

## Percy Bysshe Shelley: Romanticism and Enlightenment Philosophy of Liberty

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### Abstract

This paper aims at studying Shelley's poems as exemplifying the philosophy of Enlightenment. Shelley's poems on 'Napoleon,' 'Ozymandias' and his 'Poetical Essay' show him as a Romantic writer who strongly believed in European Enlightenment philosophy. His poems are musical treats, highly spontaneous, metaphorical, allusive and romantic in style, but the core content of his poems is the Enlightenment philosophy of his contemporary Eurocentric thought. Shelley was a voracious reader, as exemplified by Mathew Arnold, and absorbed the ideologies of philosophers and thinkers hailing from the middle classes and universities, and his poems reveal the highly volatile period during which Europe shifted from monarchy to democracy through revolutions.

**Keywords:** Percy Bysshe Shelley, Romanticism, Enlightenment. Philosophy of Liberty

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was a very talented young man who wrote great poetry that reflected the core philosophy of the Romantic ideal – eulogising the individual ego, and invoking the native stories with natural metaphors. Each of his poems can be read or sung aloud and their musical quality is supreme, as vouchsafed by Mathew Arnold. Though Arnold dismisses Shelley as a poet of high seriousness, we have to re-read his poems to understand the subtle emphasis on liberty which has been viewed as a tendency for anarchy. This paper presents an argument that Shelley's poems reveal his core faith in Enlightenment philosophy of democracy and also they show the rise of the political power of the middle classes. Analysing a few of Shelley's poems might help us locate him as an Enlightenment thinker, reflecting the ideologies

of David Hume and other philosophers of his age. Shelley's poems belong to nineteenth century, an era of high colonialism and Britain had empowered itself as an empire, and economics had emerged to identify the changes in the way money flowed across continents, and science had been institutionalised as a method of observation to master nature. Romanticism grew as a parallel movement signifying the power of the individual, and the slowly developing concept of nation that celebrated local customs and traditions. The Romantic poet wrote in psychological isolation, separating himself as a superior being. Shelley also falls in this framework of loneliness, death, depression, invoking nature and other such styles of Romantic writing.

"Alastor" was written in 1815 in which Shelley creates a poet who prefers to be lonely, till he reaches a powerful passion that makes him pour his heart like a fiend. He begins the poem invoking "earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!" He addresses the "mother of this unfathomable world" who owns the spring season who pants like a voluptuous woman when she breathes her first kisses. The hours are lonely and silent "when night makes a weird sound of its own stillness" with "incommunicable dream." There are "twilight phantasms" and "deep noon-day thought." The poem spills earthly images that evoke the senses constructing a poet's world that has dark passions inside the still soul. The poet talks to himself continuously, but his powerful passions are waiting to be born as a fierce energy. As a typical Romantic, he celebrates "charnels" and "coffins, where black death / keeps record of the trophies." The quiet poet is a wanderer who has visited "The awful ruins of the days of old" like "Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec" and "the waste / where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers / of Babylon, the eternal pyramids, / Memphis and Thebes." He has seen sculptures "on alabaster obelisk, / or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx, / dark Ethiopia in her desert hills." He has seen "ruined temples" and "stupendous columns." Slowly Shelley's imagined poet emerges as a symbol of European Enlightenment, who is presented as a scholar who has witnessed the destruction of other civilizations. He wears a Romantic veil of dreamy, sensual and passionate imagery, and shows an intellectual acquisition of mainstream academic ideology of eighteenth century. In his dream, this imagined poet dreams of a "veiled maid" who sits next to him and sings a song of "knowledge and truth and virtue" as "her theme" and gives him "lofty hopes of divine liberty." Her thoughts presented herself as a poet like him as she has thoughts most "dear to him" (Alastor).

Alastor shows the impact of Coleridge's style as depicted in "Ancient Mariner" and "Kublakhan," on Shelley's kind of writing, invoking nature images. Shelley also builds the image of the poet as a prophet in the style of Coleridge (Raben). The imaginary poet is still like a saint and talks to himself through silence. He gets a fierce energy from his silence like a shaman.

While daylight held  
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference.  
With his still soul.  
At night the passion came,  
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,  
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth  
Into the darkness. ("Alastor")

"Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" written in 1816 addresses intellect as a superior form of beauty: "Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate / With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon / Of human thought or form, where art thou gone? / Why dost thou pass away...?" ("Hymn to Intellectual Beauty") Reason is a beautiful element enriching human lives. "The Waning Moon" was written in 1824 describes the moon that is "like a dying lady, lean and pale, / Who totters forth, wrapp'd in a gauzy veil, / Out of her chamber, led by the insane / And feeble wanderings of her fading brain." The moon arises up "in the murky East, / A white and shapeless mass" ("The Waning Moon"). Reason is beautiful and the waning moon is also beautiful, and both look like women to the poetic imagination.

"Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats" was written in 1821 that weeps for the dead Keats. Shelley calls Keats Adonais who had the soul of a star: "Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!.../ Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep, / He hath awaken'd from the dream of life;.../ The soul of Adonais, like a star, / Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are" ("Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats"). Life is a dream and Keats has been woken up from it and has been awakened to eternal reality.

"Ode to the West Wind," written in 1819 speaks about the dissemination of modern ideas of equality and social justice as a new political governing methodology in which Shelley asks the

wind to “drive” his “dead thoughts over the universe,” and “scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind” (“Ode to the West Wind”).

Apart from the obvious romantic style of narrative, a strong enlightenment ideology runs through the poems of Shelley, thus carrying the features of both the major thought streams of the contemporary Europe, that was shaped by Greek, Jewish and Christian ideologies, the outcome of academic research in universities and the birth of new social sciences like anthropology, psychology and anthropology, philology, translations of orient cultural texts into European languages, and earlier the crusades, and finally, science and technology along with global migrations referred to as colonialism. Romanticism and Enlightenment reflect the social processes resulting from these various negotiations in which the occident met with the rest of the world and created its perceptions of itself and others. Its identity is constructed in the new light of other societies, the life of people who had different living styles and thinkers called themselves advanced who propagated human rights against the inferior forms of societies that did not believe in such methods of social operation.

Jean D'Alembert, mathematician and scientist, referred to eighteenth century as “the century of philosophy par excellence because of the tremendous intellectual and scientific progress of the age.” Voltaire critiqued narrow perspectives of religion directing his “polemic mostly against the Catholic Church in France.” Rousseau argued that “human freedom” can be achieved “only through governance according to what he calls “the general will,” which is the will of the body politic, formed through the original contract, concretely determined in an assembly in which all citizens participate.” Shaftesbury argued that reason had to be combined with a “moral sense” and these ideologies played a “significant role in the theories of subsequent Enlightenment thinkers such as Francis Hutcheson and David Hume.” The Greek dictum of aesthetics was reasserted by thinkers like Christian Wolff who affirmed the “classical dictum that beauty is truth; beauty is truth perceived through the feeling of pleasure,” and “Enlightenment is not an historical period, but a process of social, psychological or spiritual development, unbound to time or place” (Bristow).

It appears as if that Romanticism was one of the many schools of thought, a phase, in Europe after as well as running in parallel to the age of Reason, and Enlightenment philosophy

continued in bringing changes all over the world, introducing new political structures like the nation/state model and republics all over the world, and has remained till now as the most important contribution of Europe to the rest of the world, also paving way to women's rights and other similar human rights.

"Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things" by Shelley in 1811 has been made public in November 2015 as the Bodleian Libraries acquired its 12 millionth printed book in which Shelley has written that "Man must assert his native rights, must say / We take from Monarchs' hand the granted sway; / Oppressive law no more shall power retain, / Peace, love, and concord, once shall rule again, / And heal the anguish of a suffering world;.../ Kings are but men....." ("Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things")

"Ozymandias" was written by Shelley in 1817 which defies the power of monarchy that comments on hegemony and warns people: "King of Kings; / Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair! / Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away" ("Ozymandias").

"Lines written on hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon" by Shelley was written in 1821 in which mother Earth critiques the totalitarian Napoleon:

"Ay, alive and still bold," muttered Earth,  
"Napoleon's fierce spirit rolled,  
In terror, and blood, and gold,  
A torrent of ruin to death from his birth." ("Lines written on hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon")

"Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte" written in 1816 gives a personal attack: "I hated thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan / To think that a most unambitious slave, / Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave / Of Liberty" ("Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte").

"A New National Anthem" written in 1819, fantasizes a country that practices liberty, and ironically Shelley is not able to imagine a Prime Minister or President talking about liberty. Liberty itself is a queen and Arnold's dismissal of Shelley as a poet of high seriousness, perhaps, is

justified with the following lines written in a period when England had colonised other lands across the world:

God prosper, speed, and save,  
God raise from England's grave  
Her murdered Queen!  
Pave with swift victory  
The steps of Liberty,  
Whom Britons own to be Immortal Queen.  
II. See, she comes throned on high,  
On swift Eternity!  
God save the Queen!  
Millions on millions wait,  
Firm, rapid, and elate,  
On her majestic state!  
God save the Queen!

The century in which Shelley lived and wrote was the “19th century” that had “marked the full flower of the British Empire” in which the “administration and policy changed during the century from the haphazard arrangements of the 17th and 18th centuries to the sophisticated system characteristic of Joseph Chamberlain’s tenure (1895–1900) in the Colonial Office” which was started “in 1801, was first an appendage of the Home Office and the Board of Trade” (Britannica).

The ideology that has been obviously propagated by Shelley is limited only to Europe and just like the other Enlightenment thinkers, he is not able to form a world view of equality and human rights, and is only thinking of Europe and America and hence Enlightenment presents itself as a mode of thought that benefits only certain sections of the universe.

“An Ode, Written October, 1819, Before the Spaniards Had Recovered Their Liberty” justifies how Shelley’s Eurocentrism demands equality to all the members of the continent:

Awaken, awaken, awaken!  
The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;...  
Wave, wave high the banner!  
When Freedom is riding to conquest by: ...

Conquerors have conquered their foes alone,  
Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown  
Ride ye, more victorious, over your own. (“An Ode, Written October, 1819, Before  
The Spaniards Had Recovered Their Liberty”)

“Liberty” written in 1820 demands freedom in a furious and passionate manner decorated with complex metaphors of nature and typifying itself as a product of the Romantic Age. Mountains and thunders are involved in the demand for freedom, and Shelley is personified as a power of nature:

The tempestuous oceans awake one another, ...  
From a single cloud the lightening flashes, ...  
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes, ...  
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare  
Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun’s bright lamp  
To thine is a fen-fire damp. ...  
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,  
From city to hamlet thy dawning is cast,--  
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night  
In the van of the morning light. (“Liberty”)

“Ode to Liberty” written in 1820 quotes Byron: “Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying, / Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.” The poem in a typical Romantic style uses nature’s imagery to highlight the need for freedom and glorifies man above all creatures:

A glorious people vibrated again  
The lightning of the nations:  
Liberty From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o’er Spain,  
Scattering contagious fire into the sky, ...  
The burning stars of the abyss were hurled  
Into the depths of Heaven....  
Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied  
His generations under the pavilion  
Of the Sun’s throne: ..

Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves,  
Hung Tyranny;... (“Ode to Liberty”)

“To The Republicans Of North America,” supposedly written in 1812 describes “Freedom’s bloodless banners wave / Feel the pulses of the brave / Unextinguished in the grave / See them drenched in sacred gore / Catch the warrior's gasping breath / Murmuring 'Liberty or death!’” hailing the bravery on men and courage (“To The Republicans Of North America”).

“To Wordsworth” is a poem written in 1816 calls Wordsworth a “Poet of Nature” who “hast wept to know / That things depart which never may return: / Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow” that flee “like sweet dreams” which are “common woes.” Wordsworth is a “lone star, whose light did shine / On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar.” He has been like “a rock-built refuge” that “stood / Above the blind and battling multitude.” Shelley argues that the “Songs” of Wordsworth consecrated “to truth and liberty” (“To Wordsworth”).

The social basis of Romanticism of Shelley and Wordsworth was the middleclass ideology of equality that it kept as a war cry to take over political power in governments.

We shall, of course, see that within Romanticism – in sharp contrast to the Enlightenment and Classicism – a defense of the feudal remnants of Germany and even stylized attempts at renewal of the medieval, feudal ideology emerged. Establishing this fact must not, however, prevent us from clearly recognizing that the social basis of Romanticism was bourgeois. (Lukacs in “Romanticism”)

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), a poet with radical political perspectives, belonging to the same century’s poem on weavers expresses the contemporary sensibility regarding man as a supreme being, and hence all men must be treated in an equal manner.

A curse on the King of the wealthy, whom often  
Our misery vainly attempted to soften;  
Who takes away e'en the last penny we've got,  
And lets us like dogs in the highway be shot,—  
We're weaving, we're weaving! (Heine)

As the Romantic poets were writing invoking local legends, folktales and were attempting to write in the language of the common man, Europe also had a parallel movement that encouraged classicism and objective writing, along with thoughts of social justice and the welfare of the



common man. The common and the ordinary middleclass man was also preparing himself for social revolutions and upheavals.

The struggle against political Romanticism is the main theme of the entire era. All progressive newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and scientific writings of that time are filled with responses to this campaign against the revived Romanticism. It is enough to read the articles of the young Marx in the *Rhine Gazette*, a particularly remarkable article against the historical school of law, to appreciate the enormous political and ideological significance of this struggle for the preparation of the revolution. And when Marx, during the period of friendship and ideological alliance with Bruno Bauer, propagated the “esoteric” – atheistic and revolutionary – Hegel, they produced a special essay on the criticism of the Romantic theory of art, the Romantic view of the religious essence of art. (To characterize that era, it is not important how great was the personal participation of Marx as the author of this work; it is enough to know that he participated in the preparatory work for it in the most active way.) And we find the same energetic struggle against Romanticism in all the writings of the then radical intelligentsia, especially among all radical Young Hegelians. (Lukacs in “Heine’s Germany”)

This revolutionary fervour had to compete with an equivalent fervour for chivalry and romance. After the renaissance and reformation we notice Europe contesting with folk stories, classicism and emerging political ideology of equality propagated by the middle classes. The novel emerged as a new form that could give enough physical space in a text for expressing mainstream thought in an elaborate manner.

In Spain during the 13th century “a native prose romance, the *Amadís de Gaula*” appeared which was “Arthurian in spirit” put down in writing “by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo in its first known edition of 1508” and the text “captured the imagination of the polite society of western Europe.” It had a narrative blended with heroism and “tender sentiment,” and it exalted an “idealized and refined concept of chivalry.” The story became so popular amidst the people and was “translated and adapted into French, Italian, Dutch, and English and followed by numerous sequels and imitations in Spanish and Portuguese” and “remained influential for more than four centuries, greatly affecting the outlook and sensibility of western society.” The great

novelist “Cervantes parodied the fashion inspired by *Amadís* in *Don Quixote*” in 1605, though he introduced “many of its features into his own masterpiece, so that the spirit and the character of chivalric romance may be said to have entered into the first great modern novel” (Whitehead).

“Amadís of Gaul” is a prose romance of chivalry, and its first written version was in Spanish by Garci Ordóñez (or Rodríguez) de Montalvo, who claimed to have “corrected and emended” existing versions. It has been proved now that the text was “in circulation since the early 14th century or even the late 13th” (Britannica).

Lord God! quoth Amadis: let me but find that traitor!—The woodmen then told them how the party had separated, and said that one of the five Knights who went with the Damsel was the biggest Knight they had ever seen. Amadis knew that that was Arcalaus; and bidding Galaor follow where the King went, he spurred on after Oriana. By sunset the horse could carry him no farther, and he being greatly distressed, saw a little to the right of the road a Knight lying dead, and a Squire by him holding his horse. Who slew that Knight? cried Amadis. A traitor that passed by, carrying the fairest Damsel in the world by force, and he slew my master only for asking who they were, and here is no one to help me to remove the body. (Lobeira’s version of *Amadís de Gaula*)

How much did Asia contribute to these concepts of celebrating local legends and also establishing the concept of equality? Orientalism re-emphasised and helped to create a strong Christian identity bordered with Greek ideologies and Europe became a mixed culture of Hellenic, Judaic, Christian and even Indian thought.

What Bouvard has in mind - the regeneration of Europe by Asia - was a very influential Romantic idea. Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, for example, urged upon their countrymen, and upon Europeans in general, a detailed study of India because, they said, it was Indian culture and religion that could defeat the materialism and mechanism (and republicanism) of Occidental culture. And from this defeat would arise a new, revitalized Europe: the Biblical imagery of death, rebirth, and redemption is evident in this prescription. Moreover, the Romantic Orientalist project was not merely a specific instance of a general tendency; it was a powerful shaper of the tendency itself, as Raymond Schwab has so convincingly argued in

“La Renaissance Orientale.” But what mattered was not Asia so much as Asia's use to modern Europe. Thus anyone who, like Schlegel or Franz Bopp, mastered an Oriental language was a spiritual hero, a knight-errant bringing back to Europe a sense of the holy mission it had now lost. It is precisely this sense that the later secular religions portrayed by Flaubert carry on in the nineteenth century. No less than Schlegel, Wordsworth, and Chateaubriand, Auguste Comte-like Bouvard was the adherent and proponent of a secular post-Enlightenment myth whose outlines are unmistakably Christian. (Said 115)

Edward Said traces the love for the Romantic Gothic tales to the Orient, differing completely from the Christian stories that were in mainstream vogue for thousand years or so. A lot more research would be required to exemplify Said's understanding of the impact of the Orient on western imagination and culture, especially, Romanticism.

It is very difficult nonetheless to separate such intuitions of the Orient as Mozart's from the entire range of pre-Romantic and Romantic representations of the Orient as exotic locale. Popular Orientalism during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth attained a vogue of considerable intensity. But even this vogue, easily identifiable in William Beckford, Byron, Thomas Moore, and Goethe, cannot be simply detached from the interest taken in Gothic tales, pseudomedieval idylls, visions of barbaric splendor and cruelty. (Said 118)

Just as Shelley's vision of equality does not notice how England's colonised lands' people's equality has been affected, we also notice, through the eyes of Edward Said how Karl Marx too was not able to create a universal perspective about social justice. Said quotes Marx: “England has to fulfill a double mission in India; one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of the Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia” (Said 154). Europe felt intellectually responsible for Asia, as a part of their Enlightenment philosophy, to make sure the world has come under the impact of western society.

Arnold dismisses the Romantic approach of the British and recommends the German model that he claimed, had a high seriousness, probably, more Christian in nature.

English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron empty of matter, Shelley

so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. Wordsworth cared little for books, and disparaged Goethe... but surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth an even greater poet than he is,—his thought richer, and his influence of wider application,—was that he should have read more books, among them, no doubt, those of that Goethe whom he disparaged without reading him....Shelley had plenty of reading... (Arnold 13)

Shelley, Arnold feels, had a “natural magic in his rhythm” and his sphere was more to do with rhythm and music. Though he wrote poetry that is musical “he has neither intellectual force enough nor sanity enough” (Arnold 86).

Byron and Shelley did not succeed in their attempt freely to apply the modern spirit in English literature... Their literary creation, compared with the literary creation of Shakespeare and Spenser, compared with the literary creation of Goethe and Heine, is a failure... Byron and Shelley will be long remembered, long after the inadequacy of their actual work is clearly recognised, for their passionate, their Titanic effort to flow in the main stream of modern literature; their names will be greater than their writings. (Arnold 130-131)

Arnold referred to Shelley as a “beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain” (Arnold 204 in *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*). At the same time, Arnold presents Shelley as an intellectual who was a scholar too. “Shelley read incessantly. Hume's *Essays* produced a powerful impression on him” (Arnold 216 *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*).

David Hume (1711–1776) wrote “major philosophical works—*A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), the *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), and *Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), as well as his posthumously published *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (1779)” which are “deeply influential.” Contemporary scholars view him as an “exponent of philosophical naturalism, as a precursor of contemporary cognitive science, and as the inspiration for several of the most significant types of ethical theory developed in contemporary moral philosophy.” Hume argues that ordinary people and even philosophers “talk about the “combat” between reason and passion.” People say that “we ought to be governed by reason rather than passion, and if our passions are not in line with reason’s commands, we ought to restrain them or bring them into conformity with reason.” Hume denies this argument and

“counters that “reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will” and that by itself it can never oppose a passion in the direction of the will.” He gives the example of “mathematical reasoning” which “when it bears on action is always used in connection with achieving some purpose and thus in connection with causal reasoning” (Morris).

For to me it seems evident, that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations.... I do not think a philosopher, who would apply himself so earnestly to the explaining the ultimate principles of the soul, would show himself a great master in that very science of human nature, which he pretends to explain, or very knowing in what is naturally satisfactory to the mind of man... Since a passion can never, in any sense, be called unreasonable, but when founded on a false supposition or when it chooses means insufficient for the designed end, it is impossible, that reason and passion can ever oppose each other, or dispute for the government of the will and actions. The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means our passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases. I may will the performance of certain actions as means of obtaining any desired good; but as my willing of these actions is only secondary, and founded on the supposition, that they are causes of the proposed effect; as soon as I discover the falsehood of that supposition, they must become indifferent to me. (Hume)

“Queen Mab” was written in 1813 by Shelley that says that “All things are void of terror; man has lost / His terrible prerogative, and stands / An equal amidst equals; happiness / And science dawn, though late, upon the earth; / Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame; / Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here, / Reason and passion cease to combat there” (Queen Mab).

Enlightenment encouraged skepticism and is also “identified” with “political accomplishments” and “three political revolutions” namely, “The English Revolution (1688), the

American Revolution (1775–83), and the French Revolution (1789–99)” belong to this period, creating “the basic model of government founded upon the consent of the governed” articulating “the political ideals of freedom and equality” and “basic individual human rights” and “promotion of toleration of religious diversity” and “other now-familiar features of western democracies.” It argued that “reason shows its power more convincingly in criticizing authorities than in establishing them.” Hence, we can argue that “liberalism is perhaps the most characteristic political philosophy of the Enlightenment” with “Spinoza” as “one of its originators.” We have to remember “Locke’s argument for the right to revolt against a government.” These ideologies were created by the middle class and “has many relations with the rise of the mercantile class (the bourgeoisie) and the development of what comes to be called civil society.” This modern “society” was “characterized by work and trade in pursuit of private property” and we have to bring to mind how Rousseau argued “that direct (pure) democracy is the only form of government in which human freedom can be realized” (Bristow).

Only later, society understood that totalitarianism is not only a feature of certain monarchic and aristocratic systems, but that even middle classes would acquire that characteristic if given unlimited rights to create narratives and bring forth ideologies that are populist in nature and Horkheimer said in 1944 that “Enlightenment is totalitarian” (Horkheimer & Adorno 4). If all of us are empowered, then all of us would also want to attempt at self-preservation. Egoism of the self of all people in an equal manner, might destroy harmony, when accelerated by a capitalistic mode of production in a new economic system different from hierarchical feudalism.

The Enlightenment had pinned its colors to liberalism. If all affects are of equal value, then self-preservation, which dominates the form of the system in any case, seems to offer the most plausible maxims for action. It was to be given free rein in the free economy. The somber writers of the early bourgeois period, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Mandeville, who spoke up for the egoism of the self, thereby recognized society as the destructive principle and denounced harmony before it was elevated to the official doctrine by the bearers of light, the classicists. The former writers exposed the totality of the bourgeois order as the horrifying entity which finally engulfed both, the general and the particular, society and the self. With the development of the economic system in which the control of the

economic apparatus by private groups creates a division between human beings, self-preservation, although treated by reason as identical, had become the reified drive of each individual citizen and proved to be a destructive natural force no longer distinguishable from self-destruction. The two principles combined in a murky fusion. Pure reason became unreason, a procedure as immune to errors as it was devoid of content. (Horkheimer & Adorno 71)

The history of Europe has a subtext of highly controlled societies that encouraged the repression of human passions, and “from the vantage point of the fascist present, in which the hidden is coming to light, the manifest history is also revealing its connection to that dark side, which is passed over in the official legend of nation states, and no less in its progressive critique” (Horkheimer & Adorno 192). Individuality came to be viewed as human emancipation “but at the same time” this “was the result of the very mechanism from which humanity was to be emancipated” as “in the autonomy and uniqueness of the individual, the resistance to the blind, repressive power of the irrational whole was crystallized” (Horkheimer and Adorno 200).

Shelley’s poems are beautiful rhythmic songs that have also captured the shift of political power from the upper class to the middle class that was a historical process that happened during sea trade, Puritanism, colonialism, translations of texts from other cultures, emergence of capitalism, and strengthening of science and technology and philosophy in universities. Enlightenment is the name we have given to the rise of middle classes in political power.

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