demarche, the cultural background and the education of the author says a lot about his work: „*The humanistic education of Bianco is a signature of his diplomatic work in Bulgaria. His intellectual reading of Sofia, and indeed Bulgaria, is inspiring. The question „What do you hate about Bulgarians?” was posted to him by a higher secondary level student in the presence of the media. His response, revealing his understanding of the Bulgarian psyche, was: „You should not speak negatively about your country; it is your guardian. Bulgaria is a lovely country; you have many reasons to feel proud of it and its wonderful people and nature”.* Bianco concluded his intervention by making reference to a popular symbol of our country: „*Bulgaria is the land of roses: the sharper the thorns, the more beautiful is the rose and it is that matters most*” (p. XIII).

After the essay entitled „The Grace of Visitation” (pp. XIV-XXVIII) that serves as an introduction to the book, Vladimir Gradev known in the Bulgarian space both for his works as for his translations, not only characterises the author, but presents the landmarks of his approaches underlining the originality of Professor Bianco’s approach.

The introductory aspects are later followed by the six essays and studies. The book starts with the one entitled „The Ring Metaphor and the Spirit of Sofia” (pp. 1-23), where the Professor not only insists on the architectural value of important monuments from the Bulgarian

capital, but also tries to link them with philosophical aspects. The work is continued with a chapter dedicated to Valletta (pp. 25-56), where he not only brings into attention the landmarks of the history of the city, but also presents the main aspects that define its legacy and its patrimony. The same aspect can be also said about the next chapter entitled: „Limestone in Post-War British Architecture: Is it a Plea for a Return to Pugin?“ (pp. 57-76), while the 4<sup>th</sup> one (pp. 77-96) goes deeper in an interdisciplinary field. Here the author speaks about Hegel’s notion of Gothic architecture, proving his skills in the understanding of the architectural keywords that served as a basis for the thought of one of the most important philosophers in the history. The next aspects come to fulfil the complex landscape of an approach that invites the reader to discover both the architecture, the culture, literature and the philosophy in very pleasant editorial demarche.

Well-written, dressed in a very suitable graphical suite, due to the fact that the texts are accompanied by illustrations that invite to a synaesthysical perception of the reality, with a foreword written by His Majesty King Simeon II, professor Lino Bianco’s book entitled *The Ring Metaphor and the Spirit of Sofia and Other Essays*, published by Kite Group from Malta in 2022 comes not only to speak about some cultural values that are genuine, but also about the way how they should be understood. The fact that the editorial demarche is dedicated to the memory of his excellence mother, one of the important Maltese cultural feminine personalities increase its value and speaks about the role that a mentor can have in the formation of an elite. For all these reasons, we recommend the book that will sure enrich the soul and the knowledge of any reader and we congratulate the author for the consistent work that he realized.

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