

1983

## Luigi Pirandello: existentialist avant la lettre

Madeleine Strong Cincotta  
*University of Wollongong*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

### University of Wollongong

#### Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

---

### Recommended Citation

Cincotta, Madeleine Strong, Luigi Pirandello: existentialist avant la lettre, Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Wollongong, Department of Philosophy, University of Wollongong, 1983.  
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/1623>

LUIGI PIRANDELLO: Existentialist avant la lettre

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of

Ph.D.

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Madeleine Strong Cincotta, B.A., M.A.

Department of Philosophy

1983

## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the Italian Nobel Prize winning author, Luigi Pirandello, far from being merely a rather cerebral writer with a philosophical bent, as he has been called by many of his critics, should in fact be recognised to occupy a place within what is often referred to as the field of Contemporary Continental Philosophy, as a "pre-existentialist" or an existentialist *avant la lettre*

The idea of so categorising him is not new, but no systematic examination of the entire corpus of his works has ever been attempted from a purely philosophical point of view in order to draw from them a coherent and comprehensive philosophy. In the field of philosophy, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, Luigi Pirandello remains unstudied.

This thesis deals with such existentialist themes as freedom, responsibility, anguish, the absurd, bad faith, the nature of reality, the self and the relation of the self to others. Pirandello's views in these areas are compared with those of the recognised existentialist philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, in order to attempt to prove a similarity great enough to enable Luigi Pirandello to be classed as an existentialist *avant la lettre*

## PREFACE

The origin of the idea for this study dates back to a chance re-reading of some Pirandellian short stories in which I discovered, much to my amazement, passages which seemed hauntingly Sartrian. Had I been the first to notice this? Research brought to light the small amount of previous literature in this area and while proving that the idea was not, in fact, new, presented a fascinating but challenging invitation. Could a study examining the entire corpus of Pirandello's works from a rigorously philosophical point of view, prove the hypothesis which had been merely suggested by the *letterati*? The present study is an attempt to respond to that challenge.

Due to the difficulty and the delay which was involved in obtaining certain Italian books in Australia, there are several slight irregularities in the references to Pirandello's works, which, while not affecting the precision of the references, make them less uniform than otherwise would have been the case. No complete single edition of Pirandello's works could be obtained. Therefore, two separate editions had to be used. One includes the five volumes which contain the short stories, the plays, the essays, poetry and miscellaneous writings, and the other includes the two volumes in which are contained all of the novels. Because of the great delay in obtaining these last two volumes, references to several of the novels (Il fu Mattia Pascal, Uno, nessuno e

Centomila, Il turno and Si gira ...) refer instead to other editions in which these novels were published separately.

Being qualified in the Italian language and wishing to remain as faithful as possible to the original works, I have chosen to use my own translations of all quoted passages from Italian works. The translations of passages from Sartre's L'existentialisme est un humanisme are also mine. The only exception to this regards the novel Si gira .... Due again to the delay involved in obtaining this volume, I have used as my source of reference the translation by Charles Scott Moncrieff, entitled Shoot....

In quoting sections of passages, the symbol (...) has been used to indicate that a portion has been omitted. The more usual symbol ... has been reserved for those instances in which the author himself has chosen to use it to indicate a pause or an incomplete thought.

In all footnotes and bibliographic references the standard practice has been followed of underlining only the title of the volume in which collected works such as novels, plays or short stories have been published. Within the body of the thesis, however, for the sake of clarity, the titles of all works have been underlined. Footnotes are to be found in a separate section at the end of the thesis and are numbered consecutively for each chapter.

At this time I wish to thank the University of Wollongong for its generous support of this study in the form of a Post-Graduate Research Award; my Supervisor, Prof. Lauchlan Chipman, who has given unstintingly of both his time and his expertise; and my family which has shown a kind and loving patience without which this thesis could not have been completed. An especial thank you to Prof. Enzo Lauretta, Director of the Institute of Pirandellian Studies in Agrigento, Italy, for his kind invitation to participate in the Sixth Annual International Conference of Pirandellian Studies and to both the University of Wollongong and the Soroptimists International whose financial aid enabled me to accept this invitation and have the opportunity of exchanging ideas with expert "*Pirandellists*" from all over Europe and North America.

Completed this Thirtieth Day of April 1983 and dedicated in loving thanks for his inspiration to my father, Leonard E. Strong.

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <u>CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION</u>                                   | 1   |
| A. <u>Biographical Statement</u> . . . . .                        | 2   |
| B. <u>Choice Between Literary Forms; Essay Versus Fiction</u>     | 4   |
| C. <u>Previous Works in the Area</u> . . . . .                    | 10  |
| D. <u>Purpose, Scope and Format</u> . . . . .                     | 12  |
| <u>CHAPTER II - FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY</u>                    | 15  |
| A. <u>Sartre and Pirandello: A General Comparison</u> . . . . .   | 15  |
| B. <u>Freedom as Exemplified in Il fu Mattia Pascal</u> . . . . . | 26  |
| C. <u>Summary</u> . . . . .                                       | 45  |
| <u>CHAPTER III - THE ABSURD</u>                                   | 46  |
| A. <u>Introduction</u> . . . . .                                  | 46  |
| B. <u>The Nature of the Absurd</u> . . . . .                      | 48  |
| C. <u>Realisation of the Absurd</u> . . . . .                     | 69  |
| D. <u>Reactions to the Absurd and Values in an Absurd World</u>   | 93  |
| E. <u>Summary</u> . . . . .                                       | 190 |
| <u>CHAPTER IV - THE NATURE OF REALITY</u>                         | 192 |
| A. <u>Introduction</u> . . . . .                                  | 192 |
| B. <u>The Subjectivity or 'Relativity' of Reality</u> . . . . .   | 196 |
| C. <u>Summary</u> . . . . .                                       | 225 |
| <u>CHAPTER V - THE SELF AND OTHERS</u>                            | 226 |
| A. <u>Introduction</u> . . . . .                                  | 226 |
| B. <u>Self</u> . . . . .  | 233 |
| C. <u>Relation of Self to Others</u> . . . . .                    | 248 |

|    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| D. | <u>The Other</u> . . . . .                 | 276     |
| E. | <u>Communication</u> . . . . .             | 300     |
| F. | <u>Summary</u> . . . . .                   | 304     |
|    | <br><u>CHAPTER VI - CONCLUDING SUMMARY</u> | <br>312 |
|    | <br><u>FOOTNOTES</u>                       | <br>315 |
|    | <br><u>BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED</u>     | <br>351 |

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Where can the line be drawn between a philosopher and an ordinary writer? Does the distinction stem from the form of his writing? Is the philosophical essay *de rigueur*? Does the distinction lie in the clarity and consistency of the views expressed? Would this lead to the conclusion that in order to be termed a "philosopher", a writer must present ironclad or at least rigorously defended solutions to all of the problems he raises? In fact, while commonly assumed, especially amongst professional philosophers, to be somehow fundamental and obvious, the distinction between a philosopher and an "ordinary" writer is an unclear one at best.

On what basis, then, can we argue that the Italian, Luigi Pirandello, far from being merely a rather cerebral writer with a philosophical bent, as he has been called by many of his critics, including Benedetto Croce, should in fact be recognised to occupy a place within what is often referred to as the field of Contemporary Continental Philosophy, as a "pre-existentialist" or an existentialist *avant la lettre*? Leaving to one side any search for an exhaustive definition of the term "philosopher", let us proceed using two criteria: given an obvious and vast similarity between recognised existentialist philosophical works and much of the literary output of Luigi Pirandello, 1) can Pirandello's works be better or more fully understood in the

light of an existentialist interpretation? and 2) can a study of existentialist philosophy be made more fruitful by the inclusion of Pirandello's works? I shall endeavour to demonstrate that the answer to both of these questions must be an unqualified affirmative since an existentialist interpretation provides the key to many of Luigi Pirandello's works which seem sterile or superficial in the light of any other interpretation<sup>1</sup> and since if indeed the novels, short stories and plays of Pirandello embody so fully and illustrate so well the major existentialist themes, then a study of this philosophy cannot but be more fruitful in the light of these works. What remains to be proven is the assumption that there is indeed an "obvious and vast similarity" between recognised existentialist philosophical works and those of Luigi Pirandello. Before attempting to establish this similarity, let us first proceed to a brief biographical statement, the point of which is to show that much of Pirandello's work comes well before that of the major French existentialists and then to a discussion of his choice of literary forms.

### **A. Biographical Statement**

Luigi Pirandello was born in Agrigento (then known as Girgenti), Sicily, on June 28, 1867. After completing his studies at the *Liceo classico*, during which time he read on his own most of the Greek and Latin classics, he enrolled at the University of Palermo and after a year transferred to the University of Rome. In 1891

he received his doctoral degree from the University of Bonn, where he had gone to study after a minor disciplinary problem at the University of Rome. His dissertation was on the Italian dialect spoken in Agrigento. He remained in Bonn two years before returning to Italy.

Pirandello began his literary career writing poetry. (Mal Giocondo written between 1883 and 1888). The first volume of his innumerable short stories was published in 1894 (Amori senza amore). Around the same time (1893) he wrote his first novel (L'esclusa). Pirandello's first play (L'epologo - La morsa) was published in 1898. There followed over three-hundred short stories, forty-three plays and seven novels as well as a series of scholarly articles and several essays. By 1923 Pirandello's fame was world-wide, primarily on account of his plays, which have been translated into the major languages of the world. In the Proceedings of the International Congress of Pirandellian Studies which took place on the 25th anniversary of his death, there is an entire section composed of fourteen articles all devoted to the history of this author's fame in various countries around the world; from America to Egypt, from Belgium to Bulgaria.<sup>2</sup> In 1934, Pirandello won the Nobel Prize for literature and by the time of his death in 1936, he was truly an international figure of great literary renown.

Jean-Paul Sartre, on the other hand, completed his initiation into Husserl's phenomenology in Berlin in 1933-34 and didn't publish

his principal philosophical work Being and Nothingness until 1943. Albert Camus was born in 1913, five years after the publication of Pirandello's essay on the absurd, L'umorismo, and nine years after the publication of his major work on personal liberty, Il fu Mattia Pascal. Camus' famous essay on the absurd, The Myth of Sisyphus wasn't published until 1942, six years after Pirandello's death.

#### **B. Choice Between Literary Forms: Essay Versus Fiction**

It is not possible to state with certainty why Pirandello was never recognised as a "proper" philosopher, however, there are several factors which undoubtedly contributed to this. Of course, the time and place of his life could be cited. Italy has always had a strong tradition of Aristotelian philosophy. Existentialism is not consistent with the Italian philosophical tradition. The opposition of the then leading philosopher of the day in Italy, Benedetto Croce, was certainly a contributing factor. "For Croce, as is well-known, it was a question of a sterile and inconclusive philosophising, an obscurity which could not but suffocate - according to the principles of the Aesthetics - artistic creation."<sup>3</sup> But perhaps the three major causes of Pirandello's being relegated to the post of a philosopher *manqué* were:

1. the labelling of Pirandello as the philosopher of form versus life by Adriano Tilgher,
2. Pirandello's preference for the novel, the play, and the short story, and
3. his own specific refusal to call himself a philosopher.

In 1922 Adriano Tilgher published a book on the contemporary theatre in which he reduced all of Pirandello's philosophical work to a statement of the doctrine of life as a continuous flux which is killed by the "forms" which we attach to it. This, of course, is indeed one of Pirandello's themes. It is not, however, his major one; and it must be interpreted in the light of the rest of his philosophy. Since it was not, and still is not by many, so interpreted, it was easy to discount Pirandello as any kind of a serious thinker. One idea does not a philosopher make.

Perhaps the chief reasons, however, were and remain Pirandello's steadfast refusal to call himself a philosopher and his preference for the play, the novel and the short story over the essay. To understand the reasons for this refusal and this preference is integral to understanding Pirandello as a philosopher. For him, a philosopher was, above all, a logical and formally ordered thinker in the tradition of Aristotle, one who contemplated life, the world and its meaning almost as if he were

outside of it. Pirandello refused the feigned external stance presupposed by this world-view and rejected logic as its primary tool.

(Logic) is an infernal little machine (...) a type of filter pump which puts the brain in communication with the heart. (...) The brain uses it to pump feelings from the heart, from which it forms ideas. A feeling leaves behind in the filter all that is warm and turbid; it is cooled, purified, idealised. Thus, some poor emotion roused by some particular case, some contingency, often painful, is pumped and filtered by the brain, by means of that little machine, and becomes a general abstract idea; and what follows from this? What follows is that we no longer have to upset ourselves about one particular case, one passing contingency; but we have to poison our whole life with the concentrated extract with the sublimated corrosive of logical deduction. Any many unfortunates think they can cure all the ills of the world with this, and they pump and filter, and pump and filter, until their heart is pumped dry as a cork and their brain is like a chemist's cupboard full of those little

bottles which bear on their labels a skull and crossbones and the legend: POISON.<sup>4</sup>

Pirandello refuses to deal in this "poison" and hence he refuses the title of philosopher. It must be noted, of course, that Pirandello is not dealing with linguistic analysis and might very well have got on splendidly with Frege or Quine. This "rejection of logic" is not to be misconstrued as some facile espousal of illogic, which whatever else might be its consequences would necessarily remove one permanently from the realm of philosophy. Pirandello, like other existentialists, is merely stressing the value of individual human experience as opposed to rigid *a priori* systems.

One of the most basic tenets of existentialism (if existentialism may be said to have tenets) is that which stresses the irreducible value of personal experience. Communication of the content of that uniquely personal phenomenon is held to be impossible. No one person can prescribe for another what life is or how the other should act. To do so on the basis of one's own personal experience would be, among other things, to attempt to communicate the incommunicable. For this reason, most existentialists have used essays only in conjunction with their other works: short stories, plays, and novels, in order to provide a more formal background or a frame of reference against which to interpret these. In a way reminiscent of the early Wittgenstein's distinction between "saying" and "showing",<sup>5</sup> these latter are thought the

proper media for the existentialist writer because they have the power to evoke in the reader (or the audience) those responses, albeit vicariously, which cannot be "explained", "taught", or "said" in an essay.

...existentialists see the right method of philosophising as descriptive or revelatory. The philosopher is not so much concerned to explain or to systematise as to evoke, to show, to reveal. As Heidegger says: "I cannot prove anything in philosophy; but I think I can show some things." And novels, plays, poetry, biography and autobiography can be just as "revealing" as formal philosophical analysis.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, non-existentialist philosophers have also been tempted by this dichotomy between showing and saying or telling, but the existentialists have made this distinction central to their philosophy, and historically they have made more use of the novel and the play than have other philosophers.

In her introduction to Being and Nothingness Mary Warnock describes Sartre's own use of example as not only an illustration but an essential element in Sartre's argumentation. She explains:

(...)we are made to feel and, as it were, experience in our own persons, the shock which the eavesdropper experiences, the change that his internal feelings undergo at the moment when he is aware of being watched. It would have been possible to present an argument which would have led in the same direction, in a far more external, Aristotelian way; we might, that is, simply have been asked to agree to the fact that the emotion of shame entails the idea of another person, and therefore to agree that, if anyone experiences shame, that person at least must believe that other people exist. This would have been possible; but it would not have been an existentialist form of argument. As it is, we are asked not to agree to a proposition but to experience, in imagination a familiar emotion. And while we are under the impact of it, we are asked whether we do not therefore necessarily believe that other people exist, and that they determine our own mode of existence. To understand the anecdote and reject the general conclusion would be to assert a contradiction.<sup>7</sup>

There is, of course, a similar use of illustrative example in Pirandello. Whether it is indeed possible for a literary work to express a philosophic thesis is a question which need not concern us here. The point is that Pirandello has chosen the same set of literary forms as Sartre, and they have both tried to expound their theses by causing the reader or the audience to experience a certain *réalité vécue*. If this is not a valid philosophical methodology--as well it may not be--then Sartre too must be excluded from philosophy, in which case what is to be done with the term "existentialist philosopher"? Hence, the usefulness or legitimacy of an "illustrative" rather than a deductive methodology is not at issue. Rather, given that the recognised existentialist philosophers used such a methodology, Pirandello's choice of literary form cannot of itself exclude him from the title "philosopher".

### C. Previous Works in the Area

We have seen that Pirandello was not recognised as a philosopher during his own life-time. Is, then, the idea of classifying him as a philosopher, and in particular a pre-existentialist philosopher completely new? As far back as 1953 Eric Bentley in his essay "Pirandello's Joy and Torment" suggested that Pirandello's vision had much in common with that of the then contemporary existentialist novelists.<sup>8</sup> In 1961 at the International Congress of Pirandellian Studies held in Venice, Vera Passerì Pignoni

presented a paper, entitled "Luigi Pirandello and Existentialist Philosophy", (published in the Congress Proceedings six years later in order to mark the hundredth anniversary of Pirandello's birth). In 1962 Sergio Pacifici included in A Guide to Contemporary Italian Literature a section on existentialism in which Pirandello figures quite prominently, and in which he specifically refers to Pirandello as an existentialist *avant la lettre*. In 1964, Franz Rauhut published a book entitled Der Junge Pirandello (The Young Pirandello) in which he discusses the existentialist themes found in Pirandello's youthful works, particularly his poetry. The concept of Pirandello as some sort of an existentialist "or pre-existentialist or a forerunner of today's existentialists"<sup>9</sup> therefore, is not new.

What is the purpose then, of going beyond these articles and this book? What in fact is the aim of this thesis? Vera Passeri Pignoni's article, like all other previous works on Pirandello, is written from the point of view of a literary critic and, in the way of literary critics, certain hypotheses are taken as conclusion without sufficient substantiation. This may be due to the fact that it was written for an audience of Pirandello scholars who, the author may have assumed, were both sympathetic to her interpretation as well as being entirely familiar with the supporting examples which were evidently considered too obvious to mention. Nevertheless, construed as a contribution to philosophical

scholarship the article is not sufficiently thorough and rigorous to establish Pirandello as an existentialist. Sergio Pacifici's article is more substantial, and important existentialist themes are noted in Pirandello's works. However, it is a short article which once again has no pretensions at being an in-depth study of the subject. Rauhut's book Der Junge Pirandello is a much more exhaustive study, but it deals primarily with Pirandello's poetry in which are found many very trite themes which are then given an existentialist interpretation. The author defends this by stating that while these themes are platitudes, "platitudes are the most important themes of human thought".<sup>10</sup> As well, many of Rauhut's conclusions are interesting but mere assertions, as, for example, the claim that Pirandello should be classed with the Christian existentialist Gabriel Marcel based only on the "evidence" of two rather mysteriously pantheistic poems of his youth - O Notte, O Sacra notte and O gloriosa pace.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the book limits itself to an examination of Pirandello's youthful works rather than to an examination of the entire corpus of his writings.

#### **D. Purpose, Scope and Format**

This thesis, therefore, attempts to examine all of Pirandello's works in order to discover whether he can be justifiably termed an existentialist *avant la lettre*. No attempt is being made to justify existentialism itself, as this would be a quite different task and one better done by someone more sympathetic to that

philosophy. Nor is it asserted that Pirandello's ideas are wholly original,<sup>12</sup> any more than are those of Sartre, for example. The interesting question presents itself whether Sartre may have derived some of his philosophy from Pirandello, whose plays, after all, were translated into French and presented before enthusiastic Parisian audiences. M. Sartre, himself, before his death refused to enlighten us on this matter, either in print or by way of personal correspondence, and such a conclusion remains outside of the scope of this thesis. The research contained herein, however, will, it is hoped, be of use to some future historian of ideas who may perhaps be able to establish some causal relation between the similarities found in these two writers.

It is assumed that the reader will have some general knowledge of French existentialism, but it is not assumed that he will be in any way familiar with the works of Pirandello. For this reason, extensive use has been made of quotations, and of any story to which reference has been made, the plot and themes have been at least briefly discussed.

The principle of division of this thesis into chapters has been a thematic one. Thus each chapter will deal with a major existentialist theme and will be further divided into relevant minor themes.

Let us now proceed to an analysis of the works of Luigi Pirandello to see if we can establish an "obvious and vast similarity" to recognised existentialist works, a similarity which will be sufficient for us to term him an existentialist *avant la lettre*.

The major themes which will be examined in this thesis include freedom; the "absurd" with its effect on a theory of values and the related notion of "bad faith"; the nature of reality; and the self and its relation to others.

## CHAPTER II - FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

### A. Sartre and Pirandello; a General Comparison

Individual freedom and responsibility are the fundamental concepts which lie at the basis of Sartre's existentialism. As he states in his popular essay L'Existentialisme est un humanisme:

(...) there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. (...) Thus, we have neither behind us nor before us, in the luminous domain of values, either justifications or excuses. We are alone, without excuses. It is this which I will express by saying that man is condemned to be free. (...) he is responsible for all that he does.<sup>1</sup>

Comparing the ideas of Sartre and Pirandello yields some very interesting parallels. The following are several well-known views concerning individual freedom, as held by Jean-Paul Sartre, (at least in the earlier part of his career before he became Marxist and then Maoist). Let us examine how closely the ideas of Pirandello resemble these.

1. According to Sartre, for men there is no such antecedently given thing as what Medieval philosophers called "essence". Existence precedes essence. First man exists. He then becomes aware of

himself and begins to define himself. At first he is nothing. Afterwards he will be what he will have made himself to be.<sup>2</sup>

For Sartre freedom is identical with man's existence.

(...) freedom in its foundation coincides with the nothingness which is at the heart of man. Human reality is free because it is not enough. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be. It is free, finally, because its present being is itself a nothingness in the form of the "reflection-reflecting". Man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself. The being which is what it is can not be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human reality to make itself instead of to be. As we have seen, for human reality, to be is to choose oneself; nothing comes to it either from the outside or from within which it can receive or accept.<sup>3</sup>

Freedom is the being of man.

Thus freedom is not a being; it is the being of man - i.e. his nothingness of being. If we start by conceiving man as a plenum, it is absurd to try to find in him afterwards moments or psychic regions in which he would be free. As well look for emptiness in a container which one has filled beforehand up to the brim! Man can not be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all.<sup>4</sup>

Pirandello was not worried about justifying his position, so he did not bother about the "technical" matter of whether existence precedes essence or not. However, Pirandello questions over and over what the "essence" of man is. Time and time again his characters (as Sartre would say) rise up in the world, meet themselves and find that they are nothing until and unless they will use their freedom to make themselves whatever it is they choose. In fact, the final line of Pirandello's play Trovarsi is precisely this conclusion: "One must create oneself, create! And then only one finds oneself."

2. For Sartre, the decision as to what one would like to be is not a decision made by the will alone; that is, the decision cannot be said to have been made until whatever thoughts one may have are translated into acts, for it is acts which count,

not words or intentions. Intentions and motives cannot be looked at separately as if they were the "causes" of an act for we choose our intentions and our motives as well.

(...) it is in fact impossible to find an act without a motive but this does not mean that we must conclude that the motive causes the act; the motive is an integral part of the act. For as the resolute project toward a change is not distinct from the act, the motive, the act, and the end are all constituted in a single upsurge. Each of these three structures claims the two others as its meaning. But the organised totality of the three is no longer explained by any particular structure, and its upsurge as the pure temporalizing nihilation of the in-itself is one with freedom. It is the act which decides its end and its motives, and the act is the expression of freedom.<sup>5</sup>

Feelings too are made up of acts, which we choose. Passions have no power of themselves because we choose our own passions. "There is no love except that which we show in acts and no genius but that which is expressed in works of art."<sup>6</sup>

Pirandello is in perfect accord with Sartre here. He stresses the existence of conflicting passions and how one must choose freely between them as does Sartre in his (Sartre's) famous example of the young man who cannot choose between patriotism and duty, and love toward his mother and so cannot decide if he should stay home by her side or go off to join the Resistance. Pirandello's play La Signora Morli, una e due is very much to the point here. Should the Signora remain true to her lover or leave him and return to her husband? What values should be chosen and on what basis? Pirandello stresses another difficulty, however. While it is true that words do not have the value that acts have and to simply "wish" to be something which one is not has no value at all, even acts are extremely subjective. For Pirandello, there is no "objective" value to a particular act. There is the act as I intend it to be. There is the completed act as I see it, the act as it is seen by another person and another and another, an infinite series of acts which can therefore have no "objective" value. We do have, however, total responsibility for our acts and therefore our existence, as we shall see in more detail later on.

Nor, insists Sartre, is a temperament an act. "There is always the possibility for the coward to cease being a coward or for the hero to cease being a hero."<sup>7</sup>

(...) for consciousness (there is) the permanent possibility of effecting a rupture with its own

past, of wrenching itself away from its past so as to be able to consider it in the light of a non-being and so as to be able to confer on it the meaning which it does not have. Under no circumstances can the past in any way by itself produce an act.<sup>8</sup>

Pirandello agrees but stresses the difficulty of such a change. Pirandello uses the image of a mask (or many masks) which each of us wears. After a shock or some kind of bizarre experience, or sometimes merely as the result of reflection, with a feeling of nausea and vertigo, we see ourselves as we are, unmasked, and this may be the turning point (as in Sartre's Nausea, which was written two years after Pirandello's death!) in our lives at which point we either sink into "nothingness" or affirm our liberty.

3. Because of the great weight of responsibility placed upon us by this total freedom from any objective values, one lives continuously in a state of "metaphysical anguish". It would be so much easier to act according to some *a priori* code or because of some inner necessity. If we succumb to the temptation to deny our responsibility and make our human nature, society or some other so-called necessity the arbiter of our actions so as to escape this anguish, we are in what Sartre calls "bad faith".

We are not free not to be free. This would be to deny our own being which is freedom. It would be a form of "bad faith".

We said that freedom is not free not to be free and that it is not free not to exist. This is because the fact of not being able not to be free is the facticity of freedom, and the fact of not being able not to exist is its contingency. Contingency and facticity are really one; there is a being which freedom has to be in the form of non-being (that is, of nihilation). To exist as the fact of freedom or to have to be a being in midst of the world are one and the same thing, and this means that freedom is originally a relation to the given.<sup>9</sup>

Pirandello also illustrates this theme, especially in Il fu Mattia Pascal, but he sees all around himself examples of people choosing not to be free and he shows an attitude toward them which is perhaps somewhat more compassionate than Sartre's.

However Pirandello is in complete agreement with Sartre (see especially Non si sa come and Il Fu Mattia Pascal). Over and over again, while stressing the difficulties, he contrasts those characters who assume their responsibility and live their freedom with those who see themselves as prisoners of life, society or

whatever other excuse they have constructed for themselves. The difficulty of changing from being this latter type of person to one who accepts his freedom and his consequent responsibility is a major Pirandellian theme as will be seen in the following section concerning Il fu Mattia Pascal,

4. Sartre insists that we must draw the full consequences of atheism. Not only is God a useless and costly hypothesis which we must give up, but Sartre believes that since He does not exist, there can be no *a priori* values. This is an obvious *non sequitur*, but in order to avoid what, for present purposes, would be an irrelevant discussion on this issue, let us take these as two separate postulates of Sartre's existentialism: there are no *a priori* values, and God does not exist. We choose the values which we want, and it is our choice alone which confers upon them their value. We are free to choose as we think best.

Mary Warnock, in her introduction to Being and Nothingness puts quite succinctly Sartre's ideas concerning the origin of values:

We can understand, moreover, how it is that human beings inevitably ascribe values to things. Without any contrivance, just by perceiving the world, they perceive values. Values 'spring up around them like partridges.' But the chief

lesson which we should learn is to avoid the 'spirit of seriousness'. This is defined(...) as that which makes us pretend that values are absolute, given somehow independently of any human subjective judgment. This spirit makes us pretend that the quality of being desirable or undesirable is somehow a quality of the things themselves, like redness or roundness. Once this spirit has been dismissed, then it necessarily follows that a man will recognise himself as the source of all values, and when he has done this it will follow that he realizes that he can choose to value whatever he likes, and is free from the restraint of the conventional, the established or the apparently inescapable bonds of duty or taboo.<sup>10</sup>

Pirandello came from a society where the notion of God permeated the entire social structure. Because of this, Pirandello treads rather lightly in this area. Certainly he rejects organised religion, and if he believed in God at all, it was plainly not in a traditional Christian concept of Him. How is one to interpret a statement like, "God is what is the best in each of us"? Was Pirandello espousing some type of pantheism? In my opinion, unable or unwilling because of social conditions in Italy at the time, to

make a clear statement of atheism, Pirandello used this ambiguous statement to express the same views as Sartre. This seems to me to be clearly indicated, although of course, not proven, in such works as La Sagra del Signore della nave, Lazzaro, and Non si sa come, God, namely the supreme value, is what is best in each of us, namely our freedom. Liberty is the supreme value. Sartre states that in choosing our own liberty we are choosing others' liberty as well. While Sartre wouldn't call this kindness, I think Pirandello would. The case for Pirandello's being a Christian existentialist *à la* Gabriel Marcel has been made,<sup>11</sup> (in my opinion very poorly) on the basis that kindness seems to be for him an *a priori* absolute value. Such an argument is a difficult one to sustain, because aside from the problem of connecting theism and absolute values, at no point does the author place kindness above the affirmation of one's personal liberty, in fact, quite the contrary.

5. According to Sartre since there is no God, there is no determinism. Man is freedom, says Sartre. On the other hand, since God doesn't exist and there are no absolute values to which to refer, we have no justification, no excuses. We are condemned to be free.

Pirandello's ideas coincide so much with Sartre's on the point of being condemned to freedom that he actually uses that precise term in Non si sa come, written in 1934, a number of years before

Sartre uses it. He explores the seeming need for law and its ultimate uselessness or destructiveness in La nuova colonia, and he deals time and time again with characters in their attempts, successful or not, to defy social convention.

6. Although there is, according to Sartre, no human nature, there is a human condition, the historical and physical circumstances in which one finds himself. These have both a subjective and an objective value, objective because omnipresent, and subjective because they have no meaning except as we live them and exercise our freedom in relation to them.

Thus I shall apprehend myself at any moment whatsoever as engaged in the world at my contingent place. But it is precisely this engagement which gives meaning to my contingent place and which is my freedom. To be sure, in being born I take a place, but I am responsible for the place which I take. We can see clearly here the inextricable connection of freedom and facticity in the situation. Without facticity freedom would not exist—as a power of nihilation and of choice—and without freedom facticity would not be discovered and would have no meaning.<sup>12</sup>

Nearly all of Pirandello's works deal with man trying to assert his freedom in the historical, social, and physical circumstances in which he finds himself. The problem of the extent of the power of these circumstances over the individual is a central theme of his writings. In fact, Gaetano Munafò in his recent work on Pirandello writes:

(...) it seems to me that from all of the works of the great writer and dramatist one can really draw several conclusions which could, for example, be summarised like this: (...)affirmation of our absolute interior freedom from any tie which would tend to limit it (...) <sup>13</sup>

As we have seen from the above six examples comparing Pirandello's ideas with those of Sartre, the Sicilian bears a close resemblance to the famous existentialist. Let us now turn to a closer examination of Pirandello's ideas concerning freedom as exemplified in his works.

#### **B. Freedom as Exemplified in *Il Fu Mattia Pascal***

Although the question of the possibility of individual human freedom appears numerous times in Pirandello's works, it is nowhere treated as deeply as it is in *Il Fu Mattia Pascal* (The Late Mattia Pascal). Most other allusions to this problem found in Pirandello's writings take on meaning only in reference to this work. It is

appropriate here to note that any philosophical interpretation of a literary work will be subject to the familiar general criticism suggesting that the evidence for any particular interpretation is inevitably less than conclusive. Moreover, it is notoriously difficult to separate the meaning of a philosophical thesis from the support provided for it, and it is especially difficult when we want to attribute a philosophical position based on evidence which is atypical. Assuming, of course, that a proposed interpretation is not simply vacuous, its consistent applicability to the whole of an author's works must be taken as sufficient evidence for giving the validity of that interpretation weighty consideration.

Let us proceed then to an examination of the evidence. Mattia Pascal is a novel concerning a rather poorly educated young man whose family has been reduced from modest wealth to poverty by the thieving of Malagna, the manager of the Pascal estates since the death of Mattia's father. Pirandello paints the picture of a person who seems to lack any will of his own, prey to the events of the life which surrounds him but in which he doesn't seem to really participate. There are elements of Gide's hero of the *acte gratuit*, available for whatever adventure comes his way and at the same time Sartre's prototype of bad faith (*mauvaise foi*). Mattia falls into a job, the most boring and useless one imaginable. He allows himself to be pushed into an odious marriage and family situation. In a misguided attempt to save an old family

friend (Malagna's second wife) from the beatings and censure given to a sterile woman, he impregnates her, and thus his own child is abandoned to the care of his bitterest enemy. In short, through episode after episode, life becomes more and more unbearable for Mattia until he decides to run away to America. Physical freedom from all ties seems to him to be the only answer.

Taking with him a small amount of money which his brother had sent for other purposes, he makes his escape. Frightened, however, of arriving in a new country with hardly any money, he gets off the train in Marseilles, and in his meandering about the town he sees a book on roulette in a shop window. On impulse he buys it, and in a twelve day stint at the Monte Carlo Casino, he wins a fortune. Returning home on the train, he reads in a newspaper the news of his own death. At first shocked and horrified, he realises that this combination of circumstances will, at last, give him the opportunity of experiencing the complete freedom he has been seeking.

Taking a new identity, rich, with no ties, he sets about finding this much-prized liberty. In what does it consist? Freedom from family ties, geographical freedom, freedom from one's past? Mattia Pascal tries all of these and finds that they are but the illusions of true freedom. Feeling himself suffocated by nausea, anger, and hatred of himself,<sup>14</sup> he awakens to the realisation that true liberty consists in a free choice made within the confines of our

historical and social conditions. Mattia feels the great difficulty in accepting such liberty and therefore such responsibility, but he throws off his false identity, goes back to his village, and begins a truly new life as the "defunct Mattia Pascal".

The major themes of this novel are therefore: bad faith, the illusion of complete materialistic liberty which little by little is changed into the realisation of the nature of true freedom, and the acceptance of this latter.

#### 1. Mattia's Bad faith

Bad faith is defined by Sartre as the masking of one's anguish over his total responsibility, his absolute freedom of choice. This is usually accomplished either by making someone else responsible for a particular action or choice, or by asserting that we couldn't have chosen or acted other than we did. On the very first page of the book Mattia Pascal blames circumstances for his fate:

(...) one must really become indignant (...) over the corruption of morals, and the vices and the sadness of the times which can be the cause of such harm to a poor innocent.<sup>15</sup>

As Mattia is becoming involved in the adventure which will lead to his wretched marriage, he questions his motives.

Why was I showing such anxiety to marry off Romilda? For nothing. I repeat: for the sole pleasure of impressing Pomino.<sup>16</sup>

There is no question of responsibility here. It is almost an *acte gratuit*, except that it is in no way in conformity with Mattia's "inner self".

Another example of bad faith which has always been, as it happens, extremely common in Italy, is to take refuge in history, a continuous study of the past, not as a source of wisdom for choice of actions in the future, but only as a means of furthering humanism, the glorifying of all of the human race. Pirandello uses the occasion of Mattia Pascal's useless job as caretaker of a collection of books which someone had donated to the town but which no one ever reads, to express some views on the subject.

(...) he hoped that his bequest would with time and with availability kindle in their souls the love of study. Until now, I can testify, it hasn't been kindled: and this I say in praise of my fellow citizens.<sup>17</sup>

Sig. Romitelli, Mattia's companion in the library, deaf, one foot in the grave, spends his time reading and memorising the minute details of the lives of musicians, artists, lovers. He is the

caricature of the great humanists. Little by little, Mattia also takes up this pastime, but:

I read a little of everything, disorganisedly, but especially books on philosophy. They weigh so much and yet he who is fed on such food and swallows it lives in the clouds.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note here the similarity between Pirandello's rejection of such food and that of the famous pre-existentialist Gide, as found in Les Caves du Vatican.

It depends on the stomach. It pleases you to give the name of paradox to what yours refuses. As for me, I would let myself die of hunger in front of such a hash of bare bones as the logic which I see you feed your characters on.<sup>19</sup>

Mattia Pascal has one physical defect, his eye. This ungovernable organ of sight represents Mattia's search for true freedom, and it is fixed only when he finds it. Mattia put down his reading but then:

(...) I took it up again; and ... yes sir, I also began to read (along with Sig. Romitelli) with one eye because the other one didn't want to have anything to do with it.<sup>20</sup>

Another refuge from our anguish is in the belief that if circumstances had been different, we would have been better. Pirandello gives an example which is very similar to Sartre's example of the woman who says: "I haven't had any children to whom I could devote myself because I didn't find a man with whom I could have made my life. There remains, therefore, in me, unused and entirely viable a host of dispositions, inclinations, possibilities which makes me worth more than the simple series of my acts implies."<sup>21</sup>

(Miss Caporale)(...) wanted to live, she did, poor thing, and she judged as ungenerous those men who only pay attention to exterior beauty. So, intimately, in her soul, did she feel beautiful? Oh, who knows how many or what sacrifices she would have been capable of, if she had found a 'generous man'. Perhaps she wouldn't have drunk even a drop of wine anymore.<sup>22</sup>

Little by little Mattia Pascal begins to realise what bad faith is,

We always have to blame someone for our hurts and our misfortunes (...) But how could I listen to it, this blessed voice of reason, if it spoke to me precisely through Papiano's mouth, who

was for me wrong, obviously wrong, blatantly wrong (...) Oh, is it possible that the voice of reason had to choose just Papiano's mouth to make itself heard by me? Or perhaps it was I, who, in order to find myself an excuse, put it into his mouth so that it should seem wrong to me.<sup>23</sup>

Or again:

We fool ourselves so easily! The most when we want to believe something (...)<sup>24</sup>

The way isn't easy. Even after these discoveries, Pascal is tempted to fall back into bad faith.

'My fault? How?' I said. 'That good woman makes a mistake, first of all, recognising the body of some poor fellow who drowned himself, then she hurriedly marries again, and the fault is mine? and I should take her back?'<sup>25</sup>

Back in the library, by choice now rather than chance, at the insistence of his friend don Eligio, the new librarian, Mattia Pascal writes his memoirs. From these don Eligio draws the lesson that:

(...) outside of the law and outside of those particulars, happy or sad as they may be, because of which we are who we are, dear Mr. Pascal, it is not possible to live.<sup>26</sup>

But Pascal makes him note that in fact he was doing just that. He neither revised his civil status under the law nor re-entered into those particulars. Who is he?

'Eh, my friend ... I am the late Mattia Pascal.'<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Illusion of Complete Liberty

We hide our anguish in some instances by pretending we aren't really free or to the other extreme, we feel chained, impotent and seek a kind of liberty which will free us from any and all ties or bounds. We feel that if we can change our circumstances, we will be free. It is this kind of freedom which first attracts Mattia. Returning home in the train, he sees the notice of his own death in the paper.

(...) in a flash I saw ... but of course! my liberation, freedom, a new life.<sup>28</sup>

Having begun this new life, Mattia reflects:

Now I would have liked that not only exteriorly but also in the most intimate part of me that

there not remain any further trace of him (the old Mattia Pascal). I was alone now, and more alone than I was, I could not ever be on the face of this earth, released from every tie and every obligation, free, new, and absolutely master of myself, without even the burden of my past and with the future before me that I could shape as I liked.<sup>29</sup>

As much as to obey fortune as to satisfy my own need, I began to make myself a new man.<sup>30</sup>

'And above all,' I said to myself, 'I will take care of my freedom: I will lead it over comfortable and always new roads: neither will I ever make it wear any heavy garment. I will close my eyes and pass by as soon as the spectacle of life at any point becomes unpleasant. I will take care to make my life rather with things which are called inanimate and I will go in search of beautiful views, of pleasant tranquil places. I will give myself little by little a new education: I will transform myself with loving and patient study, so that in the end, I will be able to say not only that I have lived two lives but that I have been two men.'<sup>31</sup>

(...) I wanted to live for myself too, in the present. From time to time I was assailed by the idea of my unbounded and unique liberty, and I would feel a sudden happiness so strong that I would nearly loose myself in a blessed stupor.<sup>32</sup>

I wanted to believe that (...) I, Adriano Meis, after having wandered for a while in that new unlimited freedom had finally gained my equilibrium, reached the ideal that I had set before me, to make of myself another man, to live another life that now, here, I felt full within me.<sup>33</sup>

These excerpts serve the same purpose as Sartre's description of M. Roquentin. Maurice Cranston writes:

Roquentin is, we might fancy, a remarkably free man. He is thirty and has a modest private income; he has no family and no job, none of the so-called 'ties'. He has travelled widely; he can do what he wants and live where he chooses. 'Free' we may want to call him; but Sartre is out to persuade us that Roquentin is not really free. He is *dégagé* or uncommitted; and it is one of Sartre's central beliefs that *dégagement*

is only a mockery of freedom, is, in fact, a form of running away from freedom.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. False liberty versus True Liberty

At first, Mattia Pascal, convinced that he has found liberty, is merely annoyed at small inconveniences which life, nevertheless, imposes upon him. Even the fortune he has made will not last forever.

I would have liked to go beyond Cologne, at least to Norway, but then I thought I had better impose a little restraint on my liberty.<sup>35</sup>

Walking along one day, Pascal sees a little puppy which he would like to buy, but he sees that this would involve the first compromise of his liberty, and he passes on.

I went away, considering, however, for the first time that it was beautiful, yes, undoubtedly, this liberty of mine so boundless, but also just a bit of a tyrant.<sup>36</sup>

The cause of all our ills, (...) do you know what it is? Democracy, dear friend, democracy, that is government by the majority. Because when power is in the hands of one alone, this one

knows he is alone and must satisfy the many; but when the many govern, they only think of satisfying themselves, and so you have then the most stupid and hateful of tyrannies: tyranny masked as liberty. But surely! Oh, why do you think that I suffer? I suffer precisely for this tyranny masked as liberty.<sup>37</sup>

Mattia would like to settle down and have a home of his own, but this is impossible because he would then have to be registered on the tax role, etc. and eventually found out. He discovers the impossibility of even having a real friend.

'Free', I kept on saying; but already I began to penetrate the meaning and to measure the confines of this my liberty.<sup>38</sup>

Little by little, Mattia realises that this unbounded freedom from all social ties is an illusion. Not that it couldn't be achieved - after all he could have solved all of his problems by obtaining false papers - but in the sense that even if it is achieved, it isn't true freedom because this kind of liberty means that one doesn't live. There is no life without some kind of commitment.

You will always and everywhere be a stranger  
... a stranger to life, Adriano Meis.<sup>39</sup>

The truth was perhaps this: that in my boundless liberty, it turned out to be difficult for me to begin to live in some way. On the point of making a decision, I felt myself held back. I seemed to see so many impediments and shadows and obstacles.<sup>40</sup>

I could almost believe myself to be really drowned at the Stia and that in the meanwhile, I am illuding myself that I am alive.<sup>41</sup>

I had seemed to me to be a streak of luck to be believed dead. Well, I am really dead. Dead? Worse than dead ... the dead don't ever have to die again, and I do. I am still alive for death and dead for life. What life, in fact, can mine ever be.<sup>42</sup>

The life which I had seen in front of me free, free, free was nothing at bottom but an illusion which could not become reality except very superficially and more of a slave than ever, slave to pretending, to the lies which with such disgust I saw myself forced to use, slave to the fear of being discovered, even though I committed no crime.<sup>43</sup>

Realising that he had chosen the wrong path to liberty or rather chosen an illusion of liberty instead of the real thing, Mattia Pascal decides to give up his life as Adriano Meis and return to his village.

Crazy! How could I have deluded myself into believing that the trunk could live cut off from its roots.<sup>44</sup>

That had seemed to me to be liberation! Yes, with the leaden weight of lies on my back. A leaden weight on the back of a shadow ... now I would have again my wife on my back and that mother-in-law ... but didn't I have them on my back even as a dead man? Now at least I was alive, and on the war path.<sup>45</sup>

But of course, I'm going back! (...) I'm not the same person as before, you know.<sup>46</sup>

Thus Mattia Pascal rejects the illusion of complete liberty in the popular sense of being without ties or encumbrances. He realises that true freedom consists of a conscious choice within the personal and historical circumstances in which one finds oneself.

It was a moment, but eternity. I felt inside myself all the confusion of blind necessities, of things which can't be changed; the prison of time; being born now, and not before or after; the name and the body which is given to us; the chain of causality; the seed thrown out by that man; my father without wanting to be; my coming into the world, from that seed; involuntary fruit of that man; tied to that branch (...)<sup>47</sup>

Another illustration of the necessity to choose within given circumstances in contrast with the illusory freedom found in the escape from those circumstances is found in the short story Lontano. The nausea, the anger, the suffocation, the strange sensations of his final awakening to the true nature of liberty are reminiscent of Sartre's M. Roquentin. He would have almost wished to reject this new-found liberty.

I could have put out that eye with my own finger! What did it matter to me anymore its being fixed?<sup>48</sup>

And how could I go on living? No, no, enough! I stopped. I saw everything waver before my eyes, I felt my legs begin to give way at the sudden

welling up of an obscure feeling which made me shiver from head to foot.<sup>49</sup>

Two further examples of people choosing freedom despite the acknowledged difficulty of doing so are found in the short stories Fuga, in which the choice is represented somewhat symbolically and Volare, in which a young woman goes contrary to the expectations of society and chooses to leave her destitute family in order to find a life of her own.

Pirandello describes the moment of Mattia's final complete rejection of his past (lives), his passage from bad faith to true freedom.

I remained, I don't know for how long, there in that chair, thinking, now with my eyes wide open, now retreating into myself, angrily, as if to rid myself of a terrible inner spasm. I saw, finally; I saw in all its crudeness the fraud of my illusion: what it was at bottom that had seemed to me the greatest of fortunes in the first drunkenness of my liberation. I had already experienced how my liberty which had at first seemed limitless, in fact, was limited by the lack of money; then I had also realised that instead of liberty it could have been called solitude and boredom and that

it condemned me to a terrible punishment: that of my own company; I had then tried to get close to others; but the resolution to keep myself carefully from re-attaching even ever so loosely the cut cords, of what use had it been? See: they had re-attached themselves, those ties; and life, as much as I, already on guard, opposed it, life dragged me along, with its irresistible pull; life that wasn't for me any longer. Ah, now I really was aware, now that I could stand no longer the vain pretexts, the almost puerile pretendings, the pitiful, low excuses which prevented me from assuming consciousness of my feeling.<sup>50</sup>

Each person alone must make his own way. Mattia cannot follow in the footsteps of his brother, for example. When he is in Monte Carlo on his extraordinary winning streak, he must refuse to play with anyone else's money. No rule or law set by anyone else can govern his life if he is to find his freedom. The choice is between liberty and nothingness.

Who was I? No one.<sup>51</sup>

Again the thought of my absolute impotence, of my nothingness assailed me, crushed me.<sup>52</sup>

And yet, free to do anything, he is not free not to choose, for that is death.

Whoever understands, in fact, says: I mustn't do this, I mustn't do that, not to commit this or that folly. Wonderful! But at a certain point one realises that life is one large folly and so you tell me then, what does it mean never to have committed a folly? It signifies at least, not having lived, dear sir.<sup>53</sup>

(...) illuding myself that I could become another man, live another life. Another man, yes, but only provided that I didn't do anything. And so, then, what man? The shadow of a man! And what life? As long as I was content to remain closed within myself and to watch others live, yes, I could have to one extent or another held onto the illusion that I was living another life, but now (...) <sup>54</sup>

Life, considered that way, as an extraneous spectator, seemed to me now without form and without reason.<sup>55</sup>

### C. Summary

In this way, Pirandello has illustrated the major themes of Il fu Mattia Pascal: bad faith, the illusion of complete liberty which little by little is changed into the realisation of the nature of true freedom and the acceptance of this latter.

Thus we can see emerging from this analysis of Il fu Mattia Pascal an existentialist philosophy of freedom with its related notions of responsibility and bad faith, the necessary loneliness of each man's search for liberty, the necessity of choice and the condemnation of anything which tends to take away from man's freedom.

### CHAPTER III - THE ABSURD

#### A. Introduction

While for Sartre, the affirmation of man's absolute freedom and his consequent responsibility is generally taken to be the centre point of his entire philosophy,<sup>1</sup> for Camus the focus is on man's realisation of the absurd, of the futility of all action in the face of the inevitable fact of death, and his reaction to this realisation. Ordinary man, like Meursault in Camus' novel L'Étranger, or Roquentin in Sartre's La Nausée continues in the daily familiar routine of his life, taking for granted society's usual values, accepting unaware whatever life, fate or God sends. At a certain point, man is confronted with the ultimate meaninglessness of all action, the irrelevance of all values, the absurdity of his existence, in short, the human condition. Sartre describes this moment of realisation in physical terms as a feeling of dizziness or nausea. Camus describes it in terms perhaps a bit more poetical, but it is the point at which this realisation is attained that the emphasis of Sartre's philosophy differs somewhat from that of Camus. While Sartre sees the absurd as being overcome by the affirmation of one's absolute personal liberty in choosing to give value to a particular course of action and thus giving meaning to one's life; Camus views the absurd as man's permanent condition, no matter what course of action he chooses or how freely he chooses it. What is important is to act in full knowledge that

life will nevertheless remain meaningless. The absurd cannot be overcome. It is born of this confrontation between man's desire for absolutes, for the rational, and his true condition in the midst of an irrational universe. It is in the affirmation of one's own existence by the rejection of suicide despite the awful knowledge of sure defeat that man finds his victory.

Notoriously the quest is by no means unique historically; man, it appears, has always looked for some sort of ultimate values, some absolute around which to shape his life, to guide his choice of actions. What is the status of this absolute or these values in a philosophy which takes as its basic premiss, the contingency, the superfluity, the meaninglessness of all existence?

According to Sartre, all men live in the state of what he describes as a type of "anguish"<sup>2</sup> because they are aware of their true condition. Camus, rather than make such a boldly general claim, may usefully be regarded as envisioning three states of man: 1) the time when he is unaware of the absurd, 2) the actual moment of realisation and 3) the life of a man after this realisation. He thus leaves open at least the theoretical possibility that a man might live his entire life unaware of his condition with regard to the absurd. Leaving aside for the moment this possibility, what other reactions can man have to his awareness of the absurd? He may overcome it by the affirmation of his own freedom, as Sartre recommends; he may simply continue to live with his awareness of

it, as Camus suggests; or he may try in various ways to hide his anguish even from himself and live in a state of what Sartre calls "bad faith". What forms can this "bad faith" take? Is it to some extent inevitable in all of us?

In order to answer these questions and see the relationship between Pirandello's philosophy and those of Sartre and Camus concerning the question of the absurd, we must first of all examine the nature of the absurd as it is explained in the works of Sartre, Camus and Pirandello. Next we must compare the moment of realisation of the absurd as described by the recognised existentialists and by Pirandello. And lastly we must examine the treatment by Sartre, Camus and Pirandello of the various possible reactions to the absurd, distinguishing between those which involve "bad faith" and those which may be said to affirm existentialist "values".

## B. The Nature of the Absurd

In The Myth of Sisyphus, Camus defines what he means by the notion of the absurd. He describes the continual search by man for some kind of absolute: truth, knowledge, understanding, reason, - and the failure of the world to give this.

I want everything to be explained to me or nothing. And the reason is impotent when it hears this cry from the heart. The mind aroused

by this insistence seeks and finds nothing but contradictions and nonsense. What I fail to understand is nonsense. The world is peopled with such irrationals. The world itself, whose single meaning I do not understand, is but a vast irrational. If one could say just once: 'this is clear', all would be saved. But these men vie with one another in proclaiming that nothing is clear, all is chaos, that all man has is his lucidity and his definite knowledge of the walls surrounding him.<sup>3</sup>

But it is not in the world itself that the absurd is found, but in the confrontation between man in his continual search for an absolute and the irrational world.

I said that the world is absurd but I was too hasty. This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the will longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as the world.<sup>4</sup>

Camus explains that his choice of the word "absurd" is not an arbitrary one but rather it is based on the common usage

of the word in circumstances where it draws attention to the glaring ludicrousness of a particular juxtaposition of phenomena or situations precisely as it does in this case between man's desire for lucidity and the world's inherent irrationality.

In all these cases, from the simplest to the most complex, the magnitude of the absurdity will be in direct ratio to the distance between the two terms of my comparison. There are absurd marriages, challenges, rancours, silences, wars and even peace-treaties. For each of them the absurdity springs from a comparison. I am thus justified in saying that the feeling of absurdity does not spring from the mere scrutiny of a fact or an impression but that it bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation.

In this particular case and on the plane of intelligence, I can therefore say that the absurd is not in man (if such a metaphor could have a meaning) nor in the world, but in their presence together.<sup>5</sup>

Thus Camus, in using the word "absurd", highlights what he sees as the ludicrousness of man's desire for some kind of absolute, some antecedently given "meaning", some eternal "plan" which would explain all; in contrast with the inherent "meaninglessness" of the world. For Sartre, instead, "absurd" is not a relative term. Rather it is to be found in the total superfluity of any existent. Every being is "in the way" (*de trop*, superfluous).

All these objects ... how can I explain? They inconvenienced me; I would have liked them to exist less strongly, more dryly, in a more abstract way, with more reserve. The chestnut tree pressed itself up against my eyes. (...) I realised that there was no half-way house between existence and non-existence and this flaunting abundance. (...) We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn't the slightest reason to be there, none of us, each one, confused, vaguely alarmed, felt in the way in relation to the others. (...) In the way, the chestnut tree there, opposite me, a little to the left. In the way the Velleda. (...)

And I - (...) I, too, was in the way.<sup>6</sup>

Pirandello, too, speaks of superfluity. It lies precisely in man's awareness of the meaninglessness of his own life which causes him to forever seek to create for himself a reality in which his life will take on a meaning despite the realisation of the impossibility of this task.

(...) men have in them a superfluity which constantly and vainly torments them, never making them satisfied with any conditions, and always leaving them uncertain of their destiny. An inexplicable superfluity, which, to afford itself an outlet, creates in nature an artificial world, a world that has a meaning and value for them alone, and yet one with which they themselves cannot ever be content, so that without pause they keep on frantically arranging and rearranging it, like a thing which, having been fashioned by themselves from a need to extend and relieve an activity of which they can see neither the end nor the reason, increases and complicates ever more and more their torments carrying them farther from the simple conditions laid down by nature for life on this earth, conditions to which only dumb animals know how to remain faithful and obedient. (...)

Those actions that are fundamental and indispensable to life, he too is obliged to perform and to repeat, day after day, like animals, if he does not wish to die. All the rest, arranged and rearranged continually, frantically, can hardly fail to reveal themselves sooner or later as illusions or vanities, being as they are the fruit of that superfluity, of which we do not see on this earth either the end or the reason.<sup>7</sup>

Sartre's "superfluity" is a simple notion. It lies in the lack of any sort of justification for the existence of any being. All beings are, therefore, superfluous, meaningless, *de trop*. At first, Pirandello seems to be attributing this superfluity to man's awareness of the absurd, and that if man were to destroy this awareness and live like the animals in harmony with nature, he could escape his own superfluity. That this is not the case, that in fact he is trapped by his superfluity is clear from the following passage:

And for my friend Simone Pau the beauty of it is this: that he believes that he has set himself free from all superfluity, reducing all his wants to a minimum, depriving himself of every comfort and living the naked life of the snail. And he does not see that, on the contrary, he

by reducing himself thus, has immersed himself altogether in the superfluity and lives now by nothing else.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, as has been seen, Pirandello's notion of superfluity coincides with Sartre's.

It is the awareness of this superfluity which causes Roquentin's famous feeling of nausea. He tries to put a label on it,

The word absurdity is coming to life under my pen; a little while ago, in the garden, I couldn't find it, but neither was I looking for it, I didn't need it: I thought without words, on things, with things. Absurdity was not an idea in my head, or the sound of a voice, only this long serpent dead at my feet, this wooden serpent. (...) I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my own Nauseas, to my own life. In fact, all that I could grasp beyond that returns to this fundamental absurdity.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Sartre seems to differ from Camus in attributing the absurdity of things to their gratuitousness, rather than to the contrast between their gratuitousness and man's expectations

of some sort of meaningfulness in the world; but he does say that absurdity is relative to the "accompanying circumstances".

Absurdity: another word; I struggle against words; down there I touched the thing. But I wanted to fix the absolute character of this absurdity here. A movement, an event in the tiny coloured world of men is only relatively absurd: by relation to the accompanying circumstances. (...) the world of explanations and reasons is not the world of existence. A circle is not absurd, it is clearly explained ... But neither does a circle exist.<sup>10</sup>

Sartre and Camus are in agreement.

This discomfort in the face of man's own in-humanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this 'nausea', as a writer of today calls it, it is also the absurd.<sup>11</sup>

Time and time again, Sartre and Camus see man as searching for an externally given absolute, a certainty not within the realm of logical certainties or mathematical truths but in the sphere of the existant, the contingent. He is frustrated in his attempts and can find peace only through illusion.

A stranger to myself and to the world, armed solely with a thought that negates itself as soon as it asserts, what is this condition in which I can have peace only by refusing to know and to live, in which the appetite for conquest bumps into walls that defy its assaults? To will is to stir up paradoxes. Everything is ordered in such a way as to bring into being that poisoned peace produced by thoughtlessness, lack of heart or fatal renunciations. Hence the intelligence, too, tells me in its way that this world is absurd.<sup>12</sup>

Those who exist let themselves be encountered, but you can never deduce anything from them. I believe there are people who have understood this. Only they have tried to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, causal being. But no necessary being can explain existence: contingency is not a delusion, a probability which can be dissipated; it is the absolute, consequently, the perfect free gift. (...) they cannot succeed in not feeling superfluous. And in themselves, secretly, they are superfluous. (...) <sup>13</sup>

In Il Signore della nave Pirandello illustrates the theme of a continual but fruitless search for the absolute. The pig lives happily while he lives. Man cannot because of his continual thirst for an absolute, in the instance of this short story - and its corresponding play - religion. Who, therefore, is more of a beast, the pig or man? What could be sadder, Pirandello asks, than men who, having debased themselves to the level of pigs, cannot even enjoy the earthly pleasure which this has brought but must run weeping after the statue of the absolute which they seek.

No, no, you see? They're crying, they're crying!  
They got drunk, they brutified themselves, but  
no, here they are now crying after their bloody  
Christ! And you want more of a tragedy than  
this?<sup>14</sup>

The Sicilian discusses this thirst for the absolute in L'umorismo, his major philosophical essay.

(...) life, not having, fatally for human reason, a clear and determined end, it is necessary, in order not to grope in the abyss, that it have an individual, fictitious, illusory one for each man, either low or exalted, it matters little; since it isn't nor can it be, the real end, that everyone is anxiously seeking, perhaps because

it doesn't exist. What is important is that one give importance to something, even if it is vain: it will be worth any other value which is taken seriously, because at bottom neither one nor the other will satisfy: since the burning thirst to know will always remain, the faculty of desiring will never be extinguished, and nothing says, unfortunately, that man's happiness will be found in progress.<sup>15</sup>

He, like Sartre and Camus, affirms the emptiness of objective reality,

Pirandello, then (...) tends to sustain the the absolute unreality of all things and at the same time would like to demonstrate the reality of relativism in all things (...) he would affirm the absolute vanity, he would impune, that is, the dualism of Good and Evil, of Truth and Error, of Wisdom and Folly, of Life and Death, reconciling the opposites and reorganising them in the original unity of the absolute and undifferentiated Ego, and he would show as illusory the apparent differences, reducing them to the common denominator of their essential nothingness.<sup>16</sup>

And yet this continual search for something absolute, some truth, some meaning in the midst of the emptiness of objective reality remains the human condition.

If the unease of the times is seen in the contrast between an unsuppressible demand of man and the discovery of the constitutional impossibility of his satisfying it, Pirandello, while he defines the crisis of this historical moment, already he theorises about it as an absolute condition. The indisposition of the moment, in fact, is not made up of exclusively temporal circumstances like the passage between two systems of beliefs, as it is of the consciousness of a perennial tearing apart of the human condition held between self-deception and dissatisfaction. The critical characteristics - incommunicability, meaninglessness of action and oppressiveness of every rule and condition - defined in the analysis of the historical moment they will constitute themselves as characteristics of the absolute and perennial crisis which only now are appearing to consciousness.<sup>17</sup>

As Roquentin contemplates his discovery of the contingency of all existants, their superfluity, the very first word which

comes to his mind to describe these beings was "comic". He then rejects this word in favour of the "absurd".<sup>18</sup> Pirandello, instead, chooses the word "humour". In his long essay on this topic, while attempting first of all to define the word and then discuss its relation with rhetoric and irony, its various characteristics in different cultures, the distinction between mere comedy and humour, its presence or absence in Italian literature and finally coming to conclusions regarding the essence, characteristics and subject matter of humour; it is clear that rather than analysing the concept of humour as commonly understood, Pirandello was speaking of a different concept, one which had up until that point barely been acknowledged and had never, until then, been clearly defined; the absurd.

Every feeling, every thought, every movement which arises in the humourist is immediately doubled into its opposite; every yes into a no, that comes at last to assume the same value as the yes. The humourist might perhaps pretend sometimes to hold to one side: inside meanwhile the other feeling is talking to him, the one which seems not to have had the courage to be the first to reveal itself; it speaks to him and begins to put forth now a timid excuse, now some attenuating circumstance, which cools the ardour

of the first sentiment, sometimes a pointed reflection which takes apart the seriousness and causes laughter.<sup>19</sup>

This very special laughter is but one reaction man can have to his sudden awareness of the absurd. Nothing can be taken too seriously once the artificiality of its value is seen. For Pirandello, the essence of humour is a sense of the contrary, an awareness of life as a parody, a continuous illusion to mask from ourselves the abyss which surrounds us.

All phenomena are either illusory or the reason for them escapes us, inexplicable. Our knowledge of the world and ourselves lacks completely that objective value which we commonly presume to attribute to them. It is a continuous illusory construction. (...) the humourist (...) through the ridiculousness of this discovery, will see the serious and painful side; he will take apart this construction, but not merely to laugh at it; and instead of scorning it, while laughing, he will perhaps even feel compassion.<sup>20</sup>

Thus we can see that what Pirandello calls humour is far from comedy. It could more properly be called a sense of the absurd, and our reactions to it as described by Pirandello are the same

feelings of dizziness or nausea or fear - quite literally - that are so aptly described by Camus and Sartre.

In certain moments of interior silence, in which our soul divests itself of all its habitual frauds, and our eyes become more acute and more penetrating, we see ourselves in life and life in itself, almost in a disquieting, arid nudity; we feel ourselves assaulted by a strange impression, as if, in a flash, a reality was revealed to us different from the one we normally perceive, a reality living outside human sight, outside of the forms of human reason. Then, most lucidly the structure of everyday existence, almost suspended in the emptiness of that interior silence of ours, appears horrid to us in its impassible and mysterious crudeness, since all of our customary fictitious relations of sentiment and images are separated and disjointed in it. The internal emptiness becomes larger, crosses the limits of our body, becomes a void around us, a strange emptiness like a stopping of time and of life, as if our interior silence sank in the abysses of the mystery. (...) It was a moment; but there remains in us long after the impression of

it, as of a vertigo, with which is contrasted the stability though vain, of things, ambitious or mean appearances. Life, then, small, commonplace, which pivots between these appearances seems to us almost as if it is no longer for real, as if it were like a mechanical fantasmagoria. And how can we give it importance? How can we respect it?<sup>21</sup>

Life, seen in this light, can no longer be taken seriously and hence the laugh, albeit tearful, of the humourist.

Even the power of blind, senseless nature defeats the grandness of human designs, the ideals of his fictions. And so the humourist, or the absurd man, reflects:

'What if Cleopatra's nose had been longer, who knows what other vicissitudes the world would have had.' And this if, this miniscule participle which one can note, insert like a wedge in all events, how many and what disjunctions can it produce, of what disorder can it be the cause, in the hands of a humourist.<sup>22</sup>

Pirandello illustrates the power of nature over man's designs in a short story entitled Il buon cuore, in which by superb

planning everything is arranged to procure the greatest good for the greatest number, but due to nature or man's good intentions themselves, or the absurd, all of the good is turned into evil and the author reflects:

How true it is that it always happens that way,  
that the force of nature is worth more than  
any artifice.<sup>23</sup>

Despite our intuition of the absurd, we still search for absolutes, although at every attempt we are frustrated. As Camus writes:

Faced with this inextricable contradiction of the mind, we shall fully grasp the divorce separating us from our own creations. So long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes, everything is reflected and arranged in the unity of its nostalgia. But with its first move this world cracks and tumbles (...) Of whom and of what can I say 'I know that!' (...) This very heart which is mine will forever remain indefinable to me. Between the certainty I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. (...) there are truths but no truth.<sup>24</sup>

Pirandello is in complete agreement.

(...) the pretension of the part of the individual and of society to determine a definitive and immutable truth is absurd.<sup>25</sup>

This absurdity is dramatised in the short story Il tabernacolo. A usurer who is known as an atheist and a socialist has a shrine built. Upon its completion he dies, before having paid the labourer. No one will believe that it was he who ordered the work and so the worker isn't paid. Still believing in the ideal of justice, the labourer goes to court and loses. His faith in divine justice destroyed, he realises that he himself creates justice (or any other value). He dresses up like Christ and goes to live in the shrine. Despite this revelation, this knowledge, he still prays, although he is aware all the while of some doubt, or some recurring but vague thought that gnaws him from the inside.

Another illustration of the ridiculousness of a search for ready-made values is found in Fuoco alla paglia. Simonc, having been very wealthy but having lost nearly everything, has had a glimpse of the absurd. He is a miser and part mad, a reaction which Pirandello sees as a possible consequence of trying to face the void which is within us and live the absurd. As he writes in L'umorismo:

In this normal state of consciousness, in these re-connected ideas, in this usual feeling of life, we can no longer have faith, because at length we know that they are a fraud of our own construction in order for us to live and that underneath there is something else, which man cannot face without dying or going mad.<sup>26</sup>

Simone, half mad, is trying to live with this knowledge. Nazzaro is a poor man but happy in his own self-deception. He represents a certain set of values and because of his name, it is difficult to resist the thought that he is perhaps the symbol of Christ. Simone becomes Nazzaro's friend and tries to buy his salvation (like his namesake in the Bible) from Nazzaro. The conditions are, however, strict. He must release the thousands of birds he has been keeping as a possible source of food and burn the field of grain, his last possession. The results, of course, are disastrous. Salvation cannot be bought with someone else's values.

In Il bottone della palandrana, Pirandello depicts one of those perfectly honest, neat, exemplary people who think there is order in the world. Discovering that there is in fact none, he realises that he might as well throw away the button of his over-coat which has come off in his hand, he might as well walk down the street with his coat undone, with his sleeves inside-out, or even

with his hat upside down on his head. In a world with no order, no values, everything is permitted.

Camus sees a longing for death as man's first reaction to his awareness of the absurd. As soon as man finds himself in an alien world with no illusions, he must contemplate his own suicide.

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. (...) This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. All healthy men having thought of their own suicide, it can be seen, without further explanation, that there is a direct connection between this feeling and the longing for death.<sup>27</sup>

Sartre's M. Roquentin, contemplating the discovery of his own superfluity thinks first of all of suicide, but realises that even his death would be superfluous.

I dreamed vaguely of killing myself to wipe out at least one of these superfluous lives. But even my death would have been in the way. In the way, my corpse, my blood on these stones, between

these plants, at the back of this smiling garden,  
 And the decomposed flesh would have been in the  
way in the earth which would receive my bones,  
 at last, cleaned, stripped, peeled, proper and  
 clean as teeth, it would have been in the way:  
 I was in the way for eternity.<sup>28</sup>

Pirandello notes this reaction to the absurd and discussing it in his essay Arte e coscienza d'oggi he quotes The Confessions of Tolstoy:

Science told me only: life is an evil deprived of  
 any sense. I wanted to kill myself.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, the theme of suicide in the works of Pirandello is so frequent that it must be dealt with in a separate section, in which all of the instances of suicide appearing in these works must be noted and an attempt made to derive a cohesive account of Pirandello's attitude toward it.

The universality of man's condition in an absurd world is stressed by both Sartre and Camus. Pirandello, too, speaks of the ubiquitousness of this "life-malady".

Useless, almost a non-entity; but he existed,  
 and was walking beside me, and was suffering.  
 It was true that he was suffering, like all the

rest of us, from life which is the true malady  
of us all.<sup>30</sup>

### C. Realisation of the Absurd

We have already examined Sartre's primary example of the realisation of the absurd in his novel La Nausée. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre states that man as a "being-for-itself" is consciousness. He further states that:

Consciousness is a being, the nature of which  
is to be conscious of the nothingness of its  
being.<sup>31</sup>

thus denying the possibility that man could exist in the world without being aware of his condition with regard to the absurd. Camus and Pirandello do not see this awareness as something intrinsic within man, but emphasize rather the effect which the moment of realisation of the absurd has on a person. Camus writes in The Myth of Sisyphus:

It happens that the stage-sets collapse. Rising,  
tram, four hours in the office or the factory,  
meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and  
Saturday, according to the same rhythm - this  
path is easily followed most of the time. But one

day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. (...) What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening. At the end of the awakening comes, in time, the consequence: suicide or recovery.<sup>32</sup>

While Camus in this passage mentions only two responses: suicide or recovery, it must be noted that the term "recovery" is ambiguous here because as is evident from other passages,<sup>33</sup> it may indicate a suppression of the newly-acquired awareness with a return to normal daily existence, a refuge in some type of hope of salvation from the absurd, or it may indicate the "heroic" decision to live with the absurd. Pirandello, too, sees various stages in a man's life. According to Gaetano Munafò<sup>34</sup> these consist of a life of ordinary daily routines, a first moment of real contact with the world, with the contrast between the emptiness of the interior content and the ostentatious exterior appearances of people, a search for the reason for this discrepancy, the discovery of the absurdity of trying to force reality into forms, of trying to give it meaning, and a final moment of an attempt at reconstruction. For Camus, it is the acceptance of this consciousness which is important.

A sub-clerk in the post-office is the equal of a conqueror if consciousness is common to them. All experiences are indifferent in this regard. There are some that do either a service or a disservice to man. They do him a service if he is conscious. Otherwise, that has no importance; a man's failures imply judgment, not of circumstances, but of himself.<sup>35</sup>

The various alternatives to the acceptance of this consciousness will be dealt with in a later section. For the moment let us be concerned with how this consciousness of the absurd can come about.

Pirandello, like Camus, sees this awareness as a possible result of almost any untoward event.

Man acquires an awareness of his condition through some unexpected circumstance ... Moscarda's nose in Uno, nessuno e centomila; the news of Mattia Pascal's suicide learned of by chance; the drunks in the Gala's house in Il giuoco delle parti; the elections for Cirinciò in Maschera dimenticata; the fall from the horse for Henry IV; the meeting with his step-daughter at

Madame Pace's in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore  
(...)<sup>36</sup>

This awareness, however, is also a sign of the times as Pirandello writes in Arte e coscienza d'oggi:

We have set aside or lost traditional values.  
What can take their place? (...) we feel bewildered,  
even lost, in an immense blind labyrinth, surrounded on all sides by an impenetrable mystery.  
Paths, there are so many. Which will be the right one?<sup>37</sup>

According to Pirandello, finding nothing in heaven or on earth to satisfy his longing for a system of values, for truth, for something absolute, man is nevertheless unwilling to accept a world which exists for itself, peopled by little beings intent upon procuring for themselves what possible happiness they can find. Instead he beats his breast and desperately demands that nature give him some reason for all that it has done.<sup>38</sup>

Pirandello reasons that with the coming of science, faith must die, but ironically it does not bring with it man's longed for certitude, but rather an even greater awareness of the void. In the past, man had faith in a certain truth. This was the star which illuminated his whole way. Science, to demonstrate that

there was in fact no such star but only a tiny lamp which fed on oil not always pure, blew on the lamp and put it out. Since man could then no longer see, science gave him an electric light. But no matter how many are lit, man's way is still in darkness. Science is insufficient to light the path.<sup>39</sup> In Segni dei tempi Pirandello writes:

There is then no way out. Science is impotent to work out the problem. It succeeds in annihilating the explanations which fantasy and sentiment had created and vested with the forms of the positive religions; but of substituting for these destroyed explanations a new and sufficient one, it is incapable.<sup>40</sup>

Whatever the immediate cause of a man's moments of confrontation with the absurd, it is clear that Pirandello, like Camus, is preoccupied with their nature. The description of special, privileged moments is a repeated theme in Pirandello's works. They may be moments of a kind of pantheistic participation in life, or moments of alienation and a feeling of the strangeness of familiar things. They may be moments of a heightened joyful awareness in which everything seems new and alive.<sup>41</sup> Whatever their nature, they provoke an immediate confrontation between this awareness, these ideals, this sense of the infinite and our

ordinary perception of things, of life's daily realities, of death. In this confrontation is born the absurd.

Camus states that the theatre is the perfect medium for eliciting an awareness of the absurd.

The actor has three hours to be Iago or Alceste, Phèdre or Gloucester. In that short space of time he makes them come to life and die on fifty square yards of boards. Never has the absurd been so well illustrated or at such length. What more revelatory epitome can be imagined than those marvellous lives, those exceptional and total destinies unfolding for a few hours within a stage set? Off the stage, Sigismundo ceases to count. Two hours later he is seen dining out. Then it is, perhaps, that life is a dream.<sup>42</sup>

According to Camus, art cannot be a refuge for the absurd man, as Sartre had tentatively concluded at the end of La Nausée. It is, itself, an absurd phenomenon and cannot afford an escape from the confrontation. Rather it is but one symptom of man's awareness of the absurd.<sup>43</sup> Thus it serves two functions: 1) it reflects the quandry of the artist, as an absurd man himself, and 2) it can precipitate this awareness in the spectators.

Pirandello, according to Gino Cucchetti in his article "Assoluto e relativo nei tre miti di Luigi Pirandello" in the Proceedings of the International Congress of Pirandellian Studies, wanted to try something which had not been fully attempted since the pomp of the ancient Greek theatre. He wanted to reveal the great darkness which "determines and accompanies the life of human souls, in the vast tragicity of the events which accompany it",<sup>44</sup> A prime example, himself, of the humorist of which he writes, Pirandello fulfils the description of the absurd man.

The humorist knows that ordinary events, common details, the materialness of life in sum, so varied and complex, bitterly contradict those ideal simplifications, compel to actions, inspire thoughts and feelings which are contrary to all of that harmonious logic of facts and of characters conceived by ordinary writers (..) that search for contrasts, contradictions on which the work is based, in opposition to the unity sought by the others; it is from this that comes that certain disorder, that unboundedness, that capriciousness - all of those digressions that are found in the humorous work, as opposed to ordinary contrivance, to the composition of the work of art in general.<sup>45</sup>

A great number of Pirandello's fictional works - plays, short stories and novels - are in this sense "humorous" or as the later existentialists would call it "absurd". These works seem to fall into two main categories; 1) those works in which a character or characters either philosophise on the subject of the absurd or in which their moment of awareness of the absurd is described and 2) those works which manifest to the reader or the audience, though not necessarily to the characters within the work, certain situations or anomalies in life which tend to bring about a consciousness of the absurd. To the first category belong such short stories as Tu ridi, Dal naso al cielo, C'è qualcuno che ride, La mano del malato povero, Un'idea, Il guardaroba dell'eloquenza, La carriola, Rimedio la geografia, Canta l'epistola, Una giornata and La cattura and portions of such novels as Si gira, Il fu Mattia Pascal and Suo marito.

In Tu ridi, Pirandello continues his theme of "humour" and the absurd. A man in the most difficult of situations, leading a most serious life, is heard to laugh every night in his sleep. He doesn't know why himself. Eventually it is discovered that the laughter is the result of a recurring and absurd dream concerning very "serious" people behaving ludicrously and in a manner very unbecoming to their dignified positions. If we are to make anything of this story at all, the only interpretation which appears reasonable is that the author is suggesting that

life itself is nothing but an absurd dream and our situation is as ludicrous as that of the professor in his friend's world of sleep.

In C'è qualcuno che ride, a "serious" meeting is called. Everyone in the whole town is there, but no one knows why. When two young people dare to be themselves and laugh, a scandal is caused. They themselves must, as punishment, be derided and ostracised. The mask (see Chapter V) cannot be dropped for a moment or the absurdity of the world is too evident.

In Dal naso al cielo, after a discussion of moral idealism versus life experience, the idealist sees the absurdity of his position in the discovery of the body of his opponent, dead under mysterious circumstances. Death is indeed the end of everything; all that remains of the link which the idealist thought he saw between man's life and some sort of absolute is a spider web which goes up, it seems, into heaven, from the nose of the dead man.

In La mano del malato povero it is the protagonist himself who speaks to the reader of his understanding of man's condition.

The real difficulty is another. - Which? Eh, you, dear friends, want to know too much! The opposite of me who doesn't ever want to know

anything. If I have to tell you what the real difficulty is, that indicates that you aren't aware of it. And then why should I tell you.<sup>46</sup>

This passage is, of course, similar to several others, particularly the previously cited one from Si gira ...<sup>47</sup> in which it is clear that Pirandello sees life, or the human condition, as the true malady of us all.

Un'idea is the story of the gradual formation of an obscure thought, an idea which comes as the result of the awareness of that life malady and which cannot be identified. Unable to understand the reason for anything, feeling a terrible disgust for his own "good" actions in a meaningless world the protagonist would almost rather be a beast, so as to escape this condition.<sup>48</sup> He tries to define his feeling:

- Weariness! Too many times has he exclaimed this. In the end it has come to seem someone else's exclamation; for some comforts, though useless, we still try to give ourselves. If it is really tiredness, moreover, being no longer a temporary thing, and neither sleep nor anything else being enough to make it pass, what relief, what comfort can there be any longer in his calling the idea that? And it isn't even disgust

with his life. No, it's that he just doesn't know what that idea is precisely, or where it comes from, now so often, like a sudden stopping which holds him suspended and absorbed in an opaque waiting.<sup>49</sup>

At last the idea takes form and he realises that he is contemplating suicide.

Man's relationship with the objects which surround him is a recurring theme in Pirandello's works.<sup>50</sup> In many of these passages one is reminded of Sartre's distinction of Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself. In Il guardaroba dell'eloquenza Tudina alternates between a vicious dislike for these objects and a gentle and solicitous care for them. They represent a reality which she cannot understand.

(...) apparently moved by a savage impulse, but in reality by an unconscious instinctive need to rid herself of and destroy certain things the sense or the value of which she couldn't succeed in grasping.<sup>51</sup>

La carriola is devoted precisely to this theme of the consciousness of the absurd and a man's reaction to it.

I saw, suddenly, in front of that dark, bronze coloured door, with the oval brass plate on which was engraved my name preceded by my titles and followed by my scientific and professional qualifications, I saw suddenly as if outside of me, myself and my life but without recognising me, without recognising that life as my own.<sup>52</sup>

In this remarkable story of the absurd, the protagonist now realises that he must live with this awareness of the unreality of things. He goes back to his "ordinary" life, to his work, to his family, but he has a remedy for this feeling of alienation or rather a unique way of forcing himself to remain always in confrontation with the absurd, the meaninglessness of his position with all its titles and privileges. Every so often, when no one is about, he performs the ludicrous act of holding onto the hind legs of his dog and walking him around like a wheelbarrow.

There are other remedies. In Rimedio la geografia, a man seeks to remove himself from all distress by remembering the smallness of earth in comparison to the universe. Taken by itself, this story might be interpreted as a recommendation to suppress all personal feelings and live in a state of sublime indifference which can be achieved by keeping always before one the immensity of the universe and the smallness of earth. In fact, there is some justification in this interpretation since it corresponds with the

commonly accepted interpretation of the novel Si gira ... However, it can also be argued that such indifference is impossible. We cannot really isolate ourselves from reality except through a supreme act of what Sartre would take to be "bad faith". This type of indifference is the result of acceptance of the meaninglessness of life rather than a confrontation with it. In the short story Quando si comprende for example, Pirandello clearly illustrates the impossibility or the fraudulence of such indifference, and over and over again he, like Camus, stresses the importance of living life, being one with its "flow" rather than discussing it or trying to capture it in "form" or categories.<sup>53</sup> Also, the novel Si gira ... can be even better interpreted as an illustration not of a much sought indifference, but rather as a perfect example of that "quietism" which Sartre so forcefully rejects as a form of "bad faith".<sup>54</sup> Therefore, although this particular short story does not present a clear idea of Pirandello's beliefs on indifference in the face of the absurd, considering it together with Pirandello's other works in this area it must be interpreted as a type of "remedy" which tries to annihilate the absurd or avoid it rather than confront it.

In Canta l'epistola a young man, becoming aware of the absurd, rejects his former life as a seminarian and begins to develop a very special relationship with nature. For him, a blade of grass takes on monumental importance. After all, if nothing has any

meaning, why should any one thing have less meaning than another? No one understands his unique perceptions, and as he dies trying to make them understand, they think he was delirious to the end.

Una giornata uses a stream-of-consciousness technique to illustrate the feeling of alienation experienced as a common reaction to an intuition of the absurd. In it, a man feels as if he had amnesia, as if there were a meaning to his everyday activities which he had somehow lost. Of course, there has never been one and at one point time, the enemy of us all (as Camus calls it in The Myth of Sisyphus<sup>55</sup>) catches up with the protagonist as he realises finally that he is old, his whole life has passed in the meaninglessness of daily tasks without his being aware of it.

In La cattura, a man bereaved by the death of his son becomes aware of the vanity of everything.

Alone, among the trees and with the boundless  
expanse of the sea in sight, as if from an  
infinite distance, in the long and light rustling  
of those trees, in the dark and slow murmuring  
of that sea, he became used to feeling the vanity  
of everything and the anguished tedium of life.<sup>56</sup>

In the following passage from the novel Si gira ..., the protagonist, who later will close himself up in passivity and indifference,

describes another character, and thus reveals indirectly his own experience with the absurd:

(Cavalina) has acquired a clear perception of the futility of everything and has seen himself thus lost, alone, surrounded by shadows and crushed by the mystery of himself and of everything. (...) Illusions? Hopes? Of what use are they? Vanity ... And his own personality, prostrated, annulled in itself, has gradually re-arisen as a pitiful consciousness of other people, who are ignorant and deceive themselves, who are ignorant and labour and love and suffer.<sup>57</sup>

Mattia Pascal, whom we have seen in his search for the true nature of freedom, has glimpsed the absurd as well. Commenting on a passage from Il fu Mattia Pascal, Claudio Vicentini in his recent book L'estetica di Pirandello states that : "Heaven, understood as a system of beliefs and values is a recurrent image in Pirandello. (...) The humorist (emphasis mine), aware of the illusion, destroys the conventional wholeness by means of 'the hole in the paper sky' and introduces criticism into the work of art".<sup>58</sup>

Mattia Pascal, alias Adriano Meis, feels a great envy for marionettes above which the fake sky remains unbroken. They can love, and hold

themselves in consideration as valuable, without ever suffering vertigo or dizziness.<sup>59</sup>

In the novel Suo marito is found another description of the experience of the absurd.

She had a horror of that mirror where the image of her own soul denuded of all necessary fictions, necessarily had to also appear to her as deprived of any light of reason.

How many times, in insomnia, while her husband and master slept placidly next to her, did she see herself assaulted in that silence by a strange and sudden terror, that snuffed out her breath and made her heart beat tumultuously! So lucidly then the structure of daily existence, suspended in the night and in the emptiness of her soul, without sense, without reason, tore her apart allowing her to glimpse in a moment a very different reality, horrid in its impassible and mysterious crudeness, in which all the usual false relationships of sentiments and images would divide and fall apart.<sup>60</sup>

Having now gathered together representative examples of the first category of Pirandello's "humorous" works, those in which a character or characters either philosophise on the subject of the absurd or in which their moment of awareness of the absurd is described, let us turn now to the second category, that is, those works which manifest to the reader although not necessarily to the characters within the work, certain situations or anomalies in life which tend to bring about a consciousness of the absurd. To this category belong such short stories as La levata del sole, Al valor civile, Richiamo all'obbligo, L'illustre estinto, Marsina stretta, Se ..., Un'idea, Di sera un geranio, La rallegrata, Il marito di mia moglie, Distrazione, Notizie del mondo, Soffio, Lumie di Sicilia, Un cavallo nella luna, Il vitalizio, Il buon cuore, and Nell'albergo è morto un tale. While these two categories do to a certain degree overlap, the distinction is useful to see how Pirandello has illustrated the theme of the absurd. In accord with the general existentialist contention that there are many paths to an awareness of the absurd, Pirandello has illustrated a number of these. The realisation of the lack of seriousness of life, the "games" that fortune plays or reflection upon the weighty effect of even the most trifling of circumstances may lead to an awareness of the absurd. In La levata del sole we see how even the most serious of human intentions can be frustrated. A man burdened by gambling debts as well as a host of other difficulties sees no other solution but suicide. He stays up the

entire night in order to watch his last sunrise, but he fails even at this, his last desperate act. Instead of watching the sunrise and then putting an end to his life, he falls asleep.

In Al valor civile the laughter of fate is evident. A woman has left her husband to go and live with another man and have children by this second relationship, thus setting herself up in a respectable position in society. Her former husband is alone. He never risked much in life, and when he did he always lost. Now he is poor and very cynical. One night a man is seen to be drowning in the sea. It is a moment for heroism. Who will go to rescue him in the midst of the storm? A number of decorated and be-medalled heroes stand about. Instead, in order to attain a place for himself in society, in order to risk all, for once, the deserted husband swims to the rescue. Amid the praise and applause of the crowd he sees that the man he has saved is his wife's lover.

Richiamo all'obbligo is a comical short story concerning a "love potion" and its effects on a straying husband, to the benefit of the wife's lover. Neither marriage, nor love, nor faith in science, nor even fatherhood, nothing can be taken too seriously.

Another game of fate occurs with its victim the protagonist of L'illustre estinto. A very famous, powerful man lies dying. He imagines the enormous pomp and ceremony which will attend his

funeral. Instead, he is buried in a pauper's grave, and all the ceremony is attendant upon the body of an unknown corpse because of an inadvertent switch of the bodies by the train personnel.

Reflection on the results of such "tricks" of nature, (tricks which, however, it must be noted, are not ascribed to any intentional action on the part of a somehow rational "nature" or "fate") leads to consciousness of the power of the "if" and hence to an awareness of the absurd. In Margina stretta, a suit of clothes which is too tight is the tiny catalyst needed to change the disposition of the wearer, which in turn cause him to act differently from the way he normally would and hence to alter the whole course of certain serious events which change the lives of several people.

In the short story Se ..., this theme is developed more fully. If a soldier had not been given his discharge in one particular town rather than another, his entire life would have been different. At first, one is tempted to interpret this as a short story of "bad faith". However, the protagonist rejects the idea of fate (which would place the responsibility on some other knowing being or force). He simply reflects on the disparity of the unimportance of random circumstances and what may be their final result.

All that happens, had to fatally happen? False!  
 I could have not happened, if ... And here I lose  
 myself: in this if! <sup>61</sup>

If it is not clear that the protagonist goes beyond the realisation of the power of the "if" to an awareness of the absurd, there is certainly portrayed in this short story one of the paths which may lead to this awareness.

While Sartre sees the absurd as he contemplates the fullness and superfluity of being, Camus often finds it in the contemplation of death. The relationship between death and the absurd is an interesting one in that a contemplation of the finality of death may lead to an awareness of the absurd, and this latter may lead to a contemplation of suicide. For the moment, let us confine ourselves to the consciousness of death as it leads to an intuition of the absurd. With the exception of a certain interest in spiritism, Pirandello sees death as in a profound sense, final, and hence "useless" and "without meaning", that is, a man's death is the end of his personal existence. It fulfils no "eternal plan" and (contrary to man's desire) has no more "meaning" than any other natural event. In Notizie del mondo, the theme of life's continuation after the death of a person is illustrated; however, it is life for the others and illustrates the absurdity of his own life, now that it is past. The best friend of the deceased "corresponds" with him and through this correspondence little by

little we see what little difference it would have made if he had never lived.

In Il marito di mia moglie, Pirandello states clearly that an awareness of death is at the basis of all philosophy. The protagonist, quoting a book whose title and whose author he cannot remember, states:

The horse, - then - , who doesn't know that he has to die, doesn't have any metaphysics. But if the horse knew that he had to die, the problem of death would, in the end, become, also for him, much more serious than that of life.

Finding hay and grass is, certainly, a most serious problem. But behind this problem the other one arises: 'Why ever, after having toiled for twenty, thirty years to find the hay and grass, must one have to die, without knowing why one has lived?'

The horse doesn't know he has to die, and he doesn't ask himself these questions. To man, however, who - according to Schopenhauer's definition - is a metaphysical animal (which means

precisely, an animal which knows he has to die),  
that question is always before him,<sup>62</sup>

The protagonist of this story not only knows that he will eventually die, but that he is, in fact, dying and so must face the "philosophical question". His first reaction is to wish to be the non-metaphysical horse, but of course he cannot, and he has a clear picture of the absurdity of his own position and how life will be after he is gone.

While comical in nature, Distrazione illustrates man's instinctive flight from death and anything connected with it. It is the story of a former taxi driver who loses his present job as the driver of a hearse because of a brawl which is brought about by a moment of distraction. Forgetting his new position, he beckons a by-stander and offers him a ride. In La rallegrata, the distinction between man and beast and their respective attitudes toward death is shown. Horses in the stall of a funeral director are conversing with each other and trying to understand what it is that they do.

Man's confrontation with death and the consequent meaninglessness of life are illustrated in Di sera, un geranio,

He saw now those things; no longer as they used  
to be, when they had some meaning for him; those

things which for themselves have no meaning  
at all and which now, therefore, are no longer  
anything for him.

And this is dying.<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps the most striking illustration of death and the absurd in Pirandello is Soffio. In this short story, a man discovers quite by accident that he has a strange and unique power. Just by blowing on his fingers to illustrate the transience of life, he can kill anyone. On the one hand, life is nothing, on the other is depicted all its sweetness and joy.

Another path to the absurd is the realisation of the relativity of values (see Chapter III Section D). A good example of this, contrasting in this case, city values and country values, is Lumie di Sicilia. In Di sera, un geranio, while we have already seen the "death confrontation", we can also see illustrated the theme of the relativity of values. A man lies dying. What is life? It has no meaning except what we give it, like a flower in the night - who knows why it has sprung up? The "why" is all-important because it leads to the realisation that there is no answer. It is seen as well in Notizie del mondo. Science can invent machines and apparatus to make us do more or do it better, but:

What is important isn't to fly faster or slower,  
higher or lower, but to know why one flies.<sup>64</sup>

The power of an uncaring nature over man's most serious undertakings is illustrated once again in Un cavallo nella luna, Il vitalizio, Il buon cuore and Nell'albergo è morto un tale. There is no "seriousness" in nature. It has complete power over the affairs of men, but unlike the reasoning "fate" of the Greeks, this modern "force" is uncaring, and repeatedly manifests the gratuitousness, the meaninglessness of human life.

If then, life is meaningless, is suicide the answer, or is it, as Camus suggests, precisely in the refusal of suicide that man finds some type of happiness? Is it in the affirmation of personal freedom that man finds himself, or is it in some sort of *agape* that must be lived. Indeed, what values if any can "exist" in an absurd world? In other words, upon becoming aware of the absurd, a man will according to existentialist theory, react in one of many possible ways. Some of these reactions are "authentic", that is, consistent with the person's newly acquired consciousness of the absurd; and some are "inauthentic", that is, seeking to reject or hide from this consciousness. In the following section, we will examine these various possible reactions and, categorising each as "authentic" or "inauthentic", we will compare Pirandello's views with recognised existentialist ones.

#### D. Reactions to the Absurd and Values in an Absurd World

As has been noted, for the atheistic existentialist, life has no special *a priori* "meaning". From this, along what some would regard as a logically dubious chain, they pass to the assertion that everything is therefore meaningless and that value judgments are totally arbitrary, thence to the discussion of what reactions to the absurd are "authentic" and which values are to be chosen in an absurd and meaningless world.

In the conclusion of The Myth of Sisyphus, Camus identifies man's happiness with the acceptance of his condition in an absurd world. He likens all men to Sisyphus, that ceaseless and "futile labourer of the underworld" who was condemned by the gods to roll a rock to the top of a mountain where it would forever fall back into the valley and from which he would forever have to roll it up the mountain. Human life, for Camus, is as futile and meaningless as Sisyphus' labour, but:

The absurd man (...) knows himself to be the master of his days. At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced

of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. (...) This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. (...) The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.<sup>65</sup>

Thus for Camus, the acceptance of the futile struggle, the affirmation of life in the face of inevitable and meaningless death is seen to be, paradoxically, the only meaningful value in a meaningless world.

Sartre's view diverges only slightly from Camus' here, and the difference is much more in emphasis than in substance. He does not speak at all of "happiness", in the face of the absurd, but rather of the acceptance of man's complete freedom to affirm what value he chooses, since in an absurd world, according to Sartre, no values are given. In the affirmation of this liberty and in the commitment of oneself to a self-chosen value, no happiness or victory is found, but only the avoidance of what Sartre calls "bad faith" or "self-deception".<sup>66</sup>

For Camus, to react in any way other than that which accepts the absurd condition and determines to live in the full knowledge of it, means to be defeated and overwhelmed by the absurd and

be, in effect, less than a man. Hence, suicide is to be rejected as is the search for that which those in this tradition call an "absolute"--meaning in this context something possessing an externally generated value, something capable of giving an *a priori* "meaning" to life and thus taking away the despair. The only solace which may be allowed is that *agape*, fraternal love, or charity, which reaches out to all other men since they too must live the absurd. (see for example The Plague).

For Sartre, it is only through the acceptance of our complete liberty to choose, the realisation of which is brought about by an awareness of the absurd, that we may live as men. Any device which would seek to mask this feeling of anguish or take away one jot of our responsibility for our choices or deceive us into believing that we are not, in fact, free is a form of "bad faith". There is no solace for our anguish. No value or system of values is held to be more worthy than any other except in that it either affirms each man's liberty or restricts it.

What is Pirandello's position regarding the various reactions to the absurd? How does he deal with the "existentialist" values such as freedom or the affirmation of life as compared to the way in which he deals with traditional moral values? With a view to forming a coherent interpretation of the place of value systems in Pirandello's works let us examine all the various reactions

to the absurd found therein and see the extent to which this author may be termed a "pre-existentialist".

### 1. Relativity (Subjectivity) of Values

For Camus one of the direst consequences of the realisation of the absurd and the decision to live with it is the awareness of a paradoxical type of freedom.

(...) hitherto he was bound to that postulate of freedom on the illusion of which he was living. (...) To the extent to which he imagined a purpose to his life, he adapted himself to the demands of a purpose to be achieved and became the slave of his liberty. (...) Thus the absurd man realises that he was not really free. (...) To the extent to which (...) I arrange my life and prove thereby that I accept its having a meaning, I create for myself barriers between which I confine my life. (...) The absurd enlightens me on this point: there is no future. Henceforth this is the reason for my inner freedom. (...) He enjoys a freedom with regard to common rules.<sup>67</sup>

Hence within the existentialist framework commonly accepted moral values lose their force.

There is a widely-held although fallacious line of reasoning among atheistic existentialists that by denying the existence of God they, thereby, take away the force of moral imperatives. They are fond of that famous line by Dostoevski "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted." They also spend great amounts of energy and endless pages fighting what to many is the straw man of absolute values, values which always and everywhere override any possible circumstances. Pirandello's short story La morta e la viva is a perfect example of these lines of reasoning. A man who all his life had had faith in the infinite power of God, who had respected Him in all circumstances finally comes upon a situation which cannot be neatly arranged according to any previously constructed value system, and the man realises that he must construct his own since no values are absolute in this sense. Pirandello's ideas concerning the relativity of all reality are well-known, (see Chapter IV). Based on a rejection of God's existence (see below), the realisation of the absurd, and this notion of relativity, Pirandello also concludes that values are relative; and the only absolute that will be found is within ourselves, our freedom to choose within the limits of our historical context and in the face of our ultimate death. The phrase "relativity of reality" is typically Pirandellian and in order not to substitute some other locution for this already well-accepted - within Pirandellian studies - phrase, I have continued to use it, but it must be noted that Pirandello's "relativism" could

more properly be termed "subjectivism" since he is an ontological absolutist but an epistemological relativist.

Interestingly, in a recent article within the field of Pirandellian studies (June 1982) Ludovico Steidl in fact refers to Pirandello's philosophy as "*suggestivistica*", thus going against the already established usage and perhaps happily starting a trend toward more philosophically correct terminology.<sup>68</sup>

In the short story Zuccarello distinto melodista this search for the absolute is illustrated. At first the reader is led to believe that the protagonist is searching for an "absolute" in a name or a title which would exhaust all the possibilities of being of an individual or an object. In fact, it is upon the discovery of a sign advertising the performance in an unknown and tawdry cafe of a certain "Zuccarello, distinguished melodist" that the protagonist thinks that he has found the "absolute", the title which would exhaust all the possibilities of being of its owner.

I was (...) in one of those moments, unfortunately not rare, in which reason (I still have, unhappily, a little of that), sure of having reached at last that absolute which everyone, without knowing it, anxiously seeks in life (...) Reason, moreover, realises all of a sudden that it holds in its hand, victoriously, a little tail, understand?

instead of the absolute; the little tail of a wig, the kind of a wig tail to which Baron von Munchhausen held onto to pull himself out of the pond into which he had fallen. (...) sooner or later, the good which we have set for ourselves, toward which we aim all of our affections, all of our thoughts, and which has, therefore, acquired for us the intrinsic value of our own life, an absolute value, understand?; as soon as it is reached, or even before, it reveals itself to us as vain. (...) Because the absolute, dear friends, that absolute in which alone, our spirit could find rest, can never be reached.<sup>69</sup>

The protagonist, in desperate need of finding the 'absolute' is sure that Zuccarello must have reached this "absolute" and therefore be a god. The confusion between the protagonist's search for the "absolute" and his own statement that it cannot be found is finally resolved in the conclusion that the "absolute" is nothing more than the place inside each one of us from which can grow an entire world. Zuccarello had found the only "absolute" that there is in this world: the understanding of himself and his life condition, the understanding that is, of the subjectivity or, as Pirandello would have it, the relativity of all reality.

It must be noted here again, that neither those existentialist claims concerning the relativity (subjectivity) of values, nor those concerning the possible existence of an "absolute" and the alleged consequences of these claims is at issue here. What is relevant is only the finding of identical claims in the works of Pirandello.

In the philosophy of Pirandellian drama is the immoral affirmation that 'It is for each that which it appears to each.' Sceptical affirmation which is equivalent to 'Truth does not exist.'<sup>70</sup>

In L'uomo la bestia e la virtù, the questions are raised: What is man? What is beast? What is virtue? Conventional notions of these are not accepted.

The relativity (subjectivity) of all reality according to the perceiver is affirmed again in La mano del malato povero:

I really have never understood what pleasure there is in posing questions to others in order to know how things are. They tell you the way they know them. Are you happy with that? Thank you very much! I want to know them for myself, and I want them to enter into me as they appear to me.<sup>71</sup>

In fact, according to Pirandello, it is impossible to see things the way others do no matter how much one tries. This is illustrated in Quand'ero matto. A man who finds total peace in a contemplation of nature, feeling as if he himself could become the world with the trees as his members, the earth as his body, the rivers as his veins and the air his soul, awakes from this revery to realise that he has really been raving.

Let us come back into our own consciousness ...

- But I re-entered into it, not to see me, but to see the others in me as they see themselves, to feel them in me as they in themselves feel and to want them as they wanted themselves.<sup>72</sup>

The entire segment of his life during which time he tried to be one with nature and one with other people is refuted as the time "when I was crazy". In fact, these desires, this way of life has made him incapable of taking care of himself or functioning in the world. It is only when he accepts the necessity of being an egotist that he learns to be "wise". The ironic ending of the story is his marriage to the wealthy widow of the man who robbed him of everything. Thus he judges that he has been saved by the great virtue of foresight on the part of his "good" thief. Although it is undoubtedly true that it was for merely pragmatic reasons that the protagonist of the story "could" not succeed in seeing the world as others saw it, it is also true that he

could only see through the eyes of other people and feel as they did in his own idealised manner. In other words, he only imagines himself to be thinking the way they were and feeling the way they did. It was not, as it first appears, because of his extreme goodness that he was robbed and ruined, but because of the goodness which he thought was in others. Thus, studying this story along with La signora Frola e il signor Ponza suo genero (and its dramatic equivalent Così è (se vi pare) which is the classic example of Pirandello's illustration of the relativity (subjectivity) of reality, and which will be discussed at more length in Chapter IV on reality, we can see that it is not merely a pragmatic impossibility of seeing the world as others see it; such an objective world-view is impossible in principle as well. In the face of this discovery Pirandello affirms in L'uomo in frak that:

Loyalty, loyalty is a debt, and the most sacred  
toward ourselves even before that toward others.  
To betray is horrible.<sup>73</sup>

In Niente we see the full force of Pirandello's treatment of "common" values. They are *niente*, nothing. What is love once we have attained it? What is glory once we have achieved it? What is learning, or even life itself? Niente. (It must be noted that Pirandello is not asserting that this experience is or should be universal but only that it is one way of coming to an awareness of

the relativity (subjectivity) of values to the importance which the individual places upon them.) In the face of death, in the case of this particular story - suicide, it is realised that nothing has value and death is, in fact, the easiest way out. (For a further discussion of life as the only value, however, see subsection 6 of this chapter.)

In the stories: Ritorno, Tutt'e tre, La prova, and I fortunati, the "common" values of marriage and religion are questioned. In fact, in La prova we find a situation almost identical with Sartre's classic example of the choice of values as illustrated in the Biblical story of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac. For Sartre, even Abraham being tested by God, was entirely free and entirely responsible for his actions. He could not blame it on God because it was he who had to first of all decide whether in fact it was God who was calling, and whether he was indeed calling Abraham, and whether he was in fact that Abraham. The relativity of time itself that is, the subjectivity of its perception, is illustrated in I due giganti,

The ambivalent traditional Christian values of poverty and humility even within the Church itself are shown in La Messa di quest'anno. If one examines logically and follows to their final strict conclusion the teachings of Christ, the Church should not be rich. It should give all it has to the poor. Christmas should not be celebrated with feasts and decorations and pomp, but with

stark simplicity in its wholly spiritual value. The new priest in a small village wishes to do this, to the great disappointment of everyone. The narrator tells us:

'I am sure that the bishop will remedy everything.'  
 (...) This priest Don Grotti is too logical and cannot succeed, he follows too much to the letter the teachings of Christ. (...) No capons, no yellow bread ... no nothing. (...) even more logical was Catholicism which was well aware that men couldn't for an unsure good over there, beyond life, last for very long in the bitter and hard resignation and in the despising of the goods of the earth here below, it wanted pomp, it wanted feasts ... and so many other things it wanted and permitted. Go on, won't Monsignore want to be a good Catholic?<sup>74</sup>

On what basis then can values be chosen if even those which have supposedly been sent down from Heaven can be and are interpreted in contradictory ways?

The highest value, if there is one, must be the keeping of faith with one's self-chosen values, whatever they may be. (This is illustrated in Alla zappa, however the difficulty of doing this, is also illustrated in Sopra e sotto and in La balia.)

The existentialists insist upon the absurdity of life, its ultimate meaninglessness. This leads them to a claim that there is no such thing as an *a priori* value. At the same time, Sartre treats the acceptance of man's utter freedom and total responsibility as the highest value while Camus extols the acceptance of the absurdity of man's condition as the only fully human mode of behaviour. It is true that Sartre makes use of sophisticated philosophical reasoning (or plain sophistry--depending on one's point of view) in order to explain that he isn't really treating freedom as a "value" but as man's "mode of being":

I am indeed an existent who learns his freedom through his acts, but I am also an existent whose individual and unique existence temporalizes itself as freedom. As such I am necessarily a consciousness (of) freedom since nothing exists in consciousness except as the non-thetic consciousness of existing. Thus my freedom is perpetually in question in my being; it is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being; and as in my being, my being is in question, I must necessarily possess a certain comprehension of freedom.<sup>75</sup>

Camus seems to find it obvious that if man's condition is meaningless and absurd, then the only manly thing to do about it is too accept this absurdity. This great act of courage perhaps brings happiness and a sort of victory and is hence to be valued.

One cannot help but observe here a certain contradiction. One intuitively feels an uncomfortable inconsistency. Either it is the case that there are no *a priori* values and one cannot recommend any particular mode of action, or this is not the case. One cannot have it both ways. It is a tempting opportunity for philosophical refutation of existentialist theses. However, even more interesting is the observation of the same contradiction in Pirandello.

On the one hand Pirandello illustrates the typically existentialist notion of freedom from "common" moral strictures because of their "relativity" in the face of the absurd. On the other hand, he, like Camus, takes certain conclusions as obvious, e.g. we are alive, there is this continual "flux" of life within us. Being that this is all we have and the opposite of this, anything which stops this flow is a form of death, choose life. Being that life lived to its fullest, life aware of the masks, the forms which try to stifle it, life aware of its own absurd condition in which it is forced on the one hand to construct itself and accept certain masks while on the other it struggles to be free from such killing forms --being that such a life seems more human,

more truly alive, Pirandello sees this kind of life as a sort of ultimate value. Keeping faith with whatever values one has chosen is also accepted intuitively as a positive value.

Thus we can see within the works of Pirandello a great concern for the relativity--or subjectivity--of values as part of the awareness of the absurdity of man's condition, a typically existentialist theme. We can also see the same sort of inconsistency of claims in regard to ultimate values in Pirandello as in the recognised existentialists.

## 2. God

What is Pirandello's position regarding the existence of God? Religion, the Church, believers, miracles, and other themes concerning God are numerous in the works of Pirandello. What are their functions? Can Pirandello be classed with the atheistic existentialists or does he affirm God's existence? Among the literary critics we find many discussions in this area. Most common is the opinion that Pirandello is a pantheist, but some critics such as Pietro Mignosi have even maintained that Pirandello is a perfectly orthodox Catholic.<sup>76</sup> Pirandello's own claim that one aspect of his work is "perfect orthodoxy in regard to the position of religious problems. And such problems only allow of a Christian solution,"<sup>77</sup> is, I would argue, misinterpreted and used to support this dubious claim. Gino Cucchetti in his article

Assoluto e relativo nei tre miti di Luigi Pirandello states that Pirandello does not in fact resolve these problems, then states quite irrelevantly that Dante didn't either and asks the further irrelevant question as to whether any of us has. This critic further contradicts himself in stating that far from Pirandello's thoughts is:

(...) the procedure of a certain deism which, establishing with rational critical processes the inconsistency of all the positive religions, believes to be able to abolish them, leaving each individual to his own devices.<sup>78</sup>

Either Pirandello does, in fact, leave each individual to his own devices, or he resolves these religious problems. Cucchetti further states:

(...) Pirandellian doubt is put in the service of truth; irony and sarcasm punish perfidy, even if it is overshadowed by the pretences of social living, and even while negating it, he affirms this life and the nobility of its struggles. And not the 'absolute' in each man's actions, which could represent the implacable march of destiny, marked with the birth of the existence of each one of us, but the 'relative' created by our will,

by our sentiments, by our 'ego' conscious and operating, is the most serene and comforting significance that life is not that little breath which is imposed upon us by a materialistic force, based on a biological formula, but it is a magnificent gift liberally given to us by a spirit incalculably larger and more powerful than we, a gift which we can use as we wish, according to our desires, our tendencies, our aspirations, a free will, in short, which makes us, according to our thought, and each in a different way, masters of the world.<sup>79</sup>

In this section I will argue that: a) Pirandello's attitude towards organised religion is a negative one, b) that his position concerning God, in a Christian sense is that He is an invention of man brought about by fear of the unknown or the inability to face the absurdity of life, c) that the true nature of God - if such a term can be applied to such a nature - is nothing more than life itself which is envisioned as a force, a continual flow or flux which has no meaning in itself, of which we are only a part and to which it is we ourselves who must give a meaning, d) that the acceptance of this concept is in some sense impossible for men so they need their faith in God and e) that the recognition of this need is the only true sense in which it may be said

that Pirandello's approach to religion only admits of "Christian conclusions".

a. In La lega disciolta, Bombolo, a Mohammedan living in Sicily, acting on "Christian" principles of justice and charity, is contrasted with the Christians who, while outwardly preaching the same principles, are actually less "Christian" than he, in that they do not practise what they preach. In La Madonnina we see the faith of a small boy coming from an atheist family contrasted with the scheming of the priest and other "faithful" which deceit destroys the boy's faith and drives him from the Church. In Uno nessuno e centomila the narrator-protagonist of the novel describes all nuns as at least partly crazy. In the play All'uscita the Philosopher describes how he had to explain to his dog why he couldn't go into church.

'There stands the most respectable of human sentiments, dear, which not content, not even he, to live in men's breast, wanted to make a house for himself on the outside, and what a house! Domes, naves, columns, gold, marble, precious canvasses.' Now you, good man, perhaps you can understand. As a house of God, the world is undoubtedly infinitely grander and richer than a church; incomparably more noble and precious than any altar, the spirit of man in adoration

of the divine mystery. But this is the fate of all sentiments which want to construct a house for themselves: of necessity they become smaller, and even become a little puerile, because of their vanity. It is the same fate of that infinite which is in us (...)<sup>80</sup>

And again in Uno nessuno e centomila, we see the image of churches as houses built by men to enshrine their own sentiments.

Men, you see? had to construct a house even for their sentiments. It's not sufficient for them to have them inside, in their heart, these sentiments; they want to see them on the outside also, to touch them, and they built for them a house.<sup>81</sup>

b. In L'Avemaria di Bobbio we see the torment of a man wishing to live without faith. Bobbio, a sceptic and an atheist, has continually recurring toothaches, but hates the dentist. It is clear from the story that the pain represents man's anguish over his condition, his recurring fear of the absurd. Can science "cure" man of this fear, or is faith in God the answer? In pain, almost as a childhood conditioned response, Bobbio says an Avemaria. The pain goes away. This is repeated a number of times. Should he believe or not? Finally, in order to solve the

problem and not have these "games" anymore, he turns to science and has all his teeth pulled out. Of course this cannot solve the original problem of whether or not the Avemaria cured his pain. In the novel Suo marito the authoress reflects upon her own faith in God and begins to see this belief as a necessary fiction in the face of the absurd.

(...) but wasn't God perhaps a supreme fiction created by this dark and profound feeling in order to calm herself. Everything, everything was an illusion machine which one mustn't squelch, which one had to believe, not through hypocrisy, but out of necessity if one didn't want to die or go crazy. But how to believe if one knew them to be illusions? Alas, without a goal, what sense did life have? Beasts live for living and men couldn't and didn't know how; of necessity men had to live, not for living but for something fictitious, illusory which would give a sense and a value to their lives.<sup>82</sup>

In the face of the absurd, man's invention of God comforts him.

In Il vecchio Dio we read:

Hopes, illusions, riches and so many other beautiful things had Mr. Aurelio lost along the path

of life; faith in God was the only thing he had left, faith which was, in the midst of the anguished darkness of his ruined existence, like a little lantern; a little lantern which he, walking hunched over, sheltered as best he could, with timorous care, from the frigid breath of the latest disillusionments. He wandered as if lost through life's disorder and no one was concerned about him anymore.

- It is not important: God sees me! - he exhorted himself in his heart. And he was really sure of this, Mr. Aurelio was, that God saw him because of his little lantern. So sure, that the thought of his proximate end, rather than dismaying him, comforted him.<sup>83</sup>

In Bereche e la guerra we see man as the creator of God, the Creator.

If only it were known in the heavens that in the strip of tenuous half-light there are millions and millions of restless beings, that from that little grain of sand there they seriously believe that they can dictate laws to the whole universe, impose upon it their own reason, their

own sentiment, their own God, the little God born in their little souls that they believe to be the creator of those heavens, of all those stars; and here, they take him, this God who has created the heavens and all the stars, and they adore him and they dress him up after their own fashion and they demand that he account for their little worries and provide protection also in their most sordid affairs, in their stupid wars.<sup>84</sup>

In Pallottoline we see again, how man has created his own God out of his fear.

- Are you afraid? - her husband shouted at her.  
 - Are you afraid that God, because I curse, as you say, will send you a thunderbolt? There's the lightening rod, fool. Do you see what your God is born from? From that fear of yours. But can you seriously believe, pretend that an idea or a sentiment born in this nothing full of fear which is called man should be God, should be the one who formed the infinite universe.<sup>85</sup>

In fact, it is the husband who is made to look foolish, not because his lightening rod couldn't protect them from a thunderbolt from

On High, but because he is naive enough to believe that by exposing the origin of man's belief in God, he could rid man of his faith. In fact, for most men this faith is a necessary illusion, as is well illustrated in Lazzaro. In this play, it is precisely the realisation of this necessity which allows a man who has rejected the priesthood to accept it once more.

- Now I understand and really feel the word of Christ: CHARITY! Because men cannot remain all and always standing, God himself wants his house on earth which promises true life beyond; his Holy House, where the tired and the poor and the weak can kneel down and all sorrow and all pride bend its knee. (...) now I feel myself worthy again of putting on the habit for the divine sacrifice of Christ and for the faith of others.<sup>86</sup>

Man needs the comfort he seeks from faith in God. In Si gira ... we read:

A man has died ... Myself, yourself, ... no matter: a man ... And five people, in there, have gone on their knees round him to pray to someone, to something, which they believe to be outside and over everything and everyone, and not in

themselves, a sentiment of theirs which rises independent of their judgment and invokes that same pity which they hope to receive themselves, and it brings them comfort and peace. Well, people must act like that.<sup>87</sup>

c. The "God" which Pirandello envisages is, therefore, not the personal Judeo-Christian God who gives a meaning to the universe, who planned and executed the redemption of man, and who will judge and reward or punish each man according to his merits. It is a "God" only in the sense that it is a force somehow beyond man and yet is found in each man. It is the only "absolute": life, a continuous flux, a force which is in each man and which will continue after the death of each man. If it is any form of theism at all, then it must be regarded as a pantheistic doctrine, the equivalent of affirming that life is the ultimate value, an affirmation which is hardly foreign to Camus. What is called "God" by man in his necessity for faith is in reality, according to Pirandello "pitch darkness".<sup>88</sup> Man denies death in God, but this does not render us immortal nor does it give meaning to our lives. True resurrection consists in:

believing in only this Immortality, not ours, not for us, hope of reward or fear of punishment; believing in life's eternal present, which is God, and that is enough.<sup>89</sup>

God is our own life within us and no need to search anywhere else.

Our spirit is God within us.

(...) God (...) see you with your own eyes.

(...) What should I do?

Live.<sup>90</sup>

In Uno nessuno e centomila the narrator-protagonist contrasts Pirandello's conception of God which is within oneself with that which is a construction of man.

d. According to Pirandello, to accept that God is life within each one of us means that we must accept each person's reality as being as valid as our own; there is no God who has a privileged view. It is not possible for us to do this as we can only see from our own point of view, and hence men reject this pantheistic God and hold to their ancient faith. In Quand'ero matto a man who had tried to accept this pantheistic world-view, realises the impossibility of this.

(...) I agree now that this would be a difficult God for wise people and even down-right impractical because whoever would want to recognise him would have to act towards others the way I used to act, that is, like a crazy person; with equal

consciousness of oneself and of others, because they are consciousness as we are. Whoever would really do this and would attribute to others the identical reality which he attributes to his own, would of necessity have the idea of a reality common to all, of a truth and also of an existence which surpasses us; God.<sup>91</sup>

So we see that in one sense, because of man's weakness and fear it is very pragmatically impossible, according to Pirandello, to accept as the absolute what he proposes is, in fact, the only absolute. It is impossible also in principle, as we have seen in the above section concerning the relativity of values. (More will be said concerning the affirmation of life as well as the inevitability of what Sartre calls "bad faith" later on in this chapter.)

e. What attitude can then be taken in regard to the need for an absolute, the need for faith? More will be said later on concerning Pirandello and fraternal love, *agape*; but the above examinations of his attitudes toward the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of God along with his espousal of what may be regarded as a form of pantheism show that Pirandello's so-called "Christian conclusions", if such they may be termed, are Christian only to the extent that they take into account the frailty of man and propose a loving, charitable, tolerant

attitude towards these weaknesses. In no further respect can he be termed an "orthodox Catholic". His pantheism is thus more profitably classed with the atheistic existentialists rather than the theistic or Catholic existentialists.

### 3. Suicide

Camus, considers the question of suicide the most vital one in all of philosophy.

My reasoning wants to be faithful to the evidence that aroused it. That evidence is the absurd. It is that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, my nostalgia for unity, this fragmented universe and the contradiction that binds them together. Kierkegaard suppresses my nostalgia and Husserl gathers together that universe. That is not what I was expecting. It was a matter of living and thinking with those dislocations, of knowing whether one had to accept or refuse. There can be no question of masking the evidence, of suppressing the absurd by denying one of the terms of its equation. It is essential to know whether one can live with it or whether, on the other hand, logic commands one to die of it.<sup>92</sup>

And he concludes, as we have seen above, that in order to overcome the absurd we must live with it, in full knowledge of the meaninglessness of our lives. Sartre too condemns suicide because paradoxically, although it is a free act, it becomes the final act which takes away our freedom, man's mode of being doing away with his mode of being. For Sartre, death can only "remove all meaning from life".<sup>93</sup>

If we must die, then our life has no meaning because its problems receive no solution and because the very meaning of the problems remains undetermined.<sup>94</sup>

Suicide is as meaningless as any other kind of death.

It would be in vain for us to resort to suicide in order to escape this necessity. Suicide can not be considered as an end of life for which I should be the unique foundation. Since it is an act of my life, indeed, it itself requires a meaning which only the future can give to it; but as it is the last act of my life, it is denied this future. Thus it remains totally undetermined(...) Suicide is an absurdity which causes my life to be submerged in the absurd.<sup>95</sup>

In the works of Pirandello we find one fictitious suicide (Il fu Mattia Pascal), three attempts or (near attempts) at suicide and twenty-one examples of successful suicide. What function (or functions) do these examples have in Pirandello's exposition of his position concerning suicide?

There are only two clear examples of suicide as a reaction to the absurd in all of Pirandello's works. In L'idea it is presented to us as a vague idea which haunts, omnipresent in front of the absurdity of life. In Candelora a woman faced with the relativity of all reality cannot live with this awareness and kills herself. Another short story, Pubertà, may be interpreted as an example of suicide in the face of the absurd, but it may just as well be read as a reaction to the normal but in this case exaggerated psychological difficulties of puberty.

In Spunta un giorno we see the only example of the deliberate rejection of suicide after it has been seriously considered as a means of escape from an impossible or extremely difficult situation. The two other examples of attempts (or near attempts) concern one man who simply lacks the "courage" to commit the act of self-destruction, L'idea, and another who simply falls asleep instead of making the attempt, (La levata del sole).

Of the twenty-two examples of successful suicide, twelve are committed because of the protagonist's inability to live with a

difficult situation. In E due! a young man cannot live with his past. In Nel segno, L'uomo solo, Si gira ..., La veste lunga, and Scialle nero the motive concerns unrequited love, betrayal by the beloved or the impossibility of living without love. In Zia Michelina the suicide is the result of the conflict between society's values and the woman's own. In Niente and in La veglia (this latter really an attempted suicide, but I have classed it with the successful ones since the woman was saved only at the last moment and not by her own acts.) the motives are less clear but have to do with the difficulty of living with certain situations. In In silenzio a young boy who has "adopted" his illegitimate half-brother after the death of their mother and made the love between them the focus of his life, kills himself and the little brother as well when the mother's former lover comes to claim the child. In Vestire gl'ignudi and Il guardaroba dell'eloquenza suicide in conjunction with false stories are used as means of saving the reputation of two people. In the latter case, the suicide is committed by one person for the sake of two other people's reputations, and in the former it is committed by the person whose reputation is at stake.

While in some cases it is the awareness of the absurd which results in suicide, in two short stories, Sole e ombra and L'imbecille suicide is used by the author to lead us, if not the protagonist, to a further awareness of the absurd. In the first case, a

man commits suicide because he cannot bear the idea of being caught for his stealing and going to prison. But a greater part of the story concerns the contrast between his last glorious day in the country and his designs, and between his death and the continuing, uncaring beauty of nature. In the second story suicide is used to illustrate the uselessness of death. No one, no political motive, no other circumstances can make it "worth something" to the individual. Its very finality makes the life which preceded it futile.

In six instances suicide happens to appear in a short story or novel, but it is used primarily to illustrate another theme. In Il fu Mattia Pascal the suicide of a gambler is the technical means by which Pirandello develops his plot and causes Mattia to leave the casino and start for home, during which journey he hears the news of his own presumed suicide and begins his new life as Adriano Meis. In Mentre il cuore soffriva the suicide of an old man paralysed by a stroke is described. It is used to illustrate the contrast between his body as looked at from the outside by others and what was, at the same time, going on inside him. In La levata del sole, a man who has gambling debts sees no other solution but to kill himself. He stays up to see his last sunrise but instead of killing himself he falls asleep. In this story, as was shown in Section II of this chapter on the

realisation of the absurd, Pirandello illustrates the absurdity found in conjunction with even our most serious intentions.

In Il viaggio, Da sè, L'uccello impagliato and Il dovere del medico, suicide is the perhaps exaggerated reaction of four people in circumstances which take away their freedom and make their life nothing more than a living death. The suicides are not a solution. They are used by the author to provide a contrast which ironically, highlights the value of life. In Da sè, a man decides to kill himself after discovering that he has fallen so low that in fact his old self has already been dead for three years. In Il dovere del medico an accused murderer kills himself rather than have his life - or even his freedom - taken away from him. In Il viaggio a young widow caught in the strictures of traditional Sicilian society finally chooses life by rejecting the living death of the customs of her little village. When she must return to the village, she chooses death instead. Rather than being an example of true suicide, she is symbolically shown to have chosen only between two forms of death. In L'uccello impagliato a man who has "not lived" so he wouldn't die finally realises his circumstances and ends the "living death" that was his existence.

Thus, in none of these cases does Pirandello state clearly his position regarding suicide. He does not preach against it as does Camus or Sartre, but neither does he propose it as a

solution or an escape. In fact, far from admiration, the reader is led to feel pity and a great compassion for all of these suicides. Considering this evidence alone, it must be admitted that the claim that Pirandello, like Camus, rejects and condemns suicide, is simply under-determined by the textual evidence. However, considered within the framework of all of the works of Pirandello and especially in the light of the large number of works which affirm the value of life as an antidote to the absurd (see sub-section 6 below) it must be concluded that while Pirandello did not consider the question of suicide as the basic one of all philosophy as did Camus, neither did he leave out the question altogether. And the answer to this question was, for Pirandello, that while one must feel compassion for those who do choose this form of action, for there are many who do; suicide is not an acceptable means of dealing with the absurd.

#### 4. Denial of Responsibility and/or of the Absurd

Sartre's notorious equation of man with freedom leads him to conclude that he is totally and utterly responsible for his choices, his actions. To attempt to behave as if one were not responsible is to commit an act of what Sartre calls "bad faith", *mauvaise foi*. It is an act by which a man tries to hide from or mask the discomfort which this responsibility causes him. Even madness is, for Sartre, a kind of "bad faith" because insanity is a way of trying to create a false, illusory world in which

a man can live without responsibility. Max Charlesworth in The Existentialists and Jean-Paul Sartre, quotes an interview with Sartre in which the French philosopher speaks of his influence on and position concerning R.D. Laing and the anti-psychiatry school of psychiatrists.

I think that Professor Laing was looking for a theory which would put freedom first, so that mental illness, or what is known as mental illness, might appear as an aspect of freedom, and not as a disease resulting from a malfunctioning of the brain or from some physical complaint. I think what he meant is that within society, such as I conceived it, one could understand the nature of an aberrant but persistent attitude which at present is known as madness, an attitude that prevents a real contact with others and which is nevertheless a consequence of freedom. (...) a new conception of mental illness seen as a mode of life as valid as our own, but which, however, is likely to lead to total inertia, for instance, or to unbearable pain. He takes men as they are, not as mad versus sane men, but as men; some reaching a certain stage of distress, others avoiding that stage. That is, I presume, what

Laing seemed to want to take from my writings.  
 As a matter of fact, I am completely in favour  
 of anti-psychiatry, such as it is practised by  
 Laing and by others in Italy and France.<sup>96</sup>

For Sartre, Freud's theory of the unconscious act is a contradiction in terms, and "bad faith" or "self-deception" is the true cause of "mental illnesses" which are seen to be the result of "repression". According to Sartre, repression at an unconscious level is not possible because the mechanism of repression must in fact be conscious of what it is repressing in order to do so. Even under such extraordinary circumstances as torture, it is not licit to say that one couldn't have done otherwise. One must admit that rather than endure the pain, he chose to do as he did. Thus any attempted escape from our responsibility for our choices as free men is an example of "bad faith".

In Arte e coscienza d'oggi Pirandello describes the times and one origin of this desire to escape. Modern science has taken away the place in the universe which man thought to hold. The world is no longer anthropocentric. Man can no longer believe in the greatness of his position. As the "ancient faith" in God disappears and man sees that there is no "meaning" or eternal "plan" to be found in nature, he becomes aware of the absurd, of *l'umorismo* of his situation and may seek to escape this

realisation. One aspect of this "modern insanity" is a refuge in a deterministic view of the world.

While on the one hand describing the condition of man as part of an absurd world and emphasising his freedom; on the other, Pirandello does not condemn universally the inauthenticity with which some people approach this condition, this freedom, and their resultant responsibility. The over-analysis of life, the dissecting and marking of it with neat little labels rather than living it is seen as inauthentic and unacceptable, but to a certain extent "bad faith" (or as Pirandello might prefer "self-deception") is unavoidable because not only do we often see ourselves as very different from what we really are (see Chapter V on Self & Others), but society itself often demands of its members a certain reciprocal deception which makes life more tolerable.<sup>97</sup> This apparent divergence of opinion between Pirandello and Sartre is not the result of any radically different view of man's freedom or responsibility. It is brought about only by a certain pessimism on the part of the Sicilian as to individual man's actually accepting his position in the absurd world. As has been shown in Chapter II on freedom, Pirandello clearly believes not only in the desirability of accepting this freedom and responsibility but in the very real possibility of doing so. He does stress the difficulty of this, however, and a great part of his work is devoted to illustrating the conflict between authenticity and self-deception.<sup>98</sup>

This same conflict between authenticity and self-deception or bad faith shows up in Sartre. It is not only a question of perpetual temptation toward bad faith as toward an easier alternative but a conflict or a tension at an even deeper level. Sartre states:

That which affects itself with bad faith must be conscious (of) its bad faith since the being of consciousness is consciousness of being. It appears then that I must be in good faith, at least to the extent that I am conscious of my bad faith. (...) There is in fact an 'evanescence' of bad faith, which, it is evident, vacillates continually between good faith and cynicism.<sup>99</sup>

And again even more forcefully:

Thus the essential structure of sincerity does not differ from that of bad faith since the sincere man constitutes himself as what he is in order not to be it. This explains the truth recognized by all that one can fall into bad faith through being sincere (...) Thus we find at the base of sincerity a continual game of mirror and reflection, a perpetual passage from the being which is what it is, to the being which

is not what it is and inversely from the being which is not what it is to the being which is what it is. And what is the goal of bad faith? To cause me to be what I am in the mode of 'not being what one is', or not to be what I am in the mode of 'being what one is'. We find here the same game of mirrors. In fact, in order for me to have an intention of sincerity, I must at the outset simultaneously be and not be what I am.<sup>100</sup>

Thus we see in both writers the illustration of the conflict between authenticity and self-deception or bad faith, with a slightly greater tendency on the part of the Sicilian toward a certain pragmatic pessimism in regard to the outcome as well as an appreciation on the part of both writers of the ontological difficulties involved.

Pirandello, like Sartre, sees that the "unconscious" can be no more than an excuse. He acknowledges its power, but sees that its existence does not take away responsibility. In the short story Nel gorgo and in the play taken from it Non si sa come we see a man who, having committed adultery with his wife's best friend in an "irrational" moment, and finding himself as well as his partner, perfectly capable of pushing the memory of this betrayal so deeply into their unconscious as to feel guiltless,

goes "mad" as he realises that his wife might have done the same thing.<sup>101</sup> The unconscious is likened to an abyss (*il gorgo*) into which the entire episode falls and which closes over immediately, leaving no trace of the event. It is clear, however, that the responsibility remains, as it does in the short story Nel sogno from which comes the following passage:

(...) she had been another's in the unconsciousness of her dream. The betrayal didn't exist in fact, for the other; but it was and remained here, here for her, in her body that had taken pleasure, a reality.<sup>102</sup>

Nevertheless, the usefulness of the unconscious as an excuse is also illustrated.

Where was the guilt? What could he do to her.<sup>103</sup>

In Il treno ha fischiato, the usefulness of insanity as a refuge from reality appears again. A man living an "impossible" life, supporting a huge number of ill relatives, working literally day and night becomes aware of his own freedom and sees his life as his own choice. He is overcome with a sense of exhilaration at this discovery, and other people think he is crazy. Of course, he isn't, but being well aware of the situation he sees that it would be much easier if he were.

Yes, he was still a little elated, but very naturally so because of what had happened to him. He laughed at the doctors and the nurses and at all his colleagues who thought him crazy. - if only! - he said, - if only!<sup>104</sup>

Of course, the most famous example of Pirandello's treatment of insanity is the play Enrico IV in which a man, injured in a fall, awakes believing himself to be Henry IV. His friends and servants, etc. second his delusions. After a time, he realises who he really is, but aware also of the treachery of his "friends",--who had engineered the fall--he pretends to continue to believe in his fictitious identity, waiting for the moment when he will be able to exact his revenge. He finally murders the man who had betrayed him and retreats behind his "insanity" to evade responsibility for his action. This play raises the question of what insanity is, but it must be noted that Pirandello deals throughout his works with two different concepts of insanity. One refers to the type which we have been discussing through which a person tries to evade his responsibility. The other concept, as we saw very briefly in Il treno ha fischiato is the labelling as "insane" by society of any person who does not conform to its standards, accept its particular values or share its deceptions. This is the theme of the play Il berretto a sonagli.

It's so easy to pretend to be crazy, believe me! I'll teach you how. You just have to begin shouting the truth in everyone's face. No one believes it, and everyone will take you to be insane.<sup>105</sup>

Thus insanity can be a type of "bad faith" or "self-deception", an attempt to evade one's freedom.

For Camus, "bad faith" is any flight from the absurd. In discussing the various reactions to the absurd, in his essay The Myth of Sisyphus Camus distinguishes between the absurd hero, Sisyphus, who lives with and faces the meaninglessness of his existence and the futility of his endeavours, and others who, through various means try to escape an awareness of the absurd.

In Pirandello, too, we find self-deception as a remedy for the distress caused by the awareness of the absurd. In Si gira ... the actress Nesteroff tries to escape the meaninglessness of her existence. The protagonist of the novel, Serafino Gubbio, reflects:

'But what good will it do you' - I would like to shout at her - 'what good will it do you if Aldo Nuti does not come to bring it back before you, your malady, when you have it still inside you, stifled by an effort but not conquered?

You do not wish to see your own soul? Is that possible? If follows you, it follows you always, it pursues you like a mad thing! (...) Is it better to be killed than to fall back into that torment, to feel a soul within you, a soul that suffers and does not know why?<sup>106</sup>

Serafino is aware of the senselessness of everything. He wonders if this can be an awareness peculiar to him or if others also are aware.

I study people in their most ordinary occupations, to see if I can succeed in discovering in others what I feel that I lack in everything I do: the certainty that they understand what they are doing.<sup>107</sup>

He sees that others, too, are conscious of the absurd, but try to reject it.

This is enough for me: to know, gentlemen, that there is nothing clear or certain to you either, not even a little, that is determined for you from time to time by the absolutely familiar conditions in which you are living. There is something more in everything. You do not wish

or do not know how to see it. But the moment this something more gleams in the eyes of an idle person like myself, who has set himself to observe you, why, you become puzzled, disturbed or irritated.<sup>108</sup>

It is as if people, at times, would like to step outside of their own beings so as to relieve their suffering, aware that it is their own being which is the cause of their pain.

Enemies, to her, (Nesteroff) all the men become to whom she attaches herself, in order that they may help her to arrest the secret thing in her that escapes her: she herself, yes, but a thing that lives and suffers, so to speak outside herself.<sup>109</sup>

In fact, it is precisely the desire to be aware of one's own being, to give it a value, a meaning, in contrast with the impossibility of achieving this which gives rise to the absurd. If one could get outside of his own being and live without this awareness, the anguish which this confrontation produces would cease. In Canta l'epistola, a man who has already rejected religion as a solution to the eternal problem is very well aware of the absurd. If man could cease searching for a meaning, the absurd would no longer exist.

To be no longer conscious of being, like a stone, like a plant; not to remember any longer even one's own name; to live just to live, without knowing that one lives, like animals, like plants; with no more affections, nor desires, nor memories, nor thoughts; without anything any longer which would give a sense, a value to one's own life.<sup>110</sup>

The desire not to die but to live, as Sartre describes it, in the manner of a thing, that is, without the terrible *consciousness* of the absurd, is overwhelming. In the short story La trappola it is illustrated again:

I was in the dark. You know I like to see the day die through the panes of a window and let myself be taken and enveloped little by little by the shadows, and think: - 'I'm not here any more!' - think: - 'If there were someone in this room, he would get up and light a lamp. I don't light the lamp because I'm not here anymore. I am like the chairs of this room, like the table, the curtains, the arm chair, the sofa, which don't need a lamp and don't know and don't see that I am here. I want to be like them, and not see me and forget that I am here.'<sup>111</sup>

Sometimes people seek refuge from the absurd in frenetic and continuous activity, hoping thereby to lose consciousness of it. From his ridicule of such behaviour we may conclude that this is, for Pirandello, an inauthentic mode of action. Claudio Vicentini states:

Action, as absolute functionality without any aim, becomes mechanical action (...) In this prospective, devouring activism represents the typical attitude of the man who 'has renounced' and tries to suffocate the existence of superior truths, (...) It isn't, however, the overcoming of the crisis, it is only the loss of awareness of it, and entails the progressive alienation of man who in exasperated activism suppresses authentic feelings.<sup>112</sup>

Vicentini in his work on Pirandello's aesthetics also notes that the theme of the insignificance of human action which loses all value and all real aims is a recurrent motif in Pirandello's works. He quotes, in this context, Pirandello's short story Notizie del mondo (Novelle I p 708) "What is important is not to fly faster or slower, higher or lower, but to know why one flies." Without this reason, action is folly. Again Vicentini quotes Pirandello (I vecchi e i giovani, in Romanzi, cit., p. 817):

I don't know, at certain times, who is crazier,  
 I who don't understand anything or those who  
 seriously believe that they do and speak and  
 move as if they really had some goal in front  
 of them.<sup>113</sup>

In Si gira ..., Serafino, keeping his own being in parentheses,  
 as it were, retreats from life and observes very keenly the others  
 around him. He sees everyone rushing around, trying to hide their  
 distress in continuous amusements and activities.

I don't deny it, the outward appearance is light  
 and vivid. We move, we fly. And the breeze  
 stirred by our flight produces an alert, joyous,  
 keen agitation, and sweeps away every thought.  
 On! On, that we may not have time nor power  
 to heed the burden of sorrow, the degradation  
 of shame which remain within us, in our hearts.  
 Outside, there is a continuous glare, an incessant  
 giddiness: everything flickers and disappears.  
 'What was that?' Nothing, it has passed!<sup>114</sup>

Such flight is fruitless. Even those amusements and those  
 activities cannot take from us the realisation of our condition.

Yes. More wearying and complicated than our work do we find the amusements that are offered us; since from our rest we derive nothing but an increase of weariness.<sup>115</sup>

The short story of Pirandello's which best illustrates the theme of activity as a flight from the absurd is Leviamoci questo pensiero. The protagonist is convinced that beyond all the little tasks, the minute, everyday activities and obligations of life, there must be some scope, some grand design by which he was meant to accomplish something important. Living means doing this "important something" so he must rid himself of the worry of doing this or that in order to get on with the business of living.

(...) it palpitated in him like an indefinable anxiousness, the anxiousness of an unknown wait, a vague presentiment, that in life there was something to be done, which was never one of those many of which he ran round trying to rid himself immediately of the worry. But unfortunately, always, when he had rid himself of the worry, he remained as if suspended and panting in a frenetic emptiness. That anxiousness remained inside of him; but the wait, alas, was always vain.<sup>116</sup>

He couldn't seem to realise that life consists precisely of those little tasks, those minute, everyday activities and obligations of which he tried to rid himself of the worry. On his death bed he is still convinced that there must be something important that he was to do.

He regained consciousness a few moments before dying; he re-opened his glazed eyes, looked sullenly at the doctor and the nurses around his bed; then reclining his head on the pillow he repeated with his last breath: - There was something I was supposed to do ...<sup>117</sup>

Another, and most common, form of "bad faith" illustrated by Pirandello is the avoidance of responsibility for one's own life by attitudes which place the responsibility instead on circumstances, other people, or fate.

In Si gira ... Serafino defines this type of "bad faith",

We all of us readily admit our own unhappiness; no one admits his own wickedness; and the former we insist upon regarding as due to no reason or fault of our own; whereas we labour to find a hundred excuses and justifications for every trifling act of wickedness that we have committed,

whether against other people or against our own  
conscience.<sup>118</sup>

In order to avoid responsibility for his own actions, a man may do almost anything, as Serafino continues to reflect in the following passage:

Among all the phenomena of human nature one of the commonest, and at the same time one of the strangest when we study it closely, is this of the desperate frenzied struggle which every man, however ruined by his own misdeeds, conquered and crushed in his affliction, persists in keeping up with his own conscience, in order not to acknowledge those misdeeds and not to make them a matter for remorse.<sup>119</sup>

The following are fully twenty examples from Pirandello's novels, short stories and plays of the theme of blaming other people, fate, God or circumstances for one's own difficulties. (1) In Vexilla Regis a woman blames her mother's objection to her marriage for her own abandonment of her lover and their child. (2) In Zafferanetta a man blames his natural child for his retreat from life and abandonment of his wife and the child of their marriage. (3) In L'ombrello, a young widow blames the "difficult nature" of one of her children for her own not remarrying. (4)

In In corpore vili a priest uses the cook or anyone else around as a scapegoat for his own gluttony and even uses the sacristan to take the medicine for his own resultant illnesses. (5) In Tra due ombre a man, upon seeing his former fiancée and realising how changed he is, blames his stupid wife and ugly children for the changes. (6) In Superior stabat lupus a woman refuses to acknowledge her own complicity in a murder.

Did the suspicion of her father's cruel decision flash across her mind, upon seeing him the next morning all intent and attentive in the care of the sick one, after all that had been said between them the previous evening? Perhaps, but she refused to assume consciousness of it.<sup>120</sup>

In the novel (7) Il turno, a husband refuses any responsibility in his wife's illness, of which he is actually the cause. The doctor himself wishes to avoid responsibility for his choice of treatment.

And if the doctor said something to him: - I don't know anything. - he answered invariably. It's up to you. You're responsible. I'm here. I don't complain about anything.

But in the end the doctor asked for a consultation, and having obtained from his colleagues

the assurance that he had done all that was possible for the sick woman, he wanted to decline all responsibility.<sup>121</sup>

(8) In the play Come tu mi vuoi, a man refuses to acknowledge his responsibility for his own choices.

Salter:                    I destroyed for you my life!

The unknown woman:    For your own passion - not for me.

Salter:                    But who made me lose my head?

The unknown woman:    I? You, yourself wanted to lose it by coming near me.<sup>122</sup>

(9) In Uno di più a man uses his own child as an excuse not to admit that he can't leave his wife because he is afraid of her and needs her.

(...) while it was he who put her forward that way, his little girl, in order to shelter his shame behind her, the shame of his inconfessable shyness of his wife. He wanted to hide his shame from himself and from his mother, and he put

forward the little girl, saying that he didn't  
leave his wife on account of her.<sup>123</sup>

(10) In Vittoria delle formiche a rich man who has lost everything through his over-indulgence in wine, women and gambling, is now reduced to poverty. At the time he had refused all responsibility, pretending not to be aware that ruin was imminent, although now he lives in endless remorse over what he should have done and didn't do. But still he hasn't learned his lesson. In order to rid his shack of ants he tries to burn the ant hill nearby. His hovel catches fire and he is burned trying to save it. He dies calling it "an alliance between the ants and the wind".

(11) In Sedile sotto un vecchio cipresso a strangely emotional man, always angry with one person or another has to call in a colleague from his office as mediator every time he has a fight with his wife. The colleague becomes like one of the family. He and the wife have an affair, and the husband, thoughtless of consequences, as usual, imprisons the wife in her own home, after having sent her away and recalled her on account of the children. He shoots the lover in the arm and is absolved. The lover goes away and is reduced to begging in the streets. The husband, who has had all kinds of prostitutes in the house as a vendetta on his wife, by some sort of venereal infection has an enormous growth on his neck on account of which he can't even lift his head. One day, after many years, the husband and the lover meet and try

to console one another. They are still trying to blame fate for their present circumstances. (12) In Va bene, a man has blamed "the blows of fate" for his entire life. Time after time he makes the wrong decision and then, to avoid responsibility, blames fate for all the dire consequences. (13) In La casa dell'agonia, the theme of blaming fate is given a humorous twist. A man waiting for an appointment in the livingroom of an acquaintance notices a cat which is going after a nest of swallows under the window ledge. The cat is bound to knock over a vase of geraniums that is in the way. The observer can't take the agony of suspense. He feels that it is useless for him to move the vase since the next day it would be put back in its place. An accident is therefore "inevitable". He rushes out of the house; if he is indeed hit by the falling vase, whose fault is it? (14) In Il ventagliu a poor woman begging in a cafe is finally given money. She spends it on a little fan, saying "God will provide". (15) In La morta e la viva a man who has taken the responsibility of a choice under very unusual circumstances continues to put the responsibility for the consequences of his choice on God. (16) In Un'altra allodola, two men who haven't seen each other for years meet. In discussing their present circumstances, the one who is poor, whose wife has run off to become a prostitute, blames all of his difficulties on his being poor. (17) In L'uomo solo a man whose wife has left him, obviously through his own fault, continues to blame fate for his unhappy circumstances.

What could he do about it if around his child-like, tender and simple heart had grown that ugly body of a pig? Born for hearth and home, to love one woman in life, who would love him - not a lot! not a lot! - just a little, what recompense would he have known how to give her for that little bit of love!<sup>124</sup>

(18) In Il turno, a young man with a little musical talent blames the place of his birth for his not having developed his talent and thus opened up the future for himself. Because he lives in a small town and hasn't developed his talent, he does nothing and lives off of his relatives. (19) In Il piacere dell'onestà Maurizio speaks of:

The bad actions which one sees himself forced to commit.<sup>125</sup>

(20) In Vittoria delle formiche the man who has been reduced to poverty muses:

It was destiny that he should wind up in the country.<sup>126</sup>

Thus we have seen twenty examples of the avoidance of responsibility through a transfer of blame to another person, fate, God or circumstances.

Another way of avoiding responsibility is that of trying not to act. As Sartre states, this, too, is a choice. Pirandello, too, sees this sort of avoidance of responsibility as impossible. As he states in E due!

(...) because men, in the presence of a fact, couldn't remain impassive like things, even though they, like he, might try with all their strength, not only not to participate in it but even to hold themselves as almost absent from it.<sup>127</sup>

We see three examples in Pirandello, of people attempting to avoid responsibility by trying to live through another person. In La balia Pirandello describes a woman who expects that others will give her life, without understanding that each person must make his own.

She felt, and was perhaps really unhappy; but she blamed others for this unhappiness, instead of her own contrary nature, her bitter character, her lack of any good graces. She was convinced that had she come across a different man who would have loved and understood her, she wouldn't have felt all that emptiness inside and around her. (...) Her husband (...) avoided as much as possible speaking with her at length, certain

that, whatever he might say or do he wouldn't succeed in inspiring in her, in communicating to her that affection for life, of which she felt the furious desire, but of which at the same time he judged her incapable. She expected life from others, without understanding that each person must make it for himself.<sup>128</sup>

A major theme of the novel Suo marito is precisely this refusal to make one's own life. It concerns the husband of a famous writer who tries to take refuge in and derive his own personal worth from his wife's fame. The short story Ho tante cose da dirvi also deals with a person who tries to take her identity from another. A woman who as a young country girl married a famous musician, is stupid and knows nothing of music or art, but she thinks that for the past twenty-eight years she has shared her husband's life. Now that he is dead, she cannot seem to understand why no one is interested in seeing her. She has "borrowed" her husband's life all these years and now, by rejecting a suitor from her village, she refuses to live her own, again.

Another way of rejecting one's own responsibility is by adopting certain illusions which may be easier to live with than reality. In Concorso per referendario al consiglio di stato, a man is in a resort "trying" to study for an examination through which he could obtain a civil service position in order to be able

to marry. He uses every possible excuse to keep from studying, except the real one; that he truly doesn't want the position and doesn't really want to marry the girl. The truth is discovered when his fiancée breaks off the engagement and rather than feel unhappy or disappointed he is relieved.

In L'esclusa, the protagonist, a heroine of the anti-establishment whose role in the novel is to contrast with the "bad faith" of society is herself, upon occasion "guilty" of the same behaviour.

When evening came, however, she realised that not so much for others did she need to pretend as for herself. Immediately, not to pay attention to her own disquietude, not to remain alone with herself, she took out from the drawer the school assignments to be corrected, as she was in the habit of doing every evening, she took in hand the correction pencil and she began to read, concentrating on the first composition all her attention.<sup>129</sup>

In La maestrina Boccarmè we see a country school teacher who has retired from life to live with her illusions. In Mondo di carta a man who has never lived, but only read about life, goes blind. At first he hires someone to read to him, but this is unsatisfactory since every inflection, every tone of voice other than his own

seems wrong. Then he hires a girl merely read silently and thus share his world. When she takes exception to a particular book, saying that the place described isn't really the way it is in the book, the man is distraught. It must be the same! It must be the same! Otherwise, his entire conception of the world, based on his books, is no longer secure.

The following are four examples of Pirandello's illustration of the theme of man's coming to the realisation of his deliberate avoidance of responsibility. (1) In Il treno ha fischiato a man who lives an impossibly difficult life, working literally night and day to support a host of ill or aged relatives, is awakened to all the possibilities of life outside of his own tormented and difficult situation. A train whistle in the middle of the night is the catalyst which brings about this awareness. The situation will remain. He continues to work to support his relatives. In fact, very little will change, but the awareness of all the other possibilities and hence his responsibility for having in fact chosen this particular life are enough to bring his happiness. (2) In Marsina stretta, a man realises how he usually abandons himself to whatever situation arises, rarely if ever having the courage to rebel. (3) In Il coppo a man who has blamed his failures as an artist on anyone except himself and his own choices, finally realises his own responsibility. In this very symbolic short story, a type of fishing net represents self-deception and the

river water which flows through it, life. He realises that it is (was) his decision to jump into the net and after jumping, he climbs out. He realises that he has chosen those "duties" which inhibit other choices and chosen to pretend that he couldn't have done otherwise. (4) In Paura d'esser felice, the theme of the realisation of one's own responsibility is symbolically portrayed. In this story is discussed the question of whether it is fate or ourselves which are responsible for our own happiness. A man whose every plan seems to be foiled at the last moment is convinced that it isn't through his own actions that he comes to grief but rather through some sort of demon or evil eye or malevolent force. He becomes afraid to be happy and thus tempt the evil eye. He always asks for the opposite of what he wants, complains about what pleases him, etc. in order not to lose his happiness. In the end he "catches" the demon responsible. He realises that it is within himself.

Thus, along with those examples of "the denial of the absurd", we have seen numerous examples of man becoming aware of his condition, accepting his responsibility and living in "good faith" with the absurd. However, it is clear that Pirandello wishes to stress the difficulty of this. Sartre states in Being and Nothingness that:

(...) consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. The origin of this risk

is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is.<sup>130</sup>

In other words, if a man calls himself, for example, honest, in the same manner that he calls a stone, a stone, he is in "bad faith" inasmuch as he is not honest, he has merely committed certain acts which may be termed "honest" and there always remains for him the possibility that he will one day commit a dishonest one. Thus, man, or as Sartre terms him, consciousness, is not what he is. On the other hand, the man who has always acted the coward, may term himself courageous in that for each one of his future acts, there is as much possibility for him to act courageously as for him to continue to act cowardly. Thus, he is what he is not.

There is a nearly perfect parallel here between Pirandello and Sartre. While the affirmation of freedom is, in one sense, the avoidance of "bad faith"; self-deception is, in another sense, nearly unavoidable since as soon as one tries to affirm one mode of being as opposed to another, as soon as he tries in a certain sense, to define his "self" he is deceiving himself. The continuous flux which is life, or consciousness cannot be limited or defined. Hence Sartre's "permanent risk of bad faith". Hence, also, Pirandello's ideas concerning life as a continuous flux and form (definition of any part of that flux) as death. Despite

this, man cannot live in society without imposing upon himself a form, a mask behind which lives his vastly multi-faceted self. As Pirandello states in L'umorismo:

And nothing is true! True the sea, yes, true the mountain; true the stone; true the blade of grass; but man? Always masked. Without wanting it, without knowing it, in that thing which he in good faith believes himself to be.<sup>131</sup>

And yet this mask, too, is a kind of self-deception.

Thus emerges from both Pirandello and Sartre a philosophy of freedom in the face of the absurd, freedom, however, in constant danger of being subverted by the desire to flee one's responsibility or to deny the absurd. These desires to flee or to deny are Sartre's classic examples of "bad faith". At the end of this chapter we will examine the other reactions to the absurd to see which are in Sartre's terms "authentic" or "inauthentic".

## 5. Fraternal Love

It has been stated in defense of Pirandello's philosophy against the charge of utter despair and pessimism that, in fact, the one value which this writer affirms, despite all his pessimism

is that of love, mutual - if not understanding - then, tolerance, *agape*. Indeed, Vera Passeri Pignoni in her previously cited article on Pirandello and existentialist philosophy writes:

And this (suffering) is accompanied, as a medicine and a relief, by love which has the function, in the great iciness of existence, to bring humanity back to its primordial ardour, to warm for a moment that substance which form has irrevocably fixed. How can one find here the most agonised themes of Jaspers or of Marcel, the need to resolve in love, in communion, in compassion that weight of the absurd and of the irrational which would otherwise crush man.

Thought doesn't include everything but it itself is included. To its limitedness it is necessary to respond with the consoling mystery of love.<sup>132</sup>

Using as a prime example of this "doctrine" the play Così è (se vi pare) and speaking of Pirandello's characters which "do not ask to be understood but to be loved",<sup>133</sup> Prof. Pignoni states:

(...) he gathered together the voices of many philosophical theories, elaborating them with originality, thus from the budding existentialism

of his thought, he deduced a most human, most original theory of love and of compassion.<sup>134</sup>

In an article on the moral philosophy of Pirandello, Lina Passarella Sartorelli, defending the writer against charges of complete moral relativity, finds that Pirandello's morality - as she puts it - consists in his pity and compassion!

But against this drama (O di uno o di nessuno) stands Tutto per bene where Pirandello becomes the tragedy of the most pointed morality, crying along with scorned virtue. And there stand also Pensaci, Giacomino and Il piacere dell'onestà where man becomes the protector of another's error.<sup>135</sup>

The conclusions of both Prof. Pignoni and Prof. Sartorelli, while appealing are, in fact, unwarranted because 1) The compassion, the fraternal love of which these two writers speak is indeed present in Pirandello's works. However, it appears most frequently as an emotional response in the reader or the audience to the various situations and characters depicted. This consummate author, this winner of the Nobel Prize for literature has undoubtedly accomplished this deliberately but can this assumption be used as "hard" evidence for the conclusion that his philosophy includes a "doctrine" of fraternal love similar to Marcel or Camus? And more

importantly, 2) the themes of pity and compassion, while they do appear, seem to be counterbalanced or even outweighed by opposing ones such as the inability to see others as they see themselves, the impossibility of any deep communication between people, the violence done to the self by the other's "look".

To cite the same examples as Passarella Sartorelli, it is at least debatable whether Tutto per bene becomes the "tragedy of the most pointed morality, crying along with scorned virtue" or whether instead the author isn't in fact pointing again to one of his favourite themes, i.e. you make your own reality. That the reality is, in this particular instance, a bit more compassionate than in others is, I think, quite irrelevant. In Pensaci, Giacomino and Il piacere dell'onestà the fact that man becomes "the protector of another's error" is simply the cause of further mishap. Hence the compassionate nature of this protection is overshadowed by its consequences.

There are indeed three short stories in which love, or compassion is the major theme, and it may be on this evidence that Professors Pignoni and Sartorelli base their conclusions. These are: Natale sul Reno, in which we find a great nostalgia--possibly autobiographical--for a time when the author was surrounded by love, Prima notte and La fede. Already in the latter two, however, we see evidence of the difficulty of attaining such love. In fact, it is precisely this difficulty--one might even say impossibility--

-which is illustrated in two very striking short stories: Sogno di Natale and Un goj. In Sogno di Natale a man dreams on Christmas that he meets Jesus roaming the world looking for a soul into which he, the incarnation of love, may be reborn. He can find none since everyone is too busy looking after his own affairs. The hypocrisy of the world which professes itself to be guided by Christian principles of charity, which supposedly lives by the *agape* of the Gospel is shown in Un goj. In fact, this *agape* is at best difficult to encounter. A Jew who has given up his whole identity, changed his name and married into an ultra-Catholic family is persecuted for his religion by his hypocritical and over-zealous father-in-law. He feels a "goj", a stranger, in his own home. Actually, he is more "Christian", and understands and bears things more "Christianly" than any of his family. During the Great War, the father-in-law has prepared a magnificent manger scene, making use of all sorts of black market items. While everyone else is out at Midnight Mass, the "goj" replaces all of the shepherds, Magi, peasants, and other figures in the scene with tin soldiers of all nationalities, all with their guns facing Bethlehem.

Thus, while it may appear at times that Pirandello would find in compassion, fraternal love, or agape a kind of temporary refuge from the absurd, it is clear that Pirandello sees such a refuge as impossible--or nearly so--because man is depicted as a basically

self-centred being who, because of the inescapable relativity of his perception of reality, can never truly communicate with others let alone attain to such love.

## 6. Nature and the Affirmation of Life

Pirandello's attitude toward nature is somewhat complex and quite unique. He has been called a mystical-pantheist<sup>136</sup> and his pantheism has been discussed in sub-section 2 of this Section, but to call his attitude toward nature "mystical" is merely an evasion, a means of avoiding a rigorous examination of this attitude. It is neither mystical nor mysterious. Indeed, it is "pantheistic" only if one insists on terming the "highest value", God. In this sub-section I will argue that Pirandello's attitude towards nature leads him first of all to a historical outlook concerning man's awareness of his place in the universe, thence to the various attitudes which an individual may take towards nature and his place in it, and finally to the view of life, or nature, as a continuous flux of which we are a part and which is killed by the various "forms" which we try to impose upon it.

Mankind could never be "glorified". His behaviour is often more bestial than that of the beasts. This is well-illustrated in

the play Sagra del Signore della nave in which a young pedagogue tries to defend:

'human dignity' despite the spectacle that it makes of itself right in front of his eyes. In the end his faith wavers terrified, and he falls prostrate in front of this obscene and frightening spectacle of bestiality triumphant.<sup>137</sup>

It is not just humanity in general being judged, but individuals as well.

Sig. Lavaccara:        That one there, I assure you, he is  
a lawyer, yes, but much more of a  
pig than my pig which we are about  
to eat.<sup>138</sup>

In the past, however, despite man's faults he was regarded as the centre of the universe, the centre of the history of the Redemption, God's likeness and His child. The beginning of the disintegration of this illusion came with Copernicus. From L'umorismo:

One of the greatest humorists, without knowing it, was Copernicus, who took apart not really the workings of the universe, but the proud image which he had made for ourselves of it.<sup>139</sup>

The *coup de grâce* was given by the telescope which, by making the heavens and the stars so grand, in turn made us see the world and all of our own grandness and glory as infinitely small. Thus man, his old faith lost, turned to science to provide him with a way to deal with the absurd. It must be noted here, of course, that Pirandello was writing at the time of public awareness of the rise of science, a time in which science of one sort or another was thought to be the panacea. It must be noted also, that Pirandello was not saying that people turned from faith to science as a necessarily conscious choice. He is speaking, rather, as a social psychologist, analysing the "popular mind", much the way Sartre does when he connects atheism with the absence of moral values. Of course, science fails to live up to man's expectations of it. Vicentini, discussing Pirandello's essay Arte e coscienza d'oggi, writes;

Thus, rationalism, after having destroyed faith in God, the concept of truth and the anthropocentric conception of nature, can no longer satisfactorily answer the man who asks what is the aim of life, how to govern the instincts, and how to found a morality. From this arises a critical situation.<sup>140</sup>

In Lo stormo e l'angelo centuno, Pirandello illustrates the theme of faith or science used as a refuge from the absurd. Faith is for the common people what science is for the educated.

In the two short stories Donna Mimma and Le sorprese della scienza, Pirandello ridicules man's faith in science. In the former, an old mid-wife is forced to go to school to get a licence for her "profession". All the "science" she learns takes away her instincts and the benefit of all her years of experience. She is useless. Her rival, a young fully-trained woman, instead, takes up all of the old woman's folklore and traditional behaviour and so is very successful. In Le sorprese della scienza Pirandello paints the picture of Milocca, a town with no electricity, no running water, nothing that smacks of progress. The inhabitants of this town, far from being "backward", think of themselves as ultra-modern. They are simply waiting for the ultimate technological advancement which will make electricity, running water, etc. obsolete.

Machines or other modern inventions which are the result of science are also derided since all they can do is make life, a dull and meaningless business, easier and more monotonous. In Si gira ... there are many examples of Pirandello's dislike for "the machine". The following are six:

- (1) This was bound to happen and it has happened  
at last!

Man who first of all, as a poet, deified his own feelings and worshipped them, now having flung aside every feeling, as an encumbrance not only useless but positively harmful, and having become clever and industrious, has set to work to fashion out of iron and steel his new deities, and has become a servant and a slave to them.<sup>141</sup>

(2) (...) the motor-car, the machinery intoxicates them and excites this uncontrollable vivacity in them. They have it at their disposal; free of charge; the Kosmograph pays. In the carriage there is myself. They have seen me disappear in an instant, dropping ludicrously behind, down the receding vista of the avenue; they have laughed at me; by this time they have already arrived. But here am I creeping forward again, my dear ladies. Ever so slowly, yes; but what have you seen? A carriage drop behind, as though pulled by a string, and the whole avenue past you in a long, confused, violent, dizzy streak. I, on the other hand, am still here; I can console myself for my slow progress by admiring one by one, at my leisure, these great green plane trees by the roadside, not uprooted by the hurricane of

your passage, but firmly planted in the ground, which turn towards me at every breath of wind in the gold of the sunlight (...)<sup>142</sup>

(3) A violin, in the hands of a man, accompany a roll of perforated paper running through the belly of this other machine! The soul, which moves and guides the hands of the man, which now passes into the touch of the bow, now trembles in the fingers that press the strings, obliged to follow the register of this automatic instrument.<sup>143</sup>

(4) All the life that the machines have devoured with the voracity of animals gnawed by a tapeworm, is turned out here, in the large underground rooms, their darkness barely broken by dim red lamps, which strike a sinister blood-red gleam from the enormous dishes prepared for the developing bath.

The life swallowed by the machines is there, in those tapeworms, I mean in the films, now coiled on their reels.

We have to fix this life, which has ceased to be life, so that another machine may restore to it the movement here suspended in a series of instantaneous sections. We are as it were in a womb, in which is developing and taking shape a monstrous mechanical birth.<sup>144</sup>

(5) (...) that (opportunity) of meeting the man who has remained for me ever since the symbol of the wretched fate to which continuous progress condemns the human race.<sup>145</sup>

(6) I have no doubt, however, that in time, Sir, they will succeed in eliminating me. The machine - this machine too, like all the other machines - will go by itself. But what mankind will do then, after all the machines have been taught to go by themselves, that, my dear sir, still remains to be seen.<sup>146</sup>

Of course, man can do many things with the aid of science and its machines, but the one important task of man - to find a meaning for his existence - neither science nor inventions can accomplish. We read in Canta l'epistola:

Oh ambitions of man! What cries of victory because man has begun to fly like a bird! But look here how a little bird flies; it is with the purest and lightest ease which is accompanied spontaneously by a trill of joy. Think now of the mortal anguish of man who wants to be a little bird! Here a flutter and a trill, there a noisy and stinking motor and death ahead. The motor breaks, the engine stops; good-bye little bird! - Man - Tommasino Unzio would say, stretched out there on the grass - leave flying alone. Why do you want to fly? And when you have flown?<sup>147</sup>

While some look for an answer to the eternal question in faith or science, some take refuge from their terror of the absurd in their acceptance of scientific theories and the consequent "smallness" of man. If man is so small, then his pains must be small too. In the short story Pallottoline! we find such a man. He is an astronomer who lives a miserable life with his wife and daughter, but he doesn't let any of this worry him because the earth is nothing but a little ball. He takes refuge in his telescope. Pirandello describes the complaints of his family over how far away they lived from everything.

Distance? But on earth for him there was no distance. He would make a ring joining his thumb and finger of one hand and would say to his wife, laughing derisively: But if the Earth is so big ...<sup>148</sup>

All pain and discomfort he would try to remove with reflections on the smallness of man.

- You feel cold because you don't reason! Not only by words did he demonstrate contempt in which he held the world and all the things of life. He suffered from toothaches, and sometimes his cheek, in the violence of his pain would swell up under his huge beard like the hip of a father-abbot: well then, immediately he would push back into space the planetary system; the sun would disappear, the earth would disappear, everything became nothing, and with his eyes closed, unmoving in the consideration of this nothing, little by little his torment would subside. - A decayed tooth which hurts in some astronomer's mouth ... it's enough to laugh.<sup>149</sup>

The contemplation of nature and man's place within it is, for some, an ideal means of escape. This is illustrated in Si gira ...:

Escape, Signor Fabrizio, escape: fly from the drama! It is a fine thing, and it is the fashion, too, I tell you. Let yourself e-va-po-rate in (shall we say?) lyrical expansion, above the brutal necessities of life, so ill-timed and out of place and illogical; up, a step above every reality that threatens to plant itself, in its petty crudity, before your eyes. Imitate, in short, the songbirds in cages, Signor Fabrizio, which do indeed, as they hop from perch to perch, cast their droppings here and there, but afterwards spread their wings and fly: there, you see, prose and poetry; it is the fashion. Whenever things go amiss, whenever two people, let us say, come to blows or draw their knives, up, look above you, study the weather, watch the swallows dart by, or the bats if you like, count the passing clouds; note in what phase the moon is, and if the stars are of gold or silver.<sup>150</sup>

Not everyone can find comfort in this manner.

As we gaze at them (the stars), our own feeble pettiness is engulfed, vanishes in the emptiness of space, and every reason for our torment must

seem to us meagre and vain. But we must have in ourselves, in the moment of passion, the capacity to think of the stars. This may be found in a man like myself, who for some time past has looked at everything, himself included, from a distance.<sup>151</sup>

In the short story Rimedio la geografia, we find another version of this type of escape from anguish. A man has found the way to forget his troubles by thinking how insignificant they are in relation to all the troubles in the world. By thinking of the reality of other places he somehow takes away the reality of this place or this situation. The paradox is, of course, that man is never so small as when he considers himself as grand, (science will immediately dispute his claim and show him to be a tiny speck in an immense universe), and conversely, he is never so grand as when he considers himself to be small. That is to say, realising his own place in the universe and being able to live with the knowledge that the only spark of greatness, the only bit, as it were, of infinity which is within him is his life, which is only a tiniest part of the eternal flux of nature but which for him will be limited by his death - accepting this knowledge means that a man is living, as Camus would phrase it, in defiance of the absurd.

I know; there is also the melancholy of those philosophers who do admit the smallness of the earth but not, for that, the smallness of our soul if it can conceive of the infinite greatness of the universe. Yes. Who said it? Blaise Pascal. Nevertheless, one would need to think that this greatness of man, then, if ever, exists only provided that he understand, in front of that infinite greatness of the universe, his own infinite smallness, and that for this reason, man is only great when he feels very small, and never so small as when he feels himself to be great.<sup>152</sup>

Another means of escape from the absurd is a desire to be one with nature, not as a man, a consciousness, but as a thing, a "being-in-itself" as Sartre would call it. Camus also is aware of this type of an attempt at escape. In The Myth of Sisyphus, we read:

If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should be this world to which I am now opposed by my whole consciousness (...)<sup>153</sup>

Two examples of this type of "escape" have already been given in sub-section 4 of this chapter, since it is essentially an attempt at hiding from or masking man's situation rather than accepting it.

Another attitude toward nature which is a form of bad faith, an attempt to refuse the responsibility of one's position in an absurd world, is taken by people who try to give a "meaning" to nature and hence to their own existence as part of nature. Pirandello describes this attitude in several places. In La patente we find:

D'Andrea: (...) I speak to him (the little cardinal) imitating, thus, with a whistle, his song, and he answers me. I don't know what I tell him; but if he answers me it means that he gathers some sense from the sounds that I make to him. Just like us, my friends, when we believe that nature speaks to us with the poetry of its flowers, or with the stars in the sky, while nature, perhaps, doesn't even know that we exist.<sup>154</sup>

In the short story Il gatto, un cardellino e le stelle we find:

A stone. Another stone. Man passes and sees them next to each other. But what does this

stone know of the stone nearby? And the water of the canal which it flows through? Man sees the water and the canal; he hears the water flowing there and goes as far as to imagine that water confides, in passing, who knows what secrets to the canal.<sup>155</sup>

Il gatto, un cardellino e le stelle is the story of an old couple who are keeping as a remembrance of their orphaned granddaughter who died at age fifteen, a little cardinal. They attribute all sorts of human thoughts to it. The little bird is eaten by a cat and the stars continue to shine. Nature is perfectly indifferent. The short story Il corvo di Mizzaro is another illustration of man's attempt to ascribe a meaning to nature and natural events. In Suo marito, again, we find as a minor theme, the idea of nature having a meaning and having been created for man.

Ah, man who takes the whole earth and thinks that everything has been made for him.<sup>156</sup>

Thus Pirandello first describes the historical progression of man's awareness of his place in nature from an anthropocentric conception to a "rationalistic" one. Then we see four attitudes which Pirandello derides as impossible or based on falsehood: 1) a refuge in science as the provider of the "meaning" of nature and hence of human life, 2) the seeking of solace in the contemplation

of the "greatness" of nature and the "smallness" of man, 3) the desire to be "one" with nature in the manner of a thing as opposed to a consciousness and 4) the ascription of a "meaning" to nature. These are all derided by Pirandello and are illustrated as examples of various types of useless self-deception.

What, then, is Pirandello's own attitudes toward nature? Among all of the possible reactions to the absurd (insistence upon the existence of an absolute, rejection of responsibility, the affirmation of "common moral values" or of the existence of God, suicide, fraternal love), what value, if any, does Pirandello choose? In all of his works, the only value which is unequivocally affirmed and never contradicted is life itself. It is here that Pirandello's and Camus' ideas coincide perfectly. In La trappola we find what may be Pirandello's clearest exposition of his ideas concerning nature, life, death and forms.

(...) life is a continual flux, incandescent and indistinct,<sup>157</sup>

We are all beings caught in a trap, detached from the flux which never stops, and fixed for death. The movement of that flux in us lasts for a brief space of time, in our separated detached and fixed form; but then, little by little it slows down; the fire cools; the form

dries out; until the movement stops entirely in  
rigid form.<sup>158</sup>

Thus we are a part of nature. Our life is only a part of a life force which continues, but our life in and of itself has no meaning. The continuous flux of this life-force will continue unaltered after our death. Beyond the realisation of this, any reflection, any thought, any attempt to organise or contain our being in some "form" is only a hastening of death, since the movement of life's flux is the antithesis of the immobility of form.

Oh to lose oneself, there, to stretch out and  
abandon oneself, thus, on the grass, to the  
silence of the skies; to fill one's soul with  
all that vane blue-ness, making all thought, all  
memory fail.<sup>159</sup>

Thought can be the enemy of life, as we read in La nuova colonia:

But don't think of anything! Try to do! Listen  
to me, to have never thought. - There is the  
ground to the tilled? till; to sow? sow; to  
throw out and bring in the nets? throw out  
and bring in! Do, do. To do just to do, without  
even seeing what you are doing, why you are  
doing it.<sup>160</sup>

There is no use asking the eternal "why". There is no answer. There is only life. In All'uscita we read:

(...) so much life which, in the meanwhile, entered into me through my open senses, of which I wasn't aware. And then I would complain. About what? About that miserable little thought, about an unsatisfied desire, an adverse event already passed. And in the meanwhile all the good of my life escaped me.<sup>161</sup>

Life in man is his only good. We read in Sopra e sotto:

(...) man has here, here in his breast, in himself the greatness of the stars, this infinity, this eternity of the heavens, the spirit of the immortal universe.<sup>162</sup>

Because of Pirandello's derision of blind faith in science and his identification of man with nature since the flux of the life-force flows through all nature and man as well, we find in Pirandello's works very often an exaltation of the country over the city. He often likes to contrast the unnatural constructions of man (machines, inventions, city life) with nature or life in harmony with nature, as he does in Ciaula scopre la luna, in which a boy who has been a miner all his life finally discovers the

moon or in Alberi cittadini in which he describes the trees which try to grow in cities. In La favola del figlio cambiato we find the same contrast.

I shall go to bathe my hands in that fountain!  
 I want life to make itself new in me like spring  
 grass!  
 Away with the bitter fog, and that smoke  
 that smoke pierced by lamps,  
 architecture of iron,  
 ovens, coal, city  
 bustling with blind  
 and miserly worries.<sup>163</sup>

In the play La nuova colonia, we find a group of people who are trying to escape from the city and begin life anew. In the play Lazzaro we see the contrast between the "real" life of the country and the "cursed" life of the city.<sup>164</sup> And in I giganti della montagna we find:

And only when you no longer have a house, does  
 the whole world become yours. You go and you  
 go, then you abandon yourself on the grass to  
 the silence of the heavens; and you are all and  
 you are nothing ... and you are nothing and you  
 are all.<sup>165</sup>

In Si gira ... Serafino muses and wonders if it wouldn't be better to destroy everything and start again.

I look at the women in the street, note how they are dressed, how they walk, the hats they wear on their heads; at the men, and the airs they have or give themselves; I listen to their talk, their plans; and at times it seems to me so impossible to believe in the reality of all that I see and hear, that being incapable, on the other hand, of believing that they are all doing it as a joke, I ask myself whether really all this clamorous and dizzy machinery of life, which from day to day seems to become more complicated and to move with greater speed, has not reduced the human race to such a condition of insanity that presently we must break out in fury and overthrow and destroy everything. It would perhaps, all things considered, be so much to the good. In one respect only, though: to make a clean sweep and start afresh.<sup>166</sup>

Mixed with pity, as is his custom, we find Pirandello's greatest derision reserved for those who refuse to live: the country primary school teacher in La maestrina Boccarmè who lives only her world of illusions, the cataleptic wife of the puppet maker in La paura

del sonno, the abandoned wife in Pena di vivere così. In La distruzione dell'uomo we see the hideous crime of the murder of a pregnant woman and we are led to question whether the title refers to the destruction of the child in the womb or of the murderer himself. An excellent example of Pirandello's condemnation of mere existence as opposed to life is found in the short story L'uccello impagliato. Coming from an entire family which has died young of T.B., two brothers decide "not to live so they won't die". One finally decides to marry and the other remains, just like the old stuffed bird in his house. The married brother lives happily, eats and drinks normally. The other brother tries to follow his example once, but worries about it so much that he becomes ill. Three years after his marriage, the one brother dies. The other lives more sombrely than ever. Having reached age sixty, he realises that he is "made of straw", lifeless. He pulls out the stuffing of the old bird and commits suicide. In the development of this theme, it is clear that Pirandello is affirming the value of life lived to the fullest. As Camus writes:

(...) if I admit that my freedom has no meaning except in relation to its limited fate, then I must say that what counts is not the best living but the most living. It is not up to me to wonder if this is vulgar or revolting, elegant

or deplorable. Once and for all, value judgments are discarded here. (...) <sup>167</sup>

Pirandello's affirmation of life is found throughout his work - in the triumph of the continuation of life after the death of a loved one, in an especial reverence for the family (although not always the socially accepted one), in a mistrust of imposed chastity as opposed to a love for all life especially young, new life, in an awareness of the irreversibility of life and the impossibility of capturing any part of life in "form" or trying to perpetuate any experience beyond its moment of life.<sup>168</sup> In the stories Visitare gl'infermi and Filo d'aria Pirandello affirms life in its violent contrast with death. In the play L'uomo dal fiore in bocca and its twin short story La morte addosso, as well as in the short story La toccatina and Il marito di mia moglie we see the reactions of a man who knows he is dying. There can be no greater affirmation of life.

Of what use is this affirmation of life? Can man find in it an answer to his eternal "why", a refuge from the absurd? No. Pirandello affirms the existence of a life force but not any meaning to it. It simply is, and we are part of it, like Sartre's "being". It is a positive value in that it is the contrary of "nothingness". Our awareness of this life force only enhances our consciousness of the absurd as we contrast our ideals or aspirations with an eternal but blind and meaningless flux which

is our life within us. This flux is the only reality, eternally mutable, all else is only illusion. (See chapter on the nature of reality.)

Let us examine, then, the final possible reaction to the absurd, the last possible value to be chosen: silence.

## 7. Silence

In Arte e coscienza d'oggi Pirandello notes that the natural consequence of irresolution in thought is irresolution of action.

No ideal today arrives at concretising itself in front of us into a really intense desire or into a strong need. As soon as one believes in the vanity of life, one believes in the uselessness of the struggle. We neither reach the ideal nor does the need disappear.<sup>169</sup>

A desire for silence, for passivity is felt. Vicentini, in L'estetica di Pirandello, sees this as a positive solution.

(...) it is not a repression of every interest, but only of the egoistic interest, it isn't a closing but an opening, it isn't a distance but a presence in the world.<sup>170</sup>

Realising the vanity of all ideals, the relativity of all reality (see chapter on reality) one can find any decision, any attitude, any action intolerable because it is unjustifiable. The theme of Quando s'è capito il giuoco is precisely this necessary stoicism brought on by an understanding of the world's meaninglessness.

(...) nor could he be shaken from that kind of perpetual philosophic lethargy which stood in his large greenish eyes and panted through his large nose among the hairs of his dishevelled moustache and those which grew in clumps from his nostrils.

Because Memmo Viola would say that he had understood the game. And when one has understood the game ...<sup>171</sup>

Is such "disinterest", such passivity possible? Serafino Gubbio in Si gira ... finds himself in perpetual danger of being caught in that reality from which he tries to divorce himself completely.

(...) I endeavour to feel them in myself as they feel themselves, to wish for them as they wish for themselves; a reality, therefore, that is entirely disinterested. But I see at the same time that, without meaning it, I am letting myself

be caught by that reality which, being what it is, ought to remain outside me: matter, to which I give a form, not for my sake, but for its own; something to contemplate.<sup>172</sup>

Serafino's job as a camera operator is one of complete passivity. Knowing that all the action is but illusion meant for the cinema he must remain before it and simply turn the handle of his machine so that it may record it.

(...) Now she was beginning to be aware that for these other people and also for herself (in a vague way) I was not, properly speaking, a person. She began to feel that my person was not necessary; but that my presence there had the necessity of a thing, which she as yet did not understand; and that I remained silent for that reason. They might speak, yes, all four of them - because they were people, each of them represented a person, his or her own; but I, no: I was a thing: why, perhaps the thing that was resting on my knees, wrapped in black cloth.<sup>173</sup>

It is Serafino's job to be a silent, impassive spectator. Speaking to a tiger which is to be used in a film, he says:

And I, who love and admire you, when they kill you, shall be impassively turning the handle of this pretty machine here, do you see? They have invented it. It has to act; it has to eat. It eats everything, whatever stupidity they may set before it. It will eat you too; it eats everything, I tell you! And I am its servant.<sup>174</sup>

Entering his studio he stops being a person and assumes his impassive role as the servant of the machine.

I ceased to be Gubbio and became a hand.<sup>175</sup>

I at once assume, with it in my hand, my mask of impassivity. Or rather I cease to exist. It walks, now, upon my legs. From head to foot, I belong to it: I form part of its equipment.<sup>176</sup>

Little by little, the impassivity of Serafino Gubbio's job spills over into his life and we are aware that Pirandello is no longer speaking of one individual with a unique profession but of the condition of men in general.

I am neither hungry nor thirsty! I can do without everything.

I have wasted upon you a little of what is of no use to me;

you know it; a little of that heart which is of  
 no use to me;  
 because to me only my hand is of use (...)<sup>177</sup>

Confronted by life itself, he tries to use his work-a-day passivity  
 as an escape.

I felt myself, all of a sudden, alienated by this  
 disgust from everyone and everything, including  
 myself, liberated and so to speak emptied of  
 all interest in anything or anyone, restored  
 to my function as the impassive manipulator of  
 a photographic machine, recaptured only by my  
 original feeling, namely that all this clamorous  
 and dizzy mechanism of life can produce nothing  
 now but stupidities.<sup>178</sup>

But as yet the withdrawal is not complete. There is always the  
 danger that Serafino will not be able to remain passive.

Never before have I turned the handle of my  
 machine with such delicacy. This great black  
 spider on its tripod has had her twice, now for  
 its dinner. But the first time, out in the Bosco  
 Sacro, my hand, in turning the handle to give  
 her to the machine to eat, did not yet feel,

Whereas, on this occasion ... Ah, I am ruined; if ever my hand begins to feel!<sup>179</sup>

Suddenly there occurred a thing which (...) rebuked me for having chosen to remain indifferent. My mask of indifference I was obliged to throw aside in a moment, at the threat of a danger which did really seem to all of us imminent and terrible.<sup>180</sup>

Despite my resolution to place and keep all these people in front of my machine as food for its hunger while I stood impassively turning the handle, I saw myself too obliged to continue to take an interest in them, to occupy myself with their affairs.<sup>181</sup>

We begin to see the reason for Serafino's attempts at perfect passivity. It is not so much a "professional" need as it is a need to escape from his "superfluity".

I have only to enter here, in this darkness, foul with the breath of the machines, with the exhalations of chemical substances, for all my superfluity to evaporate.

Hands, I see nothing but hands, in these dark rooms; hands busily hovering over the dishes;

hands to which the murky light of the red lamps gives a spectral appearance. I reflect that these hands belong to men who are men no longer; who are condemned here to be hands only: these hands, instruments. Have they a heart? Of what use is it? It is of no use here. Only as an instrument, it too, of a machine, to serve, to move these hands. And so with the head: only to think of what these hands may need. And gradually I am filled with all the horror of the necessity that impels me to become a hand myself also, and nothing more.<sup>182</sup>

It is a refuge from his superfluity and yet this very superfluity, "wretched" though it is, is also, in some way, a relief.

When, finally, I am restored to myself, that is to say when for me the torture of being only a hand is ended, and I can regain possession of the rest of my body, and marvel that I have still a head on my shoulders, and abandon myself once more to that wretched superfluity which exists in me nevertheless (...)<sup>183</sup>

Serafino does not wish to admit it, but his friend Simone Pau tries to convince him that the superfluity which he is trying to escape through impassivity, is life itself.

It is true that I shall not know what to do with these riches; but I shall not reveal my embarrassment to anyone; least of all to Simone Pau, who comes every day to shake me, to abuse me, in the hope of forcing me out of this inanimate silence, which makes him furious. He would like to see me weep, would like me at least with my eyes to show distress or anger; to make him understand by signs that I agree with him, that I too believe that life is there, in the superfluity of his. I do not move an eyelid; I sit gazing at him, rigid, motionless, until he flies from the house in a rage.<sup>184</sup>

I have found salvation, I alone, in my silence, with my silence, which has made me thus - according to the standard of the times - perfect. My friend Simone Pau will not understand this, more and more determined to drown himself in superfluity (...)<sup>185</sup>

Serafino sees his passive silence a way to brotherhood in the suffering of mankind.

If you knew how I feel, at certain moments, my  
inanimate silence!

And I revel in the mystery that is exhaled by this silence for such as are capable of remarking it. I should like never to speak at all; to receive everyone and everything in this silence of mine, every tear, every smile; not to provide, myself, an echo to the smile; I could not; not to wipe away, myself, the tear; I should not know how; but so that all might find in me, not only for their griefs, but also and even more for their joys, a tender pity that would make us brothers if only for a moment.<sup>186</sup>

But it is very difficult to give or to receive pity and one can really only look through one's own eyes. It is impossible to be perfectly disinterested. Worst of all, complete passivity keeps one from living, as we have seen in the chapter on freedom.

But I? Was I of the same world? His journey and mine ... his night and mine ... No, I had no time, no world, no anything. The train was his; he was travelling in it. How on earth did I come

to be travelling in it also? What was I doing in the world in which he lived? How, in what respect was this night mine, when I had no means of living it, nothing to do with it? (...) No, no world, no time, nothing; I stood apart from everything, absent from myself and from life; and no longer knew where I was nor why I was there. Images I carried in me, not my own, of things and people; images, aspects, faces, memories of people and things which had never existed in reality, outside me, in the world which that gentleman saw round him and could touch. (...) I, no, I was not there; albeit, not being there, I should have found it hard to say where I really was and what I was, being thus without time or space.<sup>187</sup>

I have derived one great benefit from it, as you can see. I have learned to draw back with an instinctive shudder from reality, as others see and handle it, without however managing to arrest a reality of my own, since my distracted, wandering sentiments never succeed in giving any value or meaning to this uncertain, loveless life of mine. I look now at everything, myself included, as from a distance; (...) <sup>188</sup>

In the short story Il lume dell'altra casa Pirandello illustrates the impossibility of living apart from others, impassively, in silence, through others. A man with no life of his own tries to live vicariously by watching a family which he can see across the alley way through the window. The wife of that family and he run off together, but she cannot bear to be separated from her family and they are incapable of having a life of their own, so they return, only to watch the little group - husband and children - as they take their evening meal. They are as if suspended in time. They do not live and they cannot live passively through others.

Serafino, in Si gira ..., accepts the result of his impassivity. After witnessing a particularly gruesome scene at which he assists passively turning the handle of his camera, he wraps himself completely in his silence and remains mute forever,

I have lost my voice; I am dumb now for ever.

Elsewhere in these notes I have written; 'I suffer from this silence of mine, into which everyone comes, as into a place of certain hospitality.

I should like now my silence to close around me altogether.' Well, it has closed round me.

I could not be better qualified to act as the servant of a machine.<sup>189</sup>

The reader is aware that Serafino's silence is his own deliberate choice.

No, thank you. Thanks to everybody. I have had enough. I prefer to remain like this. The times are what they are; life is what it is; and in the sense that I give to my profession, I intend to go on as I am - alone, mute and impassive - being the operator.

Is the stage set?

'Are you ready? Shoot ...',<sup>190</sup>

It saves him from the awareness of his superfluity but the result is that while he can exist, he can never live.

## E. Summary

In this chapter we have compared the "absurd" as found in Pirandello, Sartre and Camus (Section B), then we have examined the moment of realisation of the absurd as described by these three authors, (Section C). In Section D we have seen several possible reactions to the absurd: acceptance of "common" morality or of God, suicide, rejection of the absurd and its concomitant responsibility, search for fraternal love, the affirmation of nature or life and refuge in silence.

While the rejection of the absurd and its concomitant responsibility is Sartre's classic example of "bad faith", it has been shown that other reactions to the absurd, i.e. acceptance of "common" morality or of God, suicide or a refuge in silence--are also forms of inauthenticity. A search for fraternal love is for Pirandello as it is for Camus a solace, a temporary refuge from the absurd but as long as it does not become a denial of the absurd neither writer seems to see it as a form of bad faith. It has been shown that Pirandello, like Camus, chooses as his one positive value life lived in the knowledge of its own absurdity. It must be noted, of course, that Pirandello seems to understand each one of the possible reactions to the absurd and exhibits a certain compassion towards people as they choose among them, a compassion perhaps greater than that of Camus or Sartre. It seems clear, however, that Pirandello's conclusions are perfectly existentialistic.

## CHAPTER IV - THE NATURE OF REALITY

### A. Introduction

Pirandello's philosophy concerning the nature of reality is overwhelmingly Kantian and most probably based, in fact, upon the Italian's study of German philosophy while at the University of Bonn.<sup>1</sup> He, like Kant, holds that objective reality (things in themselves) exist, but that they are essentially unknowable. The objects of our knowledge are things as they appear. All of the sense data (relating, of course, to these appearances) are organised by the individual into what he sees as a reality. The concept which he himself creates through his own organisation of these appearances is termed a "form". It is through the creation of these "forms" that we know "reality". Paradoxically, however, according to Pirandello, as we organise or create reality by fitting it, as it were, into forms, we begin to distort this reality by consciously or unconsciously ignoring those sense data which, like loose ends, do not fit neatly into the form(s) which we have already created and by being loathe to change the mold into which we have organised reality once we have so organised it. This distortion of reality, which of course will be extremely subjective and will vary from individual to individual, Pirandello expresses in the well-known phrase: form kills life.

The awareness of the unknowability of things in themselves and the consciousness of the subjectivity of the reality which we organise and thus create for ourselves is, for Pirandello, a primary path to the awareness of the absurd.

At times Pirandello seems to contradict himself. On the one hand, he speaks of hiding from the "truth" or shouting the "truth" in people's faces. On the other, he seems to deny that truth exists. The inconsistency arises, however, from a confusion between ontology and epistemology, and from a fairly careless use of the word "truth". For Pirandello, there is an objective reality with which our subjective construction of reality may at times coincide--as, for example, in certain reasonably unimportant (to us) bits of factual information. But this objective reality seems to Pirandello very unimportant because it is rather the subjective reality which motivates people's feelings and actions. This subjective reality is so important to Pirandello that he would not even pose the question as to whether "A knows that p" entails that "p is true". One could well assume that if it were posed to him, he would answer that it does entail that "p is true for A". At the same time it could be false for B. Really true. Really false. --a maddening response for one attempting to do analytical philosophy, but as many analytical philosophers would be the first to point out, perfectly in character for an existentialist. What Pirandello is saying must be looked at at several levels: 1) he

seems to assume a naive correspondence theory of truth; 2) the subjective experience of this correspondence and the opposite experience of a non-correspondence with this objective reality do not differ from each other, hence my belief that "p" will motivate me, will cause me to think, to feel, to act in the same way whether or not "p" is true; 3) if, then, subjective reality has this power, then one might as well say that truth doesn't exist in that my construction of reality is as powerful, as capable of motivating as anyone else's. That is--yes, truth does exist, but that fact is simply less important to the running of the world than the paradoxical facts that we each have our own subjective reality, these various realities are at times extremely different one from the other--even contradictory, and yet they may be based on the same set of "facts". These realities co-exist, each one of us finding in "the facts" reason to believe that our reality is the "true" one.

At a different level, one does in fact find some inconsistencies in Pirandello on the subject of truth, knowledge and communication. If it is through the creation of "forms" that we know "reality", which otherwise is a continual unstructured flux of sense data, and if these "forms" distort reality, how can we know even those small unimportant bits of true information which Pirandello takes for granted that we do know? How can it be that society labels as "insane" those people who speak about "truths" which are usually

hidden because of society's standards, values or deceptions? Why are these "truths" more "true" than others?

It appears to this writer that what Pirandello is doing is similar to the idealist who opens the door, (even though it really doesn't exist!) That is, he is conforming at times to the naive demands of everyday existence. There is such a thing as truth and we do at times seem able to apprehend it. We do at least sometimes succeed in communicating with one another, if only at a superficial level. Therefore, Pirandello takes these things for granted.

Ludovico Steidl of the University of Florence proposes a different solution. He suggest that by highlighting both the necessity of shattering the mask to get beneath it to the "truth" and the impossibility of doing this, what Pirandello is really doing is placing the emphasis on the method itself, on the attitude toward the absurd which it presupposes, rather than on the feasibility of actually arriving at the truth.<sup>2</sup> This too is a possible interpretation.

Having recognised that we will encounter some inconsistencies, let us now turn to a more detailed look at Pirandello's ideas concerning the nature of reality and the ways in which he has illustrated these ideas in his plays, short stories and novels.

## B. The Subjectivity or 'Relativity' of Reality

The primary contention of Pirandello concerning the nature of reality is that it is "relative", and here again it must be noted that "relative" is the Pirandellian term for what would more properly be called "subjective". Consciousness cannot passively reflect an objective reality but organises its ever-changing flux of sense data into ideas, concepts, forms. In the essay Teatro e letteratura, equating "life" with our consciousness of reality, Pirandello writes:

Life is a continuous and indistinct flux which has no other form outside of the one which time by time we ourselves give it, infinitely varied and ever changing. Each one really creates for himself his own life.<sup>3</sup>

We are not in the realm of pure idealism here, however, because:

The world is not limited to the idea that we can have of it. Outside of us the world exists for itself and with us; and in our representation, therefore, we must resolve to realise it, as much as it is possible, forming a consciousness of it in which it lives, in us as in itself; seeing it as

it sees itself, experiencing it as it experiences itself.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, despite this affirmation, the objective world in itself has very little importance for Pirandello. The goal of seeing the world "as it sees itself" is an unattainable aim. We can only know the reality which we see, which we experience, which we live. The emphasis in all of Pirandello, is all on the relativity, the subjectivity of this reality. As Serafino reflects in Si gira ...:

(I) heard him say aloud in the silence of the night:

'Excuse me, but what do I know about the mountain, the tree, the sea? The mountain is a mountain because I say: 'That is a mountain.' What are we? We are whatever, at a given moment, occupies our attention. I am the mountain, I am the tree, I am the sea. I am also the star, which knows not its own existence!'

I remained speechless. But not for long. I too have, inextricably rooted in the very depths of my being, the same malady as my friend.<sup>5</sup>

The objective world exists, but we cannot know it as such.

The activity of nature, in fact, is nothing but the spirit which penetrates it, organising it. It, therefore, does not prolong nature, it prolongs itself: nature in itself and for itself remains that which is extraneous to him and irreducible for him.<sup>6</sup>

And again in the short story Guardando una stampa we find:

Things, as they are, no one can know.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the blind poet in this short story believes that he is at no disadvantage, since everyone is, in that sense, blind.

By trying to contain reality in concepts, forms, we organise it rather in the manner of the familiar Kantian active synthesis and in that sense create it. This extends to the forms which we impose upon ourselves to create a reality, a personality, an individual out of what otherwise would be no more than a consciousness aware and participating in a continuous flux of raw sense data. As the Philosopher explains in the unusual play All'uscita in which the shades of people recently dead gather at the entrance to the cemetery:

(...) you, perhaps, poor man, imagined while you were alive that you could see those forms of yours, and touch them like real things; while

they were only illusions necessary to your being, as to mine, in order to exist in some way, understand? They needed (and they still do) to create for themselves an appearance.<sup>8</sup>

Thus it is we who give reality to things, to other people and to ourselves, in our fear of losing this reality we try all the harder to fit consciousness into forms. We read in La trappola:

You hold precious above all things and you never tire of praising the constancy of feelings and the coherence of character. And why? But always for the same reason! Because you are cowards, because you are afraid of yourselves, that is, of losing - by changing - the reality which you have given yourselves, and of recognising thereby that it was nothing but an illusion of yours, that, therefore, no reality exists if not that which we give ourselves.<sup>9</sup>

The paradox, however, is that by fitting experience, life, consciousness into forms, we kill it. In the same story, we find:

But what, I ask, does it mean to give oneself a reality, if not to fix oneself in a sentiment, to congeal, to become rigid, to encrust within

ourselves the perpetual vital moment, to make of ourselves so many little, miserable pools awaiting putrefaction, while life is a continuous flux, incandescent and indistinct. (...) Life is the wind, life is the sea, life is fire; not the earth which is encrusted and assumes a form. Every form is death.<sup>10</sup>

The man in the short story quoted, La trappola, like several others in Pirandello, such as the husband who has "understood the game" in Quando s'è capito il giuoco or Serafino Gubbio in Si gira ... tries to encompass life in forms. This tends to bring one, as it were, outside of life, to cause the person to stand apart, unable to participate and hence, in a different way, to die. So, as the title of the story (La trappola) implies, we are all caught in a trap, at the moment of our birth, merely through the accident of being born in one time or place as opposed to another or into one set of circumstances rather than another.

We wholeheartedly believe in our own conception of reality.  
From Si gira ...:

I find myself assailed, at times, with such violence by the external aspects of things that the clear, outstanding sharpness of my perceptions almost terrifies me. It becomes so much a part of

myself, what I see with so sharp a perception, that I am powerless to conceive how in the world a given object - thing or person - can be other than what I would have it to be.<sup>11</sup>

This is so important that at least in one sense it may be said that there is no other reality.

If only there were outside of us, for you and for me, a Madame reality of mine and a Madame of yours, I mean for themselves, equal and immutable. There is not. There is in me and for me a reality of mine: the one which I give to myself; a reality in you and for you: the one which you give yourselves; ones which will never be the same neither for you nor for me.

So, my friend, we must console ourselves with this: mine is no truer than yours, and yours like mine lasts but for a moment.<sup>12</sup>

It is impossible for us to see any kind of reality from outside of ourselves. As soon as we try, we find "nothingness". In La distruzione dell'uomo we read:

The difficulty comes when we want to see the aim of those inclinations and capacities and

intentions, of those sentiments and instincts, from the outside, for precisely because they are sought from the outside, they are not found, as nothing is found any longer.<sup>13</sup>

To the extent that form kills life, which cannot be grasped or held, there is no such thing as an "outward" reality. It is useless to point to "facts". They are as subjective as the rest. In the play Vestire gl'ignudi we read:

The facts! The facts! Dear sir, the facts are as one assumes them; and so, in the spirit (consciousness) there are no longer facts; but life which appears, this way or in some way. Facts are the past when the spirit gives in (...) and life abandons them.<sup>14</sup>

To become aware of the relativity of reality is possible. To accept it and live with it, without, therefore, ceasing to live but only exist, is difficult, if not impossible. Serafino Gubbio remarks:

There it is. Knowing quite well that places have no other life, no other reality than that which we bestow on them, I saw myself obliged to admit with dismay, with infinite regret: 'How I have

changed!' The reality now is this. Something different.

I rang the bell. A different sound. But now I no longer knew whether this was due to some change in myself or to there being a different bell. How depressing.<sup>15</sup>

One excellent illustration of the way each man creates his own reality is to be found in Pirandello's play Come tu mi vuoi, in which no one is sure of the identity of one of the characters. Each person finds "proof" for his own hypothesis in the "facts" and "evidence" around. In the end Pirandello makes it clear that there is no such thing as "facts" of the case, or "evidence" because everything hinges on one's own interpretation.

Nor is reality constant through time even for one individual. Moscarda comments in Uno, nessuno e centomila:

Why does it seem to you to be really a question of taste or of opinion or of habit; and you don't in the slightest doubt the reality of those dear things with which now you see and touch it. Go away from that house of yours; come back in three or four years to see it with another spirit than that of today; you will see what

will have happened to that dear dear reality of yours. 'Oh, look, is this the room? Is this the garden?' (...) Now you say that everyone knows this, that moods change and everyone can make a mistake. Of course it's an old story in fact. But I don't pretend to tell you anything new. I'm only asking: 'why then, by God, do you act as if you didn't know? Why do you continue to believe that yours is the only reality, that of today, and you wonder, you become annoyed, you show that your friend is mistaken, he who no matter what he does will never be able to have in himself, poor thing, the same spirit as yours?'<sup>16</sup>

According to Pirandello we find the relativity (subjectivity) of reality very difficult to accept, but occasionally circumstances may force the realisation upon us. The result is a feeling of anxiety, an unstable state in which it is difficult to remain. We read in Un ritratto:

(...) I am convinced that there is no other reality outside of the illusions which our feelings create for us. If a sentiment changes suddenly, the illusion collapses and with it that reality in

which we live and then we see ourselves lost in the void.<sup>17</sup>

And in I nostri ricordi:

That life had never existed except in me. And here, in the presence of things - not changed, but different because I was different - that life seemed unreal to me, as if it were a dream; an illusion of mine, one of my fictions of the past.<sup>18</sup>

The theme of the short story Il capretto nero is precisely that time (and hence reality) passes differently for different people. This notion is of course related to the concept of life-flux versus form-death, in the sense that life, flux, experience, consciousness cannot be halted even for the moment it takes to label it with a concept, fit it to a form. The story is a humorous one concerning a wealthy English woman who is travelling in Sicily. She sees an adorable little black kid and wishes to buy it and bring it back home with her. Since she is on a long trip she cannot take it along and asks that it be sent in eight months time. Of course, by then it is a big, dirty goat and no longer an adorable kid. After the furor caused by the arrival of this beast, it is suggested that what should have been sent was an adorable little black kid, albeit a different one, since that form

is what the woman wanted and not the objective reality of the goat which her chosen kid had become. The arrival of the goat was, most likely, for the Englishwoman, the moment of collapse of her idealised fictions concerning reality. As Claudio Vicentini paraphrases Pirandello:

Life appears as 'a continuous flux which we try to stop, to fix in stable and determined forms inside and outside of us'. The 'forms' into which we try to stop the flux 'are the concepts, the ideals to which we wish to remain coherent'. But inside of us the 'flow continues', and 'in certain tempestuous moments, besieged by the flow, all our fictitious forms collapse miserably.'<sup>19</sup>

In fact, at one time or another, almost everyone comes to the realisation of the relativity of reality, but this awareness - like all the other components of the flow which is life - must remain dynamic, never static. It is an awareness which comes and goes. At the risk of remaining paralysed, silent, motionless in front of the appalling spectacle of our own ignorance of reality, we must believe in our illusions all the while knowing them to be just that. In Suo marito we read of the moments when the illusions would fall and then be taken up again.

Was a particular thing really that way? No, perhaps it wasn't even that way! Perhaps, who knows how others saw it ... if they even saw it! And that dreamlike aura would put things back in order.<sup>20</sup>

In Non si sa come, a man realises how capable he is of burying reality beneath his own deception of self and of others, becomes conscious of the relativity of reality, of the possibility that he, like his betrayed wife, may be living an illusion. This awareness pushes him to the brink of madness. Ordinary life is not possible without illusions, hence the inevitability of what Pirandello calls "self-deception" and what Sartre calls "bad faith". In the same play we read:

Life depends on believing, not knowing.<sup>21</sup>

In Bellavita we find:

Denora: When we don't want to know something - it takes no time at all - we pretend not to know it. - And if the pretence is more for us than for others, believe it, it is just, just as if we didn't know.<sup>22</sup>

As has been mentioned in Chapter II on Freedom and in the section of Chapter III on the denial of responsibility, Pirandello does not

wish to take away our freedom or our responsibility, but he does believe very strongly in the inevitability of a certain amount of self-deception. In the play Come tu mi vuoi, the statement is made that all of us never do anything but lie.<sup>23</sup> Objective reality exists. We cannot know it as it is in itself, but only form a conception of it according to our own subjective consciousness of it, which conceptions cannot encompass reality since not only are they subjective, they are only static forms that are of themselves incapable of arresting the flow of experience.

The obvious implication of the contention that reality is relative is that for different people, reality is different. The paradoxes that this involves are the subject of perhaps the most famous of Pirandello's plays: Così è (se vi pare). Laudisi, attempts on several occasions to explain these views to the other characters:

Laudisi: (...) I see you so anxiously seeking to know who other people are and how things are, almost as if other people or things were one way or another.

Signora Sirelli: But then according to you one will never be able to know the truth?

Signora Cini: If we're not to believe even  
what we see and touch!

Laudisi: But yes, believe it, signora!  
However, I tell you: respect  
that which others see and  
touch, even if it be the con-  
trary to what you see and  
touch.<sup>24</sup>

This statement is relatively uncontentious, but Laudisi  
(Pirandello?) goes further.

Laudisi: (...) Permit me, signora, to answer  
your husband. How, my dear  
friend, do you want your wife  
to be content with the things  
you tell her, if you - naturally  
- tell them to her as they are  
for you?

Signora Sirelli: As they absolutely can't be!

Laudisi: Ah, no, Signora, please permit me to say that here you are wrong! For your husband, rest assured, things are as he tells you.

Sirelli: But the way they are in reality. The way they are in reality!

Signora Sirelli: Not at all! You're always mistaken.

Sirelli: You are mistaken, I beg you to believe!

Laudisi: But no, my friends! Neither of you is wrong.<sup>25</sup>

We cannot know things as they "really" are, and even less, people. Each person sees a different reality.

Laudisi: (...) You, too, are sure to touch me as you see me? You can't doubt yourself. - But for pity sake, don't tell your husband, or my sister, or my nephew, or this lady here -

Signora Cini: (suggesting) - Cini -

Laudisi: (Cini) - how you see me, because otherwise all four of them will tell you that you are mistaken, while in fact you aren't mistaken at all! Because I am really the way you see me. - But that doesn't take away - my dear lady, from the fact that I am also really as your husband, my sister, my nephew and the lady here see me.<sup>26</sup>

Nor does time pass equally for all. One person may live an entire lifetime in the space of a year while for another it seems as though time has hardly passed. This is the theme of the short story mentioned above, Il capretto nero.

In Mondo di carta, a man who has done nothing but read all his life and who has formed all of his ideas about the world through books, is now blind. He hires a person to read to him from his extensive library. In order to "continue living", he needs someone to share his reality. This is impossible, since even in this case where all of his reality is codified, stable in books, just the tone of voice of the reader changes it.

(...) he understood that, more or less, it would have been the same with any other reader. Any voice that wasn't his would have made his world seem another.<sup>27</sup>

As we have seen in the chapter on freedom, many people take refuge from the absurd, from the relativity of reality in history.

In Uno, nessuno e centomila we read:

Ah, the pleasure of history, gentlemen! Nothing more restful than history. Everything in life changes continually, right before our eyes; nothing certain, and this ceaseless anxiety to know how things will turn out, to see how the facts will sort themselves out holds you in such restlessness and such agitation! Everything determined, everything established at first sight, in history: no matter how sad the events (...) at least there they are, ordered, fixed in thirty, forty little pages of a book: those and that's it; since they will never change, at least until some wicked critical spirit has evil pleasure in overthrowing that ideal construction, where all the elements held each other so well connected, and you rested admiring how each effect followed, obedient to its pause with perfect logic. (...) <sup>28</sup>

Actually, there can be no real refuge in history since it is an idealisation and cannot capture the ever-changing flow of life. There are no such things as facts; that is to say, the world is not made up of facts which we can discover. Rather, facts are like the slices of a cake which have no existence antecedent to the cuts which we choose to make, thereby creating them. Indeed, the very language of cutting suggests the aptness of this simile. All of this is really antecedent fact. And yet not, perhaps. In Risposta we read:

It is and it isn't. Because everything depends on where and how you cut the facts.<sup>29</sup>

The importance of a fact is only that which we give it. This is the theme of the short story Non è una cosa seria.

For Perazzetti, there were in principle no serious things. Everything depends on the importance that you give to things. Something ridiculous if you give it importance, can become something most serious and vice versa, the most serious thing ridiculous. Is there anything more serious than death? And yet, for so many who don't give it importance, (...) <sup>30</sup>

This is also the theme of the play by the same name. Memmo, the main character, puts it into these words:

(...) Serious things, moreover, please be convinced, Mr. Barranco, are only those to which we give importance! Is there something more than death? Someone doesn't give it importance - it's nothing! On the contrary: your nose! Ridiculous thing, But for you serious unhappiness! Why? Because you give it importance.<sup>31</sup>

The realisation of the relativity of reality must be accepted, but one must live with it without either taking one's own "reality" too seriously or, on the other hand, making a sort of refuge from this manifestation of the absurd by refusing to believe in the importance of any reality. Sartre calls this type of refuge, the "bad faith of quietism". Pirandello, in for example, Rimedio la geografia ridicules it as an impossible refuge and uses it to again create a contrast which will highlight the absurd. In this story, a man proposes as an infallible remedy for human distress, a forced awareness of other people's reality. By remembering the geography that one has learned at school, all of those facts concerning other people, their customs, their lives - so the remedy goes - we can put the distress of our own reality into perspective and, seeing how small it is, not suffer. Of course, this only serves to bring to light once again, the paradox of the absurd.

If we are to live, we must choose, react, experience. In order to do this, we must believe in a particular reality to which we can react, which we can experience and according to which we can choose - all the while realising that it is a very subjective reality created by ourselves and shared by no one.

Over and over again Pirandello illustrates the unimportance of objective reality at least in the lives of men, in that it is unknowable. As Laudisi proclaims in the above-mentioned play, Così è (se vi pare):

I? But I deny nothing! I carefully abstain from that! You, not I, need facts, documents to affirm or to deny! I wouldn't know what to do with them, because for me reality doesn't consist of those but of the minds of those two people, into which I cannot hope to enter, if not by that little bit which they tell me of it. (...) You can't tell. (who is right) No one can. And not because those facts which you are looking for, are annulled ... lost or destroyed - by some kind of accident - a fire, an earthquake - no; but because they themselves have annulled them in their own mind, understand? Creating, she for him or he for her, a spectre which has the same consistency as reality, in which they live

at length in perfect accord, reconciled. And this reality of theirs cannot be destroyed by any document, since they breathe it, they see it, they feel it, they touch it! - At the most, the document could enable you to get rid of a stupid curiosity. It's missing, and here you are damned to the marvellous torture of having in front of you, near you, here the spectre and here reality, and not being able to distinguish one from the other.<sup>32</sup>

The document is missing, but just so that the audience or the reader shouldn't believe that in order to discover the "true" nature of reality it is merely a question of finding the objective facts, Pirandello constructs the play so that, in fact, there is one person who unquestionably knows the truth. Who is "right" depends totally upon the identity of this person. The people, unable to accept their "ignorance of the facts", contrive to find this out. The final scene of the play belongs to this unknown woman, who at last will resolve the mystery. But she says:

I am whomever you believe me to be.<sup>33</sup>

And Laudisi comments:

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how truth speaks. Are you satisfied?<sup>34</sup>

There are three other plays in which the relativity of all reality is the major theme. They are: Come tu mi vuoi, Tutto per bene and All'uscita. In the first, the question of the identity of a particular woman depends entirely (as it does in Così è) on each individual's interpretation of "the facts". In the second, Martino Lori is Palma's father, if and only if, she and others recognise him as such, irrespective of her actual biological origin. In All'uscita, shades of people recently dead congregate at the entrance to the cemetery. The relativity of reality is the subject of their conversation and they are led by the Philosopher to the recognition of this.

The following are fourteen of Pirandello's short stories, which have as a major theme the relativity of reality. In La prova two young priests are "tested" before being sent off as missionaries. At least, this is the way they see it. For someone else, the incident would have nothing to do with "God" or "tests". La signora Frola e il signor Ponza, suo genero is the short story version of Così è (se vi pare). In L'amica delle mogli is Pia a friend to all the young wives or are all her actions directed towards the admiration of her by them and their young husbands? Il chiodo is the reconstruction of a murder. What were the "true" motives? I piedi sull'erba is the story of an old man involving

the contrast between what his actions appear like to others and how they seem to himself. Cinci is another story concerning a violent crime. We know that Cinci will never be accused even though he is the murderer. For his mother, as well as the rest of the world, he will remain the little innocent, just as for him, his mother is a good hard-working woman, struggling to raise him on her own - even though the reader is aware that, in fact, she earns her living from a dubious profession. Di guardia is an extremely humorous story in which all the evidence points to a particular situation, which we discover in the end not to be the case. What about the evidence? Dono della Vergine Maria, on the other hand, is a tragic tale in which the difference between the outward appearances of a man's action and his own beliefs and intentions causes the man's death. L'eresia Catara is the story of an old professor who, believing that he is about to settle an ancient question before an avid audience, gives an entire lecture to a hall filled only with chairs on which are draped students' raincoats. Le medaglie is one of several stories dealing with people claiming to be "Garibaldini" heroes. In it is described the death of a man who, although he had never marched with Garibaldi, had lived his life pretending that he had. In Pena di vivere così Pirandello describes the situation of a deserted wife whose husband returns, along with three daughters by a *de facto* marriage. Everyone believes the husband to be entirely to blame while the woman is the ideal wife. Is this really the

case? In Acqua e <sup>11</sup>, the theme of relativity is carried beyond the realm of personal relationships into the domain of science. In a small village there is a good doctor and a quack. Which is which? The one who is believed is the one who is able to heal, even though he does it with plain water. In Lo spirito maligno, the "evil spirit" is, in fact, this subjectivity according to which a man's indifferent or even good actions are often interpreted as evil. In Guardando una stampa we find a blind beggar who preaches that everyone is blind because no one can see things as they really are.

If all reality is relative, subjective, is any one "construction" of reality as good as another? According to Gino Cucchetti in his article in the Proceedings of the (1961) International Congress of Pirandellian Studies:

Pirandello would seem to accept openly that which was the ancient proposition of the sophists and of the sceptics: that it is possible for truth not to exist in itself and for it to only have a subjective value; to exist then only inasmuch as we believe in this existence. In this way there would be neither reality nor truth outside of ourselves, to be and to seem would be the same thing, two propositions contradictory to each

other could be equally true as long as they are recognised as such by the creative act of faith of man.<sup>35</sup>

As we have seen above in the excerpt from Pirandello's essay Illustratori attori e traduttori (Saggi p 221) for the author, reality does, in fact, exist outside of our conception of it, but the affirmation of this objective reality plays a very small part in the works of Pirandello other than saving him from being dismissed as "another idealist". Yes, objective reality does exist, but this fact has no importance. All of the emphasis is placed, instead, on what he calls the relativity, or what should more properly be called the subjectivity, of reality. The proverbial falling tree in the forest does make a noise, even though no one is there to hear it, but the unheard noise has no importance. Far more important, for Pirandello, would be the illusory noise which someone or some group of people believed that they heard. All but the "humorist" the absurd man, need to believe that their reality corresponds with objective reality. Awareness of the closeness of reality to illusion is too much for most ordinary people to bear. As the narrator says in La signora Frola e il signor Ponza, suo genero:

But I say, holding the entire population this way, in a nightmare, does this seem a small thing to you? Taking away every support to

common sense, so they can't distinguish any longer between phantasm and reality. An agony, a perpetual alarm. (...) Naturally, in everyone is born the pernicious suspicion that reality then is worth as much as phantasm, and that every reality could well be a phantasm and vice versa. This seems a small thing to you? If I were in the Prefect's shoes, for the well-being of the minds of the inhabitants of Valdana, I would immediately evict Signor Frola and Signor Ponza, her son-in-law.<sup>36</sup>

One of the clearest expositions of Pirandello's thoughts on the relativity (subjectivity) of reality is found in the short story Un po' di vino, which deals with an old man who, forbidden to drink alcohol, still goes often to the bar. Questioned, he answers that his reason for doing this is to remind himself of the relativity (subjectivity) of reality. His sadness can't be so real if a tiny drop of wine would make it disappear. He states:

(...) I console myself, proving to myself that this, my great sadness, yes, now it is real, but all I would have to do is to drink a little wine for it not to be. You could object that then my gaiety wouldn't be real either, since it would depend on the little bit of wine which I would have

drunk. I don't say no. But let's go back to the beginning; what is true, dear sir? What doesn't depend on what we put inside of ourselves in order to create for ourselves now this and now that truth?<sup>37</sup>

Of even more significance for Pirandello than our subjective construction of "facts", occurrences or events is our construction of the reality of ourselves as well as of other people. This construction will be dealt with in the next chapter on the self and others. It is interesting to note, as a conclusion to this chapter on the nature of reality, that for Pirandello, there is a unique parallel between reality in life and reality in art. As he says in his essay on humour:

(...) one could say that not only for the artist, but there exists for no one a representation, either created by art or even that which we make for ourselves of ourselves, of others and of life, which can be believed to be a reality. They are, at the bottom, the same illusion, that of art and that which commonly comes to all of us from our senses.<sup>38</sup>

It must not be concluded, however, that Pirandello thinks man must therefore step back and believe nothing. It is clear that

the paradox would disappear if we were not to believe in the reality which we have, each of us, created. We would all finish like Serafino Gubbio in Si gira ...! --mute in a world of silence, existing but not alive.

Sartre's position regarding the nature of reality is not identical with, but certainly similar to Pirandello's. Sartre too admits the existence of objective reality, which he calls the "brute existent" or the "brute being of the in-itself". However, it is through the freedom of the "for-itself" (man) that this brute being reveals itself. Hence, in any given instance it will not be possible to separate or even to determine what comes from the brute given and what comes from man's freedom. Sartre cites the example of a crag by the side of the road:

Here I am at the foot of this crag which appears to me as 'not scalable'. This means that the rock appears to me in the light of a projected scaling--a secondary project which finds its meaning in terms of an initial project which is my being-in-the-world. Thus the rock is carved out on the ground of the world by the effect of the initial choice of my freedom. But on the other hand, what my freedom cannot determine is whether the 'rock to be scaled' will or will not lend itself to scaling. This is part of the

brute being of the rock. Nevertheless the rock can show its resistance to scaling only if the rock is integrated by freedom in a 'situation' of which the general theme is scaling. For the simple traveler who passes over this road and whose free project is a pure aesthetic ordering of the landscape, the crag is not revealed either as scalable or as non-scalable; it is manifested only as beautiful or ugly.<sup>39</sup>

After further examples Sartre states:

Thus we begin to catch a glimpse of the paradox of freedom; there is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom.<sup>40</sup>

Sartre has very carefully reminded us in the same work, in the chapter on transcendence that he has already rejected both the "realist" and the "idealist" solutions.<sup>41</sup> Pirandello is more dramatic, if less precise, fascinated as he is by the paradox of man's "power" to "structure" his own reality--in fact by the necessity of his doing so.

In Sartre there is no parallel to Pirandello's idea concerning form killing life. As well, the Frenchman is more precise in his explanation of the relationship between the "for-itself" and the

"in-itself" and how in one sense man creates his own situation and in another it must be said that he does not create it, but rather discovers it. Nevertheless, Pirandello's ideas concerning the nature of reality seem to be consonant with Sartre's particularly since his works manifest very clearly the relationship between the nature of reality, existentialist freedom and the absurd.

### C. Summary

We have seen in this chapter Pirandello's view of reality as "relative", or more properly "subjective", based on each individual's organisation of sense data into "forms", thereby facilitating their subsumption under concepts - though whether he operated with a considered distinction between "form" and "concept" is by no means clear. We have seen both the positive and the negative function of these forms. Through examples and illustrations from Pirandello's plays, short stories, and novels we have seen how the writer draws the conclusions that it is possible to become aware of what he calls the "relativity" of all reality and that this awareness is a path to the consciousness of the absurd. We have seen how these ideas are similar to Sartre's. Let us now proceed to an examination of how Pirandello's ideas concerning the "relativity" of reality affect his views on the nature of the "self" and its relation to the "other".

## CHAPTER V - THE SELF AND OTHERS

### A. Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter IV, all reality, for Pirandello is subjective. While he does not deny the objective existence of things, he stresses the unimportance of this objective reality. Because of this, it is not the world of "things" which interests Pirandello, but the world of people. While it is true that a man is tall or he is not; he has red hair or he does not; he is born into a particular set of historical, social and physical conditions some of which he can change but some of which he cannot; these objective "facts" take on importance for Pirandello - as for Sartre - only in relation to a person's consciousness of and attitude toward them. Given each person's individual awareness of and interpretation of his own reality and reality of others, who am I? Who is the "other" person? What relationship is possible between us? These are the questions of most interest to Pirandello. In accord with his views on the "relativity" of reality, he rejects any but the most ephemeral "human nature". We "construct" ourselves as well as others. How is this accomplished? Section B of this chapter will deal with the self: 1) the individual's search for identity, 2) the construction of the self and 3) the problem of "masks" or "roles". Section C will deal with the relation of the self to others: 1) the other's construction of us, 2) the mirror and the other's look. Section D will treat of the "other": 1) forms,

2) the paradox of the reality (or irreality) of death. Section E will deal with the possibility of communication between individual "selves".

As we have seen in previous chapters, life may be understood as a continuous flux, as pure experience.

Man does not have an absolute idea or notion of life but rather a varied changeable feeling, according to the times, the instances, chance. Now logic, abstracting ideas from feelings, tends rather to fix that which is mobile, changeable, fluid; it tends to give an absolute value to that which is relative (sic!)<sup>1</sup>

Each person has an infinity of possibilities which are then limited by his own self-conception or the conception which others have of him. Thus emerges another aspect of the absurd: the conflict between the fluid, purely experiential nature of life and man's consciousness which tries to conceptualise it. While it is in the realm of experience, sense data, that man has an infinity of possibilities of being, any attempt at living within this realm gives rise to a host of difficulties, primary among which is the problem of what Sartre calls "quietism". Aside from the conception which others have of us, we are constructed also by the conception that we have of ourselves as well as the facts

of our birth and our historical and social condition. Also, our acts become a prison for us, in which our identity is shaped. In Il giuoco delle parti, Silia is unhappy because she suffers from, but is unaware of, this aspect of the absurd. Her husband Leone, who has "understood the game" tries valiantly to fight against the limitation on his possibilities of being, to resist the "construction" of his "self". But falling into "quietism", passive acceptance of everything, which of course is a choice in itself, he realises that he cannot escape being "constructed", if only by the facts of his birth and his "role" in society. Seeing the inevitability of his situation he becomes Camus' absurd hero.

Rest assured, this indifference will be enough for me to have courage, not just in front of a man who is nothing; but in front of everyone and always. I live in such a climate, dear, that I can be heedless of anything; of death as of life. Imagine then, of the ludicrousness of men and of their wretched judgments. Don't be afraid. I have understood the game.<sup>2</sup>

Even our bodies "construct" us. Aside from fixing us in time and space and leading us from the moment of our birth inevitably toward the extinction of our personal being, they are the limiting form by which others recognise us, the image others have of us. In Trovarsi Donata states:

Donata: Eh, if you then look at my body ...

Elj: And what do you want me to look at?

Donata: ... here yes, you see? That really is a stranger to me then. (...) I am so little in my body.

Elj: And where are you?

Donata: When you think, where are you? You don't see yourself when you speak ... I am in life ... in the things which I feel ... which move about inside me ... in all I see outside - houses, street, sky ... the whole world ... So much so that sometimes, seeing myself recalled by certain looks at my body, to find myself a woman ... - Oh God, I don't say it displeases - but at certain times it seems to me an almost odious necessity, against which I could come to rebel. (...) I no longer see the reason why I should recognise my body as the thing most mine, in which I should really consist for others.<sup>3</sup>

Sartre too was fascinated by the problem of the relationship between the "self" and the "body". He states that there are three ontological dimensions to one's body:

I exist my body; this is its first dimension of being. My body is utilized and known by the other; this is its second dimension. But in so far as I am for others, the Other is revealed to me as the subject for whom I am an object. Even there the question, as we have seen, is of my fundamental relation with the Other. I exist therefore for myself as known by the Other-in-particular in my very facticity. I exist for myself as a body known by the Other. This is the third ontological dimension of my body.<sup>4</sup>

He, too, spoke of the feeling of discomfort within one's body because of the relationship between it and the Other.

The explanation (of the wish to be invisible) here is that we in fact attribute to the body-for-the-Other as much reality as to the body-for-us. Better yet, the body-for-the-Other is the body-for-us, but inapprehensible and alienated. It appears to us then that the Other accomplishes for us a function of which we are incapable and

which nevertheless is incumbent on us: to see ourselves as we are.<sup>5</sup>

In Pirandello's Uno, nessuno e centomila, Moscarda reflects:

Living, I didn't represent to myself any image of me. Why then should I see myself in that body there as in a necessary image of me? It stood there in front of me, almost non-existent, like a dream apparition, that image. And I could very well not recognise myself that way. If I had never seen myself in a mirror, for example? (...) What did my thoughts have to do with that hair, of that colour, which could have been no longer there or white or black or blond; (...) I could very well even feel a profound antipathy for that body there; and I did.<sup>6</sup>

In art, the "construction" of a character is totally free. In life one's construction of oneself is conditioned by others' perception of us, by our historical and social condition and by our past acts. Yet one must create oneself in order to find one's own identity. In Trovarsi we read:

And this is true ... and nothing is true. ...

The only truth is that one must create oneself,  
create! And only then does one find oneself.<sup>7</sup>

Still the paradox remains. We must create ourselves, our own identity, but if we try too hard, we find ourselves caught in the death of a "form" and as we watch ourselves we stop living. From Trovarsi:

You want to 'find' yourself. But you have to find yourself in life, time by time without searching; because by force of searching, if in the end you manage to find yourself, do you know what happens to you? You find nothing anymore and you can't live any longer: nice and dead, with your eyes open.<sup>8</sup>

Here one is reminded of Sartre's views on the curious inevitability of "bad faith". We can never "be" anything in the same manner that a stone is a stone. The nature of being-for-itself is not to be what it is. On the other hand, when we construct ourself we define what we are and what we are not, but it is the nature of the human reality to be what it is not. By "finding ourselves", we find only a part of ourselves which we surpass in the very act of being conscious of it.

Given that despite his efforts to live life rather than think about it, man is conscious of his "self" at the same moment that he lives it, how does man construct himself?

## B. The Self

1. The individual's search for identity - awareness of the problem

Pirandello's major work concerning the self and others is Uno, nessuno e centomila, which chronicles the search for personal identity of one man, Vitangelo Moscarda, from his first consciousness of the problem to his provisional solution. Like Roquentin's understanding of being which springs from the contemplation of the chestnut tree root, Moscarda first becomes aware of the whole problem of personal identity through a most insignificant incident. One morning, as he stands in front of the mirror, his wife asks him what he is looking at and remarks, "Oh, I thought you were looking to see which side your nose leans towards."<sup>9</sup> Never having noticed that his nose wasn't absolutely straight, at first he denies it. Then looking closely, he realises that indeed, his nose does lean slightly to the right. In fact, his wife can list for him a whole series of hitherto unnoticed little defects of which he wasn't aware: eyebrows like circumflex accents, ^ ^ , one ear which stands out more than the other, one leg ever so

slightly more curved than the other about the knee. Moscarda gives no importance to these tiny defects but:

(...) a very great and extraordinary importance to the fact that I had lived for so many years without ever changing nose, always with that one, and with those eyebrows and those ears, those hands and those legs; and I had to wait to take a wife in order to realise that they were defective.<sup>10</sup>

He thus realises that - is it possible? - he doesn't even know his own body well; the things which are most intimately his.

From this began my suffering. That illness which was to reduce me shortly in conditions of spirit and body so miserable and desperate that I certainly would have died of it or gone crazy, if I hadn't found (...) a remedy.<sup>11</sup>

And so Moscarda becomes aware of the problem: I am not for others what I am for myself. Furthermore, one cannot brush aside the "self-for-another" as some sort of misapprehension. It has a reality of its own and it is to this reality that the other person reacts.

Moscarda's wife has a nickname for him. She always calls him Gengè. The way his wife sees him, the way she perceives her "Gengè" is so far removed from Moscarda's own self-conception, that it is as if she were in love with and married to another man. He begins to feel rage and jealousy of this "other" man.

I loved her, despite the torture of being perfectly conscious of not belonging to myself in my own body as the object of her love. And yet, the sweetness which came to this body from her love, it was I who tasted it. (...) even if sometimes I was almost tempted to strangle her seeing her (...) tremble a stupid name: Gengè.<sup>12</sup>

Not only does the other person's conception of a person take on a reality all its own, but one's own self-conception is seen to be as ephemeral as the "self-for-another".

(...) think on it well: a moment ago, before this happened to you, you were another; not only, but you were even a hundred others, a hundred thousand others. And believe me there is nothing to be surprised at. See, rather, if it seems that you could be so sure that from today to tomorrow you will be that which you assume to be today. My dear, the truth is this: they are

all fixations. Today you determine yourself one way and tomorrow another.<sup>13</sup>

Moscarda finds himself at a moment of crisis. This multiplication of his "self" leaves him not with a hundred thousand identities, but with none, since in the eyes of others, "I as I, was nothing."<sup>14</sup> He feels an icy solitude as he cannot penetrate another's reality and cannot communicate his own to another. He looks strangely at those around him and thinks:

(...) we should all look like this all the time, each with his eyes full of horror at his own inescapable solitude.<sup>15</sup>

He purposely acts very differently from his usual manner in order to break the conception others have of him. He struggles to find out who he is.

But I, one, who? who? If I no longer had eyes to see me myself as one even for me? The eyes, the eyes of everyone else - I continued to see them on me, but equally without being able to know how they would see me now in this my newborn will, if I myself didn't know yet in what I would consist for myself. No longer Gengè.  
Another.

I had really wanted this.

But what else did I have inside if not this torment which revealed me as one and a hundred thousand.<sup>16</sup>

Thus no more "truth" can be ascribed to one's own conception of himself than can be ascribed to another's conception of one. The former changes in time and the latter, not only in time but from "other" person to "other" person. Thus if I am not, as previously assumed, one, I am a hundred thousand - different in each moment in time and a different person to each "other" person who sees me. If I am a hundred thousand, no one more real or even more stable than the other, then I am no one. Here Pirandello bases himself on the psychology of Alfred Binet and Gabriel Séailles, and he states in Scienza e critica estetica:

Our spirit, then, consists of fragments, or better, of distinct elements, more or less in relationship with each other, which can disperse and reorder themselves in a new ensemble, so that from it results a new personality (...) With the elements of our ego we can therefore compose, construct in ourselves other individualities, other beings with their own consciousness with their own intelligence, alive and acting.<sup>17</sup>

Based on this theory of the personality, we find in the short story L'Avemaria di Bobbio:

That which we know of ourselves is however only a part, and perhaps a very small part, of that which we are unbeknownst to us. Bobbio indeed said that that which we call consciousness is comparable to the little water which is seen in the neck of a bottomless well. And he meant perhaps to say by this that (...) there are perceptions and actions which remain unknown to us (...) but which at the sudden call of a sensation, be it taste, colour or sound, can still show signs of life, showing still alive within us another unsuspected being.<sup>18</sup>

And in the novel Suo marito we find:

(...) perhaps because she had never been able to hold herself, compose herself, fix herself in a solid and stable concept of self, she had always been aware with lively disquiet of the extraordinary disordered mobility of her interior being, (...) <sup>19</sup>

Vitangelo Moscarda, made aware of his own numerous "selves" reasons that this being the human condition,;

Julius Caesar, one, didn't exist. Yes, there existed a Julius Caesar such as he, in so many parts of his life, represented to himself; and this had without doubt, an incomparably greater value than the others; not however, with regard to reality, I beg you to believe, because no less real than this imperial Julius Caesar was the tender, fastidious, shaven and beltless and most unfaithful one of his wife Calpurnia; or that lewd one of Nicomede, King of Bitinia. The trouble is this, always, gentlemen; that they all had to be called Julius Caesar, and in a sole body of masculine sex there had to cohabitare so many (...)<sup>20</sup>

The same multiplication of personalities, of selves is noted in Trovarsi;

One, no; so many women! And for herself, perhaps,  
no one.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, it is precisely the doubling of selves which is the major theme of La signora Morli, una e due. Neither "self" has more reality than the other.

## 2. The construction of the self

Nevertheless, one cannot be in the abstract. Being must be encased in form. Like forms are people's acts. Moscarda comment:

When an act is accomplished, it is that; it no longer changes. When one, however, has acted, even without later feeling himself and finding himself in the completed acts, that which is done, remains: like a prison for him. (...) the act is, rather always and only of one of the many that we are or that we could be, (...) because no reality has been given to us and none exists, but we have to make it for ourselves, if we want to be: and it will never be one for all, one forever, but continuously and infinitely changeable. The faculty of deluding ourselves that today's reality is the only true one, if on the other hand, it sustains us, on the other, it precipitates us into an emptiness without end, because the reality of today is destined to show itself to be illusion tomorrow.<sup>22</sup>

Here, Pirandello's ideas are in perfect accord with Sartre's. We are our acts. One cannot posit more than that which is given, and what is given is our acts not our intentions or our unrealised possibilities. The world sees us in our acts and limits us to and imprisons us in them. The man who has stolen is branded a thief, the man who has been courageous, a hero. But a man does not exhaust the possibilities of his being in such a name. The thief has forever open to him the possibility of honesty, the hero of cowardliness. So there is no unity of self to be found in our acts either. Moscarda summarises the problem:

I didn't know myself at all, I had for myself no reality of my own, I was in a state as of continual fusion, almost fluid, malleable; others knew me, each in his own way, according to the reality which they had given me; that is, they each saw in me a Moscarda that wasn't I, I not being really anyone for myself; as many Moscardas as they were, and all more real than I who had for myself, I repeat, no reality.<sup>23</sup>

Here, the obvious question is raised - is there not some "inner self", which we protect by keeping it hidden from others, or perhaps an "inner being" unknown or even unknowable to other people or even to ourselves, but an objective reality, nevertheless? There is a certain amount of evidence for this interpretation in

such passages as the one in Suo marito describing the "inner being" of the artist's father as a "bitter enemy inside of himself" which he forever tries to hide from the world. In her article La filosofia morale nel teatro pirandelliano Lina Passarella Sartorelli opts for this interpretation and says:

Inevitably we construct ourselves (...) at bottom, inside of these constructions of ours, put as it were out front, behind the jealousies and the impositions there remain then well hidden our most secret thoughts, our most intimate sentiments, all that we are for ourselves, outside of the relations that we want to establish.<sup>24</sup>

Sartorelli goes on to say:

For Pirandello it isn't all unconscious: too many times it is something which we deliberately hide from the world, afraid that the world will spoil it and then too we suffocate it desirous of destroying that which is too tormenting (...)<sup>25</sup>

Thus she concludes that the construction of the self is:

(...) a construction of another apparent 'self' different from the 'self' which remains hidden, in fact, in contrast with the 'self' (...)<sup>26</sup>

It cannot be denied that Pirandello does deal with this sort of deception and even with cases where it becomes self-deception, as we have seen in the section dealing with "bad faith". However, conscious deception of others and even self-deception only constitute one aspect of the problem, and they do not imply the existence of an objective and static "self" beneath and deception, but only a perception of construction of the self which is in the first instance hidden from others and in the second inconsistent with or in conflict with another conception of ourselves which we have. In Humian terms:

(The self is) nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.<sup>27</sup>

The "self" cannot be discovered but only lived because it is an infinite set of possibilities or, as Sartre would term it, complete freedom:

In a sense there is no such thing as the self, if by that is meant some permanent and already constituted identity that lies behind our actions. My ego or self exists only through my actions and I have to be continually re-making and re-affirming myself.<sup>28</sup>

Thus we can see that Pirandello's ideas on the reality of the self parallel those on reality in general. One is forced, on pain of being labelled "insane" by society, to give a certain unity to our behaviour, to "construct" the self the same way as one "constructs" reality, all the while aware that the resultant entity, the ego or the self, remains only one construction in confrontation with the construction of ourselves by others. One device to accomplish this construction is the use of "masks" or "roles".

### 3. The mask (La maschera)

Pirandello, the "humorist" (or the "absurd man", as we have seen earlier) is fond of unmasking people, of always distinguishing between the role which a person chooses to play or which society forces upon him, and the person himself whose total being cannot be encompassed by a role, or a mask. This theme is so common in Pirandello that his plays have been collected and published under the title Maschere nude (Naked Masks).

In L'umorismo Pirandello states:

The more difficult is the struggle for life, and the more one's own weakness in this struggle is felt, the more then is the reciprocal need for deceit. The simulation of strength, of

honesty, of niceness, of discretion, in sum, of very virtue the principle of veracity, is a form of adaptation, a capable instrument of battle. The humorist immediately gathers these various simulations for the struggle of life; he amuses himself by unmasking them.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, many examples are seen throughout Pirandello's work of people who, unable to deal with the amorphousness of their own "self" put on a mask to give a unity to their personality; and of society, unable to understand or deal with a person on the level of the infinity of his possibilities, imposes upon him a role which he must play, under pain of being labelled insane, in order to more easily deal with the "role" rather than with the person. Over and over again, caught in the strictures of Sicilian society - characters ignore their own feelings or desires and act according to the role which society has placed upon them, or in fact, deliberately create a role, a mask for themselves according to which the world will be able to judge them. Examples include Vestire gl'ignudi, La guardaroba dell'eloquenza, and La patente. The imposition of roles or masks is the major theme of Il berretto a sonagli. A jealous wife has created a scandal concerning her husband and the wife of another man. In fact, there has been no justification for the scandal, but given that now, the entire town believes that adultery has been committed, the "wronged"

husband must take his revenge, fully aware that his only playing the role. The only way to avoid a double murder - and this is the solution which is finally accepted - is for the jealous wife to be branded insane and go away temporarily to a rest home. If she will play the role of the crazy person, the man can avoid the "responsibilities" of the role of "wronged husband" in Sicilian society.

In Pensaci Giacomino an old professor, acting out of the goodness of his heart and for everyone's benefit is thwarted in his projects by the roles that people must play. He is aware of the concept of role and realises that any harm which will come to him will not be to his "person" but to himself as a "role". This is not sufficient because although he is aware of the distinction, society will not admit it.

Even Leone in Il giuoco delle parti finally comes to the conclusion that it is the role which must be played.

(...) I'm sorry for you! But you have to play your part like I mine. That's the game. Even she has finally understood that! Each one his own, till the end; (...) I see myself and I see you play, and I am amused.<sup>30</sup>

He must challenge his wife's insulters to a duel. All is arranged. But it is the lover who must fight the duel, for his part goes only so far. The lover is forced to play his role as well.

Quando si è qualcuno concerns a famous writer who, however, in the play, has no name. The play illustrates the theme of the construction of the self according to the mask which society places upon one. The famous cannot live but are walled up, suffocated, turned into lifeless statues by the conception which the world has of them, the mask which is forced upon them.

In Il piacere dell'onestà the characters suffer because they force the "form" of honesty to take life for them in the person of "the honest man", whose role, whose only function, is to play the part of honesty personified in order to save the reputation of a young woman and her married lover. The conditions imposed are merely those conditions commonly found in society by which a person is "respected" for the role he plays, for the masks he puts on. The "honest man" wishes to be respected for his role of honest husband of a well-bred young lady, but given the hypocritical circumstances of on-going adultery and deceit, this is of course impossible even though it is precisely to be respected that the "honest man" has been called in. The entire problem of the distinction between the role or the mask, and the person is highlighted. It is seen that no solution to the problem of personal identity can really be found through the use of masks.

Perhaps it is in the relationship between ourselves and others that our identity can be found.

### C. The Relation of the 'Self' to 'Others'

#### 1. The 'other's' construction of us

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, it is because of Pirandello's view on the relativity of all reality, (at least at the epistemological level) that the question of individual identity, the "self" takes on such importance. If we look at such short stories as L'altro figlio, Il figlio cambiato, Un ritratto or Benedizione we see reality's "relativity" as applied to people and their personal identity. In Section B of this chapter we have already seen the difficulties raised in regard to the individual's perception of himself, his own self-construction and his use of masks or roles. Both Sartre and Pirandello hold that the "self" cannot be identified or "constructed" without reference to the "other". To a certain extent, we need others in order to see ourselves. In fact, Pirandello sees as an interesting result of this, that we never cry for another's having died. Since that person lives for us in our own creation of him, he is still there before us alive. Rather, we cry because we can no longer, through his creation of us, give life, reality to us.<sup>31</sup> The play La vita che ti diedi and the short story I pensionati della memoria illustrate this theme.

We need others in order to be able to construct ourselves, to "confirm", as it were, our own construction of reality. Our conscience is "the other" within us.<sup>32</sup> Similar passages on this topic are found in the novels Uno, nessuno e centomila, Il fu Mattia Pascal and L'esclusa; in the play Come prima meglio di prima; and in the short story Mondo di carta.<sup>33</sup>

Since each "self" has an infinity of possibilities, it is "others'" confirmation of one reality rather than another, which not only creates or constructs that very reality but also helps us to a certain extent, form our own self construction. Numerous illustrations of this are to be found in Pirandello's works: In Tutto per bene (both the short story and the play) a man's identity as "the father" depends not on biological fact but on his being recognised as such by his wife's daughter. La signora Morli, una e due has as its major theme a woman's identity based on the "others" around her. The same theme is illustrated by Come tu mi vuoi, in which a character is simply designated as "the unknown one" because the entire play is devoted to establishing her identity. Is she the long missing wife who disappeared in the chaos of the war, or is she an impostor? It is found to depend precisely on what the "others" believe. She herself states:

To be? To be is nothing! To be is to create  
oneself.<sup>34</sup>

In context, this is understood to mean, to construct oneself for others. Asked if she would then admit that she might not be Cia, she replies:

I admit that and more! I admit that Cia could even be this one (She indicates the Insane Woman)  
- if you wanted to believe it.<sup>35</sup>

The "other's" creation of us is so strong that we may begin to live the reality which others have given us. In Tutto per bene we read;

Martino Lori remained astonished at the conception of him which his wife went along little by little forming for herself, at the interpretation which she gave of his acts, of his words. Sometimes he almost began to doubt whether in fact he wasn't as his wife thought, as she had always thought and whether he didn't have, without realising, all those defects, all those vices with which she reproached him.<sup>36</sup>

In La carriola a man actually feels himself to be re-entering into a different existence each time he goes home.<sup>37</sup> Vicentini writes:

If the world finds its own reality in the representation, the personal perspective, the

interpretation confers reality, under the object 'alive'. In this conception an individual acquires reality in the perspective of the person who knows him and loses it when that person is no more. (...)

Since the perspective confers reality, erroneous opinions of people constitute an actual deformation to which they are forced to submit. Not only, in the most obvious sense, that they condition our actions forcing us to act in a way which we don't want to, but actually because they modify our own individuality.<sup>38</sup>

Moscarda, facing this problem of his need for others in order to construct himself and aware of their "deformations" of his being states:

(...) there really wasn't a view for me, to be able to say in some way how I saw myself, without the view of others, for my own body and for every other thing how could I imagine how they should see it; and so my eyes, for themselves, outside of the view of others, could no longer know really what they saw. (...)

Where the view of others doesn't help us to constitute in any way in us the reality of that which we see, our eyes no longer know what they see; our consciousness is bewildered, because this which we believe to be the most intimately ours, consciousness, means the others in us; and we cannot feel ourselves alone.<sup>39</sup>

In Vestire gl'ignudi Grotti expresses precisely this need for others as mirrors for ourselves:

(...) Because you didn't believe it! I felt that you didn't believe that I could have been so good solely to make you happy. See, see ... And by not believing this, you ruined everything! Because I had more than ever a need that you should believe it, in order to hold me, in order to overcome each temptation.<sup>40</sup>

L'uscita del vedovo is the story of a man who becomes the image that his wife had of him. All her life, the woman complains of all the faults of men in general and especially of widowers. The husband is forever falsely accused or wrongly held in suspicion. Upon her death, the widower begins to be haunted by her image of him and despite all of his protestations while she was alive, he now begins to live up (down?) to her conception of him.

Our need, according to Pirandello, for others' conceptions of us is so great that without the "other" we no longer have an identity. In Da sé ... we read:

Who was he anymore? No one. Not only because he had lost all he had; not only because he was reduced to that miserable degrading condition of errand boy, (...) No, no. He was no longer, really anyone, because there was nothing any more in him, aside from the appearance, (and even that so changed, unrecognisable) of that Matteo Sinagra that he had been up to three years ago. In this errand boy, just now gone out of the house, neither did he feel himself nor did others recognise him. And so? Who was he? Another, who didn't live yet (...) Matteo Sinagra, the real Matteo Sinagra was dead, absolutely dead, three years ago.<sup>41</sup>

Even if we are unaware of its existence, the "other's" creation of us begins to take on a life of its own and the result is the "*sdoppiamento*" (doubling) of personalities which Pirandello seems to have taken from the psychology of Alfred Binet and for which he is so well-known. Having an infinite number of possibilities of being, but capable at any one moment in time of apprehending a finite group of these, a group of actions or attributes which will

be compatible among themselves, we organise and construct our self-conception out of these. Simultaneously, using sometimes the same set of attributes but organised and arranged differently, perhaps seeing an overlapping set of characteristics or possibly even one which in no way coincides with our own chosen set, others construct their own conception of us, a construction which acts and reacts, moves and speaks - in short - becomes a live person which, given the subjectivity even of each individual's perception, does not even fully coincide with "us" under a physical description. As soon as we realise that the process is the same by which we construct ourselves and by which others construct us, and that the resultant "creations" are equally valid (invalid) but mutually incommunicable, we become aware that we have discovered another aspect of the absurd. Pirandello is fascinated with this and makes it the subject of many of his books.

In the short stories: I nostri ricordi, Musica vecchia, Con altri occhi, Risposta and Gioventù, to cite five examples, the protagonist of each story is confronted with an "alternate reality", either of himself or of another which he must realise has the same "validity" or "correspondence to truth" as his own construction has.

In the play Come prima, meglio di prima, a woman who had deserted her family years before, is reconciled with her husband and returns. Her husband had raised their daughter in the belief

that her "sainted" mother was dead. The woman is caught in the unusual situation of being compared unfavourably with "herself". The "sainted mother" has such force of reality for the daughter that "she" has taken on a life of her own, one with which it is impossible for the woman to interfere.

Silvio: But how could I imagine that this would happen! Excuse me, but it's strange! You speak of her as if you were jealous of her ...

Fulvia: Oh, Yes, in the heart of my daughter.

Silvio: But think, at bottom it is you yourself!

Fulvia: That's not true! That's not true! Myself? I touched it! I felt it! I'm dead! really dead! I stand in front of her and I am dead! It is not I, here alive; it is another, her mother ... there ... is dead! (...)  
(...)

Fulvia: Really for me? You want to remain silent in order not to offend her mother, that's why!

Silvio: But if that's you!

Fulvia: It's not true! I for her am - that one - and I can't be her mother! I've come to the point of believing it myself! She seems to me, she really seems to me the daughter of that other one. It's frightful (...) - The shadow become reality!<sup>42</sup>

In the play Vestire gl'ignudi a young girl tries to "clothe herself" in others' illusions so that she may die with the shame of the nakedness of brute facts covered. But she discovers that in life as in art, the image, the other person's construction is always of "another". She cannot clothe her own construction using others' illusions, in fact they would have to be her own and they are not. Here the paradox is brought out again, that although to some extent we need the other's look, the other's construction of ourselves as a mirror for our own construction, there remains a tension between the other's construction of ourselves and our own, which cannot really be resolved.

The works which deal specifically with this problem in detail are, as has been mentioned, the novel Uno, nessuno e centomila and the short story Stefano Gioqli, uno e due from which the novel was developed. In Stefano Gioqli a man realises that his

wife has a completely different conception of him than he does himself and is, in fact, married not to him - whom she doesn't know - but to this "other man".

(...) Stefano Giogli had to become aware of the fact that his Lucietta, in the three months of their engagement, during which the fire by which he was devoured had reduced him to a soft dough at the disposition of those little restless and tireless hands, of all those elements of his spirit in fusion, of all of those fragments of his consciousness scattered in the tumult of frenetic passion, she had forged, kneaded, composed for her own use, according to her taste and her will, a Stefano Giogli which was hers alone, absolutely hers, who wasn't him at all, not only in spirit, but by God, not even almost in body.<sup>43</sup>

And, strange torment, Stefano Giogli becomes ferociously jealous - of himself because:

(...) this fool was loved by his wife, to this fool she gave all of her kisses - on his own lips. When Lucietta looked at him, she didn't see him, but that other one; when Lucietta spoke to him, she wasn't speaking to him, but to that

other one; when Lucietta embraced him, she wasn't embracing him, but that hateful metaphor of him that she had created for herself.<sup>44</sup>

It is in Uno, nessuno e centomila, however, that Pirandello develops these themes of self-identity to the fullest. The wife's name is no longer "Lucietta", but "Dida", and it is no longer Stefano Giongoli, but Vitangelo Moscarda, but the story is simply a further development of Stefano Giongoli. It follows the gradual awareness on the part of the protagonist of all of the problems of self-identity which we have been discussing. At first, realising that his wife has a different perception of him than he himself does, he ascribes it to her inability to understand, for example, some of his more complex ideas.

I thought, in sum, that my ideas and my sentiments couldn't be understood unless they were reduced and diminished, in her little brain and heart; and that my tastes couldn't adapt to her simplicity.<sup>45</sup>

This, however, wasn't the case. It wasn't she who distorted and made ridiculous all of his thoughts and feelings. Dida, too, found them foolish.

And so who disguised and reduced them so? The reality of Gengè, gentlemen! Gengè, such as

she had fromed him for herself, could have such feelings as those, such tastes as those. A little fool, but dear. Oh yes, so dear to her! She loved him like that: dear little fool. And she really loved him.<sup>46</sup>

It begins to appear to Vitangelo that he is no one at all, that the reality which he had ascribed to himself belongs to "Gengè".

She had constructed him! And he wasn't any puppet. If anything, the puppet was I ... because that Gengè of hers existed, while I for her didn't exist at all, I had never existed. My reality was for her in that Gengè of hers which she had made, who had thoughts and feelings and tastes that weren't mine and that I couldn't have altered in the slightest, without running the risk of becoming immediately another whom she would no longer have recognised, a stranger whom she would no longer have been able either to understand or to love.<sup>47</sup>

He became jealous not of himself, he insists, but of Gengè.

Understand? She was certain, perfectly certain that her Gengè liked her hair better combed

in that other way, and she combed her hair in that other way that neither she nor I liked. But Gengè liked it; and she made the sacrifice (...) And I - now that everythig in the end had become clear to me - began to become terribly jealous - not of myself, I beg you to believe: you feel like laughing! - not of myself, gentlemen, but of one who was not I, of an imbecile who had stuck himself between myself and my wife; not like a vain shadow, no - I beg you to believe - because he, on the contrary, made me a vain shadow, me, me, appropriating my body to make himself loved by her.<sup>48</sup>

After becoming aware of the reality of his wife's construction of him and feeling as though he is no one, he then realises that it is not only his wife who has a different conception of him which in no way coincides with his own. He is not "no one". He is a hundred thousand - as many as there are "other" people to have constructions of him. In a room with other people, he realises that he is not one, but five.

(...) believing that you speak to one Moscarda only, who is really one, yes, the one who is standing in front of you in such and such a way, as you see him, as you touch him; while you

speak of five Moscardas because the other four,  
 also have one in front of them, one for each,  
 who is that one only, thus and so, as each one  
 sees him and touches him. Five; and six, if poor  
 Moscarda sees himself and touches himself, one  
 also for himself; one and no one, alas, as he  
 sees himself and touches himself, if the other  
 five see him and touch him differently.<sup>49</sup>

He is five people, and each one with a life of its own.

Five imbeciles. One in each. Five imbeciles who  
 stand in front of you, as you see them from  
 outside, in me who am one and five like the  
 house, all with this name Moscarda, nothing for  
 himself, who, yes, all five will turn if you call  
 "Moscarda!" but each one with that appearance  
 that you give him; five appearances: if I laugh,  
 five smiles, and so on. And will not each act  
 which I accomplish be for you the act of one of  
 these five? And can this act be the same if  
 the five are different? Each one of you will  
 interpret it, will give it a sense and a value  
 according to the reality which you have given  
 me.<sup>50</sup>

He is five (six) people - but he can only know the sixth, that is himself as he creates or constructs himself. There is no way for Moscarda to come to know himself as others see him. The other five will forever remain strangers to him.

Each person can know only his own "creation", his own "construction" of reality, although he is, at times, made painfully aware that others have their own "creations", their own "constructions". Describing Stefano Gogli, Pirandello writes:

' - Who knows then how that one, or that thing, which now to me seems one way, really is? Did he perhaps know some reality outside of himself? He himself didn't exist for himself except like and in as much as, time by time, he imagined himself. Well, his wife had created for herself a reality of him which didn't correspond at all, neither interiorly nor exteriorly, to that which he had created himself: a true reality; not a shadow, a spectre!

And then, would Lucietta have loved the true Stefano Gogli, a Stefano Gogli different from hers?<sup>51</sup>

From other sources we see that Pirandello's answer to this question is that not only would she not have loved him but she wouldn't even recognise any other Stefano Grogli than her own. In Uno, nessuno e centomila, Moscarda argues:

I don't presume that you are the way I imagine you. I have already stated that you aren't even the one which you imagine yourself, but so many at the same time, according to all your possibilities of being, and happenstance, relationships and circumstances. And so what wrong do I do you? You do me a wrong believing that I don't or can't have any other reality outside of the one that you give me; which reality is yours only, believe: an idea of yours, that which you have made yourself of me, a possibility of being as you feel it, as it seems to you; since of that which I could be for myself, not only can you know nothing, but not even I myself.<sup>52</sup>

(N.B. In this last phrase Moscarda is not referring to the general state of affairs. In context it is obvious that he cannot know what he can be for himself due to his own confusion about his identity because of his recent realisations.)

In Si gira ... we read:

(...) he could not be one and the same person to her and to myself.

(...) We have all of us a false conception of an individual whole

(...) And we ourselves can never know that reality which is accorded to us by other people; who we are to this person and to that.<sup>53</sup>

Paradoxically, although we cannot know directly or completely another's construction of our reality, we are to some extent indirectly aware of it and through this indirect awareness of it this other reality impinges upon us. This in turn forces us to submit to what he calls "deformation" of our own reality and, indeed, changes that reality not into a duplicate of the other's construction but modifies our original construction to resemble more closely our construction of the other's construction of us. In Una voce the parallel is drawn between a blind man who can only imagine what his wife looks like through his impressions of her voice, and the condition of any person who can only imagine what another is really like through his impressions of that other person's physical characteristics, actions, etc. Just as the blind man would be incapable upon regaining his sight, of recognising his wife, whom he had never seen, so different would she be from the construction which he had made of her; so would any man be incapable of recognising another reality apart from his own. In

this short story, the wife is wise enough to be aware of this incapability, of the impossibility of changing the reality which another has constructed for us. Knowing that her husband's sight is about to be restored by an operation, she leaves him, never to return.

Vitangelo Moscarda is not as wise, at least not at first. Becoming aware of the existence of his "other" realities, he tries vainly to change them, to make them conform more closely to his own reality for himself. First he tries to destroy his wife's "Gengè". Of course, he fails.

And it was so real, this one, that when I at last, exasperated, wanted to destroy it, imposing instead of its reality, my own, not my wife but the wife of that one, found herself immediately horrified as if in the arms of a stranger, an unknown person; and declared that she couldn't love me any more, that she couldn't live with me not even a moment and ran away.<sup>54</sup>

He can't bear the reality which others have given him and is tempted to do anything to change it.

I would even, my God, suddenly stick out my tongue, move my nose making a sudden face, in

order to alter all of a sudden, as a joke and without malice, that image of me which he believed to be real.<sup>55</sup>

He discovers the tenacity of others' construction of us.

Superficially, we usually call them false suppositions, erroneous judgments, gratuitous attributions. But all that can be imagined of us is really possible, even though it isn't true for us. That it isn't true for us, others laugh. It is true for them. So true that it can even happen that if you don't hold tight onto the reality which for your own sake you have given yourself, others can induce you to recognise that more real than your own reality is that which they give you.<sup>56</sup>

So "real" is the other's construction of us that it cannot change. Finally Moscarda realises that the other's construction of himself might "go crazy" but it cannot be destroyed.<sup>57</sup>

Although we need the other's look in order to help form our own image of ourselves, the other's look is hateful to us because living our own lives the other's image of us is only indirectly

accessible to us. It has a life apart from us, and by definition we cannot really see it as it is experienced by the "other".

The conclusion of Come prima, meglio di prima is that Fulvia ceases trying to fight her daughter's image of her. She leaves her family taking with her her newborn baby for whom she will be able to create a different image of her.

Vitangelo Moscarda states:

I needed a mirror. On the other hand, just the thought that my wife was home was enough to hold me present to myself and it was just this which I didn't want.<sup>58</sup>

## 2. The mirror and the 'other's' look

We see ourselves as in a mirror. The mirror is for Pirandello a very special instrument by which we can become aware of the absurd. This is explained by Moscarda to his wife in Uno, nessuno e centomila:

'All dead,' I told her.

(...)

'But dead, how, if I'm here, alive?'

'Oh, you, yes, because now you don't see yourself.

But when you stand in front of the mirror, at

the moment that you see yourself, you are no longer alive.'

'And why?'

'Because you have to stop life in yourself for a moment, in order to see yourself. Like in front of a camera. You strike a pose. And striking a pose is like becoming a statue for a moment. Life moves continuously and can't ever really see itself.'<sup>59</sup>

In fact, Moscarda, among others of Pirandello's heroes, is fascinated by his mirror image and his inability to see himself live as others see him. The moment one accidentally catches sight of himself in a mirror, fleetingly, as one moves, he is horrified. (see for example Rimedio la geografia cit. page 226) It is like seeing a stranger. And then as soon as we stop to get a better look, the live image is fixed and dies. Seeing ourselves in others is like seeing ourselves in a sort of mirror, one in which we cannot recognise ourselves. (see for example L'uomo in frak cit. p77)

The parallel goes further. The "other's look" fixes one, catches one in a pose, as it were, just like a mirror, and creates thereby a form into which the "other" then tries to fit and therefore limit all of one's possibilities of being. Knowing that our being overflows such a form and cannot but be killed by it, all the while needing the other's confirmation of our being, we

feel the "other's look" upon us and have an instinctive horror of it.

In the short story Romolo, Pirandello discusses man's need for others as a cause for his unhappiness because of the above-mentioned horror of the "other's look".

(...) but civilisation means precisely the recognition of this fact: that man, among so many other instincts which bring him to make war, has also that which is called the gregarious instinct, by which he must live with his fellows.

- And so then you see from this, - you deduce,  
- if man can ever be happy.<sup>60</sup>

What, however, is the nature of this look which so disturbs us? Pirandello, like Sartre, believes that the problem lies in the fact that - as Vicentini explains, - our "egocentrism":

makes us interpret and therefore perceive the reality of others exclusively in function of our needs, violating their intentionality.

(...)

The root of the difficulty is the same individuality of the person who, asserting himself as intentionality, with individual needs, deforms

the reality of other individuals perceiving their reality in his own egocentric perspective.<sup>61</sup>

This conflict is inevitable since:

One cannot, defending one's own, not violate the intentionality of others.<sup>62</sup>

This violation is, of course, bound up with the limited way in which others perceive us (or we perceive others) contrasted with the infinity of possibilities of being that each person has and the way in which the individual himself interprets, organises and feels these possibilities.

Examples of the effects of the "other's look" abound in Pirandello. The short story which has as its major theme precisely these effects is La maschera dimenticata. It concerns the amazing oratorical performance of a man at a town meeting where he is unknown and the extraordinary changes which take place as soon as he feels upon himself the eyes of someone from his own town who knows him.

Even midst the enthusiastic fervor of the welcome, he felt himself wounded right from the outset by those little eyes. He tried to escape them, plunging himself into the middle of the confusion of the party. But from here, from there, from

nearby, from far away, from wherever he least expected it, he felt himself stung by the almost spasmodic fixedness of those little persecuting eyes; and when stung; frozen, perturbed, all confounded by an obscure feeling which furiously assaulted him and occupied his brain like a vertiginous darkness.<sup>63</sup>

Persecuted by the look of the one who knew him as he usually appeared,

(...) he saw himself go back into himself with all his misfortunes and his misery (...)<sup>64</sup>

Completely changed, a different person from the night before, he mystifies those townspeople who had so admired him the previous evening. Was he an impostor? No, he had merely forgotten his habitual mask (*maschera*) and had begun living a different possibility of being. Strangers saw him and identified him with the "new mask", unable to imagine him in the old, unless they believed that one was "real" and the other "pretense".

In Pensaci Giacomino (both the short story and the play), the point is made that certain things may be done only in secret but not in front of the "other's look".

- Leave me be! don't make me say it! How can you not understand that certain things can only be done in hiding, and are no longer possible in the light, with you who know, with everyone laughing.<sup>65</sup>

In Da se it is the "other's look" which makes Matteo Sinagra realise that he has lost his identity, that his old self is completely dead.

In Nel gorgo we see another effect of the other's look: the stirring of a bad conscience.

(...) inside of us, the little machine of civilisation, and we let all of the dregs of all of our actions, of all of our thoughts, of all of our feelings, quietly deposit themselves, hidden, at the bottom of our conscience. But let someone whose little machine is broken begin to look at you the way I looked at you, no longer as a joke, but seriously, and without your expecting it, it removes from the bottom of the conscience all of the deposit of those dregs which you have inside, and see if you can tell me that you wouldn't be frightened.<sup>66</sup>

Other examples of the effects of the "other's look" are to be found in the short stories: Frammento di cronaca di Marco Leccio, Romolo, La paura, L'onda, La rosa and La ricca.

Thus, we all feel a horror of the "other's look". Vitangelo states:

(...) to feel on me people's eyes seemed to me to undergo a horrible oppression thinking that all of those eyes gave me an image which was certainly not the one which I knew myself to be but another which I could neither know nor prevent; (...) <sup>67</sup>

Not only of the look of other people in general, Moscarda had a special loathing for his wife's "look".

And meanwhile I had a horror of her eyes which looked at me, laughing and secure; a horror of those cool hands of hers which touched me, certain that I was as her eyes saw me; a horror of all of her body which weighed on my knees, trusting in the abandonment of herself to me, without the faintest suspicion that she wasn't giving that body of hers really to me, and that I, holding her in my arms, didn't hold with that body of hers one who belonged to me totally and not a stranger (...) two strangers, held tight

thus - horror - strangers, not only one for the other, but each one to himself, in that body which the other embraced.<sup>68</sup>

In La balia signor Manfroni has a similar horror of his wife's "look".

Mr. Manfroni could have a hundred thousand reasons, but he also had on his cheek bone a most ridiculous wart, onto which his wife would icily point her glance, more than ever spiteful, when she saw herself being forced to submit to those reasons. And Mr. Manfroni, seeing his wart looked at each time, experienced such an attack of nerves that in order not to do anything rash, he would immediately cut short the discussion.<sup>69</sup>

A first reaction is to try to escape the other's look.

Vitangelo, in fact, as soon as his wife leaves him, begins to feel an exhilarating sense of freedom. In the short story Guardando una stampa we read:

(...) blind men can have luck with 'good' women. Look, I would bet that Marco, handsome man, must have had his adventures. Because woman,

understand? It's all a matter of her being able  
to do it without being seen,<sup>70</sup>

But one cannot escape feeling the other's look. In L'esclusa we  
find:

No one, it's true, had bothered her; but she felt  
herself wounded by so many looks,<sup>71</sup>

In E due! we see:

But don't you see, don't you see how you look  
at me even you? - I? - exclaimed his mother.  
- How do I look at you? - Like all the others  
look at me.<sup>72</sup>

In La carriola we read:

When I have someone around, I never look at her;  
but I feel her looking at me, she looks at me,  
she looks at me without taking her eyes off me  
for a moment.<sup>73</sup>

Not only do we inevitably feel the other's look upon us when they  
are present even if they are not, in fact, looking at us, but  
we are haunted by this look even when we are alone. This is  
illustrated in the play Il giuoco delle parti, Silia is haunted by  
her husband's "look", even though they no longer live together.

She can always feel it upon her. Even the furniture begins to personify this "look" and she cannot bear being in the same room with the chair her husband used to sit in. The reason for this, of course, is that our conscience, as we have already seen, is nothing but the "other" in us. It is the other's look upon us, or rather, our interpretation of the other's look, which becomes our conscience, which helps us to form our own construction of ourselves.

Thus we have seen in these previous two sections how our "self" is formed, what the function of the "other" is in the formation of this "self", and what relationship obtains between the "self" and the "other". Let us now turn to the opposite question and deal with our conception of others.

#### D. The Other

##### 3. Forms

Just as others "know" us through their construction of us and their fitting of us into categories, roles, or forms, so too do we "know" others through the same process. Again it must be noted that Pirandello is not an idealist. He affirms the existence of an objective reality which, in order to avoid falling into solipsism, we must try to have our representation of the world resemble. Beyond the abstract knowledge of the existence of an objective reality of things and of people, we cannot progress.

On the experiential level, this objective reality can never touch us, and since it is with this experiential level which Pirandello, like the other Existentialists, deals, the objective reality has no importance other than the purely philosophical one of rejecting solipsism.

It is only through "forms" that we can know reality. That is, it is only through the categorisation of sense data that the world can begin to have some meaning for us. But it is the "forms" which we know and not the objective reality.

Do you believe that you know yourself if you don't construct yourself in some way? And that I could know you if I don't construct you in my own way? We can only know that to which we succeed in giving form. But what knowledge can it be? Is this form perhaps the thing itself? You, for you as for me; but not in the same way for me as for you; so much so that I don't recognise myself in the form which you give me, nor do you in the one I give to you; (...) <sup>74</sup>

The first "form" which we are given and into which we must forever fit is our name. It brands us. It becomes not our name but the name of the form into which the other tries to fit us, the role which the other sees us play. According to Pirandello, the very

special function of a proper name is not fulfilled. Rather, he sees names taking on the meaning of whatever "form" people ascribe to that person, the way the name Shylock has become synonymous with "usurer" or Solomon with "wise-man". This is not, according to Pirandello, a general association but rather a very individual one. That is to say, once known a person is labelled with one or more "forms" which represent the way another individual has organised the sum of that person's appearances, his "reality". In time, the person's name becomes merely a convenient way of referring to these forms, a sort of a mental shorthand which, like all other concepts or "forms" distorts reality precisely because of their inherent limitedness. As we read in Uno, nessuno e centomila:

A name is nothing but this, a funeral epigraph.

It suits dead people. People who have finished.

I am alive and I'm not finished. Life doesn't

'finish'. And life admits of no names.<sup>75</sup>

Life isn't fixed in a form. Life is a continuous flow of sensations, experience which the moment they are conceptualised freeze, solidify and thus die. Vitangelo Moscarda wished that he could have thousands of names, each one for the thousands of his thoughts, feelings or actions, rather than having each of his individual acts branded with his name and his body as if that individual act involved his entire being and not merely a fraction of it, only one of his possibilities of being. Of course, he is so used

to his name that he is able to live with it, but he does recognise it as a sort of a seal, a brand, a stamp.<sup>76</sup>

We are branded by each of our words. Others hear and construct a form for us according to their interpretation of these words. In Come tu mi vuoi we read:

I couldn't be serious! I couldn't be serious! It is frightful, sir, how one of these things, even stupidity, that is said to provoke laughter, in passing, - see? - it is fixed into a concept - forever - I am that, and I can't be anything else - branded - a clown.<sup>77</sup>

Not only our words, but of course, also our actions brand us, force us into a mold, a form, a concept. In Sì gira ... we find:

We may easily fail to recognise ourselves in what we do, but what we do, my dear fellow, remains done: an action which circumscribes you, my dear fellow, gives you a form of sorts, and imprisons you in it. You seek to rebel? You cannot.<sup>78</sup>

Donata, the actress in the play Trovarsi explains that as long as one can remain suspended:

... able to turn with the mind ... here, there ...  
 to any recall in us of a sensation, an impression  
 ... to so many images that a momentaneous desire  
 might awaken ... or re-evoke a memory ... with  
 this breathing within us ... yes, of indistinct  
 memories ... not of acts, perhaps not even of  
 appearances ... but, precisely, of desires almost  
 vanished before they arise ... things of which  
 one thinks without wanting to, almost hidden  
 from ourselves ... dreams ... the suffering of  
 not being ... like flowers which weren't able to  
 bloom ... - that's it, yes, as long as one remains  
 thus, sure one has nothing; but one has at least  
 this fullness of freedom (...) Now, to commit and  
 act, it is never the whole spirit which commits  
 it ... the whole of life which is in us ... but  
 that which we are only in that moment ... - and  
 yet, there, that act of a moment - committed -  
 imprisons us, stops us here (...) <sup>79</sup>

The short story La patente is a parody of this situation. A man about whom it is whispered that he is a "*iattatore*" (one capable of putting the "evil eye" on people) based on one of his actions and a series of coincidences, sees that he cannot escape this branding. So, he seeks legal recognition of his title of

"*iettatore*" so that at least he will be able to use it to extort money from the superstitious inhabitants of his town.

In Il dovere del medico we see the torment of a man who has been branded by one of his acts. Caught in a frivolous act of adultery he kills the husband in self-defence and then, in remorse, shoots himself. The doctors save his life, and he - who has already taken upon himself the harshest punishment but has been saved from it by others - feels that he is reborn. He has paid, nearly with his life, for his act, an act which began foolishly and which he had no intention of committing. But it is only he himself who feels that he has been sufficiently punished. Society requires that he be tried and sent to prison as soon as he recovers. He protests:

- I washed myself, with my blood! (...) I am another, now! I am reborn! How can I remain suspended at a single moment of that other life of mine that no longer exists for me? Suspended, hooked to that moment, as if it represented my whole existence, as if I had never lived for anything else.<sup>80</sup>

The short story Il professor Terremoto has as its major theme precisely this fixing of a person into a form by the other, based on an act of that person. In this work a professor is

disgraced because he had been branded a hero due to his acts of heroism during the Messina earthquake and afterwards could not live up to the label. The professor explains:

- And yet please believe that for me dear sir, - he continued shortly after with a sigh - this woman who died was not as unfortunate as all of those who, after one of these heroics, remained alive.

'Because you have to admit that an act of heroism  
is the business of a moment' (...)

'Life is not made of these moments.'<sup>81</sup>

The similarity here is obvious between this example and Sartre's example found in L'existentialisme est un humanisme in which the French existentialist speaks of the "bad faith" involved in calling anyone a hero or a coward (in the way that one calls a stone, a stone,) since there is always a possibility for the hero to cease being a hero or the coward to cease being cowardly.<sup>82</sup>

Just as Sartre speaks of the nature of "being-for-itself" not to be what it is and to be what it is not, Pirandello, despite his speaking of any "form" as a kind of death, a concept which cannot capture or encompass life, recognises (as we have already seen in the section of this chapter dealing with masks) that in a certain sense, the form takes on reality, at least for the person

who has constructed it and sometimes even for the person onto whom it has been placed, and that person becomes what the form dictates. If one believes in the form, the mask, the role, then the other person is as you see him.

In La favola del figlio cambiato we find:

Change this one of paper and glass into one of  
gold and gems of value  
the coat into a mantle  
and the king for fun becomes in earnest,  
to whom you bow down,  
There is need of nothing else, only  
that you believe it.<sup>83</sup>

Taking the identification between the person and the form one step further, we find in Pirandello many examples of people's behaviour being influenced by the form or role which society (or they themselves) have placed upon them. In Ieri e oggi the sadness of a mother at the departure of loved ones going to war is contrasted with that of a prostitute. In the one case the tears are blessed, as it were, by society. In the other they are held to be cheap and the people involved must act accordingly. In the short stories Certi obblighi, La verità and L'uomo solo the protagonist of each has known for years that his wife is unfaithful to him. Because society does not know and hence the

role of the cuckold has not been assigned to him he chooses to ignore the situation. As soon as society knows and the role is assigned, each man must then play his part. He is forced to "become aware" of his wife's infidelities and act accordingly. In the novel L'esclusa we see the example of a man who believes in a "fate" (rather than society) which assigns to each person a role or form. His own, he believes, is that of the betrayed husband.

This way of thinking of his had become so fixed that if by chance someone, urged by need, came to ask help of him, he, even feeling himself sometimes inclined to give in, already moved, he would stop himself, sigh loudly, then he would open his lips in his usual sardonic smile and advise the poor devil to address himself to someone else: to so and so, for example, the good philanthropist of the town: - Go to him, my friend: he was born expressly to help people. I wasn't, you see. To me this office does not belong. I would be offending that worthy gentleman who has fulfilled it for so many years and can't do without it.<sup>84</sup>

Of course, his belief is self-fulfilling and in one of Pirandello's usual ironic twists, as soon as he is in fact betrayed by his formerly unjustly accused and faithful wife, he becomes convinced of

her innocence, thus by belief in his assigned role, he is condemned to play it out. Of course, quite apart from the ironic turn of the plot (which one may or may not ascribe to the biographical considerations concerning the author's insanely jealous wife) we can see another example of "bad faith" or self-deception in which a person denies his own freedom and blames everything on fate, another example of a man wishing to be - in this case a cuckold - "in the same way", (as Sartre would have it), "that a stone is a stone".

A form "catches" life in an instant, rigidifies it, freezes it, and represents it just the way a camera stops the action and records a particular moment in time. For this reason Pirandello is particularly interested in the camera. He uses this analogy throughout his novel Si gira ... the protagonist of which is Serafino Gubbio, cameraman at a (silent) movie studio.

In exile, not only from the stage, but also in a sense from themselves. Because their action, the live action of their live bodies, there, on the screen of the cinematograph, no longer exists; it is their image alone, caught in a moment, in a gesture, an expression, that flickers and disappears. They are confusedly aware, with a maddening, indefinable sense of emptiness, that their bodies are so to speak subtracted,

suppressed, deprived of their reality, of breath, of voice, of the sound that they make in moving about, to become only a dumb image which quivers for a moment on the screen and disappears, in silence, in an instant, like a unsubstantial phantom, the play of illusion upon a dingy sheet of cloth.

They feel that they too are slaves to this strident machine, which suggests on its knock-kneed tripod a huge spider watching for its prey, a spider that sucks in and absorbs their live reality to render it up an evanescent, momentary appearance, the play of a mechanical illusion in the eyes of the public. And the man who strips them of their reality and offers it as food to the machine; who reduces their bodies to phantoms, who is he? It is I, Gubbio.<sup>85</sup>

The camera, like the form, imprisons life, kills it. Serafino Gubbio feels the hatred of actors for his machine, parallel to the hatred of the man aware of the absurd for the form.

It is not so much for me, Gubbio, this antipathy, as for my machine. It recoils upon me, because I am the man who turns the handle.

They do not realise it clearly, but I, with the handle in my hand, am to them in reality a sort of executioner.<sup>86</sup>

The reason, of course, as has been mentioned, is that the person becomes identified with the form and limited to it. The play Quando si è qualcuno deals precisely with this problem. In it, a famous author feels himself imprisoned in the image that others have of him. Having just written, under an assumed name, a new book, one which repudiates his old "self" and is young, alive with ideas and very popular, he realises that he can never acknowledge the book because rather than see in him another facet, another possibility of his being, people would sooner hold on to the image of his old self that they already have and dismiss the new self as a mask, a fiction which he has placed upon himself as a joke.<sup>87</sup> He has no life outside of the form under which he is seen by others.

Because I now must not think anything else -  
 imagine anything else - feel anything else. -  
 What! - I thought that and I thought (according  
 to them) and that's enough! - They don't accept  
 any more images of me. - I expressed what I felt  
 - and there - stopped there there - I can't be  
 different - alas if I should try - they no longer  
 recognise me - I must no longer move myself from

the precise concept; determined in every minimal part, that they have made for themselves of me; there, that, immobile, forever.<sup>88</sup>

Thus we form a concept of the other. We determine him by any individual word or any particular action. We construct a form into which he must fit, a role which he must play. What happens if the other person becomes aware of that form, that role and rather than accept it and second it, he tries to change it for us? According to Pirandello, rather than change it we often believe that the person has become insane, since he no longer is consistent, no longer lives up to society's or our expectations of his behaviour. We read in Uno, nessuno e centomila:

In fact, wasn't I perhaps going up to Sig. Vitangelo Moscarda in order to play a dirty trick on him? Eh, gentlemen, yes, a dirty trick that is, to make him commit an act completely contrary to him and incoherent: an act which suddenly destroying the logic of his reality would annihilate him in the eyes of Marco di Dio as in so many others? Without understanding, wretched as he was! that the consequences of such an act couldn't be those which I imagined: to present myself, that is to ask everyone after:

'see now, gentlemen, it isn't true at all that I am the usurer that you want to see in me?'

But these others, instead; that everyone should exclaim amazed;

'Oh! You know? the usurer Moscarda has gone mad!<sup>89</sup>

In fact, that is what everyone believes when Moscarda no longer acts as they expect.

'Mad! Mad! Mad!'

It was the same cry of the whole crowd there in front of the door:

'Mad! Mad! Mad!'

Because I had wanted to demonstrate, that I could, even for others, not be what they believed me to be.<sup>90</sup>

Moscarda becomes aware of the impossibility of changing the concept which others have of him. He realises that they all think him mad and he speaks to the husband of a woman who is in an insane asylum;

And I touched the ground with my forehead.

'You, not I, understand? in front of my wife, understand?

You should stay like this! And I, and he, and everyone, in front of the so-called insane, like this!

(...)

'New words!' I cried. 'Do you want to hear them? Go, go there, where you keep them locked up: go, go and listen to them speak! You keep them locked up, because it suits you that way!'<sup>91</sup>

Why is it that we should listen to the so-called insane? We find the answer in, among other places, the play Come tu mi vuoi:

The unknown one: Oh yes, I know! Only the insane have the privilege of shouting - clearly - in front of everyone - certain things.<sup>92</sup>

What are these "certain things"? As we read in Il berretto a sonagli - the truth. There is no surer way to be thought crazy than to shout the truth in people's faces.

In Quand'ero matto the protagonist learns that his reasoning can only go so far. One can reason about other people's feelings, needs, etc. but you can only live your own life and take care of yourself. All the reasoning in the world - unless you're a saint perhaps - can never equate your experience of others and their own of themselves. If one isn't wise to this:

there is no middle road: either one is a saint  
or he is insane.<sup>93</sup>

The exact same statement is found in the play Lazzaro<sup>94</sup>

So, we accord to the "other" a form which under most circumstances we do not change. As soon as one becomes encapsulated in a form he no longer lives. In order to know oneself (or an "other") we (or he) must be defined by a form. Thus we find in the play Non si sa come:

To know oneself is to die.<sup>95</sup>

The form is intolerable because it stops the "flux" of life. In Quando si è qualcuno we read:

Second journalist: Oh yes, others ... Respect ...  
admiration

Natasha: All things that kill. And even  
in front of an object of someone  
killed that way, even in front  
of you, if they recognise you  
as his son, so many stop to  
look at you. When a life stops  
... or is stopped by others ...

First journalist:           The consequences of fame. That's  
why one stays!

Natasha:                   And no longer lives.<sup>96</sup>

The writer in this play feels as though he were becoming a statue, one who can no longer move. He has become famous. He is Someone, but for this he must die because:

Someone, alive no one can see.<sup>97</sup>

We find another parallel between a man who has been given (or taken on) a form, and a statue in Si gira ...:

But his dignity, so long and so strenuously defended, has now settled upon him, like the mould of a statue, immovable. Cavalina feels himself empty inside, but outwardly incrustated all over. He has become the walking mould of this statue. He cannot any longer scrape it off himself. Forever, henceforward, inexorably, he is the most dignified man in the world.<sup>98</sup>

Ironically, while the form distorts or kills life, it itself remains vitally alive even if the person on whom it was placed really dies physically, so long as the person who has constructed the form continues to live and to believe it. This brings us to

our next consideration which is the paradox of the reality (or irreality) of death.

#### 4. The reality (or irreality) of death

As we have seen, we make our reality in a sort of mirror-like exchange with the "other's look". We see ourselves in others' eyes and this reflection influences our own self-concept. Thus it is that it is the other's look which gives us existence. Here "life" is understood, not as the indistinct flow which each person feels within himself, but "life-in-the-world", existence. It of course follows from Pirandello's ideas concerning the relativity of reality that while a person's sentient life does not depend on others, his existence as a particular individual does because he needs the other's look in order to create himself. In Come prima meglio di prima Pirandello's ideas concerning this mirror-like exchange are illustrated. The long-straying wife and mother has returned, thinking that she can take up her old life. Since she has been reconciled with her husband, she can do this at least to a certain extent with him; but her daughter believes her to be dead. She realises that because of this she and her daughter can no longer reciprocally give each other life.

(...) my dear, if you can't make me live again for  
your daughter, can she now, instead, live again  
for me.<sup>99</sup>

It is here that the paradox of the irreality of death arises. If it is the other's look which gives life (understood in the sense of existence-in-the-world), then it follows that as long as that "look" continues, that person is "alive", existent-in-the-world, whether or not he is physically alive or dead. We find this general theme illustrated in the story lines of three short stories: Colloqui coi personaggi, Vista and La camera in attesa. Even more specifically, we read in La camera in attesa:

The truth is that you don't recognise in your son or daughter, returned after a year, that same reality which you gave to them before they left. (...) Your son, the one that you knew before he left, is dead, believe it, he's dead. Only there being a body (and even that so changed!) makes you say no. But you observe it well that he was another, the one who left a year ago, and who didn't come back anymore. (...)

You know it well, now, that reality doesn't depend on there being or there not being a body. There can be a body and it be dead for the reality which you gave it. That which makes life, then, is the reality which you give to it.<sup>100</sup>

As long as I who give reality to a person, live, that person continues to have a life-in-the-world. In I pensionati della memoria we find:

(...) that which was my reality, solely mine, which can neither change nor perish, as long as I live, and which can even live forever, if I have the strength to immortalise it in a page, or at least, for a hundred million years, according to the calculations just made in America concerning the duration of human life on Earth.<sup>101</sup>

In the play La vita che ti diedi, Pirandello paints the picture of a mother whose son has just died, but who is well-aware of this paradox of death's reality or irreality. She states:

I don't need to believe in shadows. I know that he is alive for me. I'm not crazy.<sup>102</sup>

Nevertheless, she really knows that her son is dead and she cannot make him live for herself when she is aware of that fact. Her only comfort is in knowing that as long as there is a woman who knew and loved her son and who doesn't yet know that he is dead, he remains alive.

For Pirandello, what constitutes "death" (that is, the ceasing of our "existence-in-the-world") is the death of the reality that

we have given to a particular person, however that is brought about. When a child goes off to a boarding school, for example, that child never returns. When the child that was that child goes home, that child (the one of times past) dies for the parent, because the reality which the parent used to give him is recognised as an illusion. In La camera in attesa we read:

- Didn't your son or daughter die when they left for school in the far off big city?

(...)

- Calm yourself, yes, go on, I know it well. But how is it, at the end of the year, when your son or your daughter comes back a year older from the city, you remain astonished and amazed before them; and you, yes you, with hands open as if to parry a doubt which alarms you, exclaim:

- Oh God, but is it really you? Oh God, how she has become another!<sup>103</sup>

When a person goes away and changes, they, that is, the reality which we gave them dies. We do not cry because for us that reality is still alive. The mother in La vita che ti diedi realises that it was when her son went away that he "died", not at the moment of his physical death.

- Well, life can act so cruelly toward a mother; it tears from her a son and changes him. - Another; and I didn't know it. Dead and I continued to make him live in me.<sup>104</sup>

The dead, like the living, depend on the other's look for their reality. In I pensionati della memoria Pirandello explains:

Their reality is vanished; but which? the one they gave themselves. And what could I know of that reality of theirs? What do you know of it? I know that I myself give to them. Illusion, mine and theirs. But if they, poor dead ones, have been totally disabused of theirs, my illusion is still alive and it is so strong that I, I repeat, after having accompanied them to the cemetery, I see them come back to me, all of them, just as they were, outside of the coffin, next to me.

- But why, - you say, - don't they return to their own houses, instead of coming to yours? Oh beautiful! because they hardly have any reality for themselves, to be able to go where they please. Reality is never for the self. And they have it, now, for me, and with me then, per force, they have to come away.<sup>105</sup>

If the "dead" continue to live in the reality that we continue to give them, why then do we weep at the death of a friend? They still have the reality which they always had, namely, the one which we have constructed. We weep because the giving of reality is reciprocal. We weep because the dead can no longer give reality to us. In effect, since the reality of the dead person lives on in us, it is we, not they, who die! In La vita che ti diedi we read:

And I here? - This is what death is, my daughter.  
 - Things to be done whether we want to or not  
 - and things to be said ... - Now, a time-table  
 to consult - then, the carriage for the station  
 - travel ... We are the poor busy dead.<sup>106</sup>

And in the same play:

Anna: (...) My God, one should also understand that  
 the real reason we cry also in front of death  
 is a different one from what one believes.

Giorgio: One cries for the one whom we'll miss.

Anna: Right! Our life in the one who dies: that which we don't know! (...) Yes, yes: for ourselves we cry; because he who dies can no longer give any life to us, with those dead eyes which no longer see us, with those cold and hard hands of his which can't touch us anymore. (...) - And you instead mean that he isn't alive for me any longer. But of course he is alive for me, alive with all of the life which I have always given him: mine, mine; not his which I don't know.<sup>107</sup>

In Colloqui coi personaggi we find the same example.

Mama! I cry because you, Mama, you can no longer give me a reality.<sup>108</sup>

In I pensionati della memoria we find the same explanation of our tears when a loved one dies, namely, the destruction of the reciprocity of our illusions. We need the other's look as a support for our own illusions. Here it must be noted that Pirandello is not making any philosophical statement regarding physical death. Although Pirandello demonstrates a certain interest in spiritism or "theosophy", as was in vogue in his day, and speculates on the possibility that there may remain some sort of consciousness after

death, it is obvious that these possibilities are not particularly important to him. These beliefs or speculations remain isolated from the rest of his work and at no time does he accept that a belief in an afterlife should influence one's choice of values in this life. The subject remains for Pirandello an interesting speculation but an unimportant one. What Pirandello is doing is using that subject of death and the paradox of its reality (or irreality) to illustrate once again his beliefs in the relativity of all reality.

I suppose that a dead person has as much reality for us as a live one and that this reality collapses at the moment when we know that we will no longer feel the other's look upon us, is to say something about the possibility of communication between people. Let us now explore this possibility.

## **E. Communication**

Lina Passarella Sartorelli in her article La filosofia morale nel teatro pirandelliano states:

And then in Pirandello there is also another contrast: men, all preoccupied with themselves, with this intimate part of them, with this expression, don't have the energy to give to know their neighbour, and that is why they don't understand each other.<sup>109</sup>

While it is certainly true and can easily be seen in Pirandello that people are preoccupied with themselves and rarely if ever try to know or understand others, Pirandello's statements and examples illustrate a much deeper reason for this lack of mutual understanding. The reason is because real communication between people is impossible due to the subjectivity of each person's world-view. Not only do we hide our most intimate selves from others and retreat behind a role or a mask, but even when we wish to communicate our own construction of reality to others; we find this impossible. In Il piacere dell'onestà Baldovino explains;

I come in here, and I immediately become that which I must be, that which I can be - I construct myself - that is, I present myself to you in a form suitable to the relation that I must contract with you. And you do the same to yourself when you receive me. But, deep down, inside of these constructions of ours placed thus face to face with each other, behind the jealousies and the shutters remain hidden our most secret thoughts, our most intimate feelings, all that we are for ourselves, outside of the relations which we want to establish.<sup>110</sup>

From this we might be led to believe that if only we didn't deliberately hide ourselves we could understand one another. But

in Uno nessuno e centomila we read how Vitangelo discovers the subjectivity of reality and the impossibility of communication. He states:

The trouble is that you, my friend, will never know, nor will I ever be able to communicate to you how that which you tell me is translated within me. You haven't spoken Greek. We have used, you and I the same language, the same words. But what fault have we, you and I, if words, for themselves, are empty? Empty, my friend. And you fill them with your meaning, in saying them to me; and I in receiving them, inevitably, fill them with my meaning. We believe that we understood each other; we haven't at all. Oh, this too is an old story, we all know it. And I don't pretend to be telling you anything new. Only I go back to asking you:

'But why then, Holy God, do you continue to act as if you didn't know? To speak to me of yourself, if you know that in order to be for me what you are for yourself, and I for you what I am for myself, it would be necessary that I, inside of myself, give you that same reality

that you give yourself, and vice versa; and this isn't possible.<sup>111</sup>

It is also impossible, for the same reason, Vitangelo discovers, to see myself as the other sees me, but only as I see him seeing me.

In I giganti della montagna Cotrone explains:  
 (...) each one of us speaks, and after having spoken, we almost always recognise that it has been in vain, and we go back inside ourselves disillusioned, like a dog in the night to his bed, after having barked at a shadow.<sup>112</sup>

Vitangelo speaks of the impossibility of his communicating with the person whom he thought knew him best:

I was astonished.

It was obvious that the sense which I gave to my words was a meaning for me; that which they then assumed for her, as Gengè's words, was completely different.<sup>113</sup>

It is a lonely world which Pirandello describes, however, the possibility of a certain solace being derived from common experience, a sort of communication without words, is left open. This is the theme of the short story Notte,

It is clear nevertheless that our reality remains precisely that, our own personal construction of reality, unapproachable for others, incapable of being communicated or expressed by us. This is the discovery of Vitangelo Moscarda and this is the discovery of Serafino Gubbio (in Si gira ...) which leads to their silence. (This leaves aside for the moment, other considerations of this silence which have already been discussed.) Their "selves" are incommunicable to others but so is the very discovery of this incommunicability.

#### F. Summary

In this chapter concerning the self and others we have discussed Pirandello's views on life as pure experience, one's construction of his own "self", the use of roles or masks, the importance of the other's look, the construction of the "other", a unique definition of insanity, the paradox of death's irreality, and the impossibility of communication. Let us see how these coincide with the well-known views of Sartre, particularly as he has expressed them in his major philosophical treatise Being and Nothingness and his short essay: L'existentialisme est un humanisme.

When Pirandello speaks of life as pure consciousness he is describing man's way of being. Sartre speaks of man as

consciousness of objects and of itself. Consciousness (or man) has no essence. Sartre states in Being and Nothingness:

Now as we have seen, consciousness of being is  
the being of consciousness.<sup>114</sup>

In other words, man's mode of being is that of being conscious of the being of objects. Now Sartre situates this consciousness in the world as totally free - as he would say, surrounded by nothingness. Man himself orders everything around him and perceives things in his own way. He chooses his manner of perceiving and ordering things and is responsible for his choice. (See also L'existentialisme est un humanisme p31 for a practical example).

Not only does man "choose" or construct his reality, but he chooses and constructs himself. Sartre states quite clearly that:

Man is nothing but what he makes himself.<sup>115</sup>

The use of the mask or role is for Sartre, as for Pirandello, a form of bad faith because one's whole being cannot be expressed in that role. For Pirandello it is a denial of the infinity of one's possibilities. For Sartre, it is a denial, a restriction of

one's total freedom. Nevertheless the role constitutes in some sense our being.<sup>116</sup>

Sartre does not discuss the multiplication of "selves" which so fascinates Pirandello, but he does state that:

(man) can be nothing (...) unless the others recognise him as such. To obtain any truth about me, I must pass through the other. The other is indispensable to my existence, as well moreover as it is to the knowledge which I have of myself.<sup>117</sup>

Thus we see in Sartre as well as in Pirandello the need for the other's look. Sartre writes in Being and Nothingness:

I am a slave to the degree that my being is dependent at the centre of a freedom which is not mine and which is the very condition of my being. In so far as I am the object of values which come to qualify me without my being able to act on this qualification or even to know it, I am enslaved. By the same token, in so far as I am the instrument of possibilities which are not my possibilities whose pure presence beyond my being I cannot even glimpse, and which deny

my transcendence in order to constitute me as a means to ends of which I am ignorant - I am in danger. This danger is not an accident but the permanent structure of my being-for-others.<sup>118</sup>

I need the other's look in order to construct myself and yet I apprehend it as a danger, an unpleasant experience because:

To be looked at is to apprehend oneself as the unknown object of unknowable appraisals - in particular, of value judgments.<sup>119</sup>

Again Pirandello and Sartre agree.

Our construction of others, apart from the communication of their "look" is always in the mode of an object. In their "look" we become aware of their subjectivity, but since by definition we cannot enter into that subjectivity, the other is always constituted as an object of our subjectivity, seen in the light of his relation to me. While Pirandello goes further and explains how we approached the other in a particular role or at a certain moment in time or in one specific action and try to limit his being to that role or that moment or that action, and thus do not apprehend his whole being, the entire set of his possibilities; Sartre speaks more of each individual's subjectivity, his total freedom and the impossibility of our participating in that in any

way. I construct the other in my own way, and he constructs me in his, but apart from the other's look on which I depend, the construction of others by me or of me by others does not have importance for Sartre as it does for Pirandello. The reason for this difference lies in the attitudes of these two authors toward the absurd. For Pirandello, our awareness of others' construction of our "self" and the consequent doubling or multiplication of this "self" is another way in which we become aware of the absurd. The important thing for Pirandello as for Camus is to live with this awareness. For Sartre what is most important is the affirmation of our total freedom and hence he doesn't worry about our construction of others or their construction of us except in so far as it might influence the use of our freedom.

For the same reason, Sartre is not concerned with insanity except as it can be a form of bad faith which we use to mask from ourselves our freedom.

The paradox of death's irreality is another subject with which Sartre does not deal at length. While sharing Pirandello's views concerning the reality of one's "being-for-others":

My being-for-others is a real thing. If it remains in the hands of the Other like a coat which I leave to him after my disappearance, this

is by virtue of a real dimension of my being - a dimension which has become my unique dimension - and not in the form of an unsubstantial specter.<sup>120</sup>

Sartre does not play, as it were, with the paradoxical consequences of this, namely, that I exist as long as I am thought to exist. He does state, however, that

the very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the Other. To be dead is to be a prey for the living.<sup>121</sup>

and again

Now that his life is dead, only the memory of the Other can prevent Pierre's life from shrivelling up in its plenitude in-itself by cutting all its moorings with the present.

The unique characteristic of a dead life is that it is a life of which the Other makes himself the guardian.<sup>122</sup>

Taking into account these statements as well as Sartre's treatment of related topics, such as the "Other" as an object, or the necessity for the "Other's look", it is clear that Pirandello's

treatment of the paradoxical irreality of death is in complete accord with these views.

Sartre's views on the possibility of interpersonal communication seem to be slightly more optimistic than those of Pirandello. It is through the word that we are made aware to some extent of the nature of our "being-for-others". However he states:

... all this I am for the Other with no hope of apprehending this meaning which I have outside and still more important, with no hope of changing it. Speech alone will inform me of what I am; again this will never be except as the object of an empty intention; any intuition of it is forever denied me.<sup>123</sup>

He also indicates that the meaning of a sentence "is not in itself to be considered as a given but rather as an end chosen in a free surpassing of means".<sup>124</sup> And also:

Since the verbal unity is the meaningful sentence, the latter is a constructive act which is conceived only by a transcendence which surpasses and nihilates the given toward an end. To understand the word in the light of the sentence is very exactly to understand any given

whatsoever in terms of the situation and to understand the situation in the light of the original ends.<sup>125</sup>

If this is the case, then we are not at all far from Pirandello's insistence on the difficulty or perhaps even impossibility of communication, the difference being Sartre's emphasis on the primacy of the Being-for-itself and Pirandello's fascination with the self-for-others giving rise to a multiplication of the self (Uno, nessuno e centomila). One must note here a certain inconsistency in both writers in that they each seem to take for granted at least a certain level of communication while at the same time stressing the difficulty or even impossibility of it!

Thus we may conclude from this chapter that Pirandello's views concerning the self and others are consonant with those of the existentialist movement.

## CHAPTER VI - CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Since the evidence in support of the conclusion that Pirandello be recognised as an Existentialist *avant la lettre* is cumulative and has appeared throughout this work, these concluding remarks will not state any new conclusion but will be confined to a brief summary of that evidence.

The aim of this thesis has not been to defend those loosely related "systems" of philosophy or better, philosophical attitudes known as Existentialism, but rather, to show that Luigi Pirandello not only manifests in his works a philosophy so similar in its concepts and attitudes to those of Sartre and Camus as to entitle him to be rightly accepted as an Existentialist *avant la lettre*, but that by categorising Pirandello in this manner, we make the study of existentialism more fruitful through the acceptance of his extraordinarily clear elucidation and illustration of certain existentialist themes which otherwise remain slightly vague. Two examples of this latter are Pirandello's treatment of personal identity (see especially Chapter V Section B) --an area in which many critics have found Sartre unintelligible, and his contribution to the problem of other minds, an area not necessarily limited, of course, to existentialism, (see especially Chapter V Sections C and D).

It has been shown through an analysis of all of Pirandello's writings that his works clearly contain themes, the philosophical content of which, in Sartre's day, would come to be known as existentialism. More than merely themes, his works contain a well thought out if not a fully developed philosophy which chooses to express itself in plays, novels, and short stories and only rarely in essays, rather than in a formally written set of metaphysical theses. Is the evidence of these themes and this typically existentialist way of presenting them sufficient reason to accept Pirandello as an existentialist *avant la lettre*? It is this writer's opinion that it is, but there are two further reasons which justify such a categorisation. 1) Not only does Pirandello develop themes which later existentialists also developed, but in certain instances he carries them further or in another direction from the other existentialists. Sartre sees man as rising up in the world and then choosing what he is to be. Pirandello's account of what it means to construct oneself is much more detailed and much deeper. (This has been shown in Chapter IV and V.) His whole discussion of the "self" is more well-developed than Sartre's description of the being-for-itself. Sartre's description of bad faith is not at all as detailed and complete as Pirandello's innumerable examples of the numerous ways in which man seeks to deceive himself. (See Chapter III Section D.) As has been shown in Chapter IV, on the nature of reality, Pirandello's account of the nature of reality carries Sartre's ideas much further.

The second reason to categorise Pirandello with the existentialists is that his literary production relative to existentialist themes was so much greater than either Sartre or Camus, that by sheer force of numbers, his examples of these themes elucidate existentialist concepts much more frequently and clearly than the other writers. Apart from the number of his illustrations of existentialist themes, they are clearer and more persuasive because, as should be clear from the very many illustrations cited in this thesis, they rarely deal with those abnormal psychological conditions so typical of other existentialist literature, but rather with ordinary people whom one might accept more readily as typical or normal human beings.

Since, then, we find in Pirandello all of the major existentialist themes as well as most of the minor ones, since he develops certain themes even further than the recognised existentialists and since his literary works elucidate these existentialist themes even better than some works by Sartre or Camus, let us recognise the Italian writer Luigi Pirandello as an existentialist *avant la lettre*.

## FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I-INTRODUCTION

1. See, for example, the novels Si Gira and Il fu Mattia Pascal, the short stories Soffio and Leviamoci questo pensiero, and the plays Trovarsi and L'imbecille.
2. Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi pirandelliani, Le Monnier, Florence: 1967.
3. Claudio Vicentini, L'estetica di Pirandello Mursia, Turin: 1970, p.5.
4. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 6: Saggi, Poesie, Scritti varii, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1960, p.154.
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico - Philosophicus, (4.1212) "What can be shown, cannot be said." Trans. D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1961, p.51.
6. Max Charlesworth, The Existentialists and Jean-Paul Sartre, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia: 1975, p.9.

7. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Translated by Hazel E. Barnes, Mathuen & Co. Ltd., London: 1958, p.xi.
8. Sergio Pacifici, A Guide to Contemporary Italian Literature, Southern Illinois University Press, U.S.A.: 1962, p.213.
9. Franz Rauhut, Der Junge Pirandello, Beck, Munich, 1964, p.234.
10. Ibid., p.257.
11. Ibid., p.234.
12. For a study of the influence of German philosophy on Pirandello see: Mathias Adank, Luigi Pirandello e i suoi rapporti con il mondo tedesco, Berner Dissertation, Aarau, 1948.

## CHAPTER II-FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, Nagel, Paris: 1966, p.36-37.
2. These views of Sartre have been taken primarily from the essay L'Existentialisme est un humanisme.
3. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.440.

4. Ibid., p.441.
5. Ibid., p.438.
6. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, cit., p.57.
7. Ibid., p.62.
8. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.436.
9. Ibid., p.486.
10. Ibid., p.xiv.
11. Vera Passeri Pignoni, "Pirandello e la filosofia esistenziale", Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi pirandelliani, cit.
12. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit. p.495-496.
13. Gaetano Munafò, Conoscere Pirandello, Le Monnier, Florence: 1977, p.267.
14. Luigi Pirandello, Il fu Mattia Pascal, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1968, p.208.
15. Ibid., p.7.

16. Ibid., p.34.
17. Ibid., p.9.
18. Ibid., p.53.
19. André Gide, Les Caves du Vatican, University of London Press Ltd. London; 1961, p.101.
20. Luigi Pirandello, Il fu Mattia Pascal, cit., p.53.
21. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, cit., p.56.
22. Luigi Pirandello, Il fu Mattia Pascal, cit., p.140.
23. Ibid., p.170-171.
24. Ibid., p.174.
25. Ibid., p.236.
26. Ibid., p.254.
27. Ibid., p.254.
28. Ibid., p.81.
29. Ibid., p.88.

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p.89.
32. Ibid., p.98-99.
33. Ibid., p.139.
34. Maurice Cranston, Sartre, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh: 1962, p.13-14.
35. Luigi Pirandello, Il fu Mattia Pascal, cit., p.101.
36. Ibid., p.102.
37. Ibid., p.130.
38. Ibid., p.128.
39. Ibid., p.106.
40. Ibid., p.111.
41. Ibid., p.121.
42. Ibid., p.200.
43. Ibid., p.193.
44. Ibid., p.226.

45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p.237.
47. Luigi Pirandello, Uno nessuno e centomila, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1967, p.76.
48. Ibid., p.194.
49. Ibid., p.220.
50. Ibid., p.190.
51. Ibid., p.197.
52. Ibid., p.199.
53. Ibid., p.109.
54. Ibid., p.191.
55. Ibid., p.112.

### CHAPTER III -THE ABSURD

1. See for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme cit., p.36-37.
2. Ibid., p.28.

3. Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, trans. by Justin O'Brien, Hamish Hamilton, London: 1955, p.28.
4. Ibid., p.24.
5. Ibid., p.30.
6. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, trans. by Lloyd Alexander, Hamish Hamilton, London: 1962, p.172-173.
7. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot: The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio cinematograph Operator, trans. by Charles Scott Moncrieff, E.P. Dutton & Company, N.Y.: 1926, p.14-15.
8. Ibid., p.16.
9. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, cit., p.173.
10. Ibid., p.174.
11. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.19.
12. Ibid., p.23.
13. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, cit., p.176-177.

14. Luigi Pirandello, "Sagra del Signore della nave", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere Nude II, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1958, p.503.
15. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo" cit., p.138.
16. Gino Cucchetti, "Assoluto e relativo nei tre miti teatrali di Luigi Pirandello", Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi pirandelliani cit., p.354.
17. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.21.
18. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, cit., p.170-171.
19. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.139.
20. Ibid., p.146.
21. Ibid., p.152-153.
22. Ibid., p.159.
23. Luigi Pirandello, "Il buon cuore", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1956, p.866.
24. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.22.
25. Gaetano Munafò, op.cit., p.45-46.

26. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.153.
27. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.13.
28. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, cit., p.173.
29. Luigi Pirandello, "Arte e coscienza d'oggi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 6; Saggi, Poesie, Scritti vari, cit., p.892.
30. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ..., cit., p.323.
31. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.47.
32. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.18.
33. e.g. The Myth of Sisyphus, cit., p.33-35.
34. Gaetano Munafò, op.cit., p.38.
35. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.59.
36. Gaetano Munafò, op.cit., p.47.
37. Luigi Pirandello, "Arte e coscienza d'oggi", cit., p.900.
38. Ibid., p.897.
39. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.44.

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p.187-189.
42. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.66.
43. Ibid., p.78-79.
44. Gino Cucchetti, "Assoluto e relativo nei tre miti di Luigi Pirandello", cit., p.356.
45. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.159.
46. Luigi Pirandello, "La mano del malato povero", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.461.
47. See Chapter III, Section B.
48. Luigi Pirandello, "Un' idea", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.791.
49. Ibid., p.792.
50. See, for example, the short stories "La casa dell'agonia" and "La trappola".

51. Luigi Pirandello, "Il guardaroba dell'eloquenza", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.403.
52. Luigi Pirandello, "La Carriola", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.716.
53. See especially Chapter III, Section D6, and Chapter V Section D.
54. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, cit., p.55.
55. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.18.
56. Luigi Pirandello, "La cattura", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.281.
57. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ..., cit., p.176-177.
58. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.130.
59. Luigi Pirandello, Il fu Mattia Pascal, cit., p.383-384.
60. Luigi Pirandello, "Suo marito", Tutti i romanzi, Vol. I, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1973, p.640-641.

61. Luigi Pirandello, "Se ...", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1956, p.219.
62. Luigi Pirandello, "Il marito di mia moglie", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.1161.
63. Luigi Pirandello, "Di sera, un geranio", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.814.
64. Luigi Pirandello, "Notizie del mondo", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.708.
65. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, cit., p.99.
66. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, cit., p.80-83.
67. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.50-51.
68. Ludovico Steidl, "Aspetti dell 'Umorismo' Pirandelliano", Ricerche su Pirandello, Edizioni Gutenberg Povegliano, Verona: June, 1982., p.78.
69. Luigi Pirandello, "Zuccarello distinto melodista", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.680-681.

70. Lina Passarella Sartorelli, "La filosofia morale nel teatro di Pirandello", Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi pirandelliani, cit., p.440.
71. Luigi Pirandello, "La mano del malato povero", cit., p.462-463.
72. Luigi Pirandello, "Quand'ero matto", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.164.
73. Luigi Pirandello, "Sogno (ma forse no)", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.73.
74. Luigi Pirandello, "La Messa di quest'anno", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.1177.
75. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.439.
76. Gino Cucchetti, op.cit., p.359.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., p.358.
80. Luigi Pirandello, "All'uscita", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.1051.



81. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.195.
82. Luigi Pirandello, "Suo marito", cit., p.643.
83. Luigi Pirandello, "Il vecchio Dio", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.127.
84. Luigi Pirandello, "Berecche e la guerra", Opere de Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.749.
85. Luigi Pirandello, "Pallottoline", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.422-423.
86. Luigi Pirandello, "Lazzaro", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.1216.
87. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ..., cit., p.149.
88. Luigi Pirandello, "Arte e coscienza d'oggi", cit., p.893.
89. Luigi Pirandello, "Lazzaro", cit., p.1195.
90. Ibid., p.1222.
91. Luigi Pirandello, "Quand'ero matto", cit., p.163.
92. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.44-45.
93. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.539.

94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., p.539-540.
96. Max Charlesworth, *op.cit.*, p.127-128.
97. Claudio Vicentini, *op.cit.*, p.117-118.
98. See, for example, the novels Uno, nessuno e centomila, Il fu Mattia Pascal, Si gira ..., and Suo marito; the plays "La signora Morli una e due", "Il berretto a sonagli", "Ma non è una cosa seria", "Non si sa come", "Enrico IV", "Il piacere dell'onestà"; and the short stories "Paura d'essere felice", "Concorso per referendario di Stato", "In corpore vili", and "Leviamoci questo pensiero".
99. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, *cit.*, p.50.
100. Ibid., p.66.
101. The similarity in the description of the motivations and circumstances of this act -- "blinded by the sun", "stunned by the deafening noise of the crickets", etc. -- is so extraordinarily similar to Camus' description of Meursault's famous murder of the Arab in the desert in L'Étranger, that it must be noted.

102. Luigi Pirandello, "Nel sogno", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.663.
103. Ibid.
104. Luigi Pirandello, "Il treno ha fischiato", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.592.
105. Luigi Pirandello, "Il berretto a sonagli", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.404.
106. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ..., cit., p.125.
107. Ibid., p.3.
108. Ibid., p.3-4.
109. Ibid., p.62.
110. Luigi Pirandello, "Canta l'epistola", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.446.
111. Luigi Pirandello, "La trappola", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.685.
112. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.45.
113. Ibid.
114. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ..., cit., p.10.

115. Ibid., p.5.
116. Luigi Pirandello, "Leviamoci questo pensiero", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.591.
117. Ibid., p.593.
118. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ~~uu~~ cit., p.53.
119. Ibid., p.192-193.
120. Luigi Pirandello, "Superior stabat lupus", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.1332.
121. Luigi Pirandello, Il turno, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1953, p.55.
122. Luigi Pirandello, "Come tu mi vuoi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan: 1958, p.937.
123. Luigi Pirandello, "Uno di più", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.778.
124. Luigi Pirandello, "L'uomo solo", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.573.

125. Luigi Pirandello, "Il piacere dell'onestà", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.593.
126. Luigi Pirandello, "Vittoria delle formiche", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.836.
127. Luigi Pirandello, "E due!" Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.201.
128. Luigi Pirandello, "La balia", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.1006.
129. Luigi Pirandello, "L'esclusa", Tutti i romanzi, Vol. I, cit., p.158-159.
130. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.70.
131. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.153.
132. Vera Passeri Pignoni, op.cit., p.857.
133. Ibid., p.856.
134. Ibid.
135. Lina Passarella Sartorelli, op.cit., p.441.
136. See, for example, Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.49.

137. Luigi Pirandello, "Sagra del Signore della nave", cit., p.501.
138. Ibid., p.499.
139. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.156.
140. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.17.
141. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot  cit., p.8-9.
142. Ibid., p.78.
143. Ibid., p.28.
144. Ibid., p.84-85.
145. Ibid., p.23.
146. Ibid., p.8.
147. Luigi Pirandello, "Canta l'epistola", cit., p.447.
148. Luigi Pirandello, "Pallottoline!", cit., p.424.
149. Ibid., p.423.
150. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot  cit., p.314.
151. Ibid., p.202.

152. Luigi Pirandello, "Rimedio la geografia", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.223.
153. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.46.
154. Luigi Pirandello, "La patente", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.610.
155. Luigi Pirandello, "Il gatto, un cardellino e le stelle", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.53.
156. Luigi Pirandello, "Suo marito", cit., p.726.
157. Luigi Pirandello, "La trappola", cit., p.682.
158. Ibid.
159. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.217.
160. Luigi Pirandello, "La nuova colonia", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.1107.
161. Luigi Pirandello, "All'uscita", cit., p.1053.
162. Luigi Pirandello, "Sopra e sotto", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.502.

163. Luigi Pirandello, "La favola del figlio cambiato", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.1303.
164. Luigi Pirandello, "Lazzaro", cit., p.1199.
165. Luigi Pirandello, "I giganti della montagna", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.1344.
166. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.5.
167. Albert Camus, op.cit., p.52.
168. For the illustration of these themes see: the plays "Ma non è una cosa seria" and "La ragione degli altri"; and the short stories "La Messa di quest'anno", "La vita nuda", "Ignare", "Il nido", "Felicità", and "I tre pensieri della sbiobbina".
169. Luigi Pirandello, "Arte e coscienza d'oggi", cit., p.903.
170. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.39-40.
171. Luigi Pirandello, "Quando s'è capito il giuoco", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.839.

172. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.167.

173. Ibid., p.138.

174. Ibid., p.95.

175. Ibid., p.215.

176. Ibid., p.86.

177. Ibid., p.286.

178. Ibid., p.266.

179. Ibid., p.250.

180. Ibid., p.298.

181. Ibid., p.303.

182. Ibid., p.85-86.

183. Ibid., p.57.

184. Ibid., p.333-334.

185. Ibid., p.333.

186. Ibid., p.140.

187. Ibid., p.284-285.

188. Ibid., p.48-49.

189. Ibid., p.327.

190. Ibid., p.334.

#### CHAPTER IV - THE NATURE OF REALITY

1. According to Vicentini, only a vague and general knowledge by Pirandello of Kant has been proven. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.54.
2. Ludovico Steidl, op.cit.
3. Luigi Pirandello, "Teatro e letteratura", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 6: Saggi, poesie, scritti varii, cit., p.1021.
4. Luigi Pirandello, "Illustratori, attori e traduttori", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 6: Saggi, poesie, scritti varii, cit., p.221.
5. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.13.
6. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.106.
7. Luigi Pirandello, "Guardando una stampa", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.302.

8. Luigi Pirandello, "All'uscita", cit., p.1050.
9. Luigi Pirandello, "La trappola", cit., p.681.
10. Ibid., p.682.
11. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.130.
12. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.48.
13. Luigi Pirandello, "La distruzione dell'uomo", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.899.
14. Luigi Pirandello, "Vestire gl'ignudi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.909.
15. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.278.
16. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.45-46.
17. Luigi Pirandello, "Un ritratto", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.676.
18. Luigi Pirandello, "I nostri ricordi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.626.
19. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.118.

20. Luigi Pirandello, "Suo marito", cit., p.723.
21. Luigi Pirandello, "Non si sa come", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.836.
22. Luigi Pirandello, "Bellavita", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.590.
23. Luigi Pirandello, "Come tu mi vuoi", cit., p.930.
24. Luigi Pirandello, "Così è (se vi pare)", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.1018.
25. Ibid., p.1016.
26. Ibid., p.1017.
27. Luigi Pirandello, "Mondo di Carta", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.883.
28. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.111-112.
29. Luigi Pirandello, "Risposta", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.232.
30. Luigi Pirandello, "Non è una cosa seria", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.372.

31. Luigi Pirandello, "Non è una cosa seria", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.532.
32. Luigi Pirandello, "Così è (se vi pare)", cit., p.1040-1041.
33. Ibid., p.1078.
34. Ibid.
35. Gino Cucchetti, op.cit., p.354-355.
36. Luigi Pirandello, "La signora frola e il signor Ponza, suo genero", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.891.
37. Luigi Pirandello, "Un po' di vino", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol I, Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.1229.
38. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.80.
39. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.488.
40. Ibid., p.489.
41. Ibid., p.171.

#### CHAPTER V - THE SELF AND OTHERS

1. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.154-155.

2. Luigi Pirandello, "Il giuoco delle parti", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.561.
3. Luigi Pirandello, "Trovarsi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.932.
4. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.351.
5. Ibid., p.354.
6. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.30-31.
7. Luigi Pirandello, "Trovarsi", cit., p.968.
8. Ibid., p.936.
9. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.7.
10. Ibid., p.8-9.
11. Ibid., p.11.
12. Ibid., p.168-169.
13. Ibid., p.49.
14. Ibid., p.150.
15. Ibid., p.151.

16. Ibid., p.167.
17. Göste Andersson, Arte e teoria, Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm: 1966, p.227-228, Originally from Luigi Pirandello "Scienza e critica estetica".
18. Luigi Pirandello, "L'Avemaria di Bobbio", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.464.
19. Luigi Pirandello, "Suo marito", cit., p.727.
20. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.101.
21. Luigi Pirandello, Trovarsi, cit., p.904.
22. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, Nessuno e centomila, cit., p.85-89.
23. Ibid., p.63.
24. Lina Passarella Sartorelli, op.cit., p.439.
25. Ibid., p.439-440.
26. Ibid., p.438.
27. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, Vol. I., J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London: 1911, p.239.
28. Max Charlesworth, op.cit., p.97.

29. Luigi Pirandello, "L'umorismo", cit., p.148.
30. Luigi Pirandello, "Il giuoco delle parti", cit., p.557.
31. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.36-37.
32. It is interesting to note that in Italian the word "coscienza" means both "conscience" and "consciousness" and Pirandello makes deliberate use of the ambiguity. A good example of this is found in Il fu Mattia Pascal, cit., p.107.
33. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.127, Il fu Mattia Pascal, cit., p.107, L'esclusa, cit., p.160-161, "Come prima meglio di prima", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.780, and "Mondo di carta", cit., p.884.
34. Luigi Pirandello, "Come tu mi vuoi", cit., p.972.
35. Ibid., p.994.
36. Luigi Pirandello, "Tutto per bene", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.348.
37. Luigi Pirandello, "La Carriola", cit., p.718.
38. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.36-37.

39. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.146.
40. Luigi Pirandello, "Vestire gl'ignudi", cit., p.895.
41. Luigi Pirandello, "Da sè...", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.650.
42. Luigi Pirandello, "Come prima, meglio di prima", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.795-797.
43. Luigi Pirandello, "Stefano Giogli, uno e due", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.1181.
44. Ibid., p.1183.
45. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.65.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p.61-62.
48. Ibid., p.67.
49. Ibid., p.92.
50. Ibid., p.91.

51. Luigi Pirandello, "Stefano Giogli, uno e due", cit., p.1183-1184.
52. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.93.
53. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot me, cit., p.100.
54. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.68.
55. Ibid., p.109.
56. Ibid., p.189.
57. Ibid., p.164.
58. Ibid., p.17.
59. Ibid., p.206-207.
60. Luigi Pirandello, "Romolo", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.628.
61. Claudio Vicentini, op.cit., p.38-39.
62. Ibid., p.38.
63. Luigi Pirandello, "La maschera dimenticata", Opere di Luigi Pirandello Vol I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.988

64. Ibid., p.989
65. Luigi Pirandello, "Pensaci Giacomino", Opere di Luigi Pirandello Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.364.
66. Luigi Pirandello, "Nel gorgo", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.1362-1363.
67. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.114.
68. Ibid., p.138-139.
69. Luigi Pirandello, "La balia", cit., p.992.
70. Luigi Pirandello, "Guardando una stampa", cit., p.307.
71. Luigi Pirandello, "L'esclusa", cit., p.119.
72. Luigi Pirandello, "E due!", cit., p.203.
73. Luigi Pirandello, "La carriola", cit., p.714.
74. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.59.
75. Ibid., p.223-224.
76. Ibid., p.73.
77. Luigi Pirandello, "Come tu mi vuoi", cit., p.939.

78. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.146.
79. Luigi Pirandello, "Trovarsi", cit., p.914.
80. Luigi Pirandello, "Il dovere del medico", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.407.
81. Luigi Pirandello, "Il professor Terremoto", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I, cit., p.608-609.
82. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, cit., p.62.
83. Luigi Pirandello, "La favola del figlio cambiato", cit., p.1301.
84. Luigi Pirandello, "L'esclusa", cit., p.72.
85. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.106.
86. Ibid., p.104.
87. Luigi Pirandello, "Quando si è qualcuno", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 5: Maschere nude II, cit., p.992-993.
88. Ibid., p.984.
89. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.106.

90. Ibid., p.134.
91. Ibid., p.122-123.
92. Luigi Pirandello, "Come tu mi vuoi", cit., p.941.
93. Luigi Pirandello, "Quand'ero matto", cit., p.165.
94. Luigi Pirandello, "Lazzaro", cit., p.1166.
95. Luigi Pirandello, "Non si sa come", cit., p.837.
96. Luigi Pirandello, "Quando si è qualcuno", cit., p.1041.
97. Ibid., p.1027.
98. Luigi Pirandello, Shoot ... cit., p.176.
99. Luigi Pirandello, "Come prima, meglio di prima", cit., p.782.
100. Luigi Pirandello, "La camera in attesa", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.617.
101. Luigi Pirandello, "I pensionati della memoria", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.122.
102. Luigi Pirandello, "La vita che ti diedi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. 4: Maschere nude I, cit., p.472.

103. Luigi Pirandello, "La camera in attesa", cit., p.616.
104. Luigi Pirandello, "La vita che ti diedi", cit., p.461.
105. Luigi Pirandello, "I pensionati della memoria", cit., p.122.
106. Luigi Pirandello, "La vita che ti diedi", cit., p.498.
107. Ibid., p.462.
108. Luigi Pirandello, "Colloqui coi personaggi", Opere di Luigi Pirandello, Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II, cit., p.1208.
109. Lina Passarella Sartorelli, op.cit., p.440.
110. Luigi Pirandello, "Il piacere dell'onestà", cit., p.600.
111. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.47.
112. Luigi Pirandello, "I giganti della montagna", cit., p.1360.
113. Luigi Pirandello, Uno, nessuno e centomila, cit., p.64.
114. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.31.
115. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, cit., p.22.

116. See Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.83.  
for a discussion of roles.
117. Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existentialisme est un humanisme,  
cit., p.66-67.
118. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.267-  
268.
119. Ibid., p.267.
120. Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, cit., p.544.
121. Ibid., p.543.
122. Ibid., p.542
123. Ibid., p.524.
124. Ibid., p.518.
125. Ibid., p.515.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED

- Andersson, Göste. Arte e teoria. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1966.
- Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi pirandelliani Florence: Le Monnier, 1967.
- Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. Translated by Justin O'Brian. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955.
- Charlesworth, Max. The Existentialists and Jean-Paul Sartre. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975.
- Cranston, Maurice, SARTRE. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962.
- Gide, André. Les Caves du Vatican. London: University of London Press Ltd., 1961.
- Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature, Vol. I. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1911.
- Masters, Brian. Sartre: A Study. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1970.
- Munafò, Gaetano. Conoscere Pirandello. Florence: Le Monnier, 1977.
- Pacifici, Sergio. A Guide to Contemporary Italian Literature. Illinois, U.S.A.: Southern Illinois Press, 1962.

Pirandello, Luigi. Il turno. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1953.

Opere di Luigi Pirandello. Vol. I: Novelle per un anno I. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1956.

Opere di Luigi Pirandello. Vol. II: Novelle per un anno II. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1957.

Opere di Luigi Pirandello. Vol. IV: Maschere nude I. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1958.

Opere di Luigi Pirandello. Vol. V: Maschere nude II. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1958.

Opere di Luigi Pirandello. Vol. VI: Saggi, Poesie, Scritti varii. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1960.

Shoot: The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio Cinematograph Operator. Translated by Charles Scott Moncrieff. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1926.

Tutti i romanzi. Vol. I. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1973.

Tutti i romanzi. Vol. II. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1973.

Uno, nessuno e centomila. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1967.

Rauhut, Franz. Der Junge Pirandello. Munich: Beck, 1964.

Sartre, Jean-Paul: Being and Nothingness. Translated by Hazel Barnes. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1958.

L'existentialisme est un humanisme. Paris: Nagel, 1966.

Nausea. Translated by Lloyd Alexander. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962.

Steidl, Ludovico. "Aspetti dell 'Umorismo' Pirandelliano". Ricerche su Pirandello. Verona Edizioni Cutenberg Povigliano, June, 1982.

Tilgher, Adriano. Studii sul teatro contemporaneo. Second Edition. Rome: Libreria di scienze e lettere, 1923.

Vicentini, Claudio, L'estetica di Pirandello. Milan: U. Mursia & C., 1970.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Tractatus Logico - Philosophicus. Translated by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.