BROWNING'S SYNTHESIS OF HIS PRIVATE VISION WITH UNIVERSAL MEANING

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With all the striding advancement of learning in our modern times it is still like an attempt to "hold a moonbeam in our hand" to try to answer the question in describing the nature of man. Many thinkers and scientists have seen many aspects of nature of man, but not all of them. Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnel have concluded from their study of man's motivational behavior that when the aspects of nature of man that have impressed various scholars are considered it seems best to describe man's nature as a complex comprised of the following three basic aspects, (1) his animal inheritance, (2) his dichotomous individualistic-social tendencies, and (3) his spiritual endowment.

As to the first basic aspect in animal inheritance, the fact that man has evolved from primitive life form is of overwhelming significance. Man's retained aspects of animal natture can be readily illustrated with the examples from the animal kingdom. Man shares with animal in considering the safety—the protection of his life—of first-rate importance. Man shows these aspects of animal inheritance in his cunning and calculating tactics he exercises in his competition for survival which may not be considered as admirable qualities from the presentday moral standard, but they cetainly enabled man to survive. As to the second basic aspect in the dichotomous individualistic-social tendencies, it is evident that man is basically different from animal for his social behavior. Man has evolved from the primitive animal life form to complex social environment. However, with all the modern development of social structure, man as an individual still remains the prime mover of himself for his own

desire. Man has built his social structure and lives in it but his prime concern is still his own interest. Man in his built-in selfish nature is a born egoist. In the third basic aspect of nature of man in his spiritual endowment man comes wholly free from animal inheritance. The progress of knowledge has redeemed him from the bondage of religious dogmas, but man still has a need for a concept of spiritual life in heaven to save him from the sufferings of this mortal world.[1)]

This view of the nature of man under the light of the evolutional process in growth from the primitive animality to the sublimate spirituality make it possible to deduce a certain conclusion that man has become "man" through the stresses and strains of a life lived in close proximity to animal life form, from which man has ever strived to progress by his organic and dynamic effort which I prefer to call his "moral tour de force."

It is thus evident that man has progressed by having gone through many varying degrees of stresses and strains of tour de force in achieving the synthesis of the antithetical element of the private with the universal or the human with the divine no matter how primitive our concept of the "universal" or the "divine" might have been in the infancy of our civilization.

Browning as a man and as a poet clearly shows his struggle for stressed and straind moral synthesis of the duality of the human and the divine, and the private and the universal for the development of his soul.

Thomas J. Collins, in his *Robert Browning's Moral-Aesthetic Theory, 1833-1855,* has ably shown the nature of Browning's synthesis of the dual elements in himself under the influences from Elizabeth, but his observation stops with the *Men and Women*, and therefore does not

1) The implication of evolution to man is best summarized in *Soientific American,* vol. 203 (September 1960), but for this view of man's nature in its basic three elements I owe to Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, *Principles of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), pp. 542-44.

include the observation of the development after that. Collins, it seems, has presented the picture of the poet as successful in his attempt at synthesis to become a "whole poet," but if we take into consideration the poet's life after 1855 there still remain some important questions to ask about the degree of success of Browning's attempted synthesis.[2)]

Browning's synthesis was achieved with great difficulty. In fact, it was attained by sheer tour de force. In this connection, Browning is different from his wife who achieved her synthesis of her private vision with universal values almost by nature in herself, without conscious efforts for it.

Browning's tour de force in his attempt at synthesis can best be seen by comparing his treatment of the theme of the two different types of love—love between man and woman and love between parent and child. The nature of Browning's tour de force in his treatment of parental love is so important that in this very tour de force the significant moral message of Browning's can be found.

Browning's characteristic doctrine of love between man and woman is widely known among the students of Browning for its inspiring ideas, but his up-lifting moral idea of love between parent and child has never been fully noticed by the Browning scholars. The reason for this negligence of this part of Browning's idea is partly because it has been overshadowed by the powerful light of Browning's doctrine of love between the sexes,

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2)Critics in general agree on this point. Notably Roma A. King observes that

> Browning, in the decade following the publication of *The Ring and the Book*, remained interested in the development of the soul, but became increasingly skeptical. Browning appears more intensely aware of the gulf between private vision and universal values, and of the difficulties which the artist experiences when he tries to speak authoritatively on any subject outside his own immediate consciousness.

See his *The Focussing Artifice,* p. 168.

but mainly due to the fact that this subject has not been taken up for serious study either in America or in England.

Mrs. Orr insists that the "parental instinct was among the weakest in his [Browning's] nature. . . it finds little or no expression in his work."[3] And A. K. Cook also insists that "though the poet portrays many kinds of womanliness, it has been observed that motherhood (like fatherhood) finds little expression in his poetry."[4] Louis Wann also observes that "Browning takes little interest in this type of love—love between parent and child and between the kindred—possibly because of its matter-of-fact condition," and in a later page in the same article Wann explains further on this point that "being a searcher for the unusual, he [Browning] would find little stimulus in the matter-of-course love of kindred."[5] These are the only instances of the general opinion commolny held by the critics about Browning's attitude to this type of love.

It is certainly true that Browning does not say much about this type of love if compared to what he says about love between the sexes or between man and God, but it is a great mistake to consider that Browning's parental instinct "finds little or no expression in his work," or to consider that Browning takes little interest in love between parent and child. It is certainly true that Browning is "a searcher for the unusual," but it is quite wrong to say that he considered natural affection of parent and child as merely "the matter-of-course love with little stimulus" for his poetic inspiration. His reticence on the matter is only ostensible. Hidden deep in his bosom of blood-tinctured humanity, it was a deep seated source of his profound poetic aspiration.

Browning's Pippa wishes to "taste of the pleasures" of love of man

3)Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* (Boston and New York : Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), p. 411.

4)A. K. Cook, *A Commentary upon Browning's The Ring and the Book,* reprinted ed. (Hamden : Archon Books, 1966), p. 143.

5)Louis Wann, "Browning's Theory of Love," *The Personalist,* vol. 6, no. 1 (January 1925), pp. 23-35.

and woman, "but" she says, "love, love, love—there's better love, I know! . . . lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives / and only parents' love can last our lives." Browning's other ingenuous girl, Pompilia, says of her joy of her motherhood, "I never realized God's birth before—How he grew likest God in being born. / This time I felt like Mary, had my babe / Lying a little on my breast like hers." And the unnamed heroine of "The Inn Album" thinks that "Womanliness means only motherhood : / All love begins and ends there." Browning sings the love of mother in his *Christmas-Eve,* "As a babe can find its mother's breast / As well in darkness as in light, / Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right." Browning finds a love of a child even in a beggar in his "In a Balcony," "Ask him, what would buy his child? / And then approves the expected laugh of scorn / Returned as something noble from the rags." Browning sees the parents' love even in the animals when he says, "The chief's eye . . . softened itself, as sheathes / A film the mother-eagle's eye / When her bruised eaglet breathes,"[6] or "Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood / Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place."[7] Browning's mention about the love of parent for the children may not be great in number, but what is significant is not the quantity but the quality of its deep and lofty concept.

In spite of the generally held opinion that Browning did not show much interest in love between parent and child, he not only had a profound insight into this important human emotion but also he encountered the overwhelming power of this emotion as his own personal experiences.

Browning's basic philosophy of life is considered to be found in his dictum of "putting in infinite within the finite" as he said in his letter to Ruskin. If viewed in the light of this concept of the duality of infinite and finite, and in the light of his idea of putting into unity, by fusion, these two antithetical elements, what is to be observed in his idea of parent-child love?

6) In "Incident of the French Camp."

7) In "Pictor Ignotus."

For an attempt to examine Browning's concept of love between parent and child, it is highly effective to carry out the analysis of that concept in comparison with that of Tennyson. It has never failed to be an effective method to study either of the poets in comparison against each other.

Tennyson's "Rizpah" is perhaps the grandest cry of motherhood. It is especially noteworthy that the mother in this tragic story was so grief stricken that she became insane—one of the traditional plots for literature for the theme of parent's passion for his child. Another noteworthy element in this poem which makes it striking in its emotional appeal is the mother's crying claim for her son as her own. The mother's cry that the flesh and the bone of her son belong to her is especially pathetic. One will notice how so many possessive "my" are there in the cries of the mother.

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it a theft?—
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that had laughed and cried—
Theirs? O, no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved in my side.

In contrast to Tennyson in his presentation of mother's passion in its more earthly and human nature, Browning, in "Ivàn Ivànovitch," presents a concept of parent-child relationship in its more heavenly and divine nature. The "Pope" of the village says:

. . . I discern
Truer truths, laws behold more lawlike than we learn
When first we set our foot to tread the course I trod
With man to guide my steps: who leads me now is God.

And he tells the village people that life is God's best of gifts, and calls to them to follow him while he remounts to law, the fount fresh from God's footstool.

A mother bears a child: perfection is complete
So far in such a birth. Enabled to repeat

The miracle of life,—herself was born so just
A type of womankind, that God sees fit to trust
Her with the holy task of giving life in turn.
Crowned by this crowning pride, how say you, should she spurn
Regality—discrowned, unchilded, by her choice
Of barrenness exchanged for fruit which made rejoice
Creation, through life's self were lost in giving birth
To life more fresh and fit to glorify God's earth?
How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
Kindled to light the world—aware of sparks that scorch,
Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings!
The mother drops the child! Among what monstrous things
Shall she be classed?

Clearly evident is difference between Tennyson and Browning in the concept of child, one claims it as "my own" while the other claims it as the "God's best of gifts" trusted to mother as a "holy task."

The thematic significance of "Dora" can be shown clearlier if the poem is observed from the critical view point of Tennyson's preoccupation with the idea of the child as "my own." The tragedy of it all starts from Allan's selfish claim for his son as "his own," and imposes his own will upon him as law. He wants his son to marry Dora mainly for his selfish paternal motive: "I would wish to see my grand-child on my knees before I die."

In this connection it is interesting to note that Tennyson's preoccupation with the idea of the child as "my own" is more evident in his personal utterances in his "De Profundis":

Thou comest, darling boy,
Our own; a babe in lineament and limb
Perfect, and prophet of the perfect man;
Whose face and form are hers and mine in one,
Indissolutely married like our love,

or in his "To Alfred Tennyson, My Grandson":

O little blossom, O mine, and mine of mine,
Glorious poet who never hast written a line,
Laugh, for the name at the head of my verse is thine.
Mayst thou never be wrong'd by the name that is mine.

In contrast to Tennyson, Browning, even though he surprised his wife by showing his deep emotion with warm tears of joy dropped from his face on to hers as he was placing their new born baby in her arms,[8] never wrote his version of "De Profundis" to profess publicly his personal emotion.

Viewed from this standpoint of the contrast of Tennyson and Browning, it is significant that Tennyson expressed his opinion about the terrible blow which Ivàn took upon himself to strike as the "divine" retribution: "I think the woman was right. The wolves would have eaten them all. She might have saved part by what she did."[9] In contrast to this comment made by Tennyson from his "human" point of view, Browning's "divine" point of view of motherhood is firm and clear when he insists in the poem that if the mother betrays the divine trust and drops the child he has no idea "among what monstrous things / Shall she be classed." Thus it is clear that Browning considers that the child does not belong to parent as "my own" possession, but it is only given to him in trust from God for the holy task to raise it for His purpose.

In thus viewing Browning's concept of the parent-child relationship as it is declared by the "Pope" of the village in "Ivàn Ivànovitch," it is impossible not to read the poet's personal repugnant feeling to Mr. Barret, his wife's father, who is the archetype of the father who claims all his children as "my own" belongings. If Browning's flight to Italy with Elizabeth from her father's home is Perseus' rescue of Andromeda from the dragon, it is quite natural that Browning took much interest in another

8) Betty Miller, *Robert Browning, a Portrait* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 157.

9) William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 440.

dragon-king in *Lear*.

Browning presents mother as entrusted by God for the holy task. Because of this holy task not only "each male yields to his partner place, sinks proudly in the scale," but in moment of crisis "God sets himself to Satan" to save the mother and her child and places them in safety under the protecting wings of His guardian angel. This idea of divine trust and protection is best given expression in the words from dying Pompilia.

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
—Better than born, baptized and hid away
Before this happened, safe from being hurt!
That had been sin God could not well forgive:
He was too young to smile and save himself.

Pompilia is deeply convinced that the child is given to her in trust by God, but as she is now to die leaving the child after her, she places her child to the trust of God, not to the hands of men:

Him, by death, I give
Outright to God, without a further care,—
But not to any parent in the world—
So to be safe: Why is it we repine?
What guardianship were safer could we choose?
All human plans and projects come to naught;
My life, and what I know of other lives,
Prove that: no plan nor project! God shall care!

She repeats her unshakable belief in relationship of mother and her babe under the divine trust and protection:

So is detached, so left all by itself
The little life, the fact which means so much
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to his work,
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,
Now that the hand he trusted to receive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce?
The better; he shall have in orphanage
His own way all the clearlier; if my babe

Outlived the hour—and he has lived two weeks—
It is through God who knows I am not by.
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!

Browning's idea of God's trust placed to the hand of mother for the care of child is repeated in the monologue by Pope in his praise for Pompilia:

But, brave,
Thou at first prompting of what I call God,
And fools call Nature, didst hear, comprehend,
Accept the obligation laid on thee,
Mother elect, to save the unborn child,
As brute and bird, do, reptile and the fly,
Ay and, I nothing doubt, even tree, shrub, plant
And flower o' the field, all in a common pact
To worthily defend the trust of trusts,
Life from the Ever Living:

Browning's stories of Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book* and the mother in "Ivàn Ivànovitch" end, it is true, in the death of the mother. However, there is always a gleam of hope of salvation coming out of the tragedy. Even in a midst of woeful plight Pompilia kept her hope in faith that her prayers move God. Just as a goat kept firm on the sticks, all underneath was air,

So, what I hold by , are my prayer to God,
My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,
Some hand would interpose and save me . . . .

In contrast to Browning, Tennyson's tragedy, involving mother and child, has always disturbing unrest of what is called "calm despair." His "The Victim" is a very cruel story with no hope to save either the mother or the child or the father. Tennyson's "calm despair" as the result of his "divine doubt" is as clear as Browning's strong optimism as the result of his "divine faith."

It is indeed one of the vital ideas of Browning that a child is God-

given, only entrusted to parents by God as His agent, and when orphaned, God Himself takes care of the child. We are here reminded that Fra Lippo Lippi was a helpless orphan.

I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.

But poor orphan Lippo was saved to the anchorage in the convent where he "stood munching my first bread that month." This is just another way of saying of Pompilia's faith in God's protection for her babe that it is "The better ; he shall have in orphanage / His own way all the clearlier."

This important basic idea of Browning's about the parent-child relationship has not been taken up as the basis of his message of salvation for the suffering humanity . There have been a good many studies done on *Pippa Passes,* but there has been no particular attention given to the significance of the story as Browning's case-making that Pippa was an "orphan child" deprived of the care of her earthly parents, yet for this orphan girl all is right with the world if God is in His heaven. Pippa's "morning song" has been considered the fundamental testimony of the poet for his all-inclusive optimism, but as far as this short lyric is concerned Browning is, it seems, simply emphasizing his particular idea that if God's in his heaven all's right with the world of an orphan child. In *Pippa Passes,* Browning presents the four different kinds of love in their order of up-ward degree as if corresponding to the four different Greek words for love, *eros* referring to sexual love, *philia* referring to friendship or brotherly love, *storge* referring to affection, especially between parents and children, and *agape* referring to love devoted to the welfare of others, and the main interest of this poem is considered to be in the dramatic effect of passing of Pippa upon the moral reaction of the people on each of these different planes of love, but it must be noticed that the Mon-

signor in the last episode is the only one who is inspired to take positive moral action, signifying that the Monsignor is the central figure who, with his divine love as the highest of all other kinds of love in the preceding episodes, brings the drama to the conclusion with the main theme of the orphan's safety under the divine providence. Scholars haven't taken enough cognizance of the element of the prime importance in the foundation of Browning's optimism as it was manifested in this poem. The foundation of Browning's optimism, so far as this poem is concerned, is not to be found in the idea that all service ranks the same with God and, therefore, Pippa has equal right and significance as an individual regardless of her social status as an weaver, but is to be found in Browning's belief that a helpless orphan in this cruel world is safe in the guardianship of God the All-Great and All-Loving. Browning's emphasis on the significance of orphanhood of Pippa is evident from the fact that Sordello, who is Pippa's twin brother in a sense, is also presented as an orphan.

In contrast to Browning's strong faith in the divine protection for the innocent orphan child as exemplified in *Pipippa Passes,* Tennyson stands opposite in his despair of the helpless child in "The Wreck." The innocent child-girl's "orphan wail came borne in the shriek of a growing wind" to the "motherless mother," and after "ten long sweet summer days of fever, and want of care" she died in spite of her sinful mother's prayer that "may her life be as blissfully calm, be never gloom'd by the curse of a sin, not hers." This poem, "The Wreck," is contained in the volume entitled *Tiresia and Other Poems,* which is dedicated to Browning. According to Arthur Waugh "it is characteristic of a certain shyness in Tennyson that he never told Browning of the dedication, and it was not until the book was in the hands of the public that the latter learned the circumstance from a friend.[10] The "dedication" reads :

10) W. F. Rolfe, ed. *The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson,* Cambridge edition. (Boston : Houghton Mifflin Company, 1898), p. 488.

TO MY GOOD FRIEND
ROBERT BROWNING
WHOSE GENIUS AND GENIALITY
WILL BEST APPRECIATE WHAT MAY BE BEST
AND MAKE MOST ALLOWANCE FOR WHAT MAY BE WORST
THIS VOLUME
IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

We are not told of the reaction Browning should have shown to this dedication, but it will be safely presumed that Browning, with all his "genius and geniality," would have found it hard to "appreciate what may be best, and make most allowance for what may be worst." The "best" of "The Wreck" is the confession of sin of this motherless mother, but she is confessing her sin to her mother only to hide herself behind her mother in her grave, not to God, the All-Great and All-Loving, and the "worst" is that "when the small sweet face was flush'd, but it coo'd to the mother and smiled," "the heart, not a mother's heart " fled in her haste leaving her "darling alone" "to the nurse who had borne her flower on her hireling heart," and the sweet face was to die as "a bird with a warble plaintively sweet perch'd on the shrouds, and then fell fluttering down at my feet." Browning would have found it impossible to "make most allowance" for Tennyson to let this innocent child die in this way any more than he would make allowance for Monsignor to get into complicity in the scheme to kill innocent Pippa. It is a significant contrast that in a moment of crisis Tennyson "drops and let loose" the orphan child to the cold world where "stars blindly run" while Browning places the orphan child in the world where all is right if God is in his heaven.[11] It is indeed this idea of

11)In view of this contrast, it must be pointed out that Tennyson's phrase of "all is well" in *In Memoriam,* cxxvi and cxxvii, is weak in its power of conviction. While "right" of Browning's "all's right" stands absolute allowing for no room for compromise, "well" does not stand absolute. It is a matter of degree, allowing for a room for comparison with "better" and "best."

divine protection that marks most strongly the characteristic of Browning's poetry. It is a recurring theme all through his works, appearing at one time as an image of Andromeda in *Pauline,* and, at another, as an "quite sure" image of "God had set Himself to Satan" in "Count Gismond," and still at another, as an image of "soldier-saint" to Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book.* All these are the symbols of Browning's perfect faith in divine protection.

Mrs. Orr was perhaps the first and most influencial in establishing the erroneous theory that Browning was totally negative in his attitude to the parent-child attachment. For its significance, her observation deserves quoting in full, in my own italics to the parts which have important relevance to my ensuing discussions :

> The parental instinct was among the weakest in his nature--*a fact which renders the more conspicuous his devotion to his own son*; it finds little or no expression in his work. The apotheosis of motherhood which he puts forth through the aged priest in "Ivàn Ivànovitch" was due to the poetic necessity of lifting a ghastly human punishment into the sphere of divine retribution. Even in the advancing years which soften the father into the grandfather, the essential quality of early childhood was not that which appealed to him. He would admire its flowerlike beauty, but not linger over it. *He had no special emotion for its helplessness.* When he was attracted by a child it was through the evidence of something not only distinct from, but opposed to this. "It is the soul" (I see) "in that speck of a body," he said, not many years ago, of a tiny boy--now too big for it to be desirable that I should mention his name, but whose mother, if she reads this, will know to whom I allude--who had delighted him by an act of intelligent grace which seemed beyond his years. The ingenuously unbounded maternal pride, the almost luscious maternal sentiment, of Pompilia's dying moments can only associate themselves in our mind with Mrs. Browning's personal utterances, and

some notable passages in "Casa Guidi Windows" and "Aurora Leigh."[12]

From my foregoing discussions, Mrs. Orr seems to me grossly unfair in stating that "he had no special emotion for its helplessness." Strangely enough this statement has never been questioned—owing, perhaps, to the fact that her biography was "authorized" by the poet himself. Ouite the contrary, Browning's "special emotion for the helplessness of childhood" is one of the most important foundation stones for his poetic aspirations.

Also, Mrs. Orr is quite mistaken to say that Browning's apotheosis of motherhood in "Ivàn Ivànovitch" was merely due to the poetic necessity. Browning wrote "Ivàn Ivànovitch" in his "advancing years," as Mrs. Orr has put it, and if it may be true that the poet would not "linger over the flowerlike beauty" of the child, Browning's "apotheosis of motherhood" was not due to the "mere poetic necessity of lifting a human punishment into the sphere of divine retribution." On the contrary, it is because of this apotheosized motherhood in divine trust and the holy task reposed in it that the human punishment was lifted to divine retribution by Browning's sense of poetic justice. It is by no means poetic necessity to lift the ghastly human punishment to divine retribution that motherhood was apotheosized. Motherhood was divine and holy from the beginning, the divine retribution is the result, not the cause, of the apotheosized motherhood.

Browning's emotional emphasis on the divine protection upon the helpless children is seen notably in *Pippa Passes,* and seen in such poems as "The Boy and the Angel," "Guardian Angel," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Karshish," and, though indirectly,"Ivàn Ivànovitch." In quantity the expression of this idea may be small but in quality it is as high-soaring as all his other lofty ideas. If Browning's poetic aspiration for the divine protection for helpless chidren is so clear-sighted as to allow no doubt at all, why is it that the parental instinct "finds little or no expression in his work?" If

12) Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning,* pp. 411-12.

This observation by Mrs. Orr is fully approved by DeVane: See his *Handbook,* p. 333.

the answer to this question is obtained, it will also explain the enigmatic riddle posed by Mrs. Orr that the "parental instinct was among the weakest in his nature—a fact which renders the more conspicuous his devotion to his own son." If Browning had so deep an affectionate devotion to his own son, why is it that his own parental instinct for his own son "finds little or no expression in his work?" Strangely again, this question posed by Mrs. Orr in 1891 has never called in any attempt to answer.

All the critics, notably Mrs. Orr, A. K. Cook, and DeVane, have agreed in their comment on "Pompilia" to admit that

> Browning in dealing with the unusual subject (for him) of mother-love, and in the more usual subject of a woman's love for her rescuer, has his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, constantly in mind.[13]

If Pompilia is created from Mrs. Browning, and if Pompilia is shown as the incarnation of mother-love in the perfect faith in divine protection, it is evident that our study upon this subject must consider the possible influences of Elizabeth Barrett upon Browning in his creation of motherhood of Pompilia, and in other women in his subsequent works, notably in *Baloustion's Adventure.*

Elizabeth Barrett, throughout all her career, wrote many poems that show her to be strongly emotional about love between parent and child. Among many others, the following poems illustrate her interest in this type of love of parent for child:

"Isobel's Child"
"The Soul's Travelling"
"The Weakest Thing"
"The Mourning Mother"
"A Child Asleep"
"The Cry of the Children"
"The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point
"A Child Thought of God"

13) William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 333.

"Little Mattie"
"Void in Law"
"A Song for the Ragged School of London"
"Amy's Cruelty"
"Only a Curl"
"Mother and Poet"

From the above illustration it is evident that Elizabeth, from very early in her career, was deeply emotional about the love of kindred. When her own child was born, she became the incarnation of motherhood. Mrs. Miller reports :

> "Wasn't it daring of us to take Baby 〔to the picnic trip to the Prato Fiorito〕 ?" Elizabeth asked her sister. But the truth was that she could not bear to be separated from him. For she who had once written to Miss Mitford that "after all if I had to choose. . . I should choose the smile of my own father to that of my own child," had now caught up her "parental pleasures with a sort of passion." Her delight in this child, born to her three days after her own forty-third birthday, is touching to witness.[14]

Elizabeth became truly a doting mother :

> . . . feeding on his mother's kisses, his mother's adulation, as he fed, throughout her lifetime, on an indulgence as unrestricted as it was indiscriminating. For she would not allow Wiedeman, or, rather, Penini, as he now began to call himself, to be disciplined in any way. Anticipating some latterday theories of child education, she ridiculed "the mythology of children being spoilt by too much love ; it's too pagan, such a creed." Robert did not agree : and on one occasion, when Penini had misbehaved, he told him severely that he was " 'molto cattivo.' " "Upon which," wrote Elizabeth, Penini's "lip began to quiver directly . . . and I interfered and insisted on it that he meant to be 'very good' on the contrary. 'Go and kiss Papa,' said I—and off he ran, and kissed his coat ; as high up as he could reach. The child

14) Miller, *Robert Browning, a Portrait,* p. 163.

> is too susceptible—the least word overcomes him. . . . I really don't know a fault in his temper and disposition. . . poor little precious darling !"[15]

Elizabeth's "parental pleasures with a sort of passion" is evident in her "Rizpah"-like emotion she showed when all the letters she had written to her father through five years since her marriage were sent back unopened :

> "I could never tell you, if I tried," she wrote to her sister, "what I felt when these letters came back to me, nine or ten of them, all with their unbroken sealed up heart which refused to be opened by me. Oh, if my child were cast out of society for the most hideous of possible crimes, could I keep my heart so sealed up towards him ? Not while a pulse of life stirred in it. If God and man cried aloud to me not to open, I should yet open—I could not help it."[16]

However much as she was doting as a mother with her "parental pleasures with a sort of passion," Elizabeth Barrett, as a poet, it is important to notice, never became overwhelmed by private feelings, as the ideas contained in such poems as illustrated before in pages 16-17 would reveal. She never lost sight of the situations to be viewed from the standpoint of social solidality which she envisaged in her ideal of brotherhood of all mankind under the divine providence of a God of love who pities His children even as does the earthly parent. Her poems, such as "The Cry of the Children" or "A song for the Ragged School of London," clearly show not only her maternal passion for the helplessness of the children in the privation of the society, but also show her awareness of the social implication involved in the circumstances.

It is indeed important to notice that Elizabeth had a very strong passion of mother's love in her private feeling, but in her poetry, she always coupled her love for children with the sense of social responsibility, and her sense of social responsibility was based on her faith in the

15) Ibid., p. 178.

16) Ibid., p. 171.

brotherhood of all mankind, as evidenced, for instance, in her poem "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point." Elizabeth's idea of fellowship of all mankind is, of course, based on his faith in an All-Great and All-Loving God. Her faith in divine providence is the fount of her moral strength and the basis of her poetic inspiration.

The strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest!

On this foundation of her faith rested her intrepid optimism that God will never desert His children:

Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath shaken--
It went up single, echoless. "My God, I am forsaken!"
It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation!

From this faith that "no son should use those words of desolation" her beautiful soul cried out the advocacy of the cause of all earth's poor and neglected. This is the fount of her inspirational power of sympathy running all through her famous poems like "Consolation" or "Grief."[17]

From the foregoing observation, it can be argued that what is significant in Elizabeth Barrett are the two elements in contrast, her private feeling as a mother attached to her own child and her concern for others' children in her social awareness of the universal problem for the weal of all children, and her realization of the finite nature of earthly parent in contrast to the infinite nature of the heavenly Father. More important than this point of view of Elizabeth's private and universal mind in contrast is the higher view of Elizabeth's state of mind that she did not find these two elements presented in herself as sharply contrasted to cause her to be disturbed by the resulting conflict, but these two elements have always been kept, if not in complete fusion, in harmonious synthesis of

17) It is really significant that such a poetess of love was a daughter of such an egoistic man. It is indeed a strange thing in the whole scheme of God's providence. Pippa was right when she says "God's puppets, best and worst, / Are we."

heart and brain, the human and the divine, the private and the universal.

Because of this perfect synthesis of her private and universal mind, Elizabeth could give much beneficial effect to her husband. The influence of Elizabeth's emotional passion as a "human" mother upon Browning's awakened paternal instinct is observable, for instance, in his change of "wolf hunt" in the first uncompleted version of "Saul" to more signifying, meaningful, "armies" in the final version which was completed after his marriage. This change was made in the following lines in stanza IX where the life's bliss in love between parent and child is especially invoked :

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father
Whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth to the wolf hunt
For glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother
    Held up, as men sung
The song of the nearly-departed.
    And heard her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness
    "Let one more attest,
    "I have lived, seen God's hand thro' that life-time,
    "And all was for best. . . .

Since for the description of this "private" happiness of the family life Browning had no models to go after either in the original Biblical story or in Smart's *The Song to David*, Browning had freedom to change with whatever he liked, and in so using his freedom in changing, he changed an insignificant event of going on the "wolf hunt" to more significant occasion of trusting "with the armies." It is significant because "to trust with the armies" is a symbolic expression of an action which, "if cut deep down the middle, shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity" of love and trust of a father to his son.

Another evidence to support the claim for the possible influence of Elizabeth on Browning for his awakened sense of paternal emotion can be

cited in his marked change in his attitude toward Shelley. His earlier adoration of Shelley as the "Sun-Treader" was changed, in his later years, to his refusal to be elected the president of the Shelly Society. The reason for this change was mainly because he realized the "badness" of "bad Shelley" in deserting his wife and children. Browning realized the "badness" of it all as he became more aware of the sanctities of the home under the influence of his wife, as the most tender, devoted, and admiring of mothers, from whom he had found the deep sources of intellectual and spiritual sympathy.

Also, Alketis' pathetic devotion to her two children before her vicarious death, and her trust with her husband for her children, especially in her trust that he would not impose a step-mother on their children, "for hostile the new-comer, the step-dame, / To the old brood - a very viper she / For gentleness!" reflects the devoted motherhood of Elizabeth and her silent trust with her husband when their son is orphaned of his mother.

A more important phase of Elizabeth's influence, however, is seen in Browning's basic view of parental love in relationship with divine love. The influence of Elizabeth made it possible for Browning to go more deeply and effectively in his sublimation of the element of the human as regards love between parent and child to the higher plane of synthesis with the divine. The effect of this sublimated synthesis is already explained by comparing the human and divine elements in Tennyson and Browning. The contrast of Tennyson and Browning in their treatment of parental love can be illustrated in the following set of comparisons.

Tennyson	Browning
The human	The divine
Private	Universal
Flesh	Spirit
Earth	Heaven
Man	God
Emotional	Rational
Realistic	Idealistic

This comparison with Tennyson is employed only for the sake of convenience in bringing my point of observations to a focus. The more significant meaning in setting up the above set of comparisons is to see the fact that in Browning these two sets of contrasting elements are fused in forcibly "holding" synthesis which was made possible by Browning's tour de force.

Before going to observe Browning's tour de force in the theme of parental love, however, it is necessary to see what kind of tour de force Browning had to undergo in his attempt at synthesis in dealing with the more usual subject (for him) of a husband's love for his wife, because in this type of love is Browning more candid than in the unusual subject (for him) of parent's love for his child, and, for this reason, the nature of his tour de force is more conspicuously evident in his poem dealing with this type of love between man and woman.

It has been pointed out that it is Tennyson who tends to call children "my own" possession, but now it is Browning who tends to call wife "my own" possession. It is quite evident that Browning's theory of love is that only one love is possible. The highest sin is to defeat the accomplishment of that one union. The greatest gain in life is to attain that union, to develop the soul thereby. From this belief in "one love and only once" Browning does not recognize neutrality in love. The Duke in "My Last Duchess" is jealous of his wife because of this neutrality. He believes that his wife belongs to him as "my own" possession. Therefere he expects, he wants, his wife to show her love only to himself, not to any one else. But his witless wife, to his great chagrin, showed that spot of joy in her cheek not only to the presence of her husband, but to any one else. The Duke was angry at her being all one to everything. Her heart was too soon made glad by courtesy shown from any one else. If her husband's favor at her breast would draw from her the approving speech, it can be drawn out by each and all. She thanked men—good! but thanked as if she ranked his gift of a nine hundred years old name with anybody's any gift. She smiled whenever her husband passed, but she smiled all the same to any one else who passed her. This he found

unbearable at last, and gave a command. We don't know what command was that, but we certainly know that he was so mad in jealousy simply because his wife did not properly respond to his sense of "my own" Duchess. We know why he did think his last duchess a bad wife to him. We know that he didn't think that his last Duchess was a bad woman. Yes, he surely knew that she was a good and beautiful woman, but she was bad to her husband simply because she shows her beauty and goodness to everybody else without showing good sense of giving her priority to her husband—the priority that belongs, in the Duke's thought, to her husband. The Duke was happy, to be sure, with the charm of his wife's beauty and goodness, and he was happy for her smile in "the depth and passion of its earnest glance" but he was unhappy because she smiled to anybody else equally. Extreme love begets extreme hate : therefore this kind of hate is but a changed form of love. The problem for the Duke is simply the matter of priority which should be given to him as the "right" a husband can claim from his wife who belongs to him as "his own" possession. The truth is simply that a man and his wife belong to each other with all the bless of married life to be resulted in concrete benefit to themselves before anything good of their married life would serve for the good and happiness of others. It is the Duke's philosophy that man's salvation comes from man's engagement with reality, not with ideality—the reality of man's selfishness to possess his wife as "his own" prior to any ideality in considering to pass to others anything good that comes out of the bliss of their married life. The Duke would not get mad if she had given him her ample warrant of her munificent love with priority to him. It is, in its essential nature, just a common trait in the reality of everyman in his nomal psychological life. It will be more in accordance with reality to hold that man's fundametal nature is to possess his wife's love and beauty to him alone as his own belongings. This selfishness, in its fundamental nature, may be quite natural for everyman, but in case of the Duke this natural desire for possession was carrird to a maniac extremity, but, it must be noted, in essence his desire is not abnormal to that of anyone else.

A significance of Browning's basic concept of this priority in possession can be seen in the fact that "My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover" are the product of his youth and these two are the best of Browning's dramatic monologues, and strangely enough they have two important things in common, beside being in perfect form of dramtic monologue, that is the killing of women to possess them to "themselves." The speakers of these two monologues are alike somehow maniac, and both of them are not aware of the criminal nature of their acts, but rather they consider that they are granted God's affirmation. They considered the possession of women to themselves is the sanctified right of men. If their God-given right is disturbed, they believe, they are allowed to kill their women. They killed them because they loved them.

Here we are reminded that Oscar Wilde says in his "Ballad of Reading Gaol" that "Each one kills the thing he loves" and only the brave man can kill her with cold steel. This is the problem with Andrea del Sarto. Andrea loves his wife for the charm of her beauty. Andrea, of Browning's other exquisite dramatic monologue, enarmored of his "my serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds" calls his wife "my moon" but at the same time he must admit to call her "everybody's moon." He knows that "everybody looks on her and calls his." The story may take at any moment a turn to become a violent tragedy if only Andrea is strong enough as Porphylia's lover to strangle his woman, or strong enough as the Duke to "give command." He only laments in twilight mood, consoling himself by saying that Lucrezia is "no one's : very dear, no less."

For Browning's husbands, their wives must always be a moon or a star showing one secret side, dartling a magic hue, only to their husbands, hidden from the public:

. . . the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with.
One to show a woman when he loves her!

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you-yourself my moon of poets!

Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.[18]

For Browning, priority must come always to the husband and wife in their private relation before anything of the value of their union can be transmitted to the public.

For Browning, his "My Star" is not the Saturn which the world looks to adimire. His "My Star" may appear to the eyes of the world as a "bird, like a flower, hangs furled," but it "has opened its soul to me." Browning says that "therefore I love it." The Duke of "My Last Duchess" must have said to himself that "My star dartles the red and the blue to me—very good,—but it dartles them equally to anybody else of the world. Therefore I don't love it, but I hate it."

Since the Duke cannot stoop even to suggest what his wife can do to make him happy, if the Duchess is wise enough to get alert and asks her husband to "contend no more, strive nor weep" and begs him as "a woman's last word" to

Teach me, only teach. Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech. Love,
Think thy thought

and if she promisses him to

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit

18) "One Word More," xvii–xviii.

In thy hands.[19]

and if she keeps her words to the Duke to speak his speech and to think his thought by not dartling her red and blue to the world as much as to her husband or by not opening her soul to anybody else as much as to her husband, then the Duke would not have gone so mad in jealousy as to give "command."

If bad wives are defined, in Browning's opinion, as those who are indiscriminating in giving priority to their "private" hasband and to the "public" world, what are those who can be termed by Browning as "perfect" wives. They are those who "might have turned and tried a man" to see if he "yet end as he began," but have the heart to spare him this test and fill his "empty heart at a word." But, test or no test, it is necessary that "we two stood there with never a third," and

If two lives join, there is oft a scar
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far,

and a bar must be

. . . broken between
Life and life; we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.[20]

Never to have a third one when the

. . . two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct,[21]

is the only way in which "the gain of earth's can be made the "heaven's gain too."[22]

But this gain of earth and heaven can never be realized by those "Two

19) "A Woman's Last Word."
20) "By the Fireside."
21) Ibid.
22) Ibid.

in the Campagna" so long as the man is left thwarted by his incomplete possession of his love.

I would that you were all to me
You that are so much ; no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free !
Where does the fault lie ? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be ?

He knows where does the fault lie and the core of the wound. It is simply because she is not "all to me." So long as she remains not "all to me" he realizes that he

. . . must go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star.[23]

But, if one is fortunate enough to be fixed by a friendly star, and find a right word to whisper to "a simple ring with a single stone, / To the vulgar eye no stone of price," then, like fire from ice, a sprite starts forth:

And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of Heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('t is I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy praise :
Utter the true word—out and away
Escapes her soul : I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole—by a minute's birth—

23) As Browning has made the wife of "Any Wife to Any Husband" to lament that "had but love its will," it seems that either man or his wife is held responsible by Browning for their frustration in love. But it must be realized that even if love has its will, its will is just the same in its ultimate goal, that is to yearn that "you were all to me."

Through the love in a girl![24]

Browning recognizes this importance of the priority of private, human, element in love between men and women to the realization of its universal values for the public benefit, not only from the man's but also from the woman's point of view. The three court-ladies begin their trial of who judges best in estimating the love of a man. The Duchess chooses the man who "holds—save his God and his king—none above her." Merquise requires "Pure thoughts, ay but also fine deeds : / Play the paladin must he, to please / My whim," but she does not care too much for saint and loyalist. Then the Comtesse,

My choice be a wretch,
Mere losel in body and soul,
Thrice accurst! What care I, so he stretch
Arms to me his sole savior, love's ultimate goal.

The Abbe pronounced "the love which to one and one only has reference / Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's preference."

Browning's sense of the fundamental value of the private life over the public was actually given priority in his married life:

> There were no bells in their rooms at the Collegio : nobody rang : nobody knocked ; day after day, in "the utmost seclusion and tête-à-tête" husband and wife sat before the pinewood fire, pursuing, through the ramifications of sense and spirit alike, the potentialities of an all-absorbing relationship. Elizabeth found that she could not persuade Browning to leave her side : What makes him "perfectly happy," she wrote to her sister, is "to draw his chair next to mine and let the time slip by." Unwilling to relinquish, even for a moment, a privilege so dearly won, he refused to move a step without her ; assuring her that never in his life, "from his joyous childhood upwards," had he enjoyed such happiness as he found in this uninterrupted communion of two people with "one soul between them."[25]

24) "A Pearl, a Girl."

25) Miller, *Robert Browning, a Portrait,* p. 143.

When Elizabeth suggested some distractions in the way of mixed society, Browning was appalled at the suggestion. Working himself up "into a fine frenzy" at the very idea, he begged her to admit no one to their hearth. "If we once let them in," he said, "these people," as he called them, "will spoil all our happiness.[26]

Browning claimed his wife as his own before she can be anything else. When she was "summoned from the darkling earth," and came "dropping down" she was expected to give, first of all, her priority of his own moon with one side to show only to him, hidden from all the world, before she, with "boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun," should go on her poetical mission benefitting the world with her work "to toil for man, to suffer or to die."

It must be emphasized, as it has already been stated in the foregoing discussions, that Browning's men and women, in playing their role as lovers, fail more often than not to achieve their self-realization, for it is not easy task to attain the perfect union of the soul where man can make his wife "all to me," smile only to him, show her hidden side only to him, open her soul only to him, speak his speech, think his thought, meet both demands laying flesh and spirit in his hands to let him feel that he is finally wrapt in blaze as creation's lord of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole.

Browning never had a conception of a child as "his own," as Tennyson did, but as for lovers, Browning could not part with his tenacious conception of "my own." Here is found a paradoxical difficulty for Browning's lovers to achieve their self-realization. Man can not soar high in the celestial flight of love without fuel supplied from mother earth of veined-humanity. Man's love for his woman can be complete only on an existential level. Any attempt to put the infinite within the finite above this level of human limitation is tour de force. Many of Browning's lovers are thwarted and frustrated in this tour de force in their attempt at synthesis of the actual and the ideal. In Browning's successful love the gain of

26) Ibid., p. 144.

earth must be shifted to heaven's gain, but for this to be possible, the synthesis of the human with the divine, the private with the universal, is needed.[27]

Browning's struggle for synthesis of the duality of the human and the divine, fancy and fact, the flesh and the spirit, the heart and the brain, in his love poems throughout all his career, ranging from earlier ones like "My Last Duchess" to the later works like "A Pearl, a Girl" or "Which ?" had been carried out with varying degrees of success and failure. In connection with this observation of the difficulties encountered by Browning in his attemp at synthesis of the actual and the ideal, it must be noted that in the teaching of Jesus there is no such confrontation with the "tour de force" as He tells us that we should love our neighbors as ourselves—not more than ourselves, or instead of ourselves, but as ourselves. Browning's struggle was maintained by tour de force, but my point is that Browning's love poems show that man's soaring flight in the abstract idealism can not be attained without giving first priority to man's reality of his "selfhood" which is the concrete element common to all men in their common human nature. Man cannot break his umbilical cord to his mother earth. Thus after "earth had attained to heaven" and the "broken arcs" on the earth were made "a perfect round" in heaven, Abt Vogler must find his resting-place in the C Major of this life. In fact, the most characteristic of Browning's poetic inspiration is his idealistic concetion of life based on his acumen of realistic observation of human nature. Browning said, in his *Pauline,* that "my love outsoars my reason" but he had to find it impossible for his love to outsoar his "selfhood." He found it possible for his love only to compromise, by way of synthesis, with it. For Browning the body and the senses, so far from being spurned, are meant to serve as stepping stones to a rialization of the spirit which uses

27)"By the Fireside" is the example of the success of synthesis, "My Last Duchess," the failure, while "Two in the Campagna" is the example of that which lies in the midway of the success and failure.

these as vehicles of its temporal manifestations.[28] Significantly, Mrs. Orr concluded her *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* with the following remarks :

> But the two beings were in truth inseparable. The man is always present in the poet ; the poet was dominant in the man. This fact can never be absent from our loving remembrance of him. No just estimate of his life and character will fail to give it weight.

Because of this idealism sustained by tour de force, Browning's romantic spirit is different from all other romantics such as, for instance, Wordsworth and other "lake poets" who,

> . . . in quest of romantic solitude, away from the haunts of men, made their homes among the mountains, but their pursuit of a romantic dream, however beautiful it may have been, led them away from reality and from the greatness which only flourishes on the soil of reality. Here perhaps is the true explanation of the gradual withering of Wordsworth's poetic genius—his vain clinging to the "visionary gleam," the "glory and the dream" of his childhood memories.[29]

True aspiring spirit in quest for value and meaning in idealism requires of aspirant not dreaming but a sheer effort in tour de force.

The same tour de force is present in Browning's poetic aspiration for the love of a parent for his children. Tennyson did not use much of tour de force in shifting the human to the divine in his treatment of parental love for children. He stationed himself on the human level in wailing for the lost children or in rejoicing for the newly gained ones. Browning, in contrast to Tennyson, struggled, by tour de force, for the synthesis of the human and the divine for the ideality of love of parent for his children .

When children die, the grief of the parents is so deep and great that they feel their ground is sinking, and everything is all wrong with the

28) William O. Raymond, "'Jewelled Bow': A Study in Browning's Imagery and Humanism." *PMLA,* vol. 70, p. 125.

29) Peter Milward, *Christian Themes in English Literature* (Tokyo : Kenkyusha, 1967), p. 121.

world. Their grief is so deep and helpless that in the literary works the bereft parents have often gone mad which is the favorite theme not only in Japanese literature, but also the literature of Wordsworth, for instance, in his "The Thorn," " Her Eyes Are Wild," and of Dobell in his "Tommy's Dead" and "How's My Boy," and notably of Tennyson in his "Rizpah."

In contrast to Tennyson, or Wordsworth, parents in Browning's works are not driven to insanity. The contrast of Tennyson with Browning becomes more distinct if they are compared in their case-making of sanity and insanity for the love for children. Moreover, this contrast of sanity and insanity is made more impressive by the accompanying contrast of the mood of morbid dark of night and that of healthy light of morning. The mother, in Tennyson's "Rizpah," at the end of the story, goes out, following her dead son's calling voice, into the dark of snow night with her insane mind feeling that everything is all wrong with the world, while Pompilia in Browning's *The Ring and the Book,* with her belierf that "prayers move God," says, at the end of her story, "Through such souls alone / God stooping shows sufficient of his light / For us i'the dark to rise by. And I rise," with her sane and healthy mind even at the dying moment, feeling it sure that all's right with the world. The contrast of mad and sane, dark and light is also evident in "Helen's Tower," for the contrast of the Tower of Hate and Love's rock-built Tower is concluded with the line "When all the morning-stars together sang."

In contrast to the mother in the stories by Tennyson or Wordsworth, Lazarus, in Browning's "Karshish," with his clear mind with faith "to live / So long as God please, and just how God please," scarcely shows abatement of his cheerfulness even when his child "sicken unto death." The mother in Tennyson's" Rizpah" says "Do you think that I care for my soul if my boy be gone to the fire." This is so true with the true sentiment of all the true mothers and this is exactly the mother's heart Elizabeth Barrett expressed in her Rizpah-like letter [30] and yet Browning cannot allow the mother to forget, in her insanity, to care for her soul, because,

30) See qoutation in page 18.

Browning believed the salvation must come to the soul through the right mind. In *Christmas-Eve* (XXI), Browning expresses his belief that "Heaven soon sets right all other matters!" and because of this hope he can set "This soul at struggle with insanity." It must be remembered that the development of a soul is the only thing worthy of his study. In that act of punishment which is, from the human point of view, nothing but hideous Ivàn Ivànovitch was so calm and sane that he "was scant of words as strokes." "It's fitter being sane than mad," says Browning in his "Apparent Failure." One must be sane to keep himself from the danger of "apparent failure" by keeping his faith unshaken "that what began best, can't end worst, / Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."

Browining admits, in his *Easter-Day,* that all God's acts are, in our human eyes, not "geometrized," and "the creation travails, groans," and yet he says "Contrive your music from its moans / Without or let or hindrance." What music does he desire to make from the creation's moan? Browning wanted to make music that could lead the grief stricken or worry ridden parents from shade of night to plains of light where they need not wail in their dark insanity but can receive the light of saving grace in their right reasoning mind. Even when man's relationship with his sons and daughters is not apparently "geometrized," as in the ghastly story of "Halbert and Hob," Browning finds the light of saving grace is always coming from right reasoning. Toward the end of the story of "Halbert and Hob" Browning cries out with King Lear asking if "Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts?" This would be a terrible reflection on the "un-geometrized" divine providence, but, to Browning, it is still "clear" that the light of saving grace is coming from man's right reasoning about the way of God to man as he put it in his pregnant last line "That a reason out of nature must turn them soft, seems clear!" Thus Browning tells us with a conviction that

> The acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it.

It is the the reason—right mind—, not the insanity, that the grief stricken

parents need for their salvation from the shade of night of despair.

Browning's idea of the indispensability of the sane mind for the salvation of man in his parent-child relationship is emphasized in his interpolations in his transcript of *Alkestis* in *Balaustion's Adventure*. If Browning's transcript and Euripides' original *Alkestis* are compared there are to be noticed considerable changes and interpolations. The most significant interpolation, in view of the above observations of Browning's idea of the indispensability of a sane mind for man's salvation, are the following two interpolations without counterparts in Euripides' original work. In her approaching vicarious death, Alkestis asks her husband, Admetos, to promise her not to wed and not to impose a step-mother upon their children:

> Now do thou remember this,
> Do me in turn a favor—favor, since
> Certanly I shall never claim my due,
> For nothing is more precious than a life:
> But a fit favor, as thyself wilt say,
> Loving our children here no less than I,
> If head and heart be sound in thee at least.

The last line of above quotation is not in the original by Euripides. Then, to this plea of Alkestis', the reply is made :

> "Have courage" interposed the friends.
> "For him
> I have no scruple to declare—all this
> Will he perform, except he fail of sense."

One must notice that this reply is not in the original, either. From this it is evident that Browning made these two interpolations : "if head and heart be sound in thee at least," and "except he fail of sense," out of his conscious awareness of the importance of the "sane reasoning" for salvation.

From this emphasis on the indispensability of the "sane reasoning" for man's salvation, comes Browning's emphasis of "clear brain" in his synthesis of the head and heart. Even in her death agony, Pompilia

never loses her discerning power for "clear" insight. Pompilia says, "Now I have to die and see things clear," or "Obeying the clear voice which bode me rise," or "The better: he shall have in orphanage / His own way all the clearlier." Because of this synthesis of clear brain and sound heart, Browning's idea of love is also connected with this idea of "clearness" of brain, as, for example, can be seen in such lines as, "To where I clearlier see and better love" in *Panline* or "clearer loves sound other ways" in "The Boy and the Angel."[31]

The quintessence of Browning's poetic aspiration, "putting in the infinite within the finite" and the "development of the soul," can not be achieved without, first of all, right reasoning in right mind. Browning never faltered in keeping up his sane reasoning for his two major functions, singing and sermonizing, or in his passion and thougnt.

Browning was not only great in his singing and sermonizing, but he was also great in receiving lessons in his saneness. When Elizabeth miscarried, the agitation of Browning was something painful to behold.

> Dishevelled, exhausted, quite "overcome," he could neither eat nor sleep; as soon as he was allowed into the room, "he threw himself down on the bed in a passion of tears, sobbing like a child,"

but he did not fail himself of his saneness, " 'We are rebellious children,'

31) Some examples of Browning's idea of "clear brain" can be cited in the following lines:

"As clearer sense than mine would" ("A Bean-Stripe")

"With clearer brain and stouter arm than they" ("Prince Hohenstiel-Shwangau, Saviour of Society")

"All,—clearest: brains and soundest hearts (Prince Hohenstiel-Shwangau")

"And thus, with the clearer fine intellect" ("Luria")

"Clearer than mortal sense perceived the man" ("Aristophanes' Apology")

"Came need to clear your brains of their conceit" ("The Inn Album")

he said, 'and He leads us where He can best teach us.' "[32] When his mother died Browning was so grief stricken that even after months

> still he could not eat or sleep ; pale and thin, he sat listless in a corner of the drawing-room at Casa Guidi,[33]

but Elizabeth reports that

> There is no root of bitterness in this grief that it should embitter life for ever . . . it is a flowering grief, and not poisonous. Up to this point, it has drawn him nearer to God . . . and whatever does that, is not evil in its nature indeed. That Her God is his God, Her saviour his saviour, is the thought oftenst with him when he takes any comfort. If she had died years ago, twenty years ago, when he had his fit of scepticism . . . how would he have borne it then? he observed that to me himself. As it is, he has her faith to comfort him, losing her.[34]

With this emphasis on the saneness of mind—faith accepted by the reason—, Browning emphasizes to "contrive your music from its moans"[35] and admonishes "why is it we repine? / What guardianship were safer could we choose? . . . Let us leave God alone!"[36]

In thus viewing Browning's idea of salvation by the right reasoning, it must be noted that if Browning's lofty transcendental music was contrived from the creation's moans and travails so easily that in so doing he had experienced no hindrance, then the bereft parents in their deep grief, as best exemplified by Rizpah, would have nothing to learn from Browning, because what is really needed for them is the power to transcend that hindrance. If the grief of the parents in the loss of their children has remained on the same plane of private and human in its essential nature their grief has never been made to transcend from the down earth to the

32) Betty Miller, *Robert Browning, a Portrait,* P. 146.

33) Ibid., p. 158.

34) Ibid., p. 159.

35) *Easter-Day.*

36) "Pompilla," *The Ring and the Book.*

heaven above. But Browning's mode of belief, as I have already stated before, was to transcend from the private to the universal, from the human to the divine, and for this transcendental shift he had to create not only his own soul but an artifice, as observed by Roma A. King, capable of bringing into a coherent vision which made that transformation possible.[37]

If such is the case of difference between the plain humanity and Browning's transcendental aspiration, one must realize that Browning, in his efforts in transfoming the private to the universal, the human to the divine, had to create his own soul and his artifice by his striving tour de force. Browning's moral theory was always based on his idea that man should ever be a high-aiming striver. "Strive and thrive" was indeed his lifelong cry.

The clew to the basic idea of Browning's high-aiming "strive and thrive" concept of Platonism can be found in what he says of his view of poet in his "An Essay on Shelley." In speaking of the genius of the "subjective" poet he says :

> He, gifted like the objective poet with the fuller perception of nature and man, is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the one above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth,--an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees, but what God sees,-- the Ideas of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine Hand,--it is toward these that he struggles.

But Browning says that the struggle toward this highest plane of ideas must start with this world:

> For it is with this world, as starting point and basis alike, that we shall always have to concern ourselves : the world is not to be learned and thrown aside, but reverted to and relearned. The spiritual comprehension may be infinitely subtilized, but the raw material it

37) Roma A. King, Jr., *The Focusing Artifice* (Athens : Ohio University Press, 1968), p. xviii.

operates upon must remain.

Thus, Browning comes to conclude that he considers even such an "etherial" poetry of Shelley "as a sublime fragmentary essay toward a presentment of the correspondency of the universe to Deity, of the natural to the spiritual, and of the actual to the ideal."

With the light shed from the above quotations from his own observations of the ideal and the actual, it is significant that Griffin and Minchin report the follwing event:

> How a child, by the way, may soften literary judgments, is shown by a letter which Browning wrote about this time to William Cox Bennett, who sent him *Poems* published the year before. He had previously slighted Bennett's muse, while recognizing his good-nature; now his tone is altered. "Your poems," he writes, "have abundant evidence of the right spirit, and some of the child-pictures go to our very hearts in their truth and beauty, now that we have a child of our own."[38]

It is very important to observe that Browning realized the truth and beauty in the child-pictures in their ideality only when he could realize them out of the fact in the actuality of the sentiment that they had a child of their own now. Here we see the basic principle working for the shift from the actual to the ideal, and it is further remarkable that Browning recognizes in a poetic mind abundant evidence of the "right spirit"—the sane mind—right reasoning—when it is picturing the truth and bearty in the children.[39]

38) W. H. Griffin and H. C. Minchin, *The Life of Robert Browning* (London: Methuen & Co., 1938), p. 180.

39) According to Griffin and Minchin, in their *Life* at p. 287, Marcus Huish once witnessed a meeting between the two poets, Browning and Tennyson, when the younger man advanced to greet the elder, bent low and addressed him as "Magister meus." Among other reasons for Browning to show this respect to Tennyson, there must be his admiration for the elder poet for his concrete idea of the truth of the actuals of the humanity.

For a man, a born egoist, is it really possible to love his neighbor's children as well as his own? This is the question to be asked of all mankind. This is the greatest question that has ever been posed upon humanity. The shift from the "private" love of one's own childdren to the "universal" love of his neighbor's children is essential for the progress of the civilization and humanity. The safety and happiness of one's own children can never be assured, no matter how deeply the parents love their own children unless they love their neighbor's children also. Blake's interpretation of the tragedy of Job was that it was due to Job's egoistic love for only his own children.[40] Philippe Oriér, in his excellent study of the historical development of the family life in the society in the Western world, has shown that the family tie, in the modern sense of the term, started advancing only in eighteenth century, and has ever since kept growing, becoming ever more strong in its ego-centric love for only one's own children.

Man cannot live by their love for their own children alone. The security and happiness of one's own children depend upon whether or not he loves his neighbor's children. Here is a great message of Robert Browning. Our children can live and grow with true security and happiness only when true spirit of fellowship of all mankind prevails. The "Pope" of the village in "Ivàn Ivànovitch" says:

> How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
> Kindled to light the world--aware of sparks that scorch,
> Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings:
> The mother drops the child;

But the true mother would never flinch from the scorching sparks no matter how much "her flesh a fire-flake stings" while a pulse of life stirs in her heart. But, the "Pope" says, that is the thing even the animals are willing to do:

> The beaver, stretched on fire,

40) Joseph H. Wicksteed, *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1910). See, especially, "Illustration III," pp. 55-63.

Will die without a groan : no pang avails to wrest.

Her young from where they hide--her sanctuary breast.

The question is now involved in the higher morality that demands us to ward off the scorching sparks not only from our own children but also from the childrem of our neighbors !

It was Robert Browning that has shown the different levels of love in his many poems, notably in *Pippa Passes,* the *eros* type of love, the *philia* type of love, the *storge* type of love, the *agape* type of love, and the *caritas* type of love--the love to God, which is the basis for the true motive for the love to our neighbor's children, as well as to our own.[41] With this belief in God of All-Great and All-Loving, he could say that "all's love, yet all's law." The law, in its All-Loving, demands us men to grow in progress so that we can become perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

In the idea of progress in Browning's poetry the most significant factor is the shift of the private to the universal as the basis of the shift of the human to the divine. Browning, however, found this shift not easy when he had to admit "How hard it is to be a Christian." Fellowship between Christians, in its true significance of the word--Christian *Koinonia*--does not happen automatically, no matter how staunch they may be in belief and dedication to Christ. It has to be nurtured. Nurture means more than nature. The shift can be possible only by the sheer tour de force, but the true development of soul can be achieved only when man endeavors to put in the infinite within the finite by tour de force. Man's civilization was made, is maintained, and will be progressed by man's tour de force. The preservers of history are as courageous as its maker. What happens when man neglects to cultivate the garden ? Nature, if left to herself, produces jungles ; human nature, if left to itself, produces jungles of egoism where men never learn to love their neighbor's children ; Human society, if left to itself, produces son without sonship,

41)For the full discussion on Caritas, see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros,* tr. by Philip S. Watson. (London : S.P.C.K., 1953).

daughter without daughterhood, friend without friendship, citizen without citizenship, fellow without fellowship.

It is the stretched soul that makes music. Where there is no polarity—where energies flow smoothly in one direction—there will be much doing but no music. Music sweet of love comes from "spirit strained true."