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Shelley's "Necessity": Greek (Platonic) or British (Empiricist)?

Mind, the ruling power, persuaded necessity to bring the greater part of created things to perfection, and thus and after this manner in the beginning, through necessity made subject to reason, this universe was created.

Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a

'Tis difficult for us to persuade ourselves we were govern'd by necessity, and that 'twas utterly impossible for us to have acted otherwise; the idea of necessity seeming to imply something of force and violence, and contraint, of which we are not sensible.

Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, II, iii, 2

When empiricism, with its emphasis on "sensation" and the primacy of experience, became the dominant mode of thinking in eighteenth-century England, it launched a simultaneous attack upon "imagination" and "reason". The first because it fostered a free, or unlawful, or unreasonable association of ideas not corresponding to the laws of nature; the second, because it had been traditionally recognized as superior to the senses, as the organ of attainment to metempirical cognition. The "reason" of the British Age of Reason refers to the external, or God-imposed law of natural phenomena, rather than the individual's capacity of "actively" ordering its sense-data into a comprehensive and comprehensible pattern. So, in presenting the Reason of Nature of which the human "reason" is a passive reflector and participant in a mechanistic scheme of things, the rationalist tradition completely inverts the Platonic model of reality, by attributing rationality to a "necessity" which necessarily exercises a compulsion upon "reason". Plato poses the problem in a (rhetorical) question during the discussion of the way the primal causes of Limit and Unlimited (another version of "necessity")¹ mix; "Are we to say", Socrates asks,

that the sum of things or what we call this universe is controlled by a

1. This view is also supported by Raphael Demos, who, with some reservations, contends that there is an analogy of use between the two terms: "The Unlimited and the Receptacle seem to play a similar role in the explanation of nature. They are that *upon* which God works in creating a world. And they both seem to express the character of indefiniteness: the Receptacle, by complete *negation*, as the absence of all forms; the Unlimited, by complete *affirmation* — as the confusion of all forms" (*The Philosophy of Plato* [1939; New York: Octagon Books, 1966], p. 9).

power that is irrational and blind, and by mere chance, or on the contrary to follow our predecessors in saying that it is governed by reason and a wondrous regulating intelligence? (*Philebus*, 28d)²

The issue in its complexity and inner contradictions is discussed by Dudley Shapere, who tries to account for the rise of modern rationalism and its indebtedness to or divergence from the rationalism of Plato. His question is "not whether the early modern scientists *thought* of themselves as Platonists: there is abundant evidence that many did take the view that mathematics as the key to nature is basic in Plato's philosophy, and saw themselves as agreeing with Plato on this point, as against the Aristotelians"³. Attempting to find a justification for attributing the epithet "Platonists" to those philosophers because of their sharing with Plato a common reverence for mathematics, Shapere maintains that the appellation is not justified. His argument is based on the *Timaeus*⁴ and Plato's conception of "necessity" — the apparently common term behind Platonic and modern rationalism.

Plato's Necessity (*ἀνάγκη*), he supports, is definitely not *Reason* but *Un-reason*, it is the "Errant Cause", and far from "referring to inexorable scientific law", it is the negation of law and the "antagonist to confront the Demiurge", "restricting the effort of the craftsman to realize his design"; quoting Grote, he undertakes to show the "inversion" suffered by the term in the period of the Enlightenment, in that this "word is now usually understood as denoting what is fixed, permanent, unalterable, knowable beforehand. In the Platonic *Timaeus* it means the very reverse: the indeterminate, the inconstant, the anomalous, that which can be neither understood nor prejudged"⁵. Thus Reason and Necessity rather than being synonyms or even cognate concepts (and powers) in Plato, are in fact antonyms and antagonistic world forces: "That the Demiurge was not powerful enough", Shapere continues, "to impose the domination of Reason, of Form, of Law, on Necessity is supported not only by the general tenor of the *Timaeus* (and,

2. All references to Plato's text are to *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

3. "Descartes and Plato", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963), 572.

4. Paul Friedländer gives a summary of Plato's ontological complex in this dialogue in the following manner: "The *Timaeus* describes the origin of the world as a function of the forms entering into physical stuff. The perfect form is both represented in and tarnished by physical matter. In the whole and in every part, *Nous* and *Ananke* co-operate; the world is a mixture resulting from this combination", also reflected in the constitution of the world soul which "is a mixture of the 'same' and the 'other'" (*Plato: An Introduction*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff [1958; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969], pp. 205-206).

5. "Descartes and Plato", p. 573.

indeed, of other Platonic writings), but also by specific passages"; far from being identified with Law and Order, Necessity or the "erratic" ontological principle acts in a random, disorderly, and unpredictable manner. This reluctance of Necessity to comply with lawful authority, which I would describe as "Form-resistance", makes the work of the Forming Agent problematic, as at "every stage of his attempt to 'produce what is good and desirable', the Demiurge is spoken of as acting 'with *the greatest possible perfection*', 'to *the most exact perfection permitted* by Necessity willingly complying with persuasion'"⁶. Thus the Platonic model of Necessity-as-Lawlessness is the exact opposite to the rationalist Necessity-as-Law; mathematical order in Plato's conception of reality is related to "reason" and is contrary to "necessity", partly manifested in nature or the world of phenomena. Because for Plato "the world in which we live, the world of change, of Becoming — contains an essentially irrational element: nothing in it can be described *exactly* by reason". Thus, it is deduced that mathematical principles can only give us a "likely story" of the workings of nature, since they are never found in a pure, uncorrupted form, but only "mixed" with Necessity; consequently, modern science "rejects the 'characteristically Platonic' view that nature cannot be explained completely by scientific or mathematical laws"⁷.

Raphael Demos devotes a whole chapter to the discussion of the errant cause, undertaking what he calls "successive approximations" to the question; I present some of his most striking characterizations that give a tentative sketch of what Plato himself fails (or refuses) to identify specifically. The Receptacle, Demos holds, is the "container of events", it is "indefinite" and "undifferentiated extendedness", and the "principle of wild surging motion — that is, of undirected activity"; it is "potency for time as well as for space", the seat of "plurality", and a "void". As the "factor of actuality", it is "conveyed by Plato through the notion of *anaghe* — necessity. *Anaghe* is the givenness of ideas, their sensible immediacy. Fact is what we find and are compelled to accept". In human nature, Demos continues, *anaghe* operates through the compulsion of the impulses of the mortal soul, in that whereas "rational actions are self-determined" we do not "choose our passions; they are given", — which makes of the receptacle the "irrational factor in nature". The so called "conquest of desire by reason is a task which is never completed and never secure", Demos emphasizes, since "at any moment, the wild surging force of passion may break out", perpetually defeating the Demiourgos "by the method of passive resistance"; it is "both

6. Ibid., p. 573.

7. Ibid., p. 574.

destructiveness and creativity", the "aspect of transience", the "vital force of things, passive like the female principle". Another point that deserves special attention is the nature of the relationship between the "divine" and the "necessary", which Plato describes as "persuasion". Demos detects an "erotic" rather than "rhetorical" register in this transaction, supporting that the "submission of the receptacle to the forms is like the acceptance of a lover; their discourse (or intercourse) is conditional, unstable, transient — in short, problematic. Yet the errant cause seems to correspond "to absolute patience, to sensitivity; it is a transparent mirror reflecting whatever shapes are held before it". Demos goes as far as suggesting that "eros, as the appetite of the good, is the receptacle exhibiting itself in actual things", it is the "passage into otherness" (unlike the forms which retain their distinct self-identities). If "Necessity submits voluntarily to God under his persuasion" this means, Demos argues, that the receptacle can to a certain degree "understand God" — even if such understanding is "of no higher rank than that of the intelligence latent in desire". By drawing an analogy to human psychology, whereby reason controls desire "either by threats and violence, or by the exercise of a spell over them", Demos surmises that the ontological correspondence between God and the Receptacle is "a fascination of chaos by the divine", chaos submitting to the charm of the ideal "because of 'the innate sweetness of desire'"⁸.

Plato maintains that knowledge of the necessary, *πλανωμένη αἰτία*⁹ is not knowledge in the true sense of the word; besides, such a cognitive pursuit should only be undertaken for the sake of the "divine cause" and for phenomenal things but not for the "errant cause" in itself:

8. *The Philosophy of Plato*, pp. 25-47. Demos repeatedly stresses the willing responsiveness of the errant cause to its (in fact, *her*) divine collaborator; creation "is not an act of brute force but of persuasion. The receptacle is won over to the divine purpose" because God does not destroy its powers but "converts them to his purposes and uses them", thus securing "docility". Yet, although the reiterated proposition is that "Necessity is *voluntarily* persuaded by reason", Demos does not preclude some form of enforcement when he states that "for Plato, force is at the behest of reason, or that reason is backed by force. The ideal is the union of reason with power" (pp. 110-11) — which still leaves very much undetected the paradoxical interaction of "power" and "force".

9. A. E. Taylor argues that "the Necessity of the *Timaeus* is something quite different from the Necessity of the myth of Er, or of the Stoics, which are personifications of the principle of rational law and order"; conversely, the errant cause "is plainly not meant to be an independent, evil principle, for it is plastic to intelligence", open to persuasion, and "instrumental to the purposes" of mind. Taylor places Plato's reason for introducing such a principle, in the realization that "it is impossible in science to resolve physical reality into a complex of rational law and order" (*Plato: The Man and his Work* [1926; London: Methuen, 1978], p. 455). Taylor's position that "the doctrine of matter as the cause of evil is quite un-Platonic" (the source of evil specified to be "soul" in the *Laws*), has been criticized by Herbert B. Hoffleit ("An Un-Platonic Theory of Evil in Plato", *American Journal of Philology* 58 [1937], 45-58).

Wherefore we may distinguish two sorts of causes, the one divine and the other necessary, and may seek for the divine in all things, as far as our nature admits, with a view to a blessed life, but the necessary kind only for the sake of the divine, considering that without them and when isolated from them, these higher things for which we look cannot be apprehended or received or in any way shared by us. (*Timaeus*, 68e-69a)

Yet, although accepting that the material cause is basically beyond cognition, Plato attempts to provide a definition (*logos*) for it, which ends with a constellation of negative terms, of prefixes in *in-* and suffixes in *-less*, indicating the elusive nature of the “mother substance”, which however is not entirely beyond human comprehension:

Wherefore the mother and receptacle of all created and visible and in any way sensible things is not to be termed earth or air or fire or water, or any of their compounds, or any of the elements from which these are derived, but is an invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible. (*Timaeus*, 51a-b)

The paradoxical correlation of intellegibility and incomprehensibility that characterizes Plato's *ὑποδοχή* (receptacle) of creation, or *χώρα* (space), or *ἀνάγκη* (necessity), is enhanced, I believe, by a passage following close upon the one just cited, where the philosopher modifies his previous statement on the unknowability of matter; his “spatial” cause is not the object of the senses, but can be approached by some kind of “bastard” reasoning; the whole operation seems to have a dreamlike quality about it that renders it hardly believable. So this “mother of generation”,

which is space and is eternal, and admits not of destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended when all sense is absent, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real — which we, beholding as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space, but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence. (*Timaeus*, 52b)

The hermeneutics of the relation between reason and irrationality is, for Demos, “considerably disturbing”. Professing that “Plato's general theory points to a fusion of desire with thought”, he can only explain the convergence of the two if reason “involves an element of desire” and desire “entails a cognitive element”; hence, any proposition asserting that “desire

remains innocent while reason fails to function properly presupposes a disjunction of the two, which is at variance with Plato's theory"¹⁰.

This irrational component¹¹, the "infinite Dyad" of Plato's dualistic philosophy, is systematically ignored or suppressed by the eighteenth-century philosophers of optimism who, as Arthur O. Lovejoy informs us, were not "as a rule of a Romantic disposition; and what they were desirous of proving was that reality is rational through and through, that every fact of existence, however unpleasant, is grounded in some reason as clear and evident as an axiom of mathematics"¹². However, as has become evident from the unfolding of the argument so far, although geometry is considered the science of sciences in Platonic thought, its manifestation in the world of the senses or phenomenal reality is conditional for Plato and unconditional for the modern rationalists. So the concrete complexity of things which, according to Plato's theory, admitted of a degree of "irrational otherness", was replaced by a certain number of "clear and distinct ideas" conceived as being the true and only reality. This was entirely in accord with the model that Descartes inherited from the medieval Christian tradition, which, by displacing authority from the human "self" to a transcendent "other" as the source of order, "deified" otherness and "divinized" its workings. What the thinkers of the "new birth" of human consciousness did, was to substitute the concept of Nature for that of God, while at the same time transposing the logical frame of Platonic mathematics to the realm of Otherness as its structure and "language". Thus, what in Plato constituted entirely different categories of reality — mathematics (closest to the Ideas, tending to "draw the mind to essence and reality" [*Republic*, VII, 523a]), God (the mediating principle), Nature (the *ζῶον* or created cosmos), and Necessity (the errant cause) — are grouped together in a realm embracing all four Platonic *ἀρχαί*. As has been correctly observed, the "eighteenth-century divinisation of Nature was to a high degree therefore its scientification also, at a time when God seemed a sure, but totally rational fact"¹³.

Francis M. Cornford attributes the basic misunderstanding of Plato's

10. *The Philosophy of Plato*, p. 322.

11. E. R. Dodds puts forth the view held by a number of scholars, which attributes the "ethical dualism" of the later dialogues to an influence of "Persian religious ideas"; pointing towards Plato's avowed "willingness to learn from barbarians as well as from Greeks", he is prepared to consider a radical transformation in Plato's thought "when at a later date he made the acquaintance of the Persian religion of Zoroaster" ("Plato and the Irrational", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 65 [1945], 16-25).

12. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (1936; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 226.

13. A. E. Dyson and Julian Lovelock, *Masterful Images: English Poetry from Metaphysicals to Romantics* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976), p. 144.

ontological model to the fact that his conceptions are "foreign to the modern mind". Our notion of Necessity, associated as it is with matter, "suggests to us the unbroken and unbreakable chain of cause and effect, determining the whole course of events", which is at variance with the Platonic errant cause; identifying Necessity with natural law, we connect it with "the element of intelligible order and regular sequence in becoming; and we look to that quarter for the objects of knowledge, of natural science, whose aim is to formulate laws of necessary causation". Thus, in "assuming that Necessity means the laws of nature and identifying these laws with a mode of operation of Reason", Platonic commentators as well as rationalist philosophers "eliminated one of Plato's two factors and left reason in complete control". Cornford emphatically criticizes this tendency to exclude "otherness" from the cosmological scene, affirming that the notion of an "omnipotent Creator is foreign to ancient Greek thought, which unanimously denied the possibility of creating anything out of nothing"¹⁴.

So the new image of Rational Man, as a replica of a Rational God or a Rational Universe, does not quite trace its lineage back to Plato except in a distorted and displaced (or rather reversed) formation. What happened in the eighteenth century was not so much a deification of reason and its identification with nature, but rather an "en-reasoning" of the Deity and a "de-naturalizing" of an (anyway) "fallen" natural world; the best metaphor that renders this conceptual construct, I think, is Berkeley's "spiritual" Author of Nature writing his (perceptual) text on a "responding" rather than "reluctant" spiritualized "matter" (theory of immaterialism). The fallacy that once Reason "rationalized" Nature everything in man's life would inevitably become "Nature methodized" in a systematic whole, was certainly not to originate in Plato's conception of reality (partly untamed and unpredictable) and, if anything, it is closer to the Neoplatonic monistic scheme¹⁵ than the

14. *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato translated with a running commentary* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937), pp. 162-65. Jerry S. Clegg criticizes Cornford's (and other Platonic scholars') readings of the *Timaeus*, which equate "disorder" and "chaos", i.e. "irrationality", with the "wandering cause of necessity", and proceeds to reject the "generally accepted equation of chaos with the effects of necessity"; his proposition (which, unlike Demos' interpretation, puts a wedge between ontology and psychology) is that the source of chaos is to be sought in man's "animal appetites", God combating, if anything, "not inanimate chaos, but disorderly desires"; consequently, the "world's primal disorder has a psychological and moral, not a material and mechanical, base" ("Plato's Vision of Chaos", *Classical Quarterly* 26 [1976], 52-61). Tackling the same problem, Dodds supports a theory of "intentionality", arguing that Plato "has projected into his conception of Nature that stubborn irrationality which he was more and more compelled to admit in man" ("Plato and the Irrational", p. 21).

15. For the reception of Plato's doctrine of Necessity in post-Platonic times, see "Necessity in Boethius and the Neoplatonists", *Speculum* 10 (1935), 393-404.



Platonic dualistic one¹⁶. Furthermore, not only is Necessity, in Plato's view¹⁷, a cause that eludes identification, but also inescapable and all-powerful; as Plato admits, "We simply cannot dispense with its character of *necessity*; in fact, it is this which the author of the proverb presumably had in view when he said that 'even God is never to be seen contending against necessity'" (*Laws*, VII, 818a-b).

Compared with this dire and inexorable force, scientific "necessity" appears as a mild version, or better in-version of the Platonic; and Hume's sceptical variety constitutes a further reduction, transposing "necessity" from natural processes to mental procedures, from the strangeness of "things" out there to the familiarity of (human) "mind":

It is universally allowed that matter, in all its operations, is actuated by a necessary force, and that every natural effect is so precisely determined by the energy of its cause that no other effect, in such particular circumstances, could possibly have resulted from it.... Would we, therefore, form a just and precise idea of *necessity*, we must consider whence that idea arises when we apply it to the operation of bodies. ... Our idea, therefore, of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity observable in the operations of nature, where similar objects are constantly conjoined together, and the mind is determined by custom to infer the one from the appearance of the

16. Demos strongly contends that the "metaphysical situation" of Platonic philosophy is complex and therefore irreducible to a single factor — the causes being several: God, the Pattern, the Receptacle. "No definite factor", he asserts, "can be designated as the All; there is always something else. There is no Parmenidean One, no Spinozistic all-embracing Substance", to conclude that Plato "is not a mystic for whom all things are blended into a simple unity. To be Infinite would amount for Plato to being indefinite; since to be is to be definite, to exclude. Perfection is not all-inclusiveness" (*The Philosophy of Plato*, p. 18).

17. The imaginative representation of man's dealings with Necessity in the myth of Er in the *Republic* somehow reproduces the ontological myth of the *Timaeus*. Here Plato portrays a unique balance of "necessity" and "free will", although the character of personified Necessity betrays no signs of irrationality or randomness. The human being can exercise a right of "choice" within an orderly universe of strict mathematical ratios and revolutions supported by the "spindle of Necessity" which "turned on the knees of Necessity", in the presence of the three "Fates, daughters of Necessity". Under the supervision of Lachesis, the story goes, the human soul ready to embark upon "another cycle of mortal generation" is confronted with a critical task: "select a life to which it shall cleave of necessity", from a variety of multiple "patterns of lives" spread out on the ground before it. The operation concluded, Clotho ratifies the choice, Atropos makes the "web of its destiny irreversible", and then "without a backward look", the soul passes "beneath the throne of Necessity". After journeying across the "Plain of Oblivion, through a terrible and stifling heat", camping at evening by the "River of Forgetfulness" and falling asleep having drunk of its waters, in the middle of night a sudden "sound of thunder and a quaking of the earth" blows the souls "upward to their birth like shooting stars" (*Republic*, X, 616a-621b).

other. These two circumstances form the whole of that necessity, which we ascribe to matter. Beyond the constant *conjunction* of similar objects, and the consequent *inference* from one to the other, we have no notion of any necessity or connection¹⁸.

Hume, extends his enquiry from the natural to the human world, asserting that,

in judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects. When any phaenomena are constantly and invariably conjoin'd together, they acquire such a connection in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation. ... No union can be more constant and certain, than that of some actions with some motives and characters; ... We must now shew, that as the *union* betwixt motives and actions has the same constancy, as that in any natural operations, so its influence on the understanding is also the same, in *determining* us to infer the existence of one from that of another¹⁹.

The logical consequence of such reasoning is that we cannot attribute necessity to the natural world and refuse it to the human; also that mind must accept its cognitive limitations, since "Tis impossible for the mind to penetrate farther. From this constant union it *forms* the idea of cause and effect, and by its influence *feels* the necessity"²⁰.

Hume's treatment of the relation of "reason" to "passion" is the exact opposite to Plato's²¹; rationality has no power whatsoever over the irrational:

Since reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition, I infer, that the same faculty is as incapable of preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion. This consequence is necessary. ... Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse; and if this contrary impulse ever arises from reason, that latter faculty must have an original influence on the will, and must be able to cause, as well as hinder any act of volition. ... Thus it appears, that the principle, which opposes our passion, cannot be the same with reason, and is only call'd so in an

18. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edn rev. P. H. Nidditch (1777; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), VIII, i, 64.

19. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn rev. P. H. Nidditch (1888; Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1978), II, iii, 1.

20. *Ibid.*, II, iii, 1.

21. For a comparative study of Plato and Hume on this subject, see J. E. Tiles, "The Combat of Passion and Reason", *Philosophy* 52 (1977) 321-30.

improper sense. We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason²².

Hume not only criticizes the fundamental tenet of Platonic psychology, but also inverts it in the famous (or infamous) proposition: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them"²³.

C. E. Pulos discusses the Humean approach to the problematic relation of affectivity and volition. Yet, I would suggest, "will" has been traditionally proved a "transposable" faculty, able to move between the two poles of "intellect" and "passion", lending its "power" and "vitality" to either end of the polarized psychic structure: "As the imagination is necessary, according to Hume, in the creation of knowledge, so the passions are necessary in the motivation of the will. The will is that internal impression which we feel 'when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind'"; Pulos continues by offering the Humean version of the eighteenth-century mind-as-reflector model: "Now all that we know about necessity in the actions of matter — the constant conjunction of objects and the inference from the existence of one to that of the other — is found also in all the operations of the mind". The obvious conclusion is that "the will cannot be free, as all its actions have particular causes"; consequently, "Except for such a doctrine of necessity, no one could be blamed or praised for his conduct, as his acts would 'proceed from nothing in him that is durable or constant.' Liberty in this case would be synonymous with chance"²⁴. So what we have in Hume appears to be a reversal of the Platonic model — anchoring the human need for constancy and permanence on the passion/necessity pole, and looking upon the intellect/will correlation as the «chance» component in human (and other) nature.

In a chapter entitled, "Of Free Will and Necessity", William Godwin who undertook to represent man as part of the mechanism of Nature, and human character as the product of environment, also applies the argument from "necessary and universal laws" to human affairs, as "the case is exactly parallel with respect to mind":

The reflections into which we have entered upon the laws of the universe not only afford a simple and impressive argument in favour of the doctrine of necessity, but suggest a very obvious reason why the doctrine opposite to this has been, in a certain degree, the general

22. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, II, iii, 3.

23. *Ibid.*, II, iii, 3.

24. *The Deep Truth: A Study of Shelley's Scepticism* (1954; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), pp. 21-22.

opinion of mankind. ... The truth of the doctrine of necessity will be still more evident if we consider the absurdity of the opposite hypothesis. ... Liberty therefore, according to this hypothesis, consists in this, that every choice we make has been chosen by us, and every act of the mind been preceded and produced by an act of the mind. ... For first it must be remembered that the ground or reason of any event, of whatever nature it be, must be contained among the circumstances which precede that event. The mind is supposed to be in an state of previous indifference, and therefore cannot be, in itself considered, the source of that particular choice that is made. There is a motive on one side and a motive on the other: and between these lie the true ground and reason of preference²⁵.

The doctrine of "necessity in all things" is also applicable, without exception, to the human-as-thing; and the delusion of free will, Godwin contends, is built upon the belief that there is no difference "between the intellectual and active powers of the mind". Without specifying his source, Godwin can vaguely identify its origin in a "mysterious philosophy" which "taught men to suppose that, when an object was already felt to be desirable, there was need of some distinct power to put the body in motion. But reason finds no ground for this supposition", he continues, and referring to the associationist theory of Hartley, contends that we "need only attend to the obvious meaning of the terms, in order to perceive that the will is merely as it has been happily termed 'the last act of the understanding', 'one of the different cases of the association of ideas'"²⁶.

So "will" is an "idea" or a sequence of ideas, having no qualitative difference from the intellective process, but only quantitative or better "relational". "Willing" is termed a "feeling"²⁷ inhabiting the object rather than the subject of perception, as, "What indeed is preference but a feeling of something that really inheres, or is supposed to inhere, in the objects themselves"²⁸? In fact, Godwin clearly identifies "willing" and "feeling", in

25. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* (1798), ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), IV, vii, pp. 343-48.

26. *Ibid.*, IV, vi, p. 349.

27. Joseph Barrell traces what he calls the "emotionalist watering of Necessity" in Shelley's work back to Godwin who "had found in D' Holbach's determinism not so much physical law as Hume's mere constant conjunction of like phenomena. And, not content with this quasi-subjective explanation of outer necessity, Godwin had conceived of a parallel, spiritual necessity to account for human behavior"; Shelley, on his part "further emotionalizes Necessity by making the chain of motives cause both good and ill" (*Shelley and the Thought of His Time: A Study in the History of Ideas* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947], p. 72).

28. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, IV, vii, p. 349.

deducing what he calls the fallacy of free will from the passivity of mind in the "act", or rather "suffering", of sense-impressions:

But, if this fact had been sufficiently attended to, the freedom of the will would never have been gravely maintained by philosophical writers; since no man ever imagined that we were free to feel or not to feel an impression made upon our organs, and to believe or not to believe a proposition demonstrated to our understanding²⁹.

Godwin expands his argument with the suggestion that had freedom of will been supposedly granted to man, this would have made him neither virtuous nor happy. Godwin's notion of the "understanding" is the mechanical process of empirical psychology. Consequently,

This freedom we shall easily perceive to be his bane and his curse; and the only hope of lasting benefit to the species would be the drawing closer the connection between the external motions and the understanding, wholly to extirpate it. The virtuous man, in proportion to his improvement, will be under the constant influence of fixed and invariable principles; and such a being as we conceive God to be, can never in any one instance have exercised this liberty, that is, can never have acted in a foolish and tyrannical manner. Freedom of the will is absurdly represented as necessary to render the mind susceptible to moral principles; but in reality, so far as we all act with liberty, so far as we are independent of motives, our conduct is as independent of morality as it is of reason, nor is it possible that we should deserve either praise or blame for a proceeding thus capricious and indisciplineable³⁰.

The obvious conclusion from the above passage is that freedom of will is "un-necessary" in the universal scheme of things; this Godwinian premise, however, can be entirely misrepresented (or rather reversed) in assessments like the following, which sees Godwin as falling "into the fallacy of making the human will operative, not only in its own Olympian sphere, but in the Titanic realm of necessity"³¹. This would have made him into a Platonist, which he definitely is not, despite certain arguments that support Godwin's

29. *Ibid.*, IV, vii, p. 349.

30. *Ibid.*, IV, vii, p. 350. "For all his insistence on the impersonal operation of Necessity", P. M. S. Dawson argues, "Godwin does believe that man can co-operate in a rational way in the development of his own nature" (*The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980], pp. 85-86).

31. Archibald T. Strong, *Three Studies in Shelley, and an Essay on Nature in Wordsworth and Meredith* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 43.

Platonic allegiances³². The remark that follows the above statement, although of an entirely antithetical nature and quite paradoxical in being applied to the "rationalist" Godwin, seems to me to throw light on a rationalism that by assigning the superiority of "other" over "self", is quite in line with empiricism, emotionalism, and mysticism; the suggestion is that Godwin, despising "mysticism, and incapable of transcendental vision, fell back on sentimentalism, and tried to give it a basis in 'reason'"³³. So, Godwin's "reason-induced-by-necessity" cannot be related to Plato's "reason-persuading-necessity", except as its inverted simulacrum.

Alan Grob contends that "a strongly Platonic tradition existed among the rationalists and nowhere more noticeably than in Godwin's *Political Justice*"; he finds that for Godwin "the use of reason is not limited to the unravelling of the syllogism or to mere comparison and analysis; its powers instead extend far beyond that by providing man with a means of 'communication with the common instructor, truth' and a knowledge of those principles of morality that to Godwin are 'if anything can be, fixed and immutable'"³⁴. The stable and invariable principles, however, that underlie the Godwinian conception of reason are the mechanistic laws of matter³⁵, or Reason-in-things, that

32. That Godwin was a Platonist is a possibility entertained by a number of critics, especially by F. E. L. Priestley who claims that the "insistence upon absolute and eternal truth means a rejection of the moral relativity of the Utilitarians, and places Godwin with the Platonic rationalists rather than with the empiricists" ("Platonism in William Godwin's *Political Justice*", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 4 [1943], 63). His argumentation is based upon two tenets in the philosopher's thought-pattern: first, Godwin's interpretation of vice as an *hamartia*, a bad shot, a miscalculation of consequences; second, his view that rational progress depends on a scheme of absolute truths. Priestley illustrates his first proposition with the contention that, to the extent that "an action proceeds from an intention conceived within a narrow intellectual framework it is bad; it is good insofar as it proceeds from one which takes in many points of view and becomes objective. This is what Godwin means when he speaks of 'going out of our selves' and becoming 'impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part'" (p. 64). James A. Notopoulos also supports Godwin's Platonic affiliations, though he does not quite clarify the grounds on which his assumption rests. While claiming that *Political Justice* offers an "empirical therefore anti-Platonic conception of knowledge", he modifies this statement with the assertion that, "the fundamentals of Godwin's thought are derived from the Platonic rather than the empirical tradition", especially "from the rationalism of the Platonic tradition" (*The Platonism of Shelley: A Study of Platonism and the Poetic Mind* [1949; New York: Octagon Books, 1969], p. 146).

33. Strong, *Three Studies in Shelley*, p. 43.

34. *The Philosophical Mind: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry and Thought, 1797-1805* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), pp. 163-64.

35. Demos characterizes any attempt to interpret Newtonian matter in terms of Platonic materiality as "wholly superficial", physical matter being "definite, divisible, organized, operating according to law", whereas the receptacle "is wholly indeterminate", and should be rather "construed as the potency of matter, and of space, and of physical motion" (*The Philosophy of Plato*, pp. 30-31).

reduce the human life to a constant adaptation to environmental changes, entirely beyond the control of any intellectual or imaginative intervention, a complete denial "to subject the shows of things to the desires of the mind"³⁶.

Another reason why I believe that Godwin cannot be considered a Platonist (as the word refers to Plato) is that he places sense experience prior to desire, which falsifies the Platonic model of desiring what has not yet been "sensed" or apprehended — "eros" manifested as a restlessness and dissatisfaction with the "given" reality, setting the soul a-going on its climb towards the Ideas. Even the physical, i.e. "sensuous" attraction aroused in the "lover" by the sight of his "beloved" is a "calling back" to a pre-natal comradeship, when they were both "dancers", followers of the same God, who now "speaks" through the human body and excites the lover on the way of the metaphysics of sex (*Phaedrus*, 252b-e). Godwin's position is clear and dogmatic on this point:

Voluntary action cannot exist but as the result of experience. Neither desire nor aversion can have place till we have had a consciousness of agreeable and disagreeable sensations. Voluntary action implies desire, and the idea of certain means to be employed for the attainment of the things desired³⁷.

Godwin's principle of a future-oriented perfectibility through reason³⁸ has, in my view, some characteristics that make it and Plato's anamnestic theory of retrogression not only incompatible but mutually exclusive. First, perfectibility seems to be an experience that man "suffers" rather than procures. If man can be nothing else than what motives make him, and motives are conditioned by physical experiences, then these "external

36. The allusion is to Bacon's celebrated statement in *The Advancement of Learning* of the distinction between "imagination" (the poetic or intentional faculty) and "reason": "Poesie was ever thought to have some participation of divinesse, because it doth raise and erect the Minde, by submitting the shewes of things to the desires of the Mind, whereas reason doth buckle the Mind unto the Nature of things" (quoted in William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History*, 4 vols [1957; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970], II, 335).

37. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, IV, x, p. 379.

38. One of the most fundamental tenets in Godwin's philosophy, that of a firmly rooted belief in "rational progress", is also considered by Priestley as Platonic in its origin, in that it implies both an objective criterion of truth and a rational mind to perceive it. In greater detail, Priestley maintains that, "rational progress demands as this external standard a scheme of absolute truths, truths which can be discovered by a process of reasoning"; the identification of Godwin with Plato seems an obvious conclusion of these presuppositions of "objectivity", "rationality", and "progress" (though "regress" would be a more appropriate term, I think, to define the Platonic type of recollective involution); in Priestley's view, however, this is "in essence, Godwin's doctrine of progress; it is also, in essence, Platonic" ("Platonism in William Godwin's *Political Justice*", p. 65).

standards" are inherent in the nature of an "occurrence" in which the human being is a passive instrument. Godwin's "progress" involves no "vain" struggle on the part of man; all it entails is an effortless participation in the "necessary" procession of things, the inevitable movement towards a distant, yet for ever elusive, goal:

Man is in reality a passive, and not an active being. In another sense however he is sufficiently capable of exertion. The operations of his mind may be laborious, like those of the wheel of a heavy machine in ascending a hill, may even tend to wear out the substance of the shell in which he acts, without in the smallest degree impeaching its passive character. If we were constantly aware of this, our mind would not glow less ardently with the love of truth, justice, happiness and mankind. We should have a firmness and simplicity in our conduct, not wasting itself in fruitless struggles and regrets, not hurried along with infantine impatience, but seeing actions with their consequences, and calmly and unreservedly given up to the influence of those comprehensive views which this doctrine inspires³⁹.

The ultimate objective in making mind a passive spectator of its own "progress", seems to absolve mind from any sense of responsibility in the formation of "events", and therefore deliver it from useless labour and mortifying sentiments. What the passage just cited makes obvious, I think, is that mental "operations" give man only an illusion of activity which ends in a self-circling frustration and pointless struggle without any actual effect upon things. The recognition of "necessity", on the other hand, in the circumstances of existence will offer man peace of mind, in the conviction that he is a "creature of habit", contemplating the life into which he is being lived with apathetic contentment. In this respect, Godwin seems to be more of a Stoic than a Platonist:

When the person recollects with clearness that the event is over, his mind grows composed; but presently he feels as if it were in the power of God or man to alter it, and his agitation is renewed. To this, may be further added the impatience of curiosity; but philosophy and reason have an evident tendency to prevent useless curiosity from disturbing our peace. He therefore who regards all things past, present, and to come as links of an indissoluble chain will, as often as he recollects this comprehensive view, find himself assisted to surmount the tumult of passion; and be enabled to reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the same clearness of perception, the same firmness of

39. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, IV, viii, p. 354.

judgment, and the same constancy of temper, as we are accustomed to do upon the truths of geometry⁴⁰.

Godwin's brand of empiricist rationalism seems to be much closer to Hume's "calm passions" than Plato's "rational desires"⁴¹. Furthermore, Godwinian "perfectibility" lies at the antipodes of Platonic "perfection"; it presupposes an endless change and progress, a "grand march of intellect" that proceeds into infinity, never attaining to its undefined and indefinable goal. Platonic "perfection", on the contrary, is finite and can be envisioned within the closed circuit of a human life. Platonic perfection is achieved in spite of and after overcoming Necessity; Godwinian perfectibility is the product of Necessity. Unlike Godwin, Plato maintains that the idea of absolute perfection is within the grasp of human reason; that it is not within easy reach of man's experiential potentialities, is due to the second component of human nature (and the nature of things), the presence of "necessity" which offers resistance and is hard to win over for cooperation into creating the good and the desirable. Contrary to Plato's conviction, Godwin asserts that the unattainability of absolute perfection is caused not by any depravity of matter, but by cognitive limitations:

The idea of absolute perfection is scarcely within the grasp of human understanding. If science were more familiarized to speculations of this sort, we should perhaps discover that the notion itself was pregnant with absurdity and contradiction. It is not necessary in this argument to dwell upon the limited nature of the human faculties. We can neither be present to all places nor to all times. We cannot penetrate into the essences of things, or rather we have no sound and satisfactory knowledge of things external to ourselves, but merely of our own sensations. We cannot discover the causes of things, or ascertain that in the antecedent which connects it with the consequent, and discern nothing but their contiguity. With what pretence can a being thus shut in on all sides lay claim to absolute perfection⁴²?

Godwin sounds almost unhappy at the mere possibility of ever reaching perfection; in accordance with the pervasive intellectual climate of the time, he is more interested in "process", "growth", "progress", "movement",

40. Ibid., IV, viii, p. 359.

41. We should be reminded that according to Plato, passions "constitute the factor of *anaghe* in human nature; they happen to man and are compelling"; in that they are "liable to excess, expanding infinitely" to the point of becoming "overwhelming"; for "whereas man is free in his capacity as rational, in passion he is indeed passive and enslaved" (Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato*, p. 307).

42. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, I, v, p. 145.

than the "stasis" — or "ek-stasis" — that the completion of the journey affords.

There is a certain way, I think, in which the "mechanical" model of the eighteenth-century scientific outlook, and the "dynamic" or "organic" model that the Romantics embraced in their rejection of materialism and necessitarianism, may, after all, have a similarity that is not commonly recognized. Godwin's "perfectibility", like Aristotelian teleology, Christian millennial expectations, Hegelian dialectic, and Romantic organicism, is a future-oriented process, moving with time. Plato's "perfection", unlike anything else, is a past-directed motion, retrogressive, anti-clockwise, a re-collection (with or without pre-existence) or re-gathering of lived experience — a "regressus ad uterum"; it presupposes the acceptance of precisely what Godwin denies to human faculties: the discovery of the "cause" (rather than "expediency") of things, and of their relational patterns. To use the language of mathematics favoured by both, to Plato's "circle of perfection"⁴³ Godwin juxtaposes the "line of perfectibility"⁴⁴:

By perfectible, it is not meant that he is capable of being brought to perfection. But the word seems sufficiently adapted to express the faculty of being continually made better and receiving perpetual improvement; and in this sense it is here to be understood. The term perfectible, thus explained, not only does not imply the capacity of being brought to perfection, but stands in express opposition to it. If we could arrive at perfection, there would be an end to our improvement⁴⁵.

The image of the mind as a prison-house, completely isolated from reality, is a common denominator in empirical philosophy, and a close analogue to

43. For an extensive discussion of the causes and consequences of modern revolutions in thinking and their metaphorical representations, see Marjorie H. Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the "New Science" upon Seventeenth-century Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

44. Ross G. Woodman provides biographical and textual evidence in support of my metaphorical statement: "Shelley's real break with Godwin, in favour of Plato", he proposes, "lies in the view of time which is implicit in *A Defence of Poetry*. The view of time in Godwin's system, as the doctrine of gradual progress shows, is linear", which model did not satisfy Shelley as a poet because it was "shapeless" and thus incapable of being "consolidated into formulated vision". Contrasted to this "linear conception of time, the limitations of which Shelley instinctively realized as early as 1812" is that presented in Plato's *Timaeus* — not "a straight line of unlimited extent moving in both directions, but a circle which, though limited and circumscribed, is yet a symbol of eternity" (*Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964], p. 21).

45. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, I, v, pp. 144-45. Perfection as a "given", almost a grace granted from a benevolent source that, analogies retained, could be said to substitute "necessity" for the Christian providential God.

Plato's cave allegory (*Republic*, VII, 514a-516d). The difference being that in the Platonic view of things, man can *go out*, or literally *go in* (from physical perception, to passionate intellection, leading to an intuitive apprehension), whereas for Godwin, man limited to perception only, is involved in an never-ending progress of accumulation of sensations and experiences, resulting in a series of "quantitative" changes, which is entirely different from the "qualitative" transformation effected through Plato's dialectical process (*Letters*, VII, c-e):

But, not to insist upon these considerations, there is one principle in the human mind which must forever exclude us from arriving at a close of our acquisitions, and confine us to perpetual progress. The human mind, as far as we are acquainted with it, is nothing else but a faculty of perception. All our knowledge, all our ideas, everything we possess as intelligent beings, comes from impression. ... This seems to be a simple and incontrovertible history of intellectual being; and, if it be true, then as our accumulations have been incessant in the time that is gone, so, as long as we continue to perceive, to remember or reflect, they must perpetually increase⁴⁶.

The paradoxical quality of this passage is that it evokes confinement and infinity simultaneously, closedness and openness, or better confinement-infinity. An open-ended progress that is at the same time restricting and compulsive, is the exact opposite to Plato's freedom-in-finiteness, a closed system of re-collection and self-reflexivity that liberates while it limits⁴⁷.

The presence of Godwinian doctrines as a formative power in Romantic thinking, especially that of Shelley, is an acknowledged fact. Where critical dissention occurs is as to whether the so-called Godwinian influence forms part of an early empiricist/necessitarian phase of his thought, to be superseded later by a transcendentalist/idealist period. My view is that Godwinian philosophy forms one of a number of sign-posts that circumscribe the external boundaries of Shelley's poetic thinking. His alliance to Godwin has been long recognized, but has also become a matter of critical dispute. The two extreme positions assert either that Shelley never renounced his adherence to Godwinism, or, contrariwise, that Shelley finally emancipated himself from the Godwinian influence, after he had been converted to the

46. *Ibid.*, I, v, p. 146.

47. In Plato's scheme the analogy of limit/reason is the opposite to the correlation of unlimited/space (or matter): "The first then, I call the unlimited, the second the limit, and the third the being that has come to be by the mixture of these two; as to the fourth, I hope I shall not be at fault in calling it the cause of the mixture and of the coming-to-be?" (*Philebus*, 27b-c).

doctrines of Platonism⁴⁸; in other words, Shelley's philosophical development is seen in general terms as a transition from Godwinism to Platonism⁴⁹. The suggestion that it was to the presence of Plato⁵⁰ in the poet's intellectual horizon that Shelley owed not only "the free expression of himself", but also "the agonies of division and frustration", and that the so-called evolution from Godwin to Plato was not at all orderly and consistent⁵¹, is, I believe, fully justified. Plato and Godwin may be taken to represent the "objective correlatives" of a divided tendency in Shelley's consciousness. Furthermore, I think that such an evolution did not quite take place in a rational linear fashion, but followed a labyrinth in which the human mind is known to have often entangled itself; in Shelley's own words (quoted by Mary Shelley), we get a measure of the poet's imaging of the workings of mind ("errant" but also revelatory):

'In the Greek Shakespeare, Sophocles, we find the image,

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοις:

a line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry; yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed!

"Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought."

If the words ὁδοὺς and πλάνοις had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical instead of an absolute sense, as we say "ways and means," and "wanderings" for error and confusion. But they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city — as Oedipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a

48. For Shelley's early acquaintance with Plato at Eton and Oxford and the specific texts used, which probably included "Thomas Taylor's translation of *Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, *Parmenides*, and *Timaeus* (London, 1793), found among his books", see Notopoulos, *The Platonism of Shelley*, pp. 29-38; the scholar also remarks that after Shelley's "expulsion from Oxford, Godwinism became ascendant. The perfectibility of human nature and the ascription of evil to the desolating power of positive institutions replaced the philosophy of Plato" (p. 38).

49. Carl Grabo is among those critics supporting that Shelley's "development as a thinker is away from rationalism and towards Platonism" (*The Magic Plant: The Growth of Shelley's Thought* [Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936], p. 141).

50. Neville Rogers focuses his investigation on the precise nature of Shelley's borrowings from Plato; he argues that probably due to the poet's acquaintance with eighteenth-century philosophy, "came the doctrine of Necessity, a fusion in his mind of two originally Platonic doctrines, Necessity and the World Soul, the emphasis initially being principally upon the first"; gradually, though, he rejected "the materialistic aspect of Necessity" and was attracted to the notion of the World Soul which "by ruling Necessity according to the Platonic belief, could rule the universe" (*Shelley at Work: A Critical Inquiry* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956], pp. 32-33).

51. F. A. Lea, *Shelley and the Romantic Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1945), p. 86.

wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol; a world within a world which he who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do searches throughout, as he would search the external universe, for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface⁵².

I should like to pick out a few instances where the names of Godwin and Plato are significantly "conjoined" in Shelley's own writings, mostly under literary than philosophical auspices. In 1817 there appear two references in connection with Godwin's novel *Mandeville*; on both occasions, the underlying similarity detected is stylistic and ethical, not epistemological or ontological:

In style and strength of expression Mandeville is wonderfully great, & the energy & the sweetness of the sentiments [are] scarcely to be equalled. Cliffords character as mere beauty is a divine & smoothing contrast, & I do not think if perhaps I except (& I know not if I ought to do so) the speech of Agathon in the Symposium of Plato that there ever was produced a moral discourse more characteristic of all that is admirable & lovely in human Nature more lovely & admirable in itself than that of Henrietta to Mandeville as he is recovering from madness⁵³.

The second reference is made in a review of *Mandeville* in Leigh Hunt's periodical *Examiner*, on December 28 of the same year:

The pleading of Henrietta to Mandeville after his recovery from madness, in favour of virtue and benevolent energy, compose in every respect the most perfect and beautiful piece of writing of modern times. It is the genuine doctrine of *Political Justice* presented in one perspicuous and impressive view, and clothed in such enchanting melody of language as seems scarcely less than the writings of Plato to realize these lines of Milton:

How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute⁵⁴.

52. "Note on *Prometheus Unbound*, by Mrs. Shelley", *Shelley, Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, corr. edn G. M. Matthews (1905; 1943; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 273.

53. To William Godwin, 7 December 1817, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964), I, 574.

54. *Shelley's Rose, or the Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David L. Clark (1954; Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1966), p. 310.

Grabo reads this statement as "revelatory of Shelley's own absorption in divine philosophy and of the place in it of Platonism", and finds in the metaphor that Shelley employs, "a wind that tears up the deepest waters of the ocean of mind", an unconscious surfacing of "the hold which the neo-Platonic symbolism had taken upon him"⁵⁵.

The images and concepts that recur in the two passages, as those of "benevolence", "sweetness of sentiments", "beauty", "divinity", "loveliness", evoke precisely the notion of *eros* as described by Agathon in the Platonic *Symposium*: a "divine benefactor", "exquisitely dainty", "the most delicate thing in the world", "tender and supple", possessing "loveliness" and "moral excellence" (195a-196b). On this evidence one might argue that Shelley detects a close parallel between Godwin and Plato, in their doctrine of Love at least, which facilitates the reconciliation of the two philosophical systems. We should not forget, however, that Agathon's concept of love is not the Socratic *eros*, in the same way in which neither Phaedrus', nor Pausanias', nor Eryximachus', nor Aristophanes' discourses represent quite what Plato wants to convey, but rather operate as foils to the Socratic metaphysics of *Ἔρως* which, as a matter of fact, is the exact opposite to Agathon's — "gallant, impetuous, and energetic, a mighty hunter, and a master of device and artifice — at once desirous and full of wisdom, a lifelong seeker after truth, an adept in sorcery, enchantment, and seduction" (203d).

So, if Shelley thinks Godwin close to Plato, it is not to the most fundamental Platonic notions that the similarity is detected. If, however, Agathon's concept of love does not reflect the "essential" Plato, it is certainly the "essence" of Neoplatonism (in its Italian Renaissance version), as it is upon this model that Ficino's so-called "Platonic Love" as a universal force, is patterned. The radical difference in the two significations of love, as I see it, is that the Socratic/Platonic *Eros*, being a part, or precisely a "between" in a dualistic scheme of things⁵⁶ has to combat/placate/"persuade" Necessity, whereas Ficino's (and the un-Platonic "love" of Agathon), being an energy in a uniform, congenial, monistic system, is not expected to undertake such a harsh and dangerous task. Neoplatonic Love playing about in an all-spiritual universe, and Godwinian Necessity, equally

55. *The Magic Plant*, p. 228.

56. The presence of a strongly dualistic metaphysics in Shelley's work, too, and particularly in *Prometheus Unbound*, is detected by Stuart Curran; he attributes it to an influence upon Shelley of "the Zoroastrian and Manichean ethical duality" (*Shelley's Annus Mirabilis: The Maturing of an Epic Vision* [San Marino, Ca.: Huntington Library, 1975], p. 81); this binary opposition Curran presents in terms of "attraction" incarnated in Demogorgon and of "alienation" embodied in Jupiter who, like Demogorgon, is "an impulse in all men, a kind of Necessity" (p. 110).

unchallenged controller of a materialistic world, might be looked upon as "sister" concepts of the same basic scheme of reality. Before such an "energetic", though "benevolent" power, the human mind should respond with a passive receptivity, and possibly this is what Shelley's metaphor attempts to recapture in "a wind which tears up, the deepest waters of the ocean of mind", or the immediately following remark, that the "reader's mind is hurried on as he approaches the end, with breathless and accelerated impulse"⁵⁷. The images of an almost scientific discourse, conveyed in unmistakably empiricist diction, are the characteristic of the next two sentences:

The noun *Smorfia* comes at last and touches some nerve which jars the inmost soul and grates as it were along the blood; and we can scarcely believe that the grin which must accompany Mandeville to his grave is not stamped upon our own visage⁵⁸.

Godwinian "necessity", Hartleyan "vibrations", Lockean "empty paper", and Humean "impressions" coexist with what Grabo describes as the Neoplatonic symbolism of winds and waters.

The problem of Shelley's relation to Godwin and Plato, though approached from a different perspective, is tackled by Milton Wilson when in his discussion of *Prometheus Unbound* he claims that "Shelley did assume (parting company, apparently, with both Godwin and Plato) that the key to the problem lay in the will rather than the intellect"⁵⁹. In an extended footnote he groups Godwin with Plato, for not recognizing the will as a detached or detachable power, as is the case with Shelley: "For Shelley it is possible to know the truth and not to act accordingly. But Godwin never allows the operation of a separate will, undermined by the opinions of its possessor". Wilson sees the similarity between Plato and Godwin in their primacy of "reason", but not the obvious discrepancies in their systems of thought, which are of a different nature from their common difference from Shelley: "But both Plato and Godwin include so much of man in his mind that their difference from Shelley is, in part, only an apparent difference. Since for Plato true knowledge is the goal of an erotic pursuit... and since for Godwin to grasp truth is to be passionately convinced that it must prevail, they would hardly have found in Shelley's 'knowledge' all that the term includes for them"⁶⁰. Shelley, indeed, has to dissent from both, as they represent for him

57. *Prose*, p. 311. Here we have the image of a mind passively exposed, rushed about, and almost ruthlessly violated.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 311. With the exception of *Smorfia*, emphasis is mine.

59. *Shelley's Later Poetry: A Study of his Prophetic Imagination* (1959; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 54.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 306-307.

opposite reality models from which he has to choose — his conception of “will” wavering between the Platonic power-as-love⁶¹, and the Godwinian power-as-necessity. Nevertheless, Wilson argues, “by allowing a separable will, capable of corruption and in need of stimulation by the imagination, Shelley does differ from Plato and Godwin”⁶².

Another place where Shelley joins the names of Godwin and Plato is in a pregnant letter to John Gisborne in the late October of 1821, where actually he makes two references to Plato, so it is Godwin appearing in a Platonic context and not vice versa. Literally, between the statement “but I intend to write a Symposium of my own”, and “I read the Greek dramatists Plato forever”, comes the utterance:

I try to be what I might have been, but am not very successful. I find that (I dare say I shall quote it wrong)

‘Den herrlichshsten, den sich der Geist empfängt
Drängt immer fremd und fremder stoff sich an’. —

The Edinburgh review lies. Godwin’s answer to Malthus is victorious & decisive, and that it should not be generally acknowledged as such is full evidence of the influence of successful evil and tyranny. What Godwin is compared with Plato & Lord Bacon we all know. But compared with these miserable sciolists he is a vulture (you know vultures have considerable appetites) to a worm⁶³.

The German quotation is from Goethe’s *Faust*, rendered into English as: “Some alien substance more and more cleaving / To all the mind conceives

61. Shelley translates “eroticism” into “creativity”, looking upon the role of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* as a depiction of “the creative imagination in its archetypal form”; it is “precisely in these terms that Shelley describes the imagination in his *Defence*. Poetry, he says, ‘makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar one is a chaos’”; also Shelley’s “identification of the Demiurge with Eros explains his association of the creative imagination with love” (Ross. G. Woodman, “Shelley’s Changing Attitude to Plato”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21 [1960], 504).

62. *Shelley’s Later Poetry*, p. 307. Beyond this point, Wilson makes three propositions: that Godwin and Plato are reconcilable; that Godwin’s influence remains strong to the end; and that Godwin is a Platonist (adopting Priestley’s argument): “Of course, any discussion of Shelley’s relation to Plato and Godwin is complicated by the still prevalent habit of setting up the two of them as opposite poles and depicting Shelley as faced with a sort of morality-play choice between them. For a spectator of this play, since the influence of Plato apparently increases as Shelley grows older, the influence of Godwin must inevitably decline”; Wilson concludes his argument, however, by affirming that not only is Godwinian “necessity” present in Shelley’s last work, *The Triumph of Life*, but that in fact acceptance of the one system does not entail denial of the other, as “Priestley’s insistence on Godwin’s own Platonism, should, if noted, prevent Shelley’s critics from providing him with imaginary dilemmas” (pp. 307-308).

63. *Letters*, II, 364.

of grand and fair". If we follow an "associationist" reading of this passage, we would have to admit that Plato and Godwin are indeed present, and not only as names (comparable in status or even philosophical positions), but also as representations of contradictory reality models. Shelley admits of the exercise of his will, "I try to be", in order to realize the potential, "what I might have been", of a mode of life that is already "seen" as a conceptual/imaginative entity — "the mind conceives", of greatness and beauty, "grand and fair". There is also an attendant frustration, "but am not very successful", and the identification of the cause of failure as the presence of "some alien substance" which with increasing power adheres, "more and more cleaving", to the intellectual activity. Upon which thought, Godwin springs into his consciousness. Most of Shelley's ethical concerns, which were transmitted into poetic themes, are present here: the effort for improvement or self-realization (whether in the Godwinian or Platonic sense), the frustration, the presence of Otherness triumphant over Self. "Godwin victorious & decisive", but attended by the lack of recognition of his superiority, is another instance of personal failure (or the failure of [the] "Enlightenment") and the conquest of "successful evil & tyranny". Then comes the "marriage" of Shelley's three most important philosophical sources (or among the most influential), Plato, Bacon, Godwin; finally, a Promethean image, the "vulture" of the victorious (yet defeated) Godwin, contrasted to the "worm" of his enemies. I do not know if the "eagle/snake" emblem (Shelley's own inverted interpretation of the traditional symbolism) might be applicable here, but if it were, it would complicate even more the cluster of images and associations around Godwin — the person and the system. Notopoulos interprets this very passage as "an interesting revelation" concerning "the position which Godwin occupied in Shelley's mind at a time he was reading Plato enthusiastically"; he also detects that the reference "marks a considerable change from his earlier years when Godwin was Shelley's god"⁶⁴.

That Shelley did not undergo such a clear-cut intellectual metamorphosis from Godwin to Plato, or from necessitarianism to idealism, can be amply evidenced from the fact that his interest in both philosophies ran side by side throughout his life; also, from the co-presence in his poetic works of both models of reality, whether as surface or submerged structures and metaphors, each complementing or opposing the other. Stuart M. Sperry argues that those critics "who deny the doctrine of Necessity in Shelley's work in an effort to rescue what they see as the more affirmative or ideal element of his nature diminish the poet and his power of testimony",

64. *The Platonism of Shelley*, p. 370.

because in Shelley's "mature thinking an extreme idealism draws its strength from an extreme scepticism; the two reinforce rather than counteract each other"⁶⁵. As Benjamin P. Kurtz phrases it, "Plato and Godwin were his great books. Back and forth between them repeatedly he passed in his reading, excited both by the transcendental realism of the one and the philosophical radicalism of the other, and deriving unmixed nutriment from the confusion"⁶⁶. His subsequent comment, however, indicates a kind of intellectual discrimination, supporting that Shelley kept the two theories in separate compartments of his mind, putting them to different uses: "Both Godwin's necessity and subjectivism of good and evil, and Plato's unresolved dualism of natural appearances and their ideal Forms, filled his mind with images of perfectibility and perfection, the one contributing to his political, the other to his religious, or poetic, ideals"⁶⁷.

Shelley's idea of "necessity", Pulos contends, "is traceable not to materialism but to scepticism, being derived, directly and indirectly, from Hume"⁶⁸. The critic stresses the centrality of scepticism in Shelley's philosophical orientations as providing the key that integrates his thought in "its relation to his rejection of materialism, its relation to his acceptance of Plato, its relation to his attitude toward Christianity"⁶⁹. He places Shelley within the sceptical tradition that begins with doubting (the certainty of human capacity for cognition — an empiricist tenet) and negating (a knowledge granted by external, historical or transcendent authority — a Platonic plus Lockean position). The problem, however, that cannot be easily resolved pertains to the precise "sceptical solution to doubt" that Shelley adopts, because here Plato and the eighteenth-century philosophers part company. Plato's scepticism questions the reliability of the senses, the cognizability of "otherness", and the validity of given "hypotheses", but in its positive aspect it establishes an alliance of intellect/desire that is considered absolutely "necessary" in man's dealings with reality. So the "will", for Plato, is clearly intellect-motivated; for Hume, however, the "will" is passion-induced. The crux of the distinction between Platonic and modern scepticism seems to be not a matter of doubt or even sceptical solution to doubt, but a question of deciding on the nature of "freedom" (epistemological, ontological, and moral) — as the one view tends to see a "will" released

65. "Necessity and the Role of the Hero in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*", *PMLA* 96 (1981), 252.

66. *The Pursuit of Death: A Study of Shelley's Poetry* (1933; New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 97.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

68. *The Deep Truth*, p. 62.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

from the incursions of passion, and the other a "will" liberated from the limitations of reason.

Pulos brings into his discussion the proposition made by Frank B. Evans that "Godwin borrowed his account of necessity from Hume, and Shelley derived his doctrine of necessity from Hume and Godwin", in order to point out the contradiction in Evans' later comment that, "There is none of Hume's scepticism, however, in Godwin and Shelley. A hardened dogmatism takes its place. ... Shelley and Godwin mean that the necessity of causation inheres in the structure of reality", thus refuting Shelley's scepticism; Pulos finds this assessment "partially valid in regard to the doctrine of Necessity contained in the Notes to *Queen Mab*", but incompatible with the concept of necessity as it appears in Shelley's mature poetry where "Necessity is fundamentally an unknown power"⁷⁰. The paradox in this particular case is that the Humean "necessity" and the Platonic, although radically different in many respects (as already suggested), overlap at one point, that of being beyond cognition. We should not forget that Plato is the precursor not only of the idealistic tradition but also of the sceptical; and if he is quite confident that his number *one* cause, the Ideas or structures, are accessible to mind, he is very insecure, as we have seen, about the knowability of his number *two* cause, Necessity. Plato certainly does not advocate a freedom of reason and will that is absolutely unconditional — and that despite his theory of "persuasion"; if he did, there would be the whole corpus of Greek tragedy to remind him of his error.

My proposition is that Shelley's idea of necessity is too *awe-full* and *dark* a power to be simply equated to the empiricist concept. Shelley's Necessity, as an obscure Being receiving its most impressive imaginative incarnation in Demogorgon⁷¹, is certainly not a passionless impartial force. It is a power responsive to "intellectual love" (the combined action — or action/inaction — of Prometheus and Asia), the whole pattern of the lyrical drama possibly reproducing Plato's ontological situation of "mind persuading necessity". Carl Grabo is one of the most ardent supporters of the idea that

70. Ibid., p. 63; Evans concludes his argument supporting that there is "no evidence of Godwin's awareness that in using Hume's reasoning and illustrations he had completely reversed Hume's fundamental point of view. It is even less likely", he remarks, "that the young Shelley realized what he was doing when he borrowed his arguments from Hume and interpreted them through the mind of Godwin" (Frank B. Evans, III, "Shelley, Godwin, Hume, and the Doctrine of Necessity", *Studies in Philology* 37 [1940], 640).

71. Demogorgon "must also owe something of its nature to Shelley's earlier definitions of the philosophical concept of Necessity", Angela Leighton argues, drawing our attention to passages in Shelley's "Notes", especially his critique of Christianity, which foreshadow "the great debate between Asia and Demogorgon" (*Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], p. 89).

Demogorgon is "the symbol of Necessity, obscure parent of all created things and subservient in Shelley's theology only to Love"⁷². The very name of Demogorgon, carrying etymological echoes from *δαίμων* (divine mediator) and *Γοργώ* (horrifying creature of the Greek mythological underworld), is a hint as to the nature and function attributed by the poet to this "formless" yet "speaking" darkness, or "wilderness". But it is not (human) "faith" that converts (inhuman) Necessity into "voice", as Pulos claims, when he sees the "two aspects of Shelley's doctrine of Necessity" (sceptical doubt and necessary progress) as "perfectly fused in the conception of Demogorgon, the amorphous and mysterious being who effects the triumph of Prometheus over Jupiter"⁷³. Because "faith" does not "speak"; it only pathetically "listens". Unless, of course, it be the "solemn faith", which is the counterpart of "awful doubt" — a "faith" which despite its subdued and tranquil character is radically subversive and acts negatively, preventing rather than promoting an easy reconciliation between mind and reality:

The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to reveal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, the great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel. ("Mont Blanc", ll.76-83)⁷⁴

The voice of terror is a sound that disrupts and obliterates "codes of fraud", established religious and political "laws", rather than proving the indispensable support of a "grand march of intellect", assuring the progress of mankind.

72. *Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation* (1935; New York: Gordian Press, 1968), p. 73. Carlos Baker, makes an interesting verbal (and not only) play with the two words in his discussion of *Alastor*, supporting that "the poet is half in love with Necessity, the beneficent but inhuman law of the natural world", ultimately asserting that the metaphysical conflict of the poem "may be described as the love of necessity versus the necessity of love" (*Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948], p. 60).

73. *The Deep Truth*, pp. 64-65.

74. Leighton partly disagrees with those critics defining the Power of "Mont Blanc" as "philosophical Necessity" derived from Hume; she suggests that Shelley's "philosophical concerns are yoked to aesthetic concerns, and his epistemological investigations have less to do with the mind than with the imagination" (*Shelley and the Sublime*, p. 62). A similar position is taken by Lloyd Abbey who sees the poem set in "a framework of thought in which imaginative vision would be not merely a passive pawn of Necessity but an active force" (*Destroyer and Preserver: Shelley's Poetic Scepticism* [Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979], p. 13).

In his early work, *Queen Mab*, Shelley specifies the "gender" of Necessity, in

'Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requir'st no prayers or praises... (VI, 197-200)⁷⁵.

Shelley's maternal principle of creation seems to be less Plato's "mother of generation" (let alone Humean "conjunction" or Godwinian "motivation") than a version of the religion of the Goddess⁷⁶ that in ancient (pre-Platonic and pre-Greek) mythical times reigned over an immense Aegeo-Afroasiatic territory among the pre-Aryan autochthonous populations. The worship of the Divine Mother⁷⁷ involves the total acceptance of the "necessity" of all creation (even in its ugly, unpleasant, or evil aspects) and the conscious overcoming of any dislike, aversion or disapproval of "what is" — which, paradoxically, sounds quite close to Godwin's necessitarian rationalism that sustains the "tendency to make us survey all events with a tranquil and

75. To these same lines, Grabo appends the comment that the "gods of paganism and the god of revealed religion are dethroned and Necessity set in their place... It is but the substitution of the reign of law for the reign of whim, of science for religion". (*The Magic Plant*, p. 113).

76. Amiyakumar Sen, reading *Queen Mab* within the general framework of his approach which approximates Shelley's thought to that of Indian philosophy, contends that there is a discrepancy between the Notes to the poem and the poem itself: "There are, however, in *Queen Mab* itself, certain characteristics of this Universal Spirit which sharply distinguish it from the Godwinian Principle: with Godwin Necessity is a *law* according to which the activities of the universe proceed along", whereas Shelley "invests Necessity with will, 'activity and life'", which make of it an analogue to "Prakriti or Maya"; Sen affirms that the "Universal Spirit of Necessity which in *Queen Mab* pervades nature is, according to Shelley, a Sakti, a power. She may not be the 'Mother of Gods'", but "she is none the less the 'Mother of the World'" (*Studies in Shelley* [1936; New York: The Folcroft Press, 1969], pp. 258-59).

77. The dual aspect of the Great Mother — positive and negative — is emphasized in all mythological accounts of a primal female divinity as Creatrix of the universe, which foregrounds the sacredness of all existence. Erich Neumann supports that as long as "the Feminine releases what is contained in it to life and light, it is the Great and Good Mother of all life", but "since all positive elements of existence" are "associated with the image of the Great Mother", human beings also tend to attribute "all interruptions and disturbances in the positive stream... to the same Great Mother in her aspect of 'bad' and Terrible Mother"; so the Great Mother "is the giver not only of life but also of death" (*The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim [1955; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963], pp. 65-67). Concerning the poetic incarnation of such a female divinity, Robert Graves alleges that the "test of a poet's vision, one might say, is the accuracy of his portrayal of the White Goddess", and asserts that "a true poem is necessarily an invocation of the White Goddess, or Muse, the Mother of All Living, the ancient power of fright and lust — the female spider or the queen-bee whose embrace is death" (*The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* [1948; London: Faber and Faber, 1951], p. 24).

placid temper, and approve and disapprove without impeachment to our self possession"⁷⁸. Shelley attributes this attitude of undifferentiating acceptance and positive response not to the human but the divine "eye": fair and foul⁷⁹

Are registered, are equal in thy sight:
No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind. (*Queen Mab*, VI, 211-19)

Shelley's account of Necessity in his "Notes on *Queen Mab*"⁸⁰ presents aspects of the problem — or *his* treatment of the problem — that I do not find incompatible with his later developed doctrine of universal Love⁸¹, as the question is usually posed by a number of critics and interpreters. Shelley begins by recognizing the "subjective" aspect of the principle, in that the "idea of Necessity is obtained by our experience of the connection between

78. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, IV, viii, p. 358.

79. Such, Keats informs us, is also the poet's attitude — open to the whole of existence "be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated", doing "no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright ones; because they both end in speculation" (*The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols [Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1958], I, 387).

80. In his introductory note to the "Note", Clark supports the view that Shelley's notion of necessity is "a blending of the ideas of Spinoza, Hume, and Holbach", and moreover that it was "Spinoza who gave direction to Shelley's thought about Necessity"; consequently, the poet's "reading in Hume" only "confirmed Shelley's growing belief in scientific determinism"; his greatest indebtedness on the subject is attributed to Holbach, and the "very phrase, *Thou mother of the world*", is seen as coming "directly from Holbach". Clark further sustains that Shelley's early ideas were hardly changed throughout his life and that the doctrine of Necessity "is the key to his fundamental philosophy", criticizing those scholars who tend to emphasize "what modification Shelley made in the doctrine of Necessity" (*Prose*, p. 109).

81. Ellsworth Barnard, discussing Shelley's view on love and specifically his short prose piece entitled "Essay on Love" (written sometime between 1815 and 1819), informs us that the poet "is speaking a language which few men will understand, and that, therefore, the meaning he attaches to the word *love* is widely different from that which it expresses in common speech" (*Shelley's Religion* [1937; New York: Russell and Russell, 1964], p. 276). Shelley's own definition of love in this essay reads: "Thou demandest, What is Love? It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void and seek to awaken in all things that are a community with what we experience within ourselves" (*Prose*, p. 170).

objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other"⁸². His language is unmistakably Humean. The subsequent discussion on "motive" and "voluntary action" introduces a Godwinian ring. But as the argument unfolds, Shelley's own voice is more distinctly heard when, in an attack upon the Christian conception of God⁸³ as the author of good (modified by Shelley to "author of evil" as well), we read: "But we are taught, by the doctrine of Necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being"⁸⁴. Yet, if "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"⁸⁵, moral distinctions are amenable to the human person's conscious intentions, and conform to ego strategies and manipulation of events always tending towards "self"-security; Shelley sees them as part of a defence mechanism that safeguards domination and oppression⁸⁶. That "self-aggravation" and calculative/scientific reasoning are the causes of disorder and evil in the world, to be counteracted only by the generous imagination, is a determining notion in Shelley's thought, often appearing in prose and poetic utterances, as in the *Defence of Poetry*⁸⁷ for example, and also in the following passage from the notes on *Queen Mab*:

82. *Prose*, p. 109.

83. "As is the case with Plato", Lilian M. Winstanley observes, "Shelley's conception of the Supreme is much less anthropomorphic and personal than the God of the Bible"; furthermore, what is of importance is that "both Plato and Shelley lay hold of the idea of Deity largely from the aesthetic side. The God of the Bible", on the other hand, "is pre-eminently a moral ruler, a just and stern judge". Another parallelism that the critic depicts concerns the ethical character of the divine, where "as with Plato, Shelley's God is only doubtfully omnipotent", stressing that Plato fails "to solve to his own satisfaction the problem of evil", and prefers to sacrifice "omnipotence" rather than accept lack of "goodness" in his divine principle ("Platonism in Shelley", *Essays and Studies* 4 [1913], 77-78).

84. *Prose*, p. 112.

85. The allusion is to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (II, ii, 247-48).

86. I take my interpretation to be partly in accordance with Earl R. Wasserman's approach to the problem, when he says that for Shelley's doctrine of Necessity "the distinction between good and evil had relevance only to mind, for the Power that is exerted through the universe, not being mind and not having will, acts as it must according to the necessary causal succession"; human mind, however, "having will, can make possible the initiation of an evil succession by imposing on itself a fictitious authority", whose "willful impositions" Shelley called "tyranny". Referring to various poems, Wasserman attempts to elucidate Shelley's paradoxical understanding of "freedom", in that "true freedom does not mean freedom from the fixed processes of Necessity, to which the mind must submit itself if it is to possess its own will; for that submission is 'that sweet bondage which is Freedom's self', a 'weakness' or 'meekness' which is strength" (*Shelley: A Critical Reading* [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971], pp. 257-58).

87. *Prose*, p. 293.

A Necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles, if he indulges in hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmixed with a desire of injuring him: he looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes⁸⁸.

Frankly, I can find little difference between the doctrine of Necessity — “Necessity’s unchanging harmony” (*The Daemon of the World*, I, 291) and a creed of universal Love⁸⁹ and acceptance of existence, the “Common as light is love” which “makes the reptile equal to the God” (*Prometheus Unbound*, II, v, 40-43). Here Shelley seems to depart from the Platonic radical distinction between the two cosmological forces (expressed by Agathon, his favourite “dramatis persona” in the *Dialogues*):

And as for those old stories of the gods we have read in Hesiod and Parmenides, we may be sure that any such proceedings were the work not of Love but of Necessity — if, indeed, such tales are credible at all. For if Love had been among them then, they would neither have fettered nor gelded one another; they would have used no violence at all, but lived together in peace and concord as they do today, and as they have done since Love became their heavenly overlord. (*Symposium*, 195c)⁹⁰

This attitude surfaces again at another moment in *Prometheus Unbound*, the description of the transformation of natural and human forms given by the Spirit of Earth as a response to Asia’s, “I love thee, gentlest being”, which reads:

and when the dawn
Came, wouldst’t thou think the toads, and snakes, and elves,

88. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

89. Newman I. White states that Shelley’s “early ideas of love had become much more definite and important to him, largely on account of his reading in Plato. The old doctrine of Necessity had made way for the doctrine of Intellectual Beauty, which was already in process of being merged in his conception of the supreme importance of Love, or universal sympathy” (*Shelley*, 2 vols [1940; New York: Octagon Books, 1972], I, 559).

90. Joseph W. Beach quotes this very passage in Shelley’s translation, to support the thesis that “Love is, in Shelley as in Plato, one of the terms used for describing the original pattern of the universe”. Referring to Demogorgon’s utterance, “Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change. To these / All things are subject but eternal Love”, the critic gives the standard interpretation, that “Love, in short, is not subject to necessity”, adding that it was “perhaps Plato who helped Shelley to his solution — such as it was — of the problem of necessity”; he adds that it was “unquestionably Plato and platonism which largely influenced him in his prevailing view of reality as spiritual in essence” (*The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry* [1936; New York: Russell and Russell, 1966], p. 251).

Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were,
 And that with little change of shape or hue
 All things had put their evil nature off. (III, iv, 73-77)⁹¹

It is the Necessitarian's eye (in Shelley's use of the term) that through impassioned vision and ecstatic wonder enhances the "perceptual revolution"⁹² that can gain this "aesthetic" — Greek/Platonic or British/empiricist? — approach to reality.

91. Such is precisely the transformational gaze adopted by Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, which changes the "thousand slimy things" (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1. 238), into the "water-snakes" moving in "tracks of shining white"; the Mariner exclaims: "O happy living things! no tongue / Their beauty might declare: / A spring of love gushed from my heart, / And I blessed them unaware" (ll.282-85); *Coleridge, Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest H. Coleridge (1912; 1967; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

92. I borrow Richard Cronin's expression, who, in his discussion of *Prometheus Unbound* sustains that the "physical transformation of the world" engendered in the play is a "mental event"; things are radically changed "because man sees both himself and his world quite differently" (*Shelley's Poetic Thoughts* [London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981], p. 158).

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Αικατερίνη Δούκα Καμπίτογλου, *Η «ανάγκη» στο Σέλλεϋ:
ελληνική (πλατωνική) ή βρετανική (εμπειρική);*

Η θεωρία της αναγκαιότητας όπως διαμορφώνεται στην αγγλική σκέψη το δέκατο όγδοο αιώνα, αποτελεί μια πλήρη αντιστροφή της πλατωνικής θέσης. Για τον Πλάτωνα, η «ανάγκη» δεν είναι «λόγος» αλλά το παρά-λογο: είναι η «πλανωμένη αιτία» που όχι μόνο δεν έχει καμιά σχέση με επιστημονικά εξακριβωμένους νόμους, αλλά κατά κάποιο τρόπο αποτελεί την πλήρη απόρριψη και άνομη κατάλυση κάθε αιτιότητας και «συστήματος». Έτσι, «νους» και «ανάγκη» στον Πλάτωνα όχι μόνο δεν είναι συνώνυμες ή συγγενείς έννοιες, αλλά αντίπαλες και ανταγωνιστικές κοσμικές δυνάμεις — όταν η ανάγκη πεισματικά αρνείται να υποταχθεί στην έννομη τάξη. Η πλατωνική ανάγκη/αταξία είναι ακριβώς αντίθετη της εμπειρικής ανάγκης/νόμου. Σε μια τέτοια αντίληψη δεν υπάρχει χώρος για την άλογη (πλατωνική) «χώρα», το ανοίκειο «άλλο», και ο (ρασιοναλιστικός) λόγος παραμένει απόλυτος κυρίαρχος. Σε σύγκριση με την πλατωνική ανάγκη, αυτή την αλλόκοτη δύναμη που τη σέβονται ακόμα και οι θεοί, η επιστημονική ανάγκη είναι μια ήπια, κατανοητή, νομοτελική αλυσίδα. Μια παρόμοια τάση παρατηρείται και στη φιλοσοφία του Γκόντουϊν (μέντορα του Σέλλεϋ), όπου η «νόηση» ως παράγωγος της (υλιστικής) ανάγκης αντιτίθεται στην πλατωνική θέση «ανάγκης ηττωμένης υπό πειθούς έμφρονος».

Η επίδραση του Πλάτωνα όσο και των Χιουμ και Γκόντουϊν στο λόγο (ποιητικό και θεωρητικό) του Σέλλεϋ αποτελεί κοινό κριτικό τόπο. Εκείνο που διαφέρει είναι οι εκτιμήσεις των μελετητών ως προς τους πιθανούς συσχετισμούς πλατωνισμού/εμπειρισμού στο έργο του. Η παραδοσιακή ερμηνεία θέλει τη σκέψη του Σέλλεϋ να εξελίσσεται χρονολογικά διανύοντας (σε αντίθετη ιστορική φορά) την απόσταση από τον Γκόντουϊν στον Πλάτωνα. Η δική μου προσέγγιση προσανατολίζεται στο να τονίσει όχι τόσο τη διαχρονικότητα αλλά τη συγχρονικότητα, δηλαδή την ταυτόχρονη παρουσία των δύο φιλοσόφων που σαν αντίθετοι πόλοι έλξης επενεργούν ως διεκυστηνίδα στη λογοτεχνική γραφή και το θεωρητικό προβληματισμό του άγγλου ποιητή. Το ότι ο Σέλλεϋ δεν ακολούθησε μια τόσο ξεκάθαρη μετάβαση από τον Γκόντουϊν στον Πλάτωνα, ή από την τυφλή αναγκαιότητα στον ιδεαλισμό, αποδεικνύεται από το γεγονός ότι το ενδιαφέρον του για τους δύο στοχαστές παρέμεινε αμείωτο ως το τέλος της ζωής του, καθώς από το ότι και τα δύο φιλοσοφικά μοντέλα καθορίζουν το έργο του ως εμφανείς ή αφανείς δομές και μεταφορές, σε μια σχέση

παραπληρωματική ή αντιθετική. Μέσα στο παιχνίδι της αναγκαιότητας στη σκέψη του Σέλλεϋ μπαίνει και ο σκεπτικισμός του Χιούμ, κυρίως στα ώριμα ποιήματά του, όπου η «ανάγκη» εμφανίζεται σαν μια άγνωστη και μη-νοητή δύναμη.

Η θέση που υποστηρίζεται σ' αυτό το δοκίμιο είναι ότι η σελλεϊκή μυθοποιία, παρουσιάζοντας την «ανάγκη» σαν μια σκοτεινή και τρομερή «παρουσία», καθόλου δε συμβιβάζεται με το εμπειρικό δόγμα. Η «ανάγκη», όπως ενσαρκώνεται ποιητικά στη μορφή που ο Σέλλεϋ αποκαλεί «Δαιμογόρωνα» (δαίμων+γοργώ) στον *Προμηθέα Λυόμενο*, δεν είναι μια ουδέτερη, απρόσωπη ενέργεια. Είναι μια δύναμη που ευαισθητοποιείται και «αντ-αποκρίνεται» στον «ερωτευμένο νου». Στο νεανικό έργο του *Βασίλισσα Μαρπ*, ο Σέλλεϋ πιστοποιεί το «φύλο» της «ανάγκης» ως θηλυκού, αποκαλώντας την «μητέρα του κόσμου». Οπωσδήποτε αυτή η παντοδύναμη «μητριαρχική» αρχή της δημιουργίας δε συμπίπτει με την πλατωνική παθητική «μητέρα καί υποδοχή» (και φυσικά ακόμα λιγώτερο με το σκεπτικισμό του Χιούμ ή την ψυχολογική ερμηνεία του Γκόντουϊν). Θα μπορούσε να ισχυριστεί κανείς ότι η γεναλογία της σελλεϊκής «ανάγκης» είναι περισσότερο θρησκευτική παρά φιλοσοφική/επιστημονική, και ανάγεται στην αρχαία λατρεία (προ-ελληνική) της Μητέρας-θεάς, που προϋποθέτει μια πλήρη αποδοχή της αναγκαιότητας όλης της πλάσης, ακόμα και στη δύσμορφη, δυσάρεστη και διαστραμμένη μορφή της. Μια τέτοια άποψη κατά παράδοξο τρόπο συμφωνεί με το ρασιοναλισμό του Γκόντουϊν που μας παρακινεί να παρατηρούμε όλα τα φαινόμενα με ήρεμη διάθεση χωρίς να τα αποδεχόμαστε ή να τα απορρίπτουμε.

Η καταληκτική μου πρόταση επισημαίνει ότι η σελλεϊκή αντίληψη της «ανάγκης» δεν πρέπει κατ' ανάγκη να ερμηνευθεί ως αντίθετη στη μεταγενέστερη θέση του που αναγνωρίζει τον (πλατωνικό) έρωτα ως την υπέρτατη κοσμική δύναμη. Ειλικρινά, δε βρίσκω διαφορά ανάμεσα σε μια «θεωρία της αναγκαιότητας» που υποστηρίζει την ίση μεταχείριση όλων των ζωντανών πλασμάτων, και την «ερωτική θεώρηση» που «κάνει το ερπετό όμοιο με θεό» (*Προμηθέας Λυόμενος*), μεταμορφώνοντας την ασχήμια σε ομορφιά. Εδώ ο Σέλλεϋ τελείως απομακρύνεται τόσο από την πλατωνική ριζική διαφοροποίηση ανάμεσα στις δύο κοσμολογικές δυνάμεις (ανάγκη/έρως) όσο και από την πλατωνική «αντικειμενική» αντίληψη του ωραίου. Είναι το αναγκο-κρατούμενο «θλέμμα», υποστηρίζει ο Σέλλεϋ, που μέσα από μια «ερωτική» θέαση του κόσμου επιφέρει εκείνη ακριβώς την «αντίληπτική επανάσταση» που διαμορφώνει την «αισθητική» (ελληνική/πλατωνική ή βρετανική/εμπειρική;) προσέγγιση της πραγματικό-