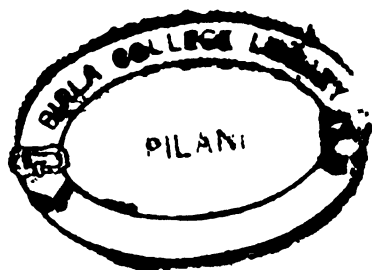


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THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE

THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE

AN INTERPRETATION OF
THE MAJOR ENGLISH POETS
FROM KEATS TO BRIDGES

By

SYED MEHDI IMAM

M.A. (OXON.)

WITH A PREFACE BY

C. F. ANDREWS

7339
"Fair are thy works, O man, and fair
Thy dreams of soul in garments rare,
Beautiful past compare."

R. Bridges, *New Poems*

821.09

Im 1 P 11

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TO MY FATHER
THE LATE
MR. SYED HASAN IMAM

“Hail, and hearken from the Realms of Help.”

R. Browning, *The Ring and the Book*, Bk. I.

These pages are dedicated to a great man who has passed the bounds of mortality. In his country, he rose to “a noonday splendour” both personal and public. He had birth, rank, fortune, genius, consecrated by a courageous career to the cause of humanity. We shall nevermore see his face upon this kindly earth. But if the lamp may flicker praise to him that lit it, if the river may hearken to the source that sped it, if the child may murmur of his sire; these words may stir the still, cold hands, warmed now by a sunnier climate than he ever knew. Faith fails not, deludes not. His Spirit speaks from the realms of light: All is well—peace in the sunset, and an awakening where the dew is never heavy on the grass and where lips of parting never bid adieu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE author gratefully acknowledges the consent of the Oxford University Press to quote from their publications of the writings of Mr. Charles Williams, Mr. Abercrombie and Mr. Bridges, including the *Testament of Beauty*. He also thanks Macmillan & Co. for the same courtesy in respect of their publications of Mr. Hardy's works.

P R E F A C E

I HAVE been asked to write a brief preface to this book and it is a great pleasure to me to do so.

Syed Mehdi Imam comes from an old and distinguished family, members of whom have been my dearest friends for over a quarter of a century. His father, Syed Hasan Imam, was renowned all over India as one of the ablest lawyers of that country. He represented India at the League of Nations, in 1923, and presided over the All-India National Congress in 1918. His uncle, Sir Ali Imam, K.C.S.I., was Law Member in the Government of India and Prime Minister of Hyderabad State. He also represented India at the League of Nations at its first session. His grandfather, Nawab Imdad Imam, was a poet with remarkable literary gifts, whose songs are still sung in India. I have vivid recollections of his gentleness of character and courtesy in every deed and word.

The author was brought up from childhood almost entirely in England. His father sent him at the age of seven to the Dragon Preparatory School, at Oxford. From thence he went to Harrow, where he studied with special interest and ability the Greek and Latin Classics. From Harrow he passed on to Oriel College, Oxford. He made many intimate friends there and took his Honours degree in *Literae Humaniores*. Thus he received the finest training that England could afford him. At the same time he had unique opportunities of understanding and appreciating the English mind. He is, therefore, singularly fitted to

present the English poets, whom he has chosen, from his own Eastern standpoint.

This volume tells its own story. It is an adventure into the invisible world of inner sight or sound as he finds it portrayed in Shelley, Keats and other poets. As he states in the first chapter, his purpose is neither to prove nor disprove the findings and results of psychic science: for that would need a separate enquiry. Rather, he seeks to illustrate from these poets those aspects of the psychic theory which have become real to himself.

H. G. Wells, with that singular propensity of the Western mind to dwell mainly in the world of outward sense, has pictured to us *The Shape of Things to Come*, in his famous film-play and novel, in a purely external manner. The story ends with an amazing adventure, not into this invisible world of Spirit, but with the immensities of Space. But our author has sided altogether with the poets in exploring the *true* invisible world within, and he has found his own imagination enkindled by their utterances. He has sought to tell us what these adventurous seers have both seen and heard from within. His first chapter bears the title, "The Poet as Seer".

This world of Spirit is a deep mystery which only the mystics can fathom, and the greater poets are among their number. Syed Mehdi Imam does not ask us to accept his spiritual hypothesis. He leaves us entirely free to choose for ourselves. Personally, I cannot accept the spiritual hypothesis he offers; but that makes me all the more ready to commend his adventurous search to the thoughtful reader; for I

have found the book both stimulating and thought-provoking. It sets forward a new approach to the poets, which invites our examination.

To me, the strength of the author's approach lies in his carefully selected quotations. He gives at length each poet's own words and seeks to explain them in the light of the psychic theory.

To sum up, I would repeat the words of one whom I revere as the greatest living poet and thinker of the East, Rabindranath Tagore, who has written concerning this volume: "The author has shown striking originality of thought and power of expression. His is an interesting thesis and cannot fail to attract attention."

C. F. ANDREWS

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

July 10, 1937

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE BY C. F. ANDREWS	9
INTRODUCTION	15
I. THE POET AS SEER	21
II. J. KEATS: THE INVISIBLE WORLD	38
III. P. B. SHELLEY: THE RADIANT BODY	53
IV. LORD BYRON: THE SPIRIT-PEOPLE	80
V. LORD TENNYSON: THE SECRET CYCLES	91
VI. R. BROWNING: THE OUT-SOUL	109
VII. A. C. SWINBURNE: BEYOND THE PLANES	128
VIII. L. ABERCROMBIE: THE WORLD-SOUL	141
IX. T. HARDY: THE COSMIC WILL	158
X. C. WILLIAMS: COSMIC LOVE	178
XI. R. BRIDGES: THE RING OF RETURN	194
XII. THE VISION OF SPIRIT	208
INDEX	231

INTRODUCTION

*"The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth
to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."
A Midsummer-Night's Dream*

THIS book is an attempt to unfold, through the masters of the English language, the invisible world of poetry. Call this the dream of the dreamer, call it the whisper of the intuition, give it whatever name one may; the poetic mind is in sensitive response to a vaster sphere of being.

Poetry is the resonance of Reality that rings its clangour through brain, eye and ear. It is a state of vision. In the heat of inspiration, the soul of the poet speaks of the fire in which it lives, of the scenes in which it dwells.

These pages seek to unify the scattered intuitions of poetry into a whole in which may appear, as in a chart, an outline of the life of spirit bodied forth by the imagination of poetry.

The book is divided into three parts—the opening, middle and concluding chapters.

The first chapter proceeds in three steps. Firstly it describes science as the study of the material plane. The physicist in his enquiry is led to the Invisible. Psychological science explores the fields of subtle life which lie beyond the senses. The poet presses deeper.

He intuits the unseen, and, when power is strongest, soars into the unknowable regions of the superconscious. He is a psychic sensitive of a rare order. His higher self at the moment of inspiration is a transmitting centre of spiritual impressions.

The middle chapters of the book, chapters two to eleven, deal with the psychical phases of three groups of poets. In the first group are Keats, Shelley and Byron—poets of the romantic school. In the second group come the Victorians—Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne. The third division consists of modern writers—Abercrombie, Hardy, Charles Williams and Bridges.

Each group builds some pattern of the psychic picture. Each guides us further into the subtle realms of poetry. The several pieces of mosaic combine to frame the general configuration of the invisible as shadowed by psychical theory.

In the last chapter—the Vision of Spirit—poetry is treated as a form of perception in a chain of other perceptions. The physical perception of science, the mental perception of psychology, and the spiritual perception of poetry, are modes of insight bringing from different pathways the invisible to the mind of man.

The end is a threefold synthesis. Poetry as the sight of the soul is firstly connected with physical Science; secondly with the psychical Theory; and thirdly with all forms of knowledge.

An important feature of the book is the consideration of contemporary work. A new analysis is given of the *Testament of Beauty* and the *Dynasts* of Hardy. The recent poems of the new poets, Abercrombie

and Williams, are shown as playing on one theme—the *Invisible*.

The chapter on Shelley was read, at the invitation of Rabindranath Tagore, to the professors of his University at Shantiniketan. Another chapter was given as an address before the Rotary Club, Calcutta, and was relayed upon the radio. At the special request of the British Broadcasting Station, Calcutta, six talks from this book were sent on the long-wave under the general heading—The Invisible Universe. Two other lectures, requested by a special resolution of the Calcutta University Senate, were delivered to the professors of their English Department. Lectures selected from this book were given in most parts of India North and South; including Kashmere, Jammu, Lahore, Lucknow, Patna, Madras and Bombay.

Further lectures in Italy, France, Switzerland and England are in contemplation.

I lay down the pen in a place of sweet memory, by a river of the softest roll, by the waters of peace—*Adyar*. In the "Garden of Remembrance" where lie the ashes of Annie Besant; where the lotus-bud sleeps in the unruffled pool, where gold-fins splash the spread leaf of the water-lily, where the river-winds sing in the tresses of the Casuarina-trees*; here as I write the sky is blue, and the sea is blue, and the stream is blue. All is the shine of aquamarine. Air be still, and wave be still, and sound be still that the lips of the living may greet the eye of the soul who sought the glory of life.

* The Casuarina-tree is a member of the pine family, and is planted in abundance in the "Garden of Remembrance."

It is impossible, in the compass of these pages, to acknowledge my debt to those who have been the inspiration of this book. I must remember Mr. and Mrs. Lynam of Oxford and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Edmonds of Tunbridge Wells, who were guardians of my childhood and youth during my nineteen years' residence, from the age of seven, in the heart of the English home. Nor may I forget Mr. C. G. Pope who, as my Housemaster at Harrow, disciplined me in the Greek and Latin tongues; and Mr. Tod and Mr. Ross who were my tutors at Oriel College, Oxford, in the preparation of the course of Classical Greats, the Honours school of *Literae Humaniores*.

I cannot pass over the influence of my father the late Mr. Hasan Imam, one of the rarest and ripest legal minds of this century, whose knowledge of men and things was the enriching of all those who come within the radius of his personality.

I could also mention many friends on the English shores. Silence and omission of them is not a denial of their remembrance.

As this book passes the press, I have no wish deeper and dearer than this that literature may cement what politics divide; that England and India, Europe and Asia, may march in bonded sympathy to the bourne that lies hid in the meshes of futurity. England did, and may it continue, to inspire by her letters minds within as well as those beyond the Dominions of her sea-girt isle. The true Empire is over the hearts of men.

Lastly this work, plumed for a perilous flight, I

will let go from heart and hand with the words of the
Testament of Beauty:

“In the light of lights
man’s little works, strewn on the sands of
time, sparkle
like cut jewels in the beatitude of God’s
countenance.”

THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE

CHAPTER I

THE POET AS SEER

*"Poetry is
A state of knowledge, and a means to find
All men's experiencing faculties
And that which they experience."
Charles Williams, A Myth of Shakespeare.*

THE UNSEEN POWER

The Life-Force is everywhere and nowhere.* Its operations are in the invisible. It works before our eyes, unseen, unheard, and, except for our intuitions, unnoticed. But because this aerial guidance is felt not perceived, inferred not reasoned with, it is a dark silent mark of interrogation.

There is no enquiry but knocks at the doors of that mystery. Save for dim-discerned gestures and motion of limbs, the Deity of life is dumb. The sculptor's carving names it Beauty; the analysis of the laboratory calls it Force; philosophy grasps it as the Cosmic Concept. All art, all science, all speculations are but the strivings of men to express and explain its symbols.

POETRY AND THE LIFE-CURRENT

Poetry has no privileges, prerogatives or emblems of royalty. It asks the same question, finds the same

* The Life-Force is "nowhere" because it is invisible and is in no particular part of space.

replies, sheds the same illumination. It is but one part of the explanations of the rational order which the minds of men encompass from varying positions. The effluence of reality is elusive. It runs and poetry runs with it. It escapes into the invisible, and poetry follows it. It leaves behind the print of its pacings; and poetry records it.

SCIENCE AND THE LIFE-CURRENT

Science too does not linger in the rear. Through the slow process of experiment—the journey from the molecule to the wave-vibration—matter flies the eager grasp. Atoms are changed into invisibles, their meanings lost in the crevices of the unapparent. Where the micro-waves elude the instrument, where the alpha and the beta rays blend into blankness, where matter vanishes into radiation and substantiality into the nameless essence of the unknown—at the gates of suspected ether, investigation halts.

Is there no vastness beyond? Enthroned in the stillness, beyond the mark of the bombarded atom, is there no Government of Force—the origin and centre of all disquiet? *Where science ends poetry begins.* Poetry dives below the interstices of the void. Hunting the habitations of the unseen, it discovers, beneath the belts of ether, the frontiers of the Soul. It congregates presences of beauty and power in the emptiness of space.

POETRY ELUSIVE

The poetic process is elusive. Its wings are everywhere. It flutters for truth. The poetic moment is not

one mood of the soul's experience. Poetry is life in full rush and velocity—comic and grave, absurd and rational, ugly and beautiful, corrupt and sublime, fantastic and truer than Science. It is the spark of the spirit of man projecting the flashes of his intuitions beyond the measure of his mind.

SHELLEY'S DEFINITION

Shelley wrote of it thus in his *Defence of Poetry*: "Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred."*

What is its divinity which Shelley claims? Where is its centre? Where is its circumference? What is the science to which poetry must be referred?

It is the object of these pages to elucidate the true nature of poetry, to find the heavenly quality which Shelley ascribes to it, and to discover its kinship with the sciences.

THE DIVINITY OF POETRY

The divinity of Poetry is in its power to raise the spirit to higher levels of experience. It strips the "film of familiarity" which hides the "wonder of our being". It brings to us the evanescent hues of the ethereal world.

Poetry is a state of knowledge. It is the knowledge of the invisible—the interior reaches of the super-conscious mind.

* *A Defence of Poetry*. The prose works of Shelley, vol. ii, p. 32. Published by Chatto & Windus, 1912.

Poetry is the centre of knowledge, because it is the science of Spirit. Its radius is all inclusive. Whatever is, must be related to Spirit.

The poetic world is imaginative. Poetry builds the beautiful.

THE EXTERNAL WORLD OF SCIENCE IMAGINATIVE

The external universe of science is also constructed by the imagining sense.* It is mind which in some unapprehended way creates the illusion of matter.

Here is the table on which I lean and paper on which ink flows. Modern physical theory suspects the substantiality of the table and paper to be an illusion.

THE INTER-SPACE OF MATTER

Break the table into its finest units. It is the grouping of electrons and protons in a particular form which gives the impression of solidity. The material structure of the table consists first of particles of matter—the molecular arrangement of electrons and protons; secondly, of the space between the particles. The electrons spin round the protons in the same way as the stars spin round the sun. The electrons fall from their orbit as a shooting star falls from its sphere. As there is interstellar space between constellation and constellation, so there is a vast inter-space between electron and proton. Lord Rutherford in 1911 discovered by bombarding the atom with alpha rays that substance occupies less than a billionth, a million

* The argument is that the physical world is constructed by imagination because it is illusory. The ideal world of the poet is also created by imagination. Hence the world of the scientist and the poet has a common basis—the imagining acts of mind.

millionth part of the space it apparently occupies. The material portion of the table, composed of concrete particles, is an infinitesimal fraction. The table and paper are mostly space—the space between the particles.

THE ELECTRON AN IMMATERIAL VIBRATION

The electron itself was shot through a spectroscope with the object of splitting it. It came out on the other side not as the subdivision of a concrete particle, but as a *wave-vibration*. The electron disappeared into immateriality. It showed itself as a system of waves in several dimensions and not as a system of particles.

SUBSTANCE ILLUSORY

Substance is illusory. It consists of the inter-space between the electrons and protons and of immaterial vibrations; both of which have to be interpreted by mind to produce the semblance of solidity.

The wave-picture of the electrons is not real. The equations of Einstein and Planck are mathematical signs with which science infers the nature of the world around us. *The region of science is as fictitious and shadowy as that of poetry.*

Science interprets the physical universe; and that interpretation involves the working of the imaginative faculty. *There is affinity between poetry and science. Their common basis is the imagining mind.*

SIR JAMES JEANS

Sir James Jeans in the *Mysterious Universe* speaks as follows, "Most physicists would, I think, agree

that the seven-dimensional space in which the wave-mechanics pictures the meeting of two electrons is purely fictitious, in which case the waves which accompany the electrons must also be regarded as fictitious".* And again: "The essential fact is simply that all the pictures which science now draws of nature and which alone seem capable of according with observational fact, are mathematical pictures. Most scientists would agree that they are nothing more than pictures—fictions if you like, if by fiction you mean that science is not yet in contact with ultimate reality".†

SIR ARTHUR EDDINGTON

So similarly writes Sir Arthur Eddington: "In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the physicist leaves it. Then comes the alchemist Mind who transmutes the symbols. The sparsely spread nuclei of electric force become a tangible solid; their restless agitation becomes the warmth of summer; the octave of aethereal vibrations becomes a gorgeous rainbow. The frank realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances".‡

Substance is the impression of solidity created by Mind. Without imagination neither the scientist nor

* *The Mysterious Universe*, pp. 106, 107.

† *Ibid.*, p. 111.

‡ Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, Introduction, pp. xvi, xvii.

the poet can touch the world of fact. Fiction is a part of the movement of experience.

TREND OF MODERN PHYSICS: MIND THE BUILDER

The trend of science is to place in the forefront Mind as the weaver of the illusion of matter.

So Sir James Jeans says in the *New Background of Science*: "Yet the essence of the present situation in physics is not that something mental has come into the new picture of nature, so much as that nothing non-mental has survived from the old picture. As we have watched the gradual metamorphosis of the old picture into the new, we have not seen the addition of mind to matter so much as the complete disappearance of matter, at least of the kind out of which the older physics constructed its objective universe".*

THE IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE

Likewise Sir Arthur Eddington in *The New Pathways in Science*: "My conclusion is that although for the most part our enquiry into the problem of experience ends in a veil of symbols, *there is an immediate knowledge in the mind of conscious beings which lifts the veil in places, and what we discern through these openings is of mental and spiritual nature*".†

THE POETIC INTUITION

Poetry is this immediate knowledge of truth lifting the veil of symbols.‡ It is the inner state of spirit,

* *The New Background of Science*, pp. 283, 284.

† *New Pathways in Science*, 1925, p. 322.

‡ The expression of truth is only one of the aspects of poetry. Poetry has numberless aspects of expression.

which discloses in the rush of inspiration truths beyond the reach of instruments.

POETRY DISTINGUISHED FROM SCIENCE

Poetry is distinguishable from science. Science is concerned with the world as it is perceived by the senses, poetry with the soul that perceives.

Science takes the picturesque succession of life before the screen of mind as reality. It weighs the pyrotechnics of the material display. Poetry sees beyond the semblances Spirit producing all the phenomena. It points to the cinema projector and the personalities at the headlight by whose magic the reel of life unfolds. Poetry intuits the immaterial world through which physical experience comes into existence.

POETRY AND SEERSHIP

There is a close bond between the poet and the seer. Both possess the open eye. The poetic perception is the mystic's perception. The poetic world is the world of extended sight.

PSYCHIC SCIENCE

The basis of psychical enquiry is the possibility of supernormal vision. The five senses respond to a definite range of vibratory matter. The eye sees not, when the vibrations of the object are too slow or too swift. The brain registers no impression of conditions beyond its receptivity. We miss the colours that lie beyond the spectrum. We miss the entire immaterial life.

THE INTERPENETRATING PLANES OF MATTER

For the mystic, there are seven grades of matter belonging to seven different wave-lengths rising from the density of the physical atom into the fineness of the last substance.

The grossest is the plane of physical matter. Interpenetrating it and shading off into ever-increasing tenuity are:

2. The Astral Plane,
3. The Mental Plane,
4. The Intuitive Plane,
5. The Spiritual Plane,
6. The Monadic Plane,
7. The Archetypal Plane of God.

Each world of matter, being rarer than the other, interpenetrates the physical. Each plane co-exists and lies within the other. Each plane is unconscious of the vibrations of the next plane by reason of the superior speed of higher matter.* The physical eye does not normally receive the astral impressions, nor the astral eye the mental impressions; and so on.

Just as the waves of sound below a certain scale pass the ear unheard, so a succession of interpenetrating worlds in subtle substance—real, solid, material—circle outside the perceptions. Just as the radiogram restores the lost voice, so the delicate attunement of the psychic state delivers the intimate responses of the higher planes.

* These different planes of matter belong to different wave-lengths. Hence they do not clash. Normal vision tunes in only to the physical plane. It misses the other wave-lengths. Supernormal vision tunes in to the other stations.

THE SUBTLE BODIES*

As there are worlds within worlds of graded substance, so there are several bodies of subtler matter lying within the physical man. These by reason of their rapidity are invisible.

THE PHYSICAL BODY

On the lowest level is the physical or *dense body* composed of solids, liquids and gases. It receives usually the vibrations of the physical plane. It fails to register impressions outside its vibratory field.

THE ASTRAL BODY

Affixed to it by a magnetic cord, moving in finer matter, is the body of emotion, desire and feeling—the *Astral or passion body* for receiving the wave-lengths of the astral plane. It is composed of invisible substance, and in shape is the precise duplicate of the physical body.†

THE ETHERIC DOUBLE

Between the physical and the astral vestures is an intervening nervous system vibrating in a subtle matter, the *etheric double*. This is not a body but a structure of nerves for passing the life-current from

* For clearness it may be noted that the poets speak of the physical body as the dense gross or sense body. The Astral body is described as the emotional desire or passion body. The Mental body is termed the mental, thought, or Causal body. The Etheric double is not a body and must be distinguished from the bodies. The different bodies are treated by the poets frequently as states of consciousness, e.g. the desire-state and the thought-state in Charles Williams' poem *Prayer*.

† The Astral body is described by Shelley.

the astral to the physical body. It is also the bridge for transmitting physical consciousness to and from the astral vehicle. In shape it is the precise counterpart of the physical man. Its colour is pale violet-grey or blue-grey. At physical death, when its magnetic link with the dense body breaks, it withdraws as a violet mist and within a few hours disintegrates. *The etheric double* is to be carefully distinguished from the astral body.*

THE MENTAL BODY

Lying within the physical and astral frame, in still finer matter, is the third body—*the mental body*. Its outer appearance is that of an ovoid or an egg-like form. Within the ovoid it appears as the contour of a physical body built of dense mist.†

It acts in two parts of the mental plane. In the lower mental level it is used by man for thinking of concrete thought; for instance, when one thinks of a particular stone or a particular tree.

At the higher mental level it is the body through which man thinks of the abstract; as when one thinks of stones in general or trees in general or some basic quality common to both.

It is then called the *causal body*.

THE CAUSAL BODY

The causal body is the vehicle in which the Ego resides and through which it evolves with a rich harvest of memory from birth to birth.

* The etheric double is described by Swinburne.

† The mental body is described by Abercrombie.

THE INTUITIVE BODY

Still deeper within the mental body, in still rarer matter, connected with still finer cords, is the fourth body—*the intuitional body*, for operating on the intuitional plane.

THE SPIRITUAL BODY

Within the intuitional body, in still rarer substance and connected with still rarer threads, is the fifth body—*the spiritual body in the spiritual plane*.

After the spiritual body in the spiritual plane, form disappears.

THE BODILESS STATE*

In the sixth or monadic plane where lies the monad or the individualized spark of divinity, all semblance of shape is dropped. *It is the bodiless state of pure thought wherein the power of feeling, hearing and seeing exist without the hindrance of any sensory instrument.*

UNION WITH GOD

In the seventh or archetypal plane, man merges with the source of central energy—God.

THE AURA

Each body has its aura or luminous atmosphere. The dense body has a physical aura, which is often painted as a nimbus or halo round the head of saints. The astral body has its astral aura; the mental body its mental aura; and so forth.†

* The bodiless state is described by Abercrombie.

† The auras are shown in the poetry of Shelley.

LINKS BETWEEN THE BODIES

Each body is connected with the other by links. The astral body is attached to the physical by astral links, the mental body is attached to the astral body with mental links, and so forth. When the astral link breaks, there is physical death. Man passes in the astral body to the astral plane. When the link of the mental body with the astral breaks, he enters the mental plane; and so forth upwards.

BODIES AS STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In mysticism all the bodies and planes are treated as the states of the Ego's consciousness. The physical body is its consciousness expressed in a physical way. The astral body is its consciousness expressed as emotion. The mental or causal body is its consciousness expressed as concrete or abstract thought; and so on.*

PLANES AS STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Similarly all the planes are the states of Ego's emotions, thoughts or intuitions.

THE ONE REALITY

All the bodies and planes are illusory. Reality is One—the mind of God thinking. The bodies and planes are the condition of His Being, and the Universe is the ideation of His thought.

MISCELLANEOUS PHENOMENA OF MYSTICISM

The miscellaneous phenomena of mysticism are many; such as the colour-speech of the spiritual people,

* Charles Williams describes the bodies as states of desire and thought.

materialization of phantoms, psychometry or readings of the astral light. These will be dealt with as each poet unfolds such phases.

MODERN EXPERIMENTS IN MYSTICISM

Many experiments, based upon scientific research, are to-day being done to find proof of the spiritual theory.

Dr. Kilner, a medical practitioner unconnected with psychical investigation, was able to verify through chemical screens the existence of three contours surrounding the physical body. These are suspected to be the shapes of the several psychic bodies. This enquiry, extending for several years, is summarized in his book *Human Atmosphere*.

Dr. Malta and Van Zellat of Holland invented the dynamistograph—a delicate electro-mechanical instrument through which they claim to have ascertained the weight, size and other particulars of the astral body.

Dr. Baraduc photographed astral forms rising from the death-bed.

Dr. Watters electrocuted beetles and grasshoppers and, through the Wilson cloud-chamber machine, photographed vaporous forms which he believes to be psychic bodies of animals.

A mass of evidence has accumulated in support of the spiritual hypothesis. Eminent scientists, such as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett and Sir William Crookes, have attested to its truth. Whether such conclusions are right or wrong, is a matter of individual opinion. Be that as it may, the spiritual case is

one which has thrown a challenge to exact investigation.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is not to prove or disprove the assertions of psychic science. That must of necessity be an independent enquiry.

There is one point and in the main one point only which this book will develop from the intuitions of Keats to the intuitions of Bridges. That point is that poetry discerns, for the most part unconsciously, the conditions of spirit, as mysticism pencils it. The inner depth of the poetic mind is illumined by the psyche of man.

THE POET A SEER

The poet is a seer. His mystic perception is direct or indirect.

In direct perception he passes into a swoon. He sees what the mystic sees. His rhythms breathe an atmosphere of ethereal rarity and loveliness. Such a work springing from the trance-state is the *Kubla Khan* of Coleridge.

In indirect sight, the poet perceives the outer object with the inner vision—the vision of intuition. There is no precise fixation line between the intuitional and the seer's perception. The last stage of intuition merges with the first stage of seership and passes, in the warming glow of inspiration, into the untrackable recesses of prophetic vision.

THE ADJUSTMENT WITH THE UNSEEN

In either instance, the poetic faculty is adjusted to the unseen. The keener its sensitivity to the pourings in of invisible influences, the richer and deeper is its singing. The more delicate the poetic mind, the finer its responses, the longer its range of receptivity, the truer the volume of its reproduction.

INSPIRATION

Inspiration is the breathing-in of power from the higher force-centres of life. The poet is the messenger of the invisible. The moment of his contact with the life-current is inspiration. This touch is as the union of electricity, positive and negative. It is the birth of the light of vision which transmutes all things into beauty.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

The plan of the following chapters is to show the invisible world of mysticism, as already outlined, unfolding itself, stream after stream, through poetry. Ten poets, chosen for the strength of their intuition, pass as three waves; revealing from their separate stations different facets of the spiritual enquiry.

THE THREE WAVES OF POETRY

Keats, Shelley and Byron are as the first foam on the sand. Next follow Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne. Last is the sound of the nearer lyres—Abercrombie, Hardy, Charles Williams and Bridges.

THE UNFOLDMENT OF THE INVISIBLE

At each step the advance is deeper into the invisible. Keats opens the trance-eyes of poetry to the beauty of the spirit-state. Shelley senses the subtle body of luminous matter. With Byron we reach the inner worlds of rare substance. The spiritual evolution of man, through sphere after sphere of life, is felt in the poetry of Tennyson. The secret of the Out-Soul or Monad is unlocked by Browning. Swinburne bears us beyond the cycles into the plane of God. The World-Soul emerges in the works of Abercrombie. Hardy describes its function as Will, Williams as Love, and Bridges as Beauty. In the last chapter—the Vision of the Spirit—poetry is in its larger significance connected with the other sciences.

Let us enter the kingdom of ethereal light through the vision of Keats.

CHAPTER II

JOHN KEATS: THE INVISIBLE WORLD

*"There shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children."*

John Keats, *Hyperion*

BEAUTY EVERYWHERE

There is beauty in birth and decay, beauty of the green leaf and the yellow, beauty of the dust shaping in the womb of the flesh, beauty of the dust radiant in corruption. Where should beauty be absent? Science may not measure her in the orbits of the atom, philosophy may not clasp her in the labyrinths of logic, chemistry may not trace her in the powders of the crucible, astronomy may not glass her in the vastness of the heavens. Yet her footfall, silent or musical, is everywhere. Beyond the stratosphere where the comets rush and mingle, below the ocean slime where the rich lights play, upon the zones of earth; there as here are her holy places. The clear-seeing eye of Keats, liberated from the thralldom of the senses, wakes to view the world as the harmony of cornice and pillar.

KEATS'S APPROACH TO THE INVISIBLE

As Keats approaches the unseen through the vision of beauty, it will be necessary to divide this chapter into two parts. The first will deal with the expansion of psychic sight, and the second with the evolution of beauty through forms.

THE TRANCE-SIGHT

The trance-eyes of Keats open in *Endymion*. Endymion passes into a swoon in which the invisible world drifts into view:

“Now indeed
His senses had swoon’d off: He did not heed
The sudden silence, or the whispers low,

.

But in the *self-same fixed trance* he kept,
Like one who on the earth had never stept.”

Endymion, Book I, lines 397-404

His body is still in mediumistic slumber. His psychic senses expand into the amplitude of etheric sight,

“His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure; . . .
. . . to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres.”

Endymion, Book II, lines 671-676

The poet’s perception grows from the sight of length, breadth and height—our world of three dimensions—into the “enormous ken” which embraces everything in a single view,*

“There grew
A power within me of *enormous ken*,
To see as a god sees and *take the depth*
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade.”

The Fall of Hyperion, lines 392-396

* The words “see as a God sees” refer to supernormal faculties of perception by which an object is seen “Through”.

"The outward eye" takes the size and shape of an object, but not its depth. It does not see through things. The sensitive perceives, as it were with the lens of the X-ray, into the interior and exterior of a solid free from the distortion of perspective.

THE SUPERNORMAL SIGHT

Mr. Hodson, in his book *Some Experiments in Four-Dimensional Vision*, examining clairvoyantly a cube, describes it, like Keats in the above passage, as a thing of "enormous dimensions" perceived in all its relationship of size, shape and depth. He writes:

"My next impression is that of being in the centre, which is now of *enormous dimension*, and which has now become a perfect cube, whereas it was at first seen in perspective. It is seen from within, all the sides being equal and all angles right angles; all are perceived at once without the necessity of turning around."*

THE TRANCE-WORLD

In the trance-mood, the soul feels itself to be one with the Universal self.

"That moment have we stept
 Into a sort of oneness, and our state
 Is like a floating spirit's.† But there are
 Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,

* Hodson, *Some Experiments in Four-Dimensional Vision*.

† Compare "There is no separation on the Buddhic plane . . . Separateness is absolutely non-existent" (A. Powell, *The Causal Body*, p. 281).

To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.

. . . whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour; but *at the tip-top*
There hangs by unseen film, *an orb'd drop*
Of light, and that is love."

Endymion, Book I, lines 795-807

THE MYSTIC PERCEPTION OF POETRY

Examine these lines as an instance of the mystic perception of poetry. "The sort of oneness" is the higher state of consciousness—sometimes in psychic literature called the Buddhic consciousness—in which the Ego is aware of its kinship with all being.* The "richer entanglements" leading to the "chief intensity" hint higher phases of spiritual awareness which yield one by one till the last illumination, the "chief intensity", is reached. Before it all the "entanglements", all the network of the lower states, are "self destroying".

THE CROWN-CHAKRA

A reflection of that "chief intensity" upon earth is the "orb'd drop of light" which issues as "a steady splendour" from the tip-top of the head of every man. This is the Crown-Chakra, or the force-centre situated

* According to mysticism, in a state of Buddhic consciousness the Ego has a sense of individuality. It does not lose its identity, but it feels itself to be one with all life.

on the brow.* It hangs by "an unseen film" from the head; and resembling as it does a round bright disc, it is fittingly called the "orbed drop of light". In the developed man under inspiration, it shines as "a steady splendour".

Mr. Davis, a well-known seer of the last century, sees this "Crown-Chakra" as a throbbing ball of spiritual radiance hovering above a dying man:

"When the old man ceased to breathe this little point of spiritual aurum silently but swiftly ascended through the intervening ceiling and hung or rather hovered over the house of death. . . . At this dizzy but stilly height the aurelian centre (the Self-Love magnet) resembled a throbbing ball, not much larger than a small orange."†

THE INNER PLANES

The psychic perception passes into the inner planes,

"Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
I became loth and fearful to alight

* In mysticism, there are said to be seven force-centres in the etheric double situated about a quarter of an inch outside the skin of the physical body. They appear as "depressions of rapidly rotating matter". The force-centres are the receiving centres in the physical body of the life-current or Pranas. The largest is the Crown-Chakra on the top of the head. Keats's description of it as "hanging by unseen film" at the top of the head is correct. The Crown-Chakra is a round bright disc, and Keats's words "orbed drop of light" are appropriate.

† J. Davis, *The Thinker*, p. 405

From such high soaring by a downward glance:
So kept me steadfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide."

Endymion, Book I, lines 578-586

What is the opening of the "doors of heaven" in the "airy trance" but the unfolding of the interpenetrating planes to mystic sight? What is the "spreading of the imaginary pinions" but the flight of Spirit into the etheric world?

THE CAVE OF QUIETUDE

Within the astral plane is the Cave of Quietude which the Ego after physical death enters to be replenished with spiritual energy for its astral life,

"O happy spirit home! O wondrous soul!
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth.
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude."

Endymion, Book IV, lines 543-549

This home of rest is an inner world in its own plane of vibration. It is unaffected by hurricanes which storm its outer gate, "All is still within". Its exterior chambers, fenced by its Ring—pass—not of matter, are a place of repose,

"But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall:
. . . . Hurricanes beat ever *at the gate*,
Yet *all is still within* and desolate."*

* "Within" the home of rest is no jar of outer sounds. The outer sounds cannot be heard in the subtle vibrations of the inner world.

THE AKASHIC RECORDS

A part of the astral scenery consists of Akashic Records. These are the imprints of all events upon subtle ether. The faculty to revive them is called Psychometry.

THE AKASHIC RECORDS IN "ENDYMION"

In *Endymion*, the Past is enshrined in the edifice of Eternity,

“ ‘Look!’ the sage replied,
 ‘Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide,
 Of divers brilliance? ’Tis the edifice
 I told thee of. . . .
 Where I have enshrined piously
 All lovers, whom fell storms have doom’d to die
 Throughout my bondage’.”

Endymion, Book III, lines 717-723

A sudden sound brings the Past into life,

“There arose
 A noise of harmony, pulses and throes
 Of gladness in the air—while many, who
 Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
 Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
 Felt a high certainty of being blest.”

Endymion, Book III, lines 790-795

The past, whole and entire, lies beyond sight traceable by the soul-sense* “as its own existence of remotest glooms”,

* The “den” is the place where in the astral plane are the Akashic Records. The words “seeming confines of Space” refer to the illusory limits of physical sight.

“There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the *soul to wander in and trace*
Its own existence of remotest glooms.”

Endymion, Book IV, lines 513-516

THE GREAT MEMORY

Every event abides in the mind of the World-Soul. The Goddess Moneta, in the *Fall of Hyperion*, represents the Great Memory. In her “globed brain” the Past still lives,

“For the scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain
With an electrical changing misery,
Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not.”

The Fall of Hyperion, lines 244-248

To contact that super-physical Memory, the poet sinks into a trance. His body grows numb, his hands unsubstantial; and death he expects when etheric energy flushes his limbs,

“I strove hard to escape
The numbness, strove to gain the lowest step.
Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace; the cold
Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart;
And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
One minute before death, my iced foot touch'd
The lowest stair; and, *as it touched life seem'd*
*To pour in at the toes;** I mounted up,

* “The radiation of etheric matter is strongest from the ends of the fingers and toes” (Powell, *Etheric Double*, p. 52).

As once fair angels on a ladder flew
From the green turf to heaven."

The Fall of Hyperion, lines 127-136

In a few moments he awakens in the psychic world
where the earth-sights have vanished,

"The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sank,
Like a Silenus on an antique vase.
How long I slumber'd, I started up
As if with wings, but the fair trees were gone,
The mossy mound and arbour were no more."

The Fall of Hyperion, lines 55-60

In the remainder of the poem, the poet observing the
"images graven in the Great Memory"—the slow
unfoldment of the Tale of Saturn—is borne away by
the excitement of the spectacle.

MATERIALIZATION IN THE STORY OF LAMIA

The story of Lamia has several scenes of spirit-
materialization. The Nymph, for whom Hermes is
searching in covert and glade, is invisible.

"This lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen, unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen."

Lamia, Part I

Breathing upon the face of Hermes, Lamia materializes
her form,

“Stop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
 And then shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.
 The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
 She breath’d upon his eyes, and swift was seen
 Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on
 the green.

It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
 Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
 Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.”

Lamia, Part I

The Nymph dematerializes as the god bends forward
 to embrace her,

“So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
 Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
 And towards her stept she, like a moon in wane,
 Faded before him, cower’d, nor could restrain
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
 That faints into itself at evening hour.”

Lamia, Part I

PSYCHIC COMMUNICATION IN THE STORY OF
 ISABELLA

The murdered lover Lorenzo, in the story of
 Isabella, communicates through a psychic vision the
 circumstances of his death. His soul speaks from the
 astral world,

“Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake;
 For there was striving, in its piteous *tongue*,
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,

.

*Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
 With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
 From the poor girl by magic of their light,
 The while it did unthread the horrid woof
 Of the late darken'd time,—the murderous spite
 Of pride and avarice."*

Isabella, Stanzas XXXVI and XXXVII

The striving tongue, the wild eye and tremulous voice of Lorenzo indicate that Keats has grasped unconsciously the idea of the soul as the organization of the subtle body.

OTHER INTUITIONS

In *Lamia* there is the suggestion of the memory of previous existence. The guests who come to the marriage of Lamia and Lucius know the secret bowers, porch and portals, without having seen them,

"Each guest, with busy brain,
 Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,
 And enter'd marvelling: *for they knew the street,
 Remember'd it from childhood all complete
 Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
 That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne."*

Lamia, Part II, lines 150-155

There are intelligences within water, air and fire who build invisible to man's eye forms of life,

"Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate
 A thousand Powers keep religious state,
 In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne;
 And, silent as a consecrated urn,

Hold sphery sessions for a season due.
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few:
Have bared their operations to this globe."*

Endymion, Book III, lines 29-35

THE EVOLUTION OF BEAUTY

Beauty in Keats' poetry is evolving from growth to growth.

In *Endymion*, the True-Self of beauty is being freed from appearances. She stirs forth successively in three disguises—first as the Moon, second as Cynthia and third as an Indian maid. Endymion takes each of these appearances as the separate selves of beauty. It is only at the close of the poem when Endymion has passed through the Cave of Quietude and is healed of his sufferings that he realizes the three aspects of beauty to be separate manifestations of the same Divinity. The Real Self of beauty is found to be a triple Self. The form of beauty which is her spurious illusion is distinguished from the essence which is her true Divinity.

THE ALLEGORY OF "ENDYMION"

Endymion is an allegorical poem. According to mysticism, God and man manifest three aspects of the one. In mystic literature this is called the Spiritual Triad, and in Christianity the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Spiritual Triad of man, his true Self, is also three in one. It is the Monad which is the fragment of Divinity, the Ego which is his spiritual Self,

* Compare the psychical idea: "There are nature-spirits of earth, water, air, fire or other-definite intelligent astral entities, residing and functioning in each of those media" (A. Powell, *The Astral Body*, p. 181).

and the body which is his physical person. Despite the haze which covers the poem, it is evident that Endymion is attempting to find the Spiritual Triad which makes the Self of Beauty. In figurative language, the Moon of the poem represents the Monad, Cynthia the Spiritual Self, and the Indian Maid the physical personality.*

THE EVOLUTION OF BEAUTY IN "HYPERION"

In the fragment *Hyperion*, Beauty is seen unfolding through a succession of forms. In Book I Saturn, the fallen divinity of the senses, is inwardly aware that his True Self—the beauty of which he held the mantle and insignia—has not in truth vanished,

"I have left
My strong identity, my real self
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
Here on this spot of earth. Search Thea, search."

Hyperion, Book I

PASSING OF THE BEAUTY OF THE SENSES

In Book II, the kingdom of Saturn has passed to the new rule. The voice of Oceanus is heard sounding the prophecy of evolution. As darkness gave way to light, as light produced matter, and matter the worlds of life, each yielding to each; so the beauty of the senses, the sway of Saturn, gives place to the sovereignty of Apollo,

* Compare: "Nature is triune. . . . Man also is triune; he has his objective physical body; his vitalizing astral body or soul . . . and the immortal spirit. . . . The trinity of nature is the lock of magic; the trinity of man the key that fits it" (H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis*, II).

“From chaos and parental darkness came
 Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
 That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
 Was ripening in itself. This ripe hour came,
 And with it light, and light, engendering
 Upon its own producer, forthwith touch’d
 The whole enormous matter into life.”

Hyperion, Book I

Beauty herself serene and secure ever emerges in
 shapes of fresh perfection,

“On our heels a fresh perfection treads,
 A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 And fated to excel us, as we pass
 In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
 Thereby more conquer’d, than by us the rule
 Of shapeless Chaos.”

Hyperion, Book I

NEW BEAUTY BORN

In Book III is born, trembling with alarm, the new
 God of beauty, Apollo,

“Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
 Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
 Or liker still to one who should take leave
 and with a pang
 As hot as death’s is chill, with fierce convulse
 Die into life: so young Apollo anguished.”

Hyperion, Book III

Mark the manner of Apollo’s dissolution. His death
 is the psychic birth, the awakening, the filling of the
 limbs with health

EMERGENT EVOLUTION

Keats explores the chief features of psychical theory. He finds the feint lines of the inner planes, the inner body. He wins the vision of the main spiritual thought—the evolution of life through forms into fairer degrees of loveliness. The statement of evolution from the poetic point of view is not only prophetic of Darwin. It is an anticipation nearer the truth than the scientific exposition of it. The evolution of the physicist is self-destructive. It is not the continuation of all that is best and excellently evolved—the ingenious attempt of Science to explain herself. It is the butchery of the innocents. The survival of the strong is followed by the executions of the stronger in everlasting and murderous succession. The statistical compilations of the scientist portray life as the ceaseless drama of death; and not the ever-arriving procession of novelty and surprise. The spiritual conception of evolution fills the void, makes the gap intelligible. Life dies not. It is appearances that pass, appearances that are consumed. Life unsinged by the flame passes forward to her plan—the fresh revelations of experience. Keats, through the perception of the Beautiful, finds the pillar of the mystic Truth—*emergent evolution* beckoning the Spirit from splendour on to splendour.

CHAPTER III

P. B. SHELLEY: THE RADIANT BODY

*"I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven—Athens doth inherit
His corpse alone."*

Greek Epigram, Shelley's translation

SHELLEY'S KINGDOM

Despite abuse and misrepresentation which have lingered about his name, in recent times there is none in English letters who has left so rich a memorial of loveliness as Shelley. *His poetry is fine rather than flimsy, light rather than empty.* He rides upon ether, not vacancy. Thick-sighted criticism slides through the veils of his thought. Shelley's kingdom is the kingdom of the air. His luminous wings, circling through ethereal matter, bring down from heaven the soundings of the soul. These if you discard as the dream-traceries of the imagination, you must burn on the pyre of oblivion the bright hopes of immortality, and crush, in the crucible of the transient, the intuitions of religion, art, science and philosophy.

MYSTICISM

The background of Shelley's poetry is mysticism. *Adonais, Epipsychidion, Prometheus Unbound* and other poems are unintelligible without a clear grasp of the subtle implications which lie beneath them. The misunderstanding between Shelley and his critics is due largely to the unfamiliarity of the popular mind with

the spiritual hypothesis. The poetic temperament is by its very constitution psychic. Shelley's poetry reaches the height of that activity.

I shall describe firstly the investigation of the radiant or duplicate body recently done by Dr. Kilner and later shall show the inner vision of Shelley's poetry to be the vision of mysticism.

THE RADIANT BODY

The subtle body is an exact counterpart of the physical body, made of radiant matter vibrating beyond the rate of normal perception. The etheric arm lies beside the physical arm, the etheric brain beside the physical brain. The radiant body is the reduplication of the physical in rare substance. It is connected with the physical by fine cords of electrons. At the breaking of that cord upon death, it is released from the physical and functions in the spiritual plane.

THE AURA

The subtle body is luminous. It emits a radiation called the Aura. The colour of the aura as well as of the subtle body changes with the nature of its thought. It is dark when the thought is dark, bright when the thought is bright.

THE KILNASCRENE EXPERIMENTS

Recently the subtle body has been claimed to have been found by Dr. Kilner through the kilnascrenes. The kilnascrenes are spectacles dyed with coal-tar dye—the dicyanin dye which enables the eyes to see in shadow. After a time the glasses are removed and the

investigator watches with the bare eye the form and aura of the subtle body. The glasses are an assistance to obtain clear vision. The outline of three auras are seen. The furthest aura appears to be the stationary form of a second human body. Dr. Kilner in his book *Human Atmosphere* calls this normally "invariable contour"—the Etheric double.* Beyond that is the Outer Aura which alters rapidly and which forms the halo seen on the forehead of persons speaking in a state of inspiration. An extension of the Outer Aura is the Ultra-Outer Aura which appears and vanishes quickly.

PHYSICAL BODY SEEN THROUGH THE KILNASCRENES

The physical body when viewed through the kilnascrenes, seems unsubstantial. It appears to be an impermanent form. Its contour is ever-changing. The duplicate body, as Dr. Kilner says, is transparent†:

"It is a fair inference to draw from these experiments, that the etheric double is quite transparent, and surrounds the body closely."‡

The contour of the Inner aura follows the lines of the physical body,

"As a rule the inner aura follows the contour of

* This is not to be confused with the etheric double of mysticism which is not a body but a nervous system for carrying of force from mind to the astral body.

† The physical body is also transparent because certain rays as X-rays pass through it. Through the kilnascrenes the physical body looks like a X-ray photograph, i.e. empty.

‡ Dr. Kilner, *Human Atmosphere*, p. 43.

the body, its proximate border being in juxtaposition to the etheric double, or in the majority of cases apparently to the body itself.”

The Inner aura, whenever it nears the etheric double, vanishes,

“Wherever this aura encroaches on the etheric double, it will almost always obliterate the latter.”*

The Outer aura also disappears,†

“The outer aura commences where the inner leaves off, and spreads round the body to a variable distance. It has no absolutely sharp outline but gradually vanishes into space, although in the majority of instances its outer border is sufficiently obvious for measurement.”‡

When two physical bodies are placed side by side, their auras blend and disappear. When electric current is applied, the auras lose their distinctness,

“Generally within the fraction of a minute the outer aura will contract and grow more dense, while the inner will lose distinctness. From this stage onwards both auras decrease in brilliance, and in a short time the inner will completely vanish.”§

* Dr. Kilner, *The Inner Aura*, p. 46.

† The trend of the argument is that according to the kilnascrene experiments the inner and outer form of the subtle body disappear. In Shelley's poems in the union of psychic bodies, the subtle form also disappears

‡ Dr. Kilner, *The Inner Aura*, p. 47.

§ Dr. Kilner, *Human Atmosphere*, p. 91.

THE RADIANT BODY

The interest of Shelley's poetry is that it visualizes through the poetic intuitions the subtle body, its auras and its diffusion in the psychic mating.

SHELLEY'S PSYCHICAL PHASES

I shall trace through the poems of Shelley his psychical phases. I shall consider firstly his vision of the soul as the radiant body; secondly the planes in which that body works; and thirdly his other spiritual intuitions.

THE RADIANT BODY IN "QUEEN MAB"

Let us take as the chief example of Shelley's insight the first poem in his collected works—*Queen Mab*. Ianthe's physical body lies in trance passive on the couch,

"Upon the couch the body lay
Wrapt in the depth of slumber:
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed
Its natural functions."

Queen Mab, Part I, lines 132-137

Her astral duplicate, the "perfect sumblance of its bodily frame", awakens to the rapture of the psychic world,

"Sudden arose
Ianthe's Soul; it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,
The perfect semblance of its bodily frame
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace."

Queen Mab, Part I, lines 123-127

The physical and astral counterparts are shown together, with "the self-same lineaments" and "the same marks of identity". The Soul is the exact reproduction of the physical body.

"Twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
*The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity were there.*"

Queen Mab, Part I, lines 137-140

The trance closes. Both bodies reunite. Ianthe returns to consciousness.

"The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed."

Queen Mab, Part VIII, last lines

THE RADIANT BODY AN OUTLINE IN SHELLEY'S POEMS

Queen Mab's subtle body is a swaying outline shedding a purpureal aura,

"From the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully."

Queen Mab, Part I, lines 101-104

Shelley has the eye of the kilnascrenes. For him the physical body is a transparent form "animated" by the light of the spiritual body,

"A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapour dim
Which the orient planet animates with light."

Hellas, lines 215-217

In slumber, the limbs slip from their earthly fetters, and the radiant body, "the glory of the changeless form within", rises; making night gay with its auric colours:

"His pale wound-worn limbs
Fell, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of the form
Which lives unchanged within."

Prometheus Unbound, Act II, lines 65-68

The subtle body, a shape of glowing matter, is the "child of light",

"Child of Light! thy lips are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee whereso'er thou shinest."

Prometheus Unbound, Act II, Scene V, lines 57-62

"The burning lips" are those of the soul-body. Its auric flashes, like beams of morning, burst through the vestment of the flesh which seems to hide it. An aura, "the atmosphere divinest", covers its shining.

DIFFUSION OF THE RADIANT BODY IN THE KILNASCRENE EXPERIMENT

I have so far shown in Shelley's poetry the subtle body as a shape of light reproducing in ethereal substance the exact features of the physical frame.

Through the kilnascrenes the radiant body appears as a clear fixed outline. But its contour, in certain circumstances, may change and even seem to vanish.

If a hand is placed along side the body, the auras of hand and body blend and become one.* In intimate contact, the Inner and Outer Auras as well as the subtle body itself disappear.

In the psychic embrace the contour of two subtle bodies grow transparent, look as two dissolving shapes of vapour, and eventually vanish into one another.

DIFFUSION OF THE RADIANT BODY IN MR. YRAM'S EXPERIMENTS

Mr. Yram, experimenting upon the possibility of union in the spiritual body, confirms the result of the kilnascrene experiments. During one of these experiments he notes as follows:

"I wished to unite my psychical body with that of my wife. . . . In the atmosphere in which we had projected ourselves, I could see our more material doubles united in the form of a cloud. Heavy at first, it began to clear in proportion to the greater and greater intimacy with which our subtle bodies were interpenetrating one another. The transparency increased until soon we seemed no more than a vapour which was hardly visible."†

DIFFUSION OF THE RADIANT BODY IN SHELLEY'S POEMS

The union of psychic bodies in the poetry of Shelley, closely resembles the above experience. The subtle body in the spiritual fusion "loses its distinctness".

* Dr. Kilner writes in *Human Atmosphere*: "Again, if the observer held a bare arm parallel to the subject body, the intervening auras will become brighter and will blend, showing that a mutual attraction exists between the two auras" (Dr. Kilner, *Human Atmosphere*).

† Yram, *Practical Astral Projection*, p. 207.

The lovers melt into "one presence", and feel the circulation of a single life,

"I saw not, heard not, moved not, *only felt*
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
 Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
 And *I was thus absorbed*, until it past,
 And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
 Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
 And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed."

Prometheus Unbound, Act II, Scene I, lines 81-88

DIFFUSION OF THE RADIANT BODY IN THE SPIRITUAL UNION

Compare this with the sensations experienced by Mr. Yram in the spiritual meeting,

"Her love penetrated into my being under the guise of a general warmth. On the other hand, my aura penetrated hers and I had the sensation as if melting into her."*

DIFFUSION OF EMILIA'S RADIANT BODY IN THE PSYCHIC UNION

Emilia's subtle body in Shelley's love poem *Epipsy-chidion* is at first a distinct shape—"the glory of her being" illumining the cold airs of earth,

"The glory of her being, issuing thence,
 Stains the dead, blank cold air with *a warm shade*
 Of unentangled intermixture made

* Yram, *Practical Astral Projection*, pp. 206-207

By Love, of light and motion: *one intense
Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence,*
Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing
Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
With the unintermitted blood."

Epipsychidion, lines 100-107

The radiant body casts a "warm shade", its aura, around the dark world. It issues from the physical body as a "glory of light". *In the psychic union, its form vanishes. It appears as "one intense diffusion", "one serene Omnipresence"*.

The lovers' bodies are fused into "passion's golden purity". Their being's "inmost cells" dissolve. Their speech is by telepathy—"that eloquence other than words",

"Our veins beat together; and our lips,
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them, and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
*The fountains of our deepest life shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity.*"

Epipsychidion

Their spirits like two arcs of flame form a single body,

"*We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and
grew,
Till, like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured.*"

Epipsychidion, 6 lines, leaving the last 26 lines.

The words "touch, mingle, transfigured" hint the diffusion of the subtle body in the psychic union.

DIFFUSION OF THE RADIANT BODY IN "ROSALIND AND HELEN"

So similarly in *Rosalind and Helen*, the lovers are united in one body in the "Diviner world" of the spirit-planes,

"We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth."

Rosalind and Helen, lines 999-1003

THE SUBTLE PLANES OF SPIRIT

Shelley's spiritual world is not unsubstantial. It is ponderable and dense; finer in matter, a sensitive extension of the physical state,

"A shrine is raised to thee
Which, nor the tempest breath of time,
Nor the interminable flood,
Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
Availeth to destroy,—
The sensitive extension of the world."*
That wondrous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join."

Queen Mab, Part VI, last 9 lines

* The shrine which none can destroy is the Akashic Record in which the past abides for ever.

ASTRAL PLANE

The interior of the astral plane is called in *Queen Mab* the Hall of Spells,

“The Spirit
Entered the Hall of Spells:
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy
With the ethereal footsteps, trembled not:
The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will.”

Queen Mab, Part II, lines 41-50

The footsteps of Spirit are too ethereal to indent astral matter. The light and crimson mist of the “unearthly dwelling” yield not to physical movement but to will.

Deep in the distance is the illumination of the last sphere—the celestial dwelling where matter, space and time cease to work,

“There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance:
None but a spirit’s eye
Might ken that rolling orb;
None but a spirit’s eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth’s inhabitants.
But matter, space, and time
In those aërial mansions cease to act.”

Queen Mab, Part II, lines 83-92

Each place in each plane is inhabited by a Spirit,

“A Soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.”

Epipsychidion, Stanza XXI, lines 70-75

SPIRIT-PERSONALITIES IN MYSTICISM

Every place has in the mystic's view a pervading personality. The book *Life beyond the Veil* describes it thus:

“You must also understand that there is in everything here a permeating personality. Every forest, every grove, every tree, lake, stream, meadow, flower, house, has a pervading personality.”*

SPIRIT-ACTIVITY IN THE PLANES

Spirit-activity is diffused through all the intermingling planes,

“Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A spirit of activity and life
That knows no term, cessation, or decay.”

Queen Mab, Stanza VII, Part VI, lines 1-4

It is present in every atom of disturbance, every molecule of light,

* Owen, *The Life Beyond the Veil*, vol. ii, p. 119.

“Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,
 Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
 All seems unlinked contingency and chance:
 No atom of this turbulence fulfils
 A vague and unnecessitated task,
 Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
 Even the minutest molecule of light,
 That in an April sunbeam’s fleeting glow
 Fulfils its destined, though invisible work,
The universal Spirit guides.”

Queen Mab, Part VI, Stanza VII, lines 23–32

Atoms are sentient with the throb of Spirit—an intuition outflaming the steps of Science,

“I tell thee that *those viewless beings*,*
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel, and live like man;
 That their affections and antipathies,
 Like his, produce the laws
 Ruling their moral state;
 And the minutest throb
 That through their frame diffuses
 The slightest, faintest motion,
 Is fixed and indispensable
 As the majestic laws
 That rule yon rolling orbs.”

Queen Mab, Part II, Stanza XIV, lines 7–9

* That the atom has sex memory, will consciousness, has been suggested by Mr. Versechoyle in his book *The Soul of an Atom*. He says: “A Hydrogen atom in the ‘nascent state’ is an example of atomic memory. When dilute sulphuric acid comes in contact with zinc, a Hydrogen atom comes off which, whilst the memory of the event lasts, can form combinations which are quite impossible without it” (*The Soul of an Atom*, p. 64).

THOUGHT-FORMS IN MYSTICISM

Thoughts, according to the spiritual theory, are physical things. They are the matter of the astral mental or higher planes moulded into semblances of reality by the thinker. By every act of thought, man is "peopling the space with living images". When he thinks of a table, he creates in invisible matter the shape of a table. These thought-images persist for a time and are called thought-forms.

MR. YRAM'S EXPERIMENTS WITH THOUGHTS

Mr. Yram experimenting, by the projection of his astral body in full consciousness in the astral plane, divides thought-forms into the following groups:

"In practice our first efforts will be to distinguish between thought-forms and living beings. As examples, the following are most common:

- (1) *Images created by our own thoughts.*
- (2) Images created by discarnate entities, dependent upon the direction of their thoughts and affections.
- (3) *The ephemeral thoughts* of each individual consciousness floating at random, or towards a predetermined goal, in any grade of the universal substance.
- (4) The collective thoughts of earth's inhabitants.
- (5) Images relative to past events, great or small.
- (6) *The animated double* of everything which exists here below, whether of so-called inanimate objects or of living things.
- (7) Living entities already well stabilized, such as

plants and animals which are awaiting their earthly manifestation.

- (8) The empty, worn-out shells of living beings passing from one dimension to a higher one.
- (9) *Human beings themselves, among which we must distinguish between those living in permanent and those in temporary forms.*"*

SHELLEY'S THOUGHT-KINGDOM

Shelley's under-world in *Prometheus Unbound* suggests this thought-kingdom,

*"For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men
And all that faith creates or love desires,†
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art and dost hang a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the gods
Are there and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts."*

Prometheus Unbound, Act I, lines 201-212

Mark the double world of psychical theory, the visible which we behold and the invisible which is the abode of etheric life. "All that faith creates or love desires" points to the thought-forms of the first class mentioned

* Yram, *Practical Astral Projection*, pp. 151-152.

† Compare the occult view: "Man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses, and passions" (Sinnet, *Occult World*, p. 111).

in the quotation from Mr. Yram—that is images created by our thoughts. “The dreams and the light imaginings of men” indicate our ephemeral thoughts with which we people the astral space. “The shadows of all forms that think and live” refer to the “animated double”, the etheric counterpart of everything here. “Heroes, men, beasts”, phantoms, and “all the powers of nameless worlds”, suggest the people of the psychic planes.

THOUGHT-FORMS IN SHELLEY'S POETRY

These thought-forms exist for some time as breathing creatures. They dwell in the rare ether of our globe and are,

“Those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its *world-surrounding ether*.”

Prometheus Unbound, Act I, Semichorus II, lines 90–93

They lie in different planes of air,

“As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;
We make these our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent,
Through the boundless element.”

Prometheus Unbound, Act I, Semichorus II, lines 116–122

In the twilight chamber of death, around the cold corpse of Keats, dying and dissolving, thought-forms mourn their lot,

“The quick Dreams,
 The *passion-winged Ministers of thought*,
 Who were his flocks, . . .

Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
 But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn
 their lot
 Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet
 pain,
 They ne'er will gather strength, nor find a home
 again.”

Adonais, Stanza IX

The Desires, Hopes and Fears in *Adonais* are not abstractions. They are the thought-images of Keats clustering about his brain,

“And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
 Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
 Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarna-
 tions
 Of hopes and fears, and twilight Fantasies;
 All he had loved, and *moulded into thought*,
 From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
 Lamented Adonais.”

Adonais, Stanzas XIII and XIV

MIND AS THE BUILDER OF IMAGES

Mind has the power to fashion mental-images of such intensity that they may be mistaken for a physical form or spirit materialization. As the mystic says:

“A thought-form may assume the shape of its pro-

jector; if a person wills strongly to be present at a particular place, . . . such a thought-form may take his own shape, and a clairvoyant present at the desired spot would see what he would probably mistake for his friend in the astral body."*

THE THOUGHT-MODEL IN "ALASTOR"

In *Alastor*, the thought-form of the maiden of his dreams is as vivid as a breathing original. She is Alastor's dream-image, or in the word of Shelley's preface to the poem—"the prototype of his conception". The radiant body of the dream-model glistens beneath the folds of thought-drapery:

"At the sound he turned,
And saw by the *warm light* of their own life
Her *glowing limbs* beneath the *sinuous veil*
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Out-stretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly."

Alastor, Stanza VI, lines 33-41

Observe the realism of the thought-image. It has the "glowing limbs" of the subtle body, and spreads an aura, the "warm light" of its own life. It is clothed with thought-clothing—"the sinuous veils of woven wind". The dream-model is an illusion. It fades in Alastor's arms,

"He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:—she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,

* C. W. Leadbeater, *The Devachanic Plane*, p. 26.

With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
 Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
 Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
 Involved and swallowed up the vision."

Alastor, Stanza VI, lines 43-50

THE THOUGHT-MODEL IN THE "WITCH OF ATLAS"

The *Witch of Atlas* is the Spirit of life weaving through thought the wonders of the sense-kingdom. She makes a living image, and breathes soul-force into it,

"Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
 Together, tempering the repugnant mass
 With liquid love—all things together grow
 Through which the harmony of love can pass;
 And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow
 A living Image."

The Witch of Atlas, Stanza XXXV

She puts the image into a boat which is the poetic symbol for the physical career. The dream-body is dipped in an atmosphere of colours and has the power to reach the seventh sphere,

"From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
 Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere
 Tipt with the speed of liquid lightings,
 Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere."

The Witch of Atlas, Stanza XXXVII

The dream-body lies in the boat with unawakened eyes and is encompassed upon the journey by a crowd of illusions. It dances through the rapids till it reaches outer Reality, figuratively the land of Egypt. There the image sees with the Spirit's eye the body as "a

rude and worn disguise" concealing the "inner form" of the subtle counterpart,

"She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits—to her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the *inner form* most bright and fair."

The Witch of Atlas, Stanza LXVI

In the closing stanzas, the boat perishes in the shallows. The Witch unwinds her illusions. The dream-body, unhurt by its tragic experience, lies warm-breathing and passionately pulsing "beyond the rage of death of life":

"And there the body lay age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and
undecaying
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle sleep about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage of
death or life."

The Witch of Atlas, Stanza LXX

REMAINDER OF SHELLEY'S WORKS

The remainder of Shelley's poems repeat in beautiful imagery the psychic ideas already traversed.

The double world of mysticism is everywhere. The plant has a spirit within its "outward form",

"Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which *within* its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say."

The Sensitive Plant, Stanza I

The Skylark has a double existence. It is "spirit or bird". The felled tree re-lives in its etheric form,

"And so this tree,—
Oh that such our death may be!
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again."

Ariel to Miranda, Stanza III, lines 11-14

The counterparts of everything upon earth exist in the inner ether,

"O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy *inner nature* was apprised
Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled,
And *varied reminiscences* have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been *imprinted* there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth."

Queen Mab, Part VII, Stanza IV

"The tablets that never fade" refer to the etheric records. The "animated double" of everything is imprinted there. Even the lineament of "fleeting visions", our ephemeral thoughts, are impressed on etheric matter.

SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Life is the march of Spirit through "the gradual paths of an aspiring change",

“Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
 Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
 For birth, and life, and death, and *that strange state*
 Before the naked soul has found its home,
 All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
 The restless wheels of being on their way,
 Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
 Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.”

Queen Mab, Part IX, Stanza X, lines 2-8

“The strange state of the soul” before it enters its last home is the Monadic plane where the fetters of body are discarded.

RE-BIRTH: KARMA

In *Ariel to Miranda*, there is the hint of re-birth upon the physical plane,

“When you die, the silent moon,
 In her interlunar swoon,
 Is not sadder in her cell
 Than deserted Ariel;
When you live again on earth,
 Like an unseen star of birth,
 Ariel guides you o’er the sea
 Of life from your nativity.”

Ariel to Miranda, Stanza II, lines 1-8

The drama of the *Cenci* suggests that sin and sorrow are due to Karma—the offences of some unreclected world. The villain of the piece is the minister of correction,

“I do not feel as if I were a man,
 But like a fiend appointed to chastise
 The offences of some unremembered world.”

The Cenci, Act IV, Scene I, lines 69-71

THE “ETERNAL NOW”

In the drama of *Hellas*, this excellent scenery of the senses, earth and her fair habitations, are but the vision of the Eternal Mind:

“Talk no more
 Of thee and me, the future and the past;
 But look on that which cannot change—the One,
 The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
 Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
 The sapphire floods of interstellar air,

.

. . . This whole
 Of suns and worlds and men and beasts and flowers,
 With all the silent or tempestuous workings
 By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
 Is but a vision.”

Hellas, lines 592-597 and 602-606

Our sense of Time is false. To-day, To-morrow and Yesterday are a fiction. Reality is ever living, ever present, ever Now,

‘The future and the past are idle shadows
 Of thought’s eternal flight—they have no being;
 Nought is but that which feels itself to be.’

Hellas, lines 609-611

All things are at one moment although seeming to be divided into past, present and future,

“Mistake me not! All is contained in each.
 Dodona’s forest to an acorn’s cup
 Is that which has been, or will be, to that
 Which is—the absent to the present.”

Hellas, lines 618–621

THE MYSTIC’S EXPERIMENTS WITH THE
 “ETERNAL NOW”

Mr. Hodson, in a clear state of consciousness and not in a trance, describes through clear-perception Shelley’s “Eternal Now”:

“Looking at myself again, I lose all sense of time. I see myself not as Geoffrey Hodson ‘now’, but as an entity that sums up within itself my forty-five years of life. I am the summation into one time of all the processes of birth and growth, preserved into a unity, each moment affecting every other moment—a curious synthesis of all states and stages of growth from the moment of birth to the age of forty-five, all conditions rolled into a unity.”*

MODERN EXPERIMENTS IN THOUGHT

Modern experiments are proving the correctness of Shelley’s spiritual intuitions. Mr. Fukurai’s researches show that thoughts can be impressed by will upon photographic plates. This is Mr. Fukurai’s conclusion:

“The function of the spirit begins by willing concentration.

“When the spirit wills to produce a picture on plates, then that picture will appear on it. ‘If willed, a

* *Some Experiments in Four-Dimensional Vision*, p. 22.

phenomenon will issue as a willed.' This should be the fundamental principle of the science of spirit.

"I do not pretend to understand the reason why such a thing is possible? I can only recognize this transcendent function of the spirit as an ultimate fact."*

SHELLEY AND MODERN SCIENCE

Towards the close of the last century, Shelley was condemned by an immortal phrase as an "ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain". His poetry, it was said, reduced the world to shadows. It was never dreamt that a deeper analysis of matter, an inner knowledge of the electron structure, might confirm the rare intuitions of the poet's eye. Science to-day corroborates Shelley and refutes his critics. The common-sense notion of matter has vanished. As Sir Arthur Eddington says:

"The external world of physics has thus become a world of shadows. In removing our illusions we have removed the substance, for indeed we have seen that substance is one of the greatest of our illusions."†

And again,

"Perhaps the *most essential change* is that we are no longer tempted to *condemn the spiritual aspects of our nature as illusory because of their lack of concreteness*. We have travelled far from the standpoint which identifies the real with the concrete matter and all else that is in the physical world have been reduced to a shadowy symbolism."†

* M. Fukurai: *Clairvoyance and Thoughtography*, p. 246.

† *The Nature of the Physical World*.

Matter is the construction of our senses. The solid state is appearance. X-rays penetrate our bodies. The material object is not what it seems. It is transparent. The world of science, like that of Shelley's, is shadowy and ethereal. We are already advancing into the rarer grade of matter where lies Shelley's universe.

SHELLEY'S UNSUBSTANTIAL KINGDOM

In the light of the recent revelations of Science, it is no longer possible to fling at Shelley the unsubstantiality of his kingdom. Our homely earth is the residence of Spirit. The crust of its soil no less than the visitation of the winds that, in storm or calm, sweep over sea and land; its granite mountains and frozen peaks and volcanic cones of breaking flame; no less than the haze of its summer islands and the gay Aureorean curtains of the frost-bound North are, in their woof and weaving, wave-particles of spiritual energy. Shelley's music rends the diaphanous drapery of substance. His lips unseal the secrets of the invisible. His aerial soul soars to the height of the intellectual firmament. *Shelley strikes the ether, never the void.* Let us therefore reverse Arnold's dictum and affirm without misgiving that the metaphysics of Descartes, Berkeley and Hume, and the researches of Dirac, Planck and Schrödinger, have not more to teach than the frail musings of this "pard-like spirit" who has slipped into the clouds of immortality.

CHAPTER IV

LORD BYRON: THE SPIRIT-PEOPLE

*"Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me."*

Byron, *Manfred*, Act I, Scene I

BYRON's mystic intuitions are less delicate than those of Shelley. His phantoms have flesh. His etheric world is dense. Yet the psychic chain does not break. Byron and Shelley possess the same spiritual instinct.

DIVISION OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I shall consider firstly Byron's intuitions of the spirit-people; secondly the materialization of phantoms and the like psychic sensings.

THE BODILESS EXISTENCE

True existence, according to mysticism, is the life of superconscious energy in the bodiless plane.*

"And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Rest of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, *less dazzling, but more warm?*
The bodiless thought?"

Childe Harold, Stanza LXXIV, lines 1-8

* The mystic idea is that in the higher planes man discards the body and continues to live, feel and see without the obstacle of a body.

The Spirit's experience as "a bodiless thought" is not the cessation but the expansion of the sense-life. The disembodied mind is "a thing of eyes", filling all space, cognizing all steps of evolution,

"When coldness wraps this suffering clay,
 Ah! whither strays the immortal mind?
 It cannot die, it cannot stay,
 But leaves its darken'd dust behind.
 Then, *unembodied*, doth it trace
 By steps each planet's heavenly way?
 Or fill at once the realms of space,
 A thing of eyes, that all survey?"
 (When coldness wraps this suffering clay, Stanza I)

Freed of the body, it perceives past, present and future
 in one glance as the Eternal Now,

"Eternal, boundless, undecay'd,
A thought unseen, but seeing all,

 In one broad glance the soul beholds,
 And all, that was, at once appears."

THE EGOIC RAY

According to the secret teaching, every Ego possesses a spark of the divine life. Invisible and lost to sight, the Egoic Ray* burns in the self's centre,

"Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
Lonely and lost to light for evermore.

* "The Monad cannot be called even Spirit: it is a Ray, a breath of the Absolute" (H. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. i, p. 267).

THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE

There, *in its centre*, a sepulchral lamp
 Burns *the slow flame*, eternal, but unseen;
 Which not the darkness of despair can damp,
 Though vain its ray as it had never been."

The Corsair, Stanza XIV, Sub-Stanzas I and II

It is the quenchless beam lit at God's altar,

"There is *a ray*
 In me, which, though forbidden yet to shine,
 I feel was lighted at thy God's and thine."

Heaven and Earth, lines 94-96

THE SPIRIT SPHERES

There are spiritual worlds beyond our worlds,

LUCIFER. Thou knowest that there is
 A state, and many states beyond thine own—
 And this thou knowest not this morn."

Cain, Act II, Scene II

THE ASTRAL PLANE

In the drama of *Cain*, the lights recede. Rising arm in arm with Lucifer, Cain flies across the "Abyss of Space" to the lower astral plane where abide the phantoms of the dead:

CAIN. "How the lights recede!
 Where fly we?"

LUCIFER. To the *world of phantoms*, which
 Are beings past, and shadows still to come."

Cain, Act II, Scene I

THE SPIRIT-PEOPLE IN SUBTLE ESSENCE

Creatures of the ethereal world have each their peculiar tenement of matter,

“Clay has its earth, and other worlds their tenants;
All temporary breathing creatures their
Peculiar element; and things which have
Long ceased to breathe our breath, have theirs.”

Cain, Act II, Scene II

The Spirit-brotherhood of the universe dwell in subtle
essence, about earth's topmost altitudes,

“Mysterious Agency!
Ye spirits of the unbounded Universe . . .

.

Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence—ye, to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And earth's and ocean's caves familiar things.”

Manfred, Act I, Scene I, lines 29-30

SPIRIT-BODIES AND SPIRIT-CONDITIONS

The bodies of the Spirit Intelligences are a shape
radiating centres of energy rather than a fixed physical
form,

“*They bear not*
The *wing of seraph*, nor the *face of man*,
Nor *form of mightiest brute*, nor aught that is
Now breathing; mighty yet and beautiful
As the most beautiful and mighty which
Live, and yet so unlike them, that I scarce
Can call them living.”

Cain, Act II, Scene II, lines 60, etc.

In their higher dimension they are free of the time-
sense,

“With us acts are exempt from time, and we
 Can crowd eternity into an hour,
 Or stretch an hour into eternity:

We breathe not by a mortal measurement.”

Cain, Act I, Scene I, lines 653–656

They live in the “Eternal Now”. Past, present and future are to them as one moment of experience.

“We are immortal, and do not forget
 We are eternal; *and to us the past*
Is, as the future, present.”

Manfred, Act I, Scene I, The Seven Spirits

MATERIALIZATION OF HIGHER INTELLIGENCES

The Higher Intelligences are the peerless essence of mind. They manifest in any form of their choice,

SPIRIT. “*We have no forms*, beyond the elements
 Of which we are the *mind and principle*:
 But choose a form—in that we will appear.

MAN. I have no choice; there is no form on
 earth
 Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
 Who is most powerful of ye, take such
 aspect
 As unto him may seem most fitting—
 Come!

*(Seventh Spirit. Appearing in the
 shape of a beautiful female figure.)*

Behold!”

Manfred, Act I, Scene I, lines 187–205

MATERIALIZATION OF THE SPIRIT OF THE ALPS

The spirit of the Alps also makes at the invocation a momentary appearance,

“Beautiful Spirit! with thy *hair of light*,
 And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
 The charms of earth’s least mortal daughters grow
 To an *unearthly stature*, in an *essence*
 Of *purser elements*.”

Manfred, Act II, Scene II, lines 13, etc.

The Spirit’s body is made of subtle matter, “the essence of purer elements”. “The hair of light and dazzling eyes of glory” show the points of fire sparkling in the force-centres of her spirit form. These Intelligences are usually of unearthly stature and sometimes extend to a range of a hundred feet.

MOUNTAIN-SPIRIT DESCRIBED IN MYSTICISM

Compare Byron’s lines in the above passage with the seer’s description of the ideation of a Higher Spirit. Mark the translucent shape, stature and energy of the Spirit flowing from fixed-centres:

“The angels of the formless worlds appear as beings of brilliant light *outraying from a central source* of greater brilliance and intensity, within which, tenuous, translucent, and supernally beautiful, the ideation of the angel and the human form may be perceived. *Immense forces flow through and all about them*, each in its appropriate symbolic hue. *Their statures range from twenty to a hundred feet according to their development*. Their countenances are noble, god-

like, majestic, and serene. Their eyes shine with ecstasy and blaze on occasion with resistless power.”*

MATERIALIZATION OF THE LOWER SPIRITS

The spirits of the lower plane also materialize. The phantom of Astarte is summoned from the astral world:

NEM. “Whom would'st thou
Uncharnel?

MAN. One without a tomb—call up
Astarte.

Nemesis.

Shadow! or Spirit!
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the *form of thy birth*,
Of the *mould of thy clay*,
Which return'd to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!

Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm,
Appear!—Appear!—Appear!

*(The phantom of Astarte rises and
stands in the midst)."*

Manfred, Act II, Scene IV, lines 94-111

Her earth body, the “form of her birth”, manifests,

* Hodson, *The Coming of the Angels*, p. 45.

MAN. "Can this be death? there's bloom upon
her cheek;

But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd
leaf.

It is the same! Oh, God! that I should
dread

To look upon the same—Astarte!—No,
I cannot speak to her—but bid her speak—"

Manfred, Act II, Scene IV, lines 112-119

Next Astarte comes through with her direct voice,

"Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee,
Speak to me!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred!

MAN. Say on, say on—

I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!"

Manfred, Act II, Scene IV, lines 152, etc.

"ELEMENTAL ESSENCE" IN MYSTICISM

In the humorous episode of *The Deformed Transformed*, we come to the lowest plane of manifestation—the life of the Elementals. The "elemental Essence" is the technical name for astral or mental matter which is ever ready at the instant command of will to become a semblance of reality. It is thus defined in mysticism:

"This elemental essence is, as it were, in a 'critical state', ready to precipitate into 'thought-forms' the moment a vibration of thought from a thinker's mind

affects it; according to the type and quality and strength of the thought, is the thought-form which is made by elemental essence out of mental or astral matter. These thought-forms are fleeting, or lasting for hours, months, or years; and hence they can well be classed among the inhabitants of the invisible worlds. They were called Elementals.”*

MATERIALIZATION OF THE “ELEMENTAL ESSENCE”

The Spirit of the Fountain materializes as a man,†

“The waters stir,
Not as with air, but by some subterranean
And *rocking power of the internal world.*
What’s here? A mist! No more?”

The Deformed Transformed, Part I, Scene I, lines 88-91

The Spirit “precipitates” by sheer force of will “models of air,” the shapes of the elemental essence,

“Shadows of beauty!
Shadows of power!
Rise to your duty—
This is the hour!
Walk lovely and pliant
From the depth of this fountain,
As the cloud-shapen giant
Bestrides the Hartz Mountain
Come as ye were,
That our eyes may behold
The model in air
Of the form I will mould,

* C. Jinarajadasa, *First Principles of Theosophy*, pp. 91-92.

† “The rocking power of the internal world” is the psychic force of the inner world.

Bright as the Iris
 When ether is spann'd;—
 Such his desire is."

The Deformed Transformed, Part I, Scene I, lines 194-308

The astral substance of the fountain mingles and stirs to the word. A human body, flesh of purest mould, limb of lightest ether, is born of the Spirit's thought-precipitation,

"Let his flesh be the purest
 Of mould, in which grew
 The lily-root surest,
 And drank the best dew!
 Let his limbs be the lightest
 Which clay can compound,
 And his aspect the brightest
 On earth to be found!
Elements near me,
Be mingled and stirr'd,
 Know me, and hear me,
 And leap to my word!
 Sunbeams, awaken
 This earth's animation!
 'Tis done! He hath taken
 His stand in creation!"

The Deformed Transformed, Part I, Scene I, lines 516-531

The words "Elements be mingled and stirred" suggest the thought-direction to the "Elemental essence" to take shape. The thought-image becomes an animate body.

THE UNDERLYING UNITY OF THE POETIC VISION

Byron closes the first group of the poets of this book. Is there any underlying vision in the poetry of Byron and his predecessors? The mystic idea is the binding link. The poetic eye traces a world of substance. The soul is a radiant body. The spirit-people are a physical reality, the spirit-planes a material condition. The scenery of Keats, Byron and Shelley is earth in finer mould.

CHAPTER V

LORD TENNYSON: THE SECRET CYCLES

*"No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for man,
But thro' the Will of One who knows and rules*

*Aeonian evolution, swift or slow,
Thro' all the Spheres."*

The Ring, lines 39-40, and 41-42

PLUME of seraph and of angel, shining peoples planes and places, have crept forth from the dark. Heaven without us and within, crystal body, auric colours, viewless lips in meeting, have fluttered down the medium of the Poet's mind. Lift the moss; there springs a face. Splash the fountain; stirs a cherub. The air is thick with populace. Unseen hands are ministrant. All is movement and a marvel. Whence the motion of the Universe? Science leaves us at the threshold, answers not why gravitation holds the lamps of heaven in balance. Why should atom wed with atom to make the orbs of light? Why should the electron, with fast and faster frequencies, pass into vibration? Why should waves be tossed in ocean; mountains crack; tempests burst? Moving operation, without the Operating Mind? Masonry and building without the Architect? Science shirks the question; the poets pass reply. The Craftsman, hid in vapour, "dark in murk", toils beyond the gloom. The order and sequence of science, rise of planet and Sun, cycles of earth and man, are born of the Breath of the Breather who builds in the Far. And His law is cyclic evolution.

THE CYCLES

All life evolves. Mineral plant and man move through the cycles to "one Divine Event". The "onward-sloping motions infinite", the secret cycles, haunt Tennyson's verse.

DIVISION OF THE CHAPTER

I shall consider Tennyson's works in two parts; firstly the continuity of the spiritual intuitions and secondly the cyclic rhythm which dominates his poetry.

ASTRAL LINKS

The radiant body is a psychic duplicate fixed to the physical by fine threads of electrons or the astral vital connexion. When this subtle cord snaps, death supervenes. Tennyson's rare eye reveals the astral links, "a link of some tight chain", hidden in the "inmost frame" of the subtle body:

"Then it seem'd as tho' *a link*
Of some tight chain within my inmost frame
 Was *riven* in twain: that life I heeded not
 Flow'd from me, and the darkness of the grave,
 The darkness of the grave, and utter night,
 Did swallow up my vision."

The Lover's Tale, Part I, lines 596-601

THE AURA IN "MAUD"

Maud's aura fills her room with her light,
 "Maud's own little oak-room
 Which Maud, like a precious stone

Set in the heart of the carven gloom
Lights with herself, when alone
 She sits by her music and books."

Maud, Part XIV, Stanza II, lines 1-5

SUBTLE BODIES ARE TRANSPARENT

The bodies of the lovers are transparent. Even
 "sweet Ida" is a shadow:

"I saw the forms: I knew not where I was:
 They did but look like *hollow-shows*: nor more
 Sweet Ida."

The Princess, Part VII, lines 133-135

PROJECTION OF THE ASTRAL BODY UPON ASTRAL WINDS

In *The Lover's Tale*, both man and maid are borne
 away by the psychic gust,

"Round and round
A whirlwind caught and bore us; mighty gyres
 Rapid and vast, of hissing spray wind-driven
 Far thro' the dizzy dark."

The Lover's Tale, Part II, lines 193-196

The woman's gross body turns to air. The lover clasps
 the astral form,

"Aloud she shriek'd;
 My heart was cloven with pain; I wound my arms
 About her; we whirl'd giddily; the wind
 Sung; but I clasp'd her without fear: *her weight*
Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim eyes,
 And parted lips which drank her breath, down-hung
 The jaws of Death."

The Lover's Tale, Part II, lines 196-202

Waking from his trance, in fear of death, he loosens
his embrace and flings aside the phantom-form,

“I, groaning, from me flung
Her empty phantom; all the sway and whirl
Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I
Down welter’d thro’ the dark ever and ever.”

The Lover's Tale, Part II, lines 202-205

MR. YRAM'S EXPERIMENTS

Mr. Yram in his chapter “Projection by Whirlwind” describes experiences similar to the one mentioned in the *Lover's Tale*. He says:

“The separation between the conscious being and his organic envelope takes place under a strange impulse . . . giving the impression of being *lifted up by a whirlwind*. The *sensation of being sucked up violently* by a sort of huge vortex is felt, and there is an immediate and conscious contact with the other worlds.”*

And again:

“Immediately I felt myself being carried away in whirlwind, I had the feeling of descending rapidly. In the greyish and cloudy opacity of the atmosphere into which I plunged I noticed greenish glows. . . . Then the *current slowed down* bit by bit and led me back into my body.”†

THE SUBTLE BODY IN “IN MEMORIAM”

In Memoriam invokes from the “sightless range” the ghost or subtle form which lies hidden in “the blindness of the physical frame”,

* Yram, *Practical Astral Projection*, chapter vii, p. 60.

† *Ibid.*, p. 61.

“No visual shade of some one lost,
 But he, the Spirit himself, may come
Where all the nerve of sense is numb;
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from thy sightless range
 With gods in unconjectured bliss,
 O, from the distance of the abyss
 Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
 The wish too strong for words to name;
 That *in this blindness of the frame*
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.”

In Memoriam, Stanza XCIII, lines 5-12

DIFFUSION OF THE PHYSICAL SELF

The physical Self grows dim and fades as a cloud into the life of the Nameless. Yet the utter clearness of the physical state persists,

“For more than once when I
 Sat all alone, revolving in myself
 The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
 And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
 Melts into Heaven, I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
 Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of
 doubt

But *utter clearness*, and thro' loss of Self
 The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
 Were Sun to spark-unshadowable in words,
 Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.”

The Ancient Sage, lines 229-238

TENNYSON'S SEERSHIP

The above lines are a personal record of Tennyson's seership. Of this Tennyson wrote in his letter of May 7, 1874, as follows:

"A kind of waking trance (this for lack of a better name) I have frequently had . . . This has often come to me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, *the individuality itself seemed to resolve* and fade away into boundless being, and *this not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest* . . . the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life."

INTERPENETRATING PLANES

The earth-plane to the poetic sense appears ethereal. It is the shadowy world of the wave-mechanics,

"To him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men
Became a crystal, *and he saw them thro' it,*
And heard their voices talk behind the wall,
And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces."

Merlin and Vivien, lines 629-634

The true world lies within, interpenetrating our sphere,

"That true world *within* the world we see,
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore."

De Profundis, Part II, Stanza I, lines 5-6

THE "LIGHT OF THE LOGOS"

The "Holy Grail" is, in the *Idylls*, the symbol of the universal Spirit. It is the seventh ray of the seventh plane which fills with the colour of love the Hermit's cell,

"And then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colours leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night."

The Holy Grail, lines 115-123

It dazzles the knights of the Round Table,

"And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light *seven-times more clear than day*:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud."

The Holy Grail, lines 187-190

The beam is seven-times clearer than day, seven-times rarer than earthly light. It is the last radiance of the last plane.

THE SEVENTH SPHERE

When the subtle veils of matter are withdrawn, the spires of the spiritual city are revealed,

"I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl."

The Holy Grail, lines 528, etc.

The seventh plane is a world of intense light,

“Then in my madness I essay’d the door;
 It gave; and thro’ a stormy glare, a heat
 As from *a seventimes-heated furnace*, I,
 Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
 With such a fierceness that I swoon’d away—
 O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
 All pall’d in crimson samite, and around
 Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.”

The Holy Grail, lines 843-850

The “seventimes-heated furnace”, the seventh sphere seven times finer than physical substance, is ringed round with shapes, wings and eyes of the higher angels.

AURAS OF FLOWERS

Everything has a halo. Mystic lights glance from flowers, and bright beams from the lover’s eyes, hair and garments,

“Methought *a light*
Burst from the garland I had wov’n, and stood
 A solid glory on her bright black hair;
 A light methought broke from her dark, dark
 eyes,
 And shot itself into the singing winds;
A mystic light flash’d ev’n from her white robe
 As from a glass in the sun, and fell about
 My footsteps on the mountains.”

The Lover’s Tale, Part I, lines 360-367

MATERIALIZATION

The soul materializes in the dark,

"I cannot see the features right,
 When on the gloom I strive to paint
 The face I know; the hues are faint
 And mix with hollow masks of night.

.

Till all at once beyond the will
 I hear a wizard music roll,
 And thro' a lattice on the soul
 Looks thy fair face and makes it still."

In Memoriam, Stanza LXX

It is watched as coming in the subtle body, the
 beauteous after-form, of finer light,

"Come: not in watches of the night,
 But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,
 Come, beauteous in thine *after-form*,
 And like a finer light in light."

In Memoriam, Stanza XCI, lines 13-16

DEMATERIALIZATION

The reverse process of dematerialization takes place
 in the *Idylls*,

"More and more
 The *moony vapour* rolling round the King,
 Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
 Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
 And grayer, till himself became as mist
 Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom."

Guinevere, lines 595-600

Arthur is about to dematerialize. The phrase "moony vapour" refers to the white etheric substance, known as ectoplasm, which usually rolls out of the medium's

mouth as thin glistening drapery and with which the materializing spirit moulds its physical form for appearance. In a few seconds the figure melts and disappears. In the present passage, the ectoplasm enfolds the King who seems a phantom in it. Slowly the ectoplasm dissolves and Arthur moves "ghost-like" to his doom.

THOUGHT AS BUILDER OF SUBSTANCE

Thought is the builder of the illusion of substance,

"Always the inaudible invisible thought,
Artificer and subject, lord and slave,
Shaped by the audible and visible,
Moulded the audible and visible."

The Lover's Tale, Part II, lines 102-105

NATURE OF THOUGHT-FORMS IN MYSTICISM

In mysticism, the size, shape, direction and colour of thoughts depend upon the intensity of concentration which produces them. A loose thought has a loose shape, a clear thought has a clear form. A quick thought has speed; a hazy thought has haze. Every act of thought stirs astral or mental matter and gives rise to vibrations which appear as colour, form and outline of the thought.

WEAK AND STRONG THOUGHT-FORM IN TENNYSON

The strong thought-form is rounded as lucidly as the Moon's orb,

“The brightness of *a burning thought*, awhile
 In battle with the glooms of my dark will,
Moonlike emerged, and to itself lit up
 There on the depth of an unfathom’d woe
 Reflex of action.”

The Lover's Tale, Part I, lines 738-742

The swift thought, flame-winged, silver-tongued, has
 an arrowy flight:

“The *viewless arrows of his thoughts* were headed
 And wing’d with flame,*
 Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,
 And of so fierce a flight,
 From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
 Filling with light
 And vagrant melodies the winds which bore
 Them earthward till they lit.”

The Poet's Mind, lines 11-18

The thought of shattered hope appears as a formless
 mist of gold,

“And in that hour
A hope flowed round me, like a golden mist
 Charm’d amid eddies of melodious airs,
 A moment, ere the onward whirlwind *shatter* it,
 Waver’d and floated—which was less than Hope,
 Because it *lack’d the power of perfect Hope.*”

The Lover's Tale, Part I, lines 442-447

AEONIAN EVOLUTION

The fresh feature of Tennyson’s poetry is the idea
 of Evolution. A cycle may be defined in Tennyson’s

* Compare: “A form of definite affection directed to a particular individual shapes itself not unlike a projectile” (A. Powell, *The Astral Body*, p. 56).

phrase as the "Eternal Process" which motions the soul from grade to grade of experience.

MAN CREATED BY GOD IN THE SIXTH CYCLE

Man, the secret science holds, is created in the sixth cycle or round,

"When first the world began,
Young Nature thro' five cycles ran,
And in the *sixth she moulded man.*

She gave him mind, the lordliest
Proportion, and, above the rest,
Dominion in the head and breast."

The Two Voices, Stanzas VI and VII

The five previous cycles of man, according to the mystic teaching, are his experience (1) in the elemental kingdom of the astral plane, (2) in the elemental kingdom of the mental plane, (3) in the mineral kingdom, (4) in the plant kingdom, (5) in the animal kingdom. In the sixth cycle he stands as the shapen mould of mind and body.

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF MAN

Man's individuality is perfected through evolution in different conditions of matter,

"For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro' many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control
 Our being, lest we rust in ease.
 We all are changed by still degrees,
 All but the basis of the soul."

Love Thou Thy Land, lines 37-44

The "basis of the soul", the fragment of divinity in him, does not change. His body and brain emerge from lower lives which are forgotten as men in trance forget:

" 'Or if thro' lower lives I came—
 Tho' all experience past became
 Consolidate in mind and frame—

'I might forget my weaker lot;
 For is not our first year forgot?
 The haunts of memory echo not.' "

The Two Voices, lines 364, etc.

Mystic gleams, reminiscences of the past, give hint of man's previous lives,

" 'Moreover, something is or seems,
 That touches me with mystic gleams,
 Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

'Of something felt, like something here;
 Of something done, I know not where;
 Such as no language may declare.' "

The Two Voices, lines 379-387

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN

In the symbolic sculpture of the *Idylls*, "four zones" of evolution are described. First is early man, second man with dominion over beasts, and third the perfect

man or Adept. In the fourth zone the superman becomes one with the angels. Men are growing wings”:

“And *four great* zones of sculpture, set betwixt
 With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
 And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
 And in the second men are slaying beasts,
 And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
 And on the fourth are men with growing wings.”

The Holy Grail, lines 233-238

CYCLES IN NATURE

Phantoms of “other forms of rule”, the Lords of Karma, invisibly arrange the gradations of the cycles,

“A slow-develop’d strength awaits
 Completion in a painful school;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
 New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,
 But *vague in vapour*, hard to mark;
 And round them sea and air are dark
 With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join’d
 Is bodied forth the second whole.
 Regard gradation.”

Love Thou Thy Land, lines 57-67

All nature follows the cyclic law, slipping from state to state,

“ ‘It may be that *no life is found*,
 Which only to one engine bound
 Falls off, *but cycles always round*.

'As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping thro' from state to state.

'As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again.' "

The Two Voices, lines 346-354

The whole inanimate kingdom passes into the unseen,

"Not raised for ever and ever,
But when their cycle is o'er,
The valley, the voice, the peak, the star
Pass, and are found no more."

The Voice and the Peak, Stanza VII

THE CYCLES IN "IN MEMORIAM"

In Memoriam, Tennyson's maturest work, has the same cyclic flow. The individual soul is formed on the "doubtful shore". The babe gathers slowly the sense of "I and thee". Leaving the ruined chrysalis of earth, it does not lose its identity in the general soul. Its eternal form divides it from the Eternal Self,

"That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:

Eternal form shall still divide

The eternal soul from all beside;

And I shall know him when we meet."

In Memoriam, Stanza XLVII, lines 1-8

Motioned into the last plane, "the sharpest height",
the individual unites with the Cosmic Spirit,

"He seeks at least,
Upon the last and *sharpest height*,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
Farewell! *We lose ourselves in light.*"

In Memoriam, Stanza LXVII, lines 12-16

In the higher mental plane, the plane of light, individual souls bid farewell to the life of form and pass into the world of the General Soul. Yet they retain their individuality.

INDIVIDUALITY INTACT IN THE DIVINE UNION

According to mysticism, individuality continues uninjured in the divine union. As the Seer says:

"Yet in all this strange advance there is no loss of the sense of individuality, even though there is an utter loss of the sense of separateness."*

END OF THE CYCLES

The end is the "Aeonian Evolution" of life through all the Spheres declared by the voices of the dead,

"The veil
Is rending, and the Voices of the day
Are heard across the Voices of the dark.
No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for man,
But thro' the Will of One who knows and
rules—

* C. W. Leadbeater, *The Master and the Path*, p. 290.

*Aeonian Evolution, swift or slow,
Thro' all the Spheres—an ever opening height,
An ever lessening earth."*

The Ring, lines 26-34

CRYSTAL-GAZING

In *The Lover's Tale* is an example of clairvoyance through crystal-gazing. A picture, pencilled in their first initiation of love, the bond and seal of early friendship, when looked upon after their severance in later years, stirs with psychic life,

"We gazed on it together
In mute and glad remembrance, and each heart
Grew closer to the other, and the eye
Was riveted and charm-bound, gazing like
The Indian on a still-eyed snake . . .
. . . when all at once
That painted vessel, *as with inner life*,
Began to heave upon that painted sea;
An earthquake, my loud heart-beats, made the
ground
Reel under us, and all at once, soul, life
And breath and motion, past and flow'd away
To those unreal billows."

The Lover's Tale, Part II, lines 182-193

THE "NAMELESS"

The Nameless broods in the soul's centre,
"If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt
dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice."

The Ancient Sage, lines 31-34

It lurks in the Eternal Now,

“But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour;
Tho’ we, thin minds, who creep from thought
to thought,
Break into ‘Thens’ and ‘Whens’ *the Eternal Now*:
This double seeming of the single world.”

The Ancient Sage, lines 102-105

TENNYSON’S CLOSE

Crossing the Bar is Tennyson’s close. A rich sunset, soft twilight, a quick farewell; and the cyclic tide, with one swift slumberous sweep, bears him to the Boundless.

CHAPTER VI

R. BROWNING: THE OUT-SOUL

*"Look forth o'er the years!
Thou hast done with the eyes for the actual,
begin with the seer's!"*

R. Browning, *Saul*, Stanza XIII

THE OUT-SOUL

The Out-Soul is Browning's phrase for the Over-Soul or Monad of mysticism. This is the real Self of man. It is not to be confused with the soul-bodies. It takes for purposes of experience successive forms of the flesh. The Spiritual Self acts with the physical body, feels with the astral body, thinks with the mental body. It uses the bodies just as the engine-driver uses the engine. The Self of man is not the same as the body, as the engine-driver is not the same as the engine.

PLANE AND WORK OF THE OUT-SOUL

The Over-Soul in its plane—the plane of the Monad—is linked with the Cosmic Spirit. Its experience is as the experience of God. It never descends from its sphere. It controls the bodies in all the planes as the moon, from distance, controls the tides. It rests ever in the bosom of the Eternal; detached from the vexations of life. But in order that it may evolve through several forms of experience, it binds itself in veils of matter. It accumulates experience, but does not participate in the changes of the bodies or the changes of the planes.

THE OUT-SOUL IN BROWNING

I shall trace from *Pauline* to *Asolando* Browning's Out-Soul, the bodies which it manipulates, and the spheres through which it travels.

THE OUT-SOUL DISTINGUISHED FROM THE BODIES

The Out-Soul is expressly distinguished from its bodies:

"I found, one must abate
One's scorn of the *soul's casing, distinct from the
soul's self—*
Which is the centre-drop."

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza CII, lines 1-3

How this "simple dew", the Monadic essence of the Spiritual Self, got congealed; how it acquired the "hard polished cold crystal environment of matter"; how it produced its "solid surface-shield", is beyond guess or grasp,

"Though how it got congealed
I shall not give a guess, nor how, *by power occult*
The solid surface-shield was outcome and result
Of simple dew at work to save itself amid
The unwatery force around."

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza CII, lines 11-15

The Over-Soul is "the nude form" which wears the chequered robes of the bodies,

"So, through sham
And outside, I arrive at inmost real, probe
And prove how the *nude form obtained the
chequered robe.*"

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza CIII, lines 11-1

The lower self is individual personal living for itself and by itself. The Out-Soul, in the "niche of mistiest heaven", lies as a lodestar with power to attract:

"Each soul lives, longs and works
An other than itself,—in whatsoe'er the niche
 Of mistiest heaven it hide."

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza LIX, lines 20-23

The Out-Soul possesses a clear conscious state, a Self distinct—always distinct—from the manifestations of the physical personality. It is connected with the centre of all existence—the Being of God,

"I am made up of an intensesst life,
 Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
 From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;
 And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all:
 But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,
 Existing as a centre to all things—

This is myself."

Pauline, vol. i, lines 268, etc.

The Out-Soul dwells in the bosom of God. It never moves from His centre. It is the spectator of the drama of life,

"For in God's breast, my own abode,
 Those shoals of dazzling glory, past,
 I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
 God smiles as he has always smiled."

J. Agricola in Meditation, lines 8-12

The Monad lies where it has always lain. It never comes down from its sphere. As the mystics say:

“Yet the phrase that the Monads go forth is somewhat inaccurate; that they shine forth, send out their rays of life, would be truer. For they remain ever ‘in the bosom of the Father’, while their life-rays stream out into the ocean of matter, and therein appropriate the materials needed for the energizing of the universe.”*

PALMA'S OUT-SOUL

In *Sordello*, Palma, the lady of the piece, contacts by the expansion of the “force within” her Out-Soul,

“In dream was Palma subjected
To some *outsoul*, . . .

. . . ‘How dared I let expand the force
‘Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
‘It grew for, should direct it?’ ”

Sordello, vol. i, Bk. III, lines 325-330

SORDELLO'S OUT-SOUL

Sordello passing from many moods in the trance-state touches the rim of the Over-Soul:

“The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
Power to uplift his power,—such moon's control
Over such sea-depths.”

Sordello, vol. i, Bk. VI, lines 37, etc.

* Mrs. Besant, *A Study in Consciousness*, p. 59.

He casts himself beyond the "secondary states of his soul's essence", beyond the lower planes, in "the mid-deep yearnings" of the Monadic region, revealed in trance:

"And, as in moments when the past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere *secondary states*
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these."

Sordello, vol. i, Bk. VI, lines 464-469

The closing truth is found when the lower soul-bodies
—"the flesh half"—break-up,

"So seemed *Sordello's* closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break-up; the sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, *but not of force to bind Eternity.*"

Sordello, vol. i, Bk. VI, lines 473-481

THE OUT-SOUL IN THE "RING AND THE BOOK"

In *The Ring and the Book*, the lower Self projects
a surplusage of Soul,

"Man, bounded, yearning to be free,
May so project *his surplusage of soul*
In search of body, so add self to self
By owning what lay ownerless before,—
So find, so fill full, so appropriate forms."

The Ring and the Book, vol. i, Bk. I, lines 722-726

Not only by insight but by *out sight*—the Over-Soul may be perceived,

“Yet by a special gift, an art of arts,
More insight and more out-sight and much more
Will to use both of these than boast my mates,
I can detach from me, commission forth
Half of my soul.”

The Ring and the Book, vol. ii, Bk. I, lines 746-750

THE OUT-SOUL IN “PAULINE”

In *Pauline*, the Out-Soul is the One “a pale form” dim to sight,

“Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed!
I have denied thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate power,
And burn to see thy calm pure truths out-flash
The brightest gleams of earth’s philosophy?”

Pauline, vol. i, lines 693-698

In mysticism the concealed Self is also spoken of as the One,

“Yet is the Monad very near to us, our Self, the very root of our being, the innermost source of our life, the One reality . . . this hidden Self it is which is called the Monad being verily the One.”

THE BODIES OF THE OUT-SOUL

The Out-Soul is encased in several forms of flesh. Three of these are described in the poem *A Death in the Desert*. First at the lowest visible level is the gross

body on the earth plane, attuned to the earth vibration, and "ends the man downward",

*"Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does.
And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward."*

A Death in the Desert, vol. i, lines 84-88

The first soul with its "bodily parts" is the physical man. It acts on the physical plane. Interpenetrating it in subtler matter, "growing and grown into", is the next soul which "feels, thinks, wills and knows". This is the astral body in which dwells the masked personality of man,

*"But, tending upward for advice,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what knows."*

A Death in the Desert, vol. i, lines 88-92

Lying in still rarer matter, is the last soul which uses both the lower bodies and which contains man's Self or Ego. This is the mental body of mysticism,

*"Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
And leans upon the former, makes it play,
As that played off the first: and, tending up,*

*Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls,
one man.”**

A Death in the Desert, vol. i, lines 93-103

Man's constitution in mysticism is complex. He is one person controlling three bodies—the physical, astral and mental, each of which penetrates the other in finer states of substance. Beyond these bodies, tending upwards still, upheld by God, in the over-world, is the Out-Soul which “ends the man upwards”. “*That dread point of intercourse*” between God and man is the Monadic plane where the Out-Soul and the universal Spirit meet.

SOUL-BODIES IN BROWNING

The several bodies are called the successive tenements of the flesh. Some of these are lost, some transformed, all shed in the last plane of Spirit,

“Yes, I lodged
In those *successive tenements*; perchance
Taste yet the straitness of them while I stretch
Limb and enjoy new liberty the more.
And some abodes are lost or ruinous;
Some, patched-up and pieced-out, and so trans-
formed
They still accommodate the traveller
His day of lifetime.”

Saviour of Society, vol. ii, lines 1041-1048

* “The self has three aspects: Knowing, willing, and energizing; from these arise severally thoughts, desires, and action” (A. Powell, *The Mental Body*, p. 15).

The soul is not vaporous mist but a corporeal form.
Alcestis's soul is a body, shadowy to sight, passing to
the twilight of the astral plane,

“Dead, *the dimmed body*, bright *Alkestis' soul*
Had penetrated through the populace
Of ghosts, was got to Kore.”

Balaustion's Adventure, vol. i

THE BODILESS STATE

Man's last state is the life of disembodied Spirit,

“Since, distinct above
Man's wickedness and folly, flies the wind
And floats the cloud, free transport for our soul
Out of its fleshly durance dim and low,—
Since *disembodied soul* anticipates
(Thought-borne as now, in rapturous unrestraint)
Above all crowding, crystal silentness,
Above all noise, a silver solitude.”

Aristophanes' Apology, vol. i, lines 40-47

There the soul-pinions are not cumbered by body:

“Fretless and free,
Soul, clap thy pinion!
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee!

Wander at will,
Day after day,—
Wander away,
Wandering still—

Soul that canst soar!
 Body may slumber:
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more."

La Saisiaz, vol. ii, Stanzas I and II

THE VITAL FIRE OF THE BODIES

The vital fire, called Prana in mysticism, circulates through the physical system. It passes over hair, shoulder and head,

"Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving
 Told you no single drop they were leaving,
 —Life, that filling her, passed redundant
 Into her very hair, back swerving
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant."

The Flight of the Duchess, vol. i, Stanza XV

It streams out of the pilgrim as a mass of "too-much glory":

"I felt my brain
 Glutted with the glory, blazing
 Throughout its whole mass, over and under,
 Until at length it burst asunder,
 And out of it bodily there streamed
The too-much glory, as it seemed
Passing from out me to the ground,
 Then palely serpentine round
 Into the dark with mazy error."

Christmas Eve, vol. i, Stanza VII

The psychic current passes from finger to finger. It is

“The electric snap and spark
Which prove, *when finger finds out finger in the dark*
O’ the world, there’s fire and life and truth there,
link but hands
And pass the secret on.”

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza XCI, lines 15-19*

THE AURA

The aura, as we have seen in the poetry of Shelley, surrounds the soul-bodies. Whether that “belt of glints and gleams” be an atmosphere or actual parts of the soul, is doubtful. The poet guesses that it passes into the soul as wine into the body,

“Whether *an aura gird the soul*, wherein it seems
To float and move, a belt of all the glints and gleams
It struck from out that world, . . .
. . . or whether these not so much surround,
As pass into the Soul itself, add worth to worth,
As wine enriches blood.”

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza LIV, lines 3-8

THE AURA IN MYSTICISM

The aura is an extension of the different soul-bodies. Of this Mrs. Besant speaks as follows in *Man and His Bodies*:

“*This separation of the ‘aura’ from the man, as though it were something different from himself, is misleading, although very natural from the point of view of observation. The ‘aura’ is the cloud round the body, in ordinary parlance; really, the man lives on the various*

* In séances, hands are linked in the dark to permit the flow of the magnetic current from person to person.

planes in such garments as befit each, and all these garments or bodies interpenetrate each other; the lowest and smallest of these is called 'the body', and the mixed substances of the other garments are called the aura when they extend beyond that body. The kamic aura, then, is merely such part of the kamic body as extends beyond the physical."*

SOUL-MEMORIES

The Ego arrives on the earth-plane with seeming suddenness. In fact it has lived before,

"Ages past the soul existed
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages."

Cristina, vol. i, Stanza V, lines 3-5

In the wells of our being lurk distant reminiscences,

"Within my deepest sentient self the knowledge
hides.

Aspiration, reminiscences, plausibilities of trust."

La Saisiaz, vol. ii, Stanza XVI, lines 27-28

Antenatal memories sleep in the gross sense,

"The antenatal prime experience—what know I?—
The initiatory love preparing us to die—
Such were a crowd to count, a sight to see, a prize
To turn to profit, were but fleshly ears and eyes
Able to cope with those o' the spirit!"

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza LXXXIX

* Dr. Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, p. 44.

PSYCHIC REVIEW AT DEATH

At the moment of death, the departing soul reviews its past. The dying Bishop of St. Praxed recollects "the life lived before this life and this life too",

"And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests."

The Bishop of St. Praxed, vol. i, lines 89-92

Before Paracelsus, at his closing breath, drift the events of his earthly drama,

"Even so my varied life
Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, these past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away."

Paracelsus, vol. i, lines 505-511

His True Self is the careless spectator of action watching for the new perceptions of the after-life,

"And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself,
A careless looker-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; *new perceptions* must
Be born in me before I plunge therein."

Paracelsus, vol. i, lines 512-519*

* According to mysticism, the soul reviews its past at each death in each plane. On the physical death it reviews its physical life. On the astral death it reviews its astral life; and so forth. The last review is in the sixth or monadic plane. There all its past appears as a whole.

THE MYSTIC TEACHING

Compare with this the mystic teaching:

“At the actual moment of death . . . a man sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him in its minutest detail . . . he reads his life, *remaining as a spectator*, looking down upon the arena he is quitting.”*

THE HEAVEN WORLD

The past is recollected, examined and classified at each transition from plane to plane. At the higher mental level, known as Devachanic or heaven-world, the Ego in the causal body gathers into one synoptic view all its lives. “During the devachanic period the Ego reviews his store of experiences . . . separating and classifying them.”† The “outline of the whole” takes shape. The entire history in its full significance confronts the Ego,

“Ponder on the *entire past*
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh with the faded hues,
And the *outline of the whole*

.
Grandly fronts for once thy soul.”

The Flight of the Duchess, vol. i, Stanza XV

In the heaven-world, the Ego has fulfilment of all its desires. “Everything thought upon earth is thus utilized in Devachan; every aspiration is worked up

* A. Powell, *The Astral Body*, p. 107.

† A. Powell, *The Mental Body*, p. 179.

into power; all frustrated efforts become faculties and abilities . . . nothing is ever lost, even though in the physical world it may seem that much has missed its aim. . . . All that a man thinks is at once reproduced in form, out of the rare matter of mind-stuff.”*

The heaven-world is described in the well-known lines of Abt Vogler:

“There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall
live as before;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with evil for so much
good more;
On earth the broken arc; in heaven, a perfect round
All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good
shall exist;
Not its semblance but itself.”

Abt Vogler, Stanzas IX and X

SPHERES AS CONDITIONS OF BEING

The seven spheres of spiritual evolution are not in the strict sense spheres but conditions of consciousness,

“A sphere is but a sphere;
Small, great, are merely terms we bandy here,
Since to the Spirit’s absoluteness all
Are like. Now of the present sphere we call
Life, are *conditions*.”

Sordello, vol. i, Bk. VI, lines 510–514

The planes are similarly defined in mysticism,

“A plane is merely a *condition*, a stage, a state.”†

* A. Powell, *The Mental Body*, p. 179.

† Mrs. Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, p. 7.

All the spheres, from the first visible height till the
last hid in the air's remote recess, are full of life.
There is no real emptiness,

“The vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.”

Cleon, vol. i, line 110

Life is an “unlimited series” of states differing only
in the scale, only in the rarity of material conditions,

“When this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul *in another state*,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's con-
geries
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.”

Old Pictures in Florence, vol. i, Stanza XXI

EVOLUTION THROUGH THE SPHERES

The Spirit of man evolves through all the spheres:

“Man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being—
In the *evolution of successive spheres*—
BEFORE its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Halfway into the next still on and off.”

Bishop Blougram's Apology, vol. i, lines 784-793

It is in full flight through unending gyrations of life,

'Still my spirit held an upward flight,
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
More and more gorgeous.'

Sordello, vol. i, lines 806-809

MAN AS CROWN OF THE EARTH-PLANE

The crown of the earth-sphere is Man,

"And God renews
His ancient rupture. Thus he dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the *completion of this sphere
Of life.*"

Paracelsus, vol. i, Part V, lines 553-558

"Hints and previsions" of his faculties are found in the animal nature, and from it evolves his superior race,

"Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last."

Paracelsus, vol. i, Part V, lines 579-584

His present is a "trembling beauty" standing in relief against the shade of his past brute life. His future is the flight of his spiritualized personality through the successive zones,

"For the present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor yet on thee

Shall burst the future, as *successive zones*
 Of several wonder open on some spirit
 Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven."

Paracelsus, vol. i, Part V, lines 702-708

When his cycle is ended, one scheme of Being wound
 up, the meaning of the life-movement becomes clear.
 Evolution, the eternal law, is as the "supplementary
 reflux of light", the ebbing and the flowing of God's
 power, from the lower into the higher, from the higher
 into the lower, till the circle be complete,

"So far the seal
 Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up: and from the grand result
 A supplementary reflux of light,
 Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
 Each back step in the circle."

Paracelsus, vol. i, Part V, lines 584-589

EVOLUTION OF THE OUT-SOUL

Man's Out-Soul likewise evolves. Its "nucleus"
 "the centre-drop" of Spirit amasses the scintillations
 of experience,

"And to this the spirits tend
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,
 Amass the scintillations, make one star

.

invest

Their souls with alien glory, some one day
 Whene'er *the nucleus, gathering shape alway*,
 Round to the perfect circle."

Sordella, vol. i, Bk. VI, lines 67-75

The lower soul, first conscious only of the shows of sense, expands and becomes aware of the outer-soul; and the outer-soul, still individual, merges into the life of God,

“The individual soul works through the shows of sense,
 (Which, ever proving false, still promise to be true)
 Up to an outer-soul as individual too;
 And, through the fleeting, lives to die into the fixed,
 And reach at length ‘God, man, or both together
 mixed’,
 Transparent through the flesh, by parts which prove
 a whole,
 By hints which make the soul discernible.”

Fifine at the Fair, vol. ii, Stanza CXXIV

THE END

The Out-Soul has evolved. Thus “justifiably golden” rounds Browning’s labour from *Pauline* to *Asolando*,

“Do I ring the changes right?
 Deformed, transformed, reformed, informed, con-
 formed.”

The Ring and the Book, Bk. XI, line 2062, etc.

CHAPTER VII

A. C. SWINBURNE: BEYOND THE PLANES

"I am a soul outside of death and birth."

A. C. Swinburne, *Tiresias*, Stanza XI

SWINBURNE'S poetry chimes itself out of the life-rhythm. The wheels of birth and death are transcended. Man "bondless and bare", disentranced of the sense-life, enters the haven of Spirit. The edge of Swinburne's perception is of the finest point. Its flight is for the outer sky where Spirit fully vital, fully aware, works without the hindrances of the flesh.

DIVISION OF THE CHAPTER

I shall trace Swinburne's intuitions of the soul-bodies and the soul-planes through his collected poetical works published by the Heinemann Press.

BIRTH OF THE SOUL-BODIES

The poetic eye senses the birth and becoming of the vehicles of man:

"In the soul within the sense began

The manlike passion of a godlike man,

And in the sense within the soul again

Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men."

Thalassius, vol. i, Stanza VI

Mark man's three subtle states, each lying within the other in rarer grades of matter. First is the state of the

sense-body. Inside it, as the "Soul within the Sense", is the astral body which holds his passion or emotional nature. Within the enclosure of still finer substance, "in the sense and within the soul", is the mental body which contains his thoughts. Each body is condition of consciousness—the consciousness of the sense-life, the emotional-life, or the thought-life. Man acts with the physical body, feels with the feeling-body, knows with the mental-body. Swinburne intuits the same three vestures of Spirit—the dense, astral and mental—as Browning does in his poem *A Death in the Desert*.

COMPOSITION OF THE BODIES

How are the bodies made? Fire, iron and water are the constituents of the dense body,

"Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,

Child, underground?

Fire that impassioned thee,

Iron that bound,

Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?"

Hertha, vol. i, Stanza IX

The Passion body is formed of radiant matter,

"And alway through new act and passion new

Shines the *divine same body* and beauty through,

The body spiritual of fire and light

That is to worldly noon as noon to night."

Tristram and Iseult, vol. ii, lines 7-10

Its flesh is fine as moonbeams filled with ardour of colours,

“The very veil of her bright flesh was made
As of light woven and moonbeam-coloured shade
More fine than moonbeams.”

The Sailing of the Swallow, Part I, lines 23-25

VITAL FIRES OF THE BODIES

The vital fires sweep through the bodies,

“He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair
Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air
Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung
To soul behind it as with serpent’s tongue,
Forked like the loveliest lightnings.”

Thalassius, vol. i, Stanza X, lines 25, etc.

The life-force is felt not only in the blood, eyes and hair of the dense body, but also in the astral body or “soul behind it”.

THE CHAKRAS IN MYSTICISM

The primary energy flows through seven specific centres into the body—from the top of the head, the space between the brows, the throat, heart, navel, spleen and spine. These spokes of fire are called Chakras and are often compared to petals of the lotus-flower,

“The chakras or force-centres are points of connection at which energy flows from one vehicle or body of a man to another. . . . By means of these spokes the force seems to bind the astral and etheric bodies together as though with grappling-hooks.”*

* C. W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras*, pp. 2, 5.

CHAKRAS IN SWINBURNE'S POETRY

The crown-chakra, a splendour of imminent light,
shines on man's head,

“As the soul on the lips of the dead
Stands poising her wings for flight,
A bird scarce quit of her prison,
But fair without form or flesh,
So stands over each man's head
A splendour of imminent light.”

The Insurrection in Candia, Ant. 3, vol. i, lines 1-6

Of all the beams which cover his person this crown-illumination, “the compact confluence of aureoles”, is the brightest and best,

“*A light of many lights about thine head,*
Lights manifold and one,
Stars molten in a sun,
A sun of divers beams incorporated,
Compact of confluent aureoles, each more fair
Than man, save only at highest of man, may wear.”

Birthday Ode, vol. i, Strophe I, lines 17-22

The brow-Chakra, less brilliant, hovers as a starry sign on the brow,

“Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the
mountains and thou?”

Hertha, vol. i, Stanza XII

THE ETHERIC DOUBLE

The etheric double is a system of nerves, situated between the physical and the astral body, which passes the ethereal force to the physical man. It is an exact duplicate of the dense body and perishes shortly after death. In the *Memorial Verses* it is compared and contrasted with the Spirit of man,

“Not that *grey ghost* whose life is empty and bare
 And his limbs moulded out of mortal air,
 A cloud of change that shifts into a shower
 And dies and leaves no light for time to wear:

But a god clothed with his own joy and power,
 A god re-risen out of his mortal hour
 Immortal, king and lord of time and space,
 With eyes that look on them as from a tower.”

Memorial Verses, vol. i, Stanzas XII and XIII

The etheric double or grey ghost is moulded of mortal air. It dissolves into etheric matter and “leaves no light of time to wear”. The Ego or Spirit in contradistinction is “a God re-risen” from the death hour; the lord of the new dimensions of time and space.

LIFE OF THE ETHERIC DOUBLE

The etheric doubles of the deceased float as lifeless forms about the churchyard and are often mistaken as materialization of spirits. Swinburne properly calls them “men and no men”, “forms without forms” because they are the discarded bodies of the dead possessing little or no consciousness,

Through the dim door of sleep that seem to press,
 Forms without form, a piteous people and blind,
 Men and no men, whose lamentable kind
 The shadow of death and shadow of life compel
 Through semblances of heaven and false-faced hell."

Tristram of Lyonesse, vol. ii, lines 262-266

At "the dim door of sleep", the gateway of the astral plane, gather these unconscious remnants, "the leavings of life, the superflux of death",

"Shapes that wax pale and shift in swift strange wise,
 Void faces with unspeculative eyes,
 Dim things that gaze and glare, dead mouths that
 move,
 Featureless heads discrowned of hate and love,
 Mockeries and masks of motion and mute breath,
 Leavings of life, the superflux of death."

Tristram of Lyonesse, vol. ii, lines 269, etc.

Perchance they live and move in subtle essence,

"Or who can say with what more *subtle sense*
 Their subtler natures taste in *air less dense*
 A life less thick and palpable than ours,
 Warmed with faint fires and sweetened with dead
 flowers,
 And measured by low music?"

Tristram of Lyonesse, vol. ii, lines 277-281

THE OUT-SOUL IN SWINBURNE

Spirit, or what Browning calls the Out-Soul, must not be confused with the bodily vestures or the etheric double. Spirit is the sensible Operator, the Monad which uses the vehicles of travel. Sorrow belongs not

to it. It lies within the sense-body, "a soul behind the soul". It retains every memory of action without participation in the act,

"We retain
A memory mastering pleasure and all pain,
A spirit within the sense of ear and eye,
A soul behind the soul, that seeks and sins
And makes our life move only with its wings."

On the Cliffs, vol. i, Stanza XV, lines 5-9

THE SEVENTH PLANE

In *An Autumn Vision*, the seventh plane is sighted. There the Light of Life abides, there past, present and future are the Eternal Now, there God's live surge of thought sways the out-going and the incoming of souls in ever fresh incarnations:

"Up from inmost memory's dwelling
Where the light of life abides,
Where the past finds tongue, foretelling
Time that comes and grace that guides,
Power that saves and sways, compelling
Souls that ebb and flow like tides,
Shone or seemed to shine and swim
Through the cloud-surf great and grim,
Thought's live surge, the soul of him
By whose light the sun looks dim."

An Autumn Vision, vol. ii, Part V, lines 11-20

ACTION IN THE DIVINE PLANE

All things, born or unborn, are conceived in the "obscurest height" of the archetypal plane,

“I have seen this, who live where men are not,
 In the high starless air of fruitful night
 On that serenest and obscurest height
Where dead and unborn things are one in thought
 And whence the live unconquerable springs
 Feed full of force the torrents of new things.”

Tiresias, vol. i, Part I, Stanza XXVII

In that outer heaven the World-Soul plans “the forms
 and similitudes”, “the divine contraries”, of life,

“In the outer world that was before this earth,
 That was before all shape or space was born,
 Before the blind first hour of time had birth,
 Before night knew the moonlight or the morn;

Yea, before any world had any light,
 Or anything called God or man drew breath,
 Slowly the strong sides of the heaving night
 Moved, and brought forth the strength of life
 and death.”

Genesis, vol. i, Stanzas I and II

Is there change in the God-Sphere? Perchance energy
 works there as repose,

“Is there change in the secret skies,
 In the sacred places that see
 The divine beginning of things,
 The weft of the web of the world?”

The Insurrection in Candia, vol. i, Strophe III, lines 1-4

PAST MEMORIES

The babe descends into the “dim sweet light” of

earth. Memories of past lives are wrapped around its subconscious mind,

“Babes at birth
Wear as raiment round them cast,
Keep as witness toward their past,
Tokens left of heaven.

Quenched as embers
Quenched with flakes of rain or snow
Till the last faint flame burns low,
All those lustrous memories lie
Dead with babyhood gone by.”

Olive, vol. i, Stanzas VIII and IX

The “lustrous memories” are suppressed and wake when the soul passes out of physical experience.

GOD IN MYSTICISM

God creates both the bodies and planes through three out-pourings of Power. He is called by reason of this threefold expression of force the Triple Logos. He is both separate from us and part of us, that is transcendent and immanent.

GOD IN SWINBURNE'S POETRY

God is the “Glory Triune” leaping from the highest to the lowest heaven,

“Suddenly, sheer from the heights to the depths of
the sky and the sea,
Sprang from the darkness alive as a vision of life
to be

Glory triune and transcendent of colour afar and afire,
 Arching and darkening the darkness with light as of
 dream or desire.

Heaven, in the depth of its height, shone wistful and
 wan from above."

An Autumn Vision, vol. i, Stanza IV, lines 1-5

The World-Soul holds in Himself all the planes,

"Our Master, over all our souls impends,
 Immanent; we, with heart-enkindled eyes
 Upwondering, search the music-moulded skies,
 Sphere by sweet sphere, concordant as it blends
 Light of bright sound, sound of clear light, in one,
 As all the stars found utterance through the sun."

The Garden of Cymodoce, vol. i, lines 311-316

He is the Invisible, the Immanent in all,

"Hooded and helmed with mystery, girt and shod
 With light and darkness, unapparent God."

Birthday Ode, vol. i, lines 285, etc.

God is a growth—a monotone murmur in the flower,
 the seed and the sod. Thought hears the breath of His
 breathing in life within life of things,

"Out of all lives that thought hears breathe
 Life within life inlaid,
 Was answer made.

A multitudinous monotone
 Of dust and flower and seed and stone,
 In the deep sea-rock's mid-sea sloth,
 In the live water's trembling zone,
 In all men love and loathe,

One God at growth."

On the Downs, vol. i, Stanzas XX and XXI

He is Love, and has for His body the living world
and for His Spirit the souls of all men,

“Love, that is first and last of all things made,
The light that has the living world for shade,
The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought.”

Tristram and Iseult, vol. ii, lines 1-6

His Essence, indefinable and indiscernible, is as light
motioning into consciousness a world of life,

“*Light, perfect and visible*

Godhead of God,

God indivisible,

Lifts but his rod,

And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and dark-
ness is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,

At the nod of his head

From the spaces beyond

Where the dawn hath her bed,

Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as
one risen from the dead.”

Off Shore, vol. ii, Stanzas XII and XIII

Earth, water and air, the matter of the physical plane,
are transfigured by the power of Light.

The mystics also sense the Prime Energy *as light*,

“*The Logos is seen as a point irradiating a sphere
or Matter, drawn round Him as the field of the future
universe, flashing with unimaginable splendour, true*

Mountain of Light, as Manu has it, but Light Invisible save on the spiritual planes.”*

BEYOND THE PLANES

Swinburne passes out of the planes. The dream of life is done; the labour finished,

“Love is not glad not sorry, as I deem;
 Labouring he dreams, and labours in the dream,
 Till when the spool is finished, lo I see
 His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.”

Laus Veneris, vol. i, Stanza XII

Good and evil meet. Light and darkness join,

“Till, when its flight hath past
 Time’s loftiest mark and last,
 The goal where good kills evil with a kiss,
 And Darkness in God’s sight
 Grows as his brother Light,
 And heaven and hell one heart whence all the abyss
 Throbs with love’s music.”

Birthday Ode, vol. i, lines 313-319

Out of the “eye-shot of star and sun” in the “remote throne of souls”, in the plane of Spirit, all things have rest and ease,

“Having past
 Through splendid life and death desirable
 To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,

.

. . . all things rest and thrive.”

Atalanta in Calydon, vol. ii, Althaea 30th, lines 43-51

* Mrs. Besant, *A Study in Consciousness*, p. 10.

OTHER INTUITIONS

Thoughts have form, colour and motion,

“*Thought*, clothed round with sorrow as light,
 Dark as a cloud that the moon turns bright,
 Moved, as a wind on the striving sea,
 That yearns and quickens and flags in flight,
Through forms of colour and song.”

Memorial Verses, vol. ii, Stanza X

The thought, quick or slow, moves through forms of colour; and is at different moments dim or bright. Past memory-forms are resplendent as the sun when strong; pale as the waning moon when dimly recollected; like “spectral float of fume” when confused:

“Out through the years where memories rise and set,
 Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,
 Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail
 Seen as red flame *through spectral float of fume.*”

Tristram of Lyonesse, vol. ii, lines 50, etc.

THE CLOSE

Swinburne closes the second wave of the poets of this book. There is a sameness of movement, a progression of the one musical stress, through the poetry of the second period. The psychic faculty flashes the same intuitional gleams. There is, however, a gentle advance. The subtle body of Shelley expands into the triple bodies. The astral plane becomes the “successive zones” of Spirit. Finally the Out-Soul evolves as the mainspring of action in man.

CHAPTER VIII

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE: THE WORLD-SOUL

*"Of all this world there is a Self;
And, in some region, lies
The Presence of this Self."*

L. Abercrombie, *The Fool's Adventure*

THE COSMIC SELF

All the lines and limits of the lower Self vanish in the poetry of Abercrombie. Reality, freed of its fantasies, is the imaginative play of the Cosmic Consciousness. Time and Space, matter and motion, proton and electron, are the expressions of its Fancy. Personality is the construction of its Thought. Abercrombie's poetry passes beyond the self of man. All is rending, cracking, till out of the crumbling structure of illusion steps the Cosmic Self fashioning through the poetry of its ideas Individuality in the psychic order.

MYSTIC INTUITIONS

Abercrombie carries forward the accumulated teaching of the previous intuitions. The subtle body of Shelley, the fleshless Spirit of Swinburne, colour language of the Higher Intelligences, auric lights are found once more. Abercrombie's poetry may remind us that neither the century of Romance, the age of Doubt nor the era of the machine can stand aloof from mysticism. The psychic sense is inherent in the poetic faculty itself. Its expression is not the privilege of any particular time or any particular literature.

COLLECTED POEMS

The collected edition of Abercrombie's works is published by the Oxford University Press, 1930. In this are included his Miscellaneous poems, Interludes 1908, Emblems of Love 1912, Twelve Idylls 1928, and the Plays. I shall deal firstly with the poet's perception of the subtle bodies; secondly with the disruption of the lower-Selves, and lastly with the emergence of the world-soul.

THE SUBTLE BODY IN MYSTICISM

In mysticism, as we have already seen, man's constitution appears as an intricate assemblage of parts. Within his physical frame are several other bodies in subtle substance used by the Ego as vehicles of travel.

THE SUBTLE BODIES IN THE POETRY OF ABERCROMBIE

These soul-bodies are shut by "some sleight" in our Being,

"I am not one being, but caged enmity:

There are two kinds, shut by some sleight, although
More jarring when they meet than fire and water,
To fight like spider and scorpion in my mind;
And 'tis a box so narrow they are in,

*Thrust face to face and knee to knee by the walls,
Lidded and luted down with kneaded flesh,*

How can they loose or escape from the mewed coil?"

An Escape, lines 63-70

The "two kinds of Being" caged as in a box, "thrust face to face by the walls of kneaded flesh", refer to

the two subtle bodies in different grades of matter struggling to escape from the mortal coil. Beyond them is the third principle of action—the Ego which employs the bodies and which lies in the repose of Eternity; pre-existing before the other souls were snared in the net of the bodies,

“And so *twy-spirited is my flesh. Now where
These souls began I know not*, but there’s one,
I know, that has been in Eternity
Before ’twas snared into this crafty body;
Still sorrows after the life it followed there;—
To this soul, strangely and I know not how,
The hills, and their great way of standing, gave
Heart, and *this soul has thrown the other down*;
It stands, in the midst of its captivity,
The master now; but it is still in the trap.”

An Escape, lines 71–80

The flesh is twy-spirited because it conceals two soul-bodies in subtle ether. The Out-Soul, the spark of Divinity, is one with nature, one with the hills. It overthrows the other souls because it surpasses in strength and beauty all the bodies. But the Ego still is trapped in the physical toil.

The astral body, “this limb of the otherwhere”, adjacent to and nearest the physical, is sensed in sleep,

“And right
To my dear need, *this limb of the otherwhere*,
This two nights’ dream of mine, comes, easily
Crossing the unsure dim untrodden parts
Of foreign mind as if his wont was there.”

An Escape, lines 122–126

EXPERIENCE IN THE SUBTLE BODIES

The Death of a Friar describes the experience of a dying man in the three soul-bodies. The Friar, as his eyes close in the extremity of the last stress, awakens in the full health of a *subtle body*,

“As if his flesh were all new exquisite sense
Assuming a divine experience,
Health was the thing he knew, health quick and
beating.
Fine as a mind strange radiant beauty greeting,
His subtle body knew his health, and made
Bodily joy of it.”

The Death of a Friar, lines 111-116

His “brave body”, receiving the vibrations of the new plane, lies for long in the relish of his sensations,

“And long time there,
Receiving each elate particular glee
Of his *brave body* in serene harmony,
And passionately still, he lay intense,
Not to disturb the lucid affluence
Of health along the nerves of his delight.”

The Death of a Friar, lines 122, etc.

Slowly enlarging into “ampler boundaries”, his consciousness breaks through the sense-body into the thought-body,

“*Then out of sense he broke*; no more by sense
He was aware, but his intelligence
Was now to Be, not know: *life, conscious still*
In thought and in a body incredible,
Became the beauty sense could only know.”

The Death of a Friar, lines 213-217

His mental body, "the body incredible", is made of a torrent of flashing electron-particles. His blood is radiant as light, his limbs fiery as glass and untouchable by our vivid substance,

*"His thought pure power of light,
And torrents of flashing particles icily bright
His blood, in limbs of flesh like fiery glass.
Not beyond this could vivid substance pass:
As if this speck of being, this body and mind,
In one essential energy combined
The shining din of the whole creature of light
And music of the burning world's delight."*

The Death of a Friar, lines 225-232

The "whole creature of light" refers to the appearance of man in his mental body.

Lastly the dying man passes beyond his gross subtle and mental bodies into the formless plane,*

*"Then something new and nameless: a caress
Blandishing dark and silent all the stress
Of joys intelligible, and through him sending
Blissful dissolution and an ending.
And he was free, thoughtless and bodiless,
Having no form, acknowledging no place:
A speed, a phantom speed for ever fleeing,
Speed the uttermost purity of being,
Speed the imperishable thing in things."*

The Death of a Friar, lines 233-241

* According to the mystics, in the formless plane, beyond the higher mental level, body is abandoned.

THREE BODIES OF MYSTICISM

The three bodies of mysticism are marked in this poem. First is described the sense-body, second the astral body, third the mental body, and last the formless state. *The Death of a Friar* suggests the same three subtle bodies as Browning's *Death in a Desert* and Swinburne's *Thalassius*.

THE FUSION OF LOVERS

These bodies, as we have in the poetry of Shelley and the experiments of the kilnascrene, tend in the psychic union to merge into one another. Woman's dense body is a rhythm of lines swerving and flowing into one,

"Think of the woman's body you love best:
How the beloved lines twin and merge,
Go into rhyme and differ, swerve and kiss,
Relent to hollows or like yearning pout."

Vashti, Stanza II

Man's Self is as a brittle bowl of glass shattered into pieces by her beauty,

"As a bowl of glass to shattering
Shivers at a sounding string,
The brittle glittering self of man
At beauty of Woman throbs apieces,
And seems into *Eternity spilled*
The being it contained.
Let it touch Woman and *flesh becomes*
Finer and more thrilled
Than air contrived in tune,
Lighter round the soul
Than flame is round burning."

Vashti, Part II, lines 347-357

The "spilt Eternity of Being", the quintessence of Spirit contained in the pair, is spilt when their outer-forms have merged. The gross body turns in the spiritual meeting into the flesh of the radiant body; more delicate in vibration than that of any earthly tune.

THE GENERAL DISINTEGRATION

The ultimate step is the disintegration of the bodies, disintegration of the separate self, disintegration of the world of appearance. Out of this general dissolution is revealed the face of the World-Soul.

BREAKING UP OF THE BODIES

In the poem *Soul and Body*, spirit and flesh part. The Body says,

"Art thou for breaking faith, after these years,
 These many married years
 Wherein we have ourselves so well delighted?"

.

Thou wilt miss the wonder I have made for thee
 Of this dear world with my fashioning senses,
 The blue, the fragrance, the singing, and the green."

Soul and Body, lines 1, etc.

The Soul also is finding that the life of the senses is but a preparatory experience,

"Dear Body, my loved friend, poor thanks have I
 For all this service. As if fires had made me clean,
I come out of thy experience,
 Thy blue, thy fragrance, thy singing, and thy green,
 Passions of love, and most, that holy fear:

Well hast thou done to me with every sense.
 But there's for me a fiercer kind
 Of joy, *that feels not, knows not, deaf and blind:*
 And these but led to it, that we did try
 When we were person, thou and I."

Soul and Body, lines 40-49

The True Man, the Individuality behind the vehicles, shakes himself free of the "writen cordage", the rough matter, of the bodies,*

"I step
 Out of the *writen cordage* I have fought,
 The struggling of the world I freed my limbs from,
 Thrown, see, at my feet, the foolish yarns.
 I could have sworn they lived, and had within them
 Striving, that *made their bodies thicken* and shrug
 And roughen scales to rasp my skin, and hold
 Against my labouring tight."

An Escape, lines 421-428

BREAKING UP OF THE SELF

The Self of man is also in slow dissolution. It is the gathering of matter into a whirlpool of a momentary fixity,

"Behold, the world and all the beings in it
 A multitude of waves upon a sea.
 But as a chance of flows and currents often
 Seizes the watery substance into whirl,
 And in the sea doth separately exist
 That whirl, so is the kind of man in the world.
 Or scatter a pool of quicksilver and see
 How easily the drops are one again."

Peregrinus, lines 234-241

* "The foolish yarns" are the soul-bodies which thicken down to the rough scales of the physical body.

His "gathered perplexity of substance" seeks to transcend the Lower Self,

"O if you but knew how I
Am looking to be taken out of me,
Out of the toil of Self."

An Escape, lines 480-482

There is nothing but demands exit from the little self-demands to be known as the disembodied fire of life without shape or form,

"And there is
Nothing that is not waiting for a chance
Out of duty to slip, and give way madly
To the old desire it has in it of joy,
Standing up in a flame and *telling aloud*
That it is fire and no more a shape."

Blind, lines 254-259

The True Self escapes beyond the rim of Time, Space and consciousness,

"I was exalted above surety
And out of time did fall

.

I stood outside the burning rims of place,
Outside that corner, consciousness."

The Trance, lines 21-22 and 26-27

DISRUPTION OF THE UNIVERSE

The Universe itself discards its veil of matter, speed and force,

“And the great sides of the world flinch and crack open,
 Spilling my glory out of its splitten hidings:
I now put off the nature of the world.
 For long enough have I been matter, speed
 And *business of forces, place and time,*
The roomy play of motes through the wide stress
Of fine tense ether, building minds and worlds.
 But suddenly the whole kind of things appears
 Like scale upon the molten Real, soon
 Riving apieces, running, all unfixt,
 Out of dimension into God. And this
 Eternity, scattered with starry troubles,
 Becomes a firth of glory.”

The New God, lines 19-31

The subtle planes, the “play of motes through the wide stress of fine tense ether”, vanish as scales upon the Real. The separate life of things, the “riven pieces” running all unfixed from their several centres, blend into the oneness of God.

Beneath the unreal lurks the Cosmic Self,

“I know that all
 Feel that the Self is ware of them—Enough;
 The Self under the world is real, the world
 Is therefore real in it.”

The Fool's Adventure, Part III, lines 138-141

The World-Soul is a centre in which all things move,

“Of all this world there is a Self;
And, in some region of existence, lies
The Presence of this Self. . . .
 It may be, we are close to the wheel's rim here,

Touching the hooping tire of forged law,
And things seem separate; but all, like spokes,
 Are towards the nave, and fixt in it at root,
 The Self of the World."

The Fool's Adventure, Part I, lines 113-115 and 119-123

The World-Soul has no shape or size which the senses
 can conceive,

"Thou canst not understand my being.
 My shape and the dimensions it inhabits
 Are nought thy senses take, nor yet thy main
 Intelligence."

The Fool's Adventure, Part IV, lines 7-10

It is the unchanging energy which remains constant
 in the perishing forms of the illusory world,

"I am the rapture of the measureless force
 For ever passing into and beyond
 The measured form of the world. The form abides;
 But wavering, inconstant, variable:
 Even as on the surface of a stream
 The whorl of an eddy shifts and slides and totters,
 And yet the whorl remains. But like the water
 Incessantly supplied, continual haste
 Pouring through the frail round of the eddy,
 Eternally impetuous is the force
 Narrowed into the world and thence escaping."

The Olympians, lines 431-441

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

It is always the thought of the Divine Imagination
 which makes the different levels of matter,

“*My thought*

Moved in its brooding, and its movement stirred
A ripple in the quiet of the waters
Whereunder my thought's Sabbath is moored deep,—
The region of the happening of my Will.”

The Fool's Adventure, Part II, lines 166-170

Thought travels from the Divine Plane, “the region of the happening of my will”, as a viewless ripple of vibration. It touches the upper calm—the upper plane,

“And when my act, this ripple's viewless travel,
In its upheaval *reacht the upper calm*
Laid on the mere, whose waters are my Will,
Whose surface is Appearance and broad Place,
Its breaking whirls became a journeying wave,
That at the last became a gathered sea,
A pile of the waters in one tide.”

The Fool's Adventure, Part II, lines 171-177

THE COSMIC PRESENCE BEYOND APPEARANCE

“The curdle of worlds loosed”, are all manifestations of the imagining Mind,

“Then is a curdle of worlds loosed again
And is abroad in the great deep again.
I mean the *soul, that feeds on many dooms*
And waits now for this world; there is allowed
Nor part, nor kind, nor shape, in space or time,
Therein, nor law; *but these come out of it.*
Over its own expressions, heavens and stars,
Fires and lightnings, life, thought, sin and pain.”

The Fool's Adventure, Part III, lines 96-103*

* The “many dooms” of the soul are its several deaths in casting off its bodies in the several planes. The “doom” which the soul waits for in this world is the present death.

The Cosmic Presence lies beyond the appearance. Yet every discrete Self is linked with it by fine nerves,

“Each gathered crowd of things, and of Its presence
Deeply aware, by fine unthinkable nerves
Are tied to it, and have it for a self.”

The Fool's Adventure, Part III, lines 107–109

THE MOMENT ETERNAL

Finally we are out of body form and life into the Moment Eternal where experience is “the one calm personal point of knowledge”,

“Out of this earth of appetite desiring,
Beauty pretending, fantasy forging,
Take me, and give me reality again:
Once more the endless *unmoved moment*
Of pure reality, a spirit's experience
Perfectly circular, icily secure:
The infinite of all things for ever present
In *one calm personal point of knowledge.*”

Asmodeus in Egypt, lines 288–296

MISCELLANEOUS INTUITIONS

I shall conclude with Abercrombie's miscellaneous intuitions.

COLOUR-THINKING IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Thinking in colour is a rare, but not unknown, phenomenon in modern psychology. The power to think in colour is called psycho-chrom-aesthesia. The process is described by Dr. Scarff,

“The colour-thinker is always conscious of a par-

ticular colour (red, green, violet, orange, purple, etc.) being associated with a particular word, and upon this word being addressed to him the colour predominates with such intensity that the word becomes a negligible factor. For example, if I were to say to a colour-thinker, 'Where are you going on Sunday?' Sunday would perhaps appear to him as the colour blue, orange, etc. These coloured thoughts are called PSYCHO-CHROMES."*

COLOUR-LANGUAGE OF THE ANGELS

The Spirit-Presences speak in this colour-language. They fill the room with their aura,

"As he near'd the bliss
The man lay in, the *paradise of hues*
That Mary loved him with, the *sheltering blues*
Mingled with sweet *surprise of green*, began
To glare a burning *amber*, and there ran
Through the translucency of *azure shade*
Reddening curls of lustre, and a blade
Of *whitening vehemence*: till the man sealed his sight
Against the full severe angelic light."

The Death of a Friar, lines 89-97

The colours indicate different thoughts. The "sheltering blues" are the token of devotion and protection; green of sympathy; and amber of spirituality.† The azure, reddening into lustre, symbolize love passing

* Dr. A. B. Scarff, *Two-Worlds, Problem of "Coloured Mental Processes,"* P. 330

† Dr. Besant, in her book *Thought-forms*, has investigated clairvoyantly the colour-effects of thought. This interpretation of colours is taken from her chart.

into the vehement white of pure Spirit. The mixture of colours suggests the running speed of the thoughts of love, sympathy, devotion and spirituality. The succession of colour-effects implies a succession of thoughts; in the same way as a sequence of sentences implies a sequence of ideas.

BODIES OF THE SPIRIT-PEOPLE

The bodies of the Higher Intelligences are shapes of flame changing with the strength and speed of their thoughts. Their faces are lit with fiery splendour,

“Thus on the empty vanishing of things
 The angels stood, Mary, obediences,
 In fiery rank behind her loveliness;
 Composed and patient their immortal zeal:
 Their faces splendour as of molten steel;
 Brightness in folds that thrill'd like scarlet heat
 In silver, falling to their golden feet;
 And in the steadfast flaming of their wings
A mounting ripple of fierce quiverings
 Sparkling terribly—the infinite ascending
 Of Fire unbeginning and unending,
Whereof their persons were the shapely flames.”

The Death of a Friar, lines 55-66

The auras of the angels, “a mounting ripple of fierce quiverings”, are visible only when the material world has vanished.

MATERIALIZATION

The room is filled with sharp points of light. The timber shakes with psychic force. The doors become

transparent and dematerialize. The physical scene disappears. There is only a "space of pure light". Out of it, the spirit materializes.

"Swords of light

Into the room at sill and lintel pierced,

.

They thought the timber would have shaken and given,
Such pressure of light burst through at every seam;
 And now the door's whole wood was full of light
 As if it were thin paper against the glare,
 The grain like a fine web of glowing threads.
And suddenly there was no door, but space
Of insupportable light, and in the midst.
A presence like a beautiful young man."

The Olympians, lines 373-387

THE END

Man consummates his race in the divine plane—
 the plane where the separate life merges in the experience of the World-Soul,

"I have seen
 Flame like the sun earth's living green,
 To be the splendour of the place
Wherein man consummates his race.
 For the whole kind of man I have seen
One blessed creature at the last:
 Lovely as the divinely fortunate stars
 Innumerably burn in one consent
 Of perfect motion round their firmament,
 One everlasting music there
 Of manifold joyous light."

At Endor, lines 112-122

THE SEPARATE SELF ILLUSORY

Abercrombie sees the Cosmic force dividing itself by the act of its imagination into innumerable manifestations of selfhood. Just as the ice-blocks of the Polar seas, stationed in compact security, yield to sunlight and warming current; so the Selfhood of man, the glacial congealment of his thoughts, desires and feelings which make his person, melts into the parent energy. The rays of separate experience re-enter the spectrum; and at the other side, beyond the spectrum lines, Life—one and whole—stands free in the single mastery and dominion of perfection.

CHAPTER IX

T. HARDY: THE COSMIC WILL

*"A fourth dimension, say the guides,
To matter is conceivable.
Think some such mystery resides
Within the ethic of my will."*

A Dream Question: Time's Laughingstocks, lines 21-24

THE IMMANENT WILL

Hardy's Immanent Will is a living organism—the totality of creation labouring as one body and brain. Its brain extends to every part of space. Its thinking spreads as visible waves of energy, as "nerves, sinews and eddies of substance" which envelope all. In willing, it expands as a web of physical forces which entangles in a mesh-work of physical fibres everything, compelling a mechanical obedience to its wishes. This physical embodiment of the spiritual System is the chief intuition of Hardy's poetry. The magnificence of his lines, otherwise so barren of poetic rhythm and phrase, is in the vision of Reality as the movement of a material body and brain.

HARDY'S COLLECTED POETRY

Hardy's poetry will be treated in two parts. The first will deal with the psychic phenomena in his collected poems.* The second part will be reserved for the drama of *The Dynasts*, which illustrates the will-activity of the World-Soul.

* References are to Hardy's collected poems, published in 1923 by the Macmillan Press.

MATERIALIZATION

The phantom, in the stillness of the night, materializes its living eyes,

“Through the dark corridors
 Your walk was so soundless I did not know
 Your form from a phantom’s of long ago
 Said to pass on the ancient floors,
 Till you drew from the shade,
 And *I saw the large luminous living eyes*
 Regard me in fixed inquiring-wise
 As those of a soul that weighed,
 Scarce consciously,
 The eternal question of what Life was,
 And why we were there, and by whose strange laws
 That which mattered most could not be.”

Satires of Circumstance: After the Visit, lines 13-24

The apparition materializes and dematerializes in mid-air,

“On the solitude, unsignalled,
 Broke a man
 Who, *in air* as if at home there,
 Seemed to scan
 Every fire-flecked nook of the apartment span by span.
 A stranger’s and no lover’s
 Eyes were these
 Eyes of a man who measures
 What he sees
But vaguely, as if wrapt in filmy phantasies.”

Satires of Circumstance: After the Visit, lines 10-15

The man sees vaguely because to the spirit’s eye, attuned to the quick vibrations of the psychic plane,

earthly objects seem a world of shadows. The figure disappears in mist,

“And, as ’twere useless longer
To persist,
He sighed, and sought the entry
Ere I wist,

And retreated, *disappearing* soundless in the mist.”

Satires of Circumstance: After the Visit, lines 43-45

MORE MATERIALIZATION

In *Who's in the Next Room?* different forms of materialization are noted. First is the materialization of the Spirit's person,

“Who's in the next room?—who?
I seemed to see
Somebody in the dawning passing through,
Unknown to me.”

“Nay: you saw nought. *He passed invisibly*”.

Moments of Vision: Who's in the Next Room?, Stanza I

Next is its direct voice,

“Who's in the next room?—who?
I seem to hear
Somebody muttering firm in a language new
That chills the ear.”

“No: you catch not his tongue who has entered there.”

Moments of Vision: Who's in the Next Room?, Stanza II

Lastly is the sensing of the phantom's 'breath accompanied by the psychic winds, the cold clammy draught, which are the signs usually preceding manifestation,

“Who’s in the next room?—who?

I seem to feel

His *breath like a clammy draught*, as if it drew
From the Polar Wheel.”

“No: none who breathes at all does the door conceal.”

Moments of Vision: Who’s in the Next Room?, Stanza III

The phantom plays the piano,

“I hear the piano playing—
Just as a ghost might play”.

“—O, but what are you saying?
There’s no piano to-day”;

“Their old one was sold and broken;
Years past it went amiss”.

“—I heard it, or shouldn’t have spoken:
A strange house, this!”

Late Lyrics: The Strange House, Stanza I

The direct voice comes through,

“I catch some *undertone* here,
From some one out of sight.”

“—Impossible; we are alone here,
And shall be through the night.”

“—The parlour-door—what stirred it?”

“—No one: no soul’s in range.”

“—But, anyhow, *I heard it*,
And it seems strange!”

Late Lyrics: The Strange House, Stanza II

Finally the phantom itself materializes,

“Seek my own room I cannot—
A figure is on the stair!”

“—What figure? Nay, I scan not
Any one lingering there.

THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE

A bough outside is waving,
 And that's its shade by the moon."
 "—Well, all is strange! I am craving
 Strength to leave soon."

Late Lyrics: The Strange House, Stanza III

THE ASTRAL PLANE

The poet visits in his phantom-body the scenes of earth,

"I travel as a phantom now,
 For people do not wish to see
 In flesh and blood so bare a bough
 As Nature makes of me.

And thus I visit bodiless
 Strange gloomy households often at odds,
 And wonder if man's consciousness
 Was a mistake of God's."

Moments of Vision: I Travel as a Phantom Now, Stanzas I and II

In the psychic state substance seems a shadow,*

"And the coomb and the upland
 Coppice-crowned,
 Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat
 Stroked by the light,
 Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial
 Meadow or mound."

Lyrics and Reveries: In Front of the Landscape, lines 4-6

The "Infinite Spectacles" of the astral plane appear,

* Under the kilnascrene substance looks like a "ghost-like gauze".

“O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,
 Some as with smiles,
 Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled
 Over the wrecked
 Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash now
 with anguish
 Harrowed by wiles.”

Lyrics and Reveries: In Front of the Landscape, lines 10-15

THE PLANE OF BIRTH AND DOOM

At night, the poet travels to the plane of birth,

“I rose at night, and visited
The Cave of the Unborn;
 And crowding shapes surrounded me
 For tidings of the life to be.”

Time's Laughingstocks: The Unborn, Stanzas I and III

The newly incarnated souls troop out by the force of
 the Cosmic Will,

“And as I silently retired
 I turned and watched them still,
 And they came helter-skelter out,
 Driven forward like a rabble rout
Into the world they had so desired,
*By the all-immanent Will.”**

Time's Laughingstocks: The Unborn, Stanza IV

The vision passes to the plane of dooms:

* “The essential reason for re-incarnation is the Cosmic Will, which impresses itself on the Ego appearing in him as a desire for manifestation. In obedience to this, the Ego . . . pours himself into the lower planes” (A. Powell, *The Causal Body*).

THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE

"I have lived with Shades so long,
And talked to them so oft,

.
.

That sometimes they
In their dim style
Will pause awhile
To hear my say;

And take me by the hand,
And lead me through their rooms
In the To-be, where Dooms
Half-wove and shapeless stand:
And show from there
The dwindled dust
And rot and rust
Of things that were."

Poems of the Past and Present: Retrospect, Stanzas I and II

AKASHIC RECORDS

Impressions of the Past which are preserved in
etheric substance—the Akashic records—are re-
covered by the seer. The new resident senses in his
surroundings psychic history,

"That here some mighty passion
Once had burned,
Which *still the walls enghosted,*
I discerned,

And that by its strong spell mine might be overturned."

Satires of Circumstance: The Re-enactment, lines 46-48

The ardour of new love is dimmed by the emanations
of the drama which had once been acted there,

"I sat depressed; till, later,
 My Love came;
 But something in the chamber
 Dimmed our flame;—
An emanation, making our due words fall tame,
 As if the intenser drama
 Shown me there
 Of what the walls had witnessed
 Filled the air,
 And left no room for later passion anywhere."

Satires of Circumstance: The Re-enactment, lines 49–54

The old house is filled with imprints of the Past,

"—Ah, may be you've some vision
 Of showings beyond our sphere;
 Some sight, sense, intuition
 Of what once happened here?
 The house is old; they've hinted
 It once held two love-thralls,
 And *they may have imprinted*
 Their dreams on its walls?"

Late Lyrics: The Strange House, Stanza IV

The new house has not the "sense of the have-beens",

"You have not known
 Men's lives, deaths, toils, and teens;
 You are but a heap of stick and stone:
 A new house has no sense of the have-beens.

 Void as a drum
 You stand: I am packed with these,
 Though, strangely, *living dwellers who come*
See not the phantoms all my substance sees!"

Later Lyrics: The Two Houses, Stanzas V and VI

But the new house will record in its substance new happenings,

“—Will the day come”,
Said the new one, awestruck, faint,
“When I shall lodge shades dim and dumb—
And with such spectral guests become acquaint?”

“—That will it, boy;
Such shades will people thee,
Each in his misery, irk, or joy.
And print on thee their presences as on me.”

Late Lyrics: The Two Houses, Stanzas XIII and XIV

ETHERIC RECORDS IN MYSTICISM

In mysticism also every event is said to endure in the ether where the event takes place,

“Wherever overwhelming terror, . . . or indeed any kind of intense passion has been felt, an impression of so marked a character has been made upon the astral matter that a person with even the faintest glimmer of psychic faculty cannot but be deeply impressed by it. It would need but a slight temporary increase of sensibility to enable him to visualize the entire scene—to see the event in all its detail apparently taking place before his eyes.”*

PSYCHIC ACTIVITY IN THE INVISIBLE

The “House of Silence” is apparently still. But beyond the “material screen” is spinning the brain of a phantom-intelligence,

* Bishop C. W. Leadbeater, *The Astral Plane*.

"That is a quiet place—

That house in the trees with the shady lawn."

"—If, child, you knew what there goes on

You would not call it a quiet place.

Why, *a phantom abides there*, the last of its race,

And a brain spins there till dawn."

"But I see nobody there,—

Nobody moves about the green,

Or wanders the heavy trees between."

"—Ah, that's because you do not bear

The visioning powers of souls who dare

To pierce the material screen."

Moments of Vision: House of Silence, Stanzas I and II

RE-BIRTH

Like most of the preceding poets, Hardy visions the possibility of re-birth. Shelley's Sky-Lark is "a pinch of unguarded dust" re-living in the sights and sounds of earth,

"Somewhere afield here something lies

In Earth's oblivious eyeless trust

That moved a poet to prophecies—

A pinch of unseen, unguarded dust:

The dust of the lark that Shelley heard,

And made immortal through times to be,—

.

Maybe it rests in the loam I view,

Maybe it throbs in a myrtle's green,

Maybe it sleeps in the coming hue

Of a grape on the slopes of yon inland scene."

"THE DYNASTS"

The drama of *The Dynasts* expresses on the largest scale the Will-activity of the World-Soul. The action is in three planes. First is the physical where the Cosmic Self controls the scene. Second is the part of the Spiritual Spectators in the Over-World. Third in the highest spheres, beyond the stellar lights, is the Cosmic Consciousness itself. The history of the Napoleonic War displays the inexplicable artistry of the Immanent Will.*

THE PHANTOM INTELLIGENCES OF "THE DYNASTS"

The Spirit Intelligences turn the reels of the film in the superphysical plane. They are man's intuitions of his future-state materialized for the purposes of the drama as phantom-intelligences. They are

"Our readings Why and Whence,
 . . . the flower of Man's intelligence;
 And that but an unreckoned incident
 Of the all-urging Will, raptly magnipotent."

The Dynasts, Part I, Act VI, Scene VIII, lines 4-9

EARTH-LINKS IN "THE DYNASTS"

The Rumours, Spirit-messengers and Recording Angels, are links with earth. The Spirit of the Pities, the Years, and the like suggest the thought-forms of men which the imagination of poetry endows with shape and life. Earth has its psychic counterpart—the "Shade of earth". The scenes and characters of the Over-World symbolize the action of the higher intelligences in the invisible.

* The first line of *The Dynasts* explains the whole trend of the play: "What of the Immanent Will and its designs?"

THE WILL-WEBS

The Fore-scene opens with a description of the will-webs of the Cosmic Self,

“As key-scene to the whole, I first lay bare
The Will-webs of thy fearful questioning.”

Spirit of the Years, Part I, Fore-scene

Its volitions, intertwining and complicate in all things,
are perceptible as waves of energy in the material
world,

“Amid this scene of bodies substantive
Strange waves I sight like winds grown visible,
Which bear men’s forms on their innumerable coils,
Twining and serpentine round and through.
Also retracting threads like gossamers—
Except in being irresistible—
Which complicate with some, and balance all.”

Spirit of the Years, Part I, Fore-scene

The World-Soul has flesh nerves and tissues by which
It heaves its will through the universe,

“These are the *Prime Volitions,—fibriles, veins,*
Will-tissues, nerves, and pulses of the Cause,
That heave throughout the Earth’s compositure.”

Spirit of the Years, Part I, Fore-scene

It has a Brain present at every point of Space,

“*A Brain whose whole connotes the Everywhere,*
And whose procedure may but be discerned
By phantom eyes like ours.”

Spirit of the Years, Part I, Fore-scene

The poetic imagination closes up as the illusion of
man’s eye the ideas of Space, Time and Cause. The

thought of the Prime Willer, appears as "threads and streams" of power,

"We'll *close up Time*, as a bird its van,
 We'll *traverse Space*, as spirits can,
 Link pulses severed by leagues and years,
 Bring cradles into touch with biers;
 So that the far-off Consequence appears
 Prompt at the heel of foregone Cause.—
The Prime, that willed ere wareness was,
Whose Brain perchance is Space, whose Thought its laws,
Which we as threads and streams discern,
 We may but muse on, never learn."

Spirit of the Years, Part I, Fore-scene

THE WILL AS A COSMIC PERSON

The Will does not work alone. It is the Personality of the conscious universe which labours in conjunction with the System. It is,

"*A Will that wills above the will of each,*
 Yet but the will of all conjunctively;
 A fabric of excitement, web of rage,
 That permeates as one stuff the weltering whole."

The Dynasts, Part III, Act I, Scene VI, lines 3-6

Men are parts of its physical organism through which
 It urges its volitions through Space,*

"So the Will heaves through Space, and moulds the
 times,

With mortals for Its fingers! We shall see
 Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes,

* Compare: "The whole of our solar system is a manifestation of the Logos and every particle in it is a part of his vehicles" (Powell, *The Solar System*, p. 31).

. . . . obey resistlessly

The mutative, unmotived, dominant Thing,
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring!"

The Dynasts, Part II, Act II, Scene III, lines 1-5

THE LIGHT OF THE WILL

The Immanent Will possesses an all-piercing preternatural light, an X-ray, by which it renders the material world transparent. This shows the interior of its Brain which holds all the personages of the drama,

"Let me then once again
Show to thy sceptic eye the very streams
And currents of this all-inhering Power,
And bring conclusion to thy unbelief.

The scene assumes the preternatural transparency before mentioned, and there is again beheld as it were the *interior of a brain which seems to manifest the volitions of a Universal Will, of whose tissues the personages of the action form portion.*"

The Dynasts, Part I, Act I, Scene VI

The Light displays in clearness the anatomy of the World-Soul,

"A new and penetrating light descends on the spectacle, enduing men and things with a seeming transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity and vitalized matter included in the display."

The Dynasts, Part I, Fore-scene

It reveals the "nerves and sinews" with which the

“Eternal Urger” manipulates the figures of the pantomime,

“Again ye deprecate the World-Soul’s way
That I so long have told? Then note anew
(Since ye forget) the ordered potencies,
Nerves, sinews, trajects, eddies, ducts of It
The Eternal Urger, pressing change on change.”

The Dynasts, Part I, Act VI, Scene III, lines 1-5

It exhibits the tentacles with which the Immanent Will grips the battle-field,

“At once, as earlier, a preternatural clearness possesses the atmosphere of the battle-field, in which the scene becomes anatomized and the living masses of humanity transparent. *The controlling Immanent Will appears therein, as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms.*”

The Dynasts, Part I, Act VI, Scene III

It makes visible the film-forces which seize unseen Napoleon,

“*The unnatural light* before seen usurps that of the sun, bringing into view, like breezes made visible, the films or *brain-tissues of the Immanent Will*, that pervade all things, ramifying through the whole army, Napoleon included, and moving them to Its inexplicable artistries. . . . The natural light returns and the anatomy of the Will disappears.”

The Dynasts, Part III, Act I, Scene I

The meshes of the Will are visualized as closing upon Wellington and his army,

"*A transparency as in earlier scenes again pervades the spectacle, and the ubiquitous urging of the Immanent Will becomes visualized. The web connecting all the apparently separate shapes includes WELLINGTON in its tissue with the rest.*"

The Dynasts, Part III, Act VII, Scene VII

In the transparent light of the Immanent Will, people appear as dream-units inseparably bound with the Cosmic organism. The separation of selves is discovered to be without basis. But when the clear light of the Will passes, the illusory sense of the individual life arises again as a vivid reality.

THE LIGHT OF THE WILL IN MYSTIC LITERATURE

The Cosmic light sustains and pervades life in all the spheres. It is described thus in mystic literature,

"*The brilliant light, the clearer air of the other invisible life which vibrates in the depths of space . . . vibrates also about earthly men and women yet is not of them: flows through their crowded streets, over their mountains, passes within and above solid ground and remains apart, aloof from all that material existence, as if indeed it did not exist at all, or as if men and women and their cities were ghosts.*"*

THE WILL HEEDLESS OF PAIN

The Cosmic Self, according to Hardy, at Its initial movement is heedless of pain. It is an Unconscious Intelligence gaining through tragedy consciousness of beneficence,

* G. Cummins, *Beyond Human Personality*.

“Like a knitter drowsed,
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
The Will has woven with an absent heed
Since life first was; and ever will so weave.”

The Dynasts, Part I, Fore-scene, lines 5-8

It is superconscious, mindless of suffering; without
balance or judgment,

“Nay, blame not! For what judgment can ye blame?—
In that immense unweeting Mind is shown
One far above forethinking; processive,
Rapt, superconscious; a Clairvoyancy
That knows that what It knows, yet works therewith.”

The Dynasts, Part I, Act V, Scene IV, lines 1-5

Yet this opinion is not final,

“Nay, nay, nay;
Your hasty judgments stay,
Until the topmost cyme
Have crowned the last entablature of Time.
O heap not blame on that in-brooding Will;
O pause, till all things all their days fulfil!”

The Dynasts, Part I, Act V, Scene V, lines 1-6

All crashes and calamities may have been the showings
of Its dream,

“What wouldst have hoped and had the Will to be?
How wouldst have penned It, if what hadst dreamed
Thereof were truth, and *all my showings dream?*”

The Dynasts, Part III, After-scene, lines 1-3

Perhaps the dream was known to the Dreamer,

“Ay, start not, Shades;
 In the Foregone *I knew what dreaming was,*
 And could let raptures rule! But not so now.
 Yes, I psalmed thus and thus. . . . But not so now?”

The Dynasts, Part III, After-scene, lines 6-9

The Will in the flux of time wins knowledge of pain,

“Men gained cognition with the flux of time,
 And wherefore not the Force informing them,
 When far-ranged aeons past all fathoming
 Shall have swung by, and stand as backward years?”

The Dynasts, Part III, After-scene, lines 3-6

THE PLANE OF THE WILL

The plane of the Will is beyond the solar fires, the ultimate psychic plane, the “far sphere unlit”,

“But where do Its compassions sit?
 Yes, where abides the heart of It?

Is it where sky-fires flame and flit,
 Or solar craters spew and spit,
 Or ultra-stellar night-webs knit?

What is Its shape? Man’s counterfeit?
 That turns in some far sphere unlit
 The Wheel which drives the Infinite?”

The Dynasts, Part II, Act VI, Scene V, lines 2-9

The earth-stage is only the outer shore, the first rim,
 of Its many contrivances,

“Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
 Have we here watched in *weaving-web Enorm,*
 Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
 To where the roars and plashings of the flames

Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
 And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
 Where hideous presences churn through the dark—
Monsters of magnitude without a shape,
 Hanging amid *deep walls of nothingness.*”

The Dynasts, Part III, After-scene, lines 5-13

The phrase “the web Enorm” refers to the psychic system. “The monsters of magnitude without shape”, the Planetary Intelligences, dwell in “the deep wells of nothingness”—that is in imperceptible space.

THE WILL BECOME AWARE

The After-scene of *The Dynasts* closes with the sound of hope—the Will become aware of pain,

“Last as first the question rings
 Of the Will’s long travailings;
 Why the All-mover,
 Why the All-prover

Ever urges on and measures out the chordless chime
 of Things.

.

Nay;—shall not Its blindness break?
 Yes, must not Its heart awake,
 Promptly tending
 To Its mending

In a genial germinating purpose, and for loving kindness’
 sake”.

The Dynasts, Part III, After-scene: Final Chorus

Then bursts the final chorus which shakes off the gloom of *The Dynasts*,

CHORUS.

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the
darts that were,
*Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things
fair!*”

The Dynasts, Part III, After-scene: Final Chorus

CHAPTER X

CHARLES WILLIAMS: COSMIC LOVE

*"Who is this that cometh
As a wind from the south?
Who is this that moveth
With a song in his mouth?*

*This is Love in loveliness,
this is Love in light;
this is Love that singeth
of a tender sight."*

Charles Williams, *The Rite of the Passion*, Part IV

THE NEW POETRY

Mr. Williams belongs to the new age of poetry. His depth of insight, "his gracious serene and metropolitan style", have already attracted discerning critics. It may be said without hesitation that even upon his present production, a promise which is as yet unfulfilled, he will pass down to the future as one of the durable personalities of our times.

POEMS AND PLAYS

Mr. Williams's poems have not as yet been collected in one volume. The most important among them are *The Poems of Conformity*, 1920; *Windows of Night*, 1920-1922; and the *Three Plays*, 1931. All these are printed separately by the Oxford University Press.

LOVE A TANGIBLE REALITY

Love is a subject of so universal an interest in poetry, that it is unnecessary to track in detail its

course in the poetry of Mr. Williams. It has in his works a freshness of aspect. It is sought as something tangible. The poet would clasp and greet love with eyes and hands and sense,

*"We would see Love! Touch and the things of sense,
Our spirits' pupilage, our minds' suspense
Of expectation,—what conjures him thence
Who is so far within? We would see Love!*

We would see Love! His face if none draw nigh
Except their whole lives shatter up thereby,
Agree, sweet! let us look on God and die,
Feel him, one shock, and end! We would see Love!"

Commentaries IV, Stanzas III and IV

Love is the Archetypal flesh,

"Follow, lovers mortal,
To the heart of Love,
Where through me the portal
Fleets the holy Dove,
Where through me the Eternal
Flashes into times,
And the still Supernal
Multitudinous chimes.

Love, on journey faring
Through infinity,
Wrought me for his bearing,
And the worlds for me
None but my white sinless
Virgin arms enmesh
Him, the sole, the kinless,
Archetypal flesh!"

Mater Dei, Stanzas II and III

The world is a veil through which Love's gleams break. It is the infinite visibility of Hardy's Cosmic Light,*

"Behold, their dreams, their works, their arts!
 Wherewith their visages aglow
 Their diverse revelations show,
 Till faces seem but veils wherethrough
 Love's light hath room to break anew
From the world behind the worlds, and be
 Infinite visibility!"

Churches, lines 40-46

Love is imaged as "a cloud of radiant dust", issuing from the shades of the astral plane,

"Love, in a single cloud of radiant dust,
 Love, from this earth's austerity or lust,
 Love, from the *place of shades doleful and dim*,
 Love is arisen, and we are risen with him."

The Christian Year, Part VII, lines 34-37

Love is an experience in the new dimension where Time is the "one moment" of bliss and where eye and hand move to new rhythm,

"We were borne
 Upon aerial passage; earth, sustained,
 in glances, motion, voices, music, *new
 dimensions of experience*, wove itself
 into its heavenly origin, and was
at once its process and its lovelier end."

The Chaste Wanton, Scene IV, lines 7-12

* "The world behind the worlds" are the interpenetrating psychic planes.

THE MYSTIC ATMOSPHERE

Mr. Williams's poetry, still "fresh from the protoplasm", breathes the same thin air of the psychic worlds as the rest of the poets of this book.

THE RADIANT BODY

The radiant body has lungs with which it breathes the air of the subtle planes,

"O heavenly comfort, blow about us!

.

And you, *fine lungs of my risen body*, deep

Breathe you of that mild, fresh, and tender air!"

The Fourth Dimension, Stanza II, lines 13 and 15-16

The True Self beyond the bodies, the "profounder I", is visibly a-tremble through the flesh,

"Is now my body held for mine no more?

Or rather doth a more profounder I,

Which that first I willed never to explore,

Through flesh and blood go trembling visibly?"

Poems of Conformity, Sonnet I, lines 9-12

THE THREE SUBTLE STATES

In the sonnet called *Prayer*, the poet during meditation discovers in the depth of his being the machinery of three subtle bodies,

"Taught by old masters, I from eyes and ears

Through narrow passages of prayer turn in,

Seeking to find that peace the world not hears,—

Alas, to what new roar and rhythmic din:

Great machines, mighty enginery, huge blows
 Of hammers, till my body's fabric reels
 With inward manufacture down long rows
 Of tall devices, purr of banded wheels;
Fibres and clay of being here are brought
 To workshops thick with prongs and furnaced coal,
Here melted to desire, there fused to thought,
 Here torn and *crushed and bubbling into soul.*
 But O what rest is here? what *place withdrawn*
 Where I could lie, and wait, and feel peace
 dawn?"

Divorce: Prayer

First the "mighty enginery" of the dense body—the "body's fabric"—makes the noise and hum of physical action. The words "fibres and clay of being melted to desire"—the workshop of heated coal—describe the state of the desire-body. The phrase "fibres and clay of being" "fused to thought" refers to the state of the thought-body. All the bodies are torn and crushed into one another—that is they interpenetrate each other in subtler matter. They "bubble" into the one soul—the subtle constitution of man. In the place withdrawn, the plane of the causal body, lies in wait the true peace of the Over-Soul. The poet intuitively subconsciously the same *three subtle states* as Browning, Swinburne and Abercrombie in their poems, *A Death in the Desert*, *Thalassius* and *The Death of a Friar*. These are the sense-body, the desire-body, the thought-body which make the subtle framework of man whose rest, if rest there be, is in the higher mental plane.

THE ANTAHKARANA

Between each of the rare bodies, there is a "tunnel of communication" by which the personality comes in touch with the Ego. "There is always a line of communication between the personality and the Ego; this is called the 'Antahkarana'. . . . In its earlier stages, evolution consists in opening up this line of communication."* "To a clairvoyant, this channel is visible as a great vortex, a kind of gigantic cylinder or funnel."†

The poet digs the under-channels of sense, the psychic intuition, for this mystic communication,

"Ah if I could but find
That *tunnel which (men say)*
Leads from this earthly mind
Underneath sense, away

To the *clear inner land*
And the spiritual sea,
And the *high towns that stand*
Within eternity!"

Divorce: In a London Office, Stanzas IV and V

The "tunnel", in figurative speech, is the communicating bridge between earth and "the high towns *within eternity*"; that is the interpenetrating spiritual planes. But the gross body—the earth-sense piled within him—obstructs the vision,

* A. Powell, *The Mental Body*, p. 271.

† *Ibid.*, p. 143.

“But
 Earth piled within me fills
That tunnel; I am shut
 From the everlasting hills.

I dig at the entering-in,
 Ere the lives around me press
 My mind, by the cords they spin
 Caught, into nothingness.”

Divorce: In a London Office, Stanzas VII and VIII

DR. ARUNDALE'S EXPERIENCE

The poet's experience may be compared with the mystic's experience of the breaking up of the causal body as described by Dr. Arundale:

“The breaking up of the causal body is exactly like the losing of the physical body. *It looks as if you are going into a tunnel which appears unending. . . . Into the tunnel you go; then loneliness comes in because you think you are stuck, you feel stuck in immeasurably black depths, as if you had gone to the bottom of things and were suffocating with inescapability*—All of a sudden at the end of the tunnel is a magnificent light.”*

MEETING IN THE SUBTLE BODY

The lovers in their subtle body meet in the spiritual plane,

“Last night I slept not
 Close in your bed,
 Nor could I cherish
 There your dark head:

* *The Theosophist*, July 1936, vol. lvii, p. 299.

O, was I found in your dream?
 Dreams, none can rule them;
 I, more content,
 Sought you and found you
 Where I was bent:
O, was an ending to dream!"

Divorce: After a Vigil, Stanzas I and II

The dream has ended and that it is not the physical body which is being "cherished". The subtle body of the pair, cloud-swirled, is blown through the astral plane,

"Here to my vision
 Move you, cloud-swirled
 By all the mist blown
 Through the dim world:
 O, is it vision or dream?"

Divorce: After a Vigil, Stanza VI

Both meet in the "True Body" beyond space in the highest heaven where "perfect matter is stored",

*"In the True Body,
 Lo, your true face
 Looked to behold me,
 There, beyond space:
 O, was an ending to dream!*

*There, where all perfect
 Matter is stored,
 In our true bodies
 Met we, Adored!*
 O, but we sink now to dream."

Divorce: After a Vigil, Stanzas VII and VIII

DISCARDING OF FORM

In the last plane, the subtle body the "ghostly band"* which encircles the tired frame dissolves,

"Three times shall I perish.

Once when my tired body
 Death touches with his hand,
 Wrapping all my movements
 In a *ghostly band*,
 And to earth I die.

Once—O Soul too happy
 If it probe the gloom
 Of its *last deprivation*
 In the mystic tomb,
 Where the elect must die;

If it find the inmost
Final mystery
Of dying even from Heaven,
And that death is He!
 If it come to die."

Windows of Night: Saint Stephen, Stanzas II, III, IV and V

Man dies three times. First is the death of the physical body, the second of the astral body. "The last deprivation" refers to the disruption of the last body in the fifth spiritual plane. In "the final mystery of dying", all bodies are discarded and the elect merge with the consciousness of God.

* Under the kilnascrene, the subtle body looks like a "ghostly band", which envelops the whole man.

THE PLANES

The interpenetrating planes of spirit are described in Mr. Williams's poetry as parts of a spiritual city,

“In the *high town which is eternity,*
The plotted comprehension of all souls,
 Through which the all-tributaried river rolls
 Waters of peace, and spreads communicably
 In wells, canals, fountains, and middle sea;
 Where Love, in commerce 'twixt his settled poles,
 God and the people, mightily controls
 And is controlled by spirits just and free.”

Divorce: House-hunting, I, lines 1-8

The “high town of Eternity”, “the plotted comprehension of all souls”, is the whole psychic city. The “all-tributaried river”, the stream of vital force, circulates through its entirety. The Spirits “just and free”, the higher Intelligences, rule as the government of the inner worlds. Love is the Cosmic Law which binds all the planes.

THE SPIRITUAL SYSTEM

The spiritual system is built city upon city, town upon town, invisibly ascending to the height of God,*

“Thou seest me not, thou hear'st my voice afar;
 City on city against me thou break'st down;
 While, quicker than thy diligence can mar,
 I rise in town on town.

* “The utmost height” is the Divine plane; the “Depth” is the lowest physical plane.

I, to the utmost height of making, God,
 Yet in the depth of all the made am man,
 Heaven beyond heaven, clod in crumbling clod,
 Crowned yet republican."

Divorce: Dialogue between the Republican and Apostacy, lines 45-52

INTERIOR OF THE PLANES

The interior of the psychic domain has each its
 special sense of Time and Space,

"There have all towns and times of towns their *places*
 Being modes of our interior city, fit,
Each at its special knot of Time and Space."

Divorce: House-hunting, Sonnet I, lines 9-11

The Ego gravitates by the force of its past actions, by
 its Karma or work, to that part of the plane to which
 its habits direct it. Some pass to "feverish hovels"
 led by the attractions of their own mind,

"O what if there
 We by the force of our past wills repair
 To feverish hovels or infectious dens?"

Divorce: House-hunting, Sonnet III, lines 6-8

THE ASTRAL PLANE

On the earthly death, man drifts to the astral plane,*

"In a place of shades unknown
 under a shadowy throne
 the shades of men are blown
 after a dying dream.

* According to mysticism, the astral plane is a world of imagination created by the Ego's thought. The Ego creates there a heaven or hell automatically by the working of its thought.

For there each shade beholds
 a vaporous cloud that folds
 the shadowy throne and moulds
 likeness of its own face;
 each over all sees naught
but his own imaged thought
 into possession brought
 and having sovereign place.”

Three Plays: The Rite of the Passion, Part IV, Stanzas I and II

All Spirits, high or low at some point in evolution,
 range the ascent and descent of all the planes,

“For there in turn republican all are
 Our masters, and we theirs; so interchange
 The hierarchical degrees afar;
 Waxing and waning, dwindled or increased,
 In order as in light, all spirits range
 The whole ascent, now topmost and now least.”

Windows of Night: To a Publisher, Stanza XXI

THE ANGELIC HIERARCHY

The sonnet *Saint Michael* describes the creation of
 the angelic hierarchy,

“There was a motion within Deity,
 And the *first Seraph lived*, saw, and became
 One cry through all his nature and his name,—
 MICHA-EL: Who is like God? Thence to be
 Began the hierarchic mystery
 Of spirit: where, though he be first in fame—
 Goldenly-helmed; thrice winged, thrice ringed with
 flame—

Yet each of his Angels is hardly less than he.

But all his Angels and he, *gathered into one*
 Fire, as a lantern high upon the mast
 Of the Admiral's vessel, shine; and in their track,
 With *night-watch set and guards at every gun,*
 Float through the ocean of the unknown vast
 The twelve huge ships of the moving Zodiac."

Windows of Night: Saint Michael, the whole

"The motion within Deity", the Prime Volition, desires self-division in the divine plane. The first Seraph is Michael. After him other angels are born. The separate personalities of the highest sphere are, despite their separation, a unity—the one Fire. In their track below come the next group of Intelligences—the "night-watch set and guards at every gun". The twelve ships symbolize the twelve signs of the Zodiac which it is said govern by stellar laws the movement of creation.

THE FIRST ANGELS

In the heart of the supreme sphere are the first angels, the "Archangelical Letters", who carry to every point of space the will of the Logos,*

"Around that seat throng the high Presences,
 The Archangelical Letters, who first bore
 The separating Word in their degrees:
 They chief who when the Unnameable was named
 Grew to the boundary of Space, the Four
 Who are the walls wherein the whole is framed."

Windows of Night: To a Publisher, Stanza VIII

* The "four walls of Space" are the four main forms of Space upon which the psychic planes rest.

THE ETERNAL NOW

The sonnet *At A Procession* recalls the Eternal Now of psychical theory, the "Unmoved Moment" of Abercrombie,

"*Out of the now redeem us into Now!*
 Out of the moment bring us to the End,
 Which is not ending merely, but the blend
 Of all the process."

Windows of Night, Sonnet IV, lines 1-4

The Logos lives in that "Now" showing in a lightning flash His aspect as One and Three,

"O vision of the Son!
 Through the Now of eternity
 Breaks in the thunder of the Three
 The lightning of the One!"

Poems of Conformity: Epilogue, Stanza VII, lines 3-6

The Past is not dead. It is alive and moving now beyond our "sight's end",

"It is not past, it is not dead! it moves,
 It stirs with life, all that men were they are,
 Vastly and dimly visioned from afar
 Down the wide slope of Being

there,

*At our sight's end, beyond the lights, all share
 One common welter, cattle and their lords."*

The Windows of Night: The Window, Stanza XII, lines 1-8

MYSTIC SYMBOLS FOR THE LIFE-RHYTHM

The sonnet *For a Picture*, written upon the Madonna teaching the Divine Child geometry on the sand, explains in mystic symbols the progress of life,

"Straight lines and circles, triangles and squares,
 With exact finger on the sand she draws,
 Marking how each new truth from its own cause
 Demonstrably arises, and prepares
 Place for more truth to follow; so, she bares
 The sacred and inevitable laws
 Which are his nature and design, and awes
 Him with his own perfection: the Child stares
 Rapt at each new device, while gravely flows
 The mighty theorem,—rapt into a fine
 Ecstasy at the argument prepared,
 And darkly now himself already knows
 *The union of dimension, ideal line,
 Inclusive number, and the circle squared.*"

The Windows of Night: For a Picture

"The mighty theorem" is life flowing in fine frenzy of argument. "The straight lines" hint the infinity of experience; the circles the rounds of rebirth. The three sides of the Triangle represent the three out-pourings with which the Triple Logos or God makes the planes. The squares signify the walls of space upon which the psychic system rests. Life returns to its source. The circle is squared. All is the union of dimension line, number and circle.

THE MUSIC OF LOVE

Mr. Williams is the youngest and latest of our singers. What is the tenor of his thought? The critical eye may sense, faintly and feebly, the features of his vision in their shaping. His poetry has left the desolate places of Hardy's pessimism and is fingering the chords for the agelong music of men—the music of

Love. Love typified in the flesh and person of Christ,
Love as the crucifixion of the soul's desire; Love in
the triumphal robes of its crowning after the fall and
flush of the tears; Love as the rhythmic note of creation
is the sound of all his singing.

CHAPTER XI

ROBERT BRIDGES: THE RING OF RETURN

*"What is Beauty? saith my sufferings then. I answer
the lover and poet in my loose alexandrines:
Beauty is the highest of all these occult influences,
the quality of appearances that thru' the sense
wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man."*

R. Bridges, *The Testament of Beauty*, Bk. II, lines 840-844

BRIDGES' Muse stoops her fragile form to fill her urn from the same brink of Beauty as Keats. The aesthetic end to which their eyes are turned is the same—Nature's love-lights in her large distress, the genial smile in her wild alarms. Yet Bridges' discernment is different. For Keats the summer-sights of Beauty are motioned through forms, manifested in truth after the uncovering of its illusions. For Bridges Beauty does not unfold develop or become. It is not the revealed: it is the revealer. It is not the evolved; it is the evolver. Man is the focus of its forces. He is a personality formed of blind instincts impulses and desires. Beauty is the power of the supersensible kingdom which transforms the passion of Self into the passion of Spirit. It changes the ethics of the animal into the ethics of the man. It attracts him first through colour scent and sound. From the blandishments of sense it persuades his footsteps to the path of Spirit. Finally educating his sensibility, consuming in the fire of its ecstasies his animal desires, it bids him enter as a Spiritual Personality the precincts of immortal life.

BRIDGES' POETICAL WORKS

The poetical works of Bridges in the collected edition of his poetry published by the Oxford University Press, if we exclude *The Testament of Beauty*, occupy six volumes. A large measure of Bridges' genius was wasted in the composition of dramas for which the poet had but little aptitude and which posterity can hardly regard as his claim to permanence. *The Testament of Beauty* (1929), written in the new loose measure the Alexandrine, ranks as the most brilliant achievement in modern letters.

DIVISION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first deals with Bridges' psychic intuitions in his poems and dramas; and the second with Beauty as "the occult influence" evolving the personality of man.

THE SUBTLE BODIES

The subtle bodies are the fine apparel woven by thought as the vehicles of sense,

*"And man hath got his fancy hence,
To clothe his thought in forms of sense.
Fair are thy works, O man, and fair
Thy dreams of soul in garments rare,
Beautiful past compare,
Yea, godlike when thou hast the skill
To steal a stir of the heavenly thrill:*

But O, have care, have care!
 'Tis envious even to dare:
 And many a fiend is watching well
 To flush thy reed with the fire of hell."

New Poems No. 8, lines 10-20

The "dreams of soul" in "garments rare" symbolize the soul's experience in forms of the flesh. In the "heavenly thrill", the exceptional moment, the Self slips into the heaven-world of the Mental body.

MAGNETIC CURRENTS OF THE BODY

Currents of attraction, binding people by ties of love, flow from the person and determine our affinities,

"I have strange sympathies, *affinities*,
Magnetic or electric it may be,
 Which rule my trust and liking: if all feel them
 I cannot say: in me they are intimations
 Of supernatural efficacy."

Humours of the Court, Act II, Scene II, lines 1477-1481

These feelings are felt as the subtle emanations of Spirit,

"There are some faces,—eyes, I think,—that draw me
 At first encounter; so that I often fancy
 There must be a *subtle emanation* thrown
 By the spirit, as light from fire."

Humours of the Court, Act II, Scene II, lines 1485-1488

AURAS OF ANGELS

The angelic Intelligences possess brilliant auras,

“That *host of spirits*,
 In all things like to men, save for the brightness
 Of incorruptible life, which they gave forth.

. . . were not clothed nor naked, *but o'er each*
A veil of quality or colour thrown
 Shewed and distinguished them, with bickering glance
 And gemlike fires, brighter or undiscerned.
As when the sun strikes on a sheet of foam
The whole is radiant, but the myriad globes
 Are red or green or blue, with rainbow light
 Caught in the gauzy texture of their coats,—
 So differed they.”

Christian Captives, Act V, Scene V, lines 2127–2139

“The veil of quality”, the auras of the Spirits, bicker with gemlike fire. In some the colours are bright, in some a mixture of coats. The aura differs in hue and texture in accordance with the grade of the Spirit. As the mystics say, thought sets in motion quiverings in the auras of the body,

“Every thought gives rise to a set of correlated vibrations in the matter of this body, accompanied with a marvellous play of colour, *like that in the spray of a waterfall as the sunlight strikes it, raised to the nth degree of colour and vivid delicacy.*”*

INVISIBLE WORLDS

The invisible people are astir on Earth, in the airy vault beneath earth, and “in far-reaching space”,

* Mrs. Besant, *Thought-forms*.

“Nor is there any spirit on Earth astir,
 Nor 'neath the airy vault, nor yet beyond
 In any dweller in far-reaching space,
 Nobler or dearer than the spirit of man.”

Prometheus, lines 463-466

Our visible earth and heaven are the “lesser kingdoms” of invisible worlds,

“Know then, O king, that this fair earth of men,
 The Olympus of the gods, and all the heavens
 Are lesser kingdoms of the boundless space
 Wherein Fate rules; *they have their several times,*
Their seasons and the limit of their thrones,
 And from the nature of eternal things
 Springing, themselves are changed; even as the trees
 Or birds or beasts of earth, which now arise
 To being, now in turn decay and die.”

Prometheus, vol. i, lines 569-577

Each plane has “its times, seasons and limits”, its cycles of growth and decay within the etheric boundary set by the vibratory rate of each type of matter.

THOUGHT-FORMS

Thoughts from the point of view of poetry and mysticism are vibrations of matter which have size form and line of flight, varying with the strength of the concentration which produces them. Here the woman's desire, a ripple of feeling, travels as a “shapen prow” to its intended end,

“Ah, but *her launched passion*, when she sings
 Wins on the hearing *like a shapen prow*
 Borne by the mastery of its urgent wings.”

The Growth of Love, vol. i, Sonnet XXXI, lines 9-11

The phrases "shapen prow" and "urgent wings" indicate the shape of the thought-form of peace and protection which bears in mysticism the likeness of a vessel sailing out to sea with wings as of a bird.* The thought-forms of desire hope and joy roam in astral space with wings of flame,

"My soul is drunk with joy, her new desire
In far forbidden places wanders away.
Her hopes with free bright-coloured wings of fire
Upon the gloom of thought
Are sailing out."

Prometheus: The Firegiver, vol. i, lines 1455, etc.

MATERIALIZATION

In the *Return of Ulysses*, the Goddess Athena materializes the scenery of Ithaca. First a thick mist appears,

ATB. "Look!
UL. I see nought."

The Return of Ulysses, Act I, Scene I, lines 111, etc.

The vapours disperse, Ithaca is revealed,†

UL. "Ay, the vapours lift, the highlands loom,
The air obeys thee: thro' its thinning veils
The figure of some mountain jags the sky;
And those should be my hills: 'tis Neritos,
'Tis Ithaca indeed."

The Return of Ulysses, Act I, Scene I, lines 116-119

* See illustration in Mrs. Besant's *Thought-forms*, Figure 12.

† "Thinning veils"; physical matter under the kilnascrene appears transparent.

The Goddess materializes from a cloud,

“Even as she pray’d a cloud spread through the cell,
And ’mid the wreathings of the vapour dim
The goddess grew in glory visible,
Like some barbaric queen in festal trim.”

Eros and Psyche: October, vol. i, Stanza XXIII, lines 1-4

The apparition steals from the bedside as “a draping mist of luminous gloom”,

PR. “When her wild cries arouse the house at night,
And, running to her bed, ye see her set
Upright in tranced sleep, her starting hair
With deathly sweat bedewed, in horror shaking,
Her eyeballs fixed upon the unbodied dark,
*Through which a draping mist of luminous gloom
Drifts from her couch away.*”

Prometheus: The Firegiver, vol. 1, lines 1030-1036

ETHERIC EMANATION

Past tragedy continues to exist in subtle ether and may be revived by psychic force. Here is not the materialization of a phantom in the house of death. It is the reconstruction of a person’s form by the spirit’s power to recover past etheric impressions,

K. “By heaven,
I saw him, Sala, when the moon shone out:
He stood upright before me; while I spoke
He walked away.

SA. ’Tis like your majesty
Hath been deluded by some airy vision
Bred in the troubled brain.

K. Nay, he was there.

SA. *The spirits of the dead have power to fix
The image of their presence in the place
Where life was robbed.**

Christian Captives, vol. v, Act IV, Scene IV, lines 2024-2030

This finishes the survey of Bridges' poems and dramas.

THE "TESTAMENT" A MASTER-WORK

Bridges' master-work is *The Testament of Beauty*. This great poem is still in the flux of contemporary opinion. Whilst the heat and din of controversy still rage round it, who should fully explore or explain the limpidity of its thought, the wealth of its cadences, or the elegance of its new speech? We are too near its charms. Distance will lend her rays to illuminate and clarify the squandered magnificence of Bridges' Alexandrines. Time's mellowing touch will unlock the perplexities of this poem.

DESIGN OF THE "TESTAMENT"

Whatever may be said of the intricacies of the *Testament*, its abrupt transitions and digressions, its main design is clear. Beauty is the psychic Influence. Secretly it touches the senses; secretly awakens the spiritual emotion; secretly rouses the spiritual idea; secretly takes man into the "life of reason and the wisdom of God":

* Compare: "Apparitions at the spot where crime is committed are usually thought-forms projected by the criminal. . . . It may happen that the thought-form is strong enough to materialize itself so as to be visible to the physical sight" (A. Powell, *The Astral Body*, p. 51).

“What is Beauty? saith my sufferings then. I answer
the lover and poet in my loose alexandrines:
Beauty is the highest of all these *occult influences*,
the quality of appearances that thru’ the sense
wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man.”

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. II, lines 840-844

The *Testament* traces the evolution of man. First he is a bundle of bestial desires. Self sex and blind impulse are his masters. By the engaging glances of Beauty, its smiles and love-lures, their strife and rage are brought low. His selfish instinct is turned to spiritual affection; sexual passion into the vision of Dante; animal impulse into conscience. Thus his personality, purified of his dross, joins as the elate Spirit the Ring of Reality.

POWER OF BEAUTY

How Beauty transfigures the rough emotion into the spiritual sense can not be taught or told:

“Delicate and subtle are the dealings of nature,
whereby the emotionable sense secretly is touch’d
to awareness and by glimpse of heav’nly vision drawn
within the attraction of the creativ energy
that is the ultimat life of all being soe’er.”

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 660-664

Yet the psychic Influence ceases not to temper the
making of the mind of man,

'Beauty, the eternal Spouse of the Wisdom of God and Angel of his Presence thru' all creation, fashioning her new love-realm in the mind of man, attempteth every mortal child with influences of her divine supremacy.'

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 1-5

DIVISION OF THE "TESTAMENT"

The *Testament of Beauty* is divided into four Books—the Introduction, Selfhood, Breed, and Ethick. In the first Book, the Soul of man is meditating upon itself and its surroundings. It sees man as the aggregate of the instincts of Self, Sex and Impulse. These Instincts are changed in the remaining three Books into selfless action, pure passion, and conscientious conduct. In each instance it is Beauty which evolves the personality of man.

INTRODUCTION

In the Introduction, the poet is reflecting upon himself. His environment is brought to him through the impact of mind with matter. But the material universe, necessary though it be for the soaring of his mind, is not all or even the essence of all that envelops him. Psychic existences, "phantasies intangible", pleading and praying, encircle him on every side. They are "the unseen company" who push forward the becoming of man,

"Yet are we aware of such existences crowding,
mysterious beauties unexpanded, unreveal'd,

phantasies intangible investing us closely,
 hid only from our eyes by skies that will not clear;
activ presences, striving to force an entrance,
 like bodiless exiled souls in dumb urgency pleading
 to be brought to birth in our conscient existence."

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. I, lines 679-85

SELFHOOD, THE FIRST ARCH-INSTINCT SHAPED BY BEAUTY

Book II, *Selfhood*, examines the Instinct of Self as the first arch-instinct of man. In plant animal and man, possibly in atom and molecule, *Selfhood* is the striving of the brute impulse for the brute expression. But *Selfhood*, softened by the glimpses of the heavenly vision, begets its own restraint. Parental love checks the action of self. In animals, the instinct of self through "blind motherly attachment" turns to altruistic feeling. In Man it springs into spiritual affection. Man is led from self to reason; from reason to Spirit. Thence through the emotion of Beauty his personality, cleansed and kindled, is caught up into the Being of God.

THE INSTINCT OF SEX EVOLVED BY BEAUTY

In Book III, called *Breed*, the second arch-instinct of man is considered—the Instinct of Sex. It exists in its crude form as the pleasurable excitement for self-increase. In beasts from animal-mating it becomes the altruistic emotion of parenthood. In man it grows into spiritual love and thence into the vision of Spirit.

It is Beauty which spiritualizes the instinct of Sex.

THE INSTINCT OF CONSCIENCE CREATED BY BEAUTY

The Fourth Book deals with the third arch-instinct of man—the Instinct of Conscience. This is at first merely the impulse to act. The bird builds its nest because it must. The “must” is turned into the responsible “ought”. Impulse becomes the action of duty. As Selfhood rose to motherly feeling, Sex into spiritual passion, so the impulse of duty is changed into the rule of conscience.

It is Beauty, spread in perfume and flower, which evolves conscience in man.

THE PERSONALITY OF MAN MADE BY BEAUTY

In the last Book, the personality of man, shedding the inferior instincts of Self, Sex and Impulse, reaches the Ring of Spiritual existence.

It is just in so far as Man is in touch with great ideas, just in so far as he is able to absorb the influences of Beauty that his personality is shaped. It is ideas that build personality,

“And human Intellect I see form’d and compact
of the essential Ideas, wherewith soever each man
hath come in contact personally, and in so far
as he is kindly disposed to absorb their influences
to build his personality.”

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 893-897

Ideas are attracted to the mind as atoms are attracted to the body. As atoms make the body, so ideas make the mind,

“For ideas born to human personality,
 having their proper attractions like as atom or cell,
 from soul to soul pass freely.”

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 1247-1249

If the mind be poorly nourished in ideas, weak in the
 co-ordination of its thought, it will fail to climb up-
 wards to the Ring of Eternal Life,

“This mind perisheth with this body, unless
 the personal co-ordination of its ideas
 have won to Being higher than animal life.”

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 1262-1264

PERSONALITY IN MYSTICISM

According to the mystics personality is made by a
 man's thoughts. Thoughts are material things: their
 particles compose the mental body:

“Man is continually peopling his current in space
 with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring
 of his fancies, desires, impulses and passion.

These Thought-forms remain in his aura, or mag-
 netic atmosphere, and as time goes on their increased
 number acts on him with ever-gathering force, repe-
 tition of thoughts and of types of thought adding
 to their intensity day by day, with cumulative energy,
 until certain kinds of thought-forms so dominate his
 mental life that the man rather answers to their impulse
 than decides anew and what we call a habit the outer
 reflection of this stored-up force, is set up. Thus
 ‘character’ is built.”*

ULTIMATE REALITY IN THE "TESTAMENT"

Ultimate Reality is the chain of all existence,
everything being bound with everything,

"Reality appeareth in forms to man's thought
as several links interdependent of a chain
that circling returneth upon itself, as doth
the coil'd snake that in art figureth eternity."

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 112-115

The Ring closes in the escape of man from the bondage
of physical law,

"The Ring in its repose is Unity and Being:
Causation and Existence are the motion thereof.
Thru'out all runneth Duty, and the conscience of it
is thatt creativ faculty of animal mind
that, wakening to self-conscience of all Essences,
closeth the full circle, where the spirit of man
escaping from the bondage of physical Law
re-entereth eternity by the vision of God."

The Testament of Beauty, Bk. IV, lines 123-130

• Mrs. Besant, *Reincarnation*, p. 26.

CHAPTER XII

THE VISION OF SPIRIT

"Perfect I call Thy Plan.

Thanks that I was a man.

Maker, remake, complete—I trust what Thou shalt do."

R. Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*

PERCEPTION IN GENERAL

Poetry is a form of insight into things. Science classifies the physical perceptions; Philosophy the mental perceptions; Art the spiritual perceptions. I shall take, in turn, each of these types of vision in its correlation with Poetry.

THE PERCEPTION OF SCIENCE

Think of the rose-flower in the garden as it grows. Consider the scent of it and the beauty of it. The scientific eye measures its outer appearance. It records what the senses record; it omits what the senses omit. Is the flower what it seems to be? Is it built by mind? Has it an independent reality? Is it ugly or beautiful? These questions science does not ask. Primarily its task is with the visible.

Yet as science probes deeper, it drifts insensibly toward the unseen. Higher physics is metaphysics. The act of seeing is complex. Physical perception implies a series of metaphysical inferences.

THE ILLUSION OF PHYSICAL PERCEPTION

Analyse the flower as it appears to-day to the

scientist. Its body in its material aspect consists firstly of a grouping of electrons and protons; and secondly of the inter-space between the electrons and protons.*

The greater part of the flower is this emptiness between the electrons. There is as much space between electron and electron in a flower as there is between star and star in the sky. The material part of it is insignificant. It is the inter-space of the atom which plays the most important role in raising the illusion of substance.

When the electron itself is examined it disappears into immateriality. It exhibits itself as vibrations of energy. The hard particle of matter vanishes. The inter-space of the flower and its material components are both shadows. The flower is hollow; it is intangible. Matter is a soap-bubble blown of emptiness.†

Hence as Sir James Jeans in his *Mysterious Universe* says, the immediate work of science is to interpret these shadows, "To speak in terms of Plato's well-known simile, we are still imprisoned in our cave, with our backs to the light, and can only watch the shadows on the wall. At present the only task immediately before science is to study these shadows, to classify them and explain them in the simplest possible way".

Yet the flower has every degree of realism. How

* Sir A. S. Eddington says: "The atom is as porous as the solar system. If we eliminated all the unfilled space in a man's body and collected his protons and electrons into one mass, the man would be reduced to a speck just visible with a magnifying glass" (*Nature of the Physical World*, p. 1).

† Sir A. S. Eddington says: "My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparingly scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed" (*Ibid.*, Introduction, p. xii).

does that which is seemingly empty give the impression of colour and perfume? How does the shadow live and grow and die? The elusive power of mind is necessary to construct the inter-space as well as the immaterial vibrations into the living beauty of the flower. The scientific enquiry is incomplete.*

PHYSICAL PERCEPTION INFERENTIAL

How then do we perceive the flower? Physical perception is inferential. We do not see directly, touch directly. The process of contacting the material world demands jumps of mind. When a particular wave-length of vibration issuing from an object falls upon the retina of the eye, is conducted by nerves to the lower and higher visual centres of the brain and is there constructed into the imageries of sight, we see. When a different wave-length of vibration alights upon the sense-cells of the skin, is transmitted upwards through intricate channels and is built by the brain-process into the sense of touch, we feel. When another wave-length of vibration strikes the ear-drum, is led to the chambers of the brain and there pictured as the sensation of sound, we hear. When a fourth class of vibration affects the taste cells of the tongue and is brought to and constructed by the brain, we taste.

* Lord Rutherford bombarded the atoms with alpha rays and discovered that the atom was hollow, as the alpha rays passed through the atom. The electrons were also tested. The electrons were passed through a spectroscope, and they came out the other side not as smaller fragments of matter but as vibrations of force. Hence it was inferred that the electrop was immaterial. The space between the electrons is probably not a void. It may be finer substance through which the alpha rays pass; just as the X-rays pass through the body. The point of the argument is that the materiality of the flower is constructed mentally.

Seeing, feeling, hearing involve the operation of the image-making faculty. The material world, despite its seeming solidity, is not contacted. It is inferred. As science pursues its facts into their subtler gradations, it finds that at the basis of physical perception is the action of the inferring mind.

THE MENTAL PERCEPTION OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology presents the mental side of seeing, touching, hearing—the mental side of physical perception. It deals with the nervous system which receives the different vibrations of the object. It traces the sensory pathways by which the vibrations travel to the brain-sectors. It shows us that the body of man receives not merely the vibrations of matter from physical objects but also the subtler vibrations of emotion, desire and thought. It reveals to us an unchartered sea of mental activity which lies beyond science. Matter being itself a mental construction, how do the physical brain-areas transmute vibrations into feeling? What is the mechanism whose delicate contrivance transfigures the vibrations on the retina into sight? Are there psychic centres for the conversion of the inferential signals into sound and touch? Is the receiving and transmitting station of all construction in the invisible—defying detection, compelling the search into the Infinite? The last phase of psychology is speculation.

THE PHILOSOPHIC PERCEPTION

^f Philosophy discovers the faculty of inference which constructs the physical scene, examines the construc-

tion and affirms the whole process of perception, physical and mental, to be illusory. All is phenomenon. Life screens the truth. Philosophy intuits the One Intelligence lurking in Semblance. In this, Philosophy touches the borders of the Occult.

PSYCHIC PERCEPTION

The psychic perception is not the perception through the senses or the inferring mind. It is a state of vision. Seership may be denied and denounced. Affirmation cannot bring it into being; negation cannot negative it. It rests not upon proof or absence of proof; but upon experience. It needs not to be defined; experience is not definable. Every seer, every musician, every poet uses it. There would be no work of beauty without it. Seership consists in the open vision of an object embraced from every angle. The physical perception pictures the physical perspective, the mental perception the mental perspective; the seer's perception every perspective. The prophet, the musician and the poet employ the spiritual perception through different modes.

THE PERCEPTION OF PROPHECY

Every scripture which reveals the word of truth draws its discoveries from a psychic contact with the unseen. All prophecy is psychic sight. The physical and mental perceptions are shut. The mystic sense is active. For prophecy sounds and words are subsidiary. It sees for the sake of seeing.

THE PERCEPTION OF MUSIC

Music involves indirect psychic sensing. Its primary object is sound. It sees through sound, communicates through sound, builds the invisible through sound. Music reveals Spirit obliquely; prophecy directly.

THE PERCEPTION OF POETRY

The poet combines the function of seer and musician. As a seer he discloses the never-ending vistas of life, which are heavily veiled from the human gaze. As a musician he uses the rhythmic word in the place of sound. Through metaphor, through phrase, through luminous perception he suggests the inexpressible implications of Spirit.

THE SEERSHIP OF THE POETS

The seership of the poet has its peculiar quality. He receives the physical object with the physical eye—the impression of a landscape, the flight of the bird across the sky. The scene is transformed into loveliness by the poet and then presented. It is not the physical scenery of the scientist or the mental scenery of the philosopher. It is the spiritual essence of the whole caught by the spiritual faculty which the poet gives.

POETIC PERCEPTION INTERCONNECTED WITH OTHER PERCEPTIONS

Prophecy, music, poetry and the arts are interconnected forms of sight. All involve from their particular angle the psychic perception. They look at Spirit from the height of Spirit.

NO DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS

In the last analysis the dividing line between the physical, the mental, and the psychic perceptions ceases to be distinguishable. The scientist at the moment of discovery acts upon his intuitions. In this sense and at this point of time, he is an artist. In the formulation of his theory, he is a philosopher. In so far as he is a thinker dealing with inferences, with principles and with acts of mind which are necessary for the understanding of the physical world, a philosopher works in the spirit of science.

ALL PERCEPTION ONE

All forms of perception are modes of one perception—the vision of the invisible. All enquiry is one—the enquiry into Spirit. Ever Reality is fleeing from the seen into the unseen. Ever the perception of the sciences is restoring it to the view. The physicist brings the lost sound and sight into physical range through the radiogram and the television. The musician through voice and instrument, the painter through colour, the sculptor through stone, the poet through rhythm, disclose the elusive stretches of Spirit.

POETRY A LINK IN PERCEPTION

The physical, the mental, and the psychic perceptions are a part of a chain of perceptions. Poetry is a link therein. Its uniqueness is in its capacity to speak, through the psychic mechanism of the poetic mind, the intuitions of the soul. Poetry is the music of consciousness, proclaiming the vastitude of life which encircles man and his environment.

THE POETIC PERCEPTION FROM KEATS TO BRIDGES

Let us now unfold the poetic vision from Keats to Bridges as a single line of seership describing through the intuitions the scenery beyond the senses.

THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF POETRY

For poetry, at its highest inspiration, the spiritual kingdom is not a haze. It is a world of matter with breathing presences in it. It is in Shelley's phrase "the sensitive extention" of the physical plane—a condition of substance governed by the laws of substance.

Likewise the soul of poetry is not a vaporous essence. *It is a series of bodies* formed of subtle grades of matter through which the Spirit of man evolves into the larger reality.

The Invisible is not, as science would have it in her sceptical mood, a void. Space is full of surprises. The earth-body and the earth-plane are but a fraction of experience.

THE ASTRAL BODY

Shelley's eye finely pursuing the Self to its deeper life, senses *the astral body*.

THE ASTRAL CORD

Tennyson disengages from the mist *the astral cord*—the link of some tight-chain in the inmost frame which binds the physical to the astral body.

THE SUBTLE BODIES

Browning, Swinburne, Abercrombie and Charles Williams visualize *three bodies*, the physical, the astral, the mental as the residence of the Ego.

THE REAL SELF

In all the poets, man's final deliverance is out of form. His real Self is the fiery force of the Divine Mind in him—his Monad. This is the Out-Soul beyond the chequered robes in the works of Browning. It is the bodiless existence in the higher mental sphere.

THE PLANES

There are also planes within planes of matter for the Spirit's progress.

In Tennyson's poetry man is moving in aeonian evolution through all the spheres. For Browning his passage is through the "successive zones" of air, life expanding in "unlimited series". Mr. Williams describes the planes as the "high towns within eternity".

Each plane has its conditions and its inhabitants. The people in the astral world, Planetary Spirits in the "depth of unguessed space", the Lords of Karma, materialize in the writings of Hardy and Byron. The whole heavenly hierarchy, from the first seraph downwards, move by in Mr. Williams's verse as the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

COSMIC THOUGHT

All the bodies and the spheres, the "choir of heaven and the furniture of earth", are the emanation of Cosmic Thought. Mind has the power to make the illusion of substance. The whole of reality is the expression of the Cosmic Will.

THE WORLD-SOUL

Finally out of the immensity of phenomenal existence, emerges the World-Soul. Hardy exhibits It as

a Material Being, body and mind, exercising the function of Will. Abercrombie shows It evolving life and form through acts of imagination. Williams unfolds It as Love; Bridges as the Spirit of Beauty.

THE MYSTIC VISION OF POETRY

The poet has the eye of the mystic. For him the unseen is seen. The subtle intuition, lit by the psychic illumination within him, reveals in the apparent emptiness of space, the complex bodies, the planes of interpenetrating matter, and the Spirit or Out-Soul in all things to be the manifestation of one Primordial Self. The mystery of the invisible is reduced to its primal simplicity—the mystery of the Cosmic Mind.

THE UNNAMABLE

What rhythm may fathom It? What sound may utter It? What thought may encompass It? Expression by the act of expressing brings in the sense of limit. The Infinite by its nature is beyond the grasp of the finite.

Yet there are stirring centres in the psyche of man which give by the intuitive glimpse hints of the Creator and His creation.

THE DIVINE IMAGINATION

The poetic act may be a symbol of the Divine act.

As the poet prefigures in his mind, character, plot and scenery of his drama, so the All-Self in the silent recesses of Being fashions by imagination Individuality and the stage where Individuality plays its part. The worlds visible and invisible, and the countless

Spirits therein, are the representation of the Divine idea. The nature of Cosmic Thought is unknowable. It is more melodious than the sound of lute or lyre; deeper than the unplumbed depths of mind; stronger than the sea in storm; purer than the hills at morning; rarer than the exhalations of the dewfall and the dawn.

THE DIVINE IMAGERIES

As poetic imageries burn in the singer's brain, so the fires of the Divine imagination kindle, ceaselessly, fresh forms of life. As the characters of the poet are portions of the mind that gave them birth and are yet independent of It, so every creature is in the All-Self and yet independent of It.

THE SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION STABLE

The Spiritual Organization, dimly felt and distantly known, is stable and self-assured in its operations. It is constituted of the delicatest equilibrium. It has one limitation and one only—the fact of Its perfection. Being perfect, how should It become more perfect? Being all-aware, how should It grow to more awareness? How should It expand, develop, live? It abdicates its sceptre, crown and kingdom. That which was perfect, by the act of its own imagination, becomes imperfect. That which was One appears as many. It prepares the dream-states of experience to evolve the consciousness of life.

THE LIMITATION OF FORM

The first act of the Cosmic Imagination is to limit itself by form. It divides itself up into multitudinous

units of manifestation. These are the Monads of the mineral, the plant, the animal and of all invisible life. Each Monad is the Divine image formed by the All-Self.

THE NECESSITY OF FORM

This limitation of shape is necessary. The Infinite presence, stretching vast and boundless, seeks the retreat of form to realize the nature of Its existence. It requires individualization. Save for this it would be a blank featureless diffusion of Being. So It fashions the concrete, enters the concrete, evolves through the concrete. The Immensity of things gains contours by which It reveals the Infinite.

THE ILLUSION OF INDIVIDUALITY

In the second step, the All-Self creates the illusion of Individuality.

The personal unit or Monad is conscious. Its consciousness is limited by its body and by its mind.

THE BODY OF THE MONAD

By its body it has a defined area of perception. The Monad of man is responsive, for the most part, to the impressions received through the physical senses. The Monad of the mineral, the plant, and the animal have different structures through which they view the scenic succession of life. Each Monad by reason of its bodily frame is centred in itself. It thinks itself to be separate from everything. The sense of isolation is necessary for the construction of the personal evolution of the Monad.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE MONAD

The third step is the limitation of environment. The Monads build, by their varying powers of inference, their individual surroundings. The outer environment, as we have already seen, is never directly contacted. It is built inferentially by the perceiver. The objective world of the bird, the fish and the man are all different. They are the impressions of their surroundings derived from their individual perceiving apparatus. Just as a camera of a particular size and range, under particular light and at a particular speed, takes one type of picture; so the eye of each Monad forms through its interpretations, the region in which it lives.

THE COMMON WORLDS OF THE MONADS

Just as the inferences and the receiving structures of each class of Monads are similar, their objective worlds are similar. As man has a specific type of body and inferential process, he has a common world.

THE LIFE-CONDITIONS OF THE MONAD

The fourth step is the creation of conditions of life, variety of stimuli and variety of responses, for the evolution of Individuality.

The human experience is born of contrast. There is good and there is evil, there is order and there is chaos, there is life and there is death. All these are the stimuli for the advance of the spirit of man. Evil is necessary that good may be done, pain needful that

pain may be relieved, poverty desirable that charity may be dispensed. The halls of justice would not exist except for crime, hospitals except for sickness. Good and evil are the lights and shadows on the human screen out of which springs the animation of the life of man.

ALL IS ILLUSION

Yet the scenery of Individuality, this drama of the sleeping and the waking moment, is illusory.

The world of the Monad is built by its imagination, and is therefore appearance. The body of the Monad being a part of its interpreted environment is also illusory. Both the body and the surroundings of the Monad are the state of its consciousness. It is its faculty of awareness which builds the idea of body and mind. There is no real outer or inner world. The outer and the inner are both the product of its consciousness.

The consciousness of the Monad is not ultimate. It is also appearance. It is the construction of the Divine imagination.

The body of the Monad is an illusion, the environment of the Monad is an illusion, the consciousness of the Monad is an illusion. The Thought of the Universe thinking of itself in separateness is the only reality.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MONADS

The tensions between the forces of good and evil are the stimuli which rouse the awareness of the local unit. This consciousness of personality—the local

focus and the local view—is evolved by the hindrances of the system. It is the ultimate aim of creation that this cherished product of its illusions the Individuality, born of the errors of perspective, may advance in the strength of its selfhood through grade after grade of material life, through states of substance finer and finer, to where mind and matter merge into the experience of the system itself.

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE MONADS

The Individuality of the Monads creates, maintains, and expands the consciousness of the Absolute.

The awareness of the All-Self is generated by its imaginative movement in putting forth the Monads into manifestation. Its consciousness begins with this action, lives in this action, and continues through this action. A pause in the creative act would involve the All-Self in the darkness of Non-Being.

It is also through the Monads that It preserves its equilibrium. The Monads face danger and death in the plane of appearance. Shocks are given them that they may be proof to shock. Obstructions are devised that they may remove obstructions. Confusion is arranged that they may undo confusion. The system learns stability from the instability of the Monads, learns power from the failure of power in the scenes of appearance.

The illusory plane of the Monads is the experimental laboratory of the Absolute.

THE ALL-SELF EVOLVES THROUGH THE MONADS

The All-Self is evolving through the experience of its units. The Monads caught in the mesh of limitations struggle for freedom. They escape from one field of perception to another. Ever they find fresh regions of release, ever new territory of restrictions. The system enlargens its consciousness through the upward strivings of the Monad. To annihilate the struggle of Individuality is to annihilate the supreme consciousness.

LIFE LEARNING OF ITS VALUE

Life is learning from tears the value of tearlessness, living in shadows to judge the worth of light, dying in order to know itself free of death. Poetry is the cry of its spirit, reverberating the universal rhythm: "I am I no longer, Self is Self no more". It is the intuition of mind speaking aloud that the body is the bondage of matter necessary for the present evolution of man.

END OF THE VISION

So the vision has run its race from light to light and returns whence it began. From Keats to Bridges, from beauty unto beauty, it has passed in full circle. Such must be its racing for ever and for ever. The wonder of the searcher is not in the goal reached, but in the aim unattained and unfulfilled—aspiration ever, achievement meagre, and The Sought lurking far 'off on the horizon within and always out of grasp.

POETRY THE ECHO OF REALITY

A great poem is the echo of a higher reality. The poet's mind is sensitively in tune through inspiration with the finest vibrations of Being. If the resonance seems distorted in transit, the disturbance is due to the distance of the sphere whence the music filters to earth. Just as light travelling from foreign stars unburdens here the mysteries of its beams, so the poet, alighting on our orb, unloads his wares that are strange to sight and unbelievable to mind.

THE VAGUENESS OF POETRY

The cloud that overhangs poetry is not of his making: it is rather the demand of our normal existence that all messages be given in the restricted code of limited perspectives. The cryptogram of life which poetry construes does not admit of easy deciphering in our daily terms. Poetry is striving to say what in the main is the message of the present-day science. It is our impossible that is possible, it is our certainty that is unsure.

REALITY BEYOND CONJECTURE

Reality overleaps our most daring conjectures. Indeed there is no conjecture, sufficiently bold or overwhelming, that may express its wonders. This is not merely the faith of poetry; it is its direct perception of the actual. The vision of song is no more vague than the vision of every other department of knowledge. The indistinctness, where-ever that is present, is due to the magnitude of reality and not to the method of poetic advance.

SCIENCE AND REALITY

Examine science which is the most exact branch of human investigation. What are her premises? Science walks with optic glass and spectrum: she is loudly articulate with wave-probabilities, quantum jumps, space-time continuums, and electromagnetic theories. The electron and the atom, unseen and for the most part untracked in the great invisible, are the hypotheses of famous men. We have no facts but only interpretations of fact.

Here in words of unambiguous clarity, Mr. Planck states the limitation which Science has to face: "The ideal aim before the mind of the physicist is to understand the external world of reality. But the means which he uses to attain this end are what are known in physical science as measurements, and these give no direct information about external reality. They are only a register or representation of reactions to physical phenomena. As such they contain no explicit information and have to be interpreted."*

This is a frank and fair estimate of the position by an acknowledged authority. I am not, however, seeking to minimize the great and concrete achievement of Science in the twentieth century: rather we must applaud and praise the effort and the sacrifice of those men who have, through material instruments and rational inferences of mind, brought into light the faint adumbrations of Reality. I am merely stressing the fact that all human knowledge has to come to the impasse of poetry—that is the impasse of hypothesis.

Science is dumb at the vital point of enquiry, the nature

* *Where Is Science Going?* p. 24 (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

and condition of the Spirit of Man. Poetry has her own hypothesis as to this. Where all is assumption, why should not the assumption of poetry be given a chance? The question is not whether a particular hypothesis is correct or not. In the present state of human ignorance, the question is rather whether it works or not. Practicability is the test. The hypothesis of Science is accepted because it achieves results.

The faith of poetry is the faith of Spirit. The issue is a clear one: does that fail in action? When, as by the agency of an earthquake, the temples and towers of wisdom are over-toppling; when the pronouncements of religion are at the cross-roads; when nations are preparing for arms; when all order and systems are crumbling to the dust: try that faith and see its worth. This state of things is not new: it is the normal condition of humanity; it was so in the palaeolithic age, is so now, and shall be so hereafter.

THE POETIC CONFIDENCE

Life without the hope and sight of the poetic understanding is a labyrinth from which there is no exit. But if you have the quiet confidence of the poetic state, if you believe as the great men of the past have always believed in the assurance of the inspirational mood, there is no need for fear or trembling. All that is destroyed, when dissolution is at hand, is the form of illusion which is confused with reality. The outward semblances of things do pass. But the Immaterial Essence that forms the aspirations, the affections, the person—yea the whole dynamics and dimensions of man—is locked safe from harm. It is

the scaffolding that falls: the building is revealed. Such is the insight of poetry into the perils that enmesh the human doom. Alas! man was born for the palace, but lives in the dead hut of habit; and he will not understand the fineness of this perception.

THE STABILITY OF THE SOUL

Is it not worth while kindling the desire for the stability of the soul, even if it be not there? If illusion does the work, the illusion must be grasped. How does the rainbow form in the arch of the sky? How does the lucent lamp of the glow-worm burn in the dark? How are Mercury and Venus and Mars born of the gaseous cloud? The process wonder-worth is illusion. Why reject imagination, if imagination make the dream-goal of our desire? The poet's faith, even if erring, works.

Now change the alternative. Suppose that inspiration, unaware, has brushed by with airy wings, the boundaries of truth. Suppose that the plummet of rhythm has drawn from the depths, dimly and darkly, the measure of Reality. Suppose song has soared not to the heaven of fancy but fact. See the vastness of the implications. The horizon of man alters. The landscape of his life, chequered by impending storms, brief as the wick of the candle, wayward as the breath of the wind, becomes from a solitary and tragic transit the progressive unfoldment of experience; heralding at the end the ecstatic moment of Eternity.

THE TRUTH OF THE POETIC VISION

Shall I show you, as in a glass, the truth that the

stammering tongue of Poetry is voicing through her visions? By the upward urge of inspiration, she passes over the narrow demesne of eye and ear. From her watch-post in the invisible she has strange sights, hints, and intuitions. What do you think she sees? The roar of the water of life, swollen and in full flood, stayed by earth's obstruction. Never dismayed by the blockage, its vehemence and passion gather fresh pulsations of power. The barriers are adjusted by Nature to yield, at the proper time and place, to the requisite pressure. The life-force is also endowed with the quality of exciting and accelerating its currents. The detention of the artificial boards and planks do not detain the march. Poetry overhead sees a remarkable sight. All the barriers are creaking and cracking and crashing. The sluices are opened at the critical moment, when the volume of life has reached the height of its resounding reverberations. The lock-gates of the Niagara are lifted.

Poetry has not the speech to lisp to you, even in her delicatest cadences, what she beholds beyond in the dim distance. She anticipates that the mass and majesty of foam and flood, withheld by long suspense, overleap the abyss; creating, through the shock of gathered power, the consciousness and the beauty and the marvel of the soul in its awareness. Thus out of a furious fashioning is wrought the first compact unit of radiant energy—the substance of the soul's self. Imagine this power operating upon the universal dimension—stars and suns and systems all passing through life's probation. Such is the poet's glimpse and trembling intuition of things as they are.

THE QUEST FINISHED

The quest is ended. The Light shines, if you will see it. The gloom before the pathway is realistic: realism is necessary to illusions that they may work. The darkness of doubt is there, to set in motion the wheels of Faith. The maladjustment of earth is necessary to give scope to our power of readjustment. The rhythmic beats are disjointed that the ear of the musician may join them. The strings of the cello snap that the cellist may change the instrument. The bands of the body break that the soul may issue thence.

LIFE A PASSAGE

Life is an abrupt and hastened passage just that Eternity may be prized. Our faith lies in the instability, the insecurity, the certain dissolution of the present order. Would you have it otherwise? Perpetuate to time without end the present pain and pang? The most helpless, abject, and pathetic pessimism is the desire to prolong for ever a preparatory state of life. But to break that dream, so vast, so various, so beautiful—to bring that to dust and ashes—herein is the regret of man mellowed to a sadness beyond the range of rhyme.

But that regret restores the transcendental value of things, of the air that the body breathes without purchase, of the summer springs that slake the thirst without the buying. That thought sets our estimate of life, not by the roubles and the lire of international currency, but by the gold-clause of the soul that stands fast against the breach of international faith.

THE POET'S DREAM

Suppose too that more wonder and wealth and worth are waiting and stretching out their arms—yes, pleading to you to take from Nature's urn, loiteringly and lovingly, all the profusions of her realm. This is not a fanciful possibility. Let us weigh, without passion or prejudice, the signs and promises of the poet's dream. Let us know in our hearts and carry in our lives this confidence: that there is no surer illusion than death. Indeed there is no training in man's evolution so beneficial for the shaping of his soul as the idea of the cancelment of his personality. By the sense of his supposed annihilation, his longing to live is rendered doubly dear. The value of life is by the measure of its loss. Death is the absurd error—the great disciplinary thought. Let us remember and bring to mind that side by side with the harshness of its presence is the original imperious ordainment of Creation—Love that bathes and blesses, with her healing beams, the torn tissues of the body of man. *Love is the ethereal manifestation of the spiritual reality in our flesh.* She fends and fences us with her walls. In her arms you and I are safely sheltered from the shrill blasts and the cruel trumpetings of experience.

INDEX

All references are to pages

- Adyar, 17
Arnold, 17, 79
Arundale, Dr., 184
- Baraduc, Dr., 34
Barrett, Sir W., 34
Berkeley, Bishop, 79
Besant, Annie, 17, 119-20, 123 *note*,
138-9, 154 *note*, 197, 199 *note*,
206-7
Blavatsky, H., 50 *note*, 81 *note*
- Coleridge, S. T., 35
Crookes, Sir William, 34
Cummins, G., 173 *note*
- Davis, 42
Descartes, 79
Dirac, 79
- Eddington, Sir Arthur, 26, 27, 78,
209 *note*
Edmonds, Mr. and Mrs. Henry, 18
- Fukurai, M., 77
- Hodson, G., 40, 77, 85-6
Hume, D., 79
- Imam, Sir Ali, 9
Imam, Hasan, 9, 18
Imam, Imdad, 9
- Jeans, Sir James, 25, 26, 27, 209
- Jinarajadasa, C. J., 88
- Kilner, Dr., 35, 54, 55, 56, 60 *note*
- Leadbeater, C. W., 71, 106, 130, 166
Lynam, Mr. and Mrs., 18
- Malta, Dr., 34
- Owen, 65 *note*
- Planck, Dr., 25, 79, 225
Pope, C. G., 18
Powell, A., 49 *note*, 116 *note*, 122,
163 *note*, 183, 201 *note*
- Ross, W. D., 18
Rutherford, Lord, 24, 210 *note*
- Scarff, Dr., 153-4
Schrödinger, Dr., 79
Sinnnet, 68 *note*
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 11, 17
Tod, 17, 18
- Versechoyle, 66
- Watters, Dr., 34
Wells, H. G., 10
- Yram, 60, 61, 68-9, 94
- Zellat, Dr., 34



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