LAST PHASE OF SHELLEY'S THEORY OF POETRY

With Special Reference to His Definition of Poetry as "the Expression of the Imagination"

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APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

The philosophers of the eighteenth century had never wanted their antitheses in their philosophizing. From his predecessors Shelley learned and borrowed most of them, often translating them into his own language. He was much interested in a number of these antitheses current through the eighteenth century. So it is not too much to say that no one could not sufficiently understand any of his ideas unless he should refer to its opposed one. A reader of his writings would meet with the antitheses such as imagination and reason or fancy, heart and head, Love and Necessity, feelings and reasoning, calculation, logic, and the like. And the most important and fundamental of these in Shelley's thought may be the contrast between reason and imagination. It is so much that the turning-point in Shelley's mental history is to be marked at the very time when he came to discover the distinction between reason and imagination, on one hand, and claimed the exclusive superiority of the latter to acquaint us the knowledge of the real nature of things, whether poetical, moral or philosophical, on the other. A clear knowledge of the contrast, therefore, between reason and imagination is the key to understanding of Shelley. In terms of this our subsequent study should be qualified.

Our purpose in this paper is that by making clear Shelley's idea of imagination as contrasted with the reason, we are to elucidate his ideas especially of poetry (defined as "the expression of the imagination") in his writings—the ideas that were not always peculiar to him but were not infrequently shared with other writers.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

(l) Definition of Poetry as "the Expression of the Imagination"

Shelley had tried to describe poetry in the terms to be considered as most fitted and natural to express and characterize some important psychological process of the poetic creation. The most typical of this way of description is to appear in A Defence of Poetry (1821), the essay which seems most frankly and comprehensively to reveal the author's final position. Here immediately after a classification of two kinds of mental action: reason and imagination, he comes to a definition of poetry: "Poetry, in general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the imagination'." (Shawcross, p.121) To consider and elucidate the purport of this phrase in one of his last essays with that antithesis (between two mental operations) made in the opening paragraph in mind, is, I think, the best way to comprehend his final and genuine idea of poetry.

Before that, it may be helpful to gather from our poet's writings the phrases with the similar meaning to that which he used for his definition of poetry in the essay in question. And it is significant that the series of these similar phraseologies would oftener recur in his later writings. They are as follows:
(1) Shelley's poem—"a mad effusion of this morning!" (April 28, 1811: Ingpen, i, 66)
(2) "Your (Hitchener's) eloquence comes from the soul: it has the impassionateness of nature." (Jan. 2, 1812: op. cit., i, 204)
(3) Story of the "passions of human mind." (Jan. 2, 1812: op. cit., i, 209)
(4) His own Poetry—"the overflowings of the mind this morning" and "a picture of my feelings." (Jan. 7, 1812: op. cit., i, 215)
(5) —"lineaments in the picture of my mind" and as written "when I feel." (Feb. 14, 1812: op. cit., i, 257)
(6) —"a picture of a mind." (Feb. 24, 1812: op. cit., i, 264)
(7) —"faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them." (Jan. 2, 1813: op. cit., i, 377)
(8) —"the vision of a delirious and distempered dream." (March 16, 1814: op. cit., i, 420)
(9) *Alastor* (1815, autumn) —as "allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind." (Hutchinson, p. 14)
(10) Christ's expression—"the overflowing enthusiasm of a poet." (*On Christianity*, ? 1815, Shawcross, p. 89)
(11) *Mont Blanc* (1816) —"an undisciplined overflowing of the soul." (Hutchinson, p. 536)
(12) *The Revolt of Islam* (1817) —"a story of human passion in its most universal character." (Hutchinson, p. 32)
(13) *Juno* (statue) —"the expression of emotion." (1819, Shawcross, p. 31)
(14) Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
    Bird thou never wert,
    That from Heaven, or near it,
    Prouest thy full heart
    *In profuse strains of unpreameditated art.*
    (To a Skylark, 1820; Italics mine)
(15) *Charles I* — "the birth of severe and high feelings." (Feb. 22, 1821: Ingpen, ii, 857)
(16) Poetry — "the expression of the imagination." (*Defence of Poetry*, completed by March 21, 1821: Shawcross, p. 121)
    — "the unpreameditated song." (*Loc. cit.*)
(17) — "overflowings of a mind." (Aug. 16, 1821: Ingpen, ii, 906)
(18) *Eipsychidion* — "an idealised history of my life and feelings." (June 18, 1822: op. cit., ii, 976)

From these various kinds of expression it may be obvious that Shelley uses the term of the "imagination" in defining poetry quite synonymously with the terms such as heart, soul, mind, feelings, passions, emotions, etc., etc.; that by the "imagination" he understands something equivalent to or at least akin to the emotional parts of human mind. But on the properties of this mental faculty we shall dwell in the later chapter.

(ii) Historical Survey of the Imagination

(1) In considering the history of the term *imagination* (in this paper we fix
our attention only on the rôle assigned to it in poetry), we must not forget to refer at least to the three terms “Genius”, “Moral Sense” and lastly “Imagination” itself; for the idea of the imagination in the course of its development seems to have absorbed and assimilated many of notions, especially, those mentioned above, upon which, therefore, in the course of our study we shall make a comment at need.

It is needless to say that the term imagination has a long history. Etymologically, it is an adoption of French, an adaptation of Latin imaginationem (noun accusative of imaginatio = “imagination, fancy,” a derivative from the verb imaginari, -are= “to picture to oneself, imagine,” or noun imago = “image, figure, a likeness, idea.” And until the time of the Romanticists generally the term had been used synonymously or rather confusedly with the fancy, a contraction of M.E. fantasie introduced through O.F. fantasie (< Late L. phantasia), from Gk. ἡ φανάστασις, which in Platonic use signified “the image-making faculty,” and which was confined to the lower class in the hierarchical order.

Now we return to England. In The Advancement of Learning (1605, Book II) Francis Bacon (1561–1626) conceived man’s understanding to be composed of the three main parts: memory, philosophy and imagination. Assigning history to his memory and philosophy to his reason, he allotted to his imagination “Poesy,” which he styled “Feigned History.” (E.D. Jones, ed., English Critical Essays: XVI–XVIIIth Centuries, Oxford, W. C., 88–9) Apparently Bacon recognized a creative power of imagination in poetry or Feigned History, but he held it to be the organ not of truth, but of mere fiction.

Next, the empiricist Hobbes (1588–1679) took a view that poetry was to be the production of education, judgment and memory, and reduced fancy (equated in him with imagination) to the humbler use for ornamenting their construction. (Answer to Davenant, 1950) In Leviathan (1651) he dwelt upon the rôle of imagination and arrived at the conclusion that it was but “a fiction of the mind, ”or a compounding power, by which man could compound “the image of his own person with the image of the actions of another,” and imagine himself a Hercules or an Alexander.

The speaking contemptuously of the imagination had been long a convention through the years of philosophical empiricism and literary neo-classicism. John Milton (1608–74) ranked the imagination among “many lesser faculties” (than Reason) in the soul. In his Paradise Lost (1667, V. 100–16) the faculty was viewed with suspicion. The Fancy or imagination was made to “serve Reason as chief.” This attitude lingered until the time of Dr. Johnson (1709–84) who then warned us that Imagination was a “licentious faculty, unsusceptible of limitations and impatient of restraint, ”and that “all predominance of fancy (synonymous with imagination) over reason” was “a degree of insanity.” Once on May 10, 1774, he told his bosom friend Boswell that Fancy had always to operate “in subordination to Reason.” He goes on, “We may take Fancy for a companion, but follow Reason as our guide. We may allow Fancy to suggest certain ideas in certain places; but Reason must always be heard, when she tells us, that those ideas and those places have
no natural or necessary relation.” (Boswell’s Life of Johnson, O. S. A., 561)

The Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) was one of the pioneers who contributed much to the establishment of Moral Sense or Taste as the standard of morals and aesthetics. From the close connection between the Shaftesburies and John Locke, it may be inferred that Shaftesbury entered upon a philosophical career as a disciple of Locke; but he arrived at the quite opposed conclusion. By the words Moral Sense (i. e. Taste) he understood the mental power capable of perceiving the ideals, philosophical, moral and aesthetical. To him poetry was indeed nothing else but a Fiction or Fable (Characteristics, etc., 1711, i, 142), but, nevertheless, it comprehended all reality—poetical, plastic Truth. (Op. cit., i, 146) He did not however allude to imaginative truth. He also had a great idea of Genius, which in his view sufficiently developed itself when freed from all kinds of limitation. Later in the Pleasures of the Imagination (1744), a didactic poem of Mark Akenside (1721–70) who had a mental affiliation to Shaftesbury there may be seen an elaborated unification of Moral Sense and imagination.

Generally speaking, in expounding the pleasures of the imagination Joseph Addison (1672–1719) was the heir both of Bacon and Hobbes. He accepted the view of poetry as a “Feigned History” and at the same time he recommended “the Fairy Way of Writing” (famous phrase of Dryden (1631–1700)), in which “the poet quite loses the sight of Nature, and entertains his reader’s imagination” with the supernatural beings (This is the Addisonian way of answer to the “men of cold fancies and philosophical dispositions” who “object to this kind of poetry, that it has not probability enough to affect the imagination.” Cf. The Spectator, No. 419, 1712); while he conceived the imagination as a compelling power. His papers on the “Pleasures of the Imagination” (The Spectator, Nos. 411–21) shows that he, just like his mentors, did not distinguish the two faculties of fancy and imagination, using both terms synonymously or rather indiscriminately. Though his imagination or fancy was but an image-making faculty, there is a passage in which he admitted that imagination had “something in it like creation.” (No. 421) By assigning the free activities to the imagination he could pass beyond the narrow limitations Bacon and Hobbes set up to the power.

Adam Smith’s (1723–90) ethics of sympathy and benevolence gives an important rôle to the imagination, by which we can put ourselves in the place of another and make his pains and pleasures our own. Such a sympathetic and benevolent theory of imagination as inculcated by this scholar and his followers was later to be adopted by Shelley and developed thoroughly in his doctrine of sympathetic love and imagination.

In the course of its development the imagination had absorbed into itself and assimilated the idea of the innate and natural endowment as best expressed in the faith in Genius. (We have to distinguish between “man of genius” and “man’s genius,” to the latter of which we are referring.) An earlier champion of the cult was Edward Young (1683–1765), an adherent of the view that poetry was true and not “fictitious,” and that it was what overflowed spontaneously from the Author’s Mind. (Preface to The Complaint, or Night Thoughts,
1742-5) His consistent preference of Genius to the mere learning and rules, and a bold assertion that "there is something in poetry beyond prose-reason" (in the Conjectures on Original Composition, 1759, Jones, op. cit., 279-80), seemed to pave the way for the Romantic theory of the imagination. (2)

With the coming of the Romantic Period the theory of imagination entered upon a new stage of vigorous development. By the time of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, as we have noted, many of philosophers and poets had already had a considerably clear notion of the importance of imagination in poetry and aesthetics, allotted it a spontaneous activity, and linked it with the notion of genius and originality grounded firmly upon the cult of natural and innate endowment. And now the creativeness of imagination and the validity of its creations were to be definitely recognized and claimed in good earnest.

As to the claim for the imaginative freedom and creativeness in poetry we may find its earlier utterance in the Fifth Act of A Midsummer Night's Dream (c. 1595) of William Shakespeare (1564-1616). Here he brings together lovers, madmen and poets in the same group; for they have alike "such seething brains, / Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend/ More than cool reason ever comprehends." "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet" are all composed "of imagination." Imagination here is used in a wider sense, including also the "fantasies." But the term in the subsequent lines is limited to the designation of "the creative faculty of the mind."

And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. (V. i. 4-8, 14-7)

But in spite of this or that good example the spirit of the age that followed leaned much towards the empiricism in philosophy, towards the limitation of the rôle assigned to the imagination in neo-classicism in literature.

Before him without any reference to the creative imagination Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) proclaimed that a poet was a maker; in 1710 in the chapter on "Soliloquy," Shaftesbury made the Poet a "second Maker." (Op. cit., i, 207) But their main aim was but to defend a poet and poetry against the abuses charged upon them. Dryden recognized a freer exercise of imagination and gave it to an heroic poet. (Essay of Heroic Play) In the Discourses (1769-91) of Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) we find a juxtaposition, or rather an identification of genius and imagination as the source of true poetry. (Discourses, 15)

It was against reason and empiricism that the Romanticists revolted. Whenever they were speculating and theorizing anything, they were always aware of those opposed antitheses which originally belonged to the Empiricists. They defended the reality and creative activity of imagination against reason, rejecting the latter or at least subordinating it to the imagination. Poetic genius was always given a higher significance than learning and talents. The Romanticists agreed that imagination was the only power of apprehending the reality—the reality which was essentially spiritual and ideal, not mechan-
ical, nor mathematical. Even Nature itself was not like a watch, but it was not only the object of imaginative contemplation but also a poet and imagination. In commenting on his impressions which he received from Mont Blanc, Shelley informed his friend Thomas Love Peacock: “Nature was the poet, whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest.” (The Letters of P. B. Shelley, Ingpen, ed., ii, 510)

William Wordsworth (1770–1850), one of the greatest predecessors of English Romanticism, was fully convinced that genius (in a narrower sense of the word) was much the same as imagination to enable us to commune with the Power: “Every great poet in the highest exercise of his genius must call forth and communicate power.” A cult of the validity and truth of the imagination the poet reveals in The Excursion (published in Aug. 1814):

principles of truth
Which the imaginative Will upholds
In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
With her minute and speculative pains,
Opinion, ever changing! (IV, 1127–32)

With these we may compare the lines in Shelley’s Epipsychidion (11, 89–90): the imaginative soul—“too deep/For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.” In Wordsworth’s opinion in the Preface to The Second Edition of The Lyrical Ballads (1800) all good poetry is nothing else but “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Poetical Works of Wordsworth, Hutchinson, ed., 735, 740), in other words, the self-expression of the true imagination and emotions; and lastly, alluding to Aristotle, he tells us: “Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing; it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative.” (Op. cit., 737)

We may find in Coleridge (1772–1834) the view of imagination in its most perfect and finished form. Most of his later writings on poetry and imagination are the answer to what he calls the “mechanical philosophy.” Against such a philosophical system he defends the imagination as the power which always corresponds to and communes with the true reality, and claims the reality of its creations.

In 1817 Coleridge published Biographia Literaria, a manifesto of all his creeds. In the book he considers the Imagination to be primary and secondary. He asserts that the primary Imagination is to be not only the essential agent in human perception of truth but the active and creative power in poetry. (Shawcross, i, 202) And next the secondary Imagination is considered as “identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation.” And then followed that famous contrast between the secondary Imagination and Fancy. To Coleridge Fancy seems to be something connected with Understanding, Memory and association, though freed from “the order of time and space.” (Loc. cit.) His Fancy is, therefore, identical with the inseparable fancy and imagination of Hobbes and the Empiricists. His secondary Imagination, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of higher and intuitive reason—the “Reason in her most exalted
mood.” (Wordsworth's phrase in *The Prelude*, XIV, 1805, 1.192) Elsewhere in the essay *On Poetry or Art* he judges that the nature(or poetry) thus created by this active and true imagination must be the *natura naturans* (“nature in the higher sense”), a living, a becoming process, rather than the *natura naturata* (“the mere nature”). (Op.cit., ii, 257) Shelley's phrase: “living Form among the Dead” echoes such a conviction.

In 1844 Leigh Hunt (1784–1859), one of Shelley's intimate friends, comes to the conviction that poetry, considered not only as “poetic feeling” but as “the operation of that feeling,” is “the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity.” (E. D. Jones, ed., *XIXth Century English Critical Essays*, W.C., 254)

With this simple comment on Hunt we must end our brief sketch. Our story of the developing idea of imagination, though quite rough and incomplete, would throw some lights upon our subsequent study, serving to form some idea of the circumstance under which Shelley placed himself when he began his speculation and composition of poetry.

CHAPTER II. EARLY DAYS OF REASON

Votary of Reason (Ingpen, i, 91). —

Shelley describes his personal career as a writer and thinker in a series of letters to William Godwin. According to him he was first fascinated by the Gothic romance, and himself became a writer of the romances like *Zastrozzi* (published in June, 1810) and *St. Irvyne* (published in December, 1810, at the age of eighteen). Books of ancient magic, and those of chemistry and biology did not fail to attract him. They would take him to the world of wonder and mystery, rather than to the realm of science. And the time came next when from these rather peaceful, happy and pleasant days he had to approach to and familiarize himself with the philosophies of Locke, Hume and Thomas Reid. But, he writes, he did not “truly think and feel” until he read Godwin's *Political Justice* (the first edition, 1793, which he recommends to read), which had been largely influential among the young people of the days. From a perusal, he continues, of this inestimable book, he rose “a wiser and a better man;” and he was no longer “the votary of romance:"

I was no longer the votary of romance; till then I had existed in an ideal (i.e. visionary) world—now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussions of reason.”


About this time he was also a diligent reader of the French authors—D'Holbach, Helvétius, Condorcet, Volney, Voltaire and Rousseau. Shelley reports his reading of D'Holbach's *Le Système de la Nature* (a manifesto of the strict materialism), commenting on it as “a work of uncommon powers.” (Op.cit., i, 315) His works written then echo the opinions and phraseologies of these writers. *Necessity of Atheism* and *Queen Mab* are the good examples.
Shelley and Godwin.—

It was William Godwin (1756-1836) that most interested and influenced him about this time and perhaps more or less through his life. Godwin was a philosopher, atheist and radicalist, standing by the extreme Whig party. To the young Shelley this philosopher is “the moderator of my enthusiasm,” “the personal exciter and strengthener of my virtuous habits” and a man “under whose actual guidance my very thoughts have hitherto been arranged.” (To Godwin, Jan. 16, 1812: Ingpen, i, 221–2) He ordered and read the works of this great philosopher and novelist—Political Justice, Caleb Williams, St. Leon, etc., the first of which seemed especially to attract his interest. “You know that in most points I agree with you. As I see you in ‘Political Justice’, I agree with you. Your ‘Enquirer’ is replete with speculations, in which I sympathize.” (Op. cit., i, 345) Shelley's writings written in those days show unmistakable influence of the philosopher's Political Justice which is known as the philosophical representative of English radicalism. Shelley's enthusiasm for this great man resulted partly in his second marriage in December, 1816, with Mary, a daughter of Godwin (and his first wife Mary Wollstonecraft); to Shelley his second wife born a child on January 24, 1816, who was then named William after his grand-father. (Op. cit. i, 454n., 458)

Thus our poet in those days came to share with this mentor many opinions, social, political and philosophical. In a letter to Godwin, for example, he seemed to make his “feelings and reasonings” correspond with what Godwin's were. (Jan. 3, 1812: op. cit., i, 211) In reasoning the soul's immortality he would claim the support of Godwin's reason. And he writes to a female friend: “We will reason, and abide by the result. I shall get Godwin's opinion of this when I can.” (To Hitchener, Jan. 20, 1812: op. cit., i, 232) He gives an answer to Godwin's disapprobation of his enterprise of Irish Campaign in a Godwinian way of argument: that “when you reprove me, reason speaks; I acquiesce in her decisions.” (March 8, 1812: op. cit., i, 270–1)

Shelley on Newton and Locke.—

In addition to Godwin Shelley in his youth would enroll the names of Locke (1632–1704) and Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) in the list of those for whom he had great respect. Though a little while, he seems to have accepted the principles of mind and matter by Locke and Newton (June, 1822: Ingpen, i, 336) and cherished the view that the whole human thought was to be built up from the ideas which entered mind from sensation and reflection. He reported his female friend Miss Hitchener (to whom he spoke as “Trinity of my Essence” or “influencer of my Usefulness” —op. cit., i, 274, 179) that Locke rejected the innate ideas from his speculation. (June 11, 25; August 19, 1811: op. cit., i, 91, 106, 136) In Locke's proof of “the non-existence of innate ideas” he had a special interest. He writes:

For instance...the non-existence of innate ideas is proved by Locke; he challenges any one to find an idea which is innate. This is conclusive. If no ideas are innate, then all ideas must take their origin subsequent to the transmutation of the soul. In consequence of this indisputable truth, intellect varies but in the impressions with which casualty or inattention has marked it. (To E. Hitchener, Aug. 19, 1811: op. cit., i, 136)
About ten months later he talks as if he were a supporter of Lockean philosophy:

Let us suppose that some half-witted philosopher should assert that the earth was the centre of the universe, or that idea could enter the human mind independently of sensation or reflexion. This man would assert what is demonstrably incorrect: he would promulgate a false opinion. (June, 1812, A Letter to Lord Ellenborough: op. cit., i, 336)

The truth of Newtonian system and Lockean philosophy Shelley accepted as indisputable. He claimed that “the truths of astronomy demonstrated by Newton have superseded astrology.” (June, 1812: op. cit., i, 325) And again on March 18, 1812, Shelley felt it “indescribably painful to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science, with Newton and Locke, without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so opposite.” (To Godwin: op. cit., 286)

Inquiry into Human Reason: on The Necessity of Atheism and Queen Mab. —

Shelley as a votary of reason finds his way of expression both in prose and poetry: The Necessity of Atheism and Queen Mab. First the reasoned pamphlet was written by February 9, 1811, and appeared on February 13 of the same year. It is a recapitulation of the scheme of John Locke and David Hume and other Empiricists. Here the author thinks much of a clearer demonstration, regarding the senses and Reason as the indispensable touchstone and judge to the human happiness and virtue. As the Argument he prints on the title-page of this collaborated pamphlet with his friend T. J. Hogg a quotation from Francis Bacon’s De Augmentis Scientiarum (Advancement of Learning, published in English, 1605, completed and translated into Latin, 1623): Quod clara et perspicua demonstratione careat pro vero habere mens omnino requit humana. (Trans.: Human mind never permits us to judge as true what lacks a clear and perspicuous demonstration.) With this argument in mind Shelley seemed to start his career as a writer and inquirer into God, Nature, Creation, Mind and Man.

This pamphlet he had printed and distributed its copies to the authorities celestial and mundane, “wishing that Reason should decide on the case at issue.” (Ingpen, i, 220) Hence Shelley’s miserable expulsion from Oxford.

Two years later in February, 1813, Shelley finished his first ambitious poem. The title of the book is Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem, with Notes. It is a didactic poem treating of the grand topics of “the Past, the Present, and the Future.” (Op. cit., i, 358 and n.) In printing the poem in the summer of 1813, he prefixes to it a motto from Voltaire’s Correspondance: ECRASEZ L’INFAME! It is a proclamation of a Radicalist who proposes the social reformation by subjecting himself to the dictates of the steady reason. Shelley seems to pride himself on the composition of Mab. How much he was interested in the poem is made us known only by the fact that the poet named his first child Ianthee (who was born in July, 1813, the very year when the poem was published) after the dutiful female disciple of the hierophant Fairy
Mab. (Op. cit., i, 408 and n.) Though the description of the poem is airy and beautiful, yet in the text and its appended Philosophical Notes, too-long and bulky incongruously to the text, we will find out various combinations of those ideas which are often mutually contradictory, which is the result partly from his careless or immature treatment of the manifold opinions.

**Concept of Reason.**

By the term *reason* Shelley understands the principle of analysis and deductions, and that its proper province is material and physical knowledge, which rests upon the mechanical principle of Necessity or the causation; it is dominant therefore in ordinary logic, mathematics, and mechanics. In 1812, Shelley speaks of the "deduction" (To William Godwin, Jan. 16, 1812: Ingpen, i, p. 221; cf. i, 262) and "the close analysis of reasoning." (To Hitchener, Jan. 29, 1812: op. cit., i, 245) He would say, "People should, by subjecting them to rational analysis, produce an unanimity founded on reason." (March 8, 1812: op. cit., i, 272) Later in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821) he defines the mental faculty in contrast with its opposed faculty of the imagination. The opening page of the essay reads: that the faculty chiefly consists in analyzing things, enumerating quantities; regarding the relations of things merely as relations; and inferring the cause from the effect and *vice versa*. (Shawcross, p. 120) Reason is applicable to the mechanical world of necessity, of time and place.

It must be noted by the way that it had been in those days a commonplace to link the reason with man's moral ideals—"Virtue, liberty and happiness." Shelley was no exception in doing so. (Cf. Ingpen, op. cit., i, 245)

We have now to speak of Shelley's attitude towards the reason. In his early days he conceived the reason was "necessary to Man" (Ingpen, i, 170); that it was the most essential to the sound operation of man's mind and the moral improvement; to him the reason was "the light of the sun." (June, 1812: op. cit., i, 333) By the way it must be noted that the phrase is quite contrasting with that passage in his later letter to Ollier, ? March, 1821, in which he says that the Imagination is the Sun of life, contemning the reason as the moon merely reflecting the borrowed light from the sun. He says that man, to be greatly good, should try to reason, and become "a man of great reasoning power." (Op. cit., i, 200) Shelley surrenders himself to "the steady ray of reason and common sense" (To Lord Ellenborough, June, 1812: op. cit., i, 327); he hopes the time comes soon when they (Hitchener and he) might "write, and talk, and hypothesize, theorize, and reason." (Jan. 20, 1812: op. cit., i, 228) He would also urge his friend Hogg to act "under the guidance of reason" and "think, reason, methodize." (?Dec., 1811: op. cit., i, 185, 186) And in the same vein in a letter to William Godwin, he cries: "Let Reason, then, be arbiter between us." (Op. cit., i, 346) Applause of the reason as seen above is the chief note characteristic of the earlier writings of Shelley.

**Truth and Reason** (Ingpen, i, 88).—

We come to consider the Reason which is both a cognitive faculty and man's moral standard. What had really concerned Shelley was the discovery of the real truth. He strived to groove his way towards the aquisition of real
knowledge. There was once the time when he was seduced by the system of material philosophy and its truth apprehended through the rational, logical, and mathematical process. Our poet stressed upon the knowledge started from and grounded on the sense-impressions, assuming an acceptance of the Lockean non-existence of the innate ideas. If all the ideas are derived from the senses (sense-perception: *op. cit.*, i, 91), the senses must be "the only inlets of knowledge." (*Op. cit.*, i, 142)

The truth must be discoverable by the reason; it must be what can bear "the test of reason" (*op. cit.*, i, 382) and the "rational proof;" and it should be those really "demonstrated." (*Op. cit.*, i, 333) Such a truth is nothing but Shelley's God. On June 6, 1811, for example, he informs Miss Hitchener, his girl friend, whom he would call a "sister of my soul" in his early letters to her: "I know that you, like myself, are a devotee at the shrine of Truth. Truth is my God." (*Op. cit.*, i, 90) This Truth means not only the truth discoverable by Reason, but also Reason itself. It has to be remembered that the truth in Shelley's scheme is much the same as a principle of causation, Necessity. It is indispensible to make a clear conception of the principle of Necessity; with its minute inspection, however, we are not concerned in this paper.

**Reason as the Enemy of All the Evil.**

All evils are the imperfections of the world, the vast portion of which has gushed from the fountains of the imperfection of human mind. On departing for Ireland he sent his girl friend Hitchener a letter in which he explained his ambition of Irish Expedition, saying: "Calm consistent reasoning will defeat the most terrible." (Jan. 29, 1812: Ingpen, i, 244) One of the Irish pamphlets, *An Address to the Irish People* aims at the social improvement through a "rational means of remedy." (Advertisement of *An Address*, *op. cit.*, i, 227n.) And Reason, common-sense is said to cast off the prevailing prejudices. (*Op. cit.*, i, 88) Losing reason—this being the source of all the evil—leads man to tyranny, war, and Priestcraft (*op. cit.*, i, 170), fear, cowardice (*op. cit.*, i, 275), and bigotry. Truth—"that introducer of Virtue and Usefulness" (*op. cit.*, i, 177) and "happiness" (i, 244), shall tear down the "uselessness" (i.e., inutility) and "falsehood." (I, 333) Truth, reason, virtue, and friendship. (*Op. cit.*, i, 172) Such is the glorious copartnership that shall crash the shrine of established religion, falsehood and treachery. Let Truth, Friendship, and Virtue conquer falsehood. (*Op. cit.*, i, 322) The "eagle-eye of truth" is carefully watching the licence of evil. (June, 1812: *op. cit.*, 328)

And also in poetry, the combined expression of the ideas, such as reason, nature, virtue, and happiness, etc., appears; for example, in the lines of *Queen Mab* in the description of a future moral scheme:

...And when Reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony....

(III, 126–30)

Identification of reason and nature is not infrequently seen in the writings
in those days. In *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough* he speaks:

We should never speculate on the future obsoleteness of a system perfectly conformable to the nature and reason: it would endure so long as they endured; it would be a truth as indisputable as the light of the sun. . . .

(June, 1812: Ingpen, i, 333)

To follow the dictates of Nature means for him at the same time to follow those of Reason, and *vice versa.*

Hence a faith in the importance of man's living in accordance with Nature, Reason, and Virtue (e.g. Ingpen, i, 107-8); a constant note characteristic of his early prose and poetry. Earnestly Shelley would urge us: "Think, reason, and methodize." *(Op. cit., i, 186)* In short, rational philosophy would be sufficient for early Shelleyan purpose as far as it could discover the true reality and reject away as irrational all the inexplicable by reason.

But Shelley has a deeper insight that the reason does not see the things-in-themselves, and that it does not give us the sufficient answer to, especially, the question of the soul's immortality. Following quotations make us known how his submission to the reason was superficial, and to what an extent the reason was made the substitute for the far more certain organ of reality. On October 10, 1811, he reveals that "reason tells me that death is the boundary of the life of man, yet I feel, I believe the direct contrary." *(To Elizabeth Hitchener: *op. cit.*, i, 142)* And elsewhere:

But it does not prove the non-existence of a thing that it is not discoverable by reason; *feeling* here affords us sufficient proof. I pity those who have not this demonstration, tho' I can scarce believe that such exist. Those who *really feel* the being of a God, have the best right to believe it.

And paradoxically:

They may, indeed, pity those who do not; they may pity me but

*until* I feel it I must be content with the substitute, Reason.

*(To Hitchener, Oct. 26, 1811: *op. cit.*, i, 150; italics in original)*

**Reason and Poetry.**

In the pamphlet of *Necessity of Atheism* (1811) Shelley used his reason exhaustively, and also he seemed to try to do so in the poetry like *Queen Mab* (1813), *Alastor* (1815), and lastly the First Canto of *The Revolt of Islam* (1817). His aim in *Queen Mab* was to write the "didactic in blank heroic verse, and the descriptive in blank lyrical measure" *(To Hogg, Feb. 7, 1813: Ingpen, i, 382)*; in *Alastor* to make the "allegorical" or the "didactic" *(Hutchinson, pp. 14, 31)*; and in the First Canto of *The Revolt to compose the "didactic" by way of introduction to the ensuing cantos. But these intentions were not always realized. The result was that he was tempted to append to the text of the first ambitious poem a "long, philosophical and anti-Christian" Notes *(op. cit., i, 394)* to supply those disadvantages caused by an inadequate medium of poetry for such a purpose. *Queen Mab* stands on the tradition of didactic poetry like Volney's; indeed Fairy Mab, the instructress, corresponds to the phantom of Volney's *Les Ruines*. It was quite impossible for him, and perhaps all genuine poets, unlike Alexander Pope, to reason in poetry. At
the very time of writing the poem, he tells Thomas Hookham:

I expect to have 'Queen Mab' and other Poems finished by March.... The notes to 'Queen Mab' will be long and philosophical; I shall take that opportunity which I judge to be a safe one, of propagating my principles, which I decline to do syllogistically in poem. A Poem very didactic is, I think, very stupid.

(Jan. 16, 1813: op. cit., i, 378-9; italics mine)

The didactic poetry as referred above belongs among those which are reduced to humbler use for appealing directly to man's reason, serving for an introduction of a great moral regeneration; and of such a kind of poetry we cannot naturally expect the organic unity, therefore, the inseparable combination, of thought and expression.

CHAPTER III. GROWING DISTRUST IN REASON

A change in his mental history must gradually and steadily have taken place between 1814 and 1818. One of the chief conceivable factors in the motivation of his antipathy to determinism (rationalism, materialism, and didacticism in poetry) would exist from the very time when he adopted it; there in his natural inclinations might have been some strains essentially inharmonious with such a system. That Shelley tried to become a complete advocate of the deterministic philosophy, seems to have been no easy task, for the philosophy and its doctrines were so foreign to his nature. The ideas gained through Godwin, D'Holbach, Helvétius, were changed down into those which made him feel sick; all the more seriously in proportion as he became surer than before that the ultimate truth should be attained through a certain direct imaginative perception, not through those hard efforts of the laborious intellect.

Besides that it happened that his natural temperaments deeply seated on his mind were enforced by the successive experiences in life, such as a failure in Irish Campaign, a miserable result of Tremadoc enterprise, upon the rational principles, and the dreary intercourse of his daily life (e.g. his increasing dislike of Eliza, the elder sister of his first wife Harriet, who was then an inmate of the Shelleys; cf. Ingpen, i, 233, 243, 419). And furthermore we are told that he was also disappointed in Hookham, his bookseller, and Hogg, his bosom friend since Oxford days. What with this and that, at last he came to have "no personal interest in any human being" but Mary, who was about this time not beyond his girl friend. (To Mary, Nov. 8, 1814: op. cit., i, 441) These difficulties and more in life served to bring him to a deeper insight into the very nature of the world.

Hitherto he had repeated again and again, as we have pointed out, that from the days of his expulsion from Oxford he had not changed his sentiments. But a time came at length when this was to be changed. And so he would cry, "I am much changed from what I was." (To Hogg, March 16, 1814: op. cit., i, 419)
Shelley and the Lake Poets. —

In the essay On Life Shelley confessed himself once to be an advocate of what he called “materialism” and votary of reason. (Besides he kept acknowledging himself as a radicalist and atheist.) The date of Shelley as a materialist is unknown. If we may believe in his confession, we may date it a little while between 1810 and 1813—during the period from the time of writing Necessity of Atheism (written sometime between the Christmas vacation, 1810 and February 9, 1811) to that of a composition of Queen Mab with a long and philosophical Notes (finished by February 19, 1813). In December, 1811, he replied with a grand air to his father, “My principles still remain the same as those which caused my expulsion from Oxford” (which took place on March 25, 1811, on a charge of his careless distribution of Necessity of Atheism), (Dec. 23, 1811: Ingpen, i, 199) And the next year he kept saying boastfully that since his expulsion, “I have not changed my sentiments.” (Feb. 24, 1812; May 28, 1813: op. cit., i, 265, 408; cf. i, 419)

It is needless to say that those passions which drove him to adopt the material philosophy was alien to his own nature. He speaks later, therefore, reminiscently that his indulgence in such “a seducing system” of “popular philosophy of mind and matter” was due to his “young and superficial” mind. (Shawcross, p. 54) When his mind became calm and self-possessed, he would reveal his desire and aspiration for something deeper and diviner, his taste for a contemplation of external nature in solitude, a conversation with “the living men of genius” and a reading of “the poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country.” (Preface to The Revolt of Islam, Hutchinson, p. 34) It is quite natural that Shelley should respect the lake poets as the teachers to his heart from boyhood. Among them were Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. (Ingpen, i, 192, 209, 215)

It happened that our poet removed to Cumberland (op. cit., i, 153–248, 412, 464); so that his anxiety to meet the poets of the elder generation living in the districts, grew ever stronger and stronger within his heart. For all his eagerness he could really make a personal acquaintance with Southey alone, with whom, however, he was destined soon to be disappointed. Later, nevertheless, he recollects of that happy and joyous conversation with Southey. (Op. cit., i, 471) Their influences became apparent already in 1812 both in his reading and writing. Among the book-list requested to Clio Rickman, a bookseller in London (Dec. 24, 1812), we do not fail to find their names including that of Godwin.

Southey’s ‘Thalaba’
Wordsworth’s Poems, 4 vols.

Reading of them would enlarge his mind and fill it with wider and deeper sympathy than a study of any reasoner. On January 20, 1812 he inserted a poem in a letter to his female friend Miss Hitchener—the poem which is said to be written “in imitation of the verses by Southey and Coleridge.” (Op. cit., i, 230n.) And furthermore in Queen Mab multifarious influence, imitation and resemblance of Southey’s lines have been pointed out. It is remarkable also that Shelley presented to Southey a copy of his second ambitious poem
entitled *Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude: & other Poems* (1816); and that among his so-called “other Poems” he included the lines beginning with a line: “O! there are spirits of the air,” supposedly addressed to Coleridge, and the poem *To Wordsworth*, etc. (Op. cit., i, 470 &n.) The depth of his enthusiastic adoration of Coleridge may be suggested by the fact that he finished *Biographia Literaria* as soon as he got it about the end of the following year, 1817, the very year of its publication. The reading might have strengthened that cult of Love and that conviction of brilliancies of the imaginative operations within man’s mind, which had been examined in *The Revolt of Islam* about three months before.

**Distrust in Reason.**

As his suspicion against the faculty of the reason kept growing deeper and stronger, a confidence in the marvellous activities of the imagination seemed to increase in strength and in depth within his mind. After all he was about the last man in the world to be carried away with a gust of the violin and temporal passions. In *The Revolt of Islam* (1817), Cythna, the heroine of the poem, comes to perceive the limitations of the “Sense and Reason” and their faithful attendants, the “blind fancies,” which cannot see the real thing “beyond the wormy grave.” Instead of those inferior powers, she is “possessed/With (imaginative) thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast.” (IX, xxxii–xxxiii)

The operations of the Sense and Reason are limited to the mere observation of phenomena (cf. Pope’s *Essay on Man*, Ep.II, ii, 83) by “the accident of surrounding impressions,” “life’s dark veil,” “the film of familiarity” (Shawcross, pp. 155–6) and by the chain of “cause and effect.” Such a procedure cannot bring us to the real knowledge of the very heart or essence of all things lying far beyond the sensory world of phenomena and “place and time” (Shawcross, pp. 131–2); for the Sense and Reason want those strong wings to soar towards and reach the realm of reality (of which the perceptible objects are the mere reflection or shadow). Bound up with bond of flesh, they cannot endow us with a full assurance of our future existence after death; they are constitutionally incapable of expelling the sources of error.

Imagination is, on the other hand, those superior powers in cognition and creation, which enable us to comprehend intuitively the very nature of things. About a year before *The Revolt* he composed a mystical poem *Mont Blanc* (1816) with concluding lines implying that Mont Blanc, the earth, stars, sea, and all things in nature in silence and solitude—these would be meaningless, unless they were to appeal “to the human mind’s imaginings.” (Ll. 142–4) Nature is to be of aesthetic and moral value for the first time when it reveals itself to the poet and the sources of feelings and imagination with mystic strangeness.

Even to the younger Shelley, as we have noted, who followed the dictations of reason, the faculty of mind was nothing but a substitute for some better faculties of cognition and creation. Growing antipathy to reason becomes apparent in a fragmentary essay *On Life* (?1815). Here he is engaged in a violent attack upon what he calls “materialism” or “the popular philos-
of mind and matter.” It is a superficial system shockingly absurd; indeed it “allows its disciples to talk, and dispenses them from thinking,” but he now becomes quite “discontented with such a view of things” as it affords, for it cannot see the depth of the things; man is in reality “a being of high aspirations.” (Shawcross, p.54) A later letter to Horace Smith (Apr. 11, 1822: Ingpen, ii, 959-60) gives the same information of his intolerance of that narrowness and selfishness of the French Material Philosophy. Bluntly he writes that “the doctrines of the French, and Material Philosophy, are as false as they are pernicious....”

Shelley’s mind is growing up towards the real state of poetic mind, keeping away from the “philosophical and reflecting minds” (op. cit., i, 236) and from the rational and conceptual modes of thinking. By the time of Promethez and A Defence of Poetry, his disparagement of materialism and rationalism seems to have arrived at its culmination. In a letter to Ollier, Shelley’s bookseller, for example, he severely protests against Peacock’s carelessness of Reason committed in the latter’s recent essay, which appeared in the book known as Ollier’s Literary Miscellany (1820). He declares:

He (Peacock) would extinguish Imagination which is the Sun of life, and grope his way by the cold and uncertain and borrowed light of that moon which he calls Reason, stumbling over the interlunar chasm of time where she deserts us, and an owl, rather than an eagle, stare with dazzled eyes on the watery orb which is the Queen of his pale Heaven.” (Proposed letter to Ollier, ?March, 1821: Ingpen, ii, 998B)

Once to him selfishness and hateful passion on earth were “the result of absence of reason” (op. cit., i, 75); now the “cold and selfish, calculating animals” (op. cit., i, 362) and their selfish and narrow mind are due to present prevalence of the social evil.

Abhorrence of the Didactic Poetry.——

On the whole, Shelley’s negation of what he called materialism and rationalism parallels his discard of the didactic poetry or allegory. His earlier poems, as we have seen, show how much he was interested in this kind of poetry. But as early as in the Preface to The Revolt (1817) he was about to pass beyond this stage. About this time he had become convinced that the good poetry should be symbolic, “narrative, not didactic.” In his later writings, especially in the Preface to Prometheus Unbound (1818-9) his discontent broke out with even more vehemence, with which he disparaged the didactic poetry: “Didactic poetry is my abhorrence,” because the poetry must primarily “familiarize the highly refined imagination” of men, rather than their calculating reason. (Hutchinson, p. 207) The didactic poetry and those kinds of poetry which were simply to satisfy the vanity of men of great rational power, thus gave way to the inner claims for the “poetry of life” as defined to be “the expression of the imagination.”

Genius—Grounded upon the Faith in Natural, Innate Endowment.——

It is worth while noting that even in the very days of his avowed advocate of materialism, he always keeps his mind open to something more
peculiar to his own nature. Its good example is the case of Genius, whose psychological attention is however the product of the empirical philosophy. As early as November 26, 1813, Shelley informs his impressions from the reading of his friend Hogg’s novel, *Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff* (published on November 8, 1813):

“Everyone to whom I have shown it agrees with me in admitting that it bears indisputable marks of a singular and original genius. Write more like this. Delight us again with a character so natural and energetic as Alexy—vary again the scene with an uncommon combination of the most natural and simple circumstances....”

(To Hogg, Nov. 26, 1813, Ingp., i, 414–5)

In his review on the *Memoirs*, which appeared in December, 1814, he admits not only the fact of “the beauty of virtue or the sublimity of genius,” but also, instead of all the unities which French tragedies observe and which mediocrity alone cherishes, he claims the indispensability to the true poetry of “the most elevated genius” along with “the subtle delicacy of imagination.” (Shawcross, pp. 10–11) To him also the Revival of Literature appears to be a historical event marking the emancipation from superstitions that had hitherto been “the weight which clogged man to earth, and prevented his genius from soaring aloft amid its native skies.” (Op. cit., p. 118) And elsewhere in a letter to Hogg he speaks of having read “the four finest books of Lucan’s ‘Pharsalia’—a poem”, as it seems to him, “of wonderful genius and transcending Virgil.” (Sept., 1815: Ingpen, i, 446)

It is obvious from these fragmental utterances that at this time he attributes to genius the free and spontaneous workings of mind superior to the mechanical rules such as the three unities, laborious study and other artistry. By the way Shelley’s attention to the remarkable wroking of genius must be highly estimated because the idea of genius is later to be absorbed into his idea of such part of qualities of imagination as natural and innate endowment.

**CHAPTER IV. POETRY AND IMAGINATION**

(i)

Contrast between Reason and Imagination.—

The most characteristic of Shelley’s thought is the distinction between reason and imagination and the applause of the latter; and this is made more apparent in that opening page of *A Defence of Poetry* (1821). According to him, (1) both Reason and Imagination are two kinds of mental action, which give us knowledge of the Truth; (2) but their modes of operation are quite different in kind (rather than in degree), that is, Imagination is the ῥό ὠνῄη (the principle of synthesis), the other the ἀληθικός (the principle of analysis): not like reasoning and calculating power nor “according to the determination of the will” (Shawc. p. 153) nor by ordinary logic, it acts “in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness” (p. 129) or “in another and diviner manner” (p. 131); (3) Imagination is of a higher nature than the
Reason: he says, "Reason (the inferior power) is to the imagination (the superior power) as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow (the phenomenon or the Moon) to the substance (the noumenon or the Sun)", and therefore reasoners and mechanists, the men of such inferior power, follow "the footsteps of poets, and copy the sketches of their creations into the book of common life". (P.149)

Imagination or the synthetic faculty of mind is superior, especially because (4) it regards its own "integrity" or the "integral unity" (i.e. the True), while Reason regards "the relations of things, simply as relations." Imagination is supposed to "ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar" (p.153); it is therefore "at once the centre and circumference of knowledge" (p.152); and by virtue of this "Imagination which is the Sun of life," we are able to survive without being enslaved by "the cold and uncertain and borrowed light of that moon" or "Reason, stumbling over the interlunar chasm of time where she deserts us, and an owl, rather than an eagle, (staring) with dazzled eyes on the watery orb which is the Queen of his pale Heaven."

(Letter to Ollier, March, 1821: Ingp. ii. 998B)

A Defence of Poetry and T.L. Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry. —

Shelley's opinion on imagination, in its most perfect and compact style, may be found in A Defence of Poetry (1821). It is intended, as he suggests in the very essay, as "a polemical reply" or "a refutation of the arguers against poetry" (Shawcross, p.158) or as a challenge against "the whole objection... of the immorality of poetry." (P.130) The immediate inducement for writing the essay devoted to defending both poetry and imagination was that essay abusive of poetry, which appeared as the last article in Ollier's Literary Miscellany issued about the end of 1820. In Four Ages of Poetry, the article in question, Peacock, a believer in the "progress of reason and civilization" (Brett-Smith, p.8) and the utility of "useful and rational man" (p.17), mainly uses the term phantasy, a substitute for the imagination, reducing the mental faculty to the organ not of the truth, but of mere fictions (p.8) or of gatherings of the second-hand observations.

It sounds somewhat sarcastic to say that the author of this nauseous writing was unexpectedly one of his most intimate friends, Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) (who was later to be known also as a memoir-writer of our poet). With him Shelley made a new acquaintance in November, 1813. Before then, he had been an earnest admirer of his poems. In a letter to Thomas Hookham, a bookseller, dated on August 18, 1812, he, lamenting the poor treatment of the objects in the two volumes, The Genius of the Thames, Palmyra, and Other Poems (1812) and The Philosophy of Melancholy (1812), does not forget to add an unstinted praise of the poetical "genius" of his future friend. (Ingpen, i, 359; cf. 368) But elsewhere shrewdly he finds and points out the preponderance of the cold, reasoning faculty in the mind of Peacock, whom three years later Shelley comes skillfully to give the nickname of "a cold and calculating man." (To Hogg, August, 1815: op. cit., i,444) It is quite probable that the hero of Alastor partly represents this
enemy of literature.

**Reason in Due Subordination to Imagination.**

It has been the fashion among the writers of the so-called romanticism to speak contemptuously of the eighteenth-century reason, namely, the mental faculty of discursive analysis, ordinary logic, and calculation. Usually a calculating man would have a doubt about the useful and vitalizing potency of imagination. But Shelley believes that even under the test of utility this imaginative faculty is quite sound. He does not fail to point out that "the exercise of the imagination is most delightful," and that it is more useful than reason. (Shawcross, pp. 148–9) It is clear that the imagination our poet has connected with the Usefulness, Virtue, and Happiness.

We must observe that in his mature speculation Shelley does not entirely reject away the faculty of calculation. He believes that as far as reason operates in due subordination to imagination, it is useful, and yet serves to duplicate the operations of imagination. According to Mrs. Shelley's observation, he is a man possessed of the two mental qualities—both of "a brilliant imagination" and "a logical exactness of reason," though the former would always be paramount in him. (Hutchinson, p. 156)

Instead of shutting the reason out of his scheme our poet strives to submit the analytical powers to the imagination, "as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow (the phenomenon) to the substance (the noumenon)" (Shawcross, p. 121); and further, as the "mere reasoners" (e.g. Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, etc., all of whom were, it must be noted, his earlier favourites) to the "poets or poetical philosophers" (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderón, Lord Bacon, Milton, Raphael, and Michael Angelo). (Op. cit., pp. 150–1) Shelley proceeds to warn the reasoners:

> While the mechanist abridges, and the political economist combines labour, let them beware that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want. (Op. cit., p. 149)

Thus to make reason subordinate to the superior powers, the imagination, and to follow the first principles belonging to the imagination, mean the best way of salvation of man "from decay." (Op. cit., p. 155) Shelley's defence of imagination or poetry, therefore, seems to have at least two important functions: one being to rescue the poetic imagination from such a miserable and disparaged status as phantasy or second-hand observing faculty or fictitious one; the other, to settle it on the surpassing throne above reason. He declares that "the power... is seated on the throne of their (poets') own soul" (Shawcross, p. 159) and "on a poet's lips" (Prom. Unb., I, 737), whereas the reason is destined to reside in a hoary head or a brain.

**A Belief in Imagination as a Natural and Innate Endowment.**

We have now to consider the idea of the imagination. In doing so we shall limit our attention merely on the rôle assigned to the imagination in
poetry. Let us begin with the characterization of imagination as a natural endowment. It should be noted first of all that Shelley strives to identify the concept of genius with the idea of imagination by arguing that imagination must be a natural and innate endowment. In *A Defence* imagination is described as the “inner faculties of our nature,” “a principle within the human being,” and accordingly that “this power arises from within.” (*Op. cit.*, pp. 138, 121, 153) It is because of its simplicity and originality that such inner and *a priori* faculty is regarded to be the first principles which naturally belong to a poet or a poetic philosopher (*op. cit.*, p. 150), and conceived as the superior powers to calculating faculty, reason or talent acquired by learnings and training—latter category being applied to cold mechanists, mere reasoners, and mathematicians. (*Op. cit.*, pp. 148–9)

But it cannot be until the imagination comes to be regarded as the only organ of truth that in his speculation, aesthetical or moral or epistemological, his imagination claims such a central position as once the reason occupied. We are told that reason is “the inferior powers” (p. 149), concerned with “the enumeration of quantities already known,” such as best exemplified in the mechanics and mathematics; imagination is, on the other hand, the only revealer of truth, “the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole.” (P. 120) And the reason why Shelley gives to imagination a higher place and he speaks contemptuously of reason and the “mere reasoners” (p. 150n.) and “mechanists” (pp. 148–9) seems partly explained by that this superior power acquaints us with immediate and certain knowledge of the true reality—“the integral unity,” “qualities” of things. Thus a connection of this antithesis with the contrast between the realm of shadow and the realm of substance, holds good of Shelley’s speculation.

**Imagination’s Intuitive Perception of Reality.**

While Shelley’s earlier concept of reality was derived from the “deductions of reason,” his later imaginative one was an experience, namely, his own intuitive emotional realization. Rejecting the reason as inferior in poetic activity or in perception of the truth and defending imagination against Peacock’s disparagement, Shelley reaches a conviction of the superiority of imagination to reason (described also in *A Defence* as “inferior powers”) as means of acquisition of true knowledge. Thus he could combine and synthesize two conceptions of poetry as the “mimetic art” (*Preface to Prometheus Unbound*, Hutch., p. 206; *cf*. Shawcross, p. 122) and a creation of imagination. This knowledge, must the Sense and Reason fail to attain forever. Imagination sees the very heart of things; reason and bodily senses, on the other hand, never go beyond a limited observation of their surface. As to reality imagination has an unlimited rôle; it has no relation to mere fictions.

Imagination acquaints us immediately and certainly with the real knowledge, not only of our own nature, but also of God and Nature and Free-will. To this immediate and certain intuition of imagination Shelley sets up no limitations. Instead of slow, logical, analytical and demonstrative reasoning he seems to introduce the theory of the immediacy of intuitive imagination to grasp from within the reality of nature, of which the world of the senses
is merely the reflection.

Imagination and the Cult of Divine Creation. —

Furthermore Shelley proceeds to link the idea of imagination with the cult of creation. For him, as he informs his friend Peacock in a letter on February 25, 1819, "(M. Angelo) has no sense of beauty (namely, the true reality), and to want this is to want the sense of the creative power of mind" (Ingpen, ii, 673); for the sense of creative power and that applied to the reality seem to mean only the two different modes of the same imaginative operation. In his meditation thus he intends to assimilate the cognitive faculty with the "productive" one—the faculty producing incessantly those higher ideas which never exist previously, above the external and sensory world. As the epithets to represent this formative capacity of man's mind which is ascribed to imagination, Shelley would prefer to our common adjective productive the words such as "creative," "creating," and rarely "plastic." And moreover its productivity or creative activity is regarded to be inexhaustible as implied in the idea of the infinity of imagination. By ascribing thus imagination equivalent to synthetic and cognitive principle such sense of creative power, he would reject that literary theory of traditional neo-classicism which, grounded on the empirical rationalism, had disparaged poetry, assigning it to mere findings, invention, or fictions. According to his belief poetry must be the only fountain of all human knowledge; it being the creations of new and real world transcending the empirical, temporal, spatial world of facts and phenomena and sense-impressions.

Quite distinct from reason—the category of the analytical, the mathematical, imagination has been said to be something natural and innate; and it is in its nature never placed under any restraint of the mechanical, external, traditional rules, but instead it has created and it will create the beautiful "out of itself according to its own idea" (Shawcross, p. 140) or the "internal laws of human nature." (P. 152) The poetic genius thus with such a brilliant, creating imagination is to be clearly distinguished from an architect, a watch-maker, a "mechanized automaton" (Queen Mab), or a mechanist; and he alone, as well as God, deserves the name of Creator. (Shelley quotes from Tasso in original Italian; p. 156) In Shelley's mind a poet's creation of poetry has much analogy with God's Creation of the world.

Ideal Form of Reality. —

We have studied that the reality, with which Shelley was concerned, can never be apprehended through the process of ordinary logic, calculating and analytical reasonings; it is never susceptible of any deduction and demonstration. He is one of those who prefer the belief to the argument (Ingpen, i, 29) or demonstration; he would say, "I believe because I do believe." (Op. cit., i, 36) Now man would compare himself much better to un roseau sentant (a feeling reed) or a Sensitive Plant (the name of Shelley's symbolical poem written in 1820) than Pascal's un roseau pensant (a thinking reed). Instead of "Cogito, ergo sum," "Credo," or "Sentio, ergo sum." Far from the knowledge having a starting-point in the sense-impressions, Shelley's reality seems to reveal itself immediately and certainly to the imagination and to the catego-
ry of the heart, soul, emotions in the happiest and best moments in a
rapture, in which the imaginative contemplator enjoys the mystical communion
with the contemplated.

We have next to examine the ideas of reality, which have been separately
treated. First it may be said that the ideal reality in him is the identity, or
the “integrity,” or “integral unity” (in our poet’s phrase, Shawcross, p. 120)
of “the eternal, the infinite, and the one” (p. 124); it is at the same time the
unity of the true, the beautiful, and the good. This he named “Intellectual
Beauty” in the poem so entitled in 1816, and later he preferred to call it “Love”
with the adjectives such as eternal, everlasting, and deepest. (Prom. Unb.,
II, iv, 120; Shawc., p. 144; Ode to Naples, 1.149) Good examples come from
his Defence:

(a) A poet participated in the eternal, the infinite, and the one.

(b) To be a poet (in the infancy of society) is to apprehend the true
and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation,
subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between
perception and expression.

Love, our poet’s favourite name for “the sacred and eternal truths,” “the
truth of things” (pp. 143, 128), “the beauty of the internal nature” (p. 130), is
the only eternal existence which can be never affected by the influence of time
and place, which the reason gives and makes. The eternity and supratemporal-
rality of the idea is poetically expressed in Prometheus Unbound, where
Demogorgon, a realization of the ineffable truth, speaks of the imageless
“deep truth:”

What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love. (II, iv, 118–20)

Shelley is used to speak contemptuously of Time given by reason as “an
envious shadow” (branded by Asia in Prom. Unb., II, iv, 32–4; cf. the lines
Time). Since a poem is no more than a manifestation of such eternal and true
reality, it is “the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth” (Shawcross,
p. 128) –or in the eternal, ideal time.

Shelley has not entertained the strict mechanical notion of Nature. He
confesses that “all Nature is animated,” and that Nature itself is but “a mass
of organized animation.” (To Elizabeth Hitchener, Nov. 24, 1811: Ingpen,
i, 174) Even Necessity, the principle which necessarily has a mechanical
connotation, is said to be “a Spirit of activity and life, /That knows no term,
cessation, or decay.” (Queen Mab, VI, 148–9) That Love cannot be affected
by any temporal change, does not involve that the idea is only the principle,
dead, static, and immutable. But it continues to live and grow and change
not only in its own eternal and ideal time but also according to its inner
laws. We need in reality differentiate the concepts of the term “change.”

Love’s world is that of a Becoming, of a Change. Thus it is found to be
apostrophized in Epipsychidion (1821) as “living Form among the Dead” (1.27);
it is thus that Panthea in Prometheus Unbound exclaims when she feels her
sister Asia under a mystical metamorphosis:

How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. (I,v, 16-20; italics mine)

No longer the change in the divine and ideal scheme means any degeneration
nor perversion.

From the beginning of his speculation Shelley has believed in the exist-
ence in the pantheistic principle. On January 3, 1811, he tells his friend Hogg
on his emotion arising from a reading of Pope's Essay on Man, lines 267-8:
"All are but parts of one stupendous whole/Whose body Nature is, and God
the soul," —the lines really taking on the colour of pantheism. He confesses
that he thinks these lines to be "something more than poetry," revealing his
faith in "the soul of the universe, the intelligent and necessarily beneficent,
acting principle." (Ingpen, i, 29) And two years later he comments on
Queen Mab (1813), VII, 13, that his negation of God in the poem "must be
understood solely to affect a creative Deity," and that "the hypothesis of a
pervading Spirit coeternal with the universe remains unshaken." (Hutchinson,
p.812) Once Southey said that Shelley should call himself a pantheist rather
than an atheist, since he believed that the universe was God. (To E. Hitchener,
Jan. 2, 1812: Ingpen, i, 205) Later Shelley withdraws his early rejection of
a creative Deity; God must be creative and pantheistic. We are told by Mrs.
Shelley that Asia in Prometheus is "the same as Venus and Nature" and at
the same time that the Fourth Act of the drama is the idealization of "the
forms of creation." (Hutchinson, p.272) God is believed to be synonymous
with Nature which he keeps creating, and another word for the true reality.
The world of Prometheus is a becoming, a creating process. Even God is less
perfect at first; and his self-realization, a reunion with Asia, and a regener-
ation of the world thereby, lie like no easy task before him. But like Man
has he a perfection's germ from the first. Waging an eternal war against
oppression, he keeps approaching towards the goal eternally unattainable.

"There," as Professor Lovejoy observes, "there is a tragic element in cosmic
and in human history" (Lovejoy, The Reason, the Understanding and Time,
Baltimore, 1961, pp.173-4)—the tragic element which probably exists in
Prometheus Unbound and perhaps in Shelley's own life. The dynamic organi-
cism, opposed to the static mechanicism, is grounded upon this faith that,
even God, together with the Nature which he is permeating and creating,
has developed and will be developing from the lower to the higher and more
perfect.

We have learned that truth is a ubiquitous and supratemporal principle,
that it can be apprehended merely through the imaginative process and it is
"necessary to poetry." (Ingpen, i, 40) Now we come to the important
question: "What is the idea of Love?" It may be true that of this real Love
Shelley expects the aesthetical and moral effects. There would be no wonder
if we recall his reality is the complete identity of the beautiful, the true,
the good. Upon this he dilates in a curious essay On Love (1815), defining thus: Love is "the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists." (Shawcross, p. 43) It is, as it were, the principle organically connecting everything. What he seeks to imply here is made more evident in the famous passage of A Defence (1821):

The great secret of moral is love, or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others, the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. (Shawcross, p. 131)

It is upon such a belief that Shelley inculcates that "the man who has fewest bodily wants approaches nearest to the Divine Nature." (Essay on Christianity, Shawcross, p.112) Such an idea is never derived from any deduction, but it is a knowledge arrived at through the imaginative way of contemplation, of which we shall treat later. Nothing is really valid but what is intensely and inwardly experienced. The moral secret of a going out of our own narrow and selfish nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful things that exist "in thought, action, or person, not our own," is the doctrine of a complete, thoroughgoing self-negation and self-annihilation.

Reality and a Belief in the Soul's Immortality. —

The whole entity of the idea of Love, Shelley's reality, is found to be comprised in its united and completed form in the belief in the soul's immortality and in Adonais (composed in 1821) with a subtitle of "An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, Etc." The poem treats the theme that Keats's soul, freed from an imprisonment of "a body like a grave" (With a Guitar, To Jane, 38-9) after death, has realized a complete and eternal union with Nature and becomes a part of Cosmic Power or Force, which lives and moves in all things in Nature. Keats's world is no longer of the dead, but a becoming and moving. The faith is to be backed up by the conviction that human mind is affiliated to a vast and infinite Universal Mind.

Through the gate of death he "has outsoared the shadow of our night;" he becomes secure from "the contagion of the world's slow stain" (st. xl), from the soul's death which people miscall life. He is "made one with Nature;" he is "a portion of the loveliness/Which once he made more lovely," He bears his part in "the one Spirit's plastic stress" which "sweeps through the dull dense world." His voice is heard and his presence is felt to be moving and ringing through all the natural manifestations. (Sts. xlii-xliii) The Spirit into which Keats's soul is absorbed, is conceived to be Shelley's reality which manifests itself to the poetic mind, assuming the forms of Light, Beauty, Benediction, and sustaining Love. (Liv) Poetic soul completely equivalent to imagination, which can thus partake of this Power, naturally claims the important rôle to redeem "from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." (Shawcross, p.155) To our poet Nature is an animating and living process. In
her Notes on *Prometheus Unbound*, Mrs. Shelley observes that her husband "loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind." (Hutchinson, p. 272)

Lastly we must remember that, in the stanzas xlii and xliii as well as in the most famous one beginning with the line: "The One remains, the many change and pass" (lii), the author seems, in much the same manner as many poets and philosophers of the elder generation have assumed, to solve the problem of the relation of the Oneness to the Many by admitting the former's manifestations in the individual natures.

Such a cosmic view, and a belief in pseudo-pantheism and in the ubiquity and supratemporality of reality, Santayana shrewdly characterizes as "Pan-psychism." The stars in heavens are really depicted in the poem to be shining as numerous as the numbers of men (and perhaps animals). Absorbed into the Universal Mind, their individual selves—as far as their higher selves are concerned—do not disappear. They retain their own individual personality, devoid of all the temporal and spatial attributes. (*Cf.* xlv–xlvi)

(ii)

The method which concerns our poet, and by which imagination can fulfil the circle of its capacity, is twofold: one being to look upon our own nature; and the other, to contemplate the external nature in silence and solitude. Man must, he exhorts, from his earlier days, try to take both or, at least, either of these imaginative exercises. This formula appears to presuppose that the real knowledge of our own inner nature surely leads us to that of the outer nature and God, and *vice versa*, because our nature is naturally affiliated to the external nature (or Nature).

**Shelley's Use of the Old Maxim: Know Thyself.**

The new method for human training which Shelley offers, is opposed to that which requires a careful observation or strict learnings. It is no wonder that the direction in which we look and discover the very heart of truth is inward (rather than outward). What is genuinely real should be sought and apprehended directly and intuitively from the inside, not from the outside. To turn away from the world of time and space which the Sense and Reason make and give (Shawcross, p. 149) and enter into the "soul—too deep for the fathom-line of (conceptual) thought and sense" (*Epipsychidion*, 11. 89–90) is to soar high up and reach the eternal region unattainable by the dullness of calculating reason. This is one means by which man can find the eternity of inner self.

From his earlier period Shelley is likely to be tempted to conceive that "all real knowledge may be comprised with the maxim ἑαυτόν ἀσκεῖται (know thyself), with infinitely more justice than its narrow and common application!" (To Mary W. Godwin, Oct. 28, 1814: Ingpen, i, 434; *cf.* Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Shawcross, ed., i, 173–4) This idea is later to be developed and detailed together with the idea of "surpassing love" in *The Revolt of Islam* (1817) and further in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), which was written
as an answer to *The Four Ages of Poetry* by Thomas Love Peacock called a "cold and calculating man."

The imaginative way of "self-knowledge" (Shawcross, p.135) is thus described as the basis of all human knowledge (Ingpen, i, 434), since the real knowledge can be steadily and directly acquired through looking upon one's own soul or speculation of external nature in silence and solitude; it does not involve any process of logic nor ratiocination nor deduction at all. Apart from the observation characteristic of Mab, the self-contemplation gives us the immediate intuition of the inner and deeper self.

Nothing is really valid but what is inwardly and directly experienced. Instead of observing from without, Cythna, a prophetess of Love in *The Revolt of Islam* (1817), bids us look inward:

Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself....
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

(VIII, xxii)

The same cry follows:

Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart—it is a paradise....

(IX, xxvi)

And it is also an eternal world. Attention is fixed on the happiness not of human beings as general but of the individual. The oracle speaks from on high or from within through the lips of the mortal prophetess. Look upon ourselves, and listen to them speaking!

**Advancement of the Imaginative Contemplation of Nature.**

We have next to consider the real meaning of what our poet calls "contemplation." Here we have also the other means to approach to the true reality. It can be no wonder that, since to enter deep into one's soul (this is to be distinguished from that mere self-centred seclusion as condemned in *Alastor*) is to contemplate whatever is beautiful in the (living) nature, he, a recommender of the looking upon one's soul as means of acquiring wisdom, accentuates the superiority and necessity of the imaginative contemplation. Those two experiences are quite identical in nature; the terms which Shelley employs to expound the contemplation are the same as those used for the elucidation of the self-knowledge.

In the very unconscious moments in a rapture initiated with the imaginative contemplation we are led immediately and assuredly to grasp the reality (the noumenon), freed from "life's dark veil" (Shawcross, p.155) or "the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being" (p.156) or from the action of bodily senses, etc. The notion of contemplation is, needless to say, for the poet, of new tendency antithetic to that observation and calculation the materialists and reasoners have been accustomed to. The contemplation of nature is indispensable for a genuine poet to the composition of his poetry. His assertion of necessity of the contemplation to make poetry appears to stand largely on such a faith that the real knowledge (requisite to poetry as its manifestation) can be seized only in such an
imaginative and contemplative process. We may find Shelley writing that his "chief pleasure in life is the contemplation of nature." (To Peacock, April 30, 1818: Ingpen, ii, 601) On this topic he further elaborates three years later in a letter to Clara Clairmont, which shows how necessary the contemplation is for the poetic composition and for a genuine life:

The only relief I find springs from the composition of poetry, which necessitates contemplations that lift me above the stormy mist of sensations which are my habitual place of abode.

(June 8, 1821: op. cit., ii, 873)

Again on December 11, 1817, in a letter to Godwin, he writes:

I felt that sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists in sympathy—and that part of imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. (Op. cit., ii, 574)

In the Essay on Christianity (1815) the same implication appears: "The mighty frame of the wonderful and lovely world is the food of your contemplation." (Shawcross, p.112) Only the contemplation in question acquaints us, and makes us united, with the reality in nature, dispersing away the limitations of time, space, and memory, and making any intervention of volition in vain.

It must be remembered by the way that Shelley's claim for imaginative contemplation as the first step of poetic creation makes a striking contrast with Peacock's views in his blasphemous essay Four Ages of Poetry on the poetic materials as the facts gathered by the careful observation of reason, and therefore on the poetry as the product or arrangement by the faculty of phantasy, of the "second-hand observation." Some passage of A Defence, therefore, contains Shelley's direct answer to his friend's claim for reason and observation. It reads:

It is impossible to feel them without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate: it were superfluous to explain how the gentleness and the elevation of mind connected with these sacred emotions can render men more amiable, more generous and wise, and lift them out of the dull vapours of the little world of self.

(Shawcross, p.144, cf. p. 39; italics mine)

Unity of Subject and Object, the Internal and the External. —

The conviction of the existence of the mysterious and unconscious state in a rapture, backed up by the theory of imaginative contemplation, leads him easily to a solution of the difficult antinomy of subject and object. Shelley's recommendation of the contemplating, gazing upon, or beholding, the external nature, as well as the looking upon the inner nature of one's self, must be noted to bear a profound meaning as conveying a decisive departure in his scheme from that attitude towards careful observation which the poet early assumed.

At the time of writing Speculations on Metaphysics (1815) the poet calls in question the contrast between object and subject, the external and the internal (in Shelley's phrase):
The use of the words external and internal, as applied to the establishment of this distinction, has been the symbol and the source of much dispute. This is merely an affair of words, and as the dispute deserves, to say, that when speaking of the objects of thought, we indeed only describe one of the forms of thought—or that, speaking of thought, we only apprehend one of the operations of the universal system of beings. (Shawcross, p.69; italics in original)

And the moments when the opposition of the subjective and the objective vanishes, and when the subjective is “aware of evanescent visitations” of the divine, is in his Defence described as “the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.” (Op. cit., 154) Such is the moments of mind’s experience, and of a consciousness of its kinship to, or an identification with, the divinity in nature, namely, a realization of the total unity of subject and object.

The cult of the kinship of the human imagination and heart to the external nature was to be traced back to his early days. Later we have many poetical utterances; for example, in a beautiful poem Mont Blanc composed in Switzerland, in July, 1816. The poem with a subtitle: “Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni,” opens with the lines:

The everlasting universe of things  
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—  
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs  
The source of human thought its tribute brings  
Of waters....  

(Ll. 1–6)

The experience of the flowing of the things through mind has much analogy with the Arve’s flowing down through Mont Blanc. Shelley in the most exalted mental state could not exactly or distinctly separate his own self from the external objects, enjoying that mystical and happy experience of a unity with, or the “interpenetration of a diviner nature” through his own (Shawcross, p.154), or “the visitations of the divinity” (p.155) within his mind. This is Shelleyan experience of empathy. This state is inaugurated with, or introduced by gazing upon (synonymously used with contemplating) Mont Blanc, a representation of the Divine Great Nature.

Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee  
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange  
To muse on my own separate fantasy,  
My own, my human mind, which passively  
Now renders and receives fast influencings,  
Holding an unremitting interchange  
With the clear universe of things around....  

(Ll. 34–40; italics mine)

It is obvious from these illustrations that Shelley holds that man’s heart and the outer nature are necessarily and closely connected with each other and so made to keep constantly on interflowing. He would conclude the poem by saying that it would come to naught if the external natures were little to
appeal to, or commune with, “the human mind’s imaginings.” (Ll. 142–4)

The psychological moments in a rapture are thus noted to effect the complete union between the contemplating and the contemplated. According to him it is impossible for us to “feel” the beauties “without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate.” (Shawcross, p.144) This phrase expects its most elaborated poetic utterance in Adonais (1821), an elegy on the death of John Keats. The stanza xlii of the elegy begins with the line: “He is made one with Nature,” and goes on in a rather pantheistic strain; and the opening lines of the next stanza read:

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: ... (St. xliii)

The sentiment expressed just above seems to serve to throw some light upon the real intention of Shelley’s comparison of the poet to a chameleon (or camelion: chamaeleo afericus), one of his most favourite animal imagery.

Before proceeding we must consult with the following song of the Fourth Spirit, a symbol of imagination, in Prometheus Unbound (1818–9):

On a poet’s lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the æoreal kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought’s wilderesses.

(I, 737–42)

A poet’s Imagination is compared to a lover; and a poet’s food is “the æoreal kisses” of imaginative spirits. And then the most interesting lines come from the Moon–Spirit’s address to the Earth. The Moon professes herself to be a “crystal paramour” of the Earth, drawn beside her lover by a power “magnet-like of lovers’ eyes,” and as “a most enamoured maiden/Whose weak brain is overlaiden/With the pleasure of her love,” she moves “maniac-like” around him, “gazing” on his form. “Brother,” drops a sweet music from the Moon’s lips:

Brother, whereso’er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens...
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul...
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet’s gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky

Until its hue grows like what it beholds...

(IV, 463–87; italics mine)

For it is impossible to feel the nature and poetry “without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate.” Here is a poem which seems to serve to reveal the secret still more clearly. The poem is An Exhortation
written in 1819 and published the next year with *Prometheus Unbound*, from which we have just quoted.

Chameleons feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light chameleons do,
Suing it to every ray
Twenty times a day?

The second stanza follows in much the same note:

Poets are on this cold earth,
As chameleons might be,
Hidden from their early birth
In a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is, chameleons change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either, never think it strange
That poets range. (Ll, 1–9; 10–18)

The third stanza tells us that, as far as chameleons (apostrophized also in the poem as “Children of a sunnier star, / Spirits from beyond the moon”) feed on light and air, beams and wind, they grow bright and fair by becoming assimilated to what they feed on; if not, “they would grow as earthly soon/ As their brother lizards are”. (Ll. 19–27) Much more is this the case with a poet. As we have seen, the food of the poet's contemplation is the famed love, the beautiful, and aereal in the nature; the poet, the contemplator, becomes glorious, being assimilated and converted into what he contemplates and feeds on. To any one imagining deeply there seems to be no better explanation than this of the creative state of poetic mind. In sensibility (and assimilation) none exceed a poet—Shelley would say “me” (who “am as a nerve o'er which do creep/ The else unfelt oppressions of this earth”—Julian and Maddalo, 1818, 449–50); no animals surpass a chameleon; and no flowers excel a sensitive plant (we have the poem so entitled, composed in 1820) or a violet. Besides we must add that there are some birds which are to be compared to a poet or his mind, and that among them we may enlist a cuckoo, skylark, nightingale, and eagle.

**Unconscious Spontaneity of Imagination.**

The spontaneous and unconscious workings of imagination receive his unusual attention and higher estimation; the imagination is the power which creates the ideas out of itself according to its own innate laws in a spontaneous and unconscious state in an ecstasy. The poetry quite synonymous with imagination is said not to be “lie reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will” (Shawcross, p. 153); but it “acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness.” (Pp. 129, 131, 153, 157) Unlike the category of reason, sense-impressions, memory, ordinary
logic, consciousness, fancy and the like, the imagination, the poetic genius claims for it a closer link with something more emotional, intuitive, unconscious and spontaneous. In this claim we find a convenient bridge between the idea of divine creation and the notion of the imaginative contemplation and perception of the true nature.

The way by which imagination expresses or overflows itself is naturally and unconsciously spontaneous, and never restricted in any way by "analytical reasoning" (p. 151) and a much delayed, laborious calculation. Shelley once told his friend John Gisborne, "I write nothing but by fits." (April 10, 1822: Ingpen, ii, 955) Also in the same spirit he appeals in his Defence to "the greatest poets" of his days "whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study." His assertion runs on:

The toil and the delay recommended by critics, can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself; for Milton conceived the Paradise Lost as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have our own authority also for the muse having 'dictated' to him the 'unpremeditated song.'

(Shawcross, pp. 153-4)

And elsewhere in the essay from which the above passage is quoted:

To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind?

(Shawcross, p. 152)

He proclaims that poetry is never to be a construction by some rational and logical means; and that it should not be thus degraded into something like a grammar-book nor a specimen of someone's art (or mechanical skill); but it is a creating process acting in some diviner and unapprehended manner.

The preference of whatever is truly and unconsciously expressed by the imaginative soul, though cut in with a temporary predilection for didactic poems, already germinated at an early stage in his history of speculation. On January 2, 1812, for example, Shelley writes a letter, in which he praises his girl friend Miss Hitchener's recent "voluminous writing," adding, "Your eloquence comes from the soul: it has the impassateness of nature," and that

Your pen—so overflowing, so demonstrative, so impassioned—ought to trace characters for a nation's perusal, and not make grammar—books for children. This latter is undoubtedly a most useful employment: but who would consent that such powers should always be so employed?

(Ingpen, i, 204, 208)

Five days later to the same female addressee he sends a letter revealing his wish to see Wordsworth and Coleridge, and informing her how his poetry (which he has inserted) was composed:
I now send you some Poetry (i.e. *Mother and Son*): the subject is not fictitious. It is overflows of the mind this morning. (Op. cit., i, 215)

And he concludes by the admonition: "Think of the poetry which I have inserted as a picture of my feelings, not a specimen of my art." (Op. cit., i, 217) It would be in the same spirit when he speaks scornfully of the education of his days: "It may be said, that I have derived little benefit or injury from artificial education." (To William Godwin, Jan. 16, 1812: op. cit., i, 222)

True poetry should be the involuntary or spontaneous overflows from the real mind and true feelings, and never a construction of mechanical art. The poetry as written in such a way has something real, true, not fictitious. This is the reason why poetry is said to be "the progeny immortal" (*Prometheus Unbound*, III, iii, 54; cf. I, 749) and "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." (Shawcross, p.128)

What is most interesting here is that for the description of the way of poetic expression, Shelley seemed to have a special interest in employing those verbs and verbals which are originally used as denoting the motions of the fresh water, ever moving and changing. Among them are:

overflow (-ing, -ings), pour (-ing), flow, roll, float, shower, etc., etc.

We find him commanding the service of these in the poetry and prose, like *Mont Blanc*, *To a Skylark*, A Defence of Poetry, and so on. The usage of these words seems very suggestive, if we consider that it is closely connected with our poet's conviction of the spontaneous and unconscious property of the imagination, and his faith that a great poetic mind and its creations are like the fountains "for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight." (Shawcross, p.148)

Now the idea of the unpremeditated poetry, that is, the poetry not previously designed, finds its poetic expression in the lines devoted to a skylark, which were composed half a year before the essay:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pour'est thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns *unbidden* (i.e. spontaneously)...

(*To a Skylark*, 1820, 11. 1-5, 36-8; italics mine)

The poet's stress upon the poetic mind pouring forth itself in an ecstasy rightly recalls to our minds his higher opinion of that finest passage of Plato's *Phaedrus* in praise of poetic madness in a letter to his friend Peacock, August 16, 1818: that the poetry is nothing but that created by the poet in a poetic madness inspired by the Muses, and so that the cold poetry composed by the poet who is convinced that only by art he can become a poet, will "vanish
into nothingness before the light of that which has sprung from divine insanity." (Ingpen, ii, 615 & n.) And we must not confound this sort of madman with the "moon-struck sophist" as described in The Revolt of Islam (VIII, vi, 1), who is the victim of calculating, reasoning system.

Only in such a mental trance as occasioned by some inspiration sent from the divine, endless creating energy unfolds itself, poetry is as it were the living record of "the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own" (Shawcross, p.154); it is compared to an inexhaustible "fountain for ever overflowing with waters of wisdom and delight." (Op. cit., p. 148) By the terms "the expression of the imagination" Shelley presumably understands that poetry is nothing more than that in which the imagination—the category of the passions, heart, soul, emotion—in a trance inaugurated with contemplation, and inspired by the divinity, is overflowing, or manifesting itself unconsciously and spontaneously in accordance with its own innate ideas or its internal laws. This is the reason why Shelley recommends the first-rate poet who makes a practice of that contemplation as the first step to poetic exercise.

To what an extent our poet executed such theory in practice is not for our present purpose; but the following description by his friend and biographer Trelawny, who chanced to witness the poet engaging himself in composition, may serve us to make an idea about this. He informs us as follows:

The day I found Shelley in the pine forest he was writing verses on a guitar (With a Guitar, to Jane). I picked up a fragment, but could only make out the first two lines:

'Ariel, to Miranda take
This slave of music.'

It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together in most 'admired disorder'; it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks: such a dashed off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered:

'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing. If you ask me why I publish what few or none will care to read, it is that the spirits I have raised haunt me until they are sent to the devil of a printer. All authors are anxious to breech their bantlings.'

(J.E. Morpurgo, ed., Trelawny's The Last Days of Shelley and Byron, New York, 1952, p.50)


CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have started from a premise that the final form of Shelley's poetic theory is best described with his own famous definition of
poetry as “the expression of the imagination.” And we have tried to take a view of the real intention of this utterance by Shelley. Before proceeding, by gathering the same utterances about poetry we have seen that imagination in him is applied to the category of the heart, soul, feelings, emotions and enthusiasm. And then for making the preliminary knowledge available for this study, a historical sketch of imagination and our poet's earlier mental history have been described and skipped.

Next we have returned to our main subject. And we have made clear the following: the distinction between reason and imagination and the applause of the latter are the most fundamental of Shelley's speculation; this has a closer connection with the antithesis between reality (noumenon) and phenomenon. Imagination in him is highly estimated because of its intuitive and certain apprehension of reality, aesthetical, moral and epistemological—the apprehension inaugurated with man's imaginative looking or gazing upon his own nature and his contemplation of the external nature.

He conceives imagination as "the basis of all knowledge" (Shawcross, p.152), as the source of human knowledge. This concept is opposed to his earlier one of the reason and the bodily senses “as the only inlets of knowledge.” (To Elizabeth Hitchener, November 12, 1811: Ingpen, i, 159; cf. Refutation of Deism, Necessity of Atheism) Now losing reason (“the owl-winged faculty of calculation,” Shawcross, p.153) means no longer the source of the evils. Thus the poetry, considered not only as a creation of imagination but as a representation of reality perceived by imagination, is the only living Form, the progeny immortal. It is “at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought.” (Op. cit., p.152)

We have pointed out that Shelley's reality (called Love) immediately and directly perceived by imagination is no other than a united form (idea) of the true, the beautiful, and the good; of the eternal, the infinite, and the one. Thus the imagination claims a larger rôle and the central position in his speculation and poetry, which reason once occupied. And furthermore other peculiarities of this superior power have been respectively described as synthetic, creative, unconsciously spontaneous, etc. Largely upon such ideas of imagination the whole entity of Shelley's view of poetry as “the expression of the imagination” seems to be based.

From this point of view we may come to the conclusion that for him poetry is nothing but the spontaneous overflowings of the imagination (or feelings, emotion, etc.), immediate, certain, synthetic, creative, unconscious, divine, transcendental—in the best and happiest moments of divine, inspired madness or trance (a mental condition of a union of the contemplating mind and the contemplated object) initiated by the imaginative contemplation of the nature. Starting from a didactic theory of poetry Shelley had reached this conviction of poetry as the unconscious overflows, or as both symbolical and narrative self-expression, of the imaginative, creative feelings.
TEXTS


REFERENCE BOOKS

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