

Explanation of three words by Keats: Spirit, Spiritual, Spiritualise.

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Spirit

The word spirit is used by Keats in a number of ordinary sentences: as a particular quality or character, as a frame of mind; as a person considered in relation to his character, particularly as a synonym for genius, as a synonym for soul. Keats speaks of a man as 'trying the resources of his Spirit...' soul is distinguished from 'mind' or 'intelligence.' Intelligences are identified with sparks which are God which are not soul till they acquire identity. Personal identity is acquired by the suffering of the heart. A world of pains and troubles schools intelligence and makes it a soul. Thus, God makes individual beings, souls, identical souls by the sparks of its own pieces.

Spiritual

It is opposed to worldly and associated with this interestedness. It is contrasted with 'material' and associated with ethereal finger-pointing. It is applied to the heavenly state of the immortals, free on the limitations of time and space but not exclusive of bodily pleasures. And it is applied to moral values. In his essay of Edmund Kean Keats distinguishes between sensual and spiritual pleasures, the appeal made by poetry to the sense and that which it makes to the imagination. Keats elsewhere speaks of the spiritual repetition of human lives hereafter, happiness being repeated in a finer tone, what appears beautiful to the imagination will then actually exist, as Adam awoke to find his dream of Eve was true. In another passage Keats distinguishes between the intercourse of spirit, which is a direct communication of spirit and the intercourse of separated human beings. Finally Keats uses spirit as a synonym for ghost and to signify a being other than human.

Sublime/Sublimity

Keats uses the word in the general sense of high, exalted and grand. The anti-thesis of low. He applies it to people, to immortals, to impressive natural phenomenon ('my Solitude is sublime there is a Sublimity to welcome me home'). Sublime is applied to some kinds of poetry (Wordsworth's geniuses was characterised in a famous phrase as an 'egotistical sublime', 'Fairies stooping on their wings sublime/ To kiss a mortal's lip.') Sublimity is contrasted with mere greatness in another passage. 'Those Americans are great but they are not sublime Man—the humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime.'

Keats believed that the excellence of every art is its intensity. In other passages he speaks of being 'self-spiritualised into a kind of sublime misery.'

Ethereal

Keats uses ethereal in a variety of senses when applied to humans. To human beings it expresses ecstasy, heavenly feelings of delight as at the climax of 'The Eve of St. Agnes.' 'A mortal man impassioned...ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star.'

The word maybe applied to poetry to suggest that it transcends the earthly. Ethereal is used in metaphorical expression describing the effect of men of genius and of literary work. 'Men of geniuses are great as certain ethereal chemical operating on the mass of neutral intellect'.