KEATS AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE TIMAEUS ON KEATS' MYTHOLOGICAL VISION

by

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Abstract

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Critics have declined to acknowledge the influence of Platonism on Keats' poetry except in its most rudimentary form. Close analysis of a contemporary translation of Plato's Timaeus, however, reveals many connections between Keats' thought and the mythology of the dialogue. This thesis contends that Thomas Taylor's translation of and commentaries on the Timaeus underlie much of the mythological structure of Keats' Hyperion and the system of salvation which Keats later develops in his vale of soul-making letter.

It is true that the poet before 1818 decries the importance of "philosophy," but when the problem of evil comes to haunt him, he is forced to confess his need to understand the world within a philosophical framework. The mythology of the Timaeus provides him with such a framework.

It cannot be proven absolutely perhaps that Keats was dependent upon the Timaeus in his own myth-making, but there appears to be a number of very direct influences of the dialogue on his letters and on Hyperion -- these are
outlined in Chapters Two and Three. What is of most importance in the study of Keats’ mythology is the way in which the poet eventually reshapes and moves beyond Platonism to answer the problem of evil and to establish a mythology of his own, a mythology which finds embodiment in the vale of soul-making and in the odes of 1819.

Chapter One traces the growth of Keats from a poet who prefers to delight in sensations to one who seeks philosophic truth. It establishes his religious and philosophic beliefs before and after the problem of evil (recorded in March 1818) is brought home to him, and indicates how he modifies upon those beliefs. In the Mansion of Many Apartments and the March of Intellect letter, Keats introduces the allegories which later become the basis of the mythology of Hyperion.

Chapter Two explores the process of Keats’ myth-making in Hyperion and reveals to what extent the poet depends upon the Timaeus to answer the problem of evil. Keats is determined to show how the Principle of Beauty is inherent in the world, and he adopts the Platonic world-view to explain that mortality and mutability are really calculated towards a greater good, are not to be considered evils. The philosophic argument, sustained in the structure of the poem, falls apart on the emotional level, however: Keats’ tragic vision as exemplified in the Titans is not compensated by the philosophic argument. The failure of Hyperion to build a mythology induces the poet to reassess the problem of evil,
to rework its parameters, and the effort leads finally to the resolution of the problem and to Keats' own mythology.

The final chapter establishes how, from the Pythagorean concept of soul found in the *Timaeus*, Keats develops his theology of soul-making. His system of spirit-creation moves far beyond Platonism and becomes the basis of the poet's own, independent mythology. But although Platonism is abandoned, its contribution to the thought of Keats should not be underestimated: in measuring his own ideas against it, Keats is able finally to define his own philosophy, to answer the problem of evil.

The odes of 1819 are a series of myths which develop and sustain Keats' vision. In each one Keats illustrates the weaknesses of traditional Greek theology, offering in its stead one more appropriate to modern England, one which explains the role of evil in man's personal salvation. If we are to know Keats' mythology, it is to the odes that we must turn.
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Martha St. Pierre
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM STATED

To approach Keats' poetry in terms of a philosophical concern such as the problem of evil might be considered a spurious endeavour, for Keats resisted aligning himself with any particular philosophical system and disliked the "consecutive reasoning" such systems necessitated. The present study, accordingly, is not essentially philosophical, for, when the problem of the presence of evil comes to haunt the poet in the years 1818 and 1819, while he recognizes it as a "philosophical" problem requiring intense thought and vision to resolve, his mind in its characteristic fashion perceives the subject in poetical terms: Keats uses allegory and mythology to record both his understanding that there is pain and misery in the world and his eventual "philosophical" acceptance of the fact. Platonism comes to play a major role in Keats' thinking, and it is my belief that it is the *Timaeus*, the dialogue which treats its subject in mythological and not strictly philosophical terms, which records the generation of the universe in symbolic, mystical and theological patterns, that most influences the poet. Keats' mythological vision, as we shall see when we come to look at *Hyperion* and the odes of 1819, is profoundly
influenced by the Platonic world-view as set out in the *Timaeus*.

The edition of the dialogue which Keats probably first read was Thomas Taylor's translation of four Platonic dialogues, including the *Cratylus*, the *Phaedo* and the *Parmenides* as well as the *Timaeus*.¹ I think that Keats later knew the 1804 edition which contains extensive notes by Taylor on the *Timaeus*, and that the commentary further influenced Keats' mythology. Critics for the most part refuse to acknowledge any connection between Taylor's work and Keats' poetry, but, considering the diversity and amount of Taylor's writing and influence, it would be surprising were Keats not to have met with his work. Taylor was the single most influential Platonist of Keats' time, and there are many examples in the poet's writings that attest to a substantial knowledge of Platonism. It is true that, the prominent status of Platonism in the intellectual environment of the time being what it was, much of this knowledge could have been acquired from sources other than Taylor; however, Benjamin Bailey, whom the poet visited at Oxford in the autumn of 1817, owned a copy of the 1793 translation, and the interest he had in Plato at the time could very well have induced Keats to read the volume. There is evidence to suggest that Keats had knowledge of at least the *Parmenides* as well as the *Timaeus*,² but it was the latter which would have most affected the young poet and former medical student.
It is not astonishing that he who would die in 6 hours could plans be brought to conclusions. -- the looking upon the Sun the Moon the Stars, the Earth and its contents as materials to form greater things -- that is ethereal things.

would be fascinated by the dialogue which, as Taylor states on the first page of his Introduction,

vindicates to itself the whole of physiology, and is conversant from beginning to end with the speculation of the universe; ... speculating the same things in images and exemplars, in wholes and in parts; ... and it leaves none of the primary causes unexplored. (369)

But while Keats might have read and assimilated the dialogue at Oxford, his natural inclinations bade him reject the influence of philosophical speculation.

It is necessary I think to see Keats as he evolves from a poet who delights only in sensations to one who hungers voraciously after truth, for it points out how overwhelmingly his sudden vision of the presence of evil affects him. To insist urgently that Keats changes completely after his crisis in March 1818 would be to distort the organic quality of his mind and to deny the many other factors which mature him as a man and as a poet. It is nevertheless true that Keats periodically underwent creative renewals, usually early in the year (in February 1819, for instance, he is waiting for the spring to rouse him so that he can
finish *Hyperion*) and that a marked change in him occurs in March and April 1818. I would like it borne in mind, though, that while I emphasize the chronological movement of Keats' thought by means of certain key letters because I think it significant in understanding the poems to be dealt with later, I am not unmindful of the vitality and wholeness of Keats' imagination.

We are fortunate that the poet wrote so often and so thoughtfully to Bailey after his visit to Oxford. Bailey was a student of theology, intensely committed to philosophical studies. It is evident that he did not approve of Keats' expressed preference for the sensuous, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that he endeavoured to show the poet the errors of his poetic and theological ways. As a result, we have Keats defending his position as a poet uninterested in philosophy and as a man detached from his friend's religious opinions.

One of the most striking features of Keats' correspondence following his visit is his conscious attempt to separate himself as far as possible from "philosophy" which in its pejorative sense (for Keats) appears to mean a closed system of ideas which by its very nature excludes the value of experiences not in conformity with its tenets, and from "philosophizing," a reasoning process employing the rational faculty over the imaginative (or intuitive or natural). Keats uses the term "philosophy" very loosely, sometimes merely as
a synonym for thought or knowledge; however, it is clear that when he is rejecting "philosophy," he is rejecting reasoned and theoretically-based knowledge, not all thought. His evident dislike for philosophy goes hand-in-hand with his conception of negative capability and his resolution to define himself as a poet in the Shakespearean mode as opposed to the Wordsworthian -- to be a poet content to rest in uncertainties and mysteries without "irritable reaching after fact and reason," rather than one who bullies his readers into a certain philosophy and whose poetry has a "palpable design." Keats' determination to distance himself from the reasoning process, to feast on sensations rather than thoughts, is extreme; in the letters of early 1818 he maintains that he is a poet and not a reasoner and that he cares not to be in the right. His repeated insistence on his autonomy as a poet is no doubt in answer to Bailey's contention that philosophical thought is imperative -- for poets as well as clergymen. Bailey's deep respect for Milton and Wordsworth probably derives from their practice of dealing within formal ethical structures.

Keats was not of course without a philosophical position, but he came by it more intuitively than systematically. The poet's letters reveal him to be a product of the empiricism and scepticism of the eighteenth century and their derivative, natual religion (or Deism, Leigh Hunt's "religion of the Heart"). Keats' letter of November 1817
to Bailey illustrates his adherence to the principles of natural religion, particularly to the doctrine that affections, passions and sensations are mental dispositions which proceed from the heart and are the basis of man's knowledge, ethical and divine:

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination -- What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth -- whether it existed before or not -- for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love that they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty -- ... I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning -- and yet it must be -- Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections -- However it may be, 0 for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts! (I, 184-85)

The "naturalism" of Keats' views rests in his belief in the individual's abilities to understand truth by his apprehension of beauty and to create essential beauty by means of his passions. Truth is not an absolute existing outside man's domain only to be comprehended by consequitive reasoning, but it is something which lies within man's powers of creation: "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth -- whether it existed before or not." Keats' preference for a Life of Sensations may have shocked his friend Bailey (although he was a follower of the "moral sense philosophers"), but it was a legitimate philosophical stance.
The letter has literary and aesthetic ramifications as well as theological, among them Keats' conception of negative capability, the seeds of which can be found in his comparison of Men of Genius and Men of Power, in his unwillingness to assert himself too much, to have any determined character: he is "certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination"; he will not take an unswerving stand against philosophy or thought, but will merely state his preference for sensations. A great deal of what lies behind Keats' reluctance to assert categorically the truth of what he believes stems from his dislike of authoritarianism in any guise, whether it be Wordsworthian bullying or Bailey's Christianity (see "In Disgust of Vulgar Superstition"). He prefers the freedom of natural religion which leaves man unencumbered by dogma and free to act as a natural being.

Exactly what Keats' "natural religion" was would be impossible to know: Deism was certainly not a static, orthodox religion but one in which doctrine tended to alter with the individual. However, we do know of his never-failing faith in a beneficent Creator who gave us the beauty of the natural world, the affections with which to perceive it and the imagination with which to translate its natural beauty into metaphysical beauty and truth. While he does not state explicitly what relation the physical world bears to the metaphysical realm (the world of "essential" beauty),
we can assume that Keats held the two to be coexistent and both to participate in real being: the material world was not simply a deceitful reflection of an ideal one. Endymion's idea that we can step into "a sort of oneness," "a fellowship divine, a fellowship with essence" by virtue of our feelings indicates an intimate connection between the two realms, as does Keats' "allegro" Ode:

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Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double lived in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
And the parle of voices thund'rous;
...
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But a divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.
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That is, the phenomena of the natural world accord us sight of immortal truth: the divine can be apprehended in the song of the nightingale, the voice of thunder and the sound of water.

Until the spring of 1818, Keats unquestioningly accepts the Deist position with regard to the problem of evil. Man is equipped with the ability to judge the morality of his actions -- good and evil are known by the feelings of pleasure and pain which they excite; holiness resides in the affections of the heart. Because mankind has power
over his moral affairs in consequence of the knowledge of
good and evil which originates in him, Keats does not look
on the existence of moral sin as a philosophical problem.
Individual displays of it — intolerance, injustice,
hypocrisy, etc. — infuriated him, and led him to admire
and praise great thinkers and men of action who opposed
tyrrany, such as Voltaire and Kosciusko, but he accepts
that each person is ultimately responsible for his own
actions and must live with their consequences. As a poet,
Keats finds himself able to enjoy a fine display of energy
whether its source be good or evil; he can delight in con­
ceiving an Iago as much as an Imogen.

But the problem with evil that is inherent in the
structure of the world is another matter. From the point of
view of Deism, there is no such problem, for the good experi­
enced in the natural world so obviously outweighs the bad.
In his November letter to Bailey, Keats adopts the Deist
attitude:

The first thing that strikes me on
hearing a Misfortune having befalled [sic]
another is this. 'Well it cannot be
helped. -- he will have the pleasure of
trying the resources of his spirit. (I, 186)

The curt dismissal of, or rather lack of concern for, the
feelings of one who suffers misfortune appears inconsistent
with the Keats so attuned to human sorrows we normally
identify. But the passage does serve to illustrate the
optimism of Keats' mind: the world is the best of possible worlds, and man can only take pleasure in it. If tragedy occurs, one must relish the struggle to overcome the challenge it presents to the psyche. This cavalier attitude disappears not long after Keats records it and is replaced by an anguished realization that living creatures are made to suffer in this world for no apparent reason. And Keats is left to agonize over the cause of indiscriminate, universal evil which is so at variance with the beauty of nature. The problem of evil is a philosophical one, and until Keats' verse epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds, March 25, 1818, he is unaware of any need to explore it.

The letter relates Keats' vision of natural disorder:

I saw
Too far into the sea; where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore: --

... Still do I that most fierce destruction see,
The shark at savage prey, -- the hawk at pounce,
The gentle Robin, like a pard or ounce,
Ravening a worm. (I, 262; 93-95, 102-105)

For Keats, the episode is cataclysmic: it is not that he had been blind to nature's grimmer aspects, but their harsh reality had never presented itself with so much poignancy, never seemed such a perversion. Being forced finally to recognize and to acknowledge the cruelty and evil endemic in the world is doubly painful for the poet: in itself the destruction is difficult to accept; but in addition it betrays
to the poet his lost innocence and has him wishing that the state of innocence could be unending:

O that our dreamings all of sleep or wake
Would all their colours from the sunset take:
From something of material sublime,
Rather than shadow our own Soul's daytime
In the dark void of Night. (I, 261; 67-71)

Our soul meets its dark night when it becomes aware of evil and ugliness in the world; we cannot for ever know only the material sublime, the exquisite beauty of the natural world, "for in the world we jostle," and part of that world is quite the reverse of sublime -- savage, brutal, destructive. But Keats can go no further than to recount his anguish; the tone becomes desperate as he faces his inability -- by reason of immaturity and ignorance -- to explain this newly-discovered and newly-felt truth, that there is pain in the world:

-- but my flag is not unfurl'd
On the Admiral staff -- and to philosophize
I dare not yet! -- Oh, never will the prize,
High reason, and the lore of good and ill
Be my award. Things cannot to the will
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought.
Or is it that Imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined, --
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven? (I, 261-62; 72-82)

Keats realizes that the mere wish to understand the world will not elucidate it, that to penetrate the mystery of good and ill requires acute, mature vision. Suddenly philosophy, reason, knowledge are as fervently longed for as they
were earlier repudiated. He senses quite accurately that he is lost in a "Purgatory blind": he sees too deeply into the reality of things but is at the same time too young to comprehend what he sees. Unable to fathom the inner workings of the universe, to discover or know the law which underlies his nightmarish perceptions, the poet is left only with the unhappy awareness that the world is changed for him:

It is a flaw
In happiness to see beyond our bourn --
It forces us in Summer skies to mourn;
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.
(I, 262; 82-85)

It would have been impossible at this point in his life for Keats to have written "Beauty is truth, truth beauty": it was clear to him that ugliness, the precise opposite of his idea of beauty and harmony, is very much a part of the truth of the natural world.

In Keats' circle the aesthetic conception of good and evil went virtually unquestioned -- Bailey, Hunt, Haydon, Hazlitt, the most intellectually influential of Keats' friends, would certainly have sympathized with the young poet's analysis of his encounter with the disharmony and destructive activity of nature: if beauty is the same as goodness, then the reverse or absence of beauty is equivalent to evil. Their Christian and Deist explanations of the situation, however, would have been of no help to him: the idea of original sin was repugnant to him, and he could not now simply avoid the confrontation which this new sense of reality demanded of
him. The problem would not allow escape into the poetical character. No honest poet, once he has met face to face a problem of this calibre, could continue to offer his readers poetry which ignores it. It became necessary then -- and Keats immediately took up the challenge -- to find the "standard law of either earth or heaven" which could account for the evil that destroys life and happiness.

Gradually throughout the weeks following his verse epistle to Reynolds, Keats evolves an awareness of the tragic implications of evil (no longer does he shrug off misfortune having befallen another) by defining -- not in a reasoning fashion but in one responsive to the experiences of humanity -- the nature of evil. He sums up his major concerns with it in a letter to Bailey in June:

Were it in my choice I would reject a petrarchal coronation -- on account of my dying day, and because women have Cancers. (I, 292)

Mortality and suffering are evils which are for Keats difficult to understand and impossible to justify. The statement, the sincerity of which cannot be doubted, reveals something very impressive about Keats: it lies in the shift that his ambition has undergone, as a result of his grappling with the problem of evil I think, from desiring fame and recognition -- a petrarchal crown -- to finding "there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world."
With his recognition that the luxury of ethereal thoughts gained through sense experience was giving way to a harsher view of reality, one that embraced a tragic consciousness, Keats also saw that his function as a poet and his conception of poetry (his own and others') must undergo change. Of primary concern to Keats is how his new vision of the world will affect his work. Since he cannot relinquish his belief in the Principle of Beauty in all things, it is necessary somehow to reconcile the existence of evil with the essential goodness of the world. Philosophy, as Keats recognizes in March, becomes something that a poet must cherish:

I know nothing I have read nothing and I mean to follow Solomon's directions of 'get Wisdom -- get understanding' -- I find cavalier days are gone by. I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of Knowledge ... The road lies though application study and thought. I will pursue it and to that end purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and a love for Philosophy -- were I calculated for the former I should be glad -- but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter.  

(I, 271, April 24)

I have written to George for some Books -- shall learn Greek, and very likely Italian -- and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a years time the best metaphysical road I can take. -- For although I take poetry to be Chief, there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among Books and thoughts on Books.  

(I, 274, April 27)

Every department of knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole ... An
extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people -- it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery: a thing I begin to understand a little. (I, 277, May 3)

In his insistence on the need for every department of knowledge, Keats is not of course forsaking his previous faith in the affections as avenues to truth, to "holiness"; what he understands is that sensations have to be reinforced and can perhaps be augmented by another form of understanding -- one which has to be worked at and developed rather than simply experienced: there is a "difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge." While prepared to steep himself in scholarship, the poet retains a healthy attitude about its possibilities: "It is impossible to know how far knowledge will console us for the death of a friend and the ill 'that flesh is heir to." And perhaps "Wisdom is folly" (I, 277-79). But he is nevertheless eager to investigate the potential benefits that knowledge might have.

The "painful and acute labyrinth" through which Keats passes in March and April leads to a crystallization of perceptions in his letter of May 3rd to Reynolds (part of which is quoted above). The tendency of his imagination to convert all experience and thought into poetical formulations acts upon his new conception of the world. In an effort to understand his previous indifference to and present concern with the reality of the world as he now sees it, Keats fashions an allegory to describe the process by which
an individual matures: he calls life a "Mansion of Many Apartments" and identifies each stage of a person's development with a particular chamber in the mansion. In each apartment the occupant is at first well-satisfied with himself and his knowledge of the world, but gradually is made aware of limitations in his knowledge and is compelled to seek truth beyond his immediate surroundings. The "awakening of the thinking principle -- within us" is responsible for the progress from the Infant or Thoughtless Chamber into the Chamber of Maiden Thought where one rejoices in the new-born activity of mind. One of the effects of developing the critical intelligence, however,

is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man -- of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression -- whereby This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open -- but all dark -- all leading to dark passages -- We see not the balance of good and evil. We are in a Mist. (I, 281)

Here Keats is giving voice again to that feeling almost of suspension -- of being lost in a Purgatory blind, knowing only that pain exists, but being unable to read the balance of good and ill. What is impressive about the allegory is not simply the reiteration that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, but the fact that Keats has advanced beyond the emotional tribulation of the darkened second chamber of his March epistle, and is uniting "sensations with knowl-
edge"; he is reasoning out the kind of life-process which every individual must undergo. The inclusion of his friend Reynolds and the Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey" in the same life journey which he is on is an extension of Keats' poetic vision from personal to collective, from subjective to objective. The schematizing of human experience in the allegory of the Mansion constitutes Keats' first real step towards a mythological vision -- towards an understanding of the world in terms of a framework of thought rather than a series of personal responses.

Naturally Keats is anxious to consider the implications which his new, formalized conception of life has for the poet and for poetry: the Mansion becomes the reference-point by which his own work and that of other poets can be measured. Wordsworth's genius, according to Keats, is to be seen in his exploration of those dark passages which the younger poet is only aware exist, and in his penetration of the human heart as it responds to each of the apartments of life. Once a poet has had the presence of evil impressed upon him, his task is to reflect the burden of life for his readers, as Wordsworth does. As a thinker, Wordsworth differs from Milton in this: Wordsworth uses philosophy (I think Keats would say) as a process of ordering and explaining experience, and each new discovery into the human heart that he makes expands his philosophical outlook; Milton, by contrast, imposes a system which is static, is composed of
"resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning," and is not given to exploring new areas of feeling and thought, but is satisfied with the "hintings of good and evil in the Paradise Lost." The comparison of the two poets which sees Wordsworth as the deeper of the two says less about them really than about Keats and the process through which he is going. (Keats at other times accuses Wordsworth of as much dogmatism as he here ascribes to Milton, and later on Paradise Lost becomes every day a greater wonder to him.)

How does the poet deal with the knowledge of pain in the world? All of Keats' energies at this point are concentrated on this question, and his discussion of Milton and Wordsworth indicates his newly-acquired conviction that great poetry which deals with life's major issues depends upon a philosophical vision; in favouring Wordsworth to his predecessor Keats is determining the sort of organic philosophical outlook which he himself would like. Keats' primary concern is theological and poetical, how to explain evil in the world, and his main interests are those he sees working in the epic poets. His analysis directs him to another formulation: the "grand March of Intellect" becomes a way of conceiving in social, political and theological terms the history of philosophy and poetry, and it points out to Keats the enormous task ahead of him if he wishes to be "among the greatest." It is clear that at this stage it is the epic which he sees as the proper vehicle for examining
the problem of the presence of evil. The epic is able at once to portray dramatically pain and suffering and to suggest explanations of why evil should exist, and to offer condolence and perhaps amelioration of the burden of the mystery to its readers.

The letter of May 3rd is important in many respects -- Keats' confrontation with so many ideas and his acceptance of philosophy as one of the poet's tools give him the basis on which to develop his ideas and his work as a poet. His allegorizing of human life and of the historical progress of thought betrays a cast of mind in the process of mythologizing, of constructing a world-view capable of explaining the mysteries met within the world. The problems of existence, especially that of suffering, go beyond the poet's personal response, and enter the realm of universal, philosophic, epic concerns.

Where philosophy and poetry converge of course is in mythology -- the poetical or narrative rendering of philosophic, theological truths. Any mythopoeia to be complete must meet certain criteria: most important among them is the explanation of the universe in the form of a cosmology and of man in historical terms; also requisite is a theology or doctrine by which man's spiritual self is interpreted and his spiritual life enhanced. From the comprehension of man and the universe in their totality, there emerges a body of myths which develops and sustains the mythopoeic
vision, and usually a set of symbols, emblems and metaphors by which the myths become universally recognized. Keats' first attempt at mythologizing, that is, creating his own mythology, is Hyperion; its strengths and weaknesses can to a great degree be traced to its success in offering a complete system by which to understand the world and man's place in it.

Of course Keats' mythology is ultimately a personal one. Nevertheless, he is bent upon offsetting his private responses to life by presenting a universal vision which attempts to address itself to many of man's major preoccupations. It was necessary to reshape myth to meet his needs, not as he did for Endymion where he took up whatever legends seemed to strike his fancy, but in such a way as would show something essential about the human condition.

The difference between Endymion and Hyperion is profound, not so much for the conclusions they come to, for Keats instinctively links the natural world with the ideal, but for the framework which he builds (or fails to build as in the case of Endymion) around the ideas contained in the poems. Endymion is the issue of Keats' intrinsic love for Greek myth, for the loveliness of the stories and the beauty of the poetry which embodies them. To the sensual world which the pastoral hero and the poet delight in is somewhat artificially superimposed an ideal vision, but the Neo-Platonism of the poem can in no way be reckoned a philosophical
statement. Keats is simply luxuriating in "pure poesy"; he takes 4000 lines of one bare circumstance and fills them with poetry. If the poem can be said to be constructed on a vision, it is one which finds a young individual allowed to indulge in beauty and romance; the legends on which the poem is based exist for their own sake. Hyperion, on the other hand, is an epic, and the cosmic totality which Keats presents is meant to convey universal truths which should be of benefit to all mankind. The poem is the expression of Keats' understanding of reality as it is manifested in the individual's apprehension of the presence of evil ("Tom has spit a little blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper -- but I know -- the truth is there is something real in the World") and as it through time leads to knowledge and wisdom.

Keats' knowledge of the material which he transforms into his own mythology originates in such works as Chapman's translations of Homer, Sandys' of Hesiod and Ovid, Hyginus, Spenser and Milton; and editors of Keats have traced much of the Hyperion poem to its sources. But one influence which has been ignored or dismissed as impossible is Thomas Taylor's translation of the Timaeus of Plato. The dialogue provided Keats not so much with particular details concerning the actions of the gods; rather it influenced the way in which Keats came to use mythology. Hyperion becomes under the authority of Taylor's Plato a comprehensive outline of the
makeup of the world based on a theological, mystical patterning of the laws of the universe. The way in which Keats gives cosmic significance to the knowledge that he now possesses owes much to the pervasive power of the Greek myths as they grew up around and then served to embody the abstractions of Platonic philosophy.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MYTHOLOGY OF HYPERION

The plan of study which Keats decides to pursue in the spring of 1818 is suddenly interrupted in the autumn by the illness of his brother Tom. The need to find a solution to the problem of evil, intensified by the imminence of his brother's death, precipitates the poet into beginning his epic Hyperion before he is ready. Keats plunges into its "abstract images" in an effort to escape the tragedy crowding in upon him, and to work out as well as he can, with an as-yet insufficient knowledge, an interpretation of experience capable of explaining human affliction. The poem is embarked upon prematurely, but not blindly: Keats has been thinking about it since Endymion, and we have the testimony of Woodhouse to indicate that his plot is in readiness. As well, Keats has his perceptions of the preceding spring to exploit: the vision of evil, now vividly reinforced in the dying Tom; the allegory of the Mansion of Many Apartments and its relation to the Burden of the Mystery; and the grand March of Intellect. Hyperion might be called an exploration into one of the dark, third Chambers, a search for some relief to the nightmarish ignorance of Maiden-Thought. There are many reasons for Keats' inability to go on with the poem, not the least of which is
the grief caused by Tom's death, but the fundamental one is that his thinking simply has not advanced far enough for him to answer the problem of evil.

The fact that Hyperion is an epic and not the romance it was originally intended to be suggests the seriousness with which Keats is approaching his writing. It is no doubt the result of the May 3rd March of Intellect that he decides to cast Hyperion as an epic, the consideration of Wordsworth and Milton as great poets having been in terms of their epic vision. It is his belief in the power of the genre to accomplish good in the world, along with his ambition to establish his own place in English poetry, that sets him upon his epic task. As an epic, the poem comprehends several layers of meaning, but the primary one is to be found in the symbolic world-order which the poet presents in an effort to account for the problem of pain. The response of the Titans to their fall, in all its anguish and heartbreak, is too masterfully drawn for us to think that Keats has not the problem of evil as his principal subject. The Timaeus of Plato plays a large part in Keats' design: the cosmogony the poet introduces is based on the Platonic world-order as he would have discovered it in Thomas Taylor's translation at Bailey's. In making use of the world-system of the Timaeus and its theological implications, Keats is endeavouring to profit from the store of philosophy or "high reason," to equip himself with enough knowledge to
clear away the mists, to see the balance of good and evil.

Hyperion is to reconcile the problem of pain to the idea that the universe is inherently good. For the first time Keats will be using mythology for its original purpose: as an utterance of religious truth, that is, a giving order and shape to a vision of creation which defines man's spiritual condition and his place in the scheme of things. Keats is very much on his way to mythologizing in Hyperion, to rendering concrete, dramatic embodiment to the abstract principles which govern existence. However, to have succeeded fully would have required a larger and more confident knowledge than Keats was then in possession of, and the poem as mythology is more one of aspiration than of completion. Nevertheless, with the fragment, Keats sets himself firmly in line with the great English poets. The excellence of the verse, the magnitude of his "more anxiety for Humanity" which reveals itself in the beautiful conception of the fallen Titans secure the poet's title to fame. Attempting an entire mythology was perhaps an error, but in the venture Keats once again 'hits the soundings' from which he is finally to emerge victorious as a mythological poet in his own right.

The mythological design of Hyperion is of large proportions: while the problem of evil is Keats' main concern, the poet does not intend to delineate it alone; rather the poem is to be an extensive mythical narrative in
which the problem of evil will be resolved. The *Timaeus* plays a large role in Keats' plan, but before considering that role, one other factor contributing to the mythology of the poem should be noted. We find Keats influenced not only by traditional Greek poetry and myth, but also by contemporary speculative mythologies which interpret Greek myth in all manner of ways to support various religious, social and historical theories. Keats was particularly affected by the speculative mythographer Edward Davies, a copy of whose *Celtic Researches* he owned. That author boldly hypothesizes the infiltration of the Old Testament Jews along with their counterparts in Greek mythology (who later become identified as the British Druids) into Early Britain. The theory which equates Greek gods and heroes with the ancient Druids was a popular one, and Keats was willing to draw on it in order that his poem be a national epic. As early as "Sleep and Poetry" we see the poet influenced by the theory (ll. 169-72, 183), and in *Hyperion* his intention is to expand the idea into a British mythology recounting the rise of poetry from Asia to Greece to Italy and finally to England.

That Keats linked the welfare of England with that of her poetry, believing that the spiritual health of a people is dependent upon its artistic health, is apparent in the letter he writes to George in America while at work on *Hyperion*, 14th October 1818:

Dilke, whom you know to be a Godwin
perfectibil/it/y Man, pleases himself with the idea that America will be the country to take up the human intellect where England leaves off -- I differ there with him greatly -- A country like the United States whose greatest Men are Franklins and Washingtons will never do that -- They are great Men doubtless but how are they to be compared to those our countrey men like Milton and the two Sidneys -- The one is a philosophical Quaker full of mean and thrifty maxims the other sold the very Charger who had taken him through all his Battles -- Those American's are great but they are not sublime Man -- the humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime. (I, 397-98)

The sublimity of Hyperion was to be a contribution to his country's honour and to her welfare. The importance of a British mythology, implicitly postulated in the letter and by the poem, is by the autumn of 1819 so strongly felt by Keats that he sees the necessity of writing in pure English idiom.

Perhaps more significantly, however, is the fact that such an outline -- one which would see Saturn eventually ruling Britain (the Isles of the Blest) and nurturing the growth of English poetry -- provided Keats with a structure to his poem and an historical perspective by which the modern reader would recognize his world. Within it, the March of Intellect would find a more complete expression than it had when first conceived: Keats would illustrate the greater beauty and truth of each new poetical age as it is built upon the previous one. The adoption of the Greek-
Druid-English connection we can see as a convenience. Keats was aware that his allusions to "Druid stones" and Saturn's "Druid locks" would be sufficient to indicate to his readers the progress of the poem. The mythography Keats is using is one small facet of his mythmaking, but in it we realize the immense plans he had for Hyperion but was unable to realize. He could, no doubt, have continued the historical representation of the development of poetry; what was lacking was not information, but knowledge. Where the poem fails is not in imaginative speculation concerning poetry, but in finding the right philosophical answer to compensate the Titans for their loss of sovereignty.

Platonism -- to which Keats looks for a solution in his theological questionings -- was of course an integral part of thought in English literature long before the arrival of Thomas Taylor, and we see it in its commonly-held tenets working its way into Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" and even into Keats' earlier poetry. It is the particular brand of Platonism, though, in the Timaeus, that affects so much the thought and poetry of Keats. I have suggested that the poet turned to the Timaeus believing that philosophy was a source of the knowledge required to unravel the more pressing complexities of life; however, the Timaeus is philosophy only in the widest sense of the term (in the fact that it is written by a philosopher), for in its mythological mode of expression it escapes the critical, argumentative
technique Plato usually exhibits in his dialogues and con­
centrates on description; indeed, the philosopher sometimes
falls short of maintaining perfectly-disciplined philosophical
analysis in his effort to envision the creation and behaviour
of the universe. Here was more of poetry than philosophy,
and the imaginative quality of the writing would have suited
Keats' poetical disposition. He was willing to trust to
the truths its symbolism conveyed rather than to the explicit,
more reasoned arguments of other Platonic dialogues, of
other philosophies perhaps.

Keats would have recognized in the dialogue mytho­
poesis at its greatest: an ordering of perceptions which
revealed by means of analogy, imagery and symbolism the
meaning of the universe. Myth is used, not as the "myths"
of the other dialogues which are introduced to illustrate
allegorically certain doctrines of Platonism, but as a
method of conceiving and forming in words what is in
essence unknowable and ineffable. It is the imaginative
imposition of pattern and expression on ideas speculative
and impossible of logical definition. (Timaeus often
repeats his uncertainty as to the accuracy of his state­
ments, but has faith that his assertions are "assimilative"
of the truth.) For instance, to exonerate the creator from
any culpability with reference to the presence of evil,
Timaeus has the artificer address his junior gods, commanding
them to create the mortal race in order that he not be
held responsible for the evil devolving upon that race. At no time of course does Plato believe that his "God who is a perpetually reasoning divinity" (Timaeus, 483) has the immanence conferred upon him here by Timaeus; but in straining to realize in words the ideas and forms of creator and creation, the philosopher is forced to fall back on mythological conceptions. Strictly speaking, these conceptions sometimes belie the force of other statements within the dialogue (see Note 12 above), but in the main, Timaeus presents a spectacularly compact cosmic vision which explains the created world and its laws.

The interdependence of material and spiritual, mundane and celestial, inherent in Plato's mythology, owes its source to the central purpose of the dialogue which "prepares us to understand physics, not only physically but theologically" (Taylor, 416). Within the structure of its thought -- where the cosmos is described in terms of man, and man is shown to contain partially everything that the universe contains wholly -- come the conclusions that what exists in the natural world is, although distant from Divinity, whole, real and good, and that philosophic truth is to be found in the world we see. Plato illustrates the universe working in a perfectly-harmonized order where divine truth can be apprehended in the contemplation of the beauty which this order creates. The dialogue is unique in the Platonic canon: what is stressed is not the ignorance of a darkened cave, the almost
spiritual void of material existence, but the beauty and
good which characterize the whole of the created universe.
Timaeus represents the power of even our "shadowy thoughts"
to attain to truth, the beautiful being very much a part of
the sensible world. The principal intent of the Timaeus is
to indicate how everything, including man and his mundane
world, moves towards the good, the perfection of itself.

Taylor in his Introduction elucidates much of the
dialogue and his comments are learned and thorough; but he
Neo-Platonizes its meaning as well, endeavouring to bring
it into line not only with the other Platonic dialogues but
with the whole tradition of Platonism and Neo-Platonism. In
his eclectic commentary, Taylor's aim is to see the dialogue
in terms of some of the more absolute doctrines of Platonism,
and he sometimes neglects to give due credit to the statements
which are often more suggestive than categorical. He does
admit its anomalous character, calling attention to Plato's
Pythagorean use of exemplar and image to illustrate truth by
analogy, and he is certainly not backward in his admiration
for the beauty of the mythical conceptions. But it is he
and not Timaeus who asserts that the material world distorts
the truth of real being, that it is "shadows falling upon
shadow." Timaeus, on the other hand, while he recognizes
that our knowledge is limited, does not suggest that the
world of the senses is in any way an unreal one:

But the greatest employment of the eyes,
with respect to the use for which they were bestowed on us by the Divinity, we shall now endeavour to explain. For, in my opinion, the sight is the cause of the greatest emolument to us on the present occasion; since what we are now discovering concerning the universe could never have been discovered without surveying the stars, the sun, and the heavens...., the nature of the universe. But from all this we obtain the possession of philosophy; a greater good than which never was nor ever will be bestowed by the Gods on the mortal race. And this is what I call the greatest benefit of the eyes. ... But concerning voice and hearing, we again assert that they were bestowed on us by the Gods on the same account. (519)

In the Timaeus there is no indication that the physical world is an impoverished realm, that mortals need cast off the chains of existence: it is in fact the physical world as Keats understood it, and in choosing the Timaeus to work with, Keats was opposing himself to the Platonism, and Taylor's Neo-Platonism, which see the corporeal world as a cave affording us only perversions for knowledge.

Because Plato is so intent upon affirming this premise that the world is calculated towards the good, he has trouble reconciling the presence of evil with his vision: in fact, he and Keats are faced with the same problem. For the philosopher, there is no doubt that the evil which exists is the product of a necessary process:

For, as the Divinity was willing that all things should be good, and that as much as possible nothing would be evil; hence, receiving every thing visible, and which
was not in a state of rest, but moving with confusion and disorder, he reduced it from this wild inordination into order, considering that such conduct was by far the best. For it neither ever was lawful, nor is, for the best of causes to produce any other than the most beautiful of effects. (Timaeus, 477-78)

There is no malevolence here. Only because of its pre-existence in chaos and the impossibility of its complete eradication does evil subsist in the universe. Sometimes Timaeus seems to hint that the ideas of mortality and mutability exist in the mind of the creator and thus, for the world to be as perfect as possible, they must find expression in his creation. Both explanations, assuredly, give rise to the graver questioning of the omnipotence and benevolence of God, but as the whole Platonic world-view is founded on a belief in both, doubts are disclaimed before they have a chance to take root. For, as Timaeus says, "It is more just to discourse concerning good things than such as are evil" (564).

And this is exactly what Hyperion is prepared to do. Although misfortune bringing with it pain and tribulation is to be incorporated in the poem, it is the good inherent in life's processes that Keats means to emphasize. It would be impossible to calculate to what extent the Timaeus figures in Keats' thinking, to what extent it merely affords a solid support for him to assert his own principles. There certainly exists an affinity between Hyperion and the dialogue
in their central thesis that the world-order is good and that it moves towards the improvement of itself. If Keats read the dialogue at Bailey's, it was a year prior to beginning the epic, but we know that he had the poem in his mind at the time and perhaps it was then that he saw the possibilities of adapting the Platonic cosmogony to his Hyperion. However it came about, the Timaeus plays an important part in Keats' mythological outlook: working from memory (it is not so much details that Keats finds in the mythology of the Timaeus as 'visionary abstractions'), Keats uses the cosmogony of the Timaeus to fashion his own mythical universe. Later on, the poet will return to the dialogue and will see in it materials for his "system of salvation," but he has first the experience of Hyperion to get through.

The Timaeus informs rather than dictates the cosmos of the poem. Keats takes a well-known mythic story -- the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympians -- and infuses it with his own interpretation of the world, an interpretation which may have been inspired by the Platonic mythology, one which in its presentation certainly owes something to that mythology. The main subject of Hyperion is a theological one; to explore it Keats is in need of a vision of the world at once concrete enough to ensure that conclusions come to would be reliable, could be verified within its structures, and yet open and speculative enough to allow the poet room
for personal wanderings, personal surmises. While the *Timaeus* has its own difficulties in meeting the problem of evil, its construction of the world is nevertheless substantial enough and at the same time elastic enough to offer Keats a security in its cosmogony.

The theogony of *Hyperion* is by no means a complete one, but the poet nonetheless reveals enough of the divine order to confirm that he is following Plato's conception of creation with reference to the hierarchy of the gods. According to *Timaeus*, the traditional gods (i.e. the Titans and Olympians) are merely part of the whole scheme of creation, and they are "secondary" in power and in birth to: their creator the Demiurgus, the planets or "celestial" gods, to Heaven and Earth their parents,¹⁴ to Time (the moving image of Eternity) and to the ethereal elements.¹⁵ These are fixed gods and verities, whereas the secondary (or sub-lunary, or mundane, or junior) gods, although immortal, are within generation and subject to change. Once the Demiurgus of the *Timaeus* has fabricated the universe and its empyrean realm, he applies himself to the traditional gods:

In this manner, then, ... the generation of these Gods is to be described:

That Ocean and Tethys were the progeny of heaven and earth. That from hence Phorcys, Saturn, and Rhea, and such as subsist together from these, were produced. That from Saturn and Rhea, Jupiter, Juno, and all such as we know are called the brethren of these descended. And lastly, others which are reported to be the
progeny of these. (Timaeus, 501)

The Artificer of the universe thus addressed them: "Gods of Gods, of whom I am the demiurgus and father, whatever is generated by me is indissoluble, such being my will in its fabrication. Indeed every thing which is bound is dissoluble; but to be willing to dissolve that which is beautifully harmonized, and well-composed, is the property of an evil nature. Hence, so far as you are generated, you are not immortal, nor in every respect indissoluble; yet you shall never be dissolved, nor become subject to the fatality of death; my will being a much greater and more excellent bond than the vital connectives with which you were bound at the commencement of your generation. (Timaeus, 501-504)

He delivered to the junior Gods the province of fabricating mortal bodies, and generating whatever else remained necessary to the human soul; and gave them dominion over every thing consequent to their fabrications. He likewise commanded them to govern as much as possible in the best and most beautiful manner the mortal animal, that it might not become the cause of evil to itself. (Timaeus, 511-12)

The genealogy presented here is standard; what is to be remarked is the particular position and responsibilities given to the offspring of Heaven and Earth. Keats creates his gods in the image of Plato's -- they are within generation, they are limited in their knowledge and their powers, and they are responsible for governing the mortal world in the "most beautiful manner" possible.

That his junior gods are within the mutable world is sufficiently evident. But Keats clearly marks as well
their position relative to the entire universe. Coelus characterizes the Titans as

\[\text{symbols divine,} \]
\[\text{Manifestations of that beauteous life} \]
\[\text{Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space.} \]

\[(I, 316-18)\]

They are "shap'd and palpable Gods," symbols, and are not to be equated with "beauteous life" or the realm of intelligible being. As the rulers of mortals, the Titans are knowledgeable of what mortality and mutability signify, and what they suffer in their fall is a further distancing from the empyrean realm -- a taking on of, not only the earth as their dwelling place, but the more painful qualities of mortals. Saturn strives, in what he blindly sees as his disgrace, against the passions of rage, fear, anxiety, remorse, spleen, despair, but

\[\text{in vain; for Fate} \]
\[\text{Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,} \]
\[\text{A disanointing poison.} \]

\[(II, 96-98)\]

Thea too experiences human agony in her defeat and in her sympathy for Saturn:

\[\text{One hand she press'd upon that aching spot} \]
\[\text{Where beats the human heart, as if just there,} \]
\[\text{Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain.} \]

\[(I, 42-44)\]

To make his gods undergo what he sees to be the plight of the human being in pain and ignorance is Keats' intention, for the poem is to explore, among other things, the Mansion of Many Apartments; Keats, in humanizing his characters as
much as he does, does not lessen the cosmic, philosophical
significance of their crisis, but rather renders it at once
more immediate and more universal. In portraying his gods
as "unlike Gods," the poet is not diverging from the kind
of mythology found in the Timaeus where attributes of the
intelligible and material realms are freely interchanged, but
is in the same process of mythologizing as is Timaeus, making
his assertions "assimilative of the truth" of human experience.

The orders of reality in the poem are most sharply
focussed in Hyperion, the only Titan who has retained his
godhead. The reason for his continued power is not expressly
given, but he is "brightest" of Coelus' children, and it is
evident within the larger meaning of the poem (where "first
in beauty should be first in might") that he is last to
fall because he is the most beautiful of his race. Why he
is may be easily conjectured: "The sun imitates to a greater
degree than the other planets the permanency of eternity"
(Timaeus, 564); it is fabricated from the most divine of
the elements. Keats, like Plato, designates the sun a
"planet" orb of fire, and grants Hyperion in consequence of
his relation with the most exalted planet, superior beauty.
However, in spite of this beauty and his position within
the sublunary hierarchy, Hyperion is merely the "sun's God";
he inhabits and attends the celestial planet, but he has no
sovereignty over it. Six hours before dawn, Hyperion would
cause the sun to rise:
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change,
He might not: -- No, though a primeval God:
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.  

(I, 290-93)

The hierarchy is clear: the celestial god, the sun, controls
Time, the sacred seasons. And Hyperion is inferior to both;
his power as a secondary god is over only the mortal world.

Like Hyperion, the other junior gods are circum-
scribed in their abilities. Saturn's "godlike exercise"
while he governed consisted of mild patronage over the lesser
stars and elements, and a somewhat stronger rule over the
earth. His acts were

Of influence benign on planets pale,
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting.  

(I, 108-110)

Though an immortal god, he has no ultimate authority. His
questions

But cannot I create?  
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe
To overbear and crumble this to naught?
Where is another chaos?  

(I, 141-45)

are rhetorical, extravagant, for he can do none of these
things, he has done none of them. Both Coelus and Oceanus
detail how Saturn came into being, and it was subsequent
to genesis from chaos.

Related to their restricted powers is the limited
knowledge the Titans possess. In Coelus' address to Hyperion
we discover that the forces behind creation are hidden from the gods. The Titans, like the first race of sublunary gods in the *Timaeus* (and here Plato is following Hesiod), are the offspring of Heaven and Earth. They and their parents are unaware of the principles of their generation. For Coelus, Hyperion is the

\[\text{Son of Mysteries} \]
\[\text{All unrevealed even to the powers} \]
\[\text{Which met at /his/ creating.} \quad (I, 310-12)\]

Nor do the Titans understand the cause of their downfall, but believe it to be the power of the Olympians. For Saturn, although he has read "strange lore" and is learned in the legends of the first of days, there are reasons for things that he cannot fathom. He addresses the gods:

\[\text{Not in my own sad breast,} \]
\[\text{Which is its own great judge and searcher out,} \]
\[\text{Can I find reason why ye should be thus.} \quad (II, 129-31)\]

It is only the grief of having lost their supremacy that the Titans know. Their father, who recounts the fall, can describe, but he cannot explain:

\[\text{I saw him fall,} \]
\[\text{I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!} \]
\[\text{To me his arms were spread, to me his voice} \]
\[\text{Found way from forth the thunders round his head!} \]
\[\ldots\]

\[\text{I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.} \]
\[\text{Divine ye were created, and divine} \]
\[\text{In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,} \]
\[\text{Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled:} \]
\[\text{Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;} \]
Actions of rage and passion; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die. -- This is the grief, O Son!

(I, 322-25, 328-35)

While Keats appears to be following Hesiod in attributing the parentage of the Titans to Heaven and Earth (as well as in his description of the den to which the gods fall), he is in fact using the Platonic interpretation of Hesiod. It has always puzzled critics of *Hyperion* that Coelus should love and pity his sons when the *Theogony*, which they were depending upon as Keats' source, has Heaven vowing vengeance on Cronos (or Saturn). But given the basis of the *Timaeus*, and Keats' obvious concurrence in it, that everything in the world moves towards the good, it is only natural that Coelus pride himself on the beauty and power of his children, and that he sympathize in their woes. If Keats had in mind the outline of the rise of poetry, no doubt Saturn and his Titans would eventually have come to accept the censures of Oceanus, to see themselves as a necessary but transitory phase in the advancement of the world, and to recognize their function in giving life and knowledge to the Olympians. The wars would thus be metaphors for the pain and turbulence experienced in the process of necessary change. The Titans must needs bow to their successors; since the commission of the junior gods is to rule in the best and most beautiful manner, the Olympians must be submitted to, for in their greater beauty they are capable of superior governing.
Oceanus' description of the coming-into-being of the universe and its gods, with Light or Visibility the main element of the celestial beginnings, with the Artificer continuing to abide in his own habit during creation, and with the notion that Time ("the ripe hour," "upon that very hour") rose together with the universe is in accord with the Platonic mythology:

From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light, engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens, and the Earth, were manifest:
Then thou the first born, and we the giant race
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
(II, 191-201)

As well, the sage's reasoning of how and why the Titans' fall occurs, which will be looked at later, in its naturalism and its understanding of generation as process, is in keeping with Platonic doctrine.

In order to clear up a misconception of the poem which is almost universally accepted, it is necessary to recognize that Keats is working within the Platonic world of the Timaeus. Although they exhibit weakness, all the frailties of the human condition, the Titans do not fall from weakness, from un-godlike actions. This should be apparent from Oceanus' statement that they

fall from course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. (II, 181-82)
But more than Oceanus' words, which, it is true, do not always conform to the emotional truth of the poem, we have the examples of the yet-to-fall Hyperion and of the conquering Olympians to illustrate that the revolution which takes place does not result from wrongful or weak actions on the part of the Titans. Hyperion, still sovereign, is destined to lose his power: nothing he can do or refuse to do can save him. The eagle's wings and neighing steeds (unseen, unheard before by gods or wondering men) which herald the approach of Apollo (I, 182-85) signal Hyperion's deposition without his having acted at all. Only after his defeat is clear to him does he desperately and ineffectually try to hasten the dawn. And Coelus specifically states that it is "now," after the fall, that the Titans are like mortals, full of fear, hope and wrath.

But more remarkable and definitive evidence that Keats makes his sublunary gods, whether Titan or Olympian, subject to universal laws over which they have no power, is the fact that even the Olympians, fated to excel their predecessors, do not realize their position in the scheme of things. Saturn's passionate execrations and his threat to destroy the new order (quoted above, p. 39; I, 141-45)

Found way onto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three. (I, 145-46)

The Olympians do not comprehend the power that has been given to them. The Titan Enceladus, hurling mountains in
the second war,

scar'd the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.

(II, 71-2)

The insecurity of the new order is not surprising when we consider that the younger gods represent simply another stage in generation, that they are part of a process not fully recognized or understood. Their condition is most apparent in Apollo whose questions, paralleling Saturn's

Who had power
To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?

(I, 102-105)

show him to be as uncomprehending as the aged god. Apollo asks:

Where is power?
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarum in the elements,
While I here idle listen on the shores
In fearless yet in aching ignorance?

(III, 103-107)

One of Keats' themes is the growth of the individual from ignorance to the acquisition of knowledge through painful experience. However much stress is laid upon ignorance, though, his characters remain deities of formidable qualities. Saturn may not be aware of the powers which conduct his downfall, but he has ruled as a king, he has 'read and studied deep,' and his emotional faculty is capacious. Apollo, and we may suppose his fellow Olympians too, are
given "knowledge enormous." What Keats is endeavouring to embody in his poem is the force of universal laws which must be reckoned with, and the fact that all, conquered and conquering, are caught in a process not easily understood. No blame attaches itself to those who suffer, no fault is to be found in the individual. Rather, ignorance is a condition natural within the patterning of the universe; to vanquish it entirely is impossible. However, the pain of ignorance can be to a great extent alleviated if one recognizes the abstract truth that beauty and goodness are the basis of the organization of the world.

While not yet apparent to the Titans, this truth is nevertheless written into the fabric of the poem. Keats will be presenting -- we see him at work on it in his structuring of the celestial, sublunary and mundane orders of reality -- a perfectly-harmonized universe in which the beauty of the world will be apparent. In a remarkably fine use of the four elements as they reflect experiences within the poem, Keats erects a solid support to his cosmic system. A good part of the Timaeus is devoted to the study of the elements -- after all, they are the materials of which the universe consists -- from their demurgic, intelligible existence as form to their subsistence as matter. One can readily imagine that the Platonic discourse would have impressed and delighted the poet, especially as a former medical student, in its explication of the various manifestations
the elements assume, particularly as applied to the composition of the body with its passions, senses, humours and diseases. While Keats may not be consciously recalling the Timaeus in his treatment of the elements, the imagery he employs, where the elements mark the division between the ethereal and corporeal orders of his cosmological design, certainly shows the influence of the dialogue.

The fall of Saturn is reflected in his separation from the elements he was used to associate with and command. That they constituted an important part of his rule as king can be noted in the fact that he looks to them to explain his collapse:

In sign, symbol, or portent  
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire --  
At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling  
One against one, or two, or three, or all  
Each several one against the other three,  
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods  
Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,  
Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath  
Unhinges the poor world; -- not in that strife  
Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,  
Can I find reason why /we/ should be thus.  

(II, 139-49)  

(Keats presumes the instructive nature of the elements in his mythology much as does Timaeus for whom their geometrical composition and relations among one another form a basis for scientific and philosophic knowledge. In fact, Saturn's catalogue has much in common with Timaeus' description of the many activities of the elements.¹⁹) The poem opens with the deposed deity "far from the fiery noon," where there is "no stir of air"; the stream which passes by is "voice-
less," "deadened"; and the ancient god finds no comfort from the earth. The physical setting clearly indicates Saturn's loss of royalty: here is a king cast into the equivalent in nature of a castle's dungeon, locked away, deprived of all that possesses health, beauty, pomp. But the imagery too reveals the psychological reality of Saturn's present state: his identity is gone, he tells Thea, left between his throne and the earth -- his lifelessness, his lack of identity find expression in the elements which no longer participate in his life, with which he can no longer identify himself. The loss of sovereignty is summed up by Thea as the disunion of the king and earth, water, air and fire:

      heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
      Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a god,
      And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
      Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air
      Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
      Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
      Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
      And thy sharp lightning in unpractis'd hands
      Scorches and burns our once serene domain.

      (I, 55-63)

The gods' once peaceful dominion, now their abode, experiences the very lowest form the elements can assume: disorder and unruliness where lightning is caustic and brings with it harm.

This mundane fire which burns and scorches is in contrast to the celestial home of Hyperion. The planet in which the god resides and to whose pre-eminence he owes his continued power is fabricated from fire, the most ethereal of the elements. Timaeus tells us that in its pure form,
the characteristic of fire is visibility, not heat. Keats makes use of this disparity between the ethereal and corporeal forms of the element to depict the gradual reduction in Hyperion's status. The sun, his "lucent empire" consists of "blissful light," "pure fanes," blaze, splendour and symmetry; but when Hyperion enters it at nightfall, having already received omens of his defeat, he enters "full of wrath," and his flaming robes, to reflect the heat of his anger, give a roar "as if of earthly fire" that scares away the ethereal Hours. Even the suggestion of earthly fire (the roar is as if of earthly fire) in the celestial palace is intrusive and frightening, and it betrays Hyperion's waning sovereignty. The disappearance of light, first in his empire, and secondly in himself, further portends his downfall:

The blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry,
I cannot see -- but darkness, death and darkness.  
(I, 241-42)

When he cannot operate the dawn as he would, when his impotence is abundantly clear to him, his division from celestial fire is nearly complete: he stretches himself along the clouds in "radiance faint." By the end of Book I, he has left his fiery home and has plunged into the lower, mundane elements:

Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,  
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,  
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,  
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.  
(I, 354-57)
Apollo, who replaces Hyperion as the sun's god, experiences the reverse of Hyperion's downward course through the elements. He is just awakened and in the morning twilight will quit the heavier earthly elements for the celestial.

His deification begins when the "dark, dark, and painful oblivion" which seals up his eyes (and which corresponds to Hyperion's newly-acquired vision of death and darkness) is transformed into the aspiration for a celestial home:

```
upon the grass I sit, and moan,
Like one who once had wings. -- O why should I
Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing:
Are there not other regions than this isle?
What are the stars? There is the sun, the sun!
(III, 90-97)
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Although the young god understands not, he senses that he must inhabit a realm more divine than the one he knows. It is the elements which in effect tell him so: the dense earth is alien to his touch, water has no meaning for him as he sits idly by the shore (l. 106), the air invites his flight. And it is the sun, the visible fire of the celestial order, which attracts his notice, and towards which he longs. Apollo, in the process of reading the elements, of gleaning the knowledge which they offer, is in direct contrast to Saturn whose fall marks a separation between himself and the power he once had to be comforted by the elements, to govern over them and to read their secrets. The passing-away of the old
order of the gods and the ascent of Apollo are thus skillfully reflected in Keats' manipulation of the ways in which the elements correspond to the varying levels of reality.

The exact process Keats was to present in his mythological world we can only speculate upon, although we know from the treatment of Apollo and the speech of Oceanus that it is to assimilate the Platonic concept of generation: "a motion or procession towards the integrity and perfection of the universe" (Taylor, 436). Taylor in his Introduction to the *Timaeus* refers to violent reformations in the cosmic order which are ordained by Divinity; and quotes a passage from Proclus in which the philosopher describes the progressions into the earth:

It is necessary to remember, that through the devastations of these two elements, fire and water, a more prolific regeneration of things takes place at certain periods of time; and that when Divinity intends a reformation, the heavenly bodies concur with this design.  

(435)

For there are progressions of all the celestial Gods into the earth; and earth contains all things, in an earthly manner, which heaven comprehends celestially.  

(430)

Keats' war between the Titans and Olympians which finds the former cast into the mundane world is hence accounted for within the Platonic cosmogony as it recognizes revolutions to be part of the generated world and as it defines the different stations of the junior gods in the universe. The
reasons for change are abstract, they are "ideas" existing in the mind of the demiurgus. Keats' sublunary gods who suffer or prosper within generation cannot see the abstract principles of which they are the vital realizations. Yet there are clues to the understanding of the process of the world inherent in creation which should inspire a faith in and understanding of the essential goodness of things: there is beauty in the heavenly bodies and in Nature, in their appearance, in their orderly movements and laws, which reveals the goodness of the created universe and which, by analogy, reveals the goodness of the principles by which the artificer establishes his world.

Keats' world-system with its "abstract images" is meant to show the truth of the Platonic doctrine that the physical world embodies metaphysical truth, that divine knowledge is to be apprehended in the machinery of ordinary existence. But because the Titans are blind to the reasons for their pain, it is necessary that the truth be elucidated for them. It falls to Oceanus, sophist and sage, to explain the pattern of the universe and the law of Nature which account for their present condition:

Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:
And in the proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn,

... as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
190 Thou art not the beginning nor the end.

Mark well!
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,

210 In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
And feedeth still, more comely than itself?

220 Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might:

230 Yea, by that law, another race may drive
Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
By noble winged creatures he hath made?
I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire: farewell sad I took,

240 And hither came, to see how-dolorous fate
Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
Give consolation in this woe extreme.

Oceanus' narration of the creation and the progress of the universe, demonstrating that as each new stage in generation unfolds the world is improved, is the basis of his argument.
The Titans themselves have benefited from change, and they cannot expect that the universe will cease its movement
towards the perfecting of itself. The same principle which first brought forth good out of chaos, created Heaven and Earth, and then introduced the Titans and the new and beautiful realms over which they ruled, is still at work within the world. When the evolutionary character of creation is properly recognized, Oceanus reasons, a philosophical contentment must override and subdue any pain suffered in the process which engenders greater beauty.

Beauty and the Good are synonymous: in the Platonic philosophy, Divinity introduces the idea of good into the world by imposing beautiful forms on it. This concept that sees beauty allied to order, figure and proportion underlies Oceanus' vision of the inherent and progressive goodness of creation. "Shapeless" chaos and "blank" darkness are transformed by light (the element of fire, consisting of geometrical proportion) into life. Immediately displacing that which was shapeless and blank are Time, "the eternal image flowing according to number" (Timaeus, 491) and the fairer, because of their figure and division, Heaven and Earth. The Titans excel their parents, are signs of "purer life," because of their "form and shape compact," and their companionship which denotes unity. Oceanus does not announce how it is that the Olympians are still more beautiful than the Titans, but his immediate recognition of their superiority (he and Mnemosyne are the only Titans to have seen their conquerors and both immediately acquiesce in their fate) is in keeping with the
Platonic idea that the beautiful speaks to our highest faculties and that it is at once perceived as goodness and truth. Beauty is the supreme principle in all things: for Keats it is what makes the tragedy of Lear bearable; for Oceanus, who sees the beauty of Neptune and who as sage sees into the beautiful patterning of the universe, it is what makes his sorrow and pain endurable. In his address Oceanus calls upon the "eternal law" that first in beauty is first in strength to explain the creation and then the unseating of his royal house. The argument presumes, and Keats surely meant to carry it out, that the Olympians would do more good for the realms they seized than were the Titans capable of. The parting words of the sage are:

Receive the truth, and let it be your balm. 
(II, 243)

The truth is that the universe follows an orderly, beautiful progression towards perfect being.

The progression is "Nature's law." In labelling it thus, and in later supporting this abstract truth by means of a natural, organic argument (11. 217-28), Keats may very well have the Platonic mythology of the Timaeus in mind. The dialogue is a book concerning Nature, Taylor tells us, and Plato considers rightly that Nature is neither matter nor material form nor body nor natural powers, but is divine through her participation of the good, that is, the intelligible cause: "she governs the whole world by her powers,
by her summit comprehending the heavens, but through these ruling over the fluctuating empire of generation." That generation "subsists through contrariety and mutation" is necessary because it involves matter. That which she reveals, however, is true being, and the movement (the mutations) of generation is always calculated towards true being, is in a "state of becoming to be true" (413-18). Nature's law to whose course Oceanus attributes the changes which occur in the universe is exactly that which oversees generation in the Timaeus; its origin is the first cause which directs the world in its conversion towards the good.

While Timaeus, because he wants to articulate metaphysical truths, investigates the mystical laws which govern the cosmos, his dialogue treats primarily of the physical world. Nature does not remain merely an abstract entity, but works her way into physical reality where she indicates by her organic properties the life and goodness of divine principles hidden from us by our limited perception. Again it is Taylor in his Introduction who for our benefit condenses an extensive passage of the dialogue, this time concerning the role of the earth and her natural qualities. The body of the world is "consummately vital; or indeed, according to habitude and alliance, life itself" (420), and she is full of "divine illuminations" (447). In order to demonstrate her life-giving properties which by analogy show the intellectually life-giving qualities of spiritual truths, Taylor asks, "For
how is it possible that plants should live while abiding in the earth, and when separated from it die, unless its visible bulk was full of life?" (447). It is this species of argument, typical of the philosophy of the Timaeus, that Oceanus introduces into his exposition. The physical world with its beauty, its life-sustaining and procreative powers, its levels of existence, can by analogy demonstrate to the Titans their position in the mystical organization of generation. Ordained by the heavens are the process and beauty of the natural world which lead to knowledge of divine truths. Oceanus characterizes the progress as upward movement from the dull earth to forest trees, to doves, to eagles golden-feathered, touched with the most reverenced element of fire; the examples he uses are meant to parallel the progress from chaos through to the Olympians, always an upward movement towards the divine. The appeal to nature in the god's attempt to persuade his listeners to accept gracefully their destiny fits into Keats' mythological, philosophical belief in the ability of nature in her beauty to answer to man's spiritual needs -- "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth."

(The transforming, intellectual power of nature was vividly brought home to Keats while on his Scottish tour of the previous summer. Images of physical nature might be transitory, but they nevertheless impress their spectators with knowledge of the divine:
What astonishes me more than any thing is the tone, the coloring, the slate, the stone, the moss, the rock-weed; or, if I may so say, the intellect, the countenance of such places. The space, the magnitude of mountains and waterfalls are well imagined before one sees them; but this countenance or intellectual tone must surpass every imagination and defy any remembrance. I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavour of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into ethereal existence for the relish of one's fellows. I cannot think with Hazlitt that these scenes make man appear little. I never forgot my stature so completely. (I, 301)

The mass of beauty, or truth, which is harvested from the material world is that knowledge of intellectual Beauty which makes us forget the littleness of this our life, of this our small stature, and affords us insight into the realm of essence. For a poet, the mental images of that knowledge become the inspiration and foundation of his art.

In the speech of Oceanus, Keats comes as close as he ever will in his poetry to asserting an ethic:

Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;  
o folly! for to bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,  
That is the top of sovereignty. (II, 202-205)

Acknowledge fallibility and act in accordance with it, 
Oceanus urges his fellow Titans. The counsel is in keeping with the ethics of the Timaeus where 

man contemplating the heavens is to regulate
his erring life according to them. He is to partake of the repose of nature and of the order of nature, to bring the variable principle of himself into harmony with the principle of the same. The ethics of the Timaeus may be summed up in the single idea of 'law.' To feel habitually that he is part of the order of the universe is one of the highest ethical motives of which man is capable. 20

And if that order includes the suffering of pain and heart-ache as it must, the evil encountered is to be borne nobly, stoically. We find Oceanus' admonition, and in fact much of his speech, difficult to attribute to the Keats who writes that "man should not dispute or assert but whisper results to his neighbour" (I, 224), and who rarely concerns himself with ethical conduct. 21 And yet it is certain that the poem is meant to hinge upon the truth of Oceanus' words. His advice is sound: there is nothing the Titans can do but accept their fate; the Olympian age will bring more Beauty and Good into the world. Yet the attempt to call upon the laws of Nature to order the behaviour of the Titans, while it is in keeping with the Platonic cosmogony within which he is working, is probably more to be ascribed to the close to frantic need by this time for Keats to find that elusive "standard law of either earth or heaven" which, if it cannot justify the presence of evil, can perhaps at least direct our way in the face of it.

It is not in Keats to be didactic. While he clings for the moment to the idea that the law of nature can direct
the conduct of man, the poem proves this supposition to be false. In his Introduction to the Poems, de Selincourt sums up Keats' understanding of nature:

The supreme truth to the poet is not to be found in the lessons of nature, but in her mysterious beauty, and in her never failing power, whencesoever it may spring, to respond to the every mood of the changing heart of man. Nature does not call upon him to understand this, but simply to recognize it.  

It is her beauty that leads to gnosis. For Keats, nature is what is experienced; truth is what is felt in the perception of her. Her mystical element resides not in an ideal conception of her perfect laws, but in her ability to speak to man, as poetry does, his highest thoughts. Moreover, the significance nature has is that which is conferred upon her by man who participates in her. Platonism, which sees the soul responding to the beautiful forms in nature, is at the centre of this conception of the role of nature, but Keats differs from most -- perhaps all -- other philosophical nature poets, for while they emphasize the God-given forms, Keats stresses the perceiver. Invariably it is the individual with whom Keats is preoccupied:

Scenery is fine -- but human nature is finer -- The Sward is richer for the tread of a real, nervous, English foot -- the eagles nest is finer for the Mountaineer has look'd into it. -- (I, 242)

Humanity is more important than nature; this will always be
Keats' bias, and the profound humanism of *Hyperion* is in keeping with that bias. An emotion, a vision, a tragedy can teach a man to mourn in spite of summer skies, they can spoil the singing of the nightingale, just as Keats' original perception of evil had done. Of course, Keats is constantly aware of the healing effects of nature that can put a man to rights again -- it is the overpowering belief in her essential goodness that has led to his difficulties in dealing with the problem of evil. The capacity of nature to soothe man's woes inevitably comes from her laws, the harmony she exhibits, and Keats certainly knows this, but his poetry, his whole spirit is drawn to the individual who looks on nature, not in an effort to discover ethical norms, but for comfort and aid.

Oceanus is sophist not only in the Greek connotation of the word; as much as Keats would have it otherwise, the god's reasoning that evil is not really evil is fallacious. The Platonic equation of Beauty with Truth upon which Oceanus bases his argument in fact causes the poem to fall apart. Keats loses himself as it were from the very beginning where the concrete experience of pain creates a beauty which possesses more truth than does Beauty in the abstract. Describing Thea, Keats writes:

\[
\text{that face:} \\
\text{How beautiful, if sorrow had not made} \\
\text{Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.} \\
(I, 34-6)
\]
(Once Keats has succeeded in answering the problem of evil in the vale of soul-making, these lines will not contradict the essential, abstract idea of the goodness and beauty of the world, but in the cosmic vision of Hyperion, they undermine the theory of generation which it advances.)

Another foil to Oceanus' argument is Clymene, a goddess whom critics are often quick to dismiss, as are the Titans, as a weak and superfluous character. It is true that her speech, sandwiched between those of Oceanus and Enceladus, seems unimpressive when compared with the grandeur of the one and the fiery energy of the other. But in its quiet, graceful artlessness, it has much to say:

I am here the simplest voice,
And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
And this thing woe crept in among our hearts.

(II, 252-54)

Of what expedience are the words of Oceanus, calculated to astound in their wisdom, in the face of such forlorn, aching ignorance and pain? And yet is Clymene to be dismissed because she can only feel and cannot philosophize? Keats, in placing her speech where he does, in the council of the gods, obviously attaches a great deal of importance to what she says and feels. In fact, he shows her feelings to be closer to reality than Saturn's futile hope and Enceladus' useless anger:

let me tell
Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
And know that we had parted from all hope.

(II, 259-61)
Oceanus explains generation in cosmic and natural terms, and the explanation is successful as an argument in a sense; but the test of generation is how it affects those who live in it, and the truth of the poem is that regardless of the good which Nature's law brings into being, there is a tremendous amount of woe crept in among hearts.

It is unfortunate that the very essence of Hyperion must spell its demise. Those allegories of the preceding May which the poem incarnates constitute its major problem. The Mansion is embodied in the Titans as they pass from peaceful rule through the dark night of the soul into agonized defeat, and somewhat less successfully in Apollo who, given "knowledge enormous," escapes the state of painful ignorance and whose third chamber we know will be a triumphant one as the father of all verse. The March of Intellect is the essence of Oceanus' explanation of the fall of the Titans, and it is supported by the knowledge which is given to Apollo; it is evident that the Olympians will know more than the Titans. How to reconcile the important truths of these two concepts -- that change accounts for so much anguish and that change is the vehicle for progressive good -- is the burden of Hyperion. Keats attempts a reconciliation by dramatizing personal pain and setting it in a symbolical cosmic structure which will reveal its necessary part in the progressive improvement of the world through time.

But to portray so poignantly, so dramatically and convincingly the Titans' unhappiness in their adversity
is to destroy the triumph of the march of time. Evil is the word Enceladus uses to describe what has been done to them, and the responses of the Lear-like Saturn, of Hyperion stretched along a dismal rack of clouds, of Clymene, of Enceladus himself, are so varied in their expressions of grief, and the characters are so little consoled by the argument for endurance that eventually Keats' argument runs out. The tangible pain overbalances the abstract reasons for it. Perhaps for the philosophic mind consolation were possible, but Keats' sympathy is too finely-tuned to those unable to profit from the wisdom of the sea-god. By Book III Keats is compelled to demonstrate the veracity of Oceanus' philosophy, but Apollo is no match for the hapless Titans. The knowledge he gains and the suffering he experiences at deification are implausible, ungenuine, not felt on the pulses; the pain that the Titans have undergone cannot be redeemed by this character of whom it is difficult to believe that the thinking principle is yet awakened. Also, the poetry of Book III is the weak, loose, romance-writing of Endymion, not the tightly-controlled symbolic composition which treated of the Titans. Keats is forced to abandon the poem.

The epic for its first two books is a successful bid at imaging a world-order whose interconnecting realms of existence reflect many truths about the human condition. But as an entire mythology Hyperion fails, because its poet cannot sustain in harmony the various levels of action and
the psychological states of his characters, because he cannot bend his perception of the truth of human tragedy to the abstract idea of generation. The stoic attitude which would have to be adopted by the Titans was impossible to thrust upon them after such a beautiful rendering of their pain. Thea's sorrow is more beautiful than the laws of Nature, by virtue of Keats' conception and sympathy, and by virtue of the quality of the poetry. As much as the *Timaeus* aids Keats in conceiving his cosmic order, it cannot yet explain to him why such misery as the Titans experience exists. The poet is still in need of a structure of thought that will coalesce in one complete, informing vision all of his ideas, perceptions and beliefs.

Although the mythology does not succeed in its cosmogonic vision, its quality as an aesthetic mode which brings to life the more particularized perceptions of the poet is for the first two books of *Hyperion* superb. Myth as a poetical form whose beauty gives insight into transcendent truth is the hallmark of the epic. We can glean perhaps a little of Keats' feeling for the mythology of Greece and his faith in its capacity to treat symbolically of man's religious needs in the following excerpt from Leigh Hunt's "Spirit of Ancient Mythology":

Imagine the feelings with which an ancient believer must have gone by the oracular oaks of Dodona; or the calm groves of the Eumenides; or the fountain where Proserpine vanished under the ground with Pluto; or
the Greek Temple of the mysteries of Eleusis; or the laurelled mountain Parnassus, on the side of which was the temple of Delphi, where Apollo was supposed to be present in person. Imagine Plutarch, a devout and yet a liberal believer, when he went to study theology and philosophy at Delphi: with what feelings must he not have passed along the woody paths of the hill, approaching nearer every instant to the divinity, and not sure that a glance of light through the trees was not the lustre of the god himself going by! This is mere poetry to us, and very fine it is; but to him it was poetry, and religion, and beauty, and gravity, and hushing awe, and a path as from one world to another. ... In all this there is a deeper sense of another world than in the habit of contenting oneself with a few vague terms and embodying nothing but Mammon. There is a deeper sense of another world, precisely because there is a deeper sense of the present: of its varieties, its benignities, its mystery.

Keats would have agreed that deep spiritual truths are to be discovered in the natural world by the mystical, imaginative faculty such as the Greeks employed it. And myth, through poetry, is the means by which man gives utterance to his religious grasp of reality. The establishment of a full mythology was what Keats was attempting; had his ambition been realized, Hyperion would have represented for England a deeper sense of herself and of the divine.

Keats' retelling of the story of creation is myth-making in that it adds to our knowledge concerning the origin of the world, the possible meanings behind it, its implications. However, where Keats' myth-making reaches its autonomy in Hyperion is in its primitive beauty, its achievement
of that "naked and grecian manner" he earlier looked forward to, that grandeur of conception which impressed his contemporaries, even the scathing Byron, so much. The portrayal of the Titans, who become colossal mythological figures representing Keats' unique poetical vision of the human condition, depends upon the cosmic system around them, without doubt; but it is even more dependent upon the nobility and intensity of the blank verse, on the beauty of the poetry which by means of symbol, image and analogy is able to deliver up spiritual truth as it describes events and emotional states.  

Myth at its greatest becomes a form of gnosis; its authority rests on the truth it can reveal through its beauty. Keats' dedication to the "eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty in all things" and his faith that it resides in the world as we experience it never diminish in spite of his confusion, his inability to reconcile the presence of pain to it in his mythology. At the moment, sorrow has more truth to it than has beauty, and it is impossible to understand why. Keats is trying in Hyperion to connect the abstractions of the mythical creation and the principles of generation to knowledge -- physical and theological. He knows that all forms of knowledge are calculated towards a great whole, but he has not yet learned to see the whole. The impasse in thought leads to the regressive poetry of Book III and later to an inability to get on with the poem. Hyperion is in effect a search for the vale of soul-making, an answer to
the problem of evil. Its poet fails to find what he is looking for, but in the effort to mythologize, to see some standard law, he nevertheless manages to write some brilliant poetry which secures the success of the incomplete poem, and which cannot but be thought of as the starting point of the great poetry of 1819.

Whether it is an instinctive awareness that in Plato he will find if he searches hard enough the "high reason" he needs, or whether he is merely trying to refresh his memory of the Timaeus in order to revitalize the mythology he has begun in Hyperion, Keats some time in early 1819 I think must have reread the dialogue, but in the 1804 edition, which contains extensive notes by Thomas Taylor. It is the notes as much as the dialogue itself that bring Keats to the end of his researches.
CHAPTER THREE

THE VALE OF SOUL-MAKING AND KEATS' OWN MYTHOLOGY

It is necessary to turn back to the letters in the spring of 1819 in order to follow Keats' thinking, for his poems exhibit little philosophizing, and it is now in his philosophical speculations that the *Timaeus* can be seen to be so influential. The evolution of Keats' mythic vision begins with *Hyperion* and achieves its maturity in the odes of 1819; underlying the assuredness of the odes is the system of thought Keats works out in March and April, based to a large extent upon the authority of that segment of Platonism which is the *Timaeus*. Particularly in the long journal letter of February 14 to May 3 to his brother and sister-in-law in America, we see Keats moulding what he has found in the dialogue, drawing allegorical interpretations from its cosmogony, and generally considering himself in terms of its philosophy. Perhaps without its aid, the poet would have reached conclusions similar to those found in the April 21 vale of soul-making letter; it is, however, difficult to imagine either the unfinished epic or soul-making without the Platonic structures behind them.

Rarely does Keats cease to question his value and role as a poet; rarely is he able to put aside doubts as to his usefulness in benefiting mankind. As a poet and not a
reformer or a teacher, he has to trust to his inner vision and its poetical expression to effect good. Arriving at the truth of the vale of soul-making, a truth he feels on his pulses, a truth we feel in the pulses of the letter's prose, he is at last free to give rein to his genius, to write with the theological certainty that has evaded him so long.

Just as the physical and mental suffering of his friend Reynolds a year earlier prompted Keats' speculations about human life, so the impending distress of another friend mouses him from an egotistical meditation on his own troubles to an impersonal, philosophical contemplation of the universal problems of existence. On March 19, immediately upon receiving a note from Haslam portending the death of his father, Keats begins to speculate about circumstances which bring with them change and loss, painful but unnecessary to confront and bear. The subject is not a new one for the poet, certainly; but the way in which he begins to handle it represents a new stage in his thinking. The topics introduced at this time receive fuller treatment on April 21; that is to say, Keats spends a month critically analyzing, not only his own perceptions of the world, but as I hope will become clear, the Platonic philosophy of the Timaeus which he had begun to depend upon in Hyperion, but which had somehow failed to penetrate the mystery of the problem of evil. Keats' system of salvation, the harvest of all his exertions this month, is no more purely Platonic than is Christianity,
yet neither system would exist as it does without the worldview laid out by Plato. The philosophical certitude of Keats' eventual system comes from his careful re-examination of the ideas of the *Timaeus* and his consideration of philosophy in a much more profound and serious way than ever before.

He mentions that he has been thinking about Socrates and the writings through which the philosopher is known: he has been discussing Plato with his publisher Taylor. (Might Taylor have lent him the 1804 edition of the Dialogues as he had lent him so many other books during their association?) Keats sees in Socrates a man completely "disinterested," and the term he uses -- "disinterested" -- bears close affinity to his own ideal of negative capability. Here is a man, a thinker, a philosopher whom Keats admires, and it is perhaps in seeing Socrates in this light, in terms akin to his own highest notions, that Keats succumbs to the power of philosophy. For the first time he calls his mind a "speculative" one. He acknowledges that philosophy has become something "real" for him, and moreover, that the need for it is not only his, but is everyone's"

You will not think that on my own account
I repeat Milton's lines
"How charming is divine Philosophy
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose
But musical as is Apollo's lute" --
No -- no for myself -- feeling grateful as I do to have got into a state of mind to relish them properly -- Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced -- Even a Proverb is no proverb
The philosophic mind is not something to be eschewed; indeed, it can be as holy and as creative as the poet's imagination. Although it is more or less a year since Keats decided that philosophy is needful to a thinking man, philosophizing as an exercise is nevertheless new to him; the only record we have of it as a serious and relatively extensive occupation is in this journal letter. I think Keats himself is aware of the fact that he is thinking in an entirely new fashion, and that he has in mind Timaeus' maxim "that to transact and know his own concerns and himself, is alone the province of a prudent man" when he claims his due for the philosophical course he is now on: "Give me this credit -- Do you not think I strive -- to know myself? Give me this credit --". With the solidity of the disinterested thought of Socrates (and the imaginative, theological Timaeus) supporting him, Keats is striving to know himself: to examine impartially the world and his relation as a mortal animal to it. The dogmatism of Oceanus vanishes, and we have Keats inquiring into the nature of things.

"This is the world," he says. And the world that he goes on to describe is the one Taylor characterizes as "not naturally adapted to abide for a moment". Keats, more poetically, describes change:

Circumstances are like clouds continually...
gathering and bursting — While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into <he> the wide arable land of events — while we are laughing it sprouts is grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck -- (II, 79)

Considering the presence of evil in such terms averts the question of responsibility or accountability which effectively destroyed Hyperion: the passive directs the attention away from the agent, towards the "we" who must pluck the poison fruit. And yet, in spite of the "we," Keats avoids the pitfall of feeling too deeply the pain caused by mutability. He has distanced himself from the emotional tribulation of the Titans: his philosophy is to be balanced and dispassionate in its account of man and the world.

In the same neutral vein Keats comments upon the mortal nature. His vision of man and animal as one, as subject to identical laws and needs, as participating in the same life processes is in tune with Plato's discourse on the mortal animal. Timaeus has the creator order the junior gods:

That mortal natures, therefore, may subsist, and that the universe may be truly all, convert yourselves, according to your nature, to the fabrication of animals, imitating the power which I employed in your generation ..., causing them to increase by supplying them with aliment, and receiving them back again when dissolved by corruption. (504-505)

Keats sees the same instincts, for amusement, for "increase," for action, operating both in the animal and in the "noble
animal Man":

The greater part of Man make their way with the same instinctiveness, the same unwandering eye from their purpose, the same animal eagerness as the Hawk -- The Hawk wants a Mate, so does the Man -- look at them both they set about and procure on[e] in the same manner -- they get their food in the same manner --.

... I go among the Feilds [sic] and catch a glimpse of a stoat or a fieldmouse peeping out of the withered grass -- the creature has a purpose and its eyes are bright with it -- I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a Man hurrying along -- to what? The Creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. (II, 79-80)

While Keats calls upon Wordsworth to give weight to this perception: "But then as Wordsworth says, 'we have all one human heart,'" Wordsworth would hardly have conceived of such a parallel of fieldmouse and man; on the other hand, Taylor tells us:

Orpheus, therefore, establishing one demiurgus of all divided fabrication, who is analogous to the one father that generates total fabrication, produces from him the whole mundane intellectual multitude, the number of souls, and corporeal compositions. This demiurgus, (viz. Bacchus) therefore, generates all these unitedly; but the Gods who are placed about him divide and separate his fabrications. Orpheus says, that all the other fabrications of the divinity were separated into parts by the distributive Gods, but that his heart alone was preserved indivisible by the providence of Minerva. (484)

In writing to George and Georgiana it would have been much
simpler to recall to them the words of Wordsworth rather than to begin to explain the Orphic doctrine of the "indivisible heart." Whether Keats had Taylor's discussion specifically in mind would be impossible to prove, and yet we know from the April 21 letter that Keats is seriously considering the Platonic make-up of humanity in terms of intellect, heart and soul as it corresponds to the world, and his grouping of corporeal compositions, animal with human, would seem to derive from the Orphic, Platonic tradition. Up to this point, none of the speculations of the March letter is necessarily influenced by the *Timaeus*; they recall its image of the world, but cannot be said to depend upon it. What is singular is Keats' introduction of the "superior genera" of Plato's cosmogony.

Angels, daemons and heroes play a substantial part in the *Timaeus*. In their many forms, they mediate between the gods and humanity. While Keats seems not to recognize the existence of angels -- perhaps the idea of them had too Christian a ring to it -- he discusses heroism as an important entity in the world and conjectures whether daemons exist or not. Of the heroic he writes:

... we have all one human heart -- there is an electric fire in human nature, tending to purify -- so that among these human creatures there is continually some birth of new heroism. (II, 80)

His words come close to Taylor's paraphrase of Proclus:
the heroic subsists according to intellect and a convertive energy; and hence it is the inspective guardian of purification, and a magnificently operating life. (500)

The heroic is an 'electric fire,' 'a convertive energy' which 'purifies' and leads to a good life. And later in the letter Keats asks if there might not be "superior beings" who watch over the reasonings of such as he, who might be amused by any erroneous opinions he might have.

His statement that "though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed are fine; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel" (II, 80) not only supports his contrast of the negatively capable poet living in gusto and the virtuous philosopher, but falls back upon the peculiar brand of philosophy presented in the Timaeus. In the psychological portion of the dialogue, Timaeus stresses the goodness and naturalness of the senses and passions which are given man at his commencement; he makes the claim that "violent passions were necessary to all, ... fear and anger were necessary" (508-509). In his habit of describing and enlightening rather than moralizing and dictating, Timaeus is far from representing Keats' "virtuous" philosopher. Depending upon the "disinterestedness" he finds in the Socratic dialogue, Keats is fixing what he feels to be a solid, philosophical groundwork on which he can build his poems; it will give him the confidence, at least for the next few months, to carry on, to render imaginatively
into poetry the truths he has worked out for himself with the aid of the *Timaeus*.

While the poet admits to a new relish for divine Philosophy, he never for a moment lets go either the contrast between poetry and philosophy, or his preference for the "not so fine" poetry. What does change in this month of philosophizing is his conception of the range or comprehensiveness of philosophy, its ability to address the whole human spirit, not only the mind. Along with the division between poetry and philosophy Keats had always seen a separation between "Philosophy human and divine" as though divine knowledge differed somehow from the knowledge needed in human matters. The disparity is apparent in not a few of his letters of 1818, including the May 3rd discussion of Milton and Wordsworth, and also in *Hyperion* where the "human" knowledge of Clymene ("And all my knowledge is that joy is gone") is in sharp contrast to the cogitations of Oceanus who sees transcendentally into universal causes. Keats was so intent upon stressing the "human" element in his poetry -- the affections of the heart -- that he was in a sense blinded to the value for the poet of the divine in philosophy. Again, it is easily understood that it is the *Timaeus*, where the human is never sacrificed to the divine, which contributes to the poet's changing thought. Man, we are told by Taylor, comprehends everything divine in a partial manner, and the universe is a cosmic animal seen to function in human terms.
When Keats finally acquires this understanding of the world, complex and difficult to grasp as it is for one who has always divided the two, that divine knowledge and the knowledge which comes from daily existence are essentially one, he is able to erect a philosophical system "which does not affront our reason and humanity" (II, 103).

On April 15, after Keats writes "I am still at a stand in versifying -- I cannot do it yet with any pleasure" (II, 84), he proceeds to copy our two recent poems: "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and "Song of Four Fairies." The standstill it would seem is in writing what he judges to be significant poetry, that is, Hyperion. The "Song of Four Fairies" is hardly significant poetry, yet it does indicate the possibility of another debt to the Timaeus which, as has been noted, is much concerned with the four elements. The poem is light-hearted, a song, and not in the least philosophical in character; but the mating which takes place in it is based upon the Platonic pairing of the elements. In the poem, the spirits Air and Water fly away together while Fire and Earth seek "In the earth's wide entrails old Couches warm." Taylor tables the characteristics of the elements thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Fire: Subtle, Acute, Movable</th>
<th>Air: Subtle, Blunt, Movable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water:</td>
<td>Dense, Blunt, Movable</td>
<td>Earth: Dense, Blunt, Immovable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And he says of the relationship between Earth and Fire:

... you may perceive how admirably the two extremes fire and earth are connected;

... the last procession of fire is subterranean; for according to Empedocles, there are many rivers of fire under the earth.

Keats is fond of writing slight, clever verse to pass the time: the "Song of Four Fairies" is not inspired poetry, but a fanciful demonstration of the characteristics and connections of the elements. Their properties, it is true, are not to be found exclusively in the Platonic dialogue, but the fact that the poem is written at this time leads to the not implausible surmise that it is influenced by the Timaeus.

"La Belle Dame," in contrast to the song, is poetry at its greatest, and is Keats' first entirely successful venture into myth-making. That the poet does not recognize its brilliance, that he later thinks the "Ode to Psyche" his first poem to reflect the pains of composition, indicates the lack of confidence he has without his "system of salvation." But the fineness of the ballad in its austere and quiet beauty shows the poet to be not very distant from answering the problem of evil: "La Belle Dame" suspends the questioning and searching and in their stead offers a disengaged, impersonal presentation of what man suffers because of change and loss. In its implied acceptance of the world as it is there
is a foreglimpse of the theme of the odes.

The poem captures the desolation that results when love and hope must be forfeited, and at the same time demonstrates the universality (kings, princes and warriors have undergone what the knight experiences) and naturalness of the despair which necessarily occurs within the impermanent world. To argue that the knight has been to hell or heaven in his encounter with the lady is I think to miss the point of the poem; Keats is perhaps thinking of the Orphic journey to the underworld when he has his knight meet a kind of spiritual death in the physical love of the elfin grot, but that the subsequent suffering endured will guarantee the salvation of his soul is not even hinted at. There is no moral, no consolation in the poem. What Keats presents is a mythical picture of this world: the happiness possible in it, however transitory and imperfect it might be (and the world of the poem is imperfect, as imperfect as Plato's cave—the knight cannot be absolutely certain that he has understood the lady; the lady, though a faery's child, weeps full sore); and the misery which also is part of it, constituting the hell of existence, where "no birds sing." This is a world of flux, and the knight is caught, as inextricably as the seasons, between its good and ill: the granary is full but the sedge is withered; the knight is fulfilled in love, but he is alone and woe-begone. As myth, the poem authenticates and, through its melancholy beauty, gives a
value to the experience of the suffering individual; however, it suggests neither reason nor recompense for that experience. After soul-making, when Keats' mythic vision is complete, his poems will be able to justify, in a profound theological sense, the mystery of suffering.

In the April 21 vale of soul-making letter, the topics Keats discusses are further explorations of those introduced in March: the character of circumstances, the importance of Socrates, the condition of mortal natures human and animal, and the possibility of the existence of mediators. But the way in which Keats deals with them reaches a height of conviction, of joy and intensity, as the nature of the world and the reason for its evils become clear to him. It has taken the poet all this time, over a year, to integrate the Platonism of the Timaeus into his own perceptions concerning life. That he is going back to Greek roots in the fabrication of his philosophical system he himself tells us when commenting on the nature of mediators and their origin. What sparks the breakthrough in thought, however, is the reading of Voltaire and of Robertson's History of America.

The historical perspective which the two authors present stimulates Keats to a re-examination of the presence of evil:

I have been reading lately two very different books Robertson's America and Voltaire's Siècle De Louis xiv It is
like walking arm and arm between Pizarro and the great-little Monarch. In How lamentable a case do we see the great body of the people in both instances: in the first, where Man might seem to inherit quiet of Mind from unsophisticated senses; from uncontamination of civilization; and especially from their being as it were estranged from the mutual helps of Society and its mutual injuries -- and thereby more immediately under the Protection of Providence -- even there they had mortal pains to bear as bad; or even worse than Baliffs, Debts and Poverties of civilised Life --

(II, 100)

A "civilized" France or a "nobly savage" America bring with them pains and hardships, perhaps different in kind, but equally bitter. With the recognition that evil exists and flourishes under all conditions, that it rather than the might of beauty seems to "reign in right thereof" with a power that does not diminish from age to age or civilization to civilization, Keats essentially turns his back on endeavouring to clarify its place in the make-up of the world. He begins to examine instead the presence of evil, as he had begun to do with the Titans, as a problem for the individual rather than for the world, and what he discovers is that the standard law he has been searching for is not of cosmic, social or physical dimensions, but is the law of personal salvation. Once one understands the individual and his needs, the role of the world's evils becomes evident.

The first hint that this letter will be one of conclusions for the poet is the statement that "the whole appears to resolve into this" -- here we have a conception
of the "whole question" of the problem of evil, and here we have its resolution, not a startling or original one, but a quietly accepting one, that "man is mortal and there is ever a heaven with its Stars above his head" (II, 101): we inhabit the mutable world which will always differ from the steadfast and eternally beautiful heavens. Keats goes on to consider the implications of this truth. He asks "the most interesting question that can come before us":

How far by the persevering endeavours of a seldom appearing Socrates Mankind may be made happy -- /he/ can imagine such happiness carried to an extreme -- (II, 101)

But he is sagacious enough to evaluate the state of mortal man in this imagined extremity of happiness and to gauge the limitations of philosophy:

-- but what must it end in? -- Death -- and who could in such a case bear with death -- the whole troubles of life which are now frittered away in a series of years, would the/h/ be accumulated for the last days of a being who instead of hailing its approach, would leave this world as Eve left Paradise -- (II, 101)

Here we have Keats glorifying the powers of philosophy to make the nature of the world understood and thus to render man happy in the possession of knowledge, and simultaneously denying the ultimate desirableness of such an effect. Issuing out of this rather cursory investigation of the capacity of philosophy to soothe the cares of man
are: the beginning of the argument that evil is necessary to mortal man -- were one never to suffer in this life, death would be unbearable; the renewed confirmation of the supremacy of the heart -- for all his respect for the reasoning mind, it is the feelings that remain paramount; -- the reaction of man to his circumstances is of more consequence than the circumstances themselves; and, finally, the complete rejection of the generation argument which lay at the foundation of Hyperion:

But in truth I do not believe in this sort of perfectability -- the nature of the world will not admit of it -- the inhabitants of the world will correspond to itself -- ... The point at which Man may arrive is as far as the parallel state in inanimate nature and no further. (II, 101)

Whether "this sort of perfectability" includes the March of Intellect is impossible to decide. Keats is talking about the knowledge which the intellect is capable of achieving in a seldom-appearing Socrates, but since the main thrust of his argument at this stage is centred upon man's 'bodily accommodations,' we cannot know whether he is referring to the allegory. Keats seems at this juncture to be revolving around and around in his mind the Platonic doctrines he has met, weighing their possibilities, their significance. The experiences he has read of France and America have effectively done away with the concept of generation towards perfection where man's sufferings are somehow tied to the world's good:
Keats relinquishes the abstract idea, and addresses himself to the world he sees around him.

To illustrate the absolute interrelationship of man with nature, the poet introduces the analogy of the rose in its habitation:

For instance suppose a rose to have sensation, it blooms on a beautiful morning it enjoys itself -- but there comes a cold wind, a hot sun -- it cannot escape it, it cannot destroy. Its annoyances -- they are as native to the world as itself: no more can man be happy in spite, the worldly elements will prey upon his nature. (II, 101)

Is Keats here recalling the "sense of plants" which Taylor describes in his notes on the _Timaeus_? --

The last sense is that with which a most obscure knowledge is present, which is full of passion, and is proximate to physical sympathy, as not knowing the forms of sensibles; as, for instance, that what operates is hot or cold, but that what falls upon it is alone pleasant or painful; for such is the sense of plants. (482)

The question is not groundless -- this vale of soul-making letter has much in common with the character of the dialogue and with individual ideas it introduces: Keats is exploring the "connection of things" which Timaeus again and again insists upon, and it is significant to note, he is examining the physical world theologically. The consideration of man in his natural environment and the consequent ills he is prey to brings Keats finally to the understanding and justi-
fication of the presence of evil.

It is a change in perspective which yields success for Keats: rather than endeavouring any longer to find a law, natural or divine, to account for the existence of evil, Keats focusses upon the individual's seemingly inextricable link with misfortune. Mankind appears somehow dependent upon the presence of pain, not only to make death tolerable, but to make life meaningful in a profound, religious sense. Keats shifts his outlook from seeing that pain is of necessity in the world to recognizing that it is necessary to the world. The vale of soul-making, while its reference points are clearly Platonic, moves far beyond the Timaeus in justifying the existence of evil. By concentrating, not on the organization of the world, but on the composition of the human being, by relying on the Heart as a knowing entity and emphasizing that knowledge is more than reasoned conclusions, Keats is able to capture what he believes to be the essence of human existence. Timaeus balanced his conceptions of universe and man, making the former the macrocosm of the latter, but in his systematizing, the role of evil was inexplicable. Hyperion was an attempt to deal with the universal pattern; now Keats examines the microcosm to explain the "use of the world." His expression "the use of the world" is singular and is the key to the vale of soul-making: Keats regards the world as though it were constructed for man, and not vice-versa as Plato would have it. But how-
ever much Keats circumnavigates certain Platonic conceptions, his system is erected upon the Greek theology as expounded by the *Timaeus*; it owes its existence to the cosmography of the dialogue, and to its particular way of focussing and interpreting phenomena -- materially verifiable and conjectural.

In order to dismiss the misguided notion of Christian redemption as an argument for the existence of evil, Keats transforms the Christian "vale of tears" into the more creative "vale of soul-making." He then proceeds to sketch his theory of salvation -- the making of the soul immortal -- in terms which adhere closely to Timaeus' description of the Anima Mundi and its counterpart, the human soul. The entire theology of the Platonic dialogue is based on the conception of soul and its embodiment in partial souls, and for its delineation Timaeus depends upon the Pythagoric mode of inquiry which maintains that things are given a triple division, that is, any two levels of being, any two substances, to interact, must be sustained by a third, for as Timaeus says, "It is impossible for two things alone to cohere together without the intervention of a third" (479). The universe, world-soul, the human soul, Nature, the inhabitants of the universe, all have threefold characters. So, for instance, the demiurgus "placing intellect in soul and soul in body, he fabricated the universe" (*Timaeus*, 478), and the soul of man except in its participation in matter is
the exact counterpart of the world-soul which consists of eternal essence, energy in time, and body (or essence, sameness and difference). In both cases, the soul represents the medium between the intellectual and the material realms. Keats is strongly influenced by the Platonic idea of soul as it is represented in the dialogue: he employs the concept of tri-partite division, especially as it is relevant to the composition of soul, and he echoes Timaeus' extensive use of "mediums" in his scheme of soul-creation.

Keats' threefold division consists of Intelligence, World and Heart, which, working together, create the soul. His system of salvation or "spirit-creation"

is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years -- These three Materials are the Intelligence -- the human heart (as distinguished from intelligence or Mind) and the World or Elemental space suited for the proper action of Mind and Heart on each other for the purpose of forming the Soul or Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity. (II, 102)

The definitions given to each of the components derive from the definitions accorded them by Timaeus and Taylor. Keats says of Intelligences that they are

not souls (the) till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. Intelligences are atoms of perception -- they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God -- (II, 102)

Or, as Taylor says, "Every pure intellect is, according to
the Platonic philosophy, a God according to union" (418). The World of Circumstances is of course the world of change, of generation which never is, but is always in a state of becoming. And the Heart, Keats' interpreter of experience, his "seat of the human Passions" is Timaeus' home of the mortal genus of the soul where the nobler passions mediate between the brain and bodily appetites (544). Keats in defining the Soul as different from Intellect, as an entity that has to be matured, sees as Taylor tells us Plato does, that the reason of the soul is "becoming to be true," thus indicating "the difference between the knowledge of soul and intellect" (489). And Keats' idea of the "three grand materials" might have been inspired by Timaeus' inquiry into intellect and true opinion:

... these ought to be denominated two distinct things, because they are generated separate from each other, and are dissimilar. ... And the one is indeed always attended with true reason, but the other is irrational. The one is not to be moved by persuasion; the other, on the contrary, is subject to this mutation. ... We must confess that the form which subsists according to same, is unbegotten and without decay; neither receiving anything into itself externally, nor itself proceeding into any other nature. That it is invisible, and imperceptible by sense; and that this is the proper object of intellectual speculation. But the form which is synonymous and similar to this, must be considered as sensible, generated, always in agitation, and generated in a certain place, from which it again recedes, hastening to dissolution; and which is apprehended by opinion in conjunction
with sense. But the third nature is that of place. (524-25)

The three natures existing in the "receptacle" of things in the universe are intellect, opinion governed by sense, and place. Or, as Keats would say, Intellect, Heart and World.

To explain the specific relations among the materials of soul-making, Keats introduces the idea of mediums. He reverses Taylor's question, "For how, without a medium, could they [souls] proceed into this body from immaterial spirits?" (511) to read 'How without the medium of this world could souls proceed from this body to possess a spirit of their own?' "How then are souls to be made?" Keats asks,

How, but by the medium of a world like this? ... Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! (II, 102)

And later on, in reiterating his doctrine, it is the Heart as mediator in the world of circumstances which becomes the medium between the Intelligence without identity and the Soul with its altering nature. There can be little doubt, I think, that Keats is in this letter of April 21 very consciously allowing himself to be influenced by the kind of philosophical inquiry and the theological doctrines concerning the soul that he finds in the Timaeus.

Taylor's comments that Plato calls the gnostic motions of the
soul touchings indicating by this the 
immediate apprehension of the objects 
of knowledge, (489)

and

the happiness of any being is the 
proper perfection of that being (484)

seem to have sparked in Keats not only the ideas that the 
soul becomes the receptacle of knowledge and that as it is 
perfected it develops a happiness, a "bliss peculiar," but 
as well they seem to have affected even the poet's vocabulary. 
It is not difficult to imagine, especially given Keats' attraction to gerunds, how easily Taylor's italicized 'touchings' 
evolved into the 'touchstones' and 'provings' Keats uses to 
describe the acquisition of knowledge that gives the soul 
its 'perfectionings':

I began by seeing how man was formed by 
circumstances -- and what are circumstances? -- 
but touchstones of his heart --? and what 
are touch stones? -- but proovings of his 
heart? -- and what are proovings of his heart 
but fortifiers or alterers of his nature? 
and what is his altered nature but his 
soul? -- and what was his soul before it 
came into the world and had These provings 
and alterations and perfectionings? -- An 
intelligence(s) -- without Identity -- and 
how is this Identity to be made? Through 
the medium of the Heart? And how is the 
heart to become this Medium but in a world 
of Circumstances? (II, 103-104)

In the Platonic philosophy the human soul acts as the 
medium between the Intelligible and the material, and the 
further she approaches the former, the more knowledge she
is said to possess and happier is the individual whose
tenement she inhabits. Ironically, however, it is only
through participating in material existence and undergoing
the circulations of time that the flight of the soul towards
essence takes place. Keats launches on to the truth of this
irony, and in so doing clarifies for himself the "use" of
the world, giving it much more importance in the scheme of
creation than Timaeus was willing to concede it. Yet even
in this seeming disparity between Keats' system and the
dialogue, the commentary of Taylor can be seen to be perhaps
influencing Keats' vision:

Should it be again asked, Why, therefore,
are partial souls descending into genera-
tion filled with such material perturbation,
and such numerous evils? we reply, that
this takes place through the inclination
arising from their free will. ... And the
soul, indeed, by verging to a material
life, kindles a light in her dark tenement
the body, but she herself becomes situated
in obscurity; and by giving life to the
body, she destroys herself and her own
intellect, in as great a degree as these
are capable of receiving destruction. For
thus the mortal nature participates of
intellect, but the intellectual part of
death, and the whole becomes a prodigy ...,
composed of the mortal and immortal, of
the intellectual, and that which is deprived
of intellect. For this physical law, which
binds the soul to the body, is the death of
the immortal life, but is the cause of
vivification to the mortal body. (513)

The soul on entering the mortal body is situated in obscurity
and must begin a series of progressions towards knowledge
and happiness. For the poet, the progress is effected by
living in the world in one's mortality and learning from the perturbations and numerous evils one encounters.

Salvation, the making of the soul into a character which is for ever one's own, which for Keats constitutes immortality, is the vivid and vital experience of our material nature in its confrontation with mutability and death. The underscoring of the Heart's role in human life is inevitable: for Keats it is the interpreter of sense experience, it is a place of holiness -- in its emotions and affections lie the seeds of personal identity, which, communicated over a series of years to the mind, create the soul. Our Intellects are God, our Hearts our own:

The Heart ... is the Minds Bible, its is the Minds experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity -- As various as the Lives of Men are -- so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls. (II, 103)

But as much as the vale of soul-making can be said to reflect Keats' nineteenth-century humanism and natural religion in the prominence which it gives to the heart, its roots are embedded in Plato's Timaeus, and more particularly in the discussion of the soul which comprises such a large part of the dialogue.

That Keats is seriously considering the Platonic, that is, Greek, theology in its many manifestations is evidenced in his speculations, first broached in March and now reiterated, concerning daemons:
It is pretty generally suspected that the Christian scheme has been copied from the ancient Persian and Greek Philosophers. Why may they not have made this simple thing even more simple for common apprehension by introducing Mediators and Personages in the same manner as in the heathen mythology abstractions are personified -- Seriously I think it probable that this System of Soul-making -- may have been the Parent of all the more palpable and personal Schemes of Redemption.

(II, 103)

The introduction of mediators serves no real purpose in Keats' system, yet it does demonstrate that the poet is struggling with the Platonic conception of partial souls, superior to our own, as they move through the universe and the circulations of time. His insistence that the soul is not a thing-in-itself but has to be made is of course a wide divergence from Plato's concept of soul. But with Plato, Keats believes that the soul exists as part of the Intellect but unlike the Intellect is in a state of "becoming to be true"; with Plato he sees that the soul must be schooled, must perfect itself through knowledge; with Plato he labels the reward given to him who succeeds in the perfecting of his soul, happiness. It is the kind of knowledge necessary to mature the soul and bring it into being that marks the essential difference between the theologies of poet and philosopher. Keats, limiting his speculations to the human condition, is able to grasp a truth that eludes Timaeus in his greater scheme: the truth that evil is present in the world for the good of mankind as individual beings, as possessors of souls. For Timaeus, it is the contemplation of good and of beauty that
leads to gnosis; for Keats, who lives and writes by this Platonic principle it is true, there is equally the recognition that what is the very opposite of beauty furnishes one with a kind of knowledge that the looking only upon the sun the moon the stars cannot provide, a knowledge which leads to Identity, a wholeness of being which is personally one's own.

Keats' first attempt to employ the philosophy-mythology of the Timaeus failed: it was impossible to work out a philosophy within the poem Hyperion, even with the enormous aid of the Platonic cosmogony. The vision required for the epic simply did not exist. When the poet comes the following spring to see the dialogue in terms more approximate to his concern for the individual, however, he is able to use it (often taking its doctrines widely out of context, using the suggestions it makes to him without attending very closely to their Platonic application) to comprehend finally the reason for the existence of evil, to answer the problem which has for so long tormented him. Keats distills from the Platonic vision of the composition of the human soul and its struggle within the material world a theological system of salvation which he believes to be reasonable and at the same time creative, and which responds more than adequately to the circumscribed, straightened notions of Christianity.28

The vale of soul-making is much what the Mansion of Many Apartments and the grand March of Intellect were: the allegorizing of human life in human terms -- abstract thought
made tangible:

I will call the world a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read -- I will call the human heart the horn Book used in that School -- and I will call the Child able to read, the Soul made from that school and its hornbook. Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways!

(II, 102)

The aching joy of the last two sentences of this passage betrays the relief Keats feels in at last reconciling the existence of evil to his abstract Principle of Beauty in all things, in at last witnessing the good that is inherent in such a plan that can produce autonomous, individual, immortal beings. What he sees so clearly and so confidently is truly a victory for him: he has fought for months to come to an understanding of the role of pain and suffering, and the answer he finds to the metaphysical question is grounded in the reality of the everyday world; it is not a closed system, one that will limit his perceptions, but one which allows open-endedly for experience and increase in knowledge.

It is significant that Keats concludes his discussion of soul-making with the words: "There now I think what with Poetry and Theology ...;" given that he has not once in the letter referred to poetry. It is not so curious, however, when one realizes that it is this system which he has worked out that is the basis of the odes that follow. The system of salvation, necessary to him as a thinking, questioning man, is no less vital for his poetry, for were he to lose
faith in the essential goodness of the world, he would lose assurance as a poet. The theological certainty of the vale of soul-making does not last the poet's lifetime, but for a few months at least it provides him with a vision of the world, a vision complete enough to erect a mythology, to create a body of myths which supports and explores the implications of the truth he now possesses.

The security Keats feels, the peaceable and healthy spirit as he terms it, is projected soon afterwards into the "Ode to Psyche," a poem the poet writes in honour of the soul-made. The direct influence of the Timaeus effectively comes to an end at this time: it has served its purpose in helping Keats to establish a framework of his own thought with which he is satisfied. He takes his leave of Platonism in the autobiographical "Psyche." Of it he says:

The following Poem -- the last I have written is the first and only one with which I have taken even moderate pains -- I have for the most part dash'd of my lines in a hurry -- This I have done leisurely -- I think it reads the more richly for it and will I hope encourage me to write other thing/s/ in even a more peacable and healthy spirit. You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apulieus the Platonist who lived after the Augustan age, and consequently the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour -- and perhaps never thought of in the old religion -- I am more orthodox that to let a heathen Goddess be so neglected -- (II, 105-106)

"Psyche" is Keats' poetical statement that he now possesses a mythopoeia, a comprehension of the world that is peculiar,
appropriate and native to himself. In the poem he defines where he stands in relation to the old mythology and how he intends to take up the challenge of creating new poetry, new myth, that will articulate the present world's cares, its burdens and its mysteries.

Keats does not choose at random the goddess to whom he will dedicate himself. Psyche is the incarnation of the human soul which, having suffered through a series of trials, attains its identity and immortality. Keats, recognizing Psyche's value as the soul in triumph, asks to be her priest, to sing her secrets to the world. In setting up the two contrasting ages in the ode: the Olympian with its antique rites, its immediacy of feeling, its holiness, its fond believing innocence; and his own, far retired from the other's happy pieties, intensely aware of the presence of pain, of the need for knowledge, Keats is determining the direction his poetry must take. As much as the beauty of the Greek religion appeals to him, he is only too aware of its inadequacies, only too aware that the theology which he must live and write by is the far more complex one of soul-making. Thus, the fane which he builds to the goddess will contain not only gentle zephyrs, streams, birds and bees, but too, dark, wild-ridged mountains full of terror and danger to be reminders of the hardship and suffering that the soul must meet to achieve its identity.

The temple is not one, however, of mere passive reminders of Psyche's mortal days. Its sanctuary where
she is to reside is Keats' mind, the breeding-ground for all that Fancy can create. The final four lines of the poem foreshadow the theme of the odes to follow, in which Keats will stress the richness of experience and the need to accept the physical world, imperfect as it is, since it is our path to the divine. Keats promises Psyche

   all soft delight
   That shadowy thought can win,
   A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
   To let the warm Love in!

The poet admits his limitations, and appears to be capitulating to traditional Platonism in confessing that his thought is "shadowy," that he inhabits an imperfect world. But there nevertheless exists in him that ideal, divine knowledge that is his as Psyche's priest, and this he would wed to the world of experience. For Keats now, divine knowledge and human are one, and what these final lines insist upon is that there must be a fusion of the ideal (the truth and beauty of Psyche, the soul made) with the physical or human world (here typified by sexual love).

In maintaining that the already-created soul of Psyche is to continue to meet with erotic love, Keats affirms that the ideal is in the mutable world, and can be experienced there: if this be Platonism, it is so only by the broadest interpretation of the mythology of the Timaeus which endorses the value of the created world, which speaks of love as the "general invader of all things" (Timaeus, 544). Keats has
by this time developed the Platonic system of creation with its intelligible and mutable realms and its concept of soul into such an unorthodox credo that it becomes impossible to speak of Platonism in his poems. "Psyche" is I think Keats' poetical statement of his position with regard to philosophy and poetry, and his acknowledgement of his unorthodoxy: in the poem he recognizes the inability of the Greek religion and of Platonism, beautiful as they are, to address the needs of the modern world; in the final stanza, while he pays tribute to their contribution to his thought, the poet resolves to replace the ancient theology and mythology with his own.

The odes which follow "Psyche" are a series of myths which support Keats' central theological vision. Middleton Murry says of them, that they are "poems that haunt men's minds and acquire a dominion over their souls, of which they can render no account to themselves." The statement I think evokes their mythic quality, their character as religious symbolism, their authority which rests in the beauty of their thought and lyricism as it works upon us, almost unaccountably as Murry suggests. Keats could not but have been cognizant of their value as myth: in each poem he is at pains to displace former myths or reshape them into a modern context. The procedure is begun with "Psyche," although Keats is not attempting in the poem to mythologize, and continues through the "Ode to a Nightingale" to "To Autumn." It is almost axiomatic that a new stanza form come
into being at this time -- the innovation expresses the richness and newness of Keats' mythopoetic vision.

The problem of evil is not forgotten, but it is assimilated into the theological system of soul-making: the odes are representations of how the individual adjusts to and profits from the world around him; how pain, loss, the limitations of the human condition are to be dealt with; how it is necessary not only to accept the evils of existence, but to seize and exploit them for the knowledge they lead to. As myths, they do not define a moral attitude or ethic of conduct, although in the truth they present they imply a standard of conduct; rather they validate the experience of living the world to its fullest. In the symbolism of the odes there is a progressive movement towards a fusion of contraries whereby an equipoise between good and evil is achieved, whereby the value of one is no greater, no less than that of the other. In his myth-making Keats is anxious to detach himself from the mythology of the past. His modern mythology will make use of the normal Platonic division between the physical world with its apportionment of evil and the world of essence, of beauty and truth, but only to illustrate that the ideal dwells within the physical and is dependent upon it and its accompanying evils for its value.

I shall not attempt a detailed interpretation of the odes, but I think it necessary to look briefly at how they function as modern myths which support Keats' theology. The "Ode to a Nightingale" is perhaps the least mythic of the
odes -- the poet is too much in it. Yet the poem is nevertheless representative in a universal way; its immediacy absorbs the reader until he forgets that it is essentially a testament of another's personal emotions. Keats symbolizes the ideal world in the beauty of the nightingale's song: the world of essence is made manifest in the natural, mutable world. However, the gap between the "happiness" of the nightingale and the misery of the human world

where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow

is an enormous one. The speaker -- whom we can fairly reasonably identify as Keats -- in hearing the song, in desiring to merge with its beauty, believes that he must in some manner quit the mortal world; to bring about this end he considers three possible methods.

By proposing and rejecting each measure, Keats distances himself from the ancient rites which were believed to lead to the divine: he refuses first Bacchus and his pards, he will not drink of the Hippocrene; poetry he understands cannot reach Phoebe, the Queen-Moon; and death at midnight in the height of ecstasy is futile. For the beauty with which he would attach himself is not of another world, but resides in the natural world. To know it, he too must abide
in that world. The speaker concludes, and it is the only thing he can conclude, that our knowledge of beauty is dependent upon our condition of suffering on earth. The more we know of pain, the more real for us is immortal beauty and the greater its capacity to speak to us: to soothe our sad hearts as it once did for Ruth, to charm the imagination, to toll us back to our sole selves, where the soul learns the value of mortal existence.

The ode finishes with a question, the poet being unable to resolve whether his experience has been a vision or an illusion. Keats could not have ended on a better note: declining to interpret, he throws the weight of the poem's meaning onto the encounter itself and what is learned there, and thus demonstrates the value of wrestling with the mutable, the absurdity of longing for assumption into the eternal.

The same conflict between the eternal realm of beauty and the world of change and decay is introduced into "Ode on a Grecian Urn," but its resolution is of a much more complex nature. While the urn serves to reinforce the same truth as does the nightingale's song, that is, that this world in spite of its evils is good and exists to be experienced, its lesson hinges upon its essence as art.

The urn is a permanent symbol, not of eternal beauty, but of transient beauty eternalized, and thus the poet with his knowledge of the mutable is able to enter to some extent into the beauty it possesses, to identify with it as he was unable to identify with the nightingale's song. At first he
views it as superior to human life: it expresses its tale more sweetly than poetry, its unheard melodies are sweeter than music, its Spring can never fade, its love is

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

But gradually he becomes convinced that it is lacking: its town is desolate without a soul to tell why, its love that is for ever still to be enjoyed will never know bliss, it is a Cold Pastoral. In the loveliness of a single moment that it captures, the urn reveals the beauty in life that is available to man. But the beauty can be appreciated only when one knows that it is a fleeting one, can be lived only when one undergoes breathing human passion and the aftermath of love. The urn's message is:

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty -- that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

The urn exists as a friend to man in two ways, in what it can show and in what it cannot: its frieze is a reminder of the beauty that exists in the world, in experience, and obviously in art -- its beauty is truth; and in its cold silence it teaches that for the beauty which is truth to be experienced, one must be a sentient being, that one's mortality is an entrance into the world of the urn as well as into the world of pain and death. This second truth is of another
kind of beauty, the beauty that comes in accepting and living in the world of action, the Principle of Beauty that recognizes sorrow. Thus is art able, in what it can portray and in what it cannot, to teach us all we need to know on earth.

As in "Psyche" Keats exposes in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" the limitations of the Greek perception of life in its pastoral settings and sacrificial rites. Its happy innocence, while attractive, does not address the essential problems of man; it neither envisions wasted generations nor offers solace or aid to the individual whose heart is high-sorrowful and cloyed. By implying the contrast between the life of the urn and his own age, while insisting upon the value of the urn as art object (it is for ever a friend to man), Keats is indicating to his readers their need to recognize what art can teach and to grasp what knowledge they can in their involvement with mortality. "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" are explorations of the human psyche in its associations with nature and art; the necessity of a world of pains and troubles is embodied in the mythical representations of what nature and art teach us.

If one were to categorize Keats' myths according to Sallust's subdivisions, \(^{31}\) "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" would qualify as physical -- they justify the "use of the world." There is a concreteness to the antitheses which the poet introduces: the eternal is symbolized in the song of the nightingale and in the urn, both
physical, both apprehended by specific senses; the mutable world with its attendant evils is characterized in both poems by references to physical pain and suffering and death. The contraries, both of which exist in the world, are brought into a harmony because of their combined ability to alter and fortify the soul. The spiritual element of the myths is to be found in their description and endorsement of the corporeal world as it is. In the two myths that follow, Keats moves away from the physical towards the more abstract and theological species of myth.

Properly speaking, the third stanza only of "Ode on Melancholy" qualifies as myth. Preceding it is the preparation for the apotheosis of the poet's own goddess, Melancholy: Keats begins by unseating the Greek deity Persephone, her connection with death rendering her unsuitable for the "wakeful anguish of the soul," the supreme religious experience. The second stanza prescribes certain rites to be observed in anticipation of the new goddess' entry. And then in stanza III Keats introduces the myth:

She dwells with Beauty -- Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.
The mythic figure the poet creates rules over the vale of soul-making; it is she who embodies the knowledge which the soul must taste.

The religious import of the myth is clear. Its subject is the activity of the soul in the temple of delight, at the shrine of the goddess Veiled Melancholy. The contraries which dwell within the imagined temple no longer have the separate identities which they possessed in the more physical myths "Nightingale" and "Grecian Urn," but beauty and death, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good and evil are merged to the point that one element does not exist but that it participates equally in its antithesis: Beauty means death, Pleasure's nectar turns to Poison, delicious Joy is the savour of sadness. The abstractions Keats uses (note the upper case for Beauty, Joy, Pleasure, Poison and of course Melancholy) emphasize the omnipresence of Melancholy in her spiritually symbolic role, but the images with which he presents them are human: Melancholy and Beauty "dwell" together, Joy's hand is at his lips bidding adieu, Pleasure sips a draught, Joy is the tasting of a grape's intoxicating flavour. The myth is the illustration of the truth that to attain knowledge of the gods, the human world of the senses must be vitally, fervently realized. It will come only to him

whose strenuous tongue
Can burst joy's grape against his palate fine.
That is, only by seizing experience and living it in all its joy and sorrow will our souls know wholeness, will they achieve identity and bliss. That the soul's happiness is hard-won is recognized by Keats in the final two lines of the poem. In the spectral image of created souls hung as Melancholy's cloudy trophies, there is a quiet pathos, as the poet takes account of the fact that, while life must be lived intensely, its burdens are often heavy and seemingly intolerable to bear, and that the soul's eternal bliss is the knowledge of the might of pain and misery and heartbreak.

Keats' displacement of the "ruby grape of Proserpine" which symbolizes death by Joy's grape which brings with it the knowledge of sadness is a mythic affirmation of the goodness and value of life in its entirety. In his use of religious, allegorical symbolism, and of abstractions which unite the world of Beauty and the world of change, Keats creates in "Melancholy" a completely modern psychic myth which represents the soul's way to salvation, not through resignation to the world's evils, but through tasting of their bittersweetness to the final drop. "Melancholy" is the most overtly religious of Keats' odes, and it comes closest to defining the system of soul-making. Keats' myths have now moved from the very physical "Nightingale" to the more complex "Grecian Urn," to the religious, psychic "Melancholy." The last of the myths is theological, of the highest order.

"To Autumn" deals with essences. Even on its most practical level as poetry, Keats is concerned with purity, with the
essential English language that is requisite for his modern English myth. To Reynolds he writes just before copying out the poem for him:

How beautiful the season is now -- How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather -- Dian skies -- I never lik'd stubble fields so much as now -- Aye better than the chilly green of spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm -- in the same way that some pictures look warm -- ... I always somehow associate Chatterton with autumn. He is the purest writer in the English Language. He has no French idiom, or particles like Chaucer -- 'tis genuine English Idiom in English Words. ... English ought to be kept up. (II, 167)

The serenity of a religious conviction which is warm but unmarred by excess, the gently intruding pathos of the fulfilled but dying year, the delicate poise of air, sky, field, and the purity of English idiom are here in the letter as they are in the ode. But the ode does not explain or judge, it simply describes. And in the description is Keats' most powerful assertion of the goodness and beauty of this world in which change and death play so great a part.

"To Autumn" absorbs in one informing vision all the contraries, all the beauties and sorrows, the longings and regrets, the satisfactions and the pains that are felt by the heart in its abiding in the world. Its imagery is one of pause and of opposites: Autumn's continuing last warm days which the poem catches in stasis, replete to overabundance with fruit and flowers, imply the coming of the end,
of coldness and barrenness and death. But the season is complete, fulfilled, and thus she "with patient looks" watches the last moments wrung out hours by hours. There is no hurry, no questioning, no physical pain in the soft-dying day; the natural cycle of life is creative, and when it is richly blessed, almost burdened (loaded with fruit, bent with apples) in its maturity, there is a willingness to change perspective, to move from the transient, ripening and yet dying earth to the eternity of the sky, to leave the mournful wailing of the insects along the river, to join the tremulous, almost fearful excitement of the swallows as they gather in the skies. And yet, because life is so blessed with warm days and twined flowers, there is a regret for what will be lost. The poet must console the season:

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? Think not of them, thou hast thy music too. --

Innocence, greeness, youth give way to maturity, to knowledge, to a new, if saddened music. The essence of the world, its pains and troubles and joys and pleasures which felt by the heart school and create a soul, the essence of the meaning of life and the meaning of death are all comprehended in Keats' apostrophe to the season.

The poem is entirely symbolical in its expression of these essences. For they are conveyed solely by means of sense-imagery, tactile, visual and aural. (The poem affects us aurally, not only in the sound-imagery of the third stanza,
but in the lengthening of the ode-stanza form which, by holding back the completion of the rhyme, adds to the sense of prolonged fulfillment inherent in the season.) Keats manifests so clearly in this nature-myth which is completely concrete, what is real in the experience of the world, and he demonstrates that the beauty of the reality is not merely something to be accepted, but to be partaken of in all its sensual properties. Theological myths are generally for philosophers, asserts Sallust, and in this myth which justifies in such a profound theological sense the mystery of change and death, we have the statement of Keats' complete philosophy that the physical world is the basis, the origin of spiritual knowledge. Even without the April 21 record of soul-making, we would know from this myth of Autumn Keats' theological certainty of the goodness of the world, and how its goodness in contingent upon its evils.

Keats transforms the Greek mythical figure Autumn into a figure of the English countryside and makes her representative of every individual who must witness the sorrowful movement from life to death. She has not the powers of the goddess Melancholy; rather, she is a priestess learned in the doctrine that Melancholy dwells with dying Beauty. The purity of the myth embodying the personification of Autumn issues from the poem's complete reliance upon what nature teaches. There is no assertion or insistence as in "Melancholy" that joy is to be vigorously seized, no spoken con-
solation as in "Nightingale" and "Grecian Urn" for the pains accompanying existence. There is only the vision of a certain phase caught at a precise moment in the process of nature. The spiritual implications of the myth are left for the reader to discover -- what is to be found are the assertions and consolations of the other myths with all the added conviction and assurance that the supreme beauty of the poem accords.

With the consummate expression of his theology in "To Autumn" comes the end of Keats' mythologizing. He has now rendered into physical, psychic and theological myth his vision of the world and man's place in it; he has succeeded in revitalizing myth in the English language for the benefit of his countrymen. The measure of his accomplishment may be estimated in the continuing ability of the lyrics to explain and justify the world, to seem a wording of man's highest thoughts. As Murry says, they hold sway over our souls. Our vision of reality is educated and refined by these myths which, in the magnificence of their poetry, represent for us the goodness of the world in all its manifestations.

The achievement of the odes is the end of the long and arduous journey which the problem of evil sets Keats on in March 1818. It leads him into the realm of philosophical enquiry, a dimension he would have been content to leave unvisited, but which his ambition to help the world by means of poetry and his personal need to reconcile the problem of pain to the Principle of Beauty dictate he must enter. He
enters as a poet and not a philosopher -- while many sources contribute to Keats' metaphysics, it is the mythology of Plato's dialogue the *Timaeus* which Keats depends upon to help him wrestle with the problem of evil. Relying on its mythological, poetical conception of creation to explain the world, Keats begins *Hyperion*; when the poem fails, the poet returns to the dialogue, but rather than attempting to assimilate its mythology into poetry, he concentrates on the concept of soul as delineated by Timaeus and develops it into his own theology.

The vale of soul-making, evolved from the Platonic philosophy of the *Timaeus*, is Keats' system of salvation which defines the essential goodness of a world of pain and troubles. His mythological vision which has as its base this system of spirit-creation is far removed from the influence which gave rise to it. The Platonism which insists on the division between corporeal and spiritual realms is rejected: Keats locates in the physical world the mundane and the divine, and the path between them which is experience. He recognizes his change of perspective in a letter to Reynolds in July:

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I have of late been moulting: not for fresh feathers & wings: they are gone, and in their stead I hope I have a pair of patient sublunary legs. I have altered, not from a Chrysalis into a butterfly, but the Contrary. (II, 128)
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Gone is the desire to create ethereal things: his sublunary legs root him and his poetry in the physical world.
Keats' independent myth-making begins with "La Belle Dame sans Merci" which, while it has not the theological assurance of the odes, nevertheless validates in its beauty the world of suffering. But it is the odes "To a Nightingale," "Grecian Urn," "Melancholy," and "To Autumn" which become for Keats the myths which support his vision of soul-creation. Other poems written at this time such as Lamia and The Fall of Hyperion are explorations of different ideas, not attempts at myth-making. Keats reserves the ode form to present disinterested mythical accounts of the truth that the individual becomes knowledgeable of divine truth in the experience of the world as it is. Keats' journey which begins in March 1818 in the Mist of Maiden-Thought where he sees not the balance of good and evil ends in April 1819. What he has learned can be seen in the clear vision of "To Autumn" where the answer to the problem of evil is given its purest expression, where the poet balances good and evil to such a refined point that the distinction between them is almost imperceptible.
Notes


2For instance, in his letter of 24 March 1818, Keats appears to be recalling the Introduction to the Parmenides where Taylor writes:

It was the custom of Pythagoras ... to conceal divine mysteries under the veil of symbols and figures, ... to joke seriously, and sport in earnest. Hence, in the following most important dialogue, under the appearance of a certain dialectic sport, and as it were logical discussion, Plato has delivered a complete system of the profound and beautiful theology of the Greeks. (247, 1793 ed.)

Keats, after seriously discussing the impossibility of resting secure in any of our thoughts without experiencing the need to explore further and learn more, jestingly introduces his "theory of Nettles." He then goes on,

the Devil put his whim into my head in the likeness of one of Pythagora's questionings, Did Milton do more good or harm to the world?

(I, 254-55)

The question is one which was to tax him for some time -- it is not a joke but an earnest query. It is doubtful that Keats would have met with the characteristics of Pythagoras' dialectic from any source but Taylor.


The "moral sense philosophers," most notably the Earl of Shaftesbury, Dr. Hutcheson and Bishop Butler, were Christian theologians who believed that the moral sense originates in intuition, and that it is the intuition and not the intellect which recognizes the beautiful and the good.

The intellectual and emotional contempt which Keats entertained for the Christian religion is understandable given the state of the English Church in his time: in an effort not to lose any thing in the tide of burgeoning rationalism, the Church had underplayed, forgotten or denied the mystical basis of its tenets and become a corrupt, spine-less, power-hungry institution which created its own opponents such as the Deists, the Methodists and the Evangelists.


Critics since Keats' time have been firm in their insistence that Keats did not know Plato. The reasons for this insistence are manifold, the two most prevalent being that as a poet of the "sensuous," Keats could not and would not have tainted his exquisite perceptions with philosophy, and that as a man lacking a proper classical education, he could not have read or understood the philosopher.

Within the last twenty years or so, principally since the publication of Bernard Blackstone's The Consecrated Urn (London: Longman, Green, 1959), in which odd book the author argues for Keats' knowledge of the translated Plato, critics have felt it necessary to introduce the subject again and to insist anew that Keats could not possibly have known Plato. These arguments often seem to be at the expense of the critics' better judgements, and to speak against evidence which undermines them. For instance, in Walter E. Evert's Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1965) we find, p. ??, the following:

While I am by no means persuaded that Keats had anything like the knowledge or interest in those Hermetic systems derived from the Timaeus which are attributed to him by Bernard
Blackstone ..., he does seem to be hinting at them in /Endymion, III, 30-40/.

And in Sperry's "Keats's Skepticism," p. 89, the author argues, once again against Blackstone, but acknowledges that "there is more than a hint of this kind of Platonism that which is found in the Timaeus in Keats's theory of how God makes 'individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence,' each to possess an identity of its own."

9 Noted by Allott in The Poems:

Woodhouse's note in his copy of Endymion runs: 'The poem, if completed, would have treated of the detachment of Hyperion, the former God of the Sun, by Apollo, -- and incidentally of those of Oceanus by Neptune, of Saturn by Jupiter etc., and of the war of the Giants for Saturn's reestablishment -- with other events, of which we have but very dark hints in the mythological poets of Greece and Rome. In fact the incidents would have been pure creations of the Poet's brain.' (441)

10 England at the time was teeming with mythological investigations, mythological theories, mythological lore. Theological and euhemeristic controversies often found their origins not only in the Greek myths, but in the mythologies of scores of cultures and sects. Speculative mythology and illuministic or theosophical mythography, whose approaches to the subject of myth were basically rationalistic or scientific, had little immediate bearing on the mainstream of English mythological poetry. Yet they infused a spirit into the whole world of myth with the result that classical myth underwent a dynamic revitalization as it was made in its various manifestations to support modern historical, scientific and religious thought. The assumption underlying the mythical speculations of this time was that myth had a value and power that could address themselves to the modern mind, and it was this assumption that came to affect the use of mythology in poetry. Myth was seen as more than mere eighteenth-century ornament; it was or could be the expression of profound social, philosophical, religious truths.

The most spectacular example of mythological poetry to issue out of the new concern with myth is Blake's, but Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley too were affected. Behind all the new interest in myth -- whether originating in an eccentric mythographer or a great poet -- was its capacity to deliver up metaphysical, religious truths. Whether a mythographer is researching Druid stones (Charles Vallancey), studying the evolution of plants (Erasmus Darwin) or even denying the
veracity of Greek mythology (Charles Francois Dupuis), his incentive is in essence a religious one. Blake comes to use myth almost purely as a religious or prophetic agency; and while other Romantic poets continue to use myth as an aesthetic mode in the tradition of classical and Renaissance poets, they use it to explore and delineate their theological concerns.

It is delightful to witness Thomas Taylor's protest against the mythographic movement. In his Introduction to the Timaeus, after outlining the "system of the world," he writes:

There is nothing in the ancient theology that will not appear admirably sublime and beautifully connected, accurate in all its parts, scientific and divine. Such then being the true account of the Grecian theology, what opinion must we form of the wretched systems of modern mythologists; and which most deserves our admiration, the impudence or ignorance of the authors of such systems? The systems indeed of these men are so monstrously absurd, that we may consider them as instances of the greatest distortion of the rational faculty which can possibly befall human nature, while connected with such a body as the present. For one of these considers the Gods as merely symbols of agriculture, another as men who once lived on the earth, and a third as the patriarchs and prophets of the Jews. Surely should these systems be transmitted to posterity, the historian by whom they are related must either be considered by future generations as an imposter, or his narration must be viewed in the light of an extravagant romance. (430)

Of course, while Keats could be stimulated, provoked or amused by speculative mythology, it was to the substantial Plato he turned for aid in his theological questionings. For background to speculative mythology and mythography, see: Edward B. Hungerford, Shores of Darkness (Cleveland: World, 1963); Albert J. Kuhn, "English Deism and the Development of Romantic Mythological Syncretism," PMLA, 71(1956), 1094-116; Alex Zwerdling, "The Mythographers and the Romantic Revival of Greek Myth," PMLA, 79(1964), 447-56.

Hungerford in Shores of Darkness investigates many of Keats' mythographic sources and argues persuasively that Keats had this plot in mind. There seems to be some confusion
in his enlisting the figure of Moneta to support his theory (pp. 148-49), since Moneta (who assumes the role of Mnemosyne) appears only in The Fall of Hyperion, but otherwise the reasoning is sound and convincing. The idea gathers force, too, when considered in light of the influence of the Timaeus and the emphasis the dialogue places on the role of generation, the continual movement of the world towards perfection.

This is most particularly to be remarked in his discourse on vice. On the one hand, he wishes to attribute it not to the volition of the individual: "For no one is voluntarily bad: but he who is depraved becomes so through a certain ill habit of the body, and an unskilful education" (563); on the other hand, he cannot but admit an "inclination to evil" to exist in some men for which they will suffer punishment in later lives by passing into the nature of a woman or the life of a brute (510). The presence of evil presents another problem for this philosopher, as will be noted later in the text.

Sensible that the speculation is impossible to prove one way or the other, I nevertheless find myself wondering whether the March of Intellect did not come from the Platonic conception of progress delivered in the Timaeus; it certainly is not linked to Godwinian perfectibility which Keats abhorred. Keats says in the 3 May 1818 letter, "It proves there is really a grand march of intellect," as though he is finally admitting to an idea tentatively raised beforehand but not yet acquiesced in by him. He confesses that he may have read somewhere the ideas he has been discussing, but he "never had even a dim perception of them" at the time of reading.

As well, the example he introduces, that "no man can set down Venery as a bestial or joyless thing—until he is sick of it and therefore all philosophizing on it would be mere wording. Until we are sick, we understand not" to support his statement that "axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses" could perhaps have been suggested by Timaeus' philosophizing that "in reality venereal intemperance for the most part becomes a disease of the soul, through a habit of /body with which it is connected/". (Keats would be very likely, after his medical training, to remember the discussion of diseases.)

The conjecture that Keats had the Timaeus in mind on May 3rd is pure conjecture; if it has any basis, it would make the already noticeable link between -- the reading of the dialogue -- the formulations of the Mansion and March of Intellect -- the writing of Hyperion -- that much stronger.

Keats makes his Titans an improvement upon their
parents Heaven and Earth to stress the greater good which comes in the process of generation.

15 It was Blackstone in *The Consecrated Urn* who first pointed out this hierarchy, pp. 231-32.

16 "The composing artificer constituted generation and the universe ... receiving every thing visible, and which was not in a state of rest, but moving with confusion and disorder, he reduced it from this wild inordination into order" (Timaeus, 477-78).

15 "At the same time he who orderly disposed all these particulars remained in his own accustomed abiding habit" (Timaeus, 512).

"He fabricated the generation of days and nights and months and years, which had no subsistence prior to the universe, but which together with it rose into existence" (Timaeus, 493).

17 Walter Jackson Bate and Douglas Bush, two of the most influential critics of Keats, lead the way in establishing this error. Bate, in *John Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), says, "the 'sky-engendered' but 'earth-born' Titans are losing their godhead partly by their own surrender to fear, wrath and frustration," p. 397. Bush, in *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1937), writes, "The Titans, however benign and beneficent, had in a crisis behaved not like deities but like frail mortals; they had lost sovereignty over themselves," p. 124.

18 The hierarchy of the many forms of the elements is most succinctly given in the Introduction where Taylor translates Proclus:

If, therefore, you take away from hence that which is immaterial and immutable, you will produce that which is mutable and material. ... If, therefore, you take away this order, you will behold the great confusion and inconstancy of the elements; and this will be the last progression, and the very dregs and sediment of all the prior gradations of the elements.

Of the elements, therefore, some are immovable, imparticipable, intellectual and demiurgic; but the others are intellectual and immovable according to essence, but
participated by mundane natures. Others again are self-motive, and essentially lives; but others are self-motive and vital, but are not lives. Some again are alter-motive, or moved by another, but are moved in an orderly manner; and, lastly, others have a disordered, tumultuous, and confused existence.

19 The Timaeus of course presents an extremely long and detailed analysis of the activity of the elements as they intermingle, pass in and out of each other, create various substances, etc. (520-42 especially). Saturn's words bear some resemblance to the following two extracts, particularly in the sense of the elements "inter-quarreling" and "loud warring;" both Saturn and Timaeus are close to personifying in the same way the elements by attributing volition to them:

When the lesser are comprehended in the greater many, and the few being lacerated are extinguished, -- if they are willing to pass into the idea of the conquering nature, they cease to be extinguished, and air becomes generated from fire, and water from air. But if, when this transition is accomplished, the composite opposes any of the other species, the agitated parts will not cease to be dissolved, till, on account of their dissoluble subsistence being every way impelled, they fly to their kindred nature; or being vanquished, and becoming one from many, similar to their vanquisher, they abide with the victor in amicable conjunction (Timaeus, 530).

But earth, when indissolubly associated with water, through the ministry of air composes stones; the more beautiful sort indeed being such as are resplendent from equal and plane parts, but the deformed being of a contrary composition. But when the moisture is hurried away by the violence of fire, and the body by this means becomes more dry, then a species of earth which is denominated fictile is produced. Sometimes, likewise, when the moisture is left behind, and the earth becomes fusile through fire, then through refrigeration a stone with a black colour is generated. But when this species of strained earth in a similar manner through mixture is deprived of much moisture, but is
composed from more attenuated parts of earth, is salt and semiconcrete, and again emerges through water; then it is partly called nitre, a cathartic kind of oil ... (Timaeus, 534)


21 In fact, as has been frequently noted, the presence of Wordsworth seems to overshadow that of Keats here. Keats earlier saw Wordsworth's genius as explorative of the dark passages beyond Maiden Thought, and Hyperion, as a quest itself, seems at least in part to be following the older poet's lead. How happy would Keats have been had that lead taken him to a philosophical stance he could "feel on the pulses."

Wordsworth perceives in the fixed forms of nature ethical guidelines. From the laws he sees working in the universe he forms, much as Oceanus does, an idea of duty, of standards of conduct: a naturalistic dogma. Keats admired Wordsworth's concern for humanity, the fact that he made the human heart the main region of his song. He is attracted to the Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey," the poet who understands the Second Chamber where the Burden of the Mystery hangs upon the beatings of the heart, where the truth of sorrow is felt in the blood. It is Wordsworth's acute comprehension of the human heart perhaps that encourages Keats at least momentarily to adopt his ethical standards. They are short-lived.


24 The imitation of Milton's Paradise Lost would seem to have more significance than merely the stylistic ones of rhythm, rhetoric and plot. Keats was too solid a poet by this time to be weakly depending upon another poet, even Milton, to such a degree: by closely paralleling the events, characters, speeches and book divisions of Hyperion to those of the earlier epic, Keats knew the comparison between the poems would be imperative, and would clearly point out and contrast the Christian structure of Milton's thought with the Greek, Platonic structure of his own. In "improving" upon Milton, Keats would not only be securing his own place in the march of poets, but would be righting the wrongs of his predecessor. The Platonic theology as laid out in the Timaeus
and embodied in Greek myth, with its naturalistic bias and its mysticism, could give a spiritual relevance to the truths of daily existence, a relevance which Christianity, Keats thought, singularly failed to furnish.

The value of closely studying the craftsmanship of the seventeenth-century poet is not to be underrated, however: Keats profited immensely from it, as nothing can be more exquisite than those passages of Hyperion that capture the grandeur of Miltonic cadence and idiom.


While it is not within the scope of this paper to consider the formal elements of Keats' poetry, it is nevertheless necessary at least to mention how Keats' use of symbol, image and analogy underlie the myth that he is presenting. His use of the elements to parallel the action of the poem has been noted; it is an instance of a fairly standard use of imagery to reflect the psychological, spiritual state of the characters. The more complex success of image and symbol is more difficult to characterize because its expression is the poetry, and like the "intellectual countenance" of nature at its most beautiful, it absorbs us until we are beings 'almost suspended' in the contemplation of it. If the deep truth is imageless, Keats shows us that it can at least be closely approximated through image.

Keats is at his best when he achieves a "hushing awe," what one might label a "felt reality," where material and spiritual, emotional and intellectual are gathered into one image, and that image becomes symbolic of all the various levels of meaning it controls as well as of the truth of the particular physical representation. For instance, in the opening verse paragraph of the poem, the solemn reaction of nature to the desolation of Saturn is caught in the images of darkness, silence and death as well as in the cadence and melody of the verse, but it is then concentrated to a point so refined that it leaves us almost breathless:

the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

In the simple action portrayed in the image of the Naiad, Keats not only shows us another level of the earth's participation in the dejection of the king (that is, not only inanimate nature but living creatures too respond to it), but he captures in it the quintessential delicacy, the purity and the reverence of sympathy that must be felt for and by the fallen Titans. No interpretation could possibly say more than is expressed in the exquisite loveliness of the water-nymph's slightest of movements. The quietness, depth of emotion and power of implication of such an image are all part
of the sense of identification, of analogy, of spiritual awareness that poetry can communicate. Keats is a master at evoking possible meanings of a single word or image. Saturn's "realmless eyes," the "tall oaks branch-charm'd," Clymene sobbing among her tangled hair, Hyperion's palace flushing angrily, the "savour of poisonous brass and metal sick" which Hyperion tastes -- all share in the ability to suggest the physical fact, the psychological import, the spiritual significance. Another example of the capacity of quiet beauty to suggest so much is in the verses which follow the speech of Coelus near the end of Book I:

Ere half this region-whisper had come down,  
Hyperion arose, and on the stars  
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide  
Until it ceas'd; and still he kept them wide: 
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.

The passage reaffirms Hyperion's helplessness; his inability to make the day begin is another instance of the powerlessness he has in the face of the stars. But the quality of the recorded moment is in the absolute beauty of silent pain: whether addressed or not, Hyperion keeps his eyes upon the stars (and the prolongation of the time is enforced by the repetition), and the stars remain the same: however bright and patient, however sympathetic, they are eternal and his looking at them as a god is temporal; and in the quiet recognition of the difference between them is the suffering.

One could go on at great length extracting passages from the poem which reveal Keats' keen awareness of and ability to exploit the power of symbolic language to show truth in all its corresponding levels of thought and feeling. The symbolism of Hyperion points forward to his later mythologizing where one image not only calls up levels of reality which correspond to each other, but where two apparently conflicting truths or realities are coalesced through the harmony of expression to present a truth far greater than either of its component parts.

The vision of 'this is life and is also corporeal' and the pleasure and pain of love in "La Belle Dame sans Merci" is supported by Taylor's commentary:

After sense, Plato arranges desire. And this indeed is life, and is also corporeal; but it is a life which perpetually unweaves the body, and affords a solace to its wants. ... He also denominates love a mixture of pleasure and pain. For, so far as it is conversant with the lovely, it is present with pleasure, but, so far as it is not yet present with it in energy, it is mingled with pain.
As, for instance, do Earl R. Wasserman and Charles I. Patterson, Jr. respectively in *The Finer Tone* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953) and *The Daemonic in the Poetry of John Keats* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1970).

Keats' system, as he would be the first to admit, is not so very original (although the allegorizing of it is), nor so strikingly different from Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, for example, recognize the existence of saints and angels which correspond quite readily to heroic and mediating personages. As well, Catholicism, as much as it stresses the importance of redemption, also emphasizes the need to suffer in order to gain an life of the spirit and the kingdom of God.— it is this aspect of the *Divine Comedy* of the Roman Catholic Dante perhaps that attracts Keats and induces him to cast his *Fall of Hyperion* as a Dantean dream allegory.

I do not include the "Ode on Indolence" which was conceived before the vale of soul-making (*Letters*, II, 79), which is almost purely autobiographical, and which, as Bate says, "is far below the standard of the other odes."


[Taylor] translated Sallust's *On the Gods and the World*, and included a passage from that work in his *Dissertation* that may, for those "mythological poets," Keats, Shelley, Blake, and Coleridge, have been a key placed in their hands to the whole body of European mythological poetry; nor was it only classical literature upon which this illumination must have fallen, but also upon Spenser and Milton, the two poets to whom the Romantics chiefly turned. Sallust's distinction of the four kinds of myth, the theological, the animastic (which would now be called the psychological, applying to the soul or anima), the natural, and the "mixed" is the key to the correct reading not only of Greek mythology but of all mythological poets since. (p. 43)

Whether Keats was acquainted with the *Dissertation* or not, his myths certainly can be read in terms of Sallust's distinctions. For a translation of Sallust's "species of
myths" more readily available than Taylor's, see John MacQueen, Allegory (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 14-17.

32 In a very fine article, "A Note on 'To Autumn'," in John Keats: A Reassessment, ed. Kenneth Muir (Liverpool: Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 96-102, Arnold Davenport deals meticulously and imaginatively with the imagery of the poem to show that its "central element is a boundary, a space between two opposite conditions; a moment of poise."
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