Kantian and Neo-Kantian Elements in the Poetry of Yeats:

A study of the controlling metaphors of the later poetry.

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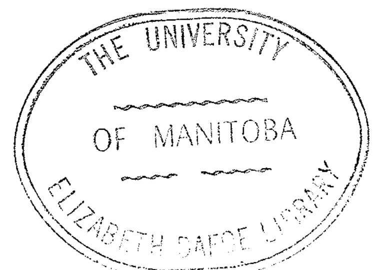
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

August, 1967



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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the influence of certain Kantian and Neo-Kantian notions on the philosophical and quasi-philosophical ideas of W.B. Yeats; and to examine these ideas and their role in the poetry which Yeats wrote in the period beginning about 1920 and ending with his death.

Yeats was, during this period, a convinced 'idealist' in philosophy. His choice of the word 'idealist' may be misleading. His idealism held that consciousness was 'primary', and was set up in opposition to both 'materialism' and 'realism'. Yeats' position was never very clear because he was not a professional philosopher, nor even a talented amateur, and because he deliberately set out to reject the terminology and methodology of contemporary philosophy. However certain elements of his position can be clarified. His idealism was not of the Platonic sort; that is, he did not believe in the existence of a super-sensible realm of ideal objects, or if he did, did not make much of this in his prose or poetry. Nor was his position like that of Berkeley; that is, it is not his position that objects perceived by the senses are ideas in the mind of God. Rather his position seems to be that the world is the common creation of the human mind (neo-Kantian). Sometimes, his position seems to be more

like that of Kant, and he claims that reality is unknowable, and that the world of appearance is a function of the structural pattern of the human mind.

In his prose and poetry this resulted in an idealist theory of history resembling that of Hegel, Spengler and Vico. It also produced an esthetic theory which claimed that art was simply the result of the human mind's ability to grasp clearly the rules of composition involved in its creation of the world (neo-Kantian), or the world of appearance (Kantian). According to this theory art was a second creation, or a second act of imaginary apprehension. As a result, Yeats' esthetic theory resembles that of Coleridge and the other English Romantic Poets.

I will begin in Chapter I with a short exposition of the philosophical notions involved, and then proceed to demonstrate how these ideas operate in a number of the major poems of the period 1920-1939. Chapter II will demonstrate Yeats' ability to use symbols and images from neo-Platonic sources in writing poetry that denies the tenets of neo-Platonic thought. Of these ideas that of reincarnation is most important. Chapter III will include a discussion of Yeats' notion of symbolism as he developed it in a number of major poems.

In Chapter IV Yeats' notion of the symbol will be examined in the poetry which deals with Art and History, and especially with the poetry that seeks to describe the relationship between the human mind and the phenomenal world.

CHAPTER I

BORROWINGS

> The Romantic movement seems related to the idealist philosophy; the naturalistic movement, Stendhal's mirror dawdling down a lane, to Locke's mechanical philosophy, as simultaneous correspondential dreams are related, not merely where there is some traceable influence but through their whole substance, and I remember that monks in the Thebaid, or was it by the Mareotic Sea, claimed "to keep the ramparts", meaning perhaps that all men whose thoughts skimmed the "unconscious", God-abetting, affected others according to their state, that what some feel others think, what some think others do. When I speak of idealist philosophy I think more of Kant than of Berkeley, who was idealist and realist alike, more of Hegel and his successors than of Kant, and when I speak of the romantic movement I think more of Manfred, more of Shelley's Prometheus, more of Jean Valjean, than of those traditional figures, Browning's Pope, the fakir-like pedlar in The Excursion.[1]

This passage expresses, as do many others, Yeats' fundamental allegiance to romanticism in poetry, and to idealism in philosophy. It also expresses his belief that 'idealism' and 'romanticism' are related in some special way. The nature of the relationships Yeats found between them only becomes clear when the rather special way

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1. W. B. Yeats: Essays and Introductions, "Bishop Berkeley" (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1961), p. 404.

Yeats is using these two terms is explicated, I shall claim, in this thesis, that an understanding of Yeats' use of the terms 'romantic' and 'idealist' and the relationship between idealism and romanticism, provides an insight into a number of Yeats' poems, and to the proper interpretation of his work as a whole.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand Yeats' use of Romanticism is to see it as directly opposed to the most popular interpretation of the Aristotelian ideal of mimesis or imitation. Yeats rejects the notion of art as a reflection or photograph of what is. That is, he has in mind an art which creates, rather than reflects, reality. By 'romantic' he refers not to subject matter or style, but to the peculiar complex of beliefs about poetry which were first formulated in English by Wordsworth and Coleridge, especially Coleridge.

By 'idealism' Yeats means the epistemological and metaphysical doctrines which claim that the universe we discover about us is in some sense a product of the human mind. Any philosophical or quasi-philosophical position which seemed to imply that objective reality was mind-dependent, Yeats would call idealist. This is not the usual meaning of the word. The philosophical term 'idealist' usually refers to someone who believes, as did Plato, that the ideal is the real. That is, there are some things that differ from the ordinary things which are reported to us by our senses. These things are immaterial and in some way prior to, or above, material things. Or it may mean someone who believes, as did Berkeley, that all those things

which seem real are ideas. According to Berkeley, these ideas were in the mind of God and were thus 'objective'. Hence Yeats says Berkeley is both realist and idealist alike. Both of these idealist theories displeased Yeats because they left the human mind a passive vehicle for perception - a camera or a mirror - in the same way as did most forms of realism.

> When Stendhal described a masterpiece as a 'mirror dawdling down a lane' he expresses the mechanical philosophy of the French eighteenth century. Gradually literature conformed to his ideal; Balzac became old-fashioned; romanticism grew theatrical in its strain to hold the public; till, by the end of the nineteenth century, the principal characters in the most famous books were the passive analysts of events, or had been brutalised into the likeness of mechanical objects.[2]

Yeats specifically, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, repudiates Berkeley's idealism, and even more important, does not mention Plato, because the philosophies of both these men preach an exterior reality just as intransigent as the exterior reality of philosophical realism; they too require only a mirror, albeit a super-sensual mirror, to shadow forth the whole of reality. Instead of the idealism of Plato and Berkeley, Yeats says that he is

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2. W.B. Yeats, Wheels and Butterflies, "Fighting the Waves" (London: MacMillan & Company, 1924), p. 73.

concerned with the idealism of Kant and Hegel and their successors.[3] Kant, and those who followed him, are not idealists in either of these senses. In fact, few philosophers would be willing to call Kant an idealist at all. Since Kant's position and what Yeats made of it, is the crux of this thesis, I shall expand upon the relevant areas of Kant's thought.

Locke had claimed that there were two kinds of 'qualities' possessed by things - primary qualities and secondary qualities. The secondary qualities, such as colour, smell, etc., were interpretations of real things which were made by the human senses. The primary qualities of extension, solidity and motion were, however, actual properties of things. This is, in effect, the metaphysics of science - reality is matter in motion. And Whitehead's remark that a world of odourless and colourless particles did not leave much place for poetry is echoed by Yeats.

> "I can see in a sort of nightmare vision the 'primary qualities' torn from the side of Locke, Johnson's ponderous body bent above the letter to Lord Chesterfield, some obscure

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3. The people Yeats wants to include here are Bradley and McTaggart in England, Croce and Gentile in Italy, and Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzche in Germany. All these men are mentioned often in the prose of the period.

> person somewhere inventing the spinning-jenny, upon his face that look of benevolence kept by painters and engravers, from the middle of the eighteenth century to the time of the Prince Consort, for such as he, or, to simplify the tale -
>
> Locke sank into a swoon;
> The garden died:
> God took the spinning-jenny
> Out of his side."[4]

But Locke was followed by Berkeley and Hume, both of whom saw absolutely no difference between the primary and secondary qualities, who argued that they were alike simply distortions of the real and who, with a few cogent arguments, shook the whole structure of British empirical epistemology. But Berkeley simply used his scepticism to set up his own idealism. Once all those things reported by the senses were ideas in the mind of God, the problem he had created disappeared. Since Hume had no such easy access to God's ideas, his radical scepticism played a more important role in determining the direction of western philosophy.

According to Hume both primary and secondary qualities were mere representations of things by the human senses. Locke would have said that an apple merely appeared to taste sweet, and merely

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4. W.B. Yeats, Wheels and Butterflies, "The Words Upon the Windowpane", p. 24.

appeared to be red; but it not only appeared solid and extended, but was <u>in reality</u> solid and extended. Hume and Berkeley pointed out that there was no more reason to suppose an apple to be in reality solid and extended than to suppose it to be red and sweet.

Further, Hume was able to show that certain kinds of inductive reasoning, for example, cause and effect, were suspect. Hume's comments on causation and the rules of induction could be translated into this - only <u>a priori</u> truths are necessary, and all <u>a posteriori</u> or inductive judgments could have at best varying degrees of probability. But all probable judgments depend on the premise that future instances will resemble past instances. But this premise is itself an <u>a posteriori</u> judgment (that is, it is not logically necessary). As a result of the fact that one had no right to assume that future events would indeed resemble past events, no collection of instances, however large, ever entitle us to conclude that in the future this event (say a causal sequence eg., extreme heat when applied to flesh produces a burn), would repeat itself. Since most of the conclusions of science, and for that matter of ordinary life, are inductive, Hume's arguments question the validity of almost everything men think, and make thinking itself (except about mathematics etc.), almost an impossibility.

Of course, so radical a scepticism seems to be self-defeating. The immediate reaction to Hume's view is that since we do in fact, seem to be able to think successfully about the world, Hume must be

mistaken. This was Kant's reaction. But since Kant's philosophy is notoriously difficult I will not try to continue with my own explanation, but will take the easier way out - easier both for myself and the reader - and quote the simplest and most cogent brief explanation of Kant's philosophy I know.

> Kant's most important book is The Critique of Pure Reason (first edition, 1781; second edition, 1787). The purpose of this work is to prove that, although none of our knowledge can transcend experience, it is, nevertheless, in part *a priori* and not inferred inductively from experience. The part of our knowledge which is *a priori* embraces, according to him, not only logic, but much that cannot be included in logic or deduced from it. He separates two distinctions which, in Leibniz, are confounded. On the one hand there is the distinction between 'analytic' and 'synthetic' propositions; on the other hand, the distinction between '*a priori*' and 'empirical' propositions. Something must be said about each of these distinctions.
>
> An 'analytic' proposition is one in which the predicate is part of the subject; for instance, 'a tall man is a man', or 'an equilateral triangle is a triangle'. Such propositions follow from the law of contradiction; to maintain that a tall man is not a man would be self-contradictory. A 'synthetic' proposition is one that is not analytic. All the propositions that we know only through experience are synthetic. We cannot, by a mere analysis of concepts, discover such truths as 'Tuesday was a wet day' or 'Napoleon was a great general.' But Kant, unlike Leibniz and all other previous philosophers, will not admit the converse, that all synthetic propositions are only known through experience. This brings us to the second of the above distinctions.
>
> An 'empirical' proposition is one which we cannot know except by the help of sense-perception, either our own or that of someone else whose testi-

mony we accept. The facts of history and geography are of this sort; so are the laws of science, whenever our knowledge of their truth depends on observational data. An '*a priori*' proposition, on the other hand, is one which, though it may be *elicited* by experience, is seen, when known, to have a basis other than experience. A child learning arithmetic may be helped by experiencing two marbles and two other marbles, and observing that altogether he is experiencing four marbles. But when he has grasped the general proposition 'two and two are four' he no longer requires confirmation by instances; the proposition has a certainty which induction can never give to a general law. All the propositions of pure mathematics are in this sense *a priori*.

Hume had proved that the law of causality is not analytic, and had inferred that we could not be certain of its truth. Kant accepted the view that it is synthetic, but nevertheless maintained that it is known *a priori*. He maintained that arithmetic and geometry are synthetic, but are likewise *a priori*. He was thus led to formulate his problems in these terms:

How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?

The answer to this question, with its consequences, constitutes the main theme of *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

Kant's solution of the problem was one in which he felt great confidence. He had spent twelve years in looking for it, but took only a few months to write his whole long book after his theory had taken shape. In the preface to the second edition he compares himself to Copernicus, and says that he has effected a Copernican revolution in philosophy.

According to Kant the outer world causes only the matter of sensation, but our own mental apparatus orders this matter in space and time, and supplies the concepts by means of which we understand experience. Things in themselves, which are the causes of our sensations, are unknowable; they are not in space or time, they are not substances, nor can they be described by any of those other general concepts which Kant calls 'categories'. Space and time are subjective, they are part of our apparatus of perception. But just because of this, we can be sure that whatever we experience will exhibit the characteristics dealt with by geometry and the science of time. If you always wore blue spec-

tacles, you could be sure of seeing everything blue (this is not Kant's illustration). Similarly, since you always wear spatial spectacles in your mind, you are sure of always seeing everything in space. Thus geometry is a priori in the sense that it must be true of everything experienced, but we have no reason to suppose that anything analogous is true of things in themselves, which we do not experience.

Space and time, Kant says, are not concepts; they are forms of 'intuition'. (The German word is 'Anschauung', which means literally, 'looking at' or 'view'. The word 'intuition', though the accepted translation, is not altogether a satisfactory one.) There are also, however, a priori concepts; these are the twelve 'categories', which Kant derives from the forms of the syllogism. The twelve categories are divided into four sets of three: (1) of quantity: unity, plurality, totality; (2) of quality: reality, negation, limitation; (3) of relation: substance - and - accident, cause - and - effect, recipricocity; (4) of modality; possibility, existence, necessity. These are subjective in the same sense in which time and space are - that is to say, our mental constitution is such that they are applicable to whatever we experience, but there is no reason to suppose them applicable to things in themselves. As regards cause, however, there is an inconsistency, for things in themselves are regarded by Kant as causes of sensations, and free volitions are held by him to be causes of occurrences in space and time. This inconsistency is not an accidental oversight; it is an essential part of his system.

A large part of The Critique of Pure Reason is occupied in showing the fallacies that arise from applying space and time or the categories to things that are not experienced. When this is done, so Kant maintains, we find ourselves troubled by 'antinomies' each consisting of thesis and anithesis.

In the first, the thesis says: 'The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.' The anithesis says: 'The world has no beginning in time, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space.'

> The second antinomy proves that every composite substance both is, and is not, made up of simple parts.
>
> The thesis of the third antinomy maintains that there are two kinds of causality, one according to the laws of nature, the other that of freedom; the antithesis maintains that there is only causality according to the laws of nature.
>
> The fourth antinomy proves that there is, and is not, an absolutely necessary Being.
>
> This part of the Critique greatly influenced Hegel, whose dialectic proceeds wholly by way of antinomies.[5]

Now it is clear that Kant's notions are very different from those of Plato and Berkeley. The earlier Idealists were primarily concerned with ontological and metaphysical problems, and Kant has put both Ontology and Metaphysics aside in order to concentrate on Epistemology. Yeats' interest in Kant derived from the nature of Kant's solution. With just a slight twist Kant's views can be turned into Yeats' insistence that the world is a product of the human mind. Space, time, the laws of causality, etc., are all products of the human mind which creates its own world.

In the passage from Yeats quoted above, Romanticism in poetry and Idealism in philosophy were equated because both start from the view that the world is a creation of the human mind and because both

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5. Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 679-681.

place great stress on the ability of the mind to alter and form experience. Both provide freedom from the tyranny of fact which materialism and the earlier idealism of Plato and Berkeley alike seem to impose on the human mind.

> "I feel that an imaginative writer whose work draws him to philosophy must attach himself to some great historic school. My dreams and much psychic phenomena force me into a certain little-trodden way but I must not go too far from the main European track, which means in practice that I turn away from all attempts to make philosophy support science by starting with some form of 'fact' or 'datum'.... "[6]

Yeats' search for evidence to support his revolt against the reality of the external world led him into many strange corners. His involvement with spiritualism and his deep interest in Eastern philosophies is well-known. Despite his lack of familiarity with mathematics, he even read mathematicians and works about Mathematics in the hope of finding his views confirmed. Because he found Eddington's position on these matters more congenial than Russell's he wrote to T. Sturge Moore that Eddington was the better mathematician. In another instance he found Henry Adams' interpretation

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6. W.B. Yeats & T. Sturge Moore, their correspondence 1901-1937, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953), p. 149.

of Poincaré's mathematics most congenial.

> "The mathematician Poincaré, according to Henry Adams, described space as the creation of our ancestors, meaning, I conclude, that mind split itself into mind and space. Space was to antiquity mind's inseperable 'other', coincident with objects, the table not the place it occupies. During the seventeenth century it was separated from mind and objects alike, and thought of as a nothing yet a reality, the place not the table, with material objects separated from taste, smell, sound, from all the mathematicians could not measure, for its sole inhabitants, and this new matter and space, men were told, had preceded mind and would live after ... yet ...Berkeley... established forever the subjectivity of space. No educated man today accepts the objective matter and space of popular science, and yet deductions made by those who believed in both dominate the world, and make possible the stimulation and condonation of revolutionary massacre and the multiplication of murderous weapons by substituting for the old humanity with its unique irreplaceable individuals something that can be chopped and measured like a piece of cheese; compel denial of the immortality of the soul by hiding from the mass of the people that the grave-diggers have no place to bury us but in the human mind.[7]

Yeats' fascination with spiritualism, Eastern theology, and Poincaré's mathematics arose from the same desire to re-assert the mind's domination of the world about it as did his interest in Kant's philosophical views.

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7. W.B. Yeats, <u>Explorations</u> (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1961), p. 435-6.

However, in certain respects Kant must have seemed to Yeats far too conservative. Like the German philosophers of the nineteenth century Yeats found the noumenal world of things in themselves an unnecessary postulate.

> And I declare my faith:
> I mock Plotinus' thought
> And cry in Plato's teeth,
> Death and life were not
> Till man made up the whole,
> Made lock, stock and barrel
> Out of his bitter soul,
> Aye, sun and moon and star, all,
> And further add to that
> That, being dead, we rise,
> Dream and so create
> Translunar Paradise.
>
> - "The Tower", from Stanza 3

The major difference between Kant and the neo-Kantians arose because of the most glaring inconsistency in Kant's system. According to Kant, all our experience is in space and time. To continue Russell's analogy, we might say the blue spectacles are permanent; we can never get them off. Kant pointed out that this meant we could never know anything that was not in the phenomenal world, and he believed that this did away with the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, or with any knowledge about noumenal reality. But it soon became obvious that Kant's position was self-defeating. It was a basic tenet of his philosophy that there was a noumenal reality behind the phenomenal. But since we could never get out of space and

time he had no right to suppose a noumenal reality in the first place. One of the more popular reactions of the philosophers who succeeded Kant was simply to do away with the noumenal world, with the thing in itself. They substituted instead the notion that the collective human mind (usually called the Absolute or Absolute Ego) was all in all. This is a very strange notion, and one that I do not understand. At best it seems to mean that the mind, acting collectively, creates the world, and acting individually, receives what it previously created as sense data. In any case, Yeats seems to have been aware of the difficulty of Kant's position and often seems to be more neo-Kantian than Kantian. Writing to T. Sturge Moore about a book that Moore had recently published, Yeats objects to certain of Moore's views because he feels they contradict certain Kantian and neo-Kantian principles.

> One sentence of yours I hoot at. You have taken it from some rascally philosopher science has corrupted and who, as Blake charged against his predecessors, insists on mystery, as the priests do, to enslave his betters. Hegel set free the human soul when he declared ('the thing in itself', this theological echo had just been proved unnecessary) that 'there is nothing that is not accessible to intellect.' One must qualify this sentence but it still keeps sufficient truth. Your sentence dismissed the great philosophical systems, as the priests do, as works of imagination, and yet the logic of Kant and that built upon his conclusions cannot be so dismissed, unless it first be disproved, and that seems to me beyond us both. If one assumes, as I think you told me your

> brother did... that mind and matter are one in a 'prior' state, mind has still its secret entrance there.[8]

In another letter in his correspondence with Moore, Yeats writes of Coleridge's 'restatement' of Kant. Coleridge's views correspond closely with those of the earlier neo-Kantians, especially Schelling. His debt to the early nineteenth century German philosophers is well-known, and some of the material in the middle chapters of the Biographia Literaria is almost a paraphrase of Fichte, Schelling and Kant. The point that Yeats wants to bring out by referring to Coleridge seems to be this; according to Kant the limitations placed upon human knowledge arose because of our inability to come to grips with the noumenal world. The antinomies arose because what was true of the phenomenal world was not true of the noumenal. Once we realised that one argument was true of the noumenal and the other was true of the phenomenal world, the contradiction disappears. This is what Yeats means by claiming that Kant thought the antinomies were 'regulative'. When Yeats goes on to say that Coleridge and the 'Platonists' think that the antinomies are 'constitutive', he means that since they reject the notion of the 'thing in itself', what they end up by saying is that at one stage in its creation of the world the ego posits one side of the

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8. W.B. Yeats, Yeats/Moore Correspondence, p. 146.

antimony and at another its opposite. The noumenal and the phenomenal worlds, the contradictory arguments which compose the antimony, are thus seen to be both the projections of the ego. In this strange and difficult passage Yeats even goes so far as to suggest that this is the meaning of what his 'instructors' are dictating to him as A Vision.

> You say 'experience or our senses and emotions never set before us the one or render us conscious of it.' You mean either that 'regularity', 'universality', 'unity' are mere names and classifications (Berkeley), or that they are a priori forms or rules of the mind which only come into 'existence' through experience (Kant). Coleridge re-stated Kant in terms of Plato and argued that they were 'constitutive' not merely 'regulative', and he would be supported by various Platonists today. The mind is its own object and sees itself as the necessary truths. The mathematical scientists who say that all must vanish except a mathematical consciousness must think so too. If Kant is right the antinomy is in our method of reasoning; but if the Platonists are right may one not think that the antinomy is itself 'constitutive', that the consciousness by which we know ourselves and exist is itself irrational? I do not yet put this forward as certainly the thought of my instructors, but at present it seems the natural interpretation of their symbols. I shall wait at least twelve months before I publish. What are the gyres? Antiquity had both symbols. Is Satan truly an archangel?[9]

9. W.B. Yeats, Yeats/Moore Correspondence, p. 131.

Yeats is being both playful and serious in this passage. This is typical of the way he treated all the philosophical ideas he became fond of. They are, as were the 'communications' from his instructors, 'metaphors for poetry'. He does not take philosophy completely seriously, but regards it as an adjunct to poetry. Whenever it threatens to usurp the place of poetry, Yeats turns it into a joke. However, Yeats was extremely concerned with the Kantian antinomies. In the strange document he called "The Genealogical Tree of Revolution" (see Appendix A) he divides modern thought into two main streams - each stream represents one way of solving the antinomies - and poses a third possibility which is, I take it, his own view, and which is based upon his belief that the antinomies cannot be solved. Further, in the section of <u>A Vision</u> entitled "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends: An Extract From a Record Made By His Pupils" we find the following passages.

> I found myself upon the third antinomy of Immanuel Kant, thesis: freedom; antithesis: necessity; but I restate it. Every action of man declares the soul's ultimate, particular freedom, and the soul's disappearance in God; declares that reality is a congeries of beings and a single being; nor is this antinomy an appearance imposed upon us by the form of thought but life itself which turns, now here, now there, a whirling and a bitterness.
>
> After an age of necessity, truth, goodness, mechanism, science, democracy, abstraction, peace, comes an age of freedom, fiction, evil, kindred, art, aristocracy, particularity, war. Has our age burned to the socket?

> Death cannot solve the antinomy: death and life are its expression. We come at birth into a multitude and after death would perish into the One did not a witch of Endor call us back, nor would she repent did we shriek with Samuel: 'Why hast thou disquieted me?' instead of slumbering upon that breast.
>
> The marriage bed is the symbol of the solved antinomy, and were more than symbol could a man there lose and keep his identity, but he falls asleep. That sleep is the same as the sleep of death.[10]

and

> "Love contains all Kant's antinomies but it is the first that poisons our lives. Thesis, there is no beginning; antithesis, there is a beginning; or, as I prefer: thesis, there is an end; antithesis, there is no end. Exhausted by the cry that it can never end, my love ends; without that cry it were not love but desire, desire does not end. The anguish of birth and that of death cry out in the same instant. Life is not a series of emanations from divine reason such as the Cabalists imagine, but an irrational bitterness, no orderly descent from level to level, no waterfall but a whirlpool, a gyre."[11]

In this chapter I am primarily concerned with demonstrating at which point Yeats borrows from Kant, and it is my intention to leave for a later chapter the necessary attempt to discover what he made of the Kantian ideas he used. But, with reference to the

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10. W.B. Yeats, A Vision (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1961), p. 52.

11. W.B. Yeats, A Vision, p. 40.

first quotation, which deals with the antinomy of freedom and necessity, I would like to point out that Kant originally was concerned with the problem of freedom of the will in the sense that, according to the laws of cause and effect, which were supposed to operate in every instance in the phenomenal world, every event had a cause and thus there could be no freedom of the will. Kant claimed that this antinomy arose because the self was 'noumenal'. The activity of the self, willing, was beyond cause and effect. Thilly and Wood summarize this part of Kant's philosophy as follows:

> "Looked at through the spectacles of sense and understanding, man is a part of nature; in this aspect he has an empirical character, he is a link in a chain of causes and effects. But in reality man is an intelligible or spiritual being. To such a being the sense forms do not apply; such a being can originate acts. That man is cognizant of this power is attested by the fact that he holds himself responsible for his decisions and actions. Whenever we think of an act as a phenomenon, it must have a cause; as such it cannot be regarded as spontaneously initiated. This interpretation cannot, however, be extended to the reason; we cannot say that the state in which reason determined the will was preceded by another state, and so on, for reason is not a phenomenon, and is not subject to the conditions of sensibility, such as time, space, causality. We cannot interpret its causality in the natural way, that is, expect a cause for everything it does. Reason, or the intelligible, or man as he is in himself, is the permanent condition of all his voluntary acts. A man's character, considered in its empirical aspect, is only the sensuous schema of his character considered in its super-sensuous aspect. The empirical is thus the way in which we image man or phenomenalize him.

> Whether his position is tenable or not, Kant's meaning is quite clear. Every voluntary act is the direct expression of man's intelligible character, of pure reason: hence, man is a free agent, he is not a link in the chain of natural causes. Yet the act itself, when viewed as a phenomenon, is absolutely determined. Man in his intelligible aspect is a free agent, he originates acts; but when these acts are perceived by a mind they are woven into a web of causation and are the effects of particular impulses, ideas, education, natural disposition, and so on."[12]

It was pointed out earlier that the neo-Kantians dropped the notion of the thing in itself while trying to maintain the main tenets of Kant's position. As an example of the sort of thing that resulted consider these sentences from Russell:

> "Kant's immediate successor, Fichte (1726-1814), abandoned 'things in themselves', and carried subjectivism to a point which seems almost to involve a kind of insanity. He holds that the Ego is the only ultimate reality, and that it exists because it posits itself; the non-Ego, which has a subordinate reality, also exists only because the Ego posits it."[13]

Once the reader of Yeats' more abstruse prose has some idea of the intellectual antecedents of Yeats' more obscure notions they

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12. Thilly & Wood, A History of Philosophy (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, 1956) p. 434.

13. Russell, A History of Western Philosophy. p. 690.

begin to seem less purely the result of his dabbling in spiritualism and more a continuation, however obscured, of the ideas which were current among the philosophers of the nineteenth century. For example, the passage entitled "The Seven Propositions" which is first quoted by Ellman in <u>The Identity of Yeats</u> owes as much (if not more) to Kantian and neo-Kantian speculation as it does to the spiritualism that interested Yeats at the beginning of the century

> (I) Reality is a timeless and spaceless community of Spirits which perceive each other. Each Spirit is determined by and determines those it perceives, and each Spirit is unique.
>
> (II) When these Spirits reflect themselves in time and space they still determine each other, and each Spirit sees the others as thoughts, images, objects of sense. Time and space are unreal.
>
> (III) This reflection into time and space is only complete at certain moments of birth, or passivity, which recur many times in each destiny. At these moments the destiny receives its character until the next such moment from those Spirits who constitute the external universe. The horoscope is a set of geometrical relation between the Spirit's reflection and the principal masses in the universe and defines that character.
>
> (IV) The emotional character of a timeless and spaceless spirit reflects itself as its position in time, its intellectual character as its position in space. The position of a Spirit in space and time therefore defines character.
>
> (V) Human life is either the struggle of a destiny against all other destinies, or a transformation of the character defined in the horoscope into timeless and spaceless existence. The whole passage from birth to birth should be an epitome of the whole passage of the universe through time and back into its timeless and spaceless condition.

> (VI) The acts and nature of a Spirit during any one life are a section or abstraction of reality and are unhappy because incomplete. They are a gyre or part a gyre, whereas reality is a sphere.
>
> (VII) Though the Spirits are determined by each other they cannot completely lose their freedom. Every possible statement or perception contains both terms - the self and that which it perceives or states.[14]

These propositions assume that the noumenal souls are responsible for the whole of phenomenal world. In this they not only resemble the ideas of Kant and Fichte, but also bear a close resemblance to Hegel's idea of history as the unfolding of the Absolute (Ego) in the world. However, Yeats and Hegel differ in that Yeats' primary interest is in the role of the individual soul, and Hegel's interest is in the collective mind, or the Absolute. Thus, when Yeats restates Kant's third antinomy, it is not the phenomenal world which threatens the soul's freedom, but instead it is the collective mind which posits the phenomenal world and that limits individual freedom. "Every action of man declares the soul's ultimate, particular freedom, and the soul's disappearance in God; declares that reality is a congeries of beings and a single being."

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14. Richard Ellman, <u>The Identity of Yeats</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 236.

The nature of the neo-Kantian position necessitates that there be some confusion about the nature of what is variously called Ego (note the capital E), the Absolute, or God. It is never clear whether or not the Absolute, [the Ego, or God] has a separate ontological status. It is never clear whether reality is One being, the Absolute, or whether reality is a number of souls, who taken together, are the Absolute. As the last few quotations from Yeats indicate he too does not make his views on this clear. In the passage from A Vision on the third antinomy the noumenal world is a single being, a Hegelian Absolute, yet in "The Seven Propositions" this Absolute turns out to be a "community of spirits." But, when Yeats does use words like "God", he seems to be more likely to mean a collection of beings rather than one being. In fact, Yeats' notion of God, or the Absolute, is best summed up in the tag which he often quoted from Blake, "God only acts or is in existing beings or men."[15]

I do not think that it is possible to compare the kind of things that Kant and his successors were saying, and the kind of things Yeats is saying, without reaching the conclusion that something very similar is involved. In the passage from A Vision which discusses the third antimony and in his "Seven Propositions", Yeats has formulated a queer

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15. W.B. Yeats, Yeats/Moore Correspondence, p. 80.

metaphysic which, although idiosyncratic, is definitely the result of his acquaintance with Kantian and neo-Kantian speculation.

"The Seven Propositions" are, as Ellman realized, a continuation of the symbology of A Vision. In A Vision the central symbol is the cone or "gyre". By plotting the gyres of personality we can know all we need to know of a person's psychological make-up, and the historical gyres are just as informative about the nature of any period - past, present, or future. When Yeats first describes the gyre he defines it in the following manner:

> "A line is a movement without extension, and so symbolical of time - subjectivity - Berkeley's stream of ideas - in Plotinus it is apparently 'sensation' - and a plane cutting it at right angles is symbolical of space or objectivity. Line and plane are combined in a gyre which must expand or contract according to whether mind grows in objectivity or subjectivity.

And he footnotes this passage with

> "Giovanni Gentile summarises Kant on time and space as follows: 'Kant said that space is a form of external sense. He meant that we represent nature, that is what we call the external world and think of as having been in existence before our knowledge and spiritual life began, in space, that we represent the multiplicity of the objects of our internal experience, or what we distinguish as diverse and manifold in the development of our spiritual life, not in space but in time.' (Theory of Mind as Pure Act, chap. 1/ix, H. Wildon Carr's translation). He thinks these definitions which seem to separate time and space from one another require restatement. It will be seen, however, when I come to what I have called the Four Principles, that my symbols imply his description of

time as a spatialising act."[16]

Yeats believed in a cyclical movement in history and in personal immortality. The central idea behind A Vision is that each "Daimon" or spirit projects itself into time and space an infinite number of times, and that its position in time and space during each incarnation determines its character. From the gyres we can read this position in time and space, and thus the character of the daimon in that particular reincarnation. The sum total of these individual projections determined the nature of events and thus if we could read the pattern of these projections in general we would be in a position to establish the nature of the historic period. The connection between Yeats' historiography and Hegel's, although complicated, is quite clear. I do not know how seriously Yeats took all this, nor how seriously he intended his readers to take it, but the controlling image is once again considerably influenced by Kantian and neo-Kantian terminology and eschatology.

Both Yeats' theory of history and Hegel's centre in the premise that history is a function of consciousness. In neither theory is it clear just whose consciousness is under discussion.

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16. W.B. Yeats, A Vision, p. 70.

But the Hegelian theory seems, on the whole, to be that the Absolute realizes itself through the individual, and this absolute, in its search for self-realization, determines and controls the individual consciousness. Yeats' theory seems to be geometrically opposed. The Zeitgeist, instead of being an independent principle which operates through the individual and determines the course of history and the life of the individual, is no more than the product or function of all individual consciousnesses. While Yeats and Hegel both believed that it was consciousness or ego which constituted ultimate reality, Hegel's absolute was a monistic consciousness which determined and directed all other consciousnesses, while Yeats' theory saw the consciousness of an age as simply the sum of the independent and self-determined egos. Yeats' ambivalent attitude towards Hegel arose because, while they shared the belief that reality was consciousness, Yeats could not stomach Hegel's determinism and lack of respect for the individual ego.

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish that Yeats was influenced by his reading of Kant and the neo-Kantians, and to show which of their views he utilized. I have not tried to show that Yeats 'believed' in Kantianism, or that he was a Kantian. To begin with I do not know what kind of evidence would be necessary to substantiate such a claim. But more important I do not believe that Yeats was a Kantian, or that his philosophical views can be characterised in this manner. Yeats was primarily concerned with

writing poetry. He found the ideas documented in previous pages congenial because they reflected his conviction that it was the actual that was important, because they placed the proper emphasis on the phenomenal world while still giving proper emphasis to the unknowable, the mystery behind the events. And most important the philosophy that he called 'Idealist' seemed to give the individual soul its proper emphasis.

> "Considering that, ...
> The soul recovers radical innocence
> And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
> Self-appeassing, self-affrighting,
> And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;"
>
> - A Prayer for My Daughter
> Collected Poems, Page 214

But despite the fact that Yeats found these views congenial, here, as always, he refuses to let himself be forced into a position which, by its rigidity, by its formal aspects, would interfere with what must always be the primary concern of the poet - a lively and active attempt to get at the raw materials of experience.

> "My imagination was for a time haunted by figures that, muttering 'The great systems', held out to me the sun-dried skeletons of birds, and it seemed to me that this image was meant to turn my thoughts to the living bird. That bird signifies truth when it eats, evacuates, builds its nest, engenders, feeds its young; do not all intelligible truths lie in its passage from egg to dust? Passages written by Japanese monks on attaining Nirvana, and one by an Indian, run in my head. "I sit upon the side of the mountain

and look at a little farm. I say to the old farmer, 'How many times have you mortgaged your farm and paid off the mortgage?' I take pleasure in the sound of the rushes." No more does the young man come from behind the embroidered curtain amid the sweet clouds of incense; he goes among his friends, he goes among the flute-players; something very nice has happened to the young man, but he can only tell it to his sweetheart. "You ask me what is my religion and I hit you upon the mouth." Ah! Ah! The lightning crosses the heavens, it passes from end to end of the heavens. Ah! Ah!"[17]

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17. W.B. Yeats, A Vision. p. 214

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS A READING OF THE POEMS: BEGINNINGS

The interpretation of the later poetry of Yeats provides certain difficulties which, although not unique, are more than usually troublesome. By the time Yeats reached middle age he was probably the best-read of all English poets, and the vast knowledge he had accumulated began to find its way into his poetry. This might not be a problem had Yeats' poetry been discursive, but his imagist techniques combined with the linguistic complexity and coherence of a technical competence that had taken most of a lifetime to achieve, resulted in a poetry which, because of its coherent and dominant imagery and its technical virtuosity, escaped the close scrutiny which is necessary in order to discover its intellectual subtlety and metaphysical wit. Even when it is recognized that Yeats is writing poetry which is intellectual in nature, the resulting interpretations are often no more successful. The academic habit of searching for 'sources' and 'influences', although illuminating, may be as misleading as it is informative. Yeats' intellect was of the highest order; and his borrowings were never allowed to determine the content of his poetry.

Whenever Yeats used an image or idea from the vast lore he had accumulated, he adapted it to his purpose. More than most poets, he was that kind of intellectual who derived pleasure from

the juxtaposition of seemingly disparate ideas, or from standing an idea on its head. As a result his poetry is highly intelligent, often difficult, and even more often, amusing, even when it is most serious. In order to read poetry of this sort what is most necessary is close attention to the text of the poem, for Yeats' meaning is rarely the same as the 'meaning' which his sources might lead one to expect.

I would like to illustrate the difficulties that arise in reading this kind of poetry by interpreting the four poems that form the end of the Volume Words for Music Perhaps.

Section II

XXII

TOM THE LUNATIC

Sang old Tom the lunatic
That sleeps under the canopy:
'What change has put my thoughts astray
And eyes that had so keen a sight?
What has turned to smoking wick
Nature's pure unchanging light?

'Huddon and Duddon and Daniel O'Leary,
Holy Joe, the beggar man,
Wenching, drinking, still remain
Or sing a penance on the road;
Something made these eyeballs weary
That blinked and saw them in a shroud.

'Whatever stands in field or flood,
Bird, beast, fish or man,
Mare or stallion, cock or hen,
Stands in God's unchanging eye
In all the vigour of its blood:
In that faith I live or die.'

XXIII

TOM AT CRUACHAN

On Cruachan's plain slept he
That must sing in a rhyme
What most could shake his soul:
'The stallion Eternity
Mounted the mare of Time
'Gat the foal of the world.'

XXIV

OLD TOM AGAIN

THINGS out of perfection sail,
And all their swelling canvas wear,
Nor shall the self-begotten fail
Though fantastic men suppose
Building-yard and stormy shore,
Winding-sheet and swaddling-clothes.

XXV

THE DELPHIC ORACLE UPON PLOTINUS

BEHOLD that great Plotinus swim,
Buffeted by such seas;
Bland Rhadamanthus beckons him,
But the Golden Race looks dim,
Salt blood blocks his eyes.

Scattered on the level grass
Or winding through the grove
Plato there and Minos pass,
There stately Pythagoras
And all the choir of Love.

It is usually claimed that these poems represent several moods; that the first is Yeats being Berkeleyan, and that the

third and fourth are Yeats being a Platonist. The second gets relatively little attention because it cannot be so easily classified. I hope to be able to demonstrate that these poems are in fact a unity, and that they are not, in whole or in part, Berkeleyan or Platonic, but that the Platonic and Berkelyan ideas which Yeats uses are being twisted and juggled to produce something that is closer to the Kantian ideas which were documented in the first chapter, but that is, in the final analysis, idiosyncratic.

With reference to the first poem it is usually remarked that Yeats has Berkeley in mind, the justification for this inference being that the last stanza, with its reference to "God's unchanging eye", sounds like what every philosophical text says Berkeley said. But, if you read those textbooks it is soon obvious that whatever stands in God's eye should not stand in all "the vigour of its blood" if Yeats is indeed following Berkeley. For Berkeley's theory stated that God's perceiving things simply guaranteed the normal process of events; according to Berkeley God's eye might well be unchanging, but the things perceived by God would decay and change nevertheless. This is one of the things Yeats objected to when he claimed that Berkeley was realist and idealist alike - the theory did not seem to alter anything. To quote the well-known limerick:

> There was a young man who said, "God
> Must think it exceedingly odd
> If he finds that this tree
> Continues to be
> When there's no one about in the Quad."

and the reply

> Dear Sir, your astonishment's odd;
> I am always about in the Quad.
> And that's why the tree
> Will continue to be,
> Since observed by yours faithfully, God.

The tree will decay and die too - absolutely nothing is changed.

The most probable source of the last stanza of Yeats' poem, if it is sources we are looking for, is the idea of the Anima Mundi in the writings of Henry More. There is at least one Ph.D thesis on the poetry of Yeats that remains to be done, and that is to trace the influence of that singular group of men called the Cambridge Platonists on their more singular reader, W.B. Yeats. In any event, compare the last stanza of this poem with stanza XIV of Canto I of Henry More's "Pyschozoia or The Life of the Soul".

> 'Whatever stands in field or flood,
> Bird, beast, fish or man,
> Mare or stallion, cock or hen,
> Stands in God's unchanging eye
> In all the vigour of its blood;
> In that faith I live or die."

with

> Not that his forms increase, or that they die:
> For Aeon-land, which men Idea call,
> Is nought but life in full serenity,
> Vigour of life is root, stock, branch, and all;
> Nought here increaseth, nought here hath its fall:
> For Aeons Kingdomes always perfect stand,
> Birds, Beasts, Fields, Springs, Plants, Men and Minerall

> To perfectness nought added be there can.
> This Aeon also hight/Autolacon and On.[18]

But Aeon-land is not this world, but a world which, in More's ontological scale is between the world of the forms of Plato and the sensible world. Yeats' fields are considerably less Elysian than this. More is talking about Anima Mundi; Yeats' poem is about this world.

These considerations preclude getting any help in reading the poem from either More or Berkeley, and suggest that the best place to look for Yeats' meaning is Yeats' poem and not his sources. There are a number of statements made in the poem which, once reconciled, provide the meaning involved in the poem. In the last stanza we are told that whatever stands, stands because it is "in God's unchanging eye". Yet in the first two stanzas of the poem Tom was not aware of this:

> ....
> 'What change has put my thoughts astray
> And eyes that had so keen a sight?
> What has turned to smoking wick
> Nature's pure unchanging light?
>
> 'Huddon and Duddon and Daniel O'Leary,
> Holy Joe, the beggar man,

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18. Henry More, Philosophical Poems of Henry More (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931), p. 16.

> Wenching, drinking, still remain
> Or sing a penance on the road;
> Something made these eyeballs weary
> That blinked and saw them in a shroud.

The 'pure unchanging light' of nature is, one may assume, the equivalent of God's unchanging eye. But in the first stanza we have also learned that this light is the light of Tom the Lunatic's eye - which has only temporarily been obliterated by the 'change'. In the second stanza we learn that this change has made Tom's eyeballs weary, and as a result, he fails to see things properly. The point seems to be that the 'unchanging light' of nature is the same light that previously shone through Tom's eyes; and this light reveals, not ideas in the kingdom of Aeon, but the full phenomenological glory of the fields and floods of the spatio-temporal world. Despite Tom's occasional lapses from the celebration of the vigour and energy of the temporal world, God is continually aware of this vigour and energy. And the light illuminating the glories of this world to God is available to Tom; when his eyeballs are not wearied he too is aware of the vigour and energy of the animals and men. However the poem means something more than this. There is a passage in the Yeats/Moore correspondence which is relevant to the poem. When Sturge Moore wrote Yeats that:

> "Berkeley had resort to God to explain objective reality; God went on

> thinking and so his thoughts remained just as the objective reality does; in fact there was only a verbal difference between the two. It matters little whether I call a tree a tree or God's thoughts of a tree if both have exactly the same properties. The only objection to doing the latter is that it is less simple and less concise."

Yeats replied:

> "I agree.... about the later Berkeley who was a Platonist. My Berkeley is the Berkeley of the Commonplace Book, and it is this Berkeley who has influenced the Italians. The essential sentence is of course 'things only exist in being perceived' and I can only call that perception God's when I add Blake's 'God only acts or is in existing beings or men.'"[19]

The point to the poem seems to be that God, that is, the sum of existing beings or men, continues to guarantee the fecundity of the universe. Tom has fallen out of step - he has failed to look at the world correctly, to see with nature's pure light (or God's eye if we remember that God only is or acts in existing beings or men). It should be noted that 'Tom the Lunatic's' views are closer to what has been described as

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19. W.B. Yeats, <u>Yeats/Moore Correspondence</u>, p. 78-80.

a Kantian position than to that usually ascribed to Berkeley or to the Platonists. In fact when Yeats gets through revising Berkeley, he turns out to be more Kantian than Berkeleyan. In the final analysis, of course, Yeats' poem defies classification.

The same kind of intellectual playfullness is at work in the three poems which follow "Tom the Lunatic". In the case of these three poems, however, the source material being used is not from Berkeley or the Cambridge Platonists but Plato. But more important, in these three poems Yeats' intellectual revisions are made by reversing the direction of certain characteristic Platonic images, rather than by explicit statements on points of doctrine such as were found in the previous poem.

Probably the easiest way to discover Yeats' attitude to Platonism is to call attention to the severe attack on Plato and Plotinus made in the section from 'The Tower' which was quoted in Chapter One. As we saw then Yeats' idealism is not the idealism of either Plato or Plotinus, although Plotinus is often closer to Yeats' position than any of the philosophers who preceded Kant except Berkeley. In this respect the note on "The Tower" which he published along with the poem is extremely interesting.

> When I wrote the lines about Plato and Plotinus I forgot that is something in our own eyes that makes us see them as all transcendence. Has not Plotinus written: "Let every soul recall, then, at the outset the truth that soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into

> them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky; it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion - and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honourable than they, for they gather or dissolve as soul brings them life or abandons them, but soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being."[20]

Yeats was eclectic in all things, and especially in his borrowings when he is dealing with philosophical or quasi-philosophical subjects. What he gets from Kantianism is a general direction and not a dogma. As a result, his philosophical views cannot be called categorically anti-Platonic. What can be said with certainty, however, is that Yeats consistently refuses any commerce with the popular mixture of Christianity and Plato which is served up as Platonism in most discussions of ideas in literature. The distinction I am drawing, between what Plato, Plotinus, and the other neo-Platonists actually said, and the generalized and sometimes misleading views which are ascribed to them, is, I think of great importance in reading Yeats.

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20. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems (London: MacMillan & Company, 1963), p. 533.

The beautiful passage which Yeats quotes in connection with 'The Tower' does not fit what has come to be accepted as Platonism, nor does it fit with most of what Plato and Plotinus believed. But it does fit with the general tendency of Yeats' thought, and as a result some of the same images that Plotinus employed are used by Yeats in the very passage of 'The Tower' which repudiates Plato and Plotinus.

It is often assumed that because Yeats uses Platonic and neo-Platonic images, he must necessarily be a Platonist. What happens when this kind of 'evidence' is used to show that Yeats is usually, or even sometimes a Platonist, can be found in almost every critical work on the poetry. Even the best of Yeats' critics continually fall into this trap. Consider this comment on 'Old Tom Again' in Ellmann's _The Identity of Yeats_

> "While Yeats frequently takes the position, as in the last of the Gregory poems, that the world, lamentable though it is, exists, he sometimes suggests, with Blake or the Hindu seers, that this world is a fiction, and death mere fantasy. So he declares in 'Old Tom Again': (Here Ellmann quotes the poem.) This is the opposite position of that of 'The Tower' where life and death are real precisely because 'fantastic men' have imagined them so.[21]

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21. R. Ellmann, _The Identity of Yeats_, p. 232.

What Ellmann is, in effect, saying is that here Plato is preferred to Kant and Berkeley. But a careful look at the poem will show that 'Old Tom Again' is anti-Platonic in much the same way as is the passage from 'The Tower' and the first poem in the series. However, because the two middle poems of the series are the most closely connected poems in the group a short comment should be made about 'Tom at Cruachan'. This poem is not difficult. Its primary function is to inform us that what most delights the speaker of the previous poem and the one to follow is the production of the world. This agrees with what has been previously said about 'Tom the Lunatic' and provides a clue to what follows in 'Old Tom Again.'

In 'Old Tom Again' the 'perfection' which is referred to in the first line is the Kingdom of the stallion Eternity and the voyage being described is a voyage through the world which is the product of the mounting of Time by Eternity. The voyage is a voyage across water because Yeats is thinking of the neo-Platonic metaphor for life. This metaphor, which is also used in the poem which follows, 'The Delphic Oracle Upon Plotinus', supposed that life was a voyage through a rough and turbulent sea which was continually disturbed by storms of sensuality. At the end of the voyage was the neo-Platonic heaven, a super-sensible world of forms which were immutable and beyond the senses. Life was a process into this heaven and to fail to make

the crossing, to fall back into the world of matter, was disastrous. To achieve a successful crossing and to enter the world of forms was a true second birth much like the Christian birth in Christ. In the two poems being discussed Yeats seems to be accepting the Platonic ontology. But in the first of these poems it is quite obvious that the production of the sensible world, what to Plato and Plotinus was a fall, is what interests and delights the speaker. The entry of Platonic forms into the spatio-temporal world produces the copies - the 'foal of the world'.

In 'Old Tom Again' the speaker, who is a sensual strange old man, and the male counterpart of Crazy Jane in the earlier poems of the volume, continues where he has left off. 'Things' sail out of perfection, become sensible objects. This is, says Tom, like the skeleton of a sailing vessel filling out its canvasses and moving before the wind. These self-begotten images - or souls, as we shall see when considering the last of the poems - will not fail because they have already achieved their objective and are in full sail. The 'self-begotten' have to sail out of perfection; they will themselves on their journeys, and are thus 'self-begotten'. And this Tom tells us, is true despite what the 'fantastic men' or Platonists, Christians, etc., tell us. These men mistakenly think that the voyage from the building yard, which is the equivalent to the coupling of 'Time'

and 'Eternity' in the first stanza and which stands for entrance into the sensible world, to the stormy shore of death, is a voyage from the winding sheet to swaddling clothes. That is, they think of the voyage from the sensual to the super-sensual as a voyage from death to life. Or conversely they think the voyage from the super-sensual (building-yard) to the sensual is a voyage from life into death. But, claims Tom, the voyage leads out of the skeletal world of pure forms to the life of the sensible world.

The last poem continues the image and further illustrates Yeats' ability to borrow from various sources, and to use diverse material in his own particular way. Porphyry had reported that the Delphic Oracle had spoken that Plotinus had successfully crossed the sea of life and found his way to the Isle of the Blessed, which was inhabited by Plato, Rhadamenthus, Minos, Pyhthagoras and the Choir of Love. This is, of course, one of the many variants of the traditional image which Yeats had used in the previous poems. It is important to note, however, that Plotinus, who is going in the opposite direction to the ships in the previous poem, is having a difficult time. Yeats' note on 'The Tower', quoted earlier, stated that Plotinus was not "all transcendence", and in the poem at hand this is reflected by the fact that it is not only the turbulent sea which interferes with Plotinus' crossing but his own sensuality, his own "salt

blood". The oracle does not tell us whether or not Plotinus succeeds in his crossing; that is a question which is answered in a later poem. Nor are we too sure that the object of Plotinus' energy is worth his trouble. Compared to the turbulence and energy of the seas of sense and sensuality Rhadomanthus looks "bland" (hardly a satisfactory epithet from the standpoint of neo-Platonic orthodoxy) and the Golden race "looks dim", is almost obscured by Plotinus' own sensuality.

This group of poems reflects the anti-Platonic direction of Yeats' poetry; that is they reflect Yeats' dislike for popular Platonic and Christian spirituality and other-worldliness. Although these poems utilize ideas and images from Plato, the neo-Platonists, Berkeley and Henry More, the poems which result are primarily concerned with the vigour and energy of the phenomenal world.

II

It was pointed out earlier that Yeats' usual strategy is not to write long discursive poems, but to utilize certain traditional myths, images and metaphors; and by changing these myths, metaphors and images to suggest his own usually unorthodox view. Of these myths none is more important in the poetry than the ideas of individual immortality and the repetiveness of history. As was mentioned earlier Yeats connected these two ideas together, and

made of them one idea. In his introduction to 'The Resurrection' he says:

> Yet there is a third myth or philosophy that has made an equal stir in the world. Ptolemy thought the procession of the equinoxes moved at the rate of a degree every hundred years, and that somewhere about the time of Christ and Caesar the equinoctial sun had returned to its original place in the constellations, completing and recommencing the thirty-six thousand years, or three hundred and sixty incarnations of a hundred years apiece, of Plato's man of Ur. Hitherto almost every philosopher had some different measure for the Greatest Year, but this Platonic Year, as it was called, soon displaced all others; it was a Christian heresy in the twelfth century, and in the East, multiplied by twelve as if it were but a month of a still greater year, it became the Manvantra of 432,000 years, until animated by the Indian jungle it generated new noughts and multiplied itself into Kalpas.
>
> It was perhaps obvious, when Plotinus substituted the archetypes of individual men in all their possible incarnations for a limited number of Platonic Ideas, that a Greatest Year for whale and gudgeon alike must exhaust the multiplication table. Whatever its length, it divided, and so did every unit whose multiple it was, into waxing and waning, day and night, or summer and winter. There was everywhere a conflict like that of my play between two principles or 'elemental forms of the mind', each 'living the other's life, dying the other's death.' I have a Chinese painting of three old sages sitting together, one with a deer at his side, one with a scroll open at the symbol of yin and yen, those two forms that whirl perpetually, creating and re-creating all things. But because of our modern discovery that the equinox shifts its ground more rapidly than Ptolemy believed, one must, somebody says, invent

a new symbolic scheme. No, a thousand times no; I insist that the equinox does shift a degree in a hundred years; anything else would lead to confusion.

All ancient nations believed in the re-birth of the soul and had probably empirical evidence like that Lafcadio Hearn found among the Japanese. In our time Schopenhauer believed it, and McTaggart thinks Hegel did, though lack of interest in the individual soul had kept him silent. It is the foundation of McTaggert's own philosophical system.[22] Cardinal Mercier saw no evidence for it, but did not think it heretical; and its rejection compelled the sincere and noble Von Hugel to say that children dead too young to have earned Heaven suffered no wrong, never having heard of a better place than Limbo. Even though we think temporal existence illusionary it cannot be capricious; it is what Plotinus called the characteristic act of the soul and must reflect the soul's coherence. All our thought seems to lead by anithesis to some new affirmation of the supernatural. In a few years perhaps we may have much empirical evidence, the only evidence that moves the mass of men today, that man has lived many times; there is some not yet perfectly examined - I think of that Professor's daughter in Palermo. This belief held by Plato and Plotinus, and supported by weighty argument, resembles the mathematical doctrines of Einstein before the experimental proof of the curvature of light.

We may come to think that nothing exists but a stream of souls, that all knowledge is biography, and with Plotinus that every soul is unique; that these souls, these eternal archetypes, combine into greater units as days and nights into months, months into years, and at last into the final unit that differs in nothing from that which they were at the beginning: everywhere that

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22. Schopenhauer, Hegel and McTaggart were neo-Kantian philosophers.

> antinomy of the One and the Many that Plato thought in his Parmenides insoluble, though Blake thought it soluble 'at the bottom of the grave.' Such belief may arise from Communism by antithesis, declaring at last even to the common ear that all things have value according to the clarity of their expression of themselves, and not as functions of changing economic conditions or as an excuse for some Utopia. There is perhaps no final happy state except in so far as man may gradually grow better; escape may be for individuals alone who know how to exhaust their possible lives, to set, as it were, the hands of the clock racing. Perhaps we shall learn to accept even innumerable lives with happy humility - 'I have been always an insect in the roots of the grass' - and putting aside calculating scruples be ever ready to wager all upon the dice.
>
> Even our best histories treat men as function. Why must I think the victorious cause the better? Why should Mommsen think the less of Cicero because Caesar beat him? I am satisfied, the Platonic Year in my head, to find but drama. I prefer that the defeated cause should be more vividly described than that which has the advertisement of victory.[23]

Yeats' reasons for taking this seriously, or at least as seriously as he did take it, are set out in his introduction to "The Words upon the Window-pane".

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23. W.B. Yeats, Wheels and Butterflies, "Introduction to the Resurrection," p. 105-109.

> "I suggest to the Collars and the Garrats that though history is too short to change either the idea of progress or the eternal circuit into scientific fact, the eternal circuit may best suit our pre-occupation with the soul's salvation, our individualism, our solitude. Besides we love antiquity, and that other idea - progress - the sole religious myth of modern man is only two hundred years old."[24]

As in A Vision, however, this idea is usually modified by Yeats' reading of Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy. According to both Plato and Plotinus, one could escape from the wheel, could achieve a unity with the one, and thus lose personality and escape re-birth. In Yeats' cosmology, however, there is nothing beyond the human mind. The super-sensual world is simply mind, and this mind cannot be confused with another greater being.

> Many times man lives and dies
> Between his two eternities,
> That of race and that of soul,
> And ancient Ireland knew it all.
> Whether man die in his bed
> Or the rifle knocks him dead,
> A brief parting from those dear
> Is the worst man has to fear.
> Though grave-diggers' toil is long,
> Sharp their spades, their muscles strong,

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24. W.B. Yeats, Wheels and Butterflies, "Introduction to The Words upon the Window-pane", p. 20.

They but thrust their buried men
Back in the human mind again.[25]

— Under Ben Bulban
Collected Poems p. 398.

Furthermore, Yeats' cosmology disdains the opportunity of release. The poem "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" is based upon the choice between noumenal and phenomenal world, between a retreat into pure mind or the repeated fall into matter.

A DIALOGUE OF SELF AND SOUL

My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done:
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

My Self. The consecrated blade upon my knees
Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was,
Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass
Unspotted by the centuries;
That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn
From some court-lady's dress and round
The wooden scabbard bound and wound,
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn.

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25. See Chapter 1, page 12, for the genesis of this idea in the prose.

My Soul. Why should the imagination of a man
Long past his prime remember things that are
Emblematical of love and war?
Think of ancestral night that can,
If but imagination scorn the earth
And intellect its wandering
To this and that and t'other thing,
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

My Self. Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it
Five hundred years ago, about it lie
Flowers from I know not what embroidery -
Heart's purple - and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematical of the night,
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

My Soul. Such fullness in that quarter overflows
And falls into the basin of the mind
That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,
For intellect no longer knows
_Is_ from the _Ought_, or _Knower_ from the _Known_ -
That is to say, ascends to Heaven;
Only the dead can be forgiven;
But when I think of that my tongue's a stone.

II

My Self. A living man is blind and drinks his drop.
What matter if the ditches are impure?
What matter if I live it all once more?
Endure that toil of growing up;
The ignominy of boyhood; the distress
Of boyhood changing into man;
The unfinished man and his pain
Brought face to face with his own clumsiness;

The finished man among his enemies?-
How in the name of Heaven can he escape
That defiling and disfigured shape
The mirror of malicious eyes
Casts upon his eyes until at last
He thinks that shape must be his shape?
And what's the good of an escape
If honour find him in the wintry blast?

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life to pitch
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,
A blind man battering blind men;
Or into that most fecund ditch of all,
The folly that man does
Or must suffer, if he woos
A proud woman not kindred of his soul.

I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.

This poem expresses, as do "Vacillation" and "Under Ben Bulben", Yeats' belief that to choose escape from the wheel of death and life was to avoid human responsibility, and an act of cowardice. Furthermore, we may note that once again Yeats has employed traditional Platonic and neo-Platonic metaphors in order to deny the theological and philosophical position the mythology was used to illustrate. The notion of reincarnation was used by Plato and the neo-Platonists to illustrate the value of turning away from the things of the world. One of the ways which the myth was couched was in terms of sight; that is, to be aware of this world is to be blind to heaven. Often it was claimed that each man had two 'daimons', and that in order to ascend to heaven the individual had to blind his 'natal daimon'. So both self and soul claim that it is valuable to be blind, but disagree about what it

is that we should not see. Further, the living man who is blind is blind because he had drunk of the cup of oblivion. According to the myth each soul goes to heaven for a short period and when it leaves is forced to drink and thus forget the glories of heaven. Yeats playfully suggest that this libation is really the 'drop' which the stage Irishman enjoys so much. Instead of being a consummation devoutly to be avoided it becomes a passport to pleasure.

The point to the Platonic myth was that if you practiced the right kind of blindness you would be forever liberated from the round of life and death and could remain permanently in heaven. Yeats insists that if you simply forget about heaven you are able to achieve a secular blessedness. That is, once you get rid of notions of permanence, of pure form, you are able to achieve a proper perspective.

> I am content to follow to its source
> Every event in action or in thought;
> Measure the lot: forgive myself the lot!
> When such as I cast out remorse
> So great a sweetness flows into the breast
> We must laugh and we must sing,
> We are blest by everything,
> Everything we look upon is blest.

The poems "At Algeciras - A Meditation before Death" and "Mohini Chatterjee" were originally one poem in two sections, "At Algeciras - A Meditation Upon Death" being the first section and "Mohini Chatterjee" the second.

AT ALGECIRAS - A MEDITATION UPON DEATH

The heron-billed pale cattle-birds
That feed on some foul parasite
Of the Moroccan flocks and herds
Cross the narrow Straits to light
In the rich midnight of the garden trees
Till the dawn break upon those mingled seas.

Often at evening when a boy
Would I carry to a friend -
Hoping more substantial joy
Did an older mind commend -
Not such as are in Newton's metaphor,
But actual shells of Rosses' level shore.

Greater glory in the sun,
An evening chill upon the air,
Bid imagination run
Much on the Great Questioner;
What He can question, what if questioned I
Can with a fitting confidence reply.

MOHINI CHATTERJEE

I ASKED if I should pray,
But the Brahmin said,
'Pray for nothing, say
Every night in bed,
"I have been a king,
I have been a slave,
Nor is there anything,
Fool, rascal, knave,
That I have not been,
And yet upon my breast
A myriad heads have lain."

That he might set at rest
A boy's turbulent days
Mohini Chatterjee
Spoke these, or words like these.
I add in commentary,
"Old lovers yet may have
All that time denied -
Grave is heaped upon grave

That they be satisfied -
Over the blackened earth
The old troops parade,
Birth is heaped on birth
That such cannonade
May thunder time away,
Birth-hour and death-hour meet,
Or, as great sages say,
Men dance on deathless feet.

The first stanza of "At Algeceras" is a symbol of the passage from life to death and back to life, of the familiar notion of re-incarnation. It is an evocation of the death Yeats had begun to feel coming upon him. In the second stanza Yeats suggests that as a boy he was concerned with the actual physical world. Newton has said that he felt that his theorizing was simply a search for a pretty pebble or shell, an almost aesthetic and ethereal pursuit. Yeats claims that his youth was spent in search of the more substantial joy of the actual.

In the third stanza he says that in his old age ("Evening chill upon the air") he is concerned with heaven. He now sees his life from the position of the soul in the previous poem, and wishes it to be a justification for entrance into heaven. How shall he be judged by the "Great Questioner"? (This phrase is probably ironically intended)

"What he can question, what if questioned I
Can with a fitting confidence reply."

This is the religious attitude, an attitude which sees human existence from the point of view of a transcendental God, a heaven

and a heaven-ordained ethic. It is summed up in the first line of the next section of the original poem. "I asked if I should pray". To this question Years gets an answer which parallels the Platonic or Christian distaste of this world. Mohini Chatterjee's advice suggests an Eastern abnegation of desire that is much like the Platonic. Both the view that is indicated in "At Algeciras" and the viewpoint of Mohini Chatterjee reject the world and wordly things as somehow unimportant. But in the last stanza Yeats reverses the direction by suggesting that the very purpose of reincarnation is to satisfy man's desire for the things of this world. His "commentary" reverses the direction of the poem.

> "Old lovers yet may have
> All that time denied -
> Grave is heaped on grave
> That they be satisfied - "

Eternity is not the property of the transcendental realm but is simply the continuation of the physical world! Yeats' point in these three poems is that the values preached by the philosophical and religious systems are not divorced from this world, are not transcendental, but are to be discovered in and through the world of the senses. The eternity that Yeats finally salutes as the answer to the question posed at the end of "At Algeciras", in the final stanza of "Mohini Chatterjee", is similar to the answer of the Self in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul." This life is not judged in terms of the desire for an eternal life in a super-sen-

sual heaven. Instead, eternity is a function of our mental needs and desires, and provides the breathing space in which to satisfy our separate energies.

> "Over the blackened earth
> The old troops parade,
> Birth is heaped on birth
> That such cannonade
> May thunder time away,
> Birth-hour and death-hour meet,
> Or, as great sages say,
> Men dance on deathless feet."

No poem more fully illustrates this attitude than "News for the Delphic Oracle". Yeats' sources for this poem were probably numerous. However, two in particular ought to be mentioned. These are Thomas Taylor's essay "The Cave of the Nymphs", and Henry More's poem "The Oracle" or "A Paraphrasticall Interpretation of the answer of Apollo, when he was consulted by Amelius whither Plotinus soul went when he departed this life." (See Appendices B & C). In a sense this poem is a companion piece and explanation of the poem previously discussed, "The Delphic Oracle Upon Plotinus."

The title of the poem sets the mood. Yeats has decided to reveal to the Delphic Oracle what "The Isle of the Blessed" is really like. The Isle is another version of the Heaven of "A Dialogue of Self and Soul". As such it represents an escape from the phenomenal and the release from the senses that is the object of Platonic and neo-Platonic discipline. Yeats'

attitude to all this is made quite clear in the first stanza, where the gods of "The Delphic Oracle Upon Plotinus" are described as "gold codgers" and found to share their island with the sensual and rowdy heroes of Irish mythology. Furthermore the whole of the first stanza is infused with a mood of drowsy sensuality. Plotinus comes to look about and then "Lay sighing like the rest." The atmosphere is more like that of a Dionysian rite or orgy than that of the super-senual and asexual heaven of Platonism. But it is the third stanza which most clearly demonstrates how Yeats plays with these Platonic ideas, and turns them to his own use.

> Slim adolescence that a nymph has stripped,
> Peleus on Thetis stares.
> Her limbs are delicate as an eyelid,
> Love has blinded him with tears;
> But Thetis' belly listens,
> Down the mountain walls
> From where Pan's cavern is
> Intolerable music falls.
> Foul goat-head, brutal arm appear,
> Belly, shoulder, bum,
> Flash fishlike; nymphs and satyrs
> Copulate in the foam.
>
> "News For The Delphic Oracle"
> Collected Poems, p. 377.

Poussin's painting, the "Marriage of Peleus and Thetis", is the source for the image in the first five lines of this stanza, but for Yeats' interpretation we must go to Taylor's essay on "The Cave of the Nymphs" (Appendix B). In Taylor's essay

The Cave of the Nymphs has the same topography, and many of the same inhabitants as does Yeats' version of the Isle of the Blessed.[26] However, there is one significant difference; according to Taylor the cave located on the island had two gates, one which led up to the super-sensible world, one leading back to the sensible world. Yeats' island cave has only one gate (Pan's cavern).

In Taylor's essay sea-nymphs are, we are told, the Goddesses of generation. They are divinities which preside over generation. Thetis is one of these Goddesses and Peleus is seen enraptured with her beauty. But, we are told that Thetis' belly listens. What she is listening to is the music of generation; she carries her son Achilles in her belly. The poem ends with the dance of the divinities of generation in the foam of the sea of life; the symbolic copulation that was discussed earlier by Old Tom in "Tom at Cruachan". The poem then, is circular; we have in the first two stanzas a description of Plotinus' arrival at the isle, and immediately following the description of the voyage to the Isle, the descent into generation. The second gate, the gate which leads to heaven, has disappeared, and in this poem, as in the poems discussed earlier, the super-sensible world, the world of

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26. Shelley's poem "The Witch of Atlas" is also a possible source of some of the symbolism. Yeats in his essay on Shelley's poem, claims that Shelley must have read Taylor's translation of the essay "The Cave of the Nymphs."

the forms, has no separate reality, but becomes only the generative principles.

> The stallion eternity
> Mounted the mare of time
> 'Gat the foal of the world.

The last stanza of "News For the Delphic Oracle" illustrates Yeats' poetry at its best. It is serious in the sense that Yeats is dealing with an important subject, but at the same time it is outrageously funny. And the humour and fun of the stanza in no way interfere with Yeats' purpose, but complement it. The poetry is difficult, in that it deals with complicated ideas; but it is not discursive. The idea lies behind the scene, and the scene can be appreciated, and a good deal of its significance realized, by anyone who is willing to read poetry. This is true despite the fact that they may not know Yeats' source material, or the genesis of the ideas in the poem. For example, Yeats' shift from the evanescent, ephemeral pleasure one would expect on the island - "her limbs are delicate as an eyelid" - to the perspective he prefers "But Thetis' belly listens" - "Belly, Shoulder, Bum" turns philosophy into flesh. The ability to provide the sensual equivalent of an argument, to prove it upon the pulse of the reader, is, it has been argued, the greatest achievement of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century.[27] Yeats, more

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27. But there are naturally few first-rate poets who could not be discussed in the same way.

than any other poet of this century, shares this gift.

A careful attention to Yeats' sources and to the philosophical and quasi-philosophical questions which provided the framework for many of these poems is, I believe, absolutely necessary to realize their meaning fully. However, this must be only a small part of the critic's task.

Yeats' methodology, his attempt to provide a concrete and sensual embodiment of his ideas, is a necessary consequence of the ideas themselves. To do otherwise is to produce a poem which is not so much a birth into this world as that dying into pure thought which Yeats abhorred. A critical approach which ignores the fact that Yeats' poetry is always concrete and sensual has confused birth and death, or at very best has fallen prey to that particular kind of neo-Platonic thinking which, if it does not confuse one with the other, preaches a birth which is more like a death.

CHAPTER III

SYMBOL AND SYMBOLISM

The ideas that were described in the first chapter, as Kantian and neo-Kantian, do not constitute a separate part of Yeats' intellectual equipment. Yeats was intent on creating an intellectual superstructure that was not metaphysics or epistemology, nor yet a theory of history or aesthetics, but something which was all of these while at the same time a mythology. To attempt to do this, even to want to do this, reflects a turn of mind more synthetic than analytic, and an imagination more sensuous than abstract. Naturally what resulted was not the kind of philosophy that was likely to appeal to anyone whose philosophical training or inclination was that of the analytical, empirical school of twentieth century English philosophy. What T. Sturge Moore, earnestly attempting to maintain a philosophical dialogue with Yeats, and often asking his famous brother (G.E. Moore) for advice, made of Yeats' position is not clear. But one suspects the brothers Moore must have been often exasperated by passages like this:

> You say Bertrand Russell says that Kant smashed his own philosophy by his doctrine of practical reason. So he does say, and what more can you expect from a man who has been entirely bald during the whole course of his life. He merely repeats a piece of common electioneering nonsense which writer has copied from writer for

> generations. The men who invented it had as much to do with philosophy as an Orange brass band on the twelfth of July has to do with religion.
>
> From Buddha's time there have always been the two paths to reality, that of knowledge and that of will. (Zen Buddhism, like Blake and Kant thought the path of knowledge was closed, that of will open.) St. Paul's Christianity set up the path of will as against the quick path of knowledge; and from Kant have descended two great streams of thought, the philosophy of will in Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Bergson, James, and that of knowledge in Hegel, Croce, Gentile, Bradley and the like.[28]

This passage illustrates both Yeats' breadth of interest, and his ability to create a cosmic stew out of bits and pieces from unlikely sources.

However, although many of the relationships Yeats drew between the major areas of intellectual discourse may give the scholar pause, his attempt to find within them a common myth or rationale is not so implausible as might first seem. These beliefs; (1) in an idealistic metaphysic and epistemology (as discussed in Ch. 1); (2) in the survival of the soul after death; (3) in a cyclical theory of history; (4) in an naturalistic theory of symbolism in the arts; (5) in something that Yeats defines as 'spiritualism' and 'magic'; and (6) in a relationship between the tradition of spiritualism and magic and eastern philosophy or religion; often occur together.

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28. W.B. Yeats, _Yeats/Moore Correspondence_, p. 124.

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, both neo-Kantians, held epistemological and philosophical positions of the sort discussed in Chapter 1, and both were interested and influenced by Eastern religious doctrines. Nietzsche believed in the survival of the soul after death, and in re-incarnation, and both these beliefs seemed to be intricately connected to his cyclical theory of history. In fact, Nietzsche's historical theory, like Yeats', seems deliberately intended to provide the secular blessedness Yeats invokes in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul", and is helpful in explicating poems like "Lapus Lazuli". All post-Kantian speculation that took, as its starting point, the nature and function of the noumenal soul, implied the survival of the soul after death, at least to the extent that the soul was thought to be a part of Absolute Ego, and to apply this kind of speculation to the arts was to hold what I have called, later in this thesis, a 'naturalistic' theory of symbolism in aesthetic speculation. Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Croce all hold variants of this position.

What has been termed 'spiritualism' or 'magic' in the previous paragraph is the tradition of heterodox mysticism in the western world. F.A.C. Wilson, in an attempt to provide more accurate description, has characterized this movement, which he says begins with the Caballa, Egyptian Theurgy, and Plotinus, and continues into the present through Swedenborg, Blake, the Rosicrucians, and Madame Blavatsky, as the 'subjective tradition in religion'. Wilson means, I suppose, both the belief that visionary experience is acquired

through the self, in contact with a God that is immanent rather than transcendent, and that the immanent principle operates beyond the laws of cause and effect (that is, a belief in magic).

In this chapter, it is my intention to discuss Yeats' poetic theory and the most important single element in this poetic theory, Yeats' view of the nature of the imagination and the role of the symbol. Yeats' position on these questions, like his views of history and personal immortality, arises out of his myth. And they cannot be understood unless the role of the Kantian and neo-Kantian elements of the myth are understood. So I should like to begin by demonstrating the change worked in Yeats' ideas by the introduction of Kantian and neo-Kantian notions, specifically the changes in those ideas which were previously associated with Yeats' interest in the tradition of heterodox mysticism.

In the first chapter the nature of the noumenal soul in nineteenth - century German philosophy was documented, and Yeats' "Seven Propositions" were quoted as an example of Yeats' modifications of these views. Both the original Kantian and neo-Kantian position and Yeats' modification of it in the "Seven Propositions" can be profitably compared with an early statement of Yeats' made in an essay entitled "Magic", in which Yeats states that he "believes in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic". In the essay he states the three major tenets of his beliefs.

These doctrines are:-

(1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
(2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.
(3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.[29]

I think it obvious that these ideas, which Yeats continually attributes to Swedenborg, Blake, and the Cambridge Platonists, to name only his most significant sources, were easily assimilated with the ideas presented in Chapter 1. With the introduction of Kantian and post-Kantian ideas, however, the earlier position grows in clarity. That is, the relationship between minds is more clearly defined. Furthermore, mind, instead of being simply another reality, becomes the creator of the phenomenal reality as well. Furthermore, both these positions are, in some respects, similar to the pyschology of Carl Jung. In the "Seven Propositions", Yeats argues that reality is a function of the human mind, and in the proposition on magic, he argues that there are certain forms, or charac-

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29. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, "Magic", p. 28.

teristic projections of the individual mind, which can bring it into contact with all minds. Both these ideas closely parallel Jung's notion of significant forms; the first being close to what Jung means by an archetype, the second by what he described as a *mandala*. Now, to establish the historical relationships between these three views would require a major effort in intellectual history and is beyond the scope of this thesis. But I think it important to note that Jung's psychology and the Kantian epistemology and metaphysics both have roots in the tradition of heterodox mysticism.

There seems to be little doubt that Kant borrowed from Swedenborg. Despite their temperamental differences, especially Kant's aversion to metaphysics, Kant's notion of the relationship of the noumenal to the phenomenal seems to copy Swedenborg's position on the relationship between the spiritual world and the ordinary world. A measure of this influence is the fact that Kant was one of only four people actually to purchase Swedenborg's *magnum opus*, *The Arcana Coelestia*, in its first printing; and Kant wrote a book, (for the most part sardonically critical) on Swedenborg's visionary experience, entitled *Dreams of a Ghost-Seer Explained by Dreams of Metaphysics*.

Yeats may well have read this book. In any event, from a remark made by Yeats in his essay on Swedenborg, we may assume that he at least knew of it, and that he assumed that there was some connection between Kant and Swedenborg.

> In his fifty-eight year he (Swedenborg) was sitting in an inn in London, where he had gone about the publication of a book, when a spirit appeared before him who was, he believed, Christ himself, and told him that henceforth he would commune with spirits and angels. From that moment he was a mysterious man describing distant events as if they were before his eyes, and knowing dead men's secrets, if we are to accept testimony that seemed convincing to Immanuel Kant.[30]

Jung's work, as is well-known, takes as data the whole of the heterodox tradition; and seeks to provide a scientific explanation of the continual recurrence of specific images within this tradition, of the continual ability of these images to provide the same meaning to their interpreters. That is, Jung's generalizations, and the generalizations of his followers, about the role of these symbols as archetypes of human experience, are built, in large measure, upon the role of these symbols within the mystical tradition and subsidiary traditions such as medieval alchemy. While Jung, and his followers (e.g. Northrop Frye in literary criticism) claim to be scientific, their ideas seem to be just as speculative as those of the 'heterodox mystical tradition', or Kantian philosophy. Theories which claim that symbols are to be understood as the product of _Anima Mundi_, Absolute Ego,

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30. W.B. Yeats, _Explorations_, p. 33.

or The Collective Unconscious, seem to be equally speculative.

While it cannot be stated with certainty that Yeats was directly conversant with Jung's ideas, since he nowhere mentions Jung, it seems to me reasonable to assume that he would have been, as are most intelligent men of this century, at least aware of the general outlines of Jung's position. Further he was very much concerned with the relationship between myths as seen from the pyschological and anthropological points of view of such works as Fraser's The Golden Bough.

There was a fourth approach to the question of symbolism with which Yeats was conversant; and that was the French symbolist movement. Of the four this seems to have had the least noticeable effect on Yeats' theory and practice, and will be ignored in the rest of this chapter.

Because of the variety of approaches to myth and symbol which interested Yeats, and the seriousness which characterized his approach to any material which touched his art, his notion of symbolism is both complex and well thought out. However Yeats' final position on this subject occurs most often in his poetry, and given its fullest expression in the many poems he wrote about art.

II

But before we can examine Yeats' use of the symbol and his ideas on symbols in the poetry, there is a more general problem which must be investigated. In most discussions of literature what is meant by the terms symbol, symbolic, symbolism, and symbolist, is rarely clear. All these terms are fairly recent additions to the technical language of literary criticism. And because this criticism is a relatively new endeavour most of its technical terms lack clarity. Questions like: What are the characteristics of literary symbols which set them apart from ordinary symbols? How do these symbols signify? How does symbol differ from allegory? and What is the relationship between symbol, image and metaphor? should at the present time embarrass the literary critic. Usually, however, these words are used indiscriminately, and what parades as a technical vocabulary is most often an intuitive struggling after precision. John Unterecker, in his _A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats_, has at least acknowledged the problem.

> At this point, definition is in order. 'Image', 'metaphor', and 'symbol', are terms which must be used so often in any discussion of Yeats' work that their meanings had better be pinned down in the very beginning as precisely as possible. All three words are of course intimately related.[31]

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31. John Unterecker, _A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats_ (New York: The Noonday Press, 1961) p. 33.

However, in his discussion of these three terms, he is unable to fulfill the task he sets himself. After defining 'sign' as 'the denotative level of a word'[32] he claims that both 'a' and 'coat' are signs. What 'a' might be a sign of is not clear. Further he claims that image is almost synonymous with sign; the other two conditions which a sign must fill, in order to become an image, is that it involves the reader in a recollection of concrete or senuous experience, or that it has the potential to become either a metaphor or symbol. Neither of these restrictions remains, when analysed, a restriction at all. Almost any substantive can involve the reader in concrete or sensuous recollection, and almost any substantive can become one of the terms of a metaphor, or be employed as a symbol. His definition of 'metaphor' is not interesting; it is a slight expansion of the usual lexical definition. (He quotes Webster's New Collegiate). However, the poverty of the normal critical vocabulary becomes most obvious when Unterecker tries to adumbrate the meaning of 'symbol'. Starting with the 'notion' of the work of art itself as 'non-discursive symbol', he says:

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32. But 'centaur' is a sign. That is, it has a connotation, but it does not denote anything.

> The distinction between metaphor and symbol is one between assigned and unassigned meaning. A metaphor always has at least two assigned meanings (its own sign value and the sign value of the object or idea it stands for). But symbol stands on one leg only; the other kicks at the stars. It exists with only its sign value as a fixed meaning. Its other meaning or meanings are unassigned. Any analogy we can construct for the symbol, any meaning we assign to it, is legitimate so long as we recognize that that meaning is not its meaning. (Its meaning must always be more elusive than any value we can - with words - fix to it.) All that the meaning we assign to a symbol can ever be is either part of its meaning or one of its possible meanings. No symbol has a meaning.[33]

This is the abdication of criticism in a subjective riot of possible, always correct, interpretations and evaluations. What Unterecker's definition says, in effect, is that a symbol is nothing at all. Any 'sign' is a symbol if we wish to interpret it as such.

At this point it seems incumbent on me, since I have chosen to quarrel with Unterecker, to provide an alternative set of definitions. Briefly, some words are signs (e.g. substantives) and some words are not signs (e.g. articles, conjunctions and other syntactical constructions). A metaphor occurs when the referent of one sign

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33. John Unterecker, A Readers Guide to William Butler Yeats, p. 34.

is compared in some manner to the referent of another sign. It is not the word 'wolf' that the Assyrians are being compared to but the denotation of 'wolf'. A metaphor occurs when the 'like' or 'as' of a simile disappears. 'Image' and 'imagery' are sometimes used to denote vividness of language. I would like to see these words restricted to this use. More often, however, they are used as synonyms for 'metaphor', 'symbol' etc., in an indiscriminate manner. They usually occur when none of the other terms seems to be exactly right. The cavalier treatment of 'simile', 'image' and 'metaphor' in the preceding paragraphs is necessary since this discussion must be short. However, as the proposed subject of this chapter is 'symbolism' in Yeats' theory and practice, a more leisurely discussion of symbolism is in order. A literary symbol, as opposed to a metaphor,[34] is not a comparison of two things, but the use of one thing as a 'sign' of another. The most usual sort of signification is conventional. That is, a word e.g. 'wolf' signifies its <u>denotatum</u> simply because everyone who speaks English agrees to accept the convention. There is no reason why one should not call all wild canine carnivores 'sheep' on Monday and 'goats' on Tuesday, apart from the fact that we would get them confused. Nor is language the only type of conventional signification; an

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34. At least, as opposed to the more usual definitions of metaphor.

amber light signifies the need for caution - but there is no particular reason why we should use amber. This brings us to the point where we can define allegory. An 'allegory' is a literary work in which certain conventional signs, that is, words, indicate a number of personages, events, objects, etc., which are themselves <u>conventional</u> signs for something else.

There is, however, at least one other kind of sign, other than the conventional. This type of sign I shall designate 'iconic", and following Pierce, I shall define an 'icon' as something which signifies another thing by virtue of a real quality of its own. When an icon occurs in literature it is called a symbol. An example of an icon is a map, or a photograph. Both the map and the photograph stand to the object iconcised by virtue of the fact that they share the same proportions. It should be noted that the proportions of the map are a quality of the map, and it is by virtue of this quality of its own that it signifies. The most obvious kind of icon in literature (that is, the most obvious kind of symbol) is that between a member of a class and a class. Adam is a symbol of all men by virtue of being the prototypal man; Babbitt is a symbol of the bourgeoisie by virtue of being a member of the bourgeoisie. In <u>The Scarlet Letter</u>, the letter 'A' is an allegorical device and many of the events in the story are allegorical. That is, they are conventional means of signification which we understand only because Hawthorne has chosen to tell us what he wants us to accept as their translation.

Many of the traditional religious emblems are of this sort. The rose in Dante is comprehensible only because we have a tradition which explicates the sign. A literary symbol, however, does not need a convention to make its meaning clear; its effect depends upon the reader's ability to notice the resemblance between the icon and the subject of the comparison. Most icons are extremely complex. Furthermore, almost any icon will contain some conventional elements, almost any allegory, some iconic elements. However, the distinction just drawn seems to me to provide the necessary elements of clarity in any discussion of the sort Unterecker introduces into his discussion of Yeats.

There are two more points I would like to make before leaving this general discussion. The feeling expressed by Unterecker, that a symbol symbolizes nothing in particular, arises because what is symbolized is rarely a simple quality, perception, etc. All symbols have a meaning, and this meaning (meaning is used here to mean 'signification') is, more often than not, a complex of propositions rather than one single or simple proposition.[35] Babbitt is a symbol for the bourgeoisie, but the novel itself is a symbol (icon) which

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35. There are a number of questions about the relationships between the icon or symbol, the "meaning" of the symbol or icon, and propositions which the critic uses to render the meaning. Unfortunately, these questions are beyond the scope of this paper. But what I am suggesting is approximately this - the critic utters propositions about the icon which are, in principle, verifiable. Furthermore, the propositions he utters are unalgous to the propositions someone might utter when describing the way a country, say Chile, appeared on a map

is related to a number of propositions about the nature of contemporary civilisation, about the mental attitudes of the bourgeoisie, about the role of the middle-classes in American life, etc., etc.

Now Yeats' idea of symbol is basically what has been described in the preceding paragraphs. He seems to have felt that allegory was arbitrary, simply an intellectual fancy, while a symbol was a natural or inevitable sign.

> Symbolism said things which could not be said so perfectly in any other way, and needed but a right instinct for its understanding; while allegory said things which could be said as well, or better in another way, and needed a right knowledge for its understanding.[36]

While Yeats was not familiar with terms like 'icon' etc., it is this distinction he is probably trying to formulate. However, Yeats enlarges upon this definition of symbolism in two directions. The first direction is toward the area of myth or archetype. We have defined a symbol as an event, process, or object which signifies another event, process, or object by virtue of a real quality of its own. A myth or archetype is, in Yeats' view, a fictional story which, by virtue of its isomorphism with a universal or near-universal human experience, signifies that experience in an immediate,

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36. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, p. 146-7.

sensuous and concrete manner. It is created as an exemplum of the universal human experience, (in the Jungian view, it is the product of the collective unconscious) and it may be counted on to recall that experience in an immediate manner, in all who are told or read the story. Further, although the stories may vary slightly in different cultures, all cultures have some version of most or all myths which reflect important aspects of the human condition. In the poem, "Her Vision in the Wood", Yeats sets forth this part of his view on symbolism.

> Dry timber under that rich foliage,
> At wine-dark midnight in the sacred wood,
> Too old for a man's love I stood in rage
> Imagining men. Imagining that I could
> A greater with a lesser pain assuage
> Or but to find if withered vein ran blood,
> I tore my body that its wine might cover
> Whatever could recall the lip of lover.
>
> And after that I held my fingers up,
> Stared at the wine-dark nail, or dark that ran
> Down every withered finger from the top;
> But the dark changed to red, and torches shone,
> And deafening music shook the leaves; a troop
> Shouldered a litter with a wounded man,
> Or smote upon the string and to the sound
> Sang of the beast that gave the fatal wound.
>
> All stately women moving to a song
> With loosened hair or foreheads grief-distraught,
> It seemed a Quattrocento painter's throng,
> A thoughtless image of Mantegna's thought -
> Why should they think that are for ever young?
> Till suddenly in grief's contagion caught,
> I stared upon his blood-bedabbled breast
> And sang my malediction with the rest.
>
> That thing all blood and mire, that beast-torn wreck,
> Half turned and fixed a glazing eye on mine,
> And, though love's bitter-sweet had all come back,

> Those bodies from a picture or a coin
> Nor saw my body fall nor heard it shriek,
> Nor knew, drunken with singing as with wine,
> That they had brought no fabulous symbol there
> But my heart's victim and its torturer.

This is an exceptionally fine poem, as well as one which gives us a good deal of information about Yeats' ideas about symbolism at this stage of his development. It is strange, therefore, to discover that it has been rarely accorded critical treatment. As far as I know, the only critics who have discussed it at any length are Ellmann and Unterecker. Neither provides much help. Unterecker's comment does not seem to comment at all:

> Her Vision in the Wood, the first of the three 'old' poems can best be understood if one bears in mind the last stanza's assertion that the visionary troop had in their invocation to the slain body of Adonis conjured up in the secret wood 'no fabulous symbol' but rather both the lady herself and her 'heart's victim'. They had unintentionally called her to the sacred spot to be a witness to the symbolic death of torn Adonis; and she, by the symbolic wound she has given herself, is able to participate in the ritual. But the Adonis proves to be her own lover. As she, 'Too old for a man's love,' wounded by her own nails and so like the visionary lover 'blood-bedabbled', stares into the drying 'glazing eye' of 'That thing all blood and mire, that beast-torn wreck,' 'Love's bittersweet' floods back over both their bodies. Each wounded yet loved by the other, each made impotent - she by the 'dry timber' of age and he by the boar's wound - the ancient lovers are nevertheless momentarily revitalized by the blood which flows down their loins. (Yeats is careful in lines 8 and 9 that there can be no doubt about the place

> in which the lady wounds herself.) But the moment of interpenetrating eyes is all they have, The Adonis-lover dies. She falls, shrieking, to earth.[37]

The poem clearly is a record of a self-induced hallucination. Why Unterecker endows the 'visionary troops' with an existence independent of the old woman's tortured imagination I do not know. Nor does Unterecker provide much in the way of explication; he does not attempt to read the poems but substitutes instead some fanciful speculations intended to explain what might be called, for lack of a better word, the plot of the poem. For instance, instead of trying to understand the last lines, Unterecker invents another detail: "The visionary troop had... conjured up in the sunset wood ....both the lady herself and heart's victim."

Ellmann is at least aware that the vision is a vision. But he concludes that the poem contrasts the richness of immediate experience with the pale abstractions of symbols.

> His portrayal of the Adonis legend is even more remarkable. The heroine of 'Her Vision in the Wood' has a sudden vision of the God's being slain by a boar: (quotes the entire poem)
>
> The speaker, full of grief at her impotent old age, loses herself among the troop of women

37. John Unterecker, A Reader's Guide to W.B. Yeats, p. 238.

> who mourn Adonis and sing maledictions upon the boar. But she differs from them in that her grief is not held in control by the stately processional. Her vision goes beyond theirs; the dead man looks at her with his 'glazing eye', and she shrieks and falls, recognizing that this is not the fabulous, symbolic god in whose death she might feel a genuine but detached grief, like that of an actor in a tragic play, but her own lover who is both torturer and victim as love itself is both bitter and sweet. This knowledge comes to her not as a similitude but as sudden direct recognition. Pageants in Yeats have a way of turning into realities. The symbol strikes to the heart; while 'those bodies from a picture or a coin' of the ageless, repetitive chorus pass on unmoved, caught up in the legend which they reenact in fitting, legendary style, immediate experience overwhelms her.[38]

Ellmann is correct in supposing that the poem deals with the relationship between the Adonis myth and the experience of the woman 'too old for a man's love'. But, as will be seen, the poem is not intended to reveal the poverty of myth, but rather to explore the way the myth parallels the experience of the woman. Adonis is, after all, a fertility god, and the myth explores his loss of fertility just as Yeats' poem explores the woman's loss of fertility.

The crux of the poem is in the last two lines. In the second to last line Yeats says the symbol is 'no fabulous symbol', meaning

38. Richard Ellman, The Identity of Yeats, p. 172-3.

not that it is not a symbol, but that the symbol is in no way esoteric. In fact, Yeats has his visionary say that the symbol is her 'heart's victim'; that is, it is a reflection of her experience. The same impulse which has caused her to rend 'whatever could recall the lip of lover' has created the suffering of Adonis. The myth is a function of human experience, and by reflecting that experience, is victimized by it. Adonis suffers as humanity suffers. But before she has had the vision she only imperfectly understands her experience. Through the myth she is able to understand her relationship with her lover, and the relationship between the love of her youth and her old age. Through the myth she can now fully recall love's bitter-sweet along with the horrible emotions of her old age. The sexual passion she tried unsucessfully to 'imagine' by ripping her body, the longing she tried to 'assuage', is satisfied by the myth. Love's bitter-sweet had "all come back". The result is to deepen her understanding.

The Adonis myth thus fulfills the condition of a symbol in that it is an icon for her loss of fertility, and in that she is able to recognize it as such. By increasing her understanding, it is her heart's torturer; and this relationship is the obverse to the relationship of victim and creator. Thus the last line states that Adonis' suffering in the myth is her creation; a creation which casts Adonis in the role of victim, but because Adonis' victimization

is an accurate and revealing reflection of her own plight, his suffering casts him in the role of her torturer as well. The telescoping of the process of life, the ability to feel at once the pain of old age and the bitter-sweet of love, is a torment. Ellman's statement that it is 'her own lover who is both torturer and victim as love itself is both bitter and sweet' just does not make sense.

There are two additional elements in the poem which deserve comment. First it should be noted that the chorus and the Adonis figure are not described as consciously motivated characters. They are simply the 'thoughtless' image of visionary thought. Because she has not yet recognized the true nature of the spectacle the old woman becomes momentarily angry. 'Why should they think that are forever young?' Yeats has used her point of view in his narrative, and to assume that he means us completely to accept her reaction to the vision is to misread the poem. He has created a picture of hysteria, and the vision is induced by self-immolation. It is her 'vision', and to miss the fact that it is a vision, a self-induced trance, is to misread the poem in the manner of Unterecker or Ellman.

Secondly, it is important to notice that her vision corresponds to the vision of others. It is a 'thoughtless image of Mategna's thought', meaning that it is a projection, without consciousness of its own, which might equally be her vision or

Mantegna's. Yeats continues to try to assure the reader of the communal nature of her vision; the vision is equally 'a Quattrocento painter's throng' or 'bodies from a picture or a coin'. The symbol or icon is a natural, not a conventional, sign. It is by virtue of the fact that it is natural and not arbitrary that it is understood, and because it is natural it tends to recur, to suggest itself time and time again, as the necessary image of the destruction of fertility.

III

So far, Yeats' notion of symbolism is in no way extraordinary. The poem just discussed is an intelligent, and moving presentation of a view which a great many people would share. But Yeats introduced other considerations which serve to differentiate his theory of the nature of symbolism in literature from the simply naturalistic view.

The ideas on symbolism that Yeats puts forward in "Her Vision in the Wood", reflect only a small part of his thought on this subject. Anyone who believes, as Yeats certainly did, that reality is not exhausted by our perceptual apparatus, that the world which we see is a function of another reality, and that the one reality stands in a defineable relationship to the other, might claim that, in the sense defined in Section II of this chapter, these realities were 'symbols' for each other. That is, a Platonist might claim that a chair was an icon for the idea 'chair', etc. But, it is not usually possible to find this kind

of relationship between the noumenal and phenomenal in Yeats' poetry and prose. He can, and does, avail himself of Platonic notions in occasional poems, in poems where he is not primarily concerned with stating his philosophical position or expanding his myth. The poem "Before The World Was Made" provides a typical example of his kind of casual use of a philosophical position which Yeats does not himself agree with. Explaining the female desire to appear beautiful as an attempt to discover a face which existed 'Before the world was made', is an ingenious adaptation of Platonic ideas. However, Yeats cannot claim this relationship to be the basis of literary symbolism if he is to be consistent and if his myth is to be unified. For in terms of nineteenth century German philosophy there is no place for ontologically distinct ideas. Reality is divided, not between ideas and copies as in the Platonic and neo-Platonic theories but between mind and its reflection in the phenomenal. If there were something other than mind and its characteristic projection, then this something was unknowable. That is, in Kantian terms, the phenomenal world was the product, jointly, of the Ding-an-sich (thing in itself) and the forms and categories of the intellect. But one could know only the relationship between the mind with its forms and categories, and the phenomenal. The relationship between the noumenal and phenomenal remained unknowable. In neo-Kantian philosophy, of course, there were no things in themselves.

If one were to hold this view, and at the same time wish to

assert that through symbols one was able to discover more about reality than is revealed in the phenomenal, the theory of symbolism which resulted would of necessity be very different from the Platonic or Berkeleyan. This is, as we shall see, Yeats' position. But it is a position which he shared with other English poets, most noticeably Coleridge and Blake. It is a position which substitutes the idea of creation for the idea of imitation. It fastens on the notion that the phenomenal is created by the human mind in accordance with the structure of the mind, and claims that the poet, when he functions as poet or creator, makes a new phenomenal configuration which reveals the structure of the human mind in a new guise. So Coleridge, in his Biographia Literaria, when looking for the first principle of both being and knowledge, says:

THESIS V

> Such a principle cannot be any thing or object. Each thing is what is is in consequence of some other thing. An infinite, independent thing is no less a contradiction than an infinite circle or a sideless triangle. Besides a thing is that which is capable of being an object of which itself is not the sole percipient. But an object is inconceivable without a subject as its antithesis. Omne perceptum percipientem supponit.
>
> But neither can the principle be found in a subject as a subject, contra-distinguished from an object: for unicuique percipienti aliquid objicitur perceptum. It is to be found therefore neither in object nor subject taken separately, and consequently, as no other third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is

neither subject nor object exclusively, but which is the identity of both.

THESIS VI

This principle, and so characterized, manifests itself in the SUM or I AM, which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words spirit, self and self-consciousness. In this, and in this alone, object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and supposing the other. In other words, it is a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself, and only so far as by the very same act it becomes a subject. It may be described therefore as a perpetual self-duplication of one and the same power into object and subject, which pre-suppose each other, and can exist only as antitheses.

SCHOLIUM. If a man be asked how he knows that he is, he can only answer, sum quia sum. But if (the absoluteness of this certainly having been admitted) he be again asked how he, the individual person, came to be, then in relation to the ground of his existence, not to the ground of his knowledge of that existence, he might reply, sum quia deus est, or still more philosophically, sum quia in deo sum.

But if we elevate our conception to the absolute self, the great eternal I AM, then the principle of being, and of knowledge, of idea, and of reality, the ground of existence, and the ground of the knowledge of existence, are absolutely identical. Sum quia sum; I am, because I affirm myself to be; I affirm myself to be, because I am.[39]

It is Coleridge's intention to deduce from this a theory of

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39. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1962) p. 150-1.

the imagination. Only because Coleridge has received a letter (which he reprints in the body of his book) from a friend most concerned that he will confuse his readers with metaphysics, are we spared a lengthy discussion of the exact steps by which Coleridge deduces his theory of the imagination from his metaphysics. But we do get a statement of Coleridge's theory of the imagination.

> The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.[40]

This notion of the imagination is one of the central features of the romantic movement. It meant that the poet's attention tended to shift away from the world to his own personality, and that this personality was considered to be the ground of reality. The work of literature, the symbol, was not an imitation of the world, or an

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40. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographic Literaria, p. 167

imitation of ontologically separate and distinct forms. Instead, it was a new creation formed by the imagination, and as a symbol, it stood in relation to the mind which created it. What was displayed was not an exterior reality, but a reality that came into being by virtue of being thought, and that revealed a new possibility for the human mind. Yeat's mature view of the imagination and of symbolism conforms in many respects to Coleridge's.

Yeats' early formulation of symbolism which occurs in the essay "Magic" was transformed into a theory of the imagination like that of Coleridge or Blake. The nature of Yeats' theory of the imagination will be the subject of the next chapter. I shall try to show how Yeats' theory of the imagination and especially the role played by the symbol in the theory, provide a key to Yeats' ideas of history, philosophy and art, and the phenomenal world itself.

CHAPTER IV

ART, HISTORY & THE PHENOMENAL

In Coleridge's theory of the imagination there occurs almost at once a radical dichotomy, a schism, between the primary and secondary imagination. But it is still a fact, for Coleridge, that the ordinary phenomenal world is a creation of the human mind. Ignoring the transcendental subject, (in Coleridge's version of idealism, the great I AM), it is possible to say of Coleridge's theory that the imaginative act involved in perceiving the world, is the same imaginative act involved in the creation of a work of art. The dichotomy occurs because Coleridge introduces into his analysis of the primary imagination, the notion of the Absolute Self. That is, he claims the normal imaginative act (that is, what most of us would call perception) of the individual, repeats the imaginative act of the Absolute Self (as God etc.). This is, of itself, not objectionable if one wishes to take an idealistic position, although it might make more sense to say that the two imaginative acts are identical. The result of the repetition of the infinite imaginative act in the finite is to provide us with a world which is, if not objectively measurable, and thus the same for all, at least a world which is objective, measurable, and common to all by virtue of being inter-subjective. But, no such objectivity can be attached to the activity of the secondary imagination. The artist, the practitioner of secondary creation,

forms new wholes which are not the product of the infinite I AM: he is able to create a world of his own. This results, in Coleridge's poetry, in the strange kingdom of Kubla Khan, it is the rationale of the opium dream. This separation of art and the world which began in Coleridge is, I think, the rationale behind many of the more extreme attempts at non-representative art in literature and painting. While it is, of course, not very profitable to confuse art and life, to separate the two is ultimately barren.

Yeats' notion of the imagination, while in many respects similar to Coleridge's, has this advantage; for Yeats there is only one imagination. The world of man, his phenomenal world, his history and his art, are a symbolization of the formal qualities of the human mind. In a sense, history, the phenomenal world, and art are all artifacts and can be treated in a uniform manner. Furthermore, since all three typical examples of human industry are functions of the process of symbolization there is a relationship between the three. The relationship between history and art, and between art and the phenomenal world, are both described in a number of the later poems. And, I hope to show by a discussion of these poems that it is the process of symbolization in art which was for Yeats the paradigm case of human creativity, and both history and the phenomenal reality are to be understood as a function of the process of creativity or symbolization in art.

II

The poem "The Statues", examines the role of symbolization in art and history, and the role of artistic symbolization in determining the course of history.

THE STATUES

PYTHAGORAS planned it. Why did the people stare?
His numbers, though they moved or seemed to move
In marble or in bronze, lacked character.
But boys and girls, pale from the imagined love
Of solitary beds, knew what they were,
That passion could bring character enough,
And pressed at midnight in some public place
Live lips upon a plummet-measured face.

No! Greater than Pythagoras, for the men
That with a mallet or a chisel modelled these
Calculations that look but causal flesh, put down
All Asiatic vague immensities,
And not the banks of oars that swam upon
The many-headed foam at Salamis.
Europe put off that foam when Phidias
Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass.

One image crossed the many-headed, sat
Under the tropic shade, grew round and slow,
No Hamlet thin from eating flies, a fat
Dreamer of the Middle Ages. Empty eyeballs knew
That knowledge increases unreality, that
Mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show.
When gong and conch declare the hour to bless
Grimalkin crawls to Buddha's emptiness.

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,
When stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,
What calculation, number, measurement, replied?
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

It is important to note that what Pythagoras measures - and what the Irish will, Yeats hopes, learn to measure - is not the physical world. The measurement involved does not start, as does Aristotle's imitation, at a world already given, but in the reality behind the world. By 'character', which a well-worn term in Yeats' criticism, is meant that which makes one man unlike another, the opposite to 'personality' which is what men share with each other. In the first stanza we are told that, although the statues planned by Pythagoras lacked individuality, the boys and girls who shared his 'numbers' knew that individuation through passion was individuation enough. Nor can the object be regarded as a copy of an ideal form. Pythagoras plans it, but the boys and girls imagine it; the antecedent to the statue is not a Platonic form but the natural tendency of the Greek mind. It is a projection, a concretization or symbolization of the natural form and energy of their minds. They chose to accept it as type or symbol, and in doing so, (pressed at midnight in some public place live lips) determine the character of Greek life. That they do so at midnight is important, in that midnight is often used by Yeats to represent the pre-conscious[41]

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41. I have called this 'pre-conscious' activity because I do not want to cause confusion by using 'unconscious.' The term 'unconscious' seems to be the property of the practitioners of psychiatry.

activity of the mind. Darkness, the absence of light, is connected with the creation of the phenomenal world, and contrasted to solar acceptance of the phenomenal world as an intransigent objective reality. Yeats is trading on the nature of Pythagoras' philosophical position. For according to Pythagoras the ultimate reality was number - harmonic and formal relationships. The first stanza suggests then, that Pythagoras gave a clear form to the impulse of Greek civilization. And, since the Greek boys and girls shared with Pythagoras the same mental equipment, they are able to recognize what he has created as a symbolization of universal validity.

It is the desire for exactitude which Yeats finds laudable in Pythagoras, but his successors are more successful in completing the symbol. The process of symbolization, the imaginative creation, is only complete when it looks 'but causal flesh'. It is the ability to create the symbol which, Yeats' second stanza claims, is the peculiar virtue of Western Civilization. And it is this power which was the cause of the Greek victory at Salamis, and which defeated the vague immensities of Asia. It is the <u>Principium Individuatum</u>, the Appllonean element in Greek life, the ability to form picture images, to create form, to separate one object from another, which defeats Asia.

> "Europe put off that foam when Phidias
> Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass."

It is important to note that there is a remarkable similarity between these two lines, and the concluding lines of "Her Vision in

the Woods". Both poems stress the reflexive nature of the symbol. In the one case, the symbol, being an accurate reflection of the woman's plight, both reveals her fate (is her heart's torturer) and suffers through her because it is created as a symbol of her fate (her heart's victim). In "The Statues" Greek sculpture gives women dreams in that it clarifies the ideal for each woman and functions as a looking-glass for that ideal, in so far as the ideal is communal. That is, in that the dream is prior to the realization, the actual statue is a reflection of human aspiration, of the possibility of form. Just as at one level the statue creates the dream, the pre-conscious form, at another more primitive level it is a reflection of the communal pre-conscious form. Thus Yeats can claim that statue reflects the dreams of Greek civilization, even while creating them. In both "Her Vision in the Wood", and "The Statues", Yeats used the archetypal images of the sexes as the typical example of symbolization. Why he should choose the human body as the most central of these symbols will become clear later in this chapter. The suggestion in these poems, and in "Under Ben Bulben" and the "Long Legged Fly", is that the process of symbolization is not simply a matter of coming to grips with the world, but of self-creation. The Blakeian notion of the great man, and other speculations of this sort also contribute to Yeats' choice of symbol.

The third stanza makes use of a number of particular pieces of information, and one symbol which is, I think, almost private to Yeats. I think it best to clear up these difficulties before trying

to explicate the stanza. Yeats was of the opinion that Greek art was imported into Asia by Alexander and developed into those images of Buddha developed by Andhara sculpture; and that this development reached its height at the time that the Middle Ages were most fully immersed in the 'fabulous formless darkness' of Christianity in the first few hundred years after the destruction of Rome. Yeats' attitude to Buddhism is ambiguous; he borrows from it and often seems to approve of many of its tenets. But at the same time his reading of Nietzsche had left him with a permanent distaste for the abnegation of personality involved in Buddhism.

Further, Yeats believed that the Renaissance represented an attempt to forge unity of being out of the chaos of the multiform Middle Ages. But the Renaissance did not represent as high a level of achievement as did Greece; it was the last gasp of the historical cycle which began with Christ and which was wending its weary way towards its close in the bloody and senseless conflicts of the twentieth century.

In the third stanza the image that crosses the many-headed, going from Greece to Asia, is the exemplum of the process, in Asia and in Europe, by which the subjective impulse to locate reality in the human mind was destroyed. The image of Buddha is contrasted with Hamlet, who represents the Renaissance attempt to reformulate the principles of Greek civilization, but who only is able to discover the buzzing multiplicity of the abstractions already defeating

the Renaissance Ideal. The use of flies as a symbol for the denatured abstractions of the end of an era occurs in the poem "The Crazed Moon", as well as in "The Statues". However, it is the peculiar use of mirrors in this stanza which provides the key to Yeats' meaning. I would remind the reader of the quotation dealing with Stendahl's mirror (p.l.), and ask him to consider a later use of the same image.

> The romantic movement with its turbulent heroism, its self-assertion, is over, superceded by a new naturalism that leaves man helpless before the contents of his own mind. One thinks of Joyce's _Anna Livia Plurabelle_, Pound's _Canto's_, works of an heroic sincerity, the man, his active faculties in suspense, one finger beating time to a bell sounding and echoing in the depths of his own mind; of Proust who, still fascinated by Stendahl's fixed framework, seems about to close his eyes and gaze upon the pattern under his lids. This new art which has arisen in different countries simultaneously seems related, ..., to that form of the new realist philosophy which thinks that the secondary and primary qualities alike are independent of consciousness; that an object can at the same moment have contradictory qualities. This philosophy seems about to follow the analogy of an art that has more rapidly completed itself, and after deciding that a penny is bright and dark, oblong and round, hot and cold, dumb and ringing in its own right, to think of the calculations it incites, our distate or pleasure at its sight, the decision that made us pitch it, our preference for head or tail, as independent of a consciousness that has shrunk back, grown intermittent and accidental, into the looking glass. _Some Indian Buddhists would have thought so had they pitched pennies instead of dice_.
>
> If you ask me why I do not accept a doctrine so respectable and convenient, its cruder forms so obviously resurrected to get science down from Berkeley's

> roasting-spit, I can but answer like Zarathrustra, 'Am I a barrel of memories that I should give you my reasons?' Somewhere among those memories something compels me to reject whatever - to borrow a metaphor of Coleridge's - drives mind into the quicksilver. And why should I, whose ancestors never accepted the anarchic subjectivity of the nineteenth century, accept its recoil; why should men's heads ache that never drank? I admit there are, especially in America, such signs of prophetic afflatus about this new movement in philosophy, so much consonant with the political and social movements of the time, or so readily transformable into a desire to fall back or sink in on some thing or being, that it may be the morning cock-crow of our Hellenistic Age.[42]

This quotation juxtaposes the mirror image and Buddha in the same manner as does the third stanza of the poem. Yeats' vision of the modern era, of the period from the decline of Rome to the present, sets before us the image of a fat dreaming Buddha, and insists that as long as mankind thinks of itself as simply the record of reality, as Coleridge's quicksilver behind the mirrors, each of us will remain a mirror in a circus funhouse, an empty reflection of our brother's emptiness. The contrast is that between the Romantic, the man who seeks to clarify and measure the world, to know reality by seeking its source in the forms and categories of the intellect, and the Buddhist belief, controlling both West and East, both before and

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42. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, p. 405-7.

after the temporary recrudesence of the subjective man during the Renaissance, that reality is what is out there beyond the mind, and that "mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show". Finally, the witch's cat from Macbeth crawls to Buddha, as Asia wins its victory over Europe.

Yeats chose Hamlet to represent the failure of the Renaissance to stem the influx of Asia because of conclusions he had reached about Shakespeare's art many years earlier.

> The Greeks, a certain scholar has told me, considered that myths are the activities of the Daimons, and that the Daimons shape our characters and our lives. I have often had the fancy that there is some one myth for every man, which, if we but knew it, would make us understand all he did and thought. Shakespeare's myth, it may be, describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness. It is in the story of Hamlet, who saw too great issues everywhere to play the trivial game of life, and of Fortinbras, who came from fighting battles about 'a little patch of ground' so poor that one of his captains would not give 'six ducats' to 'farm it', and who was yet acclaimed by Hamlet and by all as the only befitting king.[43]

The poem, then, claims that the victory at Salamis was short-lived, and that from the decline of Rome to the present Europe and European

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43. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introduction, p. 107-8.

subjectivity and measurement, have been swallowed by the mindless objectivity of Asia.

In the fourth stanza Yeats suggests that the Irish may create another Salamis, and re-fashion the course of history, if they too can examine the nature of the Irish mind, if they too can create the necessary symbol, out of the dark pre-phenomenal human imagination. The Irish will have to climb to their 'proper dark', find their right image in the pre-conscious tendency of the Irish mind. That it is the mind which must be surveyed, that it is the nature of the mind which determines both art and history, is evident from Yeats' insistence that the Irish must find their 'proper dark'. History and art are not a function of the phenomenal, nor are the ideas of men a function of some exterior reality. Like the Greek boys and girls who gave history its impetus at midnight, like Pythagoras who first precisely formulated the Greek world and Greek art, the Irish must 'plan' reality, must create their symbols, that they 'may trace the lineaments of a plummet-measured face.'

These ideas about the relationship between history and art, and their genesis in certain qualities of the human mind, which Yeats contemplates in "The Statues", are noticeably present in many of Yeats' poems. Of these the finest are "The Long-Legged Fly" and "Under Ben Bulben". The same quality of the mind that was denoted in "The Statues" by 'measurement' is here embodied in the refrain:

LONG-LEGGED FLY

That civilisation may not sink,
Its great battle lost,
Quiet the dog, tether the pony
To a distant post;
Our Master Caesar is in the tent
Where the maps are spread,
His eyes fixed upon nothing,
A hand under his head.
Like a long-legged fly upon the stream.
His mind moves upon silence.

That the topless towers be burnt
And men recall that face,
Move most gently if move you must
In this lonely place.
She thinks, part woman, three parts a child,
That nobody looks; her feet
Practise a tinker shuffle
Picked up on a street.
Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
His mind moves upon silence.

That girls at puberty may find
The first Adam in their thought,
Shut the door of the Pope's chapel,
Keep those children out.
There on that scaffolding reclines
Michael Angelo.
With no more sound than the mice make
His hands move to and fro.
Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
His mind moves upon silence.

The first stanza attributes the Roman talent for war to the same source that Yeats found behind the Greek victory at Salamis - the ability to create, and to measure reality. The third stanza describes the process of artistic symbolization, and the ability of the symbol to create the same impulse in others that gave birth to

it in the artist. In the second stanza Yeats even suggests that Helen's beauty is her own symbolization. She creates her beauty, it is a function of intellect, in the same way as are Caesar's battles and Michael Angelo's Adam. Yeats' view of the act of creation shows us, not God moving on the face of the water, but the human mind. It is a man who is the creator, who creates out of himself, from his own mind. And instead of the Old Testament's flamboyant creation, or even Milton's epic strain, we have the quiet precision of a fly delicately balancing on the surface tension of the stream.

These same ideas may be observed in "Under Ben Bulben". While there is not room for a full scale explanation of this poem, I would like to deal with the four stanzas which provide the vital centre of the poem.

II

Many times man lives and dies
Between his two eternities,
That of race and that of soul,
And ancient Ireland knew it all.
Whether man die in his bed
Or the rifle knocks him dead,
A brief parting from those dear
Is the worst man has to fear.
Though grave-diggers' toil is long,
Sharp their spades, their muscles strong,
They but thrust their buried men
Back in the human mind again.

III

You that Mitchel's prayer have heard,
'Send war in our time, O Lord! '
Know that when all words are said
And a man is fighting mad,
Something drops from eyes long blind,
He completes his partial mind,
For an instance stands at ease,
Laughs aloud, his heart at peace.
Even the wisest man grows tense
With some sort of violence
Before he can accomplish fate,
Know his work or choose his mate.

IV

Poet and sculptor, do the work,
Nor let the modish painter shirk
What his great forefathers did,
Bring the soul of man to God,
Make him fill the cradles right.

Measurement began our might:
Forms a stark Egyptian thought,
Forms that gentler Phidias wrought.
Michael Angelo left a proof
On the Sistine Chapel roof,
Where but half-awakened Adam
Can disturb globe-trotting Madam
Till her bowels are in heat,
Proof that there's a purpose set
Before the secret working mind:
Profane perfection of mankind.

The first stanza reiterates the conclusion of "News for the Delphic Oracle". There is no reality but the human mind. The transcendent world, the heaven where, according to more traditional views gravediggers send the souls of buried men, is here the human

mind, the Absolute self.

The second stanza informs us that this Absolute self is not transcendent or ineffable. On the contrary, every man, faced with important decisions, can 'complete his partial mind'. Yeats' condition of holiness does not consist in a right relationship with the universe, or with a transcendant God. It consists in knowing yourself as a man, understanding your relationship with mankind, and in fulfilling, or rather in creating in yourself, the role of man.

In the first stanza of section four the artist's task is defined as bringing 'the soul of man to God', the result of this being that this will make 'him', who I take to be generic man, 'fill the cradles right'.

But in terms of what I have called Yeats' myth, and in terms of what has been said about the earlier sections of the poem, God seems out of place. That is, if Yeats holds the views ascribed to him, he could not have an ordinary theistic conception of God. I think it important to note that, in the stanza which follows, Yeats provides a gloss on the cryptic comment in the last two lines of the previous stanza.

> Measurement began our might:
> Forms a stark Egyptian tought,
> Forms that gentler Phidias wrought.
> Michael Angelo left a proof
> On the Sistine Chapel roof,
> Where but half-awakened Adam

Can disturb globe-trotting Madam
Till her bowels are in heat,
Proof that there's a purpose set
Before the secret working mind:
Profane perfection of mankind.

Bringing the soul of man to God is equivalent to revealing the purpose set before the working mind - and this purpose is the 'profane perfection of mankind'. Yeats' notion of God is not the ordinary one, but one made up equally of German Idealistic notions and Blake. From German Idealism comes the notion of the Absolute Self, and the Yeatsian concept of the great mind that had been elaborated previously. From Blake comes the tag 'god only acts or is in existing beings or men'; that was discussed earlier. However, there is another Blakeian notion that is extremely important in reference to these stanzas of "Under Ben Bulben". Yeats summarizes Blake's notion of God in the following manner.

> Dante, like other medieval mystics, symbolized the highest order of created beings by the fixed stars, and God by the darkness beyond them, The Primum Mobile. Blake, absorbed in his very different vision, in which God took always a human shape, believed that to think of God under a symbol drawn from the outer world was in itself idolatry, but that to imagine Him as an unpeopled immensity was to think of Him under the one symbol furthest from His essence - it being a creation of the ruining reason, 'generalising' away 'the minute particulars of life'. Instead of seeking God in the deserts of time and space, in exterior immensities, in what he called 'the abstract void', he believed that the further he dropped behind him memory of time and space, reason builded upon sensation, morality founded for

> the ordering of the world; and the more he was absorbed in emotion; and, above all, in emotion escaped from the impulse of bodily longing and the restraints of bodily reason, in artistic emotion; the nearer did he come to Eden's 'breathing garden', to use his beautiful phrase, and to the unveiled face of God. No worthy symbol of God existed but the inner world, the true humanity, to whose various aspects he gave many names, 'Jerusalem', 'Liberty', 'Eden', 'The Divine Vision', 'The Divine Members', and whose most intimate expression was art and poetry. He always sang of God under this symbol:-
>
> For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
> Is God our Father dear;
> And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
> Is Man, His child and care.
>
> For Mercy has a human heart;
> Pity a human face;
> And Love the human form divine;
> And Peace the human dress.
>
> Then every man, of every clime,
> That prays in his distress,
> Prays to the human form divine -
> Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.[44]

Not only can we understand Yeats' notion of God more clearly by considering his comment on Blake, but if we read further in this essay we can understand why he did not follow Blake's particular view more closely. Yeats paraphrases Blake in this manner:

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44. W.B. Yeats, <u>Essays and Introductions</u>, p. 133-4.

> Our imaginations are but fragments of the universal imagination, portions of the universal body of God, and as we enlarge our imagination by imaginative sympathy, and transform with the beauty and peace of art the sorrows and joys of the world, we put off the limited mortal man more and more and put on the unlimited 'immortal man'[45]

and quotes further:

> Blake upon the other hand cried scorn upon the whole spectacle of external things, a vision to pass away in a moment, and preached the cultivated life, the internal Church which has no laws but beauty, rapture and labour. 'I know of no other Christianity, and of no other gospel, than the liberty, both of body and mind, to exercise the divine arts of imagination, the real and eternal world of which this vegetable universe is but a faint shadow, and in which we shall live in our eternal or imaginative bodies when these vegetable mortal bodies are no more.[46]

But for Yeats it was exactly the imaginative creation of the vegetable universe which is valuable. Blake's imagination was eventually to lead us out of the world. It is for this reason that Yeats prefers Michael Angelo to Blake: For while

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45. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions, p. 138.

46. W.B. Yeats, Essays & Introductions, p. 135.

Michael Angelo leads us to the world of the senses, Blake is only able to 'prepare a rest for the people of God.'

> Gyres run on;
> When that greater dream had gone
> Calvert and Wilson, Blake and Claude,
> Prepared a rest for the people of God,
> Palmer's phrase, but after that
> Confusion fell upon our thought.

"Under Ben Bulben" is a celebration of the process of symbolization, of the process whereby the imagination clothes itself in 'casual flesh'. And the command which greets the reader from Yeats' tombstone is a command to his reader to consecrate himself to the celebration.

> Cast a cold eye
> On life, on death,
> Horseman, pass by!

The cold eye is cold with the brightness and gaiety of the eyes of the sages in "Lapis Lazuli" - cold with the knowledge that all things die, that "all things fall and are built again, and those that build them again are gay". Though there is no final goal in Yeats' system, he is nevertheless content to celebrate the process as an end in itself. It is the imaginative process, the process of symbolization in history and art, which is the core of Yeats' myth, and throughout the later poetry we find celebration after celebration of this.

III

Yeats found the key to all human experience in what has been described variously as the 'imagination' or the power of symbolization. We have seen that for Yeats this process provides a theory of history, a theory of perception, and a theory of art. His theory of perception, and the relationship between perception and art, is more technical than the relationship between history and art. In order to approach the topic clearly it is necessary to view what was documented in Chapter 1 from a slightly different angle.

To a discussion of modern art in A Vision which is very similar to the discussion I quoted earlier when discussing the mirror image in "The Statues" Yeats appends the following footnote.

> Mr. Wyndham Lewis, whose criticism sounds true to a man of my generation, attacks this art in Time and Western Man. If we reject, he argues, the forms and categories of the intellect there is nothing left but sensation, 'eternal flux'. Yet all such rejections stop at the conscious mind, for as Dean Swift says in a meditation on a woman who paints a dying face,
>
> Matter as wise as logicians say
> Cannot without a form subsist;
> And form, say I as well as they,
> Must fail, if matter brings no grist.[47]

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47. W.B. Yeats, A Vision, p. 4

Yeats reasons for providing the pecular juxtaposition of Wyndham Lewis' criticism and Swift's little poem provide an interesting and instructive introduction to Yeats' ideas on the subject now being discussed. First, Yeats uses the expression 'forms and categories of the intellect' to describe Lewis' view because he believes that Lewis is a Kantian.

> I have read Time and Western Man with gratitude, the last chapters again and again. It has given, what I could not, a coherent voice to my hatred. You are wrong to think Lewis attacks the conclusions of men like Alexander and Russell because he thinks them 'uncertain'. He thinks them false. To admit uncertainty into philosophy, necessary uncertainty, would seem to him to wrong the sovereignty of intellect, or worse, to accept the hypocritical humility of the scientific propagandists which is, he declares, their 'cloak for dogman.' He is a Kantian, with some mixture of older thought, Catholic or Greek, and has the vast Kantian argument behind him, the most powerful in philosophy. He considers them both 'space and time are mere appearances', whereas his opponents think that time is real though space is a construction of the mind.[48]

But why if he thinks Lewis is a Kantian, does he then quote Swift's quatrain, which is, after all, a very simple rhyming of the usual Platonic notions of form and matter? The

48. W.B. Yeats, Yeats/Moore Correspondence, p. 122-3.

answer seems to be that Yeats did not simply take the poem for what Swift intended it to be. Yeats had evidently given it a good deal of thought and as a result, the poem had an added significance for him. But before examining Yeats' other comments on Swift's lines, I would like to recapitulate some of the primary tenets of the Kantian position. According to Kant, form is a quality of the mind, an order which the mind imposes upon the phenomenal world. Space and time, although they are empirically real, are transcendentally ideal; that is they are not qualities of noumena, but are the tools of aesthetic intuition which are common to all minds. They are not transcendentally real, but since they are common to all minds, they are empirically real. The imagination can do strange things, can conceive of an elephant which is pink, or has as many legs as a centipede, but it cannot avoid space and time. It is impossible to conceive of a non-spatial elephant. The scientific notions of cause and effect, etcetera, are also rules of the mind. They do not bear any relationship to the noumenal reality. Thus it is that Kant is led to claim that _percepts without concepts are blind_ - that is, we cannot have experience (perceptions) without imposing the forms of space and time and the categories which govern relationships within space and time. And as a corollary, _concepts without percepts are empty_ - they are only mental constructs which despite Plato, have

no independent reality.

This is probably one of the best known of the Kantian slogans, almost the Kantian equivalent to the slogan from Berkeley that 'esse est percepi'. When Yeats says in a letter to T. Sturge Moore:

> There are four lines of Swift that I find good guides, if one substitutes 'percept' for 'matter', and 'intellect' for 'form' - though that it is to modernise, not to improve :-
>
> Matter as wise logicians say
> Cannot without a form subsist;
> And form, say I as well as they,
> Must fail, if matter brings no grist.[49]

We can see why he has juxtaposed what seemed two discordant philosophical positions. Substituting in the original poem, we get:

> Percept as wise logicians say
> Cannot without an intellect subsist
> And intellect, I say as well as they
> Must fail, if Percept bring no grist.

And since he uses intellect here as almost synonymous to concept, as that which is capable of conception, he means that percepts without concepts are blind, concepts without percepts are empty.

The Kantian slogan, or Yeats' use of Swift's quotation as a restatement of that slogan, describes his theory, as applied to both

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49. W.B. Yeats, <u>Yeats/Moore Correspondence</u>, p. 147.

art and the phenomenal world. Either of these formulations of Kant might serve as an epigram for the poem "Byzantium".

It is often remarked that Byzantium is Yeats' city of the imagination, his Golgonooza. But it should be noted that for Yeats the imagination was what Coleridge termed the 'primary' imagination, and not the 'secondary' imagination which was for Coleridge the private preserve of the poet. In effect, Byzantium is the city of the mind, it is a world shared by all individual minds. The mosaic world of Byzantium is the world which governs percepts, and the mosaic-like patterns are the concepts which the mind impose on experience. The emperor then is the intellect, the ruler of the city of concept, intellect or form.

> The unpurged images of day recede
> The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
> Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
> After great cathedral gong;

The mind is seen as withdrawing completely from experience. The 'drunken soldiery', the senses, are abed, and we are in a world of intellect, empty of perception, in a world of pure form. The image of the senses as the soldiers of the intellect is well-chosen, and the complete absence of even 'night resonance' serves to indicate a state beyond sleep, a state of pure intellectuality which is, as we shall see, a kind of death.

> A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
> All that man is,
> All mere complexities,
> The fury and the mire of human veins.

This serves to reiterate that Byzantium's experience, once the senses have been put to sleep, is the opposite of normal experience. The reference to starlight and moonlight indicate the extremes of human experience, extremes where experience is not possible to human beings because of their inhuman purity (vide A Vision). The dome is probably a reference to Shelley's dome, and is characterised by the adjectives 'starlit' or 'moonlit'. But Shelley's dome was "a dome of many-coloured glass" which "stained the white radiance of eternity". Yeats however, sees the dome as the symbol of that which is out of life, thus reversing the role of the dome. The purity of the dome is seen as disdaining or rejecting human experience. Now, the word 'disdain' is a crux - there is considerable evidence that Yeats meant 'distains'.[50] The problem is complicated by the fact that Yeats' handwriting is nearly always illegible, and that the primary sources are cold comfort to both sides. However, although I cannot prove that the word should be 'distains', a remark of Yeats has led me to believe that, if he did not actually mean to write 'distains', he intended 'disdains' to function in the context of this poem, in much the same way as 'distains' would. Continuing his discussion of Swift's quatrain he says:

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50. Vide G. Melichiori, The Whole Mystery of Art (London: Routledge, 1960), passim.

> Swift's form and matter are concepts and matter in the sense that, if our analysis goes far enough, we cannot imagine even the vaguest film of tint or shade without such mental concepts as 'space' and 'before and after', and so on, or the concepts without the film.[51]

Yeats seems to think of the relationship between concepts and the phenomenal world in terms of the relationship between the unstained and stained slides used in the biological sciences. And this imaginative interpretation of the problem is very much like the consistent reversal of the Shelleyan dome symbolism in the poem. In both cases the phenomenal is seen as a kind of film which overwhelms and enriches an ephemeral schemata.

One of Yeats' favourite methods of composition is to set up an opposition between two extreme views, and mediate between them; or at least indicate one extreme and by thinking about it, move to a more complex and viable position. Whether the word is 'disdains' or 'distains', Yeats is here indicating an extreme position, one which either oversimplifies human experience (distains) or one that refuses to acknowledge certain aspects of human experience (disdains). Of course these positions are similar. The second stanza continues the presentation of the extreme position:

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51. W.B. Yeats, Yeats/Moore Correspondence, p. 143.

> Before me floats an image, man or shade,
> Shade more than man, more image than a shade;

'Image' here means a pure concept - not even the ghost of a man, but only the idea of a person.

> For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
> May unwind the winding path;
> A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
> Breathless mouths may summon;

Yeats' notion of the winding and unwinding of human lives along the gyres of experience is well-documented. However, what is noticeable about this passage is not the continuation of experience, but the absence of experience. I take 'unwind' to be literally what is involved. Ariadne's thread is not re-wound but unravelled, straightened out. Once again, Yeats indicates his revulsion from that which is out of human experience. Yeats has talked about the possibility of an end to cyclical scheme of things at least once before.

> When thoughts that a fool
> Has wound about a spool
> Are but loose thread, are but loose thread;
> When cradle and spool are past
> And I mere shade at last
> Coagulate of stuff
> Transparent like the wind,

The passage is charged with ironic comment. The references to 'Hades bobbin bound in mummy-cloth' and 'breathless mouths' build up a tension within the verse which is released in the supremely

ironic closing lines of the stanza

> I hail the superhuman
> I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

The echo of Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is quite deliberate.Yeats knew Coleridge's critical work quite well, and the fact that life-in-death, death-in-life was the result of too much imagination in Byzantium instead of too little as in 'The Ancient Mariner', is explicable in view of their different historical perspectives. Yeats has been exposed to the pre-Raphaelites and the Celtic Twilight, and his aim is to avoid the medieval never-never land of degenerate Romanticism. The struggle here is to avoid the twilight zone, to fight back to reality, and the zombies and ghouls are creatures of the imagination.

In the first two stanzas Yeats sets up one extreme, a world of pure form. The third stanza represents a radical shift in mood, and in direction. As is usual in his poetry, Yeats' style is ellliptical and compressed, and the relationship between the first four lines of the third stanza and the rest of the poem is not immediately apparent.

> Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
> More miracle than bird or handiwork,
> Planted on the star-lit golden bough,
> Can like the cocks of Hades crow,

The tone here becomes exultant, tense. After the vague and unsubstantial spirit of the last verse the golden bird, planted on the golden bough, and crowing, represents both a return to a substantial, almost physical, reality, and to a return to normality. Furthermore the golden bird is the cock of Hades which Yeats knew to be the herald of rebirth from his reading of Eugene Strong's Apotheosis and Afterlife. Our attention has shifted from the dome far overhead, to the spirits which float before us, to a golden bird, which we shall learn later, is a part of a floor mosaic beneath our feet. Furthermore the fact that the golden bird is crowing reintroduces sound into the disturbing silence created by the absence of night-resonance and Keatsian 'unheard melodies' of the 'breathless mouths'. And where previously the centre of our attention was occupied by a superhuman form which was outside human experience, and antithetical to it, the golden bird is vitally connected with human experience and in fact sings of the flux of temporal events, of the rebirth in time. These four lines are reminiscent of the final stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium" in that once again the immortal work of art that is imbedded in the artifact leads us back to human experience and sings, although immortal, of mortality and of 'what is past, or passing, or to come'. Thus we have dialectical opposites in the poem. We have seen Byzantium as in some way instrumental in giving direction and movement to human life and perception, and Byzantium as completely isolated from any

kind of real experience. This is a theme which becomes increasingly prominent as Yeats grows older. Compare Yeats' thoughts in this poem with two of the poems discussed earlier reveals a continuity of theme.

> Pythagoras planned it, Why did the people stare?
> His numbers, though they moved or seemed to move
> In marble or in bronze, lacked character.
> But boys and girls, pale from the imagined love
> Of solitary beds, knew what they were,
> That passion could bring character enough.
> And pressed at midnight in some public place
> Live lips upon a plummet-measured face.

AND

> Forms a stark Egyptian thought
> Forms that gentler Phidias wrought.
> Michael Angelo left a proof
> On the Sistine Chapel roof,
> Where but half-awakened Adam
> Can disturb globe-trotting Madam
> Till her bowels are in heat,
> Proof that there's a purpose set
> Before the secret working mind:
> Profane perfection of mankind.

Art then, like the golden bird, presents us with the schemata which determines the shape of human existence and which directs and controls the temporal process while remaining out of time itself. But what this direction is has only been hinted at. In this poem, and especially in the last four lines of this stanza and in the fourth stanza, Yeats returns to exorcise fully the vision of Byzantium as discreet from and antithetical to human experience.

> Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
> In glory of changeless metal
> Common bird or petal
> And all complexities of mire or blood.[52]

This is a recapitulation of the first two stanzas. The strong 'or' placed strategically at the beginning of the second line indicates the fact that the two possibilities are mutually exclusive. The following two stanzas set out the two Byzantiums, and Yeats indicates his preference for the latter.

> At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
> Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
> Not storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
> Where blood-begotten spirits come
> And all complexities of fury leave,
> Dying into a dance,
> An agony of trance,
> An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

The bird, firmly planted, disappears before another of those phantasmogrias. The time is midnight, and the evidence of the senses is absent. The mind is invaded by flames which have no real existence, which 'flit' above the Emperor's pavement. They are flames which bear no relationship to anything (flames begotten of

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52. In the fourth stanza the expression 'a starlit or a moonlit dome' turns out to have a more than casual meaning. Starlit turns out to represent an intellectual passion to discover relationships - an allusion to Pythagoras' theories; and moonlight to represent the flux of temporal events.

flames) and are unaffected by the real world (nor storm disturbs).

This is the holy city to which 'blood-begotten spirits come' and are purged of their sensuality, become pure spirits; in short, a Christian heaven. But Yeats was anti-Christian, and his attacks on the notion of the generation of the soul is best documented in 'Veronica's Napkin', which I quote in its entirety.

> The Heavenly Circuit; Berenice's Hair;
> Tent-pole of Eden; the tent's drapery;
> Symbolical glory of the earth and air!
> The Father and His angelic hierarchy
> That made the magnitude and glory there
> Stood in the circuit of a needle's eye.
>
> Some found a different pole, and where it stood
> A patter on a napkin dipped in blood.

This astonishing little poem is a companion-piece to Byzantium. Yeats states that he wrote both poems on a theme befitting an old man, and in order to 'warm' himself back into life. The poem makes use of the male - female antinomy of which Yeats was so fond; and translates the tree of knowledge into the largest phallic symbol possible. The first two lines alone should have guaranteed the poem a certain amount of critical attention and a great deal of applause. However, where the poem has not been ignored it has received poor treatment.

> This poem contrasts two kinds of religion, of art, or of thought, the first based on transcendence of life, the second on participation in it. Veronica's napkin, wiped on Christ's

> face and carrying his image, represented the
> second, while the constellations represent
> the first.[53]

This is, of course, an exact reversal of Yeats' meaning. The first stanza represents Yeats' belief that the noumenal world of idea and daimon reveals itself in the physical world. That is, if Yeats keeps to the old mind-body dualism, he does so by making the two such close parallels that for all intents and purposes they become one. For both Kant and Yeats, souls were noumenal objects, outside space and time. Hence, Yeats gets the angelic hierarchy into a needle's eye. And for both men the noumenal world constantly revealed itself in the physical world.

> All that stream that's roaring by
> Came out of a needle's eye
> Things unborn, things that are gone
> From a needle's eye still goad it on

Opposed to the perception of the close inter-relationship of the physical and spiritual, mind and matter, intellect and form, we have the Christian notion of the birth of the soul out of the death of the body, and the Platonic notion of the idea as

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53. Richard Ellman, <u>The Identity of Yeats</u>, p. 266.

above the physical.

> Some found a different pole and where it stood
> A pattern on a napkin dipped in blood.

This is exactly the process which is taking place in the fourth stanza of Byzantium.

> Where blood-begotten spirits come
> And all complexities of fury leave,
> Dying into a dance,
> An agony of trance,
> An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Now Yeats was certainly aware of the fact that this is not a description of heaven, but a description of hell that is reminiscent of Dante, and of the description of hell-fire in Joyce's _Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man_. The stanza's lurid images constitute a rejection of the Christian-Platonic notion which is made all the more effective by the description of its antithesis in the last stanza.

> Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood
> Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
> The golden smithies of the Emperor!
> Marbles of the dancing floor
> Break bitter furies of complexity,
> Those images that yet
> Fresh images beget,
> That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

Just as the first stanza of "Veronica's Napkin" presented a duality of mind and body, spirit and sense, which approached unity,

the first lines of this stanza present us with the same unity. The spirits approach Byzantium astraddle the mire and blood of the sensual, physical world. And in this stanza the 'mire and blood' is not rejected but organized. The golden smithies of the emperor are the tools, that is concepts, the intellect uses to organize experience, to break the flood. Now smithies are not smiths, they are the actual forges of the emperor. And what these forges are is made clear in the following few lines. They are works of art, the Byzantine floor mosaics which provide a kind of schematization of reality. And over the schematization flows a massed and disorganized sea of sense-impressions which are ordered by the pattern on the dancing floor.

> Marbles of the dancing floor
> Break bitter furies of complexity

And the chaos is ordered for a second, grasped conceptually but in its full, phenomenological glory, as sea and image, dancing wave and marble pattern spread out to encompass life itself - and knowledge returns the reader to the world of phenomena.

> Those images that yet
> Fresh images beget
> That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea

This is the final epiphany, life in its full flower tormented by the dolphins of sense perception, and tormented by the ever active form-imposing mind.

IV

Earlier it was claimed that Romanticism tended to separate art and life, to claim that the world of the imagination was separate from our normal reality. Just the opposite is true of Yeats' version of the imagination. For the role of art is to order our perceptions of the world. It is through art that we are able to create and order our universe.

> Marbles of the dancing floor
> Break bitter furies of complexity

It is the concept of a mind which creates and imposes form on the phenomenal, on history, which Yeats makes his first principle. And the primary example of the ability of the mind to create and impose form is art. The role of art is continually reitereated in the poetry; "The Statues", "Under Ben Bulben", "The Long-Legged Fly", "Her Vision in the Wood", and "Byzantium" are all attempts to define the role of art in our perception of the world, and to insist that art is only important when it acts in and through the phenomenal.

The repetitive nature of the process, stressed in "The Statues" and "Under Ben Bulben", as well as in "Byzantium", finds its expression in the symbol of the dance. The inter-weaving of patterns, which is what a dance is, occurs in Byzantium and in the poem immediately before Byzantium in the Collected Works, "Mohini

Chatterjee". The notion that 'men dance on deathless feet', recurs in both "Under Ben Bulben" and, we have seen, in "News for the Delphic Oracle". In fact the copulation of the nymphs and satyrs of this poem, as they move in time to the music which falls from Pan's cavern, is in many respects a recapitulation of the final stanza of Byzantium.

All human labour, of art, of science, of history, becomes a function of the human mind. Even the intransigent world, the phenomenal world of physical objects, becomes primarily a revelation of the human intellect. Yeats has denied the 'tyranny of fact' which so disturbed him, to choose instead a vision of the individual intellect as the creator, justification, and guarantor of all things.

> "Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
> His mind moves upon silence."

APPENDIX A

GENEALOGICAL TREE OF REVOLUTION

I

NICHOLAS OF CUSA
KANT RESTATES THE ANTINOMIES
HEGEL BELIEVES THAT HE HAS SOLVED THEM WITH HIS DIALECTIC
THESIS: ANTITHESIS: SYNTHESIS
ALL THINGS TRANSPARENT TO REASON

II
DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM
(KARL MARX AND SCHOOL)

(a) Nature creates Spirit.
Brain creates Mind.
Only the reasonable should exist.
Evolution.

(b) Dialectic as conflict of classes.
Each class denied by its successor.
History, a struggle for food; science, art, religions, but cries of the hunting pack.

(c) The past is criminal.
Hatred justified.
The Party is above the State.

(d) Final aim: Communism.
Individual, class, nations lost in the whole.

(e) The Proletariat justified, because, having nothing, it can reject all.

III
ITALIAN PHILOSOPHY
(INFLUENCED BY VICO)

(a) Spirit creates Nature.
Mind creates Brain.
All that exists is reasonable.
Platonic reminiscence.

(b) Dialectic rejected.
Conflicts are between positives ('distincts').
Civilisation, the rise of classes and their return to the mass bringing their gifts.

(c) The past is honoured.
Hatred is condemned.
The State is above the Party.

(d) Final aim: Fascism.
Individual, class, nation a process of the whole.

(e) History, now transparent to reason, justified.

IV

A RACE PHILOSOPHY

The antinomies cannot be solved.
Man cannot understand Nature because he has not made it. (Vico).
Communism, Fascism, are inadequate because society is the struggle of two forces not transparent to reason - the family and the individual.
From the struggle of the individual to make and preserve himself comes intellectual initiative.
From the struggle to found and preserve the family come good taste and good habits.
Equality of opportunity, equality of rights, have been created to assist the individual in his struggle.
Inherited wealth, privilege (sic), precedence, have been created to preserve the family in its struggle.
The business of Government is not to abate either struggle but to see that individual and family triumph by adding to Spiritual and material wealth.
Materially and Spiritually uncreative families or individuals must not be allowed to triumph over the creative.
Individual and family have a right to their gains but Government has a right to put a limit to those gains.
If a limit is set it must be such as permits a complete culture to individual and family; it must leave to the successful family, for instance, the power to prolong for as many years as that family thinks necessary the education of its children.
It must not be forgotten that Race, which has for its flower the family and the individual, is wiser than Government, and that it is the source of all initiative.

W.B. Yeats, Unpublished paper quoted by R. Ellmann in The Identity of Yeats, p. 351.

APPENDIX B

ON

THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS,

IN THE

THIRTEENTH BOOK OF THE ODYSSEY.

1. WHAT does Homer obscurely signify by the cave in Ithaca, which he describes in the following verses?

> " High at the head a branching olive grows,
> And crowns the pointed cliffs with shady boughs.
> A cavern pleasant, though involv'd in night,
> Beneath it lies, the Naiades' delight:
> Where bowls and urns of workmanship divine
> And massy beams in native marble shine;
> On which the Nymphs amazing webs display,
> Of purple hue, and exquisite array.
> The busy bees within the urns secure
> Honey delicious, and like nectar pure.
> Perpetual waters through the grotto glide,
> A lofty gate unfolds on either side;
> That to the north is pervious to mankind;
> The sacred south t' immortals is consign'd."

That the poet, indeed, does not narrate these particulars from historical information, is evident from this, that those who have given us a description of the island, have, as Cronius[a] says, made no mention of such a cave being found in it. This likewise, says he, is manifest, that it would be absurd for Homer to expect, that in

[a] This Cronius, the Pythagorean, is also mentioned by Porphyry, in his Life of Plotinus.

describing a cave fabricated merely by poetical license, and thus artificially opening a path to Gods and men in the region of Ithaca, he should gain the belief of mankind. And it is equally absurd to suppose, that nature herself should point out, in this place, one path for the descent of all mankind, and again another path for all the Gods. For, indeed, the whole world is full of Gods and men: but it is impossible to be persuaded, that in the Ithacensian cave men descend, and Gods ascend. Cronius, therefore, having premised thus much, says, that it is evident, not only to the wise but also to the vulgar, that the poet, under the veil of allegory, conceals some mysterious signification; thus compelling others to explore what the gate of men is, and also what is the gate of the Gods: what he means by asserting that this cave of the Nymphs has two gates; and why it is both pleasant and obscure, since darkness is by no means delightful, but is rather productive of aversion and horror. Likewise, what is the reason why it is not simply said to be the cave of the Nymphs, but it is accurately added, of the Nymphs which are called Naiades? Why, also, is the cave represented as containing bowls and amphoræ, when no mention is made of their receiving any liquor, but bees are said to deposit their honey in these vessels as in hives? Then, again, why are oblong beams adapted to weaving placed here for the Nymphs; and these not formed from wood, or any other pliable matter, but from stone, as well as the amphoræ and bowls? Which last circumstance is, indeed, less obscure; but that, on these stony beams, the Nymphs should weave purple garments, is not only wonderful to the sight, but also to the auditory sense. For who would believe that Goddesses weave garments in a cave involved in darkness, and on stony beams; especially while he hears the poet asserting, that the purple webs of the Goddesses were visible. In addition to these things likewise, this is admirable, that the cave should have a twofold entrance; one made for the descent of men, but the other for the ascent of Gods.

And again, that the gate, which is pervious by men, should be said to be turned towards the north wind, but the portal of the Gods to the south; and why the poet did not rather make use of the west and the east for this purpose; since nearly all temples have their statues and entrances turned towards the east; but those who enter them look towards the west, when standing with their faces turned towards the statues, they honour and worship the Gods. Hence, since this narration is full of such obscurities, it can neither be a fiction casually devised for the purpose of procuring delight, nor an exposition of a topical history; but something allegorical must be indicated in it by the poet, who likewise mystically places an olive near the cave. All which particulars the ancients thought very laborious to investigate and unfold; and we, with their assistance, shall now endeavour to develope the secret meaning of the allegory. Those persons, therefore, appear to have written very negligently about the situation of the place, who think that the cave, and what is narrated concerning it, are nothing more than a fiction of the poet. But the best and most accurate writers of geography, and among these Artemidorus the Ephesian, in the fifth book of his work, which consists of eleven books, thus writes: "The island of Ithaca, containing an extent of eighty-five stadia[b], is distant from Panormus, a port of Cephalenia, about twelve stadia. It has a port named Phorcys, in which there is a shore, and on that shore a cave, in which the Phæacians are reported to have placed Ulysses." This cave, therefore, will not be entirely an Homeric fiction. But whether the poet describes it as it really is, or whether he has added something to it of his own invention, nevertheless the same inquiries remain; whether the intention of the poet is investigated, or of those who founded the cave. For, neither did the ancients establish temples without fabulous symbols, nor

[b] *i. e.* Rather more than ten Italian miles and a half, eight stadia making an Italian mile.

does Homer rashly narrate the particulars pertaining to things of this kind. But how much the more any one endeavours to show that this description of the cave is not an Homeric fiction, but prior to Homer was consecrated to the Gods, by so much the more will this consecrated cave be found to be full of ancient wisdom. And on this account it deserves to be investigated, and it is requisite that its symbolical consecration should be amply unfolded into light.

2. The ancients, indeed, very properly consecrated a cave to the world, whether assumed collectively, according to the whole of itself, or separately, according to its parts. Hence they considered earth as a symbol of that matter of which the world consists; on which account some thought that matter and earth are the same; through the cave indicating the world, which was generated from matter. For caves are, for the most part, spontaneous productions, and connascent with the earth, being comprehended by one uniform mass of stone; the interior parts of which are concave, but the exterior parts are extended over an indefinite portion of land. And the world being spontaneously produced, [*i.e.* being produced by no external, but from an internal cause,] and being also self-adherent, is allied to matter; which, according to a secret signification, is denominated a stone and a rock, on account of its sluggish and repercussive nature with respect to form: the ancients, at the same time, asserting that matter is infinite through its privation of form. Since, however, it is continually flowing, and is of itself destitute of the supervening investments of form, through which it participates of *morphe*[c], and becomes visible, the flowing waters, darkness, or, as the poet says, obscurity of the cavern, were considered by the ancients as apt symbols of what the world contains, on account of the matter with which it is connected. Through matter,

[c] In the original, δι ου μορφουται. But *morphe*, as we are informed by Simplicius, pertains to the colour, figure, and magnitude of superficies.

therefore, the world is obscure and dark; but through the connecting power, and orderly distribution of form, from which also it is called *world*, it is beautiful and delightful. Hence it may very properly be denominated a cave; as being lovely, indeed, to him who first enters into it, through its participation of forms, but obscure to him who surveys its foundation, and examines it with an intellectual eye. So that its exterior and superficial parts, indeed, are pleasant, but its interior and profound parts are obscure, [and its very bottom is darkness itself]. Thus also the Persians, mystically signifying the descent of the soul into the sublunary regions, and its regression from it, initiate the mystic [or him who is admitted to the arcane sacred rites] in a place which they denominate a cavern. For, as Eubulus says, Zoroaster was the first who consecrated, in the neighbouring mountains of Persia, a spontaneously produced cave, florid, and having fountains, in honour of Mithra, the maker and father of all things; a cave, according to Zoroaster, bearing a resemblance of the world, which was fabricated by Mithra. But the things contained in the cavern being arranged according to commensurate intervals, were symbols of the mundane elements and climates.

3. After this Zoroaster likewise, it was usual with others to perform the rites pertaining to the mysteries in caverns and dens, whether spontaneously produced, or made by the hands. For, as they established temples, groves, and altars, to the celestial Gods, but to the terrestrial Gods, and to heroes, altars alone, and to the subterranean divinities pits and cells; so to the world they dedicated caves and dens; as likewise to Nymphs [d], on account of the water which trickles, or is diffused in caverns, over which the Naiades, as we shall shortly observe,

[d] "Nymphs," says Hermias, in his Scholia on the Phædrus of Plato, "are Goddesses who preside over regeneration, and are ministrant to Bacchus, the offspring of Semele. Hence they dwell near water, that is, they are conversant with generation. But this Bacchus supplies the regeneration of the whole sensible world."

preside. Not only, however, did the ancients make a cavern, as we have said, to be a symbol of the world, or of a generated and sensible nature; but they also assumed it as a symbol of all invisible powers; because, as caverns are obscure and dark, so the essence of these powers is occult. Hence Saturn fabricated a cavern in the ocean itself, and concealed in it his children. Thus, too, Ceres educated Proserpine, with her Nymphs, in a cave; and many other particulars of this kind may be found in the writings of theologists. But that the ancients dedicated caverns to Nymphs, and especially to the Naiades, who dwell near fountains, and who are called Naiades from the streams over which they preside, is manifest from the hymn to Apollo, in which it is said: "The Nymphs residing in caves shall deduce fountains of intellectual waters to thee, (according to the divine voice of the Muses,) which are the progeny of a terrene spirit. Hence waters, bursting through every river, shall exhibit to mankind perpetual effusions of sweet streams[e]." From hence, as it appears to me, the Pythagoreans, and after them Plato, showed that the world is a cavern and a den. For the powers which are the leaders of souls, thus speak in a verse of Empedocles:

> Now at this secret cavern we're arrived.

And by Plato, in the 7th book of his Republic, it is said, "Behold men as if dwelling in a subterraneous cavern, and in a den-like habitation, whose entrance is widely expanded to the admission of the light through the whole cave." But when the other person in the Dialogue says, "You adduce an unusual and wonderful similitude," he replies, "The whole of this image, friend Glauco, must be adapted to what has been before said, assimilating this receptacle, which is visible through the sight, to the habitation of a prison; but the light of the fire which is in it to the power of the sun."

[e] These lines are not to be found in any of the hymns now extant, ascribed to Homer.

4. That theologists therefore considered caverns as symbols of the world, and of mundane powers, is, through this, manifest. And it has been already observed by us, that they also considered a cave as a symbol of the intelligible essence; being impelled to do so by different and not the same conceptions. For they were of opinion, that a cave is a symbol of the sensible world, because caverns are dark, stony, and humid; and they asserted, that the world is a thing of this kind, through the matter of which it consists, and through its repercussive and flowing nature. But they thought it to be a symbol of the intelligible world, because that world is invisible to sensible perception, and possesses a firm and stable essence. Thus, also, partial powers are unapparent, and especially those which are inherent in matter. For they formed these symbols, from surveying the spontaneous production of caves, and their nocturnal, dark, and stony nature; and not entirely, as some suspect, from directing their attention to the figure of a cavern. For every cave is not spherical, as is evident from this Homeric cave with a twofold entrance. But since a cavern has a twofold similitude, the present cave must not be assumed as an image of the intelligible, but of the sensible essence. For in consequence of containing perpetually-flowing streams of water, it will not be a symbol of an intelligible hypostasis, but of a material essence. On this account also, it is sacred to Nymphs, not the mountain, *or rural*[f] *Nymphs*, or others of the like kind, but to the Naiades, who are thus denominated from streams of water. For we peculiarly call the Naiades, and the powers that preside over waters, Nymphs; and this term, also, is commonly applied to all souls descending into generation. For the ancients thought that these souls are incumbent on water which is inspired by divinity, as Numenius says, who adds, that on this account, a prophet asserts, that the Spirit of God moved on the waters. The

[f] In the original, ουδε ακραιων; but for ακραιων, I read, αγραιων.

Egyptians likewise, on this account, represent all dæmons, and also the sun, and, in short, all the planets [g], not standing on any thing solid, but on a sailing vessel; for souls descending into generation fly to moisture. Hence, also, Heraclitus says, "that moisture appears delightful and not deadly to souls;" but the lapse into generation is delightful to them. And in another place [speaking of unembodied souls], he says, "We live their death, and we die their life." Hence the poet calls those that are in generation *humid*, because they have souls which are *profoundly* steeped in moisture. On this account, such souls delight in blood and humid seed; but water is the nutriment of the souls of plants. Some likewise are of opinion, that the bodies in the air, and in the heavens, are nourished by vapours from fountains and rivers, and other exhalations. But the Stoics assert, that the sun is nourished by the exhalation from the sea; the moon from the vapours of fountains and rivers; and the stars from the exhalation of the earth. Hence, according to them, the sun is an intellectual composition formed from the sea; the moon from river waters; and the stars from terrene exhalations.

5. It is necessary, therefore, that souls, whether they are corporeal or incorporeal, while they attract to themselves body, and especially such as are about to be bound to blood and moist bodies, should verge to humidity, and be corporalized, in consequence of being drenched in moisture. Hence the souls of the dead are evocated by the effusion of bile and blood; and souls

[g] In the original, *τους τε Αιγυπτιους δια τουτο τους δαιμονας απαντας ουχ εστασαι επι στερεου, αλλα παντας επι πλοιου, και τον ηλιον, και απλως παντας, ους τινας ειδεναι χρη τας ψυχας επιποτωμενας τω υγρω, τας εις γενεσιν κατιουσας.* But after the words *και απλως παντας*, it appears to me to be requisite to insert *τους πλανητας*. For Martianus Capella, in lib. ii. De Nuptiis Philologiæ, speaking of the sun, says: "Ibi quandam navim, totius naturæ cursibus diversa cupiditate moderantem, cunctaque flammarum congestione plenissimam, beatis circumactam mercibus conspicatur. Cui *nautæ septem* germani, tamen suique consimiles præsidebant," &c. For in this passage the seven sailors are evidently the seven planets.

that are lovers of body, by attracting a moist spirit, condense this humid vehicle like a cloud. For moisture condensed in the air constitutes a cloud. But the pneumatic vehicle being condensed in these souls, becomes visible through an excess of moisture. And among the number of these we must reckon those apparitions of images, which, from a spirit coloured by the influence of imagination, present themselves to mankind. But pure souls are averse from generation; so that, as Heraclitus says, "*a dry soul is the wisest.*" Hence, here also, the spirit becomes moist and more aqueous through the desire of coition, the soul thus attracting a humid vapour from verging to generation. Souls, therefore, proceeding into generation, are the Nymphs called Naiades. Hence it is usual to call those that are married Nymphs, as being conjoined to generation, and to pour water into baths from fountains, or rivers, or perpetual rills.

6. This world, then, is sacred and pleasant to souls who have now proceeded into nature, and to natal dæmons, though it is essentially dark and *obscure*; [ηεροειδης]; from which some have suspected that souls also are of an *obscure* nature, [αερωδως,] and essentially consist of air. Hence a cavern, which is both pleasant and dark, will be appropriately consecrated to souls on the earth, conformably to its similitude to the world; in which, as in the greatest of all temples, souls reside. To the Nymphs likewise, who preside over waters, a cavern, in which there are perpetually flowing streams, is adapted. Let, therefore, this present cavern be consecrated to souls, and, among the more partial powers, to nymphs, that preside over streams and fountains, and who, on this account, are called *fontal* and *Naiades*. What, therefore, are the different symbols, some of which are adapted to souls, but others to the aquatic powers, in order that we may apprehend that this cavern is consecrated in common to both? Let the stony bowls, then, and the amphoræ, be symbols of the aquatic Nymphs. For these are, indeed, the symbols of Bacchus, but their composition is

fictile, *i. e.* consists of baked earth; and these are friendly to the vine, the gift of the God; since the fruit of the vine is brought to a proper maturity by the celestial fire of the sun. But the stony bowls and amphoræ, are in the most eminent degree adapted to the Nymphs who preside over the water that flows from rocks. And to souls that descend into generation, and are occupied in corporeal energies, what symbol can be more appropriate than those instruments pertaining to weaving? Hence, also, the poet ventures to say, " that on these the Nymphs weave purple webs, admirable to the view." For the formation of the flesh is on and about the bones, which in the bodies of animals resemble stones. Hence these instruments of weaving consist of stone, and not of any other matter. But the purple webs will evidently be the flesh which is woven from the blood. For purple woollen garments are tinged from blood; and wool is dyed from animal juice. The generation of flesh, also, is through and from blood. Add, too, that the body is a garment with which the soul is invested, a thing wonderful to the sight, whether this refers to the composition of the soul, or contributes to the colligation of the soul [to the whole of a visible essence]. Thus, also, Proserpine, who is the inspective guardian of every thing produced from seed, is represented by Orpheus as weaving a web[h]; and the heavens are called by the ancients

[h] The theological meaning of this Orphic fiction is beautifully unfolded by Proclus, as follows:—" Orpheus says that the vivific cause of partible natures [*i. e.* Proserpine], while she remained on high, weaving the order of celestials, was a nymph, as being undefiled; and in consequence of this connected with Jupiter, and abiding in her appropriate manners; but that, proceeding from her proper habitation, she left her webs unfinished, was ravished; having been ravished, was married; and that being married she generated, in order that she might animate things which have an adventitious life. For the unfinished state of her webs indicates, I think, that the universe is imperfect or unfinished, as far as to perpetual animals [*i. e.* The universe would be imperfect if nothing inferior to the celestial Gods was produced]. Hence Plato says, that the one Demiurgus calls on the many Demiurgi to weave together the

a veil, in consequence of being, as it were, the vestment of the celestial Gods.

7. Why, therefore, are the amphoræ said not to be filled with water, but with honey-combs? For in these Homer says the bees deposit their honey. But this is evident from the word τιθαιβωσσειν, which signifies τιθεναι την βοσιν; *i. e.* to deposit aliment. And honey is the nutriment of bees. Theologists, also, have made honey subservient to many and different symbols, because it consists of many powers; since it is both cathartic and preservative. Hence, through honey, bodies are preserved from putrefaction, and inveterate ulcers are purified. Farther still, it is also sweet to the taste, and is collected by bees, who are ox-begotten, from flowers. When, therefore, those who are initiated in the Leontic sacred rites, pour honey instead of water on their hands; they are ordered [by the initiator] to have their hands pure from every thing productive of molestation, and from every thing noxious and detestable. Other initiators [into the same mysteries] employ fire, which is of a cathartic nature, as an appropriate purification. And they likewise purify the tongue from all the defilement of evil with honey. But the Persians, when they offer honey to the guardian of fruits, consider it as the symbol of a preserving and defending power. Hence some per-

mortal and immortal natures; after a manner reminding us, that the addition of the mortal genera is the perfection of the textorial life of the universe, and also exciting our recollection of the divine Orphic fable, and affordin us interpretative causes of the unfinished webs of Proserpine." — See vol. ii. p. 356, of my translation of Proclus on the Timæus.

The *unfinished webs* of Proserpine are also alluded to by Claudian, in his poem De Raptu Proserpinæ, in the following verse:

> Sensit adesse Deas, *imperfectumque laborem*
> *Deserit.*

I only add, that, by ancient theologists, the shuttle was considered as a signature of *separating*, a cup of *vivific*, a sceptre of *ruling*, and a key of *guardian* power.

sons have thought that the nectar and ambrosia[1], which the poet pours into the nostrils of the dead, for the purpose of preventing putrefaction, is honey; since honey is the food of the Gods. On this account, also, the same poet somewhere calls nectar ερυθρον; for such is the colour of honey, [viz. it is a deep yellow]. But whether or not honey is to be taken for nectar, we shall elsewhere more accurately examine. In Orpheus, likewise, Saturn is ensnared by Jupiter through honey. For Saturn, being filled with honey, is intoxicated, his senses are darkened, as if from the effects of wine, and he sleeps; just as Porus, in the Banquet of Plato, is filled with nectar; for wine was not (says he) yet known. The Goddess Night,

[1] The theological meaning of nectar and ambrosia, is beautifully unfolded by Hermias, in his Scholia on the Phaedrus of Plato, published by Ast, Lips. 1810, p. 145, where he informs us, "that *ambrosia* is analogous to dry nutriment, and that, on this account, it signifies an establishment in causes; but that *nectar* is analogous to moist food, and that it signifies the providential attention of the Gods to secondary natures; the former being denominated, according to *a privation of the mortal and corruptible* [κατα στερησιν του βροτου και φθαρτου]; but the latter, according to *a privation of the funeral and sepulchral* [κατα στερησιν του κτερεως ειρημενον και του ταφου]. And when the Gods are represented as energizing providentially, they are said to drink nectar. Thus Homer, in the beginning of the 4th book of the Iliad:

> Οι δε θεοι παρ Ζηνι καθημενοι ηγορωντο
> Χρυσεω εν δαπεδω, μετα δε σφισι ποτνια Ηβη
> Νεκταρ εωνοχοει· τοι δε χρυσεοις δεπαεσσι
> Δειδεχατ' αλληλους, Τρωων πολιν εισορωντες.

> Now with each other, on the golden floor
> Seated near Jove, the Gods converse; to whom
> The venerable Hebe nectar bears,
> In golden goblets; and as these flow round,
> Th' immortals turn their careful eyes on Troy.

For then they providentially attend to the Trojans. The possession, therefore, of immutable providence by the Gods is signified by their drinking nectar; the exertion of this providence, by their beholding Troy; and their communicating with each other in providential energies, by receiving the goblets from each other.

too, in Orpheus, advises Jupiter to make use of honey as an artifice. For she says to him —

> When stretch'd beneath the lofty oaks you view
> Saturn, with honey by the bees produc'd,
> Sunk in ebriety[k], fast bind the God.

This, therefore, takes place, and Saturn being bound, is castrated in the same manner as Heaven; the theologist obscurely signifying by this, that divine natures become through pleasure bound, and drawn down into the realms of generation; and also that, when dissolved in pleasure, they emit certain seminal powers. Hence Saturn castrates Heaven, when descending to earth, through a desire of coition[l]. But the sweetness of honey signifies, with theologists, the same thing as the pleasure arising from copulation, by which Saturn, being ensnared, was castrated. For Saturn, and his sphere, are the first of the orbs that move contrary to the course of Cœlum, or the heavens. Certain powers, however, descend both from Heaven [or the inerratic sphere] and the planets. But Saturn receives the powers of Heaven,

[k] Ebriety, when ascribed to divine natures by ancient theologists, signifies a deific superessential energy, or an energy superior to intellect. Hence, when Saturn is said by Orpheus to have been intoxicated with honey or nectar, the meaning is, that he then energized providentially, in a deific and super-intellectual manner.

[l] Porphyry, though he excelled in philosophical, was deficient in theological knowledge; of which what he now says of the castrations of Saturn and Heaven, is a remarkable instance. For ancient theologists, by things preternatural, adumbrated the transcendent nature of the Gods; by such as are irrational, a power more divine than all reason; and by things apparently base, incorporeal beauty. Hence, in the fabulous narrations to which Porphyry now alludes, the genital parts must be considered as symbols of prolific power; and the castration of these parts as signifying the progression of this power into a subject order. So that the fable means that the prolific powers of Saturn are called forth into progression by Jupiter, and those of Heaven by Saturn; Jupiter being inferior to Saturn, and Saturn to Heaven.—See the Apology for the Fables of Homer, in vol. i. of my translation of Plato.

and Jupiter the powers of Saturn. Since, therefore, honey is assumed in purgations, and as an antidote to putrefaction, and is indicative of the pleasure which draws souls downward to generation; it is a symbol well adapted to aquatic Nymphs, on account of the unputrescent nature of the waters over which they preside, their purifying power, and their co-operation with generation For water co-operates in the work of generation. On this account the bees are said, by the poet, to deposit their honey in bowls and amphoræ; the bowls being a symbol of fountains, and therefore a bowl is placed near to Mithra, instead of a fountain; but the amphoræ are symbols of the vessels with which we draw water from fountains. And fountains and streams are adapted to aquatic Nymphs, and still more so to the Nymphs that are souls, which the ancients peculiarly called bees, as the efficient causes of sweetness. Hence Sophocles does not speak unappropriately when he says of souls —

> In swarms while wandering, from the dead,
> A humming sound is heard.

8. The priestesses of Ceres, also, as being initiated into the mysteries of the terrene Goddess, were called by the ancients bees; and Proserpine herself was denominated by them *honied*. The moon, likewise, who presides over generation, was called by them a bee, and also a bull. And Taurus is the exaltation of the moon. But bees are ox-begotten. And this appellation is also given to souls proceeding into generation. The God, likewise, who is occultly connected with generation, is a stealer of oxen. To which may be added, that honey is considered as a symbol of death, and on this account, it is usual to offer libations of honey to the terrestrial Gods; but gall is considered as a symbol of life; whether it is obscurely signified by this, that the life of the soul dies through pleasure, but through bitterness the soul resumes its life, whence, also, bile is sacrificed to the Gods; or whether it is, because death liberates from molestation, but the pre-

sent life is laborious and bitter. All souls, however, proceeding into generation, are not simply called bees, but those who will live in it justly, and who, after having performed such things as are acceptable to the Gods, will again return [to their kindred stars]. For this insect loves to return to the place from whence it first came, and is eminently just and sober. Whence, also, the libations which are made with honey are called sober. Bees, likewise, do not sit on beans, which were considered by the ancients as a symbol of generation proceeding in a right line, and without flexure; because this leguminous vegetable is almost the only seed-bearing plant, whose stalk is perforated throughout without any intervening knots[m]. We must therefore admit, that honey-combs and bees are appropriate and common symbols of the aquatic Nymphs, and of souls that are married [as it were] to [the humid and fluctuating nature of] generation.

9. Caves, therefore, in the most remote periods of antiquity, were consecrated to the Gods, before temples were erected to them. Hence, the Curetes in Crete dedicated a cavern to Jupiter; in Arcadia, a cave was sacred to the Moon, and to Lycean Pan; and in Naxus, to Bacchus. But wherever Mithra was known, they propitiated the God in a cavern. With respect, however, to this Ithacensian cave, Homer was not satisfied with saying that it had two gates, but adds, that one of the gates was turned towards the north, but the other, which was more divine, to the south. He also says, that the northern gate was pervious to descent, but does not indicate whether this was also the case with the southern gate. For of this, he only says, " It is inaccessible to men, but it is the path of the immortals."

10. It remains, therefore, to investigate what is indi-

[m] Hence, when Pythagoras exhorted his disciples to abstain from beans, he intended to signify, that they should beware of a continued and perpetual descent into the realms of generation.

cated by this narration, whether the poet describes a cavern which was in reality consecrated by others, or whether it is an enigma of his own invention. Since, however, a cavern is an image and symbol of the world, as Numenius and his familiar Cronius assert, there are two extremities in the heavens, viz. the winter tropic, than which nothing is more southern, and the summer tropic, than which nothing is more northern. But the summer tropic is in Cancer, and the winter tropic in Capricorn. And since Cancer is nearest to us, it is very properly attributed to the Moon, which is the nearest of all the heavenly bodies to the earth. But as the southern pole, by its great distance, is invisible to us, hence Capricorn is attributed to Saturn, the highest and most remote of all the planets. Again, the signs from Cancer to Capricorn, are situated in the following order: and the first of these is Leo, which is the house of the Sun; afterwards Virgo, which is the house of Mercury; Libra, the house of Venus; Scorpius, of Mars; Sagittarius, of Jupiter; and Capricornus, of Saturn. But from Capricorn in an inverse order, Aquarius is attributed to Saturn; Pisces, to Jupiter; Aries, to Mars; Taurus, to Venus; Gemini, to Mercury; and, in the last place, Cancer to the Moon.

11. Theologists therefore assert, that these two gates are Cancer and Capricorn; but Plato calls them entrances. And of these, theologists say, that Cancer is the gate through which souls descend; but Capricorn that through which they ascend. Cancer is indeed northern, and adapted to descent; but Capricorn is southern, and adapted to ascent[n]. The northern parts, like-

[n] Macrobius, in the 12th chapter of his Commentary on Scipio's Dream, has derived some of the ancient arcana which it contains from what is here said by Porphyry. A part of what he has farther added, I shall translate, on account of its excellence and connexion with the above passage. "Pythagoras thought that the empire of Pluto began downwards from the milky way, because souls falling from thence appear to have already receded from the Gods. Hence he asserts, that the nutriment of milk is first offered to infants, because their first motion

wise, pertain to souls descending into generation. And the gates of the cavern which are turned to the north, are

commences from the galaxy, when they begin to fall into terrene bodies. On this account, since those who are about to descend are yet in *Cancer*, and have not left the milky way, they rank in the order of the Gods. But when, by falling, they arrive at the *Lion*, in this constellation they enter on the exordium of their future condition. And because, in the *Lion*, the rudiments of birth, and certain primary exercises of human nature, commence; but *Aquarius* is opposite to the *Lion*, and presently sets after the *Lion* rises; hence, when the sun is in *Aquarius*, funeral rites are performed to departed souls, because he is then carried in a sign which is contrary or adverse to human life. From the confine, therefore, in which the zodiac and galaxy touch each other, the soul, descending from a round figure, which is the only divine form, is produced into a cone by its defluxion. And as a line is generated from a point, and proceeds into length from an indivisible, so the soul, from its own point, which is a monad, passes into the duad, which is the first extension. And this is the essence which Plato, in the Timæus, calls impartible, and at the same time partible, when he speaks of the nature of the mundane soul. For as the soul of the world, so likewise that of man, will be found to be in one respect without division, if the simplicity of a divine nature is considered; and in another respect partible, if we regard the diffusion of the former through the world, and of the latter through the members of the body.

"As soon, therefore, as the soul gravitates towards body in this first production of herself, she begins to experience a material tumult, that is, matter flowing into her essence. And this is what Plato remarks in the Phædo, that the soul is drawn into body staggering with recent intoxication; signifying by this, the new drink of matter's impetuous flood, through which the soul, becoming defiled and heavy, is drawn into a terrene situation. But the starry *cup* placed between Cancer and the Lion, is a symbol of this mystic truth, signifying that descending souls first experience intoxication in that part of the heavens through the influx of matter. Hence oblivion, the companion of intoxication, there begins silently to creep into the recesses of the soul. For if souls retained in their descent to bodies the memory of divine concerns, of which they were conscious in the heavens, there would be no dissension among men about divinity. But all, indeed, in descending, drink of oblivion; though some more, and others less. On this account, though truth is not apparent to all men on the earth, yet all exercise their opinions about it; because *a defect of memory is the origin of opinion*. But those discover most who have drank least of oblivion, because they easily remember what they had known before in the heavens.

rightly said to be pervious to the descent of men; but the southern gates are not the avenues of the Gods, but

"The soul, therefore, falling with this first weight from the zodiac and milky way into each of the subject spheres, is not only clothed with the accession of a luminous body, but produces the particular motions which it is to exercise in the respective orbs. Thus in Saturn, it energizes according to a ratiocinative and intellective power; in the sphere of Jove, according to a practic power; in the orb of the Sun, according to a sensitive and imaginative nature; but according to the motion of desire in the planet Venus; of pronouncing and interpreting what it perceives in the orb of Mercury; and according to a plantal or vegetable nature, and a power of acting on body, when it enters into the lunar globe. And this sphere, as it is the last among the divine orders, so it is the first in our terrene situation. For this body, as it is the dregs of divine natures, so it is the first animal substance. And this is the difference between terrene and supernal bodies (under the latter of which I comprehend the heavens, the stars, and the more elevated elements,) that the latter are called upwards to be the seat of the soul, and merit immortality from the very nature of the region, and an imitation of sublimity; but the soul is drawn down to these terrene bodies, and is on this account said to die when it is enclosed in this fallen region, and the seat of mortality. Nor ought it to cause any disturbance that we have so often mentioned the death of the soul, which we have pronounced to be immortal. For the soul is not extinguished by its own proper death, but is only overwhelmed for a time. Nor does it lose the benefit of perpetuity by its temporal demersion. Since, when it deserves to be purified from the contagion of vice, through its entire refinement from body, it will be restored to the light of perennial life, and will return to its pristine integrity and perfection."

" The powers, however, of the planets, which are the causes of the energies of the soul in the several planetary spheres, are more accurately described by Proclus, in p. 260 of his admirable Commentary on the Timæus, as follows: ει δε βουλει και οτι των αγαθων πλανητων Σεληνη μεν αιτια τοις θνητοις της φυσεως, το αυτοπτον αγαλμα ουσα της πηγαιας φυσεως· Ηλιος δε δημιουργος των αισθησεων πασων, διοτι και του οραν και του ορασθαι αιτιος· Ερμης δε των της φαντασιας κινησεων· αυτης γαρ της φανταστικης ουσιας, ως μιας ουσης αισθησεως και φαντασιας, Ηλιος υποστατης· Αφροδιτη δε των επιθυμητικων ορεξεων· Αρης δε των θυμοειδων κινησεων των κατα φυσιν εκαστοις· κοινη δε των μεν ζωτικων πασων δυναμεων Ζευς, των δε γνωστικων Κρονος, διῃρηνται γαρ παντα τα ειδη τα αλογα εις ταυτας, *i. e.* " If you are willing, also, you may say, that of the beneficent planets, the Moon is the cause to mortals of nature, being herself the visible statue of fontal nature. But the Sun is the Demiurgus of every thing sensible, in consequence of being the cause of sight and visibility. Mercury is the cause of the motions of the

of souls ascending to the Gods. On this account, the poet does not say that they are the avenues of the Gods, but of immortals; this appellation being also common to our souls, which are *per se*, or essentially, immortal. It is said, that Parmenides mentions these two gates in his treatise On the Nature of Things; as likewise, that they are not unknown to the Romans and Egyptians. For the Romans celebrate their Saturnalia when the Sun is in Capricorn; and during this festivity, slaves wear the shoes of those that are free, and all things are distributed among them in common; the legislator obscurely signifying by this ceremony, that through this gate of the heavens, those who are now born slaves will be liberated through the Saturnian festival, and the house attributed to Saturn, *i. e.* Capricorn, when they live again, and return to the fountain of life. Since, however, the path from Capricorn is adapted to ascent[o], hence the Romans denominate that month in which the Sun, turning from Capricorn to the east, directs his course to the north, Januarius, or January, from *janua*, a gate. But with the Egyptians, the beginning of the year is not Aquarius, as with the Romans, but Cancer. For the star Sothis, which the Greeks call the Dog, is near to Cancer. And the rising of Sothis is the new moon with them, this being the principle of generation to the world. On this account, the gates of the Homeric cavern are not dedicated to the east and west, nor to the equinoctial signs, Aries and Libra, but to the north and south, and to those celestial signs which, towards the south, are most southerly, and, towards the north, are most northerly;

phantasy; for of the imaginative essence itself, so far as sense and phantasy are one, the Sun is the producing cause. But Venus is the cause of epithymetic appetites [or of the appetites pertaining to desire]; and Mars, of the irascible motions which are conformable to nature. Of all vital powers, however, Jupiter is the common cause; but of all gnostic powers, Saturn. For all the irrational forms are divided into these."

[o] For καταβατικη, in this place, it appears to me to be obviously necessary to read αναβατικη. For Porphyry has above informed us, that Capricorn is the gate through which souls ascend.

because this cave was sacred to souls and aquatic Nymphs. But these places are adapted to souls descending into generation, and afterwards separating themselves from it. Hence, a place near to the equinoctial circle was assigned to Mithra as an appropriate seat. And on this account he bears the sword of Aries, which is a martial sign. He is likewise carried in the Bull, which is the sign of Venus. For Mithra, as well as the Bull, is the demiurgus and lord of generation[p]. But he is placed near the equinoctial circle, having the northern parts on his right hand, and the southern on his left. They likewise arranged towards the south the southern hemisphere, because it is hot; but the northern hemisphere towards the north, through the coldness of the north wind.

12. The ancients, likewise, very reasonably connected winds with souls proceeding into generation, and again separating themselves from it, because, as some think, souls attract a spirit, and have a pneumatic essence. But the north wind is adapted to souls falling into generation; and, on this account, the northern blasts refresh those who are dying, and when they can scarcely draw their breath. On the contrary, the southern gales dissolve life. For the north wind, indeed, from its superior coldness, congeals [as it were, the animal life], and detains it in the frigidity of terrene generation. But the south wind being hot, dissolves this life, and sends it upward to the heat of a divine nature. Since, however, our terrene habitation is more northern, it is proper that souls which are born in it should be familiar with the north wind; but those that exchange this life for a better, with the south wind. This also is the cause why the north wind is at its commencement great; but the south

[p] Hence Phanes, or Protogonus, who is the paradigm of the universe, and who was absorbed by Jupiter, the Demiurgus, is represented by Orpheus as having the head of a *bull* among other heads with which he is adorned. And in the Orphic hymn to him, he is called *bull-roarer*.

wind, at its termination. For the former is situated directly over the inhabitants of the northern part of the globe; but the latter is at a great distance from them; and the blast from places very remote, is more tardy than from such as are near. But when it is coacervated, then it blows abundantly, and with vigour. Since, however, souls proceed into generation through the northern gate, hence this wind is said to be amatory. For, as the poet says,

> Boreas, enamour'd of the sprightly train,
> Conceal'd his godhead in a flowing mane.
> With voice dissembled, to his loves he neigh'd,
> And coursed the dappled beauties o'er the mead:
> Hence sprung twelve others of unrivall'd kind,
> Swift as their mother mares, and father wind[q].

It is also said, that Boreas ravished Orithya[r], from

[q] Iliad, lib. xx. v. 223, &c.

[r] This fable is mentioned by Plato in the Phædrus, and is beautifully unfolded as follows, by Hermias, in his Scholia on that Dialogue: "A twofold solution may be given of this fable; one from history, more ethical; but the other, transferring us [from parts] to wholes. And the former of these is as follows: Orithya was the daughter of Erectheus, and the priestess of Boreas; for each of the winds has a presiding deity, which the telestic art, or the art pertaining to sacred mysteries, religiously cultivates. To this Orithya, then, the God was so very propitious, that he sent the north wind for the safety of the country; and besides this, he is said to have assisted the Athenians in their naval battles. Orithya, therefore, becoming enthusiastic, being possessed by her proper God Boreas, and no longer energizing as a human being (for animals cease to energize according to their own peculiarities, when possessed by superior causes), died under the inspiring influence, and thus was said to have been ravished by Boreas. And this is the more ethical explanation of the fable.

"But the second, which transfers the narration to wholes, and does not entirely subvert the former, is the following: for divine fables often employ transactions and histories, in subserviency to the discipline of wholes. It is said then, that Erectheus is the God that rules over the three elements, air, water, and earth. Sometimes, however, he is considered as alone the ruler of the earth, and sometimes as the presiding deity of Attica alone. Of this deity Orithya is the daughter; and she is the prolific power of the Earth, which is indeed coextended with the

whom he begot Zetis and Calais. But as the south is attributed to the Gods, hence, when the Sun is at his meridian, the curtains in temples are drawn before the statues of the Gods; in consequence of observing the Homeric precept, "that it is not lawful for men to enter temples when the Sun is inclined to the south;" for this is the path of the immortals. Hence, when the God is at his meridian altitude, the ancients placed a symbol of mid-day and of the south in the gates of temples[a]; and, on this account, in other gates also, it was not lawful to speak at all times, because gates were considered as sacred. Hence, too, the Pythagoreans, and the wise men among the Egyptians, forbade speaking while passing through doors or gates; for then they venerated in silence that God who is the principle of wholes [and, therefore of all things].

13. Homer likewise knew that gates are sacred, as is

word *Erectheus*, as the unfolding of the name signifies. For it is *the prolific power of the Earth, flourishing and restored, according to the seasons.* But Boreas is the providence of the Gods, supernally illuminating secondary natures. For the providence of the Gods in the world is signified by Boreas, because this divinity blows from lofty places. And the elevating power of the Gods is signified by the south wind, because this wind blows from low to lofty places; and besides this, *things situated towards the south are more divine.* The providence of the Gods, therefore, causes the prolific power of the Earth, or of the Attic land, to *ascend*, and become visible.

"Orithya also may be said to be a soul aspiring after things above, from ὀρευω and θεω, according to the Attic custom of adding a letter at the end of a word, which letter is here an "ω." Such a soul, therefore, is ravished by Boreas supernally blowing. But if Orithya was hurled from a precipice, this also is appropriate, for such a soul dies a philosophic, not receiving a physical death, and abandons a life pertaining to her own deliberate choice, at the same time that she lives a physical life. And philosophy, according to Socrates in the Phædo, is nothing else than a meditation of death."

[a] In the original, ιστασαν ουν και συμβολον της μεσημβριας και του νοτου, επι τη θυρη, μεσημβριαζοντος του θεου, which Holstenius translates most erroneously as follows: "Austrum igitur meridiei symbolum statuunt; cum deus meridiano tempore ostio immineat."

evident from his representing Oeneus, when supplicating, shaking the gate:

> The gates he shakes, and supplicates the son [u].

He also knew the gates of the heavens which are committed to the guardianship of the Hours; which gates originate in cloudy places, and are opened and shut by the clouds. For he says,

> Whether dense clouds they close, or wide unfold [x].

And on this account, these gates emit a bellowing sound, because thunders roar through the clouds:

> Heaven's gates spontaneous open to the powers;
> Heaven's bellowing portals, guarded by the Hours [y].

He likewise elsewhere speaks of the gates of the Sun, signifying by these Cancer and Capricorn; for the Sun proceeds as far as to these signs, when he descends from the north to the south, and from thence ascends again to the northern parts. But Capricorn and Cancer are situated about the galaxy, being allotted the extremities of this circle; Cancer, indeed, the northern, but Capricorn the southern extremity of it. According to Pythagoras, also, the *people of dreams* [z], are the souls which are said to be collected in the galaxy, this circle being so called from the milk with which souls are nourished when they fall into generation. Hence, those who evocate departed souls, sacrifice to them by a libation of milk mingled with honey; because, through the allurements of sweetness, they will proceed into generation; with the birth of man, milk being naturally produced. Farther still, the southern regions produce small bodies; for it is usual with heat to attenuate them in the greatest degree. But all bodies generated in the north are large, as is

[u] Iliad, lib. xi. v. 579.
[x] Iliad, lib. viii. v. 395.
[y] Iliad, lib. viii. v. 393.
[z] The souls of the suitors are said by Homer, in the 24th book of the Odyssey (v. 11), to have passed, in their descent to the region of spirits, beyond *the people of dreams*.

evident in the Celtæ, the Thracians, and the Scythians; and these regions are humid, and abound with pastures. For the word Boreas is derived from Βορα, which signifies nutriment. Hence, also, the wind which blows from a land abounding in nutriment, is called Βορρας, as being of a nutritive nature. From these causes, therefore, the northern parts are adapted to the mortal tribe, and to souls that fall into the realms of generation. But the southern parts are adapted to that which is immortal[a], just as the eastern parts of the world are attributed to the Gods, but the western to dæmons. For, in consequence of nature originating from diversity, the ancients every where made that which has a twofold entrance to be a symbol of the nature of things. For the progression is either through that which is intelligible, or through that which is sensible. And if through that which is sensible, it is either through the sphere of the fixed stars, or through the sphere of the planets. And again, it is either through an immortal, or through a mortal progression. One centre, likewise, is above, but the other beneath the earth; and the one is eastern, but the other western. Thus, too, some parts of the world are situated on the left, but others on the right hand: and night is opposed to day. On this account, also, harmony consists of, and *proceeds*[b] through contraries. Plato also says, that there are two openings[c], one of which affords a passage to souls ascending to the heavens, but the other to souls descending to the earth. And, according to theologists, the Sun and Moon are the gates of souls, which ascend through the Sun, and descend through the Moon. With Homer, likewise, there are two tubs,

> From which the lot of every one he fills,
> Blessings to these, to those distributes ills[d].

[a] Hence, the southern have always been more favourable to genius, than the northern parts of the earth.

[b] In the original, τοξευει; but instead of it, I read πορευει.

[c] See my translation of the 10th book of his Republic.

[d] Iliad, xxiv. v. 528.

But Plato, in the Gorgias, by tubs intends to signify souls, some of which are malefic, but others beneficent, and some of which are rational, but others irrational[o].

[o] The passage in the Gorgias of Plato, to which Porphyry here alludes, is as follows:—"Soc. But, indeed, as you also say, life is a grievous thing. For I should not wonder if Euripides spoke the truth when he says: 'Who knows whether to live is not to die, and to die is not to live?' And we, perhaps, are in reality dead. For I have heard from one of the wise, that we are now dead; and that the body is our sepulchre; but that the part of the soul in which the desires are contained, is of such a nature that it can be persuaded, and hurled upwards and downwards. Hence a certain elegant man, perhaps a Sicilian, or an Italian, denominated, mythologizing, this part of the soul a tub, by a derivation from the probable and the persuasive; and, likewise, he called those that are stupid, or deprived of intellect, uninitiated. He farther said, that the intemperate and uncovered nature of that part of the soul in which the desires are contained, was like a pierced tub, through its insatiable greediness."

What is here said by Plato is beautifully unfolded by Olympiodorus, in his MS. Commentary on the Gorgias, as follows:—"Euripides (in Phryxo) says, that to live is to die, and to die to live. For the soul coming hither, as she imparts life to the body, so she partakes [through this] of a certain privation of life; but this is an evil. When separated, therefore, from the body, she lives in reality: for she dies here, through participating a privation of life, because the body becomes the source of evils. And hence it is necessary to subdue the body.

"But the meaning of the Pythagoric fable, which is here introduced by Plato, is this: We are said to be dead, because, as we have before observed, we partake of a privation of life. The sepulchre which we carry about with us is, as Plato himself explains it, the body. But Hades is the unapparent, because we are situated in obscurity, the soul being in a state of servitude to the body. The tubs are the desires; whether they are so called from our hastening to fill them, as if they were tubs, or from desire persuading us that it is beautiful. The initiated, therefore, *i. e.* those that have a perfect knowledge, pour into the entire tub: for these have their tub full; or, in other words, have perfect virtue. But the uninitiated, viz. those that possess nothing perfect, have perforated tubs. For those that are in a state of servitude to desire always wish to fill it, and are more inflamed; and on this account they have perforated tubs, as being never full. But the sieve is the rational soul mingled with the irrational. For the [rational] soul is called a circle, because it seeks itself, and is itself sought; finds itself, and is itself found. But the irrational soul imitates a right line, since it does

Souls, however, are [analogous to] tubs, because they contain in themselves energies and habits, as in a vessel. In Hesiod too, we find one tub closed, but the other opened by Pleasure, who scatters its contents every where, Hope alone remaining behind. For in those things in which a depraved soul, being dispersed about matter, deserts the proper order of its essence; in all these, it is accustomed to feed itself with [the pleasing prospects of] auspicious hope.

14. Since, therefore, every twofold entrance is a symbol of nature, this Homeric cavern has, very properly, not one portal only, but two gates, which differ from each other conformably to things themselves; of which one pertains to Gods and good [dæmons[f]], but the other to mortals, and depraved natures. Hence, Plato took occasion to speak of bowls, and assumes tubs instead of amphoræ, and two openings, as we have already observed, instead of two gates. Pherecydes Syrus also mentions recesses and trenches, caverns, doors, and gates; and through these obscurely indicates the generations of souls, and their separation from these material realms. And thus much for an explanation of the Homeric cave, which we think we have sufficiently unfolded without adducing any farther testimonies from ancient philosophers and theologists, which would give a needless extent to our discourse.

15. One particular, however, remains to be explained,

not revert to itself like a circle. So far, therefore, as the sieve is circular, it is an image of the rational soul; but, as it is placed under the right lines formed from the holes, it is assumed for the irrational soul. Right lines, therefore, are in the middle of the cavities. Hence, by the sieve, Plato signifies the rational in subjection to the irrational soul. But the water is the flux of nature: for, as Heraclitus says, *moisture is the death of the soul.*"

In this extract the intelligent reader will easily perceive that the occult signification of the *tubs* is more scientifically unfolded by Olympiodorus than by Porphyry.

[f] In the original, και τας μεν, θεοις τε και τοις αγαθοις προσηκουσας. But after αγαθοις, I have no doubt we should insert δαιμοσι.

and that is the symbol of the olive planted at the top of the cavern; since Homer appears to indicate something very admirable by giving it such a position. For he does not merely say that an olive grows in this place, but that it flourishes on the summit of the cavern.

> "High at the head a branching olive grows,
> Beneath, a gloomy grotto's cool recess."

But the growth of the olive in such a situation, is not fortuitous, as some one may suspect, but contains the enigma of the cavern. For since the world was not produced rashly and casually, but is the work of divine wisdom and an intellectual nature, hence an olive, the symbol of this wisdom, flourishes near the present cavern, which is an image of the world. For the olive is the plant of Minerva; and Minerva is wisdom. But this Goddess being produced from the head of Jupiter, the theologist has discovered an appropriate place for the olive, by consecrating it at the summit of the port; signifying by this, that the universe is not the effect of a casual event, and the work of irrational fortune, but that it is the offspring of an intellectual nature and divine wisdom, which is separated, indeed, from it [by a difference of essence], but yet is near to it, through being established on the summit of the whole port; [*i. e.* from the dignity and excellence of its nature governing the whole with consummate wisdom]. Since, however, an olive is ever-flourishing, it possesses a certain peculiarity in the highest degree adapted to the revolutions of souls in the world; for to such souls this cave [as we have said] is sacred. For in summer, the white leaves of the olive tend upward, but in winter, the whiter leaves are bent downward. On this account, also, in prayers and supplications, men extend the branches of an olive, ominating from this, that they shall exchange the sorrowful darkness of danger for the fair light of security and peace. The olive, therefore, being naturally ever-flourishing, bears fruit which is the auxiliary of labour [by

being its reward]; it is also sacred to Minerva; supplies the victors in athletic labours with crowns; and affords a friendly branch to the suppliant petitioner. Thus, too, the world is governed by an intellectual nature, and is conducted by a wisdom eternal and ever-flourishing; by which the rewards of victory are conferred on the conquerors in the athletic race of life, as the reward of severe toil and patient perseverance. And the Demiurgus, who connects and contains the world [in ineffable comprehensions], invigorates miserable and suppliant souls.

16. In this cave, therefore, says Homer, all external possessions must be deposited. Here, naked, and assuming a suppliant habit, afflicted in body, casting aside every thing superfluous, and being averse to the energies of sense, it is requisite to sit at the foot of the olive, and consult with Minerva by what means we may most effectually destroy that hostile rout of passions which insidiously lurk in the secret recesses of the soul. Indeed, as it appears to me, it was not without reason that Numenius and his followers thought the person of Ulysses in the Odyssey represented to us a man, who passes in a regular manner over the dark and stormy sea of generation, and thus at length arrives at that region where tempests and seas are unknown, and finds a nation

> "Who ne'er knew salt, or heard the billows roar."

17. Again, according to Plato, the deep, the sea, and a tempest, are images of a material nature. And on this account, I think, the poet called the port by the name of Phorcys. For he says, "It is the port of the ancient marine Phorcys[s]." The daughter, likewise, of this God is men-

[s] Phorcys is one among the ennead of Gods who, according to Plato in the Timæus, fabricate generation. Of this deity, Proclus observes, "that as the Jupiter in this ennead causes the unapparent divisions and separation of forms made by Saturn to become apparent, and as Rhea calls them forth into motion and generation; so Phorcys inserts them in matter, produces sensible natures, and adorns the visible

tioned in the beginning of the Odyssey. But from Thoosa, the Cyclops was born, whom Ulysses deprived of sight. And this deed of Ulysses became the occasion of reminding him of his errors, till he was safely landed in his native country. On this account, too, a seat under the olive is proper to Ulysses, as to one who implores divinity, and would appease his natal dæmon with a suppliant branch. For it will not be simply, and in a concise way, possible for any one to be liberated from this sensible life, who blinds this dæmon, and renders his energies inefficacious; but he who dares to do this, will be pursued by the anger[h] of the marine and material Gods, whom it is first requisite to appease by sacrifices, labours, and patient endurance; at one time, indeed, contending with the passions, and at another employing enchantments and deceptions, and by these, transforming himself in an all-various manner; in order that, being at length divested of the torn garments [by which his true person was concealed], he may recover the ruined empire of his soul. Nor will he even then be liberated from labours; but this will be effected when he has entirely passed over the raging sea, and, though still living, becomes so ignorant of marine and material works [through deep attention to intelligible concerns], as to mistake an oar for a corn-van.

18. It must not, however, be thought, that interpretations of this kind are forced, and nothing more than the conjectures of ingenious men; but when we consider the great wisdom of antiquity, and how much Homer excelled in intellectual prudence, and in an accurate knowledge of every virtue, it must not be denied that he has obscurely

essence, in order that there may not only be divisions of productive principles [or forms] in natures and in souls, and in intellectual essences prior to these; *but likewise in sensibles. For this is the peculiarity of fabrication.*"

[h] "The anger of the Gods," says Proclus, "is not an indication of any passion in them, but demonstrates our inaptitude to participate of their illuminations."

indicated the images of things of a more divine nature in the fiction of a fable. For it would not have been possible to devise the whole of this hypothesis, unless the figment had been transferred [to an appropriate meaning] from certain established truths. But reserving the discussion of this for another treatise, we shall here finish our explanation of the present Cave of the Nymphs.

APPENDIX C

THE ORACLE

OR

A Paraphrastical Interpretation of the answer of Apollo, when he was consulted by Amelius whither Plotinus soul went when he departed this life.

I Tune my strings to sing some sacred verse
Of my dear friend: in an immortall strain
His mighty praise I loudly will rehearse
With hony-dewed words: some golden vein
The strucken chords right sweetly shall resound.
Come, blessed Muses, let's with one joynt noise,
With strong impulse, and full harmonious sound,
Speak out his excellent worth. Advance your voice,
As once you did for great Aeacides,
Rapt with an heavenly rage, in decent dance,
Mov'd at the measure of Meonides.
Go to, you holy Quire, let's all at once
Begin, and to the end uphold the song,
Into one heavenly harmony conspire;
I Phoebus with my lovely locks ymong
The midst of you shall sit, and life inspire.

Divine Plotinus! yet now more divine
Then when thy noble soul so stoutly strove
In that dark prison, when strong chains confine,
Keep down the active mind it cannot move
To hwat it loveth most. Those fleshly bands
Thou now hast loos'd, broke from Ncessitie.
From bodies storms, and frothie working sands
Of this low restlesse life now setten free,
Thy feet do safely stand upon a shore,
Which foaming waves beat not in swelling rage,
Nor angry seas do threat with fell uprore;
Well hast thou swommen out, and left that stage
Of wicked Actours, that tumultuous rout
Of ignorant men. Now thy pure steps thou stay'st
In that high path, where Gods light shines about,
And perfect Right its beauteous beams displayes.
How oft, when bitter wave of troubled flesh,
And whirl-pool-turnings of the lower spright,
Thou stoutly strov'st with, Heaven did thee refresh,
Held out a mark to guide they wandring flight!

While thou in tumbling seas didst strongly toyl
To reach to steddie Land, struckst with thy arms
The deafing surges, that with rage do boyl;
Stear'd by that signe thou shunn'st those common harms.
How oft, when rasher cast of they souls eye
Had thee misguided into crooked wayes,
Wast thee directed by the Deitie?
They held out to thee their bright lamping rayes:
Dispers'd the mistie darknesse, safely set
Thy feeble feet in the right path again.
Nor easie sleep so closley ere beset
Thy eyelids, nor did dimnesse ere so stain
Thy radiant sight, but thou such things didst see
Even in that tumult, that few can arrive
Of all are named from Philosophie
To that high pitch, or to such secrets dive.

But sith this body thy pure soul divine
Hath left, quite risen from her rotten grave,
Thou now among those heavenly wights dost shine,
Whose woone this glorious lustredoth embrave:
There lovely Friendship, mild-smiling Cupid's there,
With lively looks and amorous suavitie,
Full of pure pleasure, and fresh flowring chear:
Ambrosian streams sprung from the Deitie
Do frankly flow, and soft love-kindling winds
Do strike with a delicious sympathie
Those tender spirits, and fill up their minds
With satisfying joy. The puritie
Of holy fire their heart doth then invade,
And sweet Perswasion, meek Tranquillitie,
The gentle-breathing Air, the Heavens nought sad,
Do maken up this great felicitie.
Here Rhadamanthus, and just AEacus,
Here Minos wonnes, with those that liv'd of yore
I'th' golden age; here Plato vogorous
In holy virtue, and fair Pythagore.
These been the goodly Off-spring of Great Jove,
And liven here, and whoso fill'd the Quire
And sweet assembly of immortall Love
Purging their spirits with refining fire;
These with the happy Angels live in blisse,
Full fraught with joy, and lasting pure delight,
In friendly feasts, and life-outfetching kisse.
But, ah! dear Plotin, what smart did they sprite
Indure, before thou reach's this high degree
Of happinesse? what agonies, what pains
Thou underwent'st to set thy soul so free
From baser life? She now in heaven remains

Mongst the pure Angels. O thrice-happy wight!
That thou art got into the Land of Life,
Fast plac'd in view of that Eternall Light,
And sitt'st secure form the foul bodies strife.

But now, you comely virgins, make an end,
Break off this musick, and deft seemly Round,
Leave off your dance: For Plotin my dear friend
Thus much I meant my golden harp should sound.

1. Henry More, *The Philosophical Poems of Henry More*, p. 84.

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