

# Godwin and "The Great Springs of Human Passion"

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MUCH OF THE RECENT, increased attention paid to the writings of William Godwin, particularly in published papers, has been directed towards interpretations of *Caleb Williams*. When reference is made to *Political Justice*, there is usually an assumption that we know what that work is about, and clear distinctions are rarely made between the first edition of *Political Justice* and the later editions.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this paper is to draw attention to the significance of an aspect of the 1793 *Political Justice* which has been essentially ignored, and sometimes even denied,<sup>2</sup> by commentators. This is Godwin's involvement with what he himself called, in an unpublished 1800 comment on what he was doing in 1790, "the great springs of human passion." This involvement demonstrates that Godwin is too readily caricatured as an arid rationalist and too simple a distinction drawn between the author of *Political Justice* and the novelist who wrote *Caleb Williams*.

At the outset, it is necessary to exercise caution when isolating some of Godwin's later comments on his intentions when writing *Political Justice*. We should, for instance, be aware that there is an 1800 colouring in the insistence, in his unpublished "Autobiographical Notes 1773-1796," that the "original conception" of *Political Justice* "proceeded" from "reflecting" on "the imperfections & errors of Montesquieu, & a desire of supplying a less faulty work."<sup>3</sup> Certainly, Godwin was highly critical of Montesquieu's praise of the English constitution (see *PJ*, I, 271-72, II, 65-66 and III, 302). He also specifically attacked Montesquieu's view that, "in a free state, every man will be his own legislator" (*Ibid.*, I, 221-22). Nor was he prepared to accept

Montesquieu's emphasis on "the influence of climate."<sup>4</sup> All the same, this description of the "original conception" does not make us aware of the inner compulsion within Godwin that is so strikingly manifested in the first edition of *Political Justice*.

The comment, however, also found in the 1800 "Autobiographical Notes," on what he was doing in 1790 is more revealing of his state of mind at that time:

... in this year I wrote a tragedy on the story of St. Dunstan, being desirous, in writing a tragedy, of developing the great springs of human passion, & in the choice of a subject, of inculcating those principles, on which I apprehended the welfare of the human race to depend.

Here, there is no attempt to hide what was engaging his whole being in 1790, however foolish this might appear in the lapse of time.

There is, too, a similar emphasis on both "principles" and "the great springs of human passion" in his critique, also unpublished, of the first part of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. Although this critique is undated, we know, from his "Diary," that Godwin was deeply interested in "Paine's pamphlet" on its publication in February 1791.<sup>5</sup> The internal evidence of the comment also suggests that it was written immediately after the first part of *Rights of Man* was published:

The pamphlet has exceeded my expectations, & appears to be nearly the best performance that can be written upon the subject. It does not confine itself, as an injudicious answer would have done, to a cold refutation of Mr. Burke's errors, but with equal discernment & philanthropy, embraces every opportunity of impressing the purest principles of liberty upon the breasts of mankind. It is perhaps impossible to rise from perusing it, without feeling oneself both wiser & better. The seeds of revolution it contains are so vigorous in their stamina, that nothing can overpower them. All that remained for the illustrious author, after having enlightened the whole western world by the publication of *Common Sense*, was to do a similar service to Europe, by a production as energetic as that was & adapted with equal skill to rouse & interest the mind. The effects, it may be, of this work will not be so rapid; but, if properly disseminated (& prosecution cannot injure it), will be as Stoic.<sup>6</sup>

Here, we are made strongly aware of Godwin's approval of ardour and energy in his recognition that *Rights of Man* was not "a cold refutation of Mr. Burke's errors." Paine "embraces every opportunity of impressing the purest principles of liberty upon the breasts of mankind," where Godwin's use of the word, "impressing," gives value to the ability of vigorously communicated ideas to "impress" themselves upon the receptive mind. There is explicit recognition of the energy of Paine's work, and, when he notes how it is "adapted . . . to ruse and interest the mind," we are forced to bring to mind the importance Godwin places, in *Political Justice*, on the rousing of the mind (see, for instance, *PJ*, II, 5). Similarly, when he comments on its being almost impossible "to rise from perusing it, without feeling oneself both wiser & better," we cannot but think both of how, in *Political Justice*, Godwin was concerned to produce

. . . a work from the perusal of which no man should rise without being strengthened in habits of sincerity, fortitude and justice  
(*Ibid.*, I, vii)

and of his 1832 comment on the genesis of *Caleb Williams*:

I said to myself a thousand times, "I will write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before."<sup>7</sup>

Most importantly, however, for an understanding of Godwin, he sees no contradiction between his approval of the "vigorous . . . stamina" of "the seeds of revolution" present in *Rights of Man* and his conviction that its "effects" will be "as Stoic" as those of *Common Sense*. Before he began *Political Justice*, Godwin was convinced that, whilst man needed the Stoic's (and the Calvinist's) ability to resist the corrupting influence of established values,<sup>8</sup> it was not possible, in an exploration of man's true nature, to ignore "the great springs of human passion."

Clearly, in *Political Justice*, Godwin placed much importance on "design."<sup>9</sup> The titles of each Book show the value he placed upon a logically developed structure, and there are numerous examples where Godwin informs the reader of an issue that will be examined more closely later on in the work (see, for instance,

*PJ*, III, 140). Nevertheless, as in *Caleb Williams*,<sup>10</sup> there is a progressive development in the work which is accentuated by the fact that he had completed parts of the book printed during the course of composition and could not change them (*PJ*, I, viii-ix). I want to argue that, for an understanding of the essential "meaning" of *Political Justice*, attention has to be directed to its inner "movement." There is a preparedness to change as he engages himself more deeply with the content. There is, too, an engagement with events, particularly the September Massacres and the ensuing battle of Valmy, that has a profound effect upon the "movement."

An important change of direction can be seen in his thinking when we examine the holograph of *Political Justice*. His interest in "inculcating those principles, on which . . . [he] apprehended the welfare of the human race to depend" is qualified by his awareness of the limitations of the individual "perceptor." He seriously considers the ability of "government" to take over this important function, stressing, too, that it is "not merely by reasoning" that

A state may . . . endeavour to persuade its members that the superiority of motive is on the side of virtue. It can do more than this. It can actually annex reward to the conduct it approves, or render the honour & esteem of the community by some legislative provision a matter of notoriety, or exhibit in its code that explicit sense of the beauty of justice, that cannot fail gradually to take root in the breast of individuals.<sup>11</sup>

The reason he gives, in the 1793 Book I, Chapter IV, for his rejection of this argument draws attention to the importance he placed upon the "spring of action."<sup>12</sup> Quoting, not quite exactly,<sup>13</sup> from John Logan's *Elements of the Philosophy of History, Part First*, he argues that

. . . government 'lays its hand upon the spring there is in society, and puts a stop to its motion.' (*PJ*, III, 247)

The development of Godwin's argument in the 1793 Book I comes to a climax in the final chapter of this book. Having categorically denied that man is a victim of original sin (*Ibid.*, III, 141), he nevertheless reveals a deep involvement with the view

propounded by Paine in *Common Sense*. Paine argues that "the obligations of law and government" would be "unnecessary" for "newly arrived emigrants":

... but as nothing but heaven is impregnable to vice, it will unavoidably happen, that in proportion as they surmount the first difficulties of emigration, they will begin to relax in their duty and attachment to each other; and this remissness will point out the necessity, of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue.<sup>14</sup>

In his answer, Godwin sees a reinforcement being given to man's reason by "the power of social institutions" and by the "fact" that

Large bodies of men, when once they have been enlightened and persuaded, act with more vigour than solitary individuals. They animate the mutual exertions of each other, and the united forces of example and shame urge them to perseverance.

Here, there is a stress on the "impulse" that a "whole society receives . . . from the same cause that acts upon any individual" as well as a Helvétian emphasis on "an entirely new situation":

New ideas are suggested, and the surprise of novelty conspires with the approbation of truth to prevent men from falling back into imbecility and languor. (*PJ*, I, 107-08 and III, 145)

This chapter was written, as was noted in Godwin's Diary (Vol. V), during the Birmingham Trials of November 1792. As these trials would have undoubtedly forced him to recall the riots in the previous July, the point should be made that there is no evidence in what has been isolated from the chapter to support Gary Kelly's argument that the Birmingham Riots were looked upon by Godwin as "a severe setback to the advance of reason."<sup>15</sup> It is characteristic of Godwin's thinking that he should wish to utilize the energies, so strongly displayed in the riots, but, in that case, directed by false opinion, into productive channels.

The final chapter of the 1793 Book I is only, however, a stage in the development of his thinking. It is alien to a fundamental aspect of Godwin's outlook on the world that he should look upon society as greater than the sum of its parts (see *PJ*, I, 136 and II, 145). It is significant that, for the later editions, "social institutions" in the passage quoted was replaced by "reasonable

and just ideas," and the reference to "large bodies of men" was omitted (*Ibid.*, I, 107).

A more important stage in the work is reached when Godwin is forced to engage himself with the 1792 events in France. This engagement brings about his deepest involvement with man's passionate nature.

Volume II of the original edition is characterized by remarkable energy in the writing as he becomes increasingly optimistic about the emergence of a new society and about his contribution to the form this new society would take. This optimism received a setback when the French declared war on Austria in April 1792 (see *Ibid.*, II, 149 and III, 185). The fact, however, that the battle of Valmy succeeded upon the September Massacres restored his optimism, and, indeed, made it unbounded. There is a new emphasis in the work as the implications of the battle of Valmy give him a confidence in the ability of men (individual men, not now "large bodies of men") to grow in consciousness and direct their emotions into realizable, positive goals. Underlying this optimism is the confirmation, seemingly given by the events in France, of his eighteenth-century belief in the essential order and harmony within the universe, and its relation to the "natural" processes of man's mind. He agrees that "it is a dreadful remedy, for the people to yield to all their furious passions," but this, he argues, is only "before reflection and judgment" come to man's "aid":

... the spectacle of their effects gives strength to recovering reason. (*Ibid.*, III, 188)

It was, however, to a new harmony and a new order that Godwin was looking in what were, for him, the halcyon days of the early 1790's. As he continues to reveal unbounded optimism in the implications of the events in France, there is, it is true, a concern to qualify the nonetheless expressed view that "anarchy awakens mind" and "diffuses energy and enterprise through the community" in the added clause:

... though it does not effect this in the best manner, as its fruits, forced into ripeness, must not expect to have the vigorous stamina of true excellence.

Nevertheless, when he argues that "the scene in which anarchy shall terminate principally depends upon the state of mind by which it has been preceded," he is strongly optimistic about the implications of this perception for the present. Because "the regions of philosophy . . . have been penetrated," and "political truth" has "opened her school to mankind":

The revolutions of the present age (for every total revolution is a species of anarchy) promise much happier effects than the revolutions of any former period . . . (*Ibid.*, II, 369, 371 and III, 205)

Whilst he places importance on a high level of consciousness, he does not reveal the "fear of revolution" which K. N. Cameron sees as "the reason" for Godwin's "rejection of political organization." Nor does he reveal any want of "enthusiasm for the people," the lack of which, in Cameron's view, distinguishes *Political Justice* from "the works of professional revolutionaries like Paine or Mary Wollstonecraft."<sup>16</sup>

Cameron's interest in Godwin, in "The Young Shelley," is mainly directed towards the influence of *Political Justice* upon Shelley. However, whilst he makes the point that "Shelley was acquainted with all three editions but seems to have preferred the first," Cameron's criterion for departing from the 1798 text printed in the Priestley volumes is "when that of the first (1793) or second editions seems to me to present the text more clearly" (*Ibid.*, note 111, p. 323). There is, consequently, no attempt to see the 1793 edition as a work having a unity and "meaning" that are peculiar to itself. It is perhaps a little alarming to discover that, when Cameron makes the point about *Political Justice* which has been quoted, all the supporting evidence for his influential view is in extracts from the later editions of Godwin's philosophical work (see *Ibid.*, notes 132, 134 and 135, p. 324).

Cameron isolates for emphasis the *Political Justice* view that

The new society would be achieved by small bands of enlightened philosophers who would, little by little, convert their fellows — including "the rich and great" — to the justice of their views. . . . (*Ibid.*, p. 68)

This point of view is undoubtedly present in *Political Justice* (see *PJ*, II, 541). The naïve attitude to “the rich and great” is, however, strongly influenced, as Godwin made clear for the 1796 edition, by his continuing admiration for Burke (see *Ibid.*, III, 231 and footnote, *Ibid.*, II, 545-46). At the same time, it was an admiration which co-existed with a strong conviction that the author of the “Reflections” had been corrupted by aristocratic principles (see *PJ*, II, 546, footnote for the 1798 edition). The attentive reader cannot but be aware that there are numerous passages in *Political Justice* where there are penetrating criticisms of the upper classes (see, for instance, *PJ*, II, 39).

Emphasis should also be given to Godwin’s conviction that the forces of historical necessity were working towards amelioration. After insisting that it is “in vain” for “the rich and great” to “fight against truth,” because it is like endeavouring with the human hand to stop the inroad of truth,” he warns them not to “count upon the numerous train of . . . [their] adherents, retainers and servants.” Whilst “some” of these people, he argues,

. . . will adhere to you as long as a sordid interest seems to draw them in that direction . . . the moment yours shall appear to be the losing cause, the same interest will carry them over to the enemy’s standard. They will disappear like the morning dew.  
(*Ibid.*, II, 541-44 and III, 230-31)

This is the sort of passage that would have attracted the ire of the poets of the *Anti-Jacobin*, whilst Godwin’s idealization of “the rich and great” would have stimulated merely a detached amusement.

I would like to isolate another aspect of *Political Justice* that demonstrates the “movement” of the work. Godwin’s conclusion about his main interest, the nature of man, takes two forms in the 1793 edition. There is a concern to incorporate, within his conclusions, the positive aspects of the degree to which mind is passive. Whilst there is stress on a high level of consciousness (which he saw as being achieved by ordinary people at the battle of Valmy), he also argues that man, having gone from “the involuntary” to “the voluntary,” should return to “the involuntary” (*Ibid.*, III, 173). There is emphasis on “spontaneous justice” (*Ibid.*, II, 410). He argues, too, that



Every man ought to rest upon his own centre, and consult his own understanding. (*Ibid.*, III, 221)

There is a strong likelihood that, in the valuation placed on "rest[ing] upon" one's "own centre," Godwin influenced Wordsworth's concern for "a wise passiveness."<sup>17</sup> It is also relevant to be reminded of Wordsworth's dislike of the second edition of *Political Justice*, where Godwin's emphases, particularly at the beginning of the new edition, were very different.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the "movement" of *Political Justice* is towards the importance of the active powers of the human mind.

Certainly, at an early stage of the work, Godwin stresses these active powers, as he did in the "Account" he wrote of the school he wished to open for twelve pupils in August 1783.<sup>19</sup> He draws attention, for instance, early on in *Political Justice*, to how a "generalization,"

... which is implied in the very notion of thought, being thus embodied and rendered palpable, makes the mind acquainted with its own powers and creates a restless desire after farther progress. (*PJ*, I, 115 and III, 146)

Towards the end of the first volume of *Political Justice*, however, he affirms his acceptance of the Lockean view of the human mind. "Man," he argues, although with qualification,

... is in reality a passive, and not an active being. (*Ibid.*, I, 389)

Similarly, in Volume II, whilst affirming the inability to separate the faculties of the human mind, he accepts, with an indebtedness to the Arminian Dr. Samuel Clarke,<sup>20</sup> that "the will" is "merely the last act of the understanding" (*PJ*, II, 381). By the end of the work, however, he states, categorically, that

Mind... in its own nature... [is] essentially active. (*Ibid.*, III, 214)

In a context, too, where he continues to insist that

Mind is not an aggregate of various faculties contending with each other for the mastery...

there is a significant omission of the word "merely" when he refers, once more, to how "the will is the last act of the understanding" (*Ibid.*, III, 232).

In the final part of the work, Godwin distinguishes between man's "natural independence" and his "moral independence" (*Ibid.*, II, 495-97). However, whilst he insists that man cannot be morally independent, his interpretation of the 1792 events in France (where ordinary people had shown their "capacity"<sup>21</sup> for passionate thinking) leads him to give value to "the Faustian urge" within man. Man is seen as capable of going beyond morality, and in this sense his powers become unbounded. He accepts that "without external impressions we should be nothing." Nevertheless, he also shows himself attracted to a concept of the "mind" by which it is not only "now in a great degree the ruler of the system," but is capable of "extending its empire." "If," he asks,

... volition can now do something, why should it not go on to do still more and more?

His answer is that

Nothing can be more irrational and presumptuous to conclude, because a certain species of supposed power is entirely out of the line of our present observations, that it is therefore altogether beyond the limits of the human mind. We talk familiarly indeed of the limits of our faculties, but nothing is more difficult than to point them out. Mind, in a progressive view at least, is infinite. (*PJ*, II, 525 and III, 225)

There can be no doubt that, as early as *St. Irvyne* (written 1810, published 1811), Shelley was influenced by the Faustianism in the first edition of *Political Justice*, as well as by Godwin's critical engagement with "the Faustian urge" in *St. Leon* (1799).

Godwin began the reassessment of the Faustianism of *Political Justice* in *Caleb Williams* (1794). It is an aspect of Godwin's most important novel to which a number of commentators, particularly Walter Allen, James Rieger and Christopher Small, have given emphasis, in various phraseology.<sup>22</sup> The emphasis, however, in these writings ignores Godwin's conviction, again more strongly present in the first edition of *Political Justice* than in the other editions, of the unitary nature of the personality.<sup>23</sup> Rieger, for instance, sees "the Faustian urge" within *Political Justice* as having its source in "the sense-fed understanding," the

whole work being characterized by the dominating presence of the "monstrosity of cold intellect. . . the understanding's naked self, stalking at noonday."<sup>24</sup> In spite of the extremity of his language, there is a modicum of truth in Rieger's view. We should be aware, as he is, of the deep influence, however ambivalent,<sup>25</sup> upon Godwin of his Sandemanian tutor, the Rev. Samuel Newton. Attention has already been drawn, in this paper, to Godwin's significant omission of the word "merely" when, towards the end of *Political Justice*, he refers, once more, to how "the will is the last act of the understanding." It is also important to draw attention, as Rieger does, to Godwin's untitled memorandum of "10 March 1800" in which he defines the "three" main "errors" which "blemished . . . The Enquiry concerning Political Justice":

1. Stoicism, or an inattention to the principle, that pleasure and pain are the only bases upon which morality can rest.
2. Sandemanianism, or an inattention to the principle, that feeling, and not judgment, is the source of human actions.
3. The unqualified condemnation of the private affections.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, there is only a modicum of truth in Rieger's view, particularly when we have in mind the first edition of *Political Justice*. He argues, for instance, that the "imagination" is "a power excluded significantly, from the psychological system of *Political Justice*."<sup>27</sup> Attention, particularly to the "Appendix" to the 1793 chapter, "Of Obedience," as well as elsewhere (see, for instance, *PJ*, III, 338), shows that this is not so. Indeed, as early as "Account of the Seminary," Godwin displays a strong interest in a view of the imagination, present in d'Holbach's *Systeme de la Nature*, whereby the "reason" remains in control.<sup>28</sup> Godwin does use the word, "imagination," in *Political Justice*, to signify a flight from reality, which he condemns (see *PJ*, I, 106). However, in the two other passages referred to in this paragraph, there is a real awareness of the importance of the penetrating power of the imagination.

When, too, we examine the significance of Godwin's memorandum of "10 March 1800," we should be aware that the attack on the primacy given by Sandemanianism to the "judgment"

has, in an important respect, greater relevance for the 1796 edition than for the first edition. It is significant that he often substitutes the word, "intellect" (1796), for the 1793 word, "mind" (see, for instance, *Ibid.*, III, 222). The 1793 valuation of a "virtuous disposition" in his argument for "true virtue" is also played down for the 1796 edition, with the objective criterion consequently much more stressed (see *Ibid.*, III, 251 and I, 156). Whilst, too, as Godwin stated in his memorandum of "10 March 1800," he was concerned to correct the valuation he had, in 1793, placed on Stoicism "in the subsequent edition of *Political Justice*," there is, in the 1796 Book I, Chapter V, an attempt to argue that man can be governed by his reason, which is both more extreme than in the first edition and far from convincing (see *PJ*, I, 71-74). As with the substitution of "intellect" for "mind," we find an attraction towards the possibility of a separation of the mind's faculties. This is by no means always the case in the 1796 Book I, Chapter V. When, however, he argues, in this chapter, that

... whatever can be adequately brought home to the conviction of the understanding, may be depended upon as affording a secure hold upon the conduct. We are no longer at liberty to consider man as divided between two independent principles, or to imagine that his inclinations are in any case inaccessible through the medium of his reason... (*Ibid.*, I, 79-80)

there is not the emphasis present in the 1793 edition on the ability of "reason" to coalesce with "passion," so that "a degree of conviction" is given to where truth lies (see *Ibid.*, III, 338). Instead, the stress is on "the conviction of the understanding" and on the accessibility of man's "inclinations... through the medium of reason."

Neither Godwin, nor his wide influence, particularly on his contemporaries, can be sufficiently understood if we do not realize that the writing of the first edition of *Political Justice* engaged his whole being. As a consequence, too, of Godwin's interest in "the great springs of human passion," there is a dynamism in the 1793 *Political Justice*, arising from his conviction that the forces of historical necessity were working towards the betterment of man. These were active forces, present in matter,

and as much "underlying both intelligence and the very forms of being" as in particular aspects of Wordsworth's poetry. The phrase quoted is H. W. Piper's, which he uses to define what "differentiated" Wordsworth "from the rationalist believers in progress, though not . . . from a wider current of late eighteenth century thought."<sup>29</sup> There can be little doubt that Piper, like most commentators, has Godwin in mind as the leader of "the rationalist believers in progress." It is consequently necessary to stress that Godwin was, and before Wordsworth, excited by this "current" of "thought."<sup>30</sup> The belief of the late 1780's and early 1790's that ultimate truths were not only able to be discovered but were about to be so<sup>31</sup> should be seen as underlying the conviction, made manifest in the "process" of writing *Political Justice*, that it was impossible for the "evidence of what is best or what is most beneficial" to be "thrown away upon" men:

Truth for a long time spreads itself unobserved. . . . The number of those by whom it is embraced is gradually enlarged. If it have relation to their practical interests, if it show them that they may be a thousand times more happy and free than at present, it is impossible that in its perpetual increase of evidence and enquiry, it should not at last break the bounds of speculation, and become an animating principle of action. (*PJ*, II, 226 and III, 191)

This is the culmination of the "movement" of the first edition of *Political Justice*. The conviction should be seen as central to an understanding of the work. It is also important to stress that the excitement at his findings persisted into *Caleb Williams*, which, in Godwin's own words, was "the offspring of that temper of mind in which the composition . . . of *Political Justice* had left"<sup>32</sup> him. At the same time, it was an excitement that had to engage, in 1793-1794, with different conditions and with his own changed convictions. Besides developing, in *Caleb Williams*, the plight of the individual in an oppressive society, Godwin is forced to reassess the eighteenth-century belief in the essential harmony within the universe. He could not look upon the Terror in the same way that he regarded the outcome of the September Massacres: as illustrating how "the spectacle" of yielding to "furious passions . . . gives strength to recovering reason." There is, in *Caleb Williams*, an ambivalence (see, for instance, *CW*, pp. 121-

25) with regard to “the great springs of human passion” which leads to the defensiveness present in Book I, Chapter V of the 1796 *Political Justice*.

Before Godwin concluded the second edition of *Political Justice*, he attempted to restore the importance he had given, in the first edition, to the passions. As he stated in his “March 10 1800” memorandum, he became convinced, as a result of his “perusal of Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*” in 1795, that “feeling & not judgment was the source of human actions.” In the continuation of this note, he draws attention to how

The second edition of *Political Justice* was then nearly printed off, but the change of my sentiments may be traced in the later sheets of each of the volumes.

An examination of these late corrections reveals a fundamental shift from the attempt, in the 1796 Book I, Chapter V, to make excessive claims for the “reason.” At the same time, Godwin was not prepared to incorporate into these late changes for the 1796 edition his involvement, in *Caleb Williams*, with the possibility of a tension between the “heart” when “the veil” is drawn back and the presence of a “fortitude” which might “to some persons appear above the standard of human nature” (*CW*, p. 278). Nor do we find the impassioned convictions of the 1793 edition of *Political Justice*. What is present is a concern to define a criterion which can engage man’s feelings. This criterion is not that of the 1793 “justice,” which is true in almost any situation (see *PJ*, I, 133-37), but is incorporated within “a scale of happiness” (see *Ibid.*, I, 444), enabling man to take into his being an awareness of where true happiness lies.

The new criterion, with “the man of benevolence” being given greater value than the man who was “perhaps . . . a poet” (see *Ibid.*, I, 446), gives importance to sentiment, but there is no longer the deep engagement with “the great springs of human passion.” For this preoccupation in Godwin’s post-1793 writings, we have to turn to his novels, not only to *Caleb Williams* but also to the best parts of *St. Leon* and of *Fleetwood* (1805), as well as to the novel which demands reassessment for its unflinching exploration of a Calvinist nurture: *Mandeville* (1817).

The success these novels achieve is due in no small part, I would argue, to the continued presence of the man who, in his exploration of the nature of man in the 1793 *Political Justice*, wrote, not simply with his intellect but from the very depths of his being.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Gerald A. Barker, "Justice to Caleb Williams," *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 6, 1974, particularly p. 383, where the reference to *Political Justice* ignores the fact that the passage referred to was written after *Caleb Williams* had been completed. See also Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1975). Mrs. Butler does comment on the significance of the changes for the later editions of *Political Justice* (see pp. 66-67). At the same time, importance is placed, in her understanding of the work, on the 1796 Book I, Chapter V, without attention being drawn to the fact that this was a new chapter for the 1796 edition (see pp. 40-41 and footnote 1, p. 41). The now standard edition of *Political Justice* is William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, 3 vols., edited with variant readings of the first and second editions and with a critical introduction and notes by F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: Univ. Dept. of Eng. Stud. and Texts, no. 2, 1946). Apart from one instance in my "Notes," this edition is used throughout and is referred to as *PJ*.
- <sup>2</sup> As by James Rieger, some of whose comments on *Political Justice* are quoted below.
- <sup>3</sup> "Autobiographical Notes 1773-1796," *Abinger MSS.*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Film 73. I should like to thank Lord Abinger for permission to read and quote from these manuscripts. Part of the passage quoted here is difficult to read. I clearly discern "reflecting," whilst Kegan Paul reproduces the part difficult to read as "on a feeling of." See C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: H. S. King, 1876), I, 67.
- <sup>4</sup> The first part of the 1793 Book I, Chapter VI, entitled "Of Moral and Physical Causes," the whole chapter having the title, "Of the Objection to These Principles from the Influence of Climate," is omitted from the Priestley edition, although he does mention that "a few sentences of the new" (i.e., the 1796 edition) Book I, Chapter V "were originally contained in the old Bk. I, ch. vii" (*PJ*, III, 143). It is perhaps revelatory of the lack of knowledge of the 1793 *Political Justice* that attention has not been drawn, until now, to this fact. For the part omitted in the Priestley edition see William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 2 vols. (London: Robinson, 1793), I, 51-60.
- <sup>5</sup> See "William Godwin's Diary 1788-1836," Vol. III, *Abinger MSS.* See, particularly, entries for 22nd February 1791: "Paine's pamphlet appears," 27th February 1791: "Call on Paine" and 2nd March 1791: "borrow Paine."
- <sup>6</sup> Undated comment, as found in *Abinger MSS.*, MS Film 73.
- <sup>7</sup> William Godwin, *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling* (London, R. Bentley, 1832), p. ix.

- <sup>8</sup> Note Godwin's use of the phrase, "the contagion of general example" — *PJ*, III, 244, and his contempt for what he calls "a visible standard" — *Ibid.*, II, 203.
- <sup>9</sup> Note Godwin's praise of a "lofty design" — *Ibid.*, I, 325.
- <sup>10</sup> Note the qualification, made by Godwin in the 1794 Preface to *Caleb Williams*, on his didactic purpose in that novel: "as far as the progressive nature of a single story would allow" — William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, edited with an introduction by David McCracken (London: O.U.P., 1970), p. 1. Further references to *Caleb Williams* are made to this edition, which is referred to as *CW*.
- <sup>11</sup> *Manuscript of Political Justice* in 3 Volumes, Forster Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, I, 14-15.
- <sup>12</sup> A phrase used by Godwin. See *PJ*, III, 310. Note, too, his use of the phrases, "the regulating spring of our conduct" — *Ibid.*, III, 224, and "the true spring there is in mind" — *Ibid.*, II, 64.
- <sup>13</sup> See John Logan, *Elements of the Philosophy of History*, Part First (Edinburgh: W. Creech and C. Elliot, 1781), pp. 69-70, where Logan argues that "Lycurgus" brought about a situation in which "The people were arrested in the first stage of improvement. A bold hand was put forth to that spring which is in society, and stopt its motion." Godwin's approval of Logan's argument does not prevent him, later on in *Political Justice*, from looking upon "Lycurgus" as an "immortal lawgiver" (see *PJ*, II, 503-04). A second part of Logan's work was not published. I should like to thank the Librarian of Edinburgh University Library for permission to xerox-copy parts of this rare book.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Works of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: James Carey, 1797), I, 6.
- <sup>15</sup> Gary, Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1976), p. 10.
- <sup>16</sup> K. N. Cameron, *The Young Shelley: Genesis of A Radical* (London: Gollancz, 1951), p. 68.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols; vols. 1 and 2 edited by E. de Selincourt and 3-5 by de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: O.U.P., 1940-1949), IV, 56: *Expostulation and Reply*, l.24.
- <sup>18</sup> See below for comment on the 1796 Book I, Chapter V. See, too, John Beer, "Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Some Cross-currents and Parallels" in *William Blake, Essays in honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, edited by Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: O.U.P., 1973), pp. 240-41 and footnotes 28-31, p. 240. See also Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth, A Biography*, 2 vols. (Oxford: O.U.P., 1957-1965), I, 297.
- <sup>19</sup> See [William Godwin], *An Account of the Seminary That will be opened on Monday the Fourth Day of August, At Epsom in Surrey, For the Instruction of Twelve Pupils in the Greek, Latin, French, and English Languages*, London, 1783, as reproduced in William Godwin, *Four Early Pamphlets (1783-1784)*, Facsimile Reproductions with an introduction by Burton R. Pollin (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints), 1966, p. 195.
- <sup>20</sup> For the later editions, Godwin refers, in a footnote at *PJ*, II, 381, to "Clarke." For Dr. Samuel Clarke's emphasis on "the last Judgment of the Understanding," see *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, 4 vols, (London: John



- and Paul Knapton, 1738), II, 565. Note, too, that Jonathan Edwards, who influenced Godwin's view of "the nature of true virtue," refers to "Arminian writers," such as "Dr. Samuel Clarke," who agree "that the acts of the will have some connection with the dictates or views of the understanding" — *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 4 vols., edited by Paul Ramsay (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), I, 217.
- <sup>21</sup> An important word in Godwin's vocabulary. See, for instance, *PJ*, III, 153 and III, 165.
- <sup>22</sup> For Allen and Small, see Walter Allen, Introduction to William Godwin, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams or Things As They Are* (London: Cassell, 1966), p. xiv, and Christopher Small, *Ariel Like a Harpy, Shelley, Mary and 'Frankenstein'* (London: Gollancz, 1972), pp. 74-80.
- <sup>23</sup> Godwin's belief in "the theory of the unitary personality" is emphasized by Kennedy F. Roche, *Rousseau: Stoic & Romantic* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. xii-xvi.
- <sup>24</sup> James Rieger, *The Mutiny Within: The Heresies of P. B. Shelley* (New York: G. Braziller, 1967), pp. 44, 46, 47.
- <sup>25</sup> Rieger quotes (*Ibid.*, pp. 41-43) from Godwin's "Autobiographical Fragment," *Abinger MSS.*, MS Film 73, the most important part of which is: "I was under the control of a despot; & I resolved he should not be a despot to me, where I could avoid it. Never mortal felt more energetically the sentiment, 'My mind, my mind, shall be the master of me!'" Godwin's ambivalence towards Newton is particularly shown in a passage from this "Fragment," not quoted by Rieger: "... during the last seven months of the year 1770" Godwin "voluntarily withdrew from Newton's 'tuition.'" However, "at the beginning of the year 1771" he "requested once more to return to the tuition of Newton." Rieger is right to emphasize that Godwin was interested in Newton's reactions to *Political Justice*. See Rieger, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
- <sup>26</sup> *Abinger MSS.*, MS Film 75.
- <sup>27</sup> Rieger, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- <sup>28</sup> See Godwin, "Four Early Pamphlets," *op. cit.*, pp. 195-96. For d'Holbach's influence, see M. de Mirabaud, *Nature and Her Laws: As Applicable to The Happiness of Men, Living in Society Contrasted with Superstition and Imaginary States*, translator's name not mentioned, 2 vols., bound in one volume (London: Watson, 1834), I, 104-06. (This work is really a translation of d'Holbach's *Système de la Nature*.)
- <sup>29</sup> H. W. Piper, *The Active Universe, Pantheism and the concept of Imagination in the English Romantic poets* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), p. 183.
- <sup>30</sup> For Godwin's emphasis on the "corporeal" nature of "thought" see *PJ*, II, 481 and for his stress on "motion" see *Ibid.*, II, 524. Beer gives an example of Godwin's use of the word, "motion," in *Political Justice*, but describes "the paragraph" as "thrown off rather casually by Godwin" and seems unaware of any Godwinian emphasis on corporeality of thought. See Beer, in *William Blake, Essays in honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
- <sup>31</sup> Beer deals well with the late 1780's intellectual excitement in the London of Coleridge's boyhood. See *Ibid.*, pp. 232-33.
- <sup>32</sup> "Autobiographical Notes 1773-1796," *Abinger MSS.*, MS Film 73.