

Do We Live in a Gynaecocratic Society?

Julius Evola wrote the introduction to the Italian translation of Bachofen's 'Das Mutterrecht', published by Bocca in 1949 as 'Le Madri e la Virilita Olimpica' ('The Mothers and Olympian Virility'). This introduction, which constitutes a true essay, was published by Fondazione Julius Evola in 1990 as 'Il Matriarcato nell' Opera di J.J.Bachofen' ('Matriarchy in the Work of J.J. Bachofen'). Evola adopted, while ridding them of their evolutionism, his theory of matriarchy and his typology of cultures, his 'intuitions of genius' with respect to the history of Antiquity, in several of his own works, from 'The Dawn of the West in 'Ur e Krur' to 'Revolt against the Modern World' and so forth. 'Viviamo in una Societa Ginecocratica?', published in 1936 in the paper Augustea, can be found, with a few other articles published by Evola in various other papers from 1936 to 1951, in 'Critica del Costume (Scritti su Sesso e Donna nel Mondo Moderno)', Edizioni il Cinabro, 1988 ('Critique of Customs (Writings on Sex and Woman in the Modern World)').

DO WE LIVE IN A GYNAECOCRATIC SOCIETY?

Much has been written lately in Italy on J.J.Bachofen, a thinker of Basle and contemporary of Nietzsche, whose work of genius passed almost unnoticed in his lifetime, but is particularly studied today, especially in Germany. Bachofen mainly devoted himself to the exploration of the ancient civilisations of the classic and Mediterranean worlds, especially in their ethico-religious, symbolic and mythological aspects, and his fundamental idea in this area was that of an original opposition between heroic, 'solar', Olympian and virile spirituality and 'chthonic', 'lunar' and feminine spirituality. It is along these lines that he interpreted the religious conceptions, social systems, myths, symbols, and politico-legal forms of the ancient civilisations, noticing more and more the contrast and the interference between influences related to various forms of spirituality that can today be easily referred to distinct racial components of the archaic Mediterranean world: the 'solar' or 'Ouranic' civilisation, obviously related to Aryan races, and the 'chthonic' and feminine one, referred, on the contrary, to pre-Aryan or anti-Aryan races.

Bachofen's views, moreover, do not have only a retrospective value, they often offer important points of reference for understanding the most profound meaning of some aspects of our own modern civilisation, through often astounding relations of analogy. This is why we think that it may not be devoid of interest to develop a few considerations on this topic.

First of all, we would like to linger over the nature and the various aspects of this civilisation called by Bachofen the Mother's or gynaecocracy (from 'gyne' and 'krateia', that is to say: government by women) and that, to us, is identified with the anti-Aryan and pre-Aryan civilisation of the archaic Mediterranean.

The first distinctive feature of such a civilisation is 'tellurism' (from 'tellus', which, just like 'chthonos' 'hence the adjective 'chthonic' means 'earthly'). This civilisation considers the law of the earth to be the highest law. The earth is the Mother. Under the aspect of Divine Woman, of Great Mother of Life, it embodies what is eternal and unchanging. It remains identical to itself and inexorable, while all that it produces has a birth and a decline, has a purely individual finite and evanescent life. Stripped of any

spiritual and supernatural virility, all that is force and manliness thus assumes an obscure, wild, in fact 'chthonic' and 'telluric' nature. And if 'telluric' generally makes one think of seismic phenomena, this association of ideas, to a certain extent, is sound. In the vision of the world in question, virility has for its prototypes divine figures such as Poseidon, also called the 'earthquaker', the god of chthonic subterranean and turbulent waters, analogically linked by the ancients to forces of passionality and instinct. More generally, the age or civilisation of the Mother is 'telluric', with reference to a sense of destiny, of necessity, of fatal evanescence, of life mixed with death, source of wild and irrepressible impulses.

To Bachofen, matriarchy, 'gynaecocracy', that of Demeter or of Aphrodite, in the latter of which the Divine Mother, unlike the ancient Demeter, had simultaneously sensual features, is the social consequence of this central view. Wherever the supreme principle is understood as a Great Mother (Magna Mater), the earthly woman, who appears as the closest incarnation thereof, comes to assume naturally a religious dignity and the highest authority. It is she who essentially appears as the giver of life, and, in relation to her, man is only an instrument. Under her motherly aspect, she thus embodies the law, she is the true basis and the centre of the family. As lover, under her Aphrodisian aspect, she is then again sovereign of the man who is merely slave of his senses and sexuality, merely the 'telluric' being that finds its rest and its ecstasy only in the woman. Hence the various types of royal Asian women with Aphrodisian features, above all in ancient civilisations of Semitic stock, and the queen-lovers from the hands of whom men receive the power and who become the centre of an extreme refinement of life, a sign of a civilisation essentially based upon the physical and sensual side of existence. But wherever the woman has 'Demetrian' more than 'Aphrodisian' features (the mythic Demeter mostly has a chaste motherly nature), she appears also as an Initiatrix in the ancient world, as the one that maintains and partakes of the highest mysteries. In a civilisation in which virility only means materiality, the woman, whether because of the enigma of generation or because of her subtle skills of devotion and charm, assumes religious features, and she becomes the point of reference of cults and initiations which promise a contact with the Mothers of Life, with cosmic spirituality, with the mystery of the bosom of the generative earth.

Two other characteristics of the type of civilisation in question ensue from this, namely the 'Dionysian' element and the 'lunar' element. The mystery of these elements, which can be mediated by a woman, cannot be the mystery of Olympian, Apollonian, solar spirituality, cannot be the one that is linked to the virile and heroic radiance of mortal existence, guided by the ideal of an existence that, according to the symbol offered by the solar and stellar natures of the sky, is free from any promiscuous admixture with matter and becoming and is subsisting and radiant light in itself.

This, by contrast, was the 'Ouranic' ideal (from 'ouranos', 'sky') that was specific to the other type of spirituality. The mystery of the Mother rather leads to something similar to a pantheistic dissolution. It is a formless liberation, achieved, not to say snatched, in disordered experiences in which the sensual element and the suprasensual one curiously mix and the 'telluric' side reasserts itself in the prevailing sense of the 'sacred orgy', in the mystic exaltation combined with any excess and all sorts of wild manifestations. Such was, in general, 'Dionysianism'.

This is why, in the ancient myth, Dionysos is always significantly accompanied by the Mothers of Nature, who assume mostly 'Aphrodisian' features ; historically, too, his cult was closely connected with the feminine sex and his most joyous and most enthusiastic proselytes were women.

In this connection, 'lunarity' has already been mentioned. The moon used to be called 'celestial earth'. It was thus understood as a sublimation of the earthly, that is to say chthonic, element. It is light, not as radiant but as reflected light. It is light without a centre of its own ; its centre, unlike the sun, lies outside of it, it is thus passive 'feminine' light - it is intimately connected with the formless spirituality of ecstasies and liberations that lies under the sign of Woman, while, on the other hand, it can be thought of a contemplativism, an abstraction or an understanding of abstract laws, instead of an essential 'solar' knowledge.

Now, it was a characteristic of the ancient civilisations of the Mother to confer on the Moon a pre-eminence over the Sun - in them, the Moon sometimes even becomes masculine in gender, the god Lunus, either to designate this primacy or to characterise the presumed negative side of virility. But what is also specific to the civilisation that we are analysing here is the idea of a primacy of Night over Day, of Darkness over Light. Darkness and Night are the motherly sacred element, the primordial and essential one: in the myth, Day is produced by Night, in which it dissolves again.

Two other aspects remain to be considered: the social promiscuity, or egalitarianism, and 'Amazonism'. Bachofen, among his other merits, has that of bringing to light the 'telluric' and matriarchal origins of the so-called doctrine of natural right. The original premise of such a doctrine is precisely that all men, as sons of the Mother and beings also subjected to the law of earth, are equal, so that any inequality is an 'injustice', an outrage to the law of nature. Hence the connection that antiquity shows us between the plebeian element and its mother and chthonic cults and the fact that these ancient orgiastic and Dionysian feasts, which, together with the most extreme forms of licentiousness and sexual promiscuity, were meant to celebrate the return of men to the state of nature through the momentary obliteration of any social difference and of any hierarchy, were centred precisely on feminine divinities of the 'telluric' cycle, more or less directly derived from the type of the Great Mother of Life. As for 'Amazonism', Bachofen looked upon it as a variant of 'gynaecocracy'. Wherever the woman does not manage to assert herself through her maternal religious element ('Demetrian'), she tries to assert herself vis-a-vis man through a counterfeiting of the virile qualities of power and combativity.

Such are thus the fundamental features of the 'Civilisation of the Mother', characteristic, so to speak, of the pre-Aryan substratum of the ancient Mediterranean world. It was defeated by Apollonian, Dorian and Olympian Greece ; then, and even more completely, by 'solar' Rome, jealous guardian of the principle of paternal right and of the ideal of virile spirituality. However, since things are a process of constant renewal, the varieties of this 'telluric' culture manifest themselves again wherever a cycle ends, wherever the heroic tension and the constructive will vanish and decadent and debased forms of life and spirituality start to reappear.

Now, what is striking here is the correspondence of many aspects of contemporary civilisation to the civilisation of the Mother. In its external manifestations, this correspondence has already been noticed. "In the streets of Berlin, Paris or London," as for instance A.Baeumler, a famous National-Socialist scholar, wrote, "all you have

to do is to observe for a moment a man or a woman to realise that the cult of Aphrodite is the one before which Zeus and Apollo had to beat a retreat...The present age bears, in fact, all the features of a gynaeocratic age. In a late and decadent civilisation, new temples of Isis and Astarte, of these Asian mother goddesses that were celebrated in orgies and licentiousness, in desperate sinking into sensual pleasure, arise. The fascinating female is the idol of our times, and, with painted lips, she walks through the European cities as she once did through Babylon. And as if she wanted to confirm Bachofen's profound intuition, the lightly dressed modern ruler of man keeps in leash a dog, the ancient symbol of unlimited sexual promiscuity and infernal forces". But these analogies can be much further developed.

Modern times are 'telluric', not only in their mechanistic and materialistic aspects, but also, and essentially, in several of their 'vitalist' aspects, in their various religions of Life, of the Irrational and of Becoming, precise antitheses of any 'classic' and 'Olympian' conception of the world. To Keyserling, many of the currents of the so-called 'world revolution' reveal a 'telluric' nature - that is to say irrational, mainly related to forms of courage, self-sacrifice, fervour and dedication without transcendent reference. In many cases, he is right.

With the advent of democracy, with the proclamation of the 'immortal principles' and the 'rights of man and citizen' and the subsequent development of these 'conquests' in Europe into Marxism and Communism, it is exactly the 'natural right', the leveling and anti-aristocratic law of the Mother, that the West has dug up, renouncing any 'solar' virile Aryan value and confirming, with the omnipotence so often granted to the collectivist element, the ancient irrelevance of the individual to the 'telluric' conception.

Dionysos reappears with modern romanticism : we have here the same love for the formless, the confused, the unlimited, the same promiscuity between sensation and spirit, the same antagonism towards the virile and Apollonian ideal of clarity, form and limit. Can the 'lunar' nature of the most widespread type of modern culture possibly be doubted? That is to say culture based on a pale and empty intellectualism, sterile culture separated from life, only capable of criticism, abstract speculation and vain mannered 'creativity' : culture that has taken material refinement to the extreme and in which woman and sensuality often become predominant motifs almost to a pathological and obsessive degree.

And wherever the woman does not become the new idol of the masses under the modern forms of the movie 'star' and of similar fascinating Aphrodisian apparitions, she often asserts her primacy in new 'Amazonian' forms. Thus we see the new masculinised sportswoman, the garconne, the woman who devotes herself to the insane development of her own body, betrays her true mission, becomes emancipated and independent to the point of being able to choose the men that she would like to have and use. And this is not all.

In Anglo-Saxon civilisation, and particularly in America, the man who exhausts his life and time in business and the search for wealth, a wealth that, to a large extent, only serves to pay for feminine luxury, caprices, vices and refinements, has conceded to the woman the privilege and even the monopoly of dealing with 'spiritual' things. And it is precisely in this civilisation that we see a proliferation of 'spiritualist', spiritistic, mystic sects, in which the predominance of the feminine element is already significant in itself (the main one, the theosophical sect, was purely and simply created and managed by women, Blavatsky, Besant and, finally,

Bailey). But it is for a much more important reason that the new spiritualism appears to us as a sort of reincarnation of the ancient feminine mysteries : it is the formless escapism in confused suprasensual experiences, the promiscuity of mediumism and spiritualism, the unconscious evocation of truly 'infernal' influences and the stress laid on doctrines such as reincarnation, that confirm, in such pseudo-spiritualistic currents, the correspondence that we have already mentioned and prove that, in these misguided desires to go beyond 'materialism', the modern world has not managed to find anything that would connect it with the higher, Olympian and 'solar' traditions of Aryan spirituality.

Doesn't psychoanalysis, with the preeminence it grants to the unconscious over the conscious, the 'night', to the subterranean, atavistic, instinctive, sensual side of the human being over all that is waking life, will and true personality, confirm again exactly the ancient doctrine of the primacy of Night over Day, of the maternal, of the Darkness over forms, supposedly evanescent and irrelevant, that rise from it to light?

It must be acknowledged that these analogies, far from being extravagant or arbitrary, are based on grounds that are broad and substantial and therefore gravely disturbing, since a new 'Age of the Mothers' can only be the sign of the end of a cycle. This is not, obviously, the world to which we belong and that is in harmony with the forces of our restorative revolution. However, infiltrations and deviations can be noticed even where they would be least expected. In Germany, we could mention Klages and Bergmann, thinkers who, though Aryan, still proclaim in a strikingly extreme way gynaecocratic and 'telluric' conceptions of life. In Italy, we will just pick out two cases. Here is what can be read on page 185 of a recently published 'Inchiesta sulla Razza' ('Inquiry on Race') : "The furthest advance of humanity towards perfection is constituted by the woman. The woman really is the interpreter of the kingdom of pure spirits. She is purer and more perfect than man. And man feels an irresistible attraction towards her, the same attraction, but conscious, that a less pure being feels for the purest one". On pp. 152-153 of another book, 'Valori della Stirpe Italiana' ('Values of the Italian Race'), another layer of 'gynaecocracy' is added : "Around the woman, like the Holy Mother, the whole paradise revolves. Bosom of unnumerable lives, it is from the Mother that is born everything that lives in the world. From Night is born life, from Mother Earth that all is diffused. She is the living sacrament, just as the Bread implicitly contains the living God. The woman is thus the guardian and the symbol of race: its effects can be seen in all creatures, but it is in her that its fundamental substance is adored".

The fact that, in Italy, within the reconstructive Roman and Aryan movement, ideas of this kind can be proclaimed, even as sporadic expressions, shows to what extent the confusion of values can sometimes be carried. The antitheses defined by Bachofen are of fundamental importance for a right orientation. We have seen that the forms contained in the ancient civilisation of the Mother could allow us to identify accurately all that is crepuscular in the modern world. The values and ideals of the opposed solar 'Olympian' and virile civilisation can conversely give us, with as much accuracy, the directives for a true European reconstruction, on a really Aryan, Roman and Fascist basis, a point to which we may have the occasion to return.

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