Chapter - V

The Egocentric Universe
Ego is the nucleus of all kinds of poetry, whether it is emotional, psychological or psychosynthetic. Nothing there is which despenses with ego. All the literature of the world and even time, place or ideas are egocentric. Ego can be visible or invisible i.e. transparent and opaque. Sometimes we cannot see ego because of the opaqueness of objectivity but it can be possible through subjectivity, for subjectivity makes ego transparent. We can roughly divide it in- subjective ego, objective ego and non-ego. Subjective ego is completely based on ‘I-am-ness’ i.e. it indicates to the personal life. So far as the objective ego is concerned it refers to the narrator, while as non-ego is the absence of ego. But if we go in depth, we will find that even the imagination of non-ego shows the presence of ego. Dr. Davendra Save, a psychiatrist views, “Psyche of a person depends on the functioning of his ego, id and super ego. Id are the basic emotions of a person with which we are born. They are his wants and desires. As we grow older the super ego comes into play. They are the morals taught to us-it is all about what is right and wrong. But we cannot live only on emotions or on basic desires. Here the ego comes into play. Ego is the intellect which tells us what the balance between id and super ego is and our thoughts flow out. We behave exactly as per these thoughts.’ So ego acts as a support between the super ego and id using the data from the past to bring out the behaviour which we exhibit…” (Pub. The Sunday Review 19 Sep. 1999 )

Ego can be classified in two major parts: (a) Spatio temporal ego and (b) Transcendental ego. Spatio-temporal ego is felt in regard with time and place. We cannot think ego without it. In order to understand it, we have to take the help of individual ego and collective ego. In individual ego man feels and thinks about self i.e. ‘I-am-ness’ is always present in individual ego. Collective ego is the expanded form of individual ego. Man generalizes himself into the human beings or a country. ‘I-am-ness’ is always hidden behind the collective ego. It is an ego of individual soul. To Nietzsche the tragic or Dionysiac artist is first of all “subjective” but not in any sense impressionistic, personal or private. He is rather a “vital” and “universal” artist as distinguished from the private and isolated, for he does not write of himself as a personality (which is an objectified “idea”of himself). Rather, during his creative experience, he identifies himself with the entire Dionysiac realm of consciousness,
the Oneness of the Whole, of which he makes a replica in music, suggesting Carlyle’s concept of poetry as “musical thought.” “The lyrical poet...himself becomes his images, his images are objectified versions of himself. Being the active centre of the world he may boldly speak in the first person, only his “I” is not that of the actual waking man, but the “I” dwelling truly and eternally, in the ground of being.” This “I” then is not the personal “I”. It is the universal “I”. “The “I” thus sounds out of the depth of being…”

(Brashear 90)

Trancendental ego follows the unitary and holistic ego. Unitary ego takes ‘I’ as a soul. It negates the particular space and time and shows its existence everywhere. Unitary ego never perishes and is timeless and spaceless. In the Gita soul is regarded as immortal:

nainam chindanti sastrāṇi nainam dahi sewakaḥ
na chainam cladaiyantyāpo na sosyati mārutah. (2:23)
(Weapons cannot cut it nor can fire burn it; water cannot wet it nor can wind dry it).

But holistic ego is far beyond the unitary ego and one can call it super ego. He takes human beings as the part of God i.e. God is the soul of all. Indian epistemology also believes in this theory:

अहं ब्रह्मस्वः
(I am Brahma(the all pervading ego of the universe).

It is the ego of holistic soul or we can say holistic ego as the super soul. Here we begin to see Fichte’s ‘transcendentalism and morality intruding. There is an infinite Will that all the lesser wills subserve and which gives purpose and direction to man’s action. ‘The Infinite Will’ unites me with himself and with all finite beings such a myself.

While talking about ego, one cannot neglect self. Ego is incomplete in its absence. Chronologically man has many selves. The self of a man is different at different places and time. Self can be bifurcated in these following divisions:

(a) Chronological multiplication of the self
(b) Spatiological multiplication of the self
(c) Environmental or circumstantial multiplication of the self
(d) Experiential multiplication of the self
(e) Sociological multiplication of the self
In chronological multiplication of the self man becomes different i.e. the self of one time is different from the self of other time, although the man is the same. viz-the self of childhood, youth and old age differ from one another. But so far as the spatiological multiplication of the self is concerned, the personality of a man changes from place to place. His self alters with the passage of space. For example- A man in home is unlike from the man in the religious place. Even circumstances help man in the alteration of his self. If the environment is good, his self becomes healthy, but on the contrary, in the unhealthy atmosphere his self becomes neurotic. Sometimes natural surroundings and circumstances force us to be changed, but environment is quite apart from this forcing power. It is always passive and remains still. Experiential self classifies man in many forms. viz-man becomes the partner of various emotions and experiences in his life and these experiences take different shapes and with its help man seems to be an epitome of multiplex personality. Sociological multiplication of the self makes a man of different personality i.e. man changes his self according to the society and its manners. He has to adjust his self with the need of sociological life. Self is one but it has many branches. Man just changes his face in order to make himself different or due to multifarious affairs he alters himself. Everybody has various selves. As many professions he has, he consists of so many personalities and selves.

Kant, acknowledges that all human thought must start from either of two premises: the subjective, I AM or the objective, that THINGS EXIST WITHOUT US. To Fichte reality is what we make it, and there is no purpose in allowing for a world of “things in themselves” that we cannot know. The “things” we conceive as outside of ourselves are only another aspect of our own consciousness...Indeed to Fichte this “inward law of thought” by which we would posit an external world and act in accordance to it, is a dynamic principle within the self by which the self grows. The “will” to Fichte shapes reality and the ego or self can grow in contemplation of and reacting to the non-ego, which is that part of the human consciousness which is not I, analogous, though not identical, to what Carlyle specifically calls the NOT-ME.” He adds: ‘Every man is, then an island complete of itself, and that part of the human-consciousness which we do not regard as self, the non-ego element, is the finite background toward which the self, by an assertion of will, reacts and grows.”
Coleridge further emphasizes the primacy of the subject or consciousness: "It is asserted only that the act of self-consciousness is for us the source and principle of all our possible knowledge". Coleridge goes further than this in identifying self-consciousness with time- "The act of consciousness is indeed identical with time considered in its essence. (I mean time per se, as contra-distinguished from our notion of time, for this is always blended with the idea of space, which as the contrary of time, is therefore its measure).

"Tennyson has often been characterized, as by Froude, a poet of his age. 'But he has also been characterized as a poet of private sensation by H.M.McLuhan and a poet of great personal emotion by Nicolson. Not only this, he is also the saviour of collective ego or subjective vitalism. James A. Froude opines: "The underlying subject matter of Tennyson's serious poetry, for the most part, may be taken to be an embodiment of the dynamics of subjective vitalism with the 'Living will' permitted as both a shaping and resisting force against the dark and chaotic forces of the infinite realm of over-consciousness-the Dionysiac realm.' He adds, 'Such a reading of Tennyson is proper only where he writes as the universal self...' Here Froude came closer to realizing Nietzsche's description of the "subjective poet", the true, universal and tragic subjective poet, than perhaps any other modern.

A.C. Bradley, for instance noted that there are three ways in which a man may face the fact of death and personal bereavement. He can be overcome by grief and submit to the omnipotence of death, he can put death out of his mind and involve himself in external life again, or he can face the fact of death and struggle with it. In the first instance, the self loses itself to death and nature, in the second, it runs from itself into the external bulwark of things and ideas; in the third it puts its will to live against the Dionysiac force, endures the tragic struggle, maintains its own identity, and grows. 'In Memoriam' is the record of just such a confrontation and struggle."(Brachear, 98) It epitomizes the spatio-temporal ego as well as transcendental ego. The poem begins with the introduction of Unitary and holistic ego:

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love..."

But T.S. Eliot does not corroborate with this notion and alludes that it "has only a hazy connection with the Logos, or the Incarnate God. Tennyson is distressed by the idea of
a mechanical universe; he is naturally, in lamenting his friend, teased by the hope of
immortality and re-union beyond death.” William R. Brashear favours his view: “‘In
Memoriam’ is rather a poem on the religious, moral and striving nature of a man or the
self, his will to resist absorption in nature or an over-soul and to make love endure.
From this struggle the self learns nothing, but grows and strengtheneth itself.”

(Brachear 97)

The vitalistic orientation of the suffering and achievement of ‘In Memoriam’ is
indicated in the opening sections, in the image of man rising on “stepping-stones of
their dead selves” and the despairing contemplation of Nature and the old yew. The
poet presents the image of the yew tree and relates it with the inevitable of death:

“Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
That name the under-lying dead…”

“But, it is death in a ‘vital’ sense,” says Brashear, “It is nature and death or dying
nature, into which the poet of ‘In Memoriam’ something yearns to grow incorporate:

“And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out of my blood.”

And while the status of Nature in ‘In Memoriam’ is somewhat ambivalent it is far less
significant as an external something than as a subjective back-drop. Indeed, ‘objective’
Nature is but a “phantom” dependent as it were, on the perceiving consciousness,
echoing the vital impulse of self:

“And all the phantom, Nature, stands-
With all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own,-
A hollow form with empty hands.”

Nature has nothing to give back that is not put in it by the self and it can afford the poet
no semblance of consolation here. The emptiness and meaningless of Nature and self
are persuasive toward despair and death-longing. The “will” is almost annihilated from
the start:

“To sleep I give my powers away;
My will is boundsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark...

Tennyson swings between the transcendental ego and spatio-temporal ego. Arthur J. Carr-opines: “In Tennyson’s poetry the private and public worlds are fused.” Tennyson’s double nature does not divide itself between the poet and the man; his poetry has a double nature and reveals not only itself but the poet. And Hallam Tennyson confessed this truth in his preface to the ‘Memoir’ of his father’s life: “For my own part, I feel strongly that no biographer could so truly give him as he gives himself in his own works.” Carr adds: “…In Memoriam cannot be read as simple evidence of an erotic relationship infact between Tennyson and his friend. It is enough that the loss of Hallam touches Tennyson at every nerve.’

We find the signature of spatio-temporal ego from time to time in the poem:

“Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand….

He remembers the place where he has passed his childhood with his friend and connects it with the present time when he has lost Hallam’s hand and that is why the lovely house seems to him dark and ugly. He laments: ‘He is not here; but far away,’ and returns from memory to the actual world, which is full of endless noise. D.J. Palmer, in his topic ‘Tennyson’s Romantic Heritage; quotes the words of Hallam Tennyson. In the ‘Memoir’ Hallam Tennyson records that his father later told him of ‘the cloud of this overwhelming sorrow’ after the death of Arthur Hallam, which ‘for a while blotted out all joy from his life, and made him long for death.”(John Killham 45)

Further the poet memorises the four sweet years of his friendship:

‘…Thro’ four sweet years arose and fell.
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

and,

‘…we with singing cheer’d the way
And, crown’d with all the season lent,
From April on to April went
And glad at heart from May to May.”
The first Christmas awakens thoughts of personal immortality, thoughts which can be set against the agonizing sense of loss. And the case is likewise with death and immortality. It is necessary to suppose that the self lives forever and to struggle to sustain such assertion even if it be an illusion. For without this personal immortality all else, even the exercise of God, is valueless. So in Tennyson's subjective view, the existence of God does not give value to man's life, but rather man's immortality makes meaningful the concept of God, especially so since God in Tennyson's work is invariably defined in terms of the human consciousness, qualitatively as consummate love. If the self must die:

"What then were God to such as I?

'Twere best at once to sink to peace
Like birds the charming serpent draws
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease."

The pain of separation persists, however, for-

"...thou and I have shaken hands,
Till growing winters lay me low;
My paths are in the fields I know,
And thine in undiscover'd lands.'

Thus in 'In Memoriam', life, death, immortality and God himself are viewed subjectively in terms of the human consciousness. So in XLIV, Tennyson describes not so much the birth of child as an objective being, but rather, the advent of an individual self-consciousness:

"But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of 'I' and 'me',
And finds 'I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.'

Further:

'So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin
As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.'

"The use of "isolation" is particularly informing here. Everyman in the deeper epistemological sense, is an island complete unto itself," says William R. Brashear. Tennyson refers to the immortality of the soul and its existence in the one Soul i.e. God and also entertains the possibility of the self remerging into a larger consciousness, a notion which, though he sometimes attemptd to refute it argumentatively, always remained for him a plausible and to envision:

"That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul..."

and,

"Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside
And I shall know him when we meet."

According to Brashear: "For Tennyson in 'In Memoriam' achieves two victories of faith: On the theological and rational level there is apparently an affirmation of God as a God of love and of immortality of the soul. However God in the poem generally seems to stand for either the epitome of love or the over soul or general soul, the infinite consciousness itself, with which the self must finally merge and this kind of faith in God and immortality glimpsed sometimes in dreams, always tenuous, weak, flimsy, and to most readers ineffectual against the great forces of doubt, darkness and despair encountered in the poem." (89)

Referring to the transcendental ego the poet at once turns to the spatio-temporal ego and laments that the death has,

"...put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.
And regards his friendship more powerful than the time:
'A friendship as had master'd time.'

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“Like other elegies,” says F.E.L. Priestley, ‘In Memoriam has its origin in personal experience, and draws upon it, but the experience is itself a universal one and the elegy works it into a formal pattern that objectifies and dramatizes it. Consequently, the ‘I’ of the poem is never simply Tennyson: it is Everyman facing the anigma of death, sorrow and suffering and of a cosmic order in which these jarring elements are found. It is accordingly a mistake to keep referring the details of the poem to details in Tennyson’s own life…” Here we are reminded of Nietzsche’s wordings: “…He continues and readily bring to mind Tennyson’s own account of the role of ‘I’ in the creation of ‘In Memoriam’: ‘‘I” is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking thro’ him.’ And it might be suggested that Tennyson stands alone in this universal – subjective position…” (Brashear 90) William R. Brashear alludes: “The self can grow, but it grows without terminus and still dies as it grows. That Tennyson was long preoccupied with these themes, is stated explicitly in ‘In Memoriam’;

‘Likewise the imaginative woe’

That loved to handle spiritual strife,
   Diffused the shock thro’ all my life,
But in the present broke the blow.” (92)

He takes retirement from the collective ego and refers to his friend. Though his friend has left him forever, but for Tennyson the dead man still lives in his letters:

“So word by word, and line by line,
   The dead man touch’d me from the past’
   And all at once it seem’d at last
   The living soul was flash’d on mine.”

Tennyson originally wrote, “His living soul” and “mine in his” This meant that the mystical union was with Hallam alone. Further poet’s victory over private sensation is very clear in these lines:

“I will not shut me from my kind,
   And, lest I stiffen into stone’
   I will not eat my heart alone’
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind.”
This kind of reflection of collective ego can be noticed again:

“What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.”

Tennyson achieves in the poem the affirmation of the power of the Living Will to sustain human ego at least throughout the mortal duration:

“O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,...”

As an epilogue to the whole, Tennyson appends a section joyfully celebrating the marriage of one of his sisters:

“But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon?
And again:

“O happy hour, and happier hours
...behold the bride
With him to whom her hand I gave.”

As Tennyson himself accepted: ‘...this is a poem, not an actual biography. It is founded on our friendship, on the engagement of Arthur Hallam to my sister, on his sudden death at Vienna, just before the time fixed for their marriage, and on his burial Clevedon Church. The poem concludes with the marriage of my youngest sister Cecilia.” In spite of being involved in enjoying the marriage function, he refers to their grave which seems to him bright and with this thinking, all the burden of life and the sufferings became meaningless:

“Today the grave is bright for me,
For them the light of life increased...
and concludes with a prediction of ‘the crowning race of the future:

“Where of the man, that with me trod
This planet, was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,
That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

The intensity of this poem 'Break, Break, Break' can be measured roughly by spatio-temporal ego. The poet is regretted at the untimely death of his friend and imposes his sorrow on the natural surroundings. Though the beach is quiet, but it seems to him full of noises. Even the innocent children, playing nearby, disturb him. But these are not the outward disturbances, rather they refer to his internal beats:

'Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!'

Like Coleridge, Tennyson has linked his subjectivity with the natural objects and wants to share his miseries with them. For Coleridge, nature is like a lady and in his 'Dejection Ode' he clearly states:

"O Lady! we receive but what we give
And in our life alone does nature live
Ours is her wedding garment and ours her shroud…"

And very philosophically critics opine: "...Coleridge cannot hope to win from external forms that joy whose fountain lies within." Now Tennyson memorizes his friend:

But O for the touch of a vanish’d hand
And the sound of a voice that is still."

Cleanth Brooks rightly explains these two lines: "...consider the status of the past as it appears in this poem: the hand is vanished, the voice is still... But the poet makes no effort to conduct this activity, still alive in memory, with its former 'actual' life."

Again the poet seems to be upset with the mortality of the human being:

"Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."
Though the poet knows the infinite value of time, but his friend’s death disturbs him so badly that he becomes out of control and cries out that the day is ‘dead’, the ‘tender grace’ of it will never ‘come back’ to him.

Like Indian epistemologists Tennyson also believes in the immortality of soul and that is why he has decorated his poem ‘The Palace of Art’ with transcendental ego. But if we analyse deeply we will find that the poet is referring the unitary ego and holistic ego through individual and collective ego, which are the two facets of the spatio-temporal ego. As Tennyson believes in the infinity of the soul, he begins the poem with his utmost desire of making his soul, a ‘pleasure dome’. And he would be the only lord of this ‘palace’:

‘... O soul, make merry and carouse
Dear soul,
X X
My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.
He hopes the heavenly pleasure in his kingdom and tries to convince his soul:
‘Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me.’

Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’ is also the epitome of spatio-temporal ego, where he imagines a ‘pleasure dome’ which consists lordly joys:
‘For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise...”

Further the poet calls it ‘A haunt of ancient Peace’. Aubrey de Vere wrote of ‘The Palace of Art’: “In its extreme subjectivity it reminds us of German genius, but though its scope is a philosophical and spiritual one, its handling is as strikingly objective; and it consists almost wholly of images which though subordinated to moral, not material ends, yet possess a vividness and a concentrated power rarely found elsewhere...”(Brashear 70). Tennyson was very crazy for Milton and Shakespeare and imagined them in his palace tower:

“For there was Milton like a seraph strong’
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild’
While delineating the individual ego, the poet at once creeps towards collective ego and speaks out the useless and wasteful life in this world:

"The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and stings,"

Charles Tennyson, in his biography remarks: ‘The poem although making reference to an outside world, goes no further than the awareness that the poet’s soul or self cannot live stagnant and contained. It is for its own sake, not the world’s...”

Apart from the art of imagery the poem is not far removed from the self-worship of “Armageddon”:

“No nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echo’d song
Throb thro’ the ribbed stone;”

It is very surprising to note the fluctuations between the individual ego and collective ego. For at one moment the poet generalises himself, but at the other moment he rejects the social responsibilities and returns to his own world. And sometimes he seems to be the follower of transcendental ego and his aim is ‘to become ‘god-like’: “This poem is the embodiment of my own belief that the God-like life is with man or for man.”

Some critics opine that through this poem the poet wants to compensate with those desires which remained unfulfilled in his life and that is the reason his ‘palace’ is, of his mind, not his soul. But if we go in depth, we will find that the speaker’s divided state of mind is like that of the ‘soul’:

‘Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
Laughter at her self-scorn.”

The palace of mind is now filled with hideous fantasies:

“But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes, and unawareness
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
And horrible nightmares.”
The psychological insight and poetic resources of this poem make it an impressive piece of self-realization. Charles Tennyson alludes: “But for the self even to sustain itself in the vaster sea of consciousness it must struggle to stay afloat by pushing against the non ego element of the consciousness. So Fichte, the most subjective of philosophers, posited the realm of the non ego in order to satisfy the needs of the ego, providing it with something to struggle against and grow into. Otherwise self-knowledge is only stagnation of self, and the light that makes a “darkness visible” must soon be suffocated. To this ‘The Palace of Art’ is ultimately reduced:

“A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem’d my soul,
Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.”

Though the palace is the epitome of peace, but this peace appears to be horrible:

‘No voice,’ she shriek’d in that lone hall,
...One deep, deep silence all!”

Further-

‘And death and life she hated equally,
And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
No comfort anywhere.”

There is a full realization of the soul’s own undreamt of, seemingly god-like powers, but these are not self-sustaining and can be enjoyed only in an unbearable loneliness, with death, still lord of all. “At the end of the poem’ says Tennyson “when isolation becomes to the soul, not ‘god-like’ but dreadful, when she has understood that her own self-hood depends on a relationship to a larger whole, and that isolation is annihilation, she descends to the valley to become one with human kind:

“Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built-
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.”
The sense of guilt is self-induced, a symptom of the soul’s morbid condition rather than an impulse towards health. And significantly the soul’s decision to leave her palace and engage with the world beyond is prompted by no sudden access of moral responsibility or human sympathy, but by an instinct of self-preservation.

"Supposed Confessions" is a poem of individual ego. D.J.Palmer rightly says: "Supposed Confessions" in fact is not a religious poem at all. It concerns the adolescent experience of individuation, when the mind grows to self-awareness and loses undifferentiated sense of being one with the world beyond self:

"...I am void,
Dark, formless, utterly destroyed.
Why not believe then?
X X X
My judgement, and my spirit whirls
Moved from beneath with doubt and fear." (28)

The sea, with its secret depths and restless, agitated surface, is one of Tennyson’s recurrent images of consciousness. And like “Mariana”, the speaker of Supposed Confessions know the life in death of the mind turned in upon itself:

“O weary life! O weary death!
O spirit and heart made desolate!
O damned vacillating state!”

Says William R. Brashear, “In Tennyson’s poetry the cart is pulling the horse, and the subject sustains and shapes the object. External nature is nothing more than a manifestation of self.” (114) So ‘Tithonus’ the most nearly perfect of Tennyson’s poems, begins:

“The woods decay, the woods decay and fall
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground…”

Brashear adds: ‘...Tithonus, Tiresias, Demeter and Ulysses have no characters at all. They are all Tennyson in a sense, but only insofar as Tennyson spoke as the universal “I” sounding out the depths and potentialities of the human self-conscious.” (115)

But in ‘Maud’ the “I’ is not the universal “I”. Although there are surely autobiographical elements in the poem pertaining to the character Tennyson, the
notable achievement here is that Tennyson's portraying a distinct character, with peculiarities and distinguishing features. The persona is conditioned and acted upon by the external world rather than, as in "Tithonus", the myth and its landscape being employed as a correlative to some deeper universal psychic tendency, same aspect os subjective dynamics. Although Ralph Wilson Rader, like many readers, finds Maud imperfect as a work art, he emphasizes its biographical significance: "Biographically, "Maud" is a crucial document. It is Tennyson's purgative recapitulation of the inner and outer circumstances of his tortured early life, a deeply rooted act of spiritual self-definition and affirmation by which, after the commitment initiated by marriage and the Laureateship, he moved from his earlier to his later career...Having objectified and judged, as accurately as he was able, the experience of his early life, he felt ready, his own salvation secure to minister, to the moral and spiritual needs of mankind at large."

(D.J. Palmer 17).

We can conclude this chapter 'The egocentric universe' in the words of William R. Brashear: "To an extreme degree Tennyson, in most of his serious poetry, reflects a subjective psychology with its egocentric and intuitive preoccupation with "becoming" (175),...For Tennyson was throughout his work pre-occupied with the tragic fact of consciousness and the primal struggle of the self to sustain itself above the chaotic and indifferent realm of over-consciousness." (176) He adds, "Tennyson was a subjectivist and a vitalist. He was not a Heroic Vitalist as we sometimes use the term today. Tennyson was never carried away by his mental break through to any positive enthusiasm. He saw and felt the infinitely expansive power of the self, but saw also how the infinite background and death made a mockery not only of progress but growth....' Beneath any conventional and topical surface that may be found lies the genius of a subjective poet concerned with the cosmic isolation of self and a primal and tragic struggle. At this level Tennyson's poetry is as non-social and universal as "The Wanderer," 'The Sea-farer,' 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'The Shadow line'. The important "truths" he conveys are not 'truths' of 'objective' relationships" nor of "private individual experience, but rather the truths of universal "subjective" nature, primordial human nature."

(177 – 178)