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Tribunal of the Mind:
Images of Justice in The Faerie Queene

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Preface

I extend grateful thanks to Dr. George Merrill for his advice and guidance, not only in the preparation of this thesis but in the course work that preceded it. I owe thanks in equal measure to my wife, whose fortitude and forbearance in difficult circumstances provided me with the time required to complete the work.

In quoting from The Faerie Queene, I have adopted the usual method of identifying lines by book, canto, and stanza number only. Thus, for example, the notation (V, xi, 32) directs the reader to Book V, Canto 11, Stanza 32.

D. F.

Abstract of Thesis

This thesis surveys the action and structure of Spenser's The Faerie Queene from the perspective of the ideal of justice. Its basic assumption is that fundamentally the poem is an account of the quest for justice, in three aspects -- the psychological, the social, and the cosmological.

Chapter One is concerned with the relation between the archetype of the chivalric quest and the juridical procedure of Roman courts of law, whose chief investigative officers were known as quaesitores -- "questers". It is an attempt to show that the quest motif is analogous to both the public court of inquiry and the systematic deliberations of an individual mind. It is this analogy which permits Spenser to use the public quest as an allegory of the private quest.

Chapter Two is a study of Book I of The Faerie Queene, in which references to the philosophical system of Plotinus are used to explicate Spenser's use of the concepts of "unity" and "holiness". The contention of this chapter is that Book I lays the conceptual foundations for later books by dealing with the theme of justice first in its theological aspect -- i.e. the question of religious justification.

Chapter Three is an attempt to interpret the quest of Guyon in Book II as the search for and the attainment of psychological harmony within the individual. The concept of Temperance is considered in the light of classical ethical theory, most particularly in terms of the traditional distinction between pathos and ethos.

Chapter Four considers Books III and IV together, since these two books are related by virtue of their common action and the continuity of their characters. The theme of Books III and IV is the potential suffering and corruption with which erotic impulse threatens human nature. The attainment of chaste love by Britomart is seen as the basis for friendship among individuals, and therefore as the foundation of civility.

Chapter Five deals with Spenser's concept of justice at the level of society. Its argument is that in this book Spenser is concerned to unite the virtues of justice and mercy, and for this purpose makes use of the motif of marriage between Artegall and Britomart. It is noted, however, that there is a developing irony created by the difficulty of reconciling the two virtues.

Chapter Six studies Book VI in the light of the deepening ironic tone of the poem, which is caused by the greater ambiguities of Calidore's quest to slay the Blatant Beast. It is pointed out that, though Calidore lacks the

single-minded purpose of earlier champions, he is in some degree more humane. The presence of Spenser's alter ego, "Colin Clout", suggests a rift between the chivalric ideal and the simpler virtues as symbolized by the pastoral setting.

Chapter Seven reviews the structure of Books I to VI, and argues that the ironic tone of later books is central to Spenser's conception of the poem, in that it presents alternate perspectives on justice and thus complements the narrowness of earlier concepts, even as it represents a decline in intensity and moral fervour. Spenser's intention is said to have been to present a fully-rounded, three-dimensional account of human moral activity.

Chapter Eight attempts to relate the Mutabilitie Cantos to the rest of the poem. It assumes that they are the allegorical centre of what would have become Book VII. The claim of Mutability to sovereignty is seen as a direct statement of what has already been presented in the structure of Books I to VI -- the apparent truth that no human achievement is immune from change. Nature's judgement on Mutability's claim -- the presentation of the theme of justice at the cosmological level -- expresses the view that change is not structureless, but is in reality a "dilation of being" or form of cyclical growth. On these grounds, it is argued that "Book VII" was intended by Spenser as the crisis of his total structure,

which, had he completed the poem, would have begun the movement of Books VII to XII back towards the supernatural harmonies of Book I.

CHAPTER ONE

The Quest Motif

Edmund Spenser's prefatory comments on The Faerie Queene in his letter to Raleigh are centred upon two major topics: his general purpose in writing the poem, and the narrative method he has adopted in constructing it. His general intention, he says, is to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."¹ His narrative method is that of the "Poet historical" as contrasted with that of the historiographer.

For an historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions; but a Poet thrusteth into the midst, even where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to the thinges forepaste, and divining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all.²

His purpose in the letter is to direct attention to

the wel-head of the History: that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handfull gripe al the discourse.³

The "wel-head of the History", its narrative source and origin, is the "Annual feaste" kept by Gloriana, during which time each of the knightly adventures which are the narrative basis of the poem is imagined to have begun. A striking

¹ Quotations from Spenser are cited from The Faerie Queene, (Everyman Edition), J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1910. The letter to Raleigh cited is "A Letter of the Authors . . . To Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight", printed in this edition on pp. 1-4.

² "Letter to Raleigh", op. cit., p.3.

³ Op. cit., p. 4.

feature of his basic conception is that the occasion of the adventure in each case is a "complaint" made to the court of the Faerie Queene by the victim of an injustice. Una's parents have been " by an huge dragon many years shut up in a brasen Castle." The Palmer makes his complaint on behalf of the infant "with bloody hands whose parents . . . have been slayne by an Enchaunteresse called Acrasia." The Groom who comes next complains that " a vile Enchaunter, called Busirane, had in hand a most faire Lady, called Amoretta, whom he kept in most grievous torment, because she would not yield him the pleasure of her body." The letter does not contain any account of the occasion of the adventures described in later books, but it seems clear that they too are conceived to have begun in a similar way -- in response to the appeal for justice.

It is apparent from Spenser's description of the origin of each adventure that in its most basic and fundamental aspect, the action of the poem is to be conceived as aiming primarily at justice. The "court" of Gloriana is both a circle of nobles and something analogous to a court of law, to which plaintiffs can appeal for the redress of wrongs. In each case, the plaintiff is assigned a knightly champion, who undertakes the adventure of rescuing the victim and bringing the wrongdoer to justice.

The generic term for such an adventure is "quest". But this term derives from the technical term for a judicial hearing or inquiry used in the courts of the Romans. In Roman

jurisprudence, the issue to be decided in such an inquiry was called the quaestio, and the chief investigative and prosecuting officers were known as quaesitores ("investigators, seekers"), later shortened to quaestores. The chivalric type of quest which is central to the action of The Faerie Queene is thus a romanticized version of a judicial inquiry, where the "case" is tried, not by forensic debate, but by the ordeal of battle. Nevertheless, the prime function of Gloriana and her knights is the same as that of the Roman quaestor -- to investigate crime and bring the criminal to justice.

The formal proceedings of the Roman court of law display a basic structure of juridical inquiry that is still to be observed in the proceedings of modern courts. In Roman law, the case was begun by the act of postulatio, a naming of the criminal with a statement of the case against him, which was, in effect, a "request" for permission to prosecute. If the postulatio were granted, there followed the interrogatio, the questioning of the accused by the praetor. This was followed by the actiones, the speeches by accuser and defendant. The trial concluded with the probatio, the "proving" of the case, in which documents, circumstantial evidence, and declarations of witnesses were used. After the probatio, the praetores pronounced judgement by means of secret ballot on wax tablets, inscribed with an "A" (absolvo, I acquit), or a "C" (condemno, I condemn) ⁴.

⁴ See the article, "Judicial Procedure, Roman", in Oskar Seyffert, A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, revised and edited by Henry Nettleship and J. E. Sandys, Meridian Books, New York, 1957, pp. 333-336.

Not only this procedure, but much of its terminology, survives in the modern judicial process. We still speak of the "interrogation" of witnesses, of "actions at law", and of "probating" wills. It is also worth noting, however, that much of this vocabulary has been adopted in reference not to public courts of law but to the proceedings of the individual mind in its private deliberations -- the "sessions of sweet silent thought", as Shakespeare called them. We still use the term "postulate", for example, to refer to a theory or an assumption that is yet to be proven, and the terms "inquiry", "interrogation", and "proof" in an analogous way, with reference to a systematic investigation carried on by a single mind. The parallel between Roman juridical inquiry and the rhetorical forms of medieval scholasticism will be apparent to any reader of St. Thomas Aquinas. Uniformly, St. Thomas' discussions of philosophical "questions" begin with a statement describing the "postulate" that he intends to deal with -- for example, "Whether Providence can suitably be attributed to God?" (Summa Theologica, Question XXII).⁵ This is always followed by a statement of what appears to be the case: "It seems that providence is not becoming to God." This apparent truth is supported by what is, in effect, an interrogatio of other writers on the question -- in this case, Cicero, Aristotle, and St. John Damascene. But there always

⁵ The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, edited by Anton C. Pegis, Random House, New York, 1945, Vol. 1, p. 229.

follows a reversal or peripeteia , marked by the words "on the contrary".

On the contrary, it is said (Wis. XIV, 3) : But thou, Father, govern all things by providence. ⁶

St. Thomas then proceeds to his counter-argument, marked by the words, "I answer that . . .", which is followed by a systematic rebuttal of the writers quoted in the opening section. Thus does the medieval philosopher proceed, in the privacy of his own thoughts, or in the seclusion of the schoolroom, through a systematic "court of inquiry" in which he himself acts as "postulant", accuser, defence counsel, and jury.

The close relation between Roman jurisprudence and philosophical method is apparent, however, not only in this metaphoric identification of the mind with a court of law. Alfred North Whitehead has remarked that not only the method of modern science but its content has been profoundly influenced by the Roman legal tradition.

In spite of the actual anarchy throughout large regions of Europe after the collapse of the empire, the sense of legal order always haunted the racial memories of the Imperial populations

It is important to notice that this legal impress upon medieval civilization was not in the form of a few wise precepts which should permeate conduct. It was the conception of a definite articulated system which defines the

⁶Ibid.

legality of the detailed structure of social organism, and of the detailed way in which it should function. There was nothing vague. It was not a question of admirable maxims, but of definite procedure to put things right and to keep them there. ⁷

It is this conception of a "definite articulated system" which Western scientific thought shares with the Roman legal tradition: the assumption or the instinctive faith that particular phenomena, whether of nature or of human behaviour, are not discrete, anomalous, and absurd, but instances of general principles and laws. In the words of Ernst Cassirer,

Essentially cognition is always oriented towards this essential aim, the articulation of the particular into a universal law and order. ⁸

The intimacy of relation between juridical and scientific "law" is further revealed in Immanuel Kant's insistence that the investigator must approach nature not in the role of pupil but in the role of quaestor or judge.

Reason, holding in one hand its principles, according to which alone concordant appearances can be admitted as equivalent to laws, and in the other the experiment which it has devised in conformity with these principles, must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher has to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witness to answer questions which he has himself formulated. ⁹

⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, The MacMillan Company, 1925, p. 11.

⁸ Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, translated by Ralph Manheim, Yale University Press, New Haven, Vol. 1, p. 77.

⁹ Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, MacMillan and Company, London, 1952, p. 14.

The concept of physical or scientific "law", in other words, is much more than a mere analogy; it reflects an abiding sense that nature is a community, and that human society is a rational order within that community, that man, society, and nature are uniformly ruled by a system of principles capable of rationalizing all of experience. The psyche, the state, and the universe are all subject to law. This is reflected too in our use of the words "judge" and "judgement" to refer to both public legal procedure and private individual thought. For a judgement, as distinct from a mere opinion or impression, claims, as Kant says, a universality and an objectivity which is valid for all, whether it is the product of a single mind or a public tribunal.

"Quest" in the literary sense derives from the medieval notion of trial or ordeal by battle, in which the cause is tried by a contest of champions in the belief that God will defend the right. The concept of the knight errant, therefore, may be seen as a romanticized version of the Roman quaestor or "quester", whose function it is to succour the innocent and to prosecute evildoers. In this perspective, the victims who call upon the court to assign a champion to their cause are "postulants", and the actiones become not forensic debates but actions in the military sense, in which the defeat of the criminal is judged to be sufficient probatio of the case. And this type of quest is perhaps the single most fundamental form of action in The Faerie Queene, for in each

book a knightly hero champions an innocent victim against a series of malefactors in the form of dragons, enchanters, and monsters. This general pattern is re-enforced by the innumerable occasions in each book in which the knight succours other victims of lesser antagonists. By virtue of Spenser's allegorical method, each quest is both a public and a private or subjective tribunal. Acrasia, for example, is not merely an external, Circe-like enchantress, but the power of undisciplined emotion within the soul, and Guyon's struggle against her is a cleansing of his society and his psyche at once. Thus the Spenserian quest unites the outer and inner meanings of "inquiry", and displays whole the relation between order in society and sanity in the mind, both under the form of justice. The metaphor of the human mind as courtroom is only a particular instance of this general theme, and we find it explicitly developed in Canto IX of Book II, where Guyon, exploring with Arthur the Castle of Alma, is permitted to enter a chamber which symbolizes the faculty of judgement within the individual. In this room, the walls

Were painted faire with memorable gestes
 Of famous Wisards; and with picturals
 Of Magistrates, of courts, of tribunals
 Of commen-wealthes, of states, of pollicy,
 Of lawes, of judgements, and of decretals,
 All artes, all science, all Philosophy,
 And all that in the world was ay thought wittily.

(II, ix, 53)

Guyon is thus enabled, by virtue of the allegorical method, to enter into his own head, so to speak, and to observe the process by means of which the disordered imagination of Phantastes is regulated and tempered by judgement. It is no accident that this chamber resembles a courtroom, for it is by means of the faculty of judgement that emotion, sensory experience, and fantasy are reduced to the rule of law -- defined and regulated by what Sir Philip Sidney called "the judging power",¹⁰ as social behaviour is regulated by the court. In a very broad sense, the entire poem can be seen as the exploration of this one concept -- as a vast and intricate image of the tribunal of the human mind, doing battle with its own lawless emotions in the pursuit of truth, which is also justice.

But the literary archetype of the quest is only a particular instance of a much more pervasive intimacy of relation between literature and the juridical process. The trial or courtroom drama appeals to the literary imagination because it is a symbol of the human quest itself. It is concerned with primary religious and metaphysical questions of guilt and innocence, appearance and reality. It offers an orderly procedure by means of which complex and multitudinous questions can be sifted and examined, claims branded true or

¹⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, edited by J. Churton Collins, Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1907, p. 17.

false, and "final" judgements rendered on vexing and troublesome issues. It incorporates within it, symbolically, that which human nature loves best -- a fight. At the same time, it is governed by a strict formal code which not only ensures decorum and gravitas but -- at least potentially -- the aesthetic satisfaction of clarity of structure, for its proceedings have a clearly identifiable order of beginning, middle, and end. It is not accidental that so many dramatic works consist entirely of, or incorporate within themselves, the representation of a trial. Works as diverse as Aeschylus' Oresteia and Gilbert and Sullivan's Trial by Jury, Wouk's The Caine Mutiny and Shaw's Saint Joan, Plato's Apology and Kafka's The Trial attest to the centrality of the court inquiry in the body of verbal rituals that re-enact the dominant concerns of Western culture.

The close relation between drama and the rhetoric of the courts is recognized by Aristotle in the Poetics.

The Plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place Third in order is Thought -- that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. In the case of oratory, this is the function of the political art and of the art of rhetoric; and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians. ¹¹

In the next paragraph, he says that Thought (dianoia) "is

¹¹ Aristotle, Poetics, translated by Ingram Bywater, in An Introduction to Aristotle, edited by Richard McKeon, The Modern Library, New York, 1947, p. 633.

found where something is proved to be or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated." Clearly, Aristotle believed that the tragic poet was entitled -- even required -- to "prove something" and to "enunciate general maxims". The ranking of Thought after Plot and Character stresses, of course, his view that drama is above all representation. But he could not have argued that poetry is "somewhat more philosophical than history",¹² nor have placed such value on anagnorisis or "discovery" as a structural device, had he not believed that poetry was capable of grasping and expressing truth. The parallel functions of drama and trial are disclosed in the belief that each is intended to discover the truth that underlies the appearances of human experience.

Another important document in classical literary criticism is the brief and anonymous Tractatus Coislinianus¹³ of the fourth century A.D. Essentially, it is the application of the Aristotelian analysis of tragedy to the comic form. Its treatment of dianoia clarifies still further the legal or juridical archetype within the comic form.

The parts of dianoia are two: a) opinion (pistis) and b) proof (gnosis). Proofs are of five sorts: 1) oaths; 2) compacts; 3) testimonies; 4) trials ordeals; 5) laws. ¹⁴

¹² Ibid., p. 636.

¹³ Reprinted in Theories of Comedy, edited by Paul Lauter, Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1964, pp. 21-23.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

This makes even more explicit the view that literature has as its function the attainment of truth. "Thought", in comedy, moves from opinion, uncertainty, confusion, "mere appearance" (pistis) to proof, certain knowledge, resolution, and "reality" (gnosis). The "forms of proof" cited are not merely the chief instruments of juridical procedure, but also, recognizably, mechanisms which poets tragic and comic use to generate the action of their dramas. The importance of Oedipus' oath that he will cleanse Thebes of the miasma, or Hamlet's oath to avenge his murdered father, are well-known examples. Faustus launches the action of his damnation by making a compact with Mephistophilis. The importance of the nuntius, or messenger, who is usually an eye-witness of the events that he reports, in carrying forward the action of a play, is exemplified in Oedipus Tyrannus and Samson Agonistes. The trial itself, or its substitute the ordeal, is to be found in Saint Joan, The Scarlet Letter, and Heart of Darkness. The classic pattern of Shakespearean comedy is the attempt to escape from a harsh or cruel law -- as in The Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure, or A Midsummer Night's Dream.

One of the striking differences between the tragic and the comic form is precisely their characteristic treatment of such "forms of proof" as oaths, compacts, laws, and ordeals. In tragedy, the protagonist is generally unwilling or unable to evade the consequences of the oath or compact to which he

commits himself. Lear, for example, though counselled against the division of his kingdom, adheres to his resolve and thus precipitates the tragic outcome. The action of a comedy, by contrast, revolves around the problem of releasing the protagonist from his oath, or from the rigour of the law, while preserving the appearance of fidelity to it. Tragedy insists upon the universality of law, comedy upon its relativity. In both forms, however, the mechanisms of oath, compact, and ordeal may be conceived as procedures for testing initial assumptions (pisteis) about life or human nature, and thus as forms of proof or disproof (gnosis) which lead from the hypothetical charge or accusation to the reasoned judgement of condemnation or acquittal. In tragedy, they re-enact Aeschylus' formula of disillusionment: poiema, pathema, mathema ("purpose, passion, perception"). In comedy, they re-enact the central myth of Christian culture, in which mankind is condemned under the law and then miraculously liberated through the intervention of a hero who comes not to subvert the law but to fulfill it.

Of course, The Faerie Queene is epic, not drama. This means that the quest for truth, justice, and "reality" is presented not as forensic debate but in terms of action and imagery directly narrated. This permits Spenser to go beyond the external representation of consciousness and to enter into

a vast and intricate symbolism that mediates between privacy and publicity, and permits the appearance of "characters", like the River Thames or Florimell, who are personified natural agencies, not human beings. Thus, instead of being focussed purely on an external, public, and social form of justice, the poem can present the quest as both private and individual on the one hand and macrocosmic on the other. There are, therefore, three different perspectives on each of the knightly adventures in the poem. In the first place, each quest is a "public" process in which a hero, representing the ideal order symbolized by Gloriana's court, cleanses the social order by executing justice on an evildoer. But at the same time, the quest is a private struggle, a psychomachia, in which a specific habitual disposition of the soul conquers psychic enemies within its own gates. Finally, each quest has implications for, and is affected by, natural, cosmic processes such as the cycle of summer and winter, or supernatural realities such as the justice and charity of God. Ultimately, all three levels are identified in the tribunal of Nature which passes judgement upon Mutability's claim to sovereignty.

In each case, and on every level, the action is a conflict of appearance and reality, pistis and gnosis. We might borrow the style of St. Thomas and describe, for example, the action of Book I in this manner: "It seems that

man is in thrall to the great dragon, Satan, who is not only the Prince of This World but the Arch-Lie (archimago) within the soul On the contrary, Holiness frees both human society and the individual soul from the illusion of separateness and damnation." Of course, each quest combines these three levels in different proportion, Books I to III emphasizing the private, subjective side, and Books IV to VI the public and objective. In every case, however, the action aims at a form of justice -- religious justification in Book I, the rational discipline of the emotions in Book II, the harnessing of erotic impulse to social and civic purposes in Books III and IV, social justice in Book V, the just relation of man and man in Book VI, and cosmic justice in the Cantos of Mutability.

CHAPTER TWO

Nature, Contemplation, and the One

The action of Book I of The Faerie Queene is presented throughout in the terms of the activity of intellect. The companion of the Red Cross Knight, Una, is repeatedly referred to simply as "Truth". His very first battle is waged against the Dragon Error in "the Wandering Wood" (i.e. the Forest of Error). His next antagonist is Archimago, an enchanter who prevails by means of false images. He is further deceived by Duessa, who is also called "Fidessa" (Faith). He is ultimately cured of his suicidal despair in The House of Holiness and on the Hill of Contemplation. His ultimate victory over the great Dragon results in the exposure and punishment of Archimago and Duessa. Unmistakably, therefore, the adventures of Redcross are conceived as adventures of the mind (which of course does not mean that they are in any way unreal). Whatever else the concept of "Holiness" contains, it is clear that as a virtue it depends upon the intellectual power of the mind by which the true is distinguished from the false.

The true beginning of Redcross' ordeal occurs when, according to the medullary verse of Canto II, "the guilefull great Enchaunter parts/ The Redcrosse Knight from Truth." In terms of the action, Redcross is parted from Una by Archimago,

who, having failed to destroy the knight's faith in Una by concocting a deceitful dream, fashions two evil spirits into false images of Una and a young squire, and displays them to Redcross "knit . . . in Venus' shameful chaine." The effect upon Redcross is to darken his mind with passion, jealousy, and anger.

The eie of reason was with rage yblent (I, i, 5).

Redcross immediately sets out, taking with him Una's dwarf and leaving her to awake and find herself alone.

The following verses stress the notions, first of duality and then of multiplicity. Archimago exults at having divided Una and St. George "into double parts", and we learn that he possesses the capacity to take many shapes.

For by his mighty science he could take
As many formes and shapes in seeming wise
As ever Proteus to himself could make (I, ii, 10).

Thus Redcross and Una have been duplicated, so to speak, in the false images of Archimago and Duessa, a demonic parody of the original couple. Duessa (now called Fidessa) appears as the Whore of Babylon, falsely claiming to be Una. The real Redcross, still blinded by passion, fails to detect the imposture.

He in great passion all this while did dwell,

More busying his quick eies her face to view
 Then his dull eares to hear what she did tell (I, ii, 26).

The encounter with Fradubio, "once a man . . . now a tree", is a gloss upon what has happened to Redcross. For Fradubio ("Brother Doubt") too was once betrothed to a fair lady "that did then shine as the Morning Star", but had been enchanted by the "hellish science" of Duessa even to the point where he had been ready to kill her. Then he had been bereft even of his senses by "wicked herbes and oyntments" so that he has become a human vegetable, doomed to stand in the Forest of Error till he be bathed in a "living well."

This Canto, in other words, depicts in the separation of Redcross and Una the loss of what Dante called il ben d'intelletto -- "the good of intellect".¹ Redcross, his eye of reason blinded, imposed upon by false images, his single vision made multiple by Protean error, is in danger of losing his human faculties altogether, as Fradubio has. What has occurred is a fall from unity, first into duality and then into multiplicity, from reason to passion, certainty into doubt, and rationality into irrationality.

The consistent equation of unity with truth suggests

¹ The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, Canto III.

that the action of Book I is the allegorical statement of a definite philosophical doctrine. And the philosophic system which pre-eminently equates truth and unity is that of the Neo-Platonist, Plotinus. Essentially, Plotinus' system may be considered as the result of a prolonged and intense meditation on the nature of unity as such, as the title of Ennead III, viii -- "Nature, Contemplation, and the One" -- suggests. What is it, asks Plotinus, that enables us to recognize individual entities like rocks and trees and animals? His answer is "their unity" -- that which preserves their identity in the flux of experience.

To grasp the oneness in a tree, that is, its stable principle, or in an animal, or in a soul, or in the universe, is to grasp, in each of these cases, that which is most powerful and precious. ²

But the act of "grasping" this oneness reveals another kind of unity -- the unity subsisting between the knower and the known.

There is identity between knowing subject and known object. ³

This identity of the soul of the knower with the form of the object known (what the scholastics called "knowledge by connaturality") is what we know as Intelligence. As long as we remain within the realm of Intelligence, however, this

²Joseph Katz, The Philosophy of Plotinus: Representative Books from the Enneads, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1950, p. 56.

³Ibid., p. 49.

identity of knower and known cannot be a true unity, since it is always possible to separate it into its subjective and objective sides.

Intelligence is at once intelligence and the intelligible, and therefore two things at once.⁴

By a further act of contemplation, however, the rational soul can cease to apprehend the intelligible world as a multiplicity of known objects and grasp the essential unity of Intelligence itself, which, Plotinus insists, is not within Intelligence but beyond it.

Since intelligence is a sort of seeing, that is, a seeing that is active, it really is a potentiality that passes into an actualization. One will therefore have to distinguish in it form and matter.⁵

Reflection upon the form of Intelligence, apart from its matter, reveals a unity beyond Intelligence, the sustaining principle of knowing as such -- something beyond Intelligence as Intelligence is beyond Soul. That sustaining principle Plotinus calls simply "The One".

The One is none of the totality of things, but prior to all things.⁶

These four levels of being -- Body (or Nature), Soul, Intelligence, and The One, known as "hypostases" or "emanations" -- are at once principles of generation and principles of knowledge. All

⁴Ibid., p. 53.

⁵Ibid., p. 56

⁶Ibid., p. 55.

individual things in the totality of the physical universe are generated by Soul, which in turn is generated by Intelligence, which itself emanates from The One. Thus, in Plotinus' system, there is both a deductive and an inductive perspective, from The One to Nature or from Nature to The One, respectively. The multiplicity of Nature (or Body) is at the furthest remove from the generative power of The One, and so comes last in the order of generation. It is, on the other hand, the starting point for the mind, which, by progressively unifying its experience, can rise in true Neo-Platonic fashion from creature to the Uncreated, from the manifold to The One.

Since contemplation rises from nature to the soul, and from the soul to Intelligence . . . it follows that the knower, because he aspires to intelligence, must then within Intelligence be identical with what is known. ⁷

By a still further act of contemplation, the mind can abstract from what it knows and concentrate only upon the act of knowing, which is a penultimate unity depending only upon the Form of Unity itself, or The One. The act of knowing, in other words, is made possible only by Unity.

If this principle begets Intelligence, it necessarily is simpler than Intelligence. ⁸

Yet contemplation is not present merely within Intelligence. It is present wherever there is unity or a principle of

⁷Ibid. p. 51

⁸Ibid., p. 54.

stability.

All beings, rational but also irrational animals, plants and the earth that begets them, aspire to contemplation and are directed towards that end, and . . . due to their differing capacities some really achieve contemplation while others only accomplish a reflection or image of it. ⁹

The contemplation of merely natural entities -- that is, those without rational souls -- resembles rational contemplation as sleep resembles consciousness.

If one desires to attribute some sort of cognition or sensation to nature, these resemble the usual cognition and sensation only as those of a man who is asleep resemble those of a man who is awake. ¹⁰

Thus, within Plotinus' system, it is possible for the mind to move back and forth over the entire range of the levels of knowledge, from the infra-intelligent knowledge which depends on dreams or images, and is associated with the vegetative soul, to the intelligent knowing within the rational soul, to the supra-intelligent knowing which puts the mind in contact with The One, which is beyond Intelligence. Necessarily, however, Plotinus conceives any movement from unity to duality or multiplicity as a deterioration or a "fall".

The soul grasps its object better the more rational it is Her contemplation rests within her and she is sure of her possession of her object. The greater this assurance, the more peaceful is

⁹Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 45-46.

the contemplation and the more does it unify the soul. ¹¹

The loss of such assurance is therefore the loss of unity, and it comes about because the mind is unable firmly to grasp the form of its knowing, and becomes lost in the multiplicity of the objects known.

Since (contemplation and the object of this contemplation) are identical, how does it happen that their unity becomes manifold? It becomes manifold because it does not contemplate unity. ¹²

When, therefore, Redcross is parted from Una in Spenser's poem, the action is an analogue of the divorce of the mind from its assured possession of the truth through contemplation. Archimago personifies the loss of intellect, since his power depends upon mere images, to a Neo-Platonist the very lowest form of mental activity. He is not only the architect of lies but himself the Arch-Lie, and Duessa and Fradubio his instrument and his victim respectively. The Wandering Wood of Error is itself the state of mind that possesses the tree-man, Fradubio, and threatens the intellect of Redcross. Thus Redcross' entry into the Wandering Wood, his loss of Una, the deceit of Archimago and Duessa, and the encounter with Fradubio are all, in a sense, perspectives on the same event -- Redcross' fall from the assured grasp of truth

¹¹Ibid., p. 48

¹²Ibid., p. 52.

into the irrational multiplicity of the natural world.

From this point on, until the reunion of Redcross and Una in Canto IX, the action dramatizes the human condition that results when intelligence and the intelligible are divorced from one another, to produce the state of error which William Blake denounced as a "cloven fiction" -- the belief that the mind and the universe are discrete and therefore, in existentialist terms, "absurd". Una's adventures take place in the forest, where she is befriended first by a lion and later by a group of satyrs, who represent the level of knowing below that of the rational soul. Redcross' adventures take place in the House of Pride, which resembles a Tower of Babel, or the house built upon sand of the parable, and he escapes Lucifera and the preposterous parade of the Seven Deadly Sins only to fall victim to the giant Orgoglio.

The insistence upon Redcross' susceptibility to Pride derives from the fact that he represents intellect deprived of its proper object, and therefore turned in upon itself, nursing the illusion of self-sufficiency. Una, on the other hand, suggests the condition of truth separated from the receptive intellect, wielding its own influence over irrational nature, whose contemplation resembles intelligence as sleep resembles waking. Such a separation between intellect and the wholeness of truth is an archetype of decadence, being

re-enacted today by the neo-primitives, who fear Intellect because it is "unnatural" and "irrelevant", and by effete rationalists who endlessly analyze the act of knowing and yet are unable to attain the assurance and peace that, according to Plotinus, the grasp of truth bestows.

Of course, the separate adventures of Una are coloured by another strand of the allegory, the religio-historical, in which Una represents the true faith abandoned by England in the days of Mary and forced "underground" by Roman Catholic persecution. Redcross' dalliance with Fidessa, which results in his capture by Orgoglio (Philip of Spain) represents the demoralizing influence of false doctrine. In a purely philosophical perspective, however, the separation of Redcross from "Truth" by means of Archimago's deceit is a Neo-Platonist account of the clouding of man's intellect and hence an analogue of the descent from the realm of Form into the natural world. While Redcross' imprisonment in the dungeon of Orgoglio suggests the sufferings of Englishmen in the prisons of the Inquisition, it is also a Platonic image of the mind imprisoned within the cave of sensory experience. Arthur's rescue forces Redcross, painfully, to return from the darkness of the cave into the sunlight of true knowledge once more.

His sad dull eies, deep sunk in hollow pits,
 Could not endure th' unwonted sunne to view (I, viii, 41).

But the Redcross who emerges from Orgoglio's dungeon is not the hopeful young man who had, with the optimism of youth, lightly undertaken the task of freeing Una's parents from the oppression of the Great Dragon. His encounter with the complexities and duplicities of life, and most of all the awareness of the strength of his own passions, has almost fatally undermined his moral sense. He must, if he is to right the wrong done to Una and her parents, be prepared to dispense justice, but his confusion of mind has left him with an overwhelming sense of his own worthlessness. When he encounters Despair, the landscape itself suggests his former error through images of cave and forest (I, ix, 33-34). Rashly, he invokes "justice" against Despair for the wrong he has done to Sir Trevisan:

Thou damned wight,
The author of this fact we here behold,
What justice can but judge against thee right,
With thine own blood to price his blood, here shed in sight?
(I, ix, 37)

But Despair turns the very concept of justice against him.

"What franticke fit," (quoth he) "hath thus distraught
Thee, foolish man, so rash a doom to give?
What justice ever other judgement taught
But he should die who merits not to live?"
(I, ix, 38)

The indictment of Redcross that follows is the crisis of Book I. Remorselessly, Despair forces Redcross to realize

that in his present state he is completely incapable of just action. Sir Trevisan has been driven to suicide by his own guilty mind. Is it not just to give every man his due? Is death not preferable to life in any case?

Sleep after toyle, port after stormy seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please.
(I, ix, 40)

Uneasily, Redcross invokes the Socratic argument that the soldier must not leave his post until he is bidden. Despair brushes this aside in a speech that, through its thematic relationship with the description of the Garden of Adonis in Book IV and the trial of Mutability, raises issues that underlie the thematic structure of The Faerie Queene as a whole.

"Is not his deed, what ever thing is done
In heaven and earth? Did not he all create
To die againe? All ends that was begonne:
Their times in his eternal book of fate
Are written sure, and have their certain date.
Who then can strive with strong necessitee
That holds the world in his still chaunging state,
Or shunne the death ordayned by destinie?"
(I, ix, 42)

In a world ruled by mortality and doomed to inevitable death, what meaning can "justice" have? Is not death just for everyone by the Almighty's decree? And what right has Redcross to talk of justice in any case -- Redcross, who early lost his way in the Forest of Error, and even yet has not found it again?

For he that once hath missed the right way
The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray.
(I, ix, 43)

Then, like the egalitarian Giant in Book V, Despair invokes the scales of justice.

Thou, wretched man, of death hast greatest need,
If in true ballaunce thou wilt weigh thy state.
(I, ix, 45)

Has Redcross not committed sins enough to ensure his condemnation? Is not God's law that every sinner shall die? Will Redcross implicate Heaven in his own guilt by asking to be pardoned?

The effect of this measured cynicism on Redcross is devastating. His conscience tells him that all Despair has said is true; he is appalled by the "ugly vew of his deformed crimes" (48). We are reminded of Archimago, the initiator of the process, once again. Redcross is paralyzed

As he were charmed with inchaunted rimes (I, ix, 48).

He sees nothing before his eyes but death, and the wrath of God. When Despair puts a dagger into his grasp, Redcross' hand "quake(s) and tremble(s) like a leafe of Aspin greene" (51). These memories of Archimago and the tree-man Fradubio are deliberate; they suggest that Despair's indictment is the culmination of the process begun by Archimago when he parted the knight from "Truth".

Redcross' state of mind is that known in theological terms as alienation -- the sense of having been cut off from

God's grace, rejected, condemned, and placed under sentence of death. The term itself is intensely significant, because it connotes "otherness", the sense of divorcement from God. The diagnosis of Redcross' state of mind stresses precisely this meaning of the word, for when he emerges from the "sad house of Penance", Charissa instructs him

Wrath and hatred warely to shun
That drew on men Gods hatred and his wrath.
(I, x, 33)

The chiasmus in these lines makes the point vividly. The "wrath and hatred" of Redcross were directed first at Una but, for this very reason, ultimately at himself. It was his conviction of alienation from God -- his "otherness" -- that made him see only death, made him aware of God only as a source of wrath. The opposite of alienation, of course, is communion. The point is that Redcross' separation from Una in Canto II, the result of his failure of intellect which led him to see only the multiplicity of nature and not the unity of all things in God, has led necessarily to his conviction of otherness and hence his own total worthlessness. His pride, symbolized by his imprisonment in the dungeon of Orgoglio, is merely an aspect of his alienation. Paradoxically, both stem from the illusion of separateness, of self-sufficiency, and this, in turn, has been generated by his loss of vision and his descent into the manifold illusions and false images of

the merely natural world.

The treatment of such alienation, or of its secular equivalent, depression, is complex and difficult. Therapy cannot be based solely on emotional factors like sympathy, reassurance, and forgiveness, for what is at fault is essentially the patient's vision. His despair arises from the image he has of himself, and mere reassurance and "acceptance" cannot change that. He must be brought to see, to understand himself and his situation. The cure for alienation, in other words, must be addressed first to the patient's intellect, for unless he sees the doctor's reassurance as having the value of truth it will have no effect.

Spenser's account of the treatment of Redcross demonstrates his awareness of this fact. For in Caelia's house he is introduced first to Fidelia and Speranza. Charissa, we are told, is unable to greet him because of her late confinement. It is only after Redcross has submitted to the discipline of Humilta, Zele, Reverence, and Obedience that he is admitted to the schoolhouse of Fidelia, where his "dull eyes" are opened to the "celestiall discipline" of the "sacred Booke", from which she instructs him

Of God; of grace; of justice; of free will (I, xi, 19).

This part of the treatment, addressed to the intellect, seems

at first only to intensify his conviction of sin, but then Speranza takes over his instruction and provides the hope and reassurance that enable him to continue. Spenser recognizes the intensely painful nature of the treatment. We are reminded continually of Redcross' "pain" (I, x, 24), of the "festering sore" (25), of his "grieved conscience" (25). But Patience and Penance combine to help him endure. It is only then that he is able to meet Charissa, newly released from childbed. Redcross, having learned "himself to cherish", can now learn charity towards others. The implication is that he himself is the child to whom Charissa has just given birth. Redcross is born again through the revival of his hope and his new ability to be charitable towards himself and others.

Significantly, his redemption ends, as it began, with treatment directed towards the clarification of his vision. He is allowed to climb the Hill of Contemplation -- a composite image recalling the three holy mountains of Christian humanism, Sinai, Olympus, and the Mount of Olives -- where he has a vision of the holy city of Jerusalem, and for the first time learns his true identity. Like Plato's guardian, he wishes to remain on the heights, but his unfinished quest compels him to descend once again, where he is re-united with Una.

A major theme, then, of the action of Book I is the question of the justification of the agent of justice himself.

Redcross must learn, before his supreme ordeal, that Justice is God's prerogative -- that the merely natural man, convicted of sin himself, cannot safely presume to dispense justice to others. The justification of Redcross consists in the arduous process of recovering his single vision through patience and contemplation, which culminates in and is symbolized by his re-union with Una. Having recovered from the multiple illusions of Archimago, and thus from the illusion of his own self-sufficiency, he can proceed to mete out justice to others, not as a separate and personal idiosyncrasy but as the symbol of the re-established harmony between man and God.

In this respect, Book I challenges comparison with two other classic studies of the prosecution of justice -- Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus and Shakespeare's Hamlet. In those plays, as in Book I of The Faerie Queene, a young man undertakes to rescue an entire society from a curse that is the consequence of wrongdoing. And, in those plays, as in Spenser's poem, the greatest obstacle to the hero's quest is the fact of his own conviction of sin. The chorus in Sophocles' play makes this point about Oedipus:

For he, O Zeus, sped his shaft with peerless skill,
and won the prize of an all-prosperous fortune; he
slew the maiden with crooked talons who sang darkly;
he arose from our land as a tower against death. And
from that time, Oedipus, thou hast been called our
king, and hast been honoured supremely, bearing sway

in great Thebes.

But now whose story is more grievous in men's ears? Who is a more wretched captive to fierce plagues and troubles, with all his life reversed?

Alas, renowned Oedipus! The same bounteous place of rest sufficed thee, as child and as sire also, that thou shouldst make thereon thy nuptial couch. Oh, how can the soil wherein thy father sowed, unhappy one, have sufficed thee in silence so long? ¹³

Hamlet too suffers a similar fate, for his early confidence in the righteousness of his own cause ends finally in his own conviction and arrest as a killer, and ultimately issues in a faith in Providence that leads him to abandon personal attempts at revenge altogether. Both plays begin in a resolve to direct justice, in the form of hatred and wrath, outwards upon others, and end in the realization that this same wrath must be directed inwards upon the self.

Book I of The Faerie Queene differs from Oedipus Tyrannus and Hamlet, however, in that it is conceived as a comic, not a tragic, action. Redcross recovers from his own self-hatred, and is finally able to visit just punishment upon the Dragon. And he is able to do so because he has been brought to see that the perspective of Despair is false, the product of Archimago's duplicity. Archimago is of course the arch-image, the Father of Lies himself, and in this sense is identical with the Great Dragon whom Redcross finally overthrows.

¹³ Sir Richard Jebb, The Tragedies of Sophocles, Translated into English Prose, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1957, p. 47.

This "comic" treatment of the quest for justice would not have been possible for Spenser had he not been able to draw upon the classic source for all discussions of justice -- Plato's Republic. In that work the same pattern is apparent, for Socrates finds that the attempt to define justice raises two other intimately related questions, namely, "What is the just state?" and "What is a just man?" The Republic, in other words, discloses the same conceptual pattern as do Oedipus Tyrannus, Hamlet, and Book I of The Faerie Queene; the quest for justice in the state is inseparable from the quest for justice in the soul. Plato, having identified the three elements or principles within the soul -- the appetitive, the irascible, and the rational -- goes on to argue that justice, whether in the state or in the individual, has regard to

that which is within and in the true sense concerns one's self, and the things of one's self. It means that a man must not suffer the principles in his soul to do each the work of some other and interfere and meddle with one another, but that he should dispose well of what in the true sense of the word is properly his own . . . and having . . . made himself a unit, one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison, he should then and then only turn to practice.¹⁴

To act justly, then, a man must first make of himself "a unit, one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison." The concept of unity can be seen to be central to the concept

¹⁴ Plato, The Republic, 443d (translation by Paul Shorey, the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, 1953).

of justice, and it is clear why, in Spenser's poem, Redcross must regain contact with Una if he is to prosecute his quest successfully. But, as Plato also says, this harmony or unison in the soul is the essence, not only of justice, but of the other virtues as well; of bravery, because the irascible element will come to the aid of the rational in a fight for a just cause; of wisdom, because the irascible and appetitive elements will obey the rational; of sobriety, for the same reason; of honesty and trustworthiness and piety and all the rest, because "each of the principles within him does its own work in the matter of ruling and being ruled."¹⁵ This is the well-known Platonic principle that all the virtues coincide in one virtue -- the virtue of knowledge. This perhaps explains Spenser's single-minded concentration upon intellect in Book I as the means by which "Holiness" is to be achieved.

As a Christian, Spenser included in the concept of Holiness a dimension that was not vouchsafed to Plato. But the Holiness of Book I, in true humanist fashion, comprehends Plato, Plotinus, and the Book of Revelation, not as antagonistic but as complementary visions. He keeps insisting that all the virtues are one.

O goodly golden chain, wherewith yfere
The virtues linked are in lovely wize (I, ix, 1).

¹⁵Ibid.

As the converse of this, Redcross, having been parted from Una, displays all of the vices that are the counterparts of the virtues celebrated in the rest of the poem. He is subject to Lucifera, who brings with her all of the deadly sins. He is intemperate in his passion, inconstant in his abandonment of Una, unjust in assuming that she is untrue to him, discourteous to her and then to himself. His redemption from despair is the re-acquisition of the corresponding virtues. Holiness, in short, is presented in Book I as the awareness of unison within the soul and with God, and it includes within it all the virtues.

If, as this study assumes, the quest for justice is a central theme of The Faerie Queene as a whole, it is altogether logical that Book I should raise the question of personal justification in theological terms, for without this as basis, justice in the state or in the world at large must remain an ideal impossible of human attainment. But such justification is a function of what would be called in idealist terms the transcendental unity of virtue. Redcross attains to an awareness of that unity through contemplation, by means of which he is able to re-establish contact with truth and recover from the state of religious alienation. His attainment of Holiness is the foundation for the exploits of all the knightly champions who are to follow him.

CHAPTER THREE

The Tempering of the Mind

"Those who cannot remember the past," said George Santayana, "are condemned to repeat it." His aphorism has often been used to show the practical value of the study of history, but in its original context it concerns, not the macrocosmic historical process, but the microcosmic perceptual one.

The process of counting is perhaps as simple an instance as can be found of a mental operation on sensible data. The clock, let us say, strikes two: if the sensorium were perfectly elastic and after receiving the first blow reverted exactly to its previous state, retaining absolutely no trace of that momentary oscillation and no altered habit, then it is certain that a sense for number or a faculty of counting could never arise. The second stroke would be responded to with the same reaction which had met the first. There would be no summation of effects, no complication. However numerous the successive impressions might come to be, each would remain fresh and pure, the last being identical with the first. One, one, one would be the monotonous response forever Such, too, is the idiot's life: his liquid brain transmits every impulse without resistance and retains the record of no impression. ¹

It follows that our memory of past experience is a condition of our awareness of novelty. If our present experience

¹George Santayana, The Life of Reason, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1953, p. 19.

were not recognizably a continuation of the past, we could not identify what is genuinely new in it. And this in turn is the condition of all growth and development, both in the world and in ourselves. Without the record of past experience, there would be "a new world every day, with the same fool to live in it." ² But in fact existence is full of repetitions which are not exact repetitions, of tropes, rhythms, periodicities, and cycles. This is true not only of the external world, where colours, the seasons, light and darkness, sounds, and the very atoms and electrons observe regular rhythmic patterns, but of our interior world as well, where breath, pulse, heartbeat, sleeping and waking, exemplify the same kind of alternation. Cognition, therefore, is always re-cognition; the act of knowing always implies the notion of "this again".

When we attend to what is repeated, aside from the fact that it is repeated, we are attending to the forms that our experience takes. These forms are the basis of all stability and order in our lives, and from them we derive our awareness of time itself. Necessarily, the forms are abstract; that is, they transcend the flux of our experience. In the intervals between their appearances in the world, they remain available to us in memory and anticipation. Yet, paradoxically,

² Ibid., p. 27.

though they are abstract they are more real, in a sense, than the flux. Plato called them alethes, "unhidden", because they endure as objects of our inspection, whereas their exemplifications are ephemeral and evanescent. Our developing experience of the world is nothing other than the developing store of forms or models for potential existences.

The identification of these enduring forms within the flux of experience is what makes the individual experience communicable -- that is to say, available to us when the moment of their exemplification is past, and to others separated from us by time or space. Our grasp of the forms is distinguishable from our experiencing of them, which is only to say that thinking about life is different from living it. Living is ineluctably private and incommunicable; each one of us lives alone, shut up in the prison of the self. Only by thought can we escape, for it is thought that changes the private experience of the moment into public, enduring matter of fact. And the thought which records the experience can itself be recorded, in symbols which serve to direct other minds to the same forms within their experience. It is the forms that we have in common, not the flux.

In Book II of The Faerie Queene, Guyon, having fainted as a result of the physical ordeal of spending three days in the Cave of Mammon, and then having been rescued by Arthur from

the renewed attacks of Pyrochles and Cymochles, is brought to the Castle of Alma, in which is figured the structure of the human body. In the "stately Turret" of the castle, Guyon and Arthur are ushered by Alma into three successive chambers, occupied by figures representing the activities of Imagination, Judgement, and Memory. Phantastes, who inhabits the "forepart" of the turret, is a young man, intensely active and forever in movement, who is nevertheless melancholy and "of crabbed hew", with the sharp staring eyes of the fool or the madman. The chamber itself is painted with many colours and "infinite shapes", some such as have never been seen before, and others "daily seen and known by their names."

And all the chamber filled was with flyes . . .
 And all that fained is, as leasings, tales, and lies.
 (II, ix, 51)

This chamber of "buzzing, blooming confusion" is an image of the human imagination, always feverishly active and marginally mad, the locus of insubstantial sensory phantasms, dreams, fictions, and vain imaginings. The shapes that are painted on the walls are an indiscriminate confusion of everyday shapes and mythical monsters --

Infernall hags, Centaurs, feendes, Hippodames,
 Apes, Lyons, Aegles, Owles, fools, lovers, children, Dames.
 (II, ix, 50)

The list includes both the creations of the undisciplined imagination and the human exemplars of this riotous faculty. The effect is not entirely comic; in fact, it is slightly sinister. It expresses the conventional distrust of the imagination commonplace among Platonist and rationalist philosophers.

In the second chamber, by contrast, we feel that we have stepped from a lunatic asylum into a court of law. Its walls are

painted faire with memorable gestes
 Of famous Wisards; and with picturals
 Of Magistrates, of courts, of tribunals,
 Of Commen-wealthes, of states, of pollicy,
 Of lawes, of judgements, and of decretals,
 All artes, all science, all Philosophy,
 And all that in the world was ay thought wittily.
 (II, ix, 53)

To the modern reader, it may be something of a surprise to learn that this chamber, and not the chamber of Phantastes, is the province of art, and to find art, science, and philosophy closely juxtaposed with the imagery of a court of law. But Spenser is making clear that art is not mere uncontrolled imagination; it is sensory or imaginative experience regulated by judgement. As the courts regulate and define social experience by bringing it under a code, so the judgement regulates and recognizes individual mental experiences by defining them and bringing them under a system of concepts. This process is the origin not only of art (and Spenser means the useful arts, like

medicine or carpentry, as well as the "fine" arts), but of all science and philosophy as well, which implies that the thought of the artist is not in principle different from that of the scientist. It is significant, too, that the man "of ripe and perfect age", who rules the chamber, has "grown right wise and wondrous sage" by means of "continual practise and usage" (54). This makes the point that "art" is the result of repetition and custom; it is not the result of chance, nor is it dependent on the caprices of the fantasy. Art, in other words, is a virtue in the Aristotelian sense; it is a permanent disposition, part of the acquired character of the mind which "practises" it.

The deliberations of the judgement depicted in the second chamber are passed on to the third chamber, where Eumnestes rules, and recorded there in the form of "rolls and old records . . . some made in books, some in long parchment scrolls" (II, ix, 58). Just as the courts, having defined and codified the social experiences of man, record their judgements in the form of legal precedents and rulings, so does the judging faculty of the individual mind, having ordered its sensory and imaginative experience, record this ordering in the forms of language, to be preserved and made available to the minds who come after. It is this ordering of experience which ensures the later availability of that experience to

ourselves and others. Eumnestes, though "halfe blind, and all decrepit in his feeble corse" (II, ix, 55), is yet well recompensed for this physical decay in his "minds redoubled force." This too is part of the pattern, for the whole process of "art, science, and philosophy" is one which resists decay in time, by translating experience out of its physical medium and retaining the record of its forms in thought and language. The presence of the child, Anamnestes, whose name and function call to mind the Platonic doctrine of recollection, indicates that none of the forms of experience can be lost, for those which cannot be found by the old man are recovered by the child -- which is to say that memory need not always have the forms of experience actually before it at all times; they may temporarily be obscured, but are always recoverable.

The epistemological theory that informs these images is part of the tradition of Greek -- and specifically Aristotelian -- philosophy. The essential distinction underlying it is that between pathos and ethos. The term pathos is usually translated "emotion", but it also connotes suffering, as its etymological connection with "passion" suggests. "A state of the soul," says Aristotle, "is either an emotion (pathos), a capacity (dunamis), or a disposition (hexis). By an emotion," he adds,

I mean desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity, and

generally those states of consciousness which are accompanied by pleasure or pain.³

The implication here is that these states of consciousness are merely "given", that they arise in us as the result of external circumstances; we suffer them, in the sense that we cannot call them into existence by a conscious act of the will. A capacity (dunamis), on the other hand, is a power that we exert on our emotions, while a disposition (hexis) is a settled and permanent state of mind that results from the exercise of our capacities over our emotions. The same pattern is evident in Spenser's images; the uncontrolled and undisciplined sensory and imaginative phantasms of the first chamber are pathe, converted by the judgement (dunamis) into settled and permanent states of mind (hexeis) that are preserved in the Chamber of Eumnestes.

We have already noticed that the man in the prime of life who presides in the second chamber has become "right wise" through "continual practise and usage." This too is good Aristotle, who says he d'ethike ex ethous periginetai -- "Moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit."⁴ The words here translated as "ethical virtue" and "habit" are ethike and ethous, so that the Greek sentence has a nuance which is lost in translation. Ethos or habit (Spenser's "practise and usage") creates ethos or

³ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, translated by H. Rackham, the Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1926, II, v, 3.

⁴ Ibid., II, i, 1.

virtue. Ethos, then, is a permanent disposition in the soul. "In the widest sense, it includes all that is habitual and characteristic; in a limited sense, it expresses the habitual temper or disposition." ⁵

Virtues, according to the Aristotelian formulation,⁶ are not passions, because no one can be praised or blamed for feeling fear or anger, since these are involuntary experiences. Neither are they capacities (dunamis), for these we have "by nature", and the virtuous man is praised not because of the talents that were his at birth but because of what he has made out of them. Even those with little innate ability are praised for their virtue, while many more talented people are clearly recognized as vicious. A virtue, then, is a state of character, a permanent disposition to act in an ordered and disciplined way with respect to the passions. Underlying this view is the Greek assumption that all development or creative action must necessarily depend on a pre-existing "material". Virtue is not created ex nihilo, but through the establishment of an order within the personality that regulates pathe, the unruly inner experience which at first consists of chaotic sensory impressions and emotional impulses. The regulation of the sensory experiences creates intellectual virtue, while the regulation of the emotions produces moral virtue.

⁵ Aristotle, The Art of Rhetoric, translated by John Henry Freese, the Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1959, translator's note, p. 248.

⁶ Nicomachean Ethics, II, v, 4.

One of the weaknesses in Aristotle's account of virtue is the obscurity that surrounds the question, "How does one become virtuous?" His answer is that one does so by performing virtuous acts, since virtue is the product of habit. This presupposes, however, that we can first recognize virtue, by the rule that it is always a mean between excess and defect. Yet the mean in such cases is always relative to the person and the circumstances. It is all very well to point out, as he does, that "it is the mark of the educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits."⁷ The fact remains that before one can practise virtue one must first be able to recognize it, and the "golden mean" offers us singularly little practical help in doing so. It appears that reason (ratio) can only tell us where to look; in order to recognize virtue under a given set of circumstances, we must employ not discursive reason but intuitive reason -- that is, Intellect. Moral virtue is not the product of blind habit, but of habit consciously employed upon what our intellect tells us is the virtuous act.

This perhaps explains the subtle difference that exists between Books I and II of The Faerie Queene. It is not, as A. S. P. Woodhouse contended in a famous and provocative study,⁸

⁷ Ibid., I, iii.

⁸ "Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene", English Literary History, Vol. 16, No. 3, September, 1949.

purely and simply the contrast between "Grace" and "Nature". As his critics have pointed out, Grace abounds in both books. It is rather that Book I is related to Book II as intuitive reason, or intellect, is related to discursive reason, or judgement. Spenser's concept of Holiness is, as we have seen, closely related to the virtue of intellect. The apocalyptic imagery of Book I is part of this pattern, for apokalupsis is the uncovering of that which had been hidden. When in Book II the Palmer says to Redcross,

But wretched we, where ye have left your marke,
Must now anew begin like race to runne (II, i, 32),

he implies that Guyon's task is both a new beginning of the same task and a beginning of a new task. That is, Guyon's moral virtue is made possible by, and extends, the achievements of Redcross' "intellect" in Book I.

What Guyon and Arthur have witnessed in the three chambers of the Castle of Alma is quite literally "temperance" -- the activity of soul by which the merely given is disciplined and ordered by the judgement and made into a stable and permanent disposition. Temperance, in short, is the conversion of pathos into ethos. A link between Aristotle's formulation and Spenser's is to be found in Quintilian, who tells us⁹ that the Roman word for pathos is affectus, and that ethos is translated as mos (from which is derived "moral"). And the

⁹ Institutio Oratoria, VI, ii, 8.

tradition does not end there; the contrast between pathos and ethos reappears in later discussions of morality and poetry -- in Spinoza's distinction between the "inadequate ideas" of imaginatio and the "adequate ideas" of ratio,¹⁰ in Wordsworth's doctrine of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity", and in Immanuel Kant's treatment of the differences between perception and judgement.

As Sir Philip Sidney said, poetry is a central educative agency because it is concerned not merely with abstract ideas, as the philosopher must be, nor with the opacities of the temporal flux, as the historian is, but with both.

Now doth the peerless poet perform both; for
whatsoever the philosopher saith should be
done, he giveth a perfect picture of it
The philosopher with his learned definition . . .
replenisheth the memory with many infallible
grounds of wisdom, which, notwithstanding,
lie dark before the imaginative and judging
power, if they be not illuminated or figured
forth by the speaking picture of Poesy.¹¹

The historian is tied "to the particular reason of things, and not to the general reason of things." The poet, in uniting precept and example, unites also structure and process. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that in Sidney's formulation philosophy and history are to poetry as pathos to ethos, for poetry makes available their insights to "the imaginative and judging power."

¹⁰Benedictus Spinoza, Ethica More Geometrico Demonstrata, Book II, Proposition XXXVI.

¹¹Sir Philip Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, edited by J. Churton Collins, Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1907, p. 35.

This, perhaps, is what he means by identifying poetry with "the mistress-knowledge by the Greeks called Architectonike, which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration." ¹² Ethos, then, is self-knowledge -- a settled disposition which, as enduring, is a permanent structure, and, as active, is an orderly process.

Guyon's antagonist in Book II of The Faerie Queene is the "vile enchantress", Acrasia. The ethical concept of which she symbolizes the negation is that of krasis ("blending, mixture"). As Harry Berger puts it:

Krasias as a blending, an ethical climate in the soul, becomes more than a starting point, more than an accidental happiness of disposition; it becomes the result of a course of action on the part of the human will -- an acquired virtue which may be perfected by Grace. ¹³

The two victims of Acrasia, for whom the Palmer acts as "postulant", establish a pattern of deadly self-contradiction between two closely related aspects of the soul -- a pattern that is sustained throughout Book II. Mortdant and Amavia, the giver of death and the lover of life, symbolize not only the Aristotelian scheme of excess and defect but an almost Freudian marriage between eros and thanatos which suggests that the passionate desire for death, against which Redcross too had had to struggle in Book I,

¹² Ibid., p. 42.

¹³ Harry Berger Jr., The Allegorical Temper, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957, p. 113.

the hand of his daughter, Philotime. Maleger, who attacks the Castle of Alma when Guyon departs, is a grisly self-contradiction, since he is at once sick unto death and enormously strong, "most strong in most infirmitee." Throughout Book II, Guyon's adversaries are fatally self-contradictory entities, bound together in the identity of sexual or familial relationships in such a way that the death of one member seems to provoke the suicide of the other. The sinister identity between eros and thanatos, the immoderate love of life and the love of death, is made explicit by the carpe diem song sung in the Bower of Bliss.

Ah! see, whoso fayre thing doest faine to see,
 In springing flowre the image of thy day.
 Ah! see the virgin rose, how sweetly shee
 Doth first peepe foorth with bashfull modestee,
 That fairer seems the lesse ye see her may.
 Lo! see soone after how more bold and free
 Her bared bosome she doth broad display;
 Lo! see soone after how she fades and falls away.

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
 Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre;
 Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
 That earst was sought to deck both bed and bowre
 Of many a lady' and many a Paramowre.
 Gather therefore the Rose whilest yet is prime,
 For soone comes age that will her pride deflowre;
 Gather the rose of love whilest yet is time,
 Whilest loving thou mayst loved be with equall crime.
 (II, xii, 74-75)

Here, of course, the argument inverts the terms, saying, "Because there must be death, let there be sexual love." But all the exemplars of incontinence and intemperance in Book II display the terms in the proper relation: "Sexual love is

death. Pathos -- love merely suffered -- is the cause, not the result of death." The Genius who presides in the Bower of Bliss is not "the celestial power, to whom the care/ Of life, and the generation of all/ That lives, perteines" (II, xii, 47), but "The foe of life . . . That secretly doth us procure to fall" (II, xii, 48).

The Neo-Freudians, who have had so great an influence upon the formation of what is called "the counter-culture" by espousing so intemperately what they call "the life-values", and who see in the control and discipline of pathe a symptom of the death-wish, are here shown to be mistaken. For it is the uncontrolled affirmation of mere impulse that destroys Amavia and Mortdant, Pyrochles and Cymochles, Impotence and Impatience, Maleger, and the rest. When Guyon destroys the Bower and captures Acrasia in the cunningly-woven net of reason supplied by the Palmer, he releases Acrasia's victims (all but one) from their merely animal existence and restores to them the possibility of life on a truly human level.

Guyon's quest, like all of the knightly adventures in The Faerie Queene, is a quest for justice, for the "just revenge" called for by Amavia in Canto I. This is made unmistakably clear in the oath sworn by Guyon over her grave.

But, ere they did their utmost obsequy,
 Sir Guyon, more affection to increace,
 Bynempt a sacred vow, which none should ay releace.

The dead knights sword out of his sheath he drew,
 With which he cutt a lock of all their heare,
 Which medling with their blood and earth he threw
 Into the grave, and gan devoutly sweare;
 "Such and such evil God on Guyon reare,
 And worse and worse, young orphan, be thy payne,
 If I, or thou, dew vengeance do forbèare,
 Till guiltie blood her guerdon do obtayne."
 (II, i, 40-41)

This oath, an example of one of the "forms of proof" mentioned in the Tractatus Coislinianus as a means of distinguishing between pistis and gnosis, illusion and reality, begins the process by means of which Guyon withstands the batterings of pathe in their various forms and reveals that the mere affirmation of life, without ethical control, leads inevitably to death. This is the meaning of the artificiality of the Bower of Bliss, which superficially seems to full of life but is actually a form of death.

The crucial moment of the quest is Guyon's visit to the Castle of Alma, where he is permitted to pass through the Chambers of Imagination, Judgement, and Memory. Significantly, Imagination (Phantastes) displays characteristics very much like those of Maleger himself. He too is a mixture of life and death. He is young, but has a "crabbed hew" and "sharp, staring eyes." His counterpart in the Chamber of Judgement, however, is "a man of ripe and perfect age." The juridical process suggested by the Chamber of Judgement itself represents the means of passing from pistis to gnosis, from the illusion of life to its true possession,

from appearance (the "leasings, tales, and lies" of Phantastes)
to reality -- that is, to

All artes, all science, all Philosophy,
And all that in the world was ay thought wittily.
(II, ix, 53)

But the passage from pistis to gnosis achieved by means of
the reasoned judgement is also the passage from pathos to ethos,
from mere passive suffering to the active control of our humanity.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Wounds of Love

The subject of Books III and IV is the fall from the purely natural, sinless order of generation symbolized by the Garden of Adonis into the human world where sex means violence and misery. This is marked, first, by the dominance of wintry imagery. Marinell and Florimell are presumed dead, and are actually in the custody of sea-gods whose abode is the watery world. Florimell's place is taken by a simulacrum made of snow, which deceives everybody. The parallel with the myth of Pluto and Persephone is strong -- both Florimell and Amoret are held prisoner seven months. The onset of winter marks the passage from the perpetual spring of the Garden of Adonis into the fully cyclical world of ordinary nature. At the same time, it marks the beginning of human sexuality and its attendant dangers. The Garden of Adonis is an amoral world where the concept of sin is irrelevant, but in the human psyche, which is not vegetative but rational, the advent of sexual desire means suffering, misery, and the risk of the kind of metamorphosis which overtakes Hellenore and Malbecco.

The virtue of Chastity must thus contend with very

different antagonists than did Redcross and Guyon. They represented the kind of virtue in which intellect has a crucial role to play in bringing harmony out of human impulses, and to a large extent their dramas are enacted within the individual soul. But the sexual love treated in Books III and IV for the first time means the beginning of social relationships; virtue must now become more public. This is why Chastity and Friendship can be so closely identified.

The injustice which gives rise to Britomart's adventure is committed by Busirane upon Amoret, who, having left the Garden of Adonis to marry Scudamour, was kidnapped and imprisoned, chained and surrounded by a wall of fire. Unlike the adventures in Books I and II, and in spite of what Spenser says in the letter to Raleigh, this injustice is not brought to the court of Gloriana by a postulant. It happens by the way, so to speak, to come to Britomart's attention while she is searching for her own lover, Artegall. This suggests that the eventual salvation of Amoret is not something imposed upon human nature from and by a higher order of beings -- the faeries -- but is achieved on a purely human and natural level, which thus rises to meet the ideal order represented by Gloriana and her court.

Thus there is a determinate sequence of levels of the action, from the supernatural realm of Holiness in Book I, to

the achieved harmony of human reason in Book II, to the more mysterious depths of human sexuality in Books III and IV. This sequence may be conceived as parallel to the scheme of Plotinian hypostases described in Chapter Two of this study.¹ It moves from the supra-intelligent unity achieved by Redcross, to the intelligent harmony of human impulse symbolized by Guyon, to the infra-intelligent level of sexual harmony represented by Britomart. As the poem progresses, we move from heaven to earth, unity to multiplicity, intellect to emotion. As Plotinus said, the "contemplation" practised by vegetative nature resembles real contemplation as sleep resembles waking. This explains why the action of these two books depends so heavily upon images. Arthur's quest for Gloriana -- another example of the human order rising to meet the ideal -- was initiated in a dream. Similarly, Britomart sees Artegall first in Merlin's magic glass. As the action proceeds, images and illusions acquire still greater importance. The subsidiary action revolves around the false image of the snowy Florimell. The wall of fire that imprisons Amoret proves to be an illusion, as does the shadowy Masque of Cupid which flits through Busirane's castle in the hours of darkness.

But unlike the false images created by Archimago in Book I, which are conceived as essentially evil, the images of

¹ Chapter Two, pp. 19-22, above.

Book III are ambiguous. The sight of Artegall provokes Britomart at first to tears, since it appears that he is but a phantom. Merlin explains that her love is not only not in vain, but is to be the instrument of Providence.

Most noble Virgin, that by fatall lore
 Hast learn'd to love, let no whit thee dismay
 The hard beginning that meets thee in the dore,
 And with sharp fits thy tender hart oppresseth sore:

For so must all thinges excellent begin;
 And eke enrooted deep must be that Tree
 Whose big embodied branches shall not lin
 Till they to hevens hight forth stretched be . . .

It was not, Britomart, thy wandering eye
 Glauncing unwares in charmed looking glas
 But the streight course of heavenly destiny,
 Led with eternal providence, that has
 Guyded thy glance, to bring his will to pas:
 Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
 To love the prowest knight that ever was.
 Therefore submit thy wayes unto his will,
 And do by all dewe meanes thy destiny fulfill.
 (III, iii, 21-24)

Yet though her love is foreordained, and intended to establish justice (i.e. a union with Artegall) and "universal peace" eventually, it is also deeply painful. It is as if Britomart, like Amoret, must be deeply wounded in her nature in order that "Eros, builder of cities"² can bring about the firm establishment of "Troynovaunt". The image of the deep wound in human nature created by sexual love appears variously

² W. H. Auden, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud", in Collected Shorter Poems, 1927-1957, Faber and Faber, London, 1966, p. 170.

in Books III and IV as the wound inflicted upon Adonis by the boar and the wounds inflicted by Cupid's arrows. In the Garden of Adonis both the boar that killed Adonis and Cupid himself are controlled, subject to the government of Venus. But within human sexuality they rage as fiercely as ever. Britomart is wounded several times, in her fight with Marinell and, later, by Busirane. The wound that she inflicts upon Marinell fulfills the prophecy that he would be dismayed or killed by a woman. Amoret in the House of Busirane is "transfixed with a cruel dart" (III, xii, 31), while Belpheobe, attempting to cure Arthur's squire, unintentionally wounds him even more deeply with a dart from "her faire eyes and gracious countenance" (III, v, 42). Amoret is kidnapped by a savage, lustful figure with the tusks of a boar. For a time it is feared that Florimell has been wounded or killed by the Hyena-like beast that "feeds on womens flesh" (III, vii, 22).

The bestiality to which human nature can be reduced by sexual love is insisted upon throughout Books III and IV. Even the gods are not exempt from it, for Spenser includes references to many myths of metamorphosis, in which Jove, Apollo, and Proteus adopt bestial forms in the pursuit of mortal women. The story of Paridell's rape of Hellenore re-enacts the destruction of Troy, leaves Hellenore the thrall of satyrs, and leads Malbecco to forget his humanity entirely. The ravages

of lust are represented in other bestial forms -- in Argante and Olliphaunt, who represent all the perversions of the sexual instinct both masculine and feminine, and in the stories recounted to Britomart by Glauce in Canto II of Myrrhe and Biblis, who committed incest, and of Pasiphae, who loved Jove in the form of a bull, and Narcissus, who fell in love with his own image and "faded to a watery flowre" (III, ii, 45).

The four heroines of Books III and IV -- Florimell, Amoret, Belphoebe, and Britomart -- represent four different kinds of response to the wounds caused in human nature by sexual love. Florimell, upon hearing of the "death" of Marinell, simply resorts to headlong flight, which exposes her to the unwanted attentions of beasts and bestial men. Amoret, in contrast, is imprisoned, chained by lust, and surrounded by a wall of fire, so that even after her rescue she deeply fears even innocent human contact. Belphoebe suggests the type of human character who reacts in the opposite way by adopting a position of isolation from men altogether and practising a militant virginity. Only Britomart, comforted and guided by Merlin's prophecy, displays a balanced and harmonized response that combines desire and constancy, passion and control. The fact that she combines martial prowess with feminine beauty suggests that she is the most integrated of the heroines, so that she is better able to endure separation from her lover than are Florimell and Amoret.

The resolution of sexual conflict is conventionally symbolized by the reconciliation of Mars and Venus, and Britomart combines these aspects of human nature in her role as warrior maiden. In contrast to Amoret, she has a strength and courage that enable her to withstand the pain of love and to conquer her would-be assailants. At the same time she complements the salvagesse sans finesse of her lover, Artegall, by mollifying his rude violence with the feminine qualities of mercy and forgiveness. Thus the union of Britomart and Artegall repeats in a new form the resolution of Redcross' psychic conflict, since it too symbolizes the tempering of justice by mercy or charity. The eventual marriage of Britomart and Artegall means not only the resolution of the battle of the sexes but also the establishment of human amity symbolized by the order and peace of Troynovaunt. They are thus intentionally contrasted with Paridell and Hellenore, who represent the power of unbridled lust to destroy whole societies and reduce man from civility to the amoral state of nature. The release of Amoret from the House of Busirane is the signal for the development of the vision that counteracts the destructive capacities of sexual strife. This is the modified sexual urge that results in friendship and concord, symbolized first by Cambell and Triamond and later by Amyas and Placidas.

If the existing books of The Faerie Queene constitute

"a unified epic structure", as Northrop Frye assumes,³ then the transition from Book III to Book IV is a pivotal point in that structure. This transition is a very gradual one, since the stories of Scudamour and Amoret, Marinell and Florimell are not concluded until the end of Book IV, and Britomart's continues into Book V. The atmosphere of Book IV, however, is in contrast to that of Book III in that the emphasis is placed not upon the violent misery of love, nor upon the bestiality of corrupt love, but upon the bond of amity that can grow out of sexual strife. The first example of such amity is the eventual concord achieved by Cambell and Triamond through the intervention of Cambina. Hitherto, with Redcross, Guyon, and Britomart, the hero has been fighting an essentially private battle, a psychomachia. Now the emphasis gradually shifts to the more public and social virtues, as depicted first by

Couragious Cambell and stout Triamond,
With Canacee and Cambine linked in lovely bond.
(IV, ii, 31)

Indeed this quartet is a double figure or four, so to speak, since Triamond embodies the souls of his brothers Priamond and Diamond, so that Cambell and Triamond themselves are a foursome. Spenser's use of the name "Agape" to denote the power which has united three natures in one being appears

³ Northrop Frye, "The Structure and Imagery of The Faerie Queene", in Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1963, p. 70.

to suggest some overt Trinitarian symbolism, but if this was his intent it must be admitted that the effect is very odd indeed. It is almost blasphemous to depict Agape as dabbling in the black arts and then to point out, as Spenser does, that the attempt to prolong human life this way is "fond and vaine" (III, iii, 2). There is perhaps a pun intended on "concord", since Agape obtains her favour from the Moirae -- Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. But the inspiration for this figure is classical, not Christian. Cambina's wielding of the Caduceus, and her use of Nepenthe to make the rivals forget their hatred, suggests that whatever the "concord" might be, it is not rooted in any supernatural relation to the Christian God.

This abortive beginning of concord is immediately destroyed in any case by the tournament organized by Satyrane for Florimell's girdle, which is marked as fallacious from the beginning by the fact that the prize of arms is to be the snowy Florimell. In this tournament Artega11 fights Britomart and is overcome. In other words, the story seems to have fallen back from the concord of early cantos into the theme of sexual strife once more. Gradually, however, the theme of concord asserts itself once more, and Spenser seems to be working toward the idea that sexual love can be not only the root of all honour, in the courtly love tradition, but also the beginning of a Platonic ascent to heavenly beauty through friendship. Of the

"three kinds of love", he says,

Hard is the doubt, and difficult to deeme,
 When all three kinds of love together meet,
 And do dispart the hart with power extreme,
 Whether shall weigh the balance downe; to weete,
 The deare affection unto kindred sweete,
 Or raging fire of love to womankind,
 Or zeale of friends combined with vertues meet:
 But of them all the band of vertuous mind,
 Me seemes, the gentle hart should most assured bind.
 (IV, ix, 1)

This idea is illustrated in the friendship of Amyas and Placidus, which is instrumental in achieving a second fourfold concord in their double marriage to Aemylia and the redeemed Poena. Similarly, the four knights representing kinds of corrupt love (Druon, Claribell, Blandamour, and Paridell), doing battle as before for the false Florimell, are brought into accord with Britomart and Scudamour by the intervention of Arthur.

The movement from sexual strife towards concord that constitutes the structure of Books III and IV is given conceptual support in Scudamour's description of the Temple of Venus in Canto X. It is significant that, in contrast to both the island of Acrasa's Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis, the Temple of Venus is an island which has been fortified by human art. Spenser carefully points out that on this island

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, supplied it.
 (IV, x, 21)

The Bower of Bliss, we recall, was a place of corrupt art, of artifice deceitfully imitating nature, while the Garden of Adonis was purely natural, outside the human ethical process altogether. This island represents the concord between nature and art, the result of the sexual and generative urge (pathos), mitigated and sublimated by ethos. This emphasis upon the use of eros as a spur to achievement is clearly present in the inscription below Scudamour's shield:

Blessed the man that well can use his blisse.
(IV, x, 8)

As a logical concomitant of this concept of love, Spenser finds a place on the island not only for erotic love but also for the exemplars of friendship in the Platonic tradition, those who

Loved not as these for like intent,
But on chaste vertue grounded their desire . . .
Which in their spirits kindling zealous fire,
Brave thoughts and noble deedes did evermore aspire.
(IV, x, 27)

This pattern of concord between nature and man, and man and man, is completed by references to the concord within nature. The figure of Concord, who tempers the animosities of her twins, Love and Hatred, is not only the mother of Peace and Friendship but also the source of all vitality and orderliness in Nature:

By her the heaven is in his course contained,
And all the world in state unmoved stands,
As their Almighty maker first ordained,
And bound them with inviolable bands;

Else would the waters overflow the lands,
 And fire devoure the ayre, and hell them quight,
 But that she holds them with her blessed hands.
 She is the nourse of pleasure and delight,
 And unto Venus grace the gate doth open right.
 (IV, x, 35)

The steady insistence upon the resolution of conflicts in nature and in man culminates in the figure of Venus herself, who conceals beneath her veil the natures of both man and woman in a single androgynous figure.

She hath both kinds in one;
 Both male and female, both under one name.
 (IV, x, 41)

She is thus the unity of Mars and Venus, Artegall and Britomart, Marinell and Florimell, Scudamour and Amoret, the figure of ideal harmony between man and woman that is the basis of order both in nature and in human society.

Spenser uses the conventional allegorical figures of the courtly love tradition -- Doubt, Delay, Daunger -- to indicate that successful courtship is a moral achievement, something for which nature supplies only the basic urge, which must be disciplined and made constant in the face of innumerable obstacles and possible corruptions. As ethos, the love which issues in the chastity of marriage and is the substance of accord and friendship is removed from the amoral state of primitive nature and is placed firmly within the context of its own ethical world, for with love and friendship there is the basis for civilization. This latter fact is made clear by the destiny of Britomart and Artegall, whose love is to undo the ravages of

the first Troy and achieve the civility symbolized by Troynovaunt. The adventure of Artegall in Book V, therefore, is not a new beginning but a continuation of the movement out of nature into ethos depicted in Books III and IV -- as, indeed, Britomart's role in his quest indicates.

The conclusion of Book IV, in which the great concourse of rivers is both the occasion and symbol of the re-union of Marinell and Florimell, marks the end of the wintry and watery images that have dominated the action of these two books ever since Amoret left the primal innocence and simplicity of the Garden of Adonis. When he sees Florimell once more, Marinell regains his spirits

As withered weed through cruel winters time
That feels the warmth of sunny beames reflection.
(IV, xii, 34)

Taking pride of place in the wedding procession is the bridegroom, the River Thames, wearing the city of Troynovaunt like a coronet, and attended by the smaller tributaries that flow into the Thames in the area of London -- the Ouze, the Churn, and the Charwell from upstream, and the Kenet, Thetis, Cole, Breame, Lee, and Darent. When the Thames is united to the Medway in marriage, Spenser completes a grand coda] re-statement of the theme of Books III and IV, for it is an image of concord, order, and harmony in nature and in man which is crowned by the image of London, like a coronet spanning the great confluence of waters and symbolizing the civility to which love, marriage, and friendship lead.

Books III and IV constitute a distinct structure within the poem, for while Books I and II depict an order imposed upon human nature from above, in the form of the Holy Unity of God, or the steady control of anarchic impulse by the Faerie knight, Guyon, Books II and IV plunge the reader into the depths of nature below man, whence rises the generative impulse wherein man is one with nature, and depict the gradual process by which the sexual urge, potentially productive of misery, strife, and madness, ascends to the human and ethical level at which it is productive of ordered familial and social life, and makes possible, through the Platonic notion of an ascent to heavenly beauty, a return of man's spirit towards the wholly Other Being which is the subject of Book I. The middle two sections of the poem, in other words, turn back to link up with the first two, and produce a closed fourfold scheme of the levels on which human life is lived -- the natural, the social, the ethical, and the intellectual.

In the letter to Raleigh, Spenser explains that Scudamour's quest was undertaken in response to the complaint of "a Groome", who brought news that "a vile Enchaunter, called Busirane, had in hand a most faire Lady, called Amoretta, whom he kept in grievous torment, because she would not yield him the pleasure of her body."⁴ According to the version of the

⁴ "Letter to Raleigh", op. cit., p. 4.

story presented at the beginning of Book IV, however, it appears that Scudamour had already won Amoret as his love before she was spirited away by Busirane. In the poem as we have it, then, Scudamour is the postulant, and his appeal is not to one of Gloriana's knights but to Britomart. His complaint is couched in the same form as the others; it is, like them, an appeal for justice.

O soverayne Lord! that sit'st on hye,
 And raignst in bliss emongst thy blessed Saintes,
 How suffrest thou such shamefull cruelty
 So long unwreaked of thine enemy?
 Or hast thou, Lord, of good mens cause no heed?
 Or doth thy justice sleepe and silent ly?
 What booteth then the good and righteous deed,
 If goodness find no grace, nor righteousness no meed?
 (III,xi, 9)

He asks assistance from Britomart because he himself has been unable to penetrate the wall of fire surrounding the castle of Busirane. This development parallels the events of Books I and II, in each of which Prince Arthur comes to the rescue of one of Gloriana's knights. Yet in those earlier books, Redcross and Guyon go on to achieve their quests without further help from Arthur. In Book III, Britomart supplants Scudamour entirely as the rescuer of Amoret. The narrative structure of Books III and IV thus represents a considerable departure, with its complex interlacing of stories and its proliferation of agents, from the simpler and more direct narratives of Redcross and Guyon. Scudamour's story is a comparatively minor element in contrast to the adventures of Britomart and the story of

Florimell.

Spenser's adoption of this contrasting narrative technique can be accounted for by reasons other than the mere desire for variety. Books III and IV present the quest for justice in a form that complements its pattern in earlier books. Redcross and Guyon are directed from the beginning to seek out a specific evildoer and to rescue or avenge specific victims. In so doing, they encounter Arthur, who is not a Faerie knight, engaged in his own more personal quest for Gloriana. In Books III and IV this pattern is reversed. Britomart, engaged in her own personal quest for Artegall, encounters Scudamour, who has been unsuccessful in his attempt to free Amoret and punish Busirane. The effect of these parallels and contrasts is to suggest, as has been said, that an ideal of order being imposed on nature and man from levels above them (the will of God, the ideal human society as represented by Gloriana's court) meets its complement in an appetite for order that arises from the depths of nature and the human psyche (the loves of Arthur and Britomart). Thus the image of the union of two lovers is a constant symbol of the order and harmony within nature, the soul, and society at large which is the essence of Plato's concept of justice. The love of Marineil for Florimell, Scudamour for Amoret, Britomart for Artegall, Arthur for Gloriana, and Redcross for Una are the same Love which obtains at every level

of existence within nature and brings into harmony the elemental strife of water and earth, man and woman, soul and intellect, man and God. The same symbol is retained in Books V and VI in the eventual union of Britomart and Artegall and the love of Calidore for Pastorella. It appears in concentrated and powerful form in the figure of the androgynous Venus and in a variety of lesser forms throughout the poem (Medina, Concord, Venus and Adonis, Isis and Osiris, and elsewhere).

The only protagonist who is not closely identified with a feminine partner is Guyon, although even he is presented with an image of himself (the Castle of Alma) ruled by a woman. His defeat of Acrasia, however, is a necessary preliminary to the later versions of the reconciliation of sexual conflict. It shows how the eternal opposition of masculine and feminine is not to be reconciled, and is to that extent a negative instance of the theme. As Northrop Frye remarks,⁵ Guyon is a rather pedestrian hero, a fact not wholly accounted for by the theft of his horse. His presence in Book II is balanced, in any case, by that of Belphebe, his feminine counterpart, in Books III and IV.

Books III and IV, therefore, are central to the thematic structure of The Faerie Queene in more than a merely spatial sense. By virtue of the dominant personality of

⁵ Northrop Frye, "The Structure and Imagery of The Faerie Queene", in Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1963, p.75.

Britomart, these books present a counter-movement to the actions of Books I and II, in which the motivation of the action is not the impersonal, abstract ideal of justice but the personal, concrete ideal of love. The first four books of the poem, taken together, constitute yet another form of the fusion of masculine and feminine qualities which is the architectonic symbol of the poem.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Legend of Justice

In Book V, Spenser returns to the more direct and linear narrative structure used in Books I and II. Indeed, the story of Artegall is, if anything, more linear than those of Redcross and Guyon, since we are supplied with an account of Artegall's training in the lore of justice at the hands of Astraea and a plain narrative of the complaint of Irena which leads to his undertaking the quest. Like Redcross and Guyon, Artegall encounters a series of minor antagonists -- Sir Sanglier, Pollente, the egalitarian Giant, Amidas and Bracidas -- to whom he brings justice as a preparation for the climactic struggle with his major foe. And like Redcross and Guyon he fails in his penultimate task and must be rescued by another -- in this case, Britomart -- before he can go on to his final victory.

Yet Book V has a complexity of its own which derives from its position immediately following III and IV. In those books, the dominant symbol has been the androgynous figure who unites masculine and feminine in a complex unity of two conflicting powers. This image is of great importance in Book V as well, since the ideal of Justice celebrated here is also

a union of Justice and Mercy. The images, however, are more ambivalent than in earlier books. There is no single figure who unites both qualities. The best that Spenser can do is an approximation, as in the figures of Isis and the crocodile, or Mercilla and her lion, or Isis and Osiris, who are alternate personae for Britomart and Artegall. Indeed, Artegall, whose motto is Salvagesse sans finesse, and his groom Talus, the iron man who has no capacity for pity, figure forth the roughness and terror of Justice, the fact that as an ideal it can have no respect for persons. Britomart complements this component of the ideal with the feminine qualities of pity and compassion. The action of Book V revolves around the all but irreconcilable conflict between these two aspects of Justice.

Book V contains motifs from the earlier adventures of Redcross and Guyon which aim at establishing the relation between Justice and the Holiness and Temperance exemplified in those earlier episodes. As Artegall says to the egalitarian Giant,

Truth is one, and right is ever one.
(V, ii, 48)

Guyon appears in Canto III, where he restrains Artegall from doing violence to Braggadocio. Thus Spenser seems to be saying that Truth and Temperance, as he has defined them earlier,

are necessary adjuncts to Justice. The conflict between these two virtues, indeed, is analogous to the major conflict within the ideal of Justice; truth is truth, and is no respecter of persons, and yet the just judge must also temper his decrees by reference to the particular circumstances of each case. The concept of Justice developed in Book V, then, draws upon the conceptual framework of preceding books in order to produce a fully rounded explication. The exposition of the concepts of Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, and Friendship is a necessary preliminary to Book V, just as Book V is the logical implicate of earlier books.

In the very first canto, Spenser complains of the decay of the ancient ideals of Justice, Truth, and Peace. He makes it clear, before the action of the book begins, that ideal justice is not to be found in the world as we know it; Astraea is fled to the heavens, where as Virgo she represents the purity of the ideal no longer to be seen

Mongst wicked men, in whom no truth she found.
(V, i, 11)

This implies that the justice to be dispensed by Artegall is likely to be a very rough and ready sort, as indeed it is. Yet the action of Book V aims at bringing this admittedly partial ideal as close as possible, within the fallen world, to the purity of its former state. This requires, as we shall see, its constant control and mitigation by empirical factors --

and especially by the human impulse to compassion exemplified in Books III and IV. In this respect, Artegall is a mixture of Redcross and Guyon, as Justice is a combination of single-minded insistence on truth and the practical sense of what is appropriate under changing conditions.

Artegall's encounter with the egalitarian Giant in Canto II makes clear that a just judgement cannot, however, be a matter of mere expediency. The Giant's simplistic notions of bare mathematical equality seem at first to resemble the concept of the mean as exemplified by Guyon. The Giant intends to restore to the world the aboriginal equality that obtained between land and sea, nature and man, noble and peasant. But as Artegall points out, to do this a person must first know what those original proportions were. Moreover, justice is not simply a ratio, the dead arithmetic mean between two extremes. No amount of falsehood or injustice is commensurate with "truth" and "right". Justice is always in the middle, and cannot be weighed with equal parts of injustice. Artegall's insistence that the scales cannot deal with intangibles suggests that the Giant's essential error is materialism, the belief that numbers are adequate to describe all that exists. (Thus even at this early date we find socialism and materialism hand in hand.) The point is that there is no ratio, no simple formula for determining justice, since it is a dynamic concept always

changed by circumstances. The "doom of right" depends not upon calculation but upon insight. There is, of course, the kind of justice which requires an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth -- simple retributive justice. But how can one determine a punishment that fits the crime -- one, that is, that does an injury to the perpetrator of a crime equal to the injury inflicted by him? Here it is the intangibles that determine, and for this reason no simple counter-balancing of wrongs will suffice.

In the mind the doome of right must bee.
(V, ii, 47)

Artegall has already demonstrated this in his judgement of the dispute between Sir Sanglier and the young squire. Simple arithmetic equality -- the dividing of the lady into two equal parts -- is no solution at all. Justice in this case depends upon insight into character; Artégall perceives by Sir Sanglier's easy acquiescence where the truth lies.

The arbitration of the dispute between the two brothers, Amidas and Bracidas, develops this point more fully. Like the Giant, each brother bases his claim upon the original status of his inheritance, before the ever-shifting sea had transferred each one's wealth to the other. Artégall points out that the ideal of justice is not static but dynamic, like the sea itself. Amid ever-changing circumstances, one principle obtains, namely

that justice is one for all parties to the dispute. The principle that awards the land to Amidas is the same principle that awards the treasure to Bracidas.

So was their discord by this doome appeased,
And each one had his right.

(V, iv, 21)

This is the principle of distributive justice, which means that a judgement is just only if the same principle is applied in the same way to every party in a given case. Since circumstances alter cases, the principle appealed to will differ from one instance to another. Thus the concept of distributive justice cannot be implemented by any simple rule of thumb. Justice is a complex interplay of permanence and change, the One and the Many (a principle invoked later at the trial of Mutability). It is dynamic, not static; it depends upon insight, not calculation; and it requires both the singleness of vision exemplified by Redcross and the practical sense of the mean illustrated by Guyon. In justice as in ethics, as Aristotle reminds us, "it is the mark of the educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits." ¹

Whoever dispenses justice must be prepared to back his judgements with force, Spenser reminds us at the beginning of Canto IV.

Whoso upon himselfe will take the skill
True Justice unto people to divide,

¹ Nicomachean Ethics, I, iii.

Had neede have mightie hands for to fulfill
 That which he doth with righteous doome decide,
 And for to maister wrong and puissant pride;
 For vaine it is to deeme of things aright,
 And makes wrongdoers justice to deride,
 Unless it be perform'd with dreadless might;
 For power is the right hand of Justice truely hight.
 (V, iv, 1)

One symbol of Artegall's "dreadless might" is the iron man, Talus, who is incapable of pity and against whom no antagonist can prevail. But there is, as we might expect, something subhuman and mechanical about Talus; he executes Artegall's judgements with a brutal literalism, and must repeatedly be restrained by Artegall and later by Britomart. He is, one might say, that side of Artegall's character defined by the motto Salvagesse sans finesse. Yet the merely instrumental nature of Talus' power is demonstrated when Artegall, having foolishly agreed to Radigund's conditions of battle, is subdued by her beauty and becomes a thrall to the "monstrous regiment" of women. Talus does not interfere because he is bound by Artegall's judgement and has no power to act on his own initiative.

Yet all that while he would not once assay
 To reskew his own Lorde, but thought it just t' obey.
 (V, v 19)

The instrumental nature of this aspect of Artegall's power is also emphasized in Canto VIII, where Artegall mistakenly does battle with Arthur. When Samient explains who his opponent is, Artegall apologizes, saying

Sir Knight, of pardon I you pray,
 That all unweeting have you wrong'd thus sore,
 Suffering my hand against my heart to stray.
 (V, vii, 13)

This implies that the power that Artegall disposes must always be subordinate to the heart and mind that direct it. In one sense, the egalitarian Giant's mistake was to assume that mere mindless measurement, the application of rules of thumb, could produce a just judgement. But

In the mind the doome of right must be.
 (V, ii, 47)

Artegall's subjection to Radigund develops another side of his nature -- his susceptibility to feminine beauty and to misplaced compassion. Radigund herself points out that in this case Artegall has been the cause of his own bondage.

Not my valour, but his own brave mind,
 Subjected hath to my unequal might.
 (V, v, 32)

A comparison between Artegall here and Guyon in the Bower of Bliss is instructive. Guyon is touched by the temptation to forget his quest in the presence of feminine beauty, but he ruthlessly presses on to the destruction of the Bower. Artegall is influenced not by lust but by something more like compassion; nevertheless, he reveals himself here as less single-minded than Guyon. At the same time, the motif of the wound of Adonis is repeated once more in Artegall's fight with Radigund.

And, like a greedie Beare unto her pray,
 With her sharpe Cemitare at him she flew,

That glancing down his thigh the purple blood forth drew.
(V, v, 9)

Thus Spenser reminds us that the virtue of Justice in some sense contains and depends upon the virtues celebrated in earlier books. Artegall's task is somehow to reconcile in his prosecution of evildoers the single-minded vision of Redcross, the temperance and self-control of Guyon, and the superiority to passion -- which is yet compassionate -- symbolized by Britomart.

The difficulty of this task is stressed by the fact that there is no single figure in Book V who is the exemplar of Justice in its fulness. (Astraea, we recall, has long since fled from the scene.) Artegall restrains Talus, but needs help from Britomart. The vision of the unity of masculine and feminine qualities is not embodied in an actual being but in a dream centred upon an idol -- Britomart's "wondrous vision" in Isis Church. The very strangeness and barbarity of the dream, in which the crocodile devours the flames and tempest and then enters into a sexual union with the goddess, suggests the complexity of the idea that Spenser is trying to develop. Britomart's vision is at two removes from reality, so to speak, and is interpreted by the priests as a prophecy of the eventual union of Artegall and Britomart. This leaves the impression that Spenser found the concept of Justice peculiarly intractable to his efforts at symbolic unification. He has, of course, already warned us of the decay in the antique ideal of Justice.

There is thus a sense of growing complexity in the structure and tone of the poem, a complexity which takes us at once further away from the ideal unity of Book I and closer to the ambivalences and ambiguities of the world as we know it. This progression in complexity is to continue in Book VI, where Colin's vision of the Graces on Mount Acidale is destroyed by the arrival of Calidore -- an event which suggests a contradiction between the active life of the courtier and the contemplative life of the poet.

Britomart's victory over Radigund supplies a further perspective on the nature of Justice. It not only repeats the Renaissance and Aristotelian notion that rule by women is monstrous and unjust but also makes the point that Justice is not something to be negotiated between sovereign and citizen. Britomart curtly refuses to listen to Radigund's "conditions" before the battle. This stresses once again the absolute nature of Justice, the fact that Justice cannot be a respecter of persons, or deal differently with one wrongdoer than with others. At the same time, Britomart restrains Talus once more from his pitiless prosecution of lesser figures.

All these issues and motifs are recapitulated in the trial of Duessa in the House of Mercilla. Spenser reveals a certain uneasiness at the complexity of his concept of Justice by raising explicitly the question of whether Mercy can be united

with Justice.

Some Clarkes do doubt in their devicefull art
 Whether this heavenly thing whereof I treat,
 To weeten Mercie, be of Justice part,
 Or drawne forth from her by divine extreate:
 This well I wote, that sure she is as great,
 And meriteth to have as high a place,
 Sith in th' Almightyes everlasting seat
 She first was bred, and borne of heavenly race,
 From thence pour'd down on men by influence of grace.

For if that Vertue be of so great might
 Which from just verdict will for nothing start,
 But to preserve inviolated right
 Oft spilles the principal to save the part;
 Of such more, then, is that of powre and skill,
 That seekes to save the subject of her skill,
 Yet never doth from doome of right depart,
 As it is greater prayse to save then spill,
 And better to reforme then to cut off the ill.
 (V, x, 1-2)

Significantly, he says that Mercy "meriteth to have as high a place" as, and that it deserves "greater prayse" than, the merely just verdict, but he cannot bring himself to identify the two. This issue of course has already been treated, though in a much different perspective, in the redemption of Redcross in Book I. There it was a question of bringing Redcross to see that God's wrath and His charity are one. Obviously, however, this is possible only in the metaphysical perspective of Holiness. As the poem develops, we move further and further away from Redcross' transcendental vision, until in Book V the two great virtues are no longer identifiable as one. Mercilla seeks to "save the subject of her skill", but in the face of the weighty arguments brought forward against sparing

Duessa, she must ultimately order her execution, and content herself with

ruing her wilful fall
 With more then needfull natural remorse,
 And yeelding the last honour to her wretched corse.
 (V, x, 4)

The dominant impression left by Book V, then, is of a rigorous attempt on Spenser's part to explicate the ideal of Justice in a way that respects both its absoluteness and the need to temper its decrees with compassion. Spenser takes considerable care to insist upon both aspects, lest the concept degenerate into the two opposite extremes of fanaticism on the one hand and mere cynical expediency on the other. Thus the impersonal literalism of Talus is balanced by the compassion displayed by Britomart. Yet in the fight against Radigund it is Artegall who is overcome by compassion, and Britomart who upholds the absolute nature of the ideal by refusing all negotiation. Artegall insists, as against the simplistic literalism of the Giant with his scales, that truth and right are ever one, yet he is guilty of compromise with Radigund. The just judgement, Spenser seems to be saying, is always one and yet never the same, a dynamic and complex principle that is exemplified in the world only partially, yet remains one within itself, like the Platonic forms of which it is one of the most important.

The point is the Platonic one that no virtue can

exist apart from wisdom. Simplistic notions too often lead to the corruption of Justice into fanaticism or expediency. Only he who combines the constant devotion to truth exemplified by Redcross, and the practical temperance of Guyon can undertake to judge in such weighty matters, and even so, Justice in the world as we know it is of all virtues the most difficult and perhaps the most rare. C. S. Lewis' adverse comments on Book V of The Faerie Queene are a form of ad hominem argument based on Spenser's View of the Present State of Ireland. "In all this," says Lewis,

there is something I shall not attempt to excuse. Spenser was the instrument of a detestable policy in Ireland, and in his fifth book the wickedness² he had shared begins to corrupt his imagination.

This judgement seems to the present writer to be not wholly fair to Spenser's poem. What emerges from the study of Book V is the sense that Spenser has confronted an extremely difficult concept with great integrity, trying to preserve and to harmonize two almost totally opposed values. It is fatally easy to forget the idea of Justice in the complexities of human experience, and, as many radicals do, to abandon it altogether in favour of a simplistic ideal of "peace" and "love". This is to ignore, however, the kind of realism that tempers all of Spenser's ideals -- the honesty that leads him to include unpalatable truths in his poem as well as visionary

² C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 349.

ideals. If, as seems to have happened in Book V, this requires apparent inconsistencies, so much the better. As his poem develops, Spenser's vision of the world develops with it; it becomes more ironic and complex, until the simplicities of Books I and II -- admirable and true though they are in their own context -- prove no longer adequate in a world that is becoming more and more recognizable as the fallen world of our present experience. To insist upon primal simplicities in a fallen world is just the mistake of the egalitarian Giant, and those who make the same mistake today are granted the same reward -- the admiration of "fooles, women, and boys" (V, ii, 30).

The object of the Renaissance poet was, above all, to produce in the reader the ability to govern. As Spenser himself says, his "general end" was "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."³ Sir Philip Sidney expressed the same thought by saying that poetry works "not onely to make a Cyrus, which had been a particular excellence, as Nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world, to make many Cyrus's."⁴ Such an aim requires

³ "Letter to Raleigh", op. cit., p. 1.

⁴ An Apologie for Poetrie, edited by J. Churton Collins, Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1907, p. 9.

that the problem of justice, the question of "law and order" as it is called, be faced. It was not open to Spenser, as it is to modern poets, to dismiss the problems of the ruler as inherently wicked. Indeed, quite the reverse. According to Sidney, all branches of learning, but most particularly poetry, are

directed to the highest end of the mistress knowledge, by the Greekes called architectonike, which stands (as I thinke) in the knowledge of a mans selfe, in the Ethicke and politick consideration, with the end of well dooing and not of well knowing onely.⁵

This makes it unmistakably clear that the object of private and personal virtue is public and political virtue, that the ethical process culminates in the political process.

This perspective enables us to see in the structure of the first five books of the poem an aim and a direction that knits them all into a purposive whole. In a sense, his explications of "Holiness" and "Temperance" and "Chastity" are the necessary preparation for his explications of "Friendship", "Justice", and "Courtesy". As his perspective shifts from private to public virtues, from pathos to ethos, the poem becomes more and more complex. This progression permits a discussion of Justice that avoids both the Scylla of fanaticism and the Charybdis of mere expediency or

⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

opportunism. As we have seen, he requires at this stage not a single exemplar of this virtue, as had been the case with the private virtues, but a community of figures, each of whom at various times contributes to the development of the concept. Yet we are sustained amid these complexities by the memory of the achievements of Redcross, Guyon, and Britomart, who participate in the action as reminders that Justice is the unified functioning of these prior virtues in the complexity of the public arena.

CHAPTER SIX

The Fading Vision

In several respects Book VI is the most complex, and the most deeply ironic, book of The Faerie Queene. Its complexity is not that of symbolism or of structure as in Book III, but of tone and attitude. Calidore, unlike any of his predecessors, forgets his quest for a time, and comes close to abandoning it altogether, attracted by his love for Pastorella and the simplicities of life with Meliboe and Coridon. The presence of the poet's alternate persona, Colin Clout, supplies a second perspective on the action -- a perspective which at times even seems to run counter to the accepted values of Gloriana's court. The battles of Book VI appear to be deliberately inconclusive; few of them are to the death, and even the Blatant Beast eventually escapes from Calidore and remains at the end as destructive and malign as ever.

In an acute and detailed study of Book VI,¹ Richard Neuse argues that this irony is the product of Spenser's deepening

¹ "Book VI as Conclusion to The Faerie Queene", English Literary History, Vol. 35, No. 3 (September, 1968).

despair of seeing his courtly ideal realized. "It reflects," he says, "the poet's desire to find solace in a pastoral idyll from the harshness of the historical world."² It is the values of privacy and contemplation that are chiefly threatened by the thousand tongues of the Blatant Beast. Colin's vision of the Graces on Mount Acidale fades at the approach of Calidore because Colin represents a private and reflective attitude toward life that cannot survive in the corrupt world of pragmatic values which the champion of Gloriana has come to represent.

Mr. Neuse's analysis of the tone of Book VI is a clear and cogent one. Many of his conclusions seem justified by the many baffling ironies that develop. The present study differs from the view of Mr. Neuse, however, in the assumption that this result is not conditioned historically by Spenser's disappointment with the life of the court, but is the logical development of the thematic structure of the poem and has been implicit in it from the outset.

As we have seen, Book III is set over against Books I and II by the fact that it depicts a movement arising from the depths of nature to meet the supernatural or purely human virtues of Holiness and Temperance. Similarly, Book VI is set

² Loc. cit., p. 222.

over against Books IV and V by its greater insistence on the simplicity of the natural life as contrasted with the civic virtues of amity and justice. Courtesy, Spenser informs us, is "the root of civil conversation" (VI, i, 1). This vegetative imagery is sustained throughout the introductory stanzas. Courtesy itself was "by the Gods with paine/ Planted in earth, being derived at first/ From heavenly seedes of bounty souveraine" (VI, Proem). Courtesy, "though it on a lonely stalke does bowre/ Yet brancheth forth in brave nobilitee" (4). Calidore is the knight in whom "gentleness of spright/ And manners mylde were planted naturall" (VI, i, 2). This virtue, the poet insists, is a quality that is more often inherent in a man's nature than attained by labour and discipline.

Thereto great helpe dame Natures selfe doth lend;
 For some so goodly gracious are by kind,
 That every action doth them much commend,
 And in the eyes of men great liking fynd,
 Which others that have greater skill in mind,
 Though they enforce themselves, cannot attaine.
 (VI, ii, 2)

Sir Tristram, who becomes Calidore's squire, is so pleased at the honour that he blossoms before our eyes

Like as a flowre, whose silken leaves small
 Long shut up in the bud from heavens view,
 At length breakes forth, and brode displays his smiling hew.
 (VI, ii, 35)

Even the rape of Pastorella by the brigands has correspondences with the Persephone myth, for when Calidore frees her from

underground prison her rescue is like a restoration of life.

So her uneth at last he did revive,
That long had lyen dead, and made again alive.
(VI, ix, 50)

Book VI is remarkable also for the frankness and openness of its sexual activities. Priscilla and Aladine, Calepine and Serena, Claribell and Bellamour, even Calidore and Pastorella celebrate their loves naturally, frankly, and openly, in a manner reminiscent of the lovers in the Garden of Adonis. Here the obstacle to their joy is not moral scruple but rather the damage that will be done to the women's reputations by the Blatant Beast -- whose wounds, in any case, are much more easily cured than the wounds of love in Book III.

The dominant image of such naturalness is, of course, the pastoral setting of much of the book. The life of Meliboe is the symbol of a life lived close to nature, far from the envy and detraction that prevail at court, and therefore not vulnerable to the attacks of the Blatant Beast. Thus the natural world celebrated in Book VI differs from the "nature" depicted in Book III in that it is interpenetrated by the human. It has something of the frankness and honesty of the Garden of Adonis translated into human nature, this time without the intensity and moralistic restraint so typical of Redcross, Guyon, and Britomart. The rigour of the quest is here relaxed, and, though the poet cannot approve Calidore's evasion of

responsibility, he cannot bring himself to condemn it either.

Ne certes mote he greatly blamed be
 From so high step to stoupe so low,
 For who had tasted once (as oft did he)
 The happy peace which there doth overflow,
 And prov'd the perfect pleasure which do grow
 Amongst poor hyndes, in hils, in woods, in dales,
 Would never more delight in painted show
 Of such false blisse, as there is set for stales
 T' entrap unwary fooles in their eternal bales.
 (VI, x, 3)

The conflicts of Book VI lack the deadly seriousness of the battles in earlier books. Crudor and Briana are not deep-dyed villains but basically good-natured people who have acquired rough and brutal ways, and they are taught courtesy by Calidore, not exterminated as they would have been by Artegall. (Thus Calidore represents a softening of the rigour exemplified by Artegall, and is able to achieve, as Artegall and Mercilla could not, the rehabilitation of the criminal.

As it is greater prayse to save then spill,
 And better to reforme then to cut off the ill.
 (V, x, 2)

Turpine is merely "baffuld", not slain. Arthur spares the giant Disdain at the request of Mirabella, and even the Blatant Beast is merely bound for a time. Indeed, Calidore's pursuit itself often seems more like flight; he follows it from courts to cities and from there to the country and the farms, but when he comes to the open fields, where the shepherds have no knowledge of the Beast, he stays there. This suggests that he is more concerned with escaping from

the Beast's defamation himself than with ridding the commonwealth of it -- perhaps because the latter is impossible in any case.

In the characters of Tristram, "the salvage man", and Pastorella Spenser develops the theme of the contrast between "nature" and "nurture". All three are apparently of noble blood -- Tristram a prince and Pastorella the lost daughter of Bellamour and Claribell. They -- and, indeed, Calidore himself, whose courtesy seems innate and not learned -- are examples of "natural" good breeding which reveals itself in spite of their lack of education and the humble circles in which they move. Thus Book VI contrasts strongly with earlier books, in which virtue is to be gained only at the cost of great labour and painful experience. The description of the Graces, dancing to Colin's pipe on Mount Acidale, accentuates this motif of natural gifts. "These three," says Colin,

on men all gracious gifts bestow,
Which decke the body or adorne the mind,
To make them lovely or well-favoured show;
As comely carriage, entertainment kynde,
Sweet semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde,
And all the complements of curtesie.
(VI, x, 23)

They are naked because they are "without guile or false dissemblance" (VI, x, 24); they represent a goodness deep within nature that stands over against the hypocrisy and fraud connoted by the term "courtier" in its pejorative or

Machiavellian sense. They appear to Colin because Colin is Spenser's alter ego, the symbol of the poet devoted to his own private vision which cannot survive the translation into "public matter of fact." This explains, perhaps, why Spenser apologizes to Gloriana for celebrating the beauty of his own "country lass"; he feels the contradiction between his private poetic vision and the devotion of his art to the "ethicke and politick consideration".³ For the vision, once past, cannot be recalled at will.

For being gone, none can them bring in place,
But whom they of themselves list so to grace.
(VI, x, 20)

It represents a region of the mind which is neither pathos nor ethos, an experience which is not "suffering" in the ordinary sense but which falls outside the rational order because it seems to be vouchsafed from "above" rather than from "below".

Thus both Calidore and the poet seem to combine within themselves two contradictory sets of values, the public and the private. The poem, which has been moving steadily from the intensely private virtues of holiness and self-control towards the more public virtues of friendship and justice, seems here to circle back on itself. The developing irony,

³ An Apologie for Poetrie, edited by J. Churton Collins, Oxford. the Clarendon Press, 1907, p. 13.

however, is not the result of Spenser's disillusionment with the original ideas and ideals of the poem; it is a consequence of the poem's structure, which reveals a pattern of progressive "displacement" or ambiguity as it proceeds. One might say that each book brings us closer to the world of actual experience, where the single-minded vision of Redcross and the moral rigour of Guyon and Britomart -- though entirely proper within their own contexts -- are apt to seem fanatic and inhuman. We have seen this pattern emerge in Book V, where the incompatibility between civil order and "grace" appears in Artegall's and Mercilla's failure to unite justice and mercy. There, however, the possibility of their ultimate union was insisted on through the prophecy of the eventual marriage of Artegall and Britomart. Book VI is more deeply ironic in that there is no provision for such a reconciliation between the private world of contemplation and the growing "democratic" values which are an assault upon natural personal nobility. As a result, the poem takes on qualities which have come to be thought of as distinctively modern -- a disinclination to espouse any single moral point of view, a sense of the relativity of values, and a resulting ironic reserve on the part of the poet, a reluctance to identify any single attitude as correct or sufficient in itself. There is thus, in Spenser's ideal of courtesy, an element of what moderns call savoir faire. But as a result,

the poet himself seems to suffer a form of schizophrenia; he returns to the pastoral idiom which he had ostentatiously abjured in the Proem to Book I.

Lo! I, the man whose Muse whylome did maske,
As time her taught, in lowly Shephards weeds,
Am now enforst, a far unfitter taske,
For trumpets sterne to change mine oaten reeds.

Nevertheless, if Calidore falls short of exemplifying the moral rigour and the unshakable purpose of Redcross and Guyon, Britomart and Artegall, he does exemplify a more liberal and in some ways more humane attitude towards life. His virtue is natural and innate, not learned, as was that of Redcross and Artegall. He and his associates in the quest are better able to reform and rehabilitate their adversaries. In a sense, Calidore, who comes close to forgetting his mission, is the counterpart of Talus, who, once embarked on a task, pursues it with the mechanical tenacity of an automaton. He is thus more humane and more recognizably human than his predecessors. He is in many ways the complement and counterpart, especially, of Artegall. Book VI is more complex than earlier books because it deals with a side of human nature often sadly lacking in the heroic character -- tolerance.

Of course, Calidore is still a representative of the court, and his presence is plainly antithetical to whatever it is that Colin's vision on Mount Acidale represents. Nevertheless, the mere fact that he is privileged to watch it

at all suggests that he is more capable of understanding its value than some of Gloriana's other champions. (We can imagine the distaste and disapproval with which Redcross or Guyon would have responded to the sight of

An hundred naked maidens lilly white
 All raunged in a ring and dancing with delight.
 (VI, x, 11))

But Mount Acidale is not the Bower of Bliss, nor even the Garden of Adonis. It is, perhaps, the human counterpart of the Garden, where the nakedness of woman represents a free and uncorrupted response to beauty of every kind. Calidore is enchanted by it, but he also admits that his allegiance to the symbol of civil order precludes him from such visions of private felicity.

Now sure it yrketh me,
 That to thy blisse I made this lucklesse breach,
 As now the author of thy bale to be,
 Thus to bereave thy loves dear sight from thee:
 But, gentle shepheard, pardon thou my shame,
 Who rashly sought that which I mote not see.
 (VI, x, 29)

Thus, as Spenser's poem moves further and further away from the private values of intellect, reason, and chastity towards the public values of amity, justice, and courtesy, the ironic gap between individual felicity and public order is more and more accentuated, until in Book VI it seems that this development must be compensated for by the insertion of Colin's private vision, which, though very different morally, is a secular version of Redcross' vision on the Hill of

Contemplation. A full study of the complex structure of the poem as a whole will be undertaken in a later chapter.⁴ Here let it suffice to say that Book VI is not the symptom of Spenser's growing despair at the inadequacy of his courtly ideal, but is the necessary sequel to it, in which its original intensity is modified by an awareness of human existence in its entirety.

In a study of the Cantos of Mutability, Harry Berger advances the view that in Spenser's poetry as a whole there is

an overall developmental pattern in which three vectors coalesce: from lower to higher, from simpler to more complex, and, of course, from earlier to later.⁵

But the equation: later = more complex = higher (which, as Berger says, is an evolutionary pattern) is misleading if not balanced by an awareness of its opposite, which might be called the "entropic" pattern. This valuation, which is exemplified in both the Eden myth and the second law of thermodynamics, views change necessarily as decay; its equation is: later = more chaotic = lower. And it is apparent that these two patterns may be discerned in the universe and in human life as coexisting. Spenser's poem too displays them together; from one point of view, his later heroes, because they live

⁴ See Chapter Seven of this study, pp. 101-114.

⁵ "The Mutabilitie Cantos: Archaism and Evolution in Retrospect," in Spenser: A Collection of Critical Essays, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, p. 146.

in a world more recognizably contemporary with us, are more mature and realistic. From another, because they have lost sight of the archetypal unity that was present to Redcross, they represent a decline from the intensity of earlier ideals. Spenser's poem thus moves in both directions at once. Each book is a self-contained "universe of discourse" which works out the implications of a single moral value. Yet together they constitute a set of perspectives which complement (and sometimes conflict with) one another. Thus the plan of the poem as a whole is designed progressively to illuminate the entire ethical process, to reconcile innocence and experience, and thus to form a complex symbol of the full range of human moral activity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Theme and Structure in Books I to VI

Spenser is the most systematically rhetorical of any major English poet. His characteristic method is to establish a broad conceptual scheme (for example, the cycle of the months in The Shepherd's Calendar or Mutabilitie, the Seven Deadly Sins, the "twelve moral virtues as Aristotle hath devised") and methodically to exploit it. This requires that he pay special attention to the principle of decorum, which, as Milton remarked, is "the grand masterpiece to observe."¹ The detailed writing must be carefully suited to the governing concept, in action, character, setting, and imagery. Within this pattern, Spenser brings into play all the resources of his rhetorical skill, embroidering his poem with conventional devices like the epic simile, the lyrical "complaint", the heraldic challenge, and the aphorism which expresses traditional wisdom.

From one point of view, this leaves him open to the accusation that his poetry is too methodical, systematic almost to the point of being mechanical. It has great advantages too,

¹John Milton, "Of Education", in The Portable Milton, edited by Douglas Bush, The Viking Press, New York, 1949, p. 146.

however. For it permits a fullness and richness of treatment, which ensures an objectivity that is not to be found in the work of less pedestrian poets. The allegorical scheme of The Faerie Queene produces a series of self-contained structures, each celebrating a particular moral virtue; yet the sequence of books adds complementary perspectives. As a consequence, Spenser's meaning is not to be found through minute scrutiny of the verbal texture in the fashion of the "new critics". It is comprehensive and cumulative. It emerges only after each book has been considered as a necessary adjunct to the entire structure. This makes it impossible to state the theme of the poem in any simple prose formulation; the theme and structure are indistinguishable.

Broadly speaking, the six completed books of The Faerie Queene follow a sequence that passes from the individual to the collective, the private to the public aspects of ethical behaviour. Books I to III are focussed upon processes that occur essentially within the individual soul -- religious justification (Redcross), rational self-control (Guyon), and erotic fulfilment (Britomart). Books IV to VI are primarily concerned with social and political relationships between individuals -- friendship, justice, courtesy. In this aspect of the poem's structure, obviously, Books III and IV are critical because together they form the hinge on which the

whole structure turns, and accomplish the transition from the "private" to the "public". To strengthen the structure here, Spenser has welded them together by virtue of the fact that the action straddles these two books; the stories of Marinell and Florimell, Scudamour and Amoret, Artegall and Britomart are begun in Book III but not completed until Book IV. This structural device suggests the closeness of the relation between the thematic elements. Love is the most "social" of private experiences and friendship the most private of social experiences. The actual progress of thematic development may be shown by the contrast between Book I and Book VI. The action of Book I is apocalyptic in its intensity, and the conflict is essentially between Redcross' intellect and the illusions of Archimago, who is a surrogate for Satan, "the great dragon". Redcross' most difficult moment is occasioned by the "still, small voice" of Despair, with its whispered incitement to suicide. By contrast, the action of Book VI is more diffuse and secular. Calidore's adversary is less clearly defined and harder to fight, while at the same time less deadly than Redcross'. Calidore is preoccupied by questions of social well-being, not religious atonement. The adventures of Guyon, Scudamour, Britomart, and Artegall are carefully graduated in theme between these two extremes, Guyon's quest being more "public" than Redcross', in the sense that it depicts

a plurality of impulses within the soul which must be brought into unison by reason, and more private than Britomart's or Scudamour's because it is confined to the arena of the individual psyche. A similar progression may be observed in succeeding books.

This sequence from unity to multiplicity, privacy to publicity, displays aspects of evolutionary growth as well as of what we have called "entropic decay". As the action and the dominant characters become more social, they also become more worldly and more ambivalent. Scudamour, Artegall, and Calidore are more recognizable as human beings, with faults and shortcomings, than are Redcross, Guyon, and Britomart. At the same time, their adversaries are less archetypal, more realistic. The ambiguity of this structure is emphasized by the poet's continuing references to the decay of the chivalric ideal, the impossibility of justice and courtesy in the actual world. This "displacement", to use Freud's term, is ambiguous in the sense that it is a progression both away from a primitive state of innocence and towards a more truly human maturity. As Harry Berger points out,

the normal and normative growth of human consciousness and conscience is from a relatively narrow, simplistic, or elementally "pure" perspective to a broader, more complex, and

comprehensive perspective. In early or regressive stages, for example, distinguishable areas tend to blur or overlap, as when the mind fails to perceive or respect the boundaries between itself and the world, man and God, self and other, love and hate, heaven and earth²

This statement illustrates the perspective of "evolutionary growth"; according to this scheme, Redcross' vision of the identity between God and man must be designated as "narrow", "simplistic", and "regressive". But it is certainly not presented purely as such in the poem, for Spenser continually bewails the corruption of antique values in a way which suggests that he also saw such "growth" as decay. In this respect, it is Artegall and Calidore who represent the narrow and the simplistic. (Spenser's ambivalent attitude towards this process is most clearly expressed in the Mutabilitie Cantos, and the discussion of this problem will be continued in Chapter VIII of this study.)

We have seen that Books I to VI of The Faerie Queene display a binary or two-part structure depicting a consistent progression of theme. But they may also be analyzed to reveal a ternary or three-part structure. In this perspective, the completed books may be arranged in three sets of two. Books I and II are associated by virtue of their concentration upon the cognitive values of intellect and reason (in Kantian terms,

² Harry Berger, Jr., "The Mutabilitie Cantos: Archaism and Evolution in Retrospect," in Spenser: A Collection of Critical Essays, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, p. 146.

"reason" and "judgement", respectively). Redcross is the exemplar of contemplative vision, Guyon of rational self-control. Books III and IV are closely related not only by their unity of action but by their concern with the "affective" values of erotic impulse and social concord. Books V and VI are similar in that each is concerned with the political or social relationships of the community at large. In each of these pairs, the later book is related to the earlier by the fact that its "virtue" is less intense and more accommodating. Just as Guyon's "judgement" is a softened and more circumspect form of Redcross' "intellect", so Calidore's "courtesy" is a more flexible and humane way of dealing with people than is Artegall's "justice". Obviously a similar relation obtains between "friendship" and "chastity". This gradual decline in intensity (alternatively, it is a development in humaneness) is another aspect of the "displacement" referred to above.

But there is a third aspect of the structure of the poem that co-exists with the first two -- yet another binary structure reflecting a rhythmic repetition of motifs in which Books I, III, and V are contrasted with Books II, IV, and VI by the aspect of displacement already described. Thus Redcross, Britomart, and Artegall are the exemplars of a single-minded tenacity as opposed to the more accommodating and congenial characters of Guyon, Scudamour, and Calidore.

This complexity of structure exemplifies the advantage gained by Spenser's systematic rhetorical technique, for each successive book modifies and complements the theme of its predecessor; Guyon supplies an element of cognitive behaviour which Redcross lacks, and so throughout. Thus, while each individual book is conceptually self-contained, their sequence gradually fills out and builds up a view of human ethical behaviour that is remarkable in its breadth of vision, its objectivity, and its freedom from rigidity and fanaticism.

As C. S. Lewis remarks,

Spenser's whole method is such that we have a very dim perception of his characters until we meet them or their archetypes at the great allegorical centres of each book.³

Exactly the same may be said of the poem as a whole. If the "allegorical centre" of each book is its thematic core, so also is the sequence of such "allegorical centres" the thematic core of the entire poem. Considering them in sequence, we come upon yet another variation in Spenser's rhythmic structure. As a binary pattern, the House of Holiness, the Castle of Alma, and the Garden of Adonis are balanced by the Temple of Venus, Isis Church, and Mount Acidale. As Northrop Frye remarks, we have a double sequence of two "houses of recognition" followed by a locus amoenus (the Garden of Adonis, Mount Acidale).⁴

³ The Allegory of Love, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 336.

⁴ "The Structure and Imagery of The Faerie Queene," in Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1963, p. 77. Unaccountably, Frye substitutes the Palace of Mercilla for Isis Church.

This suggests a sequence in the poem from a level above nature, through the purely human, to the level of nature (part of the same pattern of displacement alluded to earlier). Within this broad pattern, however, there are contrasts that articulate the meaning ever more clearly. Redcross' vision of Truth in the House of Holiness is paralleled by Scudamour's vision of the androgynous figure representing the union of male and female in the Temple of Venus. Britomart's dream in Isis Church dramatizes the same concern for concord in society as Guyon's experience in the Castle of Alma does for concord in the soul. Mount Acidale is a humanized and "displaced" repetition of the infra-human beauty of the Garden of Adonis. We are thus permitted to observe the steady and systematic unfolding of a comprehensive vision of the relations between God and man, man and woman, and man and nature.

In such a subtle and massive complex of meanings, it is obviously foolhardy to insist upon any simple, linear interpretation. Spenser's own example warns us that no single value, no single perspective, can encompass all values and all meanings. His poem thus has the range and the mystery, the clarity and the complexity of life itself. Yet as the narrative basis for all this there remains the one recurring situation in which a chivalric champion sets out, in response

to the complaint of a "postulant", to bring an evildoer to justice. In each book the unfolding pattern of narrative and imagery is triggered by the implied "oath" or "compact" (to use the terms of the Tractatus Coislinianus) entered into by the hero by virtue of his membership in Gloriana's service. The external action in each case is converted by the allegory into both a public and a private struggle. Redcross, to free Una's parents, must first attain to sanctification himself. Conversely, Britomart, in order to recover herself from the wound of love, must rescue Amoret from the tyrannical dominion of lust symbolized by the House of Busirane. Each champion must, in one way or another, come to terms with injustice, either in the soul or in society, and this struggle in turn provokes and requires an exploration of the relations between God and man, man and himself, man and man, and man and nature. An essential part of this exploration is the confrontation with falsehood and illusion -- with Archimago, Duessa, Phantastes, Maleger, the snowy Florimell and the Bower of Bliss, the flames that guard the House of Busirane, the egalitarian Giant and the false social regimen of Radigund, the defamation and psychic poisonings of the Blatant Beast. This, once more in the terms of the Tractatus Coislinianus, is the proof (or disproof) of pistis (opinion) as the

preliminary to the establishment of gnosis (true knowledge). In terms of the Roman juridical process, it is the probatio that issues in assured knowledge and the consequent certainty of just judgement.

Yet, paradoxically, this repeated quest seems to generate a progressive complexity by means of its own dialectic. As each adventure culminates in the death or defeat of the antagonist it provokes a countermovement which supplies a different perspective on the "justice" thus achieved. Having attained to the vision of holiness on the Hill of Contemplation, Redcross is required to turn back from the promised union with God in order once more to enter the fallen world in which Una's parents remain to be set free. Like Milton, Spenser cannot accept a merely "cloistered virtue". This return to the complexities of the fallen world creates the need to combine the other-worldly values of faith with a more practical and empirical ability to control one's own human impulses -- the "temperance" of which Guyon is the exemplar. Guyon, in turn, is the most puritanical and ascetic of champions. His overthrow of Acrasia provokes its own countermovement, the exploration of the opposite side of human nature -- the erotic impulse -- as depicted in Books III and IV. Similarly, the harshness and intransigence of Artegall's nature is tempered not only

by his union with Britomart but by his complementary figure, Calidore, whose "courtesy" represents the finesse -- the more gentle, human qualities that are "planted natural" in him -- which Artegall lacks. Each champion contributes opposite but complementary qualities to the developing image of ethical behaviour.

This progression is a function of what we have called Spenser's objectivity. For the just judgement must be a reflexive one; it must take into account its own biases and shortcomings. This often means that the solution of one problem will generate a new set of problems. It is this dialectical pattern that is apparent in the sequence of virtues of the poem. In each adventure, triumph is but momentary -- a truth stressed in the action of each narrative by the fact that each new adventure is both a new task and a repetition of the one just completed in a different perspective. But this progression leads to a steadily increasing tone of ironic scepticism, until by Book VI we seem to reach another critical point in the total structure. Calidore forgets his quest for a time, and even when he achieves it the results are ambiguous and inconclusive.

The view of the structure of the poem presented here is thus different from that of Mr. Neuse,⁵ who sees in

⁵ Richard Neuse, "Book VI as Conclusion to The Faerie Queene", English Literary History, Vol. 35, No. 3 (September, 1968).

this developing irony a symptom of the poet's growing disillusionment with the courtly ideal. It differs also, in some respects, from Frye's assumption that "the six books form a unified epic structure."⁶ They are, of course, a unity, as our analysis of their binary and ternary structures indicates. But the unity is a dynamic unity, which sets up a dialectical sequence in which each book solves one problem only to create another. This pattern is especially marked at moments of "interface" between adventures. Guyon encounters Redcross at the beginning of Book II, and the Palmer's words make clear that Guyon's adventure is a continuation of the same task in a different context.

Joy may you have, and everlasting fame,
 Of late most hard atchiev'ment by you donne,
 For which enrolled is your glorious name
 In heavenly Registers above the Sunne,
 Where you a Saint with Saints your seat have wonne.
 But wretched we, where ye have left your marke,
 Must now anew begin like race to ronne.
 (II, i, 32)

At the meeting between Artegall and Calidore at the beginning of Book VI, Calidore experiences a similar moment of anxiety.

"Now, happy man," (sayd then Sir Calidore)
 "Which have, so goodly as ye can devize,
 Atchiev'd so hard a quest, as few before;
 That shall you most renowned make forevermore.

"But where ye ended have, now I begin,
 To tread an endless trace . . ."
 (VI, i, 5-6)

⁶ "The Structure and Imagery of The Faerie Queene"
op. cit., p. 70.

Calidore's sense that his adventure is not merely a new beginning but part of an "endless trace" of new beginnings marks the distance travelled between Book II and Book VI, and is part of our deepening awareness that the historical process never reaches its term, that no success is complete and final, and that each achievement merely leaves us our work to do all over again.

This is the paradox of time and change which is a constant theme of The Faerie Queene. As Whitehead said, the culmination of each growth cycle is both a return to, and a decline from, unity.

'Creativity' . . . is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity. . . . The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves. . . . The many become one, and are increased by one. ⁷

The massive irony of the total structure of The Faerie Queene is that each achieved resolution, each moment of poetic harmony and individual and social "justice" is but momentary, and each attempt to supplement it merely creates new data

⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, London, MacMillan, 1929, p. 33.

to be harmonized, in an endless progression.

By the end of Book VI, therefore, the developing structure of the poem seems to have reached an impasse; the poem is in danger of dissolving altogether into the chaos of human history. Yet the dialectic which has created this crisis also contains its counteragent. If, as the letter to Raleigh suggests, Spenser's intent was to complete the poem in twelve books, then we have reached the major crisis of the structure, and we could expect that the completion of the pattern would call for the initiation of a countermovement which would lead away from the ironic dissociations of Book VI and back towards the assured possession of truth celebrated in Book I. And, of course, we have the beginning of such a countermovement in the Mutabilitie Cantos, which, "both for forme and matter, appeare to be parcell of some following Booke . . . under the Legend of Constancie."⁸ It is to Spenser's confrontation of constancy with mutability that we must look for indications of his plan for the continuation of the poem.

⁸ The Faerie Queene, Everyman Edition, Dent, 1955, p. 426.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Tribunal of Nature

As has been said, the very richness of Spenser's structure in The Faerie Queene, and his concern for objectivity and adequacy of statement, create a movement within the poem that disturbs the security and assurance expressed in early books and leads to a crisis in Book VI in which the courtly ideal itself is called into question. Thus there is a sense in which both the subject and the structure of the poem are centred on the fact of mutability. Change in its various forms has been a principal antagonist of his champions throughout. As the fact of human mortality, expressed in the cynical and defeatist speech of Despair, it had precipitated the crisis in Redcross' spiritual development. For, as Despair says, is it not the sentence of a just God that all shall die? As the power of the emotions to disrupt human purpose, the deadly contradiction between immoderate joy and immoderate despair, between Amavia and Mortdant, it had provided the principal obstacle for Guyon.

As the corruption of desire and the tendency to animality within the human psyche, it forms the basis of the struggle of Britomart and Scudamour. Artegall encountered it in the Protean shapes adopted by Malengin, and in the argument of the egalitarian Giant, who proposed to disrupt the natural order on the basis of a doctrinaire belief in an aboriginal equity. Calidore meets it in the loss of his own sense of purpose, and in the deadly enmity between natural nobility and the envy and detraction symbolized by the Blatant Beast, who suffers no achievement to survive. Spenser punctuates his poem with nostalgic odes to the beauty and harmony of the antique world. Thus the outburst of anxiety over the domination of "the ever-whirling wheele of Change" at the beginning of the Cantos of Mutabilitie is the continuation and culmination of a recurring theme -- the instability of human existence, intellectual, ethical, and political, which in turn derives from the radical instability at the heart of nature.

It is significant that the issue is raised now in the form of a trial, for, as we have seen, the appeal of a postulant for justice against an evil-doer is the single most basic narrative method employed in the poem. But unlike the appeals of Una, the Palmer, Scudamour, and Irena, all of which eventually result in the vindication of the claimant

against the usurper, the claim of Mutability that Jove is an usurper is ultimately denied. This suggests that "Book VII", if indeed the Cantos of Mutability form part of the next succeeding book, was to represent a radical change in the direction of the poem. And, in a total structure of twelve books, it is obvious that something of the sort would have to take place. The assumption of this study is that the Cantos of Mutability are the allegorical centre of what was intended as the crisis of the entire poem.

Mutability's claim to sovereignty in earth and in the heavens results in a formal juridical process among the gods, complete with postulatio, appeals to a higher court, summonses to the members of the tribunal, interrogatio of witnesses, and the delivery of a final judgement (probatio) by Dame Nature herself. The trial exemplifies at the same time the movement from pistis to gnosis that we have observed in each of the preceding quests. The peripeteia, or reversal in the direction of the case, is dramatic and sudden. As the evidence of Mutability's power over earth and heaven, gods and men, steadily mounts, it appears that her case must of necessity be granted. But, as Dame Nature points out, all her evidence is two-edged because all the examples cited are cyclical. Thus what had seemed to be proof that every existing thing is subject to mutability is in fact proof of the opposite,

for the spectacle of steady and ordered succession is in fact the reverse of mere decay. Moreover, Mutability's claim is self-defeating; she is revealed now as herself orderly and constant in a way she had not realized, and so has in fact been arguing for her own dissolution.

More than this, the process of change is revealed to be itself cyclical. Though

all things stedfastness do hate
And changed be; yet, being rightly wayd,
They are not changed from their first estate;
But by their change their being do dilate,
And turning to themselves at length again,
Do worke their own perfection so by fate.

(Mutabilitie, vii, 58)

As critics have remarked, there appears in this notion of things "turning to themselves . . . again" to be a reference to the Platonic doctrine of "the great year." Time, as Plato says, is but the moving image of eternity, and though we can measure the smaller cycles of day, month, and year, we cannot measure the much larger cycles of the heavenly bodies.

And yet there is no difficulty in seeing that the perfect number of time fulfillls the perfect year when all the eight revolutions, having their relative degrees of swiftness, are accomplished together and attain their completion at the same time, measured by the rotation of the same and equally moving. After this manner, and for these reasons, came into being such of the stars as in their heavenly progress received reversals of motion, to the end

that the created heaven might be as like as possible to the perfect and intelligible animal, by imitation of its eternal nature.¹

Thus at the climax of the trial the concepts of justice and "constancy" are juxtaposed, if not identified. Justice, that is, is shown to be possible by the fact of orderly change in nature, society, and man; and the change is orderly because it is not merely chaotic and linear displacement but purposive "emanation" and return. This concept unites the two processes of evolutionary growth and entropic "decay"; one is necessary to the other. The orderly abandonment of, and return to, the original state makes possible the "dilation of being" which is another word for growth.

In Plato's conception, since there was never a moment when the universe began, there shall never be a moment when it ceases. Thus, for him, the "Great Year" begins and ends at every moment. This explains why the moments of beginning and end in any cycle are causes for rejoicing or anxiety, or both -- midnight, Sunday (the Sabbath, Spenser's "Sabaoth"), New Year's Eve. It also explains the outbursts of anxiety that occur in Spenser's poem at the beginning of each new book. For the end of a cycle is the moment when time completes itself

¹ Plato, The Timaeus, translated by Benjamin Jowett, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963, p.1168.

as an image of eternity and points beyond itself to the realm where no such change exists. But, since it is also the beginning of a new cycle, it makes us aware of the endless repetition which is the demonic image of time. The Palmer's words to Redcross at the beginning of Book II, and Calidore's to Artegall at the beginning of Book VI are examples of such ambivalent moments. The claim of Mutability to absolute power over Nature is the apotheosis of such moments of anxiety, occurring at what would, in a completed structure of twelve books, be the critical point of transition -- the seventh canto of the seventh book.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the two cantos of Book VII, brief though they are, contain incidents which are reminiscent of crucial moments in earlier books. Jove, about summarily to condemn Mutability for her impertinence, stays his hand because of "her lovely face" (vi, 31), just as Artegall's salvagesse had been softened by Radigund's beauty. Nature, like Venus in Book III, is veiled, and is said to combine two natures. In the initial debate, Jove's very right to dispense justice is questioned by Mutability on the grounds that he was born on earth and is therefore subject to her. Just so had Redcross been challenged by Despair, and with the same effect. Mutability answers Jove's claim that the gods rule time with the same materialistic scepticism that the

Spenser is speaking from experience -- are all that is to be found there now.

The trial of Mutability therefore repeats and summarizes the developing theme and selected motifs from the rest of the poem, as a preparation for the definitive statement of the counter-idea. Nature's judgement upon Mutability's claim is based on the fact that all the examples of change which she herself has cited are orderly and cyclical.

I well consider all that ye have said,
 And find that all things stedfastness do hate,
 And changed be; yet being rightly wayd,
 They are not changed from their first estate,
 But by their change their being do dilate,
 And turning to themselves at length againe,
 Do work their owne perfection so by fate.
 (vii, 58)

The crucial idea is that change is not decay but a "dilation of being", in which what appears to be lost is not lost permanently, but remains to be regained at the completion of the cycle, and the accumulation of "eccentricities" is subsumed finally into the regained aboriginal state. The prose formulation of this doctrine is to be found in Whitehead's Process and Reality.

What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world Throughout the

perishing occasions in the life of each temporal Creature, the inward source of distaste or of refreshment, the judge arising out of the very nature of things, redeemer or goddess of mischief, is the transformation of itself, everlasting in the Being of God. In this way, the insistent craving is justified -- the insistent craving that zest for existence be refreshed by the ever-present, unfading importance of our immediate actions, which perish and yet live for evermore. ²

The link between these two attempts to describe the relation between growth and decay, evolution and entropy, is to be found in Plato's concept of Time as a result of the very plenitude of Eternity. Eternity without Time is incomplete, as Redcross' intellect is incomplete without Guyon's judgement, or Artegall's justice without Calidore's courtesy. Even more obviously, Time without Eternity is incomplete. Each concept is in need of the other. In the same way, the quest for justice in the poem is not to be attained apart from the attainment of moral virtue, which as Plato says is the state of justice in the soul. Significantly, Whitehead too links together the act of judgement with the concept of everlastingness; "the judge arising out of the very nature of things . . . is the transformation of (creatures), everlasting in the Being of God."

Some such conclusion is necessary to the structure

² Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, London, MacMillan, 1929, pp. 532-3. The italics are those of the present writer.

of the poem, for without it the dialectic of the first six books must inevitably result in the ultimate erosion of all values in absolute scepticism. With it, Spenser provides the double perspective that enables him both to affirm values and to realize that no single value is sufficient in and of itself. The virtue of constancy, which was to be celebrated in this book, is parallel to the virtues celebrated in Books I, III, and V -- Holiness, Chastity, and Justice -- in that it insists upon the final unity and orderliness of all meaning. Books II, IV, and VI, on the other hand, supply the complementary vision of multiplicity and variety (for which Mutability makes such a large claim) which is necessary in order that there may be, as Whitehead says, "zest for existence." We might expect that, had the poem been continued, Book VIII would have celebrated a value complementary to that of Constancy in order to maintain the same rhythm.

The trial of Mutability is remarkable also because it takes place not within the mind, as in the case of Redcross and Guyon, nor within human society, as in the case of Duessa in Book V, but within Nature itself. This corresponds with the movement already observed from privacy to publicity, from subjectivity to objectivity. The next most "objective" level would be a tribunal beyond even nature -- the Last Judgement itself. Nevertheless, the judgement delivered against Mutability

repeats and ratifies the achievements of Redcross, Guyon, Britomart, Artegall, and Calidore. It supplies the basis for their own constancy. Obviously, in a world ruled by mere featureless change, "a new world every day," as Santayana says, "with the same fool to live in it,"³ any judgement must become false the moment it is uttered. The certainty that there is a "nature of things", a constant character or essence, ensures that human judgements can be valid.

Thus the powerful statement of the fact of Constancy in a world apparently ruled by change is the metaphysical ground of all the other treatments of virtue in the poem. In even more abstract form, this is the perennial philosophic problem of the One and the Many, which we have seen in the background of each earlier quest. Redcross' search for unity with God is the most direct treatment of the theme, but it underlies all the other actions as well. Guyon's task of reducing the multiplicity of human impulses to orderly unison is the same problem in psychological terms. The unity achieved by Britomart is sexual and social, and the action of Books III and IV aims at the unity of male and female symbolized by the androgynous Venus, as well as the civic unity symbolized by Troynovaunt. The problem of Justice per se is the union of Mercy and Justice, or the preservation of the absolute nature

³ See above, pp. 37-8.

of justice in a fallen world where injustice appears in Protean and inexhaustible variants. The problem of Courtesy is that of decorum, of bearing oneself in a seemly and appropriate manner towards all men, whatever their degree, and thus achieving a justice of relationship that is at once constant and yet almost infinitely variable.

For whether they be placed high above
 Or low beneath, yet ought they well to know
 Their good; that none them rightly may reprove
 Of rudeness for not yeelding what they owe.
 (VI, ii, 1)

The Faerie Queene itself is a richly patterned example of the poetic solution to the problem of "unity in multiteity and multiteity in unity" (to use Coleridge's term),⁴ for in spite of its length it is controlled by the single concept of that unity of nature, society, and the individual which is justice. Each book is, from one point of view, a self-contained "universe of discourse", a cyclical action which departs from and then returns to a state of equilibrium. As a sequence of books, the poem displays a similar pattern, for as it moves from private to public value it displays a developing complexity and irony that appear, superficially, to exemplify a form of entropic decay. Yet in the Cantos of

⁴Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, edited by J. Shawcross, Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1909, Vol. II, p. 230.

Mutability this process is arrested by a re-affirmation that even this growth in complexity is not the decay of the original concept but a "dilation of its being" which, we can assume, would have been continued in the last six books as a movement back towards the metaphysical unity of Book I. Thus each book of the poem in relation to its total structure is an exemplar of unity within multiplicity, and as such provides Spenser with a poetic mechanism unrivalled in its richness and its adequacy of statement.

Another term we have used for "adequacy of statement" is "objectivity". Spenser's poem is objective, not in the scientific sense, which implies the exclusion of subjectivity, but in the poetic sense which implies intelligent awareness of that very subjectivity. As a rich symbol of the mind in contact with reality, The Faerie Queene is the union of the One and the Many which is the essence of human consciousness. What Ernst Cassirer said of the mind is an exact characterization of Spenser's poem:

Here there is not from the very start an abstract 'one' confronted by an equally abstract and detached 'other'; here the one is 'in' the many and the many is 'in' the one: in the sense that each determines and represents the other. ⁵

⁵ Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Form, translated by Ralph Manheim, Yale University Press, New Haven, Vol. 1, p. 108.

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