

THE ETHICAL AIM OF POETRY

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Carl Trueman's *The Rise And Triumph of the Modern Self* has chapter 4 devoted to Wordsworth, Shelley and Blake. I want to make a few observations here and return to issues of substance in the current moment in history. I am immediately interested in Wordsworth's idea that poetry has the ethical goal of binding people with each other, to bring relationship and love by reconnecting to human nature, to the universal. I am interested in this issue personally, because I happen to have been attracted to English Romantic poetry since early youth. And now, with various strange twist of fate, I am stuck in conflict with Bill Gates, an American tycoon, directly and am in a struggle for my life, on ethical matter of well-being of the human race from extremely dystopian vision that I learned about by him. And simultaneously, my interests have turned to centrality in Romantic Love, and my hopes for home and hearth with a beautiful lover in San Francisco when I am able to overcome plans to destroy my life by malevolent destructive intent of Bill Gates.

Some months ago I became more interested in Universal Self and what Romantics can do for the well-being of the Self. So what Wordsworth seems to have suggested is that poetry will teach us how to relate and love other people in a better way than others.

Now let us not forget that by the early twentieth century, we had Musil attempting to examine a world in which Virtue no longer mattered.

These issues, these circles of concerns are remarkably difficult when we demand canonical answers that are trustworthy. In other words, so many people in the period from 1790s to 2020s had given so many different confident answers to these issues that there is here a great deal of confusion. Which answers are right? Which ones are wrong? How can we determine which are canonically best answers that will remain true for for the future? These are the issues that animate me to examine these questions. I am driven by private uncertainty here, I will confess without shame. I am driven by private uncertainty and a great deal of self-trust that I will resolve these confusions for my beloved people the human race, and quell the doubts that persist.

Whenever I approach a problem of this great magnitude, I take my time to get some feel for it. Now my great genius and acumen in Science is without question, but I am no poet. And thankfully, I have no great feeling of inadequacy about this. I am comfortable letting Shelley and Rilke be great poets and I am satisfied with being their consumers. I am no longer young enough to have energy to attempt to be a great poet. But I am strong in philosophy and Science, and I believe that I will be able to make progress on these issues. Eventually.

The question is, what can we understand about Universal Self and how can we gain some sense of how to prepare the young to be able to connect with human nature in a way that will improve their lives *uniformly across the world*. That is

what interests me. This question. I am an optimist and believe this problem is possible to solve.

1. WHY WORDSWORTH IS WRONG AND SHELLEY IS MORE RIGHT

Wordsworth thought alienation of industrialisation, dehumanisation, urban life in eighteenth century cut men and women off from authentic life. Shelley saw all forms of particular life obscuring unchanging truths. Carl Trueman's synopsis is valuable in this.

So Wordsworth's viewpoint I think is interesting but it's not particularly deep in my view. He is misdiagnosing the problem and giving therefore a solution that was untenable. I don't think this is a serious answer. Shelley's viewpoint was much more serious and profound. I know that today Wordsworth and Shelley are considered together, but Shelley's viewpoint has much more potential for understanding issues of what is human nature and authenticity without getting stuck on irrelevant preferences of sentimental type. I am biased here because the most meaningful parts of my own inner life is completely urban and I love to have meaningful life much more in urban settings and I do not believe that authenticity of human life is better in rustic settings more than in urban settings. As a matter of fact, I find rustic settings to be isolating and authenticity to be less profound than in urban settings. But then again, I was born in 1973 and my happiest and most meaningful relationships were urban, in New York, Boston, London, San Francisco, and not in rustic settings.

Nature, to me is not watching trees and deer isolated from the organic life of a great city. For me Wordsworth is not as profound in his outlook as Shelley. For me Nature is Existence, the whole of the Universe, and all things that exist and human nature is the uniformity from sharing of genetic code in common, G_c , that is 99.9% of the genetic code of all human beings whose expression is always mysterious.

I do not hide my natural preference for seeing Shelley as a far more profound poetic genius than Wordsworth who was more of a sentimental reactionary with nostalgia for simpler times in rustic settings.

I am quite serious about these views, and there was never any possibility of turning back the clock and returning to rustic settings. Authentic lives had to be resolved without wishing for the impossible. Wordsworth's viewpoint did not have any salvation. Shelley avoided this error and his Platonic influence allowed him to formulate a theory of poetry which is more valid even today.

2. SHELLEY'S INSIGHTS ABOUT MORAL EDUCATION

Carl Trueman's analysis of Shelley's philosophy is extremely valuable to me. I am extremely interested in Shelley's ideas about the centrality of moral reformation of humanity through poetry. The theory behind this is intriguing, and serious. Shelley believes that cultivation of sentiments such as love and trust is a prerequisite for moral reasoning. This is extremely interesting for me, because I have shown that universal moral values exist that is mostly ethnicity-independent globally. It is thus not a product of Reason but an expression of the genetic code G_c that all human beings have in common, and which accounts for 99.9% of the genome.

First, let us note immediately that since Immanuel Kant and others were strongly of the view that morality arises from reason, they do not mention affects as a source of morality at all. Shelley was prescient in the understanding that there is an

affective component, and today we know the structure of the seven basic emotion systems of the subcortical brain from 1998 text *Affective Neuroscience* of Jaak Panksepp. Then we return and see that Shelley had an intuitive grasp of the right answer regarding the way in which morality is dominated by genetic inheritance through (primarily) social emotions that have evolved over the past five million years.

Thus his idea that *emotions must be cultivated first* for moral reasoning is right. Indeed, work of Jonathan Haidt showed that reasoning in moral events is after the fact. So Shelley was right that emotional cultivation is necessary for moral elevation and virtue.

I am quite pleased with Shelley's thoughts here because I think that these issues need further effort for assessment. Perhaps this is even key to Universal Self, that in the modern world *cultivation of emotions* does not seem to be a significant part of our education at all.

REFERENCES

- [1] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Crossway, 2020