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FOUR AND TWENTY MINDS

ESSAYS

BY

GIOVANNI PAPINI

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY

ERNEST HATCH WILKINS

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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PREFACE

The first ten of the essays here translated are from Papini's *24 Cervelli* ("Four and Twenty Minds"), the next six from his *Stroncature* ("Slashings"), and the last eight from his *Testimonianze* ("Testimonies").

In the Preface to *24 Cervelli,* Papini writes:

> These essays deal with twenty-four men—poets, philosophers, imaginary beings, scientists, mystics, painters—grouped without regard to logical classifications or to their relative importance. Some of the essays are tributes of affection, some are slashings; some reveal neglected greatness, others demolish undeserved reputations. Some are long, and represent careful study, others are brief and slight. . . . I have surveyed these four and twenty souls not with the scrupulous exactitude of the pure scholar, nor with the definitive cocksureness of the professional critic, but as a man seeking to penetrate deeply into the lives of other men in order to discern and to reveal their lovableness or their hatefulness. The essays, then, are for the most part impassioned, subjective, partial—lyric, in a sense—and *not* critical.

These essays had been written between 1902 and 1912: *24 Cervelli* was published in the latter year. The book proved very successful; and in 1916 Papini brought out a second set of twenty-four similar essays, to which he gave the title *Slashings.* In this volume, as the title indicates,

attack and demolition have a larger place, and the style is at times vituperative in the extreme. Many of the essays, nevertheless, are friendly and constructive. Papini's caricature of himself (from *Testimonies*), which appears as the last essay in the present translation, was written soon after the publication of *Slashings,* and reflects the sensation made by that book.

Testimonies, published in 1918, is a third set of twenty-four essays. They are of the same general character as those contained in *Slashings,* though the part of invective is somewhat less, and the tone of the book as a whole is quieter.

In selecting the essays to be included in this translation I have chosen, naturally, those which seemed to hold greatest interest for American readers. Most of the persons discussed are figures of world-wide significance; in the few other cases there has seemed to be something of special value in the content of the essay itself.

The translation is deliberately free; for I have endeavored to find the true English expression for Papini's thought.

E. H. W.

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FOUR AND TWENTY MINDS

I

THE UNKNOWN MAN

MODERN critics have the most unfortunate custom of discussing only men who are well known, men of whose existence they are absolutely sure. The result is that no one hitherto has taken the trouble to write the biography of the Unknown Man. I am not referring to the ordinary unknown person who may at any time be brought into the commonplace class of the known and the recognized. I mean the Unknown Man himself, the authentic Unknown Man whom nobody knows.

The critics, one and all, write only about the prominent, the illustrious, or at least about beings known to the police and listed in the directories. Far be it from them to waste ink for a man without a name—for a man who does not even possess one of those trivial pairs of names

which the papers print just once: in the column of death notices.

What if they ask: "How can we write the life of the Unknown Man, since the very fact that he is unknown prevents us from knowing anything about him"? A foolish excuse! The most highly educational biographies are those of men of whom little or nothing is known. Those are the books that set forth the human ideal, that tell us what a man ought to be.

The critics may go their way, and I'll go mine. And you will see that I do not need to resort to fiction.

If it be true that men are known by their works, how much we know of the Unknown Man! I might maintain that he has been the most important personage in history, the greatest hero of humanity. If you don't believe it, I don't mind. But I do ask that you lend me your ears, you slaves of the known, you devotees of the catalogue!

The Unknown Man is very ancient. He appeared, indeed, in the first human tribe. In the earliest times he busied himself chiefly with chemistry and metallurgy. He invented the wheel, and discovered the use of iron. Later he concerned himself with clothes, devised money, and started agriculture. But he soon tired of these material interests, and became a poet. Through-

out the centuries he has traveled hither and yon. He conceived the myths of our religions; he fashioned the Vedas and the Orphic hymns; he wove the legends of the north; he improvised the themes of folk poetry. In the Middle Ages he carved the numberless statues of the Romanesque and the Gothic cathedrals, and covered chapel and refectory walls with unsigned frescoes. Then, too, he composed tales and legends: all those great books that bear no author's name are his.

But with the approach of modern times, when the stupid craze for signature came in, the Unknown Man ceased his activity, and was content to rest. An immense throng of vain fellows, of men who had a name or sought to make a name, began to paint, invent, carve, write. They had less genius than the Unknown Man, and they had also less modesty: they proclaimed to all the winds that they, and none but they, had done these things. They worked not only for their own joy or for others' benefit, but that the world might know that they, and none but they, had done the work.

But the Unknown Man did not remain permanently inactive. With the coming of democracy he turned to politics. The great modern revolutions have been due to him. The English Puritans, the American Revolutionists, the

French Sansculottes, the Italian Volunteers were his followers. Under the names of Mob and People he frightened kings, overthrew demagogues, and resolved to turn the world upside-down.

But these great concerns do not dim his memory of the good old times. Often, deep in thought, he walks through ancient streets which he laid out, stops to delight in the simple forms of vases such as he first modeled, and now and again turns into some pleasant courtyard, remembering the distant time when he, in his childhood, invented houses, on the model of woods and caves.

He lives still, and he cannot die. The frightful progress of pride and of advertisement will limit his activity more and more; but he will be forever what silent men were to Carlyle: the salt of the earth. Now and then, to tell the truth, I am moved to fear that his enforced idleness and the trend of the times have turned him into evil ways. When the newspapers attribute thefts or assaults to "the usual unknown parties" I am always a little afraid that he is involved. But that plural reassures me.

Judging from his portraits, I should not think him capable of baseness. Have you not noticed, in the great galleries, those canvases which catalogues and labels call "Portrait of an Unknown

Man?" These portraits are all different, to be sure, and pedantic critics maintain that they represent different persons not as yet identified. But I have no use for the critics, and I have perfect faith in the multiplicity of my hero's faces. How noble and how beautiful his countenance! Sometimes he is represented as a gentleman deep in thought. Sometimes he is a pale youth seen in profile against a window. Sometimes he is a wise, mature man toying with a glove or a falcon. But you can always see in his face that aristocracy of soul and that natural reserve which have made him unwilling to let his name be trumpeted by the vulgar mouth of fame.

* * * * * *

You may think that I am jesting, after the fashion of Swift or Carlyle. No: I desire, seriously, to suggest a matter for serious thought. We are in general too much inclined to attribute importance to all that has a name, to all that is legitimized by a signature, by print, by foolscap. We fail to realize that most of what we call civilization has been produced by people of whose lives and personalities we know absolutely nothing. Those who remain anonymous and unknown have done far more for us than all the men whose fame fills biographical dictionaries. The fairest fancies, the simplest melodies, the most enduring phrases, the fundamental inventions, are the

work of the Unknown Man, to whom historians and panegyrists give no heed.

We are guilty, in this case, of an ingratitude reënforced by laziness. We remember things more readily when they have a name; it is easier to be grateful when we have before us a definite being to whom we may address our praise, in whom we may take pride. The Unknown Man, who thought and wrought without labeling his works, without sending *communiqués* to the papers, is too evanescent, too easily forgotten. All men, Jews and Protestants included, must have images when they attempt adoration. If they do not know the name and the features of the man who has achieved, they cannot fix their thought upon him, they cannot direct toward him the current of their affection or their enthusiasm. It is our ineradicable laziness that has led us to forget the Unknown Man, the age-long benefactor of the human race.

In our public squares we behold—unfortunately—numberless equestrian or pedestrian statues of men who have merely written a tiresome tragedy or given a lucky sabre-thrust. The Greeks had at least the profound and prudent idea of raising an altar to the Unknown God. Should not we forgetful moderns erect a monument to the Unknown Man?

II

DANTE

I

THE *Divine Comedy* is not yet complete. When the disdainful poet wrote that last fair starry line, he had merely finished the fundamental theme on which other men were to execute complicated variations. For a great book is only an initial *motif,* a starting point from which later generations proceed to develop all the possible themes of a perennial symphony. Every man who reads a great work, even though he be poor in spirit, adds to it some meaning, some pause, some intonation of his own; something of what he feels enters into it and is borne on to those who are to read thereafter.

The greatest books, then, such as the *Divine Comedy,* are to be considered not as mere personal creations, but rather as artistic structures of a special type in which an original central block has been so enlarged, by the addition of stratum after stratum, that the primitive form

is wholly changed. Even if we read the *Commedia* without a commentary, it is impossible for us to forget all that has been said of Dante, all the interpretations of his vast work. We may indeed forget the marginalia of pedants, the minutiæ of casuists, the erudition of philologians, the glosses of fanatics; but we cannot forget the conceptions expressed, and thus imposed upon the sacred poem, by certain men of outstanding intellectual power. We view Dante through them as we view the heavens through Newton, and God through Dionysius the Areopagite.

And we may do better than forget: we may continue the work of such collaborators of Dante. It is indeed our proper task to find a new interpretation of his soul and of his work, an interpretation more rich in truth than all those we have inherited. In a recent book I asserted that modern Italy cannot understand Dante—and certain scholars took offense at this simple statement of fact. Yet if they would sincerely examine their own consciences they would be obliged to agree with me that the so-called "cult of Dante" is primarily a pretext for the composition of works of criticism, or history, or philology, in which there is no authentic trace of a true understanding of Dante. Critics in general study Dante just as they might study an obscure mock-heroic poet or an insignificant question of Greek

epigraphy. In the presence of one of the most terrible creations of man they have not trembled.

But my purpose is not merely to say that Dante is not rightly understood, that men fail to comprehend his apostleship of moral grandeur. I desire to indicate a new conception of his work, a new view-point from which we may behold his great figure towering against the background of eternity.

II

The best proof of my thesis that the modern world is in general unable truly to understand the *Divine Comedy* lies in the limited nature of the ideas regarding Dante which have been held by certain very intelligent men. Some, like Carlyle, have seen in him a prophet; some, like Mazzini, an apostle of Italian unity; some, like Rossetti, an adept in strange mysteries; some, like Aroux, a heretic and precursor of the Reformation; some, like De Sanctis, simply a very great artist. But all such men are merely attributing to Dante purposes and qualities which many other writers have possessed as well. And we all tend to forget that Dante was something apart, a man unique. We assign him to one of the several classes into which we so readily divide the host of the workers of the spirit. Be-

fore his birth and since his death there have been great poets, great prophets, great reformers; and we are content to ask to which of these groups he belongs, and to what extent and in what way he is superior to his fellows in that group.

But to my mind Dante was great because he claimed and fulfilled a function claimed by no other man before or since his time. He is indeed a great poet and a great mystic, but that which differentiates him from all other men is not his poetry nor his mysticism. Art, theology, politics, are for him means subordinate to one supreme purpose: he sought to be the vicar of God on earth.

Dante was a sincere son of the Church, and for that very reason he was conscious of the enormous decadence of the Papacy. The concept of the Pope as the vicar of Christ was a noble one: had it been conserved in its purity there would have been nothing strange in the lordship which the Pope sought to exercise, by the sheer power of his word, over all the kingdoms of the earth. But the Papacy itself had become earthy, had fed on gold, had sold its right to the spiritual dominion of the entire world that it might gain material dominion over one small portion of the world. It had rendered itself liable to judgment, to condemnation, and had lost thereby its true *raison d'être,* its mis-

sion as the supreme judge of men. The Popes, faithless to Him who gave them their commission, could no longer claim to be His representatives on earth.

In the soul of Dante there rose instinctively the desire to take the place of these faithless vicars, and to judge them as God Himself would have judged them. He desired to exercise to the full extent of his power that judicial authority which the Popes had forgotten. But he was none the less resolved to remain within the Church, since for all its decadence it still represented the unbroken Christian tradition. He had no wish to become the leader of a revolt, or to overthrow the existing hierarchy. He chose the instrument which was most familiar to him—art—and composed a poem which is not, as certain critics maintain, an anticlerical pamphlet, but rather a true *actus pontificalis.*

But if we are thoroughly to understand the significance of this act of his we must realize that his idea of divine vicarage was very different from that represented by the Roman tradition. The Catholic church was primarily a continuation of the apostolic service of Christ, and the Pope, as vicar of Christ, devoted himself especially to the spiritual education of men. The institution of the Mass as a daily symbol of man's redemption from sin, the confessional,

the propagation of the faith among the heathen—all these are proofs of the primarily pedagogical and moralizing purpose of the church. The church was the teacher of the world, and in Christ the church saw primarily the teacher of moral and eternal truths.

Dante, on the other hand, had in mind a part of the doctrine of Christ to which the Popes had given relatively slight importance: the idea of the Last Judgment. God is not only the God who enlightens and saves mankind, but the God who, on a terrible distant day, will judge the quick and the dead. The idea of the Last Judgment, so tragically expressed throughout the Middle Ages in hymns, in mosaic, and in painting, had not been hitherto associated with the idea of the Papacy.

Dante, aware that God is not only a teacher but a judge, and believing it necessary that God should have a vicar on earth, chose to represent Him rather as judge than as teacher. In this intent he conceived the *Divine Comedy,* which is, in fact, an anticipatory Last Judgment.

Dante knows that the world has not come to an end, that the roll of the dead is not yet complete; but he takes all peoples, all generations, from the Hebrew patriarchs to the leaders of his own day, and distributes them in the three realms even as God would have done. He takes the

place of God, forestalls the great Assize, exalts to the spheres or thrusts down into infernal caverns the souls of cowardly Popes, proud emperors, rapacious captains, enamored ladies, saints and warriors, hermits and thinkers, poets and politicians. No one is overlooked. Beside the queens of the thirteenth century appear the women of the Old Testament; beside the consuls of Rome, the painters of Tuscany. The king but newly dead converses with the Greek or Roman poet; the Christian martyr with the Florentine warrior.

Each has his penalty or his reward. Dante walks among them all in the guise of a spectator, but he is in reality their judge. The *Divine Comedy* is the *Dies irae* of a great spirit which cannot wait for the manifestation of divine wrath, and assigns a place provisionally to every man. It is an incomplete Vale of Jehoshaphat, in which all the dead are gathered, while beyond the dread hills the renewal of life goes on.

Dante felt that his genius was a divine investiture which gave him the right to judge those who had lived before his time. He was so sure of being a better representative of God than the venal priests and intriguing Popes of his experience that he did not hesitate to thrust into Hell men who passed themselves off before their fellow men as vicars and ministers of God. Thus

from a lofty throne, more enduring than bronze, the Florentine poet pronounces terrible condemnations which have not yet been canceled. He seems verily, by the power of his art, to compel God to ratify his sentences.

III

Only one man since Dante's time has achieved a conception of equal grandeur—and that man is Michelangelo. The Sistine Chapel is the only worthy illustration of the *Divine Comedy*.

I have sometimes imagined a tremendous drama of the Last Judgment, the words to be written by Dante, the music to be composed by Palestrina—save that for the trumpets of the angel who is to wake the dead (think of the sound of trumpets that will wake even from the sleep of death!) I should have sought the aid of Richard Wagner.

Should there come to the throne of St. Peter a Pope with daring and initiative, he might well cover the quattrocentist frescoes on the side walls of the Sistine Chapel—frescoes that yield but incidental charm—and in their place inscribe, in fair red characters, the whole *Divine Comedy*, in the presence of its only worthy interpretation: the Last Judgment of Michelangelo.

III

LEONARDO DA VINCI

"Philosophieren ist vivificieren."
—NOVALIS.

I

HISTORIANS affirm with a surprising unanimity that in the Year of Grace 1452 there was born in the town of Vinci a child who received the fair name of Leonardo, and became famous throughout Italy and beyond the Alps. And they go on to tell how he was taken to Florence and apprenticed to Andrea del Verrocchio, how he began to paint with marvelous skill, how he went to the court of Milan—and many other things which the reader surely knows much better than I. If he doesn't, he may find them duly set forth by the said historians—from the beloved unknown writer of the Gaddi manuscript, or the popular Vasari (equally famous for his horrible frescoes and his extraordinary misinformation), down to the latest biographers of Leonardo, whom I will not even name, lest I seem too erudite.

But my Leonardo is not the Leonardo of the historians. Their Leonardo, Ser Pietro's son, who lived his mortal life from 1452 to 1519, I gladly leave to all those honest men who turn to history for facts, and worship documentary evidence. For myself I have fashioned another and a different Leonardo. And since he is my creation, I love him the more, like a dutiful father, and am very fond of his company.

I don't mean to say that the Leonardo of the historians is to be forgotten. If I had had the luck to live in his generation, it would not have been hard for me to regard him as the dearest of my friends. And since he loved the spirits of those who seek, perhaps he would have taken me with him on some of his thoughtful walks among those Tuscan hills that gladden his canvases with their pale azure. And he would have talked to me, in his clear, rich voice, of his anatomical researches and his architectural plans. Some day, perhaps, he would have taken me to the bare summit of Monte Ceceri, whence he hoped to fly to Florence in a mysterious machine of his own invention. And as his glance and his gesture followed the flight of birds through my Florentine sky, I would have repeated to him Alexandrian subtleties learned from some disciple of Ficino.

But the times have changed too much. Amid

the relentless progress of our day it would be mad to regret the bloody and barbaric age of the Renaissance. In the streets of Florence, cluttered with cabs and bicycles, one can no longer spin a quiet syllogism, one can no longer enjoy in silence the red glow of sunset on the noble dark-browed palaces. The Leonardo of the fifteenth century, with his fine raiment and his great dreams, would not now be at home in that Milan to which he gave so many gentle images. And Milan would be too busy with municipal elections and the exportation of rubber to take any interest in him.

If Leonardo is to live on as something more than a subject for theses and for lantern slides, he must be transformed, must be given a spiritual existence. This transformation is what I have sought to achieve.

II

In the real Leonardo, as revealed by his writings and by other records, there are some elements that I do not find sympathetic. He had too much of a mania for science. His disheveled books are too full of observations and of tiny facts. It seems as though this man, whose father and grandfather had been notaries, were possessed by an atavistic desire to undertake an in-

ventory of the universe. That passion for detail which has dulled the spirits of so many of his successors had seized him all too firmly. In a certain sense (and I am sincerely sorry to speak so ill of him) he was a positivist long before the time of positivism. For that reason, perhaps, he is held in high esteem by our own scientists. Every now and then one of these gentlemen discovers that Leonardo was the founder of some science or other, and salutes him as father and master of the experimental method.

There is doubtless a certain amount of exaggeration in this point of view. I am even inclined to believe that Leonardo was much less of a positivist than the moderns would have us think —some of his cosmological conceptions, for instance, are hopelessly marked by animism and anthropocentrism. Nevertheless, one can but recognize that he deserves the title of scientist, that he is even more of a scientist than an artist —and for that I cannot forgive him. Even his painting, though he poured into it the treasure of his dreams, was to him primarily a form of science, destined to reproduce the aspects of nature with the most scrupulous fidelity. All his studies, even those which were directly related to his work as painter, led in reality toward a complete knowledge of the universe. And this constant preoccupation, which wins the plaudits of

the scientists, tends on the contrary to repel those who love æsthetic and metaphysical unreality, as I do.

Had he been rather a philosopher than an artist I could willingly have pardoned him: I could indeed have praised him without reserve. But his philosophy, it must be confessed, does not amount to much. In its essence it consists of the old Greek idea of the world as a living organism; and his acceptance of this idea is inconsistent with his criticism of those thinkers whose theories are not supported by experiment. Now a man who has not reached that aristocratic intellectuality which treats ideas as of supreme interest in themselves, without the least thought of their relation to facts, has not attained the greatest heights.

Perhaps, too, those delicate lovers of strange souls who, like Walter Pater, have admitted the wondrous Leonardo into their intimate circle of great spirits, have not fully realized that this man was too much inclined to practical and mathematical interests. Much of his research was devoted to the invention of machinery and apparatus for canals or sluices, or to the construction of engines which could kill or defend, or to the designing of wonderful vehicles. He is forever saying that one must think of practical utility; and much as he loved knowledge in itself,

I suspect that many of his experiments were tried for purely practical ends. And it sometimes saddens me to think that the man who left us the "Adoration of the Magi" is famous also for the canals of Lombardy.

Such criticism may lead the reader to think that I am incapable of appreciating versatility. Had I the time, I might answer that the problem is really one of quantity and quality. It is not the number of things that a man has done that matters, but their excellence. I could wish that Leonardo had painted one more canvas and left a hundred less precepts; and I could indeed willingly dispense with that praise of his universality which is so showered upon him by men who do not realize the meaning of their words. Botanists and engineers of our own day can draw plants and plans of fortresses; but for the painting of certain mountainous backgrounds and for the writing of certain *pensées* there has been none save Leonardo—and it is sad to think that so much of his time was spent on things unworthy of his powers.

So too I regret the excessive time he spent in companionship with other men, and the hours that he wasted in the courts of Milan and of France at repartee with ladies and with princes. He was delightful in conversation—so the historians say—and those ambiguous prophecies of

his, which at times seem weighty with hidden meaning, were but riddles devised to sharpen courtly wit. I cannot imagine my Leonardo, author of the most profound of all eulogies of solitude, as the entertainer of a fashionable company. In the spiritual biography of my Leonardo I have canceled the hours which the historic Leonardo spent in society; and have sent him instead over mountain slopes and summits, searching for wild flowers and watching the flight of royal eagles.

III

But it is high time that I should turn to my own Leonardo and his secret.

Unlike the Leonardo of history, mine did not die on the second of May, 1519, in the melancholy castle of Cloux. He is still living, and very much alive; he is within me; he is a part of myself, a precious fragment of my spirit.

He dwells as of old in his fair Italy, and stirs me to pulsing meditation in the keen Tuscan springtime. He repeats to me some of his profoundest sayings; he helps me to realize the full wonder of certain sunsets. In the Pantheon of my soul he is one of the most inspiring geniuses, one of the most adored divinities. His image, beside that of his younger brother, Percy Bysshe

Shelley, and opposite that of the Olympian Goethe, illumines the current of my thoughts and charms the tapestry of my unwearying dreams.

Literal folk who consider great men as external and independent beings will reproach me for sacrilege, and express surprise at this adaptation of a genius to the spiritual needs of one obscure soul. They may protest as loudly as they will: they have failed to understand that the great men of the past are in reality instruments of the present, themes on which we may build personality, fragments of olden time through which we may learn to analyze ourselves, dead bodies to which we may give new life. If we content ourselves with knowing the external vicissitudes of the great, the scenes in which they moved, the lists of their works, their characteristic traits of style, we are simply gathering erudition, we are approaching the temple without prayer, we are entering the orchard without tasting its fruit. But if we seek to know the heroes of the past truly and profoundly, we shall make them members of ourselves, our own instruments of joy—we shall save their treasure by enabling them to live again in us. A great man may be known either through dead words and documents or through present and individual consciousness.

Only the poor and the timid choose the former way.

Thus with historic materials I have created a living Leonardo, who satisfies my need and my desire far better than his prototype.

This second Leonardo is neither a pure scientist nor a pure artist—much less is he an engineer or a courtier. He is the complete type of the inner man—unwilling to reveal himself too rich in spiritual fruit, lest greedy folk should ruin him. He loves solitary toil, and feels himself diminished by the presence of others; he knows the power of silence; he gathers for his own sake, and does not cast the treasure of his thoughts amid the crowd. In that first life that was his youth he meditated more than all his fellows, yet he did not publish a single book; his broad-winged fancy conceived the fairest of all visions, the sweetest and most alluring of all faces, yet he left to men but a few unfinished sketches; he was a profound and subtle poet, yet in the heart of the Italian Renaissance he had the heroism not to write a single line. In a word, he is one of those rare men who are sufficient unto themselves, who are not concerned with others; into whose souls, as close and strong as a breastplate, only a few companion spirits win admission.

He is a pagan ascetic, a purified mystic, who chose to ascend the heights of intellectual ecstasy

by the two great paths of art and knowledge. His paintings are but memories of visions he sought to fix in color that he might rise still higher. His observations and his speculations are but doors through which he passed to behold the secrets of nature, to discover throughout the world the pulsing of that life which he perceived, and thus to satisfy the perpetual desire of souls that are incomplete. All his creations, in beauty and in thought, are mystic: steps in the course of his ascent (for he did not choose to follow the way of the Pseudo-Dionysius and Hugh of St. Victor) to that divine state in which all shadow is illumined, from which all littleness is banished—that supreme state which only a few saints, a few artists, and a few philosophers have been able, through utter resolution, to attain.

Like all great men, my Leonardo tends to make his life his masterpiece. His works are but the foot-prints of his path, stones that the master cast by the wayside to mark his progress, though posterity has mistaken them for the objects of his toil. But his purpose lay beyond. And if in his first life his mystic conquest was imperfect, if he did not reach that summit that o'ertops all other heights, he is nearer his goal in this his second life.

In this epoch, when a great revolution in thought is imminent, he represents for me the

achievement of personality, the possession of self, the conquest of the world by means of thought and image. Ibsen's exhortation—"Be yourself" —is absurd. Every one of us *is* himself, whether he will or no; and when one imitates another it simply means that the instinct of imitation is part of himself. Leonardo da Vinci gives us something better than an exhortation: the glorious example of a life fair, rich, and intimate, a life which seeks ever to surpass itself, to become deeper, more individual, more spiritual.

In the name of this lover of fair forms, who hid that which he loved and that which he discovered, we may proclaim a new age of the spirit, an age for which a little band of his younger brothers is seeking to prepare the way.

Above our common life, outside the throng of those who have not ears to hear, beyond the little steaming ring wherein men seek the means of sustenance, let us speed our hearts toward the master of shadows and of smiles.

IV

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI [1]

THIS present age of literary dilettanteism, of elegant scribbling, has chosen to represent the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the most glorious epoch of the Italian people, as the Renaissance of all grandeur and all beauty. We men and women of today admire civilization through guide-books and picture-postcards; powerless to create new monuments, we boast that we love the monuments of old; incapable of heroic action, we sit by the fire and read of the heroes of Homer and Villani. We prefer the polished elegance of church or palace to the bristling stone of the fortress—and we exalt the Quattrocento. Our own literary epoch has magnified a former literary epoch; and the legend of the "Dark Ages" still endures.

The fifteenth century was a time of rebirth, but it was a time of death as well; and we have failed to ask whether the renewal of certain elements of life brought full compensation for the loss of the elements that disappeared. The very

[1] Written in 1904, for the fifth centenary of Alberti's birth.

gentleness of our sedentary culture has led us to love and admire the extraordinary century that witnessed our undoing and initiated our deepest decadence. The Quattrocento marks the transition from the active, original, rough, strong civilization of the Middle Ages to the verbal, imitative, insincere, pacific civilization of the succeeding centuries. In the Quattrocento the man of action yields to the man of words; the book takes the place of the sword; the fortress becomes a villa garden; skeptical dilettanteism casts out faith. Great words win honor such as hitherto had been accorded to great deeds alone. Achievement ended, men tell of past achievement. Art and literature, which had served for the expression of spiritual energy, become clever means of acquiring fame and power.

The man who knew little of letters but was strong in body and austere in spirit, the conqueror of kingdoms, the governor of cities, gives way to the insinuating humanist; and the humanist, grown lean in the study of Cicero, admiring strenuous deeds in safe seclusion, becomes the historian of the past and the prophet of the future, but has neither the wit nor the power to act in the present. To a civilization of muscles, stone, and iron, there succeeds a civilization of nerves, pens, and papers. There are poets a-plenty for the writing of pæans, but there are no heroes for

them to celebrate. As a philosopher might put it, the dominion of the external gives place to the dominion of the internal.

The period we are wont to call the Renaissance appears, then, to be in certain respects a period of weakening and decline. And if Italy would return to a life more intense and more energetic than that which now she leads amid verbal pyrotechnics and the academic discourses of Parliament, she must resolutely expel the dangerous maladies which the Renaissance introduced into her blood, must return to deeper and more bitter springs, must forget the lust of ornament and the delights of rhetoric, must set herself to action rather than to speech, to new achievement rather than to admiration.

Such thoughts as these might well be suggested by the centenary of Leon Battista Alberti if such occasions, instead of serving merely for the display of erudition and municipal vanity, really led us to seek the essential message and the continuing inspiration of the great men they celebrate.

For Alberti signifies the passage from the heroic, active life of the Middle Ages to the graceful, wordy epoch that ensued, and illustrates, even more clearly than Petrarch or Leonardo, that softening of the conceptions of life which was to lead at last to the spiritual degeneration of the seventeenth century. He is indeed, to bor-

row Emerson's term, the "representative man" of the Quattrocentro, of an age sad and wondrous in its ambiguity and its versatility. His life is truly a mirror of the time.

Consider his ancestry. He came of that glorious Alberti family which has given Florence so many successful merchants, energetic statesmen, and turbulent partisans. Shortly before the time of his birth the family had been banished, and Leon Battista was born in exile in Genoa, where his kinsmen continued their mercantile pursuits and plotted a return to Florence. He might have become a merchant-politician like his ancestors, might have won riches and governed men. He preferred, on the contrary, to devote himself to letters. Study attracted him. He wished to know Greek and Latin, to read Plato and Virgil; he had no desire to export cloths to the East, or to measure his strength with the leader of a hostile faction.

In his childhood his father sought to train his body, to make him strong and handsome; and they tell us, indeed, that he could tame wild horses, and that he used to climb pathless mountains. But the lure of letters called him to Bologna and the law; and he turned to study with such ardor that he lost his health and became a lean and trembling scholar, suffering from nervous ills and absentmindedness.

Even so the whole race was losing its vigor amid studies and pleasures, and the time of its ignoble paralysis was near at hand.

But study consoled Alberti for all that he had lost; letters and philosophy led him to scorn all else. Perilous indeed is contact with the ancients! The men of the Quattrocento, like barbarians come to a marvelous city, were overwhelmed with reverence for the divine Latin works. They had no hope of reaching higher excellence; they sought a similar perfection; they could but imitate. Their greatest desire was that scholars should think their writings a recovered treasure. So when Alberti, in spare hours at Bologna, wrote a comedy, the *Philodoxeos,* in which he allegorized his love of learning, he himself spread the rumor that it was a new-found piece by an ancient writer of comedies named Lepidus—and had the satisfaction of deceiving his literary friends.

There no longer existed that indifference to glory which had marked the obscure artisans of the Middle Ages, the nameless builders and sculptors of the great cathedrals; nor had there yet appeared the complacent modern genius, who, sure of himself and of the novelty of his work, sends it forth under his own name. The men of the Quattrocento sought shelter under

classic robes: they strove not to do more than the ancients, but to do as the ancients had done.

This attitude of intellectual servility is to be found throughout the work of Alberti. In his moral treatises he mingles Stoic ethics with the traditions of Christian goodness and of Florentine frugality. In his books on art he supports his precepts by the authority of ancient writings and by the example of ancient works. In his architectural designs Roman triumphal arches become doorways, and he is classic at any cost.

Even when, as in the Rucellai palace, he did not entirely abandon local tradition, he introduced into the mediæval forms a grace derived from classic models and from the teachings of Vitruvius. So in Rimini he did his best to bury the little Franciscan church under the splendor of his Hellenizing imagination; and in the Temple of the Divine Isotta he expressed the very spirit of the learned tyrant, Sigismondo Malatesta, who had achieved a complete denial of the Christian motives of the preceding age.

He refined—that is, he weakened. His structures are more graceful and less solid, more regular and less original. Out of the stern old Florentine palace with its rough-hewn blocks projecting as though in challenge he made the elegant Palazzo Rucellai, whose joyously rising pilasters and smooth ordered stones are an æsthetic de-

light—utterly without menace. For mediæval ferocity he substitutes pagan pleasantness.

I regard Alberti as one of the most completely Hellenic of all Italians. He had the Attic sense of measure, of order, of regularity. His love of geometry (*vide* Milhaud's theory of the geometrical foundation of Greek culture), his search for the perfect type of human beauty, his care in measurement, and his passion for the architectonic, the symmetrical, the non-fantastic, bring him close to the intellectual type of the Greeks.

And he resembled them, as well, in the varied curiosity that made him turn from law to letters, from painting to architecture or sculpture, from physics to mathematics, from religion and ethics to grammar. He was the first of those universal men of the Renaissance whose line was to culminate in Leonardo: men who stopped work on an equestrian statue to write an apologue, or turned to the invention of military engines after the building of a church or the conclusion of a series of scientific experiments.

In this respect also Alberti expresses that liberating tendency which developed after the firmly organic society of the Middle Ages had broken up, and men no longer felt themselves bound to city, art, and guild, but rather, like greyhounds freed of the leash, sped hither and yon in search

of any prey. The limited man, the man of a single interest, had disappeared; in his stead came the complete, the universal man. Dilettanteism had begun: that man was called "virtuous" who knew something of everything, to whom nothing was new.

While versatility was represented by men of the prodigious energy of Alberti and Leonardo, it was by no means vain, but when small spirits attempted all things, spoiled all things, and belittled all things, then versatility led to decadence.

Even Alberti's versatility was more apparent than real, was a matter rather of letters than of practice. He wrote on many topics, but he did not actually do many different things. He formulated precepts for painting and for sculpture, but he left neither paintings nor statues. He designed many buildings, but he brought only a few to completion. His writings are numerous: his only practical activities are his journeys and his service as secretary of the Papal chancery.

His universality, then, was more verbal than concrete. He produced instructions rather than works; he was more disposed to say what should be done than to act himself. And he thus reveals the aristocratic instinct transmitted to him by the rich and powerful family from which he sprang. In the field of art his attitude is that of the condescending nobleman, not that of the busy

rising artisan. He gives orders to be carried out by his inferiors, and does not deign to work with his own hands.

He feels the superiority of the creative intellect, of the imaginative spirit. He would be the mind that originates, the will that commands, not the base instrument of material execution. He brought into art his inherited nobility; and the Renaissance received from him that spiritual aristocracy that made it so marvelous and so ephemeral.

Before the century grew dark and the first barbarians came over the Alps to plunder Italy, helpless in her refinement, Alberti died serenely at Rome, in 1472. He had written that man is "like a ship destined not to rot in the harbor, but to plow new paths over the sea, and to tend ever through self-exercise toward praise and the fruit of glory." And in this sense he had been indeed a voyager.

Perhaps the very extent of his verbal versatility kept him from greater actual achievement. In the presence of his multiform and restless spirit, one thinks of his experience with the ship of the Lake of Nemi. Tradition had it that an ancient trireme lay sunken in this lake. Cardinal Colonna commissioned Alberti to try to raise it, and he, by clever mechanisms, succeeded in sending divers down and in bringing up the prow

and part of the hull. But lack of money or of efficient machinery prevented the completion of the task, and the fair ship remained for centuries beneath the waters.

Just so Alberti has made known some portions of his soul, and it is for us to plumb the depths to discover all that he did not reveal. Instead of gathering laboriously the data of his external life, we may well reconstruct in ourselves his inner experience. So only can the dead be our masters; so only can the great lead us to still greater heights.

V

BERKELEY

I

BERKELEY was one of those men who cannot or will not decide whether to devote themselves to thought or to action. They are enamored of ideas, but they would have ideas triumph at once in the reality of daily life. They would influence men, they would transform the world, but they rely on thought and word as instruments. They know the pleasure of intellectual activity and the joy of discovery, but they soon weary of solitary meditation. They seek to do good, and to mingle in the affairs of the social group to which they belong, but they cannot make up their minds to sacrifice truth to possibility, the things of the spirit to the necessities of common life. And even if they succeed in winning men by their enthusiasm, they fall victims at the last to their own intellectual ingenuousness. Thus their speculations are disturbed by their practical purposes, they are fatally hampered by considerations of moral propriety or by dogma; and on the other

hand, their action is thwarted and delayed by their ideological prejudices and by that element of the paradoxical which is to be found in every thinker who is not content merely to repeat the ideas of his predecessors.

Thus they waver between the search for general concepts and the management of particular undertakings, between the tower of the philosopher and the pulpit of the preacher. They are too theoretical to start a true religious or social revolution, too oratorical to be taken seriously by professional scientists and metaphysicians. The learned look down on them a little, and the people pity them. They love many things, they often change occupation, they sometimes change opinion. Not that they are dilettantes—far from it! They are very much in earnest about their own activities, but they are men of such multiform vivacity that they cannot stay for forty or fifty years in a single rut. Among them you will find the discoverers of the intuitions which are ultimately developed by those mastodontic pedants who cannot assimilate ideas less than fifty years old. Among them you will find the agitators, the revolutionists, the aristocratic propagandists who form an intermediate class between the disdainful metaphysicians—outspoken enemies of clearness and of utility—and the great simple apostles of the people, men of intuition who stir

the city as though by magic, and draw their words not from books but from the heart.

This class of men has not yet been thoroughly described nor patiently studied, but it is larger than one would think. The pure, absolute types of the philosopher, the artist, the practical man, are very rare. A careful scrutiny will discover Utopians among business men, empiricists among philosophers, money-makers among poets.

All this is illustrated in the case of Berkeley. In him, indeed, if you scratch the philosopher, you will find the Christian apostle; if you scratch the man of religion, you will find the civic moralist; if you scratch the preacher, you will find the practical man and the artist; and after all these scratchings, you will not know which of all these persons is the true, the fundamental, the irreducible Berkeley.

The first period of his life (1685-1718) is devoted wholly to knowledge, and in particular, to philosophy. This is the period when he wins high honors at Trinity, when he studies mathematics and publishes his *Arithmetic,* when he and his friends, in a sort of philosophic academy which he had founded, discuss natural philosophy, Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, and Newton. But it is preëminently the period when enter triumphant exclamations and mysterious hints in his *Commonplace Book*—hasty notes concerning that

"new principle," that "great discovery," that theory of the non-existence of matter, which was to be one of the three important fixed ideas of his life (the other two, as we shall see, were his scheme for the evangelization of the American Indians and his belief in the virtues of tar-water). The *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), in which the new principle is applied somewhat timidly to the sensations of sight, belongs to these years. Soon after this came the *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), in which the inconceivability of a material substance is demonstrated and defended at great length, and the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713), which are the polite manifesto of immaterialism. The great principle, presented as the best philosophic preventive against the plagues of skepticism and immorality, is thus brought within the range of parlor vision.

In 1713, with Berkeley's journey to London, begins the period of his mundane and wandering life. The young Irishman makes acquaintances, becomes the friend of Swift, who presents him at court, continues in Steele's *Guardian* his campaign against free-thinkers, and all at once sets out for Sicily in the suite of Lord Peterborough. In 1714 he was again in London, but he soon left to accompany the son of Bishop Ashe to France and Italy. This second journey lasted

for five years. Berkeley stopped for a while in Paris, where he seems to have made the acquaintance of Malebranche; then, crossing the Alps on the first of January, 1715, he entered Italy. He traversed the entire peninsula, making his longest stops at Florence, Rome, and Naples. His journal indicates that he was much interested in archæology and in modern painting, and that he played to perfection his part as traveling tutor, visiting palaces, churches, private collections, and the ruins of ancient monuments. He did also something which very few visitors have done before or since: he traveled through a great part of southern Italy, stopping in many places —often in monasteries—and interesting himself in agriculture, in the political organization of the country, and most of all in the famous question of the dance of the tarantula. In 1720 he started back toward London, but stopped at Lyons to write a Latin essay, *De motu,* to be presented in a competition held by the Parisian Academy of Science.

His return to England marks the beginning of a new period in his life: the period of his apostleship. He found his country convulsed by the catastrophe of the South Sea Bubble, and he published almost at once a little work in which he sought to remind his fellow citizens that nothing

but moral renovation could save England from greater disasters.

Like an earlier Rousseau, however, he believed that the corruption of Europe was hopelessly advanced, that the disease had gone too far to be eradicated by preachments or pamphlets. It would be better, he thought, to turn to America, where the English had already founded colonies and cities; where one might perhaps inaugurate a new civilization, purer and more Christian than that of the Old World. With a little good will, and plenty of money, one might convert and educate the aborigines, who might then be employed in the furtherance of the cause. Thus there sprang up in Berkeley's head the evangelistic, Rousseauistic, and somewhat Utopian idea of founding in Bermuda a sort of university to train young Indian pastors. Berkeley's enthusiasm and tranquil assurance were contagious. Many noblemen promised money. A number of people prepared to go with him. Public opinion was favorable. Parliament approved the project. The king granted a charter to the future university; and the prime minister, Horace Walpole, though at first opposed to the plan, was compelled by the pressure of the Court, of Parliament, of public opinion, and of the friends of Berkeley, to promise a subsidy of twenty thousand pounds. Without waiting for the delivery

of this money, he began preparations for his departure. It was at this time that he married Anne Forster, a lady of mystic leanings, a reader of Fénelon and of Mme Guyon. Early in September, 1728, he left Greenwich, with his wife and a few companions (among them the painter Smibert), and in January, 1729, he reached America. He landed, however, not in Bermuda, but at Newport, Rhode Island, where for two years he waited for the money which never came, read many ancient philosophers, fell in love with Plato, converted some of the American clergy to the doctrine of immaterialism, founded a philosophic society, and wrote his most extensive work, *Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher.*

Late in 1731, following the advice of his friends, he returned to England, where he published the *Alciphron* and a defense of his *Theory of Vision.* For some time he was engaged in polemics with free-thinkers and mathematicians, and brought out new editions of his early philosophical works, modifying his thought in some respects.

Berkeley's stay in Rhode Island divides his philosophic activity into two parts. In his youth he was a positivist and phenomenalist, wary of metaphysics. In his maturity, under the influence of Platonism, he held psychology in less esteem, made more use of dialectics than of the

appeal to experience, and gave to his constant thesis—that the world is immaterial—a metaphysical rather than an empiric character.

In 1734 the episcopal period of Berkeley's life begins. From then on, his name was always accompanied by the title "Bishop of Cloyne." During this period he was much occupied by the affairs of his diocese, in which the Catholics were numerous, became greatly interested in the Irish question, and continued his insistent struggle against unbelief. In 1740 Ireland was devastated by famine and disease, and Berkeley remembered a remedy of which he had learned in America: tar-water. It was tried with success in several cases. Berkeley then lost his head and thought he had discovered a universal panacea. His friend Dr. Prior advertised the new medicine extensively. It soon became fashionable, and Berkeley, with increasing enthusiasm, wrote one of the strangest of all books, the *Siris,* which starts off as a treatise on pharmacopœia, turns successively into a medical discussion and an essay in physics, and is finally transformed into a transcendental synthesis of neo-Platonic thought and Christian revelation. Berkeley's tar-water brought him a popularity that his immaterialism had failed to win; and his philosophical theories now made their way everywhere in England and abroad, in the suite of his directions for the use

of the fashionable specific. But he by no means forgot his duties as bishop and as citizen. In the last years of his life he wrote several pamphlets directed against the Catholics, and those *Maxims concerning Patriotism* which are, as it were, his civic testament.

In 1751 his health broke, misfortunes came, and he decided to go to Oxford with his son George. He left Cloyne in 1752; but he was not destined long to enjoy the learned life of the university city, for he died of paralysis on the twentieth of January, 1753, amid the sincere regret of all who had known him.

He was one of the most lovable of men. His moral qualities were highly esteemed during his life, while the full value of his teachings was not recognized until much later. For eighteenth-century England he stood as the model of the active and cultivated churchman and the unselfish citizen, so full of initiative and of enthusiasm for religion and for the common weal that he might readily be pardoned for his curious philosophical ideas.

II

Those who regard Berkeley merely as a philosopher are but slightly acquainted with him. Berkeley was a philosopher *also,* just as he was

also a botanist,[1] *also* a mathematician, *also* a poet. Those who know him best are well aware that the central purpose of his life was neither the tranquil contemplation of concepts nor the dispassionate search for truth. Unless this point be first established, we cannot rightly understand even his philosophy.

What though continental opinion allows Berkeley no legal domicile save in those heavy histories of philosophy wherein a long tradition assigns him a comfortable place between the armchair of Locke and the footstool of Hume? What though little remains of Berkeley in the memory of the average student save his reputation as immaterialist and the famous equation *esse est percipi?* This is by no means proof that Berkeley was merely an inspector and tester of the terms most often used in the discussion of the theory of knowledge, or that his greatest interest was the endeavor to achieve a profounder definition of the word "exist," and thus to free men's thought of the old belief in an external, independent, and material substance.

If you compare his life with the lives of the typical philosophers—the inevitable Spinoza or the inevitable Kant—a striking difference ap-

[1] When he was in Sicily he collected materials for a natural history of the island, but on the return voyage he lost the manuscript, at the same time, perhaps, when he lost the continuation of his *Principles*.

pears. Their lives hold nothing beyond their philosophy save the common life of every-day, the provision of food—by the polishing of lenses, or the teaching of physical geography—and its consumption. In Berkeley, on the contrary, philosophic activity was but a part, and not always the dominant part, of a broader spiritual activity. For he was priest as well as philosopher: he was a true and ardent *apostle of Christianity,* a resourceful champion of morality and of Christian dogma. From the *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) to the *Maxims concerning Patriotism* (1750) he labored with all his might, for forty years, to establish belief and to increase righteousness in England.

Those who know *all* the works of Berkeley know that he regarded the defense of religion as the most important of all things, and that his life was a constant battle against skeptics, atheists, nihilarians, *libertins, esprits forts,* "men of fashion," "minute philosophers," against all who in any way, by argument or mockery, by treatise or by apologue, offended and menaced belief in God, belief in the spirituality of the world, or Christian morals. The *Principles of Human Knowledge* were written—as the young philosopher proclaimed upon the title-page—to remove "the bases of atheism and of irreligion." The pamphlet on *Passive Obedience* (1712) is merely

a development of the evangelical principle of non-resistance to the Supreme Power. The *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) seek to demonstrate the providence of God and the incorporeal nature of the soul, to the confusion of skeptics and atheists. The essays of the *Guardian* (1713) are nearly all directed against free-thinkers. The *Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721) was written to remind Englishmen, then distressed by financial disaster, that a society cannot be safe or sane unless it is sober, pure, and religious. The *Proposal for the Better Supplying of the Churches in our Foreign Plantations* (1725) is the public statement of Berkeley's famous project for the founding of a university in Bermuda, and the conversion of the American Indians to Christianity. The seven dialogues of the *Alciphron* constitute a complete system of Christian apologetics, philosophic and moral in method and emphasis. The *Analyst* (1734) is a critique of the differential calculus—which had recently been invented and was attracting much attention—designed to show that there are mysteries in mathematics as well as in faith, and that one of the most famous anti-Christian arguments of the rationalists has therefore no validity. The *Discourse Addressed to Magistrates* (1738) is from beginning to end an invective against the license and

irreligion of the times. The *Siris* (1744), though devoted in particular to the praise of tar-water, ends with a metaphysical and religious portion in which the writer resumes one of the favorite theses of the Renaissance: the marvelous agreement between the philosophy of Plato and the Christian revelation. The list might easily be continued, but as it stands it includes all the important works of Berkeley; and in every one of them the attack on irreligion, even if it does not afford the subject matter, is the moving principle of the work.

Berkeley was not content to watch life from a window, or to withdraw into the world of thought in the pure search for truth. He was a practical man who used theoretical means. As a priest he believed in Christianity; and as a practical man he saw that morality was based upon Christianity, and that a morality based upon religion is necessary for any society that is to escape an evil end. He therefore considered as his personal enemies all those who attacked the faith and the morals of the people and the prosperity of the nation. Atheists, to his mind, were not merely superficial thinkers and cheap philosophers, but also, and primarily, enemies to humanity and traitors to their fatherland. As a shepherd of souls and as a citizen he felt that his first duty was to harass, to pursue, and to attack such enemies.

He did his best to fulfil that duty. And since philosophy is one of the weapons unbelievers use, he sought to blow the ground from under their feet by a philosophic mine: the theory of immaterialism. His development of this theory, which in the eyes of most historians constitutes the whole of Berkeley, is in reality merely one phase of his *Glaubenkampf*.

III

A thorough examination of Berkeley's leading characteristics would compel us, in any case, to conclude that he could never have been a pure philosopher, even had he so desired. Indeed, to say nothing of the dogmatic assumptions and the moral purposes to which I have already referred, he was dominated by considerations which are usually regarded as hostile to abstract speculation. He was inclined, as he himself recognized, to take up with what was new and paradoxical; and he was the sworn enemy of all that is not clear, precise, completely and universally intelligible, and in harmony with that famous "common sense" which has always been the guardian deity of British thought. Berkeley approached philosophy, at least in the first period of his career, as a good positivist, a student of physical science, and a reader of Locke. He sought to

affirm nothing save that which is actually established. His denial of the independent existence of matter looks at first sight like a metaphysical leap foretokening the more fatal leaps of the German idealists; but to his mind it was merely the consequence of a more exact and positive examination of human knowledge—a conclusion that might serve to drive the cold spectres of metaphysics out of every head and every school. "I am more for reality than any other philosopher," said he in youth in his *Commonplace Book*,[1] in which he was assembling the materials for his work on *The Principles of Human Knowledge*. And again: "Mem. To be eternally banishing Metaphysics, etc., and recalling men to Common Sense."[2]

Furthermore, like a good Englishman and a good practical man, he scorned all that which is of no use to mankind. For him the word "useless" was tantamount to an unanswerable objection, a definitive condemnation. The value of his theories lay, to his mind, in their theological implications—ultimately, therefore, in their social and moral efficacy.

This practical spirit led him to hate anything long or complicated. He started out by trying to make arithmetic briefer and easier. Later he

[1] Ed. by A. C. Fraser in his *Life and Letters of George Berkeley*, Oxford, 1871, p. 432.
[2] P. 455.

tried to simplify philosophy by canceling the material world and the whole repertory of scholasticism. Finally, he tried to reduce and to prune Christian apologetics by removing those elements which were too speculative or merely oratorical. His program in philosophy, in short, was this: to reach results useful for humanity in the least possible time and with the least possible exertion.

Another proof of Berkeley's positivist spirit appears in his keen and constant criticism of words. Words, he said, were in reality responsible for the confusions and the follies of earlier philosophers.[1]

Berkeley believed also in the experimental method, and was one of the first, perhaps, to attempt personal experiments in psychology. One of these experiments nearly cost him his life. In his youth he went to witness a hanging at Kilkenny, and on his way home he began to wonder what the condemned man's sensations must have been in the last moments of his life. After reaching Dublin, he decided that the only way to obtain any exact information on this point was to make a trial himself. He therefore arranged with a friend of his, a Venetian named Contarini, to attempt an experiment in hanging. It was ar-

[1] See especially *Commonplace Book*, Fraser's Edition, pp. 434, 435, 479; *Theory of Vision*, § 190; the introduction to the *Principles of Human Knowledge*; and *Alciphron*, Dialogue VII, § 2.

ranged that at a given signal Contarini should let him down and release him from the noose. But as soon as he felt the knot about his throat he lost consciousness, so that he could not give the signal they had agreed upon. Contarini waited, astonished at the young philosopher's power of resistance; but he finally got frightened, and let poor Berkeley down. If he had waited a few minutes more, the world would have had to wait a while for the theory of immaterialism.[1]

Berkeley placed great reliance on the examination of one's own experience, if made directly, and without scholastic prejudice. The way in which he constantly appeals to the experience of the reader, or rather, the way in which he constantly orders the reader to perform certain experiments, constitutes, indeed, one of the most original features of his method. When he has set forth one after another, in that clear and agile style of his, the arguments that seem best adapted to support his thesis or to overthrow that of his adversary, he has recourse finally to the *introspective command.* "Do you yourself, O reader," he says, "think of this matter seriously, and consider whether it is indeed conceivable or possible." Poor Hylas lends himself again and again

[1] It would not have had to wait very long, for there appeared in London in 1713, almost at the same time as Berkeley's *Dialogues*, the curious work of A. Collier entitled: *Clavis Universalis, or, A New Inquiry after Truth, Being a Demonstration of the Non-existence and Impossibility of an External World.*

to this forced reflection, and after a moment or two confesses humbly to Philonous that he cannot in fact conceive the matter in question. Not all Berkeley's readers, it is to be hoped, will be as speedily submissive as Hylas. Nevertheless, this frequent insistence on stopping to consider the real meaning of a term, and on thinking with one's own brain—instead of accepting outworn words and truths on the authority of tradition—is one of the best lessons to be learned from the youthful works of the good Bishop of Cloyne.

IV

Yet in spite of the fact that Berkeley is not in the first instance a philosopher, and in spite of the fact that he approached philosophy with a practical rather than a speculative intention, his name is indissolubly associated with one of the greatest philosophic discoveries of the eighteenth century: the definitive reduction of matter to spirit. The Cartesian dualism of matter and spirit had already been transformed by Malebranche into a sort of spiritual monism, in which matter little by little faded away; and Locke had already reduced secondary qualities to sensations, and the concepts of cause and substance to mere relationships between ideas. But it was

Berkeley who carried the implicit spirituality of Descartes to its logical conclusion and extended the arguments of Locke to primary qualities. The elements of his immaterialism, then, were ready for his hand, but to Berkeley himself belongs the credit of having extended and developed the theories of his fathers in philosophy, the credit of setting forth as a dominant idea, clear, central, and in full light, the great principle that the world consists of naught save spirit and spiritual activity.

Even here, to be sure, one may discern Berkeley's theological preoccupations. Matter is an ancient enemy. Philosophers have sought in many ways to discredit it, to reduce it to dust, to make it an obedient slave of the spirit, but it has remained an insistent annoyance in all theistic philosophy. If matter exists independently of spirit, if it is governed by its own laws and is capable even of influencing the soul, then the position of God becomes embarrassing. It may of course be said that God created matter, and that matter must obey the laws established by God; but the rôle and the dignity of God are much diminished nevertheless. We can conceive of God only as spirit; and if the world is composed for the most part of matter, which is the opposite of spirit, we may readily be led to conclude that matter is indeed the only reality, and

that thought itself is merely a manifestation of the force contained in matter. Tendencies such as this were appearing among the free-thinkers of Berkeley's time, and Berkeley took delight in his discovery precisely because it eliminated that blind, deaf mass of matter which threatened to exile the Supreme Spirit from the universe.

Berkeley's immaterialism, then, sprang from a theological motive and was utilized for a theological purpose: but his great principle was none the less true in itself, and its truth has now been accepted by the better part of the thinking world. I shall not reassume the several arguments which Berkeley invents, expounds and repeats in the *Principles* and in the *Dialogues*. Anyone can find them in a good history of philosophy, or better still, in Berkeley's own books, which are excellent reading and by no means difficult. And those who desire really to *feel* the discovery of Berkeley in all its ecstatic completeness, should read by preference the obscure and hurried notes of the *Commonplace Book*, in which, amid ingenuous remarks and ill-expressed revelations of the pride of discovery, one can witness the unfolding, or rather the explosion, of the theory of immaterialism. It is not a treatise fairly adorned and skillfully arranged, like a French garden; it is one of the few documents that reveal philosophic thought in action—uncertain at times,

often animated, and always beautiful, like every young and growing thing.

For I believe that it is not enough, even in the field of philosophy, to *know* a theory. One must live it and feel it with all one's soul, must fill one's thought with it, must make it, for the time being, the content, the coloring and the significance of one's whole life. Berkeley's principle lends itself excellently well to this integral possession of truth. When a man truly discovers the great principle—and that may be long after he has *known* it at second hand—he is seized by a sort of idealistic intoxication which transforms the whole world for him. Think for a moment, think intensely of the real implications of these words: "The whole world is composed of *spirit*." All that had seemed solid and foreign becomes fluid, becomes immediately personal; the contrast between the ego and the world is diminished; the immense and formidable mass of matter is transmuted into a moving picture within the mind; the ego is no longer a drop in the sea or a leaf in the forest, but a marvelous mirror, able to create for itself the images that appear in it. You are master of the world; you hold within yourself the whole range of future possibility.

From this idealistic exaltation one may pass easily enough into the absurdity of solipsism—and this I know, for I have gone through that

crisis. But the great liberating and suggestive value of Berkeley's principle remains: we are forced to recognize that the world cannot be formed of a substance different from that of our own thought. How, indeed, can we say that we know the world if we admit the possibility of knowing something foreign to thought, something which is not thought? From this principle, through Hume, the great reversal of Kant and all German idealism down to Hegel are derived; human thought henceforth, despite all the possible stupidities of science, cannot go back beyond this point.

Berkeley himself, it is true, did not maintain his principle in absolute purity to the end. In the *Siris*, the work of his old age, though he remains a spiritualist, Plato has led him toward the more naturalistic idealism of the Greeks. His ideas are no longer those of the *Principles*, they are those of Plato; and between the Supreme Spirit and the spirits of men there intervenes the universal fire or ether, which displays the chemical and biological phenomena of the universe, and can scarcely be reduced to spirit, though conceived as a divine emanation.

But men will forget the erudite neo-Platonism of Berkeley's old age, and will remember the immaterialism of his youth. For that theory, though expressed in empiric language by a posi-

tive mind, has been, and will forever be, the implicit premise of all metaphysics.

V

The contemporaries of Berkeley, however, were not quick to understand the greatness of his discovery. He found a few followers in England, and a few more in America, but his works were read rather from curiosity than for serious purposes. His famous contemporary, Clarke, confessed that he could not answer the pressing arguments of Philonous, but declared at the same time that he refused absolutely to follow Philonous in his conclusions. The facts are that Berkeley was regarded chiefly as a pleasant maker of paradoxes and a zealous gentleman, and that he won fame late in life, and then only as the discoverer of the virtues of tar-water.

As preacher and apologist of Christianity he was well received; but even the *Alciphron,* his *summa,* brought no replies from the disciples of the unbelievers whom he had attacked—Collins and Mandeville—though it did bring answers from the mathematicians, offended, it would seem, by the philosopher's ironical attack on the new calculus of variations.

But the religious campaign of Berkeley met a

real need in the English life of his time. England is to all appearances the most conservative country in the world, but it has always had its revolutions long before other countries. England first went through the political revolution for the establishment of representative government, the theoretical revolution against scholasticism, and the industrial revolution against landed property; and in the eighteenth century it went through the anti-religious revolution against Christianity. England had had its *Aufklärung* and its Encyclopedists before Berkeley began his work. But in this, as in the other English revolutions, the natural moderation of the race and its tendency toward balance kept the movement from attaining an excessive development and from wreaking such destruction as to compel its adversaries to oppose it without compromise. So the English tendency toward unbelief did not degenerate, but remained in part within the field of religious thought, thus obliging the apologists of religion to seek new arguments, and to jettison some old ones.

In the apologetics of Berkeley one cannot readily separate the part of morals and the part of religion, and it is not always easy to decide whether he is insisting on morality for religious reasons, or defending belief in God for moral reasons. His position, which has been called

"religious utilitarianism," affords a new instance of that practical-theoretical dualism to which I have already referred. Nevertheless, some of his views on the problem of God are to a certain extent independent of his ethical preoccupations. One of his proofs of the existence of a supreme spirit is derived, in fact, from his immaterialism. He could not sink to the absurdity of believing that things exist only as we see them and hear them, and that they appear and disappear according as we are present or absent; nor could he admit, without giving up his entire system, that things exist in themselves, and not as mere objects of thought. When things are not seen by us they must then exist in some other thought: either in the thought of other men, or in the thought of God. To the thought of man belongs only that which is conscious and present. All that which is invisible, all that which is unconscious, even within ourselves, belongs to the activity of God.

Berkeley sought also, therefore, to reveal the nature of God; and in the works of his last period the problem of the significance of the material world is replaced by the problem of the significance of the Supreme Power of whom the material world is merely a manifestation. And Berkeley was obliged, in consequence, to combat not only the atheists of his time, but also the

agnostics and the mystics; for they, reviving a thesis once dear to the Pseudo-Dionysius and to Erigena, were proclaiming the impossibility of talking about God, of determining his qualities and attributes, or of forming any idea about him whatsoever—thus clearing the way for the atheists, who declared triumphantly that there was no reason to believe in the existence of a being of whom nothing could be known and nothing could be said. Berkeley, on the contrary, felt the need of a positive God, a God of whom one could speak, a God who should be in particular a regulator of morals. So, while he rejected the anthropomorphic and metaphysical analogy which sees in God merely an enlargement of man, he turned to what he calls the *proper analogy,* the analogy, that is, which proceeds from the partial perfections of which there is some trace in man to the absolute perfections which must exist in God. Berkeley's God, then, is neither the wonder-working God of the crowd, nor the abstract God of the metaphysicians. He is the God of wisdom and of goodness, an ethical God, precisely suited to the purposes of the guardians of morality. And here begins the interweaving of morality and religion. We seek the good, but the good we seek is an eternal—not a transitory—good, and we know that the end established by a just and good God must in itself be good. Con-

sequently, the best means of attaining eternal felicity is to discover the nature of the divine will as expressed in natural and in moral law, and to obey that will in all respects. We are to believe in God because only thus may we obtain the imperishable good. Religion is useful, therefore it must be true—yet after all the very basis of its utility is its truth.

In the *Siris* this somewhat narrow religious utilitarianism becomes broader. God is still the wise and good Ruler, and He is still the infinite Spirit who provides finite spirits with their ideas: but, thanks to the influence of Plato, He has become the cosmic principle, the creator of that universal ether which explains the life of the world better than any mechanistic theory. The Master of Morals has become a Demiurge; and beyond him the philosopher, liberated for the moment from the necessities of apologetics, believes that he can perceive the very essence of divinity, the ineffable One of the neo-Platonists.

But though Berkeley rises to great heights in the last pages of the *Siris*, he is less original there than elsewhere. His importance in the history of English religious thought consists primarily in his reconciliation between the divine will and the human desire for well-being. For Locke, the validity of moral law is derived from the omnipotence of God; for Paley, that validity lies purely

in the goodness and usefulness of its practical consequences. Berkeley, on the other hand, creates a God who is primarily ethical, and tends toward a system of morality which is primarily religious. He appeals to utility to induce men to believe in God; he appeals to divinity to compel them to goodness.

This conception may seem to have been dictated primarily by practical exigencies; but those who have followed the latest developments of Christian apologetics will realize that in this respect also Berkeley was a precursor of the moderns. The religious pragmatism of certain Anglo-Saxon thinkers is to be found in germ in the works of the Bishop of Cloyne; and Le Roy's recent and profound attempt to escape from the scholastic demonstrations of the existence of God and to form a new concept of divinity has led precisely to the identification of God with that instinct for moral progress which is immanent in the human soul.

VI

SPENCER

I

THE doctrine of individualism has had altogether too many devotees. Each of them has given it a new dress, motto, attitude, name, or seal, until the very mass of attributes has come to obscure the true nature of the doctrine. All men boast today of their individualism: conservative philosophers in search of theoretical weapons of defense; liberals and liberators who seek to bring free trade and competition under the banner of the struggle for existence; mild socialists, like Fournière, who see no incompatibility between the ideas of collectivism and individualism, and would enthrone Nietzsche among the prophets of socialism; and anarchists, dreamers or actors, who plunder Max Stirner by way of preparing themselves for the great destruction.

In a history of individualism you would find the soldiers of fortune of the Renaissance beside the disheveled philosophers of the *Sturm und*

Drang; abstract theorists like Fichte and poets of the imagination like Goethe; supporters of Prussian aristocracy like Hegel and revolutionary radicals like Ibsen; mystics like Carlyle and skeptics like Renan; dialecticians like Stirner and lyrists like Nietzsche. Hippolyte Taine, for all his talk of race and of tradition, is as strong for the individual as is the vagabond Gorky, dreaming in Russian solitudes fantastic dreams of gypsy anarchy. And the weighty evolutionary learning of Spencer joins with the elegant subtleties of Maurice Barrès to form part of the current conception of individualism.

Clearly, then, individualism cannot be a single and unchanging thing: too many spirits have exalted it. We must confess, as honest individualists, that there is no common and accepted type of individualism. And there could be perhaps no better proof of the profound and continual diversity of men than the fact that we give a single name and symbol to this many-colored flowering of forms and of ideals.

But perhaps the variety is not so great as it seems. Is it not possible that we are abusing terms when we class as individualistic certain theories which superficially proclaim the preëminence of the individual?

I can hardly repress this suspicion, for in-

stance, in the presence of the highly vaunted individualism of Spencer.

To many it has seemed that the philosopher of Derby is the only ideological athlete of the second half of the nineteenth century who is worthy to compete with the prophets of collectivism. His name has become the bulwark of the *bourgeoisie*. His critique of the state has provided material for propagandist pamphlets. His evolutionary formula has been wielded against the dogmas of equality and historical materialism. In the shadow of his synthesis conservatives have felt themselves secure. *The Man versus the State* has been the delight of *laissez-faire* politicians. His *Data of Ethics* has lulled the hearts of those whose egotism is not yet dead.

What cries of protest went up when Ferri, moved by a cowardly mania for finding allies and supports for socialism, tried to drag Spencer behind the triumphal chariot of collectivism!

Yet no one has seriously raised the question whether Spencer could rightly be called an individualist. No one has sought to discover whether the spirit of Spencer's philosophy is in accord with our most immediate purposes. We have read the chapters in which he justifies egotism and inveighs against the domination of the state, and we have read no further. In so doing, we have done ill.

I find myself obliged to confess that Spencer is far less of an individualist than his admirers appear to believe. But since the noblest characteristic of an individualist is his self-sufficiency, his admirers will surely waste no tears for the loss of their ally.

He had been, to be sure, a powerful ally. Being on Spencer's side meant being in accord with the most influential recent philosophic doctrine, the doctrine of monistic and evolutionary positivism. But the very thing which the conservatives, in their desire to be in accord with approved thought, have failed to discover, is that this conception cannot rationally be made to serve as a support for individualism. They have copied the pattern of the latest fashion, but that fashion was never meant for figures such as theirs. Individualism is borrowing for itself a uniform designed by collectivists for the use of collectivists. That is what monism is. The dogma of equality in the field of democratic sociology is the counterpart of the dogma of unity in the field of democratic cosmology.

I have called Spencer an evolutionary monist. I might as well have left out the adjective. The theory of evolution is merely one of the methods by which philosophers—those deadly enemies of the particular—have tried to prove unity. Spencer, like all philosophers, is fundamentally a monist, both in his goal and in his methods.

Philosophy, indeed, despite its apparent variety, is conservative, constant, pertinacious. Philosophy is like a romantic old lady who to the day of her death cherishes the dream of her girlhood: the dream of reducing all things to one single thing, of denying all differences and all distinctions—that is, frankly, of annihilating things. The philosopher desires to see the world issue and unfold, like a gigantic plant, from one single seed; or seeks to trace all appearances of variation back to some vague primordial mystery wherein reason may find a certain pleasure, though sense be lost.

Thus from Thales to the latest Germanic *Weltanschauung* the constant philosophic tendency has been to make reality illusory and to make the illusion real—that is, to sacrifice variety to oneness, the particular to the universal. And Spencer, though his acquaintance with the history of philosophy was very limited, moved in the same way. Setting aside the unknowable—established as a category for several compelling reasons, but chiefly in order to escape an embarrassing dualism—he took the knowable in hand in the endeavor to reduce it to one single principle, Force, and to one single law, Evolution. His point of departure was the *homogeneous*. From the homogeneous, that is, from the unique, everything is derived, everything has unfolded. All that which to us seems varied, diverse, heter-

ogeneous, came out of the great cosmic heart of the primal homogeneity. In the beginning there was but one; later, and for reasons which we see none too clearly, plurality ventured to intrude, for the confusion of the world.

Plurality, in short, is admitted, but not desired. The idea of differentiation which recurs so often in Spencer's explanations is not the goal, but an insistent datum which the philosopher seeks as best he can to trace back to its fabulous origin, to the undifferentiated beginning—that Cockayne of monistic meditation. The *diverse* is an object to be explained or *reduced,* not a goal to be achieved—it lacks, indeed, the stability that one desires in a goal. By the side of evolution appears the inverse process, involution, which leads back to the original vagueness. All things issue from the homogeneous, and return to the homogeneous: there you have the synthetic formula of evolutionism.

Spencer then, like all monists, like all philosophers, has failed to grasp the specific characteristic of reality. Truth, multiplicity, that which permits one to compare and contrast objects—that is, really to know them—is regarded as a deviation and a mere appearance, a deceit and a prejudice. In other words, the *individual* is a dream. That which is called personal, that which seems to us particular, specific, peculiar to one man, is reducible to other elements, may be found

in other men. Men themselves are reducible to more inclusive species, and these to one single species. And so on from the organic to the inorganic, and at last to the cold universalism of Energy.

If evolution is an instrument of a supreme unity, if all varieties are reducible, if all chasms may be filled, if nature is continuous and uninterrupted, then what the scholastics used to call the *ineffable individual* disappears like a child's dream. The individual, the person, the man unique, the self, does not and cannot exist, is but a legend denied by science, destroyed by philosophy, abjured by thought. In short, while the individualist feels the need of affirming, accentuating, and increasing diversities, the monist, on the contrary, tends to attenuate, to forget and to deny all differences. Their interests are opposed. Their purposes are antipodal.

Thus the collectivism of sociology finds in monism its perfect metaphysical counterpart.

Positivism, like democracy, is a leveler. It ferrets out facts—tiny facts, by preference. The triumph of Comte was brought about by his enthronement of *things*. The higher activities of the spirit, sentiment and will, have been dispossessed; their place has been usurped by fact, by representation, by all that which is least personal. And positivism, in its search for law, has sought to remove all irregularity and all caprice. It

has enrolled the world in regiments, has put facts in uniform, and has thrust the exceptional into the prison of the absurd.

In Spencer, then, monist and positivist, the individualists cannot find a sure defense. If they still share the common desire to win a metaphysical fortress for themselves, with the unconfessed purpose of justifying *a posteriori* their instinct for personal life, they must turn not to Spencer, but to some pluralistic doctrine. And if they do not find the right doctrine, they will have to invent it.

II

When Spencer left the heights whereon metaphysics battle with the incomprehensible, and came down to consider with greater clearness and with equal profundity the things of earth, the life of men, he did not succeed in forgetting or discarding those intellectual habits which had revealed themselves in his metaphysical speculation.

Indeed, Spencer had developed those habits in sociology before he applied them to ontology. His practical bent had led him very early toward the consideration of human groupings and to the writing of his *Social Statics* (1851), in which —it is well to remember—he proposed the nationalization of landed property. The sociologist

finds it impossible to disregard the group, and the student of the group finds it impossible to disregard the elements common to the individuals who compose the group. He is thus led to fix attention on elements of likeness, and to remove attention from elements of difference—to be, in short, a seeker of contacts and affinities rather than of chasms and aversions.

The very first interests of Spencer, then, indicate that fundamental characteristic which makes him in reality an opponent of individualism: his love for unity and for likeness.

This affirmation will seem strange to those who are wont to consider Spencer as the prophet of individualism *à outrance*. But your true individualist doesn't write sociology. If he writes at all, he writes "confessions," recording the adventures of his egotism. Shall we say that he disregards men? Not that, for an individualism which simply carried off a little slice of the world would be the individualism of a mole. The individualist considers men as servitors, as instruments to grasp, as animals to drive in leash, and not as objects of knowledge. In a word, your true individualist does not *write* history: he *makes* it. He lives the life of society, and does not stop to theorize. He is a Pandolfo Petrucci or a Napoleon, not a Comte or a Spencer.

Spencer, however, chose the other course: he turned to the study of men in their actions and

their relations. As man of letters he wrote of others, not of himself. He had individualism enough to write books on life, but not to achieve in life. Neither as man of words nor as man of deeds was he in reality personal, individual. As a scientist he bowed before facts; as a metaphysician, before the unknowable; as a moralist, before the immutable truth of natural law. His philosophy is formed of fear, of ignorance, and of obedience: virtues from the point of view of Christ, but vices from the point of view of the individualist. Spencer was no more nor less than a forger of individualism.

The common belief that Spencer defended the individual comes wholly from his criticism of the domination of the State. The English philosopher is in fact one of the most tenacious assailants of governmental tyranny. Valiant indeed are his onslaughts against the new Leviathan that seeks to swallow all activities and all persons in the mechanistic mass of its bureaucratic tentacles.

The little book called *The Man versus the State* is excellent reading. It is a pleasure to take it up after the imposition of some idiotic penalty, or a debate on Sunday closing: for though the muzzling powers of the State increase, its fundamental weakness and absurdity are here revealed.

Yet even this, intelligent and edifying though

it is, cannot be called individualism. Spencer, to be sure, attacks the State, and the State is a collective entity; but the reasons which underlie his attack remain to be examined. And his principal reason is not the fact that the State is a collective entity and tends, as such, to enthrall the individual; his principal reason is that the State is a collective entity which does not function well. His scorn for governmental action is based on the fact that it costs too much and does not yield enough. Without the stimulus of competition it grows torpid, it falls asleep, it becomes needlessly complicated, spasmodic, cumbersome. He criticizes the State as an engineer might criticize an old-fashioned engine which uses much coal and produces little energy. The engineer, that is, does not object to the engine as an engine, but to a defect in its functioning. If the machine worked well, the engineer would not care whether it were old or new, whether it were composed of few or many pieces. So it is with the State. Spencer does not oppose it because it is a State, a group, a collective and dominant entity—but because it consumes too many pounds sterling and yields but scanty benefits.

Furthermore, he does not by any means oppose all collective entities. He merely criticizes one form of collective entity, the State, to the advantage of other forms, such as societies and private companies. He knows that public util-

ities, such as postal service or the distribution of energy, of light, or of education, cannot be carried on by individuals acting independently, but demand union and coöperation; and he believes that a multiplicity of private organizations, made keen by competition and by the more immediate control of their component members, may have better success than a monopolistic State in satisfying individual needs. But with all this we are still within the realm of unionism; there is no indication here of the development of a truly individual point of view.

Nor can it be said that Spencer is trying to substitute voluntary for compulsory coöperation, and that individual liberty is thus safeguarded, since we can turn from one society to another when the first no longer satisfies us. For since certain services are necessary for all, one must accept a society perforce just as one becomes part of a nation perforce; and since the enterprises in question are necessarily on a large scale, the societies cannot be numerous, and one's choice is therefore limited. Furthermore, they may unite as *trusts* for their own advantage, and to the disadvantage of the consumer. They may be as tyrannical as the State. And if it be said that one may go from one society to another, cannot the same be said with regard to States? A man who is unwilling to accept the laws of one State may go to another and assume another

nationality; and as States are governed differently, it may be claimed that there is in theory a rivalry between States just as there is in theory a rivalry between private companies.

In short, Spencer's criticism is directed rather against the excesses of governmental domination than against government in itself. To say nothing of the fact that some services are so fundamental and so complex that a private society could not undertake them, it is to be remembered that Spencer, in the heat of his anti-governmental rage, nevertheless assigns to the State the all-important function of guarding life and property—that is, of guarding all that is worth guarding. And the fact that Spencer assigns this particular function to the State proves that his hatred for the State is partial and superficial, not deep and definitive. If I dislike and distrust a man I do not ask him to become the guardian of my life and the custodian of my property. Yet it is to the State that Spencer gives this confidential task; for he makes the State the policeman, the judge, and the protector of human life, allows it indeed the most intimate and vital offices. He behaves toward the State like a *bourru bienfaisant:* he complains, grumbles, and protests, but in the end he yields on the most important points. He attacks the State only to exalt it. He attacks public collective entities only

to put private collective entities in their place. Mere substitution, then, not demolition.

It has well been observed that many men complain of the tyranny of the State, and yet say not a word against the far more powerful tyranny of society. Social dogmas, precisely because they are not fixed in laws and regulations, are more oppressive and more irresistible than the principles of State control. Against these latter there is some defense; they are matters of law. Against social dogmas, reënforced by public opinion, there is no resource save useless and solitary revolt. If it were really desirable and possible to liberate the individual, one would have to begin by uprooting all those weeds of collective superstition which do not appear in codes of law, and are not external and tangible, but reveal themselves as the torments of an inherited conscience, and are internal, invisible, and for the most part unrecognized.

In short, either we are individualists in the true sense of the word—and then we should attack not only the State but any form whatsoever of human regimentation, of subjection to rules and convention—or else we seek to preserve a little liberty and a little union, a little of the individual and a little of the State, a little of the person and a little of the group. In that case we are taking half measures, we are temporizing

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like the prudent *bourgeois* that we are—but we are not individualists.

Some one at this point will raise his brows, and glimpse between the lines of my prose the dagger of a Caserio or the dynamite of a Ravachol. He need not fear. I am not a half-anarchist, like Spencer, nor a complete anarchist, like Kropotkin or Malatesta. Indeed, I am hostile to Spencer precisely because, failing to understand individualism, he slips toward anarchy.

It is high time to stop the repetition of the statement that anarchy represents the ideal of the greatest possible liberty. Liberty consists in the ability to do certain things, that is, to enjoy and possess certain properties; and since property is by its nature limited, the giving of all liberties to all men, the granting to all men of the right to perform all acts, would simply mean the restriction of the share of each—to the benefit of none and the injury of many. People ingenuously believe that liberty is a thing to be distributed, and that it would be well to give it to all men. Universal liberty, on the contrary, would result in a greater number of unimpeded actions, that is to say, in universal helplessness. The anarchistic ideal is not only impracticable; it is self-contradictory.

Now Spencer, in his dream of a future altruistic humanity, without laws and without government, has consciously or unconsciously ap-

proached the anarchistic ideal, has displayed an individualism which is anti-personal, like that of all anarchists. For anarchists have failed as yet to understand that since the liberty of all is a contradiction in terms the only liberty which can be established is the liberty of a limited number —that is to say the power of a limited number, the government of a class. Those who are free exercise power, that is, they possess the greater part of all properties, including the labor of other men. And it is clear that any society in which a few are free must necessarily contain many who are slaves.

Despotism is the only practical ideal of anarchy. Alexander the Great, for instance, was far more free than any citizen of modern Europe, precisely because he stood alone, or almost alone, in the power to command and to possess. True individualism consists, then, in counseling subjection, not rebellion; in making slaves, not revolutionists; instruments, not critics. Individualism, the affirmation of full personal power, is in the nature of things reserved for the few, and it is well that the rest of mankind should not get the idea of liberty into their heads. Anarchy, in short, turns out to be in reality an apology for czarism, comes down from an impossible universalism to an easily realized aristocracy, from the theoretical liberty of all to the practical power of the few.

Spencer, in his fight against the domination of the State and the army, was but a superficial and prehistoric individualist, sentimental and abstract rather than analytical and practical. His individualism was empty and half-hearted.

Despite his scientific pretensions, Spencer was guided more by sentiment than by reason. Instead of seeing clearly the need for realities beneath words, he, like all philanthropists, sought universal love, altruism, and progress. In the last years of his life, perhaps in conscious recognition of this weakness, he sang the praises of sentiment in his *Facts and Comments*—forgetting the intellectualistic psychology of his youth.

Sentiment appears too in those moral analyses at the end of the *Data of Ethics* which have been cited in support of the legend of his individualism. He did indeed attempt a rehabilitation of egotism in so far as it tends to altruism—of that egotism which through ego-altruistic sentiments tends toward a final and universal altruism. The ultimate goal is to think of others; it is well to begin by thinking of one's self. The ego is again subordinate to others, the individual to the common herd.

Now for the true individualist there are possible but two attitudes with regard to men: that of the rebel and that of the dominator, that of the libertarian and that of Cæsar. Those who

cannot dominate or possess choose the former attitude, and seek to destroy those who do possess and dominate. And these, in turn, seek to conquer more and more, and to ward off their enemies while they endeavor to increase their domination over things and men.

Spencer, a middle-class spirit without courage and without audacity, remains dangling in the limbo of antinomies, wavering between the necessity of government and the lamentation of the oppressed. He was the pedantic Hamlet of a half-intelligent and compromising *bourgeoisie.*

VII

F. C. S. SCHILLER

In the sleepy world of modern philosophy F. C. S. Schiller stands for an idea which is very simple, and has for that very reason been long forgotten: the idea that *theories should lead to practical results.* Philosophy should be one of the moving forces of the world. Even speculative thought should be an instrument of change. Pure reason, rigid and static rationalism, and prudent objectivism are but myths or absurdities. There is no such thing as pure reason: reason is always impure, at least if one regards sentiment, purpose, and will, as elements of impurity. The immobile rationalism that claims to have pinned down truth in its theodicies, as a boy pins down a butterfly, is but the twaddle of degenerate Leibnitzians. The passive objectivism that waits resignedly to receive impressions, contemplates the slow formation of truth, and scorns those who go out to seek for truth, to pursue it, to impose it, to create it, to subject and master things instead of merely measuring or counting them—such passive objectivism is the

hypocritical method of a generation of weaklings. Truth must be provoked, I might almost say *invented;* and when it has been invented it must be made real and concrete through the dominion which the spirit must incessantly exercise over material things.

Such, in somewhat sharper emphasis, are the ideas which recur throughout the keen and imaginative writings of the Oxford philosopher. In *Axioms as Postulates,* which he published, together with essays by some of his friends, in the volume called *Personal Idealism* (1902), there appears an irreverent analysis of those truths which are traditionally called necessary, and an intimate history of axioms. Axioms, he shows, are but hypotheses which have proved so useful, and have succeeded so well in displacing all rival hypotheses, that today they seem indispensable: they are merely empiric propositions or teleological conventions which have proved victorious in the struggle for acceptance as truth.

In other words, the origin of those concepts which we tend to regard as the eternal armor of reason is purely practical and utilitarian. That which has proved most serviceable has asserted itself and has survived. Everything else has been thrown into the enormous waste-basket of the insignificant and the erroneous. Knowledge must serve life. Life, then, may suppress such knowledge as harms or does not help it.

In his essay on *Useless Knowledge,* the second of those gathered under the title *Humanism,*[1] he reduces to three types the conceptions which the greatest philosophers have held of the relations between practical reason and pure reason. For Plato, practical reason is a special form derived from theoretical reason. For Aristotle, theoretical reason and practical reason are independent, but theoretical reason is superior to practical reason. For Kant, theoretical reason and practical reason are independent, but practical reason is superior to theoretical reason. Schiller goes further still, and on the basis of the theories of pragmatism (Pierce, James) he affirms outright that theoretical reason is a special case and a derivative form of practical reason. Knowledge is merely a form of action.

In fact, pure intelligence, that is, passive intelligence, does not exist for Schiller. We know only what we seek to know, what we have some interest in knowing. Knowledge is shot through with affections, emotions, purposes. One of the most imperious needs of the human mind is the need of *harmony.* We desire that the data of knowledge should agree with each other and with outer objects, and that the data of our own knowledge should be in agreement with those of the human group in which we live.

When an idea which offers interest and utility,

[1] *Humanism: Philosophical Essays,* London, 1903, pp. 18–43.

and does not clash with our convictions, comes before us, we *desire it to be true;* that is, we *suppose* that it is true, and we *act as if it were true,* considering it as true provisionally, and awaiting the consequences. If those consequences are favorable, and if the idea does not prove to be in opposition with the ideas we already possess and with those of other men, we admit it into the society of our established truths, and retain it until some change of interests or some alteration of conditions ousts it in favor of some other fresher and more useful truth. Schiller, then, defines truth as "that manipulation of data which turns out upon trial to be useful, primarily for any human end, but ultimately for that perfect harmony of our whole life which forms our final aspiration."

That which is true is useful. There may be ideas which are at the same time false and useful, but there is no such thing as an idea which is at the same time useless and true. Every hypothesis which is without utility is either false or insignificant. To adopt the Platonic terminology, the True is a form of the Good, and "every act of human knowledge is potentially a moral act."

Thus it is evident that Schiller does not consider truth as a thing fixed and dead, but as a thing changeable, plastic, dynamic. Truths are born and die, decay and are renewed continually.

As times and individuals and purposes change, that which has been true becomes insignificant, that which has seemed absurd comes to be true. Movement and evolution enter the calm architectonic world of knowledge. Schiller naturally regards the doctrines of evolution with approval, since they have made familiar the idea of the plasticity of organic beings, and have thus prepared the way for the idea of the plasticity of speculative organisms.

For Schiller, and for Schiller distinctively, motion, change, and activity are everything. Things exist in so far as they are active. Existence means action. Substance is activity. Schiller renews Aristotle's vision of ἐνέργεια, and shares the vision of his contemporary, Ostwald, the present champion of energism. Spirit as well as substance, then, must be preëminently active, must choose and reconstruct. The world as we know it is not the original world: it is the result of long centuries of choices, modifications, eliminations, deformations, and creations wrought by men according to their habits and their desires. The world is not "a datum imposed upon us ready-made, but the fruit of a long evolution, of a strenuous struggle"—the struggle of consciousness with consciousness, of spirit with things, of man with the world.

Such is the philosophy which comes to us from Oxford under the fair name of *Humanism*, dear

to our Latin memories. Italian humanism was the resurrection of a distant and unfamiliar world; Anglo-Saxon humanism is the announcement of a new world, still unfamiliar, but no longer distant: a world in which the soul is master. And this explains Schiller's interest in psychic problems and his membership in the Society of Psychical Research, which has made him a member of its council.[1] It explains also why he is one of the most prominent exponents of pragmatism as embodied in James' doctrine of the *Will to Believe,* which is simply one of the means of rendering true the beliefs that most concern us.

Schiller's philosophy is by no means new. Beyond his direct sources—the most important of whom is certainly William James, the full extent of whose influence on contemporary thought cannot yet be fully estimated—one may rightly enough go back to the famous aphorism of Protagoras ("Man is the measure of all things") which so scandalized the ingenuous soul of Plato. Saint-Martin, the *philosophe inconnu,* set this phrase at the head of one of his works: "Il ne faut pas expliquer l'homme avec les choses mais expliquer les choses avec l'homme." Schiller might have chosen a still more daring motto: "Il ne faut pas soumettre l'homme aux choses, mais

[1] See his article on *Human Sentiment as to a Future Life,* in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,* XVIII (October, 1904), 416-50.

il faut que les choses soient soumises à l'homme." The phrase of Saint-Martin may seem like a return to primitive animism, and the phrase that might be Schiller's may seem like a return to barbarian magic; but they may both be in reality the mottoes of a new spiritual age, an age to be marked by events no less important than the discovery of America or the invention of the steam engine.

If this is to come about, we must discard the metaphysical lore that has long since given all it had to give, and we must bring forth from our own spirits not only imaginative systems wherein curiosity may wander at will, but that *art of creation* which is already foretokened and is already in preparation.

VIII

HEGEL[1]

WHEN one reads Croce's latest book—as indeed when one reads any book by Hegel or by a Hegelian—one is confronted with a problem which is not so much philosophical as psychological. How can it be that men whom I must recognize on other grounds as being intelligent, even as being men of genius, seem to have no difficulty in understanding certain statements which to other persons who are intelligent, and are even men of genius, appear to be absolutely devoid of sense?

Consider the case which naturally comes at this moment to my mind.

Benedetto Croce is a man of great genius, and of vast and well assimilated culture. One reads his books rapidly, with pleasure, with deep interest, even when they treat of the loftiest and most difficult questions that human thought can set before itself. His critical essays are delightful: witty, frank, and erudite. Many of his in-

[1] Written *à propos* of Benedetto Croce's *Ciò ch' è vivo e ciò ch' è morto nella filosofia di Hegel* ("What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel"), Bari, 1906.

cidental remarks and some of his theories compel us to recognize in him one of the broadest and most penetrating of recent Italian thinkers.

On the other hand, in view of the fact that people pay heed to what I write, I cannot deny that I am myself an intelligent man. And if I cannot go so far as to say as much of myself as I have said of Croce, the fact remains that Croce, both in public and in private, has expressed opinions of my work which do me much honor, and that in the *Leonardo* some time ago he referred to me as "a keen mind, quick to perceive the essential point of a problem."

How then can you explain the fact that when I read and reread Croce's book on the persistent and the transitory elements in the philosophy of Hegel, I constantly come across phrases the significance of which appears to be perfectly and immediately clear to Croce, while I on the contrary receive from them merely the impression of more or less elegant and symmetrical combinations of words which might have a certain sense if they were taken singly, but lose that sense completely when they are put together in just this way?

I am well aware of the answer that Hegelians give to those who criticize their books on this score: to understand Hegel, they say, you must read him and then reread him and then meditate on him and then consider him in relation with

all his predecessors and then consider him in relation with all his followers—in short, that you must steep yourself in that atmosphere of idealistic culture in which the Hegelian philosophy was formed and developed.

But in the case of Croce's book this reply is not in point, for this book cannot demand on the part of its critics any such preparation—a preparation which, in the last analysis, would immobilize the critic for so long a period that at its close he would have to admit—either in order to avoid confessing that he had wasted his time or as a result of slow intoxication or auto-suggestion—that Hegel was a great man and that his philosophy, though perhaps in need of still further development, will remain the best of all possible philosophies. For Croce's book is intended to serve as an introduction to the Hegelian system, as the indispensable means by which one may prepare himself to read Croce's translations of the works of Hegel. In other words, his book must stand or fall on its own merits; and if it is to attain the purpose for which it was written, it must be intelligible even to one who has not seen the title-pages of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and the *Logic*.

I know that Croce and his parrots are fond of saying that men who do not or will not read Hegel are intellectually lazy. The accusation would be in point if the men in question, while

not studying Hegel, did not study any one else either. But Croce knows that the men in question spend the time saved by neglecting the *Encyclopedia of Philosophic Science* not at the billiard table, but in reading and in studying other books which may be as difficult and exhausting as those of Hegel—and more fruitful.

Indeed, we may well apply to philosophers what Jesus said of trees: "By their fruits ye shall know them." There are men who have spent a great part of their lives in the endeavor to read and understand Hegel. And if the writings of these men appear, as they usually do appear, to be pedantic, obscure, and meaningless, then I have reason to suspect that the reading of Hegel is no such elixir of philosophic life as it is claimed to be, and I may well prefer to study the malady in others rather than to expose myself to the infection.

William James compared Hegelianism to a mouse-trap. It reminds me rather of the fable of the sick lion who could not leave his tent to hunt other beasts, and had therefore commissioned the fox to bring the other beasts to see him, so that he might devour them at his convenience. The gracious invitation was given to the ass, among others; but when that wise creature came to the threshold of the lion's den he observed that the ground bore many prints of feet that had entered in, but none of feet that

had come out—and he turned back. The ass was always a philosophic beast: witness Buridan and Bruno!

Croce's book makes it unnecessary for us—for the moment at least—to enter the trap, or the den, since it is supposed, as I have said, to be intelligible without previous reading of Hegel, and since it is at the same time a select sample of the products of the Neapolitan branch of Hegel & Co.

Let us see, then, what there is that we may regard as significant and as valid in those elements of Hegel's philosophy which, according to Croce, still persist. Some time ago, in an article in the *Critica* entitled *Are We Hegelians?* Croce besought for his favorite philosopher at least a definitive burial, a first-class funeral. For my part, I am quite willing to drive a few more nails into the coffin.

I

The two great merits of Hegel, according to his latest champion, are these: that he demonstrated the existence of a method peculiar to philosophy and different from the methods of art or the physical and mathematical sciences; and that he formulated that dialectic (the coexistence of contraries or the identity of opposites) which was already implicit in certain ear-

lier philosophers, and was indeed foretokened in a general way by the whole course of philosophy.

Philosophy, then, differs from all other products of the human mind in that it concerns itself with concepts which are universal and concrete, unlike the intuitions of art, the ecstasies of mysticism, or the representative generalities of science.

Certain objections are, however, to be brought against Croce's thesis that philosophy must perforce have a method of its own since the other activities of the human spirit (mathematics, natural science, history, art, economics, ethics) have each its own method. In the first place, the methods of the several other activities which he enumerates are not entirely distinct, since mathematical methods are employed in natural science, artistic methods in history, naturalistic or mathematical methods in economics, and so on. Clearly, then, it is by no means true that each particular discipline has always its own specific method.

Furthermore, Croce does not discuss, and apparently has not even considered, a hypothesis which is perfectly possible and in my opinion altogether probable: the hypothesis that philosophy may fairly be considered as consisting of those problems which concern several sciences at the same time, which are, as it were, crossroads or neutral zones of two or three or more

sciences—in which case philosophy might well be content with the methods employed in mathematics and in the natural sciences.

But I prefer to turn to the question whether the method which Hegel and Croce attribute to philosophy has any real value in itself, and whether, if so, it is really unlike the other methods.

We must try, then, to understand this "philosophic thinking" which is different from all other activities of the mind, and which is one of those things against which—so Croce writes—"rebellion seems to me impossible, though I recognize that they should be taught more and more widely, since they constitute, as it were, the neglected *a b c* of philosophy." But this *a b c* is by no means easy to understand, even when one brings to the task, as I have done, the utmost resolution and good will.

When I am told that philosophy is concerned with concepts, that is to say, with abstract notions and not with particular representations or personal sentiments, I can understand perfectly well; but when I am told that these concepts are not general concepts like those of science, but universal concepts, then I am lost. For if the term "universal concept" does not indicate, just as the term "general concept" does, certain qualities common to a definite and limited class of objects, what then can it indicate? The most

probable explanation, to my mind, is that Croce gives the name "universal" to a certain number of general concepts which are distinguished from the concepts of the experimental sciences merely in that they have frequently been the object of study of certain men called philosophers. In this case the distinction would be merely apparent, or rather, would be historical rather than logical. But Croce certainly would not admit this interpretation, which, I must confess, reveals a lack of confidence in his analytical ability. I am compelled, therefore, to seek for some interpretation which might justify, at least to Croce's eyes, the establishment of a distinction between general concepts and universal concepts.

Croce's method, as all who have read his books are well aware, is primarily a process of elimination. He is careful to tell us that x is neither a nor b nor c, but he does not take the trouble to tell us what x really is. In the case in question he asserts that the universal concept is not the general concept—that is all. Since he does not even go on to say what a general concept is, we are justified in assuming that he is using the term "general concept" in its ordinary sense, that is, as a term indicating one or more characteristics common to a certain class of objects.

Now since Croce is endeavoring to establish a contrast between the universal concept and the general concept, the question naturally arises

whether the term "universal concept" is intended to indicate one or more characteristics common to *all* objects. Croce does not explicitly state that this is his meaning; but this appears nevertheless to be the only interpretation that could justify the distinction.

But are there really characteristics common to *all* objects? There would seem to be two, and only two: first, the fact that these objects are known by us; second, the fact that these objects differ from each other. But these two characteristics may evidently be reduced to one single characteristic, namely, the fact of "being." For we predicate being of those things which we know, directly or indirectly; and we know things only in so far as they differ from each other, since complete and homogeneous unity would be tantamount to unknowability—that is, so far as we are concerned, to non-existence, or "not-being."

The diversity of objects and their resultant knowability mean then only this: that the objects exist. "Being" would then seem to be the only "universal concept" in the supposedly Crocean sense. And its very uniqueness deprives it of real value: for a concept has meaning only in so far as it may be distinguished from other concepts, whereas in this case we cannot conceive of anything which, through the very fact of being conceived, is non-existent. "Not-being" is unthinkable, and cannot serve therefore to help

us to understand "being"—which is itself unthinkable, since there is nothing with which we can contrast it.

Now Hegel, according to Croce, admits that the concepts of "being" and "not-being" have no meaning if taken separately, and asserts that they acquire significance when they are united in the concept of "becoming." But even when the two concepts are brought together they do not succeed in throwing light on each other, since a condition precedent to their having a joint meaning would be the previous and independent possession of meaning by one or the other. The blind cannot lead the blind.

Even the concept of "becoming," the delight of the Hegelians, the reflector (to their minds) which illumines those two poor concepts of "being" and "not-being" which remain obscure until they are transcended—even the concept of "becoming" appears on careful examination to be merely a disguise for the concept of "being." "Becoming" implies motion, change, diversity in time. To say that the world *becomes* amounts to saying that changes take place in the world (regularly or sporadically), and that in consequence things which had certain characteristics at a certain moment have different characteristics at a later moment. We are therefore dealing with diversity—that is to say, with the funda-

mental condition of knowability, which, as we have seen, is nothing other than "being."

Nor does the idea of "not-being" help us out, for in all changes nothing is really lost. We simply have different impressions, one after the other. There is no reason to think that something has been annihilated merely because my sensations change from moment to moment while my attention is fixed on a given point in space, any more than there is reason to think that something has been annihilated merely because I receive different impressions from moment to moment when looking through a window of a moving train.

The only difference is that in the case of concepts we may turn back and see again just what we saw before—which we cannot do in the case of time. But the fact that you can't buy return tickets in time is no reason for believing that annihilation has taken place. Chemistry, moreover, offers us plenty of cases in which the union of elements produces a substance which differs from any one of the component elements, and will yield those elements again through analysis.

The concept of "becoming" is then an element of the concept of "being," and is not something which transcends that concept by uniting to it the concept of "not-being." And if, as I believe, the concept of "being" is the only "universal" concept, then philosophy is in a sorry plight in-

deed, since it has as the field of its labors just one concept. A single concept would not in any case suffice for the building of a system—and this particular concept is meaningless.

For Hegel himself, after saying that the concept must be universal, proceeds, even when he claims to be writing philosophy, to deal with concepts which are not in the least universal. In the *Logic,* for instance, he speaks of quality, measure, force, and matter—of concepts, that is, which evidently are not universal concepts, since according to Hegel himself they do not concern all reality or any characteristic of all reality. Even philosophers, then, must have recourse to the "general" concepts that obtain in the experimental sciences.

And Croce himself, when he draws up a list of opposites, is compelled to cite the "good" and the "evil," the "true" and the "false," the "beautiful" and the "ugly," which are certainly not universal concepts, since not all things are beautiful, nor are all affirmations false, nor all actions good. Philosophers then, even when they have had the privilege of reading Hegel, use either words which are devoid of sense, or concepts as general as those of the poor everyday scientist.

But the philosophic concept, as we have seen, is to be distinguished from the pseudo-concepts of science not only by its universality, but also by its concreteness. It is concrete: that is to

say, "it does not consist of arbitrary abstractions: it is not a petrifaction of reality, but a summary of reality in all its richness and fullness. Philosophical abstractions are necessary, and are therefore adequate to reality, and do not mutilate or falsify it."

But in this case the word *concrete* is evidently to be taken in some sense other than the ordinary sense, and cannot mean "something tangible and existent," for if it did, then the individual sciences would also be concrete. It must then indicate something *complete* and *adequate to reality.* Scientific concepts impoverish reality, and the philosopher, it would seem, represents reality entire.

Supposing that he does, how does he do it? By means of words so general and so vague ("becoming," for example) that whatsoever occurs and whatsoever exists is of necessity comprised therein. If to be complete is to find words which have so vast an extension as to comprise everything, then the most complete description of the world would be: "Things exist." Such a formula omits nothing—but at the same time it tells us nothing. A reporter describing a crowd at the races cites the names of only a few of those present, and thereby impoverishes reality. If a philosopher referring to the same scene should state that at a given point there were a certain number of men and women, his statement would be

more complete, but at the same time *more indefinite.* The highest completeness is then equal to the highest indefiniteness. And we naturally prefer to be told a few specific facts rather than listen to a man who pretends to tell us everything, but gives us no information. Completeness may be achieved with a single word, but where then is the richness and the fullness we were promised?

Nor can I make out what Croce means by indicating that the philosophic concept is *adequate to reality.* Certainly not that it is identical with or similar to the reality with which it deals, for a book on botany is not a forest, and a book on philosophy is not the world. Perhaps then knowledge "adequate to reality" is such knowledge as will enable me to recognize things of which I have been told, to foresee them and thus to control them.

Upon this basis chemistry may fairly be called a science adequate to reality. For if I read a description of platinum, and thereafter find myself in possession of a piece of platinum, I am able to determine that it is platinum; and I know that if I fuse a certain quantity of chloride with a certain quantity of mercury, I shall obtain another substance which will have characteristics more or less similar to those of chloride and mercury, and may serve for certain definite purposes.

In philosophy, however, we find no such conditions. No one has ever met a concept on the

street—though Hegel says that ideas have legs. A concept must be derived, by thought, from a particular object, or particular objects; and it has often happened, as the whole history of science and philosophy bears witness, that a single object has given rise to very different concepts. Furthermore, the concepts of philosophy do not even enable us to foresee. If I should be converted tomorrow to Hegelianism, none of my anticipations would be changed; I should merely experience certain intellectual emotions somewhat different in character from those I now experience. It has been said many a time that the rabid Berkeleyite, even though he believes that the world is composed exclusively of spiritual phenomena, is just as careful as any materialist to avoid running into a wall.

This first analysis, then, has served to show that the "philosophic concept" is either unthinkable or is a general concept like the rest; that it is complete only by virtue of giving no information; and that it is in no sense adequate to reality.

There remains the famous dialectic of Hegel —but to this I shall return later on, attempting to give it a sense which is certainly not that desired by Hegel nor that intended by Croce. For the moment I wish to turn to the problem which I suggested at the start. We have seen that Hegelianism has no comprehensible intellectual

content: what then is its emotional content, what is its moral significance?

II

The phenomenon of Hegelianism will constitute one of the most important problems in that study of the comparative psychology of philosophers which some one will eventually initiate.

What are the states of consciousness of those who read or write Hegelian phrases? What are the sentiments or the needs which have caused the rise and development of philosophies of the Hegelian type? For it does not suffice to say that the books of Hegel and his disciples are for the most part composed of meaningless phrases which many persons, through habit, through imitation, or through lack of analytical ability, think that they comprehend. If, as I believe, those phrases have no valid theoretical significance, they must have an emotional or an æsthetic or a moral significance, and it must be possible to determine and describe this significance at least approximately.

Among the non-philosophic elements which enter into Hegelian philosophy, the æsthetic element certainly holds the first place. I am convinced that there is a *rhetoric of conceits* as well as a rhetoric of imagery, and that philosophy, like

poetry, has its *préciosité* and its Symbolism. Just as there are orators who attain astonishing popularity by dint of putting together bombastic and resonant phrases in which heterogeneous words—mingled more or less at random and strained beyond their ordinary meaning—serve to lead up to impressive moral or patriotic or humanitarian tirades, so there are philosophers who win an extraordinary degree of influence in certain minds by mixing together great words of uncertain significance and mysterious color, arranging them in symmetrical schemes and in elegant combinations, and making reversible charades or impressive phrases broken here and there by a noisy outburst of metaphysics. When you read that a syllogism is "the essence of logic meeting with itself," that the "negative is also positive, positive in the very fact of its being negative," that "the unreal has its own reality, which is to be sure the reality of the unreal: the reality of 'not-being' in the dialectic triad, of that 'not-being' which is not real, but is the stimulus of the real," you experience an æsthetic pleasure which is different from that of poetry, but is none the less unmistakable, though it has as yet no name. A similar pleasure is to be derived from the unexpected and sometimes grotesque comparisons of the Hegelians, which recall the famous metaphors of the decadent lyrists of the seventeenth century. A similar pleasure comes

also from the sort of musical and suggestive rhythm which appears in certain pretentious and meaningless phrases. There are pages of Hegel which have in the field of thought the same effect that the sonnets of Mallarmé have in the field of poetry. They are instruments of evocation and of indefinite, sentimental suggestiveness —and they are nothing more. That does not lessen their value; it may even increase it. But verbal narcotics and hypnotic formulas are not to be imposed on us as truths.

The sentimental states most readily produced by the books of Hegel are pride, mystic ecstasy, and the sense of motion. The sense of motion certainly pervades Hegelian philosophy, and despite deficiencies in logical expression has certainly contributed to its popularity. The thinkers of Hegel's day were a little weary of static systems, of fixed and motionless metaphysics, of the cold classifications and distinctions of traditional philosophy, and they felt the need of a start, a run, a crack of the whip. The philosophy of Hegel, even in the manner of its utterance, brought this sense of motion, of change, of development. The Hegelian world is rather a promenade for the Idea than a stationary piece of furniture full of drawers and pigeonholes.

Men were beginning just then to acquire that love of motion and speed which has today reached the point of frenzy; and we have Hegel to thank

for starting the reaction against the immobility of the old régime in philosophy, just as Darwin started it, a little later, in biology.

But Hegelianism is not to be wholly accounted for by the satisfaction which it gives to such sentiments. Its success has been due to other causes as well, and in particular to moral causes. It satisfies the need which men have always felt for the creation of a world *sui generis,* located beyond and above the world of sense and of science, exempt by its very nature from the attacks of criticism and the denials of experience, a world wherein one may give free play to beliefs and sentiments of every sort. These metaphysical worlds of the philosophers have in the city of thought the same function that cathedrals had in the Middle Ages: they enjoy the *right of asylum.* For when a man who has sinned in the presence of science or experience takes refuge in such a world, its prelates cover him with the mantle of philosophy, and save not only his life, but his reputation.

III

In speaking thus of the philosophic concept—the Isis, the Phœnix, and the Veiled Prophet of Hegelianism—I have by implication criticized the Hegelian dialectic as well, since this dialectic feeds only on these particular concepts. But the

dialectic may also be attacked directly, and without recourse to the notion of the inconceivable.

The worst absurdity that lurks in the dialectic seems to be this: while the Hegelians boast that by means of their dialectic they can transcend antitheses and can thus attain the unity and homogeneity of the world (Croce affirms that Hegel justifies the saying of Goethe that the world is all of a piece, without kernel and without bark), they start off by accepting as actual and as justified many of the very antitheses which they seek thereafter to transcend. Now anyone who tries to reconcile two persons bears witness, by that very action, that they are in disagreement; while in the case of concepts we have to deal not always with actual antitheses, but often with different expressions of the same idea, or with concepts which are different but not necessarily antithetic.

Croce, to be sure, bases his criticism of Hegel upon what he regards as Hegel's confusion between the relationship of antithetic entities and the relationship of different entities—for Hegel, according to Croce, applies to the latter relationship a procedure which is valid only for the former. Yet Croce himself accepts as antithetic certain concepts which are merely different formulations of one basic concept. In his account of the problem of antitheses in the history of philosophy, for instance, he regards as an-

tithetic the materialists, considered as the representative monists, and the spiritualists, considered as the representative dualists: whereas everyone knows that there have been materialists who were also pluralists (some of the pre-Socratics, for example), and spiritualists who were also monists (Berkeley, for example). The Hegelians, in short, are too ready to consider certain concepts as antithetic, and then to make valiant efforts to reconcile antitheses which needed only to be unmasked.

But disregarding these matters of method, for which the Hegelian mind has no liking, it is difficult in any case to accept the Hegelian dialectic as a metaphysical explanation of the world. If Hegel had limited himself to the introduction of the idea of motion into our conception of the universe, all would have been well; but when he attempts to represent the *marche des choses* as a pursuit of antitheses and of syntheses which give way to new antitheses, transcended in their turn by new syntheses—and so on in rhythmic perpetuity—we cannot help wondering that men of genius, including Hegel himself, should really have believed that the world was made in such a fashion, by dint of the actions and reactions of abstract concepts. For we must remind ourselves once in a while that the mere attribution of the adjective *concrete* to an ethereal abstraction and the mere assertion that the range of cer-

tain concepts represents the whole of *reality* do not suffice to prove that one is actually dealing with real and concrete things. It is easy enough to give a name to a thing, but it remains to be seen whether the thing really possesses the characteristics indicated by the name. I may affirm that *The Tempest* is a historical comedy: but that affirmation does not turn Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban into historical characters. The Hegelians have too much faith in the magic power of the word; and when they have filled their mouths with those words which most readily inspire the confidence of the populace (*real, concrete, true,* etc.), they really think that they have bestowed upon their theories the qualities which those words indicate. In this respect the Hegelians are very like the positivists. What a mass of absurd theses and superficial generalizations people have been made to swallow without question, just because they were labeled *positive, scientific,* or *mathematical!*

But I am forgetting my purpose, which consists not so much in attempting a criticism of the Hegelian dialectic—which would hardly be possible save for those who are ready to deal in majestic and confused phrases and to fabricate rebuses of the same sort—as in attempting to discover in it some reasonable meaning. By way of making amends for my delay, I will be generous: instead of suggesting one meaning I will

offer two, and the Hegelians may take their choice.

My first interpretation is this. The Hegelian dialectic is a logical reaction (masked as a metaphysical reaction) against the false distinctions of scholasticism and of traditional philosophy in general; it is a paradoxical defense against those who have sought to stop the course of thought by putting insistent dilemmas in its way. Hegelianism, then, in the presence of false distinctions, has sought to fuse and to mingle at all costs, in such a way as to produce confusions which in their turn require new distinctions, presumably better than the old ones. Hegelianism is in a certain sense the declaration of our right to disregard apparent antinomies. To those who say "either this or that" Hegelianism replies "both this and that." Hegel represents the warfare of the *and's* against the *or's*, the point of view of those who instead of "cutting off the bull's head" prefer simply to cut off his horns. There have been false antinomies in all the sciences (heavy and light, terrestrial and celestial, for instance), and scientists have removed them one by one. Hegel, instead of performing the same task in the field of philosophy by a direct criticism of false philosophic antinomies, chose the form of metaphysics, and was led on by his enthusiasm to give the appearance of a system of

reality to what was in fact merely a correction of method.

And if you do not like my first interpretation, here is my second. The Hegelian dialectic is a sort of historic law, a theory of the manner in which social forms or scientific theories succeed each other. It amounts to saying this: that an exaggerated assertion is usually succeeded by an assertion which exaggerates in the opposite direction, without regard to the restrictions which in part justify the original assertion; and that these two contrary assertions then give place to a third, which takes account of the modicum of truth contained in each of the first two, and consolidates them by reëstablishing the tacit restrictions and suppressing the exaggerations. It amounts, in short, to saying that it takes two opposite errors to establish a truth. This generalization, which could be amply instanced, is of the same order as Comte's *law of the three states*, and constitutes a similarity between Hegelianism and positivism. Both of these laws, though they refer to entirely different classes of facts, simplify to a high degree; but roughly, and within certain limits, they do represent the movement of the history of ideas. They afford material, then, rather for the psychology of philosophers or of scientists than for philosophy itself, as the Hegelians would have us believe.

In short, the choice lies between the hypothesis

that the Hegelian dialectic is a disguised logical reaction, and the hypothesis that it is a historic law. In the first case Hegel assumes the semblance of a pragmatist; in the second case he is linked with the positivists. Let the Hegelians choose.

IX

NIETZSCHE[1]

WE OWE a debt of love, all of us, to Friedrich Nietzsche, and it is time to pay it. His brain stopped thinking in January, 1889; his heart stopped beating in August, 1900. Ten years, twenty years, have passed; and we may smile again with the wise, sad smile of a poor Zarathustra who fainted on the mountain-tops for holy envy of heaven, a loving spirit eternally repulsed by fellow men unworthy of his love, a convalescent Siegfried banished to the *pensions de luxe* of the Darwinian and Wagnerian Europe of our childhood. How unkind we have been to him! That cold, white, plump face of his; those eyes, now soft as the poetry of a lonely lake, now fiery as if reflecting the mad course of a comet; that sonorous voice, too loud and full and orchestral, perhaps, for smaller and more sensitive ears—we have forgotten them all, and we have been willing to forget. His books are put aside, sold, lost, behind others, under others. His thought, if it ever passes before our thought, is

[1] Written *à propos* of Daniel Halévy's *La Vie de F. Nietzsche*, Paris, 1909.

like one of Hoffmann's *revenants* before an "oval mirror," like the last trace of a glowing, dazzling electric light fit for the *Götterdämmerung*, or like the memory of a thousand meteors that have sped hissing through the sky, mocking the rockets of men and the rays of the sun, and fallen, dust and ashes, into the silent dark of nothingness.

But who among us cannot recall some August day, some hour of intense heat and of manly joy, when the words of Nietzsche lashed our hearts to the gallop, pulsed in our veins, and brought us an Alpine wind of strength and liberty? Can you forget, O friend lost to me now though still alive, that lonely summit of Pratomagno whence our voices, musical with emotion, shouted the red and shameless phrases of the *Zarathustra* into the cool air of the Casentino? Later on came that criticism which trails greatness and seeks to belittle it; later still the senile calm of the years of reflection. As we grew serious we grew weak and faint in spirit. Philosophy opened its mouth, set all things in place, began and closed its paragraph; and life, that had overflowed and sped toward shores unnamed in atlases, shrank within the brick beds of straight canals, and mirrored without restlessness the white clouds of heaven and the grasses of the narrow banks.

Perhaps the time has come for setting sail again. Whither?

The turmoil of passions has been stilled, ship-

wreck no longer frightens us, the phantom vessels are all sunk in the luminous depths of the sea. We have learned the art of war without the blare of trumpets, without shouts of command, without the shedding of blood; yet our blood boils within us, and of this we shall die. We may well return to Nietzsche.

Others, forgers and traitors, have had their say. Are we rid of you now, you parlor wildcats, you little Neros drunk with undigested egotism, you hypocritical scoundrels who interpreted the winged words of Zarathustra after the fashion of butchers and harem-keepers? And you too, worthy doctors and illustrious professors, have you finished your petty post-mortems on the body of the hero who awaits his resurrection? Have you found all the sources, have you made all the comparisons, have you registered all the subtle interpretations, all the weighty objections? Posthumous spies have gathered his *souvenirs;* faithless correspondents have sold his letters for the sound of silver; the Archive is established; the catalogue is complete; the bibliography is ready; his poor Polish name has found its place in every "author index." Your turn is past.

Our turn has come: the turn of those who loved him, scorned him, hated him, sought to forget him, were yet faithful to him, embraced him even amid scorn, stood by his side when he had been abandoned. Our turn has come at last.

There is room now for love. The smirching caresses of fashion are bestowed elsewhere.

Years ago a swarm of noisy wasps hovered about the gentle paralytic of Weimar, and when a ray of light made their wings gleam they said that they had been turned to gold, that the world had been turned upside down, that man had stolen the keys of the earthly paradise, and that heaven had come down to hell. In those years no gentleman could linger in such company. Cowardly homicides might abide there, or nabobs smitten with meningitis, or *nouvellistes* without ideas—not men with hungering souls to nourish and to save. But now the chaffering crowd has been dispersed. The wasps have winged their way to new scenes of dissolution; and around him now there is that silence, that calm, that Mediterranean serenity which he himself breathed in the blue bays of Liguria. The last codicil of his will has been opened: *Ecce Homo.* He stands before us crowned with the thorns of the adoration that does not understand, buffeted by indifference, stabbed by doubt. His life lies open before us. We may be his friends, may press his hand, may offer him in death that fellowship in perilous pilgrimage that he never knew in life.

Think what you will of the philosophy of Nietzsche. I leave it freely to your caprice. His doctrine is one of those poetic, tragic doctrines which answer to the temper, the life, the spirit of

a man. If your spirit is of other metal, if your temper is from another anvil, if you have sped through life on other tracks, you cannot understand, nor love, nor follow, the doctrine of Nietzsche. So be it. Different experiences call for different cosmic words and different moral banners. But if you will not respect his philosophy, if you will continue, like all the witless moths of all the continents, to regard it as a fricassee of paradoxes, fit for rude *arrivistes*, you must at least respect the soul of him who thought and wrote it.

I declare to you that I do not know of any modern life nobler, purer, sadder, lonelier, more hopeless than that of Friedrich Nietzsche. Being no hypocrite, I confess frankly that I owe the force of this conviction to the simple, clear, and searching biography of Nietzsche written recently by Daniel Halévy. Any man who can read this book and not be moved to the depths of his being, especially by the later chapters, is a groveling beast.

There stands revealed in these four hundred pages of calm, intelligent, French prose a Nietzsche whom we had glimpsed already from passages in his letters and from confessions sobbed out, but quickly denied and transcended, in his works—a pure, a saintly, a martyred Nietzsche. How different such a tribute from the utterances of the bloodthirsty monkeys who

have disported themselves, in parlors and in novels, under the utterly false name of disciples of Zarathustra!

In 1880 Nietzsche was living in Genoa, at No. 8 Salita delle Battistine. He led a sober, poor, and lonely life. His Genoese neighbors called him *the saint*. This first judgment of humble and ingenuous Italians—the only judgment that Italy expressed, before 1894, of a man who for so great a part of his life suffered or found joy. beside our seas—this judgment is perhaps the deepest and the sanest that our fellow-countrymen have as yet pronounced with regard to Nietzsche.

What other name, indeed, than that of saint would you give to a man who from his boyhood was fired with the pure thirst for truth, who through all his life scorned honors, winnings, friendships founded on fiction, triumphs owed to servility and to cowardice, the soft mattresses of faith, the embraces of militant Philistinism, half measures and half figures, compromises and reverences?

What other name can you give, if you please, to one who was never daunted by his own thought; who changed his mind only at the command of his severe self, never at the command of another; who sent his glance to the very bottom of the widest and darkest abysses of human fate; who loved danger, peril, suffering, who

would not put a coat of mail upon a young and eager heart; who did not tremble when he beheld the constellations of the moral heaven grow pale, fall from their place, and die, nor when his Heraclitean fancy saw the wheel of the universe revolving ever on the same axis, returning ever to the same points at the same times? A man who was content with little bread, who scarcely knew the love of woman, who lived poor, wandering, a stranger ever, who had no friends of his own stature, who was half understood, who dragged his suffering body and his acid thought into the lowliest inns and the broadest solitudes of Alpine and Mediterranean Europe, and yet refused to draw back, to stop, to wear a mask or win ignoble comfort—a man who, with a manly soul full of pride, of poetry, and of grief, built up his moral personality hour by hour even to the expected day of his spiritual death—such a man, I say, whatever bigots or hagiographers or fools may call him, is a saint.

His was the love of a secret ideal, of another world, cleaner, free-aired, whereof his thoughts, solidified in fragments or in poems, give us but glimpses. How different this passion from the physical breathlessness that drove him from the mountains to the sea, his brain wounded as by the point of a compass—thought—which never found its centre, his princely heart loving madly,

yet repulsing those about him, lest, if he gave way to love, love should bring death!

I am not inventing his idealism. He was idealistic even from his youth. Who would expect to find Mazzini entering the life of Nietzsche—the one the champion of the rights of men and our moral mission, the other the champion of the rights of the body and the reversal of values? In 1871 Nietzsche crossed the Gotthard to Lugano. In the *diligence* he found an old man, with whom he entered into conversation. The two became enthusiastic, finding each other in agreement on many things. The old man quoted to Nietzsche one of the noblest maxims of Goethe: "Sich des halben zu entwohnen und im Ganzen, Vollen, Schönen, resolut zu leben." Nietzsche never forgot that thought, nor the man who had brought it to his attention. That man was Mazzini. Nietzsche said later, to Malwida von Meysenbug: "There is no other man whom I esteem as I esteem Mazzini." And he was sincere. Let whoso will explain the apparent difference between two such heroes.

Nietzsche had neither wife nor mistress; he had friends among women; he had for some time a quasi-fiancée—Lou Salomé—he had a sister who pretended to understand him, and followed him as best she could. But if woman had but a slight part in his life—as is the case with all saints—friendship played a very great part in it. A man

who felt friendship as deeply and solemnly as he did could not be common, though he should write no more than a manual of Piedmontese cookery. His days at Triebschen with Wagner and Cosima are the sunniest bay of his life. The affectionate esteem of Rohde and of Burckhardt, the warm deference of Paul Rée, of Peter Gast, of Stein, of Lanzki, were the best of the few uncertain comforts that humanity gave him. But what pain as well! When Wagner ceased to understand him and he realized what Wagner was (sad discovery: a charlatan, perilous because he was inspired!); when Paul Rée betrayed him, when Erwin Rohde, a professor to the last auricle of his heart, refused the smile and the embrace that would have spared him overwhelming grief; when the others left him alone or treated him as an amiable decoy, as a poetic "original"; then the blood-drops of his wounded heart fell one by one, not outwardly upon his flesh—as in the crucifixions of ancient Rome—but within him. And little by little they killed him: "Where are ye, friends? Come, it is time, it is time!"

That song written at night in Rome within the eternal sound of the fountain—"my heart too is an overflowing fountain"—is perhaps the most ardent declaration of love that genius ever addressed to deaf humanity. But men are prone to prefer a casual flattery to the ennobling influence of a true love. And they gave no heed.

"Evening of my life! the sun sets; soon thou wilt no longer thirst, O thirsty heart." He wrote the *Ecce Homo;* he wrote to Peter Gast, signing himself "The Crucified," and to Cosima Wagner, saying, "Ariadne, I love thee." In these two last letters—which seemed to carry the final evidence of his madness—we have the clearest confessions of his destiny. Nietzsche was content to be an Antichrist, and in being an Antichrist he was perforce to some extent a Christ. He was a Dionysos of grief, a man tormented by others and by himself. He died, I assure you, as on a Palestinian cross.

To Cosima Wagner, in the last hour before the clouding of his mind, he wrote his love. Cosima Wagner was to him Ariadne, and Ariadne meant love. Perhaps he had loved her secretly; perhaps in his break with Wagner there was an element of jealousy. However that may be, that final declaration of his is far more profound, far more weighty than it seems. For Cosima-Ariadne was to him humanity itself, joyous, laughing, full of life and strength—that same humanity that had been the support of Wagner in his triumph.

For Nietzsche, that support had failed. His love had found no chance to spend itself in fullness and in liberty. It was indeed of love, shut in and unappeased, that Nietzsche died. We slew him—all of us—by our common human behavior. Nor will he be our last victim.

X

WALT WHITMAN[1]

I

I CANNOT write of Walt Whitman, I confess, with an easy objectivity. The soul and the verse of the sage of Manhattan are too intimately related in my mind to one of the most important discoveries of my early youth: the discovery of poetry.

Among my father's books I found the two little five-cent volumes of the *Biblioteca Universale* in which Gamberale had published part of his translation of Whitman; and I read them and reread them with that enthusiasm which does not survive the teens. Though I was no *bourgeois gentilhomme* I had then no clear idea of the difference between verse and prose; and I did not stop to inquire why these songs were com-

[1] Written *à propos* of L. Gamberale's version of the *Leaves of Grass: Foglie di erba*, Palermo, 1908.

In the present translation the Italian quotations from Whitman are replaced by the corresponding passages of the English text as printed in the edition of *Leaves of Grass* published by Doubleday, Page and Company in 1920. The page references in the footnotes are to this edition.

posed of verses so long as to fill two or three lines of print. I read them—I breathed in the poetry of the sea, of the city, of the universe—without a thought of the pale scholars who count the syllables of a soul in emotion as they would count, if they could, the notes of the nightingale that sings for love.

And I must confess that I, a Tuscan, an Italian, a Latin, learned the meaning of poetry not through Virgil or through Dante—much less through the casuist Petrarch or the mosaicist Tasso, poets *de luxe*, and therefore men of letters rather than poets—but through the puerile enumerations and the long, passionate invocations of the good reaper of the *Leaves of Grass*. Even today, though so many years have passed, I cannot read without emotion the *Whispers of Heavenly Death* or *There Was a Child Went Forth*. Later on I read the *Leaves of Grass* in English, became acquainted, through thick American volumes, with the life and the countenance of Whitman, and studied in Jannacone's little book the metrical questions raised by Whitman's verse. But I have never forgotten those wondrous hours of my boyhood.

I am not saying all this for the sake of writing an uncalled-for bit of spiritual autobiography, but just to explain why I cannot speak of Whitman as if he were one of the ordinary foreign poets reserved for special importation by pro-

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fessors in female seminaries, and to make it clear that I can speak of him only as a loving brother may speak of a brother beloved, as a humble younger brother may speak of a great elder brother who is dead.

How glad I would be if I might convey to others something of my deep affection, if I might present to my readers a living, faithful image of the soul of the poet whom I love—a soul childlike and great, inebriate with joy and heavy with sadness.

I do not care to discuss the facts of his life. What matters it just when he was a printer, a reporter, a carpenter, a nurse, a government employee, a patriarch of democracy? I know that he was born in America in 1819, that he never left his country, and that he died in 1892. I know that in life he was just what he is in his songs: a complete, simple, loyal man, a lover of nature and of men, full of hope, a giver of joy. Howells, who saw him, writes: "His eyes and his voice revealed a frank, irresistible offer of friendship; he gave his hand in such a way that it was ours to hold forever." And another, who saw his body the day after his death, writes: "His face is that of an affectionate and aged child." Whenever I learn of such an honorable accordance between life and poetry I take delight in it; and I prefer those poets who have sung the grief of their own hearts to those whose

versification of all possible sentiments proceeds from the depths of a comfortable armchair.

But I care less for the whole course of a man's life than for his own distilling of its essence. Minute biographers have always seemed to me like those who, not content with the taste of a noble wine, should seek the stems of the grapes from which it came. Knowledge of the external life of a great man may satisfy the curiosity of the *amateur d'âmes* or the collector of anecdotes —and it may serve indeed to inspire great achievement—but it has nothing to do with the value or the real significance of his work.

External biography is even more than usually out of place in the case of Whitman, for he is a universal poet, a poet not of the part but of the whole, a poet not merely of America but of the world; and on the other hand he is a poet so personal, so individual, so intimate, that he could rightly say:

> Camerado, this is no book,
> Who touches this, touches a man.[1]

In his songs, therefore, you may find the man's whole message—all that he wished to say, to teach, and to leave to those who loved him, to his comrades, to mankind. The hundred and other hundred *Leaves of Grass* are the truly immortal portion of his soul.

[1] Vol. II, p. 289.

Nor will I, in writing of Whitman, follow the plan of those who, having nothing of their own to say, proceed to a mechanical analysis of style. And yet, in the case of Whitman, there are choice questions of metrical jurisprudence to be proposed and solved. One might ask whether the poetry of Whitman is truly metrical, as Whitman himself declared, and others—Noel, Stedman, Gamberale—have repeated; or whether it has a dactylic cadence, as Macaulay believed, or a sort of consonantal rhythm, as Triggs maintains, or a latent rhythmic harmony with psychic rhyme and strophic period, as our own Jannacone has it. Or again, one might follow O'Connor and Nencioni in the endeavor to decide which movements in nature the song of Whitman most resembles—whether forest winds or ocean waves—or one might investigate the influence of Whitman's theories as to the relation between prose and verse on the French movement of the *verslibristes*. And if one had plenty of time to waste, one might also consider Whitman's favorite rhetorical figure, enumeration, and compare it with Homer's periphrasis, Dante's metonymy, Victor Hugo's antithesis, and d'Annunzio's metaphor. But all this fine research is not for us, for what we seek in the world and in men is spiritual activity, and what we seek in the spirit is ideas.

Walt Whitman wrote a few songs which are

marvelous for their pure poetry, for their music, for their imagery, and for their choice of words, but fortunately he did not write to amuse people or to please the publishers.

Walt Whitman has something to say to men, and is eager that men should listen. That they may hear the better, he "sings full-voiced his valiant and melodious songs." Our duty, the duty of those who love him, is to distil from these full-voiced songs the poet's thought—that which he entrusted lovingly to himself, to his comrades, to his followers, to all of us.

II

Why did Walt Whitman turn to the writing of verse? Because he was a man of letters by instinct? To win fame? Because there was nothing else that he could do? By no means. Walt Whitman, before becoming a poet, had been a worker, the son of a carpenter, able to saw logs and make tables. He was far from being one of those mosaicists in adjectives whose horizon is an inkstand and whose only goal is the favor of critics and of ladies:

> Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?
> Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing rhymes? . . .
> What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore leave my works,

And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and
with piano-tunes,
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.[1]

Thus he writes *To a Certain Civilian.* So then the purpose of his volume is not to amuse people, nor to soothe sensitive ears, nor to delight students of metrics. His ideal is not the classic Æolian harp, but rather the hoarse locomotive, with its "madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all."[2] He has no fear of professors of poetry; he is content to contemplate the awe of a Colorado canyon:

Was't charged against my chants they had forgotten art?
To fuse within themselves its rules precise and delicatesse?
The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's grace
—column and polish'd arch forgot?[3]

"What do I care?"—Whitman seems to say—"all this is but literature":

I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.[4]

He sings not for the sake of singing, but that he may rouse men, educate them, inspire them:

I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your lives![5]

I am the teacher of athletes,
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves
the width of my own.[6]

[1] Vol. II, p. 89.
[2] Vol. II, p. 254.
[3] Vol. II, p. 268.
[4] Vol. I, p. 108.
[5] Vol. II, p. 109.
[6] Vol. I, p. 103.

And of necessity, since he would educate, he must be rough and without compliments:

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,
Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prises of the universe.[1]

He is, then, less a poet in the modern sense than a prophet, a *vates* in the ancient sense. He is not the singer of certain specific things or of a few sentiments: he is the poet of the universal, of the all, of the ensemble.

There are poets who sing only the love of woman, others who sing only the love of nature, others yet who sing only the love of fatherland or of mankind or of themselves. Whitman sings all these loves together, and others as well:

I will not make poems with reference to parts,
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all days.[2]

All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and the compact truth of the world.[3]

And he has heard the command of the Muse:

Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the universal.[4]

[1] Vol. I, p. 29.
[2] Vol. I, pp. 25-26.
[3] Vol. II, p. 161.
[4] Vol. I, p. 276.

Else why should all men listen to his songs?

At first sight, on the contrary, Whitman seems the most personal of poets, or at least the most sincere of egotists. Is he not the proud author of the *Song of Myself?* His very first line is this:

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person.[1]

And again he says:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself.[2]

His own personality recurs frequently in his songs, and not under the abstract and indeterminate title *I,* but with the face and the clothes of Walt Whitman:

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding.[3]

Behold this swarthy face, these gray eyes,
This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,
My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm.[4]

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from . . .
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.[5]

But it would be a mistake to regard this adoration of the self as a proof of Whitman's individualism. He adores the self because he adores

[1] Vol. I, p. 1.
[2] Vol. I, p. 33.
[3] Vol. I, p. 62.
[4] Vol. I, p. 152.
[5] Vol. I, p. 63.

the *all*, sees the all reflected in the self, and feels the self intimately mingled with the all. Addressing an unknown friend, he says:

We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,
We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side.[1]

The enumeration goes on and on, in the endeavor to suggest effectively this sense of oneness with all things. He is conscious of himself as being the universal spirit, as being breath and air, as the God of a pantheistic world (if you will permit the paradox) might be conscious of himself:

Santa Spirita, breather, life,
Beyond the light, lighter than light,
Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,
Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Saviour and Satan,
Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what were God?)
Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive, (namely the unseen,)
Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the general soul.[2]

In this sense Walt Whitman may even be called a mystic. Yet he is very unlike other mystics, for he does not lose himself in God, but aspires, as it were, to be so universal as to include

[1] Vol. I, p. 132. [2] Vol. II, pp. 224-25.

God Himself within his soul. At other times he desires "to be indeed a God";[1] says "that there is no God any more divine than Yourself";[2] or delights "to be this incredible God I am."[3] In one of the songs entitled *Whispers of Heavenly Death* he openly proclaims himself as the most powerful of Gods:

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,
Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies and poems . . .
All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself.[4]

And he includes within himself not merely all things, but all times as well:

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time . . .
And that where I am or you are this present day, there is the centre of all days, all races,
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races and days, or ever will come.[5]

Furthermore, he comprises in himself not only all things and all times, but all men, men of all conditions and of all ages. In the *Song of Myself,* at the close of one of his endless enumerations of men, he asserts:

And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.[6]

[1] Vol. I, p. 221.
[2] Vol. II, p. 161.
[3] Vol. II, p. 279.
[4] Vol. II, p. 223.
[5] Vol. I, p. 294.
[6] Vol. I, p. 52.

His most poetic expression of this identity with all things and all men is the famous poem which begins:

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years . . .
These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.[1]

The personality of Walt Whitman is then but the dress, the rind of his cosmic love. Like all great souls he aspires to the complete and the infinite, but he does not seek to attain completeness by means of general and abstract terms. Just as his mysticism is an enormous amplification of his egotism, so his love for the universal manifests itself as a love of every single detail. He would reach the infinite by dint of the accumulation of finite things. Mad though the effort be, perilous though it be from the point of view of poetry, since it compels interminable enumerations, one must recognize that his constant insistence on particular things, and on the greatest possible number of particular things, suggests amplitude and universality more effectively than the abstract phrases with which philosophers and contemplatives are so well satisfied.

[1] Vol. II, pp. 135-38.

So overflowing is his love for the universe that it could not find sufficient utterance if he were obliged to limit his expressions of love to things in general, to the all, to the infinite, to God. He must needs express to every single object his admiration and his affection, his pleasure and his wonder. As he looks upon the world, Walt Whitman is an optimist. An optimist, did I say? No, that is a cold and technical word, and will not serve for him. Say rather a passionate lover, a worshipper of the all—not so blind as to be unaware of the ugly and the evil, but so great as to extend his love to the ugly and the evil.

He is by instinct and by program the champion of all things:

And henceforth I will go celebrate any thing I see or am,
And sing and laugh and deny nothing.[1]

To his magnificent soul all is magnificent:

Illustrious every one!
Illustrious what we name space, sphere of unnumber'd spirits,
Illustrious the mystery of motion in all beings, even the tiniest insect,
Illustrious the attribute of speech, the senses, the body,
Illustrious the passing light—illustrious the pale reflection on the new moon in the western sky,
Illustrious whatever I see or hear or touch, to the last.
Good in all.[2]

All beautiful to me, all wondrous.[3]

[1] Vol. II, p. 258. [2] Vol. II, p. 278. [3] Vol. I, p. 110.

After reading Hegel, he meditates:

Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that
is Good steadily hastening towards immortality,
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge
itself and become lost and dead.[1]

And again:

The whole universe indicates that it is good,
The past and the present indicate that it is good.
How beautiful and perfect are the animals!
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!
What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is
just as perfect.[2]

In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.[3]

For I do not see one imperfection in the universe,
And I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last in
the universe.[4]

For him

All the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as
profound as any.[5]

His inspired child-soul sees nought save miracles:

To me the sea is a continual miracle,
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—
the ships with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there?[6]

[1] Vol. II, p. 35.
[2] Vol. II, pp. 219-20.
[3] Vol. I, p. 276.
[4] Vol. II, p. 280.
[5] Vol. I, p. 25.
[6] Vol. II, p. 164.

Even the tiniest things are miraculous:

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars . . .
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.[1]

Behold this compost! behold it well!
Perhaps every mite has once formed part of a sick person—yet behold!
The grass of spring covers the prairies,
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward.[2]

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of diseas'd corpses,
It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last.[3]

Thus Whitman's soul is almost always joyous. At certain moments his physical and spiritual delight in the spectacle of the world transports him into a well-nigh Dionysiac frenzy. Read, for instance, the *Song of Joys,* wherein all joys from that of "bathing in the swimming bath" to the "prophetic joys of better" are enumerated and invoked.

[1] Vol. I, pp. 70-71. [2] Vol. II, pp. 140-41. [3] Vol. II, p. 149.

But the greatest of all joys for Whitman is the joy of being loved, in body and in spirit:

I know . . .
That all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love.[1]

After studying all philosophers and all prophets he discovers that the basis of all metaphysics is love:

The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,
Of city for city and land for land.[2]

He thinks of all the men scattered in far away lands whom he might love:

And it seems to me if I could know those men I should become attached to them as I do to men in my own lands,
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.[3]

But Whitman's song would not be truly universal if he saw only the beauty and the goodness of the world. I have already said, I believe, that his optimism is by no means that of Dr. Pangloss. He is not unaware of evil; he transcends it. Sometimes, indeed, he cannot rise above it in full

[1] Vol. I, p. 38. [2] Vol. I, p. 147. [3] Vol. I, p. 154.

serenity. A sudden thought assails him, and his words are full of sadness, wet with tears, resonant with the echoes of funeral bells and drums:

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and filth.
Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids, conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.[1]

Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.[2]

But for him too come days of sadness:

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame . . .
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent.[3]

And when he contemplates the faces of those who sleep, he sees not only those of the happy, but

The wretched features of ennuyés, the white features of corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces of onanists,
The gash'd bodies on battle-fields, the insane in their strong-door'd rooms, the sacred idiots, the new-born emerging from gates, and the dying emerging from gates.[4]

[1] Vol. I, p. 56.
[2] Vol. I, p. 177.
[3] Vol. II, p. 34.
[4] Vol. II, p. 201.

In the midst of the tempest it seems to him that tears are raining on the earth:

O then the unloosen'd ocean,
Of tears! tears! tears![1]

He feels the horror

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only.[2]

And he asks, sadly:

Hast never come to thee an hour,
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these bubbles, fashions, wealth?
These eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,
To utter nothingness?[3]

The thought of death, especially in his last years, leads him to bitter reflections:

To think how eager we are in building our houses,
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent . . .
Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth—they never cease—they are the burial lines,
He that was President was buried, and he that is now President shall surely be buried.[4]

What matters it? Perhaps death is but apparent:

[1] Vol. II, p. 18.
[2] Vol. I, p. 145.
[3] Vol. II, p. 38.
[4] Vol. II, pp. 214-15.

Pensive and faltering,
The words *the Dead* I write,
For living are the Dead,
(Haply the only living, only real,
And I the apparition, I the spectre).[1]

For the death of Lincoln he expands magnificently St. Francis' praise of Sister Death:

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.
Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.[2]

And he goes on to promise festivals and serenades as to one beloved.

III

But Whitman would not be the universal man if the thought of death held him continually. To be complete he must be at the same time as full of laughter as a child, as melancholy as an old man, as humble as St. Francis, and as valiant as Nietzsche. No one, I hope, will be surprised at the appearance of this name here. Since I

[1] Vol. II, p. 234. [2] Vol. II, pp. 101-2.

know Whitman better than I know what has been written about him, I cannot say whether the relationship between Whitman and Nietzsche has been pointed out. In any case, students of Nietzsche should take care to include Whitman in the long roll of the precursors of their philosopher.[1] From the *Leaves of Grass* one could easily make a little Nietzschean chrestomathy in which even the favorite expressions of the prophet of Zarathustra would appear.

In the very first strophe of the *Song of Myself* Whitman says:

I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.[2]

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be
the poet of wickedness also.
What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand
indifferent,
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.[3]

O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse and love! good and evil!
O all dear to me![4]

And he imagines thus the life of himself and his friends:

Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering, thieving, threatening,

[1] It is to be remembered that the first edition of the *Leaves of Grass* appeared in 1855.
[2] Vol. I, p. 33. [3] Vol. I, p. 60. [4] Vol. II, p. 254.

Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water drinking, on the turf or the sea-beach dancing,
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness chasing,
Fulfilling our foray.[1]

In the *Song of Joys* he exclaims:

O something pernicious and dread!
Something far away from a puny and pious life! . . .
To see men fall and die and not complain!
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.[2]

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,
To meet life as a powerful conqueror.[3]

Piety and conformity to them that like,
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like.[4]

He would sing "the songs of the body and of the truths of the earth."[5] He feels all the unrealized greatness of the earth,[6] and to the earth addresses a song which has the solemnity of a Vedic hymn:

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above,
Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains, trees,
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention.[7]

[1] Vol. I, p. 156.
[2] Vol. I, pp. 216-17.
[3] Vol. I, p. 220.
[4] Vol. II, p. 109.
[5] Vol. I, p. 273.
[6] Vol. I, p. 191.
[7] Vol. II, pp. 189-90.

Not only does he, before Nietzsche, possess this sense of the virtue of the earth, but he has, as well, the expectation of a superior race of men. To the men of his day he says:

For man of you, your characteristic race,
Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower proportionate to Nature,
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by wall or roof,
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure,
Here heed himself.[1]

And to the mystic trumpeter he cries:

Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at last,
Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all joy!
A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy![2]

These moments of Dionysiac frenzy, in which Whitman is seized by the rapture of joy, are not rare in his songs. "I am one who ever laughs," he says. Not only does he laugh; he goes mad with joy. One of his ecstasies ends thus:

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!
To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!
To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!
To court destruction with taunts, with invitations!
To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!
To rise thither with my inebriate soul!
To be lost if it must be so!

[1] Vol. I, p. 254. [2] Vol. II, p. 252.

To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom!
With one brief hour of madness and joy.[1]

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on!
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,
A ship itself . . .
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.[2]

Elsewhere the hymn rises still more rapturously, and ends in a way that reminds one of the beginning of Pascal's *Prière de Jésus:*

Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—all joy!
Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!
War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—nothing but joy left!
The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!
Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!
Enough to merely be! enough to breathe!
Joy! joy! all over joy![3]

In this case the Dionysiac and Nietzschean exultation mingles with the universal optimism of Whitman, and in a certain sense purifies it. But the American prophet suggests the German poet in another respect also: in his pride. Whitman loves to call himself "more vain than modest," and reveals himself "proud of his pride"—

[1] Vol. I, p. 130. [2] Vol. I, p. 222.
[3] Vol. II, pp. 252-53. In the comparison with Nietzsche, their common love for the South should be noted. See Whitman's *O Magnet-South.*

he comes even to the Lucifer-like conception of believing that he includes God.

But Walt Whitman is no man of a single aspect. He is a Janus of many faces, gathering in himself, like humanity, all possible characters and all possible sentiments. The *Leaves of Grass,* indeed, are not without instances of humility:

> What am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the sound of my own name? repeating it over and over.[1]

> What do I know of life? what of myself?
> I know not even my own work past or present,
> Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,
> Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,
> Mocking, perplexing me.[2]

Extending his own humility to all mankind, he asks:

> Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not flashes and specks what are they?[3]

There is in Whitman something of a Prometheus and something of a Job; and if in some respects he may be called a precursor of Nietzsche, he may with equal propriety be classed on other grounds as a precursor of Dostoevsky and of Tolstoi. He never knew, probably, the "religion of human suffering," but his great soul always felt a profound sympathy for the hum-

[1] Vol. II, p. 166. [2] Vol. II, p. 900. [3] Vol. II, p. 137.

blest members of society, the poor, the slaves, even the delinquent and the fallen. Amid the evils that silence him he numbers

The slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like.[1]

To his banquet he invites all men:

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.[2]

As friend he seeks a humble man:

He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemn'd by others for deeds done.[3]

In Tolstoi this attitude is a pose; but not in Whitman, for Whitman feels that he, like his humble friends, is stained with sin:

Beneath this face that appears so impassive hell's tides continually run,
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and prostitutes myself,
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny myself?[4]

He is not ashamed to turn even to a woman of the streets with that poetic generosity which purifies all things:

Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the leaves

[1] Vol. II, p. 34.
[2] Vol. I, p. 55.
[3] Vol. I, p. 134.
[4] Vol. II, p. 160.

to rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle for you.[1]

Unashamed, Whitman will celebrate the body, for

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred.[2]

And with equal frankness he will describe and celebrate love:

No other words but words of love, no other thought but love.[3]

Not love as the hypocrites of literature understand it—not platonism paralleled by secret lust—but love as healthy human beings understand it, love born of body and soul alike, composed of physical action, touch, and pressure, ennobled by fatherhood and motherhood, and by the divine thought of the generations that are to spring from one embrace. He has then no cause for shame that he loves the body as well as the soul:

There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well.[4]

Nothing shall be hidden: the whole body shall be sung. His voice, at least, will sing "the song of procreation."[5] But it is creative love that he sings, not lust:

[1] Vol. II, p. 161.
[2] Vol. I, p. 122.
[3] Vol. I, p. 111. Compare pp. 117-18 and 124-26.
[4] Vol. I, p. 117.
[5] Vol. II, p. 251.

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall
be fathers in their turns,
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments
and enjoyments.[1]

Since Whitman feels that he is as vast as nature, he rejects nothing of what he finds in nature, but seeks merely to transform it. At heart he would like to be as natural as trees and beasts.[2] Nor was he ever again so happy as on

The day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect
health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of
autumn.[3]

But he always aspires, through the body, to the life of the soul:

And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem
but has reference to the soul,
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find
there is no one nor any particle of one but has reference to the soul.[4]

And when he would rise above the world and escape from things, he sends to the soul this lyric summons:

Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away!
O if one could but fly like a bird!
O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!
To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er the
waters.[5]

[1] Vol. I, p. 121.
[2] Vol. I, pp. 12, 213.
[3] Vol. I, p. 148.
[4] Vol. I, p. 26.
[5] Vol. II, p. 153.

How then explain the fact that Whitman so constantly deals with the body? Here too we are in the presence of one of those contradictions, or rather, unifications, which make him in a certain sense a Hegelian poet. He sings of the body when he means to sing of the soul simply because the body, like everything else, is fundamentally a manifestation of the soul:

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul.[1]

And he asks:

If the body were not the soul, what is the soul?[2]

In this way his idealism becomes concrete, his sensualism becomes spiritualized, and the whole of life appears as a portentous unity in which nothing is to be rejected. And as he accepts life, so he accepts all the occupations of life. Even as he sings of the blossoms of the lilac, of the broad, cool sea that caresses him, of the sonorous rumblings of the drum, so he does not disdain to sing of the rough locomotive[3] or to set forth the miracles of industry in his *Song of the Exposition* or to write the *Song for Occupations,* wherein no laborer is forgotten. Does he not indeed proclaim, simply and directly: "I sing the ordinary"?

The one thing he will not accept is slavery.

[1] Vol. I, p. 105.
[2] Vol. I, p. 114. Compare also pp. 122-24.
[3] Vol. II, p. 253.

He never forgets that he is the poet of free America and of democracy; he encourages thwarted revolutionists with his hymns of hope. He even disregards his pulsing naturalistic inspiration that he may set forth a sort of democratic mythology.[1] But beneath the rhetorical and possibly ridiculous elements in this Promethean and Garibaldian phase of his poetry, there is a noble basis of natural generosity, of love for liberty, and of broad sympathy for those who cannot live as they desire to live.

He too, like all towering spirits, lived and moved in the pursuit of liberty:

> From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
> Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
> Listening to others, considering well what they say,
> Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
> Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.[2]

And he encourages rebellion in others also. So he writes, *To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire:*

> Not songs of loyalty alone are these,
> But songs of insurrection also.[3]

And he is

> Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to rule me.[4]

[1] Vol. II, pp. 237ff.
[2] Vol. I, p. 180.
[3] Vol. II, p. 143.
[4] Vol. II, p. 294.

Though a sincere believer in democracy, he has little sympathy for rules and laws. If all men were like unto himself, he would frankly favor anarchy. His ideal city would have neither rules nor officials.[1] And it exists already

Where the men and women think lightly of the laws.[2]

Again, he says:

I am for those that have never been master'd,
For men and women whose tempers have never been master'd,
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never master.[3]

IV

In Walt Whitman the age-long opposition between flesh and spirit disappears. There are those who live solely for the flesh: they are pagans, in the bad sense of the word. There are those who subject the soul to the uses of the flesh: they are the refined pagans, the skeptics, the elegant Mephistophelians. There are those who live for the spirit alone, and mortify the body: they are the ascetics, reproved by Christ as well as by the ordinary man. And there are those who respect the body and train it for the service of the soul. Such is Walt Whitman.

Can it be truly said that he sings of the body

[1] Vol. I, p. 154. [2] Vol. I, p. 229. [3] Vol. II, p. 123.

for the sake of the body, that he sings of love for the sake of love? No. He sings of the body and the soul: the soul through the body; the body as the provisional vestment of the soul. And when he sings of love, even of ardent passion, though his thought may turn, like that of any Latin, to the intensity of a moment's joy, he thinks of the man as husband and father, and of the woman as wife and mother. And in the background of the future he sees the numberless generations of their progeny.

There are those—and Catholicism has known many of them—who refrain from bodily sin, but are tempted and tormented and yield to sin within the life of thought. They are pure in the flesh and impure in the spirit. They defile the life of the spirit. There are others, like Whitman, who live fully and healthily the life of the body without pretense and without asceticism, and thus succeed in giving a spiritual quality even to bodily life. Such men are far nobler than the others. I would set the life of the spirit before all else; but for this very reason I would not have that life too full of scruples, of fears, of subterfuges, with regard to the life of the body. The life of the body is secondary; it must be purified by a purpose which is not corporeal. But it cannot be annihilated, and in consequence it must not be cursed and it must not be hidden. Walt Whitman was the first man who had the daring

to seem for moral purposes to be immoral, to seem pornographic for pure ends. The more honor to him that he had no fear of staining himself even when he accepted that which small minds call indecent!

Whitman has been accused not only of immorality and of materialism, but of irreligion. He is certainly not an adherent of any specific religion. In all matters his point of view is universal. Humanity, taken as a whole, has no one single faith. Whitman, representing all humanity in himself, accepts all human faiths, does not admit that any one is truer than the others:

Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,
Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,
Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing with sticks in the circle of obis,
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admirant, minding the Koran,
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly that he is divine,
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a pew.[1]

[1] Vol. I, p. 95.

And this is not eclecticism: it is universalism, a complete acceptance of the religious experience, whatever its form. For Walt Whitman feels the need of religion, and asserts that he comes to bring us a religion:

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a religion, I descend into the arena . . .
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake.
I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough . . .
I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States must be their religion . . .
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable to flame, the essential life of the earth,
Any more than such are to religion.[1]

But what is the essence of Whitman's religion? In one of his songs he confesses the gods of his belief: the ideal man, death, the soul, time, space.[2] Yet his polytheism is only apparent: his mind is unitarian. All things are one: this unity may be called soul, it may be called Walt Whitman, but it may better be called God. God is all and is everywhere:

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name,

[1] Vol. I, pp. 21-22. [2] Vol. II, pp. 30-31.

And I leave them where they are, for I know that wherever I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.[1]

When he thinks of immortality, he, the proud in spirit, prays:

Give me O God to sing that thought,
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from us,
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,
Health, peace, salvation universal.[2]

Like the mystics, he aspires to union with God:

Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.[3]

And the hymn to divinity bursts forth thus from the love of his soul:

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them,
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source, thou reservoir . . .
Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if, out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?[4]

[1] Vol. I, p. 106.
[2] Vol. II, p. 194.
[3] Vol. I, p. 278.
[4] Vol. II, p. 195.

As this poem shows, he is a sort of paradoxical personal pantheist, or Christian pantheist. The soul of Christ, more than that of any other revealer of the divine, is to him a sister soul. At daybreak on a battlefield he sees three wounded men asleep, and suddenly one of them seems to him to be Christ:

Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face of the Christ himself,
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.[1]

And as he had felt himself like unto God, so he feels like unto Christ. The same accusations had been brought against them both:

I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions.[2]

He seeks only to found the city of love; and his resolute purpose gives him the right to believe himself more truly Christian than those who bear that name merely as a sign of cold devotion. He speaks thus *To Him that was Crucified:*

My spirit to yours dear brother,
Do not mind because many sounding your name do not understand you,
I do not sound your name, but I understand you . . .
That we all labor together transmitting the same charge and succession . . .
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men. . . .

[1] Vol. II, p. 71. [2] Vol. I, p. 154.

Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as we are.[1]

His pity for those who have sinned, his love for all men, even the humblest and most despised of men, his Franciscan praise of death—all these are truly Christian sentiments. And though Walt Whitman was never enrolled among the members of any church, we may count him without hesitation among the disciples and the followers of Christ.

Even less can one question the depth of his religious understanding. He believed not only in bodies, but in

Identities now doubtless near us in the air that we know not of.[2]

He believed firmly in the future life. He maintained that the body cannot die,[3] and that no one can ever suffer annihilation:

Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue?
Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?
Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you?
Is today nothing? is the beginningless past nothing?
If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.[4]

[1] Vol. II, p. 159.
[2] Vol. I, p. 23.
[3] Vol. I, p. 26.
[4] Vol. II, p. 213.

He is certain that everything has an immortal soul:

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality![1]

Filled with hope, he has no fear of the future, and seeks to go beyond the things of common life, beyond cowardly immobility:

Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking like mere brutes?
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long enough?
Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.
O my brave soul!
O farther farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail![2]

Who has gone farthest? for I would go farther.[3]

V

And now, like all good orators and all good essayists, I ought to gather the threads of my discourse and frame a summary. But this I

[1] Vol. II, p. 220. [2] Vol. II, pp. 196-97. [3] Vol. II, p. 260.

shall not do. My love for Whitman is too deep. His poetry is not such that it can be reduced to a coherent system and subjected to dialectic criticism. Whitman's soul is as vast as the world, as all-enfolding as God. It includes everything —joy and grief, body and spirit, liberty and discipline, pride and humility, God and the blade of grass. One must accept it as one accepts the universe, without regard for the cleavages that men have made in the world.

But Whitman's soul is not merely a gigantic lake of love. It is composed of qualities, sentiments, passions that may inspire men, excite them to action, to life, render them saner, stronger, purer, better. Men who do not feel, as they read Whitman, that the flame of life grows broader and shines more brilliantly, as if it were carried into a better air, who are not conscious of an intense regret that it was not for them to know and embrace the author of certain of these songs, who are shocked by the coarseness, the violence, the shamelessness, the energy of the poems, and would have the man calmer and more refined, more prudent and less rough—such men understand Whitman not at all, will never understand him, and are not worthy to understand him.

Whitman is a good plebeian who sings unashamed all the things of the world. And the most significant counsel that he gives us—after

the counsel that we love one another—is that we wash away the literary rheum that fills our eyes and keeps from us the sight of things as they are. We Italians—and not we alone—are too literary, too polite. We are gentlemen even in the presence of nature, which asks no compliments. We are gentlemen even within the world of poetry, which asks no elegance. In our dried veins—sleek, feminine, civilian dilettantes that we are—we need a little of the blood of peasants, of mountaineers, of the rabble. It is not enough to "open our windows," as Orsini said. We must go forth, leave the city, feel things and love things immediately, whether they be fair or foul. And we must express our love without respect of persons, without sweetish words, without metrical hair-splitting, without too much thought of the holy traditions, the honorable conventions, and the stupid rules of good society. If we would find again the poetry we have lost we must go back a little toward barbarism—even toward savagery.

If Walt Whitman does not teach us this at least, translations and interpretations will avail nothing.

XI

CROCE [1]

THERE are still in Italy a number of more or less youthful men of letters, many secondary professors in secondary schools, and a few journalists with a smattering of philosophy, who really attribute great importance to Benedetto Croce and his *Æsthetics*. That book, published ten years ago, has reached its fourth edition, and is considered, by those to whom I have referred, as the unbreakable table of artistic law, as the most refined and exquisite essence of European thought, as the eternal gospel of all criticism. In their eyes Croce is the one licensed guide of the present generation, the perpetual dictator of our culture, the high and mighty mas-

[1] Written *à propos* of Croce's *Breviario di estetica* ("The Breviary of Æsthetic"), Bari, 1913.

The lectures composing this treatise were written for the opening of the Rice Institute (October, 1912). They appear, in an English translation by Douglas Ainslie, in *The Book of the Opening of The Rice Institute*, Vol. II, pp. 430–517, and in *The Rice Institute Pamphlet* (December, 1915), pp. 223-310. In the present translation the passages of Croce's Italian text quoted by Papini are replaced by the corresponding passages of Ainslie's translation. The page references in the footnotes are to that translation as it appears in *The Rice Institute Pamphlet*.

ter of a boarding-school which all good little Italians should attend.

In other countries the revelation according to Croce has aroused no such wonder. The *Æsthetics* has been translated into four or five languages; but we may safely affirm that France, England, and Germany have marveled rather at our admiration than at the value of Croce's theories. Not a single philosopher has accepted them, and not one has discussed them at length save the illustrious Cohen, who slashes them through several pages of his last treatise on æsthetics.

Texas appears to be the only foreign land that rivals central and southern Italy in their incautious and prostrate devotion. Croce was invited some time ago to deliver at the Rice Institute, in Houston, four lectures which should at last reveal the true nature of art to an anxious nation. He was unable, for personal reasons, to undertake the long voyage to the Gulf of Mexico, but he sent over the four lectures that had been requested; and now, lest a grateful fatherland should suffer from their loss, he has printed them in the original Italian. In this *Breviary,* he writes, "I have not only condensed the more important concepts of my earlier volumes on the same subject, but have set them forth in better organization and with greater clearness than in my *Æsthetics.*" And he is so

well pleased with the little book that he hopes to introduce it into the schools "as collateral reading for literary and philosophic studies." That is a serious menace; and it behooves us to stop for a moment to consider the real value of the æsthetic system of Croce, which seems likely, through newspapers and schools, to lead the mass of our young compatriots astray for twenty years to come.

The *Breviary* examines in turn the nature of art, prejudices relating to art, the place of art in the spirit and in human society, and, finally, criticism and the history of art. All the points of the system are indeed set forth with greater brevity, if not with greater clearness, than hitherto. Every difficulty is dispelled in a twinkling, and with the most elegant ease. Problems are solved with that smile of superiority which seems to say: "There; do you mean to admit that you hadn't realized a truth as simple as this?"

Here again we find not only the familiar ideas, but the familiar mental method of Croce, which consists chiefly in multiplying distinctions just in order to deny them, in scattering equality signs right and left, in that pleasant little game in which you announce that a thing is white and black at the same time, and that it is white precisely because it is black, and black precisely because it is white. The summit of truth, for example, is so situated that the conqueror "reaches

the sighed-for eminence, repulsing his adversary, and yet in his company."[1] Every particular concept "is independent on one side and dependent on another, or both independent and dependent."[2] The spirit which possesses intuition "finds in that virtue, together with its satisfaction, its dissatisfaction."[3] Foscolo, after the writing of a certain famous ode, is "a poet who has utterly achieved his task, and is therefore no longer a poet."[4] The paths of error are the same as the paths of truth;[5] nay, more, pure error does not exist, for if it did exist, it would be truth.[6] The concept and other things which are not art "are in art as art, either antecedent or consequent."[7] The activities of the spirit are at the same time all real and all unreal.[8]

You simply cannot count the identifications: philosophy is religion,[9] history,[10] poetry;[11] language is art;[12] art is intuition, intuition is expression, expression is imagination, imagination is fancy, fancy is lyrism, lyrism is intuition, expression is beauty, *etcetera, etcetera.* Croce's logic tends inevitably and infinitely toward fusions (not to say confusions). One does not see what is to prevent his reducing the entire system, by means of such identities, to one single word, to that Absolute which he regards as the synthesis of syntheses, the Spirit, the Real, and so forth.

[1] P. 240. [2] P. 274. [3] P. 277. [4] P. 278. [5] P. 226. [6] P. 239.
[7] P. 283. [8] Pp. 282-83. [9] P. 237. [10] P. 279. [11] P. 285. [12] P. 264.

If you disregard critical trivialities and didactic accessories, the entire æsthetic system of Croce amounts merely to a hunt for pseudonyms of the word *art,* and may indeed be stated briefly and accurately in this formula: art = intuition = expression = feeling = imagination = fancy = lyrism = beauty. And you must be very careful not to take these words with the shadings and distinctions which they have in ordinary or scientific language. Not a bit of it. Every word is merely a different series of syllables signifying absolutely and completely the same thing; every term in the list may be superposed logically and exactly on any other term. What is not perceived by intuition is not art; what is not expressed is not even perceived by intuition; an unsuccessful expression is not even an expression, and every successful expression—that is to say, every expression that is an expression—is beautiful. That is all. You cannot get from Croce any further information as to the nature of art. He offers nothing save a string of identities which in the last analysis mean that art is art and is nothing else—a discovery which, I believe, had been made some time before the glorious eighteenth of February of the year 1900.

The other remarks related to this central pronouncement have no real significance. He begins, for example, by maintaining that art is not

a physical fact,[1] but on the next page he proves that "physical facts do not possess reality." All he has said, then, is that since art is a real fact it cannot belong to a class of unreal facts—that is, that art is a thing which does in truth exist. *Quod non erat demonstrandum.*

But we do not turn to a philosopher to learn that art is art, and that art is a portion of reality. So much we may infer for ourselves, with our own weak powers, even without recourse to Vico or to Baumgarten. From the philosopher we seek something more. We seek, for instance, some explanation of the phenomenon of art which shall be new and constructive even though it be incomplete. We seek primarily to ascertain whether or not there exists a sure and certain standard by which we may judge the beauty and the ugliness of works of art. But Croce gives us no help. There are just two types of explanation: the type that goes from the particular to the general, and the type that starts with the whole and proceeds to the component parts. In the first case we affirm that a given object belongs to a certain class of things having certain common characteristics; in the second we analyze the thing itself, and reveal its nature by reducing it to its elements. But in the æsthetics of Croce neither one of these two types of explanation is to be found. His procedure consists al-

[1] P. 229.

ways and everywhere in the establishment of identities, that is to say, in proving the perfect equivalence, the exact interchangeableness of the concepts under discussion. Expression, fancy, imagination, are not elements or factors of art; they are art itself, in its entirety. Intuition and lyrism cannot be defined as individual members of the large class of the phenomena of the spirit, because they include the whole range of the phenomena of the spirit with which art is concerned. At the most they may be considered as proper to the human spirit, but since the human spirit belongs to the universal spirit, and the universal spirit is identical with the whole, and the whole is inexpressible because it cannot be distinguished from anything else (since no reality exists outside it), your final result is that intuition is an element of reality—that is to say, you know just as much about it as you knew before.

Croce's strategy consists in taking secret advantage of the different meanings of the concepts which he employs—denying their diversity, but using them (without seeming to do so) in such a way as to give a certain coloring and a certain content to his system, which would otherwise be merely a game of words—whereas, to be just, not more than three-fourths of it, or at the most four-fifths, is merely a game of words.

Croce faces this dilemma: either he must contradict himself by assuming that there are differences between phenomena which he has called identical, or he must put ink on paper without intelligible results. Impelled by the desire to say something, Croce here and there loosens the links of his chain of homogeneity; for instance, after saying that art is feeling, he affirms that "what gives coherence and unity to the intuition is feeling: the intuition is really such because it represents a feeling, and can only appear from and upon that."[1] Now if feeling *gives* something to intuition; if intuition *represents* feeling and *appears from* feeling, then intuition and feeling are two different things; whereas Croce maintains elsewhere that intuition is art and that feeling is art,[2] forgetting, at the appropriate moment, the very simple mathematical and logical axiom which teaches us that two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.

Nor is there any hope of reaching a concrete understanding through the idea that those phases of the spirit which are represented as identical may succeed each other in time. Croce denies resolutely that there is any such succession. Until intuition is expressed, it does not exist even as intuition. "Thought, musical fancy, pictorial image, did not indeed exist without expression,

[1] P. 247. [2] P. 255.

they did not exist at all previous to the formation of this expressive side of the spirit." [1]

To the two fundamental questions that men ask of æstheticians—"What is art?" and "What is beauty?"—Croce either does not deign to reply, or replies in antediluvian fashion, "Art is symbol, all symbol." [2] "An aspiration enclosed in the circle of a representaion—that is art; and in it the aspiration alone stands for the representation, and the representation alone for the aspiration." [3] "Art is a true *æsthetic synthesis a priori* of feeling and image in the intuition." [4] These definitions, to my mind, do nothing more than repeat, in more elegant terms, in more sophistical formulæ, the old truism that art consists in the expression of feeling.

With regard to beauty we are still more deeply in the dark. "An appropriate expression, if appropriate, is also beautiful, beauty being nothing but the determination of the image and therefore of the expression." [5] But we have learned that an expression which is not appropriate is not even an expression, and we remember that art is nothing other than expression: all art, then, is proper and determinate, in other words, beautiful. We are lost in another hopeless labyrinth of identities.

And the worst of it is that the concepts of appropriateness and determinateness are the most

[1] P. 258. [2] P. 245. [3] P. 248. [4] P. 254. [5] P. 262.

indeterminate of all possible concepts. *Appropriate,* if I mistake not, means *adapted,* and *adapted* brings us back to the idea of purpose. But what is the purpose of art? To move? There are works which move many people, and yet are not beautiful. To reveal? But there are some to whom a single epithet reveals the whole, and others to whom a whole series of descriptions will not convey the gift of vision. And what is the meaning of *determinateness?* Certainly not logical clearness, for there are poems which are great precisely because of their undefined suggestiveness; not completeness—else a notary's inventory would be more beautiful than a swift poetic image. And if we turn to the standard set up by Croce in the *Æsthetics* itself —the standard of success and failure—we are no better off. The idea of success is indissolubly associated with the idea of a model (an object or an action) which the artist approaches more or less closely or not at all. But where and what are the models to which the critic may refer in judging the success, that is, the beauty, of a work of art? Surely not the ideal images that may arise in critics' heads: for if they really had images superior to existing works they would at once express them—and then they would be no longer critics, but artists.

And yet a standard for the estimate of beauty in art is absolutely necessary if, as Croce admits,

the service of the critic consists in "clearly stating whether a work be beautiful or ugly." [1]

In the presence of such thoughts and such a way of thinking, in the presence of a theory which wavers constantly between nonsense and mere common sense, between emptiness and banality, one is forced to ask why it is that Croce's books have won such fame in Italy. One reason, at least, is this: among the things which Croce repeats so often there is one indubitable truth, namely, that Italians know little or nothing about philosophy. Croce's advent occurred after twenty or thirty years of positivism had made our young men forget the strong and ancient language of metaphysics; the thirst for greater certainty remained; Croce came and conquered. The average Italian, weary of his positivists—Lombroso, Ardigò, Ferri, Sergi—threw himself upon the books of Croce in the belief that the philosophy dished out in them was the whole of philosophy and nothing but philosophy. Croce's popularity was increased by the fact that he began his system with a treatment of art, thus winning all the men of letters of his land, who, since they are (or think themselves) capable of art, are persuaded that they are capable also of understanding the theory of art.

But just there lies a serious difficulty. The theorist should understand and feel, deeply and

[1] P. 267.

thoroughly, the phenomenon he is discussing: whereas Croce, as his too extensive excursions into literary criticism make evident, has not the slightest artistic sensitiveness nor the slightest taste beyond that which is merely scholastic and traditional. There are no works in which the sense of art is more completely lacking than in those of Croce. That is why he has brought himself to consider the theory of art as a closed circle of six or seven Siamese twins, so identical one with the other that no one of them gives any help in the understanding of another. And that is why he has had to cover the banality of his commonplaces with a sophistical counterpoint of arbitrary abstractions.

At a certain point in his book Croce expresses the belief that some of his theories, because of their novelty, will at first produce a sort of bewilderment. The illustrious theorist is right, but he need not worry. The reader's bewilderment, when he comes really to understand the situation, is merely the bewilderment that comes with each new proof of the fact that enormous popularity may be won at any time by the utterance of the most bromidic of truisms, provided they be furbished up with a little coquetry and a little mystery.

XII

ARMANDO SPADINI[1]

ARMANDO SPADINI is an Italian painter, Italian in fatherland and in style. He was born in Florence in 1883, and has been living in Rome since 1910.

Though he has reached the mid-point of his life and his work, I do not know how his credit is rated on the pictorial exchange, nor in what esteem he is held by those doubly ignorant critics who nourish the emaciated arts of the present day with myrrh or hemlock. There are two tribes of these critic-nurses: the old-school tribe of the Minoses, who have nothing left of the original Minos except his monstrosity; and the new-school tribe of the Ten, who retain but one attribute of the original inquisitors—the mask. I fear that Spadini's name is not in the good books of either tribe. But that may be a good sign after all.

To form a fair judgment of Spadini, one must know the man, and not merely his painting, which in itself might seem so facile and so com-

[1] Written in 1918.

monplace as to deserve only a word and a glance. And the principle that you must know a man in order to understand his work has special force when that work is not the labored product of a brain, but a free expression of nature incarnate in a complete personality.

Armando Spadini, like all who work by inspiration and by instinct rather than by deliberate will, is still a child, despite his five and thirty years; a child spoiled by life, by suffering, by men; a restless child, a melancholy child, but a child with all that is good and all that is ill in the madness and the divinity of childhood. He does not advance by plans and calculations, as do serious men, convinced seekers, self-made men. He moves by leaps, by improvisations, by dashes and flashes. Something suddenly stirs him, draws him, takes possession of him. He is like a child with a new toy, like a moth drawn to the flame. Nothing then can hold him back, and no one can control him. He goes into a sort of furious trance or epileptic seizure, and therein he remains until, conquered or conquering, he returns to the everyday sadness of all those who feel that their achievement is still far short of the ideal.

Spadini is a primitive being, a creature of passion, of impulse and excess, never within the balance of a manhood that has adapted itself to law. Within the course of a few days, of a few

hours, he can be jealous and generous, egotistic and loving, grasping and prodigal, chaste and incontinent, ascetic and inebriate, prolific and idle. He may fast for a week, and for the next week eat from morning until night. He may weep in despair for the death of a friend, and share the merriment of a group of companions before the day is out. He may be timid as a whipped dog, and forthwith valiant as a paladin.

His character is not yet formed, nor will it ever attain the cold and reasoned stability of the successful. It is still plastic, like that of children, or of primitive folk, or of women. He is a bundle of passions and of impulses, of manias and of fixed ideas, of superstitions and *naïvetés*. But his dominant passion is painting: he marvels at the beauty of the visible world, he yearns continually to copy it, to make it over, to transfer its color and its charm to bits of canvas. In his most constant essence he is a man enamored of reality, and served by two eyes and a hand. He hungers for visual reality as a libertine for his prey, as a scholar for books, as a peasant for land.

He paints as he eats: from necessity, and with more or less appetite according to the time of day and the state of his soul. He has none of the traits of the salaried employee of beauty and profundity. He is as greedy as a child, greedy not only for meat and wine, but for color and

form. The world is to him an earthly paradise which he desires to clutch, to squeeze, to bite, to possess completely. Women, animals, plants, children: the nearest things, the things in reach, the things he can grasp most easily. His painting is a continual conquest, an almost sensual enjoyment renewed till weariness sets in. He is capable of drawing the same face a hundred times in all its different expressions, in all lights, in all positions, in all companies—never satisfied till he has captured and sucked and swallowed its visual completeness.

It takes but little to amuse and to content him: the shadows of a pergola, the edge of a table, the turn of a path, the corner of a room. But in his domestic scenes there must be living creatures, the same, it may be, from canvas to canvas. The world is so rich, so different from season to season and from hour to hour—and it is so hard to represent one single square of it with the full force of truth—that a humble dwelling and a simple family are enough, and more than enough, for the pictorial endeavor of a lifetime.

Spadini does not turn, for elements of interest or novelty, to history, mythology, or legend, nor—as is now the fashion—to the composition and dissection of unusual objects, to the bones of manikins, to the deformations of still life, to the design of abstract forms. If painting is to be independent of its subject, there is no reason,

so it seems to him, why he should not make use of the eternal model, the human figure. And his choice of men and women as subjects is not made in the hope that charm of anecdote or psychological depth may hide artistic poverty. He seeks to convey emotion not by the subjects represented, but by his means of representing them. He is, in short, a painter, and nothing more than a painter: not a historian, not a scientist, not a *raconteur,* not a metaphysician. Nor can it be maintained that as a subject for pure painting a woman or a child is inferior to a plate of apples or a fantastic hieroglyph. Recourse to such indifferent or unreal subjects for the sake of concentrating attention on the pictorial method is in a sense a catering to the laziness of the spectator. The spectator is all too ready, it is true, to look at the subject and not at the execution; but if he has the least suspicion of the meaning of painting he ought to be able to distinguish purely pictorial value from its decorative or narrative or religious pretext.

In any case, whatever the fashions and theories of the moment, Spadini does not claim to be an innovator, a seeker, a theorist, an exception, a pioneer. He is content to be a true painter, and at the most, an Italian painter. He has no fear of tradition, which for the strong is a springboard, not a prison. He has visited the galleries,

but has left them to discover truth again for himself, and to transform it in his own fashion.

Involuntarily, and perhaps unconsciously, he has paralleled the whole development of modern painting. He began in the mode of the Tuscans, the Giottesques: he drew with such scrupulous Florentine exactitude, with such diligence in line, as to seem in certain sketches a mere calligrapher. That was the time of his enthusiasm for the precise drawings of Leonardo and the dainty coloring of Filippino Lippi. That was the time—do you remember, Spadini?—when we used to wander among the cypresses of Vincigliata and the caverns of Monte Ceceri, the time when I was publishing the *Leonardo*. That was the dawn.

But the asceticism of the quattrocentist drawings gave place to Venetian sensuality. Display after simplicity, woman after the Madonna, color after line, Titian after Giotto. He discovered florid flesh, sumptuous stuffs, gleaming silks, golden shadows, summer skies. He undertook broad decorative compositions, country scenes, sacred or profane, in which an oppressive warmth of luxury and of love casts over all a sense of decadent monotony. The "Finding of the Child Moses," painted many years ago, serves to illustrate this second period.

Then came a Spanish, or, more precisely, a Goyesque period. Sumptuousness yields again

to sobriety, and attention is concentrated on the figure. Two portraits of Pasqualina, the painter's wife—in one she has a light shawl, in the other she is wearing a blue dress—represent this transition.

But Spadini, who had discovered Goya without visiting Spain, proceeded to discover impressionism without going to Paris. And in impressionism he finally approached the rediscovery of himself. Some of his groups, painted a few years ago, suggest a humbler and less stylistic Renoir. But though Spadini may be rightly called the first and the sanest of the Italian impressionists, he cannot be classed as a mere scholar of the French. Like the French, he forms his art on the old masters—Cézanne copied the Venetians and sought to paint like Titian—but he has his own way of representing the fragments of the world which he discerns from time to time. His very near-sightedness helps him to see things in a personal manner. His ambition is to be the copyist of reality, not the copyist of painters who have recast reality. His painting now is freer, more spontaneous, broader, more essential. He gives no thought to photographic and scholastic exactness, he makes no concessions to the prettiness beloved of the *bourgeoisie,* he does not search for sentimental effects or for external novelty. A mere ordinary group of living beings in the open air, undisturbed by artificial

arrangement, is enough to give him the material for a picture—an *ensemble* of tones and lights which will convey the immediate impression of truth. That is all he seeks: not sharpness of outline, not scenic grace, not pathos, not hieroglyphic mystery, not mathematical abstraction. He is a clear, sane, simple, homely painter. Look at the two paintings of the Pincian Hill (the little one with the blue sky and the flowers, and the larger one with the carriages) or the two of paths in the Villa Borghese (the lonely one, and the one with people on the benches); look particularly at the portrait of Pasqualina with the broom and the little girl turning her back and her braided hair, a painting of the utmost loving delicacy in color; or look at the other large unfinished household scene that hangs beside it—and you will understand what I mean when I speak of the Italian loyalty of Spadini. Even his color has grown clearer of late. He is successful in his greens, in his violets, and in his dainty shades of rose; he has lost the sickly museum yellow.

He has escaped the infection of all those novelties which have lately been transplanted from France to decay in Italy. In the work of pioneers such novelties have a revealing and a revolutionary value which I should be the first to acknowledge (and here in Italy the names of Soffici and of Carrà will suffice to establish the

point). But these French importations have fallen little by little into the hands of a troupe of helpless monkeys who have managed to arouse a general disgust. A rabble of mediocre painters, men and women scarcely competent to draw Vermouth posters or fashion-plates for the *Lettura,* have found in the recent tendencies of painting a means of camouflaging themselves as futurists—to put it more plainly, a means of painting without knowing how to paint, and of seeming new without being really new, even in their impudence and falsity.

Thus we have in Italy a thin broth of Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso, and Boccioni, served up as the last word and the quintessence of pictorial and plastic art. This imported and simulated art has two main divisions. Some of its followers tend to the infantile, to clumsy formlessness, to a barbaric simplification. Others aspire to complexity, to mystery, to inconclusive flourishes, to metaphysical and dynamic geometry. The first group ends in Imbecilism, the other in Hieroglyphicism; but the banner they both bear is that of the great school of False Pretense. We may well admire real children who paint as children, and real savages who carve as savages. We may well admire the hieroglyphics of Egypt and of Persia. We may well respect the pioneers, the courageous creators, who at the cost of seeming to be charlatans seek to discover new

heavens and new earths of artistic sensibility. But we may equally well detest the whole mushroom growth of those academicians of the extravagant who attempt to mask the incurable poverty and emptiness of their tiny souls through the repetition of facile semblances. And in the presence of this cheap pretentiousness those who cling to the truth feel the need of drawing close to something more vital. Soffici goes back to the art of the folk; Carrà, through Giotto and Paolo Uccello, resumes the tradition of precise volume and refined color; De Chirico discovers in the architecture of old Italian *piazze* and in the solid masses of life a field for painting in the grand style of the seventeenth century.

Spadini has had no such experience. He has not felt the need of returning to the true Italian tradition—he had never left it. He has never had the craving for perilous adventure, has never been attracted by the cerebral ingenuity of those theorists whose work has so often turned out to be an object of ephemeral curiosity, undeserving of the name of painting. He has never left reality, nor the Italian method of representing reality. No startling discoveries, but no betrayals and no weaknesses. He has never played the cubist nor the futurist; neither has he let himself be led aside, like so many of his contemporaries, by the preceding fashions, by the imitation (often fruitful, to be sure) of a Stuck or

an Anglada. He has never tried the wild excitement of research, but he has never sunk to the elegant banditry of those who paint with an eye to the winning of medals and high prices. He has traveled his own road, conscious of the tremendous difficulty of fixing in color a single fleeting moment of truth; he has felt that the daily endeavor to do this, the daily struggle to achieve the impossible, is enough to bear witness to his courage. He is by no means content with the whole of his own work, and if he were content, his very contentment would mark an end and a condemnation. But if in spite of loneliness, of poverty, and of envy his furious efforts and his loving insistence have enabled him now and then to fix, with the certainty of light and the evidence of color, some incidents and some aspects of living reality, then he has done his duty as a true and honest painter, and we as artists and as Italians owe him gratitude.

XIII

HAMLET[1]

I

SHAKESPEARE died just three centuries ago, on the twenty-third of April, 1616. He died—and was forgotten, we may say, for a century, until in 1709 and 1710 Nicholas Rowe published the first approximately complete edition of his works. Then he came to life again, to a life more intense and more vivid than the life he had lived in the rough, confused age of the Virgin Queen. This new life of his has endured for two hundred years. It was initiated by a pre-Romantic impulse; it was carried to universal fame on that wave of Romanticism whose ripples have not yet subsided, that wave whereby Shakespeare was made to seem a fellow-citizen of Goethe, a brother of Schlegel, a contemporary of Victor Hugo.

But now a second night hangs over Shakespeare; this third centenary is perhaps the beginning of a second and a truer death. Today,

[1] Written in 1916, for the third centenary of Shakespeare's death.

silencing for a moment, with the arrogance of fame, the furious reveilles of the world-wide war, he is finding in England and elsewhere men and women to repeat the centenary formulas of love and admiration, each according to his rite and his power, by erudition or exclamation, by rhetoric or anecdote. But we are by no means sure that a hundred years from now Shakespeare will be as dominant in human consciousness as habit and tradition have made him for our own generation.

Nor does it avail to say that Shakespeare is modern and eternal, that his restlessness is our restlessness, that his fear is our fear. For we are changing, and those who are to come after us will change still more. Day by day we are becoming harder to satisfy, more refined, more discontented. Fewer things give us pleasure, and fewer still will please us as time goes on: a painful condition, but a condition that is inevitable if we are to create more than we have found, if we are to add new treasure to the inheritance we have received from those who, though dead, are yet immortal.

We are growing away from Shakespeare. That terrible old dramatic world of his, compact of grandeur and nocturnal dread, is beginning to make us smile. There is too much machinery and scene-painting in his work. We of t r want things in essence. His fancy, even n it soars most wildly, is fashioned and c tr d

by the specific social forms of theatrical action. His lyric, even when it seems to win an independent life, is the poetry of an alchemist—ornate, Parnassian. It tends toward the madrigal and the *tour de force*. And we want things in their essence. The drama is composite. It is the first historic form of spoken art—it derives from magic pantomimes, from primitive ceremonies, from sacred mysteries—and it is therefore the most limited and the least legitimate of arts. It carries with it so many social, external, material, and mythical weights and motives that it cannot completely absorb us and convince us. Tragedy presupposes faith—some sort of faith, whatsoever it may be, even an irreligious faith —it presupposes a system of morality, a system of law, and the possibility of opposition between life and law and between life and faith. Death and tragedy spring from the clash between passion and discipline. But today we have lost faith and morality. We have no law, no discipline: the myths and divinities of all the ages are dead and turned to clay. We are beyond struggle, beyond stageable tragedy, beyond the capacity for sharing with eager passion in the old dramatic antitheses. The drama is receding from us, and with it Shakespeare too recedes. The very qualities that have brought him greatness ıd glory hitherto will hereafter bring forget- ıd disesteem. We of today feel poetry,

that poetry which is absolutely poetic and intimately alive even in its unspoken implications —we feel the lyric. Other forms of literary art, narrative or dramatic, will doubtless appeal for centuries to the higher and lower castes of the incompetent, but as the generations pass they will find less and less approval from those few sensitive minds which after all are the only ones that count, since they are the only ones able to create poetry or understand it.

Shakespeare, a portent of dead ages, is not great enough or pure enough in his lyricism to entitle him to immortality even in anthologies: he moves within the sphere of dramatic action and suffering, in those ambiguous, impure, and external forms which are steadily sinking in esteem. For us the death of Shakespeare is beginning now.

II

But Shakespeare is still great, so devotees and conservatives will reply, in his power of penetrating and representing the human soul, of revealing—through the torments of his characters —the infamy of man, the blind ferocity of fate, the depths and the terrors of life. Such is, or should be, the judgment of those (and they are in the majority) who have not yet reached the most radical conclusions, the most lacerating and

irremediable solutions. But Shakespeare's psychology and philosophy no longer have their former power for one who has undergone the desolation of the modern spiritual hell, and has won back for himself, stone by stone, and blade of grass by blade of grass, a corner in the cold and cruel paradise of perfect knowledge. Yet the majority of mankind has not yet come even to the point which Shakespeare reached, and is content therefore to wonder and to worship. For the development of the human spirit does not proceed in lines of contemporary parallelism: brutes of the Neanderthal were at large in the very years when Plato lifted his youthful eyes to the face of Socrates and listened to his holy virtuosities.

I am thinking in particular of *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* has been regarded by critics and by the public as the most profound of Shakespeare's plays. Historians, actors, and dilettantes consider it his masterpiece. I, too, many years ago, had a languid fondness for the Prince of Denmark, who returned my affection. How many nights we spent in each other's company! How many fantastic and exciting conversations we enjoyed which are not to be found in any printed text! Hamlet was a brother to me, more than a brother. Side by side we delved, and side by side discovered some of those mysteries that are not dreamt

human philosophies.

But of late, thinking of Shakespeare's death, I have reread *Hamlet*. The beloved brother had disappeared, and in his place I found a fat neurasthenic, half evil, half imbecile.

More than ever before the dramatic machinery annoys me. The legendary and murderous intrigue that supports and justifies the action, the barbaric events and manners, among which the semi-barbaric Hamlet moves as an intellectualist dispensing justice, repel me without stirring me. It is such a tragedy as people seek when they go to the theatre to laugh or tremble. Here there is bait a-plenty for those who need blood and miracles to stir their torpid sensibility.

In *Hamlet* nine of the characters are killed. One is killed before the curtain rises; but he stalks, a vindictive and oratorical spectre, through two acts of the play. A second, Polonius, is killed through an error of the nervous Hamlet. A third, Ophelia, kills herself through the fault of the tender Hamlet. Two others, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are killed in a distant city through the fault of the astute Hamlet. The other four die at the end of the last act: the mother a suicide by mistake, Laertes and Claudius at Hamlet's hand. Hamlet is the evil genius of himself and of the others. To avenge one corpse he puts eight by its side. And at least six of the eight are innocent.

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cessities of the story and the stage. The fundamental failure is in the justification of all these terrible and funereal events. The soul of the tragedy is false, the psychology of the protagonists is incoherent, the most striking *pensées* are merely banalities in disguise. Something is rotten even in the art of Shakespeare.

III

Hamlet's case is simple and well known. He had loved his father, and his father has been murdered. He desires to slay the murderer; and after a series of weaknesses and waverings he succeeds in doing so at the moment of his own death.

We are then in the realm of the elementary and savage law of retribution: an eye for an eye, a life for a life. But Prince Hamlet is by no means a primitive man. He has studied philosophy; he has spent the best years of his life amid the wisdom of Wittenberg; he is capable of general ideas. He therefore colors his vengeance with the motive of justice, and seeks to act not as a rabid brute, but as a man pure in the assurance and the majesty of his right. Yet here his error starts. For justice is by no means the same thing as vengeance: it is infinitely more subtle and more vast. Justice involves intelli-

gence and reflection: it is no mere unruly mania for private slaughter. There is a justice, human and divine, within whose course even crimes may serve as just and necessary acts. Hamlet's father confesses his own damnation: he must be punished for certain "foul crimes done in my days of nature." In these foul crimes lies the first justification of Claudius—not in his own eyes, or in those of Hamlet, but from the viewpoint of universal justice. So then a guilty man has slain a guilty man; and to appease the shadow of the guilty man who has been slain, others, guilty and innocent, must die. And an apparent and material justice engenders sad and irrevocable injustices.

If Hamlet were in reality a man of exceptional intelligence, as he seems at times to be, he would not fix upon the idea of vengeance, or at the least he would hesitate to do so. But all the uncertainties of Hamlet have reference not to the legitimacy of vengeance in itself—on this point he decides once and forever—but merely to the choice of the means and the moment for vengeance.

And yet, if he were really capable of thinking more clearly than his fellows, vengeance should have seemed to him a terribly complicated and a brutally useless thing. Vengeance cures nothing; usually, as in this case, it adds worse ills to ills already irreparable. His madness, half feigned, half real, swaying between epilepsy and imbecil-

ity, drives him to slay six human beings by his own or by another hand, though his father had asked as sacrifice but a single life. He destroys two families, a dynasty, his love, himself; and from all this death not a single principle of life comes forth.

He knows that his father was a guilty man; he knows that he himself is base, vicious, and homicidal. Within the drama he appears to us as a deceiver, a slayer of souls and bodies. Had he the right to heap up so much torture when his father was not innocent, when he himself was not innocent? A savage, a primitive man, would have hastened to Claudius and killed him immediately on receiving the command to avenge. Hamlet requires proof, that is, reflection. But his reflection yields merely a restless play of shrewdness, a comedy of fits and starts, through which there gleams a deep filial piety and, at the end, a refined cruelty. He even spares Claudius when he might safely kill him, merely because he finds him kneeling and in a state of grace. He toys with his tempestuous despair.

His inner experience is utterly illogical. Even before he has spoken with the spectre he feels repugnance for his mother and hatred for his uncle. Yet even after the terrible revelation he is not fully convinced. He devises the scene of the *Murder of Gonzago* in order to obtain a definite certainty, and he does not even trust his own

powers of observation, but brings Horatio in as witness. And when he is certain he wavers still. He slays Polonius through error, and passively agrees to go to England instead of acting at once and resolutely.

We cannot tell what he seeks at sea: perhaps merely another pretext to delay action. And when he returns, after he has sent the two courtiers to die in his place, he philosophizes in cemeteries instead of digging the grave of the only man he has a right to strike. Only at the last, when he has killed his friend and sees his mother and himself in the death agony, does he, with his dying arm, take the one life the savage spectre had demanded.

No less incomprehensible is his behavior toward Ophelia, whom his feigned madness brings to real madness and to piteous death in the indifferent stream. He loves Ophelia truly, and his love continues even after her death. Might he not have spared her in his tragic comedy? Might he not have given her some word that would have enabled her to wait and understand? "I cannot now be yours nor think of tenderness. When I have fulfilled my duty I will come to you again; and if I then can smile, my first smile shall be for your white face, for your maidenly blushes. Marvel not though I seem strange in word and deed. Another Hamlet has perforce entered life; but the Hamlet that you knew is

not dead—he that spoke to you so sweetly, as his heart overflowing with adoration bade him speak —and he will be with you in thought forever, even though he disappear."

The killing of Ophelia is the most useless and the most monstrous of all the cruelties of Hamlet. I cannot understand how a single soul can have forgiven him for this. His rambling frenzy at her tomb does not suffice to obliterate the crime. She, at least, was pure and innocent; yet through the fault of him who loved her there came to her the greatest unhappiness and the most unjust fate. To her, the one pure being, the one innocent heart—and her only fault was that she had trusted love!

IV

The other persons of the drama are as incoherent as the Prince. Claudius is at heart a cowardly moralist who sins through blindness and terror—yet knows that he is sinning, and is capable of remorse. Gertrude is still more inexplicable. Either she was so wicked as to have formed the resolve to be the accomplice and wife of the assassin—and in that case one cannot understand her dismay at the first harsh words of Hamlet—or she was at heart weak and affectionate—and in that case one cannot understand

why she obeyed Claudius and allowed the death of a loving husband whom she loved. The little that we can infer from the conversation of this sinister pair leads us to think that Hamlet would have wreaked a nobler and a far more terrible vengeance if he had let them live with their memories and their fears, guarding himself against their terror, but letting them realize that he knew and judged.

Poor Polonius, a ridiculous victim, despite his skeptical and time-serving courtly wit, does not know what the pother is all about, and persists in regarding Hamlet's madness as an impossible amatory delusion.

Nor can we save the famous thoughts of Hamlet—not even that "To be or not to be" which, after all, amounts merely to this superficial commonplace: life is evil, and if we were sure that the other life is not worse, we would do well to commit suicide. What better can one say of his banal reflections in the cemetery—the matter of men's bodies is but dust, and may return to foul places and to base uses—and his easy, vulgar invective against the falseness of woman?

Never has any rereading been for me so sad as this—appropriate in its very sadness to the natural melancholy of a commemoration. For me today not only is Shakespeare dead, but in my spirit his restless son has died also.

XIV

REMY DE GOURMONT[1]

I

He too is dead. He was the most intelligent man in France, and one of the keenest intellects in the whole world. His brain was an instrument of precision. His thought had the lucidity of distilled alcohol, as clear as the water of a mountain spring, yet drawn from purple clusters, and carrying the inebriation, the vertigo, the wild fancy of a year's experience compressed into a single hour.

He died several days ago. The Parisian paragraphers said of him, as they would say of the meanest scribbler of a mean *Matin,* that "les lettres françaises ont perdu un estimable écrivain et un homme de goût."

His death was little heeded—because of the war, and because he did not die at the front. There was much talk about the death of Péguy, because Péguy was more the man of the hour, was more vivid, of a fresher fame, of more serious

[1] Written in 1915.

and more reassuring features—and because Péguy was killed by a Prussian bullet in the defense of the fields and the rights of France.

There was much talk even about Fabre, the friend of Mistral and of insects, who died, full of days and honors, at almost the same time. But an observer of insects is nearer the level of our journalists than an observer of men. Especially if the observer of men is a poet as well, and does not live on the ideas of Monsieur Delarue. It was Remy de Gourmont who uttered these profound and bitter words: "Il faut flatter les imbéciles et les flatter dans leurs facultés les moins nocives. C'est peut-être un instinct de conservation qui pousse la société à conférer provisoirement la gloire à tant de médiocres esprits." *Provisionally.* Let us hope for the ultimate revision.

II

Remy de Gourmont died too soon. He was only fifty-seven years of age, and he had never swung incense before any fool. Modest and alone in a great dark house full of books—how well I remember a luminous morning in November, 1906, in the Rue des Saints Pères!—he read books, read men and women, read the ancients and the moderns and *les jeunes,* and sought truth, clear French truth, pitiless contemporary

European truth. And he set forth that truth ceaselessly, without cosmetics, without reticence or omission. The truth—that hard and unpleasant other side of the shield of illusion. "Je ne ferai que dire la vérité," said Flaubert, "mais elle sera horrible, cruelle et nue." One who takes the vows of obedience to such truth loses all right to earthly beatitude, loses all hope of swift glory, all sympathy. From the days of Socrates to those of Nietzsche, the man who analyzes and dissociates, the man who breaks through the surface of useful and convenient beliefs to reveal the fierce and injurious truths that lie beneath, has been ostracized and condemned as an enemy to the State and to the gods.

Remy de Gourmont was of this ill-regarded family. Less serene and profound than Socrates, less violent and grand than Nietzsche, he resembled more closely the great Frenchmen of the eighteenth century. He had the malice of Voltaire (with Voltaire's apparently innocent narrative simplicity); he had d'Alembert's passion for disinterested exactness; he had the good-natured frivolity of Fontenelle; he had the branching curiosity of Bayle. But the man he most closely resembles is Diderot, who has always seemed to me the most complete and vigorous genius among the Encyclopedists. In Diderot, as in Remy de Gourmont, one may find a natural inclination toward general ideas, an enjoyment

of specific facts and scientific theories, a happy, spontaneous interweaving of art and philosophy, of myth and thought, of type and paradox, a common dilettanteism in criticism and in painting.

It goes without saying that Remy de Gourmont was not merely a repetition of Diderot, for no man, least of all a man of genius, is a repetition of a predecessor. Between the one and the other there lies a century of corrective and advancing culture. Romanticism has not been in vain. Stendhal and Taine have left their impress on brains formed after 1870.

The intellectual life of Remy de Gourmont—his only real life—began thirty years ago. His first book, *Merlette,* was published in 1886. That was the time of the beginnings of Symbolism. He was at once convinced of the importance of that movement, which was so long berated by the critics, and is now finding a little affectionate justice. Remy de Gourmont was one of the first of the Symbolist theorists and poets. As artist he worked in the vanguard. Novel, drama, lyric: he set himself free; he sought to find himself.

I do not intend to attempt here an estimate of Gourmont as a creative artist. In *Sixtine* there is new and fine psychology; in *Lilith* there is a harmonious luxury of fancy; in the *Pèlerin du Silence* and in the *Proses Moroses* there are capricious and terrible inventions worthy of

Villiers de l'Isle Adam at his best; in the *Divertissements* (in which the *Hieroglyphics,* examples of the most artificial Symbolism, are republished) there is the sensitiveness of a wise spirit bursting at times into poetry. But the greatness of Remy de Gourmont, to my mind, does not lie in these old works of his.

With the keenness of his intelligence and the exquisite refinement of his taste, he succeeded in creating a group of poems which at first sight might be classed with those of Mallarmé. But his creative works will not stand repeated reading. You miss the pulse of life in that magnificent play of words, cleverly sought out and cleverly strung together. In his prose works, even in those of artistic character, the best passages are those in which psychological discoveries or unusual thoughts are stated in surprising form. In view of the wideness of his reading and the aristocracy of his culture, it was easy for him to catch the method of the trade and to give to his bookish imagination a certain electric semblance of life. But his genius did not lie in this field. Art requires intelligence, but it requires something more. Intelligence may discipline and purify inspiration, and it may even imitate it, to the confusion of the incompetent. But it does not suffice for the creation of strong and permanent works.

Remy de Gourmont was born to understand

and to enjoy. His famous book on the *Latin Mystique* (1892), almost a masterpiece, revealed his bent for criticism—understood in the broadest sense of the word and of the idea. From then on, while he continued to write stories and poems from time to time, his richest and most important books, the books that perfectly express him, were his books of criticism. One who desires to know and love him should read the two *Livres des Masques* (1896 and 1898), *L'Esthétique de la Langue Française* (1889), *La Culture des Idées* (1900), *Le Chemin de Velours* (1902), *Le Problème du Style* (1902), and the several volumes in which he collected his extensive contributions to the *Mercure de France;* the *Promenades Littéraires,* the *Promenades Philosophiques,* the *Epilogues,* the *Dialogues des Amateurs.*

Thousands and thousands of pages; hundreds and hundreds of subjects and of thoughts: one motive, one man, with kindly, mobile, piercing eyes.

III

The dominant principle of Gourmont's great inquiry is to be sought in the essay on the *Dissociation des idées,* in the book called *La Culture des idées.*

I do not mean to imply that the whole of Gourmont is to be found in this passionless dis-

mantling and divorcing of ideas. He deals in nuances; he may feign to believe, and to let himself be carried on by the regular and accepted currents. But the secret of his liberating power lies precisely in that delicate virtuosity which applies itself to the decomposition of thoughts that are apparently simple, to the separation of pairs which had been thought indissoluble, to the reëstablishment of harmonies and relationships between ideas which had been regarded as heterogeneous and distant, to the search for bits of truth amid the refuse of prejudice, to the gentle denuding of the most solemn truths, revealing, to startled eyes, the bare bones of contradiction. There is in his work a continual testing and experimenting; a knocking with the knuckles to find out what is empty and what is full; a search this way and that to discover the multiform paths of existence; a sounding of the stagnant wells of life and of the troubled seas of philosophy to find a sunken fragment, a lonely island. There is a turning and tossing on the pillow of doubt; a tenacious and joyous effort toward elemental reality (a reality ignoble, to be sure, but sincere); a polygonal assault upon the strongest fortresses of scientific and moral and metaphysical religion; a mania for examining, elucidating, purifying; and, finally, a delight, at times merely sterile, in giving utterly free play to an intelligence that finds rest and

satisfaction only in itself, even though it be on the edge of the abyss.

And there are traces of pleasant dilettanteism, of purposeless irony, of facile journalism, of sportive surface literature. Remy de Gourmont wrote so much—and not always of his own free will or for his own pleasure—that one naturally finds passages which do not rest on thought, improvisations without structure. But if one follows the main line of his thought, even in his fantastic deviations, even in the weary efforts of piece-work, one can trace a penetrating certainty, a thread woven of eagerly disinterested meditation, a sad and personal profundity under a surface so clear that there seems to be no substance beneath, a passionate pursuit of truth amid a nomadism that has the look of vagabondage. And such traits may well lead us to regard Remy de Gourmont as one of the greatest soldiers and heroes of pure thought.

Amid the battles, death has interrupted, but has not killed, his work. The best spirits of Europe have watched it, and must continue it.

IV

Facts for those who want them. He was born in Normandy, in the Castle of La Motte at Bazoches-en-Houlme (Orne), on the fourth of

April, 1858, of an old and noble family of painters, engravers, and printers. He went to Paris in 1883, and obtained a position in the Bibliothèque Nationale, but was dismissed after two or three years because of an article—*Joujou Patriotisme*—in which he proposed an alliance between France and Germany. He was on the editorial staff of the *Mercure de France,* for which he wrote to his last days. Before the war he had created a magnificent type of the Philistine, M. Croquant. When I saw him for the first time, in 1906, he gave me the impression of a weary friar smothered in books, with two great vivid eyes and a thick-lipped mouth. I saw him for the last time in 1914, at the Café de Flore, on the Boulevard Saint Germain, with his friend Apollinaire. He had been very sick, and could hardly speak. A sort of lupus disfigured one side of his face, but he kept up his thinking and his writing with a marvelous and obstinate courage. An article every day for *La France;* a dialogue every fortnight for the *Mercure.*

In Italy he ought to be well known. He wrote for several Italian reviews: for the *Rassegna Internazionale,* the *Marzocco* and *Lacerba* of Florence, and for the *Flegrea* of Naples. Sem Benelli wrote of him in the *Emporium,* Giuseppe Vorluni in the *Flegrea.*

Today the troubles of the world are leading us back to religion and to humility, and Remy de

Gourmont might seem to have outlived his time. But his time would have returned. And it will return.

Every death is a summons for payment. All those who knew him should pay their debts of affection. This is the beginning of my tribute.

XV

ARDENGO SOFFICI[1]

I

ARDENGO SOFFICI, born in 1879 at Rignano on the Arno, now a second lieutenant in an infantry battalion, is one of the most singular, most novel, and most perfect writers of the present day. In 1905, when he came back from France to become again an Italian and a writer, I was alone in recognizing his excellence. There are many today who share in that recognition, and the number will steadily increase.

Soffici did not find himself till he was nearly thirty, but he will endure the longer—as is the case with all those who have not wasted their energies in the disordered precocities of youth. He has already won a place, and a high place, in painting and in poetry.

He is extraordinarily versatile. I have seen him cover walls with frescoes, paint earthenware vases, carve wood, emboss leather, help a printer to set up difficult passages in his "lyric com-

[1] Written *à propos* of Soffici's *Bif§zf + 18*, Florence, 1915.

pounds," imitate still-life groups on sheets of cardboard with bits of newspapers, scissors and paste, dash off newspaper articles and pages of a diary while at the café, and explain the mysteries of difficult poems and paintings, with a witty eloquence, to the hardest heads.

At times he is the most refined lyrist who has ever interwoven foreign and Italian words; at times he is the brilliant painter who with a few strokes on a sheet of blue paper creates for you a world of pure metaphysical form; then the exact and brilliant *raconteur* who compresses a whole romance into half a column or enlarges a village anecdote to the dimensions of an epic; then the clear, lucid, persuasive interpreter who plays with theories as a Japanese entertainer plays with fans, who condenses the most paradoxical abstractions into transparent paragraphs; then at last the elegant *jongleur* who between one breath and the next fuses the marvels of earth, sky, and sea in a pyrotechnic display of brilliant magic.

Thus in appearance he seems at first sight a disdainful and distinguished gentleman balancing the pyramids of the absolute on the smoke of his cigarettes; then he reveals the drawn and clouded face of a Baudelaire; then you take him for a substantial Tuscan countryman deeply rooted in his flowery soil, hale and hearty with a festive sobriety; and all of a sudden he turns

out to be a cosmopolitan dandy, expert in all the refinements of many capitals. There are days when his serious, clerical face gives you the impression of a fanatic friar ready to die for his faith; and there are days when he suggests a gay and acrobatic Pierrot. He may play the subverter of tradition, mocking old ways more cruelly than any futurist; and the next day he will make you see the beauty and the fineness of a sentence of Manzoni or a line of Leopardi as no professional man of letters will ever do.

The secret of his charm lies in the changing wealth of his many aspects. He is at the same time an aristocrat and a man of the people, a Tuscan of the Valdarno and a Parisian, a theorist and a lyrist, a devotee and a libertine, a fanatic and a dilettante, profound and transparent. Like the clear water of the Ambra which runs by his home, his polytheistic sensitiveness mirrors the infinite variety of the world, and renders it more delicate and more beautiful.

II

But in all this lively transformation of the spirit one quality remains dominant. Ardengo Soffici is at all times, and beyond all else, an artist. An artist when he tells of others, when he tells of himself, when he amuses himself by

firing verbal rockets or playing practical jokes, when he paints or criticizes painting or philosophizes about painting. He may take part in politics—he was active, for instance, in the campaign for intervention—but he always sees the map and the war with an artist's eye, and his affections go out to the land that has given him the richest spiritual and artistic gifts.

Deep in the heart of this skeptic there is one faith: art. Behind the melancholy of this pessimist there is one joy: art. In other men he esteems only intelligence, and for him intelligence means the achievement of art or at least the understanding of art. Even in life he seeks that intellectual or physical refinement which after all is art. Even in poverty and in hunger you would find him ready to see and to catch the picturesque or the comic or the colorful aspect of his ill luck, and to turn it into a marvelous page in his memoirs.

This characteristic, the very spinal column of his being, is rarer nowadays than Philistines think. For the Philistine is prone to believe that every man who breaks the rectangular habits of Philistia is an artist—every drawing-teacher, every dauber with disheveled hair, every third-rate journalist. But the true and complete artist—the lyrist, in short, whether he expresses himself in signs, in colors, or in words—is the rarest creature in the whole world. Few, indeed,

are those who live from morning to night ready to see impartially and to express with utter truth.

Among these few Soffici is one of the most fortunate. Free and alone, a man of few needs, accustomed to a simple, wandering life, poverty has not defeated him, obscurity has not discouraged him. He has always found as much love and friendship as he needed, and the world is so large, so complicated, so magnificent, so variegated, warm, and sonorous, that he has never lacked for pleasure. A bit of crayon and a bit of paper, and he is content. He trained himself little by little, grew silently, stored up his gains, was willing to wait and meditate, extracted the essence of countryside and of metropolis; and set forth at last fully confident, armed for any combat, strong enough for any conquest. He came slowly, and late. He came from Paris, and looked as if he came from the country. He came late, but he has advanced beyond his fellows. It is a pleasure and a good fortune to be by his side.

III

I will not speak of his work as painter; it would take too long to trace the stages of his development, from his first Giottesque ventures down to his recent fusion of popular art with the discoveries of cubists and futurists—a fusion

which has given him a novel physiognomy of his own, at once Tuscan and cosmopolitan.

As a writer he began to express himself in French in the *Vagabondages lyriques* which came out between 1904 and 1906 in the *Plume* and in the *Europe artiste*. Toward the end of his long stay in France, he sent to the *Leonardo* (under the name of Stefan Cloud) two or three essays in art criticism, in which, under the rust of lingering ideologies, one could already perceive the vigorous apostle of modern art who was so soon to reveal himself. In a brief polemic entitled *Rentrée* there appeared already the bright color and the impressionistic freshness which were later to develop in full consciousness in the most successful pages of the *Harlequin* and the *Logbook*.

In his first book, a tiny volume of a few score pages, printed (and badly printed) in 1909, the influence of Foscolo, Leopardi, and Carlyle is too apparent. *The Unknown Tuscan* is indeed dedicated to Didimus Clericus, Filippo Ottonieri, and Dr. Teufelsdröckh. The contents of this book are but the floating fragments of a shipwreck, the remnants of a great pessimistic work which was to have been called *Tragedy*.

When the publication of the *Voce* began, Soffici set out with a will to acquaint Italy with foreign art, and with French art in particular. His essays on Cézanne, Dégas, Gauguin, Renoir,

Rousseau, Picasso, and Braque are marvelous examples of loving intelligence and effective evocation. To the same period belongs his generous and successful campaign on behalf of the great Italian sculptor, Medardo Rosso, which culminated in 1911 in the Florentine Exposition of the works of Rosso and of the French impressionists.

At the same time his literary activity was increasing. His book on Rimbaud does not content the latest connoisseurs, though it was Soffici who made known to them the existence of the prodigious creator of the *Illuminations;* but it is none the less one of the best intellectual biographies of an exceptional figure, and it served to reveal the name, the work, and the greatness of the first pure lyrist of France and of Europe.

In *Lemmonio Boreo* Soffici began a sort of satirical romance of adventure in which a contemporary and indigenous Don Quixote sets out, accompanied by force (in the person of Zaccagna) and astuteness (in the person of Spillo), to chastise the rabble and to speak his mind to fools. But the critics did not like the beginning of the work; and the moralists failed to see the beauty of certain pages, and spun theories as to a thesis which did not exist. Soffici was discouraged, and poor Lemmonio's career was cut short at the end of the first volume.

This partial defeat did not lead Soffici to

abandon fiction and poetry. Two or three years later appeared his *Harlequin,* a collection of miscellaneous articles which had been published in the *Voce* or in the *Riviera Ligure.* This volume and the *Logbook* show Soffici at his best, and are among the most precious works of recent literature.

Even today, perhaps, there is more of Soffici in the *Harlequin* than in any other book. It has an extraordinary felicity and limpidity and solidity in color, word, and image—life, novelty, a spontaneous power, a clearness that seems profound by virtue of its very transparency.

But Soffici's greatest success began in the review *Lacerba.* Still moved by his old eagerness for the fragment, the brief note, the registration of autobiographical experience, Soffici began to publish a sort of diary, sentimental and philosophic, pictorial and poetic, which he called his *Logbook.* At first it attracted little attention, but in the course of a few months competent and sensitive readers began to look for it and to enjoy it. Renato Serra was one of the first to discover its great beauty, and had the courage to state his admiration publicly. Soffici, who in his painting had recently turned to futurism, became popular, at least among connoisseurs and radicals. People began to read his other books as well; and within a year's time he had come to be the fashionable writer, the favorite both of

experts and of beginners. When the *Logbook* appeared as a volume, it proved to have lost nothing in interest or in freshness. Its last sections foretokened the complicated structure of the later "lyric compounds."

The *Logbook* was not his only contribution to *Lacerba*. As in the *Voce* he had been the champion and the theorist of impressionism, so in *Lacerba* he was the apostle and the exponent of cubism. His limpid, axiomatic articles, now published in book form, are the best European treatment of the most daring experimental schools of painting.

In *Lacerba* too, from 1914 on, and in the *Voce*, he published the greater part of those "lyric compounds" and "lyric simultaneities" which have recently come out, under the strange title *Bïf§zf + 18*, in a strange sort of album which has for its cover a medley of posters colored by Soffici in the brightest blues, greens, yellows, and reds that are to be found in Italy now that the importation of German dyes has ceased.

IV

The book is limited to three hundred copies, costs five *lire*, and is published in war-time: consequently few will read it. And yet this bizarre volume, which even in the extravagances of its

typography expresses the modernist and mechanistic will of Soffici at play with the most sumptuous poetic counterpoint, will remain one of the most significant and vitally important works of our literature.

This poetry of Soffici, which seeks to bind with the invisible silk of an intense and nervous Pindarism the impressions which from all the universe converge to a brain as luminous and as fiery as a lens of Archimedes—this poetry did not come into being all at once. It had been prepared for slowly and gradually by Soffici himself and by others. But it is only in this book that Soffici reaches full self-consciousness and affirms himself in clear and definitive utterances which give him the right to be listened to, discussed, and recognized. Like all the true poets of this blasé and exacting age, Soffici demands and seeks the pure lyric, the lyric freed from anecdote, from narrative, from external motives, from eloquence, from description. Baudelaire and Rimbaud are the starting point, but the terminus is Soffici. No longer the proud and dolorous Parnassianism of the *Fleurs du mal,* no longer the psychological and fantastic mythology of the *Saison en enfer.* Here at last poetry is sound, color, form, word, a complex reflected image, an immense net of suggestions and reminiscences—freedom within an infinite wealth of forms and shadows. Soffici, with the sensitive

spirit of the liberated lyrist, sets himself in the centre of the world, and so manipulates rays and gems and lights as to construct a super-universe more spiritual, more compact, more subtle, and more gorgeous than the real universe. From one single point issue rays which on numberless paths meet memories and beauties, and imprison and illumine them with a sense of totality deeply realized and enjoyed: just as a ray of sunlight turns the base dust of the street into a whirl of golden points. Without recourse to isolated words, without availing himself, save rarely, of typographical trickery, Soffici succeeds in rendering the transparent and tremendous enigma of the visible world with expressions and suggestions which are absolutely novel to Italian poetry.

To understand these "lyric compounds" one must read and reread them; to realize their importance we must wait for years, perhaps for decades. I am not a literary critic by profession, and no interpretation of mine could take the place of direct examination. I have been a friend and comrade of Soffici for a dozen years; and I am glad to have borne witness for him here as a man who admires him because he understands him.

XVI

SWIFT [1]

JONATHAN SWIFT is one of the four greatest writers of England (Shakespeare and Carlyle are of the same company: the reader may choose the fourth to suit himself).

Gulliver's Travels is one of those few books, pleasant or unpleasant, light or profound, which may be read and reread at all ages, even when other books have been exhausted and laid aside.

Upon the basis of these axiomatic premises, we must necessarily thank the translator and the publisher who have brought out a new Italian edition of Swift's masterpiece. The volume is none too elegant, but it is not repulsive; the translation is by no means perfect (I suspect that it is not based directly on the English text), but it is at least complete, or nearly complete. Italian publishers have usually printed only the first two of the four parts of the *Travels*, since the first two are the parts that are popular among children, amusement seekers, and super-

[1] Written *à propos* of A. Valori's version of *Gulliver's Travels: I viaggi di Gulliver*, Genoa, 1913.

ficial readers. Of the lands to which Gulliver journeyed, the only one that is popular and famous among us is Lilliput. Brobdingnag is a close second. But we have only the vaguest notions of Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, and Glubbdubdrib, and we are quite willing to leave unvisited the land of the terrible Yahoos. But the last two parts are really more characteristic than the first two: their omission in previous Italian editions is then another instance of the fact that excisions are usually ill-judged.

The translator expresses his regret that the work "has always been so slightly and so inaccurately known and so grotesquely interpreted in Italy. Thanks to the absurdity of publishers and of the public *Gulliver's Travels* has been regarded as a book for children, a harmless fantastic romance founded upon an idea that is clever but superficial." The translator is right so far as modern Italy is concerned, but for the sake of justice he should have recalled the fact that in the eighteenth century, even before the death of Swift, Italian men of letters knew him and admired him as a satirist and moralist, and not by any means as an author of extravaganzas for children. Algarotti, for example, cited him often, and called him the modern Lucian. Baretti paid him due esteem, though he once wrote in the *Frusta* that "half of Swift's fancy was always covered with filth." Albergati and

Cesarotti were fond of quoting him; Bettinelli imitated him in one of his poems; and in 1770 Giuseppe Pelli, the Dantist, introduced him as one of the characters in his *Dialogues of the Dead.* So then Italian men of letters of a century and a half ago, when there were no reviews of modern philology, and no volumes on comparative literature, were better acquainted with certain foreign authors than are the Italian writers of today. And I therefore share the translator's hope that this new edition may help to win for *Gulliver's Travels* its rightful place among the most famous works of European literature.

It is, without question, of the highest rank. Swift's book, like most of the masterpieces of European imagination, is an adventurous journey which affords a pretext for a critical survey of humanity. So too the *Odyssey,* the *Divine Comedy, Don Quixote,* and *Faust* are marvelous journeys and at the same time satires on mankind. The books I have named are but the greatest. The mere titles of those of the second rank would cover a page. In all these books we find the same scheme and the same design, varied according to variations in time and in genius—a review of human life (in most cases a sad and bitter review) effected by means of imaginary experiences which may be sublime or fascinating or ridiculous.

Of these fantastic "reports on mankind" Swift's is one of the most extraordinary. The *Odyssey* moves in the world of pagan mythology; the *Divine Comedy* is based on Christian mythology; *Faust* mixes all mythologies; *Don Quixote* remains within the Spanish reality of every day. *Gulliver's Travels* achieves the marvelous without recourse to mythology, and transcends English reality without falling into absurdity. All the author needs is a simple premise, a mere quantitative alteration at the start—men of extraordinary littleness, men of extraordinary hugeness, horses of extraordinary wisdom—and all the rest proceeds with the most orthodox logic, with no trace of specific improbability, without inventive effort. We are within the field of the incredible, yet we are within the field of reality. Strange happenings seem normal, madness assumes the forms of reason. Just a difference in nature, just a shift of dimensions, and we have with the utmost naturalness the most unnatural of worlds. It is the classic method for the creation of the extraordinary, a method to be resumed a century later by Poe for his travels into the realms of mystery.

By thus reducing absurdity to the minimum and gaining in consequence the maximum of effect, Swift succeeded in making *Gulliver's Travels* one of the classic documents of man's scorn for man. The sharp and cynical spirit of

the Dean of St. Patrick's vented itself within the limits of this ingenious device by mocking and humiliating men in all the attitudes and occupations of their lives. Never has an indictment of the cowardice, the weakness, and the foolishness of humanity been fiercer or more complete than that contained in this book for children. Those who believe that pessimism had its rise in Germany in the nineteenth century are blind or forgetful. The most definitive condemnation of life as we live it was uttered in England in the year 1721. Even before Swift's time many of the things whereof men boast, wherein they glory, had been reproached and bitterly attacked. There had been elegiac laments and sarcastic demolitions. But no one had extended such treatment to the whole human race, no one had said these things with such force, with such refined cruelty. Dr. Gulliver, surgeon and average man, seeks in appearance to maintain the dignity and the greatness of his species, and yet the most terrific accusations emerge from his apologetic efforts.

Lemuel Gulliver is honest, intelligent, educated, good-looking; he can reason, he is a man of feeling; and yet his invisible enemy condemns him to be a toy in the hands of giants, and to resemble the disgusting Yahoos, slaves of the wise horses. After we have seen our foolish littleness reflected in the Lilliputians, he reveals

us as still more little by putting one of us amid the giants of Brobdingnag. In Laputa and in Balnibarbi we find our madnesses enlarged and deformed as in a convex mirror. In the island of Glubbdubdrib we find our past; in the land of the Houyhnhnms we find our foul bestiality. Nothing escapes Swift's black hatred. Political divisions are no more important than the division between those who wear high heels and those who wear low heels; religious divisions are like the division between those who crack eggs on the side and those who crack them at the end; ministers of state win their positions by proficiency in dancing on the tight-rope. Kings are proud and pitiless in proportion to their weakness. Woman's beauty appears full of stains and ugliness when it is magnified. All that to us seems glorious and majestic would be but a pygmy's farce to beings greater and wiser than we—as to the King of Brobdingnag, who observed:

> "How contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I: and yet," says he, "I dare engage, these creatures have their titles and distinctions of honour; they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities; they make a figure in dress and equipage; they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray."

But with the hairs of this king's beard, Gulliver makes himself a comb! The same king,

however, by way of unconscious vengeance, proves in a twinkling the defects of parliamentary government, touches the sore spots of English history and administration, and concludes that the majority of Gulliver's fellow-citizens form "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin, that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

Nothing is spared in the implacable review of our miseries: neither our legislation nor our philosophy nor our desire to make war and to conquer. In Laputa and in the academy of Lagado our metaphysicians and our scientists, our schemers and our dreamers, are mocked and laughed to scorn. In Glubbdubdrib the lies of our historians and the weaknesses of our ancestors stand revealed. And in the land of horses the whole human race is pilloried and unspeakably humbled in the image of the Yahoos—wild, vicious, foul, malignant creatures who yet possess a terrible resemblance (if the veils and paints and powders of civilization be disregarded) to the beings that enjoy the full benefits of civilization.

Swift's book does not mount toward redemption. It makes no concessions to optimism. His pitiless hatred for humanity increases from chapter to chapter, even to the final insult. Along the way everything has been denied, everything has been stripped of glamor: politics, religion,

to turn this book—with all its strangeness, sadness, and profundity—into a humorous work, a book for children. It is not a matter of chance that the very pages that make children laugh are those that may well bring tears of shame to the rest of us.

XVII

CAROLINA INVERNIZIO

I

No: this indefatigable woman shall not disappear from the literary scene without a word of farewell, without an expression of deep gratitude. For once, at least, I will play the cavalier, unworthy though I am. I alone will be mourner, critic, and eulogist. I will sacrifice myself. I shall have no rivals, but my tribute will not be venal or ready-made.

Not one of the all too many archimandrites of that historical, anecdotal, impressionistic, pure, impure, or philosophic criticism who are to be found in the generous breadths of this our Italy will take pen in hand and dispense ink and judgment to glorify the prolific and industrious novelist recently borne off by pneumonia from the affection of her family, the curiosity of movie audiences, and the faithful admiration of the multitude. Such silence is unjust; and I, like Cato the Younger, have a liking for lost causes.

Though the critics hold their peace, I will glorify thee, O Carolina Invernizio, lost forever!

A certain serious periodical, the *ne plus ultra* of serious periodicals—suffice it to say that it is printed in my sweet city, only a few steps from that fair San Giovanni in which Dante and the undersigned were baptized—this ultra-serious periodical, to which Carducci once contributed, deigns to inform its readers, at the end of the few lines in which the death of the novelist is reported, that "the productivity of Carolina Invernizio was enormous, and brought a fortune to her publishers, but will certainly not suffice to win a lasting fame for the deceased, who was, however, an excellent wife and a woman of simple ways." Oh, the envious certainties of the anonymous! Who gave thee the right, thou scornful prophet, to foretell literary fortunes? Who, save God above, can pledge the memories of the future? If Carolina Invernizio had been merely an excellent wife and a woman of simple ways, wouldst thou have deigned to speak of her, even to commemorate her? There be millions of excellent and simple-hearted women in Italy: thou couldst scarce register all their holy and devout deaths. But how many canst thou find among them that have won the hearts and the imaginations of all Italy and half America? that have created so many angels of glistening

perfection and so many microcosms of black wickedness?

Enough of these questions, to which the poor anonymous necrologist could not possibly reply. Let us mount to better air, to the realm of feeling. No man who has not devoured *Accursed Loves,* who has not shuddered at *Souls of Mire,* who has not been stirred by *The Miscreant,* who has not quivered under *The Eternal Chain,* who has not sympathized with *A Woman's Heart,* who has not wept for *The Heart of the Laborer,* who has not trembled for *Dora, the Assassin's Daughter,* who has not shivered at the *Dramas of Infidelity,* who has not turned pale before *Thieves of Honor,* who has not been absorbed in *The Crime of the Countess,* who has not been terrified by *The Kiss of the Dead,* who has not been entranced by *The Illegitimate Daughter,* who has not followed in suspense the fate of *The Accursed Woman*—no such man has the right to judge Carolina Invernizio. Nor must we forget the hair-raising *Memoirs of a Grave Digger,* the pathetic *Victims of Love,* the supremely piteous *Orphan of the Ghetto,* the atrocious satire of *Faithless Husbands,* the spectral synthesis of *Paradise and Hell,* the sentimental epic of *Rina, The Angel of the Alps,* the terrible fantasy of *Satanella, or The Dead Hand.*

J'en passe, et des meilleurs. For our Carolina certainly had at least one of the signs of genius:

productivity. The lines and the novels traced by that tireless hand are more than the Alexandrines of Victor Hugo, more than the *autos* of Calderón. We may call them "flowers and hay," to use Manzoni's term; but hay—and if you don't believe it, ask any peasant—is no less precious than flowers. It has its own fragrance, and it feeds beasts who would not touch lilies and roses. You may say that her French rival Xavier de Montépin had an equal abundance of inventive imagination. But he was a man, and a Frenchman; Carolina a woman, and an Italian.

Among the women writers of other lands the only one to whom she may fairly be compared is Ann Radcliffe, authoress of the terrible *Mysteries of Udolpho*—and she, though she died in 1823, is still unforgotten. Among Italians, Mastriani alone can rival the fertility of her unrestrained genius. And yet I would swear that her modern sisters in fiction regarded her with that arrogant scorn of which women alone are capable. Certainly they said that she did not know how to write or to psychologize. But how can you ask, my dear ladies, that an Italian woman should write good, pure, strong Italian prose? Since the time of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, who wrote for her children and not for print, since the time of St. Catherine of Siena, who wrote for Paradise and not for this foolish and sinful earth, since the time of Sister Celeste

Galilei, who wrote for her blind father and not for the publishers, I have never heard of any Italian woman who knew how to write Italian. Surely you would not give the name of true Italian prose to the thin broth of Matilde Serao, the surreptitious delight of boarding-schools? Or to the honest camomile in which the venerable lady who hides under the pastoral name of Neera sets forth her chaste narratives? Or to the colorful swoonings of that pretentious literary dialect which Grazia Deledda manipulates with a Sardinian frankness.

Leave her in peace then—poor Carolina. She wrote just as the words came, to be sure, but she was always intelligible, and, what is more, she was always readable. She too, like her fellow-citizen Alfieri, like her colleague Manzoni, came in her youth to Tuscany to steep herself in the idiom of the Arno. But the Arno, so clear and resplendent when it gushes forth amid the chestnut trees of Falterona, is so muddy and greasy and turbid when it reaches Florence that the beauty of its idiom is gone. And the Academy of the Crusca in its Medicean palace is too high and mighty a lady to receive or help a humble schoolma'am, such as Signora Invernizio then was.

So then you must not seek in her books the full-blown flowers of choice speech that may be gathered from the hopper of the dictionaries.

There are too many people in Italy, from Captain d'Annunzio down, who write by dint of fingering Tommaseo-Bellini. Nor must you seek art. Who now, indeed—save for eight or nine desperate lunatics—really insists on pure art? The *bourgeoisie,* the proletariat, the people who patronize the movies and the circulating libraries, the infallible and sovereign people, demand homicides, infidelities, gendarmes, and swoonings in the moonlight—they demand Carolina Invernizio. They may not give her a place among the approved classic texts. What of it? Neither did Balzac and Zola have the satisfaction of sitting under the dome of the French Academy.

The poverty of her psychology might seem to be a more serious matter. But in this connection it may not be amiss to sketch a brief theory of the novel. Today, amid the squalor and decay of so many literary forms, the novel is nothing more than a stake that serves to uphold all sorts of vines. Rousseau began by putting into the novel the philosophy of sentiment; Walter Scott and Manzoni threw in raw chunks of political and civic history; Dumas *fils,* the mulatto, added social theses; Flaubert, archæology; Weisman, Sienkiewicz and Fogazzaro, Christian apologetics; Zola, treatises on medical science and sociology; Bourget, the psychological problems of souls with an income of fifty thousand francs; Barrès, the battles of contemporary politics;

d'Annunzio, æsthetic exegeses, lyric descriptions, and the history of art. It is too much. The novel should be a novel; that is, a narrative of strange and curious events, a story of unusual happenings. The novel of adventure is the only genuine, legitimate novel. Let him who wants the history of art write books on the history of art; let him who wants religion write on theology; let him who wants psychology turn to psychological studies and manuals. Why should the novel, the very type that has least right to bore the reader, be compelled to serve as the receptacle, the vehicle, the substitute for all these other sciences, arts, and disciplines, beautiful in themselves, no doubt, most worthy and most useful, but utterly unrelated to romance? There is no psychologizing in the *Tristan,* the best and most popular novel of the Middle Ages. The favorite novel of modern times, the *Don Quixote,* is wholly a story of adventure, and does not pause for the analysis of souls. The first European novel, the *Odyssey,* is an unbroken sequence of events, without a trace of introspection. The department-store novel is a discovery of modern times. The novel which seeks to inform, instead of bringing pleasure, is an outcome of the corruption of the *genre.* The knowing, overladen, mixed and composite novel is faithless to its ancestry and its purposes. The great narrators —let us say Boccaccio and Maupassant, to keep

the ancients and the moderns on even terms—did not betray their art. They tell of events, sad or ridiculous, and seek no further. They do not spin psychology. That they leave to their readers or their critics or the professional psychologists.

This simple truth seems to have flashed upon the simple mind of Carolina Invernizio when in her early youth she undertook the writing of her first novel. She was well aware that a novel is written to amuse, and is read for the sake of amusement. So then it calls for many facts, for surprising and intricate combinations, for fancy unrestrained, for plenty of action, for a clever plot in which the splendor of virtue and the shadow of vice shall find their place. Her readers, and especially her feminine readers, have been completely satisfied by novels so composed, and her success is a proof of the intrinsic and undeniable excellence of the method. Her novels have been sold and are still sold by the hundred thousand wherever women's hearts beat for the misfortunes of innocence and the Italian tongue is read and understood. Before the war her publisher, Salani, sent whole shiploads of her novels to South America. And they were sold and were read far more than the works of her superior colleagues, far more than the volumes of De Amicis or d'Annunzio. The editions of her most famous books are as numerous as those of the

Reali di Francia (the one truly Italian romantic epic) or those of *Bertoldo* (the one truly Italian comic hero). So long and so vast a success cannot be without its reasons, nor can all its reasons be to the discredit of the writer or her devotees.

Her success was obtained honestly, without the trumpeting of newspapers or the fanning of critics, without even the aid of mystery or a poetic pseudonym. She did not call herself the Countess of Lara, nor Phœbe, nor the Sphinx, nor the Queen of Luanto, nor Iolanda, nor Cordelia, nor Fate. She was content—being a woman of simple ways, as our friend the paragrapher has it—with the modern and homely name of Carolina Invernizio. And though she married a certain Colonel Quinterno, she died as Carolina Invernizio—at Cuneo, in that sturdy Piedmont where she was born, I believe, in the fateful year of 1860. Her ashes are to be brought to Florence, where first the ways and the hopes of art opened before her. In the half century that witnessed the final resurrection of her fatherland, it was she who rendered Italy independent of foreign importations in the one branch of literature that is so necessary to the mass of the nation—the novel of intrigue and villainy.

Lest it be said that I am too partial to this woman, who has been too much blamed and too much praised (as they said of Voltaire), let me close with the testimony of a keen and disillu-

sioned writer who, though a friend of mine, has exceptionally good taste. Ardengo Soffici relates in his *Logbook* that on a certain occasion he and a companion were both reading novels by Carolina Invernizio. His was *The Villain's Joy;* his companion's was *Mortal Passion:*

> Every now and then we stopped reading to compare notes.
> "How many killed off so far?"
> "Two."
> "Three in mine."
> "What's the heroine like?"
> "Periwinkle eyes, golden hair, pale face, sad mouth."
> "Same here."
> And the rest was what you might expect to find in Zuccoli or Ojetti or Angeli. Nor was it notably inferior.

And that is exactly my opinion, except that I would omit the "notably," and would not hesitate to say the work of Carolina Invernizio is superior at least in that it does not bore one. But a modern Italian novelist who realized that he was *interesting* would think himself dishonored. I, free from prejudice and from Arcadian austerity, admire and salute in the deceased Carolina the first and only Italian rival of the immortal Ponson du Terrail.[1]

[1] The perception of real values is so rare among us that soon after this essay was first published I received a letter of thanks from the husband of the deceased—and her publisher, Salani, asked my permission to reprint it as a preface to a posthumous novel.

XVIII

ALFREDO ORIANI[1]

I

SEVEN years ago there died, after fifty-seven years of restless and imprisoned life, a man whom his fellow men had neither loved nor understood. He died alone as he had lived; he died in this season of death which had inspired his most poetic pages.

One cannot say that he died forgotten, because he had never won fame. The novels written in his youth had aroused a curiosity which failed to develop into glory. His other, stronger books, his books of synthesis, had been received in silence by a generation incapable of understanding them. In recent years a little youthful appreciation had brought the rare smile to that face of his, graven by the acids of melancholy, but had not canceled the look of proud sadness impressed upon it by the neglect of his contem-

[1] Written in October, 1916, for the seventh anniversary of the death of Oriani.

poraries. He had just begun to emerge from the silence into which a deaf and brutal indifference had banished him, when Fate thrust him into that other silence from which there is no emerging save at the summons of glory.

Some three years before Oriani's death, Giosue Carducci had passed to the heaven of recognized glories, amid a national adoration which took well nigh the form of apotheosis. Carducci was a greater man than Oriani, to be sure, but they differed far more widely in fame than in desert. They were not friends, but Oriani would have been the one man worthy to be the companion of Carducci, through the loftiness of his genius and the virility of his eloquence; far more worthy than the so-called disciples of Carducci, who were scarcely capable of following feebly the letter of his work, and were utterly remote from its spirit, from its temper, from its dignity—parlor kittens playing about the bed of a sick lion whose roaring days were over.

As poet and as philologist, Oriani would have suffered by the comparison; but as thinker and as historian he unquestionably surpassed Carducci, and would have surpassed him still more notably had he felt around him that affectionate and intelligent approval which may be scorned by those who fail to win it, but serves none the less to encourage even the most vigorous. Both

men loved Italy with a jealous and passionate love, and both lashed Italy for the faults of her decadence—even as all those who have loved her deeply have reproached her bitterly. And here there is food for the thought of those who regard all that surrounds them as perfect and heroic, who cannot unite the dart of Archilochus to the song of Pindar, who fancy that patriotism is composed of caresses and flatteries.

In Carducci this passion for Italy came chiefly from the practice of art: in Oriani it came from meditation on the past. The former was a lyrist who in the depths of history saw only an indefinite Nemesis; the latter, a "prophet of the past" who brought the dead to life that they might tell their secret to the living, a man who could discern in the nation's experience the manifold elements of an age-long plot, and fateful preparations for the future. Equally intense in their adoration, they drew their nourishment from different sources—those of Carducci more traditional and literary, those of Oriani more conscious and political. Oriani's eloquence was more excited and more modern, and his view, trained to the telescopic perspectives of philosophy, was of longer reach.

To those who have been slow to perceive or quick to forget, this comparison will seem strange and irreverent. Interest in Oriani was revived

by a man whom many esteem even though they differ with him—Benedetto Croce—but the common throng of readers will not permit comparisons between those who have and those who have not received all the licenses, passports, and *visés* of academic, governmental, and journalistic glorification. Without diplomas and brevets, the greatest man is but an outcast—and intermarriages are prohibited as severely as in royal Rome. Alfredo Oriani was not the laureate of any creed, of any party, of any school. Even since his death—though death at times wins pardon for unconventionality in greatness—he has not succeeded in breaking down the invisible wall that shut from him the air and the light of recognition. "Life is a prison without a window," says an English writer. Such it was indeed for Oriani.

But I, being free from legitimist considerations, can and will compare him to the great—not that I may play the Plutarch, nor that I may exalt one who needs no exaltation, but as a matter of didactic necessity. Despite all efforts, Oriani is still unknown; and the only way of giving an impression of him to those who do not know him is to bring him into relation with those who are well known—even though these latter appear far greater than Oriani, even though Oriani be made to seem a casual intruder.

II

The dominant quality of Oriani's style was eloquence. His mental attitude was primarily historic. A writer by instinct, abundant without recourse to the *recherché,* solid but never dull, laconic and epigrammatic in spite of an apparent prolixity, colorful without display, lofty without over-emphasis, he was better qualified to command than to narrate, to persuade than to describe. He was a born orator, though he seldom spoke in public. His prose reflected the constant activity of a mind stirred by high thoughts and qualified to summarize them in rapid and illuminating surveys. His method of proceeding by contrasts and antitheses recalls Victor Hugo and Ferrari, with whom he must certainly have been familiar.

But the orator cannot be a true artist in the sense in which we now use that word: that is, he cannot be disinterested. In the orator, together with the real and powerful art of expression, there exists a desire to convince himself and others which is foreign to the pure artist, since it is of practical origin. When Oriani gave himself up to his own imagination, or when in his novels he succeeded in living in his characters, he approached art as we understand it. He was not always as original or as perfect as others be-

fore or since his time, but he was a true writer of the best Italian quality.

Even in his novels his eloquence now and then got the better of him. Some problem suggested a page of reflection, some name led to an essay in criticism, some story turned into a literary or philosophic discussion—just as some of his biographical portraits began like stories. But throughout his work the life pulsed strongly.

For the eloquence of Oriani was not the empty eloquence of the professional man of letters, nor the sophistical eloquence of the lawyer. It was an eloquence warm with passion, nourished with facts, sustained by ideas, rich in intuitions and in discoveries, an eloquence that sought to persuade both intellect and heart. It transported you, with the freshness of its allusions and the rapidity of its evocations, to the summit of one of those mountains from which—if you have the breath to reach the top—you may perceive all the kingdoms of the earth, all the activities of mankind. It was the eloquence of a historian deeply interested in the past, of a thinker passionately concerned with his problems, of an Italian enamored of Italy. It had nothing in common with that eloquence which is too often the tiny voice of mediocrity transmitted through the megaphone of literature.

When it comes to poetry, I agree with Verlaine's dictum: "Prend l'éloquence et tord-lui le

cou!" But history, even when viewed by a poet, is history and not poetry: that is to say, it is an artistic representation of events, but it is at the same time a meditation on events. That lyric liberty which is independent of subjects and of anecdotes, as we of today maintain, cannot be expected from one who, like Oriani, writes and rewrites a historical discourse on Italy and the Italians.

To my mind, the greatness of Oriani lies in his syntheses, long or short, of the remote or the recent past, and in the marvelous portraits which enliven those syntheses. The only men to whom you can compare him are Carlyle in England, Michelet in France, and Giuseppe Ferrari in Italy. And in some respects he was their superior. He lacked the Englishman's humor and originality; his scholarly preparation was less than that of the Frenchman; the Italian surpassed him in philosophic genius. But no one of the three wrote pages as clean-cut and impressive as those of Oriani—pages in which the poet's sense of life, the philosopher's sense of space, the keenness of the historian, and the filial love of the citizen are fused in a synthesis which wins us completely. Fortunately, too, he did not have the apocalyptic moralizing of Carlyle, the democratic emphasis of Michelet, or the mechanistic and mathematical mania of Ferrari. He equals them in their best qualities, and surpasses them in others.

To Ferrari in particular he owes much, even in point of style—though his style is not without reflections of Foscolo, Guerrazzi, and Carducci as well. It has been pointed out that certain passages in the *Political Struggle in Italy* are derived from Ferrari's *History of the Revolutions of Italy;* but the influence is limited to a single part of Oriani's book, and in any case proves nothing against him, since he, assimilating the skill and the method of Ferrari, was merely going on to discuss epochs not treated by Ferrari, and proving thus that he had the right to take over the results of his predecessor, summarizing and illuminating them.

His *Political Struggle in Italy*—though it is ill proportioned, since the first third goes to the fall of the Napoleonic empire, while the remaining two-thirds treat of the nineteenth century—is the only modern general history of Italy that is more than a storehouse of facts or a manual of dates. It is Oriani's masterpiece, though finer single pages may be found in other volumes, for instance in the collections of miscellaneous essays entitled *To Dogali, Sunset Shadows,* and *Bivouac Fires.*

III

Like all those men of genius whose curiosity is equal to their energy, Oriani was polygonal:

a fortress with spurs and loopholes in every direction. Unlike those narrow spirits who are proud of their fixed itinerary, he did not confine himself to a single path. He was poet and critic, narrator and philosopher, historian and essayist. His activity was as diversified as his mind was concentrated. His fecundity in thought was as great as his facility with the pen. He was as prodigal with the riches of his spirit as only the rich, and the generous rich, can be. In works of widely different purpose and content he maintained himself always upon the same level. Always and everywhere he was true to himself.

There are few men, I think, who can compare with him as essayists. (Does any one still remember that flaccid little Milanese Renan called Gaetano Negri?) His hundred pages on Machiavelli—in *To Dogali*—are hundreds of times truer, deeper, and more instructive than all the volumes of Villari and Tommaseo. Here again, to be sure, the inspiration comes from Ferrari; but it is Oriani whom we have to thank for pointing out the convergence of Machiavelli's glory and greatness in art, in the creation of prose—a truth not even glimpsed by the very man who ought *ex officio* to have discovered it: De Sanctis.

His newspaper articles—in the last years of his life he had to devote much of his time to newspaper work—were very notable indeed. They

were not pleasant improvisations nor witty digressions: they were serious, weighty, ill suited for the public. His ability to mount from the little fact to the great idea, from the fleeting moment to the most remote past or the most fantastic future, from the individual to the universal, from the materialism of appearances to the purity of a transcending idea, shines brilliantly throughout this work. It would seem that in these last years of weariness he sought to accomplish his most heroic feats. In comparison with him Rastignac is but flat champagne, Scarfoglio a parlor volcano, Bergeret a gossip of the tea-table.

But his style could not win popularity. A roughness of manner, a solemn austerity, a passionate eloquence gave sacredness and majesty to every theme he handled. Like the mythical king who turned whatever he touched to gold, so Oriani gave the air of greatness to all subjects, even the most trivial. He was not a man of laughter. Everything was serious to him—love and history, woman and frailty. When his indignation was aroused he could attack a man or an idea with a persistent fusillade of scornful invectives, but he never attained the ridicule that can slay as surely as an insult. His spirit was inherently tragic. He lacked the ability to laugh and to make others laugh; his irony was too

bitter, his mocking turned always into apostrophe or reproach.

In his novels an underlying conviction of the inevitability of sorrow prevents the development of any sense of pleasure. His satire of provincial and *bourgeois* manners is pitiless. Nearly all of his heroes are blameless unfortunates, souls exceptional or commonplace, destined alike to suffering. With the artist's intuition, Oriani has discovered the terrible law that governs great and small—the tendency of life toward a centrifugal futility. The tragedy which fills *Defeat* is more impressive than the detail of any conjugal drama: perfection itself leads to unhappiness. Even under the best conditions human experience tends toward the impossible.

The novels of Oriani are by no means perfect works. Some of them are old-fashioned, others are monotonous. They all lack that exquisiteness and novelty which readers have sought in this popular and ephemeral *genre* since the time of Flaubert. But if we think of the novelists who were contemporary with him, we can do no less than put him on a par, here too, with men who in point of fame surpassed him so much as not to be aware of his existence.

The most popular of these novelists, Fogazzaro and d'Annunzio, are but women in comparison: Fogazzaro a mystic devotee with leanings

toward gallantry; d'Annunzio an adventuress with leanings toward mysticism.

Oriani and Verga, far superior to the other two in sobriety, solidity, honesty, and energy, are the real men of the group. But they are too hard for teeth that prefer sweetmeats (women readers determine popularity!) and by the side of the other two they appear inferior and uncouth. They were both deeply attached to their own regions—Romagna and Sicily—they were both upright artists, sad with a manly sadness, recorders of misfortune and decadence, scorners of ornament and trickery. And they both await a fairer judgment. One of them died all but unknown; the other, all but forgotten, waits still for death.

Oriani did not write any one novel that can be called a masterpiece, but in every one of his novels there are pages in which nature lives in its full freshness of sound and color, pages of relentless and cruel psychology in which the wretched souls of wretched men are revealed with a homicidal lucidity. When the definitive history of the Italian novel of the nineteenth century shall be written, the importance of Oriani will inevitably be recognized, and he will receive the place to which the profundity of his genius and the vigor of his art entitle him. To find his compeers one must go to the great French novelists of the nineteenth century.

IV

This is not intended as a commemorative essay: Oriani does not lend himself to the usual solemnities. Nor is it an introductory essay: it would take a book, not an article, to present Oriani. Nor is it an apology or a vindication: time is working quietly to prepare readers for those who deserve them.

Oriani might have chosen as motto for his *Political Struggle* the proud phrase of Kepler: "My book can wait for its reader." His spiritual life was as sad as his own novels. His love was not requited, his intelligence was not recognized, his greatness remained as lonely as a fire dying uselessly in a desert.

Only in recent years has this hungry wanderer begun to win justice. I am offering my testimony for what it may be worth. My testimony is that of a man called destructive, and yet it is more capable of tenderness and admiration than are many of those who so judge it. My testimony maintains that Oriani is not forgotten and must not be forgotten.

I never knew him personally. In 1905 I had the honor of publishing in the *Leonardo* an unpublished chapter of his *Ideal Revolt;* but I never saw him. Perhaps it is just as well: we should hardly have had time to smooth our angu-

larities through intimacy. But now that he is dead, I feel as though I had known him, I feel him nearer, I might almost say that he has become my friend. I seem to have seen that sad and deeply-lined face of his, those wide-open eyes that saw only high and distant things. I seem to have heard his voice thundering the pleas of idealism amid friends in the café or on the street. But I never knew him.

They say that one evening, not many years before his death, when he was leaving Bologna for Casolavalsenio, he was sitting alone in the dark in a third-class compartment, when some one stepped up to the open door and asked: "Who is in here?"

And out of the darkness came a great deep voice that answered: "The greatest writer in Italy!"

The reply was meant as a melancholy jest and a lyric sarcasm, but it was not without its truth. Alfredo Oriani was in reality one of the greatest Italian writers of the nineteenth century.

XIX

WILLIAM TELL

I

FOUR apples mark the four great epochs of human history—the apple of Eve (the Biblical epoch); the apple of Paris (the Hellenic epoch); the apple of Tell (the mediæval epoch); the apple of Newton (the scientific epoch). The one of the four whose fate I most regret—for apples, unlike the women of Nicea, have souls—is the one the Swiss bowman with the cock's feather transfixed on his son's head.

The first of the four, as we all know, was eaten by our first parents, with consequences that have made us what we are. The second went as award to the fairest creature in all mythology, who bit into it, I hope, in honor of the charming herdsman. The last, though somewhat injured in its fall, gave us the law of universal gravitation, and a great improvement in celestial mechanics.

But the apple of Tell—alas!—gave us the Swiss nation. And what the Swiss nation has given us I refrain from saying.

II

In the history of famous fools—which ought to find a place in the library of every intelligent man—a conspicuous chapter is reserved for that wild cross-bowman who bears the name of William Tell. Much may be forgiven him for the single but valid reason that he is perhaps nothing more than a fiction of the chroniclers, clumsy even in their inventions. But myths are the unconscious revelation of peoples; and this Tell—I can see his green hat set on the bony cube of a head impermeable to thought—gives me the impression of a county-fair hero and a shooting-gallery champion: surely that bow of his never failed to win the goose. 'Twas but a gross and sluggish spirit that could so miss the profound irony of a bailiff content to receive a bow. When a monarch has become but a hat on top of a pole, what more can a free people ask or expect? Was it not indeed an honor that the imperial heir of the Cæsars should deign to govern those tribes of mountainous boors who, now that they are left to themselves, have come to the point of submitting, through the referendum, to the plebiscite of incompetence?

Even in the drama of his greatest champion, Tell cuts but a poor figure. When his more daring friends urge him to conspire for the liberation

of his country, he will have none of it, and puts them off with vague promises. In the famous scene of the shooting, when he might have transfixed the bailiff's heart and escaped (for those around him were his friends), he is content to put the life of his son in jeopardy. He does not attend the night assembly on the Rütli, the true beginning and foundation of Helvetian liberty. His only achievements are the treacherous murder of the bailiff and the expulsion of the assassin of the emperor who was the enemy of his land. It took nothing less than the inflated democracy of the retired military surgeon, inventor of the moralizing brigand, of the Marquis of Posa, and of other *poseurs,* to make that rustic booby of a Tell the hero of a tragedy.

III

Neither the feeble poetry of Schiller nor the vigorous music of Rossini has ever succeeded in making me admire the ill-starred churl. Whenever I see his face, in awkward lithographs scarce worthy of his own awkwardness, I wish intensely that another archer, more ancient and infinitely more modern—the divine Odysseus—might rise before him, draw bow, and split in two the wooden pumpkin that served him for a head.

I intend no offense to free Switzerland, who

calls herself free precisely because she has always sent her children to be the armed servants of the most reactionary kings of Europe, from the Bourbons of Paris to the Bourbons of Naples. And there can be no offense to any one in the statement of this historic truth: that since Switzerland (thanks to the apple of Tell) withdrew from European civilization, she has contributed little or nothing to that civilization. Not one great writer, not one great artist, not one great philosopher. The most glorious Reformed church of Switzerland was founded by a Frenchman. Her writers are a Toepffer or a Keller, her scientists a Lavater or a Haller, her artists a Boecklin or a Hodler—none of them men who have risen above the mediocrity of the valleys.

The one universal man sprung from this land is Jean Jacques Rousseau—who was ashamed of his country, which in turn was ashamed of him, and condemned his books. Rousseau, indeed, was himself a sort of William Tell: but he shot the arrows of paradox not at apples, but at tyranny. And after his death the bloody mushroom growth of the Jacobin tyrants and the Terror grew from the mire of his excesses.

XX

DON QUIXOTE

No soy tan loco ni tan menguado como debo de haberle parecido.—*Don Quixote,* Part I, Chapter XVII.

I

GREAT is the power of genius, even though it be constrained to inhabit the flesh of a swordsman, soldier, slave, accountant, adventurer, prisoner, wandering poet, and needy courtier by the name of Miguel Cervantes.

By virtue of this power the shade of Don Quixote has succeeded in deceiving us. We have been led to think that his life was full of deception in the sense that he was himself deceived by carnivorous men, decadent times, and impossible books. His life was indeed full of deception, but he was himself the deceiver, and we of the succeeding generations have been the ones deceived.

Cervantes does all he can to set before us—like a lank marionette decked out in obsessions ıd scraps of iron—a Don Quixote crazed

through excessive reading, a Don Quixote magnified by his sapient eloquence and still more by his imitative madness. And we of the later generations have adored this Don Quixote as the martyr of a pure, militant, and derided Christianity at odds with the persistent and world-wide life of those baptized pagans for whom convention is truth, idleness is wisdom, comfort is goodness, and bread and meat are the only tangible essence of life. Every man who has challenged this common paganism has thought himself a knight, and has felt on his own shoulders the staves that beat him to the ground. In Don Quixote's wise antique serenity, in his futile love of the good, we moderns have seen a reflection of Socrates and of Christ, both of whom went to death at man's behest because they were better than other men.

Don Quixote has seemed to us but half a martyr: men left him his life—we said—but blows, torments, tortures, and mockeries fell to him as to his models, and at the end, his soul quenched by trickery, he survived only to regain the common imbecility of the world, and to die in his bed more lean than he was before.

This creed has been one of the many "dear illusions" which art, the rival of nature, has prepared for us in these three hundred years. Even Don Quixote has deceived us, and it is our c n fault that we have not realized it before.]

Quixote too, like all those beings, created by God or by genius, who in one point at least attain the absolute, has a secret; and this secret he has at last revealed to me, whose fidelity had been proven in the many quixotic vigils of my youth.[1]

Don Quixote is not mad. He does not go mad in spite of himself. He belongs to the common type of the Brutuses and the Hamlets: he pretends that he is mad. He fashions an extravagant career for himself in order that he may escape the deadly monotony of Argamasilla. In the invention of his difficulties and misfortunes he is quite without fear, because he knows that he is the moving agent, conscious of what he is doing, and ready at any time to put on the brake or turn aside. That is why he is neither tragic nor desperate. His whole adventure is a deliberate amusement. He may well be serene, for he alone knows the truth of the game, and his soul has no room for veritable anguish.

Don Quixote is not in earnest.

II

In order to see clearly into so grievous a mystery, we must dismiss the ostensible evidence of the book itself.

[1] As long ago as 1911 I had come to realise that Don Quixote was not mad, and had said that "the structure of his mind and life was perfectly normal" (*L'altra metà*, p. 134), but I did not [illegible] insist on the true nature of his apparent madness.

Cervantes himself said, and scores of critics have said after him, that he really meant to destroy the *genre* of the romance of chivalry; but this is not to be believed for a moment. It is just another literary trick, akin to the device of "the manuscripts of Cid Hamet Benengeli"—just one of the many tricks to which Cervantes had recourse. The balanced and truly cultured brain of Cervantes could not possibly have harbored such a purpose. The book itself belies it. In the first place, Cervantes satirizes not the romances of chivalry alone, but all literary *genres* without exception. By parody or irony or direct criticism all contemporary literature is condemned, and in particular its most popular forms, the pastoral and the drama.

The chief accusation which Cervantes pretends to bring against the books of chivalry is their improbability. An extraordinary accusation to come from the mouth of him who began with the pastoral improbabilities of the *Galatea*, filled the *Don Quixote* itself with improbable tragic and pastoral adventures, composed a chivalric drama after finishing the first part and before beginning the second part of *Don Quixote*, and at the end of his life reworked, in the *Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, the intricate and improbable voyages of the fantastic Byzantine romance.

Cervantes, a man of taste and imagination, knew, as all of us know, that every work of art

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is by its very nature improbable, even as all those lives and actions and works are improbable which rise above the surface of that round stagnant swamp in which we live. Even in the *Don Quixote* Cervantes, with the justice of a competent artist, saves and defends more than one romance of chivalry. The only ones he throws into the fire are those whose existence is not justified by beauty of expression and imagination.[1]

Nor could he, accepting as reality the Spain of the seventeenth century, claim to regard as utterly improbable the mediæval knightly sagas of Brittany and the Ardennes. To us the contrast between daily life and the marvels of chivalry seems far greater than it really was in the Spain of Cervantes. The grotesque exploits of Don Quixote would be impossible in our well regulated lands. At his first sally gendarmes and doctors would have seized Rocinante and his rider. Even the attack on the windmills and the meeting with the Biscayan would have been impossible.

Furthermore, no absolute contrast between the dreams of Don Quixote and ordinary life is to be found in the novel itself. The inn-keeper and the curate second Don Quixote's whims for reasons of their own; the ducal party and the bachelor and the banditti of Barcelona merely order affairs in such a way that Don Quixote

[1] Part I, Chapter VII.

may have reason to believe himself to be what he claims to be. They think him their fool, but they are the slaves of his fooleries.

But this makes little difference. Even from the point of view of that moment and that *milieu,* there is so much that is improbable in the story of the Manchegan that we cannot reasonably believe that Cervantes really meant to exterminate the absurdities of chivalry in the name of a new realism which, in the last analysis, is but partial and sporadic. Those who hold such an opinion have not reached even the understanding of the letter, and there is little hope of bringing them to admit the probability of other meanings.

Equally wide of the mark are those who see or seek some symbolism in Cervantes' novel. The most frequent of these symbolistic errors, due to the fatuous desire for profundity, is the worn-out legend that the Don Quixote is a modernized version of the mediæval theme of the conflict betwixt soul and body. The lank master is supposed to be the spirit, the ideal, always contradicted by the rotund servitor who represents the flesh and base reality. All other mystic explanations of the *Don Quixote* are of this order: Don Quixote is the ascetic, holy and mad; his companions are sensible, Philistine and mundane.

To attribute a philosophy to the *Don Quixote* is the surest way to falsify it. Any one may take these creatures of the book and make them sym-

bols of whatsoever he chooses, even of the most abstract terms. But in this case it is the book that is lending its names to the speculative dreamer; the man is not interpreting the book. We must endeavor to see Don Quixote as he is, and not regard him as an empty lantern in which we may put any candle that we choose, to give light to those that wander.

I cannot even see the literal Don Quixote as the mystics see him. He is not single-minded and disinterested enough for a supreme incarnation of idealism. He is by no means the Christian altruist that he is made out to be.

If he seeks to cast down the strong and to defend the weak, it is simply because that is the tradition handed down in the tales of knightly deeds. He is an imitator. He has before him a whole gallery of models. If Amadis had been pitiless and unfaithful, he too would have been pitiless and unfaithful. He is vain and proud, he thinks constantly of earthly glory,[1] he aspires to material conquests, he is capable of fictitious inventions.[2]

Nor can Sancho Panza be fairly regarded as the representative of common sense and materialism. Sancho has more actual belief than Don Quixote. Don Quixote believes (or professes to

[1] Instances in Part I, Chapters I and V, and Part II, Chapters V and XXXIX.

[2] With regard to the Cave of Montesinos "he said that he had invented it because it seemed to him in keeping with matters that he had read in his romances": Part II, Chapter XXIV.

believe) in the olden cavaliers; but Sancho believes in Don Quixote, and that is a much more difficult faith. Sancho finds in his increasing veneration for his master a terrestrial ideal far removed from his sure possessions. He dreams a dream; and when—in his island—his dream comes true he reveals himself more enamored of justice than of gain. In short, the only real madman in the book is Sancho, and the usual contrasts between him and his master are utterly invalid.[1]

III

The substance of the book—if we may linger for a moment on this theme before returning to our hero and his deceptions—is by no means such as the allegorists would lead us to believe. The work cannot be regarded as a unity, and the part that still lives for us amounts to perhaps one-third of the whole. The *Don Quixote* is a miscellany which may be easily resolved into its elements. It contains:

Madrigals and burlesque lyrics.
Tales: tragic, pathetic, or romantic.
Literary criticism (reviews and opinions on literary types and individual works—novels, poems, pastorals. At times the expression of opinion takes the form of parody).

[1] "I am madder than he, since I follow and serve him": Part II, Chapter X.

Silva de varias lecciones (oratorical tirades on the usual themes: the Golden Age, poverty, ideal government, marriage, the relative excellence of arms and letters, etc.; a repertory of mediæval and humanistic commonplaces).

If you take away all this stuffing there remains the story of the two travelers—a journey, in short. This *motif* of the journey brings the *Don Quixote* into line with the great books of humanity. The most profound and the most popular of those books are narratives of journeys: the *Odyssey,* the *Æneid,* the *Divine Comedy, Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe,* the *Tales of Sinbad,* the *Persian Letters, Faust, Dead Souls.* For every great book is a timid anticipation of the Last Judgment, and the journey is better adapted than any other device to afford opportunity for the judging of all sorts and conditions of men. The journey means variety and the transcending of limits. Man himself has been represented a thousand times as a pilgrim—a pilgrim with sin for a wallet and death for his goal.

IV

In the midst of this mobile and universal judgment of mankind—goatherds and friars, muleteers and dukes, clodhoppers and gentlemen, lov-

ers and landlords, brigands and bachelors—stands one old man with a secret. He is a case for the psychologists: he attempts to deceive the whole world. But he is not so sly that you cannot catch him at his game. Here and there he betrays himself. The main lines of his plot appear now and then in his words. The threads of his veil of deception are revealed by flashes of full light.

Don Quixote is the man grown tired of the life of every-day.

His poor, homely, respectable life with his curate and his womenfolk bores him to death. All his restricted provinciality, with its scanty moments of relief in hunting or reading, palls upon him. He wants to amuse himself for a while. Chivalry, as he has learned it in the great romances, offers him the bright path of a masquerade without peril. As a man of letters and of experience he understands that he cannot suddenly change his way of life without a pretext. And he sees just one harmless path of liberation: madness.

Partly in earnest and partly in fun he therefore feigns that he is mad. His madness is as noble and as literary as the man himself. It does not interfere with his Catholic faith, so necessary to one who seeks to live without disaster; indeed it takes on the aspect of an evangelical crusade, so far as it may do so within the limits of the indispensable imitation.

But if Don Quixote had been so pure and sincere a Christian as ingenuous readers have believed, he would not have needed the camouflage of chivalry. He might just as well have dedicated himself to God and to the Poor (God's other name) without helmet and lance. He might even have stayed in Argamasilla. He might have spent himself, with a martyr's humility, in the service of those who suffer; he might have remedied injustice; he might have filled simple hearts with a renewing emotion. Instead of imitating knights-errant, he might have imitated the saints who brought salvation. Others had trod this path before his time. They had followed a model, and in their following they had been great and sad. St. Francis, who resolved to imitate Jesus, and willed to imitate him even in the wounds of his hands and his feet, was a purer Don Quixote. Rienzi, whose soul was fired with the reading of Roman history, who dreamed of being the consul of a new republic, was another Don Quixote, more unfortunate, but more authentic. And other great men, like these two, have been exalted by the examples of the past, and have given life and strength without reserve, resplendent even in defeat.

But Don Quixote is more modest and less serious. He is an artist, a charlatan. There are certain elements of sincerity in his behavior: he would really like to be something of a warrior,

something of an adventurer, something of a benefactor. But all this is superficial: there is just enough of it to give a tone to his words and a justification to his enterprise.

On close examination his madness appears to be a clever excuse for going about the world and getting into varied and easily soluble difficulties. There is indeed an element of spiritual and bodily brutality in his enterprise, a confused desire to behold disasters and to share in them—provided he may escape without serious consequences. The very fact that he plays the part of an aristocratic paladin saves him from dangerous plights. It is not permissible for him to fight with boors—yet he knows from the first that he will have chiefly to deal with boors.

Don Quixote decides to seem mad because he desires to seem mad. If he were not believed to be mad, he could not amuse himself, could not wander in the free air, could not expose himself to the chances of the unforeseen. He would be shut in by immediate restraints. He would find no pardon and no sport in those that he might meet.

All this explains why the madness of Don Quixote never seems grave or tragic. If it were a true and serious madness, there would be some reaction, some sorrow, some pain now and then, at the end of a scuffle, or in the presence of a hard reality. On the contrary, whenever men or events

show him that he has made a mistake, Don Quixote remains perfectly calm. He admits the mistake at once, and drops back into the commonplace. At times he himself laughs at his feigned error. At other times he takes refuge in the device of the malevolent enchanters—a story that serves well enough for Sancho, who first believes it and finally makes use of it, turning it against his master when he tells him that the three peasant girls on their donkeys are princesses on their palfreys.[1]

Don Quixote's returns to the truth are painless. A man truly mad, a hero with convictions, would experience distress and anguish at so many material denials, would suffer a thousand deaths in finding himself so obstinately contradicted. But Don Quixote, who knows his own game, and is befooling friends and strangers alike, is never moved to grief. He accepts his defeats as perfectly natural, and regrets only his bumps and bruises—inevitable inconveniences, the small change with which he pays the cost of his unusual pastime. Don Quixote is capable of laughter. He makes fun of Sancho and of himself. His spirit is free. He carries pleasant invention to the utmost, but he cannot carry his pretense to the point of grief, which is inimitable. He moves us to laughter because he himself cannot weep.

[1] Part II, Chapter X.

V

This is no calumny. If you want the proofs, all you have to do is to reread the book with an unprejudiced spirit.

There is in the *Don Quixote* a central point the importance of which has not been recognized by the commentators. This central point, which supplies the key to the whole book, is the deliberate madness assumed in the Sierra Morena.[1] All readers will recall the scene. When they have reached the barren mount of desolation, Don Quixote announces to Sancho that he intends to play the madman to the honor and glory of Dulcinea until Sancho returns. The deceiver reveals himself to the simple spectator. He inserts a confessed madness in the midst of his general pretended madness.

He begins by announcing that he will follow the method of imitation, but that his imitation will be restrained—not too exhausting nor too perilous:

> I intend to imitate Amadis, playing here the desperate, raving, and furious lover, so that I may imitate at the same time the valiant Don Roland.

But he will imitate judiciously. Roland's madness went too far:

[1] Part I, Chapter XXV.

And although I do not intend to imitate Roland completely, in all his mad deeds and words and thoughts, yet I will copy as best I can all that seems to me most essential.

And he concludes with the definite statement of his clear resolution:

Mad I am and mad I must be until thou shalt return with the reply. . . . If the reply be kindly, I shall cease playing the madman. If it be unkind, I shall go mad in very truth, and thus I shall suffer no consciousness of my pain.

One could not ask a more explicit revelation of Don Quixote's secret. He knows that he is not mad, but he wishes to behave as if he were, and his mad exploits are to be merely in imitation of the exploits of famous madmen. The method which he confesses in this one case of deliberate madness superposed upon his primary madness is the very method which he follows in all the other cases in which he does not confess.

In this same passage is to be found his theory —one of the profoundest in the book—as to going mad without cause or reason. On Sancho's asking him why he undertakes so hard a penance when Dulcinea has given him no cause, Don Quixote answers:

There lies the point and the very excellence of my intent. For the knight-errant who goes mad for just cause deserves no thanks; but to go mad without just cause is notable indeed.

Proofs that the madness of Don Quixote is deliberate and not inevitable are to be found on every page. He is well aware of the transformation which real objects must undergo to be adapted to the comedy he is playing. He knows perfectly well, for instance, what sort of a person Dulcinea really is.[1] But he is not satisfied with the image of the gross, hard-working peasant girl whom he, in the refinement of his irony, has chosen to be the lady of his thought. He explains to Sancho that since there cannot be any perfect woman in the world, he has chosen the lowest of them all that he may the better prove the power of his deforming and reforming imagination: "I have fashioned her in my imagination as I would desire her to be." When Sancho brings his report of his mission to the fair one, Don Quixote translates it phrase for phrase into his own language, for he knows that Sancho is describing the truth as he saw it. And later on, when the peasant girls appear on the road at dawn, and Sancho would have Don Quixote believe that they are Dulcinea and her maidens, Don Quixote refuses to accept the hallucination, for the reason that it is imposed upon him by another. He sees the women as they really are, and in order not to reveal his trickery, he has recourse to the old story of the enchanters who transform ob-

[1] "It is enough for me to think and to believe that she is beautiful and virtuous": Part I, Chapter XXV.

jects in his very presence. But he finally admits that Dulcinea is a fantastic and imaginary personage—and this no real madman would ever have done.[1]

In still other cases Don Quixote confesses that he has been mistaken, and is conscious, as he says, of the deceit into which he has fallen.[2] But whenever it suits his fancy he sees things as they are. The tavern is to him a tavern and not a castle; and he recognizes that the helmet of Mambrino is a barber's basin. His principle, which should have revealed the seam of his fiction, is this (and it is the one truly idealistic motive in the whole book): that objects in themselves have no fast and inalienable character, but vary as different men behold them. His system might be defined as an instance of "the will to believe," an anticipation, by three centuries, of the theories of pragmatism—unless it be a reflection, after twenty centuries, of the theories of Protagoras.

This view explains, moreover, the obvious common sense of Don Quixote. All whom he meets are astonished at the good sense of his discourse when it does not refer to matters of chivalry. They call him "a wise fool." And at the end, sincere once more, he proclaims that he is not mad. Does he not openly confess that he in-

[1] Part II, Chapter XXXII.
[2] Instances in Part I, Chapter XLV, and Part II, Chapter XL

vented outright the marvelous phantasmagoria of the Cave of Montesinos?

From the time when he issues from the subterranean world, Sancho himself doubts his truthfulness, and at the Duke's, Don Quixote makes a cynical compact with his squire: "If you will believe my Montesinos story, I will believe your story about Heaven."[1] But the shameless invention stands, and the implied confession was in reality superfluous.[2]

Don Quixote does not succeed in remaining within the limits of perfect pretense. And these slips in his part give a double reënforcement to our discovery: he did not take his game so seriously as to carry it too far. Don Quixote is a pretended madman who betrays himself by his mirth. His tranquillity and his wit depose against him: there is no conflict in his soul. Where there is no seriousness there can be no conflict. Don Quixote jests: true madmen never jest.

VI

The profundity of *Don Quixote*—and there is an element of profundity in the joker of La Mancha—lies elsewhere. For the methods of

[1] "Sancho, since you desire me to believe what you saw in Heaven, I desire you to believe what I saw in the Cave of Montesinos": Part II, Chapter XLI.

[2] See Part II, Chapter XXV.

Don Quixote—deformation and symbolism—are the very methods of modern art, and have a significance which goes far beyond the superficial contrasts hitherto seen in the grotesque epic.

The voluntary deformation of objects has its beginning in arbitrary idealism, and has come to be recognized as an essential characteristic of all creative art. It is that process by which you see only what you want to see, represent only what you want to represent, changing, exaggerating, or reducing even that, according to the internal necessities of the creative will. Don Quixote is in this sense an artist, an artist in life though of literary origin, a true modern artist.

He is a symbolist as well, and a satiric symbolist. His voluntary errors follow a preëstablished plan. They are organically related, and grow directly out of an ironic judgment on the life of mankind. His apparently mad confusions reflect the discovery of hidden likenesses, and are necessary consequences of his skepticism. Consider the best known of these pretended errors in recognition: sheep to him are soldiers; windmills are robber giants; taverns are castles; inn-keepers are knights; basins are helmets; harlots are courtly damsels; serving-maids are enamored ladies; peasant girls are Beatrices; galley-slaves are innocent men.

In order to avoid compromising himself he attributes these mistakes to his madness. But

they are not casual: they reveal the *hidalgo* as a critical and unprejudiced judge. In reality, so he thinks, soldiers are sheep led to the slaughter; lordly castles are but taverns in disguise, where hospitality must be paid for by servility; giants are windmills living on wind and theft; social status is no guarantee of purity; maids are quite as lovable as their mistresses; an ignorant peasant girl, if she be honest and unspoiled, may be the inspiration of a genius that can recognize her worth; prisoners in chains upon the roadside may be more innocent than the jailors who are dragging them to the galleys.

These deliberate identifications, between beings for the most part remote and unlike, allow us to perceive what Don Quixote really thought of men. He had meditated in his loneliness, and he had come at last to know them as they are. Like all those who finally discover the nature of their fellow-beings, he had no choice save to hate them or to make fun of them. He was not a hero of the highest order; he preferred to laugh. So he decided to turn knight, that others, while thinking him their fool, might serve as the toys of his amusement.

His vengeance was successful—for it has remained undiscovered until the present day. But Don Quixote was born to be my brother, first according to the letter, now according to the spirit. He and I understand each other.

paratory work has never been done, and without that work no man, though he be a Titan, can improvise the results.

When once we have finished sampling and can really proceed to assimilate the four or five civilizations of the unknown East, there will ensue profound changes in our ideas about the world and about life, and in the range of our imagination and sensibility.

Just one type of oriental culture, the Hebraic, is really known to the Western world. That culture, in its religious forms, and particularly in its Christian form, was assimilated by Europe in the days of the Roman Empire. And our moral life still centers about a collection of Palestinian writings.

But as yet we have hardly glanced at the other oriental cultures. We stand only in the vestibule. The immense storehouses of Asiatic nurture are scarcely opened. All we have done is to taste a few sips, a few morsels.

Just as in the two centuries that preceded our own Renaissance there were teachers and poets who found the Greeks and Romans for themselves without waiting for the humanists, so for the last two centuries there has been in Europe a considerable importation of oriental thought and art. Translations, contributions, studies, histories. Here and there the light has shone through. Some marvels have become almost fa-

miliar: Arabian fancy in the *Thousand and One Nights;* Persian lyric in the *Rubaiyat;* Indian thought in the *Upanishads* and in Buddha; Japanese painting.

But with respect to the whole, these importations are but the slightest of promises. And they have been limited to a few hundred specialists and a few thousand lovers of poetic, pictorial, and metaphysical curiosities.

The work of the future must be two-fold; to select the best from the entire mass, and to bring that best to universal knowledge. There are marvels of poetry to be found, prodigies of painting and of sculpture, triumphs of invention, depths of wisdom. There is enough in the East to change our opinions as to the very nature of the most essential realities, and to double the keyboard of our sentiments.

II

In this coming Renaissance a major part will fall to China, which now lies prostrate. We are better acquainted with the Arabs, who are nearer neighbors, and with the Indians, through a sense of philological affinity, and because India is a European possession.

China, far greater, but more distant, more enclosed, more heterogeneous, and more timid,

is for us less familiar and less adored. It was once the fashion to exalt China: the Chinese, it was claimed, had invented everything. But reaction led to mockery. And now we talk of Mandarinism, of immobility, of petrifaction. But even supposing that a civilization that has lasted for some dozens of centuries has come to a stop (and who can say that it has stopped indeed?), it remains true that before it stopped it had progressed for a long, long time. And of this living past there remain thousands of works in millions of volumes. What do we know of these works? We know the *King*, translated but seldom read and little understood; the *Tâo Teh King*, often translated and none the less obscure; a few romances; a few brief poems. The Sinologues do not like to translate. What is more, they make their own selections. And on what basis do they choose? They know the Chinese characters and bibliographies and historical systems, but how much taste have they for poetry? Consider, for instance, the translations of poems of the Tang dynasty by Hervey de Saint Denis. Alas! The good man confesses that he has selected for translation those poems which seem to him most significant as historical documents. What a treatment for poetry! The Tang poems are like the dust on a butterfly's wing, and those which have most lyric beauty are still untranslated.

So it goes. China has a marvelous and limitless literature—drama, philosophy, history, romance. No *genre* is missing. One may draw in one's nets heavy-laden, as in a lake where no one has fished before. Who in Europe is really familiar with the poets Li-po, Tu-fu, Wen-kiun, Wang-wei, Po-kin-i, Su-kung-tu? Or the dramatists Wang-chi-fu, Ma-li-yuen, Pe-gen-fu? Or the philosophers Lieh-tze, Yang-min, Kwang-tze, Yang-chu?[1] These are the first names that occur to me out of many that I have seen or heard. They are but a handful drawn from a full granary. And no one of these men is inferior in art or in profundity to the most famous writers of Europe. Yet in Europe there are scarcely fifty people who could read them in the original, and five thousand at the most who may have read some fragments or pronounced their names.

In Italy it is worse yet. The very first Sinologues were Italians—Ricci and Desideri—and there have been others since. But they have either translated little or have translated in verse. Andreozzi has rendered *The Tooth of Buddha* of Shenai-ghan (the one Chinese romance that has come to be fairly well known, thanks to a popular edition); Severini has translated several poems, but more from the Japanese than from

[1]The translator assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the Chinese names cited incidentally in this essay.

the Chinese. Massarani's *Book of Jade* is translated from the French of Judith Gautier; Mario Chini has given us an Italian rendering of the *Si-siang-ki* of Wang-chi-fu, but it is based on the French of Julien, and is merely a verse translation of the poetic portions of the work. The most active Italian translator, who is at the same time the dean of European Sinologues and one of the most truly learned of them all, is Carlo Puini. To him and to Giovanni Vacca, his scholar and my friend, I owe my knowledge of Kwang-tze, one of the noblest of Chinese philosophers, and at the same time an excellent writer.[1]

III

Kwang-tze was a Tâoist, and lived in the fourth century before Christ. Very little is known about his life. The Chinese are not greedy for biographies. They say: "He flourished under such and such a dynasty"—and they ask nothing further.

[1] Translations of passages from Kwang-tze are to be found in several of the works of Puini, and chiefly in his recent *Taoismo* (Lanciano, 1917). Translations by Vacca appear in the *Leonardo* (Florence, 1906). Selections appear in Buber's *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse* (Leipsig, 1910). There are complete English translations by Giles and by James Legge. Legge's translation appears in *The Texts of Tâoism* (Oxford, 1891), Volumes XXXIX and XL of *The Sacred Books of the East*. In the present translation Papini's quotations from an Italian version of Kwang-tse are replaced by the corresponding passages of Legge's translation.

To be a Tâoist means to be a follower—but an intelligent follower—of the doctrine attributed to Lâo-tze, which is condensed in the famous and obscure *Tâo Teh King*.

Tâo means "the way." But in Tâoism it means the principle, the germinating force of the world. This principle, from which all being is derived, animates the world continually as Teh, that is, as potential energy. The development of Teh is Wû-wei, or "inaction." In other words, when nature acts spontaneously it is perfect. Even so man should act, relaxing himself. If he tries to modify, to check, to rule, to find a purpose, he ruins everything. Man has set reason and knowledge over against natural spontaneousness, has tried to do too much; and for this cause he is unhappy. On the contrary, he should but obey his own body, living in purity, that is, in accordance with nature. Thus the spirit itself is saved, all else is transformed into spirit, and perfection and immortality are attained.

Tâoism in its most constant aspect is then a sort of Rousseauism extended from the human creature to the entire field of existence. It implies acceptance, non-resistance, inaction. It is, in short, a recognition of that uselessness which is inscribed at the end of all human exertion. When Tâoism got down to the poets and the people it lost itself in incantations, in materialistic

attempts to win a forced immortality, in semi-scientific formalism. But in Lâo-tze and in the greatest philosophers of the school, it is illumined with paradoxical magnificence. Confucianism seems by comparison a meticulous and utilitarian system of morality designed to bring up honest subjects for the State, and Buddhism a desperate renunciation of nature and of reason alike, a refined anæsthetic for the annihilation of universal grief. Lâo-tze does not seek to change men or to annihilate them, but he points out the path by which, following again the line of natural destiny, they may obtain peace and immortality. "For Lâo-tze," Puini says, "the man who enters into society is the comic figure *par excellence*. And his ridiculousness increases in proportion as he complicates the artificial manner of his life." Putting it roughly, and leaving aside the other points of the doctrine, we may say that Lâo-tze was a Rousseau who appeared six centuries before Christ, instead of coming eighteen centuries after Christ.

By way of a final comparison with Europeans, let me recall the fact that Kwang-tze, since he lived in the fourth century before Christ, was the contemporary of Plato and of Aristotle—to remain in the philosophical field. Unlike them, however, he did not limit himself to the study of logic, physics, and metaphysics, but concerned

himself almost exclusively with that which is of most importance to man: life.

IV

Though he was contemporary with Plato, he makes us think rather of Gorgias or of the Pyrrhonists. Not only is man's knowledge of little or no extent, according to Kwang-tze, but it is almost impossible to transmit it:

> What the world thinks the most valuable exhibition of the Tâo is to be found in books. But books are only a collection of words. Words have what is valuable in them;—what is valuable in words is the ideas they convey. But those ideas are a sequence of something else;—and what that something else is cannot be conveyed by words. When the world, because of the value which it attaches to words, commits them to books, that for which it so values them may not deserve to be valued;—because that which it values is not what is really valuable.
>
> Thus it is that what we look at and can see is (only) the outward form and colour, and what we listen to and can hear is (only) names and sounds. Alas! that men of the world should think that form and colour, name and sound, should be sufficient to give them the real nature of the Tâo. The form and colour, the name and sound, are certainly not sufficient to convey its real nature; and so it is that "the wise do not speak and those who do speak are not wise." How should the world know that real nature?[1]

[1] Legge's translation (see preceding note), Vol. XXXIX, p. 343.

And it is worse yet in the case of the writings of the ancients:

Duke Hwan, seated above in his hall, was (once) reading a book, and the wheelwright Phien was making a wheel below it. Laying aside his hammer and chisel, Phien went up the steps, and said, "I venture to ask your Grace what words you are reading?" The duke said, "The words of the sages." "Are those sages alive?" Phien continued. "They are dead," was the reply. "Then," said the other, "what you, my Ruler, are reading are only the dregs and sediments of those old men." The duke said, "How should you, a wheelwright, have anything to say about the book which I am reading? If you can explain yourself, very well; if you cannot, you shall die!" The wheelwright said, "Your servant will look at the thing from the point of view of his own art. In making a wheel, if I proceed gently, that is pleasant enough, but the workmanship is not strong; if I proceed violently, that is toilsome and the joinings do not fit. If the movements of my hand are neither (too) gentle nor (too) violent, the idea in my mind is realised. But I cannot tell (how to do this) by word of mouth;—there is a knack in it. I cannot teach the knack to my son, nor can my son learn it from me. Thus it is that I am in my seventieth year, and am (still) making wheels in my old age. But these ancients, and what it was not possible for them to convey, are dead and gone:—so then what you, my Ruler, are reading is but their dregs and sediments!" [1]

Kwang-tze does not even believe that knowledge leads to moral improvements: on the contrary, knowledge and law seem to him the causes of the greatest ills:

[1] Vol. XXXIX, pp. 343-44.

According to my idea, those who know well to govern mankind would not act so. The people had their regular and constant nature:—they wove and made themselves clothes; they tilled the ground and got food. This was their common faculty. They were all one in this, and did not form themselves into separate classes; so were they constituted and left to their natural tendencies. . . . But when the sagely men appeared, limping and wheeling about in (the exercise of) benevolence, pressing along and standing on tiptoe in the doing of righteousness, then men universally began to be perplexed. (Those sages also) went to excess in their performances of music, and in their gesticulations in the practice of ceremonies, and then men began to be separated from one another.[1]

In the time of (the Tî) Ho-hsü, the people occupied their dwellings without knowing what they were doing, and walked out without knowing where they were going. They filled their mouths with food and were glad; they slapped their stomachs to express their satisfaction. This was all the ability which they possessed. But when the sagely men appeared, with their bendings and stoppings in ceremonies and music to adjust the persons of all, and hanging up their benevolence and righteousness to excite the endeavours of all to reach them, in order to comfort their minds, then the people began to stump and limp about in their love of knowledge, and strove with one another in their pursuit of gain, so that there was no stopping them:—this was the error of those sagely men.[2]

[1] Vol. XXXIX, pp. 277-78.

[2] Vol. XXXIX, pp. 279-80. Compare Dostoevsky's *Journal of an Author*, April, 1877: "They came to know and to love sadness; they longed for suffering and said that truth could be achieved by suffering alone. Then science appeared among them. When they were angered, they began to talk of brotherhood and humanity, and conceived those ideas. When they committed crime, they invented justice and prescribed for themselves whole codes

That which is the perfectly correct path is not to lose the real character of the nature with which we are endowed. Hence the union (of parts) should not be considered redundance, nor their divergence superfluity; what is long should not be considered too long, nor what is short too short. A duck's legs, for instance, are short, but if we try to lengthen them, it occasions pain; and a crane's legs are long, but if we try to cut off a portion of them, it produces grief.[1]

Therefore if an end were put to sageness and wisdom put away, the great robbers would cease to arise. If jade were put away and pearls broken to bits, the small thieves would not appear. If tallies were burned and seals broken in pieces, the people would become simple and unsophisticated. If pecks were destroyed and steelyards snapped in two, the people would have no wrangling. If the rules of the sages were entirely set aside in the world, a beginning might be made of reasoning with the people.[2]

Looking at the subject in this way, we see that good men do not arise without having the principles of the sages, and that Kih could not have pursued his course without the same principles. But the good men in the world are few, and those who are not good are many;—it follows that the sages benefit the world in a few instances and injure it in many.[3]

The less one does, so Kwang-tze seems to say, the better off one is. That *dolce far niente* which the Abbé Galiani praised in our golden eight-

of laws to maintain it, and to maintain the codes they set up a guillotine." (This translation is quoted from *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, translated by S. Koteliansky and J. M. Murry, Boston, 1916. Papini quotes in Italian.)

[1] Vol. XXXIX, p. 270. [2] Vol. XXXIX, p. 284.
[3] Vol. XXXIX, p. 286.

eenth century is the ideal of Tâoism—not in the beggar's sense of not working, but in the sense of not changing that which nature establishes and impels. Such inaction is regarded by the Tâoists as the indispensable means of ascending to the state of primal spontaneity:

> Come and I will tell you the perfect Tâo. . . . You must be still; you must be pure; not subjecting your body to toil, not agitating your vital force;—then you may live for long. When your eyes see nothing, your ears hear nothing, and your mind knows nothing, your spirit will keep your body, and the body will live long. Watch over what is within you, shut up the avenues that connect you with what is external;—much knowledge is pernicious. . . . Watch over and keep your body, and all things will of themselves give it vigour. I maintain the (original) unity (of these elements), and dwell in the harmony of them. In this way I have cultivated myself for one thousand and two hundred years, and my bodily form has undergone no decay.[1]

It is with life as it is with implements. Thus spake the cook of King Hui:

> A good cook changes his knife every year;—(it may have been injured) in cutting; an ordinary cook changes his every month;—(it may have been) broken. Now my knife has been in use for nineteen years; it has cut up several thousand oxen, and yet its edge is as sharp as if it had newly come from the whetstone.[2]

Kwang-tze does not exalt deathlessness as do the orthodox Tâoists. He knows how little worth

[1] Vol. XXXIX, pp. 298-99. [2] Vol. XXXIX, p. 199.

while life really is to one who looks at it with clear eyes and a strong heart:

I will now tell you, Sir, my views about the condition of man. The eyes wish to look on beauty; the ears to hear music; the mouth to enjoy flavours; the will to be gratified. The greatest longevity man can reach is a hundred years; a medium longevity is eighty years; the lowest longevity is sixty. Take away sickness, pining, bereavement, mourning, anxieties, and calamities, the times when, in any of these, one can open his mouth and laugh, are only four or five days in a month. Heaven and earth have no limit of duration, but the death of man has its (appointed) time.[1]

Death has no terror for Kwang-tze. Man comes and goes; the life of the spirit continues:

He has life; he has death; he comes forth; he enters; but we do not see his form;—all this is what is called the door of Heaven.[2]

Long before the time of Calderón, life seemed to Kwang-tze a dream and nothing more:

Those who dream of (the pleasures of) drinking may in the morning wail and weep; those who dream of wailing and weeping may in the morning be going out to hunt. When they were dreaming they did not know it was a dream; in their dream they may even have tried to interpret it; but when they awoke they knew that it was a dream. And there is the great awaking, after which we shall know that this life was a great dream. All the while, the stupid think they are awake, and with nice discrimination insist on their knowledge; now playing the part of rulers, and now of grooms. Bigoted was that Khiû! He and you are

[1] Vol. XL, pp. 174-75. [2] Vol. XL, p. 85.

both dreaming. I who say that you are dreaming am dreaming myself.[1]

Nay more, death is preferable to life: long before the time of Hamlet, Kwang-tze questioned the skulls of the dead and learned from mouths of bone such truths as mouths of flesh do not reveal:

When Kwang-tze went to Khû, he saw an empty skull, bleached indeed, but still retaining its shape. Tapping it with his horse-switch, he asked it, saying, "Did you, Sir, in your greed of life, fail in the lessons of reason, and come to this? Or did you do so, in the service of a perishing state, by the punishment of the axe? Or was it through your evil conduct, reflecting disgrace on your parents and on your wife and children? Or was it through your hard endurances of cold and hunger? Or was it that you had completed your term of life?"

Having given expression to these questions, he took up the skull and made a pillow of it when he went to sleep. At midnight the skull appeared to him in a dream, and said, "What you said to me was after the fashion of an orator. All your words were about the entanglements of men in their lifetime. There are none of those things after death. Would you like to hear me, Sir, tell you about death?" "I should," said Kwang-tze, and the skull resumed: "In death there are not (the distinctions of) ruler above and minister below. There are none of the phenomena of the four seasons. Tranquil and at ease, our years are those of heaven and earth. No king in his court has greater enjoyment

[1] Vol. XXXIX, pp. 194-95. On this passage see Farinelli, *La vita è un sogno*, Turin, 1916, Vol. I, pp. 21 and 256. Farinelli, however, does not refer to a Chinese comedy which is built entirely on this idea. It is by Chi-yuen, and is called *Hoang-liang-mong* (*The Dream of the Yellow Millet*) and has a Tâoist thesis.

than we have." Kwang-tse did not believe it, and said, "If I could get the Ruler of our Destiny to restore your body to life with its bones and flesh and skin, and to give you back your father and mother, your wife and children, and all your village acquaintances, would you wish me to do so?" The skull stared fixedly at him, knitted its brows, and said, "How should I cast away the enjoyment of my royal court, and undertake again the toils of life among mankind?"[1]

Some reader will exclaim, at this point, that Kwang-tze brings us nothing new, that he is just a mixture of Montaigne, Rousseau, and Leopardi, with a Chinese coloring.

Even if this were true, would the fact that he preceded these men by a score of centuries be of no significance? If intellectual contacts between the East and the West had always been as free as they are today, how many men who have seemed to us the discoverers of new worlds of thought would have appeared rather as late comers and copyists! How many truths we should have learned far earlier!

But the kernel of Kwang-tze's doctrine is new for modern Europe. His Wû-wei, or inaction, is the absolute opposite of our energetic and exhausting manner of life. Our age seems to have as its motto the words of Ibsen: "It makes little difference what one does; the important thing is to be doing. All in all, we may call ourselves a race of doers." Jesus, an oriental, felt the folly

[1] Vol. XL, pp. 6-7.

of this perpetual concern for the body and the needs of the body, and expressed it in imaginative form in his sayings about food and clothing: the fowls of the air sow not, yet God feedeth them; the lilies of the field spin not, yet even Solomon was not so gloriously arrayed. But these words of Jesus have been either misunderstood or distorted into some sense other than the true sense, which is the Tâoist sense. They express a profound confidence that nature will provide for all that is really needful if only man will refrain from stirring up vain desires for superfluous goods. In Europe the praise of inaction is hardly to be found before the eighteenth century, and even then it is rather a witty *tour de force* than the utterance of a serious conviction.[1]

Christian Europe, instead of converting the Jews, has been converted to the Jewish attitude: Christ has been crucified again and again by the demons of industrial and mercantile civilization. For the essential purpose of that civilization is this: to create as many needs as possible in order that we may work to satisfy them as best we can.

The Tâoists in general, and Kwang-tze in particular, have an excellent antidote for that European malady of doing, undoing, doing over, and overdoing, which wastes and annihilates us all.

[1] The idea of inaction is treated, with historical notes as to its velopment, in my book *L'altra metà*, Milan, 1912.

In weakness and in docility lies true strength, according to Lâo-tze and his followers. Consider, they say, the instance of water: there is nothing more gentle, yet nothing that so overwhelms. Christianity prescribes non-resistance to evil, as a consequence of love. Tâoism, long before, had taught that perfection and wisdom consist in non-resistance to the entire universe. Thus at the heart of this apparent pessimism there is an implicit optimistic faith, faith in the original goodness of reality and of its principle, the Tâo. In other Chinese writers this assumption of natural goodness is crystallized in the idea of the natural goodness of man, and—in sharp contrast with the doctrine of original sin, the most profound and terrible doctrine of Christianity—becomes the postulate of common morality centuries before Rousseau. *The Book of the Three Words (San-tze-king)* of Wang-pe-heu, which is used for teaching children to read, begins thus: "The character of man is essentially good."

But it is not impossible to dissociate the theories of primitive perfection and of inaction—as indeed Kwang-tze has done in some measure. No Christian and no European philosopher doubts that man was an evil beast to start with, and that such in essence he has remained. And it is perfectly clear, to any one who reviews the daily round of human activities, that man does

too much, and that by this excess he well-nigh prevents the true inner humanization of his bestial self—for nearly all of our daily acts tend rather to satisfy our native bestial instincts in a more complex, refined, safe, and expensive manner, than to correct the original sin of our swinish and tigerish nature. The primitive man had but his nails and his teeth to fight his rival for the body of a stag: the civilized man has submarines, airplanes, torpedoes, bombs, flame-throwers, gas, hand-grenades, shrapnel, and high explosives to fight his rival for a province. Greed and ferocity have been magnified and armed by science: the human beast is unchanged.

Now the Chinese idea of inaction may help us Europeans to discredit the type of action that is merely an agonizing struggle to obtain satisfactions that do not satisfy. Such, indeed, is all action that does not subserve the only purpose worthy of man: the overcoming of his bestial nature by the substitution of sentiments, habits, checks, and reason. Christianity tells us what to do; Tâoism tells us what not to do. In order that we may do what is essential and divine, we must refrain from doing that which is transitory and useless. Tâoism does not regard the immortal soul as something perfect and ready-made, placed in the body to give it life: the soul is a conquest, a terminus, a reward, a sublimation and a transbstantiation of the body. We have at birth but

a potential soul: we must fashion our souls for ourselves, without wasting our strength in external endeavors, in bodily labors for the service of the body. While Aristotle was plodding through the commonplaces of formal morality, Kwang-tze was setting up one of the pillars of Christian super-wisdom. Twenty-three centuries ago his voice condemned the exhausting mercantile superstition of our day.

XXII

CALDERÓN [1]

I

ARTURO FARINELLI is an extraordinary man. Marino wrote:

> The poet aims to stir the soul to wonder—

Farinelli seems to be carrying the same purpose into the field of literary history.

The first effect his books produce upon the reader is a sense of astonishment. Every one of his volumes is like one of those caves wherein Persian fancy pictures trees laden with rubies, stalactites of emerald, masses of topaz, heaps of diamonds. Everything gleams and flashes in the multiple reflections. If a child enters, he plays with the bright toys. If a miser enters, he crams them in his wallet.

It is not precious stones that shine in the works of Farinelli, but fragments and gems of poetry, of many kinds and of many ages. This jeweler of the spirit has in store all the treasures of

[1] Written *à propos* of Farinelli's *La vita è un sogno* ("Life is a "), Vols. I and II, Turin, 1916.

thought, and he offers them by the handful, by the shovelful, by the cartful, making them sparkle under the eager eyes of his readers. For him there are no Alps nor Pyrenees, no chains that cannot be broken, no oceans that separate. Every realm pays him tribute, every land offers him its tithe of beauty. He has dug deeply in fields where others have but turned the sod. He has followed close after the pioneers in the exploration of unfamiliar lands. If we in Italy were accustomed to elect princes, Farinelli would certainly be the rightful prince of literary erudition.

Nor does he cast his Titanic learning about in haphazard fragments and fagots, as so many have done, especially in Germany. He can arrange and organize his magnificent material. He can embody it in a continuous discourse which moves on toward a single conclusion, though it may assume at times the color of imagery, or the power of eloquence. Farinelli is not a pure scholar, but a great scholar who makes use of his erudition as an architect makes use of stones and bricks. He has ideas, he has feeling; and he knows the most notable expressions of ideas and of feelings in every clime and every period. His books therefore are not external histories of literary *genres*, but histories of single passions or of single theories followed through the masterpieces of all literatures.

Such in particular is his last work, on Calderón's *Life is a Dream.* For this work, when the third volume shall also have appeared, will be a universal history of the concept of life as nullity and illusion.

II

Farinelli states his intention with perfect frankness:

> Calderón has been to me merely a pretext for following through the cycles of the ages that fundamental concept of life on which he built the famous drama which so many praise and so few understand.

The reader must not expect to find here a critical commentary of the usual sort. In the whole first volume the drama of Calderón is scarcely mentioned. That volume contains instead a complete history, rich in information and in comparisons, of those concepts of human life which begin with Buddha and end with the Spanish mystics of the Golden Age. In the second volume Farinelli examines the entire literary work of Calderón with a view to the full discovery of his conception of the world and of life. Only toward the end of the volume does he come to a direct analysis of the famous drama. Thus the play is treated as a single link in the chain of this universal epic of "life as a dream"—a link

which is central and precious, but which appears merely incidental as we look back over the centuries. Here we have a definitive history of a single human intuition, not an exclusive study of one dramatic composition. The vicissitudes of a certain skeptical and pessimistic view of life are traced through religions, mysticisms, mythologies, through fiction and through philosophy—with an intensive treatment of a particular Spanish dramatic masterpiece of the seventeenth century.

The fact that this play stands out as the centre of the research is perhaps a result of the personal predilections of Farinelli, who has devoted the better part of his life to Spanish studies. All students of comparative literature are acquainted with his early studies of Calderón. But those studies were primarily bibliographical. Now the scholar gives place to the thinker; and the thinker proceeds from the examination of a particular plot to the contemplation of a moral drama which has the entire earth as its stage and the saddest geniuses of humanity as its *dramatis personæ*.

Calderón's play has perhaps received more honor than it deserves. It was immensely popular in Europe in the Romantic period, thanks in particular to the two Schlegels and to other German critics. For a time it seemed the choicest fruit of Spanish genius. Some critics rated

it above the greatest creations of Shakespeare. It was translated into all languages. It was revived on the stage. It was tormented by the speciousness of commentators and text-makers. In Italy, where a translation, or rather adaptation, had been made in the seventeenth century, it became popular again in the nineteenth century. Ernesto Rossi played it several times. It was after a performance given by him at Bologna in August, 1869, that Carducci wrote his essay on Calderón—an essay which is mistaken, as Farinelli points out, in its general interpretation and in certain individual facts and opinions, but contains none the less many just and acute remarks.

I have reread *Life is a Dream* in these last few days, in order that I might follow Farinelli more closely. And I have been greatly disappointed.

It was well known, even before the publication of Farinelli's book, that the plot of the drama is not original, and that there is nothing original in the philosophic or mystic concept which gives it character. New and great works are sometimes written, to be sure, on ancient themes and myths: famous instances are to be found in all literatures. But the drama of Calderón is almost entirely lacking in constructive psychology. The conversion of Prince Sigismund when he wakes, as he thinks, from his

dream of power—the event which should have been made the central point of the drama—is as sudden and miraculous as the conversion of any fabled saint. The beast turns human all at once; the ferocious creature becomes courteous and generous; the savage stands forth as a compendium of Christian virtues. As Farinelli says:

> It is precisely this sudden intervention of the superhuman in the human that offends us in the play. Such inexorable suppression of all development in the character of the protagonist, such disregard of nature, makes the human spirit merely the slave of a thesis, of a doctrine.

That is precisely the point. Calderón wrote his drama in order to teach a moral lesson.

The plot is of course familiar. A certain king of Poland, Basilio, an old chatterer swollen with fantastic science, has a son, Sigismund, who is destined, according to the horoscope, to prove a rascal. Basilio therefore has the child imprisoned in a tower on a remote mountain, under the care of another pedantic old man, Clotaldo, who keeps the boy from contact with other human beings, and in ignorance of his identity. But when the boy grows up, the father takes it into his head to bring him out in order to see whether or not the astrologers were right. They give the youth an opiate—an old prescription, well known to the author of the *Arabian Nights* and

to Boccaccio—and carry him into a room in the royal palace. When he wakes and finds out who he is, he goes into a fury, and maltreats those who come into his presence. He throws a man out of a window, insults his doting father, and all but kills his tutor Clotaldo. He is given another sleeping potion, and reawakes as a prisoner in his tower. He is told that he has been dreaming, and he believes it. He reels off a rosary of phrases on the idea that life is a dream and that dreaming is life, and becomes instantly a resigned and repentant model of Christian humility. King Basilio decides to abdicate in favor of the Duke of Moscow, a foreigner; but the army revolts, and soldiers break into the tower, liberate Sigismund, and hail him as king. He thinks he is dreaming again, and for a moment he hesitates. But then a military fury seizes him; and he sets forth. He declares war on his father, conquers him, pardons him, rescues a damsel, chooses a wife forthwith, and ends his career with a final volley of sententiousness.

With this plot there is interwoven a second and minor one which combines the barbarian themes of the daughter recognized by her unknown father, and the abandoned mistress who finally marries her fugitive lover. The public demanded a little complexity, and the ladies demanded a little love—and there had to be at least two heroines to make it a fashionable tale.

But the persons of the drama, whether men or women, have no life, no spiritual complications, no tragic accents or impulses. They utter a series of chilly conceits and pedantic maxims; they give us sermons or madrigals. Clotaldo, by way of informing us that he is going to fire a pistol, speaks thus:

> . . . Aquesta pistola, áspid
> de metal, escupirá
> el veneno penetrante
> de dos balas, cuyo fuego
> será escándalo del aire.[1]

Sigismund compliments Estrella thus:

> ¿Qué dejáis que hacer al sol,
> si os levantáis con el día?
> Dadme á besar vuestra mano,
> en cuya copa de nieve
> el aura candores bebe.[2]

The whole drama is in this tone. Hyperboles and aphorisms, conceits and antitheses, puns and banality. The famous soliloquy of Sigismund ends thus:

> ¿Qué es la vida? un frenesí;
> ¿Qué es la vida? una ilusión,
> una sombra, una ficción,

[1] "This pistol, an asp of metal, will spit forth the piercing poison of two bullets, whose fire will astonish the air."

[2] "What do you leave for the sun to do, if you arise with the dawn? Grant that I kiss your hand, in whose snowy cup the breeze drinks whiteness."

y el mayor bien es pequeño;
que toda la vida es sueño,
y los sueños sueño son.[1]

The mechanical artificiality of Calderón does not escape Farinelli:

The author designs and builds without inner compulsion. The crystallized thought remains dense and unstirred. There is no flow of life-blood in the drama. The words rise dryly; they never come eagerly or with a precipitate rush, and they yield themselves tamely to the skillful arrangement and intention of the artist. Simplicity is gone, selection governs. The commonplace is suppressed, instinct is slain, ornament and decoration are sought above all else. The poet forgets to mould the living clay spontaneously. Affectation becomes nature. In this drama, which deals with eternal human destiny, there are no great eternal utterances. The over-emphasis of the dialogue is on a par with its dialectic subtlety. A persistent play of logic chills the glow of the imagination. Every phrase is passed through the sieve of reflection. The rigid discipline of thought humiliates and ousts mere human feeling. The poet calculates, measures, ordains, divides, disposes.

So far as thought is concerned, the drama contains merely repetitions and amplifications of the very ancient idea that life is a dream. So far as poetry is concerned—there is none. The search for poetry reveals this one bit of ingenuous cynicism, which some follower of Nietzsche might take for his motto:

Nada me parece justo
en siendo contra mi gusto.[2]

[1] "What is life? A frenzy. What is life? An illusion, a shadow, a fiction, and the greatest happiness is small; for all life is a dream, and dreams are a dream."

[2] "Nothing seems to me just if it be contrary to my liking."

The pessimist *à outrance* might perhaps prefer this couplet:

> Pues el delito mayor
> del hombre es haber nacido.[1]

But of the true lyric there is not a trace. Not a single new and lovely image could I find in these thousands of lines. There is perhaps a breath of poetry in this paraphrase for the sunset:

> Antes que la obscura sombra
> sepulte los rayos de oro
> entre verdinegras ondas.[2]

But even here there is a glimpse of a conceit which is by no means new.

Calderón had neither the desire nor the ability to write as a pure poet. In the theatre, indeed, pure poetry is but an intruder. Either the drama kills it, or else it kills the drama. Calderón sought to please his audience—and he succeeded, as the records amply prove. He sought to teach a moral lesson to the grandees of the earth, to picture a prince converted to Christian behavior by the discovery of the mystic commonplace that life is a shadow, an illusion, nothing.

It would be labor lost to seek hidden or lofty meanings in the play. It does not illustrate even that rigid application of a single principle which

[1] "For the greatest sin of man is in having been born."
[2] "Before the dark shadow buries the rays of gold amid green-black waves."

leads at times to magnificent absurdities. Two theories are superposed one on the other: all is a dream; yet one should act, and act worthily. But the first thesis implies the annihilation of action; and the second thesis by implication denies the first. If life is a dream and a fiction, why should we act? And if we must act, and act as Christians rather than beasts, we are forced to conclude that there is something certain in the world, that life has a purpose, that choice is inevitable. But if you thus deny the first thesis, you take away the whole imaginative and moral coloring of the drama, and you have merely a discursive elegiac exhortation, for which a few phrases would have sufficed. If you accept the common Christian thesis, the drama loses background and relief, and becomes an ordinary play in which the sudden and utter transformation of the protagonist has not the slightest motivation. The two theses are interwoven not by logical but by theatrical necessity. *Life is a Dream* might then be defined, in the last analysis, as a pair of old and contradictory ideas combined in old and lifeless forms.

Farinelli is perfectly well aware of the ideological and artistic bankruptcy of Calderón:

> The true drama lies outside the action of the play. It consists in the impossibility of reconciling the doctrine of the nullity of life with the demands of life itself, the world of shadows with the concrete world of this our earth, which

leads us on from stress to stress, from pain to pain. A mere doctrine pretends that it can absorb the practical experience of life, seeks even to make itself identical with life; but its endeavor is arrogant and hopeless. The chasm remains. The idea that life is a dream falls into emptiness, yet Calderón does not realize it. He moves his phantoms hither and yon in a dream-world remote alike from nature and from truth.

Quite so: even in the dream-world there is a certain law of nature, a certain truth. For the dream-world is purely an artistic creation. And the man who does not recognize the power of that truth and the reign of that law is beyond the pale of poetry.

XXIII

MAETERLINCK[1]

I

LET a solemn man with a black cat in his hands lead you into a dark room. Let him begin patiently to rub the cat's fur the wrong way, singing a nonsense song *sotto voce.* If you don't fall asleep too soon you will see sparks fly from the cat's fur. Then the man will begin to talk to you about sparks. Speaking in the low tone that is used in incantations, he will tell you that sparks are products of animal electricity, but that they may well be reflections of the fires of Hell—unless forsooth they be glimmerings of a celestial illumination. The cat, in dread uncertainty, will purr a little, and every now and then will venture a languid meow or will spit in dismay. The solemn man, unmoved, will go on talking in his white and specious voice. He will direct your glance to the pale window, and try to persuade you that the points of light out yonder are stars lost in the sky, or else will-o'-the-

[1] Written *à propos* of Maeterlinck's *l'Hôte Inconnu,* Paris, 1917.

wisps of ancient cemeteries, or possibly fireflies rising from the damp grass; and he will finally suggest that fireflies may well be stars of the infernal world, and that stars may well be will-o'-the-wisps of the world above, and so on *ad infinitum.*

The solemn man is Maurice Maeterlinck. The ambiguous and labyrinthine discourses, interspersed with the meowings of the cat, are the books of Maurice Maeterlinck. Such, at least, is the impression his books have made on me for some time past. And that impression has been strengthened by the reading of his recently published *Unknown Guest,* a little breviary of subliminal marvels.

Maeterlinck's specialty in the field of contemporary literature is the manipulation of mystery for the use of delicate souls. He creates little enigmas in order that he may provide three or four equally possible solutions. He stirs up little anguishes, he plays with quivers and shivers, he prepares dark recesses that he may walk through them with a lantern in his hand and his finger on his lips. He invents terrible problems —and solves them with the utmost amiability. He is a sort of austere Puck, a Puritan clown, a religious gnome. Real mysteries, the true and terrible mysteries, are too much for delicate souls; they cannot swallow them whole. The mystery of dogmas, the mystery of our universal

ignorance, and the mystery of our inevitable death are too hard and too strong for the souls of ladies and gentlemen who can spare only odd moments for metaphysical anxiety.

Maeterlinck breaks up and subdivides his mysteries. He distributes them in digestible doses; he makes them into biscuits, cakes, and candies, he sweetens them with the sugar of poetry, and serves them up in the pastry of literature. Thus the mysteries of life, of the spirit, and of the universe, disguised and powdered, thinned and triturated, appear presentable and edible to men of fashion, to Anglo-Saxon ladies, to young occultists, and to German *Fräulein;* and the books of Maeterlinck take their place on the tea-table between the steaming samovar and the cigarette box.

II

But though his books are full of mystery, there is nothing mysterious in the financial success of this cosmopolitan Belgian who, born at Ghent of a Flemish family, writes in French, publishes by preference in English, and is studied chiefly in German. Paris gave him his reputation, through the famous essay of Mirbeau, published in 1890. The English and the Americans pay him best for his magazine articles. The Germans, naturally,

have taken him most seriously: they have devoted several books to him, and have written treatises on that which in their kindly condescension they term his philosophy.

Polydore Marie Bernard Maeterlinck went to a Jesuit school, and later studied and practiced law. The Jesuits, to be sure, are not very strong on mystery. The more intransigent they are in matters of religion, the more accommodating and mundane they are in school and in life. But it was perhaps from the Jesuits that Maeterlinck got that habit of softening down and smoothing away asperities, that rather sickish sweetness that is almost unctuous, that fondness for unfinished sentences uttered in a low voice, that continual distinguishing and redistinguishing, that saying without saying anything, that love of *nuances,* that silent walking on the *chemin de velours.* Some of his books are but the casuistry of mysticism clad in a dress suit.

He did not long continue the practice of law, and yet he has retained certain forensic traits: the ability to see only what he wants to see, the art of insinuations withdrawn as soon as they are made, a quibbling type of argumentation, a tendency to undertake unsound causes and to indulge in elegant and complicated disquisitions, the habit of methodological procedure, the constant repetition of the very fact that he is seeking to establish as if it were an element of evi-

dence. He often seems to be the lawyer of the subconscious, the attorney of the spirit-world.

In 1886, when he went to Paris, Symbolism was in full swing—and he became a Symbolist. Symbolism is a brief, magnificent movement in French poetry, created by the genius of three or four real Frenchmen, but developed and exploited by Belgians, Flemings, North Americans, and Greeks. The Flemings in particular—suffice it to mention the names of Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, both of them of Teutonic stock, and popular in Germany—succeeded in turning Symbolism to their own great advantage. While Rimbaud was dying forgotten in a hospital at Marseilles, while Verlaine was dragging his poverty and his diseases from one hospital to another, while Mallarmé was giving English lessons to ward off starvation, these Belgians were winning glory—and Maeterlinck was winning wealth.

Maeterlinck was revealed to the hydra-headed public through a generous and exaggerated essay by Octave Mirbeau. Mirbeau was precisely the opposite of Maeterlinck in talent and in nature, but he was carried off his feet by his first reading of the *Princess Maleine,* and declared that the unknown beginner was greater than Shakespeare.

Yet nothing could be less Shakespearean than the plays of Maeterlinck. Shakespeare is virile,

solid, full-blooded, concrete; he can jest and laugh; his spectres are even more substantial than his living men. The father of Hamlet is perfectly capable of knocking Bernardo and Marcellus down when they try to stop him; the ghost of Banquo is more vindictive than any living person. The characters of the early plays of Maeterlinck, on the contrary, are paler and more empty than the phantoms they pursue, and the spirits that disturb them are but the deliquescent reflections of an invisible silence. If the ingenuous Mirbeau, instead of suggesting Shakespeare, had read the plays of Villiers de l'Isle Adam—*Axel,* for example—and had known that Villiers was the first prominent writer visited by Maeterlinck in Paris, he would have perceived more clearly the origins of Maeterlinck's drama of metaphysical marionettes. Later on Maeterlinck himself grew tired of fantastications sobbed forth in a dim light and ending in the chatter of delirious idiots. In *The Blue Bird* he tried his hand at the folktale, with much less wit than our own Gozzi; in *Monna Vanna* he sank into the drama of Fate, with less gorgeousness than our own d'Annunzio.

III

Remy de Gourmont, in a moment of kindliness, wrote an essay on the originality of Maeter-

linck. He too was bewitched by that atmosphere of magic half-shadows full of a tragic-ascetic whispering. But in reality Maeterlinck is a translator, an adapter, a popularizer. He translated Novalis from the German, Ruysbroeck from the Flemish, Ford and Shakespeare from the English. In the *Treasure of the Humble* and in the various *Double Gardens* and *Buried Temples* that followed it, he adapted the religious mysticism of the primitives and the lay mysticism of Carlyle and Emerson. In the *Life of the Bee* and the *Intelligence of Flowers* he popularized the scientific manner of Fabre. Of late, following the tastes of his Anglo-Saxon and German *clientèle,* he has started dispensing the marvels and novelties of occultism and psychical research, not without a dash of spiritism and a sprinkling of theosophy. He began with a book on *Death,* which I read patiently, though I found nothing in it that was worth remembering. Now he continues with his *Unknown Guest,* and my patience is worn out.

In this book, a collection of three or four magazine articles originally published in English, he talks of phantoms of persons living or dead, of psychometry (communication with a dead or distant person by holding in the hand something once touched by that person), of second sight, and of the horses of Elberfeldt. I have not the slightest objection to the careful

study of such problems; indeed, I have studied them myself. But there are only two methods by which they may be studied to advantage: by the collection of data, carefully observed, controlled, and tested; or by the formation of new and specific hypotheses with regard to the causes and varieties of these data. But Maeterlinck follows neither of these methods. He does nothing that is really useful either to science or to thought. He does not adduce a single new fact: once in a while he cites a fact that is perfectly familiar. As to theory, he gives way unashamed to the vagaries of his incurable ambiguity.

He seems to want to believe in a mysterious second soul within us, the reflection of a hidden universal soul; but at the same time he advances the arguments of a pettifogging materialist. He finds some good in the beliefs of spiritism; but he seeks to disregard them as far as possible. He does not scorn theosophy; but he avoids it, and lumps it with all other religions. He is religious; but he recognizes no authority save that of science. He tries to give himself the air of a scientist; but he loses himself in a sea of vague sophistication. You do not know whether he believes in mediums, in general telepathy, or in the intervention of spirits. He would like to believe, but he is afraid to believe; and with all his scruples and reservations, with all his hypocritical attempts at objectivity, he ends with

phrases such as this: "Il est fort possible et même assez probable que les morts nous entourent, puisqu'il est impossible que les morts ne vivent pas."

In short, his book gives the impression of a merry-go-round of useless chatter about ambiguous mysteries. The only thing that is clear is that he is earning money by means of this chatter. The only thing he has done that called for personal exertion was to go to Elberfeldt to see the educated horses of Herr Krall. But his visit adds nothing to what we had learned from the reports of the psychologists who had preceded him. And Maeterlinck himself destroys all the significance which the calculations of the German steeds might be thought to have as a proof of animal intelligence, by pointing out that human calculating prodigies are in general children or half-witted persons who guess mathematical results by a strange sort of intuition, but do not carry through real mathematical operations. What is more, Maeterlinck (who has read Shakespeare, it would seem) ought to have recognized that the horses of Elberfeldt are not a novelty. At the end of the sixteenth century a certain Bankes exhibited in London, before St. Paul's, a horse so well trained that he could count coins, and could carry things to a spectator whose name his master pronounced. Shakespeare refers to him in *Love's Labour Lost.*

Mediocre enough as a poet, Maeterlinck has not even any great aptitude for metaphysics, whatever his French and German admirers may say. He is a parlor occultist, a moralist for old ladies, a syrupy philosopher, a friar without faith, a scientist without clearness, a poet without imagination, a casuist for idle consciences, a fakir of facile marvels. To read him after reading a great philosopher is like smoking opium after climbing a mountain. To read him after reading a great poet is like drinking a cup of camomile after a goblet of old wine.

XXIV

GIOVANNI PAPINI[1]

I

GIOVANNI PAPINI does not need to be introduced to our readers. Every one knows, his friends with even more certainty than his enemies, that he is the ugliest man in Italy (if indeed he deserves the name of man at all), so repulsive that Mirabeau would seem in comparison an academy model, a Discobolus, an Apollo Belvedere. And since the face is the mirror of the soul, as the infinite wisdom of the race informs us in one of its proverbial condensations of experience, no one will be surprised to learn that this Papini is the scoundrel of literature, the blackguard of journalism, the Barabbas of art, the thug of philosophy, the bully of politics, the Apaché of culture, and that he is inextricably involved in all the enterprises of the intellectual underworld. It is also well known that he lives sumptuously and gorgeously, and of course like

[1] Written soon after the publication of *Stroncature* ("Slashings"), Florence, 1916.

a Sybarite, in an inaccessible castle; and that he derives his usual means of sustenance from theft, blackmail, and highway robbery. We may add, though it is scarcely necessary, that his favorite food is the flesh of fools and his favorite drink is warm, steaming human blood.

It is a matter of common knowledge that this creature is the worst of all the churls and boors that feed on Italian soil: rumor has it that he has sworn a Carthaginian hatred against every past or future treatise on good behavior. This shameful rascal goes even so far as to say what he actually thinks. Worse still, he has the audacity to turn on the critics when they annoy him:

> Cet animal est très méchant:
> Quand on l'attaque il se défend!

This Giovanni Papini, this sinister chameleon of the zoölogy of the spirit, has just published a new book, a thick book, an abominable book. If our eyes were not veiled by that natural kindliness which always dominates a well-bred soul, and if our severest words were not shut deep down in our throat and our ink-well by the practical necessity of defending a colleague, we should be tempted to say that not even in the most decadent and vituperative periods of our literature has any one ever applied such a boundless flow of ribald and perfidious terms to men who in spite of their moments of weakness (due,

no doubt, to the influence of Homer's nods), honor the name and genius of Italy among ourselves and before the world. Disgust assails us, nausea overwhelms us, scorn conquers us, indignation stifles us, wrath shakes us, and rage consumes us when we see this miscreant of the pen, this bandit of paper, this outlaw of ink, move to the assault of persons whom the country honors, universities approve, academies reward, foreigners admire, and the *bourgeoisie* respects without knowing why.

Who can witness such an atrocious spectacle without shuddering? Who can be content to stand aside with folded arms? Never shall it be said that filibusters and libelers may devastate with impunity the *hortos conclusos,* the gardens of Armida, the ivory towers and the terrestrial paradises of our literature. Our voice is weak, and modest is our strength. But we rise to protest (with dignity, with nobility, but with energy) against this shameful degeneration of criticism.

II

The volume in question, which the author shamelessly entitles *Slashings*, opens appropriately with several pages of "Boasts," in which Papini insinuates that indignation as well as love may lead to knowledge, since only our enemies

clearly perceive our defects and our failings. But this Tamerlane of literary warfare does not keep to the promise of his title. Of his twenty-four chapters, in fact, there are only eleven that can fairly be called "slashings." The other thirteen are either eulogies of men alive or dead, or cordial presentations of men famous or unknown. And this again is scandalous, and sheds the clearest electric light on the fundamental dishonesty of Papini. Any one who has been so unfortunate as to spend five *lire* in the hope of witnessing a massacre (and in view of the common human instincts one cannot deny *a priori* that such a purchase is possible) would be justified in suing the slasher for an attempt to collect money under false pretenses. For this wretched book contains pages so steeped in affection and so warm with love—and this not only in the chapters in which he is talking of his friends—that it is hard to believe them written by the same murderous hand that wrote the other pages. If the men praised were acquaintances of Papini, the phenomenon might easily be explained as a case of bribery or blackmail. But in almost all these instances the men are dead, and in many cases they have been dead so long that Papini cannot possibly have known them. We confess that we are powerless to solve this enigma, and we console ourselves with the thought—an ancient and excellent idea—that the soul of man

is an abyss where lights and shadows mingle in conflict, to the confusion of the psychologists.

But we must not let this impudent Proteus deceive us. We must not forget that he spends more than fifty pages in an onslaught on that Benedetto Croce, whom the young men of forty-five and fifty years regard as their standard and their lighthouse, that Croce whom all revere—from the *Giornale d'Italia* to the Senate, from Pescasseroli to Texas—as the ultimate intuition and expression of the truth. We must not forget that this Zoilus in the form of Thersites allows himself to attack Gabriele d'Annunzio, our great national poet, novelist, dramatist, and orator, our champion intellectual importer, who, like Ferrero, his only rival in this respect, lives on the results of a most profitable exportation. In this same book he maltreats that Luciano Zuccoli whom all Italian ladies adore; that Sem Benelli whom all Italian second galleries have applauded; that Guido Mazzoni, permanent secretary of the Academy of the Crusca, whose *Bunch of Keys* has admitted him into the Golden Book of Poetry; that Emilio Cecchi who will long remain the dearest hope of young Italian criticism; that Romain Rolland who has undertaken to write a twenty-volume novel, and will sooner or later be declared an honorary citizen of Switzerland. The devouring hunger of this hyena is so boundless that he has even attacked

unreal beings, imagined by the fancy of peoples and of poets. Incredible though it may seem, there are pages here in which, with an unprecedented refinement of malignity, he tears to bits the learned Dr. Faust and the melancholy Prince Hamlet.

The case is all the clearer since the men whom he praises are themselves calumniators: Swift, who calumniated man; Weininger, who calumniated woman; Cervantes, who mocked idealism; Remy de Gourmont, who performed the autopsy on Philistine thought; Tristan Corbière, who ridiculed the whole of humanity, including himself.

Giovanni Papini knows only hatred. His one motive is wrath. He deals only in invective; he delights only in blasphemy. He has gathered the filth of Aretino, the drivel of Annibal Caro, the sinister humor of Antonfrancesco Doni, has beaten up this mess of infection with the whip of Baretti, and then tries to make us swallow it. But we writhe in revolt against the drink, for we, like the child of Tasso, desire a sweet draught, especially now that all these troubles are plunging the world into the darkness of grief.

It is perfectly right that boneheads should be given a drubbing, that undeserved reputations should be reduced to their true level, that the mediocre should be exposed, that bubbles should be pricked, and so on. That is all right. But

this is not the way it should be done. "And the way offends me still," as the Divine Poet makes Signora Francesca da Rimini remark.

The author of this detestable book is still young, and has given evidence of ability to do things not so bad as this. We will remind him, therefore, of a great truth which our fathers have handed down to us, and which we shall entrust as a precious thing to our sons: "Criticism is easy, but art is difficult." And if this stubborn wretch should reply that even criticism may be art, and should persist in his wickedness, we shall retort with a saying of the immortal Manzoni, a saying that is somewhat out of date, but still convenient: "Don't worry, poor creature, it will take more than you to turn Milan upside down."

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