

Shelley's Pythagorean Daemons

John J. Lavelle

On 24 December 1812 Shelley wrote to Thomas "Clio" Rickman from Wales asking for a number of books. The letter included a list of classical writers whose works Shelley wanted in editions that combined the original with a translation. The name of Pythagoras is included.¹ Frederick L. Jones takes note of this request in his edition of the *Letters*, adding the observation that "Pythagoras left no writings."² That is true enough, of course, and both Shelley and Rickman were doubtless aware of it. But the teachings of Pythagoras and his followers exerted considerable influence in the ancient world, and they were cited or described by writers such as Plato, Plutarch, and Iamblichus. The precepts of Pythagoras are outlined in the so-called "Golden Verses" of Pythagoras, best known in the Greek version recorded in the fifth century, together with commentary, by Hierocles of Alexandria. Even the earliest editors of these verses were not convinced they had actually been written by Pythagoras, but for want of any other verifiable author the titles *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras* or . . . of the *Pythagoreans* were used interchangeably.³ It was probably the "Golden Verses" that Shelley sent for in 1812. Moreover, it is reasonably certain that Shelley eventually acquired, and was particularly influenced by, the French translation of the "Golden Verses" by Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, published in 1813 together with Fabre d'Olivet's "Explanations" and a discourse on poetry.⁴

The clearest evidence of the influence of Pythagorean moral philosophy on Shelley can be seen in his interest in vegetarianism. Hogg tells us that "It was not until the spring of the year 1813 that he entered upon a full and exact course of vegetable diet." This he

refers to as Shelley's "Pythagorean, or Brahminical, existence." Shelley was no doubt encouraged in his vegetarianism by the example of John Frank Newton and his family and by his reading in Plutarch (both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*), but by 26 November, in a letter to Hogg, he demonstrated his knowledge that Plutarch was drawing upon an even more venerable source:

I have translated the two essays of Plutarch, . . . [On the Eating of Flesh], which we read together. They are very excellent. I intend to comment upon them, and to reason in my preface concerning the Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet. . . .⁶

It seems logical to suppose that Shelley, having encountered the philosophical arguments in support of vegetarianism presented by Plutarch, and, recognizing that they drew upon an older tradition, sent for "Pythagoras" at the end of 1812, in the form of the "Golden Verses," in order to investigate what purported to be the purest survival of the Pythagorean precepts.

For Shelley, Pythagoreanism evidently represented a very ancient authority for moral and philosophical principles which he found attractive. These precepts, including vegetarianism, could be regarded as both fundamental and "uncorrupted," proceeding as they did from a time before the rise of the institutionalized revealed religions that he rejected. Moreover, they had acquired an aura of universality because of the supposition that the wisdom of Pythagoras (who was purportedly the first of the ancient mentors to call himself a *philosopher*: "lover of wisdom," rather than *sophist*: "a wise man") constituted a compendium of the most profound and arcane knowledge he had garnered from the masters of many ancient systems:

And farther still, it is said, that he was the author of a compound divine philosophy and worship of the Gods; having learnt indeed some things from the followers of Orpheus, but others from the Egyptian priests; some from the Chaldaeans and Magi; some from the mysteries performed in Eleusis, in Imbrus, Samothracia, and Delos; and some also from those which are performed by the Celtæ, and in Iberia.⁷

Stuart Curran is clearly right when he says Shelley's conception of "a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, & harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled" is consistent with "the massive thrust of contemporary scholarship in syncretic mythology," and when he asserts that this principle is pervasive in Shelley's poetry.⁸ Pythagoreanism afforded such a syncretic system that had the merit of authority, by virtue of its antiquity, and did not suffer from the gratuitous surmises and linguistic contortions so evident in the works of Faber, Bryant, Davies, and others among the contemporary mythographers. The Pythagoreans were traditionally concerned with profound truths rather than particular religious observances, and they made no secret of the fact that their master had learned vegetarianism from Orpheus and the concept of metempsychosis from the Egyptians. The assumption was that there existed an ancient body of knowledge that was the common heritage of wise men everywhere, that variations were not fundamentally significant, and that no sect could claim exclusive revelation or authority. James Rieger acutely observes that "Hogg later garbled the printed texts of his dead friend's letters in order to disguise Shelley's anticlericalism and his own youthful atheism. But when he substituted 'Intolerance' for 'Christianity' as the name of the poet's archenemy, he did not so much distort as reveal the essence of the category."⁹ One can imagine, then, how congenial Shelley would have found Fabre d'Olivet's observations on Pythagorean tolerance:

The Christian Religion, exclusive and severe, has changed all our ideas . . . by admitting only one sole doctrine in one unique church, this religion has necessarily confused tolerance with indifference or coldness, and reserve with heresy or hypocrisy; but in the spirit of polytheism these same things take on another colour. A Christian philosopher could not, without perjuring himself and committing a frightful impiety, bend the knee in China before *Kong-Tse*, nor offer incense to *Chang-Ty* nor to *Tien*; he could neither render, in India, homage to *Krishna*, nor present himself at Benares as a worshipper of *Vishnu*; he could not even, although recognizing the same God as the Jews and Mussulmans, take part in their ceremonies, or what is still more, worship this God with the

Arians, the Lutherans, or Calvinists, if he were a Catholic. This belongs to the very essence of his cult. A Pythagorean philosopher did not recognize in the least these formidable barriers, which hem in the nations, as it were, isolate them, and make them worse than enemies. The gods of the people were in his eyes the same gods, and his cosmopolitan dogmas condemned no one to eternal damnation.¹⁰

Fabre d'Olivet, who considered himself a latter-day disciple of Pythagoras rather than a classicist or historian, assumed that the "cosmopolitan dogmas" of the Pythagoreans encompassed much of the lore of the ancient world. His "Examinations" include long excursions into the doctrines of the Zoroastrians, the Hindus, and the Chinese (among others) in which he claims that these are not materially different from the doctrines of Pythagoras. Indeed he goes so far as to assert, quite casually, that Moses was "instructed in the same school as Pythagoras."¹¹

Though it seems clear that Shelley was influenced by the "explanations" of Fabre d'Olivet, there was enough in the "Golden Verses" themselves and in the commentary of Hierocles to furnish him with significant ideas that emerge in his works. First, there was the notion that there were "divine" beings other than the "celestial" gods who deserved veneration:

*Rends aux Dieux immortels le cult consacré;
Garde ensuite ta foi: Révère la mémoire
Des Héros bienfaiteurs, des Esprits demi-Dieux.*¹²

Hierocles refers to these beings as the "Immortal Gods," the "Illustrious Heroes," and the "Demons of the Earth Doing Right Things," observing that "all the intelligent part of the creation bears the image of their maker, God. . . . And of these three sorts of beings, the first takes in those which the verse calls immortal Gods, the middle the illustrious Heroes, and the last the Daemons of the earth . . ." ¹³ The "immortal Gods" are reflections of their maker, "the supreme and best God," and so one should not "extoll their dignity above measure."¹⁴ In accordance with this exceedingly neoplatonic theory, there is a "middle" order of "illustrious heroes": "Sometimes we make a threefold division of this middle

kind, calling those which constantly inhabit the heavens, angels; those of the earth, heroes; and those which are at equal distance from both, demons . . ." ¹⁵ Shelley's Prometheus clearly belongs to this middle order, of which Hierocles says "they sublimate and raise up our minds from the animal to the divine life." ¹⁶ He was an earth-dwelling hero whose transgression against the gods consisted of giving man the wherewithal to better himself (fire, language, etc.).

Perhaps the most interesting category comprises "those men which excell others in virtue," who are "The Demons of the Earth Doing Right Things." Hierocles comments that "By demons here, which signifies knowing and learned, he [Pythagoras] means the souls of men adorn'd with truth and virtue . . . they which are rank'd among the divine beings, such as resemble demons, angels and illustrious heroes." In order to render these individuals the honor due to them, we are obliged "To do right things, . . . that is, to obey the precepts which they have left to us, to esteem their sentences as authentick as laws, and to follow the same course of life, the participation of which they were so far from envying us, that they carefully made it their endeavour to preserve the elements of virtue and rules of truth in lasting monuments, as an immortal and fatherly legacy for the common good of posterity." ¹⁷

Pythagoras was clearly assumed by his followers to belong to this category. According to Iamblichus, "Such . . . was their reverence for Pythagoras, that they numbered him with the Gods, as a certain beneficent and most philanthropic daemon." ¹⁸ Unlike Hierocles, Iamblichus made no distinction between "Illustrious Heroes" and "Demons of the Earth" in his outline of Pythagorean cosmology, and he notes that:

some indeed celebrated him as the Pythian, but others as the Hyperborean Apollo. Some again considered him as Paëon, but others as one of the daemons that inhabit the moon; and others celebrated him as one of the Olympian Gods, who, in order to benefit and correct the mortal life, appeared to the men of those times in a human form, in order that he might extend to them the salutary light of felicity and philosophy. ¹⁹

This was a little too much for Thomas Taylor, who pointed out in a note that Pythagoras "was a *terrestrial hero* belonging to the series

of Apollo," and compared him with "Esculapius (Asklepios) and with "Hercules, Theseus, . . . Plato, &c." ²⁰ The company is still rather impressive, and we can see that if the distinction of Hierocles were imposed upon it we would have Pythagoras and Plato, the historical figures, as "Demons of the Earth," and the rest would fall into the "middle" order (to which Prometheus, Orpheus, and others might be added). In any case, the commentators on Pythagorean doctrine were agreed that there were some mortals who had special insight into fundamental truths by virtue of an inferior sort of divinity, and that these men demonstrated their "daemonic" quality by the example of their lives and their teachings.

That Shelley aspired to be one of those who "preserve the elements of virtue and rules of truth . . . for the common good of posterity" is clear from his remark to Godwin that "I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications so far as they do influence shall influence to good." ²¹ Shelley was chastened by Godwin's dismissal of this determination as youthful hubris, but there was consolation to be found in Fabre d'Olivet. ²² In his "Discourse upon the Essence and Form of Poetry Among the Principal Peoples of the Earth," Fabre d'Olivet asserted that poets were uniquely qualified to exert an improving influence upon humanity:

Poetry was not at all in its origin what it became later, a simple accomplishment, regarded by those who profess to be savants as even rather frivolous; it was the language of the gods, *par excellence*, that of the prophets, the ministers of the altars, the preceptors and the legislators of the world. ²³

Shelley echoes this latter observation in his own *Defence of Poetry* when he observes that "Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators or prophets . . ." Of course his conclusion that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" assumes that any supposed deterioration had affected the perceptions of the auditors, and not, necessarily, the language of the poet. ²⁴

In the face of adverse criticism of his poems on the grounds of obscurity, Shelley could take comfort from Fabre d'Olivet's

assertion that a poet-preceptor such as the author of "The Golden Verses" did not employ allegory (or "symbols," in the case of Pythagoras) merely to keep esoteric truths from becoming the common property of the uninitiated:

the poetic inspiration being once received by the poet and his soul finding itself transported to the intelligible world, all the ideas which then come to him are universal and in consequence allegorical.²⁵

But Fabre d'Olivet lamented that such a style, in which universals take precedence over accidentals as a matter of course, had fallen prey to a passion for realism and historical precision. He offered the example of ancient "allegorical history":

This history, confined to the memory of men or preserved among the sacerdotal archives of the temples in detached fragments of poetry, considered things only from the moral side, was never occupied with individuals, but saw only the masses; that is to say, peoples, corporations, sects, doctrines, even arts and sciences, as so many particular beings that it designated by a generic name. . . . The adventures of all were accumulated upon the head of one alone. It was the moral thing whose course was examined, whose birth, progress, or downfall was described. . . . The moderns would mock that allegorical manner of the ancients, if they could believe it possible. . . . How approve of what is unknown? Man approves of only what he likes; he always believes he knows all that he ought to like.²⁶

The "Demons of the Earth Doing Right Things," including Pythagoras, were responsible to truths that are timeless and universal, according to Fabre d'Olivet, and their teachings were embodied in allegory dictated by a special sort of insight. If Shelley saw himself as one of them, he would have to be prepared for criticism from those who expected unambiguous poetry that was clearly relevant to contemporary circumstances.

In addition to his speculations on the character of the terrestrial daemons, Fabre d'Olivet imparted some significant reflections on

the source of the threefold emanation. He noted that attempts to characterize the several "attributes" and "faculties" of the "Universal Being" had resulted in a multiplicity of deities. But he also gave a great deal of attention to the inscrutable nature of the "Supreme God":

Before Moses, none of the theocratic legislators had thought it well to present for the adoration of the people, the Supreme God, unique and uncreated in His unfathomable universality. The Indian Brahmins . . . never permit themselves, even in this day . . . to utter the name of God, principle of All. They are content to meditate upon its essence in silence and to offer sacrifices to its sublimest emanations. The Chinese sages act the same with regard to the Primal Cause, that must be neither named nor defined; the followers of Zoroaster, who believe that the two universal principles of good and evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman, emanate from this ineffable Cause, are content to designate it under the name of Eternity.²⁷

The same, he says, was true of the Egyptians and of "Orpheus, their disciple." He goes on to observe that "the principal tenets of the mysteries, those upon which reposed all others, were the Unity of God and the homogeneity of Nature.":

Now the unity of God resides in His essence so that the vulgar can never in any way either conceive or understand. His infinity consists in His perfections, His faculties, His attributes, of which the vulgar can, according to the measure of their understanding, grasp some feeble emanations, and draw nearer to Him by detaching them from the universality—that is, by particularizing and personifying them.²⁸

In his own works, Shelley was obviously caught between the allegorizing instinct of the poet and a desire to elucidate fundamental truths without debasing them. If he chose to follow the example of the most venerable custodians of those truths, he could not reasonably ignore the primal creative force, nor could he avoid assigning identities of some sort to its several manifestations. But he had no wish to reduce ineffable forces to domestic familiarity by

the "vulgar" device of assigning them conventional names. Hence the references such as that in "Mont Blanc" to the "Power" that "dwells apart in its tranquillity, / Remote, serene, and inaccessible" (ll. 96-97), or in the *Prologue to Hellas* to a Destiny who is "mailed in the omnipotence / Of Him who sends thee forth . . ." (ll. 134-135). Of course the clearest example of the compromise is in *Prometheus Unbound*. When Asia entreats Demogorgon to identify the primal creative power and "Utter his name," Demogorgon will only reply "He reigns" (II.iv.29, 31). When asked his identity by Jupiter, Demogorgon replies: "Eternity. Demand no direr name." (III.i.52). This is the term Fabre d'Olivet says the Zoroastrians applied to the "ineffable Cause"; Shelley uses it to identify the daemonic force that represents its power. When Asia asks whom Demogorgon has initially referred to as "God" and then refused to name, he explains that "I spoke but as ye speak, / For Jove is the supreme of living things." (II.iv.112-113). Demogorgon had offered to answer any questions put to him, and he had tried to convey the supremacy of the ultimate power of which he is a daemonic emanation by using the most appropriate conventional term. But even that is not adequate, for universals can never be satisfactorily represented by terms generated in the world of time and circumstance. When Demogorgon asserts that "the deep truth is imageless," he may be replying like a Pythagorean and not, as Pulos says, "like a sceptic."²⁹

Obviously not all of Shelley's allegorical devices were deliberately inscrutable. Shelley's Prometheus and Jupiter are essentially the Prometheus and Zeus of Aeschylus, except that they have become more abstract representations of humanity and tyranny respectively. But to pursue the case of Demogorgon, we can see that Shelley has deliberately chosen the name for its atmosphere of inscrutability and obscurity. Peacock's note on a line in Canto VI of *Rhododaphne* summarizes the qualities associated with the name:

He was the Genius of the Earth, and the Sovereign Power of the Terrestrial Daemons. . . . This awful Power was so sacred among the Arcadians, that it was held impious to pronounce his name. . . . The silence of mythologists concerning him, can only be attributed to their veneration for his "dreaded name" . . .³⁰

To identify Demogorgon and understand Shelley's choice of the name, we have only to look further in the "Golden Verses."

The condition of man depicted in the "Golden Verses" is almost precisely that represented by Prometheus in *Prometheus Unbound*:

Man, wretched man, thou shalt be taught to know,
Who hears within himself the inborn cause of woe.
Unhappy race! that never yet could tell
How near their good and happiness they dwell.
Depriv'd of sense, they neither hear nor see;
Fetter'd in vice, they seek not to be free,
But stupid to their own sad fate agree. }
Like pond'rous rolling stones, oppress'd with ill, }
The weight that loads 'em makes 'em roll on still,
Bereft of choice, and freedom of the will.³¹

This statement depicts mankind as shackled by Blake's "mind-forged manacles," and it is followed by an injunction that both points to the course that will liberate Shelley's Prometheus and characterizes his Demogorgon:

For native strife in every bosom reigns,
And secretly an impious war maintains;
Provoke not this, but let the combat cease,
And ev'ry yielding passion sue for peace.
Would'st thou, great Jove, thou father of mankind, }
Reveal the Daemon for that task assign'd,
The wretched race an end of woes would find.³²

Demogorgon would appear to be the "Daemon" whose appointed task it is to liberate mankind, as represented by Prometheus, from the circumstances so aptly described by these lines from the "Golden Verses." Moreover, it would seem that Shelley's "Daemon of the World" shares these characteristics with Demogorgon, and that, as Cameron says, "Demogorgon and the Daemon of the world, in short, are the same," though it does not follow that "the Daemon is clearly necessity."³³

According to Fabre d'Olivet, the Pythagoreans considered the accidental circumstances of a person's birth and social environ-

ment "the consequences of an anterior order, severe and irresistible, called Fortune or Necessity." To this he adds a second ingredient:

Pythagoras opposed to this restrained nature, a free Nature, which, acting upon forced things as upon brute matter, modifies them and draws as it wills, good or bad results. This second nature was called Power or Will: it is this which rules the life of man, and which directs his conduct according to the elements furnished him by the first. Necessity and Power are, according to Pythagoras, the two opposed motives of the sublunary world where man is relegated. These two motives draw their force from a superior cause that the ancients named *Nemesis*, the fundamental decree, that we name *Providence*. . . .³⁴

Fabre d'Olivet goes on to distinguish between Necessity, or "Destiny" (effect) and Providence (cause), and complains that these have been confounded. It could be that Shelley confounded them as well. But it might also be that Shelley meant to depict both Necessity ("the mightiest daemon") and Demogorgon / The Daemon of the World as independent agencies, the first superior to the second, both of which are subordinate to some greater determinant. That ultimate determining force, "the deep truth," is inscrutable. But there are various "daemonic" forces, which are simply devices for characterizing certain aspects of the operation of the supreme power at the material level. The daemons would thus resemble Platonic ideals, with innumerable accidental manifestations in the real world.

The greatest of the daemons would be Necessity, a collective term for the manifestations (effects) of the inexorable process of change and development initiated by the primary creative power. But this daemon would be affected by the operations of another, representing "Power" or "Will," for human volition was by no means irrelevant in the Pythagorean system. (It might be added that the Pythagorean Necessity need not exclude that of Holbach, for, as I have noted, the Pythagoreans were eminent syncretists.) Moreover, it need not be assumed that because Necessity and Power are two "opposed motives," according to Fabre d'Olivet, it

follows that Power (or "Will") can indefinitely contravene the operation of Necessity upon human affairs. One could assume, as Shelley did, that tyranny was inevitably destined to be replaced with a more enlightened dispensation governed by love, and that the transition could be impeded or accelerated, but not precluded, by the exercise of will.

The agency representing human power or will could not be called daemonic in the same sense as Necessity, for it characterizes activity originating on the material plane. According to the "Golden Verses," it is intelligence or "reason" that acts in conjunction with Necessity to produce enlightenment and progress. But that is only possible when reason is employed productively under the proper guidance; otherwise: "Deprived of sense, they neither hear nor see; / Fetter'd in vice, they seek not to be free, . . ." Guidance for the proper use of reason is precisely what is furnished in the gnomic exhortations of the "Golden Verses," even at the level of dietary regulations:

Abstain, I warn, from meats unclean and foul,
So keep thy body pure, so free thy soul;
So rightly judge; thy reason, so maintain;
Reason which heav'n did for thy guide ordain,
Let that best reason ever hold the rein.³⁵

In Hierocles' commentary on this passage, which renders the original Greek somewhat differently, we may find a clue to Shelley's representation of reason in his own gnomic works. (The lines, followed by the gloss, are given in the version of Dacier as translated by Rowe):

Abstain moreover with judgment from those meats which we have spoken of in the lustrations and solution of the soul. And consider all things, setting reason the best charioteer in the uppermost place.

. . . He adds moreover to this performance, the judgment of reason, which is able to bestow such care upon the lucid body as is suitable to the purity of the soul, wherefore he calls it reason the charioteer, as that which was naturally framed for the regular guidance of the vehicle³⁶

It seems reasonable to surmise that Shelley's charioteers represent either reason or else direction that is rational in terms of human understanding, depending upon the context. But it is not necessary to assume, as Cameron does, that Shelley is being as consistent as we would like him to be when he refers to the charioteer in *Hellas* and in *The Triumph of Life*.³⁷ In *Hellas*, Destiny is referred to as "The world's eyeless charioteer," (l. 711) and in *The Revolt of Islam* Shelley alludes to Necessity's "sightless strength" (l. 3708). Each of these appears to be a metaphorical assertion that Destiny and Necessity (its daemonic manifestation) do not operate in a pattern that is compatible with human rationality. In *The Triumph of Life*, however, the charioteer seems to be an allegorical representation of reason that borrows from the concept expressed in the "Golden Verses." According to Hierocles, reason is "the best charioteer" for the mortal conveyance of that "lucid body" which is the aspiring human soul. It is logical that Shelley should provide him with four faces, for circumspection was one of the most important qualities stressed in the Pythagorean precepts. Retrospection was enjoined in that one should evaluate one's actions after the fact, even to the point of not retiring without reviewing "ev'ry action of the former day."³⁸ Introspection and prudence are likewise prescribed, which would add two faces to the charioteer that look sideways into present time. All of these kinds of vision are necessary in order for one to see the proper road to a future spiritual growth with any clarity. Of course if all of the charioteer's four sets of eyes are "banded," as Shelley represents them, then men will proceed aimlessly:

Like pond'rous rolling stones, oppress'd with ill,
The weight that loads 'em makes 'em roll on still,
Bereft of choice, and freedom of the will.³⁹

Power and Will are exercised through reason or intelligence, and when reason is disabled the inclinations of Necessity cannot be modified by acts of will.

Shelley's Daemon of the World is the power that enlightens and uplifts man when his spirit has been cleansed of folly and vice. Commentators on the "Golden Verses" emphasize that assigning a

name to the daemon whose task it is to emancipate mankind, or invoking a name elicited somehow from the supreme power, would be of little use in itself. The daemon's power can only be brought into play once man has accomplished his own purification. He does manifest himself to individuals, but collective purification is hardly to be hoped for. As Hierocles puts it:

God is always disposed to give what is good, but . . . we then only receive it when we attend upon the divine bounty. For 'tis inconsistent with the liberty of our wills, that good should be obtruded upon us whether we will or no. . . .

The prayer also desires . . . that we may see the dignity of our own essence, for this he means by the phrase what demon they are, which is the soul. . . .

The prayer therefore proceeds on a supposition, that if all did but know who they are, and what demon they use, they would all be free from evil. But this will never be. . . .⁴⁰

It might be said that the daemon is a representation of the consequences of the soul's transformation. We should also note that the daemon manifests himself individually, and perhaps idiosyncratically, according to the way in which an individual comes to understand his own nature:

Now if we are at all interested in the society of divine men, we shall shew it by applying our selves to honest actions and intellectual disciplines, by which alone the soul of man is heal'd, freed from terrestrial labours, and translated into the divine order. . . .

This being so, let us suppose that all would be freed from evil if their maker did shew to all the knowledge of his own nature, and what demon they themselves use. But we find that all are not at once deliver'd from evil, it follows therefore that he does not make this discovery to all, but to those only who of their own accord, endeavour to free themselves from evil, and voluntarily fix their eye upon what is shewn by the intention of contemplation. . . .⁴¹

I think it is entirely possible that "Intellectual Beauty" represented Shelley's personal manifestation of the "Daemon of the World." Shelley feels that the cultivation of intellect at the expense of the passions has enabled him to perceive the beauty of creation:

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
(ll. 37-41)

Cultivation of intellect enables him to conquer "Doubt, chance, and mutability" and perceive the "harmonies of evening" and the "harmony" of autumn to which he refers in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." The harmony of creation is, of course, one of the principal doctrines of the Pythagoreans.⁴²

In "The Daemon of the World," Shelley presents a dream-vision in which a mortal is vouchsafed a sample of the daemon's influence, his power to transport one to a realm of transcendent perception. But he is careful to note that the vision is a great "boon" usually reserved for the "terrestrial heroes" ("wisest poets"). The dream furnishes a perfect example of the vision that actual spiritual purification might provide:

For thou hast earned a mighty boon
The truths which wisest poets see
Dimly, thy mind may make to own,
Rewarding its own majesty,
Entranced in some diviner mood
Of self-oblivious solitude.
Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest;
From hate and awe thy heart is free;
Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,
For dark and cold mortality
A living light, to cheer it long,
The watch-fires of the world among. (I, 84-95)

In *Prometheus Unbound*, Demogorgon represents the inexorable

consequence of Prometheus' "knowledge of his own nature," whereby he embraces eternal love and accepts his role as "The savior and strength of suffering man" (l.817). Demogorgon is the child of Jupiter as much as of Prometheus, for he is a representation of the ultimate fate of those who embrace either tyranny or love. Shelley represented his own liberating daemon as a function of intellect, but he represented that of Prometheus as a function of love and self-sacrifice, activities which are not beyond the scope of even the least "intellectual" segment of humanity. The Spirit of the Hour (the hour when mankind, represented by Prometheus, espouses love instead of hatred and egocentricity) provides a vision of the earth after Demogorgon, the daemon of emancipation, has done his work (III.iv.99-204). It is a vision of social perfection that is as euphoric, in its way, as the transcendental vision experienced by the dreaming Ianthe in "The Daemon of the World."

If Prometheus could be regarded as an "illustrious hero" of the middle daemonic order, both allegorically representing mankind and, traditionally, assisting man, Shelley aspired to be a "Demon of the Earth Doing Right Things," in the company of Pythagoras and Plato. He sought, like Prometheus, to be "The saviour and the strength of suffering man," even in the face of adverse criticism and the sorrowful skepticism of sympathetic friends. His method was the timeless one of the ancient adepts as outlined by Fabre d'Olivet:

It is well known that all of the eminent men, as many among the ancients as among the moderns, all the savants commendable for their labours or their learning, are agreed in regarding the precepts of Pythagoras as symbolical, that is, as containing figuratively, a very different meaning from that which they would seem to offer literally.⁴³

By these methods, Shelley attempted to transmit the precepts of the ancient sages to his contemporaries, and he furnished them with glimpses of the social and spiritual emancipation that could be achieved by following those precepts. The reward promised in the "Golden Verses" is very much like the vision provided in "The Daemon of the World":

Then if this mortal body thou forsake,
 And thy glad flight to the pure aether take,
 Among the gods exalted thou shalt shine,
 Immortal, incorruptible, divine;
 The tyrant death securely shalt thou brave,
 And scorn the dark dominion of the grave.⁴¹

As Fabre d'Olivet says:

It is necessary that this soul be raised to the knowledge of universal truths, and that it should have found, as far as it is possible for it, the Principle and the end of all things. Then having attained to this high degree of perfection, being drawn into this immutable region whose ethereal element is no more subjected to the descending movement of generation, it can be united by its knowledge to the Universal All, and reflect in all its being the ineffable light with which the Being of beings, God Himself, fills unceasingly the Immensity.⁴²

NOTES

1. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), I, 343-344 (hereafter cited as *Letters*).
2. *Letters*, II, 482.
3. In the entry on Pythagoras in his *Classical Dictionary*, Lemprière says "There is now extant a poetical composition ascribed to the philosopher, and called the *golden verses of Pythagoras*, which contain the greatest part of his doctrines, and moral precepts; but many support, that it is a supposititious composition, and that the true name of the writer was Lysis." Lysis was a follower of Pythagoras, and only one of the possible authors, but this observation shows that attribution of the verses to Pythagoras was common enough (albeit probably not among classicists). See J. Lemprière, *A Classical Dictionary* . . . , ed. Rev. T. Smith (London: T. Almon, 1831), p. 583; the work was originally published in 1788 and is still in print. Fabre d'Olivet says "The ancients had the habit of comparing with gold all that they deemed without defects and pre-eminently beautiful: thus, by . . . the *Golden Verses*, [they meant] the verses wherein was concealed the most pure doctrine. They constantly attributed these verses to Pythagoras, not that they believed that this philosopher had

- himself composed them, but because they knew that his disciple, whose work they were, had revealed the exact doctrine of his master and had based them all upon maxims issued from his mouth. This disciple . . . was called Lysis." See *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras Explained and Translated into French* . . . , tr. Nanyàn Louise Redfield (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), p. 125.
4. Rickman probably sent Shelley an edition of "The Golden Verses" early in 1813, but he might have had trouble finding the "Original and translation . . . united—" if the translation was to be in English. S. K. Heninger, Jr., notes that the *Carmina aurea* were popular schoolbook exercises during the Renaissance, and that they were, of course, frequently printed and translated in conjunction with Hierocles' "Commentary." He cites the existence of at least 237 texts of the *Carmina aurea* "in various languages, printed between 1474 and 1700," including translations by such noted humanists as Ficino (Latin) and Jean Antoine de Baif (French). But these would hardly have been available on demand in 1813, except by a happy coincidence. The same could be said of the early English translations by Thomas Stanley (1651, 1660), John Hall (1657), and John Norris (1682), the latter two with Hierocles' *Upon the Golden Verses*. The best solution would have been the "revised Greek text" of Hierocles, with translation, by Peter Needham (Cambridge, 1709). But there were also editions of the *Carmina aurea* by Johann Adam Schier (Leipzig, 1750) and Adamantios Koraes, a Greek scholar living in Paris, in 1812. There was an edition of Hierocles in 1742 by Richard Warren, and Nicholas Rowe produced an English version of André Dacier's French translation of 1706 in the following year, adding his own translation of the verses themselves from the original Greek. Rowe's translation was reprinted several times during the eighteenth century. Shelley's request for "Pythagoras" could have been satisfied by one or more of these volumes, but however Rickman responded it seems clear that Shelley eventually became acquainted with Fabre d'Olivet's *Les Vers dorés de Pythagore, expliqués, et traduits pour la première fois en vers épiques français* . . . (Paris, 1813). See S. K. Heninger, Jr., *Touche of Secret Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1974), pp. 63-65 (notes 41 and 42); John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship* (1903-08; rpt. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1958), III, 362, 502.
5. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Edward Moxon, 1858), II, 414.
6. *Letters*, I, 250. As Jones notes, this "commentary" was never produced. Catherine Nugent associated Shelley's vegetarianism with Pythagoreanism when she first met the Shelleys in March of 1812, and it follows that Shelley would have been conscious of the

- connection then as well. See Kenneth N. Cameron, *The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 374.
7. Iamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras or Pythagoric Life*, Translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor (London: A. J. Valpy, 1818), p. 110. Herein cited as *Iamblichus*.
 8. Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis: The Maturing of an Epic Vision* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1975), pp. 43-44.
 9. James Rieger, *The Mutiny Within: The Heresies of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (New York: George Braziller, 1967), p. 32.
 10. Fabre d'Olivet, *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras Explained and Translated into French and Preceded by a Discourse upon the Essence and Form of Poetry Among the Principal Peoples of the Earth*, trans. Nayán Louise Redfield (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), pp. 128-129. This is a translation of *Les Vers dorés de Pythagore, expliqués, et traduits pour la première fois en vers eumolpiques français; précédés d'un discours sur l'essence et la forme de la poésie, chez les principaux peuples de la terre . . .* (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1813). A modern reprint of this work was produced in 1971 in the "Collection Delphica": *Editions de la Tête de Feuilles* (Paris: Bernard Laville). A reprint of the translation, excluding the "Discourse upon the Essence and Form of Poetry," is also available, with an introduction and a "biographical sketch" by Ehud C. Sperling (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1975). Subsequent references to Fabre d'Olivet's "Examinations" will be taken from the 1917 translation, which appears to be faithful to the original French.
 11. Fabre d'Olivet, p. 141. By 1810, Fabre d'Olivet had completed a work called *The Hebraic Tongue Restored*, which he could not get published until 1815. It purported to correct the modern notion of ancient Hebrew by showing that the language of Moses was actually based on that of the ancient Egyptians, and it included the *Cosmogony of Moses*. This version of Genesis assumed Moses' obligation to the Egyptian "mysteries" rather than divine revelation.
 12. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. This is Fabre d'Olivet's translation of the "Golden Verses," lines 1-3.
 13. *Hierocles Upon the Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans* (Glasgow: Rob. & And. Foulis, 1756), p. 58. This is Nicholas Rowe's version of Dacier's French translation from the Greek, hereafter referred to as "Rowe." It is interesting that, though "*daimones*" clearly appears in the Greek, Fabre d'Olivet does not use it in his translation (see Fabre d'Olivet, p. 134, for his rationale), and Rowe likewise omits it in his own rendering of the original into (rather inflated) English:

The heroes next demand thy just regard,
Renown'd on earth, and to the stars preferr'd,
To light and endless life their virtue's sure reward.

}

(p. 39)

The spellings "daemon" and "demon" are used without distinction in this edition.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-82.
18. *Iamblichus*, p. 18. This is a repetition of a statement made concerning the disciples at Samos (p. 7) applied here to those in southern Italy.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 19.
21. *Letters*, I, 259 (24 February 1812).
22. *Letters*, I, 261, 266.
23. Fabre d'Olivet, pp. 30-31.
24. *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (1926-1930; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1965), VII, 112, 140. All references to Shelley's works, including line numbers for poems, are taken from this edition, hereafter referred to as *Works*.
25. Fabre d'Olivet, p. 39.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.
29. C. E. Pulos, *The Deep Truth: A Study of Shelley's Scepticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 61.
30. *The Halliford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones (1924-1934; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), VII, 94.
31. Rowe, p. 44.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Kenneth Neill Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 514. But Cameron is probably right when he asserts that "In *The Daemon of the World* the temple is described as 'The temple of the mightiest daemon' (208), namely, necessity." *Ibid.*, p. 320.
34. Fabre d'Olivet, p. 143.
35. Rowe, p. 44.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 284. Fabre d'Olivet explains that the soul is confined in a "gloomy body" of matter, but that it develops a "luminous body" as it becomes purified. Hierocles, he says, "called this body the subtle chariot of the soul, and said that the mortal body is only the gross exterior." See Fabre d'Olivet, p. 277.
37. *Shelley: The Golden Years*, pp. 453-454.
38. Rowe, p. 42.
39. Rowe, p. 44.
40. Rowe, pp. 264-265.
41. Rowe, pp. 266, 270-271.

- 42. Shelley alludes to "Necessity's unchanging harmony" again in *The Daemon of the World* (l. 291).
- 43. Fabre d'Olivet, p. 275.
- 44. Rowe, p. 45.
- 45. Fabre d'Olivet, pp. 277-278.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE IMAGINATION
1978