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A New Interpretation in Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'

——Development of the Poetic Images——

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〈Abstract〉

Keats's *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'*, which is one of the most familiar poems in English, is also one of the most argued over. The first point of content is the theme of the poem. The Poet Robert Bridge summed up much earlier criticism by stating that 'Ode' is about 'Supremacy of Art over Nature, because of its unchanging expression of perfection', but a number of critics have since challenged this view. The second enigma which the poem poses is the meaning of its last two lines, particularly of the truth-beauty aphorism, which has been interpreted in a great variety of ways.

Interpretation of poetry is one of conducting the balanced judgement or a type of proving with several reasons and interesting conditions. One is that, although it is frequently thought to be totally unscientific, it combines induction and deduction. Of course the main of evidence is citation of the poem itself.

But there are many others methods. In spite of a trend in modern criticism to discount all evidence outside of the poem under analysis, these other sources of synthetic evaluation and arrangements often seem useful to have a good experience on his poetic creative powers.

키이츠의 '希臘古甕賦'에 관한 硏究

——詩的 이미지의 展開를 中心으로——

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〈요　약〉

現代는 輕薄하고 皮相的이거나 一時的인 價値밖에 없는 그것들이 오히려 우리들의 大部分 속에 자리를 차지하고 있다. 換言하면, 現代는 바로 詩가 存在하기에는 너무나 絶望的인 狀況이다. 바로 그러한 理由로 하여 詩의 存在價値가 더욱 높을지도 모른다. ——어두울수록 빛이 더욱 빛나는 것처럼——

人類의 廣大한 歷史의 흐름이 持續되는 限에는 永遠히 人生과 더불어 새로운 意味를 賦與하는 詩의 世界에서 키이츠의 確固한 位置와 그의 詩的 業績의 偉大함은 周知의 事實이다. 高尙하고 眞摯하여 深奧한 그의 詩 一篇을 찾아 每行을 細密히 파헤쳐 感想을 통한 批評을 加함으로써 本詩의 高次元的인 意味와 複雜性을 分析하여 再整理하고자 한다. 특히 筆者는 本詩의 分析過程을 통하여 나타나는 全體的인 詩的 이미지와 意味의 相關 關係에서 美的 價値에 대한 詩人 키이츠의 特異하고 놀랄만한 視眼과 想像力을 追求해 보았다.

I. Introduction

It was a really important period, which is Keats's *Annus Mirabilis*, of April and May 1819, to compose his three major Odes.

In these months were perhaps the most remarkable period of Keats's creative life, not so much for the quantity of his work as for its quality. Also in February, he wrote very little, and temporarily put aside because as he wrote to his brother George, in fact the need and value of a very "gradual ripening of the intellectural powers", while reading the Miton's poetry and inclined to his mind to Wordsworth. (1)

It is felt that Keats is now at a level of speculation from which he is beginning to touch on some of the highest functions of poetry. (2)

This sudden flowering of genius is of course inexplicable, but at least it shows how strange are the reactions of the creative spirits to circumstances. (3) Though as yet he had no suspicion of their deadly menace, they cannot but have depressed his spirit and lowered his vitality and concentration of his imaginative experience. Under such circumstances, Keats might not be expected to start on a new form of poetry and to give to it an unprecedented richness. The first works of a young poet are more frequently expressions of the intent to be a poet than exercises of a poet's powers.

For Keats began his poetic life with a corrupted sensibility. The career of most artists moves from simplicity to complexity, or from uncertainty to assurance, or from illusion to reality. The direction of Keats's progress, in ironic contrast with that of his body, was from sickness to health.

The true line of Keats's development, lost in a waste of misdirected energy, misguided submission, and frustrated purpose, is recovered in the Odes. These are the poems of a sensibility both powerful and exquisite, on the point of attaining its majority, on the point of completing its self-education. And because of this Keats is liable momentarily to be quilty of certain imperfections. But our recognition of these will only make us wonder all the more at the triumph of the spirit in the most tragic conditions. I will attempt to substantiate this view by considering in detail one of the poems, the *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'*.

The *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'* was written during April 1819, at an agonizing time in Keats's life, when his money was nearly gone, his health undermined, his love affair, a cause of pain, his family dispersed or dead. If at moments the poem's lucidity as a work of art is muddied by unabsorbed personal feeling, this is hardly surprising.

On Sunday, April 11, Keats took a famous walk and talk which Keats had with Coleridge at Hampstead Heath in the direction of Highgate, where Coleridge was living, among other topics, of "Nightingales, Poetry—on Poetical Sensation—Metaphysics". (4)

This talk contained the first germ of the *'Ode to a Nightingale'* and if that is so, the other Odes may directly trace their descent from it. But the talk, can have done no more than set

(1) p.294. W.J. Bate: *John Keats*
(2) p.237-9. Op., Cit.,
(3) In the Spring of 1819, Keats had received more than his fair share of blows from fortune. He was only twenty three years old, and his happiness was menaced from several quarters. In the preceding June, his brother, George, who had been "more than a bother and "greatest friend" him, had emigrated with his wife to America. In December his other brother, Thomas, whom he loved no less than George, died. On Christmas day Keats had indeed become betrothed to Fanny Brawne, but, however we may judge their feelings on both. It is clear enough that their relations were not a source of strength and encouragement to him. And lastly, the symtoms of his fatal illness, which had appeared in the preceding September, returned in February and were with him intermittently in the spring and summer of 1819. During his last two years he was, besides, passionately and miserably in love, and, latterly, ill and threatened with death. His soul was full of sorrow and bitterness, he shrank into himself, avoided society, and rarely sought even intimate friends.
(4) p.467. W.J. Bate: *John Keat*

Keats's genius to work. He was ready for a new venture, and, once the creative fit began, he owed little to Coleridge. He wanted, if possible, to copy the contents of the literary works of Shakespearean and Miltonic poetry. We can find it easily in every pieces of biographies and criticism about him.

Here the remoteness of a part of the subject—the projection of imagination, that is, needed to realize the Greek element in it—the complicated stanza pattern, the whole elaborate and formal structure of the Ode itself, are some of the means Keats chose in order to achieve distance and control.

But these comparatively external conditions imposed by the poet on himself carry only a general influence. Closer to the poet's purpose, because more intimate with the substance of the poem, is the structure formed by the different kinds of statement out of which the poem is made. (It is significantly an Ode *on*, and not, like 'Nightingale' an Ode *to*)

There are three sorts of statement used in the Ode: address, question, and something vaguer which I shall call generalization or reflection. These three modes of statement are alike in this, that they all direct the flow of attention on to the object and away from the speaker. A vivid address, a provocative or surprising question, a brooding generalization compose a kind of discourse in which the pivotal points are the second and third persons, and the first is reduced to amonymity. This poetic use of syntax brings to Keats's rich language the authority of a more than subjective validity.

I am trying to attempt to invite special consideration through the *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'* among Keats's Odes for two reasons: his complete maturity almost final word on the vision of Hellas which he first discovered through *Hempriere's Classical Dictionary, Chapman's Homer, and the Elgin Marbles*,[5] his interpretation in quite different way alone the Odes. It is true that Keats himself thought that poems should explain themselves without comment, *A poem should not mean, but be*[6] but in this case he did not succeed in his aim. The *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'* calls for much comment because its meaning and purpose have been intepreted and judged variously. For this Keats is not entirely responsible: What was perfectly clear to Keats is not so clear to us because we do not share all his ideas. It might as well to assume that his most pondered conclusions about his lifework should somehow be with our own. No Greek Urn has been discovered with what Keats had in mind described. The Urn of his Ode must in some sense be an invention of his fancy so that he may look at his words and see what he had in mind. We are fortunate in being able to identify some of the elements from which Keats constructed his imaginary Urn.[7] It is unlikely that in creating an imaginary work of Greek art he did not, consciously or unconsciously, owe something to these relics of "Grecian grandeur".[8]

Dr. Leavis defined the sort of inadequacy which persists in them when he said, "It is as if Keats were making major poetry out of minor —as if, that is, the genius of a major poet were

(5) p.510-511. Op., Cit.,

(6) The last line in *'Ars Poetica'* by Archibald MacLeish

(7) His friend, Charles Wentworth Dilke, told his grandson, Sir Charles Dilke, that tracing of a marble Urn had been made by Keats. This survives in Rome in the house on the Piazza di Spagna where Keats died. It was made from a book, published in 1804 by F. and P. Piranesi, called *Les Monuments Antiques du Musée Napoléon*, with engravings by Thomas Piroli. The engraving which Keats copied is of one side of a marble vase made by the Sculptor Sosibios and still to be seen in the Louvre. A second vase, also in the Louvre, may have performed a similar service for Keats's scene of pursuit and revelry. If too is of the same type as the vase of Sosibios. Keats may have seen a picture of it in G. B. Piranesi's book on candelabra, and so forth, published in 1778. This vase shows a Dionysiac scene of ten figures, and among them are some relevant to Keats's Ode a man playing the flute. A woman with a timbrel, a nearly naked man laying hold of a woman's dress as he pursues her. cf. p.510—511. W. J. Bate: *John Keats* & p.416. Sir Sidney Colvin: *John Keats*, London. (1917)

(8) "The glory that was Greece/And the grandeur that was Rome." 'To Helen' E. A. Poe

working in the material of minor poetry". (9) And there are, without doubt, positive weaknesses in these poems, remants of decay, touches of nostalgic softness and moments of regression to a less-disciplined past. I can best illustrate this combination of strength and relaxation, order and impurity, by a detailed consideration of one of these poems, and for this purpose I will choose the *'Ode on a Grecian Urn.'* But first I must refer to the third great literary influence on Keats's poetic career.

Ⅱ. Development

When I speak of a statement producing a general effect throught a poem, I am speaking of a secondary function. The first function of each statement, phrase, or even word is to produce a precise effect in a particular place. Look at the opening address:

> Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness
> Thus foster-child of silence and slow time.

These two lines provide a first term for the violent contrast which is the ground of the first stanza and the source of the rest of the poem. The contrast is between the form of the vase, a perfect and unchanging definition, and the tumult of action inscribed upon its surface. The images in the first part of the poem combine to stress-but that is too harsh a word—to present the vase's character of arrested and timeless perfection. Keats's symbols like Shakespeare's are habitually charged with more than single significanee. The word "still" keeps in simultaneous operation both the notion of enduring in time and that of tranquility, the phrase "still unravish'd bride" keeps in play both the idea of the present and that of uncorrupted innocence, a note which is continued in "foster-child." It is a foster-child, too, because it is from the hand of man, an artefact adopted by time; a natural object presumably would be just a child of time.

In calling the Urn an "Unravish'd bride of quitness", Keats gives to the heart of the experience which concerns him. In a noisy, changing world here is something beyond sound and beyond change. The note for the poem is set at the start by these daring words, we are brought at once into an order of things remote from our usual lives. The poet asks that we should see the Urn in all the mystery of its unchanging silence. The Urn is an "Unravish'd bride" because it stand in a special, sacred relations to a special kind of existence and keeps this relation immaculate and intact. The Urn is a concrete symbol of some vast reality which can be reached only through a knowledge of individual objects which share and reflect its character.

The Urn is also the "foster-child of silence and slow time". It is not their actual child, because they have not created it, but they have preserved it, that is why it is called so. Keats felt strongly the appeal of the uncalendared past and saw in the Urn a repository of the wisdom of the ages. But he saw more than that. It is not for nothing that he couples silence with slow time.

The meaning of the "foster-child of silence" relates to mysterions hierarchy of supernatural powers which are hidden until we learn how to enter into their presence. Already at this date Keats had found in the idea of an Urn a symbol for something central to his outlook. (10)

The symbol of the Urn begin by standing for some remote, sublime reality and then become more definite and intimate, as Keats uses it to mark a peculiar aspect of his experience. The

(9) p. 251. F.R. Leavis, *'Revaluation'* London(1936),

(10) In a letter written to his brother George, on March 19th, 1819, Keats shows that this symbol was still active in his mind and speaks of his detachment from active interests "Neither poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me: they seem rather like three figures on a Greek vase-a Man and two women no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement". cf. p. 466. W.J. Bate *John Keats*

first stanza of the Ode sets out the situations with which Keasts begins. The Urn is an "ethereal thing"(11) which raises and invites questions. At the start the questions do not look very difficult, but as Keats develops his theme, we see that they have a special point. He does not wish to know who the figures on the Urn are, what they are, and what they mean.

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

But the Urn is a 'historian' too. Historian tell the truth, or are at least expected to tell the truth. What is a "Sylvan historian"? The Urn can express/A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme", and what the Urn goes on to express is a "leaf-fring'd which it tells, is covered with emblems of the fields and forests; "Overwronght/With forest branches and the trodden weed" (Stanza V): When we consider the way in which the Urn utters its history, the fact that it must be sylvan in both senses is seen as inevitable. Perhaps too the fact that it is rural historian, a peasant historian, qualifies in our minds the dignity and the "truth" of the histories which it recites. Its histories, Keats has already conceeded, may be characterized as "tales"—not formal history at all. The human quality is registered again in "Sylvan historian", which also alerts the mind to the Urn's expressive function, the Urn as an organ of communication, something that is consequent on but different from its self or being, the theme of the opening couplet. The narrative or telling function of the vase introduces the next three lines, the frame of the carvings of the Urn upon the detail of which the poet's attention is now fixed.

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy/
shape
Of deities or mortals or of both
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady.

"Legend" suggests first the mythical content, a development this of the sense latent in "historian": but legend also implies the intricacy of the carving-it is to be read, to be interpreted and not just seen; the lightness of sound of "legend" is carried on in the aerial and ghostly "haunts about thy shape", and evokes the fineness and delicacy of the carving, a suggestion which is strenghened by the muted and exact rhythm of the whole phrase and by the sense in "haunts about thy shape" of hardly touching the surface; the word "about" involving a slight labial effort in speech and with a full and open sound rounds out for us the circle of the vase's shape. They quicken the pulse of the rhythm and prepare us for the extreme agitation of the last three lines; simultaneously, and this is a good example of the use of double and opposed potentialities of words, their cool freshness acts as a foil or the Dionysiac conclusion:

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

The sylvan historian certainly supplies no places, names and dates—What men or gods one these? the poet asks. What it does give is action-of men or gods, of godlike men or of superhuman gods—action, which is not the less intense for all that the Urn is cool marble; The words "mad" and "ecstasy" occur, but it is quite, rigid Urn which gives the dynamic picture.

These six peremptory questions in a broken and tempestuous rhythm powerfully enforce the sexual suggestiveness of the language, and complete, as it were by opposition, the note

(11) "Every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardor of the pursuer being in itself a nothing- Ethereal things may at least be thus real, divided under three heads- —Things—things— semireal-and no things". In a letter to Bailey, written on March 13th. 1818. & cf. p.241. W.J. Bate: *John Keats*

announced in "Thou still unravish'd bride". At this point the stanza has described a great unerring circle from peace to violence and from innocence to passion. The scene is one of violent love-making, a Bacchanalian scene, but the Urn itself is like a "still unravish'd bride". His Urn that Keats described is a marble vase, it must be of the Neo-attic kind which had so wide a vogue in the Greco-Roman world, these scenes are two and separate. The one, described in the first three stanzas, is of a "mad pursuit" in which a youth pipes under a tree while another youth pursues a maiden. The other scene is of a sacrificial procession, (Stanza IV) in which a priest leads a garlanded heifer to a "green altar" and is followed by a company of pious worshipers. The two scenes may be complementary, but they are not united. Their spirit and their Tempes are different, In this point, we may compare them with Nietzsche's famous analysis of the Greek genius into the Dionysian and the Apollonian elements, ecstatic excitement and luminous order.

There is another quality of this magnificent Stanza I want to call an attention to. That is the marvellously plastic use of language of such a sort that the system of apprehensions assumed by the reader in response to the poet's words is a kind of model or metaphor of the physical structure of the vase, from its still center to its turbulent surface.

Keats had seen such a urn, or more properly, (the word Urn being especially used for stone-vases); and the beautiful figures upon it touch him deeply by their grace and pathos. Here was the relic of a civilization utterly vanished, a civilization of exquisite beauty, joyous, simple, and nature-loving. Its cities have disappeared from the face of the earth; its god exist only in museums: its people are nowhere;—but no this vase we see the thought and feeling of two thousand or three thousand years ago just as fresh as if it had been painted only yesterdays. The subject is a religious festival; there is a thronging of happy people to the temple—children and old men and maidens, and youths, with a priest or two among the crowd. musician plays upon a flute. A boy tries to kiss a girl; and she tries to run away from him. Everything is just as real as if we saw it; the humanity of three thousand years ago was not so very much unlike the humanity of todav. And the young poet, looking at this relic, thinks in sorrow for a moment of the impermanency of this world. But, as suddenly,—*Ars longa, vita brevis*- there comes to him new sense of the immortality of art. Everything is gone but the art of that time; it preserve the memory of that festal day; it leaves the musician still blowing his flute, and the boy still trying to kiss that girl after three thousand years. Notice how beautifully Keats speaks of this ghostly music and that ghostly love.

In the wild scene on his Urn, Keats gives a special prominence to a lover in pursuit of a maiden. The beginnings of this idea may perhaps be found in the second vase, but the idea gathered force in mind, and what was originally a man pulling at a women's dress became for him a man in amorous pursuit.

However, there is a tendency to think that the poem contains a single static idea, and that it does no more than amplify and illustrate this. So Robert Bridge says;

"The thougt as enounced in the first stanza is the supremacy of ideal art over Nature, because of its unchanging expression of perfection; and this is true and beautiful; but is amplification in the poem is unprogressive, monotonous, and scatter'd, the attention being call'd to fresh details without result which gives an effect of poverty in spite of the beauty."(12)

In other words, Bridges saw no development in the poem but merely the amplification of a theme stated at the start. We might well complain that this theme is not in fact stated

(12) p.364. *'Romantic Imagination'* C.M. Bowra.

at the start. But even if it were, could we honestly say that there is nothing but amplification? Are all the stanzas concerned with the same idea as the first? And is there really no change of tone, no introduction of new ideas? When we read the poem, we surely have the impression that it does more than amplify a single theme, and, when we look close at it, we see that this impression is justified.

Perhaps the first step toward understanding and enjoyment of this ode is visual recognition of the little picture groups connected with the "Flowery tale" and "leaf-fringed legend" sculptured on the Urn: (1) a marriage ceremony or procession ("pursuit" of the bride is a common feature of primitive ceremonies); (2) a pipes under the trees: (3) a youth making love to a maiden under the trees; (4) a religious procession led by a priest with a heifer in a sense of his poetic imaginary development. However, other imaginary decorations and visual memory are melted away into the creative genius with one perfect effect. (13)

The first conclusion suggested by these pictures is in Stanza Ⅱ—Ⅲ :

The next three stanzas he shows how much there is in these questions and in what relations they stand to his themes of quieteness and silence. Silence is emphasized at the starts of the second stanza, when Keats challenges our curiosity by a paradox expressed with a simplicity which makes it all the more striking, having a second example of this essentially poetic power:

> Heard melodies and sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play/ on:
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
> Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

It is quite natural that this unheard music, a melody of silence, is what Keats finds in the flute-player on the Urn.

These lines have not only a musical reference but a musical structure. The theme(the preeminence of the unrealized possibilities of silence) is announced in a generalization like a ground or bass; it is elaborated in a middle key, quicker, less deliberate, and then pointed in the words, "Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone", which have the clear and nimble melodic line of a composition for the flute.

The word "therefore" in the second line concludes a poetic and not a logical argument, or more correctly it completes a piece of characteristically poetic logic. In the first stanza, silence symbolizes the timeless and unmoving, and music activity and passion. (14) Now the poet reflects that this music carved on the Urn is itself soundless, a possibility, never realized, of actual sound, a distillation of silence. At this point, music comes to stand for the perfection of the possible, for all that is superior to "the sensual ear".

The music which we do not hear but only imagine is sweeter than any music actually heard because it is the ideal of what music ought to be, the kind of music actually heard because it is the ideal of what music ought to be, the kind of music which we may conceive in fancy but which will never strike "the sensual ears". In all arts men reach towards such a ideal and know that, though they cannot ever attain it, it provides a standard and criterion for what art they have. Shall we paraphrase this golden verse? Music heard by the ear, however sweet it may be, is never so sweet as music heard by the imagination only.

Therefore how delightful it is to fancy the melodies being played by those old Greek flutes thousand of years ago; grateful to the soul is

(13) Ibid..
(14) p.255. BK V. The Pelican Guide to English Literature & cf. "A Poem should be motionless in time /As the moon climbs" in '*Ars Poetica*' by Archibald MacLeish

this soundless music. Here we move into the world presented by the Urn, into an examination, not of the Urn as a whole —as an entity with its own form—but of the detaild which overlay it. But as we enter that world the paradox of silent speech is carried on, this time in terms of objects portrayed on the vase. The first lines of the stanza state a rather bold paradox(even the dulling effect of many reading has hardly blunnted it). At least we can easily revive its sharpness. The unheard music is sweeter than any andible music. The poet has rather cunningly enforced his conceit by using the phrase; "ye soft pipes". Actually, we might accept the poet's metaphor(the original metaphor of the speaking Urn is true) without being forced to accept the adjective "soft". The pipes might, although "unheard", be shrill, just as the action which is frozen in the figures on the Urn can be violent and ecstatic as in Stanza I and slow and dignified as in Stanza IV (The procession to the sacrifice). Yet, by characterizing the pipes as "soft", the poet has provided a sort of realistic basic for his metaphor: the pipes, it is suggested, are playing very soft; if we listen carefully, we can hear them; their music is just below the threshhold of normal sound.

Fair youth, beneath the tress, thou canst/ not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare,
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal-yet, do not/ grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou has not thy/ bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

O young man standing under those trees, you have been standing there for many, many centuries; and you can never go away. But that does not make any difference to you: because the leaves of those tree never will fall. Young lover, for many, many centuries you have been vainly trying to kiss that little maiden; and your lips are very close to her lips: but they will never touch, never. Still, you must not be sorry, there is a recompense. She will always be young, always beautiful, through the thousands years, and you will always love. Such love is like the loves of the immortals. Human beauty soon withers and passes, but never the beauty of the being that you will love upon that vase. In this stanza, we can think another general paradox runs through the stanza: action goes on though the actors are motionless; the song will not cease; the lover cannot leave his song; the maiden, always to be kissed, never actually kissed, will remain changelessly beautiful. The maiden is, indeed, like the Urn itself, a "still unravish'd bride of quietness"—not even ravished by a kiss; and it is implied, perhaps, that her changeless beauty, like that of the urn, springs from this fact. The poet is obviously stressing the fresh, unwearied charm of the scene itself which can defy time and is deathless. But, at the same times, the poet is being perfectly fair to the terms of his metaphor. The beauty portrayed is deathless because it is lifeless.(15) Thus, in the case of "thou canst not leave/Thy song", one could interpret, Love is one of the eternal theme of the human beings. These items are mentioned here, not because one wishes to maintain that the poet is bitterly ironical, but because it is important for us to see that even here the paradox is being used fairly, particularly in view of the shift in tone which comes in the next stanza.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannst shed
your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu,
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;

(15) p. 129. Cleanth Brooks *The Well Wrought Urn* Methuen. (1968)

The whole of the third stanza represents in details the conclusion and connect it with the instances cut in the vase-the fair youth, the trees, the bough, the happy melodist. It represents, as various critics have pointed out, a recapitulation of earlier motifs. The boughs which cannot shed their leaves, the unwearied melodiest, and ever-ardent lover reappear. I am not sure that this stanza can altogether be defended against the charge that it represents a falling-off from the delicate but firm precision of the earlier stanzas. There is a tendency to linger over the scene sentimentally;

Particularly, beginning "More happy love, more happy, happy love", there is, it seems to me, a decided slackening in the tightness of the poem's organization, a softening and blurring of its energy and precision. This is seen in the litter or Keatsian *cliche's* (happy love for ever warm, a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed) and an unwarranted amount of repetition (the word 'happy' occurs six times in the stanza). The shrill insistence of the repetition shows, or rather shows up, the poet's anxiety to project a desperately desired state to the object; he is betrayed under the pressure of his private condition into deserting his heroic detachment from self and fidelity to the object for the sake of personal psychological relief. Significantly these are of the hectic and feverish kind associated with Keats's own disease.

Here, if anywhere in my opinion, is to be found the blemish on the Ode — also in the last two lines.(16) Yet, if we are to attempt a defence of the third stanza, we shall come nearest success by emphasizing the paradoxical implication of the repeated items; for whatever development there is in the stanza inheres in the increased stress on the paradoxical element. For example, the bough cannot "bid the Spring adieu", a phrase which repeats "not ever can those trees be bare", but the new line strengths the implications of speaking: The falling leaves are a gesture, a word of farwell to joy of spring. The melodist of Stanza II played sweeter music because unheard, but here, in the third stanza, it is implied that he does not tire of his song for the same reason that the lover does not tire of his love. The songs are "for ever new" because they cannot be completed.

The paradox is carried further in the case of the lover whose love is "For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd". We are really dealing with an ambiguity here, for we can take "still to be enjoy'd" as an adjectival phrase on the same level as "warm" — that is, "still virginal and warm". But the tenor of the whole poem suggests that the warmth of the love depends upon the fact that it has not been enjoyed-that is, "warm and still to be enjoy'd" may mean also "warm *because* still to be enjoy'd".(17)

> All breathing human passion far above,
> That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
> A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

The love which a line earlier was "warm" and "panting" becomes suddenly in the next line, "All breathing human passion far *above*. But if it is above all breathing passion, it is, after all, outside the realm of breathing passion, and therefore, not human passion at all.

The purpose in emphasizing the ironic undercurrent in the foregoing lines is not at all to disparage Keats—to point up implications of his poem of which he was himself unaware. Far from it: the poet knows precisely what he is doing. The point we have to realize is to ours.

(16) Eliot is taking issue with I.A. Richards, who, in discussing "Pseudo-statements', speaks of those who mislead the close of the "Grecian Urn" and "swallow···, Beausy is Truth, truth beauty', as the quintessence of an aesthetic philosophy, not as the expression of a certain blend of feelings"(*'Practical Criticism'*(1929)-p(185—187). Eliot goes on: "I am at first inclined to agree with (Richards) ···But on re-reading the whole Ode, this line strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem, and the reason must be either that I fail to understand it, or that it is a statement which is untrue···The statement of Keats seems to me meaningless or perhaps the fact that it is grammatically meaningless conceals another meaning from me." 'Dante,' *Selected Essays* (1932). p.230—231.

(17) p.130. Cleanth Brooks: *The Well Wrought Urn*

And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever now.

The ideal songs beyond all existing songs has an eternal freshness because it is not actual song but the essence of song presupposed in any music which we make or hear. The truth is that is his conception of this unheard music Keats expresses with great force something which lies close to the center of all truly creative experience. Great as was his physical sensibility and his appreciation of everything that came through his sense, he know in the very moment of enjoying it was not everything and not enough.

In our apprehension and enjoyment of this, we almost forget the details of an actual work of art and pass beyond them into a state which may be called silence because it speaks not to the ear but to the spirit, If we feel this in reading poetry, we can imagine how much more keenly Keats felt it in writing Keat's notion of silence is combined with his notion of time, which indeed receives fuller attention. The paradox of all art is that it gives permanence to fleeting moments and fix them in an unchanging form. In this case, he may be quite successful in embodying his ideal Urn. It keeps its original freshness and appeal, preserved and sanctified by time.

The work of art has its own life, which is more vivid than the actual life on which Keats touches in the third stanza. The paradox of the Urn, as of all true works of art, is that it transcends time by making a single moment last forever and so become timeless. The timelessness of his achievement is a true reflection of something known to artists when they work at the highest pitch of inspiration. It is quite sure that Keats wanted to express himself such an action of creation with all his faculties of harmony.

No literary piece of work can expressed so much the quietessence of Hellenism as this work does. He captures the Hellenism not through the intellectual way, but through the world of imagination.

On the Sosibios vase, there is, as we have seen, no priest and the sacrificial kid can hardly be said to be led or to be lowing. Keats seems to have fused two impressions into one: the dragged kid of the vase and the lowing oxen led by priests on the southern frieze of the Parthenon.

The memories which Keats retained of these Greek monuments were gradually refined and changed until they found their final form.

Mysterious as the process is by which a poet stores his impressions and slowly matures them, we can in this case discern some of the steps in Keats's progress from his first knowledge of these Greek works of arts to his presentation. Stanza Ⅳ with it tone of sadness, suggests another aspect of this conclusion: such art arrests the villagers and cuts them off from the rest of life, as if they had been enchanted into eternal immobility.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands/ drest?

A commentator can only point clumsily at the meaning the poet offers with utter precision. "Who" quietly touches a note of surprise at the unusual and "these" identifies them with us, the ordinary natural occupants of the world; "sacrifice" is the destination which gives a tone to the whole journey; "green altar" fuses the two elements; and 'mysterious priest' intensifies the feeling of religious solemnity. The association is completed in the following couplet, when the "heifer lowing", the familiar farm beast richly suggestive of terrestrial good, modulates easily into the elected, sacramental victim, "all her silken flanks with garlands dressed".

We are still within the world depicted by the Urn, but the scene presented in this stanza forms a contrast to the earlier scenes. It

emphasizes, not individual aspiration and desire, but communal life. It constitutes another chapter in the history that the "Sylvan historian" has to tell. And again, names and dates have been omitted. We are not told to what god's altar the procession moves, nor the occasion of the sacrifice.

We must, I think, be conscious of an inartistic and too personal presence of the poet's self in this last part of the stanza. There we detect the taint of sickness, here we feel vitality and control, the qualities of health. We are aware of vitality in the intensely realized, vividly rendered scene, and in the deep, organic movement of the rhythm; we are aware of control in the poet's pure and disinterested attitude, (18) in the kept distance and the designed succession of effects. The initial questions—"Who are these coming to the sacrifice?—works both within and without the frame of events in the stanza; it voices both the bystander's awe and the reader's wonder, and its effect is to place the reader there in the front rank of the spectators. From that viewpoint he sees the procession as a brilliant figure on a darker ground—first the priest and the animal; then, less clearly, the more generalized crowd, "those coming to the sacrifice', and more distantly still, the town, the generic town, on river or sea-shore or mountain-built from which the procession comes. The detail is rich enough to establish the reality of the procession, and it is complex enough to be a verbal equivalent of the intricate decoration on the vase. It is also so finely, so economicaly organized, as to carry with complete lucidity a complex symbolic meaning.

In stanza Ⅳ, the whole emotion value of the *'Ode on a Grecian Urn'* has been based upon the poignant transiency of human beauty and passion. What we do expect is emotional coherence. So conceived this Ode has that essential emotional coherence which is of more consequence to a work of art than intellectual validity of its ideas.

Yet, without pretending to account for the effect in any mechanical fashion, one can point to some of the elements active in securing the effect: there is the suggestiveness of the word "green" in "green altar"—something natural, spontaneous, living; there is the suggestion that the little town is caught in a curve of the seashore, or nestled in a fold of the mountains—at any rate, is something secluded and something naturally related to its terrain; there is the effect of the phrase "peaceful citadel", a phrase which involves a 'clash between the ideas of war and peace and resolves it in the sense of stability and independence without imperialistic ambition—the sense of stable repose.

> What little town by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
> And, little town, thy streets for evermore
> Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
> Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

However, but appearance is here reality. Keats now turns to contemplate the town, the point of departure of the procession and the familiar center of a communal life which is intimate, explicable, accustomed. The small town and the dedicated victim, is contained in the phrase "this pious morn". Piety is a settled, traditional, humanized habit of religion, the bridge between the ultimate mysteries and the simple immediacy of everyday life, symbolized in the "little town". And how tactfully the poet lodges the suggestion that is to be the impulse of the next movement of the poem. The town is desolate, emptied of its folk, and appropriately silent.

The little town which has been merely implied by the procession portrayed on the Urn is endowed with a poignance beyond anything else in the poem. Its desolation for ever shrouded in a

(18) p.221. cf. his 'Negative Capability' W. Walsh: *John Keats*. P.G.E.L.

mystery. No one in the figured procession will ever be able to go back to the town to break the silence there, not even one to tell the stranger there why the town remains desolate. It is one of difficulties to find out any interpretation in the last two line of this stanza.

One of the most moving passages in the poem is that in which the poet speculates on the strange emptiness of the little town which, of course, has not been pictured on the Urn at all.

No one will ever discover the town except by the very same process by which Keats has discovered it; namely, through the figured Urn, and then, of course, he will not need to ask why it is empty. Cleanth Brooks comments:

..... It will not be too difficult, however, to show that Keats's extension of the fancy is not irrelevant to the poem as a whole. The 'reality' of the little town has a very close relation to the Urn's character as a historian. (19)

The poet has created in his own imagination the town imagination the town implied by the procession of worshippers, has given it a special character of desolation and loneliness, and then has gone on to treat it as if it were a real town to which a stranger might actually come and be puzzled by its emptiness.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of/ thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou/ say'st,
Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye known on earth, and all ye need to know.

We move back out of the enchanted world portrayed by the Urn to consider the Urn itself once more as a whole, as an object. The shift in point of view is marked with the first line of the stanza by the apostrophe, "O Attic shape". It is the urn itself as a formed thing, to which the poet addresses these last words. And the rich, almost breathing world which the poet has conjured up for us contracts and hardens into the decorated motifs on the Urn itself. The beings who have a life above life-"All breathing-human passion far above"-are marble, after all.

And it is this image of silence which the poet uses as a means of transferring our attention from the decorated surface of the Urn, 'with brede of marble men and maidens overwrought", to its total pattern, the silent form which teases us out of thought and the cold pastoral which holds a permanent communication for men. Keats's reading of that communication, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty", has been the subject of endless comment. For some it is meaningless, But it seems to me that a modest and attentive reader, careful not to import his metaphysics or his prejudices into the poem, can accept it as something neither so outrageous nor so formidable. Keats distinguished between fact and truth(20) it was the business of the organizing imagination to transfigure the one into the other. And the equivalance of beauty and truth which he asserts here is an elliptical way of making the same assertion, in place at this point in the poem, since this, the transfiguring of brute fact into imagination or poetic truth, is what the poem has been doing all along. There is a relevant remark on this theme in a letter to Bailey-"What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth whether it existed before or not the Imagination is like Adam's dream(21)-he awoke and found it true". (22)

However, Keats is not contents to leave his

(19) p.132. Cleanth Brooks *The Well Wrought Urn*
(20) p.72. *'Letters'*, (ed) M. B. Forman.
(21) BK. Ⅷ.452—490. 'Paradise Lost'.
(22) p.238. W.J. Bate *John Keat*

subject(same as how on the three middle stanzas), he feels compelled to reach some conclusion by trying to express the meaning of this timeless rapture to beings who live in time. This is the purpose of the last stanza. Addressing the Urn, Keats says:

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of/ thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

This does not mean that the question of the timeless raised by the Urn is a philosophical problem beyond Keats's reach. But he is not thinking of that. He means that works of art (like the urn) seduce us from the ordinary life of thought into the exordinary life of the imagination. Here Keats expresses his unwillingness to leave his own special approach to experience through the imagination for something like philosphy, and his refusal is based on the belief that the mystery of things can be mastered by an act of will but forces us "out of thought", from ordinary way of thinking into the approach of the imagination.

Art is a unity of content and form. The work of art is made from being by eternalizing and concretisizing with the ideal forms the transitory and sensual subjects.

The feeling having of coldness in appreciation of the work of art is, in this case quite inevitable. Such an effect usually is well expressed in the works of Greek arts.

The pure and ideal art of this "Cold Pastoral", this "silent form", has a cold silentness which in some degree saddens him. In the last lines of the fourth stanza, especially the last three lines every reader is conscious, I should suppose, of an undertone of sadness, of disappointment.

Keats is perfectly aware that the frozen moment of loveliness is more dynamic than is the fluid world of reality only because it is frozen. The love depicted on the Urn remains warm and young because it is not human flesh at all but cold, ancient marble.

His poems indeed represented it already, but there is much that such an artist has to say which is not poetical but analytical.

As we all agree, the last two lines are commonly detached by Keats's interpreters, as summing up his views on everything; and it may be that they are right. But let us consider the Ode as a poem on a separate occasion. In the first stanza, there are as it were two parties meeting. "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness." the silent vase, in its place, is one. The other is us, the race of man, as is shown by the words "our rhyme". We then ask the questions, in the stanza as that follows. The Urn, however much it will tell us by its picture, preservers its tantalizing remoteness.

Its silence defeats our inquiring minds,—Keats does not write "tease me out of thoughts,"—but at length its very silence seems to speak.

This is only a hint and is intented to remind us that our ordinary existence is different from that of the Urn. In this, it would be wrong to detect a note of complaint. Keats does not resent the fact the Urn stops him from thinking or bears no relation to his ordinary existence. On the contrary, the reality of the timeless world attainable through art is a comfort and a solace not merely to the inner state of his mind but to future men and women. In the perfect enjoyment of scenes like those on the Urn, we have indeed a sense of security and happiness. The Urn has its final message, which sums up the meaning of its existence and completes the poems in the last two famous lines.

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

Even if we interpret the statement as sympathetically as possible, taking "that is all" to mean "that is the finally important thing", it still looks like an effort, ungainly and unjustified, to inflate the dignity of the poem's conclusion. It is ungainly for it suddenly puts on

the poet the necessity of taking up quite a new stance and arguing a case directly. It is unjustified because it doesn't issue irresistibly from what has gone before. Keat's design on us may not be palpable at this moment but it certainly leaves us suspicious and uneasy.

At the start there is a textual difficulty(23).

We can figure out the slight different variance, but it does not follow that this text has been correctly interpreted, nor need we admit that the last words are Keats's independent comment on the message of the Urn. For it is surely clear that in these words it is not Keats but the Urn who speaks. This follows from the use of the word "ye". Keats does not usually address his reader in this way, and it is inconceivable that he should so address them in the preceding line he has spoken of "others woe than ours". If he had meant to speak for himself, he would, he would have said not "ye", but "we". We may therefore dismiss the view that these last words are Keats's comment on the Urn's message. The poem, which has been concerned with the Urn, ends with a lesson which all artists have to learn and to which it gives its special commendation.

According to the logic of the poem, the Urn addresses us ("ye" a pronoun of some dignity) in the last two lines; it implies that, as a piece of painted earthenware from byyone Greece, it can answer none of our minor questions. Only, in its quality, it conveys the answer to a very big question as the Greeks did that beauty and truth are inseparable and attain the art of life. And I do not hear Keats pesonally announce, "that is all ye know." He takes his place in the piece from the beginning as one of us. He does not write "we know". (in passing, be it remembered that there is no certain help on the matter from any manuscript). My contention is after all a reasonable one: the poet is particular in his occasion and his object.(24) Keats sets his Urn firmly on the table and concentrates on its characteristics. We could not doubt construct and adorn such a shape from what he tells us-but the Urn is ancient and was made by the countrymen of Plato and of Theocritus. That subtle element is the depth of the problem of Keats and the poet, painting his verse picture of the Urn, a figure of a distinct civilization with its dominant philosophy. He also paints, in shadowed background, the appearance of the more confused modern world, -"us," who go to Museums to ponder on Greek vases.

The principle is expressed by Aristotle when he says that beauty is based on unity in variety, and by Coleridge when he says that "The Beautiful, contemplated in its essentials, that is, in ***kind*** and not in ***degree***, is that in which the ***many***, still seen as many becomes one" and that a work of art is "rich in proportion to the variety of parts which it holds in unity.(25)

The beauty he worshipped was not intellectual; but visible, audible, tangible. "O for a life of sensations," he cried, "rather than of thoughts.(26) He was an artist, intent upon fashioning his materials until the outward sensible form is perfectly expressive and delightful. In all

(23) The text printed in *'Annals of the Fine Arts'* in January 1820 is substantially the same, though it makes. "That is all" begin a new sentence after a full stop. In the volume which Keats published in June 1820, there was an important difference. The words "Beauty is truth, truth Beauty" are replaced in invented commas, while what follows is not.

(24) "For poetry is the apprehension or verbalization of an objective world. The poet must even, as Keats was the first to understand, objectify his own emotions before he can make poetic use of them." p.194. Herbert Read: *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, Faber & Faber Ltd., (mcmliv).

(25) "What the poet seeks is Beauty, Beauty is a 'principle', it is one. All things beautiful manifest it, and so far therefore are one and the same. This idea of the unity of all beauty comes out in many crucial passages in the poems and letters I take a single example. The godess Cynthia in *"Endymion"* is the principle of Beauty." p.223 A.C. Bradley: *Oxford Lecturer on Poetry* & cf. p.81. W.K. Wimsatt: *Verbal Icon*.

(26) "It was misunderstood several times, Murry says: 'Sensation' include two at first sight unrelated experiences, first, 'the affection of the affection of the heart; which are sacred; and, second, the perceptions of beauty by the imagination, which, he says, must be truth." cf. p.254. "Keats's Thought: A Discovery of Truth" *in the Major English Romantic Poets*.

this he was at the opposite pole to Shelley: and he himself felt it. He refused to visit Shelley, in order that he might keep his own unfettered scope; and he never speaks of Shelley cordially. (27)

The words which Keats gives to the Urn are derived from his own meditations on the nature of his art. He knew that this art was not everything, but so far as it concerned him, he was quite consistent about it. The following passages(28) will help us to understand thoroughly how deeply Keats was concerned with the relations of truth and beauty, and how he developed his own aesthetic theory.

This theory may be expressed in something like the following forms. Truth is another name for ultimate reality, and is discovered not by reasoning mind but by the imagination. The imagination has special insight into the true nature of things, and Keats accepts its discoveries because they agree with his senses, resolve disagreeable discords, and overwhelm him by their intensity. He is convinced that anything so discovered is true in a sense that conclusions of philosophy are not. Keats calls this reality "beauty" because of its overpowing and all—absorbing effect on him. In fact, he substitutes the discovery of beauty—through the imagination for the discovery of facts through the reason. —and asserts that it is more satisfactory and more certain way of piercing to the heart of things, since inspired insights sees more than abstract ratiocination ever can. Keat's concern is with the imagination in a special sence, and not far from Coleridge in his view of it. For him it does much more than imagine in the ordinary sense; it is an insight so fine that it sees what is concealed from most men and understands things in their full range and significance and character. The rationale of poetry is that through the imagination it finds something so compelling in its intensity that it is at once both beautiful and real.

This is not a complete philosophy of life, nor did Keats intend to be. It is a theory of art, a doctrine intended to explain his own creative experience. Thinking that the poet is but a "dreaming thing", (29) Keats had not gone so far as to think that the truth which he sought through imagination was a dream. It was still very important Truth for him as a poet—but only as a poet. The Ode is his last word on a special activity and special experience. Within its limits it has its own view of life, and that is what Keats expresses.

The last two lines expresses of a generalization of which the Urn itself and the poem about it are examples; beauty and truth are aspects of the same ultimate reality.

"These two are reached, apprehended and expressed in different ways: beauty in or through sense or imagination, truth in or by 'thought; 'knowledge; or philosophy'. But the two are none the less one and the same; so that whatever is felt perceived, imagined as beautiful, would, if adequately expressed in an

(27) p. 226 A. C. Bradley: *Oxford Lecturer on Poetry*

(28) a. "I am certain of nothing but of 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." Nov. 22, 1817, to Benjamin Baily:

b. "The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disgreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth." Dec. 21, 1817, to George and Thomas Keats.

c. "When I worte it was a regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth" Jan. 30, 1818, to John Taylor (of *'Endymion'*);

d. "Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses" May 3. 1818, to J. H. Reynolds;

e. "I never can feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its Beauty." Dec. 1818, to George and Georgiana Keats;

f. "Truth there can be no merits, no craft at all, without that, And further, all beauty is in the long run only fineness of truth, or what we call expression, the fine accommodation of speech to that vision with."-cf. Pater: *Appreciation.*

(29) See *'Lamia'* by John Keats.

intellectual form, be found a reality truly conceived; and truth, adequately transformed into the shape of "Sensation" or imagination, would have turned into beauty."(30)

He knew nothing of Byron's stormy spirit of antagonism to the existing order of things, and he had no sympathy with Shelley's humanitarian zeal and passion for reforming the world. According to his conception of it, poetry should be, not the vehicle of philosoply, religious teaching or social and political theories, but the incarnation of beauty.(31)

Ⅲ. Conclusion

It is clear that the poet was not a philosopher in the technical sense and he did not even try to express himself in a philosophical and systematic way. And yet we see recurrent and laborious attempts to extract from him a continuous and deliberate philosophy.

A representative poem, distinctly enunciating Keats's Philosophy, is the *"Ode on a Grecian Urn"*. I do not offered in this 'Ode' an essay on beauty in general. The poet has been describing the Urn,-the stories so graphically told in the pictures around it, and the further stories which it suggests to the imagination,-till at last he cannot go further that way.

The *"Ode on a Grecian Urn"* leads us to a perception of the truth, represented by the antique scenes depicted, that the eternal miracle of great art lies in its power to capture beauty and fix it in forms that will forever stir the beholder's or the hearer's imagination in the way the original experience stirred the artist's. In the half-sorrowful, half-glad words of consolation to the youth who will never kiss the girl, to the trees that will never come to fruit, to the piper whose melody will never be sounded, the poet suggests the superiority of art to life becanse of its changeless record of life's lovely moments. Yet in his recognition of the coldness of this changeless perfection, of the everlasting desolation of that little Greek town whose inhabitants will never return home from the sacrifice, he honestly admits a limitations in response to art that we all feel.

The *"Ode on a Grecian Urn"* is built on a neat and recognizable plan in three parts: introduction, main subject, and conclusion. The first stanza gives introduction, the second, third and fourth the main subject, and the fifth the conclusion. The introduction presents the Urn in its mystery and shows what questions it poses to the poet. The main subject consists of the scenes on the Urn, not as a casual observer might notice them, but as Keats sees them with the full force of his imaginative insight into the metaphysical problems which they raise and their hints of another life different from what we ordinarily know. The conclusion relates the experience gained from the Urn to its special order of reality and an answers the questions which the poem has raised. The poem has what Aristotle would call a beginning, a middle and an end; it asks questions and answers them; it evokes a special state of mind and relates this to ordinary life; it moves from earger curiosity to delighted amazement, exalted raputure, and devout solemnity; it closes on a note akin to revelations and summarizes its message in words of astonishing, paradoxical clarity, this ideal world of the imagination is given an unexpected strength by the the comparison made between it and lone as Keats actually know it.

He is important for three reasons; First, on the side of form and style he is the most romantic of the romantic poets, handling even his Greek themes with a luxuriance of language

(30) A.C. Bradley. *'Keats and 'Philosophy' The John Keats Memorial Volume.* p.45. Lane, 1924. (cf. also Keats's letter to Baily Nov. 22. 1817.
(31) p.18. Elizabeth Drew. *Poetry.*

and a wealth of detail as far as possible removed from the temperance and restraint of Hellenic art. Secondly, more than any other great poet of his time,[32] he represents the exhaustion of the impulses generated by the social upheaval—gorgeous dreams of progress and perfection,—of the French Revolution—the wonderful humanitarian enthusiasms, interests of contemporary life, returns to the past, and devotes itself to the service of beauty. It is for this reason that he seems to stand definitely at the end of his age. Finally, his influence was none the less very strong upon the poets of the succeeding generation.[33]

Keats is pre-eminently a man of sensations, with whom the very activities of intelligence bring into play concrete notions, images, and qualities. His artis full of passion; it is above all aspiration and desire; and the object of this desire is not the 'intellectural beauty' of Shelley, but that which reveals itself to the enchant-ment of the senses. This bit of wisdom sums up the whole of mortal knowledge.

Keats builds up for himself a personal store of reflection and ideas; his intellectural ambition is high; he realizes what is lacking in his nature, and is determined to acquire a philosophy. Religion for him takes definite shape at an early age, in the adoration of the beautiful. But this adoration he elaboratees into a doctrine: Beauty is the supreme Truth; it is imagination that discovers it, and scientific reasoning, armed as it is to analyse and dissect, is an altogether inferior instrument of knowledge.

Poetry is the earliest and remains the most concentrated and intense form of communication among the arts of language.

But we don't want poetry to be all moral propaganda. As Keats said, we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, feeling instinctively that it is not its true function to preach.

Poetry's mountain top is Parnassus, not Olympus or Sinai. Yet this is certainly not to exclude ethical significance from poetry.[34]

> And died, nor young-(the life of a long life
> Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
> Upon the world's cold cheek, to make it
> burn for ever.)
>
> Mrs Browing, 'Aurora Leigh'. Ⅰ, Ⅱ. 1008—11.

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