

Lino BIANCO. *The Ring Metaphor and the Spirit of Sofia and other essays*, a collection of scientific papers mostly relating to the literature of architectural history.

As several scholars are engaged in researching architectural history and theory, Lino Bianco, a respected practising architect, academic and diplomat from Malta who was made Member of the Order of Merit of his motherland by its Head of State in 2021, is also preoccupied by these disciplines. This book, having 196 pages including 51 colour and black and white illustrations, was published in the first quarter of 2022 by Kite Group, Malta. This publication is endorsed both by the prominent international Maltese architect and former dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Engineering at the University of Malta Richard England and also by the Chancellor of the same university. As the Director of Research and former Head of the Department of Architecture

**THE RING METAPHOR
AND THE SPIRIT OF SOFIA**

and other essays

Lino Bianco
with a foreword by HM King Simeon II

at the University of Strathclyde Ashraf M. Salama notes, Bianco's underlying concerns are linked with his investigations of space and time as phenomena involved in the making of architecture. In his endorsement, the former dean at the Helsinki University of Technology Juhani Pallasmaa notes that this publication "reconnects architecture with the artistic and spiritual realms. [It reveals] the timeless existential and mental qualities in the art of building".

The book, a revised re-publication of six peer-reviewed papers originally published in *Melita Theologica*, one of the oldest academic theological journals, has a foreword by H.M. King Simeon II (p. xiii) and an introduction by philosopher and cultural theorist Vladimir Gradev (pp. xv–xxix). The author divided the content of his work into six chapters: (i) The ring metaphor and the spirit of Sofia (pp. 1–23), (ii) Valletta: A city in history (pp. 25–56), (iii) Limestone in post-war British architecture: is it a plea for a return to Pugin? (pp. 57–75), (iv) Hegel's notion of Gothic architecture (pp. 77–96), (v) *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* and the Cartography of an Orphic life-in-death: The modern katábasis of Resnais (pp. 97–119), and (vi) Music in teaching religion in primary schools (pp. 121–153). Two papers are co-authored. Chapter 5 was co-authored with Saviour Catania whilst Chapter 6 was written with Irene Dillon and Marlene Gatt. The book concludes with a thorough index (pp. 155–166) which is useful for researchers making use of this publication.

While they seem to be traditional essays, the papers dealing with architecture address the theme from philosophical and cultural theory standpoints. The approach to the study of architecture which the papers present is multidisciplinary. Indeed, the book is a collection of essays on philosophical aspects relating to architecture and a statement of the philosophy of the author. Gradev's introduction is an excellent piece of writing in this regard. It brings out the author's search for the essence of the physical and the metaphysical.

Concluding this brief review of *The Ring Metaphor and the Spirit of Sofia and other essays*, it is self-evident that the first paper, addressing the Bulgarian Capital, lent this publication its title. One may argue that it is thus fitting for the foreword to be penned by the last Bulgarian monarch. This fact begs one to note the scholarly and diplomatic admiration that the author enjoys in this Balkan republic which awarded him the Order "Madara Horseman" first degree for his significant contribution to the development of friendly relations and bilateral co-operation between Bulgaria and Malta in 2018.

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