Chapter - III

SOME OF THE THINKERS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SHELLEY

An unbiased study of the development of Shelley's thought and poetry reveals that his poetry is the blending of two main elements—thought and feeling. There is no denying the fact that feeling dominates thought in his lyrics but there is also a sizeable number of poems in which thought is more markedly predominant than lyricism and spontaneity. True that his genius was essentially lyrical and that it is discernible, in varying degrees, in almost all his poems but even then it will be quite improper to assume that lyricism is the only element of his poetry. On the other hand we may safely state that thought is the kernel of his poetry and that it plays an unmistakable part in shaping the colour, direction, tone and intensity of his feelings, because "Shelley uses poetry", remarks Spender "as a medium for expressing his ideas and his personal conflicts more than he exercises it as a craft or plays it as an intellectual game." 1

If we are to be guided by the unambiguous utterances of Shelley on the role of the poets, we immediately notice that he was intrinsically inclined to attach greater value to ideas than to feelings, because ideas have the unique singularity of providing the intellectual base for understanding the whole gamut of the doctrine of change and progress and of inspiring people for rejecting all that comes into conflict with the basic tenets. It is the sacred duty and the inspired mission of a poet having social vision to awaken consciousness in man and that is what

1 S. Spender, Shelley (Writers and their Works): Longman; 1964, p.45.
makes them "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Similarly 
his ideas of the nature and functions of poetry convincingly show that 
Shelley regarded poetry as an effective means of ushering in a new social, 
political and ethical order discarding the obsolete and hackneyed one. 
"The most unfailling herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of 
a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution 
is poetry." Being socially conscious he was also convinced of the 
fact that poetry without thought cannot, under any circumstances, 
accomplish this noble task. Hence thought enjoys a place of paramount 
importance in Shelley's understanding of the real role of poets and 
poetry.

The importance of thought in Shelley's poetry can be assessed 
by his emphasis on the supremacy of political science over poetry: "I 
consider poetry very subordinate to moral or political science; and 
if I were well, certainly I should aspire to the latter." The opinion 
of Mary Shelley also corroborates this view when she says, "Shelley 
had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depth of 
his mind, and develop some high or abstruse truth." This lends support 
to the claim that Shelley's poetry has real substance. Therefore, any 
attempt to eliminate, belittle, or ignore the thought-content will be

3 ibid.
4 Shelley to Love Peacock; January 24, 1819; Vol. II, p. 71.
5 Mary Shelley: Note to Revanl and Helen; Political Works; ed. 
F.L. Jones, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman; 1947, p. 188.
tantamount to ignoring his poetry. Rogers has suggested that the correct approach to Shelley's poetry is to consider the importance of both thought and feeling. "Throughout Shelley's work in both prose and verse instinctive feeling and derivative thought -- the first coloured by the emotions arising out of experience and the second elaborated by a great deal of original invention -- are so closely interwoven that, beyond a certain point they defy disentanglement; all we can do -- and this precaution is always necessary in our studies -- is to allow for thought when we are considering feeling and for feeling when we are considering his thought."

It was not owing to some accident or chance that Shelley became what he was. On the other hand he had solid background, both subjective and objective, to lay a modest claim to his seat of esteem. "He read much, and his reading gave purpose and unity and intensity to his natural characteristics an extreme sensitivity of imagination, a hatred of oppression and injustice and an overpowering impulse to self-expression."7

(A) JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704) was the initiator of the age of enlightenment and reason in England and France and is still a powerful influence on the life and thought of Europe. After a curious, successful and controversial service career, cut short owing to ill-health, he started writing his philosophical essays, among which his Essay Concerning

Human Understanding is perhaps the best and most well known. His medical training (though he did not go in for medical profession) helped him to a great extent to attain clear insight into and balanced approach in some of the most complicated and controversial issues of his time. His arguments were strongly logical and he attempted to show that all ideas were derived through sensory experiences. He thoroughly rejected the older theory of innate ideas and forcefully argued that even complex ideas arose through the interplay of sense and reflection. He opined that moral judgement was the result of voluntary action and consequently he was a strong defender of individual liberty; he advocated religious tolerance but vehemently opposed atheism. He did not subscribe to the view that one can know the truth about this universe by reason and he was of the opinion that knowledge of the world around us could only be gathered by experience and reflection on experience.

His most important work on political philosophy is that entitled Two Treaties of Government (1690). The first treaty which refuted the divine right of kings had a lasting effect on Shelley. In the second treaty he goes deeper and broods over the basic concept of a government. He is of the opinion that the act of governance is a contract and that governments should work 'for the public good'. He further says that the ruler's authority is conditional and not absolute and that government is a trust forfeited by a ruler who fails to secure the public good. He championed the cause of the freedom of men under governments and strongly declared that this freedom should not be subject to the inconstant, unknown arbitrary will of another man. As regards
the moral concept of good and evil his stand was hedonistic calling
that good which is apt to cause or increase pleasure or diminish
pain in human being.

In Shelley the influence of Locke was deep-rooted. So great
was his veneration for Locke that "the examination of a chapter of
Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding would induce him, at any
moment, to quit every other pursuit." Whenever Shelley wanted to
convert any one to his philosophy and his own arguments seemed to be
inadequate to him, he would refer him to the authority of Locke. "Locke
was the systematic cudgel for blockheads." The very basis of Shelley's
metaphysical speculations seems to be derived from Locke. Asserting
that on Shelley the influence of Locke was greater than that of Godwin,
Professor Sen states, "Even in his early youth, when the poet was
practically in the leading strings of the philosopher, the empiricism
of Lockian philosophy and its denunciation of wordy disputes made the
enthusiastic admirer of Godwin sharply criticize his opinions." The
reply of Shelley to Godwin's stand that 'acquisition of classical
learning is the proper employment of youth' is a pointer to Locke's
influence on Shelley.

9 ibid., pp. 9-10.
10 ibid., p. 18.
11 "Words are the very things that so eminently contribute to
the growth and establishment of prejudices. The learning of
words before the mind is capable of attaching correspondent ideas
to them, is like possessing machinery of which we are so un-
acquainted as to be in danger of misusing it." (Shelley to Godwin,
January 29, 1812).
(B) VOLTAIRE (1694-1778). One of the pioneers of the French Revolution, Voltaire was the first thinker who popularized the ideas of Locke in France, propounded a theory of liberty and ardently pleaded for freedom in all its forms — to speak, to write and to act. For him liberty was the panacea for all social and political ills and the mainspring of all progress and change. 'I may not believe in a single word of what you say but I will defend unto death your right to say so,' declared he. His scathing attack on religion in general and Christianity in particular is, perhaps, the greatest contribution to the freedom of speech. But he was an atheist in the limited sense of the word, his violent attack on Christianity notwithstanding. He had faith in certain religious and moral values and he sincerely accepted a few fundamental principles of natural religion — belief in a transcendental Deity and obedience to the moral precepts that are revealed to man through the faculty of his reason. Then what aspect of Christianity did he attack? He attacked "the dogmas, the accretions of theology, the complex mysteries and contradictory ceremonials of Christianity that had engendered fanaticism, caused bloodshed, suppressed reason and persecuted free thought." 12

There was another apparent contradiction in Voltaire; while in one breath he condemned the monarchial form of government in France, in the next breath he praised England and its constitution. This becomes clear to us if we take note of the fact that Voltaire was less concerned

with the representative government but was more enthusiastic about the freedom of expression and religious tolerance. Secondly his love for and admiration of Newton's physics and Locke's material philosophy made him admire everything that England stood for. Voltaire's ideas concerning freedom and religion assumed a radical tone in France though these were taken favourably in conservative ideology of England. He had "an intense interest in the freedom of scholars and he was humane enough to be revolted by the stupidity and brutalities of France's criminal law." It can be said with emphasis that he played a very important part in preparing a favourable atmosphere for the Revolution. He attacked the evils of the Church and declared that the abolition of the ecclesiastical despotism was the beginning of the justice and enlightenment. He hated the old regime, denounced the abuses and the inequalities of laws and the judicial system of arbitrary imprisonment and torture, and undermined the respect for authority. His denunciation of religious intolerance and intellectual tyranny found echoes which reverberated throughout England. Shelley was greatly influenced by Voltaire; his criticism of the Church and the State is as bitter as that of the French thinker. In Queen Mab we hear the impassioned tones and echoes of the sardonic laughter of Voltaire. It is significant that Shelley introduced his Queen Mab with the words 'Kerouz-L'Infame', taken from the correspondence of Voltaire.

(C) DAVID HUME (1711-1776) enjoys the unique distinction of conceiving

philosophy as the inductive science of human nature. After a brief span of employment in a merchant's office, he retired to France for three years and there he composed *A Treatise of Human Nature*. But he met with utter frustration when he tried to publish it on his return to England. But fortunately, his very next venture, *Essays, Moral and Philosophical* (1741-42) won him success. In 1763 he reached France on a diplomatic assignment and was well-received by the society in Paris.

Hume's contention is that no theory of reality is possible and that ideas cannot be created. He discards the terms of metaphysics by declaring that all talk of a realm beyond experience has no content and that all objects of awareness are either 'relation of ideas' or 'matters of fact'. To him utility or usefulness means the fitness or natural tendency of anything to serve an end, if the end is regarded as good.

"There are obvious points of resemblance between Shelley's standpoint and that of Hume as expressed in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*; and we might have explained them away as due to the intellectual environment of the poet, if we had not known how eagerly Shelley read and re-read these Enquiries as embodied in the authentic editions of Hume's Essays. The letters of this youthful thinker specially during his residence at Oxford are replete with references to the doctrines and arguments of Hume and in several of them we can very clearly trace the influence of this philosopher's 'sceptical solutions' of doubts concerning the operations of the Human Understanding." 14 Initially

Shelly was very much influenced by William Godwin's *Political Justice*. But soon he could see the inherent contradiction in Godwin's standpoint and after a great deal of deliberate effort could free himself to a great extent from the influence of the latter. Stretching his own method of argument further he soon came under the spell of the ideas propounded by Hume. "We may not find in his *Speculations on Morals* any definite or elaborate expansion of the part played by reason and emotion in forming our moral judgements. But the very way in which he defines virtue as involving not only 'the desire to be the author of good' but also 'the apprehension of the manner in which it ought to be done' shows the unmistakable influence of Hume." 15

(D) J.J. Rousseau (1712-1778), the chief brain behind the French Revolution, wielded tremendous influence on a galaxy of social and political thinkers, literati, social reformers and revolutionaries, both at home and abroad. He is universally acclaimed as the spiritual force behind the English Romantic Movement. The singular achievement of Rousseau lies in the fact that he compiled many apparently irrelevant ideas, interconnected them and after a process of deep mental thought gave vent to a stream of social and political ideas that inspired generations of thinkers and writers to higher and nobler thoughts. Being immensely conscious of the corrupting and crippling effects of civilization, he stressed the supreme importance of simple and unsophisticated life lived in intimate contact with benign Nature and of

15 Ibid., p. 56.
emancipating man from the shackles of civilisation which bind, harden and degrade him. His anti-sophistication zeal came to the fore when he declared that cities were the graveyards of men. Shelley's prejudices towards cities can be traced to the influence of Rousseau. In the opening lines of the third part of Peter Bell The Third he likens hell to the city of London when he says:

Hell is a city much like London
A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;
Small justice shown, and still less pity.

1-5

God made the country and man made the city. And since city is the creation of Man, the outcast, it is evil. The whole fabric of man-made institution is defective and vicious. In strong words Shelley exposes the cant and hypocrisy of the guardians of such institutions when he says in the same poem:

There is a Chancery Court; a king;
A manufacturing mob; a set
Of thieves who by themselves are sent
Similar thieves to represent
An army; and a public debt.
Which last in a scheme of paper money,
And means -- being interpreted --
"Bees, keep your wax -- give us the honey."

Ibid. 16-23

The approach of Rousseau was unique and his manner singular. He believed in progress and in material method of improving the lot of men. He was ardent in eliminating various forms of evil -- corruption,
injustice, cruelty, misery and tyranny -- from the woof and texture of society. Rousseau could not reconcile to the degenerate state of man who reasonably should have been otherwise. Hence the significance of the opening sentence of the Social Contract -- 'Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains'. Many a man believes himself to be the master of others who is, no less than they, a slave. In the society of his dream only good would obtain; only virtuous citizens would flourish; and all would submit to general good. He discarded parliamentary democracy on the ground that representation is derived in a fraudulent manner. In his opinion, people think that they are free in democracy but in fact they are free at the time of general election only. Activities of modern political parties have not only vindicated Rousseau's stand but it has also stretched his point further. Now it is generally believed that in democracy people are not free, not even at the time of general elections.

In Rousseau's writing "the rise of the new epoch is very observable, for this most powerful writer abstains from those attacks on Christianity which unhappily had been too frequent; and exerted almost exclusively against the civil and political abuses of the existing society."16 In his essay -- Has the Progress of Science and Art Tended to Corrupt or purify morals? -- he argued that the virtue and happiness of the simple primitive man had been transformed into corruption and misery by the increase of knowledge, by the accumulation of wealth, by the growth of cities and luxuries. A.C. Ward considered him "the first of the moderns

to preach the importance of the individual person -- any individual person -- in relation to the community". 17

Rousseau as an advocate of Naturalism constantly emphasised the supreme value of 'Return to Nature'. In his magnum opus - Social Contract - an amazing and revolutionary tissue of the seventeenth century political theory and Calvinist theology - he formulated a new scheme for social salvation. He envisioned the world of an ideal society in which man can be free to follow the dictates of his spiritual being and to live happily in virtuous harmony with the purposes of Nature.

Rousseau was greatly concerned with the relation of the individual to the authority that governed him. He was aware of the fact that men in the then existing society had been deprived of their legitimate rights and liberties without their consent. The logical culmination of this line of thinking led him to formulate the revolutionary theory that the people are sovereign and the Governments derive their legitimate authority from the consent of all the governed. 18 In fact it is an axiom of political

17 A.C. Ward, Landmarks in Western Literature; London; 1952, p. 66.
18 We hear an echo of this in Tom Paine's Rights of Man and Shelley was very much influenced by this line of approach. So in the very beginning of his A Declaration of Rights (1812) he states "Government has no rights; it is a delegation from several individuals for the purpose of securing their own. It is therefore just only so far as it exists by their consent; useful only so far as it operates to their well-being" (Clause I). Shelley does not stop there. He boldly asserts in the very next lines, "If these individuals think that the form of government which they or their forefathers constituted is ill-adapted to produce their happiness, they have a right to change it" (ibid. Clause II). To make his stand very clear Shelley further states, "As the benefit of the governed is, or ought to be, the origin of government, no man can have any authority that does not expressly emanate from their will" (ibid., Clause II. The relation between the government and the governed should (contd.)
democracy. But his greatest contribution to political speculation remains his doctrine of popular sovereignty which consists of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He championed the cause of liberty which became so dear to the people of France of that period. It was he who said that to renounce liberty was to renounce being man.

Rousseau's influence on contemporary thought was tremendous. His political theories were readily received by British scholars and were immediately translated into English. It is no exaggeration to say that he offered a justification for abolishing the obsolete system of society and government. His works were the gospels for the enthusiasts of the French Revolution. Literally speaking, his disciples preached the gospel of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in street corners and in their Assemblies. His dogmas are clearly discernible in both the speculative systems and the governmental reorganisations of the revolutionary era. It was he who largely contributed to promote the theory of rational state. Where his theorising touched government in its more practical aspect, his ideas were in some cases singularly fruitful.

Rousseau's influence on the literary figures of England was enormous. Paine and Godwin for their social doctrine, Wordsworth and Coleridge for their love of Nature, Byron and Shelley for their

18 (Contd.)

be very healthy. The government should in the extreme case apply minimum coercion to correct the recalcitrant minority for the benefit of the majority and in no case should the force applied be more than it is needed. Persuasion is preferred to application of force because "Government is never supported by fraud until it cannot be supported by reason" (ibid. Cl.VIII).
revolutionary ideology were indebted to him. The dignity of man as man is but Rousseau's humanism which was "carried on with increased richness and subtlety in Romantic poetry. Childhood is idealised by Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge; freedom and passion inspire the heroes and heroines of Shelley". 19

(E) HELVETIUS (1715-1771) wrote little but whatever he wrote contributed a great deal to the development of utilitarian thought. He distinguished between public and private, general and individual interests and tried to establish the supremacy of personal desires over state service. In a bid to seek harmony between private passions and common interests he prescribed the imparting of similar type of education to all. He noted the strange irony of the fact that all the rich and the poor die -- the former of boredom and the latter of starvation. To bridge this vast gulf, he advocated equal opportunities of progress to all.

He opined that men are born with equal powers and capacities and their conduct and behaviour are determined solely by self-interest -- man's actions are always directed towards the attainment of maximum happiness, satisfaction of all legitimate desires. With this hypothesis he examined the success of a government: greatest happiness to the greatest number becomes the yardstick of a successful government. He further maintains that the character of the government decides the

character of the people.

It is to be remembered that the social theories and the political creeds of Helvetius exercised tremendous influence on Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Shelley. Godwin derived considerable inspiration from Helvetius for shaping his egalitarian and material philosophy. According to H.N. Brailsford, Helvetius had been Godwin's chief precursor. Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas about the education of women and their emancipation may be traced to the feminism of Helvetius. Shelley's early reading of Helvetius helped him to be allergic to the practical aspect of religion. Shelley's violent attack of institutionalised Christianity can to some extent be traced to the influence of Helvetius.

(F) D'HOLBACH (1723-1789), the most prolific author amongst the French Encyclopaedists, held that the government is constituted of a minority chosen by a majority to promote the ends of a society; it is a kind of gentleman's agreement between the government and the people and consequently the agreement comes to an end if the government fails to work for the welfare of one and all. Holbach found all the forms of government defective and devoid of promise for permanent good. He championed tolerance on the part of the government and freedom of the press and no the then existing government satisfied these two basic tenets of his opinion.

Holbach's attack on domestic tyranny was still more scathing;
in his opinion, women became the instruments of secret sensual pleasures of men as they were refused the right to a sensible education. He talks of the absurdities of women's education; draws a bitter picture of a woman's fate in a loveless marriage of convenience; remarks that esteem is necessary for a happy marriage, but asks sadly how one is to esteem a mind which has emerged from a schooling in folly, assails the practice of gallantry and the fashionable conjugal infidelities of his day. "Holbach's feminism attracted Shelley so much that he advocated equal rights to women with men in all spheres.

(G) Tom Paine (1737-1809), hailed as one of the prominent champions of mankind, was never content with his lot, nor was he ever content with the lot of his fellowmen. While summing up the difference between the ideas of political philosophers like Voltaire, Locke, Cromwell, Rousseau, etc., and those of Paine, Howard Fast says, "they (Voltaire, etc.) wrote abstractly of the patterns of change; Paine wrote realistically of the method of change. They were philosophers who created political philosophy; Paine was a revolutionist who created a method for revolution. They moved men to thought; Paine moved men to thought and action. They dealt with theories and ideas; Paine dealt with the dynamics of one force playing against another." 21


21 Howard Fast, The Selected Works of Tom Paine: (Introduction), New York; 1946, p. XII.
Rousseau's sentimental idealism did not appeal to Paine because he was essentially a rationalist. Nevertheless, he condemned monarchy, nobility and all such hereditary forms of government on the ground that they operate for the benefit of the few in callous disregard to the aspirations of the many. He preferred democracy though he was fully aware of its limitations in looking after the affairs of a vast bulk of population. In Rights of Man, which according to Howard Fast, is one of the finest statement of eighteenth century democratic philosophy, ever formulated, he attacked feudalism, its succession of great landed property and its search for further propriety and property, for despotism leads to war and to political oppression. While pointing out the evils of monarchy he makes a distinction between society and the State. He is of the opinion that the feudal interest, in their control of governments had invaded society as a whole and estranged and alienated man from Nature.

Another significant contribution of Paine is the doctrine of natural constitution. He contends that a constitution is an antecedent to a Government. A Government without a good and sound constitution is like a ship without a rudder. In Paine's opinion all the enactments of legislature cannot be called laws. Laws are only those acts of an assembly that have universal operation or apply to every individual of that assembly. Paine's greatest contribution to political thought is the plan of social security which he proposed in Rights of Man. He is the only thinker of his time who created many battle cries and slogans of a revolution. Paine's influence on the Romantic poets was indirect
and short-lived; but on Shelley it was direct and abiding. His aggressive tone is discernible in the political essays of Shelley.

"Where liberty is, there is my country", as expressed by Benjamin Franklin, reveals the spirit of eighteenth century humanity. But the befitting answer "Where is not Liberty, there is mine" is of Paine. "It is the watchword of the knight-errant, the marching music that sent Lafayette to America and Byron to Greece, the motto of every man who prizes striving above enjoyment, honours comradeship above patriotism and follows an idea that no frontier can arrest. Paine was indeed of no century, and no formula of classification can confine him.... In his spirit of adventure, in his passion for movement and combat, there Paine is romantic. Paine thought in prose and acted epics. He drew horizons on paper and pursued the infinite in deeds."22

(H) CONDORCET (1743-1794), the author of Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind, was a radical republican thinker. He believed that each generation has considerable power of pure reason to determine, define and mould the form and working of its institutions. He was opposed to any change in the fundamental law. He hailed the formation of the French Republic declaring it to be the triumph of reason in society and Government and a happy augury of complete regeneration of the degenerate race. But he became extremely critical of the cruelty and waste in the game of war. His intuitive assertion that the wealth,

social condition and culture would be equally distributed amongst citizens through the enlightened function of free Government has, however, not come to true. His sincere optimism and the doctrine of perfectibility can be understood from his belief in the future when the Sun will shine only upon a world of free men who will recognise no master except their reason and when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical tools will no longer exist except in history or on the stage. Shelley in his Queen Mab agrees with Condorcet in believing that the germ of perfection is present in every heart and is ready for nurturing by the forces of light and liberty. Presumably Shelley owes to Condorcet the mental attitude to view history in stages, appreciating an age to the proportion of liberty attained. This optimistic idea of future progress and perfection in human nature and society appears in "the romantic projects of the utopian socialists; and also in the poems of Shelley; the earlier poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey."23

(I) WILLIAM GODWIN (1756-1835), to quote is biographer Brown, was "the perfect flower of a stock deserted for many generations to non-conformity and moral insurrection."24 He presumably conceived the idea of writing Political Justice, after reading Burke's Reflections, Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women and Paine's Rights of Man. And with its publication in 1793 he emerged from "his comparative obscurity to become almost overnight the leading radical social philosopher of his age."25

Political Justice is his first document that gives vent to his new socio-political and moral ideas. Some of the basic tenets enshrined in it are mechanical materialism, political anarchism, necessitarianism and perfectibility of men. Beginning with Locke-Hartley tradition that physical influences are negligible compared to moral causes, he attributed supreme importance to education and Government, because he asserts that Government works upon mind. And consequently change of opinion brings change in Government. He attributes slavery to the continued interest of the tyrants in holding back their subjects from understanding the advantages of freedom. The attraction of despotism is so strong that emancipation becomes almost impossible; but when "true crisis shall come, not a sword will need to be drawn, not a finger to be lifted up."26

This typical Godwinism became the guiding principle of Wordsworth's Oswald.27 Going against the prevailing mood of society he establishes the right of the have-nots to demand a share of the spares of the have.

To Godwin generosity is no virtue but duty.

Godwin opines that the practice of awarding punishment to convicts betrays the very purpose because the punitive aspect of law is given upper hand in callous disregard to the reformatory aspect. Godwin


27 Wordsworth: 'To-day you have thrown off a tyranny That lives but in the torpid acquiescence Of our emasculated souls; the tyranny Of the world's masters with the musty rules By which they uphold their craft from age to age. You have obeyed the only law that sense Submits to recognise; the immediate law, From the clear light of circumstances, fleshed Upon and independent of intellect.

(The Borderers)
looks upon crime as an error which proceeds from a defective social set up and hence if the institutions of society are properly reorganised there is little possibility of such an error. Godwin opines that criminals should be treated sympathetically because it is the want of sympathy, in one form or another, which thwarts the nobler instincts of man and often turns him into a criminal. Under no circumstances should inhuman treatment be meted out to the criminals because it is the crime which should be hated and not the criminal. And moreover, punishment involves violence. Violence on a greater scale becomes war and war brings in its trains evils like misery, death, starvation and destruction. He attacks patriotism since it is a smokescreen to hide nefarious and selfish intentions of the so-called champions of patriotism.

Godwin puts too much emphasis on truth and reason. "Sound reasoning and truth when adequately communicated must always be victorious over error. Truth, then is omnipotent, and the vices and moral weaknesses of man are not invincible. Man, in short, is perfectible, or in other words, susceptible to perpetual improvement. These sentiments... are explosives capable of destroying the whole fabric of government. For if truth is omnipotent, why trust to laws? If man will obey argument, why use constraint?" But here, it seems, Godwin suffers from a

28 Godwin: 'What... can be more shameless than for society to make an example of those whom she has goaded to the breach of order, instead of amending her own institutions which, by straining order into tyranny, produced the mischief'? Political Justice: Vol. II, p. 713.

29 H.N. Brailsford, op. cit., p. 105.
contradiction. He gives reason a high position being himself well aware that most men rarely reason. This lacuna in his approach "led him to ignore the aesthetic and emotional influences by which the mass of men can best be led to a virtuous ideal". 30 Even his most ardent follower Shelley 31 supplements this defect in the teaching of his master.

Godwin's Necessitarianism has three distinct uses: to exonerate the criminal from crime; to preach truth and justice and to believe in perfectibility. He opines that since a virtue or a vice is the result of persuasion, threats or violence are of no use in uplifting the moral stature of man.

Godwin's political ideals are based on philosophical anarchism; the only necessity of Government is to supply the few cases to which society and civilisation are not conveniently competent. "Therefore, its annihilation, by means of argument and persuasion, would do men and society lasting good. Another aspect of his anarchism is equalisation of property since property breeds corruption in both the extremes -- the rich amass wealth by fraud and spend it in evil ways; the poor starve.

30 Ibid., p. 104.

31 Shelley moves half-consciously from the standpoint of Godwin that mankind are to be reasoned into perfection. The contention of Shelley is that the contemplation of beauty is of greatest importance in the progress towards reasoned virtue. "My purpose", he writes in the preface to Prometheus Unbound, "has been ... to familiarise... poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness".
for bare necessities of life and adopt unfair means to satisfy their needs.

Unlike Rousseau, Godwin highlights the positive role of education in inculcating virtue even in an honest ploughman. Imperfect Government keeps people uneducated and ushers in various evils. Godwin even wants to do away with institutions like marriage and paternal affection when virtues like equality and fraternity shall be the order of society.

(J) ERASMUS DARWIN (1731-1802), English scientist and poet, was one of the foremost physicians of his day. Though he was a total failure in medical profession, his training was not a fiasco; it helped him to systematize his philosophical thought to which he owed his seat of esteem. He was the grandfather of the renowned biologist, Charles Darwin, in real, as well as, spiritual sense. It is he who showed in germination the nascent ideas of the theory of evolution which had its full bloom in Charles Darwin. His importance is mainly as a transitional figure: he stands at the threshold of a new era, taking most of his basic assumptions from eighteenth century materialism but also prefiguring the more sophisticated approach of scientists like Charles Darwin and others.

Darwin was a child of the eighteenth century and was a convinced deist. In his ideas of aesthetics and psychology he followed in the tradition of English materialism established by Locke, Hume, Berkeley
and David Hume. His literary works, especially *Zoönomia* are interesting for their apparent anticipation of the later theories of Charles Darwin and others and also for the emphasis on the physical basis of thought and emotion. Influence of Darwin on Shelley can be traced to the latter's short-term deism and long-term materialism.

**VOLNEY** (1757-1820), the French savant, was born on February 3, 1757 of well-to-do family. Being strongly individualistic, he assumed the surname of Volney discarding Boisgirais, his earlier surname, received owing to his father's estate. To know the world under the Sun, he went on tour abroad and for long four years he travelled a great part of Egypt, Syria and other countries and in 1787 printed his impressions in a book entitled *Voyage en Egypt et en Syria*. His *Magnum Opus*, *Les Ruins*, rightly called philosophy of history, appeared in 1791. In it he traced the rise and fall of empires and attributed the fall to the corrupt practices of Kings, Bishops and their sycophants as well to the throttling effects of dehumanising roles of social, political and religious institutions. He did not rest there. Being eager to put his political-economic theories into practice, he bought an estate in Corsica in 1792. Though he was thrown into prison during Jacobian triumph, he somehow escaped guillotine.

Out of frustration he sailed for the United States in 1795 but within two years he was accused of being a French spy, sent to prepare for the reoccupation of Louisiana by France, and was forced to return to France in 1798. Though he was not a follower of Napoleon, the latter
appointed him to a post of distinction being highly impressed by his modest character and liberal views. He died in Paris in 1820. Shelley was very much influenced by his Les Ruins as evidenced by many of Shelley's poems.

In Les Ruins Volney traces the developments leading to the fall of empires and kingdoms and he puts the blame squarely on the institutions of man. "... You have massacred the people; burnt their cities; destroyed cultivation; reduced the earth to a solitude; and you ask the reward of your work! Miracles then must be performed, the laborers whom you cut off must be recalled to life; the walls re-edified which you have overthrown; the harvest reproduced which you have destroyed; the laws, in fine, of heaven and earth reversed; those laws established by God himself; in demonstration of His magnificence and wisdom; those eternal laws anterior to all codes, to all the prophets; those immutable laws, which neither passions nor the ignorance of man can pervert; but that passion which mistakes, that ignorance which observes no causes and predicts no effects, has said in the folly of her heart: 'Everything comes from chance; a blind fatality dispenses good and evil on the earth so that prudence and wisdom cannot guard against it'; or else assuming the language of hypocrisy, she has said: 'All things are from God; He takes pleasure in deceiving wisdom, and confounding reason...' and ignorance applauding herself in her malice, has said: 'Thus I shall not be inferior to that science which detest ... and has added: 'I will oppress the weak and devours the fruits of his
labours; and I will say 'It is God who decreed and fate who ordained it so'.

Volney's works and especially his *Ruins* exerted tremendous influence on Shelley during his formative years. The violent denunciation of monarchs, priests and other earthly tyrants in his first long poem *Queen Mab* is a pointer to the profound influence of Volney on Shelley. It can be said in short the theme of *Queen Mab* owes a great deal to Volney's *Ruins*. Commenting on the influence of Volney on Shelley's *Queen Mab* Carl Grabo observes, "The past he meant to do in the spirit of Volney's *Ruins*, revealing the sins by which fell the empires of antiquity, and like Volney looking to a glorious future when humankind having learned its lesson at last, after repeated failures, should establish the kingdom of heaven on earth." We can discern the influence of Volney in the utterances of the Spirit who, while surveying the ruins of dead empires, Palmyra, Egypt, Salem, Athens, Rome and Sparta, says

... Oh! they were friends!
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of Nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?

(*Queen Mab*; II; 154-157)

The purpose of this chapter is not to show that Shelley had little originality and that what he said was at best a random expression of

33 Carl Grabo, op.cit., p. 102.
thoughts derived from eclectic sources through his reading of a
galaxy of thinkers. True, Shelley was very well read and his vast
reading stood him in good stead while indulging in desperate
speculations. But Shelley had some intrinsic set of values and while
going through works of others he encouraged his mental process to
pick and choose only those aspects of others' thoughts which
corroborated with his own ideas and vehemently rejected those which
could not convince him. And as he matured with age, Shelley did not
hesitate to discard opinions he had earlier held in high esteem, if
those appeared to be inadequate to him.
Treatment of evil in different phases of Shelley's work and the significance of his concept of evil for his poetry.