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TESI DI DOTTORATO

Fenomenologia dell'inconscio:

il sogno come limen nella poetica di Luigi Pirandello

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ABSTRACT

(English version)

This abstract is about some of the philosophical, aesthetic and literary aspects of Luigi Pirandello's style. I will follow two different paths: the analysis of the "dream" in Pirandello's production (published and non published works), and the artistic and philosophical confluence of his production with expressionism. I have also considered such phenomenology from its sources to its following development.

I have analysed several critical, literary, scientific and philosophical references, choosing among the immense amount of papers and treaties that have been written on Pirandello's life and works.

The nucleus of my dissertation is the role of the "dream" in Pirandello's works. I will demonstrate that Pirandello uses the dream as a tool: his goal is not that of describing the dreams of his characters, but that of touching the subliminal areas of humanity in order to discover the "other" meanings of the very human soul. I will start from the analysis of the dream from the classical age to Pirandello's age, with particular attention to the meaning and the values of the mysterious dream world and to the way all the authors – classical and modern – have treated this matter.

I will start from the classical world, to be precise, from ancient Greece. There, dreams were very important, as they were often considered messages from the after-world. Some relevant examples are Platone's considerations on dreams in his "Repubblica", Esiodo's "Teogonia", as well as Artemidoro's first scientific researches, not to mention some tragedies like Euripide's "Ifigenia in Tauride", in which dreams can alter the course of events.

From the classical period, I will skip directly to modern times, taking into consideration two big playwrights: William Shakespeare and Calderon de la Barca.

In his plays, Shakespeare often creates quite realistic dream scenes, giving dreams a metaphysical meaning. For him the dream has a double function: it can create ephemeral worlds (like in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"), and it makes you consider the connections between dreams and men's life in an ontological way. Just think of Prospero's most famous cue: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on".

In his work "La vida es sueño", Calderon presents a concept valid also for Pirandello's work analysis. Calderon thinks that there is a close connection between the dream and the dreamer's life. A dream can unveil the real character of the individual. For Calderon "life passes by as a dream, and in our lives we do nothing but play a role which does not touch our actual existence", just like on the stage – the big theatre of the real world – or in a night dream. The protagonist, Sigismondo concludes the play with the words: "La vida es sueño", "Life is a dream".

I will consider, then, nineteenth century writers. This century studies the human soul, its dynamics, its feelings and senses, its passions and conflicts. Pirandello will explore this field and, at the beginning he will be strongly influenced by it.

Authors such as Nikolaj Gogol ("The portrait"), belong to this period. "The portrait" deals with the destroying strength of the dream, and it first uses the dream as a canon. In his "Double dream" Arthur Schnitzel anticipates the scene representations of dream anxiety and through them he observes his characters' emotions and intentions. Following this line, but with more mature – almost psychoanalytical – skills, there is August Strindberg, especially with his work "The Dream".

As many nineteenth century writers are inspired by the results of these new human sciences, the second and third parts of this abstract deal with the basis of some subjects like psychology and phenomenological-existentialist philosophies. The studies and theories by Alfred Binet, Henry Bergson, Gabriel Séailles, Wilhelm Dilthey and Sigmund Freud become the basis for a new line of reasoning. Besides, actual philosophical disciplines, inspired by Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer, lead the knowledge beyond ego worlds, like conscience, spirit and experienced life (*Erlebnis*). The fracture between physical and metaphysical worlds becomes deep. And it gets deeper and deeper with philosophers like Brentano and Husserl who give a new vision of life based on the observation of experienced life, of conscience and behaviour. The individual is not only considered able of thoughts, but also of feelings, sensations, and of listening to other components of his being. The fracture between physical and metaphysical worlds will draw more and more attention, leading to the essential nucleus of man.

Here we find Pirandello, on the border between being and appearing. He observes and feels hidden entities, which are alive, yet concealed from human senses. The dream represents the “window” on the border from which you can master both views: the real world and the ultra-world. Pirandello’s “double” does not lie on two opposite poles, but on the metamorphic co-penetration of two entities belonging to the same nucleus. He does not want the two poles to fight, but he wants them to get close together, looking for the right balance among the different components.

That is the reason why Pirandello’s characters are always dynamic and full of sentimental and physical energy. Even if they appear frozen in their fixed dimension like a dead mask, behind the mask there is a vortex of sensations which clashes with the fixity of reality. Pirandello achieves this result in two different ways: directly, showing the conflicts to his public, or, indirectly, presenting a dream.

Pirandello uses the dream as an allusion – there are very few cases of accounts of dreams, like in “Tu ridi”, “La realtà del sogno” and “Effetti di un sogno interrotto”. His short stories taste like dreams, where too many particles, adverbs, allusions move the action from a physical to a metaphysical world. In order to demonstrate this “limen” between the two worlds, I will analyse in depth the stories “E due!” and “Una giornata”.

The way Pirandello uses the dream is very different from the way Freud and Jung analyse it. He does not use the dream to discover psychological pathologies or human behaviours. He simply wants to observe, know and understand the real components of men, in order to win over the conflicts between being and appearing, trying to achieve a conscientious expression of life.

In “Sogno, (ma forse no)” and in his unpublished musical “Proprio così”, Pirandello demonstrates that dreams can make you live experienced life again, showing its saddest or happiest moments, thanks to an ego that operates following irrational thought. The irrational, though, can listen and understand the rational world. It can use colours, images and remembrances that can be interpreted by the real world.

Finally, with “Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore”, Pirandello goes beyond allusions and illusions, giving birth to “existential meta-theatre”. He creates a place which is more of an art lab or a psychoanalytic set than a real stage. An *Erlebnis*, a vital space where people cannot find the traditional separation between stage (the theatrical creative fiction) and public (human reality). The audience is sentimentally involved in the plot, and characters cannot be separated from both actors and audience.

As if in a huge prism, Pirandello’s theatre world is very similar to Husserl’s living world: it produces multiple reflections all depending on the same nucleus: the prismatic nucleus.

Pirandello lives in a dimension made of pure art, where substance, shapes and rules are not those of reality. Then, from his world he decides to move towards a rational world, dragging a court of characters who – like himself – ask for consideration, attention, peace so to survive in a life full of difficulties and anguish.