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COMMENT

This number begins the second volume of *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*. It is a larger issue than the previous ones to make up for the longer time we took to bring it out. The next issue will be devoted entirely to Maltese Studies, a specialised number which will bring before our readers at home and abroad, material of linguistic and literary interest at scholarly level. The next issue of the Journal will bear the title of *Journal of Maltese Studies* edited under the auspices of the Chair of Maltese by the holder of the Chair. Such a number will be an additional periodical publication that can, and should, be bound separately. We hope that those that want to know more about Maltese linguistics, folklore and Melitensia in general will like, and support, the supplementary publication.

This number contains two articles by two Fulbright scholars who spent some time teaching in our University. We are always glad to maintain direct personal contact with our American colleagues who for one academic year worked with us in a University which, though small in material dimensions, yet counts 368 years of academic existence.

Unfortunately, the financial life of the institution is beset with so many hazards and difficulties that, with all the best will in the world, we cannot do all we would like to do for the promotion of knowledge. The publication of this Journal and other similar publications is a voluntary effort, a self-imposed task, that has been kept going at great personal sacrifice. Nothing has disappointed us so much as the absence in the Hetherington and subsequent reports of any official recognition of the value of such efforts and the need for subsidizing such reviews as well as finding money for publication of research works and providing travelling expenses to enable members of the teaching staff to attend Congresses. None the less, we have managed to edit this Journal in order to provide an organ for the Faculty of Arts, and through it maintain and increase contacts with British and continental Universities. Our exchange scheme has proved successful and, with more cooperation and response, students and members of the teaching staff will be able to enjoy a larger measure of the academic

fellowship that animates the world of learning and thus overcome the unfavourable conditions of insular isolation so harmful to learning and growth.]

In the meantime, we have to continue working against odds such as are unknown to our British colleagues in the U.K.; we work and hope, undeterred – hope that the University of Malta will one day be treated (the sooner the better) with greater generosity and imagination by the Government of the day than it has been treated so far. It has been said very well that the most expensive of constructional plans, however urgently needed, can produce no more than an empty shell, no more than a costly impressive façade, if the men that live and work inside this shell are not happy and satisfied that they are well treated as a teaching and research body. The letters that have been appearing in the press and the comments made by some of the correspondents have all stressed the need for a more urgent consideration of the academic and personal requirements of the institution, the personal well-being of the teaching staff. The Institution lacks an effective liaison machinery operating punctually between it and the Government on whose meagre block vote, unincreased since 1958 in spite of two increases to civil servants, it entirely depends for survival and continuance.]

We produce this Journal to travel abroad and meet new friends across the seas through the written word. But we need more than this; we need comprehension at home and continual personal contact with our colleagues in Britain and on the continent. We need also friends really interested in the well-being of the University. We owe much to the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas. Yet we still need something that has not been given us so far – a publication fund for the promotion of research, money for digging deeper down into our rich native soil in search of undiscovered treasures and expanding wider afield. We need also another fund to make it possible for our scholars to attend Conferences and Congresses abroad.]

A progressive University must be helped to overcome the many disadvantages of an insular society and government. Without such help it cannot prosper whatever the physical dimensions of a new University building elsewhere.]

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY*

(A talk given at the Convent of the Sacred Heart to the members of the Private Schools' Association on January 3, 1958)

By J. AQUILINA

'WHY have you chosen this subject at all?' some of you may feel inclined to ask. 'This is not a Congress of Linguists, but a gathering of Private Schools teachers.' I see your point and I think I owe you an explanation, but I certainly do not owe you an apology for choosing this subject. For what subject plays a larger and more significant part than language in the schools both as the medium of instruction and itself a subject-matter of intense study in a country that, rightly, attaches great importance to the teaching of languages? The premise from which I draw the conclusion of such importance is justified by the importance of the social purpose that Language serves.

Language is a means of inter-class and inter-group communication. It is man's natural means of mental contact with organized society; and within that society Language serves multifarious social purposes. We educate our young men and women for a purpose that is likewise social, and in using language to communicate ideas and principles of conduct, we fulfil a social purpose of the highest order. Here is, therefore, at the very beginning of this talk, a statement of the greatest significance; namely *that Language is a natural means of communication and self-expression*. Language is to ideas, from which actions and behaviours spring naturally, what a bottle is to the liquid it contains. Its capacity determines the quantity of the content.

One can assess the intellectual and social capacity of the British from their mixed and varied vocabulary and the way the words are strung together in the spoken and written language at its various levels. So also one could assess the intellectual and social capacity of the Italians, the Arabs, the Greeks and the Japanese. Consider carefully and then compare the vocabulary of a Bantu tribe with that of a highly civilised Greek community of Aristotle's time, and you have evidence enough on which to draw if you wish to establish various degrees of social and linguistic relationships.

* This talk originally published serially in *The Bulletin* (Jan. 30, 1958 - Feb. 5, 1959), is reprinted here with thanks to the Editor.

Man is inconceivable without language. If, unfortunately, he is born deaf and dumb, he instinctively makes up for the lack of audible language by a series of rationalised gestures; he devises a signalling system of his own and a process of lip-reading, so that he may maintain contact with other men like him. And, as pointed out by the Unesco Commission in the introduction to its monograph on *The use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (1935), 'a handbook which should be read carefully by every teacher of languages and every Head of school or College, 'there are various ways of looking at language: to a physiologist, it is a biophysical device consisting of a certain number of units of sound; to an anthropologist, it is a cultural inherited trend; to a sociologist, it is a medium for the transmission of feelings, ideas and knowledge, which may be summed up as social usages or culture.'

In this talk I can only take one aspect, the sociologist's aspect which is also the educationist's aspect, more strictly so far our purposes than the other scientific approaches, not less interesting by any means but falling within a different category of scientific discipline. The sociologist's approach is also the linguist's approach because to the linguist language is primarily a means of communication and as such it is a social tool. It being no more than that, for our purpose we could relate its social importance to that of communication itself without which human society, as we know it, would be impossible; for who can conceive an inarticulate society, or a society whose language is badly related to the objects and ideas it purports to communicate without his mind going back to the confusion of tongues that happened at Babel, when a group of monoglottic workers having suddenly lost the nexus between word-sounds and the objects indicated by them, could no longer work and live together?

Strictly speaking, I should have used not the word 'Language' but the word 'Speech' which is man's universal gift of self-expression and self-extension into the physical world of sound, but I have preferred to use the word 'Language' because I am not going to theorise about speech as such. I am going instead to contextualise my talk, if I may say so, by direct references to the language spoken in our islands, and state a few platitudes which apparently want re-stating because, somehow, there is still insufficient evidence of their cultural and social reality.]

The nonsense that we hear or see printed about Maltese generally from uninformed or ill-informed persons as if it were something apart from the men and women that speak it is too silly for words. When this nonsense exists in places or institutions where one expects scientific clear-headedness, it constitutes a serious threat to the main purpose of education at all levels. Indeed, what do we educate our children for? We educate them,

in the first place, for life which is much larger than a job even as a man's soul is much larger than his coat and shirt. ;

As genuine patriotism impersonates part of that abstraction we call 'Life', so education is largely impersonated in the life of one's country in a very broad sense. Similarly, as the young newly planted tree thrives after it has not merely struck root but has also spread them far out (the larger trees more so than the smaller trees), so also one's education must first strike root in its own soil, then, spreading outside its native soil draw richer nourishment from other deeper soils. Language is one of the means of contact with our own fellow-countrymen alive and dead, with the history of our people yesterday, today and tomorrow; with the national personality of the country as a whole, and its book of recorded and unrecorded history. Without that means of psychological contact, something precious is lost or missed, something without which no people can be welded together into a nation. No one better than the dictators knew this. Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and other dictators suppressed minority languages because they knew that the main force that holds small peoples together is the language they speak. ;

As Catholics, we share our faith with the Italians, the French, and multitudes of other nationalities in every corner of the world. It is only by the language we speak that we are Maltese; just as it is by the language they speak that the British and the French are what they are. Of course, one's birthplace, the place we are brought up in counts a great deal; but we would consider Churchill and Macmillan less English if they used French as their home and public language. At the most, we would consider them as two French-speaking English men; and under these two conflicting aspects, the English-speaking community that inhabits the British Isles would not have accepted them as their leaders. The foreign language would have placed a barrier between them. ;

Apply the example to Malta where some families are still unreasonably shy of using Maltese at cocktail parties and other socials, a small decreasing number who prefer to cut a good figure by speaking a sort of English as once they used to speak a sort of Italian when social and class prestige was on its side. Something like this for many years happened in Czarist Russia and the Kaisers' Germany where polite society preferred to chatter in French. ;

Why does this happen at all? It is a question that educationists should ask themselves; and not merely ask but face the implications of the answer boldly. Why do these families feel uneasy? What 'complex' are they trying to repress? Do they reach higher levels of self-expression by doing so? Are they not cutting off themselves, linguistically at least, from the social

context of their native country, from that sum-total of social responses that derive their nourishment from the native soil? What would an English educationist say of such an anomaly in his country? There was a time when this linguistic attitude, a queer manner of showing off, was more prevalent. Then Italian, not English, glittered in society; that was when the people's own language suffered unfairly from the competition of the rulers' privileged language. Prestige plays a great part in the popularity or otherwise of native languages. But the effects of wrong ideas on linguistic education were often disastrous. They certainly retarded the growth of a national literature and a compact Maltese linguistic awareness. Some future Maltese sociologist may, one day, write a thesis on this unhealthy mental attitude from the educational and linguistic point of view.]

In one of his essays, William Hazlitt described prejudice as 'the child of ignorance'. I would describe 'linguistic and social prejudice by the native people' as the child of fear, the expression of a fear and shame complex, fear and shame of both linguistic and social adverse comparisons, fears not less painful and embarrassing because they are in fact imaginary so long as they are real to those they embarrass, to those whose false pride they hurt. When the fear or shame complex is purely social you get, for instance, the village maid sophisticated by expensive and artificial town habits aping her mistress even beyond her means. When the fear, or shame, complex is linguistic, you get the better educated persons brought up in ignorance of the value of their own language as a medium of inter-class and inter-group communication, not only aping the habits and manners, no matter how exotic, of the foreigners or the ruling classes, but also abandoning their native speech as a medium of self-expression at socials or in literary or cultural gatherings.] This is a terrible mistake that cost many countries the best in thought and feeling that the best men and women of these countries might otherwise have enshrined for ever in the people's native language for their own lasting good!

This shame or fear complex is by no means an exclusively Maltese aberration. Here is a brief list of languages which today have their own literature and enjoy an official status in their respective countries but were once overshadowed by the foreigners' language and, in some instances, by Latin or Greek as cultural and liturgical languages. Latin itself was for many years overshadowed by the greater cultural prestige of Greek, early Italian and English by that of Latin, Hungarian by Latin, Hungary's official language up to 1843; Czechoslovakian by German; Polish by French; Portuguese by Spanish; Norwegian by Danish; Turkish by Arabic and Persian; Bulgarian by Greek, Finnish by Latin and Swedish;

Japanese by Chinese. The list could be increased by other examples, but the one significant example I wish to mention now is that of the Faroe Islands inhabited by about 30,000 people, whose native language Norse is now, together with Danish, the official language.

So what happened in our country is by no means an exclusively Maltese error of judgement. The worst that one can say about us, perhaps, is that we Maltese suffered irrational prejudice longer than other peoples who emancipated themselves from the fear and shame complex before us. ;

You'll agree with me that educationists and teachers, besides a good knowledge of the subjects they specialise in, need also a sense of history. With a sense of history and a sense of humour they can go a long way; they can debunk myths and promote Truth. ;

Women that had a public school education are the worst sinners against the dignity of grammatical Maltese speech. I have noticed the growth of a sort of Maltese patois in Sliema. This Sliema jargon, largely of the feminine gender, has created some linguistic phenomena in the field of Maltese phonetics including the Semitic part of their mixed speech that are worth study though from the literary angle this patois is no more than a pretentious hotch potch. I have noticed that some of the public school girls use a different set of vowels, distinctly different from those used by girls attending other schools. These distinctive phonetic traits have become a sort of family or class badge almost like the so called Oxford accent which some people in Britain consider very artificial and annoying. Of course the comparison ends here; for while the Oxford intonation and phonetics are associated with one of the best types of education, here in Malta this curiosity of Maltese accent does not make up for its exotic strangeness by any comparable claim in the field of culture and general education. ;

I state a problem here for the private schools staffs especially those catering for the girls of our better off families. What can they do, or what are they failing to do, in order to integrate the personality of Maltese Womanhood within the framework of Maltese public education, with the stress on the word Maltese? Let me give you an example before I take leave of this point; and will you please excuse me if the case history may sound unpleasant to some of you. I preside a fortnightly Brains Trust in Maltese. The questions I asked so far touched on literature, Science, Sociology, points of theology and other odd bits of human knowledge. On the Trust, I had University professors, and Primary School teachers, members of the clergy, civil servants and other categories of Maltese social life. It took me some time to find half a dozen women in Malta willing to take part in a Brains Trust with men. Once, I had an all-women Brains Trust and it was fun to hear what they thought of men, as it was fun to

hear the day after what men had to say about women. With one exception not one of them had a private school education and the single exception was terribly handicapped by her inability to speak good Maltese.

The language barrier made it practically impossible to most young women I invited to take part in a Maltese Brains Trust. In other words, the language barrier deprived them of the privilege of communicating with the general public at a higher level of self-expression than mere gossip.

I had a talk with a very intelligent girl, now employed as a clerk, and from this talk I was sure that she had much to tell Maltese listeners about Literature. I asked her whether she would like to take part in a Brains Trust. She accepted; but when I told her the Brains Trust was to be conducted in Maltese, she apologised. 'I cant' talk Maltese', she told me, 'I never learnt Maltese at school'. She is Maltese-speaking at colloquial level. What she really meant was that she did not possess a sufficient command of the language at a level higher than everyday colloquial. Whether that girl will ever be invited to join a B.B.C. Brains Trust is very doubtful; but it is beyond doubt that she would be welcomed on a Maltese Brains Trust if only her private school education had not crippled her natural means of self-expression and thus fatally reduced her chances of establishing educative contacts with other women. Maltese womanhood must come forward, meet and address the thousands of other Maltese women who would like to hear the feminine point of view, who would like to feel that some of their sex can hold their own with men.

My main point up to now is that language is not only a means of communication in the abstract but also a means of social inter-group and inter-class contact in everyday life. Without this contact there is isolation. Of feminine snobbish aloofness from the ordinary type of the uneducated or less well-educated woman we have more than is good for Malta.

The harm of an education unrooted in its native soil on account of wrong ideas or lack of an appreciation of the fundamental social importance of the people's language, accounts for the wedge that other differently educated men and women gradually drive between one section of society and another. Neither the State nor the Church can benefit by this mentality. Here is, therefore, a problem from another angle equally worthy of careful study.

The objection often raised against the more intensive teaching of Maltese (and no teacher can teach that has not learned his own language at a higher level than he or she teaches it), is that the People's language is, indeed, so unimportant in the world of business that it is sheer folly to waste on it time that could be more profitably spent on other subjects. Now this lone objection is stupid and can be mischievous and very harm-

ful. No other subject can be as important really as the language the people handle in their daily commerce and inter-communication of ideas at different levels. Consider what use is being made of Maltese in Malta — no other language is being used as extensively as Maltese; and naturally no other language can ever take the place of the heart except by some act of despotic violence. The priest needs Maltese for his day-to-day spiritual ministry; he needs it for the pulpit especially and for the modern form of apostolate, which is Catholic journalism that should cultivate its Maltese Bellocs and Chestertons. The priest, who has insufficient command of the people's language, who can speak it, but cannot write it effectively can never do justice to the Church he belongs to; and believe me, the time has come when the Church in Malta will have to muster a larger and more impressive number of lay and religious writers that can handle the written and spoken word effectively enough to influence ideas, and create or re-create the mental attitudes the Church wants to foster.]

Most of our religious literature is ineffective precisely because it lacks those graces of style, that word-power of self-expression which we acquire by intensive training only.]

The lawyer needs Maltese too; if he is a man of high principles he won't be satisfied with a hybrid jargon; he'll do his best to speak intelligently and effectively not only to persuade the judge or magistrate, but also to satisfy the client that foots the bill. A lawyer can talk jargon if he is careless; and a jargon is a sort of Secret Language that cuts out the humiliated listeners from the fellowship of verbal inter-communication.]

More examples could be mentioned to show how close to native social life a people's language is. All we need keep in mind all the time is that it is the vehicle of a people's ideas, thoughts and feelings; that self-expression, in its turn, expresses truths, untruths, half truths, sublimities and banalities etc. We have in a nutshell the main social justification of the proper teaching of Maltese in every public and private school for a purpose that is higher than may be immediately visible to the naked eye, or to such mercenaries as estimate values by their financial returns in terms of £, s, d.]

Another objection against the teaching of Maltese is that it is no good outside Malta, that our emigrants need English more than they need Maltese. Let me clear these two hurdles. That our children need English not merely for mercenary purposes but also for the benefits that they can derive from British culture is agreed. No one need convert me to that opinion. Thirteen years ago in a lecture which I gave at the British Institute I stated several reasons for a basis of Anglo-Maltese culture and so long as the balance is not tilted far too much on one side (all extremes and naturally

'extremists' are harmful), I'll continue to believe in the creation of Anglo-Maltese culture. But the roots of this composite culture, mind you, must be laid in Malta.

If you agree with me, you must agree also that this demands a certain amount of self-education in the social Maltese way of life and historical background from the non-Maltese teachers who come from different cultures and whose privilege it is to educate our future educationists.

Cultures, you know as well as I do, spring from the same dynamic force that compels man to excel his own day-to-day experience of life. He does so in many ways. One of these ways is socio-linguistic. He creates his own literature and his own Art to enshrine what is best in the continuous personality of native manhood. This accounts for the rise of so many cultures with one basic universal motive but otherwise different in flowering. There is such a thing as a Maltese socio-historical culture; and it must be taken into account by the non-Maltese teachers. It cannot be passed by as something not very important. Like any other people, we have our Maltese ethos. If our literature is still limited, we shall have to accept it as an outgrowth of the Maltese ethos; and it is the duty of every teacher, Maltese and non-Maltese, to accept this basic principle for if he does not he will inevitably injure our manhood and womanhood.

Some private schools, I understand, find it necessary to penalise pupils when they speak Maltese. I want to speak frankly about this. I think this policy can be psychologically crippling if the reason for such embarrassing discipline is not explained beforehand. Young boys and girls at their impressionable age look up to their teachers for the right lead. They swear by what they are told by their teachers. To them they are not men but Supermen. It is possible, and, I am afraid, some of the results of this queer discipline show that it is so, that as these boys and girls grow into young men and women they come to regard their native speech as a sort of helots' language or base dialect; begin to feel that there is little to be proud of in speaking their parents' home language; and as one thing leads to another, also that there is not much cause for being proud of being Maltese after all. Or you might get a completely different reaction. You might get in adult life a sort of national reactionary chauvinism which is as bad really. There is a middle way. This internal school discipline, if it has to be enforced at all (Is it enforced in other schools in France, Italy, Spain etc? I wonder!) has to be explained in terms of the utilitarian benefits aimed at, such being the learning of spoken English, which, for a time involves the renunciation of the pupils' native language. I am afraid I have little personal experience of this kind of discipline nor would I like to see my children subjected to it. I learned English and a few other

languages in the Seminary of Gozo without ever being subjected to this anomalous discipline. I am a believer in my own way of learning a foreign language. (By the way, teachers of foreign languages might benefit by Jespersen's book *The Teaching of Modern Languages*).

I was still a boy when I fell in love with books, and the stories they said, read voraciously; later, I fell in love with ideas and the handling of the medium. I do not think really you can learn any language in a simpler and more effective way. Some of the school books that cut up a language into unrelated bits, verbs, phrases, prepositional verbs, teach language very much as the professor of anatomy teaches his subject to medical students – bone by bone, nerve by nerve. But as the skeleton on which he lectures is not the living man or woman that once kept it moving about clothed in flesh and blood, so also this anatomical language teaching will never teach the living language. This mechanical method teaches verbal isolates. It does not create a living language which is a social dynamo.

Frankly, I think the method I followed instinctively is simpler and more direct. I need hardly call your attention to the folly of prescribing for our children books that were written expressly for the use of English children. Our children inevitably start at a disadvantage. The production of textbooks in English by local teachers is a step in the right direction. The principle is always good even if the books locally produced may leave much to be desired.

The point I have made just now is that as a boy's or girl's native language is his, or her, natural means of communication and social contact with the rest of the country, it is not in the best interests of our manhood and womanhood to foster, no matter how unintentionally, tacit or spoken prejudices against their native language.

More than a century ago, Mr. John Hookham-Frere, who was for some years the Chairman of the Malta University Council, to whom our M. A. Vassalli dedicated his Book of Maltese proverbs, submitted a memorandum to the members of the Council. This memorandum contained some very useful 'reflections on the studies which may be cultivated in the University of Malta'. In this memorandum which was reproduced in Vol. I: *Memoir by the Right Hon. Sir Bartle Frere* (London, 1874, pp. 301-7) he stated *inter alia* that 'to speak one's language without a knowledge of its grammar and construction, is the true characteristic of ignorance in an individual and of barbarism in a people'.

By the way, it was Hookham Frere that made possible the temporary Chair of Maltese held by M. A. Vassalli by himself defraying Vassalli's salary. Then, even more than now, material results, immediate and lucrative, were expected to justify the teaching of any subject. Then as now

Maltese could not mint money. Most spiritual values do not. That crippling mentality has not died out because, apparently, our University and public education has not faced the menace with sufficient moral strength. No wonder moral values which cannot be translated immediately into £. s. d. are now crumbling at our feet one by one, in spite of the increasing number of government and private schools. The monster is still at large. Many still demand the immediate return in tangible results, largely of a material and utilitarian kind. As the Malta University Commission insisted that none should expect immediate, tangible results of a utilitarian nature from subjects that are entitled to a place in the academical curricula of our Alma Mater, so also Hookham Frere who ably pleaded for the teaching of Maltese and the promotion of Oriental studies in our University, stated that 'in everything, if a noble and superior object is pursued for its own sake with zeal and generosity, all the inferior advantages which are connected with it, will follow naturally and of their own accord'.

A more warm-hearted and persuasive teaching of Maltese by teachers who love and know the subject at a sufficiently high level, believe me, is bound to produce a generation more conscious of their own national heritage and their linguistic place in the world. It will, frankly, produce more genuine, more enlightened and well-educated patriots; that lively sense of collective interest in the well-being and progress of our people at all levels as a distinct nation; it will produce a true, militant patriotism which is above party politics. Patriotism has to be fostered by creating a healthy sense of self-respect in the country of our birth and the language we speak.

An inferiority complex, wherever nourished by prejudice, no matter how unintentionally and indirectly, breeds contempt for the country that gave us birth because, as Edmund Burke said very well in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* 'to make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely'. Frankly, I do not think that a country like ours, still unhappily afflicted with some unpatriotic men that write silly letters to the press running down their native languages is a very lovely country. We can create the missing loveliness in the minds of our young men and women by getting them more intelligently, and spontaneously, interested in their native language from the historical, literary and social angle and, correlatively, by getting them also interested in the history of their homeland for which the people and the government of Malta have not yet provided a Chair in our University.

I am not unaware of the teaching of the people's language in some of the private schools. But I have seen no signs yet of a deep-rooted awareness of its vital role in our national life. I have a feeling that Maltese,

somewhere and somehow, has been suffered as an aggressive intruder one could not turn away, a sort of gate-crasher instead of a master in his own house. Those who glibly talk about national identity do not always show they have a strong enough grip on the kernel of the question at issue. They do not seem to be sufficiently aware that language is the most important characteristic of nationhood because, as I have repeatedly pointed out, it is the only, and if not the only anyhow the main, medium of inter-group and inter-class communication in the country where it flourishes.

Language is bound up with thinking and acting. That is what Nathaniel Webster in the preface to his Dictionary had in mind when he said that 'Language is the expression of ideas, and if the people of one country cannot preserve an identity of ideas, they cannot retain an identity of language'. Let me refer this to the language we speak and tell you non-Maltese teachers entrusted with the education of our children that the language we speak carries the awareness of our Mediterranean Catholic culture and identity, ethnically and linguistically distinct, while it is integrated within a vast framework of European culture serving as the unique European bridge between the Semitic and the Indo-European family of languages, a key to two Continents, and two cultures. This is the context into which you must fit our linguistic education.

I have stressed this point over and over again because, in my opinion, one of the fundamental concepts of nationhood which is falling to pieces because of a lack of correct ideas that can hold them together, is our Maltese national identity both ethnic and linguistic. I unhesitatingly say that it is the duty of all private and public schools to stem the tide of the anti-national congruent influences that are sapping our nationhood both physically and morally. Where are the patriots? They are outnumbered by those that run down their native heritage.

The preservation of our national identity, a sociological reality bound up with the language we speak, and which under one form or another has been continuously spoken for at least the last 2,000 years, is a primary function of national education, and ethnic continuity which I regard as an obligation of all private and public schools whether the teachers are Maltese, Irish or English. This is no plea for the use of Language as an ally of national chauvinism, but for its use as an ally of our national personality without which we cease to be a nation.

But apart from this consideration which some hard-headed people may describe as sentimental (I don't. I as hard-headedly describe it as a national reality) there are other basic considerations of a purely utilitarian nature, such as the service it renders in the teaching of foreign languages, for instance. The value of Maltese as itself a school subject, is a helpful

medium of learning other subjects and laying the foundations of adult education, all too desperately neglected in Malta, as was ably explained by such men, born ahead of their times, as De Soldanis, M. A. Vassalli, our greatest scholar in the field of lexicography, the first advocate of universal education at a time when education was a jealously guarded class privilege, and later by A. E. Caruana, G. B. Falzon, Badger, Schlienzy and others.

Some of the views, though expressed a hundred years ago, sound very modern. Such are the views favouring the use of Maltese as a medium of instruction in the schools, views which agree with those stated and illustrated by contemporary experience in the Unesco monograph on *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education*. This report was drawn up at a meeting of specialists held on the use of vernacular languages in education which was convened in Paris in November 1951. Their views, therefore, should control the aberrations of the amateur educationists who advocate a use, or should I say, an abuse of language in a manner that belies the function and purpose of language as a vehicle of ideas. Such is, for instance, the silly system of teaching English to Maltese children through English from the very first classes of the Primary schools, by the so-called 'direct method' in spite of the fact, to quote from this Language monograph, 'that education can best be carried out in the mother tongue of the pupil, adult child'.

Now let me quote again from Unesco monograph platitudes that are no platitudes to such as self-complacently depart from the basic policy outlined by expert linguists and educationists in this invaluable book. 'The use of the mother tongue' we read on page 48 'will promote better understanding between the home and the school when the child is taught in the language of their home. What he learns can be easily expressed or applied in the home. Moreover, the parents will be in a position better to understand the problem of the school and, in some measure, to help the school in the education of the child.' Why is that so? Well, for the very evident reason that the child, already a learning member of his native society which uses a language that has been its own historical creation through the centuries, already knows some of that language. The jump from the known to the unknown is much easier, certainly a shorter cut than the jump headlong from the unknown to the unknown. I have discussed this incredible system with some local teachers and they expressed to me their regret at so much wasted labour, at taking so long to get where they want to get. One teacher mentioned an example of the confusion created by the longer way. Where do we go from here? To Confusion where worse confounded? A school inspector asked one of the boys the meaning of the English word 'wind'. The boy did not know the meaning. The kind inspec-

tor tried to lead him to its meaning by the longer way. He went near the window and began by moving his arms up and down, and sideways to give an impression of the movements of the wind. The child could not understand till he thought he understood and then 'I know Sir he cried 'wind' means *tixxejjer!* 'swing yourself' — a general laugh, the merry laughter of amused children. I discussed this method with British educationists when I was last in the United Kingdom under the Commonwealth Universities Scheme. They condemned the system. None the less the fad is still enforced in Malta.

Precious time could have been saved for more profitable use if the nexus between one recognisable phonetic unit and another less recognisable was expressed by the direct Sound-Image process in Maltese. Here is a problem for such educationists as have adopted this round about method of teaching English to Maltese children in the elementary stages. Other questions that come to mind are: Is the method I am condemning wasting time? If so how much time per lesson? Are corresponding advantages being obtained in other directions? If so, what are they and how do far they compensate for the loss of mental energy and time involved in the round about method? Are we keeping statistical records checking the results of the method?

The point I have made now is not merely how wasteful it is to abandon the use of the child's own language in the teaching of a foreign language, but also in positive terms, how useful it can be in the teaching of other subjects. Personally, I believe that up to a certain stage of the child's mental development when its only thinking tools are still the number of native words it learns at home and its still limited ability to string them together in baby language, it is a mistake to use English when the child's home tongue can so much more easily serve to transmit ideas and to widen its little world of sensations and contacts with the outside world.

To me it is also preposterous that primary school children, for instance, should be made to learn their native history through English. The approach is psychologically wrong. One has really to decide what one wants to teach directly. If one wants to teach geography and history, or the truths that Our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to His Church, the medium should never assume a greater importance than the content, namely the subject-matter it communicates. And lest you run away with the idea that I am not on scientific grounds on this matter, let me quote from the Unesco experts' Language monograph again.

On page 49 we read that: 'Some people claim that it is impossible for children to acquire a good use of the second language unless the school adopts the second language as a medium of instruction from the very be-

ginning. In fact, it is on the basis of this action that some schools, in the past have actually forbidden any use whatsoever of the vernacular anywhere in the school. However, recent experience in many places proves that an equal, or better, command of the second language can be imparted if the school begins with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, subsequently introducing the second language as a subject of instruction.'

On page 54 the Unesco Report continues: 'We believe that when the people as a whole have had an opportunity of observing the results of education in the mother tongue, they will be convinced that it is sound policy,' and again on page 55, the expert linguists stated that 'the early training in the mother tongue should serve as a bridge for learning the second language'. That aim cannot be reached if the Teachers' Training Colleges fail to provide sufficient training in the use of Maltese as a means of education. It is a question of balancing the time-table and the distribution of subjects with not too much on one side, and less than enough on another. After all, primary school teachers spend their lives teaching the children of the masses most of whom leave school at the age of thirteen. As we read on page 53 of the same Unesco Report: Teachers who have themselves received their education and professional training in a second language have real difficulty in having to teach in the mother tongue. That difficulty can have serious consequences. How many of our teachers can teach their own language profitably and interestingly? How many of them possess an adequate historical background? And, more precisely, how many of them did they learn it at school at a sufficiently high level? Those that became teachers before 1939 never studied the language at school; those that studied it in the transition period studied it very superficially. Under the circumstances, what depth and breath of vision can we expect from them? *Nemo dat quod non habet* and thereby hangs a story.

In Malta many often write and speak as if most of our children could afford the privilege of higher education at least at Secondary level. That is a fallacy which we should regard with some misapprehension because the result of that wrong attitude has led to the utter neglect of the mental broadening and education, general enlightenment of the masses on whose numerically larger number the pillars of our democracy and ideals rest. The thousands of men and women who can never hope to learn enough English for the higher purposes served by language leave schools too early, for the simple reason that they have got to start working for a living. Having left school, the little English they learned vanishes into the air and no more remains of it than a few unconnected words of little practical value for the purposes of citizenship.

These neglected, book-starved, men and women need more attention from us than we have paid them so far. The penalty for such omission of duty is that we may one day be all carried away from below; that Church and State will totter because their supporting pillars are shaky. I need not enlarge on the social utility of the mother tongue in the promotion of adult education. The members of the University Commission in their report spoke also about the need for this type of education. Again I quote from the Unesco Language Monograph: 'The teaching of adults requires special technique and materials, both of which are adapted to the needs and psychology of the mature learners'. Now listen to this: 'It must be borne in mind that the interest of adults are much more specific and immediate than those of children and that there must be greater variety in the contents of reading material provided for them. . . . Wherever possible, adult education should be carried out in the mother tongue. The great majority will not have time to master a foreign language sufficiently for it to be used as an effective medium of education'.

Surely, the Unesco authorities confirm what I have been saying for some years now; and make it clear enough that private schools should show greater unawareness of the sociological importance of the people's mother tongue. It also makes it clear enough for the scientific-minded that the cultivation of Maltese as a medium of communication should occupy a very important place together with English in our Teachers' Training Colleges. Teachers inadequately versed in the mechanisms of their native language and their national literature will prove very poor teachers in the broad sense of the word. They will be no more than hired wage-earners; men without vision and without a message. Our teachers more than anybody else need not merely a good knowledge of the structure of their native speech and information about the literature that is being rapidly produced in their speech, they need moral encouragement and a sense of pride in their speech and literature; for how can they communicate to others an interest which nobody communicated to them?

I am now going to read out the main objection to the use of vernacular languages which the Unesco Commission encountered and answered. Here they are in the right order:

- (1) *The language has no grammar and no alphabet* (Answer: There is nothing in the structure of any language which precludes it from becoming a vehicle of modern civilization. . . .)
- (2) *The Child already knows his mother tongue* (Answer: No child has completely learned his language before coming to school. . . . the school is not merely teaching the child his mother-tongue; it is using his mother tongue as the most effective means of teaching him other things). . . .)

(3) *The use of the mother tongue will prevent the acquisition of the second language.* (Answer: already given in the course of this talk).

(4) *Shortage of educational materials.* (Answer: Find or train competent authors and you'll have the books).

(5) *Shortage of suitably trained teachers.* (Answer: Enable teacher trainees to do at least some of their practice teaching in the mother tongue. ; and provide special teachers' guides and handbooks in order to prevent old-fashioned methods of teaching by rote. And remember, please, that 'a teacher is not adequately qualified to teach a language merely because it is his mother tongue'. (p. 69).

But what about the time the teaching of Maltese takes? ask some local educationists of the transitional period, that is, educationists whose education did not include very often even the elements of their own language. My answer is 'If the teacher is competent to teach Maltese in a manner both profitable and interesting, whatever time is devoted to the study of Maltese is not wasted. As for the amount of time allocated to it, that will be considered with the time that has to be allocated to other subjects with due regard to the national, educational and social importance of the people's language as the medium of this inter-group and inter-class communication at different social and educational levels that one aims at in the eventual expansion of adult education, the cultivation of the spoken word over the Rediffusion System, shortly on T.V. on the pulpits and in the Maltese lay or religious press, as well as the well-maintained growth of a national literature. No time is really wasted on the cultivation of the imponderables, and our native, more than 2,000 years old speech is one of the imponderables.'

I have just mentioned a national literature. But have we a good Maltese literature? some of you who have done no Maltese may ask. It is paradoxical that some of my countrymen who insist on our ability to govern ourselves are so blinded by irrational prejudice that they insist no less emphatically on our inability to produce our own literature. I have edited several anthologies and as my love of literature is not limited to Maltese, I can make comparisons and in a separate lecture I could have exemplified the heights reached by our best contemporary poets, especially Dun Karm, who no longer stands a solitary star shining in lonely majesty.

Maltese literature has attracted the attention of the well-known British author, A.J. Arberry, Sir Thomas Adams professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge and Fellow of the British Academy. He read our literature and liked it; not only liked it but wrote about it to a wider circle of people interested in literature. He has compiled a Maltese anthology published by Oxford University Press and has also compiled an

anthology of the best poems written by Dun Karm. The book of translated poems will be published by the University of Cambridge.]

Surely that is something we Maltese should be proud of, something that private and public schools should foster and encourage? Maltese literature is the image of our national identity. It is typically Maltese in that it preserves Christian values and loyalties no longer maintained, except comparatively to a limited degree, in other de-Christianised countries. The objections against the use of the mother tongue, those listed in the Unesco Monograph and others purely local, are generally urged by prejudiced persons, who may be in good faith but are not, therefore, less mistaken.]

Prejudice is the child of ignorance, and it is certainly out of place in private or public schools. Prejudice is as much out of place in an educational establishment as the devil in a church, and, of course, prejudice is not less prejudicial when it is supported, under false pretences, by single-track minds, men whose authority and competence (if they are really authoritative or competent in any subject!) lie outside the field of Linguistics and education.]

There is many an authority that is also an ignoramus outside his speciality.]

Language being a natural means of communication provides evidence of the quality of the soul within us. We Maltese are neither inarticulate nor dull.]

As a matter of fact, considering the size of the island, we are very articulate yet our literature is comparatively recent. Why? It could not be very old, because we started late and the reason is that we Maltese who never ruled our own destiny got so involved that we lost sight of first things and failed to appreciate the primary function of language neglecting Maltese as a medium of literary self-expression. Of course, the school authorities of the past and their unqualified superiors are much to blame for the loss of the literary heritage that would have been ours to enjoy. The more progressive, less handicapped schools of today have to catch up now and not merely accept Maltese as one of the school subjects but promote its growth as Malta's best medium of individual and collective self-expression.]

An inarticulate nation is dead. It is not a nation. It is a country of helots. It can never produce greatness either above or below. The masses and their leaders inevitably lack vision and where there is no vision the people perish; and they deserve to perish. The schools could make more Dun Karm's possible by just keeping the Torch he lighted for us burning.] If they keep it burning very low, the output will be negligible and the progress we are aiming at will be retarded again.]

Our future is in our hands. To you I say our future is in our schools and you are our future.]

THE AMERICAN STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

(Lecture delivered at the Royal University of Malta, 30th March 1960)

By H.R. HOPPE

The American pattern of higher education with almost 1800 universities, colleges, institutes, and what not, is indeed confusing to the outsider and by no means easy for an American to explain. Within this larger pattern, however, the state university has shown a certain coherence which to my mind justifies calling it a system.

Institutions of higher education in the United States may be divided into three main classes, privately supported institutions, publicly supported institutions, and church-sponsored institutions. In this paper I shall not have much occasion to refer to church-sponsored institutions, but shall frequently make comparisons between state universities and private universities. Usually the private institutions were privately founded, that is, by an individual or a group interested in education; however, a considerable number of present-day private institutions were originally church-sponsored, but in time lost their religious affiliation and became private ones. Harvard and Yale represent this kind of development. In general, publicly supported institutions were established by some governmental unit: a city, a country, or a state, and most of their support comes from taxpayers' money. The state university belongs to this class. In the course of time there has been a tendency for private institutions to be taken over by public bodies. For instance, Rutgers University, founded in 1766, during the Colonial period, was taken over by the State of New Jersey in 1945 and made the state university; the College of Charleston, chartered as a private college in 1785, was taken over by the City of Charleston, South Carolina, in 1837, thus becoming the oldest of the numerous municipal colleges and universities that exist today. The reverse process of a public institution being taken over by a private one is very rare; I cannot adduce a single example.

Private institutions were certainly the first to appear on the American educational scene. Famous universities like Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Princeton and two or three liberal arts colleges like Dartmouth and William and Mary were established during the Colonial period. Public institutions, and especially the state universities, came into being only after the colonies had won independence in 1782. During these formative

years of the Republic there was widespread awareness that an educated citizenry was necessary if this experiment in representative government was to function and endure; and the state university was designed to be the capstone to the educational pyramid that the new states, now no longer colonies, hoped would be erected. Of the thirteen original states, those that already possessed well-established private institutions, mostly northern states, did not charter state universities. Massachusetts with its Harvard, Connecticut with its Yale, New Jersey with its Princeton and Rutgers, Rhode Island with its Brown, New York with its Columbia, and New Hampshire with its Dartmouth College saw no reason to create state universities until well into the 19th, sometimes the 20th century. The pioneers in establishing state universities were the southern states.

In view of the bad publicity that the southern states have made for themselves in recent years because of their attitudes on racial desegregation and such matters, this must be placed on the credit side of their ledger: they showed real foresight in their early days of independence. Georgia, the earliest, chartered her state university in 1785, North Carolina in 1789, South Carolina in 1801. It may be added that the University of North Carolina has long been one of the best southern universities and among the better American universities. Next the two 'border' states of Maryland and Delaware — so called because they form a kind of border between the distinctively Northern and the distinctively Southern states — established their state universities in 1807 and 1833 respectively. Virginia, a leader, especially a political leader, among the southern states in the early years of the Republic, did not charter the University of Virginia till 1819, probably because, like the northern states, she already had William and Mary College, second only to Harvard in age. It is worthy of mention that the prime mover in the establishment of this university and the designer of its original buildings was Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and third President of the United States. 'Founder of the University of Virginia' was one of the three achievements that he wished to have recorded in his epitaph.

As new states were admitted to the Union, they promptly created new state universities, usually within two decades of admission. Considering states admitted before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1860, we find that Vermont (1791), the first new state to be admitted, established its state university in the same year; Ohio (1803), Iowa (1846), and Wisconsin (1848) one year later; Indiana (1816) four years later; Alabama (1819) twelve years later; Missouri (1821) and California (1850) eighteen years later; and Florida (1845) eight years later. Tennessee (1796), the third state to be admitted, had founded its state university two years earlier,

while still a territory, an example next followed by Michigan (1837), which had chartered a state university, under the cumbersome title of Catholepistemiad, twenty years before admission, and by Minnesota, whose university was established seven years before its admission as a state (1858). Among states admitted before the Civil War the laggards in chartering state universities were mostly southern or border states. Kentucky, the second new state to be admitted (1792) was 73 years in establishing a state university, Louisiana (1812) 48 years, Arkansas (1836) 35 years and Texas (1845) 36 years. Two northern states, however, were also laggards; Illinois's state university came 49 years after admission (1818), Maine's 45 years after admission (1820). Nevertheless the record of state responsibility for higher education is a respectable one. Every one of the twenty states admitted to the Union in this period eventually founded a state university; only one took more than 50 years to do so.

The American Civil War of 1860-4 marks a Great Divide in the history of state universities as it does in the history of the United States as a whole. Before that, the Federal government had done little for higher education; after that it did much. It is true that George Washington and many of those about him entertained the hope of establishing a National University, but nothing came of it. Also Congress in the first half of the 19th century did assign Federal land or the proceeds from the sale of Federal land to newly admitted states for educational purposes; but elementary and secondary education benefited principally from this aid. However, beginning in 1802 the national government granted two 'townships', a township being an area of 36 square miles, to each new western state for a state university, Ohio being the first beneficiary. But the great change comes with enactment of the Morrill Act in July 1862. This was passed in the midst of the Civil War, when the prospects of victory for the North were dim and uncertain. To each state loyal to the North it granted 30,000 acres of land for each Senator and Representative then in Congress for the purpose of establishing in each state at least one college where agriculture and technical subjects would be taught. Inasmuch as every state has two Senators and at least one Representative regardless of population, this meant that every loyal state was entitled to at least 90,000 acres to be used for higher education and technical subjects. After the war the provisions of the act were extended to the former rebel states. Under this act 69 land-grant colleges were created, many of them to become state universities. Not all land-grant colleges were public institutions. Cornell University, for example, benefited from the Morrill Act even though it was privately founded. But most of the state universities and state colleges established after

1862 were land-grant institutions. My own university, founded earlier as Michigan Agriculture College, was the first to take advantage of this act, and a few years ago, in 1955, celebrated its centenary with the added distinction that it was the oldest land-grant institution. Thus, though an upstart as compared with the Royal University of Malta, Michigan State University has a venerability of its own.

Among later forms of Federal aid to higher education, the Hatch Act of 1887 gave substantial annual grants of money to land-grant institutions for the erection and maintenance of agricultural experiment stations. In 1890 a so-called second Morrill Act gave direct financial aid to land-grant institutions, ranging from \$15,000 to \$30,000 annually to each one. In the first third of the 20th century a series of Congressional acts, most notable being the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, bestowed annual sums to land-grant colleges for furtherance of agricultural and vocational education. These funds were granted on a 'matching' principle, namely that the state must furnish an amount equal to that given by the Federal government. One product of these acts is the nationwide system of country agricultural agents. These men, themselves specialists in agriculture, and using the land-grant college or university as a base of operations, go out to the farmers in the various counties to give advice on farming problems and to keep them abreast of the latest discoveries of agricultural research. Incidentally, the tremendous productivity of American agriculture, whereby ten per cent of the population can feed the other ninety per cent and show a surplus to boot, owes much to the work of these agents. Because most of the state universities that came into existence after 1860 were also land-grant schools, their growth was greatly stimulated by Federal funds arising from these various acts.

Returning to the effects of the Morrill Act, let me explain that the recipients of these grants of land did not have to retain and establish themselves upon their shares of these 30,000-acre blocks of land. Most of them sold the greater part to provide capital. Nevertheless, they kept, directly or indirectly, some of this generous allotment; and today most of the land-grant colleges and universities are characterized by their extensive campuses, of sometimes hundreds of acres. The University of Wisconsin fronts one side of a lake itself several miles long; the University of Washington campus is bounded on one side by a considerable stretch of Puget Sound, an inland arm of the Pacific Ocean. Some, originally located in suburban areas, now appear dwarfed by the growth of cities around them; this has happened to places like the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Illinois. But even the most cramped campus would seem superfluously ample by European standards. A ten

to fifteen minute interval must be allowed between lectures so that students may make their way from one classroom building to another. The campuses are well landscaped and pleasing to the eye. Ample and well kept lawns lie between the buildings; plots of shrubbery are maintained or even created by judicious transplanting. Natural attractions like brooks and waterfalls, glens, even groves of trees are generally kept in something resembling their original state. The affectionate loyalty that most graduates feel for their alma maters is certainly nourished in considerable part by the lovely campus on which four years of their lives have been spent.

One vexing legacy of the Morrill Act has been the question of military training in the land-grant colleges and universities. Passed in the midst of a war when Congress was mindful of the country's need for officer material, the act contained a minor provision that military training should be offered. Most land-grant institutions observed this by making training compulsory the first two years and voluntary the second two years — for those who wished to obtain commissions in the officers' reserve. About fifteen years after each World War a wave of pacifistic or anti-militaristic feeling has swept over the student bodies and agitated the land-grant campuses. Some institutions have now dropped the compulsory two years; others still retain it. If the globe survives a third World War, the land-grant universities can expect a third wave of agitation.

To resume our survey of the growth of state universities after 1860, we find Kansas, West Virginia, Nevada, and Nebraska being admitted to the Union between 1861 and 1867 and all establishing state universities within ten years of their admission. When Colorado was admitted in 1876 its state university was already 15 years old. The years 1889 and 1890 produced a record crop of six new states: Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming. Of these, every one except Montana had already established a state university while still a territory, and Montana created hers four years later. Thereafter all the new states entered the Union with a state university already in being. Utah, the next to be admitted (in 1896), had a university already 46 years old. Alaska was 43 years old when the state was admitted in 1958, and Hawaii's was 52 years old when that state was admitted last year.

Meanwhile, those north Atlantic states which, at the founding of the Republic, saw no cause to create state universities, began to establish their own universities or state-supported institutions that later grew to universities. Pennsylvania, having in 1855 established a Farmers' High School, transformed it, under the Morrill Act, to Agriculture College of Pennsylvania in 1862, Pennsylvania State College in 1874, and

Pennsylvania State University in 1953. Other states, aided by the provisions of the Morrill Act, followed Pennsylvania's lead. Massachusetts and New Hampshire in 1863, Connecticut in 1881, and Rhode Island in 1892 established agricultural colleges that in course of time became state universities. New Jersey, as I have already mentioned, satisfied its need in a different way, by taking over Rutgers University. Paradoxically, the last to have a state-supported university was New York, the most populous and one of the wealthiest states. As early as 1894 it took over the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, later adding and supporting the College of Agriculture and the College of Home Economics at the same university. In 1900 it established the State College of Ceramics at Alfred University and in 1911 the State College of Forestry at Syracuse University, all of these being otherwise private universities. Thus the state did not totally neglect higher education, but rather tended to subsidize technical education and to leave the sciences, arts, and professions to the private institutions. In 1948, however, the legislature chartered the State University of New York, which now embraces the colleges already mentioned; eleven teacher training colleges; Harpur College, a liberal-arts college at Endicott; two medical schools, and a number of community colleges scattered about the state, altogether about 30 units. Unlike most other states, which began with a single university and later enlarged its scope in various ways, New York appears to be committed to a dispersed, loosely integrated system aimed, nevertheless, at eventually offering everything that a centralized state university offers. Thus with the advent of the State University of New York, every state in the Nation came to have one or more state-supported universities.

A few words now about the nomenclature of these state universities, which is confusing even to graduates of a state university like myself, and utterly perplexing to most outsiders, native or foreign. The surest evidence is the word 'State' in the title: Michigan State University, Ohio State University, Kent State University, Wayne State University. If the title is 'University of' plus the name of a state, the chances are good that it is a state university; thus the University of California, the University of Maine, the University of Illinois are all state universities. But watch out! There is at least one exception. The University of Pennsylvania is essentially a private university and proud of it. One source of its pride is that the great Benjamin Franklin had a main hand in its original foundation. Two state universities have the name of the state at the beginning of their name: Indiana University and Ohio University. (Ohio University and Ohio State University are not the same, though both are state universities!). Washington University, I hasten to add, is not the

university of the state of Washington; it is a private university situated in St. Louis, Missouri, nearly 2,000 miles from the state of Washington. If a compass-direction like northern, southern, eastern or western appears in the title along with the name of a state, then the chances are about fifty-fifty whether it is a state or private university. Southern Illinois University is one of the state universities of Illinois; University of Southern California is a private university. Finally there are some titles that seem purposely designed to confuse. Rutgers I have already mentioned. Purdue University in Indiana is also a state institution, in effect the technical branch of the state university, primarily an engineering school; whereas Indiana University teaches non-technical subjects and the professions of law and medicine. Miami University is one of the state universities of Ohio; the University of Miami, on the other hand, is a private university in Florida.

Already in the course of this exposition I have had to mention the presence of more than one state university in some states; so perhaps I shall do well to pause here and explain the matter. With one or two exceptions, all states began by creating one state university. As they grew in population and wealth there arose a corresponding need for enlarged facilities. They tackled the problem in three principal ways. Some simply created new universities, each one generally independent of the other. This has been Michigan's way, where there are now three state universities; the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University. In other states the parent state university has reached out to create branches or to take over institutions in other parts of the state. The University of California is a notable example of this process. Beginning at Berkeley in the north central part of the state overlooking San Francisco Bay, it later established its college of agriculture in a farming region and called it the University of California at Davis. When the population of the southern part of the state began to grow, and to grow more rapidly than the northern portion, the University created the University of California at Los Angeles, U.C.L.A. for short, now with an undergraduate enrollment almost as large as the parent in Berkeley. Recently it took over a teachers' college at Santa Barbara, about half way between Berkeley and Los Angeles, naming it the University of California at Santa Barbara. The third way has been the creation of a single board in control of all state institutions of higher learning, including the universities. Twelve states now have this system: Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, New York, Oregon, Texas, South Dakota and North Dakota. In some, like Oregon, each institution has its own subordinate governing board, with the state board exercising general control; in

others the state board runs everything. It should be observed that, whatever the system under which they operate, the state universities are pretty independent of the legislature. To the extent that it holds the purse strings, the legislature can exercise an indirect or ultimate control, the control of extinction or slow starvation, which it usually is not eager to practice. Universities may have to go hat in hand to their legislatures for annual or biennial appropriations, but legally they can usually employ the funds, once appropriated, as they see fit, so long as they do not outrageously flout the wishes of the legislature.

Having referred to the dependence of state universities on legislative appropriations, I wish to offer a few remarks about their general financial situation. Every year or two years when the state university's appropriation is under consideration by the legislature, everybody on the staff from the president down to the newest instructor is likely to feel butterflies fluttering in his stomach until the appropriation bill has passed. At such times I have heard staff members express a wish that they were in a private, endowed university where the staff would not be subject to such uncertainties. What they too conveniently forget is that the income from invested endowment funds has been declining while costs have been rising. In many a private university the certainty of endowment income is like the certainty of a strait-jacket that is drawn tighter every year. On the other hand, legislative appropriations, because based ultimately on taxation, have followed the tendency for taxes to rise with the rise of governmental expenditures and costs. Outsiders are likely to be dazzled by the munificence of the half-dozen universities in the Harvard-Yale-Columbia class and to overlook the fact that financially the state-supported universities are much better off than the run of private universities. Furthermore some of the state universities have greater endowments than many a well-known private university. The University of California, with over \$86,000,000, has a greater endowment than Cornell, Northwestern, Princeton, Rochester, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins universities, each with over \$60,000,000. Minnesota with more than \$59,000,000, is wealthier than Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Washington, Duke, Emory, and New York universities. The universities of Michigan and of Washington with endowments of about \$25,000,000 are in the same class with Buffalo, Wesleyan and Brown universities. Being in states whose legislatures have long been generous in their appropriations, these state universities can use their endowment income for academic luxuries that many a private university cannot afford. Furthermore, accustomed to thinking of the very wealthy Universities like Harvard, Columbia, Chicago, and Yale, each with endowments of \$100,000,000 or more, as in a class by themselves, you

may be as surprised as I was to learn — and I am not a Texan — that the greatest endowment of all is held by the University of Texas system, over \$287,000,000 as compared with Harvard's \$278,000,000. I do not know any details about the origin of this vast endowment, but presume it represents some of the wealth from the Texas oil lands. The University of Texas can really eat its appropriations cake and have its endowment cake too!

Now some remarks about the over-all control of state universities. The control of American universities, whether private or public, is different from that of most European universities. The latter trace their origins to mediæval times when teachers gathered in some convenient city, Paris, Bologna or Oxford, in order to lecture to their students in a communal atmosphere. When the increase in students and teachers called for some kind of formal organization and administration, this body, called the university, was created by the teachers and its control rested in the hands of the teachers. New universities as they came into being tended to adopt the same kind of administration, so that European universities — French universities perhaps excepted — enjoy a high degree of autonomy, with control of curricula and students vested in the teaching staff and university policy determined by a senate or convocation made up of teachers and, often, graduates of the university. Whether practice approximates to this beautiful theory I sometimes wonder. At any rate, the situation was different when higher education came to the future United States of America. There was no time for slowly sinking roots and allowing the leisurely growth of an educational organism. When our first institution of higher learning, Harvard College, was founded in 1636, the colony of Massachusetts had been settled only sixteen years, and the wilderness was still not far away. The general administrative organization had to be established first; the teaching staff came later. In chartering the college the Massachusetts legislature created a corporation made up of the president and a governing board in whom ultimate authority was vested. The model, I have little doubt, was the chartered corporations like the Muscovy Company, the East India Company, or the Virginia Company which had played so great a part in opening England's trade with foreign parts and in setting up her first colonies in the New World. In fact the Massachusetts Bay Colony was itself the creature of just such a corporation, the Massachusetts Bay Company.

When legislatures chartered subsequent private universities like Columbia and Yale they followed the same system of bestowing authority on a president and governing board; and in turn, when state legislatures created state universities they took the same model. But with at least one impor-

tant difference. The boards of most private universities are self-perpetuating; that is, the members of the board choose their own successors. Membership on the boards of state universities is appointive (usually by the governor) or elective, or some combination of the two. Whereas membership on the boards of private universities is often for life, on state-university boards it is usually for fixed terms of six to ten years. To maintain continuity of policy the terms of office are usually 'staggered' so that not more than a fourth or a third of the membership can change at any one time. The boards go under various names; trustees, regents, overseers and governors are the commonest terms. Besides the appointive or elective members there are often *ex officio* members, most commonly the governor of the state and the superintendent of public instruction. Sometimes there are a few alumni representatives, that is members elected by the graduates of the university. Representation of the teaching staff is almost non-existent. On a few boards one to three faculty representatives are members without vote or are permitted to attend meetings as observers. Election or appointment of staff members of the same university to the board is almost unknown. I have heard tell that a few years ago the retired football coach of the University of Michigan got elected in the regular way to the university's board. Friends who were living in Michigan at that time tell me he made a much better board member than one would dare expect, considering the intellectual calibre one looks for in football coaches. This is the only such case that has come to my attention; and I can hardly deem a football coach as speaking for the teaching staff in the same way as a professor of philosophy, physics, or history.

By a sort of overwhelmingly tacit agreement members of university boards are thus expected to be laymen, not academics. In all except church-supported institutions they are preponderantly business men. Often they are graduates of the university; nearly always they are persons who have demonstrated an interest in the university or in higher education in general. Frequently, and this is especially true of private universities, they are chosen for somewhat mercenary reasons: a wealthy business man is appointed to the board in the hope that, his interest in the institution stimulated by membership on the board, he will, in his lifetime or at his death, leave a handsome bequest to the university — and he often does! A more positive value of such men is their inside knowledge of the financial world, which is of great benefit in the investment of a university's endowment funds. They usually place their knowledge disinterestedly at the service of the board, with the result that the record of most universities for efficient management of their investments is very good. The endowments of universities like Harvard, Yale, and Chicago that run into

the hundreds of millions and of many others that can be counted by tens of millions are not all the accumulations of gifts; much represents increase through wise investment.

Though the financial benefit of having a governing board dominated by business men is undeniable — what university ever has enough money? — their influence in other ways is not always so beneficial for the peculiar needs of a university. Academic freedom is one of these. Even for those nurtured in a university environment this is a nebulous term. We can usually recognize its presence and always recognize its absence; but we are hard put to it to define the term. To a 'practical' businessman who has been managing a bank or a chain of multiple shops, still more to a self-made man who thinks of himself as having single-handedly created a large and successful factory, academic freedom sounds like perversity or an excuse for loafing. He knows jolly well what he'd do if his office staff started talking that way! Sack the lot. And he has a tendency to act in the same way when a question of academic freedom comes before a university board. The loyalty-oath controversies that have beset several universities in recent years have accordingly been more vexing than they deserved. Alarmed by reports that some of their teachers were Communists or entertained Communist opinions, a few governing boards tried to impose a loyalty oath containing a disclaimer of membership in or sympathy with the Communist party. When the staff, usually speaking through the mouths of thoroughly non-Communist professors, protested against this as a violation of academic freedom, the boards tended to react somewhat as a 19th century industrialist would have reacted to strike threat — close down the plant and hire a new labor force. Fortunately, common sense and the cooling effect of time have cooperated to bring these controversies to a sensible conclusion. Let me observe here that though state universities have their share of troubles over academic freedom, they are not the prime sufferers. Over the years there have probably been more encroachments or assaults on academic freedom in private than in state universities. The splendid record of enlightenment shown by universities like Harvard and Yale where in the course of two or three centuries the teaching staff has 'trained' the administration and governing board to its way of thinking about academic freedom — this record diverts our attention from the great number of lesser private universities which have been much less enlightened. Considering all the universities, I think the chances for academic freedom are well above average in state universities.

Another less than beneficial influence that can be laid in part to business-man domination on boards is a tendency to appreciate practical subjects at the expense of theoretical, to prefer, for instance, applied science

to pure science. In earlier days this would be shown in the way in which a department of industrial chemistry might have a proportionally larger budget for salary and equipment than the department of chemistry. As regards the physical sciences, especially physics and chemistry, the attitude has changed radically during the past three decades. There pure research, theoretical physics and the like have demonstrated their prestige value as well as practical value so triumphantly that boards are disposed to give such departments first claim on funds and encouragement. Other departments like geology get thinner fare, and the biological sciences still thinner. Arts and letters of course are away off in Siberia. While the physics department may get hundreds of thousands of dollars for a baby cyclotron — if cyclotrons come that cheap — the department of classics may have trouble in getting a hundred dollars for one of its professors to complete a book on Latin epigraphy. But it would be unfair to place the burden of blame for this on the businessman. The roots of this attitude go deep into the national past. Even the humanistically trained Thomas Jefferson, who read his stint of Greek for a half hour every morning, envisioned American education as largely practical training of competent workers to fulfill the demands of a new country and a new society. Benjamin Franklin held similar views. As we have seen, the Morrill Act and its successors were designed to foster education in 'agricultural and mechanic arts'. And today most students come to the university to fit themselves for a particular occupation like journalism, hotel administration, engineering, social work, teaching, and the like. The university governing boards are thus only manifesting the bias of American society.

The charter which established an American university, public or private, created not only a governing board with final authority but also a president to be the board's executive and administrative officer. He is without doubt the most important single officer in an American university. Appointed by the board, he is also, in effect if not by title, the chairman of the board; and so long as he 'delivers the goods' he usually dominates the board. His responsibility and authority are much greater than those of the Continental university's rector or the British university's vice-chancellor. Upon his character, vision, intelligence, and energy depends much of the effectiveness of the university. If the board deems his regime ineffective it can forthwith dismiss him.

Because of the administrative talents that the office requires, the president of a large university has great prestige within his state and often is a national figure. The most famous example of the latter is Woodrow Wilson, who rose from the presidency of Princeton University to the presidency of the United States. Without entering active politics, the univer-

sity president is often 'drafted' to serve in important Federal offices. The president of my university was granted leave a few years ago to serve several months in Washington as under-secretary of Defence in charge of manpower. He is now chairman of the joint Canadian-American defence board, a highly responsible position which, fortunately takes him from the University only intermittently. I would not want to intimate that during his absence in Washington chaos came to the university, but it underlines the importance of a university president that there was a general sense of marking time. Important decisions and changes in university policy had to be deferred till his return.

One great drawback to the constitutional set-up whereby the board and president are legally the university, and the teaching staff something of an afterthought, is the creation of a barrier, invisible but real, between 'faculty' and 'administration'. (In American parlance the faculty is the body of permanent, full-time teachers and researchers in a university.) The board itself, made up of laymen, meeting only a few times yearly, and usually considering only matters referred to it by the president, is naturally remote from the faculty. The qualities required of a president in most of his functions are non-academic; he must be a good organizer and administrator, an effective negotiator with the state legislature when the budget is up for consideration, a good public speaker if at all possible, a man with a keen scent for sources of money, plus a host of other capabilities, nearly all of them on the extrovert side. Such men can be found in an academic community, but they are rare. The increasing tendency has been to draw upon non-academic sources for university presidents. A good illustration is the presidency of the university where I took my B.A. The president when I matriculated was a former professor and world-famous astronomer. Before I graduated he retired and was replaced by the former treasurer of the university. Though in the long run the ex-treasurer proved a successful president, in early years there was much complaint among the faculty that he didn't talk their language. Accordingly the example of General Eisenhower, in other words a proved organizer and administrator, who served briefly as president of Columbia University, is becoming more typical than that of James M. Conant, former president of Harvard and professor of chemistry before that. The administration of a large university, from president downward, has become so complicated, specialized and non-professorial, that already at least one school for university administrators has come into being.

Because of the increasing size and complexity of all universities and because the president must be several diverse personalities in one body, he has had to delegate many of his duties. The consequence has been a

great enlargement of the administrative staff of the university. When I came to my present university it had about 6,000 students and five deans. It now has about 20,000 students, three vice-presidents, some fifteen deans and a multiplicity of assistant deans and assistants to the deans. In this proliferation you can see Parkinson's Law hard at work. Sometimes it seems that we have two administrators for every active teacher. This corps of administrators in their citadel -- and often their offices are housed in one central structure, the Administration Building -- further enlarges the barrier between faculty and administration. The faculty tend to look upon the administration as the Enemy, the source of bounty, it is true, but the enemy whose moves and motives are always to be regarded with suspicion, to whom as little as possible must be yielded and from whom as much as possible must be cajoled. I imagine the Maltese populace looked in much the same way upon the Knights of St. John in their Valletta citadel.

This barrier might never have been erected if the original charters had specified the powers and responsibilities of the faculty with respect to the governing board and president on one hand and the students on the other, somewhat as the American Constitution defined and separated the powers of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. But this would have been the manifestation of something very like divine foresight. The legislatures vested ultimate power in the president and board, thinking no doubt that other things would take care of themselves. But presidents and boards, being human, were chary of relinquishing power. Don't think for a moment that the venerable private universities escaped the problem. They merely had an additional century or more to arrive at a workable arrangement between faculty and administration, usually through the creation of a sort of constitution which defines the relationship between the two and creates faculty organizations -- senates, committees and the like -- to regularize it. The state universities and the newer private universities are at various stages on the road to such a goal. Some state universities, like the University of Illinois and the University of California, are near the goal, having strong, responsible faculty government with faculty control over educational policies. Others have hardly started on the road. There the relation of the administration, including the board, toward the faculty is very paternalistic. The administration decides upon a policy, too often without consulting the faculty in any way, and the faculty must carry it out.

Nevertheless, despite this painting of the dark side of the picture, I believe the American public has displayed a basic common sense in placing ultimate control of state universities in the hands of boards responsible

to the public, directly or indirectly. To paraphrase Clemenceau's dictum about war and generals, education is much too important to be run by teachers. There is a temptation for professionals to run a profession for themselves, not the public they are supposed to serve. The attitude of the American Medical Association toward its public responsibilities has not always appeared disinterested or edifying. I am not sure that a university run solely by its faculty would display any more sense of responsibility. It must be said for the American state university that it has rarely lost sight of its purpose, to serve its state and nation. Visitors from abroad have waxed satiric over some absurdities in this concept. If offered for academic credit, courses on flower arrangement or the use of cosmetics deserve ridicule, and get it — from Americans as well as foreigners. Some courses are better than they appear at first glance. I was inclined to look down my nose at a degree in Hotel Administration until I saw the amount of chemistry, physics, economics and the like which it entails. I still reserve my esteem for a degree in philosophy, mathematics, or history, but I no longer regard a B. A. in Hotel Administration with utter contempt.

One way that the state university from the outset tried to serve the public was to set fees as low as possible. Though in theory some state universities charge no tuition fee whatever to residents of their states, in practice all exact something. But they are always much less than in private universities. The tendency is for state university fees to be highest in the northeastern part of the nation and to diminish as one moves southward and westward. Thus fees in non-technical courses range from \$250 or \$400 a year in northeastern states like New York, Maine, Maryland, and Pennsylvania; from \$150 to \$250 in central states like Michigan, Iowa and Nebraska, and from \$50 to \$100 in southern states like Texas, Florida and Georgia and western states like California, Washington and Wyoming. A comparison of fees in some states where there are a state university and a private university of comparable rank is instructive. A student in liberal arts at Pennsylvania State University pays \$250, and at the University of Pennsylvania (private), \$800 a year; at the University of Missouri he would pay \$70, at Washington University in St. Louis, \$600; at the University of California \$85, at Stanford University, \$750. No wonder that with the exception of two private universities in New York City, all the universities with enrolments of 15,000 or more are state universities.

Another form of public service has been coeducation, in other words extending higher education to the women of the state. In this, state universities, though not absolute pioneers, have been well to the front. The

oldest coeducational institution of higher education was Oberlin College, Ohio, which first enrolled women in 1837. But the state universities of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota and Nebraska were coeducational from their start; others like Missouri, Michigan, California, Illinois, and Wisconsin became coeducational soon after their founding; and all that were established after 1880 were coeducational. Six Southern States have women's branches, their state university proper being open only to men. Though coeducation is now pretty general in American universities, private and public, remember that Princeton does not admit women at all, and Yale does not admit them to undergraduate instruction. Harvard admits them by the back door, so to speak; they enter Radcliffe College but get most of their teaching from Harvard instructors.

In the addition of new courses of study and fields of investigation, the state universities, following this concept of service, have been originators or early initiators. Agriculture as a course of study for a degree and as a subject for scientific research, seems to have been a child of the state universities. Now it has become so specialized that it has subdivided itself into departments like citriculture, floriculture, horticulture, farm crops, agricultural economics, agricultural engineering, agricultural chemistry, rural sociology, and a host of others. Business administration and finance, first established at the private University of Pennsylvania, was quickly taken up by the University of California, later followed by many other state (and private) universities. Home economics got its start in the state colleges, later state universities, of Iowa, Kansas and Illinois in the 1870's. The first school of journalism was founded at the University of Missouri in 1908, the forerunner of many others in state and private universities. The study of police administration started at the University of California and has spread to many others. The list could be extended almost indefinitely.

A recently developed kind of service to the public has been the creation of bureaux and laboratories which put the skills and knowledge of the staff to use in solving particular public problems. A Bureau of Governmental Research will stand ready to help cities and lesser communities improve their municipal administration; a Bureau of Business and Economic Research will make surveys in order to suggest the kinds of new industries a community may attract. Labour and Industrial Relations Centres are available to labour and industrial groups, not so much for arbitration of immediate disputes but to make long-range plans in areas where friction may occur. Highway Traffic Safety Centres give municipalities and counties the benefit of their knowledge and experience in solving traffic safety problems. In all these the services of economists, political sci-

tists, sociologists, statisticians, highway and civil engineers, police specialists, and many others are enlisted from the staff of the university.

Perhaps the most notable 'service' activity of state universities has been extension work; continuing education or adult education might be a better term. The activity of the county agricultural agent and his feminine colleague, the home economics extension agent, represents one phase. Related to their work are the 'short courses' offered on university campuses. Here particular occupational groups, police sergeants, life-insurance salesmen, dairy farmers, and so on spend one, two, three weeks at the university in order to take refresher courses designed to bring them abreast of recent developments in their occupations. In many state universities there are miniature dormitory villages where these temporary students eat and sleep while taking their short courses. Another phase is the year-round offering of courses, commonly at night, at points all up and down the state. In small towns, classrooms of the local high schools will be used; in large cities whole buildings in the business district are taken over for classroom space. Conducted by members of the university staff, courses of all sorts are offered. The bulk of courses inclines to the practical: engineering draughtmanship, machine design, surveying. Others are designed for better, more understanding living: courses in marital and parental adjustment — serving a purpose similar to the Cana movement here in Malta — courses in adjustment to retirement and old age, courses on contemporary events. Regular academic courses are also offered: Shakespeare, the modern novel, statistics, American history, to name only a few. I've never heard of anyone getting a degree by extension courses alone, but many who for matrimonial or economic reasons had to leave university with a year to go have been able to complete their degrees by extension courses. So varied and so extensive has this extension work become that, although the services of the regular academic staff are used, a large staff of instructors devoted to extension teaching alone has had to be employed. Sometimes, including the county agents, the extension division can number almost a fourth of the entire university staff.

This paper can best be closed with a tribute to the state university by a British-educated historian, former professor in both private and state universities and now president of a private American university. "The state university is the parent of some of the most valuable academic reforms in American education. The persuasion that two or three institutions on the Atlantic Seaboard are the cause and source of all excellence and growth in American education is an illusion shared only by the uninformed. It was the land grant institution with its experimental and occasionally

raffish open-mindedness that brought learning and research closer to the lives and interests of a new people struggling to control their environment, and gave dignity to pursuits that had no classical roots. The excesses and even nonsense of which these institutions were sometimes guilty were but the shadowside of an enthusiasm for knowledge and a desire to apply it as widely as possible. The open frontier between university and society brought about understanding and support. The presence on the same campus of students of technology and literature, nursing and physics, agriculture and history, pharmacy and mathematics, took the idea of the university into the entire community, and took the concept of efficiency and excellence into occupations and pursuits hitherto closed by traditional ignorance.*

*C.W. De Kiewiet, 'American Education and the British Commonwealth', *Universities Quarterly*, xiii (Feb. 1959), 139-40.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF GERRARD WINSTANLEY

By BERNARD C. WEBER AND WARREN I. SMITH

ONE of the major domestic issues of mid-seventeenth century England was the problem of how to work out and apply a pragmatic concept of the power of government. Consequently England during the period of the Interregnum became a significant battleground of ideas when diverse militant and articulate groups struggled for power and dominance. The military phase of the Great Rebellion began on August 22, 1642, when King Charles I raised the royal standard at Nottingham. This action represented the culmination of some forty years of intensified struggle for supremacy between the Stuart dynasty and Parliament. Intermingled with the constitutional causes were religious, economic, and social factors. A remarkable feature of the English civil war is the point that although both sides suffered from internal dissension, the faction which suffered the most from such disputes won the war. After nearly four years of military strife the first phase of the conflict ended when Charles I surrendered himself to the Scots on May 5, 1646.

Following the royal surrender a wave of radicalism permeated the ranks and even the staffs of the Army. With the intervention of the Army in political affairs during Charles I's imprisonment, sharp divisions appeared in English Puritanism, and the various sects devised their own Utopias. The existence of a multiplicity of sects led to mutual jealousies and rivalries.¹

Among these groups were the political Levellers. Dissatisfied with the cautious and conservative plan of reform worked out by certain officers, this militant soldiers' party advocated a more radical program, political in its emphasis rather than social.² In *An Agreement of the People* the political Levellers proposed the establishment of a democratic form of government, limited and restrained by an exact written statement of the laws of nature and of reason.³ The political thought of these Levellers

¹ Similarities of the different groups are set forth in William Y. Tindall, *John Bunyan Mechanick Preacher* (New York, 1934), pp. 4-5.

² George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, rev. ed. (New York, 1950), p. 480.

³ This pamphlet is printed in *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution*, ed. by Don M. Wolfe (New York, 1944), pp. 226-34.

rested on the conviction that the life of a nation should be in accordance with certain moral principles.⁴ John Lilburne was probably their best known and most vocal leader.⁵

Among the interesting offshoots of the political Levellers were the social Levellers or 'Diggers' of St. George's Hill. They were led by the egalitarian-minded Gerrard Winstanley, a native of Lancashire. In this paper an effort has been made to present the governmental organization proposed by Gerrard Winstanley and to show how he hoped to carry out the social and political philosophy of the Digger Movement. This phase of Winstanley's philosophy seems to be inadequately presented in published monographs.⁶

David Petegorsky has stated that the Digger Movement represents another link in the long chain of socialist thought that successive centuries of agrarian revolt have forged. The comprehensiveness of the Digger's social philosophy constituted an interesting effort to give the age-old vision of a cooperative society an adequate theoretical framework.⁷ The reason for the rise of the Digger Movement, which at first was considered a left wing of the Leveller party, can probably be stated best in Winstanley's own words addressed to Oliver Cromwell:

For is not this a common speech among the people, we have parted with our Estates, we have lost our Friends in the Wars, which we willingly gave up, because Freedom was promised us; and now in the end we have new Task-Masters, and our old burdens increased; and though all sorts of people have taken an Engagement to cast out Kingly Power, yet Kingly Power

⁴For a detailed discussion see Theodore C. Pease, *The Leveller Movement; a study in the history and political theory of the English great civil war* (Washington, D.C., 1916), and Joseph Frank, *The Levellers; a history of the writings of three seventeenth-century social democrats; John Lilburne, Richard Overton, William Walwyn* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955). Also useful is *The Leveller tracts, 1647-1653*, ed. by William Haller and Godfrey Davies (New York, 1944).

⁵The fullest account is by M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne, the Leveller, a Christian democrat* (London, 1947). William Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1938) discusses Lilburne's writings and career up to the Long Parliament.

⁶Lewis H. Berens, who made the first extended study of Winstanley, has interpreted him essentially as a forerunner of Henry George. See *The Digger movement in the days of the Commonwealth as revealed in the writings of Gerrard Winstanley* (London, 1906). Eduard Bernstein in his *Socialismus und Demokratie in der grossen englischen Revolution*, translated by H.L. Stenning as *Cromwell and Communism...* (London, 1930) interprets Winstanley as a forerunner of Marx.

⁷David Petegorsky, *Left-wing democracy in the English Civil War; a study of the social philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley* (London, 1940) p. 13.

remains in power still in the hands of those who have no more right to the Earth than ourselves.⁸

For them the revolution had not gone far enough. Those who formed the Digger party appear to have been drawn from those members of the less prosperous middle class forced by economic stress into the ranks of the propertyless.⁹ This was true of Winstanley himself, an unsuccessful small merchant.

The aims of the Diggers were summed up briefly by Winstanley as follows: government without buying and selling, laws that assure a free and peaceful commonwealth, separate residence for each family, improvement of every trade to greater excellency, education of all children, greater subjection of children to parents and elders, common planting and reaping of the earth, common store houses for all, and no idle persons or beggars in the land.¹⁰ In contrast to the political Levellers, emphasis was placed primarily on social reform.

Winstanley's earliest writings showed a mystic influence. In these writings he relied on non-worldly forces to bring about his ideal society. God, he said, would destroy the power of darkness, and when His work was completed, He would dwell in the whole creation;¹¹ neither would He suffer the scoffers to destroy His people.¹² One should be patient in his bondage for the work of freedom was in the hand of Christ.¹³ This point of view was somewhat altered by 1649. Although Winstanley retained his conviction that only God could achieve the final redemption of mankind, he urged that the propertyless class itself begin the process through direct action.¹⁴ The action took the form of the Saint George Hill endeavour. Aided by a small group of followers, Winstanley for a year attempted to take over the commons of Saint George Hill and set up his experimental state. After about a year this experiment failed as a result of the opposition of the surrounding populace. This endeavour was no effort to seize control by force. Only the ancient commons, wasteland, and recently won lands were to be set free to all who were willing to come into the

⁸ 'The law of freedom in a platform or true magistracy restored,' in *The words of Gerrard Winstanley, with an appendix of documents relating to the Digger movement* (hereinafter cited as *Works*), ed. by George H. Sabine (Ithaca, New York, 1941), p. 507.

⁹ Sabine, *Political Theory*, p. 479.

¹⁰ 'To the friendly and unbyassed reader,' *Works*, p. 515.

¹¹ 'The Myserie of God', *Works*, p. 81.

¹² 'The saints paradise', *Works*, pp. 94-5.

¹³ 'The new law of righteousness budding forth, to restore the whole creation from bondage of the curse', *Works*, p. 183.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

practice of the new government and to be obedient to the laws thereof. Others would have remained, as Winstanley phrased it, in the way of the conqueror, buying and selling, until they were willing to join.¹⁵ A last change was made in Winstanley's approach in 1652 when Cromwell was beseeched to use his influence and power to put into effect the new government suggested in *The Law of Freedom*, a work dedicated to him. The head of the Commonwealth had the opportunity to act for common freedom if he would.¹⁶

The Law of Freedom may be taken as a summation of the basic political and social concepts of Winstanley. Primarily in this work is one able to see a detailed consideration of how the earlier Digger concepts were to be put into effect. This document was not meant as a final constitution, but instead Winstanley submitted it to Cromwell in the form of suggestions on which to base a future constitution.

Winstanley believed that in the beginning the earth and its fruits were held in common. Every man had an equal right to till the soil and to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the fish in seas. But this freedom was broken by the power of covetousness, pride, and self love.¹⁷ Kingly power rose: first, by drawing the people from a common enjoyment of the earth to the crafty art of buying and selling, and by advancing itself through the power of the sword, when the art of buying had made the people quarrel among themselves.¹⁸ This concept is somewhat in keeping with the old vision of the Golden Age held by the early Christian fathers and Seneca, the Roman philosopher.

The original source of magistracy was common preservation, and it arose first in the private family. The two roots of law were common preservation and self preservation. A true magistrate's work was to maintain the common law, which was the root of right government, to preserve peace for everyone, and to cast out all self centered principles and interests which were tyrannical and oppressive.¹⁹

True freedom, in Winstanley's conception, lay where a man received his nourishment and preservation, and that was in the use of the earth. A man was better to have no body than to lack food for it; therefore, this denial of the use of the earth to brethren was oppression and bondage.²⁰ In the government of a land there were three factors—laws, fit officers, and a faithful execution of the laws, for therein lay the very life of govern-

¹⁵ 'The law of freedom...' *Works*, p. 513.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

¹⁷ 'The new law of righteousness', *Works*, p. 182.

¹⁸ 'The law of freedom...', *Works*, p. 531.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 536-8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 519-20.

ment.²¹ One had to establish either a commonwealth or a monarchy.²²

William, Duke of Normandy, had taken possession of the earth for his freedom and had disposed of the English land to his friends as he pleased, thereby making the conquered English his servants. At least this was Winstanley's belief. Every king from William I to Charles I had been a successor of that conquest, and laws had been made to confirm the seizure. Winstanley's disapproval applied likewise to the old and new gentry, who were but the successors of the Normans. Lawyers and the clergy, appointed to enforce the foreigner's law, stuck close to their master, the king, and to his monarchical oppressing government, otherwise they would have to work to support themselves.²³ Regal government might well be called the government of highwaymen, who had stolen the earth from the younger brethren by force and held it from them. The ruler of such a state sheds blood not to free the people from oppression, but in order that he might dominate them.²⁴

In contrast, a Commonwealth government appeared to Winstanley to govern the earth without buying and selling, and thereby it became an organization of peace and freedom. This government would make provision for the oppressed, the weak, and the simple, as well as for the rich, the wise, and the strong; it would not depend upon the will of any particular man or men, for it was seated in the spirit of mankind.²⁵ The victory over the king provided an opportunity to re-establish the only basis of quality, which had been prevented so long by the descendants of the conquerors.

In *The Law of Freedom* Winstanley provided for four levels of government — the family, the town or the parish, the county, and the nation. A father, as head of the family, was to cherish his children until they grew wise and strong. Also he was to instruct them in reading, languages, arts and sciences, or he was to provide for their instruction in some trade.²⁶

On the second level of government, there were to be peacemakers, overseers, soldiers, task-masters and executioners. The principal duties of the peacemakers were to sit in council, to administer the parish, to prevent troubles, and to preserve the common peace. In their efforts to settle quarrels between individuals they were empowered to use only persuasion. If unable to reconcile the parties, they were to command the offenders to appear at the Judge's court, a higher tribunal in the judicial system. These peacemakers were also to be responsible for warning officers who

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 528-9.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 527.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 527-8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 533-4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 545.

neglected their duty, and in case the neglect continued they were to notify the County Senate or National Parliament.²⁷

Overseers were divided into four classifications. One group would aid the peacemakers in preserving order. Smaller matters could be settled by the overseer without reference to the peacemaker if the solution was mutually satisfactory to the disputants. Supervision of the training of young people in the trades was a second task. Every type of trade or rural skill had an overseer. No one could be idly reared. Seven years of apprenticeship were necessary before one could become a Master. Other overseers saw that tradesmen brought in their work to the stockhouses and shops. Regulation of the clerks of these establishments was a further responsibility. Finally, there was a group, over sixty years of age, who served as general overseers. The theory of this elaborate system was that so many watchful eyes would compel obedience to the law.²⁸

The soldier was like a city marshal of today and always under an order from an officer, usually a peacemaker, or one with greater authority. His duty was to apprehend offenders and bring them before the officers or courts. One could be released while awaiting trial unless his actions warranted the death penalty. This freedom was permitted for two reasons: first, to prevent prison cruelty, and second, to present an opportunity for the accused to aid himself by the example of his righteous living. If an offender should escape while in this state of temporary freedom, the penalty was death.²⁹

Task-masters were to take under their supervision those who were sentenced by the Judge to lose their freedom and to assign them work. The quantity and quality of the prisoner's food was lessened if he did not work. 'A rod is prepared for the fool's back' was to be the motto of these officers. Again there was the death penalty for a prisoner who ran away while serving a sentence.³⁰ If such an extreme penalty became necessary, the executioner performed this function.³¹

Over these local governmental units were imposed the county authorities, a Judge and the Judge's Court or County Senate. A Judge heard cases referred to him by the peacemakers and lower authorities. Under no circumstances could he interpret the law, as Winstanley implied the royal judges had done. Furthermore, no fee'd lawyer could practice before the court.³² Assisting the Judge was the County Senate, composed of the Judge, all peacemakers, overseers, and soldiers within the circuit. Its duty was the supervision of county officers and the settlement of disorders

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 545-6.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 546-51.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 552-3.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 553-4.

³¹ Ibid., p. 554.

³² Ibid., pp. 554-5.

that might break or disturb the people.³³ This Senate or Court was to meet four times a year in the County and four times in the large cities.

At the head of the whole government was a yearly elected parliament which served as the highest court of equity and oversaw all other courts, officers, and actions of governmental officers. This parliament possessed the power to remove all grievances and to ease any oppression of the people. Its particular work was four-fold: first, as a tender father it gave out orders for free planting and reaping of the Commonwealth land (abbey lands, crown lands, Bishops' lands, parks, forest and commons); second, this body, with the consent of the people, could abolish old laws and substitute new laws for the comfort of the people; third, it was to see that all burdens were actually removed from the people and when the land was freed to keep it so; and last, this central authority had the right to wage war and manage the army.³⁴ This army originated from the necessity of common preservation. In peace time the magistracy alone composed the army.

Information was to be secured for this central government through a system of postmasters, who were required to send detailed statements of the news of their respective areas. This information could be used to prepare an overall program for the nation.³⁵

Winstanley urged the election of those who had shown themselves to be promoters of common freedom. Office holders, he stated, should be men of peaceful spirits and conversation. These men should have suffered under royal oppression and have chanced the loss of their lives and estates and yet remained constant, for this type of official would be sympathetic to the bondage of others. In addition, those chosen were to be experienced men in the laws of peaceful and right ordered government, those not afraid to speak the truth, and men over forty, who were more likely to be experienced, courageous and non-covetous. In fact, Winstanley believed few were fit to be officers because the royal clergy were continually instilling their principles into the people and nursing ignorance in them.³⁶

Winstanley believed those competent to select the officers of the Commonwealth were males over twenty years of age,³⁷ except drunkards, quarrelers, fearful or ignorant men, those given to pleasure and sports, and those who brought and sold. Furthermore, both monarchical supporters and followers of the Parliamentary party were to be denied the right to vote. Supporters of Parliament were not to be allowed to vote because an ignorant spirit of revenge might move them to disturb the common peace.³⁸

³³ Ibid., pp. 555-6.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 556-61.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 570-1.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 543-4.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 596.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 542.

Throughout the nation there was to be a Commonwealth ministry elected yearly, whose duty was to read to the people on three subjects: first, the affairs of the whole land; second, the law of the Commonwealth; and third, entertaining speeches concerning the old government of Israel and the 'arts and sciences'. Not only could the chosen minister give sermons, but any one who had experience could speak. The minister could not assume all of the power for himself, as the clergy were accused of having done.³⁵ Thus the clergy assumed the role of teachers and became quite secularized. Organized religion, as such, ceased to have a place in the new State. Winstanley had definite concepts of the role of the Church in society.

The education of the Commonwealth was, under no circumstances, to create a scholarly class. Winstanley believed that this group would spend time trying to become masters of those who laboured. Yet as part of the preparation for a trade all were to study Arts and Sciences, as this knowledge would enable one better to govern himself and prepare himself for the foreign service. This study made better Commonwealth men as the citizens would be acquainted with the nature of government.³⁶

In answer to the question in what trade should mankind be instructed, Winstanley suggested study in every trade. Also arts and sciences were not to be neglected, for thereby one might discover the secrets of creation and know how to govern the earth in right order. The major subjects on which to concentrate were: husbandry, mineral employment, cattle, woods and timber, and the study of astrology, astronomy, navigation, and the like. The knowledge found in all these fields was practical and good. Traditional knowledge, obtained by reading or by being instructed by others, was not considered good, for it led to an idle life. It was from this last mentioned education that the lawyers and clergy arose. Like men, women should receive a practical education and thus be able to manage their households.³⁷

This type of education could hardly be considered sufficient for an advanced state; at best it would serve for a simply organized rural society. Certainly, it could not have produced great men of science, such as Newton or Harvey. In this respect *The Law of Freedom* seems an inadequate blueprint for a state of its day.

Law, according to Winstanley, was a rule whereby man and other creatures were governed in their actions for the preservation of the common peace.³⁸ Short and pithy laws were best to govern a Commonwealth, otherwise people erred through lack of knowledge. This ignorance provided a

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 562-4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 576-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 577-9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

good source for lawyers to entrap the people and obtain their estates from them by craft.⁴³ The bare letter of the law established by act of Parliament was to be the rule for officers and people. Law was not to be administered for money. Two or three witnesses were needed to make an accusation. Both the accuser and accused appeared together. If one made false charges, the penalty would be the same for the accuser as if the accused had been guilty. In general, the spirit of the law was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The regulations suggested by *The Law of Freedom* fall into numerous categories. There were to be laws for storehouses, laws concerning overseers, laws against buying and selling, laws regarding treachery, etc.

Once again Winstanley's outlook was too short-sighted. Even in his day, life had long since been too complicated for any system of law to be as simple as he envisioned. The system he proposed represented a yearning for what had long before passed on, never to return. Observation will show that this cooperative society was to be idealistic, all inclusive, economically archaic, and governed by elder citizens.

All inclusive is the key word to use in describing the activities of the government. Some governmental officer was to supervise every detail, no matter how minute. This supervision ranged from planting and harvesting the crops to the clothing of the smallest child. Officials assigned private individuals a small part to play in the great economic life of the nation, while in return individuals were to be assured permanent security. Regardless of what one needed, he had merely to apply at the appropriate government agency and his desires were fulfilled. Only in the homes was there the least escape from government supervision, because this supervision extended over one's work, education, pleasure and religion.

Such a bureaucratic government tended by its very nature to be extremely paternalistic. The idealism behind this 'Christian communism' caused the government to feel a great concern for the individual. Yet the paternalism and varied scope of the government called for an extensive regimentation of society. One was selected for his job by some overseer. If he was weak he would be given a lighter post, such as that of a clerk in a common storehouse or shop. On the other hand, one who seemed proficient in agriculture might be placed in some part of the rural organization. Through a system, including apprentices and masters, the state provided a detailed and specialized training for everyone. Although it was urged that initiative not be blocked in the young, it is hard to see how a system so regimented could fail to stifle individualism and initiative.

The economic system, which was based upon the archaic medieval

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

guild, was extremely idealistic for the mid-seventeenth century. Already the guilds had begun to fall before the rising mercantile class of this period. Self sufficiency and simplicity of wants were practical essentials of a system that employed no money. Whatever trade existed would have been entirely under the control of the government. Such a condition would limit trade to the barest necessities and do much to hinder the country's internal growth. All initiative would be discouraged.

Punishments were quite stern, judged by modern standards. For example, the death penalty was invoked if an offender ran away from the supervision of his taskmaster,⁴⁴ or for buying and selling.⁴⁵ As has been stated, the general code provided for an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a limb for a limb.⁴⁶ The Old Testament concept of the harsh God is carried over to a harsh father — the state. The aim always remains the same — the peaceful cooperative state.

In the lower echelons of government, great emphasis was placed on persuasion. The peacemaker, soldier, or overseer had no authority to settle an issue by any means other than persuasion. If this means failed, the higher authorities were empowered to make a decision based upon a law clearly stated. Winstanley's great dislike for lawyers in general appears when he stipulated that there could be no fee'd lawyers. The law profession for profit ceased to have a reason for existence.

The importance of age was greatly stressed. Although all males over twenty years of age could work, no one under forty could hold office. General overseers were to be sixty years of age. Once one had reached the age of forty, work was no longer a requirement. The worker now had the leisure time possible to join the great bureaucratic class that watched over every move of the citizenry.

With the exception of Niccolò Machiavelli, the Bible alone appears to have provided Winstanley with his basic concepts. The references to Machiavelli appear to come not from a reading of the author himself, but from an assimilation of some of the Machiavellian ideas resulting from contact with others.⁴⁷ Yet Winstanley is quite close to Machiavelli's concept of man's nature. One of the major reasons for yearly elections was to prevent any development of oppression.⁴⁸ Certainly, Winstanley considered the clergy, lawyers, and landowners evil by nature. Although he believed that good could be brought out in society, he asserted that the two roots of law and magistracy were common preservation and self preservation.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 554.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 594-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 591-2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 541.

In this last respect his thought seems close to the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who likewise lived in this troubled time. Although one might say that he showed a low regard for a great portion of mankind, his solution was not the establishment of an absolute government, such as Hobbes advocated, but an idealistic government which in many respects was quite absolutist itself. Yet one may perceive that the spirit of the two solutions is quite different.

The thought of Winstanley was in keeping with that expressed in Sir Thomas More's political satire, *Utopia*, and in some of the social theories of the later Middle Ages. A community consisted of classes, each entrusted with some task necessary to the common good, each performing its proper function and receiving its due reward.

Although Winstanley and the early Christian Fathers have quite similar beliefs as to the state of man before government, their attitude toward governmental institutions, and, particularly, property, differed greatly. Ownership of property, far from being accepted as a necessary fact recognized by civil law, was looked upon as oppression of the worst character, as it violated man's basic freedom — the right jointly to till the soil. These views were further contrasted in regard to slavery. Whereas the early Church recognized slavery, the new state would not recognize such a violation of man's equality.

Winstanley's use of the Old Testament as the source for his ideal state reflects either a curious interpretation of the Scriptures or the use of some rather free translations of the original to fit a preconceived opinion. The rather extensive misuses of Biblical quotations tends to substantiate the latter possibility. More consideration might well be given to Winstanley's method of citing scriptural references. A few examples of his use of Biblical quotations follow. In regard to Ecclesiastes 2:24, Solomon was quoted as stating that all that man laboured for was to enjoy the free use of the Earth with the fruits thereof.⁴⁹ The King James translation gives this verse as follows: 'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God'. The impression which one receives when he reads the actual translation is certainly different from that conveyed by Winstanley.

In a reference to Joshua, Chapters 16, 17 and 18, Winstanley stated that Israel was made a free Commonwealth in power as well as in name. Furthermore, the land was made a common treasury for the livelihood of the whole Commonwealth of Israel.⁵⁰ These chapters refer, in reality, to the allotment of the conquered territory in Palestine. This was an

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

arbitrary division on the part of Joshua, and considerable dissatisfaction followed. Certainly the land formed no common treasury. Winstanley wrote:

The Winter's past, the Spring time now appears,
Be gone thou King Tyrant, with all thy Cavaliers.
Thy day is past, and sure thou dost appear
To be the bond-mans son, and not the free-born Heir.

He gives as a reference Matthew 15:13. This verse reads: 'But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up'. One fails to see a logical basis for the use of this quotation. In his glorification of the Commonwealth type of government, Winstanley characterized it as one which provided for all classes of society. Furthermore, it made elder and younger brothers freemen on the earth. The reference given was Micah 4:3, 4 and Isaiah 33:1 and 65:17 to 25.⁵¹ Not one of these references alludes to a Commonwealth type of government. The first describes what shall come in the last days. Numerous other examples of the misuse of Biblical quotations could be given. From the above it would appear that he improperly used the Old Testament as a source to illustrate his belief in common ownership.

The New Testament does not provide the basis for many of the author's concepts. The Book of Revelation is used to a minor extent, but most references are to the Old Testament.

In conclusion one may point out that the Digger Movement reflected some of the prevailing seventeenth century ideas about popular sovereignty, government by consent, government limited by law, written constitutions, and land reform. In this respect it was following the liberal trend of the age which was to be continued in the eighteenth century. Essentially, Winstanley began his career as an exponent of a chiliastic mysticism. Indeed, his social concerns and interests are properly understood through the framework of a mystical millenarianism.⁵² He was a preacher rather than economist. His *Law of Freedom* set forth the blueprint for an ideal Commonwealth which he thought should be established as a necessary prerequisite to the millenium.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 533.

⁵² Winthrop S. Hudson, 'Economic and social thought of Gerrard Winstanley. Was he a seventeenth-century Marxist?' *Journal of modern history*, XVIII (March, 1946), 5.

NEWMAN'S VISIT TO MALTA IN 1832

By DONALD E. SULTANA

It does not seem to be widely known that John Henry Newman was one of the many English literary figures who visited Malta in the nineteenth century; his name, in fact, is unmentioned in the chapter in Sir Harry Luke's book on Malta which deals with the visits of Coleridge, Byron, Scott and other writers who were Newman's contemporaries. Like Thackeray twelve years after him, he paid two calls at Malta in the course of a Mediterranean tour which included the Ionian Isles, Sicily and Italy. His original plan was to proceed to Sicily direct from Malta but the itinerary was slightly altered to enable him to go on to the Ionian Isles via Malta and return to the island for the crossing to Sicily. His first call was made on the 24th December 1832 when his steamer, the *Hermes*, a packet taking Mediterranean mails, put into Marsamuscetto Harbour, took in coals and put to sea again on the 26th December. The second call, much longer for it lasted four weeks, was made on the 11th January 1833 when the *Hermes* returned from the Ionian Isles and Newman moved into the lazaretto for a confinement of a fortnight in accordance with the strict quarantine regulations of the time.

He was then an Anglican clergyman, aged thirty-one, and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. His fellow-travellers were Archdeacon Froude and his son, Richard Hurrell Froude, who was also a clergyman and Fellow of Oriel, and Newman's most intimate friend. The Froudes had decided to winter in the Mediterranean because Hurrell was consumptive, and Newman had accepted their invitation to travel with them. It cannot be said that his own health received any fillip from Malta because, as soon as he was released from the lazaretto, he was afflicted with a bad cold which confined him to his room for almost another fortnight, during which he was subject to loneliness, as one letter to his mother from Valletta makes clear. It is unfortunate that these confinements prevented him from doing much sight-seeing and, worse still, seem to have affected his general opinion of the island, which was not enthusiastic. In a letter from Rome he regretted the length of his stay in Malta because, after leaving the island, he found that there were several places in Italy which he wished to visit but which time, or rather the lack of it, prevented him from including in his itinerary.

This does not mean that he was uncomfortable in the lazaretto, on the

contrary, he had spacious rooms in the block locally known as 'il-palazz' which R.H. Froude in one of his letters described as 'the best apartments in the lazaretto'. There they were attended by 'a man of all work' and allowed to walk upon the terrace over the water and to be rowed about the harbour. They had 'booked' their rooms when they had paid their first call for they had been told that quarantine was the inevitable price they had to pay for going east and on Xmas Day 1832 they had walked across the plank from the *Hermes* to the lazaretto and had chosen four rooms and a kitchen. These were large and lofty in the style of the houses of the Knights and had a gallery on the inside supported by ordinary Maltese corbels which were as novel to them as the flagstones and the large recesses in the walls of the rooms. Since Newman was obviously interested in these features of Maltese domestic architecture, it is a pity that he was subsequently unable to see more of them in Valletta, as exemplified — to mention but one building — in the attractive courtyard in the palace built by Bishop Cagliares (now the Archbishop's Palace).

The Froudes, who drew and painted, had no shortage of views: 'There is much that is picturesque and singular about this place,' Hurrell had written, 'that I do not despair of occupation for all the 15 days in drawing, if the weather is only tolerable. The boats, and the dresses, and the colours and forms of the buildings are all as good practice as anything I can fancy, and I shall not be sorry to have time on my hands for studying them at leisure.' Newman, apparently, was surprised that 'in the whole Lazaret there is but one fireplace beside our own' — a mild hint of inadequate heating which is often echoed nowadays by visitors who winter in the old buildings of Valletta. He had no complaint to make, however, about the food which came from 'an hotel across the water', nor was he unduly inconvenienced by the lack of furniture which, he was told, could be had 'almost for nothing, for a few dollars'. It was only the waste of time that disturbed him and made him appear a little querulous in his first reactions to the prospect of imprisonment, for he was not the relaxing type of traveller. 'Life is short,' he exclaimed, 'and one has so much to do...' — a characteristic utterance from one so earnest and mission-minded, who, nonetheless, lived to be ninety.

He related all this, and much else, in the letters which he wrote almost daily to his mother and sisters and, less often, to college friends. Indeed, his copious letter-writing was one of the ways in which he kept himself occupied in 'this house of my imprisonment', which the Knights had originally built for the Turks. As an industrious letter-writer he belongs entirely to the 19th century and is unlike some Oxford scholars of to-day who are hardly models of good correspondents. In his time a letter

from Malta sometimes took about a month and a half to reach England, and, although his letters got to their destinations in due time, those which he was longing to receive from home had delayed or desultory deliveries, and he appears to have been somewhat fretful at times on this account. His repeated plea that he had no time to read his letters over did not apply, of course, to his period of quarantine when he found he had enough leisure to warrant his hiring a violin which he had cultivated since childhood.

When not writing letters and reading Homer and Virgil, which became a *vade mecum* 'directly old Atlas was visible', he kept himself occupied by composing poems or 'verse-making', as he aptly called it, since a good number of the poems he wrote were little more than metrical exercises on scriptural themes. In a letter from Rome to a pupil of his he explained that if one had no employment verse-making was a useful pastime, 'particularly in times of excitement', or as an alternative to some such exercise as mathematizing, 'as some men do on the top of coaches'. He had taken up its practice in earnest from the first day at sea in the *Hermes* (especially when he felt qualmish!) and the quiet moralizing in which he indulged at Malta found fruitful expression, though mediocre inspiration, in the poems he 'threw off' at the diligent rate of about one a day. One other reason for being so industrious was that he had arranged with a certain clergyman, the Rev. Hugh Rose of Cambridge, to contribute verse to his magazine, and he honoured his undertaking in a characteristically prompt manner by finishing a series of Patriarchal Sonnets at Malta, which appeared in *The British Magazine* and were included in *Lyra Apostolica* in 1836.

He transcribed some of these poems at the end of his letters to his family, who were accustomed to read his most intimate confidences, which he would perhaps have reserved to a wife had he not decided, well before this tour, that marriage was not consistent with his profession. In view of this it is curious, if not amusing, to read the following sentence in a letter to his mother during his cold: 'I have sent to the library and got "Marriage" to read!' — a confession which, had it come from a less unbending man than Newman, might have been interpreted by a speculative mind as a hint of a broken or wavering resolution under the romantic pressure of the Mediterranean! The news of his indisposition, when it reached the family, caused alarm and he thought it necessary to allay their anxiety from Rome in a letter to his mother in which he sought to refute his sister's strictures on Hurrell Froude for the lonely days he had spent indoors. Hurrell, he explained, had offered to sit with him or read to him but he had insisted on being left alone; as a result, it was only the Froudes who availed themselves of the 'round of English parties' to which they were invited and 'in the course of which', the younger Froude wrote, 'we did

not learn much, except that the English there are very hospitable, and live very well'. The words are an echo of the impression of the young Disraeli who visited Malta two years before them and had a full taste of English society in its heyday, with much greater relish of course than the three clergymen.

The origin of Newman's cold, as accounted for by him, was unusual. He blamed it on 'the mysterious night visitants' who kept him awake several times in the lazaretto with their strange steps which he imagined one night to be coming from a ghost who, proving too noisy, obliged him to sit up in bed for a considerable time ready to spring out in case a reply should come to his 'who's there?' The cough which followed was first treated by himself with blisters but he was later attended by Dr. Davy, a well-known physician and the author of a book on the geology of Malta and the Ionian Isles. Davy recommended '50 drops of antimonial wine three times a day' and Newman attributed the disappearance of his cough to this remedy and not to Nature.

Davy lived in one of the large houses of the Knights which Newman thought were like great palaces and which he considered superior to the houses at Messina and Palermo. 'The Knights', he wrote, 'were not allowed to leave away their property', which amounted, when they moved to Malta from Rhodes, to £300,000 a year. Hence immense sums were available for houses, churches and fortifications. Though he thought highly of the houses, he was given to understand that the fortifications were not worth much from the military point of view since they had no 'unity of plan or use for modern purposes', the former criticism being put a repetition of the observation made by many travellers before him that the Grand Masters had kept adding to the fortifications which had consequently grown out of all proportion to the size of the defending garrison. Apart from this and one or two other short allusions, his letters throw little light on the Knights whose history and chivalry had fired the imagination of Scott, one of his earliest favourites.

Undoubtedly the building of the Knights which impressed him most was St John's Cathedral, which he thought deserved a second and even third visit. He did not share the English dislike of baroque architecture, and, though he had not yet seen the basilicas of Rome, he confessed that the little he had seen of the Greek and Latin churches fired him 'with great admiration', adding, however, as a true Anglican, that 'everything in St John's Church is admirable, if it did not go too far'. This opinion was in keeping with his strong bias for 'the quiet and calm connected with our services', which was thrown into sharper relief by his contact with the Orthodox and Roman churches; but he went out of his way to refute, on the

evidence of what he had just observed, the current Protestant representation of the Greek Church as more 'reasonable' in its ceremonies than the Roman; on this subject he could see no difference at all between the two churches.

As an Anglican clergyman he was naturally told of the claim of the imperial government to the ownership of St John's as the property of the Knights and he regretted that 'by mismanagement, it was given to the Romanists, or perhaps it was impossible for us to do otherwise'. His regret was accentuated by the fact that 'the present Protestant chapel is insufficient to contain more than the chief English families' who were thus 'left to either total neglect of religious observance or to the Roman Catholic priests, or to the Wesleyans, as the case may be'. Froude, however, in one of his letters mentioned two Church of England chapels, 'one of which was originally the kitchen of the Grand Master, and the other but little better'. 'Our government,' he added, 'will not give the residents any assistance in erecting something more reputable.' The deficiency of which they both complained was made good six years later by Queen Adelaide who, after coming to Malta in search of health, erected the cathedral of St. Paul at her own expense in the square which now bears her name.

At St John's Newman met the dean, whose name he did not mention and whom he described in the *Apologia pro vita sua* (1846) as 'a most pleasant man, lately dead'. He had a conversation with him about the Fathers of the Church, a subject of great interest to him at this period because he had just finished his first book, *The Arians of the 4th century*, which he intended to revise on returning home from the Mediterranean. In the church, or after his visit to it, he learned of the deception which had prevented the French from plundering the silver rails of the Chapel of Communion, and he was able to account for their unpopularity of which he heard from different sources. No doubt he realized that the English would have made themselves as unpopular as the French had Maitland's advice against turning St John's into a Protestant church been overruled.

The Russians, he found, were liked by the Maltese because of the large sums of money distributed among the population by the wealthy commanders of Russian ships calling at Malta. Newman's letters are a reminder of the presence of Russia in the Mediterranean in the 19th century as one of the three great powers. He learned, in fact, of the pretensions of Grand Master Paul to the sovereignty of Malta and of the hastily concocted co-operation between Russia and France against England over the island. In short, the struggle for mastery in Europe in the 19th century is reflected in the more 'political' passages in his correspondence, especially in the

letters which he wrote east of Malta where the international intrigues and manoeuvres of which he was given a hint in the island were in full play in the Balkans.]

The money with which the Russians had enriched the place had given way to extreme poverty which the islanders, according to his information, were bearing without protest. They were more demonstrative, it seems, in their grievances against the English officials who were occupying posts which they felt they should themselves fill. Anglo-Maltese relations, indeed, were not good, and another reason for this was a heavy corn tax levied by the English administration and 'profusely laid out in quasi-sinecures, and, after all, a balance is transmitted to England'. His 'final and confirmed opinion' was that the Maltese 'do not like us'. This was echoed in language even more uncompromising by Froude: 'From all we could learn the English hold Malta by a very precarious tenure; we govern it most oppressively, and the inhabitants hate us; so that it is generally supposed a very small Russian force could wrest it from us. The population is in a wretched state, almost starving, and yet a heavy duty is imposed on imported corn, which puts into the hands of government nearly 130,000 L a year. Of this about 10,000 L goes to pension English sinecurists, and the rest over and above paying for the civil establishment leaves a surplus for the military chest'. This was the period of political agitation by the Maltese nationalists which culminated in the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.]

Newman's opinion of the Maltese was that, racially, they were 'Arabs or Moors in large measure', and that their language was 'entirely or almost entirely Arabic', Italian being 'for the most part confined to the city'. He was much intrigued by the connection he found between Maltese and Hebrew and asserted that 'the common words in both languages (i.e. the necessaries of life) are the same'. The language with which he occupied himself most during his visit was Italian which he studied on his own in the lazaretto and which he practised with a master whom he engaged when he was confined to his room in Valletta. He did this in preparation for his visit to Italy — hence his insistence on conversational Italian — but in actual fact he made little use of his newly acquired knowledge because he found himself largely in English company in Italy.]

Unfortunately he did not give the name or address of his residence at Valletta, but he made it clear that he thought it most unsatisfactory because 'the people of the house are so dirty, cheating and ignorant of English that they make a mistake whatever is told them'. Perhaps it did not occur to him that not all foreigners had the time or the opportunity of learning English in order to afford him the privilege of talking his language

in their own country instead of obliging him to learn theirs. Besides, in 1832 the English language was spoken by a mere handful of the Maltese intelligentsia whose language of education had for centuries been Italian. It was, however, a cardinal principle of British policy to promote the English language in Maltese education and in Newman's time it was just beginning to be taught in the schools, although admittedly they were not many.

The quality for which Newman praised the Maltese more than once was their industriousness, which, he added, was unusual among the Mediterranean races, especially the Ionians whom he had just visited. This comparison is a reminder of the link which then existed between Malta and the Ionian Isles, both of which were under British protection. He referred, in fact, to Maltese servants at Corfu and to several Greek trading vessels at anchor in Marsamuscetto harbour with its familiar scene of little boats 'pushing to and fro, painted bright colours'. As a classical scholar he had exciting memories of the beauty and Homeric associations of the Ionian Isles, about which he wrote with enthusiasm from the lazaretto in a letter to Bowden, his first friend at Trinity College, Oxford, and himself a visitor to Malta in 1839. Even before setting foot in Zante and Corfu Newman had been attracted to the dresses and 'fine countenances' of the Greeks whom he had seen in the parlatorio, although it had pained him to think that as a nation they had 'sunk below the Turks their masters'.

His description of the parlatorio is considerably graphic and deserves to be quoted: 'It is a long naked building or barn divided into several rooms, and cut lengthway from end to end by two barriers parallel, breast high. Between these two, guardians are stationed to hinder contact, the men in quarantine on one side the townsmen on the other, the latter being either friends of the imprisoned party, or pedlars, traffickers, etc. A crowd of persons are on the prison side, each party under the conduct of its own guardian; for if these parties were to touch each other the longer quarantine would be given to the party which had the smaller number. If I were to touch a Greek, I should have fifteen days of quarantine. The strange dresses, the strange languages, the jabbering and grimaces, the queer faces driving a bargain across the barrier, without a common language, the solemn absurd guardians with their staves in the space between, the opposite speaker fearing nothing so much as touching you, and crying out and receding at the same time, made it as curious a sight as the free communication of breath, and the gratuitous and inconsistent rules of the intercourse made it ridiculous.'

In the parlatorio the Froudes and Newman were visited by Sir John Stoddart, who was a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford, and to whom they had

letters of introduction. Stoddart was Chief Justice and, following Sir John Richardson, was continuing the work of the commissioners who had been sent out 'to adjust the legal and ecclesiastical system' after Malta's accession to Britain. He was engaged in introducing trial by jury — 'the birth-right' of a British subject and, in the eyes of many an English writer on Malta, an anomalous omission in the island's legislation as an inheritance of the Order. Apparently, the other long-standing complaint of the English — namely, the privilege of sanctuary — had been settled by 1832 so that Stoddart did not tell Newman anything about it. He did tell him, however, about the problem arising from the action of the British government to make the local clergy subject to the state courts. This had been one of the most protracted and delicate issues between Church and State in the early years of British rule since *prima facie* it seemed to affect the pledge which Britain had given the islanders on taking them under her protection, namely, to keep the Catholic Religion inviolate. That the British government was anxious to honour this pledge and that it brought into play its traditional diplomatic skill in its representations to the Vatican over this issue is evident in Newman's account of the story — and, presumably, in the annals of Maltese History.

It was also from Stoddart that Newman learned of the other issue between Church and State, namely, the appointment of the Bishop of Malta, who had for many centuries been under the Archbishop of Palermo, for which reason the King of Naples claimed the right of appointment — and indeed, for other reasons, the suzerainty of Malta. This claim the British government had been determined to reject — as also to sever the ecclesiastical link between Malta and Palermo. Specific instructions to this effect had been given from London to the first Governor, Sir Thomas Maitland, when Britain's initial uncertainty over the fate of the island had given way to a resolve in 1813 to keep it; but even at the time of Newman's visit the dispute with Naples had not yet been settled.

Perhaps the most interesting piece of information emerging from the account of Newman's talk with Stoddart is the news about the overpopulation of the island, which had already become a problem, since the figure exceeded 100,000 and was increasing by 1,000 a year. The solution of the problem, in the English view, was emigration to Corfu or, as Stoddart wished, to Negropont. It is a fact that emigration from Malta to the Barbary States and the Levant was proceeding on a considerable scale but only a minority of the migrants remained for good in the receiving countries. According to the returns quoted by Montgomery Martin in his *History of the British Colonies*, in the five years from 1830 to 1835 'it appears that about 10,000 have departed in each of those years, and about 9,000

have returned'.

It has been said that few were the distinguished visitors to Malta in the first half of the 19th century who did not bring or obtain during their stay an introduction to John Hookham Frere, who, after retiring from the foreign service, had settled for good in the island in the palatial villa at Pietà. Newman did not mention him in his letters, but Hookham Frere's sister in a letter written from Malta on the 11th February 1833 referred to the Froudes as well as to Newman. The three clergymen, apparently, were about to leave 'just as we found out', adds Miss Frere, 'that we liked them'. Newman had chest trouble but Hookham Frere managed to have 'some good talk with him', though he was unable to discuss with him his translation of Aristophanes on which the diplomat was then engaged. Miss Frere compared 'the becoming simplicity and placidity of deportment' of the three visitors with the finished manners of two French princes, Rohans, who had come to Malta from Naples and who travelled to Messina with Newman on board the *Francisco*. Newman also mentioned them as 'the only gentleman-like men' among an impressive collection of aristocrats who were his fellow-travellers. He seems to have had a most punctilious sense of decorum and he could be extremely critical of those who fell short of his standard.

His own 'placidity' had tended to be ruffled on Xmas Day during his first call when he had been debarred from holding a service on board while the *Hermes* had been coaling. The church-bells - 'deep and sonorous', as he had described them - had added to his pain which had found vent in a poem entitled 'Christmas without Christ'. One pious wish, however, did not remain unfulfilled, for, on getting over his cold, he went to St. Paul's Bay by water to see for himself the Apostle's site of which he had read in the Acts. The bay was one of the first sights he had identified before the *Hermes* had steamed into the harbour and moored opposite to the lazaretto, and the episode of St Paul's shipwreck stood out so prominently in his reading that he wrote a short poem - a homily in intention - on the viper incident. He also relished the thought of going to Rome 'almost by the track of the apostle'. Above St Paul's, he observed, lay Città Vecchia with its site of the old Roman garrison and many antiquities but apparently he failed to go up to Mdina from Valletta.

He confessed that he saw little of Valletta itself, which he described as 'a most curious town' in contrast with Froude's eulogy of it as 'a magnificent city; all its houses, palaces and churches splendid to a degree'. Certainly they had a striking view of the capital from their apartments in the lazaretto which looked out upon 'the Greek and other vessels, the fortifications of Valletta, some few houses of the town, two windmills,

and the great church of St. John: a scene familiar enough in the lithographs of Schranz and the drawings of Allen. Having a keen eye for colour he noted the deep green of the sea off 'the Manual Battery' and the golden sky at sunset, for the weather favoured him in his first call to the extent of allowing him to be rowed 'in an open boar without a greatcoat on a December evening', but the cold and rainy season set in during his second call so that his final impression of Malta's climate was that it was 'uncertain and stormy in winter'. The sea, however, was remarkably kind to him all the way from England except for a gale of short duration between Algiers and Malta, which brought on a bout of sea-sickness — and, to the reader's delight, one of his best pieces of writing: 'The worst of sea-sickness is the sympathy which all things on board have with it, as if they were all sick too. First, all the chairs, tables, and the things on them much more, are moving, moving up and down, up and down, swing, swing. A tumbler turns over, knife and fork go, wine is split, as if encouraging like tendencies within you. In this condition you go on talking and eating as fast as you can, concealing your misery, which you are reminded of by every motion of the furniture around you. At last the moment comes; you are seized; up you get, swing, swing, you cannot move a step forward; you knock your hips against the table, run smack at the side of the cabin, try to make for the door in vain, which is your only aim. You get into your berth at last, but the door keeps banging; you lie down, and now a new misery begins — the noise of the bulkheads; they are sick too. You are in a mill; all sorts of noises, heightened by the gale, creaking, crattering, shivering, and dashing. Your bed is sea-sick, swing up and down, to your imagination, as high as low as a swing in a fair, incessantly. This requires strong nerves to bear; and the motion is not that of a simple swing, but epicyclical. . . . And, last of all, the bilge water in the hold; a gale puts it all in motion'.

This is perhaps his nearest approach to humour which was certainly not instinctive in him. Admittedly, he was hardly in a frivolous mood when the passage was written for 'I am sore all over with the tossing, and very stiff, and so weak that at times I can hardly put out a hand'. In fact, the prospect of a quiet, however short, break at Malta after the exciting impressions of the Ionian Isles was very welcome as he had no great love of the sea which he described as 'that restless element which is the type of human life'. Nor was he addicted to wanderlust. Though this was the first time he had been abroad he declared emphatically, 'I shall never take a voyage again' when the *Hermes* left the island without him on the return journey to England. Home was very dear to him, especially the church of St Mary at Oxford of which he was vicar and where he

was later to preach the famous sermons before his conversion. Besides, he was much concerned about the politics of the time as they affected the Church at home. The Whigs were then in power and had passed the Reform Bill before he had set out for the Mediterranean. As a staunch Tory and high Anglican he became increasingly alarmed at the threat, as he viewed it, of the liberals to the church and his fears found confirmation in the weakened position of the church on the continent after the French Revolution. Even at Malta he was told of infidelity among the laity, and the result of all this was 'a sad presentiment' that 'the Christian world is becoming barren and effete, as land which has been worked out and has become sand'. These broodings were really the seeds of the Oxford Movement which landed him eventually in the church of Rome but they matured to a dramatic climax not at Malta but in Rome and Sicily whither he proceeded from the island on the morning of the 7th February 1833 in the *Francisco* in singularly prosperous weather.

FOLK DANCE AND DRAMA

(Lecture delivered in the University Theatre on the 3rd May, 1960)

By VIOLET ALFORD

MY TITLE says *Folk Dance and Drama* because I have long specialised in these interwoven subjects, and because so far as I can judge in a visit to the island, Malta possesses some very good comparative material in these subjects. If there is time I would like to bring in the improvising singers of Malta who I have been able to hear and compare them with other improvising bards, especially the Basque Bertsularis, and a wonderful bard from Croatia I once heard. If time, also I would like to touch on the tradition of Giants. But one talk of forty minutes will be short indeed and the folklore subjects will perforce be but few.

Your *Maltija* – to plunge straight into comparison – is a ceremonial Country dance when used at Court, that is at the Governor's State Balls, a recreational, social dance when performed by Country people and others who like to practise their own customs. Country dances are figure dances, Rounds, Squares according to their shape, or in old fashioned language 'Longways for as many as Will'. The Country dance is historically an invention of the English – not the British generally, but of the people of England who were written of as 'the dancing English who carried a fair presence'. The dances began to appear in the Tudor period after the Medieval Carole had gone out of fashion and died away. Yet this ancient Chain dance does still live, in the form of the famous Farandole of Provence, the Cramignon of the Low Countries and the Choros of Greece, and Horas of the Balkans. The figure dances presently began to be danced at the English Court and we have some of the names of those danced by the Maids of Honour of Elizabeth I. Trenchmore, for instance, was a great favourite of theirs. Village people danced them too, and in James I's reign the Country dance quite invaded Court balls because the Duke of Buckingham's young brothers and sisters did not know the Court dances and the duke, the favourite of the King, was allowed to have everything his own way. In the reign of Charles II they returned after the Commonwealth as great favourites and Pepys, the celebrated diarist and Supplier of the Navy, gives a description of the King and one of his ladies and another couple dancing a square for four 'Hey Boys Up go We'. Then the English Country dances began to be taken abroad – great Houses and other Courts began

to like them – Italy danced ‘Buttered Pease’ under the title of ‘Piselli al-Burro’ and I suspect the figures of the *Maltija* reached the island during the late eighteenth or the early nineteenth century. The figure called ‘Alamanda’ is rather later and is known nearly all over Western and Central Europe as Allamanda, l’Allemande and other variations sometimes as a figure of a Country dance, sometimes as a dance on its own account. Country dances also went to the United States and came back again about ten years ago as the American Square Dance with amusing rhyming calls to tell the dancers what to do next. But even the calls did not originate in the States. Jane Austen, that demure novelist, called the figures at a Country Ball at Basingstoke near her Hampshire home, to give a single example. The *Maltija*, as you all know, is a Square for sixteen and the Leader in the traditional manner calls the figures. When danced at a State Ball ceremonial dress is worn, the men in red velvet with white wigs, the ladies with powdered hair, in eighteenth century gowns with paniers. They carry bouquets and in some figures are linked to their partners by ribbons. Just so were the dancers of the ceremonial Farandole linked as they passed through the streets of Bayonne, to stop at certain points for a figure dance; the Greek State Balls demand a ceremonial traditional dress, that of the ladies called Amalia costume after the first Queen of Greece. Besides going across the Atlantic and coming home again English Country dances in the square form, the Contra danse, came back from Paris as the Quadrille. This was supposed to be something very French and very fashionable. Dance fashions often keep up a shuttle movement, from the village to the Court, fall from fashion and return to the village as the very latest thing from town. A great deal of French folk dance now consists of these old-fashioned Quadrilles with Mazurkas and Polkas. French promoters of dance groups, although very careful about local costume, never seem to go far enough back for their dance and music material – a great pity.

To follow another travelling dance we go right across Europe to Scandinavia and Finland. These Northern Countries, rather cut off from fashion, managed to keep descendants of the Medieval Carole in their sung chain and circle dances, enormously long ballads sung by the dancers supplying the motive. Some of these became dramatic as the verses told heroic or fairy stories, chiefly tragical, for the North, with its long hours of darkness, seems to engender both sentiment and tragedy. A Danish ballad for dancing says:

There danced the Maidens with hair unbound,
It was the King’s daughter who sang the Round.
A Princess was the leader.

and still more dramatically:

The King of the Wends with all his ships
 Came sailing in from Sea
 And captured the Maidens who were dancing on the shore.

A Norwegian dance ballad goes on and on and on — about twenty-nine verses, I think, the dancers performing precisely the same action on the Refrain — twenty-nine times over. } But into this medieval backwash of Chain dance and song came a new fashion from Poland. The Swedes, as you know, fought for many years in Germany, Poland and Russia and about the year 1600 soldiers returning from the wars took back the Polka with them to Scandinavia. In Poland it was simply *Polski*, the Polish dance, in Scandinavia it became the *Polska* and practically put an end to the ancient Carole with its chain of dancers and its interminable ballads. Figure dancers of the Country dance type were also beginning to be liked and many of these became *Polska* too — although there was not a Polka step in them. They are frequently Pair dances, the couples standing in a circle but dancing only together, and frequently also Rounds and Squares called by nineteenth century ballroom dance names — Waltz, Quadrille, but neither a Waltz nor a Quadrille — which is very confusing to dance students. We will now listen to the traditional air of the Norwegian *Springar*, a Country dance for couples standing round a circle, partners dancing with each other, not with other couples.

A record of a Springar tune was then played

Now we will go to England and hear some lively Country dance tunes played by the Square Dance Band, amateur musicians belonging to the English Folk Dance and Song Society. } They love to get together to play. The dances and their tunes are not old ones but characteristic of the end of the nineteenth century. They are real village dances which probably never went to balls.

Records of English Country Dance tunes were played

Everyone knows of the Italian Tarantella. } This famous dance is in reality a folk dance, but much stylised when appearing on the stage. On its native heath it is performed in several different forms, some quite simple to suit Country people, some ornate to suit Neapolitans. One of the medium forms, not too ornate, comes from Sorrento. } Here one realises its true Country dance form — two rows of dancers *vis-a-vis* as in the English Longways for as many as will, but quite unlike this form when it comes to the steps. } Tambourines bang and jingle, the orchestra, one may

call it, of strings and guitars and a curious wooden affair like three croquet mallets which clack violently together, makes a great noise and the airs are nearly always in that almost frenzied rhythm connected in our minds with the Tarantella. I need hardly remind you of the story that dancing it is supposed to cure the bite of the deadly tarantula spider. It may be useful in preventing Coma – to keep the patient moving. This is folk-medicine founded on a pathological truth, as it so often is.

A record of a Neapolitan Tarantella was then played.

RITUAL DRAMATIC DANCES

All those just played to you are social and recreational dances, even the Scandinavian sung dances *now*, although they had another aspect. But we come to another category of dance, dances performed for an altogether different purpose, neither social nor recreational but ritual, appearing for one day only or at one season only, and disappearing for the rest of the year. These are men's dances, the duty and prerogative of the young men of the village. The dancers (nearly always) must be unmarried men, often they form a club or a fraternity or belong to some trade guild such as Bakers, Cutlers or Sword smiths, or, as in France, they are the recruits ready to join the Army that year.

Roumania possesses one of the most famous of these dances, the Calus, the performers the Calusari. They dance for forty days in the Spring, they act a dance-drama, they possess a Fool who during these forty days must be dumb – and he was too when he came to a Folk Dance Festival in London. We had no idea that their visit coincided with their forty days of ritual dancing, and they did not say so but they came all the same, dancing in the corridor of their train, dancing thro' the streets of London, resolutely and inexorably dancing and the Fool did not speak.

There are many such amazing dances still alive. Amongst them is the Sword Dance. I am not speaking of the Scottish Sword dances which you have seen performed by pipers and dancers of Scottish regiments, in which a sword and scabbard are laid crossed on the ground and a solo dancer performs intricate steps in the angles thus made. What I mean is called the Hilt-and-Point Sword Dance in which each man, from five to a large number grasp the hilt of his own sword in his right hand and takes the point of his neighbour's sword in his left. They thus make a chain of swords which never comes undone until the figure is finished. Sometimes they are bunched into a tight group, sometimes they open out into a wide circle; they pass under and over the swords, one at a time, two at a time, occasionally under all the swords raised to form a tunnel, an endless

series of intricate figures. Germany, Switzerland and especially Austria and Spain are extraordinarily rich in this sort of Sword Dance. They come out at the village feast, our own Corpus Christi day and during Carnival. They are, as I said, ritual seasonal dances for men. In France only two are left, in Italy there are a few. England is rich in this dance especially Northumbria and Yorkshire. It is chiefly in the possession of coal miners and miners of ironstone and their season is the Winter Solstice, between Christmas and the New Year.

Folk drama and elements of drama cling to this dance and it is this which makes it so valuable, so important an addition to both Folklore and Anthropology. I must here recall Frazer's great thesis in *The Golden Bough* and all the anthropologists who have come after him. His Divine King, personifying the Old Year, who ruled for a span of years and was then removed to make way for a younger, stronger man, seems to have a descendant in the folk drama and Sword Dance even to-day. Frazer's first brilliant proposition has, of course, been modified by others as knowledge has increased and I venture to say that the study of folk dance now going on all over Europe has been one of the chief means of clarifying and consolidating the theory of the King, Leader or Chief who as his powers failed was killed by his own people to make way for a young successor. In a few regions this age-old custom actually exists today. Not long ago *The Daily Telegraph* gave news of the Shilluk, a people on the White Nile, whose Ruler is a Priest-King who after a cycle of years has to give place to a young successor. This arbitrary end of a Ruler's life was because in the minds of primitive people prosperity — that is the food-supply, the ripening of crops, the reproduction of animals, even the birth of children — in the villages depended on the strength of the King. In their eyes he was more than a man, he was touched with supernatural powers.

Dr. Margaret Murray, whose excavation work at Borg in-Nadur is so well known, seeks to fit the Divine Kingship on to historical characters. She sees a ritual death in the slaying of William Rufus in the New Forest, and several other historical personages. Very surprising, but this marvellous lady, now ninety-five, does not proceed without some firm ground to tread on.

The folk drama in which the ritual removal of a character occurs is played at its appointed season from Greece to Spain, from Italy to the Scottish Border. Frequently it is connected with a Hilt-and-Point Sword Dance, frequently it appears alone. The Sword Dance also may appear alone or with a few ragged dramatic elements left from a forgotten play.

Both dance and drama are pre-Christian and almost certainly pre-historic. The earliest parallel of which we hold a record is the dance of the

Salian Priests in Rome. That was seasonal – in March – a men's dance performed with strict ritual, in which they carried swords and shields, a magico-religious rite (pagan religion) if ever there was one. So it is unreasonable to expect so ancient a custom to retain all its leaves as in the spring time of European cultures many leaves have fallen in the course of centuries; moreover accretions of every sort have grown round the rite. Experience is needed and a hundred comparisons before discarding this; disentangling that, so that the tattered, overloaded confusion of a dance-drama can be detected and its component parts put into their places. What is lost in Portugal may be found in Bohemia, what Bohemia lacks may be seen in Alpine villages. And so by degrees sense emerges and the old, tattered cloak is mended – to change the metaphor.

In England we have two Folk Plays, the St. George Play all over the Country, the Plough Play in the North East. I do not mean that the people call them so, these are the names given by folklorists for study purposes.

St. George is the Patron Saint of England. You may read an article about him which appeared in the *Times of Malta* on his day, April 23rd, and again a letter yesterday. It tells how his cult came to England with returned Crusaders. But the history it gives is not popular history. Popular tales make St. George deliver Sabra, the King of Egypt's daughter, from the dragon but in the play, although mentioned, Sabra never appears.

Each character marches on to the stage, which is merely an imaginary circle in the street or in the hall of the house visited, announcing himself

Here comes I, St. George
A Knight of courage bold.
I fought the fiery dragon
And brought him to the slaughter
And with my sword I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

Poor stuff now but remember the mouth-to-mouth existence it has led.

St George fights a Turkish Knight who is killed and revived by the Doctor, and several other characters strut in to announce themselves,

Here comes I, old father Beelzebub
And in my hand I carries my club

This personage may have wandered into the St. George's Play from an ancient Mystery.

The Mysteries, as you will know, were organized by the Church in medieval times to teach an illiterate people their Bible history and the Story of the Passion. In many countries when they had outlived their usefulness in that manner they broke up into characters who walked in religious

processions and in that form you still have them in this Island. Indeed at Qormi the store house in which processional regalia and implements are stored is still called *tal-Misteri*. The *Times of Malta* on April 6th this year published part of a long article on Shakespeare dealing with the influence of medieval plays including the Mysteries.

St. George is often played by Sword dancers, sometimes the play consists of a few remembered lines only, sometimes even these have been lost and only some dramatic characters remembered. These always include the Fool and a Lady – who is a man dressed in woman's clothes. But at the end of the dance the swords are woven into what is called the Lock and put round the leader's neck. When suddenly withdrawn the effect is horrific. He falls to the ground and one expects to see his head roll away separately.

Sometimes the leader stands on the woven swords and is raised shoulder-high on this little platform, so that even where there is no real play someone is symbolically killed and in a far more archaic and telling manner than by a mere duel. Nevertheless it is the revival of the slain man which is the necessary act. Our other Folk Play, called the Plough Play has every sign of antiquity far greater than St. George. It also has a killing and a resurrection and, although you may be surprised to hear it, it shows strong affinities with the Carnival village plays of Greece – of Thrace. The main theme is the killing of the Old Father and his resurrection as a strong young man. This would be the far distant descendant of the Divine King and would ultimately depict indeed the death of the old year, the birth of the new. There is a Bride all ready for him when he grows up, which he does in the course of the few minutes of the play. The Springtime marriage takes place and all is prepared for next year's cycle. In England the Sword dancers kill the Old Father who declares that he will turn his face to the light and 'Will die for all of you'.

Italy possesses two splendid Hilt-and-Point Sword dances, in Piedmont. They link more with the Alpine zone of dances than with those of the Mediterranean Harlequin. The Fool is the person raised and killed. On the island of Korcula in the Adriatic, there is a good example called simply *La Kumpanija*, the Company; on the small island of Lastova (Lagosta) there is another and on the island of Ischia near Naples is a dance which is certainly a corrupted form of the Sword dance. They use swords in some figures, clubs in others and the leader is raised on the woven platform to show to the crowd. It is called *N' drezzata*, the weaving. This is why I class this Ischia dance as a Sword Dance although they have forgotten the Hilt-and-point linking.

I almost believe that the *Parata* of Malta is an offshoot of this great

European ritual dance. It comes out in the Spring, at Carnival. It is therefore seasonal. It is a men's dance although now unfortunately performed by boys. They hold Swords and Shields – but at Ischia they carry swords and clubs, and in Spain swords, shields, wands, sticks. It is a ritual dance, not social, not recreational. Further you have a Spring Bride as in the Plough Play in Thrace and many another region even if she is now only four years old, and what is more she is raised up on high for the crowd to see just as the Leader is raised.

The explanation of the *Parata* is that it commemorates the fight with the Turks. All the Southern Sword Dances give the same explanation – Turks Moors or Saracens. Even St. George of England fights a Turkish Knight. Practically every Spanish Sword Dance is supposed to be a battle between Christians and Moors and is often called, not the Sword Dance, but La Morisca. During the last two centuries of the Spanish Reconquest hope of clearing the Infidel from Spain sprang so high that all Europe joined in it, and this gave rise to an extraordinary vogue for Moors and everything to do with them – dress, jewelry, buildings, music and dance.

Malta believes the Knights invented or started the *Parata*. If you could run this oft-repeated assertion to its sources it would not be the least surprising to find that it was an Italian or a Spanish Knight – if Spanish preferably one from the Auberge d'Aragon for Sword dances abound in Aragon – who, remembering his home dramatic dance-battle against the Moor, taught it to his young retainers in the Island where the enemy was the Turk. Folk sources must never be neglected although they frequently prove to be untrue. But this one may well have an historical source. Somebody might like to try to find records of such a person as I have suggested and it may be possible to tell you if there was or still is a Sword dance in the place he came from.

Music for Sword dances differs very much. In Piedmont they are performed to a drum beat only, rhythm but no tune. Sometimes the time is traditional and nothing but that one must be played. Often tunes alter from year to year. At the village of Sena in Aragon there is a whole suite of tunes; the most enormous bagpipes I have seen and a drum provide the instruments, with singing. Since they change so much I do not consider tunes of the first importance.

From an anthropological point of view as differing from that of a choreographer I feel the same about steps. Always in Sword dances small running steps are used to take the men in place. Often they break into a more ornate step according to what is danced in the region. High leaping steps, stamps and even pattering are important on account of their symbolism – as high as you jump so high will the crops grow, as hard as you hit

Mother Earth so quickly will she awake in the Spring. Our Northumbrian pitmen practice clog-dance steps while they are holding up the Lock of Swords. This is the tap dancing for wooden-soled shoes as done in the public houses of that region.

A record of a fiddle tune of the type used for English Sword dances was then played

Now to jump, as comparative studies do, to the other end of the Continent. The Sword Dance at its simplest is a Chain dance, a chain linked by swords. Here are the tunes of a Croatian chain and then of a Macedonian chain linked by handkerchiefs or by arms, or by the men grasping each others' belts. Macedonia is close to the Greek Choros region, the Chorus of the ancient Greek Theatre which was the forerunner of the orchestra.

Records of a Croatian and a Macedonian Chain dance were then played

What about the conservation of all this wonderful inheritance? Two wars enormously increased transport taking people into the towns instead of their providing their own entertainment; industrialism which empties the villages and other contributing factors have turned the minds of the Country folk from their own heritage. The young ones think it a bore and disdain it. The old ones are shy about it and fear to be laughed at — which they are. Nevertheless war which nearly killed it, denuding the villages of young men — *Il n'y a pas assez d'hommes* — was the cry everywhere in the Pyrenees when I began to work there between the wars — war in a peculiar way resuscitated it in occupied Countries. Folk customs were, as a rule, tolerated by German invaders. I have a remarkable photograph of a handful of women and boys raising the May tree in a street in Brussels, a trio of German soldiers pushing past the little group without paying attention. Belgian processional giants were brought out immediately the occupiers had been driven out, the Belgian Government even giving grants for new clothes for these great citizens. In England the Women's Institutes are usefully gathering records written and unwritten and compiling histories of their own villages, never forgotten remembrances of May day, Christmas-tide, all Halloween, dances and drama. And although village girls may prefer rock 'n roll and crooning another set will come to Country dance parties in the village Hall, paying two shillings and sixpence and dragging their boy friends with them. Besides this, love of their own traditions has seized artistic and educated circles. The beauty and the strangeness, the archaic strangeness yet familiarity of ancestral tradition, pulls them. The first time I saw Morris dances and heard Morris dance tunes when the revival had begun I felt I had known

them always. The Medical and Science Schools of Newcastle University have a crack team of Sword dancers now. They were taught by pitmen and at the right season there they are, out in the streets dancing side by side with traditional teams of miners. As for the English Morris — about which I have not been able to speak, for it is a subject by itself — Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates, young London artists and businessmen, Birmingham University students, in fact educated men all over England have formed the Morris Ring, a fraternity of Morris dancers so that from a handful of surviving teams when Cecil Sharp began noting the dances there are now hundreds, and they, like Sword dancers, are out in the street again, again after seventy or eighty years without them, welcomed by everyone. How good it would be to see the *Parata* teams coming in from various places, teams of men, instead of one team of little boys?

In France this movement has got rather out-of-hand and a federation has been formed to exercise some necessary control over leaders who, preferring quantity to quality, see no harm in borrowing dances and tunes from other parts of the Country. These too-enthusiastic enthusiasts have to be taught that folk art is strictly regional. My best-known friends, the Basques, are quite the worst offenders in this respect. Since I knew them between the two wars they have created a hotch-potch of so-called Basque dance and music and costume never seen before in their country. ;

The educated people of Sweden have saved the Art the peasants have almost lost. The great Folk Museum, Skansen, is famous throughout the world, buildings, costumes, documents, records and live dances and music going on there from every province far-away and near at hand. ;

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

By G. CURMI

NATO a Girgenti il 28 giugno 1867 e morto a Roma il 10 dicembre 1936, il Pirandello menò una vita piuttosto appartata e dolorosa: non ebbe avventure galanti nè episodi scandalosi, e venne appellato «l'uomo segreto.»

I principali avvenimenti della sua vita privata e letteraria si possono raggruppare in sei date: 1889, — nomina a lettore d'Italiano nell'Università di Bonn sul Reno, acquistata con una tesi di laurea in tedesco; 1891, — pubblicazione della sua prima raccolta di novelle *Amori senz'amore*; 1894, — matrimonio con Maria Antonietta Portulano d'Agrigento; 1904, — pubblicazione di *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, che segnò il suo primo successo europeo; 1905, — fallimento del padre, e grave malattia della moglie; 1934, — premio Nobel per la letteratura.

Nonostante i molti successi letterari, incoronati dal premio Nobel, pochi scrittori ebbero una vita così grigia e un funerale così melanconico. Ecco come Corrado Alvaro rievocò il 22 dicembre 1946 nel *Corriere della Sera* la morte di Pirandello: «... Non avevo l'idea di che fosse la morte di un grande uomo. Ma devo dire che è una cosa crudele.»

«... Entrammo in quel suo studio, era pieno di gente, ma di gente in piedi, convulsa, curiosa, che fumava, parlava ad alta voce, come se il padrone di casa l'avesse invitata ad un ricevimento e tardasse ad entrare. C'era lo scaffale dove egli non si era mai curato di mettere ordine e di raccogliere le sue opere. C'era una costernazione di molti, ma come se egli fosse fuggito. Entrai nella camera ove egli giaceva. Era come abbandonata, poi ci si accorgeva che da una parte due suore pregavano in silenzio, e il prete che avevamo avvertito lo assolveva. Tornato di là, fra la gente sempre più fitta e curiosa, il figlio mi mostrò mezzo foglio di carta da lettere che conteneva le sue ultime volontà. Conteneva quella volontà senza consolazioni, senza rapporti, senza rimedio, di andarsene sul carro dei poveri, di non essere accompagnato da nessuno, di essere disperso al vento con le sue ceneri, o di riposare in quella sua casetta del Caso, o del Caos come egli diceva, presso Agrigento.»

«... Il giorno seguente, la nebbia infracidiva gli ultimi fiori secchi di quel giardinetto dietro a quel cancello di via Antonio Bosio. Un povero cavallo attaccato al carro dei poveri era fermo sulla strada bagnata, tutto puntato avanti per non sdruciolare. La bara di abete tinto di fresco con una mano di terra bruna fu collata sul carro, e i pochi amici rimasero

fermi davanti al cancello a vederla partire sola verso gli alberi brumosi in fondo al viale. Il carro scomparve all'angolo, con la sua rozza che lo tirava di traverso.»

Come scrittore, il Pirandello esordì seguendo le orme della tradizione del romanzo siciliano — di cui Giovanni Verga e Federico de Roberto sono gli esponenti più noti — ma ben presto lasciò la scuola verista, e si formò una fisionomia propria, inconfondibile, facendosi sempre più cerebralista e filosofico. Nelle sue maggiori opere egli sembra infatti voler sempre dire come Marcantonio Ravì nel suo primo romanzo *Il turno*: Ragioniamo.

«I miei lavori — scrive Pirandello nell'*Almanacco Letterario* del 1927 — nascono da immagini vive, quelle che sono la fonte perenne dell'arte, ma queste immagini passano attraverso un filtro di concetti che hanno preso tutto me stesso.» Nella prefazione a *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, egli ammette di essere scrittore filosofo. «Vi sono — scrive — scrittori che non ammettono figure, vicende, paesaggi che non s'imbevono, per così dire, di un particolar senso della vita, e non acquistano con esso valore universale. Sono scrittori di natura più propriamente filosofica. Io ho la disgrazia di appartenere a questi ultimi.» E in una intervista così definisce il suo teatro: «Quando uno vive, vive e non si vede. Orbene, fate che si veda, nell'atto di vivere, in preda alle sue passioni, ponendogli uno specchio davanti: o resta attonito e sbalordito del suo stesso aspetto, o torce gli occhi per non vedersi, o sdegnato tira uno sputo alla sua immagine, o irato avventa un pugno per infrangerla; se piangeva, non può più piangere; se rideva non può più ridere, e che so io. In somma nasce un *guaiò* per forza. E questo *guaiò* è il mio teatro.»

Per il Pirandello tutto è illusione: nulla realmente esiste. È una illusione la personalità, è una illusione la vita, è una illusione perfino la natura.

È una illusione la nostra personalità. Noi crediamo di essere soltanto quello che sentiamo o ci figuriamo di essere, ma siamo nel fatto anche quello che gli altri s'immaginano che noi siamo. Dice Laudesi nel primo atto di *Così è, se vi pare*: «È sicura anche lei di toccarmi come mi vede? Non può dubitare di lei... — Ma per carità, non dica a suo marito, nè a mia sorella, nè a mia nipote, nè alla signora qua, come mi vede, perchè tutte e quattro altrimenti Le diranno *che lei s'inganna*. Mentre lei non s'inganna affatto! Perchè io sono come realmente me vede lei! — Ma ciò non toglie, cara signora mia, che io sia anche *realmente* come mi vede suo marito, mia sorella, mia nipote.»

Ma non soltanto la nostra personalità è una illusione: è una illusione anche la nostra stessa vita. Noi crediamo che la vita la facciamo noi, la costruiamo noi, giorno per giorno, mentre nel fatto essa è una burla che

seguitano a farla i morti, perchè vivendo, noi continuiamo a trascinarci pigramente nel solco delle tradizioni dei Morti, seguendo i loro costumi, ripetendo la loro vita, i loro gesti, le loro parole. Nel secondo atto della tragedia *Enrico IV* leggiamo: «Spunta il giorno. Il tempo è davanti a noi. Un'alba. — Questo giorno che ci sta davanti — voi dite — lo faremo noi! — Sì? Voi? E salutatemmi tutte le tradizioni! Salutatemmi tutti i costumi! Mettetevi a parlare! Ripetete tutte le parole che si sono sempre dette! Credete di vi vere? Rimasticate la vita dei morti.»

Ed è anche una illusione perfino la stessa natura. Noi crediamo che la natura sia una cosa concreta, stabile e ferma, mentre nel fatto essa si muove e si muta di continuo sotto i nostri stessi occhi. Nel romanzo *Uno, nessuno, centomila*, dicendo la montagna: io sono una montagna, e non mi muovo; lo scrittore le osserva: «Non ti muovi, cara? E guarda quei carri tirati da buoi. Sono carichi di te, di pietre tue. Ti portano in carretta, cara mia. Credi di startene costì? E già sei due miglia lontano, nella pianura. Dove? Ma in quelle case là, non ti vedi? una gialla, una rossa, una bianca, a due, a tre, a quattro piani. E i tuoi faggi, i tuoi noci, i tuoi abeti? Eccoli qua, a casa mia. Vedi come li abbiamo lavorati bene? chi li riconoscerebbe più in queste sedie, in questi armadi, in questi scaffali?»

Per il Pirandello tutta la realtà è una illusione. Nel primo intermezzo corale della commedia *Ciascuno a suo modo* ci dice: «Perchè la avete dagli altri, voi, come una convenzione qualunque, parola vuota: *monte, albero, strada*, credete che ci sia una *data* realtà; e vi sembra una frode se altri vi scopre ch'era invece un'illusione. Sciocchi! Qua s'insegna che ciascuno se lo deve costruire da sè il terreno sotto i piedi, volta per volta, per ogni passo che vogliamo dare, facendovi crollare quello che non v'appartiene, perchè non ve l'eravate costruito da voi e ci camminate da parassiti, da parassiti...» Gli oggetti che ne circondano non esistono realmente, non hanno vita reale; siamo noi col nostro pensiero a farli esistere, a dare loro vita reale. In *Il fu Mattia Pascal* il Pirandello osserva: «Ogni oggetto in noi suol trasformarsi secondo le immagini che esso evoca e aggruppa, per così dire, attorno a sè... Certo un oggetto può piacere anche per se stesso, per la diversità delle sensazioni gradevoli che ci suscita in una percezione armoniosa; ma ben più spesso il piacere che un oggetto ci procura non si trova nell'oggetto per sè medesimo... La fantasia lo abbellisce cingendolo e quasi irraggiandolo d'immagini care. Nè noi lo percepiamo più qual esso è, ma così, quasi animato dalle immagini che suscita in noi o che le nostre abitudini vi associano. Nell'oggetto, insomma, noi amiamo quel che vi mettiamo di noi, l'accordo, l'armonia che stabiliamo tra esso e noi, l'anima che esso acquista per noi soltanto.» E nel già citato romanzo *Uno, nessuno, centomila* sostiene che: «Una realtà

non ci fu data e non c'è, ma dobbiamo farcela noi stessi. La vita non si spiega, si vive... Quando uno vive, vive e non si vede. Conoscersi è morire.»

Non esiste una verità astratta, valevole per tutti come un dogma indiscutibile, ma una verità individuale, secondo che ciascuno di noi la vede nel suo stato d'animo particolare, come influenzato dall'ambiente e dalle circostanze. Lamberto Laudisi in *Così è, se vi pare* dice a coloro che vogliono decidere una questione a base di documenti: «Voi, non io, avete bisogno dei dati di fatto, dei documenti per affermare o negare! Io non so che farmene, poichè per me la realtà non consiste in essi, ma nell'animo di quei due in cui non posso figurarmi d'entrare se non per quel tanto che essi me ne dicono.» E continua: «E chi dei due? (è pazzo). Non potete dirlo voi come non può dirlo nessuno. E non già perchè codesti dati di fatto, che andate cercando, siano stati annullati — dispersi o distrutti — da un accidente qualsiasi — un incendio, un terremoto — no; ma perchè li hanno annullati essi in sè, nell'animo loro, volete capirlo? creando lei a lui, o lui a lei, un fantasma che ha la stessa consistenza della realtà, dove essi vivono ormai in perfetto accordo, pacificati. E non potrà essere distrutta questa loro realtà, da nessun documento, poichè essi ci respirano dentro, la vedono, la sentono, la toccano! — Al più, per voi potrebbe servire il documento, per levarvi voi una sciocca curiosità.»

Nulla esiste: tutto è illusione. Le cose hanno la realtà che ad esse diamo noi, i fatti hanno la valutazione che ad essi noi affibbiamo, una verità è tale o no secondo che noi la interpretiamo; ogni persona ha l'oggettività che noi ci figuriamo con la nostra immaginazione; l'io non ha alcuna unità inscindibile, ma è un continuo fluire cangievole, un continuo succedersi di stati d'animo mutevoli secondo l'ambiente, l'epoca, le circostanze e le persone con cui trattiamo. Questi principi, con tutte le deduzioni e le conseguenze che ne derivano, dimostra il Pirandello nelle sue opere: nelle novelle, nei romanzi, nei drammi, nelle commedie. C'è, indubbiamente, una parte vera in questi principi psicologici, e quindi i paradossi pirandelliani su questi principi basati sono spesso paradossi soltanto in apparenza o per metà. Perchè l'errore del Pirandello non sta nel riconoscere, nell'affermare e nel dimostrare questi principi, ma nel dare ad essi valore assoluto, e quindi nel trarre deduzioni arbitrarie ed assurde. Ed è questo relativismo condotto alle sue conseguenze più spinte ed ardite che ha preso il nome *pirandellismo*, e che va combattuto in nome della ragione e della coscienza, della verità e della morale.

Nulla esiste: tutto è illusione. E il mondo creato colle nostre illusioni è più vero di quello reale che noi crediamo che esista. Ma il mondo reale non esiste, ed anche se esistesse non sarebbe vero, perchè continuamente

cambia. Il mondo creato con le nostre illusioni non può esistere, perchè è solo effetto delle nostre illusioni. Nella novella *Un ritratto*, il Pirandello dice: «Sono convinto che non c'è altra realtà fuori delle illusioni che il sentimento ci crea. Se un sentimento cangia all'improvviso, crolla l'illusione e con essa quella realtà in cui vivevamo, e allora ci vediamo sperduti nel vuoto.» In un'altra novella, *La camera in attesa*, basandosi su questo modo d'argomentare, il Pirandello giunge alla seguente assurdità: i vivi sono meno veri e reali dei morti, e i morti sono più veri e reali dei vivi, perchè i vivi cambiano continuamente e non sono mai gli stessi, mai quelli di prima, mentre i morti non possono cambiare dall'idea che non ci siamo fatti di loro. L'unica differenza è la presenza del corpo, ma questa milita a vantaggio dei morti, perchè il corpo dei vivi non è vero in quanto che subisce una trasformazione continua, mentre il corpo dei morti, così come è nella nostra illusione, non è soggetto a mutazione alcuna, ma resta sempre come noi ci illudiamo che sia. I figli, secondo il Pirandello, che partono per gli studi in una città lontana, per i loro genitori sono nella realtà morti, perchè quando ritornano, dopo un anno, non sono più loro: saranno cambiati non solo nell'anima, cioè nel modo di pensare e di sentire, ma anche nel corpo: avranno un'altra voce, un altro modo di gestire, di muoversi, di guardare, di sorridere. «Il vostro figliuolo — dice il Pirandello — quello che voi conoscevate prima che partisse, è morto, credetelo, è morto. Solo l'esserci d'un corpo (e pur esso tanto cambiato!) vi fa dire di no. Ma lo avvertite bene, voi, ch'era un altro, quello partito un anno fa, che non è più ritornato.» Invece, Cesarino Mochi, sottotenente di fanteria, partito per la guerra e dato per disperso dal Comando Ufficiale, è ancora vivo, perchè la mamma e le sue tre sorelle si creano questa illusione. Esse l'attendono ancora, da quattordici mesi l'attendono: ogni giorno gli puliscono e gli rassettano la camera, ogni giorno gli rifanno il letto, gli caricano l'orologio, gli cambiano l'acqua della boccetta sul tavolino, gli preparano sul letto la camicia da notte. E tanto è la loro illusione forte che Cesarino per loro è vivo. «Voi lo sapete bene, ora, che la realtà non dipende dall'esserci o dal non esserci del corpo. — nota il Pirandello — Può esserci il corpo, ed esser morto per la realtà che voi gli davate. Quel che fa la vita, dunque, è la realtà che voi le date. E dunque realmente può bastare alla mamma e alle tre sorelle di Cesarino Mochi la vita che egli segue ad avere per esse, qua nella realtà degli atti che compiono per lui, in questa camera che lo attende in ordine, pronta ad accoglierlo tal quale egli era prima che partisse... Ah, non c'è pericolo per quella mamma e per quelle tre sorelle ch'egli ritorni un altro, com'è avvenuto per il vostro figliuolo a fin d'anno... La realtà di Cesarino è inalterabile qua nella sua camera e

nel cuore e nella mente di quella mamma e di quelle tre sorelle, che per sè, fuori di questa, non ne hanno altra.»

Da questo principio che tutto è un'illusione, segue logico e naturale il dramma del dualismo della vita che troviamo esposto nelle opere del Pirandello. Dramma logico e naturale, abbiamo detto, perchè esso balza spontaneo dall'antitesi tra la realtà della vita, che non può essere conosciuta, e quella che noi ci illudiamo che sia la realtà. A volte l'uomo appare quello che lui stesso s'immagina d'essere, altre volte quello che egli è davvero nella realtà, e così si perpetua il duello tra la maschera e la vita. E nelle opere del Pirandello ora è la maschera che trionfa sulla vita, come nell'*Enrico IV* e ne *Il giuoco delle parti*, ora è invece la vita che trionfa sulla maschera, come in *Tutto per bene; Come prima, meglio di prima; Il piacere dell'onestà; Ma non è una cosa seria; Vestire gli ignudi*.

Nell'abisso della nostra coscienza scorazzano, dice il Pirandello, «pensieri strani, quasi lampi di follia, pensieri inconseguenti, inconfessabili finanche a noi stessi, come... sorti da un'anima diversa da quella che normalmente ci riconosciamo.» Perchè, secondo lui, nel nostro *io* noi abbiamo più anime che si contrastano fra loro: l'anima istintiva, l'anima morale, l'anima affettuosa, l'anima sociale. E nella vita ora noi ci comportiamo secondo che ci detta l'anima istintiva, ora come ci detta l'anima morale, e così via. Continua il Pirandello: «E secondo che domina questa o quella (anima), s'atteggia la nostra coscienza; e noi riteniamo valida e sincera quella interpretazione fittizia di noi medesimi, del nostro essere interiore che ignoriamo, perchè non si manifesta mai tutto intero, ma ora in un modo, ora in un altro, come volgano i casi della vita.» L'anima individuale non è *una*: ora è passione, ora è ragione; ora è istinto, ora è volontà. Sono anime diverse, anzi opposte, che fanno nascere diverse ed opposte personalità nello stesso individuo. Quando è cosciente, sotto la rigida censura della coscienza, l'individuo ha certe caratteristiche personali, che forse non sono le sue caratteristiche vere; mentre se opera sotto l'influsso del subcosciente, cioè non più sotto la rigida censura della coscienza, ha caratteristiche personali molto diverse, e sono forse queste le sue vere caratteristiche.

In ciascun uomo sono uomini innumerevoli, tutti diversi, a volte contrastanti, sempre molto irrequieti e mutevoli. «Ciascuno di noi — ha scritto il Pirandello — si crede uno, ma non è vero: è tanti, signore, tanti; secondo tutte le possibilità d'essere che sono in noi.» E Serafino Gubbio, il protagonista d'un suo romanzo omonimo, trovandosi sul treno in compagnia d'uomo di mezza età, così filosofeggia: «Quell'uomo era sì lui, in questo mondo; fermo e ben posato nel sentimento della sua tranquilla e ben posa-

ta bestialità, ci capiva tutto a meraviglia, senza inquietarsi di nulla... Ma io?... Com'ero anch'io nel mondo dove stava lui?... No, io ero fuori di tutto, assente da me stesso e dalla vita; e non sapevo più dove fossi, nè perchè ci fossi. Immagini, aspetti, figure, ricordi di persone, di cose che non erano mai state nella realtà, fuori di me, nel mondo che quel signore si vedeva attorno e toccava. Avevo creduto di vederle anch'io, di toccarle anch'io, ma che! Non era vero niente! Non le avevo trovate più perchè non c'erano state mai: ombre, sogno... Ma come avevano potuto venirmi in mente? donde? perchè? C'ero anch'io, forse, allora? C'era un io che ora non c'era più? Ma no: quel signore di mezza età mi diceva di no: che c'erano gli altri, ciascuno a suo modo e col suo modo e col suo tempo: io no, non c'ero.»

Da qui nasce l'*individualità relativa* del Pirandello, e anche la conseguente *tragedia della personalità*. Verso la fine del lungo saggio su *L'Umorismo* egli dice: «Le barriere, i limiti che noi poniamo alla nostra coscienza, sono anch'essi illusioni, sono le condizioni dell'apparire della nostra individualità relativa; ma, nella realtà, quei limiti non esistono punto. Non soltanto noi, quali ora siamo, viviamo in noi stessi, ma anche noi, quali fummo in altro tempo, viviamo tutt'ora e sentiamo e ragioniamo con pensieri e affetti già da lungo oblio oscurati, cancellati, spenti nella nostra coscienza presente, ma che a un urto, a un tumulto improvviso dello spirito, possono ancor dar prova di vita, mostrando vivo in noi un altro essere insospettato.»

Secondo il Pirandello, la personalità può variare a causa dell'ambiente, ma può anche alterarsi per un fenomeno interiore improvviso che noi stessi non arriviamo a capire. Dice nel citato saggio su *L'Umorismo*: «Ecco un alto funzionario, che si crede, ed è, poveretto, in verità, un galantuomo. Domina in lui l'anima morale. Ma un bel giorno, l'anima istintiva, che è come la bestia originaria acquattata in fondo a ciascuno di noi, spara un calcio all'anima morale e quel galantuomo ruba. Oh, egli stesso, poveretto, egli per il primo, poco dopo, ne prova stupore, piange, domanda a se stesso, disperato: «Come, come mai ho potuto fare questo? Ma, signori, ha rubato. E quell'altro là? Uomo dabbene, anzi dabenissimo; signori, ha ucciso. L'idealità morale costituiva nella personalità di lui un'anima che contrastava con l'anima istintiva e pure in parte con quella affettiva e passionale; costituiva un'anima acquisita che lottava con l'anima ereditaria, la quale, lasciata per un po' libera a se stessa, è riuscita d'improvviso al furto, al delitto.»

E tanto è sola e sempre illusione la personalità delle persone vere che, non solo i morti sono più veri dei vivi, come nella novella già citata *La camera in attesa*, ma i puri fantasmi, i personaggi creati dall'arte

hanno anch'essi una personalità più concreta e reale di quella delle persone reali. Così nella novella *La tragedia d'un personaggio*, alcuni personaggi, creati dalla fantasia dell'autore, si sentono più vivi delle persone reali, ed esclamano: «Noi siamo esseri vivi, più vivi di quelli che respirano e vestono panni; forse menò reali, ma più veri. Si nasce alla vita in tanti modi, caro signore; e lei sa bene che la natura si serve dello strumento della fantasia umana per proseguire la sua opera di creazione... Chi nasce personaggio, chi ha la ventura di nascere personaggio vivo, può infischiarci anche della morte. Non muore più! Morrà l'uomo, lo scrittore, strumento naturale della creazione; la creatura non muore più! E per vivere eterna, non ha mica bisogno di straordinarie doti o di compiere prodigi. Mi dica lei chi era Sancho Panza! Mi dica lei chi era Don Abbondio!»

Il motivo di questa novella diventerà più tardi l'argomento d'una delle più celebri opere teatrali del Pirandello: *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*. Sono sei personaggi pensati dall'autore ma non esternati nel mondo dell'arte, che si recano in un teatro, da un Capocomico in cerca d'un autore, mossi dalla smania di vivere il loro dramma sulla scena, spinti irresistibilmente dal bisogno di venire interamente alla luce. «O perchè — dice il Pirandello — non rappresento questo novissimo caso d'un autore che si rifiuta di far vivere alcuni suoi personaggi, nati vivi nella sua fantasia, e il caso di questi personaggi che, avendo ormai infusa in loro la vita, non si rassegnano a restare esclusi dal mondo dell'arte? Essi si sono già staccati da me; vivono per conto loro; hanno acquistato voce e movimento; sono già dunque divenuti di per sè stessi, in questa lotta che han dovuto sostenere con me per la loro vita, personaggi drammatici, personaggi che possono da soli muoversi e parlare; vedono già sè stessi come tali; hanno imparato a difendersi da me; sapranno ancora difendersi dagli altri. E, allora, ecco, lasciamoli andare dove son soliti d'andare i personaggi drammatici per aver vita.»

Il nucleo più potente e più originale dell'arte del Pirandello sta qui: nello sdoppiamento della personalità, nel realtismo psicologico, per cui nulla è certo e tutto è problematico, per cui tutto può essere affermato e tutto può essere negato, per cui la realtà può essere un mero sogno, e il sogno un realtà vera. Una delle novelle più introspettive e più psicanalitiche del Pirandello porta infatti il titolo *La realtà del sogno*. La nostra personalità non esiste; noi falsiamo continuamente la nostra natura con la nostra volontà conscia o inconscia, per vivere secondo il nostro gusto, o secondo la nostra educazione, o secondo il nostro abito morale, o secondo le convenienze della società. Dice Carlo Viola nella novella or or menzionata: «Fingiamo tutti spontaneamente, non tanto innanzi agli

altri, quanto innanzi a noi stessi; crediamo sempre di noi quello che ci piace credere, e ci vediamo non quali siamo nella realtà, ma quali presumiamo d'essere secondo la costruzione ideale che ci siamo fatti di noi stessi. Ma poi la nostra personalità è quale ce la figuriamo noi o quale la vedono gli altri: quindi noi possiamo essere, allo stesso tempo, *uno, nessuno, centomila*, che è il titolo del più pirandelliano romanzo del Pirandello. Quando la nostra personalità è quella che noi ci fingiamo di essere, allora essa è *una*, ma non è la vera, perchè noi offriamo di noi stessi una immagine favorevole, siccome istintivamente vogliamo presentarci agli altri fisicamente e moralmente più belli di quel che nel fatto siamo; quando la nostra personalità è quella che si immaginano gli altri, allora essa può essere *centomila*, o anche più, se centomila o più sono quelli che se la figurano; quando siamo soli, e potremmo quindi davvero apparire nella nostra vera personalità, non siamo *nessuno*, perchè neanche quando siamo soli possiamo afferrarla questa nostra personalità. Quando siamo soli, infatti, noi non viviamo in noi, ma negli altri, in quanto che quando siamo soli noi siamo assaliti dai ricordi, ed entrano nella nostra anima, in confuso, tutte le persone che conosciamo, tutte le persone con cui, in un'epoca o in un'altra, siamo venuti in contatto. Dice Vitangelo Moscarda in *Uno, nessuno, centomila*: «Ah sì, v'assicuro ch'è un bel modo, codesto, d'essere soli. Vi s'apre nella memoria una cara finestretta, da cui s'affaccia sorridente, tra un vaso di garofani e un altro di gelsomini, la Titti che lavora all'ucinetto una fascia rossa di lana, oh Dio, come quella che ha al collo quel vecchio insopportabile signor Giacomino, a cui ancora non avete fatto il biglietto di raccomandazione per il presidente della Congregazione di carità, vostro buon amico, ma seccantissimo anche lui, specie se si mette a parlare delle marachelle del suo segretario particolare...»

Come non esiste la personalità, così non esiste il carattere, non esiste l'atteggiamento virtuoso, non esiste l'atteggiamento vizioso. Nessuna realtà esiste come punto fermo. La realtà è continuamente mutevole, è in continuo fluire. Esistono le finzioni e gli artifici con cui noi crediamo di dare un aspetto alla realtà; ma sono solo finzioni e artifici che ad un soffio violento della vita cadono come castelli di carta. Non c'è un punto fisso e immutabile da cui giudicare e con cui valutare le azioni umane, che sotto un aspetto potrebbero essere considerate buone e sotto un altro aspetto cattive. Nessuna realtà, sia essa fisica o psicologica, esiste più nella realtà: esistono soltanto illusioni e illusioni che noi creiamo senza sosta, a getto continuo.

Perchè la vita, colle sue varie manifestazioni, nella realtà non esiste, e noi cerchiamo di darle un'oggettività con le finzioni e gli ideali che

noi stessi ci creiamo. Ma queste finzioni e questi ideali sono veli illusori con cui noi ci illudiamo di costruirci una personalità. E il Pirandello straccia anche tutti questi veli, ma da realista cinico che è, non soffre vedendoli stracciarsi fra le sue mani. «Il cittadino Pirandello — osserva il Borgese — rispetta ed ama, senza dubbio, gli ideali, ma l'artista Pirandello si mostra supinamente indifferente. I veli della vita sono per lui cenci sudici; e, sacrificandoli, non sa ispirarci quella riluttante simpatia, da cui zampilla il doloroso riso dell'umorismo: appunto perchè il suo sacrificio non è molto più drammatico di quello del frate miscredente, che, per alleggerire la nave nella tempesta, getta in preda alle onde il breviario.»

Quale è la vera e profonda ragione psicologica per cui il Pirandello considera la realtà un'illusione, e non si turba vedendo cadere tutti gli ideali e tutte le finzioni per cui la vita è santa e bella? La mancanza di fede. Quando, per riempire la scheda d'immatricolazione, il segretario dell'Università di Bonn gli chiese cosa dovesse scrivere accanto alla parola Fede, il giovine Pirandello rispose: *Schreiben Sie null*. Scriva zero.

Giustamente osserva il Bargellini: «Fede zero, che è come dire uomo zero, cioè nessuno. Che cos'è infatti un uomo preso in se stesso, senza più nessun legame di fede con nessun altro? Chi gli garantisce il suo essere? Egli non diventa che un'illusione. L'uomo solo, il lirico «calamita», dentro la torre d'avorio, che riceve e trasmette messaggi analogici, come può dire di esser qualcuno? *Cogito ergo sum*. Ma si potrebbe dire anche: *Cogito ergo non sum*. Credo di essere, m'illudo di essere.»

E questa terribile farsa delle illusioni ha nelle opere del Pirandello una conseguenza disastrosa anche dal punto di vista artistico. Giacchè tutto è illusione, perchè scalmanarsi, perchè inquietarsi, perchè scomporsi? Se la vita è un'illusione, perchè drammatizzarla? E il Pirandello non risolve mai alcuna crisi. Nelle sue opere non ci sono mai nè vincitori nè vinti, non c'è mai il trionfo del bene sul male. Ben osserva a proposito lo stesso Bargellini: «I suoi personaggi non giungono mai ad atti o a fatti irreparabili. S'adattano sempre a una situazione di compromesso, denunziate già in precedenza dai titoli delle opere: *Come tu mi vuoi*; *Ciascuno a suo modo*; *Così è, se vi pare*; *La vita che ti diedi*; *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, ecc.!!! Le soluzioni sono sempre lasciate in sospenso, aggrionate, e il personaggio pirandelliano, continuamente in crisi, seguita a vivere, nella sua perenne ambiguità, anche dopo la vicenda drammatica. Anzi, egli è sempre lo stesso, unico personaggio, che esce da una scena ed entra nell'altra, esce da un'illusione ed entra nell'altra, evasivo, e multiforme, una specie di Fenice che continuamente s'incenerisce nella illusione per risorgere in una nuova illusione.»

Proprio così. Giunti all'apice del dramma non succede niente, nessun

cataclisma: si continua a ragionare e a vivere come se nulla d'insolito fosse accaduto. Ecco ad esempio la novella *Cassa Riposta*. Il cane d'un avvocato mangia alcune salsicce appese in una bottega. Il salumiere si reca dall'avvocato e gli chiede se il padrone del cane sia tenuto a indennizzarlo. Avuta una risposta affermativa, il salumiere, tutto contento, svela all'avvocato che il cane era suo, e chi quindi lui doveva pagare. L'avvocato non si scompone: pagherà, secondo come vuole la legge; ma il salumiere gli dovrà pagare il triplo per il consulto giuridico, pure secondo come vuole la legge.

Un altro esempio tipico del come il dramma non si risolve mai, nè in disperazione nè in liberazione, è la chiusa di *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. Ritornato al suo paese di nuovo vivo e reale, dopo due finti suicidi, e trovata la moglie rimaritata, Mattia Pascal non fa alcuna scena terribile: rinuncia tranquillamente a ogni suo diritto maritale, e ritorna a vivere nell'ombra. Per i più questa chiusa non è soltanto inconcludente, ma anche troppo fredda, perchè i più avrebbero preferito qui una scena tragica con almeno un morto, o quella della moglie, o quella dell'intruso marito. Invece questa chiusa è solo fredda in apparenza; nella realtà racchiude molta e profonda umanità, perchè Mattia Pascal rinuncia ai suoi diritti semplicemente perchè dal nuovo matrimonio era nata una bambina. Dice alla sua *quondam* metà che piange: «Non piangere! Via, via: voi ora avete una figliuola, e dunque non se ne parli più. Vi lascio in pace.» E dice al marito: «Va là: fa il marito in pace, senza soggezione...» Il tuo matrimonio, comunque sia, s'è celebrato. Tutti approvano, considerando che c'è di mezzo una creaturina. Ti prometto e giuro che non verrò mai a importunarti, neanche per una misserima tazza di caffè, neanche per godere del dolce, esilarante spettacolo del vostro amore, della vostra concordia, della vostra felicità edificata sulla mia morte.»

Nell'*Avvertenza sugli scrupoli della fantasia*, il Pirandello osserva: «...La vita, per tutte le sfacciate assurdità, piccole e grandi, di cui beatamente è piena, ha l'instimabile privilegio di poter fare a meno di quella stupidissima verosimiglianza a cui l'arte crede suo dovere obbedire... Le assurdità della vita non hanno bisogno di parer verosimili, perchè sono vere, all'opposto di quelle dell'arte che, per parer vere, hanno bisogno d'esser verosimili. E allora, verosimili, non sono più assurdità... Un caso della vita può esser assurdo; un'opera d'arte, se è opera d'arte, no... Ne segue che tacciare d'assurdità e d'inverosimiglianza, in nome della vita, un'opera d'arte è balordaggine... In nome dell'arte, sì; in nome della vita, no.»

Il Pirandello insorge contro questo «privilegio» della vita sull'arte, e in ogni sua maggiore opera cerca sempre, con la sua arte persuasiva, di

farci apparire logiche e verosimili le assurdità e le inverosimiglianze delle sue creazioni. In ogni suo maggior lavoro il Pirandello, infatti, imposta un problema e lo risolve: ma è quasi sempre una tesi assurda quella che sostiene, e sempre la sostiene con argomenti naturali, semplici, e, in apparenza, convincenti. Ed è questa un'altra della più potenti e più originali caratteristiche dell'arte del Pirandello, una caratteristica tutta sua, inconfondibile, integrata da un continuo umorismo: un umorismo pacato e ragionato, come quello del Manzoni, ma poi molto diverso da quello sorridente e bonario del grande Milanese, perchè è in fondo sempre immensamente scettico e amaro.

Che i casi che tratta siano sempre strani, complicati e di difficilissima soluzione, lo riconosce il Pirandello stesso. Nella prefazione a *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* ha scritto: «E da tanti anni al servizio della mia arte una servetta sveltissima, e non pertanto nuova sempre al mestiere. Si chiama Fantasia. Un po' dispettosa e beffarda, se ha il gusto di vestir di nero, nessuno potrà negare che non sia spesso alla bizzarra. E si diverte a portarmi in casa, perchè io ne tragga novelle e romanzi e commedie, la gente più scontenta del mondo, uomini, donne e ragazzi, rinvolti in casi strani e complicati, da cui non trovano più modo a uscite.»

Nel romanzo *Il turno*, in cui c'è già il germe del vero Pirandello, Marcantonio Ravì riesce a persuadere la figlia Stellina a maritarsi col vecchio don Diego Alcozè ragionando in questo modo: «Se don Diego Alcozè avesse avuto cinquanta o sessant'anni, no: dieci, quindici anni di sacrificio sarebbero stati troppi per la figliuola; ed egli non avrebbe mai accettato quel partito. Ma ne aveva, a buon conto, settantadue, don Diego! E non c'era dunque da temere pericoli di nessuna sorta. Più che matrimonio, in fondo, sarebbe quasi una pura e semplice adozione. Stellina entrerebbe come una figliuola in casa di don Diego: nè più nè meno. Invece di stare in casa del padre, starebbe in quell'altra casa, con più comodi, da padrona assoluta; casa d'un galantuomo alla fin fine: nessuno osava metterlo in dubbio, questo. Dunque, che sacrificio? Aspettare qua o là. Con questa differenza, che aspettare qua, in casa del padre, sarebbe tempo perduto, non potendo egli far nulla per la figliuola; mentre aspettando là, tre quattr'anni. E riesce a persuadere il giovine Pepè Alletto, che ama Stellina, ad aspettare, con i seguenti argomenti: «Quanto a ballare, lo so, ballate come se non aveste fatto mai altro in vita vostra. Anche con gli speroni ai piedi, m'hanno detto. E sonare, sonate il pianoforte come un angelo. Ma caro mio don Pepè, qui non si tratta di ballare, mi spiego? Ballare è un conto; mangiare un altro. Senza mangiare non si balla e non si suona. Debbo aprirvi gli occhi proprio io? Lasciatemi combinare in pace questo benedetto matrimonio, e aiutatemi, anzi! Il vecchio è ricco,

ha settantadue anni e ha preso quattro mogli... Gli diamo ancora tre anni di vita? L'avvenire è poi nelle mani di Dio. Dite un po': quale può essere l'ambizione d'un onesto padre di famiglia? La felicità della propria figliuola, ne convenite? Oh: chi è scarso è schiavo: schiavitù e felicità possono andar d'accordo? No. Ergo, prima base: denari. La libertà sta di casa con la ricchezza; e quando Stellina sarà ricca, non sarà poi libera di fare ciò che le parrà e piacerà? Dunque... che dicevamo? Ah, don Diego. Ricco, don Pepè mio! Ricchezze ne ha tante, che potrebbe lastricare di pezzi di dodici tarì tutta Girgenti, beato lui!»

Le stesse assurdità — che nella vita potrebbero essere «vere» ma che nell'arte rimangono sempre «assurdità» perchè non sono verosimili — le stesse assurdità le troviamo nelle opere di teatro. Così in *Pensaci, Giacomo*, il marito, il vecchio professor Toti, riesce a ricondurre l'amante alla propria moglie; ne *L'innesto*, Laura Banti riesce a far sì che il marito riconosca come proprio figlio il figlio che ella ha avuto da un altro; ne *La regione degli altri*, Livia Arciani riesce a persuadere il marito di riportarle a casa il frutto del suo amore illegittimo, e soltanto allora si riconcilia pienamente con lui.

Il Pirandello è uno dei più fecondi scrittori italiani degli ultimi tempi, e, se si eccettuino Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Papini, è stato l'unico scrittore italiano, dopo il D'Annunzio, a conquistare, fuori d'Italia, una fama salda e duratura, specialmente col suo teatro. In Francia, ad esempio, le sue commedie sono state incluse nel repertorio della *Comédie française* vicino ai classici francesi e inglesi.

Anche in Italia, del resto, il suo teatro ha avuto più fortuna delle sue opere narrative. A noi, invece, pare che i suoi romanzi e in ispecie le sue novelle siano migliori dei suoi lavori drammatici. Vi troviamo già sviluppati quasi tutti i problemi che più tardi egli svolgerà nei suoi drammi, e perciò, a volte, notiamo in quest'ultimi l'aria d'una cosa rifatta, stanca, e mancante di spontaneità.

Il rifacimento però non sempre si nota subito, perchè il Pirandello, scrivendo i suoi drammi, era sempre realmente ispirato, e s'immedesimava tanto coi suoi personaggi che dalla penna gli usciva sempre qualche cosa completamente nuova. È interessante riportare a proposito un ricordo di Orio Vergani, registrato da Luigi Cavicchioli sulla rivista *Oggi* del febbraio del 1951. Il Vergani «afferma ancora oggi di avere trascorso, nello studio di Pirandello, le ore più emozionanti della sua vita. Fu quando assistette, durante tre mattinate consecutive, alla creazione e alla stesura, nonchè, contemporaneamente, alla recitazione, dalla prima all'ultima battuta, dei *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*. Si recò un mattino a casa di Pirandello, per chiedergli non ricorda che cosa, e entrò nello

studio. Il commediografo era seduto alla scrivania e stava lavorando. Gli disse soltanto: «siedi e aspetta. Sto cominciando quel lavoro di cui ti ho parlato.» Pirandello aveva uno stranissimo modo di lavorare. Si serviva di due penne, che usava alternativamente, intingendole in inchiostri diversi, uno rosso e l'altro nero. Con l'inchiostro rosso scriveva le didascalie, con quello nero le battute del dialogo. Le commedie se le dettava, pronunciava, cioè, ad alta voce, prima di scriverle, tutte le parole. Mentre le frasi delle didascalie le pronunciava con voce incolore e monotona, con volto impassibile e tranquillo, appena afferrava la penna per l'inchiostro nero si trasformava, diventava il personaggio, uomo o donna, del quale stava per esprimere il tormento. Le parole del dialogo le urlava, le ringhiava, le singhiozzava, le cantava, a seconda dei casi, con il viso sconvolto da espressioni intensissime e terribili. Poi, scritta la battuta, di colpo si ricomponeva, riprendeva adagio la nuova didascalia, dettandosi con la solita voce incolore. Vergani, quella mattina, restò inchiodato sulla sedia, con gli occhi fissi sul commediografo, per più di tre ore, fino a mezzogiorno, fino a quando cioè Pirandello non si dettò, con voce incolore, e non scrisse, con inchiostro rosso: «Fine dell'atto primo.» Vergani era spossato e sconvolto per quelle tre ore di tensione spasmodica. Pirandello al contrario era sereno e tranquillo... Vergani tornò il mattino successivo, sedette sulla medesima sedia, e assistette alla creazione di tutto il secondo atto dei *Sei personaggi*. La terza mattina vide nascere il terzo atto. Concluso il suo capolavoro, Pirandello prese a braccetto il suo giovane amico e lo condusse fuori chiacchierando amabilmente del più e del meno. Più tardi arrivarono i figli Stefano (che oggi è scrittore e commediografo) e Fausto (che è pittore) in compagnia di Federico Tozzi e di Marino Moretti. Pirandello era di ottimo umore e invitò tutti a prendere parte a una gara podistica di velocità sui cento metri piani.»

Nel complesso, l'opera del Pirandello è una costruzione massiccia, dall'apparenza serena e contemplativa, calma e rassicurante. Ma sotto la sua apparente tranquillità sono nascosti tragici abissi e gorgi spaventosi, e vi scorre continuamente un pessimismo acre e beffardo, più demolitore di quello del Leopardi. Il Leopardi trova il male nella natura, che è all'uomo «matrigna», ma il Pirandello trova il male tanto nella natura, che è «cieca», quanto negli uomini, che sono cattivi ed ipocriti, meno rispettabili delle bestie, perchè queste almeno hanno il pregio della sincerità. E nel progresso civile egli non vede che impostura ed ipocrisia. Dice Baldovino ne *Il piacere dell'onestà* mostrando a Maurizio Setti le unghie ben tagliate: «Vedi dove siamo arrivati? E non ce le tagliano mica per disamarci! Anzi! Perchè paiano più civili le nostre mani: vuol dire più

atte a una lotta ben più feroce di quella che i nostri avi bestioni combattevano, poveretti, con le sole unghie... Ho avuto sempre, perciò, invidia delle belve...»

Il pessimismo trascina spesso il Pirandello alle più amare riflessioni sulla vita. Uno spirito beffardo domina, secondo lui, il mondo e gli uomini, e si prende giuoco di tutto e di tutti. La riflessione di don Cosmo, nel romanzo *I vecchi e i giovani* è una riflessione tipicamente pirandelliana: «Dico il gioco di questo demoniaccio beffardo che ciascuno di noi ha dentro e che si spassa a rappresentarci di fuori, come realtà, ciò che poco dopo egli stesso ci scopre come una nostra illusione, deridendoci degli affanni che per essa ci siamo dati, e deridendoci anche, come avviene a me, del non averci saputo illudere, perchè fuor di queste illusioni non c'è più altra realtà... E dunque non vi lagnate. Affannatevi e tormentatevi, senza pensare che tutto questo non conclude. Se non conclude è segno che non deve concludere, e che è vano cercarvi una soluzione. Bisogna vivere, cioè illudersi; lasciar giocare in noi il demoniaccio beffardo, finchè non si sarà stancato; e pensare che tutto questo passerà... passerà.»

I personaggi nelle opere del Pirandello diventano perciò marionette, mosse capricciosamente dal caso e dalla fortuna, perchè tali sono gli uomini per lui, anzi pupi, come dice un personaggio della commedia *Il berretto a sonagli*: «Pupi siamo. Lo spirito divino entra in noi e si fa pupo. Pupo io, pupo lei, pupi tutti.» Il Pirandello, anzi, va anche più in là, e nella prefazione ai già citati *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* scrive: «Nulla pare che sia più superfluo dello spirito, in un organismo umano.»

Paragonata con quella, sempre troppo sonora e sempre troppo ricca, del D'Annunzio, la prosa del Pirandello appare sciatta e disadorna. Certo, essa manca di fioriture, e talora è anche aspra e stridente, e perfino disordinata e confusa, ma è sempre precisa ed espressiva, molto efficace e vigorosa, specialmente quando si scarnisce, scandagliando l'anima umana, o quando procede a scatti, seguendo il secco martellamento del pensiero.

L'opera del Pirandello fa male, specialmente ai giovani. In genere fa male per la sua derisione sistematica delle concezioni morali e delle convenzioni sociali, derisione tanto sostenuta e tanto spinta da far apparire più regolare, più sana e più dignitosa, la vita vissuta al di fuori di queste concezioni e di queste convenzioni, che, secondo lui, l'uomo si è imposto per forza d'abitudine e per pigrizia di spirito. Ma l'opera del Pirandello fa anche male per il suo pessimismo amaro, che disorienta e demoralizza le anime deboli, o non ancora ben formate: fa male per il suo argomentare falso e sottile, che, contrastando con la realtà e violentando l'ordine

morale, squilibria l'intelletto e perverte il cuore; ma soprattutto fa male per il modo come imposta e scioglie alcuni problemi coniugali: un modo tra il faceto e il cinico, che passa sopra i più sacri affetti della famiglia e distrugge la nobiltà e la santità del matrimonio.

Al Pirandello artista tutto questo non spiace, ma al Pirandello uomo non può piacere. Nel suo interno, il Pirandello uomo soffre terribilmente quando s'accorge che dal suo pessimismo altro non si ricava che amarezza e dolore. E nell'avvertenza alla raccolta delle sue *Novelle per un anno*, che aveva rielaborato con lunga e amorosa cura, egli esprime velatamente questo suo rammarico, chiedendone scusa ai lettori: scusa che vuol esser quasi a un tempo una confessione e una pubblica ammenda. Dice: «In grazia almeno di questa cura, l'autore delle *Novelle per un anno* spera che i lettori vorranno usargli venia, se dalla concezione che egli ebbe del mondo e della vita troppo amarezza e scarsa gioia avranno e vedranno in questi tanti piccoli specchi che la riflettono intera.»

Il Pirandello è quasi sempre realista, cinico e cerebrale: ma non è solo cervello, non è solo elucubrazione filosofica e arzigogolo metafisico. A volte si dimentica del suo cerebralismo, e allora scrive pagine davvero poetiche vibranti di delicata sensibilità. Ecco con quanta delicatezza religiosa e quasi mistica Tommasino Unzio, nella novella *Canta L'Epistola*, cura un filo d'erba cresciuto fra due macigni nell'aperta campagna: «E ogni giorno, per una o due ore, contemplandone e vivendone la vita; aveva con esso tentennato a ogni più lieve alito d'aria; trepidando era accorso in qualche giorno di forte vento, o per paura di non arrivare a tempo a proteggerlo da una greggiola di capre... Finora, così il vento come le capre avevano rispettato quel filo d'erba. E la gioia di Tommasino nel ritrovarlo intatto lì, col suo spavaldo pennachietto in cima, era ineffabile. Lo carezzava con l'animo e col fiato, e, nel lasciarlo, la sera, lo affidava alle prime stelle che spuntavano nel cielo crepuscolare, perchè con tutte le altre stelle lo vegliassero durante la notte. E proprio con gli occhi della mente, da lontano, vedeva quel filo d'erba, tra i due macigni, sotto le stelle fitte fitte, sfavillanti nel cielo nero, che lo vegliavano.» Ed ecco con quanta tenerezza è espresso l'amore alla natura e con quanta liricità è espresso l'anelito all'infinito proprio da Vitangelo Moscarda, che è il protagonista del più pirandelliano romanzo del Pirandello, *Uno, nessuno, centomila*: «Mi sentivo come inebriato vaneggiare in un vuoto tranquillo soave, di sogno. Era ritornata la primavera e i primi tepori del sole mi davano un languore di ineffabile letizia. Avevo quasi timore di sentirmi ferire dalla tenerezza dell'aria limpida e nuova ch'entrava dalla finestra semichiusa, e me ne tenevo riparato, alzavo di tanto in tanto gli occhi a mirare quell'azzurro vivace di marzo, corso da allegre nuvole luminose

«Ci vedevo la campagna: come se fosse tutta una sterminata distesa di grano; e, carezzandola, me ne beavo, sentendomi davvero, in mezzo a tutto quel grano, con un senso di così smemorata lontananza, che quasi ne avevo angoscia, una dolcissima angoscia;... Ah, perdersi là, distendersi e abbandonarsi, così tra l'erba, al silenzio dei cieli; empirsi l'anima di tutta quella vana azzurrità, facendovi naufragare ogni pensiero, ogni memoria.» Ed ecco come esprime la sua tenerezza in cospetto del plenilunio un suo personaggio: un marito infelice, volgare, e gonfio d'adipe: «Lei mi vede così grosso e forse non mi suppone capace di commuovermi a uno spettacolo di natura. Ma creda che io ho un'anima piuttosto mingherlina. Un'animuccia coi capelli biondi ho io e col viso dolce, diafano e affilato e gli occhi color di cielo. Un'animuccia insomma che pare una inglesina, quando, nel silenzio, nella solitudine, s'affaccia alle finestre di questi miei occhiacci di bue, e s'intenerisce alla vista della luna e allo scampanello dei grilli sparsi per la campagna... Gli uomini, di giorno, nelle città, e i grilli non si danno requie la notte né le campagne. Bella professione quella del grillo!... Che fai?... Canto! E perchè canti?... Non lo sa nemmeno lui. Canta... E tutte le stelle tremano nel cielo.»

Quando si sveste del suo pirandellismo, quando mette in silenzio il cervello e fa parlare soltanto il cuore, il Pirandello raggiunge vette di poesia e di pathos da pochissimi altri scrittori raggiunte. E scrive allora quella meravigliosa novella intitolata *Servitù*, in cui la delicatezza del sentimento è soltanto uguagliata della tenerezza di poesia che tutta l'avvolge e la permea. «Due volte la mamma aveva sporto il capo dall'uscio e raccomandato alla Dolly di non parlar troppo, di non agitarsi tanto, chè altrimenti la febbre le sarebbe cresciuta.

« - Parli sempre tu... giuochi tu sola... »

«La Dolly, sostenuta da una pila di guanciali, sedeva sul lettino in compagnia di tutte le sue bambole belle. E due volte, scotendo la testina per cacciar via dagli occhi i riccioli d'oro scappati nel calore del giuoco di sotto la cuffietta di raso celeste, aveva risposto alla mamma:

« - No, io sola; gioca anche Nenè... »

«Nenè era la figliuola della *nurse*.

«Ma finora, per dir la verità, Nenè non aveva mai aperto bocca. Tutt'e due le volte, invece aveva guardato quasi atterita la signora che sporgeva il capo dall'uscio; e il cerchio della maniglia, il cigolio dell'uscio schiuso, lo sporgersi di quel capo, la voce della mamma di Dolly, erano stati per lei un fracasso, un crollo, uno scompiglio. Perchè era in un sogno Nenè da due ore, sospesa, quasi angosciata nel dubbio che non fosse vero ciò che pur si vedeva attorno e toccava.»

Nella realtà gioca con le bambole la sola Dolly, perchè Nenè, troppo

timida, non ha ancora detto parola, nè si è mossa, però: «Sentiva bene la Dolly che il giuoco realmente lo faceva Nenè, quantunque finora non avesse aperto bocca. Con la sua meraviglia intenta e muta dava un'anima a quelle sette bambole sedute sul lettino come damine in visita, e un nuovo piacere, a lei, nel farle muovere e parlare. Da tanto tempo, infatti, quelle sette bambole per Dolly quasi non vivevano più: erano pezzi di legno, testine di cera o di porcellana, occhi di vetro, capelli di stoppa. Ma ora riavevano un'anima, un'anima nuova, e rivivevano una nuova vita meravigliosa anche per lei, quale ella non avrebbe mai immaginato di dar loro, un'anima, una vita che prendevano qualità appunto dalla meraviglia di Nenè, ch'era meraviglia di servetta. Le faceva perciò parlare come signorone del gran mondo, piene di capricci e di moine, press'a poco come parlavano le amiche di mammà.»

La ragazza malata, la Dolly, vuole regalare una delle sue bambole a Nenè, ma questa, sbalordita, non ha il coraggio di alzare la mano per prenderla, ed è sul punto di piangere. A questo momento entra nella cameretta la signora, prende un braccino a Nenè, poi le pone sul petto la bambola, e poi sulla bambola le ripiega il braccino, perchè la regga forte. Nenè non ha il coraggio di aprire la bocca per ringraziare: «Nulla. Non poteva dir nulla, Nenè. E non osava nemmeno guardare quella bambola marchesa contro il suo petto, sotto il suo braccino.»

«Se n'andò via come intonata, gli occhi sbarrati, senza sguardo, la boccuccia aperta, e coi capelli che le si rizzavano sotto il nastro color di rosa, quanto più la madre cervava d'assettagliarli sul capo. Scese la scale, attraversò tante vie e si ridusse alla catapecchia, ove abitava col padre, senza veder nulla, senza sentir nulla, quasi alienata d'ogni senso di vita.»

«Le viveva invece sul petto, stretta sotto il braccio, quella bambola meravigliosa; d'una vita incomprendibile però, quale le sbarbagliava ancora nella mente attraverso il chiacchierio fitto e volubile della padroncina malata. Oh Dio, se quella bambola parlava col linguaggio che le aveva messo in bocca la Dolly, come avrebbe fatto lei a comprenderla?»

«Non le s'affacciava neppur per ombra alla mente che avrebbe potuto giocarci, con quella bambola. Servirla, sì, avrebbe potuto servirla; ma come, se non sapeva nemmeno parlarle? se non capiva nulla della vita a cui la bambola era avvezza?»

Quando entra nel bugigattolo ov'era la sua cuccia con una seggiola spagliata, Nenè si guarda attorno «smarrita, avvilita, non per sè ma per la damina che porta in braccio.» E non osa ancora guardarla. C'è troppo miseria in quel bugigattolino, e la bambola è abituata al lusso. Allora Nenè cerca di farle più signorile l'ambiente: trae da una cassetta un grem-

builino azzurro, pulito ma stinto, e avente più d'uno strappo, badando che gli strappi, almeno i più grossi, non vengano in mostra sul piano, con mani tremanti per paura di farle male e di sciuparle l'abito; e finalmente osò guardarla. Un sentimento misto di pietà d'adorazione espressero le manine rimaste innanzi al petto aperte, in un gesto d'incertezza angustiosa. E a poco a poco si piegò su le ginocchia, guardando negli occhi la bambola. Ahimè, la vita meravigliosa, di cui la Dolly nella sua cameretta la aveva fatta vivere, qua s'era come spenta. La bambola le stava davanti, come se non vedesse nulla, in attesa che ella facesse qualche cosa per lei, per ridarle vita, la sua vita perduta, di gran signora. Ma come? che cosa? le mancava tutto. La Dolly le aveva detto ch'erano avvezze a cambiarsi d'abito più volte al giorno le sue bambole, e che quella marchesina Mimì poi aveva anche tante vestaglie una più bella dell'altra, rosse, gialle, viola, a fiorellini, a ombrellini giapponesi... Possibile che ora stesse vestita sempre così, sempre con quel cappellino in capo, con quelle scarpine ai piedi, con quei braccialetti al polso, e quella catenella al collo da cui pendeva il ventaglino? Ah, com'era bello quel ventaglio di piume, ventaglino vero, che faceva un po' di vento davvero, poco poco, quanto poteva bastare a quella piccola marchesina Mimì... Ah là, sì, in casa di Dolly, con tutte le cose adatte, il lettuccio di legno bianco e gli altri mobiletti e il ricco corredo, là, sì, sarebbe stata felice lei di servire quella bambola marchesina. Ma qua? Come non aveva pensato la Dolly che avrebbe dovuto anche darle almeno almeno il lettuccio e un po' di corredo, non per far più ricco e più completo il dono, ma perchè la bambola non avesse a soffrire, e perchè lei, Nenè, avesse modo di servirla? Come poteva così, senza nulla? Al più al più, col fiato e col dito, o con la punta d'una pezzuola, avrebbe potuto ripulirle le scarpette di coppale. Nient'altro.»

È vero: raramente avviene che il Pirandello si dimentica nello stesso tempo del suo cerebralismo sofisticato e del suo realismo cinico. Ma quando questo avviene egli sa frugare nell'anima dei suoi personaggi con una grazia tanto squisita e con una delicatezza tanto spirituale che scrive pagine di così tenera poesia e di così calda umanità che poche volte si riscontra nelle opere dei grandi scopritori d'anime.

Allora nascono accanto a *Servitù*, le altre novelle piene d'umanità e di bontà dolorante, e d'intimo tono affettivo, come *L'eresia càtara*, *Nenia*, *Filo d'aria*, *Ciàula scopre la luna*, *L'ombrello*, ecc. e alcune delle più belle pagine delle sue commedie e dei suoi romanzi.

Tolgo da *Il fu Mattia Pascal* la pagina dove il protagonista piange la morte delle sue due figliuole e della mamma: «Una mi morì dopo (la nascita); l'altra volle darmi il tempo, invece, di affezionarmi a lei, con tutto

l'ardore di un padre che, non avendo più altro, faccia della propria creatura lo scopo unico della sua vita; volle aver la crudeltà di morirmi quando aveva già quasi un anno, e s'era fatta tanto bellina, tanto, con quei riccioli d'oro ch'io m'avvolgevo attorno le dita e le baciavo senza saziarmene mai; mi chiamava papà, e io le rispondevo subito: — Figlia —; e lei di nuovo: — Papà...; così, senza ragione, come si chiamano gli uccelli tra loro... Mi morì contemporaneamente alla mamma mia, nello stesso giorno e quasi alla stessa ora. Non sapevo più come spartire le mie cure e la mia pena. Lasciavo la piccina mia che risposava, e scappavo dalla mamma, che non si curava di sè, della sua morte, e mi domandava di lei, della nipotina, struggendosi di non poterla più rivedere, baciare per l'ultima volta. E durò nove giorni, questo strazio! Ebbene dopo nove giorni e novè notti di veglia assidua, senza chiudere occhio neanche per un minuto... debbo dirlo? — molti forse avrebbero ritengo a confessarlo; ma è pure umano, umano, umano — io non sentii pena, no, sul momento; rimasi un pezzo in una tetraggine attonita, spaventevole, e mi addormentai. Sicuro. Dovetti prima dormire. Poi, sì, quando mi destai, il dolore m'assali rabbioso, feroce, per la figlietta mia, per la mamma mia, che non eran più... E fui quasi per impazzire. Un'intera notte vagai per il paese e per le campagne: non so con che idee per la mente; so che, alla fine, mi ritrovai nel podere della *Stia*, presso alla gora del molino, e che un tal Filippo, vecchio mugnaio, lì di guardia, mi prese con sè, mi fece sedere più là, sotto gli alberi, e mi parlò a lungo, a lungo della mamma e anche di mio padre e dei bei tempi lontani; e mi disse che non dovevo piangere e disperarmi così, perchè per attendere alla figlioletta mia, nel mondo di là, era accorsa la nonna, la nonnina buona, che la avrebbe tenuta sulle ginocchia e le avrebbe parlato di me sempre e non me la avrebbe lasciata mai sola, mai.*

Leggendo simili pagine ci vien voglia di maledire la gran forza mentale e il profondo acume d'osservazione di cui il Pirandello è dotato. Perchè se è vero che sono stati questa forza e questo acume a rendere il Pirandello quel grande scrittore che è, è pur vero che sono stati questa forza mentale sorprendente e quest'acume d'osservazione prepotente a impedire che il volume di tenerezza nascosto in fondo alla sua anima scorresse libero e limpido nelle sue opere.

Profondamente umano, squisitamente artistico ed altamente poetico è questo Pirandello tenero e idillico su cui pochissimi si sono soffermati; ma non è il vero Pirandello. Il vero Pirandello è un altro, molto diverso, quello di cui abbiamo parlato prima. Il vero Pirandello è il Pirandello scettico e amaro come lo plasmarono le sue esperienze personali e il suo congenito pessimismo: pessimismo congenito, ma in lui esacerbato, come

nota Arminio Janner, dall'ingiustizia che è nella vita, dall'illusione dell'amore, dalla mutua incomprendione degli uomini, dal male che si fa inconsapevolmente o magari per istinto perverso, dagli imprevedibili giuochi del caso e dalla metafisica inquietudine che è in noi. Questo è il vero Pirandello. Perché Luigi Pirandello è un cerebrale essenzialmente sarcastico ed un realista essenzialmente cinico. La realtà per lui è una illusione, la vita una burla, il «mondo una trottola in mano della dea Assurdità.» Sotto l'acido della sua spietata analisi e della sua desolata filosofia egli sgretola, polverizza e dissolve l'edificio morale e civile della società, così faticosamente e così pazientemente costruito lungo i secoli, ed oggi comunemente accettato da tutti. Ma nonostante tutto questo è riuscito non soltanto il più interessante e originale scrittore italiano del Novecento, ma indubbiamente uno dei più grandi scrittori di tutti i tempi e di tutti i paesi. Eppure in Italia non è stato mai degnamente apprezzato, e fu sempre trattato molto male dalla critica. Ingiusti in modo particolare sono stati con lui Benedetto Croce e Francesco Flora.

Benedetto Croce, nel suo *Saggio sul Pirandello*, comincia innanzitutto col darci la causa per la quale, secondo lui, il Pirandello riuscì tardi ad acquistar fama in Italia, nonostante che avesse già pubblicato centinaia di novelle e parecchi romanzi. «Certo, le sue novelle e i suoi romanzi — dice il Croce — offrivano una profusione di avventure e di caratteri studiati con cura e non senza ricerca di effetti cupi o grotteschi. Ma è anche vero che non avevano molta originalità di sentimento e di stile, ed erano, più che altro, una prosecuzione, alquanto in ritardo, dell'opera della scuola veristica italiana.» Ed aggiunge il Croce che le novelle del Pirandello di questa scuola veristica italiana seguirono «soprattutto quella parte in cui prendeva a soggetto di rappresentazione artistica l'umanità senza ideali, l'umanità bassa, volgare, egoistica, turpe, e sovente delittuosa» senza che vi abitasse dentro «lo spirito poetico di un Di Giacomo o di un Verga.» Passando alla seconda maniera dell'arte del Pirandello, a quella cerebrale, il Croce commenta: «Se io dovessi definire in poche parole in che cosa propriamente questa sua maniera consiste, direi: in taluni spunti artistici, soffocati o sfigurati da un convulso inconcludente filosofare. Nè arte schietta, dunque, nè filosofia; impedita da un vizio d'origine a svolgersi secondo l'una o l'altra delle due.»

Critica questa che non ha alcuna serietà dal punto di vista artistico e letterario. Noi ammettiamo che il Pirandello è spesso *inconcludente*, ma siamo certi che, se il suo filosofare fosse concludente, il Croce avrebbe detto che il concludente filosofare non ha nulla a che vedere con l'arte, e avrebbe stroncato il Pirandello lo stesso. Il Croce, nella sua critica al grande novelliere e drammaturgo siciliano, come quasi sempre nei suoi

sette volumi di critica, insiste più sulla parte caduca dello scrittore, anzichè sulla parte veramente bella, e ne rivela più i difetti che i pregi.

Benedetto Croce accusa il Pirandello di «puerilismo filosofico», e Piero Bargellini, movendo da questa accusa e rincarando la dose, dice: «Luigi Pirandello era senza dubbio fanciullesco, ma un fanciullo terribile, che, avuto il permesso di rompere alcune «realtà», rompeva tutto. Distrutto il Dio trascendente e personale, egli distruggeva il mondo, la società, e fatalmente, anche se stesso. Perchè si doveva fermare, rispettoso, dinanzi alla *maschera* del suo io? ... Tagliati gli omeggi della fede, negata la trascendenza, tutto abbandonato all'immanenza, l'uomo moderno si perdeva nell'infinito mare senza fondo dell'illusione... Veniva a mancare ogni sicuro criterio di verità. Non esisteva più una verità per tutti e per sempre, ma esistevano tante verità illusorie, sciamanti dell'io, che si svuotava così come una crisalide... La vita non era che un flusso continuo di illusioni, un susseguirsi di verità-errori. Fermarsi, accettare per buona una di queste verità, significava morire. Aderire a una realtà significava farsi una maschera, ma dietro a quella maschera *fabbricata* restava ancora l'illusione.»

Anche più terribile del Croce e del Bargellini è il Flora nella sua critica al Pirandello. Discutendo il modo di filosofare del grande drammaturgo, e fermandosi sul solito giuoco delle illusioni, che fa sembrare sano il pazzo, e pazzo il sano, il Flora perde la pazienza, e manda il Pirandello nientedimeno al diavolo: «Questo giocare — dice il Flora — sui termini *saggezza e pazzia* come bussolotti, quando si ha piena coscienza di non esser pazzi nel porre la sottile altalena, è per lo meno un perditempo. Questo chiedersi se siamo pazzi o savi sfogliando le margherite, ci sembra una goffaggine. E ammettiamo che la prima margherita si sfogli affermativamente, la seconda dirà di no. Allora, chi è dunque il pazzo? Ma chi volete far ammattire? Andate al diavolo!»

Giovanni Papini, in *Santi e Poeti*, paragona il Pirandello col Leopardi per giungere alla conclusione che il Pirandello è *stato molto* più crudele del Recanatese, in quantocchè mentre questi aveva asserito, gemendo, che la gloria, la virtù, la gioventù, e il Sommo Bene, sono una illusione, il Pirandello era andato molto più in là, perchè si era proposto di «liquefare le illusioni superstiti: l'unicità dell'io, la monocromia del carattere, la possibilità di conoscere e di prevedere i moti dell'anima, la comune onestà, quasi ogni forma d'amore. Invece di piangere su tante rovine pareva che di quella universale versione si compiacesse e ridesse.» E conclude: «Pirandello dimostrò drasticamente che i cieli dipinti del teatro son di tela e che i sedicenti soli del palcoscenico son giochi d'elettrici ma non seppe e non volle scoperchiare il tetto e ritrovare il cielo

autentico e il sole divino... Tutti gli esseri umani eran per lui *personaggi* tutti quanti e non soltanto quelle sei lamentevoli (e lamentose) creature che un giorno invasero la sua fantasia e un inverosimile palcoscenico.»

È vero: c'è spesso, nelle opere del Pirandello, un filosofare inconcludente, come osserva il Croce; c'è quasi sempre distruzione e negazione, come osserva il Bargellini; c'è, a volte, un giuoco troppo insistente sui termini *saggezza* e *pazzia*, come nota il Flora; c'è, a volte, la liquefazione della verità, dell'onestà e dell'amore, come afferma il Papini: c'è dialettica, c'è sofistica, c'è assurdità, ci sono aberrazioni, e tutti questi sono difetti, difetti grandi. Ma accanto a questi difetti, notati e rilevati alla nausea da tutti i critici grandi e piccoli, ci sono nelle opere del Pirandello molti pregi inestimabili, su cui i critici sono passati sopra, o perchè non se ne sono accorti o perchè non hanno voluto accorgersene. E, innanzitutto, la grande umanità: perchè se il Pirandello considera la vita un inganno, egli sente compassione per gli ingannati; se il Pirandello considera la vita una illusione, e quindi una delusione, egli ha pietà di tutti gli illusi e di tutti i delusi. È vero che il Pirandello nega la personalità e nega la verità: ma pur negando la personalità, non nega assolutamente il libero arbitrio; e negando la verità, è sempre ansioso di trovarla e si tormenta perchè non la può trovare. E poi, nonostante la stranezza, più apparente che reale, delle vicende che narra, il Pirandello è sempre alla scoperta dell'uomo in quanto che di continuo analizza i moti più intimi che s'agitano nella profondità della nostra psiche, e di continuo cerca di trovare una soluzione ai più astrusi e complicati problemi che tormentano l'individuo e la società.

Il Pirandello è un grande psicologo, e da grande psicologo scruta i fenomeni coscienti e incoscienti del nostro io, analizza le intime contraddizioni e i moti più nascosti e incomprensibili dell'animo umano, indaga le radici spirituali d'ogni nostro atto e d'ogni nostro atteggiamento, e con una acutezza di pensiero e d'osservazione davvero straordinaria affronta tutte le incongruenze e tutti i paradossi della vita, siano essi sociali, psicologici o filosofici.

Troppo a sproposito si è parlato intorno ai paradossi e ai personaggi maniaci o morbosi del Pirandello: perchè i paradossi del Pirandello sono spesso solo apparenti, e i suoi personaggi, generalmente, non sono affatto esseri maniaci o morbosi, ma saggi ed eroi che agiscono da uomini che si scrutano in profondità e che sono superiori alle false convenzioni arbitrariamente imposte alla società dai loro simili.

Gli stati d'animo che il Pirandello ritrae, benchè originalissimi e in apparenza fuori del comune, non sono paradossi che alla superficie: sono

nella realtà un riflesso reale della multiforme vita che s'agita di nascosto nel nostro intimo, e di cui i più neanche s'accorgono, o a causa della fretta con cui vivono o a causa della loro mancanza di introspezione. Sono soltanto paradossi per le persone distratte, per coloro che guardano le cose della vita solo superficialmente, per coloro che mai non interrogano l'anima nei suoi moti più intimi, per coloro che non osservano mai i processi psicologici che di continuo avvengono nel nostro subcosciente.

Il Pirandello è poi anche un grande narratore, certo uno dei più grandi narratori che abbia avuto l'Italia dopo il Boccaccio. Nei suoi romanzi, e in modo particolare nelle sue novelle, c'è movimento e ambiente, c'è calore e tensione drammatica, c'è una innumerevole varietà di tipi umani tutti ricchissimi di potente vita: ci sono descrizioni grandiose, dialoghi vivaci, riflessioni profonde, meditazioni introspettive: le scene si susseguono con ritmo incessante, e situazioni gravi e complicate, e difficoltà insolubili e inestricabili s'intrecciano a casuali incontri e a vicende imprevedibili che alterano il corso della vita dei protagonisti. E da grande narratore il Pirandello fa vivere concretamente davanti ai nostri occhi i suoi personaggi, nell'ambiente che ci descrive, lungo le vicende che ci racconta; e quel che più vale e che è più difficile dà realtà artistica alle sue fantasie e alle sue concezioni della vita spirituale e morale dei personaggi che ritrae. I quali personaggi nella loro varietà sono infiniti: appartengono a ogni classe sociale, a ogni condizione finanziaria, a ogni abito morale e culturale. Pochi scrittori ci hanno dato come lui tanta varietà di tipi umani, ciascuno studiato in profondità, ciascuno magistralmente espresso in tutti i suoi contorni fisici e psichici: tanto che possiamo dire che la sua opera rappresenta tutte le vicende e tutti gli aspetti della vita, riflette tutta quanta l'umanità, perchè attraverso i suoi personaggi tutti i problemi fondamentali del nostro essere sono indagati ed esposti, agitati e discussi.

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