

William Wordsworth's struggle against his spiritual crisis

— An interpretation of *Immortality Ode* —

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William Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* tells us about his spiritual crisis and his recovery from it. The poem indicates that his critical situation results from his awareness that he can not share gladness any more with other creatures around him. His recovery from the crisis is, therefore, expected to be made when he can experience gladness once more. The expression referring to his recovery — "We in thought will join your throng, . . . /Ye that through your hearts to-day/Feel the gladness of the May!" — indicates a crucial role which "thought" plays in leading Wordsworth to his recovery.

The purpose of this paper is not only to clarify the reason for his inability to share gladness with other creatures, but to examine how "thought" enables him to overcome his spiritual crisis. In addition, it will be made clear by this study that it is also "thought" that leads Wordsworth to realize a symbolical meaning presented by Nature.

Key words : spiritual crisis, creative sensibility, thought

1

William Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* tells us about his spiritual crisis and his recovery from it. Wordsworth's critical situation results from his awareness that

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight
 To me did seem
 Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore, —
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,
 By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more. (1-9)

His inability to see "celestial light" makes it impossible for Wordsworth to share "jollity" with other creatures around him. He feels himself isolated by "a thought of grief."

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief. (19-22)

This "thought of grief" fades from Wordsworth because of "a timely utterance," which "gave that thought relief." He feels himself experiencing "jubilee" once more. He confidently declares his sharing of joy with other "blessed Creatures."

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make ; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee :
My head is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all. (36-41)

However, his blissful situation changes into a bitter one, in which he is ruthlessly forced to realize that the overcoming of "a thought of grief" is a mere illusion. Once more, Wordsworth faces an irrefutable fact that, because of his inability to see the celestial light, he is still prevented from sharing joy with other creatures.

the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm : —
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !
— But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone :
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat :
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ? (48-57)

Wordsworth is, however, saved from his spiritual crisis. He regains spiritual strength which enables him to empathize with other creatures.

We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May ! (172-175)

This passage is important because it indicates that it is "in thought" that Wordsworth can finally succeed in experiencing gladness once more. "Thought" is crucial to his recovery from a depressing situation. It gives him spiritual strength strong enough to utterly overcome his inability to see the visionary gleam.

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;
 We will grieve not. . . . (176-180)

The story which *Immortality Ode* tells about Wordsworth's overcoming of his spiritual crisis poses fundamental questions as to his recovery from the crisis : why does his inability to perceive the visionary gleam lead him to his spiritual crisis? ; and how does "thought" make it possible for him to overcome the crisis?

2

Wordsworth's inclination to use luminous images — "light," "gleam," "radiance" — in *Immortality Ode* leads us to deduce that his other unusual experiences which are described with luminous images have a substantial similarity to his blissful experience of the visionary gleam. The following is one of those experiences.

I still retained
My first creative sensibility. . . .

 An auxiliary light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour ; the melodious birds,
The gentle breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion. . . . (Two-part *Prelude*. ii. 408-9, 417-22)

Because of "an auxiliary light" shed from the mind, the sunset scene changes its familiar appearance and dramatically reveals an utterly unusual aspect of nature ; the setting sun, birds, breezes, fountains and other components of the scene are all covered with "new splendour." This metaphorical expression indicates that each component of the scene is fused and transformed into transcendental beauty, and that, for this reason, Wordsworth's perception of the sunset scene is quite different from general perception.

According to Gestalt Psychology, our general perception fundamentally depends on a

psychological mechanism which directly perceives an object as a configurational whole (*Figur*). For example, when we perceive a tree, we do not receive its sense-data at first, then identify it as a tree. Our perception is immediate — we directly perceive a tree as definitely segregated *Figur*. The same can be said of the setting sun, birds, breezes, fountains and other components of the sunset scene. They are usually perceived as *Figur*. The scene, therefore, is generally perceived as an aggregate of each *Figur*. Wordsworth's perception of the sunset scene, however, is quite unique in that the scene is perceived as a continuum of its components in which they lose their configurational stability and are in condition to reveal "celestial light."

This Wordsworthian perception, which fills him with bliss, is metaphorically described as caused by the shedding of "an auxiliary light." Given that its shedding can be thought to be unable to happen without the creative sensibility, it can be deduced that Wordsworth's unique perception depends on the creative sensibility. When the creative sensibility is activated, his *Figur*-based perception becomes unstable, and an unusual state of consciousness arises in which objects lose their configurational stability to such an extent that unstableness of *Figur*-based perception can trigger a mysterious experience. It is also in this state that the viewing of the sunrise scene, which is also described with luminous images, throws Wordsworth into a blissful moment when he and the world around him are felt as if they were melted into each other.

Oh! then what soul was his when on the tops
 Of the high mountains he beheld the sun
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light. He look'd;
 The ocean and the earth beneath him lay
 In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,
 and in their silent faces did he read
 Unutterable love. . . . his spirit drank
 The spectacle. Sensation, soul, and form
 All melted into him: they swallow'd up
 His animal being: in them did he live
 And by them did he live. They were his life.
 In such access of mind, in such high hour
 Of visitation from the living God,
 Thought was not. In enjoyment it expir'd.

(*Peddler*, MS. E, 190-204)

At the very moment when "his spirit drank/The spectacle. Sensation, soul, and form/All melted into him," the sunrise scene transforms itself into overflow of brightness which represents "unutterable love" of "the living God." In this blissful encounter with transcendental beauty, his *Figur*-based perception, metaphorically speaking, "in enjoyment. . . expir'd."

Our inference that Wordsworth's unique perception is caused by the creative sensibility makes it possible to deduce that a disappearance of the visionary gleam means inactiveness of

the creative sensibility. Wordsworth's depressive experience mentioned in *Immortality Ode* is thus about impotence of the creative sensibility. As mentioned above, the creative sensibility activates the unstabilization of *Figur*-based perception which can bring about a transcendental transformation of a commonplace scenery. The inactiveness of the creative sensibility, therefore, results in his inability to experience transcendental beauty with a heart full of bliss. This is the reason why Wordsworth failed to give himself up to joy along with other creatures despite his desperate effort to regain the visionary gleam through his senses. As long as his creative sensibility is impotent to unstabilize *Figur*-based perception, he definitely can not experience transcendental beauty; and it follows that his strenuous effort to share gladness with other "blessed Creatures" through his senses goes to waste. Wordsworth must find another way of unstabilizing *Figur*-based perception.

3

"Thought," as mentioned above, saved Wordsworth from his critical situation. According to *OED*, "thought" has a meaning of "mental contemplation"¹; therefore, it is "contemplation" that played a crucial role in his spiritual recovery. Wordsworth's explanation of the birth of poetry gives us a clue to the reason why contemplation — "thought" — enables him to overcome his crisis.

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.²

Contemplation over an "emotion recollected in tranquillity" brings a mind to a highly excited mental state in which powerful feelings overflow. According to Wordsworth, the excitation of a mind brings about an unusual psychological state where "ideas and feelings do not. . . succeed each other in *accustomed* order"³ (italics mine). In a general state of mind, our cognitive response fundamentally bases on a socially and personally accustomed order of ideas and feelings. This habituated link of ideas and feelings is so tight that our response almost becomes automatic; for example, something beautiful evokes pleasant associations; and something sublime does magnificent ones. However, this accustomed order of ideas and feelings becomes unstabilized when a mind is so emotionally agitated that strong feelings overflow, as a result of which an unpredictable link of ideas can be established. We can see one of those examples of an unaccustomed association of ideas in *The Mad Mother*. In the poem, the mad mother utters a painful cry for help to her baby.

Suck, little babe, oh suck again

It cools my blood ; it cools my brain ;
Thy lips I feel them, baby ! they
Draw from my heart the pain away. (31-34)

A baby is generally associated with something weak, lovely or pretty. However, a strong maternal passion of the mad mother breaks those accustomed images and drastically associates the baby with a spiritual savior, which substantially transforms the baby into and forces us to recognize it as Christ in a cradle.

Our interpretation that “thought” activates the excitation of a mind to evoke an unaccustomed, unpredictable association of ideas leads us to understand that “thought” is closely related to imagination in Wordsworth. He says that imagination is an ability “to modify, to create, and to associate,” and he cites as its most typical example his description of an old leech-gatherer.⁴

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence ;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence ;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense :
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand repositeth, there to sun itself.

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep. . . . (Resolution and Independence, 64-72)

Wordsworth’s association of the old man with a stone and a sea-beast is astonishingly unique. The stone is “approximate[d]” to a sea-beast because it is “endowed with something of the power of life” by comparison with a sea-beast ; on the other hand, the sea-beast is “assimilate[d]” to a stone because it is “stripped of some of its vital qualities” by comparison with a stone.⁵ This amalgamated image of the stone and the sea-beast is not without definite purpose. It is truly what Wordsworth desperately needs to describe his impression of the old man.

intermediate image [of the stone and the sea-beast] is . . . treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man ; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison.⁶

The intermediate image of the stone and the sea-beast substantively influences our interpreta-

tion of the old man. The association of the old leech-gatherer with the stone and the sea-beast is so unique that an interpretation based on our general accustomed ideas of an old man is thrown into disturbance. We are forced to go beyond general ideas of an old man and to interpret him not as a mechanical chimera of a man, a stone and a marine animal, but as an organic amalgam of them — a *borderer*⁷ evoking contradictory ideas: massive stillness and autonomous movability; sublime isolation and utterly defenseless, doubtless dependence. Thus, behind the unique description of the old leech-gatherer lies an utterly unpredictable link of ideas.

We can see another typical example of an unpredeceivable association of ideas in a passage from *The Prelude*⁸, which is about an episode of ascending Mt. Snowdon. Wordsworth's aim of ascending the mountain was to look at the sunrise from its top. On the way, he unexpectantly had a rare opportunity to see a sublime prospect of mountains which lay in "a huge sea of mist" under the moon.

The moon stood naked in the heavens at height
Immense above my head, and on the shore
I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
Which meek and silent rested at my feet.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean, and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
In headlands, tongues and promontory shapes,
Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed
To dwindle and give up its majesty,
Usurped upon as far as sight could reach. (XIII, 41-51)

Wordsworth is absorbed in such a glorious prospect—"a huge sea of mist"—that the real sea "seemed/To dwindle and give up its majesty." After being overwhelmed by mighty creativity of a mist, Wordsworth is lost in a meditation which leads him to realize that the prospect is "the perfect image" of a human mind.

The perfect image of a mighty mind,
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an under-presence,
The sense of God, or whatso'er is dim
Or vast in its own being — above all,
One function of such mind had Nature there
Exhibited by putting forth. . . . (XIII, 69-75)

Wordsworth's associating of the sublime prospect with human mind is undoubtedly astonishing ;

however, despite of its unpredictability, the association is crucial in making him realize that a human being has such a mighty creative power that it can be equal to Nature's "glorious faculty," which is perfectly exemplified by an impressive transformation of a mist.

That domination which [Nature] oftentimes
Exerts upon the outward face of things,
So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
Doth make one object so impress itself
Upon all others, and pervades them so,
That even the grossest minds must see and hear,
And cannot chuse but feel. The power which these
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express
Resemblance — in the fullness of its strength
Made visible — a genuine counterpart
And brother of the glorious faculty
Which higher minds bear with them as their own.
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With all the objects of the universe :
They from their native selves can send abroad
like transformation, for themselves create
A like existence. . . .

(XIII, 77-95)

Thus, the timely association concerned leads Wordsworth to an utterly innovative perspective on a creative aspect of a human mind : a mythological or biblical viewpoint, the Creation of the world. This new perspective, furthermore, enables him to grasp another profound fact — Nature exhibited the sublime prospect in order to make him realize that he himself had such a mighty imaginative power as Nature's "transformation."

The universal spectacle throughout
Was shaped for admiration and delight,
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged
The soul, the imagination of the whole.

(XIII, 60-65)

Wordsworth fully understands that, despite his utter weakness and powerlessness, he astonishingly can be equal to Nature in creativity. Nature transformed its scenery into a symbol to reveal a creative aspect of human mind, which was perfectly exemplified by a mighty transfor-

mation of a mist ; on the other hand, his imagination, being highly stimulated by its sublime prospect, performed a function such as transformed an accustomed way of thinking — the establishing of an utterly new association of ideas — which led him to the understanding of a symbolic meaning presented by Nature.

Thus, for Wordsworth, imagination is crucial in establishing an unhabituated link of ideas. This unhabituated link of ideas, as mentioned above, is also caused by “thought” because it brings about an unusual mental state in which ideas can connect each other in an unaccustomed way. We can deduce, therefore, that, in terms of the establishing of an unpredictable association of ideas, metaphorically speaking, “thought” plays a role as a sort of a starter, and imagination as an engine ; in other words, when a mind is emotionally elevated by “thought” to such an extent that powerful feelings spontaneously overflow, imagination is activated to connect ideas in an utterly unaccustomed way.

“Thought” is thus crucial in freeing Wordsworth from a firmly accustomed way of thinking ; it is, furthermore, crucial in that it throws him into enjoyment. He says about the pleasure produced by “thought” as follows :

the emotion, of whatever kind and in whatever degree, for various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever . . . , the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment.⁹

This statement leads us to a clue as to why “thought” saves Wordsworth from his spiritual crisis — his inability to share gladness with other “blessed Creatures.” According to him, the reason is this : the unaccustomed linking of ideas, which can be established by imagination activated by “thought,” makes him experience enjoyment through which he can empathize with others.

At last, despite his inability to activate the creative sensibility through senses, Wordsworth can regain a means of overcoming his grief that he is isolated from other joyful creatures. “Thought” takes over the role which was played by the creative sensibility.

4

For Wordsworth to overcome his spiritually critical situation, it was indispensable to sever a firmly habituated link of ideas, which prevented him from facing his critical situation from an utterly new aspect. “Thought” led him to a joyful mental state in which ideas could be associated in an unaccustomed way. We can see such associations in *Immortality Ode* lead Wordsworth to the innovation of his thinking. As the poem states, when Wordsworth tried to, but could not, share gladness with other creatures around him, what thoroughly occupied his mind was the visionary gleam. However desperately he tried to regain gladness through perceiving the visionary gleam, his effort was in vain. The more he tried to seek the visionary gleam, the more he felt the experience of a feeling of loss — a loss of the visionary gleam from

adulthood. What enables him to get out of this difficulty is an association of the visionary gleam with radiance of the dawn. To Wordsworth, the association becomes highly enlightening. This association makes him fully convinced that, just as the sun loses its radiance of the dawn in accordance with its moving toward the zenith, so the visionary gleam fades away as a human being approaches towards adulthood, the zenith of the growth of men.

The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel. . . .
And by the vision splended
Is on his way attended ;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day. (72-77)

Not only is the association great important — it enables Wordsworth to realize the fading away of the visionary gleam as quite natural, which leads him to understand that it is meaningless to regret a loss of the visionary gleam —, it furthermore plays a crucial role in terms of Wordsworth's utterly innovative interpretation of an infant. From the viewpoint of comparing a human birth to the dawn (the comparison is not necessarily uncommon), an infant, being nearest to the brilliantly illuminated rising sun, is bathed in radiance of the dawn. The association of the dawn with the visionary gleam leads to an interpretation of an infant as illuminated with the visionary gleam ; and given that the visionary gleam indicates something heavenly in Wordsworth's mythological interpretation of a human life, it naturally follows that an infant, being illuminated with the visionary gleam, still possesses divine "heritage" — "Soul's immensity [which] read'st the eternal deep" — from "that imperial palace whence he came." This is why a six year's child of "a pigmy size" is

Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest !
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave. (115-118)

It is this interpretation of an infant as the highest being in a spiritual hierarchy that lies behind Wordsworth's belief "the child is Father of the Man." What an unique understanding of a child it is ! A child, who is weakest in a physical strength, is greatest in spirituality — a child as a spiritual guide.

"Soul's immensity" in childhood is, however, destined to lose its celestial brilliance under the "earthly freight," as radiance of the dawn gradually fades away into "the light of common day."

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,

And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, as deep almost as life? (127-129)

This Wordsworthian thinking of human growth is so pessimistic that he is temporarily entangled in the thought that he, being in adulthood, is enclosed within earthly "shades of the prison-house" and loses himself in "the darkness of the grave." However, an unpredictably novel association of a nature saves him from his pessimistic view of human growth. He says that the earth, or a nature, like "the homely Nurse [who] doth all she can," does its best

To make her foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came. (83-85)

Wordsworth's unique understanding of a nature as a nurse leads him to his crucial realization that human beings, who are destined to lose their preexistent "heritage" after a birth, "have only relinquished one delight/To live beneath [nature's] more habitual sway." Given that it is "thought" that enables Wordsworth to recover from his spiritual crisis, it can be deduced that what a nature tries to do for "her foster-child" to overcome an earthly "inevitable yoke" ahead is the cultivating of "thought." And, our interpretation that "thought" plays a crucial role in associating ideas in an utterly unpredictable way, furthermore, leads to this understanding: it is a nature's true aim to cultivate Wordsworth's mind to such an extent that the deep thinking ignites the linking of ideas in an unhabituated way. The loss of the visionary gleam from human beings was unavoidable; however, owing to the nature's cultivation of "thought", he could find another "fountain light" which guided him through "the darkness of the grave" after his losing the visionary gleam.

Wordsworth's understanding that a nature cultivates its foster-child's "thought" lies behind his severe criticism of radical rationalism. The reason for his criticism is that rationalism throws us into moral perplexity in which, in the phrase of Wordsworth, "our meddling intellect/ Misshapes the beauteous forms of things; — We murder to dissect." Using a metaphor of a culprit who is totally confused in a court, Wordsworth describes such a dangerous situation as follows:

I fared,
Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
Calling the mind to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours, now believing,
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of moral obligation — what the rule,

And what the sanction — till, demanding proof,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

(*Prelude*, X. 888-900)

It is this analytical inclination of thinking that Wordsworth criticizes in *We are Seven*. In the poem, he describes an adult's puzzlement about a child's notion of death. To an adult, it is undoubtedly clear that death means the end of life; it is therefore illogical to include the dead among the living. However, to a child, it is not necessarily unreasonable to think a person buried in a churchyard as countable person. In the poem, after having been asked about her brothers and sisters, a little cottage girl answered,

‘Seven are we ;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

‘Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother ;

(*We are Seven*, 18-22)

Being confused by her answer, “I” asks her the same question, but her answer is the same. To make her understand what death is like, “I” obstinately repeats the same question four times; however, her answer is always “Nay, we are seven.” The reason for her insistence is that she is convinced that she still lives a life with her dead brother and sister.

‘Twelve steps or more from mother’s door,
And they are side by side.

‘My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem ;
And there upon the ground I sit —
I sit and sing to them.

‘And often after sunset, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

(*Ibid.*, 39-48)

To this girl, life and death are not separated from each other. They are different only in forms of existence; they are continuous in terms of being. This notion of death throws into confu-

sion an adult who is educated to think death as definitely opposite to life. A man's obstinate questions—four time!—in the poem implies that how overwhelmingly his thinking is influenced by an association of death with the end of life, or non-existence. The girl's notion of death makes such an adult's common sense of death ludicrous; it even indicates that the man's rational, analytical attitude toward her is dangerous.

'How many are you then,' said I,
'If they two are in Heaven?'
The little Maiden did reply,
'Oh master! we are seven.'

'But they are dead: those two are dead!
Their spirits are in Heaven!'
'Twas throwing words away: for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, 'Nay, we are seven!'

(*Ibid.*, 61-69)

To him, who is firmly entangled in a common sense, it is utterly ridiculous to answer "we are seven" when two of them are dead. It is generally thought to be rational to subtract two dead from living seven. He has no doubt whatever as to whether his effort to persuade her to accept his calculation is appropriate. However, what if we take the same position as the girl? Her dead brother and sister continue to live in her mind with such reality that thinking about them spontaneously evokes an intimate feeling toward them to such an extent that it naturally prompts her to think of them as still existing. This inseparable relationship between thinking and feeling is crucial in creating her inner world. The man's analytical attitude toward her, which, "demanding proof," necessarily *dissects* her thinking and feeling, destroys her imaginary inner world itself. Thus, Wordsworth warns us against danger of relentlessly pursuing an answer in a rational, analytical way.¹⁰

5

Not only Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* tells us about his spiritual crisis, it also states his recovery from it. His spiritual crisis results from his inability to activate the creative sensibility to such an extent that he can experience transcendental beauty. This inability prevents him from sharing gladness with other creatures. "Thought" enables him to overcome such a crisis. It leads him to such an emotionally elevated state of mind that ideas are associated in an unaccustomed, unpredictable way. By freeing him from a firmly habituated way of thinking, "thought" enables him to experience spiritual uplift.

Because of its intuitiveness, Wordsworthian experience of transcendental beauty can not be thought to occur in every ordinary people who are not necessarily rich with a rare gift such

as the creative sensibility. On the other hand, spiritual uplift caused by “thought” has a greater possibility to occur in us all. As Wordsworth says, our mind has been cultivated by a nature, whether or not we are aware of it, to such an extent that the deep thinking — “thought” — brings about a spiritually uplifted state of mind. Therefore, if we can concentrate our attention on an “emotion recollected in tranquility” till “an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced,” we break through a firmly habituated association of ideas to mental excitement in which an utterly innovative link of ideas¹¹ can lead us to the understanding of truth symbolically presented by Nature. Thus, thanks to “thought,” not only Wordsworth but we can also find a “fountain light of all our day” which guides us through “the darkness of the grave.”

Texts :

1. E. DE Selincourt (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1952)
2. J. Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, Stephen Gill (ed.), *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850* (Norton & Company, 1979)
3. M. Mason (ed.), *Lyrical Ballads* (Longman, 1992)
4. J. Butler (ed.), *The Ruined Cottage and the Pedlar* (Cornell University Press, 1979)
5. W.J.B. Owen (ed.), *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1974)

References :

1. J.H. Averill, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (Cornell University Press, 1980)
2. Association of English Romanticism in Japan (ed.), *Centre and Circumference* (Kiri-hara Shoten, 1995)
3. G.H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (Yale University Press, 1971)
4. M. Levinson, *Wordsworth's great Period Poems* (Cambridge University Press, 1986)
5. H. Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's Prelude* (Greenwood Press, 1976)
6. S. Oka, *Gyosai to Muso (Contemplation and Imagination)* (Kokubun Sha, 1977)
7. ——— (ed.), *Essays on 'The Prelude'* (Kokubun Sha, 1988)
8. J.C. Robinson, *Radical Literary Education* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987)
9. J.R. Watson, *Wordsworth's Vital Soul* (Macmillan Press, 1982)
10. J. Wordsworth, *The Borders of Vision* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1982)

Notes :

1. *OED*, *thought*, 4. b.
2. W.J.B. Owen (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 146.
3. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 146.
4. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 26.
5. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 33.
6. *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 33.
7. A *borderer* means a person who is in “border-states.” Cf., J. Wordsworth, *The Borders of Vision*, p. 3.
8. The text is Thirteen-Books *Prelude* in 1805.

William Wordsworth's struggle against his spiritual crisis

9. W.J.B. Owen (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 148.
10. We are admonished to think over a father's lesson in *Anecdote for Father*. Hearing his son answer to his question, he obstinately — five times! — forces his son to give the reason for his choice, “At Kilve I'd rather be/Than here at Liswyn farm.” His son's answer makes him notice that how foolish his persistent demand for a rational reason is.

His head he raised — there was in sight,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain —
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the Boy his tongue unlock ;
And thus to me he made reply :
'At Kilve there was no weather-cook,
And that's the reason why.'

O dearest, dearest Boy! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

(*Anecdote for Father*, 49-60)

11. Wordsworth' thinking that contemplation of “emotion recollected in tranquility” ignites an unhabituated link of ideas clarifies a crucial role which a memory plays in his spiritual recovery. He raises “the song of thanks and praise” not for “that which is most worthy to be blest ; /Delight and liberty, the simple creed/Of Childhood,”

But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised

(*Immortality Ode*, 142-148)

“Those shadowy recollections” can free Wordsworth from an earthly “inevitable yoke” — a firmly habituated way of thinking — and make him experience “moments in the being/Of the eternal Silence ; truths that wake, /To perish never.” It is important that he calls those recollections “shadowy,” because they are not memories concerning the experiencing of transcendental beauty. This suggests that even those memories which are not about such a mystical incident as experiencing of “visionary gleam” can hold the possibility of becoming a priming powder to ignite an innovative association of ideas. That is why Wordsworth claims that those shadowy recollection are “the fountain light of all our day.”

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