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Bobbio raises—and as he notes, it was a question raised earlier in the debate between Einaudi and Croce—is to what extent is this *economic* right essential to the *moral* right of liberalism's defense against democracy? This is no easy question: If a person has decided that wealth is the good that he or she above all else wishes to pursue, what moral right does the puritan have to say this is wrong? Inasmuch as the many poor will *always* resent the few that are rich, how is one to distinguish legitimate moral resentment from the Nietzschean *ressentiment* of the low-minded?

This dilemma is only apparently made easier by the fact that today wealth is as powerful a threat to liberty as the masses ever were; for today wealth can pave the globe, buy elections, or procure nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons for entire nations of fundamentalist kamikazes. In such a world, it becomes plain that liberalism *and* democracy require regulation. But by whom?

Bobbio's answer is that the two regimes—liberalism and democracy—must learn to accommodate each other and become tense allies. To such a complex question, one should not expect an answer any more definite, though one wishes Bobbio had spent more time on the necessity of the *debate* between liberalism and democracy rather than on explaining the various forms of that debate. After all, what will the world's fate be if ever an evil, hypnotic, and wealthy liberal *does* wed the elusive *demos*? To put the issue in classical terms, liberty requires both Socrates and Aristophanes, the

philosopher *and* the city. For only by recognizing that theory *and* practice, philosophy *and* rhetoric each have their claims and that liberty cannot survive the domination of either one or the other, can we understand the importance of the *dialogue* and the *conflict* between liberalism and democracy.

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Il Sublime: Teorie estetiche nell'Inghilterra del Settecento

By Samuel H. Monk.

Translated by Rachele Garattini.

Introduction by Giuseppe Sertoli.

Milan: Marietti, 1991.

Samuel Holt Monk (1902-1981) published *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* in 1935 when interest in the subject was at its lowest ebb in two hundred years. Academic scholarship paid little attention to the sublime, and no modern school of poetry or criticism had found any use for it. Nor did Monk succeed in resuscitating the concept, though when a revival did happen—in the 1960s—his study was republished and honored as a trailblazer. This Italian translation of a classic work in the "history of ideas" is a testimony to its continuing value.

Monk's special virtue was to trace the concept of the Longinian sublime from its humble beginnings as a side issue in neoclassicism to its thunder-

ous romantic climax. His thesis is that the sublime unfolds progressively from Boileau and Addison, through Burke and the associationists, to its "apotheosis" in Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" in the *Critique of Judgment* and in Wordsworth's poetry. As Giuseppe Sertoli summarizes Monk's conclusions, the sublime contributes to the disintegration of classicism, the rise of emotionalism, and the transition from aesthetic objectivity to subjectivity. Monk's close historical analysis of the theory guaranteed him centrality of focus, though it cost him in other ways. He neglected the social and political background, a particularly glaring oversight with regard to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Nor did he grant sufficient attention to the plastic arts and music; Sertoli is right to complain that the chapter on painting is too much of a catalogue.

Sertoli makes important additions and corrections to Monk's thesis in a concise, penetrating introduction. One correction is utterly crucial: to take the Kantian concept as the natural culmination of the sublime, and to read it backward through the period, imposes an inaccurate teleology upon the subject which the facts of analysis readily expose. (Sertoli suggests that Monk was indebted to Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, which similarly makes Kantian philosophy the end-point of eighteenth-century thought.) In Kant's rational, ethical, late neoclassical aesthetics, the sublime is a "potentiation" of the ego, as it had been in Longinus and Addison. Challenged, the self rises superior to the object of its contemplation. This

line of reasoning runs directly counter to Burke's anticlassical notion in his *Enquiry . . . of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757): the sublime in nature and art arouses psychological terror, the strongest of the passions, and the experience of the sublime succeeds to the extent to which the ego courts its own disaster. The sublime is thus a "de-potentiation" of the ego and associated with a loss of self; in Sertoli's judgment, it figures by way of Schopenhauer in the etiology of the Freudian death instinct. Burke undermined both the classical concept of the sublime and classicism itself. Longinus had excluded fear and terror from the "noble passions" of the sublime; Boileau did not even mention them; Addison linked the sublime to grandeur, vastness, and a "pleasant wonder" at the mind's being "filled with" an object too great for its capacity. There is pleasure, to be sure, in Burke's sublime, though of a negative kind which he calls "delight", and it leaves one quaking in one's boots. The Kantian sublime is therefore no culmination or "apotheosis": it is a "reaction" to Burke and his late-eighteenth-century gothicizing disciples. (For Sertoli's pioneering essay, see Burke, *Inchiesta sul Bello e il Sublime*, ed. by Giuseppe Sertoli and Goffredo Miglietta [Palermo: Aesthetica Edizioni, 1985], reviewed in *The Eighteenth Century: A Current Bibliography* n.s. 11—for 1985 [1990]: 516).

Sertoli also argues against Monk's linking of Wordsworth and Kant on the sublime: "the central role of subjectivity is not sufficient to authorize a continuity or assimilation of perspectives." Following Neil Hertz and

Thomas Weiskel, Sertoli points out that whereas in Kant the subject saves itself by separating itself from the object; in Wordsworth the subject saves itself by identifying with it. But Sertoli praises Monk for his suggestive commentary on the fate of the sublime from the romantic period to Imagism and early Modernism. While Modernist poets and critics generally rejected the sublime as so much nineteenth-century afflatus, Monk showed that the sublime had injected itself into the notion of aesthetic (emotional) "disinterestedness". Sertoli writes: "Far from being a refusal of subjectivity, then, the imagistic objectivism is, on the contrary, a purification of it ...its sublimation." Monk had reinstated romanticism in the literary history of modernism—no mean feat in 1935 when the anti-Romanticism of Eliot and Pound was at its zenith.

Against Monk's model of an organic unfolding of the idea of the sublime, however, Sertoli prefers something on the order of *The Sublime* and its Vicissitudes: one may discover a

classical sublime and a neoclassical sublime, a gothic sublime and a romantic sublime; there is the sublime of Dennis and that of Addison, that of Burke and that of Kames, that of Kant and that of Wordsworth . . . and no one of them is the Sublime.

This is not to say that a history of the subject cannot be traced, only that such a history will be marked by "plurality" and "difference". The "history" of the sublime should confirm what David Perkins has argued in *Is Literary History Possible?* (1992): the "always unsuccessful attempt of every literary history to explain the

development of literature that it describes."

It is astonishing that the translator's name, Rachele Garattini, is not on the title page, and is only to be found on a white label pasted onto the back of it. *Traduttore—traditore?* No, translators are not always traitors. Garattini has been loyal to her chosen task and accomplished fine work with a difficult text of three hundred pages. Surely she deserves more recognition.

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Il dialogo della menzogna

By M. A. Bonfantini and A. Ponzio.
*Bari-Roma: Millelire/Stampa
Alternativa, 1993.*

This booklet is the published version of a dialogue originally held between Bonfantini and Ponzio at the *Conference on Lying, Deception and Simulation* in Naples in February 1992. This philosophical dialogue on lying (31 pages) makes its appearance as a piece of "alternative literature" with the publishers Millelire, and as such, is destined to an exceptionally wide and differentiated audience. Even more interesting is the fact that this volume has been adopted as a university course book, and, to the joy of students, all for the mere price of 1.000 lire—a provocative reply to dominant political and economic trends in Italy today, whose policies do not hesitate to penalize education.