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Τακτικού καθηγητοῦ  
τῆς ἔδρας Βύρωνος Ἀγγλικῆς Φιλολογίας

## KEATS AND THE TETRAKTYS

*Practise thoroughly all these things; meditate on  
them well; thou ought'st to love them with all thy Heart.  
'Tis they that will put these in the Way of Divine Virtue.  
I swear it by him who has transmitted into our  
Soul the sacred Quaternion.  
The Source of Nature, whose Course is Eternal.*

THE GOLDEN VERSES OF PYTHAGORAS

### I

I have suggested in a previous paper that the temple «complete and true in sacred custom» of *Endymion* II is identical with the «fane in some untrodden region of my mind» of the *Ode to Psyche*. Keats had a strong sense of the traditional, the customary; we can hardly imagine Shelley, or even Coleridge, using the epithet «sacred» in such a context. In these matters, as in many others, Keats balances the excesses of his contemporaries. He was a searcher for tradition. He was an affirmer, against Shelley, of the sanctity of custom and the authority of the *true* King; against Coleridge, he sought for wisdom in Eastern directions from which Coleridge's narrow Christian orthodoxy drew back alarmed.

These «againsts» must not be taken literally: Keats was not against anything, not even the dogmatism of Wordsworth which he could not accept – for this attitude too has a right to exist. He agreed with Blake that «everything that lives is holy». Holy, sacred – the words recur in his poems and letters. «The holiness of the heart's affections»; the «sacred fire» of Pan's altar; Endymion's reverence, when

*to his ears*

*Silence was music from the holy spheres;*

in *Hyperion*, «The sacred seasons might not be disturbed»; and a few lines earlier in the *Ode to Psyche*, he regrets the ancient days

*When holy were the haunted forest boughs,  
Holy the air, the water, and the fire.*

Those days are gone: the primeval times of holiness or wholeness when man, integrated to his environment, participated in and worshipped the unity of all things. We can see, in reading Keats, that it was the natural order that was «holy» for him; yet not the natural order of Newton or Locke, but the totality seen, as with Blake, «not with but through the eye», accepted in its «minute particulars» yet cognisant, in Keats's phrase, of «the abysm-birth of elements». We see in Keats a truly extraordinary, because wholly instinctive, attempt to return to a prescientific view of the universe. To return—that is, personally and non-argumentatively to find there *his* living reality. Not, like Blake or Wordsworth, to argue the matter out, to condemn and chide (although that had needed doing too) but to *realise* in his own being the holiness of life.

I need not stress this basic point; it is evident enough from the Letters alone, and may now safely be regarded as axiomatic. But Keats was first and foremost a poet, and some may feel that the Letters have been exploited more than enough. It is from the verse that I shall illustrate, in what follows, my contention that Keats was through and through a traditionalist; yet not a traditionalist in any direction that would have spelled sense to his contemporaries. There are traditions and traditions: some of them more opposed to the unity-of-all-things than any simple individualism could be. For there is an *ecclesia* of Urizen as well as of Los. Keats was concerned to get back behind all human traditions to the primeval doctrine literally handed down, not from man to man, but from God to Man, in the first age of the world. This to him, we may say quite certainly, was the meaning of Greek myth. He was not aware, as Blake was, how the rationalising spirit of the Greeks had distorted the Everlasting Gospel; he was more aware than Blake was that the Greek mythology (as distinguished from Greek philosophy) has preserved precious fragments of the truth. He knew far better than Wordsworth how myth arose. Shelley's Pan and Arethusa are embroideries, Keats's are part of the basic warp and woof.

## II

Wordsworth has often been praised for the account he gives in Book IV of *The Excursion* of the origin of myth. Let us look at this celebrated passage. It is the Wanderer who is speaking :

« Once more to distant ages of the world  
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts  
The face which rural solitude might wear  
To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.  
— In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched  
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
With music lulled his indolent repose :  
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds  
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,  
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,  
A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,  
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.  
The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye  
Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart  
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed  
That timely light, to share his joyous sport :  
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,  
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,  
Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes  
By echo multiplied from rock or cave,  
Swept in the storm of chase ; as moon and stars  
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,  
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked  
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked  
The Naiad. Sunbeams, upon distant hills  
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train  
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed  
Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly.  
The Zephyrs fanning, as they passed, their wings,  
Lacked not, for love, fair objects whom they wooed



*With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,  
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,  
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth  
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side;  
And, sometimes, intermixed with stirring horns  
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard—  
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood  
Of gamesome Deities; or Pan himself  
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God!*»

To Keats's reading of the Hymn to Pan in *Endymion* Wordsworth had responded with «A pretty piece of paganism!» We know from his Letters Keats's opinion of this passage from *The Excursion*: it might be summarised as «a dull piece of rationalism». Indeed, it is difficult to see how this account of the origin of mythology is any advance on the spirit of Darwin's *Economy of Vegetation*; in diction, it is a mass of eighteen century clichés. The tone is artificial and patronising: «the unenlightened swains of ancient Greece» in «indolent repose», aided by fancy (not, we note, imagination) saw things that were not there. That is all there is to it.

Not thus did the ancients, not thus did Blake and Keats see the matter. The unenlightened swain of ancient times is a man endowed not with a more hair-trigger fancy, but with more «enlarged and numerous senses» than modern man. Let us remember that the Greek of the fifth century is only at the beginning of what the Indians call the *Kali-Yuga*, the fourth and last and worst of the «ages» which go to make up a cosmic cycle: only at the beginning of the age of which we, today, are nearing the end. He must still have possessed some of the «expanded faculties» which characterised the nobler age that had gone before. Consequently it is no «occultism» to suppose that he was capable of perceiving beings who to us have become simply invisible. To believe that he could so perceive is, of course, to take a view of history entirely contrary to the current dogmas of evolution and progress; it is to hold to a cyclic theory of universal change, and to throw our gaze back far beyond the limits of recorded history. We know that Blake held this view (which is a basic element in the primitive tradition); there are indications that Keats held it too. Take, for example, these lines which immediately precede the discovery of the «mimic temple» in *Endymion*:

*Chilly and numb  
His bosom grew, when first he, far away,  
Descried an orb'd diamond, set to fray  
Old Darkness from his throne; 'twas like the sun  
Uprisen o'er chaos: and with such a stun  
Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,  
He saw not fiercer wonders – past the wit  
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those  
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,  
Will be its high remembrancers: who they?  
The mighty ones who have made eternal day  
For Greece and England.*

The phrase «when this planet's sphering time doth close» gives exact impression to the cyclic nature of cosmic existence; or rather to its conclusion, as «the sun uprisen o'er chaos» adequately expresses its inauguration.

Wordsworth's account of myth is simply this: that «unenlightened» human fancy, working on the forms of nature, gives rise to illusions. These illusions are not unbeneficent, for they are exteriorisations of the moral sense and lead men to a love of Nature:

*Diverting evil purposes, remorse  
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,  
Or pride of heart abating: and, whene'er  
For less important ends those phantoms move,  
Who would forbid them, if their presence serve –  
On thinly-peopled mountains and wild heaths,  
Filling a space, else vacant – to exalt  
The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers?*

Passing over the really extraordinary consideration that Wordsworth puts between parentheses, what have we here but a characteristic mixture of moralising and sentimentality? And indeed the two things, from the viewpoint of primitive tradition, are indistinguishable. The Everlasting Gospel knows nothing of morality; morality arises, as Blake and the *Tao Te Ching* alike insist, when the Great Way has been lost<sup>1</sup>. And the Great Way is something revealed, not

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1. Cf. Waley, *The Way and Its Power*, ch. XVII, with *The Everlasting Gospel* I and II.

something constructed. It is a *datum* from God to Man in the first ages of the world, guarded by «sacred custom», and expressed in the forms of art. It is not a human thing at all. Or if it is «human», then only in the sense of Blake's «Divine Humanity». Neither reason nor fancy has a part in it; and if we use the word «imagination», we must use it in Blake's sense rather than Coleridge's.

It may be thought that I have wandered into speculations which are alien to Keats's mind, however native they may be to Blake's. But this is not so. Keats never speaks out on such matters as Blake does, never takes up an expository tone: is content, rather, not to preach the Everlasting Gospel but to allow it to permeate his life as a man and an artist. This we shall see as we go on. But there is one passage, and a very important one, where Keats does speak out (though still in his quiet, allusive way) on this very subject of myth. I fancy that when he wrote it he had the Wordsworth lines in mind. It comes in the second book of *Endymion*, and it describes the genesis of the legend itself:

*'tis a ditty*

*Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told  
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;  
And then the forest told it in a dream  
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam  
A poet caught as he was journeying  
To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling  
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,  
And after, straight in that inspired place  
He sang the story up into the air,  
Giving it universal freedom. There  
Has it been ever sounding for those ears  
Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers  
Yon sentinel stars; and he who listens to it  
Must surely be self-doom'd or he will rue it:  
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,  
Made fiercer by a fear lest any part  
Should be engulfed in the eddying wind.  
A much as here is penn'd doth always find  
A resting-place, thus much comes clear and plain;  
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane –  
And 'tis but echoed from departing sound,*



*That the fair visitant at last unwound  
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.  
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.*

«Thus the *tradition* of the gusty deep». What is Keats doing here? He is telling us, through the symbolism of the four elements (which are not only the four elements but also, by Hermetic transposition, the Four Zoas or Faces of God) that the vital legend has its origin in the purely superhuman sphere. Sound, in the primitive tradition, is the first of all things; it is «a cavern wind» (*air*) that tells the «ditty» to «a forest old» (*earth*); finally, by bathing in the lake – *water* is a universal symbol for the non-rational, the unconscious – the poet on his way to the shrine of Phœbus (*fire*) sings it «in that inspired place» back «up into the air, Giving it universal freedom». Universal freedom—for two reasons: first, because the cycle is completed, from air to air, from sound to sound through the four elements; and, second, because the doctrine as expressed in the poet's words is now available to begin its beneficent work in the minds of all who can hear and understand.

What that beneficent work is can only be hinted at here by saying that the object of the Great Tradition is always and everywhere realisation, enlightenment and transformation: whatever myth is integral must contribute to this end. For the moment, we can at least see the importance Keats attaches to the correct transmission of the legend; using words, indeed, which must seem exaggerated to most readers. «The legend cheers Yon sentinel stars»; its significance is not purely human, it links macrocosm and microcosm. It is so precious that men fear it may be mutilated or lost. But this fear is vain: «as much as here is penn'd» will always be available; the suggestion being that behind the legend expressed in words are reaches of significance altogether inexpressible.

### III

Throughout the course of this study I cannot avoid constant correlations of Keats and Blake. Indeed, the basic interest lies just there. Why did Keats take so eagerly to the Greeks? Why did Blake reject them? Here we have two poets, among the Romantics the two great untaught poets, both needing a mythology, yet satisfy-

ing their needs in opposite directions. Both of them are spontaneous, immensely open to life in all its forms; the one of them coming at the dawn of the new age in English poetry, the other gilding its sunset. Blake utterly rejects the Greeks: for him, they are nationalists, militarists, deformers of the primeval doctrine. «The Gods of Greece and Egypt were Mathematical Diagrams – See Plato's Works». Keats, on the contrary, feels himself most at home in the old Greek world; some of his loveliest verses have for theme Greek art, Greek Greek life, Greek myth.

I have suggested elsewhere that while Blake's attitude was, on his own premisses, fully justified, it was neither complete nor altogether profound. To cut off from the Greeks as he did is to separate oneself from the main stream of Western culture. It is true that there are other streams, running mostly underground; and Blake was right to dip his pitcher into them. Keats, too, shows a remarkable interest in Hermeticism, in the Hindu doctrines, in the native Hyperborean tradition, in the current Celtomania. But Keats showed a more balanced view than Blake in detaching what is primary in Greek thought from what is secondary<sup>1</sup>, in going to the primitive layers of myth, of epic, of art rather than to the later developments of philosophy and rationalism. Of course Blake was unlucky in his introduction to Greece, and especially in his introduction to Homer. Keats, as we all know, discovered Homer in Chapman's translation and was enthralled; poor Blake read the *Iliad*, in Cowper's translation, under Haley's direction, and was bored. In Plato he saw only the moralising and the body-soul dualism; he missed the noumenal world and the praise of archaic, non representational art. Greek myth came to him filtered through eighteenth century poetic convention and the vignettes of Stothard and Bartolozzi. Thus he saw only (and quite rightly) that it was a humanisation, a vulgarisation, of the archaic metaphysical symbols; he was not prepared to look for the original doctrine beneath. But this is what Keats did. He revived Greek myth by restoring to it the noetic, universal qualities which he perceived it must originally have possessed, and which existed, quite apart from myth, in the intuitions of his own

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1. Here I take up a position quite opposed to that of such Hellenists as Livingstone, whose *The Greek Genius and Its Meaning to Us* expressly discounts the orther-worldly elements such as Orphism which I should judge basic.



mind. A genuine fusion took place, we may say, between his metaphysical grasp of things and the ancient legends which for so long had been used in English poetry as ornament and «machinery».

Keats, as we have seen, links up myth with natural forces, with elements and seasons, with planets and things that grow, change and decay; not in Wordsworth's Golden-Boughish manner, but by virtue of an analogical vision that looks through myth and natural order to the noumenon that lies behind. His view is pre-Socratic, pre-animistic. Coleridge would have understood it. The «Gutch Memorandum Book» has for its sixteenth item the project to write «Hymns to the Sun, the Moon and the Elements—six hymns»: a project which haunted Coleridge through his life and which he never realised. Item 25 runs: «Hymn to Dr Darwin—in the manner of the Orphics». And among the jumble of item 27 is this: «There is not a new or strange opinion—Truth returned from banishment—a river run under ground— — — fire beneath embers». I shall not try to make too much of these notes; they are cryptic enough, and the main development of Coleridge lay in another direction altogether. Yet the theme is a permanent one in Coleridge—and perhaps a more integral one than we realise, or than he himself, at a later date, would have cared to realise. The point for us, however, is to see how close to Coleridge's project are such remarks in Keats as this: «the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things...», or this, from *Endymion* III:

If he utterly  
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds  
The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds;  
If he explore all forms and substances  
Straight homeward to their symbol essences;  
He shall not die.

Nature, as Coleridge affirms in the Notebooks, is a cryptogram:

*In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were a s k i n g for, a symbolical language for something within me that already and for ever exists, than observing anything new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awaking of*

*a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature. It is still interesting as a word—a symbol. It is Ἀβγος the Creator, and the Evolver!*

Now this attitude is recognisably the Hermetic anagogy, and leads us straight to that theme of transformation which must be the term of our enquiry.

We are not there yet, however. We have not touched on the correspondences of Keats's space-time notion with those of Blake and Coleridge; and there is still much to be said, in this connection, of Keats's debt to the Greeks. We do not know exactly how close that debt was, or even what opportunities Keats's had of coming in contact with pre-Socratic thinking on these matters. Probably very little. To his contemporaries, «Greek» still spelled Plato and Aristotle. But there is one link at least: Thomas Taylor the Platonist, whose works were known to Keats and whose interests were precisely of this non-rationalist, esoteric kind. We can therefore, while on the whole restricting our suggestions to ifs and perhapses and buts, accept tentatively the idea that through Taylor, he had access to a world of ideas intensely congenial to him<sup>1</sup>.

A second and even more hypothetical link might have been Dacier's *Life of Pythagoras, with his Symbols and Golden Verses*, a work published towards the close of the seventeenth century but still, in its English translation, curiously popular in Keats's day. I lay no stress whatever on this possibility, but mention it merely to show that certain ideas were in the air and to introduce by an apt quotation the theme of the quaternary which is the main subject of the present paper. For it is within the Pythagorean system of numbers that the quaternary, so vital a basis of the Far Eastern tradition, finds its characteristic expression for Western thought.

## VI

«It would be no easy matter», writes Coleridge in *Notes on English Divines*<sup>2</sup>, «to find a tolerably competent individual who more

1. Coleridge too avows that 'dreamers, from Thoth the Egyptian to Taylor the English pagan, are my darling studies'. This in a letter of November 1796. A little later he asks Thelwall to send him a list of books including 'Iamblichus de Mysteriis', Proclus, and Porphyry.

2. Nonesuch Coleridge, p. 465.

venerates the writings of Waterland than I do, and long have done. But still in how many pages do I not see reason to regret, that the total idea of the  $4 = 3 = 1$ , — of the adorable Tetraktys, eternally self-manifested in the Triad, Father, Son and Spirit, — was never in its cloudless unity present to him». Coleridge's regret might be extended to cover more than Waterland, more perhaps than the whole bench of bishops. The adorable Tetraktys<sup>1</sup>, «the formula of God», is hardly familiar to the run of Christians; theologians may think of it, if at all, with memories of Gnostic attempts to smuggle Holy Wisdom into the Godhead. Yet its provenance is immensely old and it exists in a bewildering variety of symbols. It is the four feet of the tortoise that supports the world; it is the four Zoas of Blake's mythology; in scriptural form, it is the Four Vedas; in human life, the four stages. Cosmologically, we find the four seasons and the four elements and the four cardinal points. Jung has tracked it down as the basic pattern of the human psyche. *Ut supra, ita ut infra*. But for its purest, its mathematical form we shall do well to go to the Pythagorean writings<sup>2</sup>.

In his *Life of Pythagoras*, Dacier stresses several ideas that we shall find interested Keats greatly: the rule of silence, the value of the morning hours for contemplation, the use of hieroglyphics and symbols. «He imitated the Hieroglyphick Style: For to denote and signifie a God, the Creator of all Beings, he took sometimes the *Quaternion*, or number of four, sometimes the *Vnite*, or Number of one: and to denote Matter, or this visible World, he took that of *Two*, as I shall shall explain hereafter<sup>3</sup>. Keats's interest in hieroglyphics and in the Egyptian generally (from whom Pythagoras is said to have got his wisdom) is evident from *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. «Lastly he imitated above all the Symbolical Style, which having

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1. Coleridge seems to be using the term loosely: the Pythagorean *τετρακτύς* is, accurately, the first four numbers and their sum as the whole (1 plus 2 plus 3 plus 4 equal 10).

2. The woefully sketchy treatment here will, it is hoped, be made up in a forthcoming book on the Hermetic tradition. I had to remember that the present paper is an essay on Keats.

3. All these ideas Keats might have found in Taylor, and certainly did find in Davies (*Celtic Researches*); if I quote here from Dacier (1707 English edition) it is because nowhere else do I find them so conveniently summarised.



neither the Obscurity of Hieroglyphicks, nor the Clearness of ordinary Discourse, he thought very proper to inculcate the greatest and most important Truths: For a Symbol, by its double Sense, the proper and the figurative, teaches two things at once; and nothing pleases the Mind more than the double Image it represents at one View. Besides, as *Demetrius Phalereus* has observ'd, a Symbol has much Gravity and Force, and in its Brevity is contain'd a Sting that tickles even while it pricks, and will not easily let us forget it».

Dacier goes on to explain how Pythagoras held the traditional division of the human continuum into body, soul, and spirit (or mind); how his object was to render the mind capable of divine knowledge; and how he «purg'd» the mind «by the Knowledge of Truth». «To this purpose he had Recourse to Means that were Analogical to those he made use of, for the *subtile Chariot of the Soul*. These Means were first the Mathematical Sciences, which answer'd to the Purifications, and to the Initiations.....». It is clear from what follows that Dacier has some idea of the nature of the Pythagorean mathematics – that is to say, of its essential distinction from the secular mathematics of modern times, and its links with astronomy and physics (again, archaic sciences the modern representatives of which are so in hardly more than name). Thus the Quaternion is not the mere *number* four, but the expression of divinity in its four-fold aspect; the strictures of Aristotle apply not to Pythagoras himself but to the disciples who followed him. The basis of the Pythagorean mathematics is the metaphysical idea of *harmony*; and what Dacier has to say here about music will recall a famous quatrain of Keats's:

*Pythagoras had a very particular Opinion concerning Musick, which nevertheless the Masters of that Science, after they have duly weigh'd it, will find just and reasonable. He condemn'd and rejected all Judgment that was made of Musick by the Ear: because, says Plutarch, in the Treatise of Musick, he found the sense of Hearing to be already so weaken'd and decay'd, that it was no longer able to judge aright: He would have Men therefore judge of it by the Understanding, and by the analogical and proportionable Harmony. This in my Opinion was to shew that the Beauty of Musick is independent of the Tune that strikes the Ear, and consists only in the Reason, in the Conformity, and in the Proportions of which the Understanding is the only Judge.*

*As to what he said, that the Sense of Hearing was become weak and impotent, it agrees with this other Assertion of his, that the reason why Men did not hear the Musick of the Universe, was the weakness and imbecility of their Nature, which they had corrupted and suffer'd to degenerate.*

## IV

If such passages remind us on the one hand of *The Merchant of Venice* and the *Tao Tê Ching* («The five sounds dull the ear»), they are of equal importance for the understanding of the *Grecian Urn* and the lines already quoted from *Endymion*.

*to his capable ears  
Silence was musick from the holy spheres.*

Influenced directly by Pythagoras or not, we find Keats groping after a noetic experience in which harmony is *implicit*, but a *harmony of intervals*, a harmony in which the spaces between the notes are more important than the notes themselves. In no other of our poets do we get so intense a feeling as we have in Keats for pure space. Space and silence are there too in Wordsworth: but with him, space is «room», that in which objects exist. For Keats, space has a value of its own. In one of his last poems he associates it with the epithet *crystal*:

*The undisturbed lake has crystal space,*

and perhaps it is not entirely fanciful to assimilate his often-expressed preference for the music of Mozart to this love of the crystalline interval.

Space is not for Keats the locus of objects: but it is the ground of *principles*. Such a statement, with its metaphysical implications, will take a deal of proving; and in so small a body of serious work as Keats left behind him, indications must necessarily be scanty and elusive. Moreover, not only is there no initial grasp of the conception, but even in the last poems when Keats has won his way to a full understanding we must not expect overt statements. The theme permeates the poetry; the poetry is not there as a vesture for the theme.

Pure space, appreciated for itself, its emptiness, its uncontami-

nated snchness, appears in what is believed to be the first published stanza he wrote: the beginning of the *Imitation of Spenser*.

*Now Morning from her orient chamber came,  
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill :  
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,  
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill ;  
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,  
And after parting beds of simple flowers,  
By many streams a little lake did fill,  
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,  
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.*

Note the epithets: untainted, pure, applied to the *source* of the lake, which, though reflecting around its margin the various natural objects, preserves a *middle space* which is a mirror only for the *unclouded* sky. Here at once, though perfectly spontaneously and I am sure unconsciously, is a statement of the One and the Many, the unmanifested ground and the world of phenomena. It is only after this relation has been established that Keats feels himself free to go on, in the succeeding stanzas, to describe the world of bird and beast and flower.

I do not propose to go through the early poems one by one to illustrate my point; they are there for the reader to consult for himself. It will suffice to list my main findings. First, almost a physiological one: Keats's intense delight in the *freedom* of space, the sense of relief in being able to look around, to have an unimpeded view. This, of itself, brings healing. In «I stood tiptoe upon a little hill» he writes:

*There was wide wandering for the greediest eye.  
To peer about upon variety ;  
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,  
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim.*

And in *The Sea* :

*Oh ye ! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tired,  
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea ;  
Oh ye ! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,  
Or fed too much with cloying melody, -  
Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood  
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quired !*



— in which the spatial and harmonic simplicities are neatly juxtaposed. In *Endymion*, Glaucus's ambition is «to be free of all [Ocean's] kingdom», as it is Endymion's to be «Full alchemized and free of space». Secondly, we have the lake or the unclouded sky as the symbol of eternity. The verse epistle *To Charles Cowden Clarke* describe the swan that

*ruffles all the surface of the lake  
In striving from its crystal face to take  
Some diamond water-drops*

— but in vain —

*For down they rush as though they would be free,  
And drop like hours into eternity.*

So, too in the sonnet «To one who has been long in city pent» the day that is ended is

*E'en like the passage of an angel's tear  
That falls through the clear ether silently.*

Thirdly, and most important, is the idea of space as the unmanifested ground of the manifested principles which the Chinese called the Yin and the Yang, and which Keats, in *Hyperion*, calls «the sky-children».

It is, indeed, chiefly to *Hyperion* that we have to go for Keats's full realization of this theme. To feel the clearness of space as an almost physical relief, like Mozart's music after «cloying melodies»; to sink oneself into the emptiness of space as into eternity, to let «the dewdrop slip into the shining sea»: there are great things. But they are still things of the self. To go on, as Keats did, through the travails of experience, to reconcile the One and the Many, is a greater.

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