Spenser and the Principle of Plenitude

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research, McGill University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

by

Ruby Diane Nemser

April, 1956

Chapter I

The History of Plenitude

In this thesis we will study the emergence in the work of Edmund Spenser of an idea originally Greek but primarily mediaeval. This is an examination of Spenser's view, not of nature, but of creation, for Spenser's feeling that this world is the work of a divine Creator contributes greatly to his view of nature and consequently to his poetry.

Plenitude is in a certain measure an idea about the relationship between the Creator and the created world. Before studying its emergence in Spenser's work we will present a brief history of the principle of Plenitude in Platonic and neo-Platonic thought and in the Middle Ages. Then we will show how that idea, in association with two other Greek philosophical ideas, formed the concept of the Great Chain of Being, which, although its popularity was decreasing, had sufficient hold on the minds of Elizabethan Englishmen to find expression in the works of most of the important writers of that period. Most of this chapter is based on the first three chapters of Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being, which gives a history of the ideas involved.

The idea of Plenitude developed from Plato's Theory of Forms, which is expressed primarily in the Phaedo and the

Republic. It is in the Allegory of the Cave that the extreme "otherworldliness" of the Theory of Forms becomes clear. The world we live in is likened to a cave where the inhabitants see only the shadows of real objects. The "real" world is the world of Forms seen by the light of the sun, which represents Reason. But in the Timaeus this teaching is reversed. Professor Lovejoy explains this as follows:

> Plato clearly was dissatisfied with a philosophy in which no ground or explanation of the existence of mundane things, and of the number and diversity of their several modes and degrees of imperfection, was so much as suggested . . . And if any reason for the being of the sensible world was to be found, it must necessarily, for Plato, be found in the Intellectual World, and in the very nature of the sole Self-Sufficing Being. The not-so-good, not to say the bad, must be apprehended as derivative from the Idea of the Good, as involved in the essence of Perfection.[1]

Therefore in the Timaeus Plato answers two questions about this world: 1) why should it exist at all in addition to the world of Ideas or indeed to the one supreme Idea; 2) what principle determines the number of kinds of being that make up the sensible world.

The answer to the first question completely reverses the concept of the Good which Plato previously expounded. For the Platonic "Good" was distinguished by its absolute self-sufficiency. Yet in the Timaeus this reason is given for creation:

> Let us declare then for what cause nature and this All was framed by him that framed it. He was good, and in none that

---

[1] A. O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 45.

is good can there arise jealousy of aught at any time. So being far aloof from this, he desired that all things should be as like unto himself as possible.[2]

In short, where in Platonic thought "good" had previously meant primarily "self-sufficient", a further implication was added: the Good tends to produce things perfect in their kind -- omne bonum est diffusivum sui. As Lovejoy says, "The concept of Self-Sufficing Perfection . . . was . . . converted into the concept of Self-Transcending Fecundity."[3] The very nature of the Good causes it to grant existence to all sorts of lesser beings. Therefore the answer to the question "how many?" is implicit in the answer to the question "why?". If the Good has no envy to cause it to deny existence to any creature, then "the 'best soul' could begrudge existence to nothing that could conceivably possess it".[4] The answer is that the world must contain all possible kinds of temporal and imperfect beings.[4]

A third point may be drawn from the Timaeus: this world was created according to a previously created model, the "universe is a likeness of something" (29B). In summary, the Timaeus teaches of a "good" creator and a reason for the creation of finite beings of all possible kinds according to the pattern of the world of Forms. And in that world dwelt

---

[2] Plato, Timaeus, ed. R. D. Archer-Hind (London, 1888), 29D-E.

[3] Lovejoy, p. 49.

[4] Lovejoy, p. 50.

"perfect counterparts of all physical phenomena"[5] as well as Forms "corresponding to every generic term."[6]

"Parmenides in the dialogue bearing his name . . . reminds the young Socrates, [that] there are in the World of Ideas the essences of all manner of things, even things paltry, or ridiculous, or disgusting."[7] The ideas of Plotinus, who lived five centuries after Plato, contributed to this aspect of the mediaeval view of the universe. Plotinus felt this to be the best of all possible worlds, and he therefore spoke of the necessity of evil and of diversity and gradation among creatures. He believed that a good world need not contain only pleasant, uniformly good beings. Therefore, he said that the world should not be thought "badly made merely because there are so many unpleasant things in it."[8] Nor should anyone complain because of the impossibility that all men should be good.[9] According to Plotinus the world's excellence is the result of both its fullness and of its diversity. We should not complain of the world, any more than of a tragedy, "because the characters are not all heroes, but

---

[5] Plato, Phaedo, trans. R. S. Bluck (London, 1955), Appendix VIII, p. 182.

[6] ibid., p. 184. In connection with this point see also p. 186, where the editor states, "there is never the slightest hint that there are forms only of some things, or that some things are not caused by Forms."

[7] Lovejoy, p. 50.

[8] The Philosophy of Plotinus, ed. J. Katz (New York, 1950), p. 75.

[9] Plotinus, p. 92.

some slaves, and rustics, and rough-speaking fellows."[10] By removing these low characters, we spoil the play, "for it is by means of them that it becomes complete."[11]

Plenitude passed on to the Christian Middle Ages through Plato, Plotinus and the pseudo-Dionysius. The Christian God, although a personal Redeemer as well as a Creator, is not much different from the Absolute Good of Plato, and mediaeval philosophers were inclined to feel, with Plato, that "the Absolute would not be what it is if it gave rise to anything less than a complete world in which the 'model', i. e., the totality of ideal Forms, is translated into concrete realities."[12] The resultant mediaeval view was that the universe was absolutely full, that is, that no potential existence was unrealized, since God had given physical existence to everything that could be.

The logical conclusion to be drawn from the idea that goodness expressed itself by fecundity, as the Timaeus implies, is that "the extent and abundance of the creation must be as great as the possibility of existence and commensurate with the productive capacity of a 'perfect' and inexhaustible Source, and that the world is the better, the more it contains."[13] Of this conclusion we can say that most of the mediaeval philosophers thought so, but avoided

---

[10] quoted in E. A. G. Fuller, The Problem of Evil in Plotinus (Cambridge, 1912), p. 209.

[11] quoted by Lovejoy, p. 65.

[12] Lovejoy, p. 54.

[13] Lovejoy, p. 52.

saying so. For "the principle of Plenitude had latent in it a sort of absolute cosmical determinism."[14] If one believes, as people seemed to believe, that God's goodness is manifest in His fecundity, then creation is somehow enjoined upon God, who loses thereby not only His self-sufficiency, but also His freedom. Abelard stated the conclusion which comes logically from the major premiss of Plenitude and was condemned for heresy by Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Lombard. He spoke of "a certain necessity"[15] arising out of the nature of God. Although he refused to call this a constraint, he did say that all the evidence indicates that it is intrinsically impossible for God to do anything differently from the way He has done or does it. But the teachings which were condemned by other theologians were the result of 1500 years of teaching on Plenitude. So the philosophers were caught in a dilemma: to argue that the world was made perfectly in accordance with God's perfection was to attribute the perfection of of the Creator to the creature; to argue that the world might have been created differently or better was to deny to God "goodness" as goodness was defined.

The fact is that not Abelard, but Plenitude threatened the foundations of the Christian conception of God. The philosophers realized this, and avoided heresy by avoiding the

---

[14] Lovejoy, p. 54.

[15] Lovejoy, p. 71.

problem. It was "inadmissible to accept . . . the principle of plenitude",[16] but at the same time, Plenitude was indispensable as the basis of the mediaeval concept of the universe. As we have said, Plenitude in combination with two other principles formed the idea of the Great Chain of Being.

The second component is an idea not explicitly stated by Aristotle, but derived from his work. Although Aristotle denied in Metaphysics[17] that everything which can exist does exist, the idea of Qualitative Continuity is dependent on Plenitude. Continuity is defined by Aristotle as the existence of a limit common to two species. That is, contiguous species may be said to form a continuum. However, it is only in combination with the idea of Plenitude that this idea can give rise to the concept of a chain of creatures. For Plenitude maintains that everything which can exist does exist, so that the universe is full. Therefore, since there are no gaps, everything in the universe is continuous; and except the extreme links of the chain, which are continuous only with the species either to the right or to the left, each species shares its boundaries with other species.[18]

The third idea is also derived largely from Aristotle, although Plato too referred vaguely to differences in

---

[16] Lovejoy, p. 73.

[17] See Lovejoy, p. 55.

[18] Cp. Lovejoy, p. 58.

rank. Aristotle suggested both a zoological hierarchy, based on the development attained by the newborn offspring (in this scale, man was the lowest being), and a psychological hierarchy, based on "powers of soul" or the extent to which various species can attain the perfection found complete only in God.[19] The latter idea was the one adopted, so that in terms of Unilinear Gradation the lowest beings were inanimate objects, which possess only "being", then plants, which have the added attribute of growth, animals, which also possess sense and motion, man, who is part spirit, and angels, who are pure spirit.[20]

> The result was the conception of the plan and structure of the world which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century, many philosophers, most men of science, and, indeed, most educated men, were to accept without question -- the conception of the universe as a "Great Chain of Being", composed . . . of an infinite . . . number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through "every possible" grade up to the . . . highest possible kind of creature, between which and the Absolute Being the disparity was assumed to be infinite -- every one of them differing from that immediately above and that immediately below it by the "least possible" degree of difference.[21]

---

[19] Lovejoy, p. 58.

[20] Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York, 1942), n. 25, pp. 11-12.

[21] Lovejoy, p. 59.

Chapter II

Spenser and the Great Chain of Being - I

As we have seen, the people of the Middle Ages believed firmly in the Great Chain of Being while denying or disavowing Plenitude, its most basic principle. This is not to be attributed merely to some aberration common to all the mediaeval people, for it is psychologically possible that one may hold a tenet whose component ideas are found upon examination to be untenable. Therefore it is often advisable to examine the more complex idea before probing deeper to the bases on which it rests. For this reason, we shall study Spenser's relation to the Great Chain of Being before examining his view of the principle of Plenitude. That is, we shall try first to discover what he considers to be "the order of things", and afterwards try to find out "what things" were in that order.

In these two chapters we shall examine the extent to which the concept of the Great Chain of Being emerges in Spenser's work. We will be concerned mainly with The Faerie Queene, for the chain of being is largely a moral idea, and therefore the moral allegory is the most logical place to seek its expression. This concept was "taken for granted by the ordinary

educated Elizabethan."[1] A passage from North's Diall of Princes shows the vision of the world which the Elizabethans inherited from the Middle Ages.

> When the Creator created the whole world, he gave to eche thing immediately his place: that is to wete, he placed intelligence, in the upper-most heaven; he placed the starres, in the firmament; the planettes, in the orbes; the byrdes, in the ayre; the erthe, on the center; the fyshes, in the water; the serpentes, in the holes: the beastes, in the mountaines: and al in generality he gave place to rest themselves in.[2]

As we have seen, the universe was thought to be arranged in a hierarchy, but within it there were other hierarchies. There was one among metals, at the pinnacle of which was gold. The eagle was the highest of the birds, the lion was the king of beasts, men ranged in hierarchy from the commonest to the king, the planets and stars of the physical heavens were thought to give homage to the sun. The lowest of the elements was earth, and the highest, fire. All the universe was a series of descending spheres, from God's heaven downward, and the earth was the bottom of the world, the resting place of the silt and sediment of the universe. Similarly, the pure spiritual beings like the soul tended upward, while the heavy dross of the body tended downward. In this ordered scheme, everything had its place and its function: kings ruled, subjects obeyed; lions chased and deer fled.

---

[1] E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1943), Preface, p. v.

[2] Quoted by M. Y. Hughes, "Spenser and Utopia", SP, XVII (1920), 132-146.

Men were governed by three sets of laws: the laws of Nature, the laws of Nations, and civil law.[3] It was the law of Nature which, incorporated into the moral law, governed the individual man. Disobedience to any of these laws was thought to cause chaos; and Hooker could say that the obedience of creatures to the law of Nature is "the stay of the world", and ask what would become of man if any of the natural forces were to disobey the law even for a short time.[4] Just as storms were thought of as disorder in the universe, revolution against the social order was disorder in the state, and sin was disorder in the human being.

The Elizabethans often thought in terms of parallel hierarchies. They saw analogies or "correspondences" among the three most relevant hierarchies. Thus, just as the ordered universe was subject to God, the ordered state was subject to the monarch, and the ordered body was subject to the soul, and especially to the soul's highest faculty, that of Reason.[5] Therefore the body was thought of as the castle of the soul, as we will see in Book II of The Faerie Queene, where all the parts of the body give homage to their lady, Alma.

No one can reasonably deny the influence of the Great Chain of Being on Spenser. It is implicit in many of

---

[3] Spencer, p. 15.

[4] Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, I, iii, 2.

[5] Tillyard, ch. VII, and Spencer, p. 17.

his works. For example, in Mother Hubberds Tale the Ape and the Fox are at once suspect to the Elizabethan reader from their dissatisfaction with their positions in life. When they choose to become idle vagabonds, to

> . . . fashion both our selues to bee,
> Lords of the world, and so will wander free
> Where so vs listeth, vncontrol'd of anie;[6]

they are stepping out of their places in the hierarchy. By starting them off this way, Spenser could be assured that they would incur the immediate disapproval of the majority of his readers. So too the butterfly of Muiopotmos is destined to fall because he does not conform to his place in the hierarchy.

Before examining Spenser's work in detail, we should like to consider Spenser's references to chains. A chain, being something which binds and controls, is a natural symbol of order. We venture to suggest that not once in The Faerie Queene does Spenser mention a chain which is not related to the chain of order. Every chain image can be identified with "the chayne of strong necessitee,/ Which fast is tyde to Ioues eternall seat" (FQ I. v. 25). This is the order which Night and Duessa hate, but against which they are helpless. An aspect of the chain of being is mentioned when Arthur has rescued the Redcrosse Knight from Orgoglio:

---

[6] "Mother Hubberds Tale," The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London, 1912), pp. 495-508, lines 167-169. All subsequent line references to Spenser's works will be to this edition.

> O goodly golden chaine, wherewith yfere
> The vertues linked are in louely wize:
> (I. ix. 1)

and again when the Palmer makes peace among Guyon, Arthur and Britomart, so that all were "with that golden chaine of concord tyde" (III. i. 12). "This is the golden chain mentioned in Homer and Milton that joins heaven and earth, and as there is a sympathy between things of like nature in the natural world, so in the mental and higher order of nature there is a union of mind with mind."[7]

In the course of these chapters we will consider the chain of ambition held by Philotime (II. vii. 46-48). It is closely connected with the legend in the Iliad[8] which relates that Jove let down a chain from his throne to Hades, challenging anyone to pull the chain hard enough to dislodge him from his position. But it is the same "golden chaine" of Concord which Ate strives to destroy (IV. i. 30), the "inuiolable bands" with which the Creator bound the universe (IV. x. 35); it is also the Adamantine chain which links the four elements in the "Hymne in Honour of Love," and the chain which binds Chaos (FQ VII. vi. 14).

Now we will proceed to study the Great Chain of Being in Spenser's work. As we have seen, there are three great areas to which the Great Chain of Being may be said to

---

[7] Variorum Spenser, I, 264.

[8] See Osgood, Variorum, VI, 277.

apply: the Microcosm or the individual; the Body Politic, or the state; and the Cosmos, or the universe. In some places Spenser explicitly expounds the idea of order in these areas. For example, Book V of The Faerie Queene is a study of order in the Body Politic, while the Cantos of Mutabilitie and other passages treat of order in the universe.

Order in the Microcosm

Much of The Faerie Queene is devoted to the study of order and disorder in the individual, as befits the work in its capacity of courtesy book. The place where this topic receives its lengthiest and most specific treatment is in Book II. Therefore we will study this book, first making a few general observations and then examining it canto by canto.

Book II purports to be based on Aristotelian Temperance, and the question of whether it is or not has often been argued. We do not believe that Spenser had in mind the virtue of Temperance which Aristotle describes. Aristotle's virtue is a placid one, and is distinguished by the absence of internal inclination to vice, while all Christian virtue, which we believe Spenser depicts, is more or less meritorious according to the fierceness of the battle it has won against sin. Furthermore, Aristotle applies Temperance only to sins of touch and taste, while Spenser applies it also to anger, desire for wealth and desire for power. We think that in these pictures Spenser brings in ideas drawn from the various

philosophers with whose work he was acquainted. Therefore in Canto ii, as Harrison points out,[9] the Aristotelian mean is coated with Platonism. Medina is not merely the mean of Temperance between the excess and defect, for her two sisters are not merely the excess and the defect of Temperance, but they are also two attributes of the soul and are controlled by Medina. We are immediately reminded of Plato's teaching about the tri-partite soul, and the simile (Phaedrus 246 A-B) in which the soul is likened to a charioteer (Reason) controlling two horses (Spirit and Appetite). Medina is the charioteer, she is Reason.

It is this concept of Temperance, as the rule of reason over all the passions, which came down to the Elizabethans through Cicero, Seneca and the Christian philosophers.[10] It is this concept which we believe Spenser is expressing. Yet the rule of reason over the passions of the body and the soul is precisely what Spenser and his contemporaries called order in the body, and the revolt against the rule of reason was, conversely, disorder in the body.

In the description of Guyon, the knight of Temperance, Spenser uses words which reflect the concept of order: "Meete" and "comely". These words recur throughout Spenser's work and therefore their significance should be noted now.

---

[9] J. S. Harrison, Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (New York, 1903), p. 22.

[10] Viola B. Hulbert, "A Possible Christian Source for Spenser's Temperance", SP, XXVIII (1931), 184-210.

"Meete" can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon word "gemet", meaning "meter" or "measure". Measure is a basic trait of order, especially in the individual, denoting control. "Comely" has similar implications. In Orchestra, Sir John Davies says:

> For comeliness is a disposing fair
> Of things and actions in fit time and place.[11]
> (p. 767, st. 4)

That which is comely is fitting, right, in short orderly, and thus Spenser describes Guyon: "A goodly knight, all armd in harnesse meete," whose

> carriage was full comely and vpright,
> His countenance demure and temperate.
> (II. i. 6).

Then we are told that Guyon's companion is a Palmer, who is shown throughout Book II to represent Reason, and who

> euer with slow pace the knight did lead,
> Who taught his trampling steed with equal steps to tread.
> (II. i. 7)

The image of the knight controlling his horse is the Ciceronian version of Plato's charioteer -- Right Reason controlling the passions. This image is important in the early cantos while Guyon still has a horse. When he yields to anger and sets out to do battle with the Redcrosse Knight, his ingrained respect for the cross on the knight's shield

---

[11] Sir John Davies, "Orchestra", The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse, ed. E. K. Chambers (Oxford, 1932), pp. 739-772.

stops his wrath, but he

> his steede could stay vneath,
> Who prickt with courage kene, did cruell battell breath.
> (II.i. 27)

That is, when Guyon was "amoued from his sober mood" (i. 12), and "inflam'd with wrathfulnesse" (i. 25), his control over his passions was weakened. We are reminded of how the Redcrosse Knight, deceived by Archimago, left the hermitage in a rage, and how Una could not overtake him,

> For him so far had borne his light-foot steede,
> Pricked with wrath and fiery fierce disdaine.
> (I. ii. 8)

When Braggadocchio steals Guyon's horse Spenser says that he "gan to ride/ As one vnfit therefore" (II. iii. 46), and remarks that

> chiefly skill to ride, seemes a science
> Proper to gentle bloud; some others faine
> To menage steeds, as did this vaunter; but in vaine.
> (II. iv. 1)

and he calls Guyon

> the rightfull owner of that steed,
> Who well could manage and subdew his pride.
> (II. iv. 2).

But let us return to the image of the Palmer guiding Guyon. His influence is referred to specifically at least twice.

> Then Guyon forward gan his voyage make,
> With his blacke Palmer, that him guided still,
> Still he him guided ouer dale and hill,
> And with his steedie staffe did point his way:
> His race with reason, and with words his will,
> From foul intemperance he oft did stay,
> And suffered not in wrath his hastie steps to stray.
> (II. i. 34)

> . . . that blacke Palmer, his most trusty guide;
> Who suffred not his wandring feet to slide.
> But when strong passion, or weake fleshlinesse
> Would from the right way seeke to draw him wide,
> He would through temperance and stedfastnesse,
> Teach him the weake to strengthen, and the strong suppresse.
> (II. iv. 2)

Clearly the Palmer cannot be construed as a person or force separate from Guyon. He is Guyon's guide. In Canto v he stops Guyon from wasting pity on Pyrochles, who is incorrigibly disordered through the predominance of wrath. In Canto xii, as the argument tells us, he steers the boat safely between the Gulfe of Greedinesse and the Rocke of Reproch. He teaches Guyon not to fear the monsters which Acrasia has conjured up to prevent them from accomplishing their mission; he stops Guyon from being led astray by the weeping woman. He rebukes Guyon when the latter is tempted by the girls at the fountain. He often points the moral of one event or other. But when the Palmer has been left behind, Guyon successfully resists the temptations of Phaedria and of Mammon, for Reason is in him, and the Palmer is only a "speaking picture".

Let us examine Book II more closely as a picture of order and disorder in the body. Guyon is not perfect, but is, for example, greatly inclined to excess of wrath. We have already seen how he lost control of himself and charged in rage at the Redcrosse Knight. Nor is he perfected in virtue at the end of the book, for in Book V, at the wedding of Marinell and Florimell, Guyon becomes enraged at Braggadocchio and it is necessary for Artegall to calm him (V. iii. 30). Yet in spite of this tendency Guyon is known as a most virtuous man, for the

Redcrosse Knight speaks of his reputation for "goodly gouernance" (II. i. 29).

Acrasia, who is carnal lust personified, is the arch-villainess of Book II. We encounter her indirectly through the story told by Amavia. Amavia's husband, Mordant, is dead, Amavia herself is dying of a self-inflicted wound, and their child, a picture of disorder, is playing in his mother's blood: "His cruell sport, in stead of sorrow dew" (i. 40). Amavia tells how she found her husband in the Bowre of Blis, so disordered

> That me he knew not, neither his owne ill;
> Till through wise handling and faire gouernaunce,
> I him recured . . .
>
> (II. i. 54)

The Palmer remarks that her suicide is a result of intemperance; Mordant was destroyed by his fleshly lusts, and Amavia by her unreasonable love for him, which makes life without him unbearable. He, the strong, fell by pleasure, she, the weaker, "through smart". This view reflects an Aristotelian doctrine, but the Palmer clothes the matter in imagery peculiar to disorder in the body.

> When raging passion with fierce tyrannie
> Robs reason of her due regalitie,
> And makes it seruant to her basest part.
>
> (II. i. 57)

He excuses Amavia's suicide on the grounds that it was brought on by her anguish, not by criminal intent, but we are reminded, nevertheless, of the dialogue between Despair and the Redcrosse Knight, where the knight says:

> The terme of life is limited,
> Ne may a man prolong nor shorten it;
>
> (I. ix. 41)

Since life and death are the prerogatives of God, suicide implies the disorder of trying to take away God's authority.

Canto ii has long been supposed to depict the Aristotelian Mean. Yet no one of the critics has been able to show its strict connection with Aristotle. Kitchin says that Spenser's Temperance covers "almost the whole ground of the Aristotelian virtues."[12] Another critic says, "When the phrase 'temperate man' is used . . . in respect to any emotions or desires other than those related to bodily pleasures, it must be understood as a synonym for Aristotle's 'virtuous man'."[13] Harrison, however, states the case clearly:

> In Spenser, Medina is the mean; her two sisters, Elissa and Perissa, are the defect and excess respectively. Yet Spenser has colored the character of each in accordance with the Platonic division of the soul. The three sisters are daughters of one sire by three different mothers; that is, they are the three principles of the soul (the sire); namely, right reason (Medina), wrath or spirit (Elissa), and sensual desire (Perissa). . . . Temperance, then, according to Spenser, is not the golden mean between the excess and defect of pleasure, but between two disturbing passions. . . . This struggle between the rational principle and the irrational elements in the soul does not, however, constitute temperance. That virtue, or rather that condition of all virtue, is the harmony and order resulting in the soul after reason has quieted the disturbing passions.[14]

And the imagery of the house of Medina is not that of temperance, but of order:

> Her golden lockes she roundly did vptye
> In breaded tramels, that no looser heares
> Did out of order stray. . .
>
> (II. ii. 15)

---

[12] Quoted by Hulbert, p. 184.

[13] J. L. Shanley, "Spenser's Temperance and Aristotle", MP, XLIII (1945-46), 170-174.

[14] Harrison, pp. 22-23.

It is said of Huddibras that he "reason with foole-hardize ouer ran" (17) and Sansloy is described as "most vnruly" (18). Elissa's frowns and scowls are said to be "Vnworthy of faire Ladies comely gouernaunce" (35). Finally, the description of Medina's influence reminds us of the Platonic image:

> That forward paire she euer would asswage,
> When they would striue dew reason to exceed,
> But that same froward twaine would accourage,
> And of her plenty adde vnto their need:
> So kept she them in order, and her selfe in heed.
> (II. ii. 38)

One immediately gets a picture of her reining in one pair, and giving freer rein to the other.

Canto ii looks forward to Canto ix, where we will again meet three faculties, this time of the brain; of which three the most perfect, Reason, leads the two less worthy ones, Imagination and Memory, in giving counsel to the soul.

Cantos iii-vi are best described as the "anger cantos". As we have said, Guyon is particularly inclined to wrath, which is allied to the Platonic attribute of spirit, whence also courage originates.[15] Thus we find that all of the characters who depict anger are also courageous, some, like Huddibras, even to the point of recklessness. Similarly, we find that Artegall, Britomart and the Redcrosse Knight,

---

[15] For this information I am indebted to a graduate student in Philosophy, who has been very helpful on this and other matters related to Plato.

as well as Guyon, are easily angered. Braggadocchio and Trompart are defective in spirit, that is, both in wrath and in courage.[16]

In Canto iv, there are three allegorical personifications: Furor, Occasion, and Atin. Occasion is the mother and the inciting factor to Furor. As his mother, she is also the source of his vitality and strength. The Palmer tells Guyon that these two cannot be destroyed by force of arms, but must be bound. Thus they are shown to be forces which incite the soul. When Guyon has incapacitated Occasion, he easily conquers Furor. But we should remember that when he tried to fight Furor,

> To ouerthrow him strongly did assay,
> But ouerthrew himselfe vnwares, and lower lay.
> (II. iv. 8)

Atin is related in his name to the Ate of Book IV, who is the goddess of Discord. His function is to incite Pyrochles and Cymochles to anger.

In addition, there are the persons who fall victim to these three forces. The most interesting of these is the young squire, Phedon. He tells how he fell into the power of Occasion and Furor through jealousy ("reason blent through passion"), and how he was maltreated by them until his rescue by Guyon. Both Guyon and the Palmer draw the moral:

---

[16] T. G. Helfield, Attitudes Toward Love in Spenser (unpublished thesis) points out that Braggadocchio is also incapable of love and friendship, p. 123. He is a thoroughly negative character.

> Then gan the Palmer thus, Most wretched man,
> That to affections does the bridle lend;
> . . . . . .
> Whiles they are weake betimes with them contend:
> For when they once to perfect strength do grow,
> Strong warres they make, and cruell battry bend
> Gainst fort of Reason . . .
> (II. iv. 34)

Guyon tells him that his wounds may easily be cured by temperance, and admonishes him to "guide thy wayes with warie gouernaunce" (36).

Pyrochles is less distinctly a human being, although in terms of Elizabethan psychology he might be taken to represent a man in whom choler predominates. Guyon warns him much as he warned Phedon, but Pyrochles requests the freeing of Occasion and Furor. This time, Guyon does not respond to Occasion's taunts,

> But he was wise
> Ne would with vaine occasions be inflamed.
> (II. v. 21)

Cymochles is more complex than his brother, Pyrochles, in that he is subject both to wrath and to desire. He is found by Atin in the Bowre of Blis, and is quickly roused to anger, so that he leaves to avenge Pyrochles. However, he is dissuaded and enticed away by Phaedria; this is a further example of the warring elements in him. But it is quite clear that he is not subject to order.

Phaedria appears at first to be nothing more than frivolity, or causeless mirth. This of course is sufficient to mark her as disorderly, since in an ordered world, any phenomenon which has no cause is out of order. Furthermore, she has a boat which travels without oar or rudder. Since it

manages to get about, one can't really complain, but it is unnatural. Finally, she identifies herself as a servant of Acrasia.

After Phaedria has lulled Cymochles to sleep, she goes off to find Guyon, whom she separates from the Palmer. Guyon refuses to succumb to any of her devices, for "he was wise, and warie of her will" (II. vi. 25), and when trouble starts between him and Cymochles, Phaedria is happy enough to let Guyon go. Once back on the shore, he is railed at by Atin, "Yet with strong reason maistred passion fraile" (40).

In the closing incident of this canto Pyrochles, burning in invisible flames, attempts to drown himself, feeling that only death can relieve the pain of the wounds inflicted by Furor. There is a great similarity between these flames and the flames of hell, which burn without consuming. We recall that Guyon told Phedon that only temperance would cure the wounds inflicted by Furor.

Canto vii shows Guyon tempted by Mammon to seek power and wealth at the price of his soul. The very name of the tempter denotes disorder, for one remembers that one cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt. vi. 24) and that the universe is bound to the service of God. So too when Mammon tries to convince Guyon of his temporal power, Guyon answers that Mammon's power is only in the realm of disorder, for riches are the "roote of all disquietnesse" (II. vii. 12):

> Witnesse the guiltlesse bloud pourd oft on ground,
> The crowned often slaine, the slayer crownd,
> . . . . . .
> So mak'st thou kings . . .
>
> (II. vii. 13)

He refers here to the disorder wrought by Mammon in the state, bringing about the assassination of rightful kings, and the crowning of usurpers. He speaks of "troublous storms" (14) and of the "fowle intemperaunce" which leads men to desire wealth,

> But would they thinke, with how small allowaunce
> Vntroubled Nature doth her selfe suffise,
> Such superfluities they would despise,
> Which with sad cares empeach our natiue ioyes.
> (II. vii. 15)

Here Guyon shows that only disorder would tempt men to go against nature and worship Mammon. This image is reinforced by the fact that throughout the three days that Guyon spends in Mammon's cave in the underworld, he is followed by a devil, ready to seize him and carry him off if once he wavers. All this imagery combined shows that Spenser means us to believe that the choice before Guyon is between order in obedience to God and Satanic disorder.

Guyon steadfastly resists Mammon's temptations, and the latter finally offers him his daughter, Philotime. Her name means love of honour, and Mammon relates how she once lived in heaven, but was cast down by the envious gods. Spenser obviously wants us to understand that she was expelled from heaven for overreaching herself. She is surrounded by a great crowd of people, all trying to ascend the chain of ambition, which, reaching from heaven to hell, is obviously connected with the chain of being. Therefore, one may interpret the episode as meaning that these worshippers of Philotime all want to climb higher in the hierarchy, not by hard work or merit, but

> Some thought to raise themselues to high degree,
> By riches and vnrighteous reward,
> Some by close shouldring, some by flatteree;
> Others through friends, others for base regard;
> And all by wrong wayes for themselues prepard.
> (II. vii. 47)

One may digress here to examine what this tells us about Spenser's view of the social order. Generally he seems to feel that one is born into the same level in the hierarchy as one's father, and there one is bound by the order of things to remain. However, the negative statement quoted above implies that there is a right way to rise in the hierarchy; it is possible for individuals distinguished by great ability or merit to rise in the chain of being, and conversely, through lack of merit, to fall lower. This is the concept stated in Book VI, where unworthy knights are overthrown by the knights of Courtesy. However we should not forget that Spenser's general idea of nobility is that though the fair flower of Courtesy "on a lowly stalke doe bowre" (Proem, VI. 4), it is most consistently found in those of noble blood.

To Mammon's offer of Philotime, Guyon replies that he is bound to another. Nowhere, however, are we told who that other one is. We are therefore drawn to the conjecture that he means that he is committed irrevocably to honor and to order.

The next cantos important for this study are numbers ix and xi, which have to do with the House of Alma. Alma is the soul, her house a well-ordered body. The opening stanza of Canto ix states the general truth which these cantos will expound:

> Of all Gods workes, which do this world adorne,
> There is no one more faire and excellent,
> Then is mans body both for powre and forme,
> Whiles it is kept in sober gouernment;
> But none then it, more fowle and indecent,
> Distempred through misrule and passions bace:
> It growes a Monster, and incontinent
> Doth lose his dignitie and natiue grace.

Therefore, the house of Alma is a "goodly castle". But this stanza has even more than its apparent significance, for it explains and underlies a good deal, if not all, of the "monster" imagery in The Faerie Queene. For example in Book V, Gerioneo rejoices at Arthur's temporary setback,

> And laught so loud, that all his teeth wide bare
> One might haue seene enraung'd disorderly,
> Like to a rancke of piles, that pitched are awry.
> (V. xi. 9)

We may contrast to this the "twise sixteen warders" who "were enraunged ready, still for fight" (II. ix. 26). So too the various exponents of lust in Books III and IV are depicted as monsters, especially the Lust who captures Amoret:

> It was to weet a wilde and saluage man,
> Yet was no man, but onely like in shape
> . . . . . .
> His neather lip was not like man nor beast,
> But like a wide deep poke, downe hanging low,
> . . . . . .
> And ouer it his huge great nose did grow,
> Full dreadfully empurpled all with bloud;
> And downe both sides two wide long eares did glow.
> (IV. vii. 5-6)

The disordered bodies who "distempred through misrule and passions bace" (II. ix. 1) become monstrous are to be found in the Bowre of Blis: those servants of hers whom Acrasia has transformed into beasts. Surely nothing is more disorderly than a man, made "a little lower than the angels", who has become a beast.

There are many images of order in the House of Alma: for example, the Porter, who represents the absolutely temperate tongue, would not let a word out "But in good order, and with dew regard" (ix. 25). The steward Diet is "a comely personage" (27), and both he and Appetite "did dewty to their Lady, as became"; that is, both of these are subject to the soul and work for her good. The various cooks work together, each performing his set task, "which goodly order" astonished and delighted the knights.

Alma leads them finally to the head, or Turret, whose "frame most admirable was". There they see the faculties of the brain: foresight or imagination, reason, and memory, who are counsellors to the soul. Spenser shows that although Reason is the fairest and the most admirable of the three, they are all

> . . . three honorable sages,
> The wisest men, I weene, that lived in their ages.
> (II. ix. 47)

and says that the three of them "counselled faire Alma, how to gouerne well" (48).

In spite of the unfavorable light which Spenser throws on Phantastes, connecting him with "idle thoughts . . . opinions vnsound . . . leasings . . . and lies" (51), we must not feel that imagination is to be rejected, but rather that the soul is to be guided by it only in subordination to reason. So too, although Eumnestes is a decrepit old man, and the chamber walls are decaying somewhat, the walls are "right firme and strong", and "yet liuely vigour rested in his mind" (55).

In Canto ix, then, we are shown the perfectly ordered

microcosm: the body subject to and working for the soul, the soul counselled by the faculties of the mind, and chiefly by reason.

> . . . a body, which doth freely yeeld
> His parts to reasons rule obedient,
> And letteth her that ought the scepter weeld,
> All happy peace and goodly gouernment
> Is setled there in sure establishment;
> There Alma like a virgin Queene most bright,
> Doth florish in all beautie excellent.
> (II. xi. 2)

In this stanza we find one of those famous Elizabethan correspondences: the imagery of the body politic: rule, scepter, peace, government, the virgin queen, is here applied to the body physical.

Canto xi is devoted to a description of the cruel war

> . . . which strong affections do apply
> Against the fort of reason euermore
> To bring the soule into captiuitie.
> (II. xi. 1)

The house of Alma is besieged by twelve troops: the seven deadly sins and five other troops which attempt to undermine the five senses. These five are monstrous, deformed groups. The entire army of sin is led by Maleger. Professor Woodhouse suggests[17] that Maleger is Original Sin, and the reasons he puts forward have convinced the writer. Nothing suggests disorder more than Original Sin, which "Brought Death into

---

[17] A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene", ELH, XVI (1949), 194-228.

the World, and all our woe."[18] The same imagery is applied to Mutabilitie, who tries to displace the gods from heaven:

> O pittious worke of MVTABILITIE!
> By which, we all are subiect to that curse,
> And death in stead of life haue sucked from our Nurse.
> (VII. vi. 6)

While Arthur is coping with Maleger, Guyon and the Palmer proceed towards the Bowre of Blis. We have examined earlier the way in which the Palmer guides Guyon through the perils of the journey. Acrasia has set all kinds of traps to hinder them: a weeping woman attracts their attention; a group of Mermaids, siren-like, tries to draw them away; a fog rolls over them, spreading darkness and confusion; and finally they are set upon by beasts. The knight and his companion overcome these obstacles and at last reach the Bowre itself.

Of the Bowre of Blis C. S. Lewis says: "It is a picture . . . of the whole sexual nature in disease."[19] He is writing, however, about Love. But considering the Bowre from the point of view of order, it is a picture of the whole human nature in disease, and therefore disorder. The first person we meet is the evil porter, Genius, whose pleasing appearance is "more than naturall",

> His looser garment to the ground did fall,
> And flew about his heeles in wanton wize,
> Not fit for speedy pace, or manly exercize.
> (II. xii. 46)

---

[18] Milton, Paradise Lost, I, 3.

[19] C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1936) p. 332.

Excess is described as a comely lady, "but fowle disordered" (55).

There is then the entire matter of art competing against nature. C. S. Lewis points out that this is the distinguishing mark of the "evil paradise".[20] Theodore Spencer shows that the Elizabethans did not object to art on principle:

> Art -- and by the term is meant all the techniques by which man interprets Nature's rules and so finds out the truth; the art of cosmography, of astronomy, of government, of logic, of rhetoric, of poetry, of painting and of the practical crafts -- art is the interpreter of Nature's rules, and in the exercise of art, itself the product of Nature, man helps to fulfill his natural function.[21]

Art is, in a sense, an imitation of divine creation, and as Nature is God's creation, art is man's; but as such, it is infinitely lower than Nature, and should be Nature's servant. But in the evil Bowre of Blis, art strives against nature; in the house of Busirane art is alone; but in the Garden of Adonis, nature stands alone, while in the Temple of Venus, which is the highest expression of order in The Faerie Queene, nature is served by art.

Spenser specifically mentions this competition three times in Canto xii, and once in Canto v. The very imitation of nature by art is disorderly. There is the vine which forms a gate, but with "clasping armes, in wanton wreathings intricate" (II. xii. 53). Among the grapes are some of "burnisht gold", and over the fountain there is a vine made of pure gold disguised as ivy. Ordinarily, we would think this

---

[20] p. 326.

[21] pp. 16-17.

extremely clever, but while gold is the highest metal, two things are to be borne in mind. First, we must remember the great lengths to which Spenser has gone to show us that gold is not always good, but usually per accidens evil. Second, we must remember that however fine the gold, it is still an inanimate being, and therefore lower in the hierarchy than any plant. Therefore this gold, in striving to appear higher in the chain of being than it is, is out of order.

Finally, we see what happens to human beings in the Bowre of Blis. We remember that Mordant was completely disordered. When we are first introduced to Cymochles, we are told that

> He was a man of rare redoubted might,
> Famous throughout the world for warlike prayse,
> And glorious spoiles, purchast in perilous fight.
> (II. v. 26)

But when Atin finds him in Acrasia's kingdom,

> . . . he has pourd out his idle mind
> In daintie delices, and lauish ioyes,
> Hauing his warlike weapons cast behind.
> (II. v. 28)

So Verdant:

> His warlike arms, the idle instruments
> Of sleeping praise, were hong vpon a tree,
> And his braue shield, full of old moniments,
> Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might see;
> Ne for them, ne for honour cared hee,
> Ne ought, that did to his aduauncement tend,
> But in lewd loues, as wastfull luxuree,
> His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spend.
> (II. xii. 80)

Finally, we have the picture Spenser promised in Canto ix: the body which, "Distempred through misrule . . . growes a Monster". The Palmer raises his staff over the beasts which guard the path to the Bowre, and when he strikes them, they

are transformed into men. Turned into beasts by the disorder in them, they remain disordered: "Yet being men they did vnmanly looke" (86); some even object to their retransformation, notably Grill, who has a hoggish, not a human mind.

In Book II, as we have seen, Spenser applies his usual method to the exposition of order in the microcosm: he shows us Guyon, the human being noted for this virtue, undergoing temptations and encountering various ordered and disordered personalities. The ordered body is shown allegorically in the House of Alma: the disordered microcosm is shown in the beasts of the Bowre of Blis. The Bowre itself is the expression of disorder, for in it Spenser shows how pleasant sin can be, and at the same time shows its disastrous effects upon the human being.

Chapter III

Spenser and the Great Chain of Being - II

Order in the Body Politic

The political satire of Mother Hubberds Tale can be examined for an understanding of Spenser's view of order and disorder in the state. In line 952, the Ape and the Fox come across the Lion sleeping. In the hierarchy, the lion is king of the animal kingdom. The Ape puts on the Lion's crown, scepter and even his skin; thus he convinces the other animals that he is their king.

It is possible that there is an implicit reproach to the Lion for not being on guard against usurpers. In any case, the Ape, not being born to kingship, is not capable of fulfilling the obligations of a king, and brings disorder into the kingdom:

> No care of iustice, nor no rule of reason,
> No temperance, nor no regard of season
> Did thenceforth euer enter in his minde,
> But crueltie, the signe of currish kinde.
> (1131-34)

He is intemperate, and has no sense of fitness. Furthermore, he maintains his tyrannous rule with the help of "forreine beasts",

> Then vnto him all monstrous beasts resorted
> Bred of two kindes, as Griffons, Minotaures,

> Crocodiles, Dragons, Beauers, and Centaures.
> (1122-24)

Here again the imagery of monsters indicates disorder.

The Lion is finally restored to his rightful place when Jove takes part,

> in whose almightie hand
> The care of Kings, and power of Empires stand.
> (1225-26)

This can be compared with the Proem to Book V of The Faerie Queene, where Spenser describes justice as the

> Most sacred vertue she of all the rest,
> Resembling God in his imperiall might;
> Whose soueraine powre is herein most exprest,
> That both to good and bad he dealeth right,
> And all his workes with Iustice hath bedight,
> (st. 10)

Spenser's concept of justice is fairly straightforward: justice exists to maintain the order of the universe. This was a common Elizabethan idea, that "Nature rules over all; her order is manifest in the heavens, in created beings, in the state, and it is man's business, not only to comprehend it, but to see that it is maintained".[1] Similarly C. S. Lewis points out that

> . . . justice is not equality simpliciter but proportional equality. When this principle is applied to things more important than cakes, justice becomes the art of allotting carefully graded shares of honour, power, liberty and the like to the various ranks of a fixed social hierarchy, and when justice succeeds, she produces a harmony of differences very like the Concord of Book IV. . . . Justice, in fact, is the grand principle of Subordination.[2]

Artegall's function is to carry out this sort of justice. He defeats Sanglier,

---

[1] Spencer, p. 17.

[2] pp. 347-348.

> . . . whose spirit was with pride vpblowne,
> Would not so rest contented with his right.
> (V. i. 17)

He also kills Pollente, the Tyrant,[3] and he is equally merciless with the Giant who seeks to destroy the hierarchy and bring about equality. "Like Plato, Spenser sees in unbridled democracy and in the ensuing tyranny the opposites of the just state, and he accordingly portrays both as such in his treatment of justice."[4] Spenser condemns the Giant first in his followers, who hoped to gain great benefit, "and vncontrolled freedome to obtaine" (V. ii. 33). The keyword here is "uncontrolled", which implies lack of order. Artegall defends here both the order of the state and the order of the cosmos, and he defends each in terms of the other. The Giant wants to level the mountains, put down tyrants and kings, and redistribute wealth equally. He decries the power of the sea over the land. Artegall defends all order by the fact that it is maintained by God:

> For at the first they all created were
> In goodly measure, by their Makers might,
> And weighed out in ballaunces so nere,
> That not a dram was missing of their right,
> . . . . . .
> Al which the heauens containe, and in their courses guide.
>
> Such heauenly iustice doth among them raine,
> That euery one doe know their certain bound,

---

[3] On Elizabethan feeling about the despotic king, see Spencer, pp. 15-16.

[4] Fritz Caspari, Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England (Chicago, 1954), p. 197.

> In which they doe these many yeares remaine
> And mongst them al no change hath yet beene found.
> (V. ii. 35-36)

He says that cycles are reciprocal, and therein orderly:

> What though the sea with waues continuall
> Doe eate the earth, it is no more at all:
> Ne is the earth the less, or loseth ought,
> For whatsoeuer from one place doth fall,
> Is with the tide vnto another brought:
>
> Likewise the earth is not augmented more,
> By all that dying into it doe fade.
> For of the earth they formed were of yore.
> (V. ii. 39-40)

He justifies inequality; everything has its place and its function:

> The hils doe not the lowly dales disdaine;
> The dales doe not the lofty hills enuy.
> He maketh Kings to sit in souerainty;
> He maketh subiects to their powre obay.
> (V. ii. 41)

He maintains the soundness of the divinely-established order, and decries the revolution which the Giant plans: "All change is perillous, and all chaunce vnsound" (36).

> . . . Artegall . . . would not deny mutability. But when he claims, in spite of both the Proem to Book V and the Equalitarian giant, that "no change hath yet beene found" among the heavenly bodies, he is not arguing, as the Proem does, from man's observations, which soar beyond their "forces pitch", but from God's attribute of "heavenly justice", which is certain. . . . Artegall holds that the heavenly bodies may <u>seem</u> erratic since their original positions cannot be known, but that in fact they are only following an ordained course. He denies the right of those who do not know the whole, to take the part for the whole. God's justice, which rules the heavenly bodies, does not, by definition, admit of anything but government within "their certain bound," whatever men may see or think they see.[5]

---

[5] Milton Miller, "Nature in the <u>Faerie Queene</u>," <u>ELH</u>, XVIII (1951), 191-200.

Finally, having justified his action, he destroys the Giant.

The episode of the two brothers repeats the quarrel with the sea, one having lost land to the sea, and the other treasure. In each case, one of the brothers has gained by the other's loss. Artegall judges that the distribution effected by the sea shall prevail:

> For equall right in equall things doth stand,
> For what the mighty Sea hath once possesst,
> . . . . . .
> He may dispose by his imperiall might.
> (V. iv. 19)

The phrase "imperiall might" is the same one applied to God in the Proem; so the sea becomes a symbol, or at least an instrument of divine justice, "a manifestation of the power which disposes of things justly for nature and man alike".[6]

Then Artegall comes on Sir Terpine, who is about to be hanged by "a troupe of women warlike dight" (V. iv. 21). Talus disperses the women, and Artegall asks the knight how he fell into that condition. But it is not merely a question, it is a reproach to Terpine for having stepped out of the bounds of order:

> Or else what other deadly dismall day
> Is falne on you . . .
> That ye were runne so fondly far astray,
> As for to lead your selfe vnto your owne decay?
> (V. iv. 26)

Terpine tells of Radigund, who, defeating knights "by force or guile", then reverses the order of things, and puts the

---

[6] Kathleen Williams, "'Eterne in Mutabilitie': The Unified World of The Faerie Queene", ELH, XIX (1952), 115-130.

men to work in the sewing room, the kitchen, and the laundry. This is indeed disorderly, although the picture is somewhat confused by the fact that Radigund is a powerful Valkyrie-type woman, capable of defeating many men, if not Artegall, in fair battle. However, Spenser makes his own view quite clear. When Artegall first encounters Radigund in battle, he flies at her "Like to an Eagle in his kingly pride", and Radigund is compared to "a Goshauke". The Correspondence is obvious: Artegall, the man, is likened to the eagle, or king of birds; and the woman, Radigund, to a subject bird. This is the order which should be preserved. They arrange to do battle the next day, and again the disorder in Radigund is made manifest, for they dress themselves,

> The Knight, as best was seeming for a Knight,
> And th'Amazon, as best it likt her selfe to dight.
> (V. v. 1)

When Artegall wounds Radigund and removes her helmet, he is astounded to see

> A miracle of natures goodly grace,
> In her faire visage voide of ornament,
> But bath'd in bloud and sweat together ment;
> Which in the rudeness of that euill plight,
> Bewrayd the signes of feature excellent.
> (V. v. 12)

Radigund is then a beautiful woman, but the blood and sweat which mar her beauty are the signs of her disorderly behavior.

She subdues Artegall by guile, not force, and he is subject to her by the terms of the battle. She leads him to a chamber in which his arms are hung beside those of the other defeated knights. This itself is a sign of disorder, for we remember the disorder implied by the fact that knights in the

Bowre of Blis also laid aside their armor, and hung it on branches of trees. Also, the Redcrosse Knight is found by Duessa just before his defeat by Orgoglio, "disarmed all of yron-coated Plate" (I. vii. 2).

In that chamber the defeated knights are doing domestic chores "all in comely rew"; that is, in apparent order, but Artegall loathed "so vncomely vew" (V. v. 22), that is, the actual disorder. The moral of the story is in stanza 25:

> Such is the crueltie of womenkynd,
> When they haue shaken off the shamefast band,
> With thich wise Nature did them strongly bynd,
> T'obay the heasts of mans well ruling hand,
> That then all rule and reason they withstand,
> To purchase a licentious libertie.
> But vertuous women wisely vnderstand,
> That they were borne to base humilitie,
> Vnlesse the heauens them lift to lawfull souerantie.

So Radigund is eventually defeated by Britomart, who understands the proper place of women. The last line of the stanza just quoted shows Spenser's firm belief in the hereditary rights of even the female sovereign. It excuses or justifies Elizabeth's rule, and anticipates the picture of Mercilla.

But before we get to Mercilla's court, there is another figure to examine. Mercilla's kingdom is harassed by the Souldan, another tyrant, who is incited against Mercilla by his wife, Adicia,

> Who counsels him through confidence of might,
> To breake all bonds of law, and rules of right.
> For she her selfe professeth mortal foe
> To Iustice . . .
>
> (V. viii. 20)

This description shows Adicia (whose name comes from the Greek

ἀδικία 'injustice') to be a figure of disorder. She incites her husband against law and order; she herself is opposed to Justice, which is the virtue especially dedicated to the maintenance of order.

When Arthur fights the Souldan, we have a picture of the just versus the unjust warrior, whose armor is "burnisht with bloudie rust", while Arthur stands

> In glistering armes right goodly well beseene,
> That shone as bright, as doth the heauen sheene.
> (V. viii. 29)

In stanzas 38-40 we have the image of a chariot out of control, just as Phaeton was unable to control the horses of the sun. But it is Arthur's shield which causes the horses to run away, and by means of this disorder order is restored. In Book III, a similar phenomenon occurs. It is comparatively peaceful in the house of Busirane, but Amoret, with her gaping wound and exposed heart, presents an unnatural picture. Britomart forces Busirane to undo the spell, and here again order is restored by means of disorder, for

> Anon she gan perceiue the house to quake,
> And all the dores to rattle round about;

But Britomart perseveres until

> At last that mightie chaine, which round about
> Her tender waste was wound, adowne gan fall,
> And that great brasen pillour broke in peeces small.
> (III. xii. 37)

We see that the Souldan is a person dedicated to war, not only by his bloodstained armor, but by the fact that the sides of his chariot are covered with darts

> And of all other weapons lesse or more,
> Which warlike vses had deuiz'd of yore.
> (V. viii. 34)

In his status as the enemy of Mercilla, the Souldan may be seen to represent war or disorder, while Mercilla represents peace, or order. Indeed, in Mercilla's court Spenser portrays perfect justice tempered with mercy, and therefore Mercilla's kingdom shows forth the ideal of the ordered state. The guard at the gate is Awe, who keeps out malice, spite and guile. There is a great crowd in the hall, somewhat noisy as crowds are wont to be, but when the Marshall, Order, calls for peace, the crowd "did their clamors ceasse" (V. ix. 23). Thus the people of the kingdom are shown to be in harmony with order. In fact, the whole kingdom itself is full of harmony, and the people stare in terror and amazement at the armed knights:

> For neuer saw they there the like array,
> Ne euer was the name of warre there spoken,
> But ioyous peace and quietnesse alway,
> Dealing iust iudgements . . .
> (V. ix. 24)

Then we are shown the queen, sitting on a golden, bejewelled throne, a lion, symbol of kingship, at her feet. She is also compared to the sun (35).

Since this is the court of perfect justice, it is natural that here Duessa should be tried and judged. It is also significant that her accusers include those forces which tend to the preservation of order, like Authority, the Law of Nations, Religion and Justice, and that her accomplices should include Ate, who is discord herself, Sedition "breeding stryfe/ In troublous wits, and mutinous vprore" (48), Incontinence, or

disorder in the individual, Adulterie, which is disorder in marriage, and Impietie, or disorder in religion.

The final episodes of Book V represent the idea of restoration of order in the state by the reinstatement of the rightful ruler and the destruction of the usurper.

Order in the Cosmos

We have seen that Canto ii of Book V is as much an exposition of the order of the universe, maintained by God, as of the order of the state, maintained by the sovereign. The rebels remind one of civil insurrectionists, but the order they call into question is God's order. Man is constantly threatening the order of all things:

> Whom neither dread of God, that deuils bindes,
> Nor lawes of men, that common weales containe,
> Nor bandes of nature, that wilde beastes restraine,
> Can keepe from outrage, and from doing wrong.
> (V. xii. 1)

" . . . [God's] providence sustains and guides even the apparently lawless world of beasts and the apparently aimless world of inanimate nature, but in this orderly universe springing from and guided by God, the disruptive and unruly element is man."[7]

Canto ii of Book V, and the Mutabilitie Cantos are the two places in The Faerie Queene where Spenser defends the order of the universe. But in several other parts of his work, he expounds it either implicitly or explicitly: as in the Fowre

---

[7] Williams, p. 120.

Hymnes, the Garden of Adonis (FQ III. vi) and the Temple of Venus (IV. x).

In the Garden of Adonis, he uses words connoting order to show the intrinsic goodness of the Garden. There

> All things, as they created were, doe grow,
> And yet remember well the mightie word,
> Which first was spoken by th'Almightie Lord.
> (III. vi. 34)

That is, although everything in the garden grows of its own accord, without the care of a gardener, everything grows in accordance with God's command. Also, of the endless variety of creatures,

> . . . euery sort is in a sundry bed
> Set by it selfe, and ranckt in comely rew.
> (35)

That is, they are set in order, as Tillyard points out,[8] with no confusion. If, as seems likely, the Garden of Adonis is something like Plato's world of Forms, the next lines also suggest the hierarchy:

> Some fit for reasonable soules t'indew,
> Some made for beasts, some made for birds to weare,
> And all the fruitfull spawne of fishes hew
> In endlesse rancks along enraunged were.
> (35)

Another place where Spenser uses order to add to the pleasant aspect of a phenomenon is in the dance of the Graces. Dancing itself implies order, or "degree in motion".[9] Antinous, in Davies' Orchestra, tries to persuade Penelope to dance by showing that the whole order of the universe is a dance; and the sight which pleases Calidore so is

---

[8] p. 29.

[9] Tillyard, p. 94.

> An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
> All raunged in a ring . . .
>
> (FQ VI. x. 11)

C. S. Lewis contrasts the disappearance of the dancing maidens and Graces at the sight of Calidore to the coy antics of the girls at the fountain in the Bowre of Blis, and points out that "the Graces are engaged in doing something worth doing, -- namely, dancing in a ring 'in order excellent'".[10] Davies also mentions the Graces "dancing an endless round"[11] as an example of comeliness. The "endless round", like the ring of maidens in Spenser's dance, are both signs of order, since the circle is the symbol of perfection.

In "An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie", Spenser refers to the hierarchy of all things: the earth, the air, the various spheres of heaven, and the hierarchy of angels leading up to, but infinitely separated from God. And the hierarchy is determined thus:

> That still as euery thing doth vpward tend,
> And further is from earth, so still more cleare
> And faire it growes, till to his perfect end
> Of purest beautie, it at last ascend.
>
> (44-47)

In "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie", Spenser says:

> For Loue is a celestiall harmonie,
> Of likely harts composd of starres concent,
> Which ioyne together in sweete sympathie,
> To worke ech others ioy and true content.
>
> (197-200)

In the Temple of Venus, a petitioner expresses the following

---

[10] p. 331.

[11] ed. cit., p. 758, st. 1.

idea:

> That with thy smyling looke doest pacifie
> The raging seas, and makst the stormes to flie.
> (FQ IV. x. 44)

This picture of Love reducing disorder to order is related to the concept expressed in "An Hymne in Honour of Love", that Love brought order into the world.

> He then them tooke, and tempering goodly well
> Their contrary dislikes with loued meanes,
> Did place them all in order, and compell
> To keepe them selues within their sundrie raines,
> Together linkt with Adamantine chaines.
> (85-89)

This is a Platonic idea, stated in the Symposium,[12] but it was fairly common to the English Renaissance, since Davies also states it.[13]

There is some incidental order imagery in the Temple of Venus. For example, the garden in which the Temple stands is "wall'd by nature gainst inuaders wrong" (FQ IV. x. 6). The roof of the Temple is upheld by "an hundred marble pillors round" (37). The Temple itself has a "goodly frame" (31).

The most important picture in this episode is that of Concord, whom we cannot help contrasting to Ate. It is perhaps best to examine the latter first. Her dwelling, like Mammon's, is "hard by the gates of hell" (IV. i. 20). Its walls are hung with trophies:

---

[12] See note 15, p. 21.

[13] p. 743, st. 3.

> All which the sad effects of discord sung:
> There were rent robes, and broken scepters plast,
> Altars defyl'd, and holy things defast,
> . . . . . .
> Great cities ransackt, and strong castles rast,
> Nations captiued, and huge armies slaine.
> (IV. i. 21)

Ate herself is a monster, with a foul-looking face, a divided tongue, feet that move in different directions and hands that work against each other; and

> . . . all her studie was and all her thought,
> How she might ouerthrow the things that Concord wrought.
> (IV. i. 29)

She is dedicated to the disruption of order, and to the attempt to break the chain of being:

> For all this worlds faire workmanship she tride,
> Vnto his last confusion to bring,
> And that great golden chaine quite to diuide,
> With which it blessed Concord hath together tide.
> (IV. i. 30)

In opposition to her, Concord is "an amiable Dame" (IV. x. 31) beautifully dressed in a gown "enwouen with gold". She is so powerful that she can restrain Hate. She is described as the mother of peace and friendship, which, we have seen, are two of the highest manifestations of cosmic order. She subdues strife, war, and anger, and it is she who maintains the chain of being.

> By her the heauen is in his course contained,
> And all the world in state vnmoued stands,
> As their Almightie maker first ordained,
> And bound them with inuiolable bands;
> Else would the waters ouerflow the lands,
> And fire deuour the ayre, and hell them quight,
> But that she holds them with her blessed hands.
> (IV. x. 35)

Two things are interesting to note in this passage: first that

here Concord is credited with having accomplished what Love was said to do in the "Hymne of Love"; that is, to have ended the war among the four elements. Second, the Creator is named as the origin of the chain of being, having bound the universe "with inuiolable bands". Thus Spenser repeats that order is a divine institution, and therefore Concord, who maintains order, is called "blessed".

The Mutabilitie fragment presents the defense of order against the skeptics who would deny it. Skepticism was creeping into the minds of men during the Renaissance, and as Greenlaw says, it is hardly to be expected that Spenser should not be affected by it in some way.[14] Bush says that in this passage, Spenser rises above his Ovidian materials "to present, or rather to admit, the painful struggle between his belief in a world evolving under divine providence and his vivid concsiousness of a world of cruel strife and change."[15]

One may object that a great deal of space is devoted to Mutabilitie's arguments, and only a couple of stanzas to the refutation by Nature. But Tillyard points out[16] that Spenser expressed his desire for order in the very terms in which he put the opposition to order, that is, in terms of mutability. Then, if one remembers that Spenser was writ-

---

[14] Edwin Greenlaw, "Spenser and Lucretius", SP, XVII (1920), 439-464.

[15] Douglas Bush, Classical Influences in Renaissance Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 56.

[16] p. 14.

ing for a public which held to the principle of order, one will realize that Nature says all that is necessary: she explains change in terms of order, and thus reconciles it with stability. Therefore Spenser says that when Mutabilitie was trying to unseat Cynthia, the earth was in darkness, and the people were afraid,

> Fearing least Chaos broken had his chaine,
> And brought againe on them eternall night.
> (VII. vi. 14)

In writing this passage, Spenser took it for granted that none of his readers would believe Mutabilitie's claim. Everyone accepted the moon's cycle; people might be frightened by Mutabilitie's labelling it as change, but they would not be convinced, and would therefore be satisfied with Nature's answer.

Mutabilitie herself is not ugly, for she comes from a noble family, the Titans, and is a distant cousin of Jove himself. Nevertheless, she is out of order, far more so than any of the other characters in The Faerie Queene, for she is trying to move up the chain of being from earth to heaven. She has broken the laws of Nature and of Justice, has perverted good, and is in fact responsible for the frightening picture of apparent disorder which Spenser paints in the Proem to Book V.

Nature's answer is a reply not only to Mutabilitie, but to the Proem of Book V as well, for although she acknowledges the existence of change, she says that this change does not tend in linear fashion towards death, but is circular, and leads everything back to its origin; by undergoing these

changes, things "dilate their being", and thus attain perfection. This is "the general pattern of Spenser's view of nature, in which the mutable exists as a mode of the unchanging and neither can nor does exist alone".[17]

As Miss Williams says, the world of The Faerie Queene is

> A world in which the linked orders of created things range from the least conscious and the least spiritual upwards to the ranked angels . . . and in which God has ordained for each creature a steady movement towards its own perfection. Even in the life of man and of the hapless creatures which share in his fall, the remnant of this joyous order may still be seen in the justice and love which Spenser shows us at work in so many spheres and embodies in myth and symbol.[18]

It only remains in this matter to say something about Spenser's concept of Nature, and most particularly, of the Nature who appears as the judge above the gods in Mutabilitie. Throughout The Faerie Queene the natural and the orderly are usually synonymous. Therefore "the unnatural is condemned as absurdity . . . as perversion of the appointed order of things".[19] But in the Mutabilitie Cantos, Order is the servant of Nature, and separate from her. There is a difference in Spenser's mind between "nature" and "Nature", in which matter we are inclined to accept C. S. Lewis' view that "nature", represented in Book VII by the gods, is the collection of laws of the universe, but that "Nature" is

---

[17] Miller, p. 194.

[18] p. 130.

[19] Woodhouse, p. 218.

"the ground of the phenomenal world".[20]

This is not a complete study, but it shows the extent to which Spenser thought in terms of the Great Chain of Being, and the great extent to which he expressed it in his work. The Great Chain of Being is a controlling and unifying factor of The Faerie Queene, as the following passage states:

> . . . between these two extremes [heaven and chaos] comes all the multiplicity of human life, transmuted but not falsified by the conventions of chivalrous romance. The 'great golden chain of Concord' has united the whole of his world. What he feels on one level, he feels on all. When the good and fair appear to him, the whole man responds; the satyrs gambol, the lances splinter, the shining ones rise up. There is a place for everything, and everything is in its place. Nothing is repressed; nothing is insubordinate.[21]

---

[20] p. 354.

[21] C. S. Lewis, p. 359.

Chapter IV

General Manifestations of Plenitude

In this chapter we will examine three manifestations of Plenitude as expressed in Spenser's poetry. We will see that Spenser held the tenet of the Timaeus that the universe was created according to a previously created pattern. We will examine the connection between Plenitude and Spenser's use of allegory; that is, the relationship between the belief in a pre-existent world whose forms are all copied in the physical universe, and the writing of narrative poetry whose personae are often embodiments of abstract ideas. Finally, we will discuss the extent to which Spenser appears to experience a conflict between what Lovejoy calls "this-worldliness" and "other-worldliness".

We must realize that Spenser expresses a complex tradition, in that while he inherits the mediaeval belief in Plenitude, much of the same material would be received from his study of Platonism. What many critics have labelled Platonism, we choose very often to call Plenitude, for the following reason. Spenser expresses the ideas of his period and he is basically conservative in his thought. As the following words of a conservative contemporary of his show, Plenitude was an integral part of Elizabethan thought:

> The general end of God's eternal working is the exercise of his most glorious and most abundant virtue. Which abundance doth shew itself in variety, and for that cause this variety is oftentimes in Scripture exprest by the name of riches.[1]

It is impossible to say that Spenser expressed only Platonism or only the mediaeval tradition. In the question of the nature of the universe, we must conclude that the two are very much the same.

The Pre-Created Pattern

> Spenser held with Plato that all things great and abiding, whether in the material or the moral world, were created after the pattern of certain great ideas existing eternally in the mind of the Creator, inseparable from His essence, and in it alone perfectly realised. Creation is thus a picture of the uncreated.[2]

Spenser himself speaks plainly about a model after which this world was patterned.

> What time this worlds great workmaister did cast
> To make al things, such as we now behold,
> It seemes that he before his eyes had plast
> A goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould
> He fashiond them.[3]

This passage may, of course, be labelled "Platonic" because it occurs in one of the earlier hymns. But in the avowedly Christian "Hymne of Heavenly Beautie", Spenser mentions the world of Ideas again, and places it in the Christian hierarchy of the universe. He directs his vision to the heavens above the sky,

---

[1] Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, I, ii, 4.

[2] Aubrey De Vere, "Spenser as a Philosophic Poet", Essays, Chiefly on Poetry (London, 1887), I, 48-100.

[3] "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie", lines 29-33.

to the spheres where spiritual beings dwell, showing how each ascending sphere is more beautiful "as to the Highest they approch more neare" (100).

> Faire is the heauen, where happy soules haue place,
> In full enioyment of felicitie,
> Whence they doe still behold the glorious face
> Of the diuine eternall Maiestie;
> More faire is that, where those Idees on hie,
> Enraunged be, which Plato so admyred.
> (78-83)

These are the first two spheres; above them are the dwelling-places of the nine choirs of angels. This shows that Spenser believed in the world of Ideas in the Christian context. For Spenser, that world is part of God's creation, and he does not consider it to have been Plato's invention. The phrase "which Plato so admyred" implies that the world of Ideas is a part of the Christian tradition which was also known to Plato. Therefore we may proceed from this first step.

Plenitude and Allegory

The allegory with which we are concerned under this heading is the moral allegory of The Faerie Queene. The difference between allegory and symbolism does not directly concern us, because when symbols are woven into a narrative the result is called an allegory. For the moment, therefore, we may summarize that matter as follows: "We may say that allegory is dynamic and narrative, whereas symbolism is more frequently static and lyrical; that the figures in an allegory are symbols, their action allegory".[4]

---

[4] W. B. C. Watkins, Shakespeare and Spenser (Princeton, 1950), p. 121.

To Spenser, allegory is more than a literary convention. "As we see in Plato's own writings, to an idealist of a Platonic cast allegory is an inevitable technique. Spenser's mind constantly hovers between the world of fact and the world of ideas. . . . This more than literary fashion explains why Spenser's use of allegory is so natural, so vividly imagined, so seldom perfunctory."[5] The basis of allegory lies in Plenitude, for in the belief in the physical actualization of every Idea, there is implicit the possibility of physical representation of every idea. C. S. Lewis speaks of

> . . . Spenser's real concern; the primitive or instinctive mind, with all its terrors and ecstasies--that part in the mind of each of us which we should never dream of showing to a man of the world like Ariosto. Archimago and Una, in their opposite ways, are true creations of that mind. When we first meet them we seem to have known them long before; and so in a sense we have, but only the poet could have clothed them for us in form and colour. The same may be said of Despair and Malengin, of Busirane's appalling house, and of the garden of Adonis. For all of these are translations into the visible of feelings else blind and inarticulate; and they are translations made with singular accuracy, with singularly little loss.[6]

We will see in chapter VI that Spenser distrusts figments of the imagination, and does not admit that they exist as copies of more "real" Ideas. But only the mind can observe those Ideas which are non-material in this world, and in giving them physical existence Spenser acts on a privilege granted by the principle of Plenitude.

Much of Spenser's allegory is purely conventional,

---

[5] Watkins, p. 112.

[6] p. 312.

continuing in the tradition of the love allegories of the Middle Ages, and consisting of personified abstractions. The Masque of Cupid (Book III) is of this type, where Fancy and Desire, Fear and Hope parade past Britomart in conventional, stylized fashion, and only the poet's gift saves them from absolute dullness. The kitchen of the House of Alma (Book II) is of a different kind, but Digestion, Diet and the other cooks are similarly stylized and extremely unreal.

But the allegory is at its best when the figures are not personification, but symbols. We must recall C. S. Lewis' definition of symbolism;[7] symbolism springs from the belief in an immaterial world of which this world is only a copy. The symbolist presents the more real world by embodying its forms in recognizable physical forms. Britomart and Una are symbols, that is, they are Chastity and Truth in human form. It is the interaction between these symbolic figures and the purely human beings -- for example, the relationship between Una and the Redcrosse Knight -- which raises The Faerie Queene above stereotyped allegory.

In summary, there are two factors at work in Spenser's use of allegory. The first is his belief in the world of Ideas as the model for the phenomenal world. As we have seen, it is natural for Spenser to move mentally between these two worlds. The second factor is the principle of Plenitude itself. Everything in the model has a counterpart in the physical universe. This is true also of the absolute ideas which

---

[7] p. 45.

exist in this world as intangibles, e. g., Truth, Justice, Chastity. But for Spenser there is "a third world of myth and fancy",[8] his Fairyland, and in that world the poet, as its creator, can take the liberty of embodying even the intangible Absolutes. The result is such vibrant personalities as Una and Britomart, Despair and Care. Plato, in order to endow the virtues with a reality which would exempt them from the change and decay to which all material things are subject, "'separated' them from the phenomenal world, giving them a real existence as perfect substantial 'things' in a world of their own".[9] Spenser reverses this process. In The Faerie Queene he brings the Ideas into the phenomenal world by embodying them in persons so real that the Ideas themselves become more meaningful and more generally accessible.

The Conflict Between This-Worldliness and Other-Worldliness

This-worldliness and other-worldliness may be defined by contrasting them.[10] This-worldliness may be equated with philosophical materialism, which is the belief that the physical world around us is the only reality. Other-worldliness is the extreme of philosophical idealism, "the belief that both the genuinely 'real' and the truly good are radically antithetic in their essential characteristics to any-

---

[8] C. S. Lewis, p. 82.

[9] Phaedo, App. VIII, p. 182.

[10] For a full discussion, see Lovejoy, pp. 25-26.

thing to be found in man's natural life, in the ordinary course of human experience, however normal, however intelligent, and however fortunate".[11] In the Middle Ages the idea that God had created a universe intrinsically good came into conflict with the idea, promulgated in Christian ethics, that man's soul is held back from reaching its goal, God, by the lures of the world and the flesh.[12] Both ideas were held to be true, but for practical purposes only one could be followed. The teaching of the mediaeval Church emphasized the need for man to detach himself from the trap of worldly things for the sake of his ultimate end. Chaucer's Wife of Bath emphasizes the intrinsic goodness of the creation, and no doubt there were others who did the same. But the official theological position of the Church was ascetic and otherworldly.

Otherworldliness is a hallmark of the mediaeval. It distinguishes Dante from Petrarch and Thomas More from the later English humanists. "The men of the Renaissance, unlike those of the French Revolution, were not seeking for a simplification; they had . . . just escaped from one, and they rejoiced in the variety and complexity of life, of human activities and possibilities, of human thought."[13] But the Christians of the Renaissance also experienced a conflict

---

[11] Lovejoy, p. 25.

[12] Lovejoy, pp. 84-98.

[13] W. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser. An essay on renaissance poetry (London, 1925), p. 162.

between these ideas. Spenser was one of these, a Christian, but wholly a man of the Renaissance. As a result, he "could not set aside the material for the sake of the spiritual, nor could he live in the material in despite of God".[14] But essentially Spenser is not ascetic, he is not otherworldly. Throughout The Faerie Queene he accords respect to those who have withdrawn from the world. Una's simple garment is like a nun's habit. Archimago seems harmless because he is masquerading as a holy hermit (I. i.). The personages of the House of Holiness (I. x) are all withdrawn from the world, and this fact is a sign of their sanctity. The Redcrosse Knight is shown the New Jerusalem by the hermit Contemplation (I. x. 46-56), and this episode implies that the sight of God is only to be acquired by an ascetic, contemplative life. But the Redcrosse Knight must return to the world, however reluctantly, to fulfill himself and gain his salvation by worldly deeds among material things. This, then, is Spenser's rejection of otherworldliness.

Occasionally Spenser succumbs to moods of depression and pessimism during which he expresses the view that this world is merely a transitory lure to the senses. The Complaints: Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie come to mind immediately as examples of the work of these moods. Many of these poems are translations, some are original, but because both the translation and the composition of such

---

[14] Renwick, pp. 172-173.

poems indicate a state of mind and a way of thought, we may consider all of them without making any distinction.

Four poems of the Complaints particularly emphasize the theme of the "worlds vanitie". Two of these are translations: the "Visions of Petrarch" and the "Visions of Bellay", both of which appeared in the Theatre of Voluptuous Worldlings in 1569. It is interesting to note that at some time between 1569 and 1591 Spenser took the trouble to revise these translations.

The "Visions of Bellay" is a group of fifteen sonnets on the theme

> Lo all is nought but flying vanitee.
> So that I know this worlds inconstancies,
> Sith onely God surmounts all times decay,
> In God alone my confidence do stay.
> (11-14)

In each sonnet after the first a monument or great building is destroyed by earthquake, storm, or decay; an eagle reaches beyond the heavens and is dashed to the ground; or a symbol figures the destruction of Rome. The entire poem illustrates the transience of earthly glory. Spenser's own "Visions of the worlds vanitie" draws a similar picture in showing how the great things of this world are overthrown by the small.

The "Visions of Petrarch" is concerned with the same theme, and many of the same images appear. However it is more particularly concerned with the decay or destruction of beauty: a fair hind is killed by dogs; a splendid treasure-ship is sunk; a beautiful lady is bitten by a serpent. All these sights prompt the poet to a personal message in the sestet of the final sonnet:

> And ye faire Ladie, in whose bounteous brest
> All heauenly grace and vertue shrined is,
> When ye these rythmes doo read, and vew the rest,
> Loath this base world, and thinke of heauens blis:
> And though ye be the fairest of Gods creatures,
> Yet thinke, that death shall spoyle your goodly features.

In the same sonnet the poet deplores the mutability of worldly things and yearns for an unchangeable afterlife.

> When I behold this tickle trustles state
> Of vaine worlds glorie, flitting too and fro,
> . . . . . .
> I wish I might this wearie life forgoe,
> And shortly turne vnto my happie rest.

The latest work among the Complaints is "The Ruines of Time", which commemorates the deaths of Leicester, Walsingham and Sidney. Like the other three poems we have mentioned, it is a "vision" poem, but it differs in containing a triple vision. First the poet encounters the spirit of the ruined city of Verulamium. She bewails the transience of earthly glory, telling of the destruction of Verulamium and of the deaths of Leicester, Walsingham and Sidney. Her words repeat the theme:

> O vaine worlds glorie, and vnstedfast state
> Of all that liues, on face of sinfull earth. (43-44)

She asks why man should seek honor and glory, or achieve great works,

> As if his daies for euer should remaine?
> Sith all that in this world is great or gaie,
> Doth as a vapour vanish, and decaie. (54-56)

She tells of the flatterers who fawned on Leicester while he was alive and powerful, and decries flatterers and those who are fooled by them, for "All things doo change that vnder

heauen abide" (206). She says of Leicester, and her words apply also to Walsingham and Sidney,

> He now is dead, and all is with him dead,
> Saue what in heauens storehouse he vplaid.
> (211-212)

This theme recurs in the third vision. But first we must consider the second part of the poem.

After the spirit of Verulamium has finished her lament and disappeared, a series of "tragicke Pageants" passes before the poet's eyes, demonstrating and clarifying the meaning of the spirit's speech. Six images of earthly glory: a statue, a tower, a garden, a colossus, a bridge and a cave housing two beautiful bears, crumble to dust simply because they are earthly.

> But what can long abide aboue this ground
> In state of blis, or stedfast happinesse?
> The Caue, in which these Beares lay sleeping sound,
> Was but earth, and with her own weightinesse
> Vpon them fell.
> (568-572)

Then a voice calls to him, telling him to realize that

> all is vanitie and griefe of minde,
> Ne other comfort in this world can be,
> But hope of heauen, and heart to God inclinde.
> (583-585)

This inaugurates the third vision, the theme of which is the contrast of heavenly happiness and permanence with earthly sorrow and decay. The third vision is the equivalent of the reassertion of joy in the pastoral elegy; it denies death and affirms heavenly life. It is an elegy to Sidney, and dwells on the heavenly bliss which the dead man now experiences. However, the contrasting sense of earthly misery is also emphasized. The final lines of the envoi call on the

Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, to accept Spenser's offering, and

> vnto heauen let your high minde aspire,
> And loath this dross of sinfull worlds desire.
> (685-686)

There is one other place in Spenser's work where otherworldliness is expressed; that is in the unfinished Canto viii of the Mutabilitie fragment. In Cantos vi and vii Mutabilitie presents her claim to supremacy over heaven and earth. Nature finally refutes her by pointing out that although all things appear to change,

> yet being rightly wayd
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate:
> And turning to themselues at length againe,
> Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate.
> (FQ VII. vii. 58)

In other words, as we have said, the change is not linear, but cyclical and circular, leading back to the original form; "the mutable exists as a mode of the unchanging".[15] But in the surviving stanzas of the following canto, "Spenser indicates that he is not fully satisfied by the explanation which he had put into the mouth of Nature, an explanation which is ultimately classical. He professes to accept the judgement that the heavenly bodies are under the rule of law, but when he contemplates mortality he finds nought but change".[16] In the first of these two stanzas, he says that in spite of Na-

---

[15] Miller, p. 194.

[16] Edwin Greenlaw, "'A Better Teacher than Aquinas'", SP, XIV (1917), 196-217.

ture's decree, Mutabilitie still seems to rule on earth,

> When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare,
> Of Mutability, and well it way:
> Me seems, that though she all vnworthy were
> Of the Heav'ns Rule; yet very sooth to say,
> In all things else she beares the greatest sway.
> Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
> And loue of things so vaine to cast away;
> Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
> Short Time shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.
> (VII. viii. 1)

In this stanza, Spenser repeats the theme of earthly transience. He speaks of loathing "this state of life so tickle" and of casting away the love of such vain (i. e., empty or meaningless) things. We have noticed such expressions in the Complaints. In the second stanza, having rejected this world, he looks forward to the next.

> Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
> Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
> But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd
> Vpon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is contrayr to Mutabilitie:
> For, all that moueth doth in Change delight:
> But thenceforth all shall rest eternally
> With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
> O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight.
> (VII. viii. 2)

This is the most emphatic expression of otherworldliness in Spenser's work. In the Complaints a mood seems to have overtaken him; in Mutabilitie he has heard Nature's decree and has found it unconvincing. He turns from earth and looks to heaven for consolation.

But the sum total of all these passages is small compared to the bulk of The Faerie Queene and Spenser's other works, in which he rejoices in the richness of nature and of life. We have gone through these works and selected the pas-

sages quoted, but one thing stands out by itself in Spenser's poetry: the description of beauty, his joy in the fullness of creation. We cannot call Spenser "this-worldly", for he is too much a man of religion to be that. But he is not other-worldly in the strict sense of the word. Conscious that this world is only a copy of a better one, he still takes pleasure in it because he finds it good. Spenser is "a poet whose work composes one grand paean to nature and to human achievement as intrinsically fair and laudable, not simply as the foretaste of an after-life".[17] It is as such that we shall study him in the next chapter.

---

[17] B. E. C. Davis, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1933), p. 228.

Chapter V

God's Plenty

In this chapter we will present internal evidence of the influence of Plenitude on Spenser's work. We shall examine those passages which display Spenser's delight in the abundance of nature which is God's Plenty. Bacon says that "the contemplation of God's creatures and works produceth (having regard to the works and creatures themselves) knowledge, but having regard to God, no perfect knowledge, but wonder, which is broken knowledge".[1] We may assume that Spenser would agree with this, for he says in "An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" that since men are not equal to the sight of God, God gives us a reflection of His glory in His works. But he also says that in those works we may behold God's goodness and beauty:

> The meanes therefore which vnto vs is lent,
> Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
> Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
> And in the same, as in a brasen booke,
> To reade enregistred in euery nooke
> His goodness . . .
>
> (127-132)

This passage is pertinent to our study because it makes a

---

[1] The Advancement of Learning, ed. G. W. Kitchin (London, 1915, Everyman Series #719), p. 7.

statement about the relationship between Creator and creatures. Plenitude is, as we have said before, a philosophy of Creation, and all the passages about the Creation are related to Plenitude. We have already seen that in "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie" Spenser states his belief in a pre-existent pattern. In that same stanza he expresses another facet of the doctrine of Plenitude.

> What time this worlds great workmaister did cast
> To make al things, such as we now behold,
> It seemes that he before his eyes had plast
> A goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould
> He fashiond them as comely as he could;
> That now so faire and seemely they appeare,
> As nought may be amended any wheare.
> (29-35)

The last three lines echo the doctrine which caused the condemnation of Plenitude in the eleventh century, for in saying that God made everything so well that there is no room for improvement, Spenser implies what Abelard said explicitly: that God could not have done it differently.

In "An Hymne of Heavenly Love" Spenser says that God begot the Son through love. This is not the orthodox mediaeval view, which taught that the Son, or λόγος, was begotten through knowledge.[2] However, mediaeval philosophy did teach that God created the world because of the superabundance of His love. In the Middle Ages God's goodness was equated with God's love, and both, as we have seen, with God's fecundity. There can be no question that Spenser accepted this view, for he states it in describing the creation of the angels.

---

[2] Cf. F. J. Sheed, Theology and Sanity (London, 1947), pp. 65-67.

> Yet being pregnant still with powrefull grace,
> And full of fruitfull loue, that loues to get
> Things like himselfe, and to enlarge his race,
> His second brood though not in powre so great,
> Yet full of beautie, next he did beget
> An infinite increase of Angels bright.
> (Heavenly Love, 50-55)

In the same hymn, talking of the creation of man, Spenser says that God made man

> by loue out of his owne like mould,
> In whom he might his mightie selfe behould;
> For loue doth loue the thing belou'd to see,
> That like it selfe in louely shape may bee.
> (116-119)

He says that man was created after the fall of the angels because

> that eternall fount of loue and grace,
> Still flowing forth his goodnesse vnto all,
> Now seeing left a waste and empty place
> In his wyde Pallace, through those Angels fall,
> Cast to supply the same . . .
> (99-103)

Spenser shows here that the God in whom he believes, a God of Love, dislikes emptiness. Spenser himself repeatedly connects love with fecundity. This will be clear in the passages we examine in the following pages, but we may mention a few examples here. In the Epithalamion, Spenser asks for heaven's plentiful blessing, "that we may raise a large posterity" (423). Charissa, who is "full of great loue" (I. x. 30) is made more attractive in that "a multitude of babes about her hong,/ Playing their sports" (I. x. 31). In the Amoretti Spenser associates the fruitfulness of Spring with the god of Love:

> Fresh spring the herald of loues mighty king,
> In whose cote armour richly are displayd
> all sorts of flowers the which on earth do spring
> in goodly colours gloriously arrayd.
> (Sonnet LXX)

The prayer in the Temple of Venus states that when Venus spreads forth her mantle,

> Then doth the daedale earth throw forth to thee
> Out of her fruitfull lap aboundant flowres.
> (IV. x. 45)

We see then that Spenser is influenced by Plenitude. In the rest of this chapter we will examine the ways in which he expresses this influence, first considering general imagery, and then examining Spenser's "paradises".

The Expression of Plenitude: Abundance

The influence of Plenitude may be equated with Spenser's love of natural abundance; he expresses it by describing abundance, variety, or motion, or sometimes all three, in beautiful scenes. However, we must not be confused about Spenser's love of abundance, for he dislikes whatever is disorderly, and therefore he disapproves of wild growth.[3] Thus we find Britomart, Arthur and Guyon riding through

> . . . a forrest wyde,
> Whose hideous horror and sad trembling sound
> Full griesly seem'd.
> (III. i. 14)

This forest is a wilderness; it is the home of the Foster who chases Florimell and who, with his brothers, attacks Timias. The castle of Malecasta is "plaste for pleasure nigh that forrest syde". The disorder within the castle is indicated by the fact that its inhabitants take pleasure in the disordered wilderness. We see then that for Spenser there are two

---

[3] See C. S. Lewis, pp. 329-330, for a discussion of the "natural" versus the "inchoate" in Spenser.

kinds of natural abundance, one of which is evil. But unless there is an indication of disordered growth, we may conclude that any scene of natural abundance is good. Three passages particularly claim our interest. In Book III, Spenser extols the fruitfulness of the earth; in Book IV he celebrates the fullness of the sea; and in the Cantos of Mutabilitie he presents a glorious pageant of planting and harvesting.

In telling of the miraculous conception of Amoret and Belphoebe, Spenser extols the fecundity of nature, a fruitfulness almost spontaneous:

> . . . the fruitfull seades
> Of all things liuing, through impression
> Of the sunbeames in moyst complexion,
> Doe life conceiue and quickned are by kynd:
> So after Nilus invndation,
> Infinite shapes of creatures men do fynd,
> Informed in the mud, on which the Sunne hath shynd.
> (III. vi. 8)

He gives praise to Osiris and Isis, the Egyptian deities who have much the same function as his Adonis and Venus. For Adonis is called the "Father of all formes" (III. vi. 47), and since all things consist of form and substance, it would seem that Venus supplies substance.[4] So Spenser says of Osiris and Isis:

> Great father he of generation
> Is rightly cald, th'author of life and light;
> And his faire sister for creation
> Ministreth matter fit . . .
> (III. vi. 9)

In this passage, Spenser stamps with approval the earth's

---

[4] Cf. Brents Stirling, "The Philosophy of Spenser's 'Garden of Adonis'", PMLA, XLIX (1934), 501-538, and "Spenser's 'Platonic' Garden", JEGP, XLI (1942), 482-486.

fruitfulness and those pagan deities who are connected with the process of generation.

Spenser always delights in the fruitfulness of the seas, the lakes and the rivers, as we shall see again later in this chapter. He devotes almost an entire canto to a list of the rivers which attend the marriage of the Thames and the Medway. Then before continuing the love story of Marinell and Florimell, he digresses to comment on "the seas abundant progeny":

> For much more eath to tell the starres on hy,
> . . . . . .
> Then to recount the Seas posterity:
> So fertile be the flouds in generation,
> So huge their numbers, and so numberlesse their nation.
>
> Therefore the antique wisards well inuented,
> That Venus of the fomy sea was bred;
> For that the seas by her are most augmented.
> Witnesse th'exceeding fry, which there are fed,
> And wondrous sholes, which may of none be red.
> (IV. xii. 1-2)

The word "wondrous" is a key to Spenser's attitude towards this abundance, for it is with feelings of wonder that he contemplates it.

Finally, the Cantos of Mutabilitie provide excellent examples of Spenser's love of abundance. The trial of Mutabilitie takes place on Arlo Hill, where Nature is placed in a pavilion made beautiful by natural abundance,

> Not such as Craftes-men by their idle skill
> Are wont for Princes state to fashion:
> But th'earth her self of her owne motion,
> Out of her fruitfull bosome made to growe
> Most dainty trees . . .
>
> And all the earth far vnderneath the feete
> Was dight with flowres, that voluntary grew
> Out of the ground, and sent forth odours sweet;

> Tenne thousand mores of sundry sent and hew,
> That might delight the smell, or please the view.
> (VII, vii. 8, 10)

The pageant of Mutabilitie is a tribute to the earthly cycle of birth, growth and death, and is an example of the influence of Plenitude. The seasons and months come forth in obedience to Nature's sergeant, Order. Only Winter and January are unadorned by any sign of abundance, for they represent the death of the earth. December, though much like them in appearance,

> through merry feasting which he made,
> And great bonfires, did not the cold remember.
> (VII, vii. 41)

The other three seasons carry signs of abundance. It is for this reason that Mutabilitie is beautiful: "that she symbolises the infinite variety and ever-changing beauty of the natural world, the insubstantial pageant of a poet's dream".[5] Since all the beautiful moments cannot co-exist in nature, Spring, Summer and Autumn must follow each other in succession, and therefore change is a necessary and desirable phenomenon.[6]

In the pageant, Spring comes forth covered

> . . . in leaues of flowres
> That freshly budded and new bloosmes did beare
> (In which a thousand birds had built their bowres
> . . .)
> (VII. vii. 28)

"Iolly Summer" is clad lightly in green, the color of fertility. Autumn is the personification of the abundance of harvest-time:

---

[5] Davis, p. 233.

[6] Janet Spens, Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation (London, 1934), p. 45.

> Then came the Autumne all in yellow clad,
> As though he ioyed in his plentious store,
> Laden with fruits that made him laugh, full glad
> That he had banisht hunger . . .
> . . . . . .
> Vpon his head a wreath that was enrold
> With eares of corne, of euery sort he bore:
> And in his hand a sickle he did holde,
> To reape the ripened fruits the which the earth had yold.
> (VII. vii. 30)

This passage illustrates the point made by Rudolph Gottfried[7] that very few of Spenser's pictures are directed to the eye. If he were painted as Spenser describes him, Autumn would look laughably like a walking cornucopia. The power of this description lies in the sense of abundance it conveys to the reader's mind.

Except for January and December, all the imagery of the pageant of the months is based on the cycle of planting and harvesting. The result is that this masque emphasizes the fact of the earth's fruitfulness. Even July, described as an uncomfortably hot month, bears a scythe and a sickle. March presents a stern face, but he carries a bag of seeds which he scatters on the earth, "And fild her womb with fruitfull hope of nourishment"(32). April, "full of lustyhed", connotes the moist month of the rebirth of Spring; the bull he rides is Taurus, whose horns are covered with garlands "Of all the fairest flowres and freshest buds/ Which th'earth brings forth" (33). All the creatures rejoice at May, who represents the first fruitful month, "deckt all with dainties of her seasons

---

[7] "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry", ELH, XIX (1952), 203-213.

pryde" (34). June is clad in green leaves and bears a ploughshare. August and September, the harvest months, are the most pleasing pictures of abundance. Like Autumn, August is dressed in gold, and he leads Virgo, his astrological sign, by the hand. She is crowned "with eares of corne, and full her hand was found" (37). September is

> heauy laden with the spoyle
> Of haruests riches, which he made his boot,
> And him enricht with bounty of the soyle.
> (38)

October and November are connected with post-harvest duties: the making of wine, and "fatting hogs" (40). And "cold February" with "his plough and harnesse fit to till the ground" (43) looks forward to Spring again. The entire pageant enables us to share Spenser's wonder at the goodness of abundance.

Plenitude in Variety

Spenser expresses his love of variety by means of the technical device of the natural catalogue. In La Sepmaine, Du Bartas uses extremely long catalogues to show forth the goodness and the power of God. Nothing escapes these lists, which cover pages. Spenser has a greater poetic sense, and he uses only short catalogues to augment the beauty of his scenes. They are a manifestation of Plenitude because that concept implies diversity as well as fullness.

Spenser's longest catalogue is the list of rivers which attend the marriage of Thames and Medway. Some of the lines of this passage possess an inner strength unusual in The Faerie Queene. Usually the individual line is subordin-

ated to the meter and the rhyme scheme of the stanza. But in the following lines, the alliteration is of such power that it almost obviates meter and rhyme, so that each line and each image stands forth of itself.

> The sandy Slane, the stony Aubrian,
> The spacious Shenan spreading like a sea,
> The pleasant Boyne, the fishy fruitfull Ban,
> . . . . . .
> Strong Allo tombling from Slewlogher steep,
> And Mulla mine, whose waues I whilom taught to weep.
> (IV. xi. 41)

Not only does Spenser use the catalogue to convey beauty, but here he adorns his longest catalogue with outstanding poetry.

The wedding banquet given by Proteus is not described, but the catalogue of rivers attests its magnificence. However, Spenser does not usually present a catalogue as the only feature of a scene. More frequently he uses it to add to the picture he is creating. In the Prothalamion the nymphs gather flowers for the wedding

> Of euery sort, which in that Meadow grew,
> They gathered some; the Violet pallid blew,
> The little Dazie, which at euening closes,
> The virgin Lillie, and the Primrose trew,
> With store of vermeil Roses.
> (29-33)

The catalogue of flowers here is like a detail of the greater painting of the bridal day. This is true also of the catalogue of birds in the Epithalamion:

> Hark how the cheerefull birds do chaunt their laies
> And carroll of loues praise.
> The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft,
> The thrush replyes, the Mauis descant playes,
> The Ouzell shrills, the Ruddock warbles soft,
> So goodly all agree with sweet consent,
> To this dayes merriment.
> (78-84)

In Virgils Gnat there is a catalogue of the flowers with which

the shepherd adorns the gnat's monument. These flowers add beauty to the scene and testify to the shepherd's good intentions. Spenser mentions nineteen flowers, and adds that

> . . . whatsoeuer other flowre of worth,
> And whatso other hearb of louely hew
> The ioyous Spring out of the ground brings forth,
> To cloath her selfe in colours fresh and new,
> He planted there.
>
> (681-685)

Error's cave is placed in a beautiful forest, which Spenser adorns with a catalogue of trees. He mentions twenty kinds of trees, and intends this variety of "trees so straight and hy" to explain why the Redcrosse Knight and Una are "led with delight" to go further into the forest (I. i. 8-10). We might be inclined to think that the forest is evil because it houses Error. But Spenser gives no indications that this is so. The forest may be taken allegorically to represent theology, in which man takes refuge from a troublous life as Una and the Knight take refuge from the storm. The forest has many paths, and the travellers fail to find the right one. Similarly, theology has many paths, but the wrong one leads to error. A man must be careful not to lose his way in a forest, and so too, he must avoid error in theology. But in spite of the danger of error, theology is intrinsically good; and so Spenser shows that the forest is good by ornamenting it with a catalogue, the sign of variety in fullness.

Plenitude in Motion

Outside of the Garden of Adonis, the Epithalamion, taken as a whole, is Spenser's greatest expression of Pleni-

tude, for it is full of teeming life. Until nightfall, when the poet begs for silence, there is no stillness in the poem. This is what we mean in saying that Spenser expresses Plenitude by motion. Here we may truly say that "there is a place for everything, and . . . nothing is repressed".[8] Everyone is invited to share Spenser's joy at the wedding, from the Muses to the merchants' daughters. There are crowds of nymphs: "Bring with you all the Nymphes" (37); there is a riot of flowers; all the forces of nature are involved. Nymphs of wood and water, the Graces, the sun, the woods, the echoes, all are invited. A veritable pageant of beauty must surround the bride who is herself beautiful. Flowers are to crown the bride's head and cushion her feet. Sound is to proclaim her praises. The poet will sing, the nymphs will sing, birds, Graces, boys -- all sing to the bride, and "the woods shal answer and theyr eccho ring". The minstrels play, their voices mingle in harmonious music with the sounds of pipe and tabor, timbrel and fiddle. And in all this there is a fullness of motion; the damsels

> doe daunce and carrol sweet,
> That all the sences they do rauish quite,
> The whyles the boyes run vp and downe the street,
> Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
> . . . . . .
> Hymen io Hymen.
>
> (135-140)

The motion slows down as the bride comes forth "with portly pace" (148), and for a moment all the beholders are transfixed at the sight of her beauty, so that the poet must prod them to

---

[8] C. S. Lewis, p. 359.

move again:

> Why stand ye still ye virgins in amaze,
> Vpon her so to gaze,
> Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,
> To which the woods did answer and your eccho ring.
> (181-184)

The movement is now stately, but there is an undercurrent of excitement, for while some must

> Open the temple gates vnto my loue,
> Open them wide that she may enter in,
> (204-205)

others must deck the posts and pillars. And while the bride stands before the altar in sober dignity, the angels fly about to stare at her in wonder, singing "Alleluya". The procession and the banquet follow in a burst of renewed exultation:

> Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,
> Poure not by cups, but by the belly full,
> . . . . . .
> And sprinkle all the posts and wals with wine,
> That they may sweat, and drunken be withall.
> Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,
> And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine,
> And let the Graces daunce vnto the rest;
> For they can doo it best.
> (250-258)

The day ends with sound, as it began: the poet exhorts the young men to "ring ye the bells", and

> bonefiers make all day,
> And daunce about them, and about them sing.
> (275-276)

When at last the long-awaited night comes, the poet asks for silence and stillness as eloquently as he has formerly requested sound and motion. But as we have noticed before, he ends his poem with a prayer for "fruitfull progeny". Thus we see that the influence of Plenitude is manifest throughout Spenser's poetry. We have examined its general expression;

now we shall study Plenitude in a particular type of creation, the Spenserian paradise.

The Paradise

In four places in his work Spenser describes earthly paradises. We call them "earthly" because they are identified with Eden rather than with heaven. They are marked as paradises, that is, set off from earth, chiefly by the absence of sin. All four are the earthly dwelling-places of the god or goddess of Love and are distinguished by natural abundance. Thus we find that Scudamour calls the garden of the Temple of Venus a most pleasant and delightful place,

> For all that nature by her mother wit
> Could frame in earth, and forme of substance base,
> Was there, and all that nature did omit,
> Art playing second natures part, supplyed it.
> (IV. x. 21)

He identifies the garden as "a second paradise",

> So lauishly enricht with natures threasure,
> That if the happie soules, which doe possesse
> Th'Elysian fields, and liue in lasting blesse,
> Should happen this with liuing eye to see,
> They soone would loathe their lesser happinesse,
> And wish to life return'd againe to bee.
> (IV. x. 23)

This paradise is graced by natural abundance, for

> No tree, that is of count, in greenewood growes,
> From lowest Iuniper to Ceder tall,
> No flowre in field, that daintie odour throwes,
> And deckes his branch with blossomes ouer all,
> But there was planted, or grew naturall.
> (IV. x. 22)

Variety also augments its beauty, for there are shady places and sunny lawns, springs and brooks, mountains and valleys, lovers' bowers, and labyrinths, "All which by nature made did nature self amaze" (IV. x. 24). Du Bartas makes plenty the dis-

tinctive feature of Eden; Spenser makes it the mark of his earthly paradise. Calidore sees this on the hill of the Graces,

> For all that euer was by natures skill
> Deuized to worke delight, was gathered there.
> (VI. x. 5)

The hill itself is beautiful, for on it

> all trees of honour stately stood,
> And did all winter as in sommer bud,
> Spredding pauilions for the birds to bowre.
> (VI. x. 6)

We are told that Venus goes there to be entertained by the Graces. Thus the hill is identified as another earthly paradise, for in Book III we learn that Venus dwells on earth in the Garden of Adonis, her "ioyous Paradize". The temple of Venus, the hill of the Graces and the Garden of Adonis are all Love's paradises, but the Garden of Adonis in particular may be identified with the reward of Love's servants, described in "An Hymne in Honour of Love".

> There thou them placest in a Paradize
> Of all delight, and ioyous happie rest.
> . . . . . .
> There with thy daughter Pleasure they doe play
> Their hurtlesse sports, without rebuke or blame,
> And in her snowy bosome boldly lay
> Their quiet heads, deuoyd of guilty shame,
> After full ioyance of their gentle game.
> (280-291)

Cupid is also said to live with Psyche and their daughter Pleasure in the Garden of Adonis. As in the place described above, there is no sin attached to the act of love, for in the Garden of Adonis "Franckly each paramour his leman knowes" (III. vi. 41).

The Garden of Adonis is Spenser's highest expression of Plenitude:

> Many creatures are bred here, of all shapes and sizes. Birds, beasts, and fish are all set out in teeming racks for all to view. . . . Nothing ever decays or dies, but merely changes into another form. . . . Everything in the Garden signifies birth and generation. It is filled with active, teeming life, engendering yet more life.[9]

Although there is controversy about the meaning and the nature of the Garden of Adonis, Professor Greenlaw has said all that is necessary to our study:

> The first part of Spenser's account of the Garden of Adonis is, therefore, made up of ideas partly Platonic and partly Lucretian. . . . There is more or less confusion in Spenser's mind between the Platonic idea of pre-existence of forms, implied in the growth in the Garden, and the pure Lucretian atomism that is the basis of the passage beginning with stanza xxxvi. The Garden is both the Universe, or created world, and a place set apart, in which the forms of all living things develop prior to their appearance on earth.[10]

We are interested primarily in the Garden as a place set apart, a paradise; we will treat of the Garden as the world of Forms in the final chapter, where we will try to draw some conclusion about Spenser's belief in the philosophical principle of Plenitude. But as another Eden, the Garden is both the created world and a place set apart, and as such we may examine it for the influence of Plenitude. We may consider first the hill of Adonis, for it contains two familiar images. First, an arbor is formed there by the trees' knitting their branches together, "not by art,/ But of the trees owne inclination made" (III. vi. 44). The Garden is throughout the work of nature, and the hand of man plays no part. Second, the description of the arbor includes a catalogue of the flowers "to which

---

[9] Helfield, p. 100.

[10] "Spenser and Lucretius", p. 448.

sad louers were transformd of yore" (45).

The relation between the Garden and our study is stated by Spenser, "For here all plentie . . . growes" (41), and were it not for the constant menace of Time, all things in the Garden would be perfectly happy. But this flaw does not detract from the paradisical aspect, for

> That substance is eterne, and bideth so,
> Ne when the life decayes, and forme does fade,
> Doth it consume, and into nothing go.
> (37)

"Death is not the death of non-entity, of no return; it is the death from which life springs again".[11] The most important thing in the Garden is life, and the G$_a$rden abounds with living forms.

> Long worke it were,
> Here to account the endlesse progenie
> Of all the weedes, that bud and blossome there.
> (30)

But we are told that all flowers are there, and that "a thousand naked babes" wait around the porter, Genius. Furthermore, all things bear in mind the commandment of God "that bad them to increase and multiply" (34). Genius is mentioned here and in the Epithalamion as a life-giver, while the evil Genius who is porter of the Bowre of Blis is called the "foe of life" (II. xii. 48).

There are two passages which particularly manifest the influence of Plenitude. We are told that

---

[11] Miller, p. 194.

> Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
> . . . . . .
> Some fit for reasonable soules t'indew,
> Some made for beasts, some made for birds to weare,
> And all the fruitfull spawne of fishes hew,
> In endlesse rancks along enraunged were,
> That seem'd the Ocean could not contain them there.
> (III. vi. 35)

The words "infinite" and "endlesse" have been used before to show the fullness of God's creation. These lines denote superabundance, an abundance so great that it seems the world is too small for it. But Spenser has also spoken before of the "numberlesse . . . nation" of the sea, so that while God's plenty seems too great for the earth, it is not too great.

Moreover,

> There is continuall spring, and haruest there
> Continuall, both meeting at one time:
> For both the boughes do laughing blossomes beare,
> And with fresh colours decke the wanton Prime,
> And eke attonce the heauy trees they clime,
> Which seeme to labour vnder their fruits lode.
> (42)

This shows that the Garden of Adonis is truly a paradise set off from earth. For Miss Spens points out that while succession in time is necessary, it is desirable only because "in the secular process . . . the beautiful moments may not co-exist".[12] We remember the beauty of Spring and Autumn, of April, May, August and September in the Pageant of Mutabilitie. Here in this "other Eden" all of these beautiful moments <u>do</u> co-exist. It is not, perhaps, a beautiful sight for mortal eyes, but it is a climax of joy in God's plenty. From this high point we must move to a study of what man does with abundance.

---

[12] p. 45.

Chapter VI

Man's Excess

We have seen that Spenser is conscious of two kinds of natural abundance, the good and the disordered. In this chapter we will examine a third kind of abundance: artificial abundance, of the kind which Spenser calls "superfluous riotize" (III. i. 33). This abundance, created by man, tends toward excess; thus Spenser says of the great number of flowers in the Bowre of Blis:

> Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
> Of niggard Nature, like a pompous bride
> Did decke her, and too lauishly adorne.
> (II. xii. 50)

We observed in Chapter III that in this divinely-ordered universe, man is the disorderly factor. We shall discuss briefly the concept of fallen man,[1] and Spenser's view of fallen man, as a basis for the material to follow.

The sin of Adam brought death into the world, and condemned mankind to separation from God. This sentence is repealed through the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God. Thus St. Paul says that "since by man came death, by man comes also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die,

---

[1] See Sheed, chap. XIV.

even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. xv. 21). But although man is redeemed by Christ from everlasting death, human nature is irreparably damaged by the effects of original sin. The order in the human being has been disrupted. Man's intellect is clouded so that he fails to perceive his true good; his passions rebel against the control of Reason; the imagination, man's creative faculty, tries to dominate Reason and Intellect, substituting falsehood for truth. In short, man is inclined to disorder in the microcosm.

There is no reason to believe that Spenser's view differed from this. In "An Hymne of Heavenly Love" he tells how man, "forgetfull of his makers grace",

> Fell from the hope of promist heauenly place,
> Into the mouth of death, to sinners dew,
> And all his off-spring into thraldome threw.
> (122-124)

Twice Spenser speaks of man as God's foe, and extols God's mercy in continuing to care for man. All of Spenser's human personalities move in the context of a fallen universe. The best example of this is the Redcrosse Knight, a "fraile, feeble, fleshly wight" (I. ix. 53), whose quest is as much a search for personal sanctity as a knightly adventure. Like all human beings, he is tempted from virtue and sometimes falls. We must realize that Fairyland is located in the universe where God and Satan wage war for men's souls. When Spenser moves out of that context, he depicts a paradise.

We have seen that in Book II Spenser treats of order in the individual, and of the conflict in man between Reason and the passions. It is there also that he embodies the realm of imagination in Phantastes' chamber. Phantastes

represents the imagination of fallen man, and presents a picture of evil abundance. The walls of the chamber are painted with "infinite shapes of things" both real and unreal:

> Infernall Hags, Centaures, feendes, Hippodames,
> Apes, Lions, Aegles, Owles, fooles, louers,
> children, Dames.
> (II. ix. 50)

Thus we see that the imagination does not discriminate between the true and the false. A worse sign is that the chamber is filled with flies whose sound and motion "encombred all mens eares and eyes".

> All those were idle thoughts and fantasies,
> Deuices, dreames, opinions vnsound,
> Shewes, visions, sooth-sayes, and prophesies;
> And all that fained is, as leasings, tales, and lies.
> (51)

Spenser associates imagination with untruth. It is the duty of Reason to discriminate between the good and the bad, and because Alma's Reason does this, the house is in good order. But in general the imagery used here denotes Spenser's disapproval of the imagination <u>in se</u>.

As a prelude to the remainder of this chapter, we must bear this in mind: the fallen angels sinned once and finally, and altered their nature from good to evil by their sin. Man's nature is only damaged by original sin, and the love of good is as much a part of that nature as is the tendency to evil. Sin is the choice of evil rather than good, and of all creatures only man has that power of choice. The devils are irrevocably committed to evil, and animals, having no spiritual souls, are incapable of evil. Therefore all actual (as distinct from original) sin in the world is the work of man. Therefore in discussing the excess produced by

sin, we understand that it is man's excess.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the examination of certain scenes of "superfluous riotize". Sometimes we will compare these to scenes of "God's plenty". In the final section we will study the Bowre of Blis as an evil paradise.

Man's Excess versus God's Plenty

There are many scenes of evil abundance in The Faerie Queene, of which we shall examine a few outstanding ones. The first is the description of Error and her children (I. i. 15). We remember how lovely Charissa looked, surrounded by her "multitude of babes" (I. x. 31). But Error's "thousand yong ones" are "eachone/ Of sundry shapes yet all ill-fauored". In her death-throes, Error vomits forth a multitude of "bookes and papers . . . loathly frogs and toades" (I. i. 20). The following stanza falls into the category of epic simile:

> As when old father Nilus gins to swell
> With timely pride aboue the Aegyptian vale,
> His fattie waues do fertile slime outwell,
> And ouerflow each plaine and lowly dale:
> But when his later spring gins to auale,
> Huge heapes of mudd he leaues, wherein there breed
> Ten thousand kindes of creatures, partly male
> And partly female of his fruitfull seed;
> Such vgly monstrous shapes elswhere may no man reed.
> (I. i. 21)

We have already seen the fertility of the Nile associated with the goodness of abundance in Book III. The only conclusion we may draw about this apparent contradiction is that in Book III Spenser emphasizes the aspect of fertility, while here he emphasizes the evil of all "monstrous shapes".

The Masque of the Seven Deadly Sins is a pageant of man's excess. The figure of Gluttony is especially interesting, for his evil abundance may be contrasted to the pictures of natural abundance in the pageant of Mutabilitie, with which it has verbal correspondences. For example, Gluttony is described as swollen with fat. November too is fat, but his fat is the fullness of abundance. November's brow is covered with perspiration, but it is the result of honest labor, while Gluttony's sweat is the result of excessive body temperature because of too much food. Gluttony is clad in "greene vine leaues . . ./ For other clothes he could not wear for heat" (I. iv. 22). June is also "arrayd/ All in greene leaues" (VII. vii. 35), but these leaves are a sign of the season. Summer wears a green silk robe, "vnlyned all, to be more light" (VII. vii. 29), but he is protecting himself against the natural heat of the sun, while Gluttony is the victim of his own excess.

Avarice rides on a camel laden with gold; the picture here is of abundance of money, for which he denies himself all else. Avarice, who "vnto hell him selfe for money sold" (I. iv. 27), is the prime example of man's excess, for it is avarice which has led man to serve Mammon rather than God.

The House of Pride presents a picture of luxurious plenty, but it is man-made luxury, and we have already seen how Spenser distrusts the artificial. The House of Pride is characterized by ornateness, and while this is a kind of plenty, it is to be neither commended nor trusted. Duessa

is marked by excessive adornment in her first appearance:

> A goodly Lady clad in scarlot red,
> Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay,
> And like a Persian mitre on her hed
> She wore, with crownes and owches garnished,
> The which her lauish louers to her gaue;
> Her wanton palfrey all was ouerspred
> With tinsell trappings, wouen like a waue,
> Whose bridle rung with golden bels and bosses braue.
> (I. ii. 13)

The House of Malecasta (the Castle Ioyeous) is branded as evil before we see the inside, by the fact that it overlooks a wilderness, and by the disorder of Malecasta, who tries to interrupt the course of chaste love. Inside, it is richly decorated, but Spenser calls its "sumptuous aray"

> The image of superfluous riotize,
> Exceeding much the state of meane degree.
> (III. i. 33)

Knowing that Spenser considers it evil, we shall note briefly the components of the decor, for we shall meet them again in the house of Busirane, about which there is an important point to observe. First of all, there is a great deal of gold, and an abundance of precious stones. Nature does not use these to adorn herself, so we may say that their appearance is a hallmark of artificial abundance. The second decorative device is a number of tapestries, also man-made, depicting various mythological scenes of love.

When we find these same devices decorating the House of Busirane, we know that we are in an evil place. The walls are covered with tapestries "wouen with gold and silk"(III. xi. 28). These appear in such great number that Spenser says that the room was "abounding with all precious store" (27). Britomart enters a second room even fairer, for the walls

are covered "not with arras . . . / But with pure gold" (51). Both the tapestries and the designs in the gold depict various aspects of Cupid, the king of Courtly Love. We must remember that C. S. Lewis has shown that Malecasta and Busirane represent Courtly Love, "and that Courtly Love is in Spenser's view the chief opponent of Chastity".[2]

But in the House of Busirane Spenser also shows the emptiness of sinful abundance. We saw that God created man to fill the empty place left by the fall of the angels, and we concluded that in Spenser's view God, like Nature, "abhorreth a vacuum". We have seen that Spenser couples goodness and fullness. Emptiness is opposed to the principle of Plenitude and is therefore evil. If man's excess, or sinful abundance can be shown by these examples to be empty, then we are confirmed in what we have said thus far.

We find that Britomart views the riches of Busirane's house with wondering eyes,

> But more she meruaild that no footings trace,
> Nor wight appear'd, but wastefull emptinesse.
> (III. xi. 53)

Later, leading Amoret to freedom,

> those goodly roomes, which erst
> She saw so rich and royally arayd,
> Now vanisht vtterly, and cleane subuerst
> She found.
> (III. xii. 42)

What has happened here is this: at the triumph of goodness evil was forced to withdraw, and that which was created and maintained by evil, like the tapestries, vanishes as well.

---

[2] p. 340.

We find a similar phenomenon in the encounter of the false with the true Florimell. The false Florimell is the work of human hands, made in counterfeit of Nature's work (III. viii. 5). It is created of snow, mercury and wax, and significantly, the hair is made of "golden wyre", but it is still a "carkasse dead", with an evil spirit to rule it "in the stead of life" (III. viii. 7). But when the true and the false are placed side by side, "Th'enchaunted Damzell vanisht into nought" (V. iii. 24), leaving nothing behind but the empty girdle, which belongs to the true Florimell and is the only part of the false one which had real existence. In both these examples we see that false beauty and abundance have no real existence; they are empty, and return to nothingness when goodness triumphs. It may be objected that both these phenomena are the work of magic. But magic is the method used by man, aided by the devil, to usurp God's power of creation. As such, it is sinful, and a sign of man's evil excess.

The Evil Paradise

The Bowre of Blis has confused many readers, who have felt that Spenser shows himself to be a sensualist in making it so beautiful. But no man yields to sin because it is ugly. A man commits a sin because he believes it will yield him some good. His intellect is confused and does not see the evil of the deed. Spenser is aware of that fact, as two examples will show. The Redcrosse Knight falls into the power of Duessa because she appears beautiful to him. Her true ugliness masquerades under a veil of virtue and beauty. Later, when the Knight meets Despair, he is almost won over,

in spite of Despair's exceedingly unpleasant appearance, by the apparent truth of the arguments. He comes to believe that suicide would be good because it would put an end to his sins; he forgets the truth that suicide is always wrong.

Milton tells us that Spenser brings Guyon through the Cave of Mammon and "the bowr of earthly blisse that he might see and know, and yet abstain".[3] And what Guyon is to see and know is "the utmost that vice promises to her followers".[4] In the Bowre of Blis, Spenser shows us just that: the attractiveness of carnal sin. Even Guyon is momentarily drawn by it, and only the most forceful application of pure Reason restores his realization of its evil. Total surrender to the sins of the flesh degrades man to the level of a beast, but the use of Reason, represented by the touch of the Palmer's staff, restores him to human status. It is because Reason alone can strip away the veil of beauty which covers sin that it is given to Guyon and the Palmer to destroy the Bowre of Blis.

We call the Bowre of Blis a paradise because it is set apart, and adorned with all that art can make in imitation of nature. Furthermore, it is a love-paradise, where all the outward expressions of love are indulged in with no thought of sin. It is a complete perversion of good, comparable only to

---

[3] "Areopagitica", The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Milton, ed. Cleanth Brooks (New York, 1950), pp. 677-725.

[4] Ibid., p. 691.

the Black Mass. To the man who does not regard the Bowre with the stern eye of Reason, it is beautiful. What makes it beautiful is the appearance of natural abundance. Spenser repeatedly shows that it is only an imitation, but he also says that "the art, which all that wrought, appeared in no place" (II. xii. 58). It is beautiful because it is a very clever imitation of nature; it is evil because it is artificial or false. Let us examine some of the descriptive passages to illustrate this point. The Bowre is located in

> A place pickt out by choice of best aliue,
> That natures worke by art can imitate;
> In which what euer in this worldly state
> Is sweet, and pleasing vnto liuing sense,
> Or that may dayntiest fantasie aggrate,
> Was poured forth with plentifull dispence,
> And made there to abound with lauish affluence.
> (II. xii. 42)

Spenser augments the beauty of his natural scenes with descriptions of abundance; here he shows that the apparent beauty of the Bowre of Blis is largely dependent on the appearance of natural abundance. The porter looks like Genius, who is in charge "of life, and generation of all/ That liues" (47). Actually he is not that Genius at all, but an evil Genius, "the foe of life". But the association one would make, however falsely, would be with the idea of goodness and abundance.

Having entered the Bowre, Guyon and the Palmer come upon

> A large and spacious plaine, on euery side
> Strowed with pleasauns, whose faire grassy ground
> Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide
> With all the ornaments of Floraes pride.
> (50)

This passage echoes the descriptions of the paradises we considered in the previous chapter. But though it is beautiful,

its beauty is derived from its adornment by all the flowers

> Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
> Of niggard Nature, . . .
> Did decke her . . .
> (50)

Guyon comes to another gate, which is formed by trees, like the arbor of Adonis. It is arched at the top and joined

> with an embracing vine,
> Whose bounches hanging downe, seemed to entice
> All passers by, to tast their lushious wine,
> And did themselues into their hands incline,
> As freely offering to be gathered.
> (54)

Although, as we saw in chapter II, there is some imagery of disorder in this passage, it is on the whole a picture of generous abundance. The vine is heavy with grapes, and the grapes in turn are "with fulnesse sweld". The garden seems "the most daintie Paradise on ground", because there "all pleasures plenteously abound". There is variety as well as abundance:

> The painted flowres, the trees vpshooting hye,
> The dales for shade, the hilles for breathing space,
> The trembling groues, the Christall running by.
> (58)

Spenser says that Nature and Art, by their competition, have contrived "This Gardin to adorne with all varietie" (59). There is even natural motion in the fountain:

> Infinit streames continually did well
> Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
> The which into an ample lauer fell,
> And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
> That like a little lake it seemd to bee.
> (62)

In summary, we see that the Bowre of Blis seems beautiful because it seems to possess all the assets of a beautiful scene: natural abundance, variety, and motion. For this reason, it

is particularly insidious, for although Spenser repeatedly shows how evil it is, the reader, like a man inclined to lust, often fails to see this because of its beauty.

The sign of the evil of the Bowre which Spenser gives us most frequently is the reminder that it is man-made. This is true of every scene of sinful abundance which we have examined. The work of Nature is good; man's attempts to displace Nature are evil. This chapter might be summarized by these words: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it". (Ps. cxxvii. 1).

Chapter VII

Spenser and the Principle of Plenitude

Although it is almost impossible to prove Spenser's belief in any philosophical system, we shall try in this chapter to draw a conclusion about whether Spenser held the philosophical tenet of Plenitude. One can show the influence of such a concept in his work, but one is on dangerous ground if one tries to be more conclusive, for "Spenser was like Plato . . . in his indifference to forming a consistent philosophical system."[1]

Thus far we have been able to show the great extent to which Spenser's work is influenced by the concept of Plenitude. We have also shown his own statements of some of the doctrines implicit in Plenitude. Let us re-examine this evidence briefly. We have seen that Plenitude implies four ideas. The first is a belief in a previously created pattern of the universe. The second is the belief that God's goodness is expressed in the creation of other beings. Then there is the feeling that God's love should manifest itself in as many ways as possible, giving rise to diversity in creatures. Finally there is the belief that because God is good, He could

---

[1] Greenlaw, "Spenser and Lucretius", p. 464.

not have begrudged existence to anything, and therefore all possible things exist.

We have already shown that Spenser expresses belief in the first three ideas. We saw first that Spenser believed in the world of Forms as "a goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould" God fashioned all things, and that this pattern has a place in the universal hierarchy. We have also seen that Spenser speaks of God as being

> pregnant still with powrefull grace,
> And full of fruitfull loue, that loues to get
> Things like himselfe.
> ("Heavenly Love", 50-52)

This echoes the doctrine stated in the Timaeus that the Maker, being good, is incapable of jealousy, and therefore "desired that all things should be as like unto himself as possible".[2] Spenser associates love and fecundity throughout his work. He implies that God, who creates because of love, hates emptiness, for he says that when God saw "a waste and empty place" left by the fall of the angels, He "cast to supply the same" by creating man. We have seen Spenser's own dislike of emptiness, and his use of the word "wastefull" to describe it (III. xi. 53). Therefore we may say that Spenser holds the principle that omne bonum est diffusivum sui.

Finally, we have seen Spenser's affirmation of the goodness of diversity in his own love of variety. He uses catalogues to ornament natural scenes, and thereby implies that degrees and differences are intrinsically good. Further-

---

[2] Timaeus, 29E.

more, in his defense of order Spenser also defends diversity:

> The hils doe not the lowly dales disdaine;
> The dales doe not the lofty hills enuy.
> (V. ii. 41)

Therefore we are left with one question: can we say that Spenser affirmed the absolute fullness of the world; that is, does he believe that everything which can possibly exist does exist? Nowhere in his work does Spenser actually say that the universe is absolutely full. He comes closest to that in "An Hymne of Heavenly Love" where he tells how the Trinity reigned

> Before this worlds great frame, in which al things
> Are now containd, found any being place.
> (22-23)

Also, in "An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" Spenser says that all creatures in heaven and earth obey Sapience,

> For of her fulnesse which the world doth fill,
> They all partake.
> (197-198)

In the first passage, however, Spenser simply says that all things which exist are contained in "this worlds great frame". In the second, he says that Sapience fills the world. But this does not give us ground to assume that the world contains all possible things, or that Sapience, or anyone else, has filled the world to absolute fullness.

On the other hand Spenser implies fullness everywhere in his work. He exhorts man to

> looke on the frame
> Of this wyde vniuerse, and therein reed
> The endlesse kinds of creatures, which by name
> Thou canst not count.
> ("Heavenly Beauty," 30-33)

We have seen how Spenser loves abundance. He repeatedly speaks of "infinite" or "endlesse" numbers of creatures. He uses the phrase "infinite shapes of creatures" at least three times; he talks of the "endlesse progenie" of the plants in the Garden of Adonis. He speaks of the "numberlesse . . . nation" of the sea, and says that fishes' forms were arranged "in endlesse rancks" so that it seemed that the Ocean could not contain them.

We have seen that Spenser states that everything was created so well "as nought may be amended any wheare". This statement implies that the universe, having no further potential, is a finished work. This is the basis of the concept of the Great Chain of Being, for as we have seen, in order to have a perfect chain of creatures, it is essential that there be no gaps. This seems very simple, but Spenser, although a philosophic poet, is no philosopher, and refuses to be bound by the rules of logic. Therefore, while Spenser is wholly committed to the concept of the Great Chain of Being, he can deny Plenitude in the Garden of Adonis.

The Garden of Adonis is described in terms which relate it to Plato's world of Forms. Spenser tells us that the porter sends forms into the world and admits them into the Garden again after they have passed some time in the world. Then they remain in the Garden "some thousand yeares", after which they are

> clad with other hew,
> Or sent into the chaungefull world againe.
> (III. vi. 33)

This is very much like the cycle which Plato describes in the

Phaedo: souls come from the world of Forms, live in the world, and after the death of the body, return thither, where they remain for a period. After that the soul is either released from the cycle and given perpetual contemplation of the Forms ("clad with other hew") or again sent into a body to dwell in the physical world. This kinship between the Garden and the world of Forms does not mean that Spenser believed in the transmigration of souls, for as a Christian he was bound to believe that each soul lives only once.

Nor need we believe that the Garden is the world of Forms after which the universe is patterned. If the Garden has any place in Spenser's cosmology, it is probably an intermediate stage between the pattern and the phenomenal world. We know that Spenser believes that everything in the universe existed first in the pattern. We have been unable to establish whether or not everything in the pattern is realized in the phenomenal world. But in this intermediate world,

> Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
> And vncouth formes, which none yet euer knew.
> (III. vi. 35)

This line seems to mean only one thing: in the Garden of Adonis, somewhere between heaven and earth, there are forms which have not yet appeared on earth. Thus, Spenser denies that everything which can exist does exist in the phenomenal world. In other words, Spenser denies the principle of Plenitude.

Apparently, then, we must conclude that in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, Spenser did not hold the philosophical tenet of Plenitude. But this conclusion is mean-

ingless, for Spenser was not a philosopher, but a poet. "It was no part of his idea of poetry to give a schematic treatment of philosophical problems. To him truth was to be sought in a synthesis of the best that has been known and thought in the world, and it was to be presented through story."[3] Spenser made the assumption, fundamental to Plenitude, that God's goodness and fecundity are much the same thing. From this assumption spring his love of variety, his pleasure in abundance, his joy in "the endlesse kinds of creatures" which populate the world. But philosophically Spenser failed to carry this major premiss to its logical conclusion. Had he been a philosopher he would have done so, and then he would have been faced with the necessity of either believing in the conclusion or discarding the major premiss.

The true conclusion to this thesis is that we cannot place Plenitude among the philosophical tenets which governed Spenser's thinking. But what we can do, and have done, is more important: we have placed it among the ideas which pervade his poetry. This sense of Plenitude makes his poetry what it is, gives it its fullness and its diffusiveness, for his poetical world reflects his vision of the phenomenal world: a world overflowing with the superabundance of its Creator. The defects of Spenser's poetry are overcome by the reader's delight in the infinite variety of his poetic crea-

---

[3] Edwin Greenlaw, "Some Old Religious Cults in Spenser", SP, XX (1923), 216-242.

tion. Belphoebe stands before us, glorious in beauty and virtue, yet this same picture shows us Braggadocchio quaking behind a bush. We move among mountains and valleys, into forests crowded with trees, and meadows bright with flowers. Knights advance to joust, swords clash, horses snort and pound the earth; then all is stilled at the sight of the incredible beauty of Britomart unmasked. A crowd of sounds bursts upon the ear: the harmony of the birds; the ringing of bells; the tinkle and the roar of stream and sea; the songs of nymphs and echoes, and of choirs of angels and of men. This is the poet's voice, singing to the Lord a new song.

Bibliography

I - Texts

Spenser, Edmund, The Poetical Works, edited by J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt. London, 1912.

----------, The Works of Edmund Spenser. A Variorum Edition, edited by Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, F. M. Padelford and Ray Heffner. 10 volumes. Baltimore, 1932-1949.

II - References

Albright, Evelyn May, "Spenser's Cosmic Philosophy and His Religion," Publications of the Modern Language Association, XLIV (1929), 715-759.

Aristotle, The Nichomachean Ethics, translated by F. H. Peters. London, 1906.

Atkinson, Dorothy F., Edmund Spenser: A bibliographical supplement. Baltimore, 1937.

Bacon, Francis, The Advancement of Learning, edited by G. W. Kitchin. London, 1915 (Everyman Series #719).

Bennett, Josephine Waters, "Genre, Milieu, and the 'Epic-Romance,'" English Institute Essays, 1951. New York, 1952, pages 95-125.

----------, "On Methods of Literary Interpretation," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLI (1942), 486-489.

----------, "Spenser's Garden of Adonis," Publications of the Modern Language Association, XLVII (1932), 46-78.

----------, "Spenser's Garden of Adonis Revisited," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLI (1942), 53-78.

----------, "The Theme of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," Studies in Philology, XXVIII (1931), 18-57.

Bhattacherje, Mohinimohan, Studies in Spenser. Calcutta, 1929.

Bloom, Edward A., "The Allegorical Principle," A Journal of English Literary History, XVIII (1951), 163-190.

Brooke, N. S., "C. S. Lewis and Spenser: Nature, Art and the Bower of Bliss," The Cambridge Journal, II (1948-49), 420-434.

Bush, Douglas, Classical Influences in Renaissance Literature. Cambridge, Mass., 1952.

----------, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century. Oxford, 1945.

----------, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry. Minneapolis, 1932.

Buyssens, E., "Aristotelianism and Anti-Puritanism in Spenser's Allegory of the Three Sisters," English Studies, XVIII (1936), 68-73.

Calvin, John, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, edited by Hugh Thomson Kerr. Philadelphia, 1939.

Camden, Carroll, "The Architecture of Spenser's 'House of Alma,'" Modern Language Notes, LVIII (1943), 262-265.

Carpenter, Frederic Ives, A Reference Guide to Edmund Spenser. Chicago, 1923.

Casady, Edwin, "The Neo-Platonic Ladder in Spenser's Amoretti," Philological Quarterly, XX (1941), 284-295.

Caspari, Fritz, Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England. Chicago, 1954.

Cassirer, Ernst, Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge. Leipzig, 1932.

Chang, H. C., Allegory and Courtesy in Spenser. Edinburgh, 1955.

Collins, John Churton, Ephemera Critica. Westminster, 1901.

Cory, Herbert Ellsworth, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study. Berkeley, California, 1917.

Davies, Sir John, "Orchestra," The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse, edited by E. K. Chambers. Oxford, 1932, pages 739-772.

Davis, Bernard Eustace Cuthbert, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study. Cambridge, 1933.

De Moss, William Fenn, The Influence of Aristotle's "Politics" and "Ethics" on Spenser. Chicago, 1918.

De Vere, Aubrey, Essays, Chiefly on Poetry. 2 volumes. London, 1887.

Edwards, Jean M., "Spenser and his Philosophy," The Cambridge Journal, IV (1950-51), 622-628.

Fletcher, Jefferson B., "The Puritan Argument in Spenser," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LVIII (1943), 634-648.

----------, "A Study in Renaissance Mysticism: Spenser's 'Fowre Hymnes,'" Publications of the Modern Language Association, XXVI (1911), 452-475.

Fowler, Earle Broadus, Spenser and the Courts of Love. Menasha, Wisc., 1921.

Frazer, Sir James George, The Growth of Plato's Ideal Theory. London, 1930.

Friedland, Louis S., "Spenser as a Fabulist," Shakespeare Association Bulletin, XII (1937), 85-108, 133-154, 197-207.

Fuller, B. A. G., The Problem of Evil in Plotinus. Cambridge, 1912.

Gottfried, Rudolph, "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry," A Journal of English Literary History, XIX (1952), 203-213.

Greenlaw, Edwin, "'A Better Teacher Than Aquinas,'" Studies in Philology, XIV (1917), 196-217.

----------, "Some Old Religious Cults in Spenser," Studies in Philology, XX (1923), 216-242.

----------, "Spenser's Influence on Paradise Lost," Studies in Philology, XVII (1920), 320-359.

----------, "Spenser and Lucretius," Studies in Philology, XVII (1920), 439-464.

Hanford, James Holly, "A Platonic Passage in Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida,'" Studies in Philology, XIII (1916), 100-109.

Harrison, John Smith, Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. New York, 1903.

Helfield, Tilya Gallay, Attitudes Toward Love in Spenser. McGill University Thesis, Typewritten MS. Montreal, 1955.

Hooker, Richard, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. 2 volumes. London, 1907 (Everyman Series ##201, 202).

Hoopes, Robert, "'God Guide Thee, Guyon': Nature and Grace Reconciled in The Faerie Queene, Book II," Review of English Studies, V (1954), 14-24.

Hughes, Merritt Y., "Spenser and Utopia," Studies in Philology, XVII (1920), 132-146.

Hulbert, Viola Blackburn, "A Possible Christian Source for Spenser's Temperance," Studies in Philology, XXVIII (1931), 184-210.

Johnson, Francis R., A Critical Bibliography of the Works of Edmund Spenser printed before 1700. Baltimore, 1933.

Jones, H. S. V., "Magnanimity in Spenser's Legend of Holiness," Studies in Philology, XXIX (1932), 200-206.

----------, A Spenser Handbook. New York, 1930.

Lee, Renssalaer W., "Castiglione's Influence on Spenser's Early Hymns," Philological Quarterly, VII (1928), 65-77.

Legouis, Emile, Edmund Spenser. Paris, 1932.

----------, Spenser. London, 1926.

Lewis, Clive Staples, The Allegory of Love. Oxford, 1936.

----------, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century. Oxford, 1954.

Loewenberg, J., "Philosophy and Literature," University of California Chronicle, XXXIII (1931), 267-292.

Lovejoy, Arthur Oncken, The Great Chain of Being. Cambridge, Mass., 1936.

Miller, Milton, "Nature in the Faerie Queene," A Journal of English Literary History, XVIII (1951), 191-200.

Milton, John, The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, edited by Cleanth Brooks. New York, 1950.

Mounts, Charles E., "Spenser's Seven Bead-Men and the Corporal Works of Mercy," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LIV (1939), 974-980.

Osgood, Charles Grosvenor, A Concordance to the Poems of Edmund Spenser. Washington, 1915.

Padelford, Frederick Morgan, "Spenser and The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man," Studies in Philology, XXVIII (1931), 211-218.

----------, "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XIII (1914), 418-433.

----------, "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes: A Resurvey," Studies in Philology, XXIX (1932), 207-232.

Parker, Roscoe E., "'Let Gryll be Gryll,'" Philological Quarterly, XVI (1937), 218-219.

Parkes, H. B., "Nature's Diverse Laws: The Double Vision of the Elizabethans," The Sewanee Review, LVIII (1950), 402-418.

Parrot, Alice, "A Critical Bibliography of Spenser from 1923 to 1928," Studies in Philology, XXV (1928), 468-491.

Pellegrini, Angelo M., "Bruno, Sidney, and Spenser," Studies in Philology, XL (1943), 128-144.

Plato, Phaedo, translated by R. S. Bluck. London, 1955.

-----, Phaedrus, translated by R. Hackforth. Cambridge, 1952.

-----, Timaeus, edited by R. D. Archer-Hind. London, 1888.

-----, The Timaeus and the Critias, translated by Thomas Taylor. New York, 1944.

Renwick, William L., Edmund Spenser (The R. A. Neil Lecture). Cambridge, 1952.

----------, Edmund Spenser. An essay on renaissance poetry. London, 1925.

Saluste du Bartas, Guillaume, His deuine Weekes and Workes Translated and Dedicated To the Kings most excellent Maiestie by Iosiah Sylvester. London, 1608 .

Saunders, J. W., "The Facade of Morality," A Journal of English Literary History, XIX (1952), 81-114.

Saurat, Denis, Literature and Occult Tradition, translated by Dorothy Bolton. London, 1930.

Shanley, James Lydon, "Spenser's Temperance and Aristotle," Modern Philology, XLIII (1945-46), 170-174.

Sheed, Frank J., Theology and Sanity. London, 1947.

Siegel, Paul N., "Spenser and the Calvinist View of Life," Studies in Philology, XLI (1944), 201-222.

Sirluck, Ernest, "The Faerie Queene, Book II, and the Nichomachean Ethics," Modern Philology, XLIX (1951-52), 73-100.

----------, "Review of Virgil K. Whitaker, The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought," Modern Philology, XLIX (1951-52), 65-67.

Smith, Charles G., Spenser's Theory of Friendship. Baltimore, 1935.

Spencer, Theodore, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man. New York, 1942.

Spens, Janet, Spenser's Faerie Queene. An Interpretation. London, 1934.

Stirling, Brents, "The Philosophy of Spenser's 'Garden of Adonis,'" Publications of the Modern Language Association, XLIX (1934), 501-538.

----------, The Populace in Shakespeare. New York, 1949.

----------, "Spenser's 'Platonic' Garden," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLI (1942), 482-486.

Stoll, Elmer Edgar, "Criticisms Criticized: Spenser and Milton," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLI (1942), 451-477.

----------, "The Validity of the Poetic Vision," Modern Language Review, XL (1945), 1-7.

Taylor, A. E., "Spenser's Knowledge of Plato," Modern Language Review, XIX (1924), 208-210.

Tillyard, Eustace Mandeville Wetenhall, The Elizabethan World Picture. London, 1943.

----------, The English Renaissance: Fact or Fiction? London, 1952.

Tuve, Rosemond, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery. Chicago, 1947.

Watkins, W. B. C., Shakespeare and Spenser. Princeton, 1950.

Whitaker, Virgil K., The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought. Stanford, Calif., 1950.

Williams, Kathleen, "'Eterne in Mutabilitie': The Unified World of The Faerie Queene," A Journal of English Literary History, XIX (1952), 115-130.

Woodhouse, A. S. P., "Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene," A Journal of English Literary History, XVI (1949), 194-228.

Wurtsbaugh, Jewel, Two Centuries of Spenserian Scholarship, 1609-1805. Baltimore, 1936.

Yeats, William Butler, Essays. London, 1924.