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Nevertheless, such vagueness does indicate a mode of accounting that is not precisely counting. It should also be borne in mind that Dedekind and Peano's work took place only relatively recently in the history of the human race, that is to say, just before and just after the start of the twentieth century. If therefore, as we believe, archetypes evolve from our physical and psychic nature, then it should be unsurprising that the archetype corresponding to the construction of the unending sequence of natural numbers should have only appeared relatively recently. In the mathematical world the precursor of the axiom of induction only dates from the work of Francesco Maurolico in the sixteenth century. Further developments of the idea took place only slowly culminating in the work of Pascal and Bernoulli in the seventeenth century.

If, as we believe, our sense of and use of number may rely on the basic properties of brains and even of neurons, but they develop through the inextricable interplay of the biological and the social then Jung's archetype of ordering does seem to come to the rescue here. Since archetypes, by their very nature, are not knowable but only manifest themselves through the human psyche, the fact that we cannot (without circularity) characterize the notion of the next larger number, or indeed, the idea of unending repetition does not impede us from appealing to the archetype as the underlying source of our thoughts and actions. It does not solve all our questions, but it does give us a model that we can usefully apply. The archetype gives us an instinct for the unending repetition of an act. The mathematical solution to the problem of characterizing what such a repetition might be in a mathematical context as apparently simple as that of the natural numbers, remains to be found.

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38 See Blaise Pascal, Traité du triangle arithmétique (Paris, 1665) and Jacob Bernoulli, Excerpta ex iisdem litteris, Acta Eruditorum (1686), 5: 360-361.

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31 His deformity pleased more than if he had been composed of the most beautiful form. The Mantuan poet Battista Fiera writing on the death in 1499 of the court dwarf Mattello. Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, "Buffoni, nani, e schiavi dei Gonzaga," Nuova Antologia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arte, 3rd series, 34 (1891), 618-650, 636.
32 For the unfortunate tendency to use the word "other" as if it were a stable term, see Paul Freedman, "The Medieval Other? The Middle Ages as Other," in Marvels and Miracles, eds. T.S. Jones and D.A. Sprunger (Kalamazoo, MI, 2002), pp. 1-14.
34 Vittorio Viale, Mostra del barocco piemontese (Turin, 1963), 2:45, cat. 1.
proportionately larger head in which the forehead is prominent. Alonso Sánchez Coello’s likeness, from the 1580s, depicting the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia, daughter of Philip II of Spain, with the well-known court dwarf Magdalena Ruiz holding monkeys, can be seen in Fig. 2.

In this type of double portrait, power relationships were articulated visually. The princes were centralized within the composition and the dwarfs visually marginalized, so that the two figures were clearly differentiated into a protagonist and a subordinate, a status confirmed by visual details. In the case of L’Argeta’s portrait, for instance, only the duke was given a shadow to cast; in that by Sánchez Coello, while the Infanta was positioned against a hanging of rich brocade, her companion was placed against a dark void. In both works, the princes’ prominent, possessive gestures of hand and, in one case, arm, draped across the subordinates’ heads reads as signifying the domination of the one and the subjugation of the other.

Interpretations, when they are offered, for the inclusion of dwarfs in independent princely likenesses are limited to a celebration of their ownership or recognition of their exotic presence at court. Although these factors obviously played a role, I will propose that the Renaissance pictorial association of the aristocratic self with an unequal partner was more functional. Categorized by their contemporaries both as monstri, monsters, and as maraviglia, wonders of nature, these stunted creatures served as foils to rulers who sought grandeur through pictorial juxtaposition. As Barry Wind has shown for the Baroque period, such subsidiary figures promoted the superiority of the protagonist by demonstrating how much more beautiful, upright and better proportioned he or she was.

In his Book of the Courtier Castiglione famously defined laughter as deriving from una certa deformità, “a certain deformity.” Given that other Renaissance sources, such as letters, also stress that deformity invariably provoked laughter and amusement, I further speculate that some visual representations of dwarfs must have had humorous connotations for contemporary viewers. Associated with entertainment in life, these unfortunate creatures surely evoked a similar response when glimpsed in art. Thus this essay addresses the image of the dwarf as marvelous monster, on the one hand, and as entertainment, on the other.

To get a sense of how these princely companions would have signified for the portraits’ first viewers, I turn to Agnolo Bronzino’s independent portrait of the dwarf Morgante, depicted without an aristocratic protagonist (Fig. 3). Painted at the Medici court in Florence, c. 1550, it was a doubled-sided work that reflected the contemporary paragone, or competition, between painting and sculpture. Placed back to back in the same frame, on the verso Morgante was depicted in the guise of a bird hunter, the form of the hunt that was considered appropriate for dwarfs (Fig. 3a). Seen from the back, Morgante holds up a dead game bird and grasps a bundle of sticks; on his shoulder, sits Minerva’s owl, symbol of wisdom—and, hence, in a world upside-down—of folly. On the recto, seen from the front, Morgante is currently assimilated to Bacchus but apparently he originally held another owl instead of a glass (Fig. 3b). Yet a further level of meaning of these repetitive attributes is offered by Deborah Parker: in burlesque poetry, such as that by Bronzino, the owl was a common euphemism for a sodomite’s phallus.
form, order, and hierarchy, they violated standards of decorum in nature and society. In the sixteenth century, Castiglione had not only already defined such “monstrous things” as “marvels” but also qualified the noun with the adjective dispettosa, meaning “scorn” or “contempt.” Accordingly, while, on the one hand, monsters such as dwarves were seen as maraviglia, on the other hand, they aroused repugnance that in turn elicited disprezzo, contempt, and deriso, derision, on the part of the viewer whose limbs were well-formed. A few disparaging quotations from Shakespeare makes the point. Lydian in Midsummer Night’s Dream, said: “Get you gone, you dwarf!/You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;/ You beard, you acorn;” and Auvergne in Henry VI, Part I declared: “Alas, this is a child, a silly dwarf!/It cannot be this weak and writhed shrimp/Should strike such terror to his enemies.”

Francis Bacon also knew that the sight of deformed aroused scorn and contempt. Indeed, the class and social prejudices expressed in the language of contempt could lead to cruel outcomes. Documentation from the Medici court shows that dwarves were often subject to what in our century constitutes abuse or ill-treatment. They were de-humanized by being made the focus of beatings, or the butt of crude, physical horseplay—that Renaissance propensity for coarseness and violence that is difficult for modern sensibilities to comprehend and accept.

Albeit defined as jests of nature to be simultaneously marveled at while being derided, dwarves, given the relative rarity of dwarvesm, were nonetheless greatly sought after by princes. They were considered valuable possessions that added to the court’s magnificence, and, like lapdogs and parrots, were regarded as personal property. Indeed
Italian aristocrats delighted in the sensational appearance produced by grotesque disfigurement. "Everyone caressed [the dwarf] and were astonished at the sight of his body," reads one letter from the Mantuan court.21 "[The dwarf's] deformity pleased more than if he had been composed of the most beautiful forms," reads an account that juxtaposed the terms deformità and bellissima forma, of another sixteenth-century Mantuan dwarf.22 As the Florentine poet, Anton Francesco Grazzini known as Il Lasca, wrote about Morgante, he was tanto brutto che pareva bello, "so ugly as to appear beautiful."23

Wherein lay physical beauty for this culture? "I would have [the courtier] well built and shapely of limb [ben formati]," wrote Castiglione, "and would have him show strength, lightness and suppleness [forza, leggerezza, discioltura]."24 Obsession with bodily deportment was not confined to the writings of Castiglione. Erasmus, for instance, devoted a whole chapter of his treatise on civility, "On good manners for boys," to correct deportment.25 This required an erect posture and evidence of male strength in a powerful chest and shoulders. "Men are wonderfully desirous of beauty, proportion, & decorum [bellezza, misura, convivenzevoleza]" wrote Giovanni della Casa in his treatise Galateo, "and, conversely, they avoid as much as possible that which is...shapeless & deformed [contraffatto, difforne]."26

"Ugliness, a defect of Nature," wrote Giovanni Battista della Porta, "is an effect of disproportion."27 Referring to "my own deformity," Shakespeare’s hunchback Richard III echoed these concepts when he lamented that he was "curtailed of this fair proportion."28 St. Augustine followed classical authors in insisting that "all bodily beauty consists in the proportion of the parts... Where there is no proportion the eye is offended, either because there is something wanting, or too small, or too large."29

Upright carriage and fair proportions were sought after not only for aesthetic reasons but also for their connotations of inner moral rectitude. As Marsilio Ficino wrote, "The body is the shadow of the soul; the form of the body... represents the form of the soul."30 In Medieval physiognomic theory, for instance, well-proportioned bodies, serene expressions, and elegant gestures were considered the appropriate physical attributes for holy personages and the Virtuous in general. Such somatic characteristics, suitable for the saintly, were soon considered equally appropriate to depictions of the nobility. Thus, the upper classes in the Middle Ages were traditionally represented visually with the same elegant, handsome, and well-proportioned bodies as those given to the holy, as well as being carefully differentiated from the lower classes whose bodies were constructed as short, squat, and bent. Concepts of social status and virtue merged, as if the nobility was, by definition, endowed with saintly characteristics.31 Breeding was evident in an individual’s somatic bearing, so that good posture served to reinforce class distinctions.

Fabio and Magdalena were, I propose, included in the portraits of Carlo Emmanuele of Savoy and Isabel Clara Eugenia of Spain as counter-figures to the standard canon of beauty, that is, as exemplars of the brutto that tested and proved their masters’ bellezza, a contrast, as it were, between the firm & the infirm, of the normative body with the abnormal (Figs. 1 and 2). "In the portrait of a very beautiful and pleasant-looking lady," wrote the French sixteenth-century chronicler Brantôme, "place next to her an old hag, a moonish slave or a hideous dwarf, so that the ugliness [laideur] and blackness [noirceur] may give greater luster [lustre] and brilliance [candeur] to her beauty and
fairness." Such a function was not limited to the female gender. The stunted, mal formato, limbs and bruttezza of these "monstrous" pets provided a foil to the lord and lady's well-proportioned, upright bodies, establishing their superiority and elegance, bodies that, albeit clothed, were surely intended to recall sublimely the idealized forms of classicizing sculpture; whether ancient or modern.

The same connotations of the prince's erect carriage, and his concomitantly elevated virtù, resonate in another type: portraits designed to make manifest the military commander's virility and martial potency on the battlefield. In this type, dwarfs were often shown as pages holding the condottiere's helmet. Fig. 5 shows Titian's portrait of Charles V's commander, Alfonso D'Avalos, c. 1533, in full armor including gauntlets, being handed his helmet by a dwarf, who is barely squeezed, as if a last moment addition, into the lower left corner. All the sources comment on Avalos' fine appearance. Paolo Giovio claimed he was the most handsome man in the world, and Brantôme wrote that he was handsome, well formed and tall [il était beau seigneur et de belle taille et haut]. Avalos' erect elegance is unquestionably emphasized by his page-dwarf's tiny stature as well by the latter's extreme marginalization.

Another variation on this theme is provided by the Tintoretto workshop double portrait of 1561 depicting the Venetian commander Scipione Clusone, identified by his coat of arms (Fig. 6). The horizontal format, unusual for the genre, allowed the artist to separate the protagonist and his dwarf-page and locate them on opposite sides of the picture surface where they enact the ritual of the helmet being assigned to its warrior before battle. The distribution of the pictorial surface is striking; silhouetted against a dark interior wall, the surfaces of Clusone's body, garbed in expensive sword and armor, are spread-eagled over the right half of the canvas, while the profiled dwarf and Clusone's helmet, poised above his gauntlets, share the left half, silhouetted against the sunrise of the world outdoors in which the combat will take place. Stylishly dressed, with dagger at waist, the dwarf appears to have been deliberately posed to echo the configuration of his master, including Clusone's protruding left elbow that pierces the picture plane.

We now turn to the entertainment potential for the Renaissance of human bodily disfigurement. In a typical Renaissance jest, Morgante was named satirically after the poet Luigi Pulci's giant. Bronzino's double-sided portrait points up another major Cinquecento reaction to dwarfs in court life: these deviants from the norm were regarded as sources of sollazzo, amusement, and diletto, pleasure, to their owners (Fig. 3). As Castiglione noted, "bodily defects often offer fine material for laughter," a laughter that may have been a mechanism for coping with anxiety. We have contemporary documentation of this pleasure in the form of a ducal privilege drawn up by Cosimo I de' Medici in 1555 to accompany the gift of a farm to Morgante. It reveals that mental deficiencies were expected to accompany bodily deformity. "The very many amusements [oblectamenta] that you offered us," it read, were due to "the stupidity of your spirit [fatuitate animi], and the weakness of your mind [mentis defectu], which for this reason were extremely pleasurable [iocunda] and offered us no little consolation [solitium]."

In short, in the words of the satirist Pietro Aretino, La buffoneria è vita e anima della corte, "jesting is the life and spirit of the

32 Jean Habert, Le portrait d'Alphonse d'Avalos par Titien (Paris, 1990); Scott Schaefer, Titian and the Commander: A Renaissance Artist and his Patron (Los Angeles, 2006), pamphlet.
35 Luigi Pulci, Il Morgante Maggiore, 1481. Similarly, the dwarfs of Philip II of Spain and Henri II of France were nicknamed respectively Montagna (mountain) and Grand Jean (Big John). Juvenal had suggested the nickname "Atlas" for a dwarf (Juvenal, Satires of Juvenal and Persius, Loeb Classical Librarry, trans. G.G. Ramsey [Cambridge, MA, 1957], p. 161).
37 ..."prœstitit plurimave oblectamenta per te nobis exhibita, que cum non parum procedere quasi ex fatuitate animi tui et multum ex tue mentis defectu facile cognoverimus, iocunda ob id admodum fuere et solitium non mediocre triuemerant..." Heikamp, p. 292, doc. II.
court. As a jest of nature, the “monstrous” dwarf thus also evoked comic delight. In Bibbiena’s discussion in the Book of the Courtier of the causes of laughter (le cose che movono il riso), Castiglione used various terms to differentiate between the kinds of entertainment provided by dwarfs and others. Among these were facezie, pleasanntries, burle, practical jokes, and motti da ridere, laughable witticisms. Another term for practical joke, beffa, was frequently used by Il Lasca following Boccaccio. Cicero had contended that images of the deformed provoked “loud laughter,” directed at ugliness and physical defects, and, as we saw, Castiglione followed him by defining laughter as deriving from una certa deformità, a certain deformity. Leonardo da Vinci also defined deformity as, on the one hand, cose mostruose, monstrous things, and, on the other, as buffonessche e risibili, grotesque and laughable. It has been suggested that the deformed features in some of Leonardo’s caricatures were intended to be amusing and would have been found so by contemporaries. Indeed, the mere sight of a “new monster,” wrote Gregorio Comanini at the end of the Cinquecento, would bring allegrezza, cheer and happiness to the viewer. As late as 1755, Samuel Johnson defined deformity in his Dictionary as a “quality of something to be laughed at.”

Dwarfs’ popularity as trastulli, playthings, in the Cinquecento was such that they were often exchanged between courts to lighten illness or dispel melancholy. Alfonso I d’Este of Ferrara, suffering from syphillis, spoke, for instance, about the delectionate, recreation et piacere, delight, recreation, and pleasure, that he took from the Mantuan dwarf Mattello. Indeed, when Mattello died, his epitaph, written by the humanist Tebaldeo, read: “He makes all Paradise laugh; if he’s in Hell, Cerberus enjoys himself.” I propose that these comments about Renaissance dwarfs in everyday life offer suggestive hints as to the reception of their images by their first viewers. Given that laughter consisted in una certa deformità, Bronzino’s image of Morgante in a painting must surely have succeeded in raising the same guffaws of laughter — allegrezza or facezia — as his stunted presence in life.

Cosimo I de’ Medici referred to Morgante as servitore amatissimo, much beloved servant. Supposedly faithful to their masters, dwarfs were often associated with hounds, another symbol of fidelity. Around 1550, Antonis Mor, Flemish court artist to the Habsburgs, painted the dwarf and hound belonging to Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (Fig. 7). The dwarf, shown frontally, is fashioned as imposing his will on the animal by means of his hand on its back, just as Carlo Emmanuele of Savoy had placed his on the dwarf Fabio’s head. Mastiff and dwarf define each other’s scale, their master in common being identified by the arms on the dog’s collar. To twenty-first century sensibilities, the dwarf has been degraded to a sub-human level by being assimilated visually to the animal’s scale. The Renaissance reaction, however, must have been similar to that of a viewer beholding Bronzino’s Morgante: the assimilation of the two creatures was surely understood then as a facezia, visual pleasantry, or burla, practical joke. Moreover, given the dwarf’s garb of matching damask, gold collar, sword, and commander’s baton, the painting may well have aroused further delectionation in terms of its possible reference to a work well known to Mor and to court culture in general: Titian’s famous Portrait of Charles V with hound from the early 1530s (Fig. 8). The Emperor also stood frontally, gorgeously garbed in gold and silver, with his...
hound posed as the epitome of fidelity. Furthermore, the very nature of the dwarfs’ poses in both Mor and Bronzino’s independent likenesses should be understood as representing another instance of the world upside-down. The small protagonists, who may well be presented life-size, are shown full-length, the format that, in mid-Cinquecento portraits, was normally only employed for Emperors or Kings, that is, those at the very apex of the social hierarchy, rather than for those scorned creatures at its base.52

In a similar reading, one may ask whether Morgante’s nakedness should not be read as an obvious reference to, or satirical pun on, the nakedness of his lord, Cosimo I de’ Medici, in Bronzino’s portrait of the nude duke as Orpheus, son of Apollo—and hence another facezia or beffa (Fig. 9).53 Painted half a dozen years earlier, the work endowed the duke of Florence with the classicizing, muscled back of the Hellenistic Belvedere Torso, which in the Renaissance was believed to represent Hercules.54 Here the duke was constructed as personifying the strength and virtues of Hercules, the god considered the exemplar of “Heroic Virtue.”55 Certainly, Morgante’s body is the antithesis of the ideal strength and upright beauty with which Hercules and other classically-inspired male nudes were believed to have been endowed. Thus the nakedness of the body in Fig. 9 endowed it with greatness while that of the body in Fig. 3, defined as malformed, must have rendered it all the more available to jesting and mockery.

Returning to the Tintoretto school portrait of Scipione Clusone and his page-dwarf, it is striking how the latter’s pose appears to deliberately echo that of his master, including the condottiere’s left elbow akimbo (Fig. 6). It seems legitimate to ask whether this work should not also be read as a visual beffa or jest, in which the small page, endowed with connotations of dilettto, imitates—and perhaps parodies—his lord, depicted in this case within the same canvas?

In conclusion, this normative culture was fascinated by the strange and the abnormal. In a society that espoused the ideal human forms of classical antiquity, pictorial display of the “monstrous” dwarf’s brutto,

52 Bronzino and Mor’s portraits measure 150 cm. and 127 cm. high respectively. Achondroplastic dwarfs are apparently approximately 131 cm. tall, plus or minus 5.6 cm. Fleming, “Identity and Physical Deformity,” p. 102.


55 Ripa, Iconologia, pp. 537-538.

malformed, body acted as a foil for the well-formed proportion and upright bellezza of his or her aristocratic master or mistress—and hence the latter’s Virtù & elevated rectitude. Indeed, the thirteenth-century Franciscan, Alexander of Hale, wrote that “both morally and aesthetically the monstrous races help us to appreciate the finer humanity of others. By their contrast with human monstrosities, rational creatures are made more praiseworthy and of greater beauty.”56 Three centuries later, at the end of the Cinquecento, Tomaso Garzoni put a slightly different twist on this idea. Monsters, he said, were not really alien to Nature’s intentions, because ugliness was necessary to establish beauty: “the perfection [of the world] resides also in ugly things and in sin; otherwise, Virtue would not shine forth. Without monsters, perfect things could not be made manifest or exposed.”57

Thus, as well as providing sollazzo, entertainment and laughter, and allowing the lord to demonstrate his scornful superiority, these instances of “blemished” humanity demonstrated that which the protagonist was not. The lord and lady’s respective bodies were strong and well proportioned, not crippled or mal formato. As protagonists, they were hence morally, as well as esthetically, pleasing. Aristocratic superiority was being flaunted by means of the “other’s” corporeal forms, whereby dwarfs were visually exploited to endorse the protagonists’ beauty and virtue somatically. A purposeful subtext must be seen as underlying the introduction of the stunted dwarf into these likenesses that goes far beyond celebration of their ownership. As Garzoni put it, “without monsters, perfect things could not be made manifest.”


57 Che i mostri non sono fuori universalmente dell’intenzione della natura...la perfettione [del mondo] consiste anco nelle cose brutte e ne’ peccati, perche se non si fossero i peccati e gli uomini malvagi, non vi sarebbe la giustizia, la pieta, la misericordia, ne risplenderebbe cosi la virtù, e la perfezione delle cose. Tomaso Garzoni, Il Seraglio de gli Stupori del Mundo (Venice, 1613), pp. 59-62.