Plainly, by the time Ariosto finishes with his intermixture of the various mediaeval traditions it becomes almost impossible to extricate the specific sources. However, one feature is common to all the later versions, including Ariosto's—the happy ending.\(^1\) It would seem that almost at any point in the Christian tradition, eastern or western, when the ancient myth is varied upon at all, there is a tendency to make the story end on a non-tragical note of harmony.\(^2\)

\[\text{IRVING LAVIN}\]

\[\text{COSÌ FAN TUTTE (PROCRIS INCLUDED)}\]

\text{ Mozart's Così fan tutte has been more frequently abused and ridiculed for its libretto than any of his other operas. Nineteenth-century critics were shocked by the cynicism with which da Ponte's two lovers test the faithfulness of each other's brides and by the libertine philosophy that is proclaimed in the title.}^3 \text{ The Vienna Court Opera even introduced a bowdlerized version in which the brides do not really yield but only pretend to do so after they have seen through their lover's disguise. The revival of the opera at Glyndebourne and Edinburgh prompted critics to re-examine this verdict; but even they stalled at the moral issue. Walter Legge, in the booklet that accompanies the recording of the Mozart Opera Society,}^4 \text{ takes refuge in the view that the "artiﬁciality" of the comedy "and exaggeration of the normal formulae of excitement, passion and sorrow are the heart of the play."}^5 \text{ He regards these outbursts of feeling mainly as parodies of the grand style in opera and considers it "unlikely that the subject pleased Mozart." On this point E. J. Dent alone takes a different stand. He extols the libretto as "about the nearest approach to perfection that any musical dramatist has ever perceived" despite the fact—or rather because—to him "Così fan tutte is the apotheosis of insincerity."}^6 \text{ Its figures are but marionettes, caricaturing the arias of opera seria. C. Benn, finally, praises the \"delicate unreality of the plot\" on similar grounds. \"Its characters are too superficial to be called human . . . love in a real sense has no meaning for such people as these.\"}^7

Neither the defenders nor the detractors of the libretto appear to have recognized its venerable ancestry. The motif of the suspicious lover who returns in disguise to test the fidelity of his beloved with presents and blandishments is, of course, prefigured in the myth of Cephalus and Procris.\(^8\) There is the same fervour of rejection, the same insistence just to the point when fidelity gives way.

\[\text{"Quid referam, quoties tentamina nostra pudici Repulerint maris? quotas, Ego, dixerit, uni Servor, ubicunque est: uni mea gaudia servo . . . Muneraque augendo tandem dubitare coegi . . ."}\]

All da Ponte has done is to enrich the plot by the simple device of doubling the pair and replacing Aurora, who, in Ovid, incites Cephalus to this stratagem, by the philosopher Alphonsus who makes it the object of a wager. The cynicism of the text, then, is not da Ponte's. What is his own is the flourish with which he has seized on the old story as an opera subject for the greatest interpreter of human emotion. To introduce here the issue of \"sincerity\" is to misjudge the function of music in eighteenth-century thought. To the

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\(^1\) Così a pace e concordia ritornano, E sempre poi fu l'uno all'altro caro. (Orlando, St. 143)

\(^2\) See above, note 1.

\(^3\) Curiously enough, the cycle of old folk-tales based on the Cephalus and Procris myth from which Ariosto drew so much material, is completed when the Anselmo and Argia story itself is transformed into a local folk-fable, cf. G. Nerucci, \textit{Sessanta novelle popolari montallesi}, Florence, 1880, novella X, p. 498. On the other hand, the Ospite Cispadano story was adapted by La Fontaine for \textit{La coupe enchantée} (Contes et nouvelles, part III).


\(^5\) Published by His Master's Voice, March 1936.
pre-romantic era the purpose of music is not so much to "express" the passions as to "depict" them.\(^1\) Opera, therefore, is the ideal medium for emotive music, and the libretto that offers most opportunity for the musical portrayal of varied passions will best do justice to its potentialities. In the average grand opera this problem is solved by making hero and heroine undergo the most hair-raising and heart-rending adventures. What is original in \textit{Così fan tutte} is that here the plot turns round the nature of human passion itself. Da Ponte has perceived that Cephalus' test, whether cynical or not, can be viewed as an experiment about human nature.

An unfrocked priest and the product of the Age of Reason, da Ponte was indeed a libertine, but one who took refuge in a Rousseau-like exaltation of Nature. He had been something of a martyr to Rousseauism when a series of prize poems on the value of human civilization, answered on the lines of his master, led to his expulsion from the Seminary.\(^2\) In one of his earlier librettos he had glorified the powers of Cupid by means of a semi-Ovidian plot. The argument of his "dramma giocoso" \textit{L'arbore di Diana} develops, indeed, a philosophy which anticipates that of \textit{Così fan tutte}: In vain does Diana strive to set her proud will against Cupid's. All her Nymphs, and finally even the Goddess herself, must obey his laws.

The motif of the triumph of love over chastity is an age-old carnival theme.\(^3\) But da Ponte revived it with a specific intention. He tells us in his \textit{Memoirs} that he conceived the plot as an allegory on the dissolution of convents by Joseph II,\(^4\) who thus freed the nuns from the constraints of an "unnatural" vow.

This tribute to the spirit of Enlightenment fits in well with the twist which da Ponte then gave to the Cephalus and Procris motif in the libretto to Mozart's opera. For his philosopher Alphonso really enunciates a "natural law" when he asserts that "così fan tutte"—that all women will react alike in a given situation. The farcical introduction of mesmerism in the second act is symptomatic of the atmosphere. Human passions are "natural" forces. The plot, though equally farcical, unfolds as the progress of a scientific test. Within this framework it seems quite mistaken to speak of "exaggerated passion" or to see in the emotions embodied in Mozart's music something like parody of serious opera. It is precisely the deep seriousness of Fiordiligi's grand scene that marks the success of Alphonso's experiment with human guineapigs:

\begin{quote}
O giusto amore! Io ardo, e l'ardor mio
Non è più effetto d'un amor virtuoso:
E smania, affanno, penitimento .
Leggerezza . . . perfidia . . . e traidimento!
\end{quote}

No wonder, therefore, that the interpretation of the opera as an elaborate parody breaks down precisely at the climax. Walter Legge, who propounds this interpretation, comments as follows:

"It seems that under the stimulus of an excellent love scene Mozart, and to a lesser degree, da Ponte, forgot that they were writing a polished, artificial comedy. They overlooked the chances of fun that the situation offered and suddenly breathed life into their puppets. Fiordiligi becomes a woman, Fernando an anxiously pleading lover: and when Fiordiligi eventually yields to his pleas she does so in a phrase so simple, so touching, that we forget the world of comedy . . ."\(^5\)

\begin{quote}
\textit{Fernando:} Volgi a me pietoso il ciglio
In me sol trovar tu puoi Sposo, amante, e piu se vuoi, Idol mio! piu non tardar,

\textit{Fiordiligi:} Giusto ciel! Giusto ciel! Crudel hai vinto! Fa di me quel che ti par!
\end{quote}

It is surely the whole point of the opera that not to yield thus to the seductive passion embodied in Mozart's music would be impossible to any human being.

But what Alphonso later calls "necessità del core" carried a deeper message to da Ponte's contemporaries than a simple philosophy of libertinism. A rational approach to human nature leads to \textit{Humanità}. The lovers are told that life being like that, they had better forget all thought of punishment and revenge. We are all marionettes—but an

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\(^1\) Hugo Goldschmidt, \textit{Die Musikaesthetik des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und ihre Beziehungen zu seinem Kunstschaffen}, Zürich, 1915. This valuable collection of sources is still written with a strong pro-romantic bias and therefore, perhaps, underestimates the indebtedness even of Mozart's music to the theory of the 'affects.'


\(^3\) Cf. my "Hypnerotomachiana," this \textit{Journal}, XIV, 1951, p. 119.


insight into the mechanisms of human passion brings with it detachment and tolerance:

Fortunato l'um che prende
Ogni cosa pel buon verso!
E tra i casi e le vicende
Da ragion guidar si fa!

It is a message Sarastro might have approved of. There is no incongruity in the composer of *Così fan tutte* turning, within a few months after its completion, to the text of Schikaneder’s masonic *Zauberflöte.*

E. H. Gombrich

THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF
ABRAHAM ORTELIUS

No biography of a sixteenth-century personality would be complete without a chapter on his religious convictions; yet these are often curiously difficult to determine. In the era of the Reformation and Counter-Ref ormation, prudence sometimes dictated reticence; official documents and the statements of friends and relatives are unreliable, and often even contradictory.

Among the prominent Belgian scholars whose religious opinions do not appear clearly, figures the famous geographer and map-maker Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598). He was born at Antwerp, that very centre of Protestantism in the Southern Netherlands, where he went through the horrors of a fanatic age. Although he grew up in a Protestant family, he does not seem to have taken any active part in the religious war which ruined his native town; so his biographers do not know whether to consider him a Protestant or a Roman Catholic. In fact, up to the present we have had—a few passages in his personal correspondence excepted—only one indication at our disposal regarding his religion. Moreover, the biographers have not been unanimous about its interpretation.2

In the following pages I am going to examine these divergent pronouncements. I shall then publish some new data concerning Ortelius’ religious thoughts, on the basis of a few documents I recently came across. Finally I shall test the results obtained by the geographer’s own statements in his letters to friends and relatives.

I

Abraham Ortelius’ biographers founded their opinions about his religious views on a rather mysterious epistle, written by Christo
er Plantin to the Parisian professor Guillaume Postel on the 17th of May, 1567. In this letter, Plantin asked his correspondent to explain the note he recently sent to their common friend Ortelius, and in which he dealt with the “Family of Love,” a heterodox society founded by Henry Niclaes.

M. Rooses, who found C. Plantin’s letter in the archives of the Plantin-Moretus museum at Antwerp, concluded from it that Ortelius was initiated into the secrets of the heterodox association. He even presumed him to be a member of it.4 P. Génard,5 J. H. Hessels,6 H. Wauwermans7 and W. D. Verduyn8 went further still. They clearly revealed their preferences for the latter supposition. None of these authors, however,

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1 A. Ortelius’ father, Leonard (*1500), together with his uncle Jacob Van Meteren, translated the famous Bible of Miles Coverdale. In 1535 they were both arrested on suspicion of possessing some heretical books. When in 1539 Leonard Ortelius died, the aforesaid Jacob, father of the well-known historian Emanuel Van Meteren and a fervent adherent of Protestantism, took care of the young Abraham’s education (H. Wauwermans, “Abraham Ortelius,” in *Biographie nationale*, XVI, Brussels, 1901, col. 293).