Yeats studied the works of Swift, Berkeley, Burke and Gentile while he was revising the text of *A Vision*. He arrived at the conclusion that Gentile had derived many of his ideas from the works of Berkeley. Writing to J.M. Hone he observed:

"You have set Berkeley in his Irish world, and made him amusing, animated and intelligible. He is of the utmost importance to the Ireland that is coming into existence, as I hope to show in my introduction.* I want Protestant Ireland to base some vital part of its culture upon Burke, Swift and Berkeley. Rossi's help is of course of the first importance. Gentile and other Italian philosophers found themselves on Berkeley, and Rossi has the further advantage of being an authority on Berkeley's immediate predecessors and contemporaries".¹ The letter shows that retirement from the Senate did not mean retirement from active politics; he was thinking, even after retirement,

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* ... these two images, standing and sounding together, Swift and Berkeley, concern all those who feel a responsibility for the thought of modern Ireland that can take away their sleep*. *Essays and Introductions*, p. 397.

of a political philosophy that could revive the Ireland of the eighteenth century. He wrote to Lady Gregory: "I want to bring out a book of four plays called "My Wheels and Butterflies" - the wheels are the four introductions. Dublin is said to be full of little societies meeting in cellars and garrets. So I shall put this rhyme on a flyleaf

To Cellar and Garret
A Wheel I send
But every butterfly
To a friend.

The "wheels" are addressed to Ireland mainly - a scheme of intellectual nationalism".¹

His ideas, Yeats asserts, are neither philosophical nor complicated; they are simple and commonplace. "If the Garrets and the Cellars listen I may throw light upon the matter, and I hope if all the time I seem thinking of something else I shall be forgiven. I must speak of things that come out of the common consciousness, where every thought is like a bell with many echoes".² His ideas as the letter

². Explorations, p. 441.
shows are based upon the political philosophies of Swift and Berkeley. At first he speaks on the foundations of the state.

"I would found literature on three things which Kant thought we must postulate to make life livable - Freedom, God, Immortality ... An idea of the State which is not a preparation for those three convictions, a State founded on economics alone, would be a prison house. A State must be made like a Chartres Cathedral for the glory of God and the soul. It exists for the sake of the virtues and must pay their price. The uneconomic leisure of scholars, monks, and women gave us truth, sanctity and manners. Free power is not the denial of that part but such a conflagration or integration of that it can be grasped in a single thought". ¹ Yeats is in favour of the free power of the State because it can impose its authority on the individuals. "When I speak of the three convictions and of the idea of the State I do not mean any metaphysical or economic theory. That belief which I call free power is free because we cannot distinguish between the things believed in and the beliefs; it is something forced upon us bit by bit; as it liberates our energies we sink in on truth". ²

1. Explorations, pp. 332-35.
2. Ibid., p. 335.
He advises his countrymen to follow the principles as laid down by Swift, Berkeley and Gentile.

"Preserve that which is living and help the two Irelands, Gaelic Ireland and Anglo-Ireland, so to unite that neither shall shed its pride. Study the great problems of the world, as they have been lived in our history, the rebirth of European spirituality in the mind of Berkeley, the restoration of European order in the mind of Burke. Every nation is the whole world in a mirror, and our mirror has twice been very bright and clear. Do not be afraid to boast so long as the boast lays burdens on the boaster. Study the educational system of Italy, the creation of the philosopher Gentile, where even religion is studied not in the abstract but in the minds and lives of Italian saints and thinkers, it becomes at once part of Italian History".  

In another passage he describes how the state should be governed.

"All states depend for their health upon a right balance between the one, the Few and the Many. The One is the executive, which may in fact be more than one - the Roman

1. Explorations, p. 337.
republic had two Consuls - but must for the sake of rapid decision be as few as possible; the Few are those who through the possession of hereditary wealth, or great personal gifts, have come to identify their lives with the life of the State, whereas the lives and the ambitions of the Many are private. The Many do their day's work well, and so far from copying even the wisest of their neighbours, affect "a singularity" in action and in thought; but set them to the work of the State and every man Jack is "listed in a party" and becomes the fanatical follower of men whose characters he knows next to nothing, and from that day on puts nothing into his mouth that some other man has not already chewed and digested".  

To sum up, the head of the government should be the One (the king) who is to be advised and supported by the Few (the aristocracy). Liberty depends upon this balance between the One, the Few and the Many (the peasantry). Ireland had this system and maintained the "balance" in the eighteenth century. But this state of the "Unity of Culture" did not last long as, later on, the rule of the Many prevailed and a new class, the middle class, emerged to dominate the Irish scene. If Ireland is to achieve the "Unity of Culture" it is necessary

1. Explorations, p. 351.
to reverse the process of progression and this can be done only by following the ideas of Swift, Burke, Berkeley and Gentile.

In *The Seven Sages* he glorifies the eighteenth century Ireland and its champions of liberty. The sages proudly refer their ancestry back to the days of Swift,* Burke, Goldsmith and Berkeley. That Burke was a Whig is denied in a forceful way:

"The Fifth. Burke was a Whig
The Sixth. Whether they knew it or not, Goldsmith, and Burke, Swift and the Bishop of Cloyne
All hated Whiggery; but what is whiggery?
A levelling, rancorous, rational sort of mind
That never looked out of the eye of a saint
Or out of drunkard's eye".¹

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* "Liberty depended upon a balance within the State, like that of the "humours" in a human body, or like that "Unity of being" Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body, and for its sake Swift was prepared to sacrifice what seems to the modern man liberty itself... I remember J.F. Taylor, a great student of Swift, saying "Individual liberty is of no importance, what matters is national liberty". *Explorations*, pp. 356-57.

¹ *Collected Poems*, p. 272.
In other political poems his nationalism is dominant.

"I sought my betters: though in each
Fine manners, liberal speech
Turn hatred into a sport
Nothing said or done can reach
My fanatic heart.

Out of Ireland have we come
Great hatred, little room
Maimed us at the start
I carry from my mother's womb
A fanatic heart". ¹

The poem Parnell’s Funeral expresses his bitter remorse for the lack of Parnell's heroic character in the Irish leaders. With his death the heroic tradition has come to an end. ² Describing Parnell's Funeral* as narrated by

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* Maud Gonne told Yeats, who did not attend Parnell's funeral, that as Parnell's body was being laid down a bright star shot in the sky in the broad day light.
Maud Gonne, he refers to the myth of 'The Woman and Archer' and through a parallelism concludes that the funeral is a ritual.

"Under the Great Comedian's tomb the crowd
A bundle of tempestuous cloud is blown
About the sky; where that is clear of cloud
Brightness remains; a brighter star shoots down;
What shudders run through all that animal blood?
What is this sacrifice? Can some one there
Recall the Cretan harb that pierced a star"?

The next stanza describes the ritual:

"Rich foliage that the starlight glittered through
A frenzied crowd, and where the branches sprang
A beautiful seated boy; a sacred bow;
A woman, and an arrow on a string;

1. "The Woman who shot the Arrow.
She was, it seems, the Mother-Goddess, whose representative priestess shot the arrow at the child, whose sacrificial death symbolized the death and resurrection of the Tree-Spirit or Apollo. She is pictured upon certain Cretan coins of the fifth century B.C. as a slightly draped beautiful woman, sitting in the heart of a branching tree".

A pierced boy; image of a star laid low
That woman, the Great Mother imaging
Cut out his heart . . . . . . . . 

The slain child, like the slain vegetation god in The Waste Land is reborn. The funeral of Parnell (which coincided with the fall of a star) is ritual - "an age is the reversal of an age" - but the difference is that Parnell's soul, unlike the slain child, is not going to be reborn because the crowd is in" popular rage "in contrast to the "frenzied crowd" of the myth.

"What matter for the scene, the scene once gone:
It had not touched our lives. But popular rage
Hysterica passio dragged this quarry down
None shared our guilt; nor did we play a part
Upon a painted stage when we devoured his heart".

Yeats looks at the successors of Parnell and finds that they do not possess the noble and heroic character of the great

2. Cf. "During the quarrel over Parnell's grave a quotation from Goethe ran through the papers, describing our Irish jealousy: 'The Irish seem to me like a pack of hounds, always dragging down some noble stag'."
   Autobiographies, p. 316.
leader. If De Valera and Cosgrave had "eaten Parnell's heart" (meaning, had they inherited the noble and heroic character of Parnell), Ireland would not have suffered disintegration. Even General O'Duffy disappoints him:

"Had even O'Duffy - but I name no more -
Their school a crowd, his master a solitude". ¹

The last two lines of the poem express Yeats's admiration for Swift's political ideas and suggest that the Irish leaders should follow him as Charles Parnell did.

"Through Jonathan Swift's grove he passed, and there
Plucked bitter wisdom that enriched his blood". ²

By 1932 the events in Ireland, especially the Blue Shirts Movement, made Yeats believe that his impression of De Valera and O'Duffy was wrong and that they really were the followers of Swift. In a letter to Olivia Shakespear he wrote: "But you are right in comparing De Valera to Mussolini or Hitler". * In another letter he is more explicit.

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¹ Collected Poems, p. 320.
² Ibid., p. 320.

* Here, we must be aware of the fact that Yeats's observations on politics, especially in his letters, were always superficial and liable to fallacious generalisations. In this letter, too, he considers Hitler to be a fascist only because both Hitler and Mussolini had made an alliance between them, and united their people who earlier were frustrated and disintegrated.
"Politics are growing heroic. De Valera has forced political thought to face the most fundamental issues. A Fascist opposition (Blue Shirts Movement) is forming behind to be ready should some tragic situation develop. I find myself constantly urging the despotic rule of the educated classes as the only end to our troubles. (Let all this sleep in your ear)... Our chosen colour is blue, and the blue shirts are marching about all over the country, and their organiser tells me that it was my suggestion - a suggestion I have entirely forgotten - that made them select for their flag a red St. Paul's cross on a blue ground - all I can remember is that I have always denounced green and commended blue (the colour of my early book covers).\textsuperscript{1}

The next letter describes his meeting with O'Duffy: *The great secret is out - a convention of blue shirts - National Guards - have received their new leader with the Fascist salute and the new leader announces reform of parliament as his business.*

When I wrote to you, the Fascist organiser of the blue shirts had told me that he was about to bring to see me the man he had selected for leader that I might talk my

\textsuperscript{1} Letters of W.B. Yeats, (Ed. A. Wade), np. 811-12.
2. Yeats met O'Duffy only once in his life.
anti-democratic philosophy. I was ready, for I had just rewritten for the seventh time the part of A Vision that deals with the future. The leader turned out to be general O'Duffy, head of the Irish police for twelve years, and a famous organiser ... Italy, Poland, Germany, then perhaps Ireland. Doubtless I shall hate it (though not so much as I hate Irish democracy) but it is September and we must not behave like the gay young sparks of May or June.¹

He praised the Blue Shirts movement, of course, with some reservations as the quoted letter shows, and hoped that it could replace the hateful Irish democracy and usher in the dawn of a new era, an era in which the old Ireland could be revived.

"When nations are empty up there at the top, When order has weakened or faction is strong, Time for us all to pick out a good time, Take to the roads and go marching along March, march - How does it run? O any old words to a tune".²

But his attitude changed as soon as he saw that fascism (nazism in Germany) was associated with cruelty, tyranny,

² Collected Poems, p. 323.
exploitation and murder of the innocent. The camps of the Jews in Germany and genocide in Italy shocked him and he came to realize that Hitler and Mussolini were not the saviours of mankind.

It has been customary for critics\(^1\) either to ignore Yeats's inclination to fascism or to speak very lightly of it. Professor Jeffares considers it to be of no importance: "The question of Yeats's fascism has been raised by several critics, but the essentially Irish trait of using a theory for a plaything must not be forgotten, especially in Yeats's case"\(^2\) What is objectionable in Jeffare's conclusion is the word "plaything".\(^3\) Do the letters and the Diary Written in 1930 not reveal that Yeats took fascism and Blue Shirts movement, of course for

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2. A.G. Stock, Yeats: His Poetry and Thought, p. 213.
3. T.R. Henn writes: "I do not excuse the brief association with General O'Duffy's Blue-shirts, except to suggest that he was not alone in believing, at that moment of history, that the discipline of fascist theory might impose an order upon a disintegrating world. Though indeed nothing could be farther from Yeats's mind than its violent and suppressive practice", The Lonely Tower p. 344.
a brief period, seriously? He did really take a serious
view of the Blue Shirts movement as it raised a hope for
the aristocratic Ireland. It is very difficult to distinguish
between the Yeats of Fascism and the "true Yeats". O'Brien,
too, is off the point when he refutes the arguments of
Jeffares. "I cannot see", he observes, "on what grounds
we are to regard the Yeats who began to sneer at the Blue-
shirts when they proved a flop, as being more "real" than
the Yeats who was excited about them when he thought that
they might win. It was the same Yeats, strongly drawn to
Fascism, but no lover of hopeless causes".

The true Yeats, I think, is the writer of the
lines in the letter to Olivia Shakespear: "Italy, Poland,
Germany, then perhaps Ireland. Doubtless I shall hate it
(though not so much as I hate Irish democracy)". Yeats's

1. Commenting on a letter written on 27th February 1934,
Jeffares writes: "This ironic attitude to the Blue
Shirts reveals the true Yeats, detached and merely
playing with his thoughts, except for the intervals
when he wanted to achieve complete directness and
accuracy". W.B. Yeats, Man and the Poet, p. 279.

2. 'Passion and Cunning' in In Excited Reverie, (Ed. Jeffares
and Cross) p. 257.

* Vide infra.
inclination to fascism was not without unmixed feeling. He, certainly, hated it but hailed it as it was, in his opinion, going to replace the Irish democracy, the object of greater hatred. He became an admirer of aristocracy with the turn of the twentieth century. He was frustrated to see aristocracy losing its importance in the Irish Free State. When he started reading philosophy for the revision of *A Vision*, he found that Swift, Berkeley, Vico and Gentile, all held, more or less, similar views on the concept and nature of the state and its relation to the individual. He, too, held similar views. The Blue Shirts Movement, he felt, was inspired by the ideas of those great writers and, so, he welcomed it.

"There is so little in our stocking that we are ready at any moment to turn it inside out, and how can we not feel emulous when we see Hitler juggling with his sausage of stocking. Our chosen colour is blue ...History is very simple - the rule of the many, then the rule of the few, day and night, night and day for ever, while in small disturbed nations day and night race."¹ He wrote about O'Duffy that he was striving for the "Unity of Culture" in Ireland: "He seemed to me a plastic man that I could not judge whether he would prove plastic to the opinions of

others, obvious political current, or to his own will ("unity of being").

Yeats's fascism, we may conclude, was not the fascism of Mussolini, Hitler and other fascist leaders; it was a fascism having its origin in the philosophies of Swift, Berkeley and Burke. When he found that fascism in practice proved itself harmful to individual liberty, he dissociated himself from it. The remark of O'Brien that Yeats was not a lover of "hopeless causes" is far from true. Yeats consistently held the same views throughout his life and remained a champion of aristocracy, certainly a hopeless cause in the modern age.

Yeats's disillusionment with the Blue Shirts movement and fascism is expressed in the poem Church and State. The dream that the might of the Church and the State could properly deal with the mob is shattered. He finds that both the Church and the State are with the mob:

"That were a cowardly song, Wander in dreams no more; What if the Church and the State Are the mob that howls at the door".  

* Vide infra.
Bidding farewell to fascism Yeats remained silent on politics for some time. But he was too active to retire from public life and, as he himself did not like passivity, he started writing poetry again that expressed his political ideas. However, he remained cautious enough, perhaps out of bitterness caused by frustration or because no political ideology suited him, to identify himself with it. He refused to recommend the name of Ossietsky for the Nobel prize. "Do not try to make a politician of me", he wrote to Ethel Mannin, "even in Ireland I shall never think I be that again - as my sense of reality deepens, and I think it does with age, my horror at the cruelty of governments grows greater, and if I did what you want, I should seem to hold one form of government more responsible than the other, and that would betray my convictions. Communist, Fascist, nationalist, clerical, anticlerical, are all responsible according to the number of their victims. I have not been silent; I have used the only vehicle I possess - verse. If you have my poems by you, look up a poem called The Second Coming. It was written some sixteen or seventeen years ago and foretold what is

* Ethel Mannin had requested Yeats to recommend the name of the poet Ossietsky, who was imprisoned in the Nazi Camp, so that he could be released.
happening. I have written of the same thing again and again since. This will seem little to you with your strong practical sense, for it takes fifty years for a poet's weapons to influence".¹

In the middle of the nineteen-thirties the situation of the western world deteriorated and people began to doubt the effectiveness of the League of Nations. Yeats could not remain aloof from the political scene and to him the future of mankind became a growing concern in the darkness of political propaganda and ulterior motives of political leaders. The problem of man's existence in the present crisis of values is the dominant theme of Yeats's last poems:

"Those banners come to bribe or threaten
Or whisper that man's a fool".²

When the horror of annihilation has made man hopeless, what solution has the poet to offer? The solution that Yeats offers is the tragic joy (the "abstract joy" of Meditations in Time of Civil War), the acceptance of defeat and confidence in recreation, that the things which are destroyed today will be built again. Louis Lazuli describes

the crisis and the role of the poet in the present age. It originated from a letter of Edmund Dulac and a talk with Frank O'Connor. The poet is confronted with the criticism of some women who are sick with "the palette and fiddle bow / Of poets that are always gay". The criticism makes the poet meditate on the rise and fall of civilizations. Civilization, he thinks, must rise and fall whether man likes it or not:

"All perform their tragic play

Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages
And all the drop-scenes drop at once
Upon a hundred thousand stages
It cannot grow by an inch or ounce".  

The artist is aware of the truth that the gyres of history must run "dying each other's life, living each other's death". The artist, like the two Chinamen carved in the lapis lazuli, must remain gay because

"All things fall and are built again
And those that build them again are gay".  

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3. Ibid., p. 339.
The other important element in Yeats's later poetry is "Irishry". As he grew older he became more and more Irish and offended many of his English friends; even the friendship of Olivia Shakespear and Lady Dorothy Wellesley could not mitigate his hatred of England. Dr. Malony's book on the forged diaries of Roger Casement infuriated him. He wrote to Ethel Mannin: "I am in a rage. I have just got a book published by the Talbot Press called The Forged Casement Diaries. It is by a Dr. Malony I know in Newyork and he has spent years collecting evidence. He proved that the diaries, supported to prove Casement "a Degenerate" and successfully used to prevent an agitation for his reprieve, were forged. Casement was not a very able man but he was gallant and unselfish, and had surely his right to leave what would have been considered an unsullied name. I long to break up my rule against politics and call these men criminals but I must not. Perhaps a verse may come to me, now or a year later". ¹

Two poems came out of rage. The first poem Roger Casement is a defence of Roger Casement* that he really


* Roger Casement, the British Consular agent in Germany, was charged with treason by the British Government and hanged in 1916.
was a guiltless man and that his diaries, proving him to be a homosexual, were forged:

"Come Tom and Dick, come all the troop
That cried it far and wide,
Come from the forger and his desk
Desert the perjurer's side;
Come speak your bit in public
That some amends be made
To this most gallant gentleman
That is in quick-lime laid". ¹

But the other poem The Ghost of Roger Casement with the refrain - "The Ghost of Roger Casement / Is beating on the door" - is violent and attacking. Here Yeats's hatred for England has come out with all force.

"John Bull has stood for Parliament,
A dog must have his day,
The country thinks no end of him,
For he knows how to stay,
At a bean feast or a banquet,
That all must hang their trust
Upon the British Empire
Upon the Church of Christ". ²

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¹ Collected Poems, p. 352.
² Ibid., p. 353.
Reference to India makes John Bull, the English nation, a symbol of tyranny and exploitation:

"John bull has gone to India
And all must pay him heed
For histories are there to prove
That none of another breed
Has had a like inheritance
Or sucked such milk as he". ¹

In the same vein he wrote The O'Rahilly to refute the learned historians. True accounts of the past, according to him, are found in the sages, ballads and legends of the common folk.

"Sing of the O'Rahilly
Do not deny his right
Sing a "the" before his name
Allow that he, despite
All those learned historians
Established it for good,
He wrote out that word himself
He christened himself with blood". ²

Statesmen and journalists, he contemptuously says, equally distort the facts:

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2. Ibid., p. 354.
"A statesman is an easy man,
He tells his lies by rote
A journalist makes up his lies
And takes you by the throat
So stay at home and drink your beer
And let the neighbours vote". 1

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