

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF JUAN VALERA'S NOVELS

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PREFACE

Juan Valera's novels reflect his fondness for philosophizing. His characters are his spokesmen; their ideas are his ideas; their problems are his problems; the repeated conflict between mysticism and materialism found throughout the course of his novels reflects a similar conflict in his own mind. I have chosen, therefore, to study the philosophical aspects of the novels and to show that, in the solution of this conflict of mental attitudes and in his creed of idealistic ethics, Valera reflects strong materialistic tendencies. I am grateful to Professor Arthur L. Owen for his assistance and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

Juan Valera y Alcalá Galiano was born in 1824 in Cabra, a small town near Córdoba. His father, Jose Valera, was a naval officer; his mother, Dolores Alcalá Galiano, was Marquesa de la Paniega. We have little information concerning Valera's early life. His parents were both Catholic; he himself was educated in Catholic Schools, first at Malaga where he studied philosophy and foreign languages and read widely and promiscuously, beginning even then to develop a fondness for a literary vocation, and later at the Colegio de Sacro Monte at Granada, where he studied jurisprudence, taking the degree of licentiate in law in 1846.

Finding the practice of law distasteful he turned to the diplomatic service. In 1847 he was assistant secretary to the Spanish Legation at Naples serving under the Duke of Rivas. Here he spent two of the happiest years of his life, studying classical and modern Greek, becoming familiar with Latin and Italian classics, developing his own ideas of art and poetry and a certain sense of dignity and reserve that characterizes all his literary work.

From 1849 to 1859 Valera held various diplomatic posts in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, returning to Madrid in 1859 where he edited El Contemporaneo,

a periodical of liberal ideas. In politics he was allied with the liberals but practiced moderation in this field as in others. In 1864 he was made Director General of Agriculture; from 1865 to 1867 he served as plenipotentiary to Frankfurt. He returned to Spain in 1867, was married to Dolores Delaval and settled in Madrid. The same year he founded the Revista de Espana and gave lectures before the Academy. He took a small part in the Revolution of 1868 and was a member of the deputation which invited Amadeo to the throne of Spain. He was minister to Lisbon in 1881, to Washington in 1883, to Brussels from 1886 to 1888. He served as ambassador to Vienna from 1893 to 1895. He received a number of honors: in 1862 he was elected to membership in the Academy; he was made senator for life in 1881 and he served for a time as Director of Public Instruction. Several years before his death he suffered a complete loss of sight but in spite of this affliction remained cheerful and amiable, as well as active, to the very end. He continued to write, dictating to a secretary. His Terapéutica Social, his last volume of essays, was published only a month before his death. The last task entrusted to him was a discourse on Cervantes to be read before the Academy on the occasion of the commemoration of the tercentenary of Don Quijote. Valera was able to write most but not all of the discourse. He died of apoplexy, April 18, 1905, just before the celebration of

the tercentenary.

Valera's life was an active one to the very end. In spite of the time spent in public service he still found time for writing: poetry, criticisms, and novels. Through his various diplomatic appointments he had the opportunity to travel widely, to reside in centers of national refinement and to come into contact with foreign peoples -- usually of the upper class -- of whom he gained an intimate knowledge. But, although Valera became well acquainted with the customs and manners of foreign people, he never treats of them in his books. He draws his inspiration from his own country; his scenes are laid in Andalucía, his characters are from his own native land. His whole literary personality, his reserve and dignity, his artistic point of view, his culture, his quiet humor seem to reflect his Andalusian origin.¹

Widely read and widely travelled, a novelist, a critic and a poet and a politician as well, active in the service of his country, Valera was a man of the world as well as a man of letters. William Dean Howells says of him²: "Señor Valera who, as the reader may know, has been the minister of Spain in this country for several

¹Havelock Ellis: *The Soul of Spain*, Boston & New York, 1916, pg. 249.

²Harper's Magazine, Nov. 1886, Vol. 73, pg. 963.

years past, and has now left us for a diplomatic post in Europe, is one of those many-sided publicists of southern Europe beside whom our own politicians do not seem so gigantic as we like to think them when the other party is not running them for office. We cannot attempt to ascertain his standing as an author in Spain, that is a thing for Spaniards to do, but no reader of his books, even at second hand and in translation, can fail to perceive in them a very great talent."

It is as a novelist that Valera is best known. Although he tried his hand at poetry his aristocratic spirit, his cold reserve and academic manner make him unsuccessful in that field. His poems reflect his learning but they lack inspiration and sentiment.

In the field of criticism he is more successful. With his broad education, extensive reading and wide knowledge of foreign peoples, with his native good taste, analytical mind and clear, forceful style he was ideally prepared for critical work. However he was for the most part out of sympathy with the literary fashions of the day; he therefore neglected to read many of the most representative writers of the time -- hence he frequently based his criticisms on only minor writers. Furthermore he was always anxious to please and tended to praise unduly works, which were only ordinary, and failed to criticize harshly

works, which were deserving of such criticism. Of this tendency Fitzmaurice-Kelley says, referring to the Cartas Americanas, 1889³: "One closes the book with the impression that the writers, of whom he speaks here, remain stifled under the excessively perfumed flowers which this irreproachable diplomat has lavished upon them." However in the field of the purely aesthetic Cejador says of him⁴: "That of which Valera knew more than all other Spanish writers, ancient and modern, was of aesthetic criticism of erudite literature. In this there is no one who excels him."

It is as a novelist that Valera is most successful and best known. And yet, because he never entered wholeheartedly into the literary currents of his time and was never really a follower in any school, his readers were limited to a small, rather select circle of cultured people. Of romanticism Valera says⁵: "Even in the epoch of chief fervour and supremacy of romanticism I have never been a romanticist but in my manner classical, a manner certainly very different from the pseudo-classicism of France. I worshipped form but it was the internal and

³Historia de la Literatura Española, Madrid, 1921, pg. 327.

⁴Historia de la Lengua y Literatura Castellana, Tomo VIII, Madrid, 1918, pg. 234.

⁵Cited by Havelock Ellis: *op. cit.* pg. 252.

spiritual form, not over-adorned, puerile and affected. I was a fervid believer in the mysteries of style, in that simplicity and purity by which style realizes ideas and feelings and embodies in language of indestructible charm an author's whole mind and heart."

Valera is classified as a realist but, because of his literary creed and because of his strong philosophical and psychological tendencies, he belongs to the idealistic branch of this school. In theory and practice he ardently opposes the naturalistic tendencies of Zola and his school. In Apuntes sobre el nuevo arte de escribir novelas⁶ he argues at length against this new form of realistic literature. He calls the writing of naturalistic novels an experimental science; he says that they are not novels in the truest sense but are so called merely because no one has conceived of a more fitting name. In his opinion they are rather human documents or zoo-pathological investigations. Whereas formerly novels were written to entertain, to cheer one, to divert, with beautiful fictions, minds which were oppressed with the vulgar and prosaic realities of earthly existence -- now the opposite is true. The object of this new kind of novel is to cause the reader to suffer the spectacle of frightful miseries, picturing

⁶Crítica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXVI, pg. 12 ff.

to him, not beauty, but the coarse, sordid realities of life. However, in order to be read, it is necessary to bend one's neck under the yoke of fashion, to follow the current, to disguise oneself as a naturalist. He grants, however, that it would be more noble to throw off this yoke, to rebel, to refuse to follow a new fashion in which one does not believe -- and he himself does so to a great extent.

Valera does not dwell upon coarse, common events; he wants to create not only beauty of form but of thought as well. His literary creed is stated very clearly in the Prologue to Pepita Jiménez⁷: "It is evident that a good novel cannot consist in the servile, prosaic and vulgar representation of human life. A good novel must be poetry and not history, that is, it must paint things not as they are but more beautiful than they are, illuminating them with a light that has a certain charm." As he continues we see that, being opposed to the naturalistic method, he is seeking another means of revealing his art. He says: "In search of this light I had the happy thought, and pardon the immodesty with which I boast of it, to turn to our mystic writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From them I took deliberately all that seemed most suited

⁷Obras Completas, IV, 4 ff.

to my needs and thence the charm which is to be found in Pepita Jiménez and which is due to the aforesaid authors more than to me. I have plundered them to adorn myself."

The genesis of Pepita Jiménez he explains further in the Dedicatoria de el Comendador Mendoza⁸. Having become greatly interested in these mystical writers, St. Theresa, Luis de Granada and others, having enjoyed their wealth of poetry and marvelled at the way in which they examined the functions of the soul, he desired to remind the Spanish public of these things and to picture to them the eternal conflict between body and soul. Having something of a reputation as a free thinker himself, he decided to invent a student for the priesthood who might express his mystical ideas and then to make the conflict seem more real, he created an earthly love for him. Thus the action of Pepita Jiménez was developed.

These mystical writers had a great influence on Valera. Born of Catholic parents, brought up in the Catholic faith, having studied eagerly these devout writers of earlier centuries, he early developed a thorough appreciation of mystical theories and of spiritual life. As a man of the world, however, who had doubtless experienced much disillusionment in public life, as a man with a nat-

⁸Obras Completas, VII, 6.

ural curiosity and a keen, analytical mind whose reason always had control of his sentiments, he sought an explanation of the world of mysteries in the world of facts about him. He thus developed a keen and critical curiosity. As he himself expresses it⁹: "I had just finished reading a multitude of devout books. The poetry in those books had me charmed but not captive. My fancy was exalted with such readings but my cold heart continued in liberty and my dry spirit clung to severe reason."

This conflict of the two attitudes, the mystical, on the one hand, occasioned by his sense of the aesthetic and, on the other, the materialistic, due to his curiosity and his fondness for speculation, forms the basis about which the various actions of Valera's novels center and explains their philosophical and psychological tendencies. In some the struggle is predominant, in others it is only hinted at, but it is present in all of them and traces of the same reasoning are to be found even in the cuentos.

Aristocratic by birth and training, reserved and academical in manner, making friends among people of the upper class, Valera was unable to appreciate the popular, the un-aristocratic, the non-classical and the non-

⁹Dedicateria de el Comendador Mendoza, Obras Completas, VII, 6.

academic. He knew little about folk-lore; he did not understand common people. For this reason his novels, while they picture fairly well the life and customs of people in the small Andalucian villages, lack an appreciative and sympathetic touch, which would make them good novels of customs and manners. Because he is inclined to make his characters spokesmen for himself he elevates them to his own level, rather than descending himself to theirs, and, because they are his spokesmen, they reveal his own ideas.

It is the purpose of the following chapters to make a study of these ideas, these philosophical theories as revealed in Valera's novels, to show how they come into conflict in the lives of his characters and how, in their solution they reflect not only the strong materialistic leanings of the author but his psychological tendencies and his creed of idealistic ethics as well.

CHAPTER I

METAPHYSICS

As has been indicated, Valera's early Catholic training, together with his own natural philosophical curiosity, which sought an explanation of the phenomena which he observed about him, attracted him to a study of the mystical writers of earlier centuries. Some critics attribute this interest further to the fact that Valera, piqued by the controversy over the Krausist school¹⁰, was anxious to acquaint his countrymen with the theories of their own devout writers¹¹. But, whatever or however numerous the causes for his interest, the results were obvious. From a study of these ascetic writers Valera developed profound religious feeling, a deep appreciation of the spiritual and an added stimulus to his natural curiosity concerning mysteries beyond the range of the senses and of reason.

He was delighted with their wealth of poetry, he marvelled at the way in which they examined the functions of the soul -- withdrawing and isolating themselves

¹⁰Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, 1781-1832, a German philosopher, a so-called "Philosopher of Identity" who tries to reconcile mystical attitude with materialism.

¹¹Cejador: op. cit. VIII, 227.

from material things, erasing all impressions received by the senses, effacing memory and penetrating to the very depths of their minds so that pure intelligence might see God, and unite with God, and come out of such a union better fitted for life. He compares the soul, thus united with God, to metal in a forge. The metal appears to be fire, not metal, but it comes out of the forge better tempered, fitted for a thousand useful operations. Likewise the soul comes out of a union with God better equipped for active life but with this difference: the metal grows cold after it leaves the forge whereas the soul keeps within it the fire of the divine love¹².

This mystical idea of the union of the soul with God delighted Valera especially. It is found repeatedly in his novels and cuentos. He discusses it at length in his purely philosophical writings. La Buena Fama¹³ expresses it particularly well: "There is a sovereign beauty which beautifies all things, a light which illumines all things, a will which moves all things and an intelligence which fills, penetrates and directs all things. No human being, however much he may study, however learned he may be, can succeed in comprehending, except very vague-

¹²Del misticismo en la poesía española, in Discursos Académicos, Obras Completas, II, 80 ff.

¹³Cuentos, Obras Completas, XIV, 295 ff.

ly, this Infinite Being. We must content ourselves with forming only an incomplete concept of Him which we find in our souls, ascribing to Him all the good qualities which we can find in ourselves, elevating them to the nature of the divine. Our souls, however, are most noble -- made in the image and likeness of God -- and if we penetrate to their very depths, abstracting our thoughts from all exterior things, we shall find God so near us that we shall approach him directly. Our own weak, human faculties do not suffice. We need the aid of the All powerful and His favor and -- on our own part -- faith and charity for we cannot attain thus to God by wisdom but by love -- the way is not natural but supernatural."

Speaking further of this penetration of thought, of this concentration of the mind within itself, Valera continues¹⁴: "The science of introspection possesses resources of which we, the worldly and ignorant, are not able to conceive. He who is learned in this science sees in the innermost depths of his mind a world of ideas of which the visible world is a replica and he sees it in all its clearness, without limitations of space and time.... Obscure thoughts are made clear to him, future events are disclosed to him and on his mind is stamped the irregular

¹⁴Idem, pg. 309 ff.

march of events just as the winding course of a river is indicated on a map. He who concentrates his thoughts within himself subdues or slays his passions, withdraws from the exterior world and sees everything within himself."

He repeats a similar ^{ugh} thought in Morsamor¹⁵ when he says: "God is ever present; he fills and permeates all, -- our souls above everything else. The soul which seeks him finds him and enjoys him in this mortal life" -- and then adds the comforting thought, which the most orthodox would reject immediately, "For us man is divine because God is human."

In a critical article, La filosofía española¹⁶, he approves and quotes the philosopher Ben Gabirol who says: "You wish, you say, to discover the supreme principles, to be one with them, to control them mentally: then elevate your thoughts to the ultimate object of all thought; cleanse and purify it of the impurity of the material, free it from the bonds of nature and, with all the energy of your mind, penetrate into the truth of the substance of the spirit and understand it, enclosing, surrounding, enveloping all the exterior world in a corner

¹⁵Obras Completas, XI, 220

¹⁶Disertaciones y juicios literarios, Madrid, 1890, pg. 309.

of your soul. Then you will appreciate the smallness of the empirical and the sensible with relation to the greatness and loftiness of the idea, and you will see spiritual beings, as if you had them before your very eyes, clasped within your hand, and you will conceive yourself as similar to them, and all the corporeal will be lost in the infinity of the spirit, as the ship sails on the sea, as the bird flies in the air."

But Valera was not only a mysticist. Attractive as these idealistic theories were to him, much as they appealed to his aesthetic sense, pleased as he was with this world of ideas -- a world of facts surrounded him. His keen intellectual curiosity, his cold reason, his worldly experience lead him to study other doctrines as well. Traces of several philosophical systems are found in the course of his novels -- these will be mentioned later -- but the two which appear with most frequency, the two which are presented in greatest conflict -- a conflict which usually determines the outcome of the action of the novels, are the mystic, cited above, and the materialistic in which Valera's interest was aroused by a study of the French philosophers, Voltaire, Diderot, Condillac, and others.

Frequently two different characters represent these two theories, as for example, Father Enrique, the

mysticist, and Don Anselmo, the staunch materialist, in the novel, Doña Luz. Sometimes the two theories appear in conflict within the same individual (this is true to greater or lesser degree of all of Valera's characters -- a marked case being that of Don Luis and of Doctor Faustino) -- again there is found an attempt to blend the two, to make them not mutually exclusive but to fuse them, to interpret each in terms of the other.

Consider the suggestion of the common origin of the world of facts and the world of spirits found in Zarina¹⁷. Here it is suggested that a mysterious, subtle, yet material, fluid serves as an atmosphere in which spirits live and breathe -- that from this fluid tiny spheres are born which, becoming compressed and heaping one upon another, however diffuse they might be before, come to form suns and other heavenly bodies and all beings who dwell on them -- a fluid, on the other hand, whose infinity, virtuality, power and vigor select spirits succeed in assembling, while they reject weight, mass, bulk, inertia and other qualities which are the very essence of bodies -- keeping only energy which is the invisible and impalpable spiritual beginning of life and of intelligence.

¹⁷Obras Completas, XII, 346.

In the character of Don Juan Fresco who relates for Valera the story of Las Ilusiones del doctor Faustino -- in which novel more of the pessimistic and skeptical are to be found than in any other of Valera's novels -- is made a quite successful attempt to synthesize these two mental attitudes. Don Juan Fresco was an empiricist, a positivist; he believed only in that which he observed by means of the senses and in mathematical truths. Of all the rest he knew nothing, nor did he care to know anything -- he even denied the possibility that anything could be known. He was, however, very fond of speculations, he had a certain fondness for metaphysical systems, he liked to meditate upon them. He compared them to novels in which spirit, matter, the ego, the non-ego, God, the world, the finite and the infinite are the characters whom the bold and fertile fancy of the philosopher assembles and puts into action at his will. Although for Don Juan there was no science of the spiritual and of the supernatural, yet he was far from being irreligious. He conceived the possibility that, by an effort of faith one might put oneself in possession of that which speech could not attain, and elevate oneself to a sublime sphere where, by miraculous intuition, the soul could discover mysteries which were eternally obscure to reason.

Don Juan's inclination to speculate, his whole

attitude toward spirit and matter seem to reflect Valera's own. The letter in El Bermejino Prehistórico¹⁸ says:

"Always I have been fond of sciences. As a boy I had a thousand other hobbies but, now that I am old, the fondness for the scientific prevails and triumphs in my soul. Unfortunately, or fortunately, something very singular is happening to me. Sciences please me in inverse ratio to the truths which they demonstrate. Thus exact sciences scarcely interest me; the inexact charm me. Hence my inclination toward philosophy. It is not the truth which loads me on but the efforts of discourse, of perspicacity and of imagination which is employed in discovering the truth even tho it be not discovered. Once the truth is discovered and well demonstrated it usually leaves me cold, just like a gallant youth who goes through the street behind a lady whose graceful carriage and figure charm him and who then approaches, looks at her face and sees that she is old, or blind in one eye, or has the features of a monkey. -- Better that we know few things. That which is important is to know enough so that the mysterious will appear at a distance, but never enough so that it will be explained and made clear. In this way curiosity is excited, imagination is quickened, theories

¹⁸Cuentos, Obras Completas, XIV, 79 ff.

and dogmas which entertain us are invented and we are comforted during our existence -- all of which would be lacking to us if we should succeed in penetrating to the depths of mystery and extracting its true signification."

Like his Don Juan Fresco he believes there is room for imagination, for that which is revealed thro experience, is only the outward and superficial features of things. "Who can see," Don Juan inquires¹⁹, "or know the mysterious essence of beings? What microscope, however perfect it may be, can reveal the spirit of the life which fertilizes the stamens of flowers and places the amorous pollen in them? Who has ever measured or indicated the boundaries of human perception to the point of affirming: no one sees or is acquainted beyond this point?... Has any one ever demonstrated that there are not people who see and feel and communicate with other hidden intellects?... People talk continually about the natural and supernatural as if there were a definite line separating them, one from the other. No, my friend, the border between the natural and supernatural does not exist or has been erased. Where we can place boundaries and land marks is between the known and the unknown which is a very different thing."

¹⁹ Las ilusiones del doctor Faustino, Obras Completas, V, 39 ff.

As was stated above, in the novel Dona Luz, two different characters represent these two mental attitudes, Don Anselmo, the positivist, Father Enrique, the mysticist. An exposition of their arguments and a brief review of the novel will explain, perhaps, how the two theories come into conflict in the life of the priest and affect the outcome of the story.

According to Don Anselmo, all truth which does not come to one through the senses must be denied. With faith one can believe in the supernatural, with imagination one can create a transcendent world of ideas, but one can only know to be true what reason can deduct from a study of phenomena which reach the mind through the senses. This study he calls science, anything beyond that will be poetry or whatever one wants to call it. For Don Anselmo the scope of science comprises the period in which we live, as far as memory can penetrate into the past, and as far as prudent foresight can see into the future. Like all positivists he would confine himself solely to the facts of experience and the laws which they reveal, without making any attempt to penetrate beyond the real into the realm of the unknown. It is useless, according to him, to try to determine whether before this life of ours there was another life and another world or whether after this life of ours there will be

another life and another world -- and another death. On such matters we can form theories only for a consideration of such questions takes one into a region where reason cannot follow. Likewise, in the life of the individual there is a gradual development until life ends but before birth and after death we can be sure of nothing. And he likens this before -- and after-existence to two gloomy depths, two fathomless abysses in between which life was manifested.

Carrying his materialistic ideas still further Don Anselmo is moved in discussion with the priest to say that it isn't piety nor love of one's fellow-men that moves one to do a charitable deed, but a desire for salvation and fear of hell. All charity is egotistical, divine as well as worldly charity. To the end that one does not see a fellow creature suffer, one does an act of charity to put one well with oneself; if one does an act of charity through love of God to put oneself well with God on whom all happiness depends, one is showing no less interest in oneself. Still, Anselmo believes an act of worldly philanthropy is more praiseworthy than an act of divine charity, because in the end it is more noble to feel the sufferings of others as one's own and work to relieve them than it is to do good merely through fear of punishment and with hope of reward. And he cannot conceive of anyone's doing an act of charity

through love of God without hope of reward. The very fact of one's faith in God and in his goodness would be evidence that hope of reward would not be lacking. And he goes a step further when he says that divine charity is selfish in that when the soul unites with God, it withdraws within itself and becomes inactive, neglecting its neighbors, scorning and forgetting people.

Answering Don Anselmo's arguments and opposing his extreme materialistic views is Father Enrique, a mystic, who believes that by obtaining unity with the Deity, which unity is attained by a life of sacrifice, and by exterminating all bodily desires, one can obtain a spiritual knowledge of all mysteries beyond the range of the senses and reason. He says:²⁰ "The will goes straight to blessedness where alone it can find rest, as the stone, loosened from the top of the tower falls without stopping until it reaches the ground; as the bullet shot by an accurate marksman swiftly hits the mark." The important thing, in the priest's opinion, is to seek the supreme good where it really is to be found and when once found, the soul will turn to it voluntarily, for to love and crave the good is the very essence of all will.

To attain this state of blessedness, this unit-

²⁰Doña Luz, Obras Completas, III, 96.

ing of the soul with God, one must have given proof of one's goodness through numberless acts of kindness and, by one's own humility and meekness, must have been an example to other human beings. There is no other way to win the love of God. Father Enrique argues then that the soul, by its exemplary life, has been useful to others before it arrives and, after it arrives to unity with God and sees in God all the world and all creatures of the world united by a thread of love -- then, since the soul loves God and all is in God, it will love all, loving Him. And its love will be disinterested for, if one have God, what more can one desire? One will love his fellow creatures as God loves them and will want to turn souls to God. Far from being inert, the soul united with God will be more active than ever before.

Father Enrique compares Don Anselmo's worldly philanthropy to a river with the necessary water to irrigate nearby fields -- while the soul he compares to the water which the sun purifies and draws in vapor to the sky. The water which rises to the sky is no less useful than that which is in the river, for it descends in the form of beneficial rain. Just so philanthropy has its origin in divine charity. Love of God rises to the sky; the soul united with God might be said to scorn people, because it rises above them, but it rises only to be trans-

formed into greater love of one's neighbor and descends again in increased love -- a love that is disinterested.

The priest argues well and with assurance. It is this theory of his, that love can be disinterested, which forms the central idea of the story of Doña Luz. Early in the novel the author has his heroine say: "I am inclined to believe that there are not separate loves, each one for its own object, but that love is one and although the object change, love does not change. If this is so, as I maintain, my love will awaken and be interested in the beauty of the sky, in God who created it, in the flowers, in poetry and, who knows, perhaps even in science granted that in my narrow mind of a woman its great truths, its obscure mysteries and its far reaching problems may find entrance."²¹

But only too soon does an element of the materialistic, a realization of the personal element of love gain entrance not only to the mind of Luz but to that of Father Enrique as well -- the priest, who had returned to the little village to rest and recover his health. In the discussions in the social gatherings Father Enrique takes the lead. Finding Luz to be the most intelligent listener, he comes to appreciate her superior intellect. Real-

²¹Ibid., pg. 67.

izing that there is nothing in the village to interest her, and believing that she will probably never care to marry, he determines to explain things to her, to the end that she may devote herself to God. But, without either one's being aware of it, at first, a personal element develops in their interest -- the priest first realizing it fully only when he finds that Luz is to marry Don Jaime -- Luz realizing it partially at the priest's death but more fully, later, when she finds how deceived she has been in the man whom she did marry. Father Enrique's love for Luz was revealed to her only after his death, in one of his writings which came into her hands. In this he said²²: "In spite of you, my God, in spite of you and against you I carry it (her image) engraved in my soul in indelible lines. All the force of my will, all the strength of Heaven and all the suffering of Hell could not draw it from there. Doña Luz and the love of Doña Luz live an immortal life in my spirit." In spite of all the priest's argument in defense of disinterested love, his own love proved to have the personal element; in spite of his confidence in his own divine love which he was sure had conquered all earthly love, he realizes that he, himself, has been the end toward which he had been directing

²²Idem, pg. 247.

Luz's affections. Thus, in spite of the assurance with which he presents his idealistic theories, in his own life experience the materialistic seems to win.

A similar struggle between passion and duty, and a similar victory of the materialistic are found in Pepita Jiménez, Valera's best known novel. Don Luis de Vargas, a young theological student whose education has been directed by his devout uncle, the Dean, comes to pay a visit to his father before taking the vows of priesthood and going to preach in a foreign land. Luis is firm in the belief that his life must be devoted to the service of Heaven, his one ambition is to direct souls to God, he argues with the assurance of an ordained priest. Very soon in letters to his uncle (the novel is written in the form of letters) he reveals the fact that he is flattered by the attention and admiration of the villagers and, particularly, by the interest which a young widow, Pepita, takes in him. The reader and Luis's uncle soon realize, as the correspondence continues, that this interest in Pepita is growing and is developing a personal element. Luis himself finally realizes it and, armed with all the arguments he is able to assemble from his books and from his own conscience, goes to take leave of Pepita, to convince her that his duty requires him to go. But his arguments yield before those of the clever Pepita. Luis renounces his calling and

marries her. Blanco García²³ characterizes this outcome as "an attempt at conciliation between Christian and epicurean morals" and calls the mysticism of Don Luis "a greatly veiled rehabilitation of sensuous delight in contrast with the aspirations of the soul" -- and, referring to this criticism of Blanco García, J. D. M. Ford²⁴ says: "If we agree in this we can at least find the story satisfactory in so far as Luis finally hangs up his cloak for good" -- an argument which Valera, himself uses in defending his novel.²⁵

A study of others of Valera's novels reveals a similar victory of the materialistic over the mystical. In el Comendador Mendoza, Doña Blanca, pious and devout to the point of fanaticism finally yields before Fadrique, the deist.

In Juanita la Larga, Juanita refuses to respond to the entreaties of Inés who urges her to devote herself to mystic thoughts -- and by leading an exemplary, tho not devout, life wins respect and admiration of the villagers and seems to atone for the sin of her birth.

Father Miguel (in Morsamor) who had always led

²³La Literatura Española en el siglo XIX, Tomo II, Madrid, 1908, pg. 480.

²⁴Main Currents of Spanish Literature, New York, 1919, pg. 227.

²⁵Repita Jiménez, Obras Completas, IV, 6.

a pious life but who had never performed any worldly deeds, laments this fact as the end of life approaches and dreads to die, for, believing this life to be a preparation for the life to come, he believes himself equipped to lead in the next life only the same kind of existence (which he considers more or less useless) that he has led in this. Not until he is given a potion which puts him to sleep and causes him to dream of great worldly achievements, including earthly love, is he satisfied. Disappointed at first when he realizes it was only a dream, he consoles himself, nevertheless, with the thought that if he could even dream of such accomplishments then they could have been true, had he put forth the necessary effort and, comforted with the thought that in the next life he may perform great deeds, he dies in peace.

And in Pasarse de Listo, Beatrice who argues in true mystic fashion about the union of invisible spirits, about the ethereal, immaculate sentiment which is not love nor friendship, which hasn't a name, which is ineffable and which if it have a name, it must be in heaven --, beautiful as is her argument, is a materialist at heart.

Thus through the whole course of Valera's novels, in this conflict of mental attitudes, the materialistic seems always to win. The characters who support the mystical theories and Valera himself (for he often presents his

thoughts directly as well as indirectly through the person-ages of his novels) do so admirably -- quite as admirably and with nearly as much assurance and conviction, it seems to me, as the materialistic representatives show. However, when it comes to a practical application of the two theories to the actions of the various novels, it is the materialists who have the better side of the argument.

As was stated above, traces of other philosophical systems may be found in Valera's novels. Fadrique, el Comendador Mendoza, for example is a Deist. He believes in a natural religion as opposed to revealed religion. He believes in a God who is removed from the immediate life of men, who made the universe and set it in motion and who has laid down certain moral laws of conduct for men. Like the Encyclopedists, Fadrique was, at first, an Individualist -- he believed man to be a separate entity, a self-centered unit, independent of society, acting wholly on his own responsibility without consideration of others -- and he believed that it was the marvellous and mysterious work of Providence in His infinite wisdom so to harmonize all the separate results of these individual activities in such manner that the eternal law of progress, in which he believed, would be fulfilled. Fadrique is an optimist; he is fairly tolerant of other people's beliefs and when, upon returning to Villabermeja, he learns for

the first time of the existence of his daughter, his attitude changes somewhat. He feels a sense of responsibility toward her -- no longer is he first a man and then a citizen; he is a father and a citizen, a member of society and a man only in so far as he is the others first. But his opinion of moral questions never changes; he never believes, as does Blanca, that morality is founded upon theology. The latter character represents mysticism in its most pure form, untouched, uncolored by modern ideas. She spends her time in prayer and devotion, in reading pious books and in giving alms to the poor. By devotion to God she thinks to atone for her sin and she thanks God for her child who is a perpetual reminder that she has cause for repentance and remorse.

Doña Inés in Juanita la Larga has a concept of the materialistic world similar to that of Schopenhauer but more pessimistic. She believed in the ascetic starvation of all impulses; in her opinion the redemption of her soul depended upon her self-denial, upon her doggedly enduring all hardship, misery and vice through love of God. "For Doña Inés this world in which we live was a valley of tears and a transitory place of probation, an indispensable path leading to another and better life. Present life then, although it might be very evil, was not so evil, for the more one suffers here, the greater the harvest in the

life to come."²⁶

Yet there was something of a struggle within Inés also. Leading the ascetic life which she deemed necessary for her salvation, she was barred from any participation in the activities and gossip of the villagers -- so she had her Crispina to keep her informed. She felt a sense of responsibility toward her neighbors; it was hard for her to draw a line between social duty and what she considered individual perfection. However, firm in her belief that social life should never be allowed to blight the full realization of her ideal being, she made herself lead a life of devotion.

Don Ambrosio in Morsamor is an exponent of the theory of Will-Activity. For him the march of events is like the course of the stars: no human power can turn them from the path which they have traced in time and space, in heaven and earth, since eternity. But he believes he understands this law of progress, because he wills to comprehend it, and his will identifies itself with his understanding. The free will of man moves easily within this law, within this broad path which events follow.²⁷

Thus we see that Valera did not confine himself

²⁶ Juanita la Larga, Obras Completas, IX, 172.

²⁷ Obras Completas, XI, 46.

to any one philosophical theory. He selects and chooses to suit his needs; he is never dogmatic in his opinions; he considers the pro and con of his theories; he doubts somewhat but he speculates more; he is pessimistic occasionally, notably so in Las Ilusiones del doctor Faustino, but usually his native optimism prevails. At times he seems skeptical but never morbidly so, and repeatedly we find the suggestion of salvation by character -- a belief that the nature of the life we lead on earth will determine the nature of the life to come.

Valera, then, is eclectic in his philosophy. He picks and chooses; one can never put one's finger on any particular doctrine and say: "This is Valera's theory" but one can point to his favorites. As was stated above, judging from a study of the actions of the novels themselves one concludes that his materialistic tendencies are stronger than his mystical. One may, however, from the very fact that the same conflict is repeated in greater or lesser degree throughout the course of all his novels, infer that its outcome was never wholly satisfactory to him and that he was in each succeeding novel, by its very repetition, seeking a more satisfying solution. We can then accept at face value his own remark that out of his desire to seek but not to find the truth comes his fondness for

"philosophising."²⁸

²⁸El Bermejino Prehistorico, in Cuentos, Obras Completas, XIV, 79.

CHAPTER II

PSYCHOLOGY

"Writing novels is representing actions and passions of men." Such is Valera's own definition of the work of a novelist as stated in a critical article, Sobre el arte de escribir novelas²⁹, an answer to El naturalismo, a defense of naturalism written by Emilia Pardo Bazán.³⁰ He objects to the naturalistic novels which reveal character through action only; in such cases, he says, the novelist does not differ from the historian except that the former may add a few long, tiresome, detailed descriptions of costumes, features and the like. One never gets a clear idea of character through the mere presentation of action unless one penetrates into the intentions behind the actions. And with Valera studying and interpreting the intentions governing the actions of his characters means penetrating into the innermost recesses of their minds, studying their thoughts, analyzing their ideas and their emotions. A study of the mystics he, therefore, considers of great value to the novelist for, even tho he be lacking in the faith which these devout writers had, by the very

²⁹Crítica Literaria, Obras Completas, Tomo XXVI, pg. 86.

E. Pardo Bazán: El Naturalismo, 1886?; Obras Completas, Tomo XLI, Madrid.

nature of such study he learns to observe the functions of the mind as he has never observed them before. Although he may not accept their doctrines, through a mere consideration of them he is moved to examine his own mental processes and emotions and from such examination comes to a greater knowledge of the feelings of others.

Concerning the source of his characters Valera says³¹: "I desire that the observation of human actions and passions, of nature in general, of society as it is organized -- in short that the observation of everything real shall be the source of my fiction; I desire that all my personages shall feel, think and speak like real people and that the atmospheric medium in which I place them, the earth on which I sustain them, shall be an atmosphere and a land of truth, or seem such, for it is clear that I cannot, nor can anyone, create new atmosphere and new earth."

A similar thought concerning the realistic source of his fiction is expressed in La Novela en España³² when he says: "That which is most important, in order to be original, is that characters, passions, affections, manners and customs, episodes and events of life be not studied through books written in other countries but that they

³¹Crítica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXVI, 28.

³²Discursos Académicos, Obras Completas, II, 172.

be studied immediately and directly from nature, in the land and in the very heart of society in which we live and that we, the novelists, assembling then the accumulated treasure of our own observation, endowing it with all the color and adornment of our own fancy, give it the peculiar and private stamp of our own style."

Valera criticises Zola and other naturalists who claim that the first quality of a novelist is to have a sense of the real and who fail to see that this sense of the real serves only for collecting materials, that for the construction itself (for writing the novel) the imagination of the artist is needed -- and not only his imagination but his own personal sentiments, his emotions and his love, in whose fire are welded and fused all those materials, which his sense of the real has assembled, in order to forge an artistic object of greater or lesser beauty.³³

Concerning the aim of this artistic work, which is forged in the fire of the novelist's personal emotions and sentiments, Valera says in the words of Emilia Pardo Bazán which he would like to adopt as his own³⁴: "We demand that art be founded on the firm basis of truth but

³³Crítica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXVI, 37 ff.

³⁴Idem, pg. 28.

as its principal aim is not to discover the truth, for this aim, on the contrary, is that of science, the artist who proposes for himself any other end, whatever it may be, than that of the realization of beauty will sooner or later with infallible certainty see the monument which he erects tumbling down."

Thus we see that with Valera "writing novels is representing actions and passions of men" but this psychological presentation is not the aim of his art; it is rather the means by which he works toward his aim, the creation of beauty. He has no patience with writers who present the sordid realities of life. He did not regard the novel as a human document and he draws his own inspiration from the emotional lives of his characters. Thus his art consists in a bringing together of various and diverse elements, drawn from mental and emotional experiences which, to his mind, constitute the material from which beauty is made. And because his own aesthetic nature was attracted to a study of the mystics, because his own inquiring turn of mind could not wholly accept their doctrines there is an inward struggle within him, a struggle that is reflected in his own characters and which in most cases takes the form of a conflict between passion and duty.

Valera's characters, therefore, are always

adults. The child mind does not interest him. He is concerned only with mature minds that are capable of reasoning. That he himself has an extraordinary penetration in seeing his own characters, is evident in all his novels; it is required by the very nature of the treatment, for always there is a mental conflict and, growing out of it, emotions which have to be analyzed.

Valera makes much of the personal element of the writer behind the actions of the characters, behind the novel itself. He considers an expression of the author's feelings unnecessary to a scientific work, as of chemistry or mathematics, but very necessary in a novel, to give an air of sincerity. Yet he believes that each character should manifest his own intentions through dialogue and that each should speak in a style appropriate to himself, according to his class, his education, his intellectual capacity, his age and his temperament.⁵⁵

One is tempted to smile upon reading this theory for at once one recalls Pepita Jiménez, the young village girl who argues like a trained philosopher and other characters pictured above their rank as far as intellectual knowledge is concerned, and one recalls the critics who claim that the novels of Valera are all variations of one

⁵⁵Idem, pg. 57 ff.

personage -- the author himself³⁶, but one reads on and finds Valera's own defense and is tempted to accept it; certainly one cannot disagree with it. Referring to the charge made against him by Pardo Bazán that all his characters speak as he does, without any distinction whatsoever, he says³⁷: "It is bad for an author to be always behind his characters talking through them without giving them distinctive life and personality but, even so, he can give these creatures of his fancy human voices, feelings and thoughts although without individualization. An author whose characters speak always as he would speak in like situations creates a sense of improbability in the discourses which he attributes to them and among the passions and actions he relates of them, but, even so, he does not sin as much as does the author whose characters speak as no human beings would ever speak, as is likely to happen to one who, without studying the human soul, whence the human word springs, imitates it empirically, thinking to possess the talents of observation and retentiveness which are required to perceive and retain well in one's memory the peculiar language of each individual."

³⁶ e.g. Cojador: op. cit. VIII, 232.

³⁷Crítica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXVI, 61.

Thus we see that Valera does reflect his own thought processes through his characters. He admits it; his method is deliberately subjective. Through them he is probably trying, as is suggested in Chapter I, to settle the questions which cause him so much speculation in his own life.

In this continued analysis of character and of emotions, two features are outstanding; they are characteristic of Valera, and are found throughout the whole course of his novels. The first one -- namely that every man is responsible for his faults, that he is not a plaything of blind and irresistible force and that within the innermost depths of his spirit is a law which must be obeyed -- will be discussed in Chapter III. The second -- concerning the value of the human word, communication with one's fellow-creatures as a means of bringing peace to one's mind, as a means of analysing one's confused and conflicting emotions, will be discussed here.

As one goes from novel to novel, one is struck at once by the fact that, in spite of all the argument concerning introspection, the penetrating of one's thoughts into the innermost depths of one's mind, thus enabling one to see God therein, the mystical characters, the ones who defend this argument most staunchly, the ones who claim to see and to commune with God within their own

souls, when it comes to a final analysis of their states of mind, turn to the human word, written or spoken, in order to clarify their own thoughts. And one wonders again, as one wonders at the repetition of conflict between mystical and materialistic theories, whether this is not a reflection of Valera's own experience. Has he not, in his own life, experienced the tremendous relief that comes to one immediately upon giving expression to some fear, or to some other emotion that has been preying on his mind, that has fairly eaten its way into the depths of his soul? And has he not found in this experience that of all his friends there is just one to whom he can turn, and in whom he can confide, and is he not so grateful for this friendship which permits such a confidence, does it not seem to him such a thoroughly fine and beautiful experience, that this friend seems all but divine? And does he not seem so perhaps because God is human? One wonders as one considers the various instances.

In Morsamor³⁸ we find the following statement about human speech: "Thought when it is not expressed and determined through the medium of the word, when it persists submerged in the depths of our mind, without being communicated or expressed to another intelligent

³⁸Obras Completas, XI, 388.

being, in a confused chaos, of whose truth or whose falsehood, of whose goodness or of whose insignificance we are not sure. Clear conscience comes only with the spoken and communicated word.

And thus Father Miguel, his thirst for power and glory having been satisfied through the medium of the dream, yet worried because his earthly achievements were only dreamed, has to engage in conversation with Father Ambrosio, who had mixed the potion for him, and through communicating his fear to him, by the very act of giving expression to it, is comforted. He is persuaded that if he can dream of worldly achievements, then with sufficient effort he could have performed them and, although he knows well that his body is weak and that death is near, at the same time he realizes with a quiet joy that never has his spirit been more sane, more calm nor more serene than then -- and he dies in peace.

One of the best psychological analyses in all of Valera's novels is the one which Father Enrique in Doña Luz makes of his own state of mind after he learns of the approaching marriage of Luz and Don Jaime. He realizes that he has come to love Luz himself but -- unable to make a confession to the local priest, because it would involve people he had no right to involve -- he is pictured by Valera as seeking relief by drawing his grief out from its

confused state within him and setting it on paper, where he can observe it in a distinct and objective manner. He then confesses that his love has become a personal one. He had meant no harm. He had admired Luz for her superior talents and her beauty of character, he had meant merely to direct her spirit, to get her to devote herself to God. He had thought her unattainable during mortal life, but now realizes that unconsciously he has been wanting to confuse his soul with hers so that together they might go in search of God. He uses the figure of a net which he spread to catch his prey and now finds himself caught in the same net. And having given expression to his love, having confessed it through the medium of the human word, he assumes an air of calmness and goes about in his usual way. He has confessed his love but he does not repent of it -- the very nature of the passion which unites his soul to that of Luz makes it impossible, for repentance must come from the heart.

Luz, likewise, when she discovers how Jaime has wronged her, when she realizes that her affection for Father Enrique has been real love and that he has died of love for her, has to comfort herself by confiding in Manolita. She writes to her as follows³⁹: "I cannot be

³⁹Obras Completas, III, 263.

silent longer. My misery is choking me, killing me and I want to live. I am very unhappy; there is but one hope which smiles at me. I need to conserve my life but I fear this hidden grief will kill me. I need to confess it to you, to disclose my troubles to you; I need your compassion and friendship to save me. Come to see me at once." And when the interview is held, Luz reviews the whole of her experience with Jaime, revealing the baseness of his character, acknowledging her own weakness and vanity in marrying him, confessing her real love for Father Enrique. And as she tells of the proof which she has had of his love for her, a sense of peace and calmness takes possession of her and she determines so to fix her mind and thoughts upon the sweet, lovable character of Father Enrique that her child when he arrives shall bear not even the slightest material resemblance to the man whom she scorns.

Braulio in Pasarse de listo, being informed of gossip current about Madrid to the effect that his wife, Beatrice, is becoming interested in the Count of Alhedín, watches and waits, is finally convinced that the suspicions are well founded and then, in his confused state of mind and in the grief which follows this revelation, seeks relief in a lengthy letter to his friend Paco Ramirez. He says in part⁴⁰: "I cannot succeed in communicating direct-

⁴⁰Obras Completas, VIII, 457.

ly with God nor in disclosing my troubles to Him. I have been seeking Him in the depths of my soul, but my mind is fatigued and is frightened while crossing these infinite solitudes, without ever arriving where He resides. If I had not left off being a believer I should have my confessor, who would know all. I do not need advice. Consolation is impossible. However this sorrow which oppresses my heart will be lightened by communicating with God through the medium of a human being. There are things which one is ashamed to confess to oneself; and yet those very things, by a strange contradiction, fatigue and kill, if they are not confessed to some one. For this reason I shall tell you everything."

And having thus, in communication with his friend, reviewed the whole course of his relations with Beatrice, and having analyzed his own emotional state -- convinced that he and Beatrice can never be separated in this life, being bound, not merely by religion and law, but by an indissoluble tie of love which no guilt can extinguish -- he determines to take his life.

Rafaela in Genio y figura, before her own state of mind is clear to her, has to write in her Confidences to her friend the Viscount of Coive-Fernoso a review of her experiences. She says⁴¹: "If I could not tell some-

⁴¹Obras Completas, X, 127.

one what I feel, if I had not you to tell it to, I believe my heart would break." And as Rafaela recalls and relates the incidents of her life, reviewing for the Count her many love affairs, her mind clarifies and she realizes that because she yielded to temptation and sinned, no matter how hard she may strive to gain nobility, the fairness of her soul will always be marred by the scar of her sin, and that she cannot honorably have an earthly love because she would be lowering her lover to her own level rather than elevating herself to his -- so, freed now of all worldly responsibility since her daughter Lucia has entered a convent, she determines by death to unite herself likewise with her eternal love. But even after this decision is made she wavers a few minutes, wondering if it is cowardice on her part, fear of old age and all the illnesses and infirmities that come with advanced years that make her want to take her life -- then comes the thought that it is her egoism, her love of her material being, her pride in her appearance, that make her hesitate and she sends hastily for poison so that she may go suddenly into a better and a fuller life.

Were it not for the examples cited above one would perhaps not note particularly that in Pepita Jiménez Valera likewise uses direct communication between friends as a means of revealing mental processes. The novel is

written in epistolary style and the analysis in this case is an unconscious one on the part of the writer. Luis, in letters to his uncle, the Dean, discloses step by step the workings of his mind. Long before he himself is aware of it, the Dean and the reader realize by the lengthy, detailed and very frequent descriptions of Pepita Jiménez, of her home, of her tertulias and of her beliefs, that Luis is rapidly succumbing to her charms. By the very fact also of his reviewing repeatedly the doctrines of his own faith, one sees that he is beginning to feel the need of reassuring himself, of reconvincing himself that he really feels a call to the priesthood. And then he begins to realize that in his own mind he is coming to question the theories of his faith. His teachings tell him to turn his thoughts inward, to penetrate to the innermost recesses of his mind, to see God therein, but he says⁴²: "The image of Pepita is always present in my soul. Can this perhaps be love, I ask myself." And a little later he realizes that it is love -- love with a personal element. He says⁴³: "Is the virtue of love, I ask myself at times, always the same although applied to diverse objects or are there perhaps two classes and two conditions of love?" He

⁴²Obras Completas, IV, 81.

⁴³Idem, pg. 100.

then analyzes the love which he calls divine, the love which he feels for God, which is devoid of all egoism, of all envy, of all jealousy, which causes him to love all loving God and to feel a greater sense of human brotherhood -- then, remembering his very different attitude toward the affection which he feels for Pepita, he characterizes this love which she inspires in him as a selfish, a jealous and an egotistical love. A little later summoning all his strength of mind, with a renewed devotion to his early training, he determines to renounce this earthly love, to leave the village and take the vows as he had planned. Referring to this divine love he says⁴⁴: "Compared to this good all else is wretchedness, compared to this beauty all else is ugliness, compared to this felicity all is misfortune and compared to this loftiness all else is lowliness. Who cannot through love of God scorn all other loves?" And, armed with new zeal and determination to cast from his mind forever the worldly image of Pepita, Luis prepares to leave the village. Begged by Antoñona, however, to be courteous enough to call upon her mistress to take leave of her in person, he goes armed with arguments in defense of his resolution only to yield before the charms of Pepita.

⁴⁴Idem, pg. 107.

Thus through the whole course of the novels we find, not only the same conflict of mental attitudes discussed in Chapter I, but a similar study of emotions as well -- emotions which develop out of this conflict of ideas and which in their final analysis are made clear through the medium of the human word. And just as one notes that Valera's materialistic theories seem to triumph in the lives of his characters, one remarks also that communion with their fellow-beings seems invariably more satisfying to them than does communion with God in the depths of their souls -- and one wonders if this may not be a reflection of the author's own experience, and if it may not likewise be a further indication that his own materialistic leanings were more pronounced than his mystical.

Valera however is not concerned solely with the study of emotions; he studies ideas as well. His skill, his subtlety, his fairness and his tolerance in analysing ideas, in studying their pros and cons, in viewing them from all possible angles, are discussed in Chapter I. He welcomes new aspects of a question; his mind is open always to new lines of thought. Cajador says of him⁴⁵: "He is a cerebral writer rather than intuitive; he plays with

⁴⁵Op. cit. VIII, 232.

ideas, penetrating into their most hidden meanings, explaining them, distinguishing between them, verifying them, discussing them with penetrating subtlety." His ideas are the very raison d'être of his novels. He may abstract them, discuss them at length, argue for and against them, but always he relates them to the lives of his characters. They are an essential part of the material which his sense of the real assembles; he works them over in the fire of his own fancy, under stress of his own experiences and passions, brings them into conflict in the minds of his characters and thus develops a play of emotions.

Because of the similarity of theme and of treatment throughout the novels, there is much that is alike in the characterization also. The materialistic representatives are much alike; the mystical characters are very similar; when there is a marked distinction, it is usually because that particular individual is the prey to, or the product of, an excessive amount of some predominating emotion.

Fadrique in El Comendador Mendoza, for example, in his youth had been taught religion, not under the aspect of love and affection but under that of fear. He did not see in supernatural powers the object of the insatiable love of the soul; he saw only hangmen, tyrants, scourges and the like. He had little or no confidence in

the friars, who talked to him of supernatural powers; he rebelled against their teachings and developed his own ideas, establishing for himself a natural religion instead of a religion of revelation. He balks at the teachings of Blanca, who is an exponent of mysticism in its purest form. Blanca emphasizes the anger and wrath to be feared from God; the element of fear is the nucleus of all her teachings to her daughter; fear is what she inspires in her meek husband Valentín. He and Clara are described as leading mystic lives, not through love of God but through fear of Blanca, who, cold, devout and intolerant, has a will of iron, which works incessantly, and which inspires Fadrique to say⁴⁶: "I don't know what a woman would be like without religion -- nor has it ever been my intention that my daughter should not have it. What I do know is that a woman exalted by religious fanaticism can be insufferable." Blanca is the most unlovely, the least admirable of all of Valera's mystical characters. Even Inés in Juanita la Larga, in spite of her extreme pessimism and piety, is more attractive. She at least reveals a human side to her nature.

There are two examples of inferiority complexes in Valera's novels: Miguel in Morseamor and Braulio in

⁴⁶El Comendador Mendoza, Obras Completas, VII, 267.

Pasarse de listo. The former through lack of confidence in his own ability, devotes himself to self-depreciation and to wondering why people pay no attention to him, never seeming to realize that it is his own inertia and melancholy that bring him to this state. Persuaded by Tiburecio that depression and low spirits weaken men and incapacitate them for everything, and fearful lest his life in the next world be a repetition of this, he puts forth an effort to throw off his melancholy; having, in his satisfying dream, seen himself playing a prominent part in affairs of the world, he gains confidence in himself and his attitude changes. He respects himself and feels worthy of the respect of others.

Braulio is self-depreciatory to the end. He spends all his time wondering why Beatrice ever chanced to marry him. He considers himself insignificant, says he is neither handsome, nor young, nor gallant nor rich and convinces himself that it must have been his superior intellect that attracted her. And later when he hears the rumors concerning Beatrice's interest in the Count of Alhedín, he is more sure than ever before of his own inferiority. He even thinks that his unusual mind which, in his opinion was the one thing which drew Beatrice to him and held her, must be weakening. He blames himself always; never for a second does he reproach Beatrice -- and, finally convinced

that he cannot hope to hold her against the attractions of the Count, he determines to take his life and set her free.

Quite different is the character of Doctor Faustino. While he too, occasionally, doubts his own ability, more often he thinks there is nothing which he does not know or which he does not divine. In him we see how a clear understanding and healthy will can become perverted under the influence of illusions. Doctor Faustino has much too favorable an opinion of himself and of his own capabilities; he is ambitious; he longs for success but, so great is his confidence in his own ability, so sure is he that within him there is the germ of a great man, a germ which will develop naturally, which cannot help developing, that he fails to see that untiring effort and perseverance on his own part will be needed. He feels that he knows in advance what the doctrines of other writers are, even before reading them; what he doesn't know and what he wants to know is that which has not been written, so he tries to commune with spirits. He speculates a great deal, he is skeptical and more or less superstitious. He conceives many theories concerning life before birth and life after death, but, with all of his reasoning and speculation, only succeeds in becoming more confused. He is inconsistent, inconstant and extremely conceited. He represents the

ambitions, the egoism, the vices, the dreams and lack of faith in the young people of his time. He is politically ambitious; he dabbles in law; he tries his hand at literature but is unsuccessful in all fields. He cannot stick to things; he is a dreamer.

Valera compares the doctor to a man who, finding himself lost in a forest in the darkness of the night, runs after first one and then another of the little lights which he sees shining in the distance, believing they are beacons which will save him. The little lights, which brightened the way for the doctor, were -- depending upon his mood -- either the eyes of Maria, who represents the idealistic element in his experience, of Constance, who represents fleeting, inconstant love or those of Rosita, who represents jealous love. He follows them all at different stages; he is never wholly satisfied.

Doctor Faustino demonstrates what too much introspection may do in the life of an individual. Had he, like Valera's other characters, been able to draw his confused thoughts out from their chaotic state so that he could have observed them objectively he, too, might have been able to realize his own shortcomings, to plan for himself a definite course of action. He does finally realize the cause of his failure when he says⁴⁷: "There is no ambition which

⁴⁷Obras Completas, VI, 224.

I have not had. Hence I have seen none of them satisfied. My spirit has rambled, has been led astray by a great variety of aims; it has not travelled with the direct and sure flight of the eagle but with the uncertain and vacillating fluttering of the starling. My feeble will has not known how to pursue anything with energy. Do not wonder that I have accomplished little; I have lacked two most powerful resources -- love and faith in something outside myself." Had the doctor been able earlier in life, thus to analyze his own state of mind perhaps he would not have been the constant prey to doubts and misgivings and perhaps they would not have returned when he was no longer under the spell of Maria's voice.

A study of Valera's novels reveals, therefore, not a series of vulgar and prosaic pictures of life, not a mere enumeration of actions but a thorough analysis of ideas and a careful study of emotions and passions. His psychology is a studied one. The same cold reasoning that considers all aspects of a philosophical theory, that argues for or against it, that relates it to the lives of his characters, is turned on the study of their emotions. Everything is accounted for; his characters reason their actions; they may act impetuously -- if they do they can account logically, step by step, for the combination of moods, desires, longings, vanities and temptations which

lead to such an act -- and, the act having been performed, they can reason out exactly to the last detail just what course is to be pursued. They rarely abandon themselves to their passions -- always there is their own conscience to be answered to. J.D.M. Ford says of Valera in this connection⁴⁸: "As a result of his great experience gained in the disillusionizing school of diplomacy, Valera is one who never lets his feelings run away with him; we are sure that in him the mind is always in control of the heart." Hurtado similarly characterizes him as "an academic spirit whose mind and intelligence dominate over his heart and sensibility."⁴⁹

As has been indicated, in the last final analysis of this study of emotion, Valera's characters turn almost invariably to human speech, to communication with some friend as a means of clarifying their thoughts and determining the course of action to be pursued. And one notes that this method of analysis is repeated, just as the conflict of mental attitudes is repeated, the materialistic seeming always to have the better side of the argument. One wonders whether this is just a means of making the emotional state of his characters clear to the

⁴⁸Op. cit. pg. 224.

⁴⁹Historia de la Literatura Española, Madrid, 1921, pg. 1008.

reader or whether it is not rather a reflection of the author's own experience -- a further proof of his materialistic leanings. Did he perhaps, in spite of all his knowledge and defense of the science of introspection, fail to find God in the depths of his own soul and thus find it necessary to commune with Him through the medium of a fellow-being? Or is it just a further indication that to Valera man is divine because his God is human?

CHAPTER III

ETHICS

In Juan Valera is found an advocate of art for art's sake. Yet in the consideration of this question he is as liberal and broadminded as in other fields. Contending that it is bad taste for a novelist to aim to prove a thesis, Valera, nevertheless, admits that such an author may, if he is sincere, demonstrate a truth and be instructive.

Arguing that too many novelists write, not to entertain but to teach, he declares that it is their desire to teach which moves them to write and, yet, what they have written is valuable, not for the truth it contains, but rather for the grace, the charm, the wit and the beauty which it creates and displays. Referring to the Quijote, Valera says it was Cervantes' aim to criticise books of chivalry and to bring them into disfavor, but, had Cervantes been sure of aim, had he merely attained his purpose, had his mind and talent not risen above the object toward which he meant, through reflection, to direct himself, he would have written a book which scarcely anyone would read rather than the immortal work which is known in all tongues.⁵⁰

Valera then is a partisan of pure art; he maintains that there shall be in art no other end or purpose than the

⁵⁰ Fines del arte fuera del arte in Critica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXIX, 76 ff.

creation of beauty, in order to entertain, solace and delight the spirit and raise it to higher spheres through contemplation of the ideal. Yet, while this shall be its only aim, it may, incidentally, serve other purposes. He says⁵¹:

"The poet, however, (and I call a poet one who writes novels and dramas, although he writes them in prose) puts, or should put, his whole soul into all that he writes. And as his soul will not be common or vulgar or empty but will be rich with ideas, doctrines and sublime feelings and will contain within it obscure enigmas, which crave explanation, and awe-inspiring and profound problems, which present themselves to humanity in order that they may be solved, all this, which is contained in the soul of the author or of the poet, will likewise be apparent, will be reflected in his work, where he puts his whole soul.... Art must be for art's sake. The poet must not propose for himself the demonstration of any thesis: he must not teach, but delight. And yet there is no novel or drama of any value where the poet does not seek to solve social, moral, political or religious problems. And there is no novel or drama of any value which is not a vehicle a thousand times more efficacious than any other book to disseminate

⁵¹Idem., pg. 77.

doctrines, to reveal and diffuse new ideas, which now mislead people, now bring them back to the right path. The poet at times proposes to demonstrate something, at times he proposes merely to entertain and charm, but, very likely, when he is least conscious of it, he is teaching most, since, putting his soul into his work, he likewise puts into it the enigmas and problems which are in it and he interprets and solves them in his own way.... Such problems then, presented in this manner to the reader, stimulate his mind moving him to affirm or deny, to approve or disapprove the author's solution."

Repeatedly Valera refers to the mission of literature as a purifying of passions. For this purpose, the aesthetic side must be emphasized. As has been stated in Chapter II, he insists that novelistic fiction must be verisimilar but that the verisimilitude must be aesthetic for, if art goes to the extreme of making verisimilitude too identical with truth, it fails in its aim to elevate the spirit, to purify the passions. Again he remarks⁵²: "No, I am not a judge in matters of religion and morals; but I endeavor to be one in matters of aesthetics, of good taste. Religion and morality, it seems to me, treat poetry like a spoiled child: they tolerate things in it that they

⁵²Critica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXVI, 202 ff.

would not tolerate in real life. On the other hand, poetry is very fond of religion and morality and when, presently, they are abused by an author and flee from his works, poetry goes away with them and the author and his works remain without it and thus appear in bad taste."

Valera cites other novelists to strengthen his theory. In Sir Walter Scott, for example, he finds only the aim of art for art's sake -- that of composing books of entertainment. And, yet, as every work when it is well done is accustomed to have a greater compass than that which its author aspires to give it, so he finds that the novels of Scott have exceeded his purpose.⁵³

This theory of Valera's he puts into practice in his own novels. And because he is a sincere writer, he reveals in the lives of his characters the questions and problems which puzzle him in his own life and he attempts to interpret and solve them. And just as he reflects, through the analysis of actions and passions, (which for him are the sources of beauty) his own philosophical and psychological tendencies -- so in this same analysis, in the repetition of conflict and of similar solution, he discloses likewise his outstanding ethical ideas. Although he does not write for the purpose of teaching, his readers find themselves

⁵³Idem., pg. 183.

after each novel meditating upon some really significant question. Rarely does he devote a great deal of time to ethical problems. They are rather, as his theory implies, incidental. Exceptions are El Comendador Mendoza, the whole of which treats of an ethical question, and Genio y figura, much of which has a moral aspect. But, although the ethical problem is not stressed, it is always suggested in greater or lesser degree. As William Dean Howells said⁵⁴: "If it is true that the 'object of a novel should be to charm through a faithful representation of human actions and passions and to create, by this fidelity to nature, a beautiful work' and if 'the creation of the beautiful is solely the object of art', it never was and never can be solely its effect as long as men are men and women are women. --If ever the race is resolved into abstract qualities, perhaps this may happen but, until then, the finest effect of the "beautiful" will be ethical and not merely aesthetic. --Morality penetrates all things: it is the soul of all things. Beauty may clothe it on (sic), whether it is false morality and an evil soul or whether it is true morality and a good soul. In the one case the beauty will corrupt and in the other it will edify and, in either case, it will infallibly and inevitably have an

⁵⁴Harper's Magazine, 1886, Vol. 73, pg. 963.

ethical effect, now light, now grave according as the thing is light or grave."

A study of Valera's novels reveals then his attitude toward moral problems. His creed of idealistic ethics is a natural consequence of his strong materialistic tendencies, of his theory of salvation by character. For him morality is not founded upon theology; man is responsible for his own faults; he attains virtue by his own efforts; he looks to himself for help. Valera believes that within each individual is a law, a conscience that must be obeyed. The source of ethical judgment he finds within man himself, in an instinctive good taste in ethical matters which he possesses by nature. This good taste then is analogous to an aesthetic taste. Like Mr. Howells, Valera believes there is as close a connection between the moral and the aesthetic as if they were branches from the same root.⁵⁵ Concerning this innate moral sense, this inner conscience which must be obeyed Doctor Faustino, meditating on the bandit, Joselito el Seco, says⁵⁶: "The principles of morality, the law of conscience, the instinctive sense of justice and of goodness do not result from long and extensive study: the same are engraved in

⁵⁵Critica Literaria, Obras Completas, XXVI, 277.

⁵⁶Las Ilusiones del doctor Faustino, Obras Completas, VI, 117.

the soul of the most crude and ignorant countryman as in that of a man of science. He who erases, disfigures or distorts these principles, these laws or these notions, is always responsible and guilty. The error of his understanding implies a defect of will which tends to falsify things, in order to quiet the voice of conscience."

Valera grants that sometimes in society among barbarous, ignorant people there is evident a lack of morality for which the individual cannot be held responsible but he cannot conceive of any one, in European civilization, in any situation, descending so low in the scale of morality, that light would not penetrate into his soul and engrave there laws of the good and the just.

Repeatedly Valera stresses the importance, not only of the understanding as a faculty of the soul, but of the will and the character as well.⁵⁷ In *Lulú, Princesa de Zabulistán*,⁵⁸ he compares the mind and the will: "Through understanding we can confuse ourselves with the infinite intelligence and become lost in it, like a drop of water in the sea, but the will is an individual, irreducible center. The more one's mind is educated and elevated, the more it becomes confused and identified with

⁵⁷e.g: *Pasarse de listo*, *Obras Completas*, VIII, 343 ff.

⁵⁸*Obras Completas*, XII, 262.

all intelligence, the more it approaches infinite intelligence from which it originates. The will, on the contrary, is more individual; the more it is trained and educated, however much it may submit and conform to eternal secrets, the more it is determined and isolated, the more it becomes individualized. The will has its center within itself; in its training and development it only succeeds in outlining more distinctly and energetically this center. The understanding on the other hand has its center outside ourselves." Growing out of this theory of the individualizing force of the will, there is developed in Valera's characters a sense of dignity and of self-esteem, a feeling that they, being human individuals, are worthy of respect. They do not consider themselves victims of blind fate -- rather they respect themselves, finding themselves capable of meeting and solving their own problems.

Like Shaftesbury⁵⁹ Valera believes in the full expression of human life, in the development and fulfilling of all its potentialities into a beautiful personality. One of the best statements of this, his idealistic theory of ethics, is found in *Las Ilusiones del doctor Faustino*⁶⁰: "In my opinion, the mission of man is to realize in this

⁵⁹A. K. Rogers: A Student's History of Philosophy, N. Y., 1907, pg. 393.

⁶⁰Obras Completas, VI, 49.

life all the virtues, gifts and possibilities of his mind, contributing thus to human progress, placing his stone in the monument of history, accomplishing with his own active, noble and generous life the honor and splendor of created things, among which and over which shall shine and surpass the spirit, intelligence and divine fire of which his head and heart are the source, the temple and the dwelling."

Padrique, a champion of progress, expresses a similar thought⁶¹: "I assume in this life which we live, however much it may serve to gain another, an aim and purpose in itself. This end, this purpose, is to go on approaching perfection and, without ever attaining it here, nevertheless drawing closer to it each day. I believe then in progress, that is, in the gradual and constant improvement of society and of the individual, in the material as much as in the moral sense, and hence, in speculative science as much as in that which arises from observation and experience."

One of the most clear-cut examples of this self-improvement, of this ability of an individual, through sheer power of the will, to develop the faculties of his mind and thus realize the possibilities of his nature, is found in the character of Lorenzo in Don Lorenzo Testado,

⁶¹El Comendador Mendoza, Obras Completas, VII, 52.

a fragment. So interesting is the analysis of this character one regrets that the story is incomplete. Beginning as an assistant in the Count's kitchen, Lorenzo soon advances to the position of chief cook. By studying his cook books, he develops an interest in useful and practical household chemistry and diligently pursues the study of this physical science. From a consideration of the various possibilities of foods, vegetables and meats that he might prepare, he develops an interest in biological science, zoology and botany and thus finally becomes interested in all the visible universe. Out of this interest develops a desire to know the connection, the relation, the origin and end of all life which he has studied and thus he comes to meditate upon first causes; then he meditates even upon his own meditation to the end of calculating and measuring his own ability to demonstrate the identity of things with the concept which he has had of these things and thus from a cook, with a narrow, limited horizon, Lorenzo develops gradually into a noble philosopher and an illustrious person. Lorenzo never neglects his duty, he never fails to fix his attention on present realities, but his duties in the kitchen are made much lighter, far more pleasant and even beautiful by the fact of his illumining them with his philosophical speculations.

In the novel Horsamor, Father Miguel, whose

experience has been reviewed in Chapter I, reflects again Valera's ethical creed. Miguel is dissatisfied, he scorns himself because his life has been useless. In his opinion no human being is worthy of being remembered if he has not, by virtue of his deeds or of his words, written or spoken, succeeded in exerting a powerful influence on the events of his age. Those, who neither by action nor by thought, revealed through speech or through writing, succeed in becoming known, pass as shadows in the path of life. They are buried without anyone's deploring their death; after a few years, perhaps even at the end of a few days, no one will remember that they have ever lived.⁶²

Miguel, meditating thus upon the uselessness of his life, is miserable. Then, in the dream, he finds that he can do things, he leads an active life, he takes part in conquests, he is successful in battle, he wins the respect of his fellow-beings, he makes a name for himself. He feels that he has contributed to national advancement, he has placed his stone in the monument of history and, so completely does he conquer his scorn of himself that, even when he wakes up and realizes that it has all been only a dream, it does not take much persuasion to make him feel that what was dreamed could, with a little effort on his

⁶²Obras Completas, XI, 10 ff.

part, have been realized in real life.

Braulio in Pasarse de listo on the other hand never succeeds, not even in dreams, in performing sufficient public service, in being of sufficient value to mankind to justify a good opinion of himself. He dies lacking confidence in his own ability, disrespecting himself. He has not within him the power to overcome obstacles.

Doctor Faustino makes an attempt to realize all the virtues and gifts of his nature. The whole of the novel, Las Ilusiones del doctor Faustino is concerned with his efforts to do something, to be something in the world. He, like Braulio, is an exception to Valera's usual delineation of character but with a difference. The doctor from an over amount of vanity and confidence, without any firm belief in anything or in anybody, without the ability to stick to things, is unable to accomplish anything worthwhile, has not the strength of character or power of will to overcome difficulties. The moral purpose of the novel is pronounced. It is a criticism of the education of the day which developed in the young people of Faustino's generation, vanities, absurd ambitions, skepticism, dreams, illusions, and thousands of impossible plans. The doctor is pictured there as a product of his age without definite training in any particular line, without faith in anything outside himself, without energy for good or for evil and

rendered, through force of circumstances, unable to realize the virtues and potentialities of his own soul. Valera admits that he deliberately meant to make the doctor a representative of his age; he says⁶³: "In short, to paint the innermost soul of my hero, excepting his worldly experiences, I have used no other device than that of looking into the depths of the souls of not a few of my friends and into the depths of my own soul, analyzing there, feelings, disillusionment, passions and illusions." Braulio and the Doctor represent two extremes, the one self-depreciatory without the slightest faith or confidence in himself, the other vain, over-confident with unlimited faith in his own ability.

Another good illustration of Valera's ethical theory is found in Juanita la Larga. Inés, picturing to Juanita, in vivid colors, the corruption of the century, the covetousness and wickedness of the world, tries to persuade her to retire, to give up material and temporal pleasures and enter a convent. But Juanita feels not the slightest inclination or calling toward monastic life; she does not consider the world so corrupt and wicked that she feels it necessary to withdraw from it. She appreciates the sin of her birth and knows that, because of it, she

⁶³Obras Completas, VI, 295.

will have difficulty in making a place for herself in the village and in winning the respect of the villagers, yet that is what she determines to do. To quote her own words⁶⁴: "I shall tell you the truth. I have not wanted to flee from danger, rather I wanted to seek it out, to encounter it in order to triumph over it" -- and, again, when criticized for her tendency toward extravagant dress she remarks⁶⁵: "It makes no difference to me that they consider me obliged not to dress myself with silk, wool nor even cotton but only with coarse burlap. What is of importance to me is that they respect me. What sin of mine is so great that there is not baptism to purify it? What indelible stain has fallen on me that there is nothing to remove it? What innate vice is there in my blood such that I cannot purify it? Why suppose that my weakness is such that I need to take refuge in a convent in order to resist the seductions and dangers of the world?" Convinced that it lies within her own power to overcome the sin of her birth, Juanita resists all of Inés's pleadings, refuses to enter a convent and, by leading an exemplary worldly life, by developing her own capabilities, wins the respect of the fellow-villagers and makes a place for herself among them.

⁶⁴Obras Completas, IX, 314.

⁶⁵Idem., pg 327.

Like Juanita, Doña Luz feels a sacred obligation for every divine favor. She too has talents which must be developed; she is strong and beautiful -- she must cultivate these talents. She too wants to lead a clean, pure life in order to purify the original sin of her birth.

Even Rafaela, sinful as she is, has admirable traits. She realizes the meanness of her origin; she appreciates the significance of her own sin, hence she deems herself unworthy of real love. Proud of her beauty, her charms and her talents she, like Luz, has cultivated them but for a different purpose. She admits that it was her vanity which led her on, her desire to attract attention. For this reason, she cultivated her mind that she might converse the more intelligently and be the more attractive, especially to the opposite sex. Valera pictures her as being led toward evil by a certain innate sense of goodness; her sense of generosity, her sympathy and her clemency, coupled with a desire to please and to satisfy, cause her downfall. Yet neither Valera nor Rafaela blames anyone or makes anyone responsible for her faults. She does not consider herself a victim of blind fate, nor does she blame Providence or the social milieu in which she finds herself. She does not try to excuse or justify her sins; she admits them and assumes full responsibility herself. The sense of her own dignity as a human being comes to Rafaela late in

life but, when this is realized, her self-respect grows. Realizing that she has sinned through the folly of her own egoism, and that her purity will always be marred by her sin, she determines that she cannot lower the Viscount to her own level by accepting his love -- hence takes her life.

For Rafaela is of the same opinion as Valera -- that "There is no man, however honorable, noble and valorous he may be, who suffices to defend with his valor and to shield and protect with his honor the woman who has lost it (her honor)."⁶⁶

Thus, while Valera's purpose as a novelist is not to prove anything, yet, because he writes sincerely and reveals through the actions and passions of his characters many of his own ideas, a study of his novels acquaints one with his ethical theories, as well as with his philosophical ideas. Unless an individual be the prey of an inferiority complex, such as that which Braulio suffered, or unless he be like Doctor Faustino, the victim of over-confidence and of too great faith in self, a character with Valera will have within himself the ability so to cultivate his talents and capabilities that he can overcome obstacles, attain virtue and respect, approach perfection and be of

⁶⁶Mariquita y Antonio, Obras Completas, XIII, 250.

service to his fellow-men.

In El Comendador Mendoza the thesis is predominant. It forms the nucleus of the action; a brief outline of the plot will explain the significance of the moral involved. Blanca, devout, severe, intolerant wife of Valentín, a meek individual, successful in business but easily subdued and overpowered by his wife, seventeen years before the opening of the story, suffered the misfortune of yielding to the false flattery of Fadrique. Clara, a beautiful girl, devout like her mother and very obedient, is the product of their illicit relations. Fadrique learns of her existence only after returning to Villabermeja. He is informed also that Valentín is wealthy, that Clara is to inherit his means and that Blanca, in order to cover up her infamy and yet ease her conscience concerning the inheritance, plans to have Clara marry Casimiro, her husband's nearest relative and rightful heir. Casimiro is much older than Clara and very distasteful to her -- furthermore she has a real lover, Carlos, a poet whose affection she returns. Fadrique, realizing the situation, opens the eyes of the priest, Father Jacinto, persuading him to reason with Blanca against the marriage. He does so and Blanca then conceives the plan of having Clara enter a convent and thus renounce her worldly wealth, so that it may go to the rightful heir. Fadrique objects and, anxious not to betray

Blanca to her husband nor cause Clara to lose faith in her mother, with the aid of Father Jacinto, conceives a plan whereby Casimiro may not be deprived of his inheritance. By means of a lie he solves the situation; he makes Casimiro believe that he is the father of one Nicolasa, whom Casimiro really loves, and he promises to give her a rich dowry (an amount equivalent to the sum which Clara shall inherit from Valentín). Casimiro marries Nicolasa and Blanca, finally, under the force of Fadrique's tenacious arguments, realizing that Clara would be entering the convent, not as a devout person but rather as one despairing, frees her from her obligation. Blanca, herself, falls a victim to her own passions; she is consumed by the full realization of her own deceits and lies; she dies a horrible death. Just before her death she pardons Fadrique and she even shows some affection for Valentín. A few years later Clara marries her poet-lover, Carlos.

In developing the intricate problem of this novel, Valera makes much use of the element of contrast, both in character and in opinions.⁶⁷ Blanca, a cold, devout mysticist, believes there can be no morality, no nobility, no virtue where religion and faith are lacking, for they, religion and faith, are the foundations of all virtue. "Without holy fear of God", she says⁶⁷, "all virtue is a lie and

⁶⁷Obras Completas, VII, 101.

all moral action is an artifice of the devil to deceive the stupid, who think themselves discreet and who do not subject their judgment to that of those who know more than themselves." Equally narrow is Blanca's conception of woman's sphere⁶⁸: "Woman has not come into the world for her own pleasure and for the satisfaction of her will and her desires, but to serve God in this temporal life, to the end of enjoying him in the eternal. And you will agree with me that, if in these days she has not dealt with people who have perverted her thought and turned her from the right path, in a girl, the best manner of serving God is to obey her parents."

How different is Padrique's concept of life! He sees in life an aim and purpose in itself -- that of the improvement of the individual toward the end of approaching perfection. For him morality has no such religious foundation. He is a Deist, he believes in a natural religion. Hence, whereas morality for Blanca and Father Jacinto is a product of revelation, for Padrique moral law is formed by natural reasoning. And, if reasoning alone can reach God, revelation is unnecessary. He argues the question at length with Father Jacinto. The priest believes in divine commands, revealed through the Scriptures, as the

⁶⁸Idem., pg. 183.

moral guide. Fadrique believes one's duty and obligations to one's fellow-men to be the guide but both agree that the results are the same. They agree likewise that moral law, whatever its source, is not vague or obscure -- one does not have to be a Seneca in order to be moral. Everyone has a conscience to be obeyed.

So optimistic is Fadrique, so confident is he of individual progress and of the progress of society, that evil seems to him almost an accident and good seems the substantial, the positive, the important element to be found in everything. But he insists upon emphasizing morality; he relaxes only in that he believes that things, which bring pleasure and comfort, should not be severely prohibited. He opposes vigorously all things which cause sorrow.

The conflict between passion and duty in Pepita Jiménez and Doña Luz has already been discussed. Concerning the abandonment by Luis of his hopes and ambitions to become a priest, suffice it to say here that, inasmuch as he felt no real calling to the priesthood, we can agree with Mr. Howells who says:⁶⁹ "--His marriage was better than his vocation for his vocation was a sentimental and fancied one. Their right to each other through their love was above his vocation. In spite of himself, without impertin-

⁶⁹Harper's Magazine, 1886, Vol. 73, pg. 963.

ence or pedantry Valera has proved a thesis in his story."

In Doña Luz the situation is more serious. Luz, although single at the beginning of the story marries Jaime, a despicable character, unworthy of her, and Father Enrique is an ordained priest, having taken the vows some years before. The passion which unites their souls is sincere; it develops naturally and beautifully, yet both characters are strong enough to remain true to their obligations, although the effort costs Father Enrique his life.^X Of this situation Blanco García says:⁷⁰ "--the same spiritual, ethereal, beautiful character of the passion which unites the souls of the priest and Luz, the sordid coarseness of Jaime to whom Luz, deceived, gives her hand, contribute to legitimize apparently the kiss placed by Luz on the brow of the dying friar, unhappy victim of the internal fire whose restrained flames devour him. I cannot be persuaded that Valera has tried in this novel to combat the celibacy of the clergy."

Concerning the element of love in a novel Valera says:⁷¹ "Without doubt, to be a good novelist as well as to be a poet and knight errant, an indispensable condition is that of love, present or past, now platonic and chaste,

⁷⁰Op. cit., II, 489.

⁷¹La Novela en España in Discursos Académicos,
Obras Completas, II, 177.

now of another class. That is, love or let it be called the emotional union of man and woman, is the principal and perpetual subject of every delightful narrative; it is a spring which is never drained and whence each one draws something different in taste, color and perfume, according to the size and shape of the glass in which he gathers the inspiring drink." Valera then, realizing the importance of this element of love, makes it an essential part of the action of his novels -- it is a necessary element in his analysis of emotions and passions. In accord with his theory of the creation of beauty, he draws his inspiring potion, not from the physical aspects of the passion but from the mental and spiritual. The mystical adoration of woman has for him unusual charm. He considers her as he considers all human beings, as made in the image and likeness of God -- but woman, even more than man -- is to Valera a symbol, a visible personification of these attributes. She is a source of grace, charm and beauty and a dispenser of happiness. Hence the union pictured is usually a mystical one; if there be sinning it too is usually mental -- if it be physical it is handled with dignity and restraint, with none of the extremes of passion in which Zola and others of his school indulged.

Valera criticizes those who feel that virtue should be rewarded, who seek to convert the ideal and the

beautiful into the useful. Virtue, wit, science and poetry may on occasions be useful to the individual, who possesses them, but utility should not be their principal aim. He argues further that he who proposes to derive profit from his virtue, his science or his poetry, fails immediately to be wise, virtuous or poetic. For base purposes one must employ base means; lofty means lead only to aims which are lofty likewise.⁷²

The question of the teaching of right and wrong, of good and evil, comes up for frequent discussion. One finds traces of it in Fepita Jiménez, El Comendador Mendoza, Mariquita y Antonio and in others of the novels. Valera criticizes the system of education which tries to keep from children all knowledge of evil, thus confusing innocence with ignorance. Confident in the power of the human will to overcome obstacles, he seems rather to feel that evil should be disclosed in all its ugliness and nakedness, that they might better come to hate it and avoid it and come thus to a fuller appreciation of the beautiful and the good. Or as his character Juan in Mariquita y Antonio expresses it⁷³: "--The mind is always capable of understanding evil and the will of withdrawing from it and of curbing

⁷²Las Ilusiones del doctor Faustino, Obras Completas, V, 41.

⁷³Obras Completas, XIII, 132.

one's perverse inclinations."

Valera's creed of idealistic ethics is therefore wholly consistent with his materialistic inclinations, with his idea of salvation by character. He considers his characters as made in the image and likeness of God, as possessing many of His attributes. They seek to find God within their souls and to unite with Him -- whether they do so or not they are inferior only to God himself. The inhabitants of other worlds may be larger, they may have more varied and keener senses, but in no one can the moral law and first absolute principles, the root of all knowledge, be present with greater energy than in man, made in the likeness of God.⁷⁴

Man then from the very fact of being a human being is worthy of respect. An appreciation of this fact develops within him a sense of his own worth, a feeling of dignity, of self-respect and esteem. He feels within himself an innate sense of honor, an instinctive moral sense. His mind distinguishes between right and wrong; his will turns him from evil and aids him to conquer perverse tendencies. He attains virtue by his own efforts; he blames no one for his faults; he considers himself responsible for his own actions. His ethics are independent of religion. He answers to his own conscience.

⁷⁴Morsamor, Obras Completas, XI, 162 ff.

CONCLUSION

Valera represents realism in its broadest sense. Unlike the followers of the naturalistic wing of this great literary movement who treat man as devoid of soul, as a victim of blind fate and fixed laws, which he has no power to resist, Valera belongs rather to the idealistic wing, which includes both body and soul. His novels are important, more than for the pictures of customs and manners which they give, for the analysis of ideas and for the study of actions and passions. And because Valera is a sincere writer and reflects through his characters the problems and enigmas which puzzle him in his own life, a study of his novels reveals his philosophical tendencies.

While Valera discusses a number of metaphysical systems, his favorites are the mystical and the materialistic. They occur repeatedly, coming into conflict in the lives of his characters, reflecting apparently a conflict in his own life. Although he argues admirably and convincingly in favor of the theories of mysticism, the reader of his novels is forced to admit that, in the final development of action, in the psychological analysis of character and in his creed of idealistic ethics, his materialistic leanings far outweigh his mystical.

Valera has a wholesome respect for man and confidence in his ability to improve. He considers him as

made in the likeness of God and inferior only to Him. Man is not a mere tool of blind forces; he has within himself the power to overcome difficulties; his ethical sense is not based on religion; within the innermost depths of his spirit is a law which must be obeyed. Although Valera's characters turn their thoughts inward, seeking to find God in the depths of their souls, in practice they resort to human speech, to communication with some friend as a means of clarifying their thoughts, analyzing their ideas and emotions and determining the course of action to be pursued. To commune with God, his characters commune with their fellow-beings.

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